Investigating drama as a teaching and learning pedagogy.

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ABSTRACT

Mā te whiritahi, ka whakatutuki ai ngā pūmanawa ā tāngata

Together weaving the realisation of potential (Māori Proverb)

This study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of drama as a teaching tool in a primary school environment. The curriculum areas involved in the study were mathematics (measurement) and Ecology of Learning (teaching students about the stages or levels of particular competencies including collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication, citizenship, and character). A review is made of previous studies looking at the history of drama in education, the impact of drama on learning particular curriculum areas, and the theories of learning that support the inclusion of drama as a teaching tool. The findings of the study support the use of drama in some elements of education. Interruptions to the program may have contributed to the assessed outcomes of the mathematical elements of the program, however interruptions are an accepted part of a teaching program and as such a program's robustness in the face of interruptions has to be taken into consideration when considering its effectiveness. The outcomes of the Ecology of Learning section of the study showed higher levels of engagement and the perception of a greater depth of understanding of the material presented. Students were also able to successfully evaluate and apply information gained from their own exploration and presentation to those of other groups. This suggests that while drama does not provide an effective tool across all areas of the curriculum (such as when set formulae need to be remembered), it does offer solutions for subjects where information needs to be considered from different angles and points of view.

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Aroha mai, Aroha atu

   Love received, love returned (Māori proverb)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Ko te ahurei o te tamaiti aroha o tātou mahi

Let the uniqueness of the child guide our work (Māori proverb)

Success in teaching involves a complex combination of factors including, but not limited to; student's own and family backgrounds, nature, physical, and mental state; the teaching environment; the subject; available resources; even the time of day (Aitken, 2019b) Because of this, I feel it is important to clarify that this thesis does not propose drama in education as the only method with which to teach. However it does propose drama as an important tool in a teacher's collection of methods and approaches to teaching because of the value it adds to the outcomes for students.

1.1 Context

This study investigates and discusses the use of drama as a teaching pedagogy and how it can impact on students' engagement in learning tasks as well as result in greater understanding and retention of information. The investigation was conducted in a classroom where the researcher regularly teaches and involved the majority of the class (two students opted out of the study and their information and responses were not included in the analysis of the data).

The student cohort had recently been involved in working together to present a whole school drama production (involving 380 students). Roles included Acting, Dancing, Designing and Building Props, Movie Making and Digital Sound Effects, Ticket and Poster design, and Stage Crew. This gave students experience in working together to present a drama, however, although the production told a classic story, it was not intended as a dramatic approach to learning as identified for the purpose of this study. The cohort had also spent some time looking into the collaboration rubric provided by New Pedagogies for Deeper Learning ((Fullan, Butler & Quinn, 2012)**.** This involved discussing the rubric and attempting to highlight the key phrases that made up each level. It was hoped that this experience with a collaborative model would support students in their ability to work positively with others in their assigned groups. This ability was not taken for granted however, and support was provided when it was needed to ensure students were able to resolve disputes or struggles to collaborate effectively.

1. 2 History or drama in Education

Drama, as a tool in education, has been around almost as long as the desire to formally educate others. Early philosophers and educational theorists Plato and Aristotle both had thoughts on the effectiveness of drama as an educational tool. Plato felt that drama (or imitation) was so effective that children should only be allowed to mimic those of sound character and appropriate role models.

> "…if they imitate at all, they should imitate from youth upward only those characters which are suitable to their profession – the courageous, temperate, holy, free, and the like […] lest from imitation they should come to be what they imitate." (Plato as cited in Benson, 2010, p. 72).

His concern was that drama in the form of imitation was such an effective learning tool that students encouraged to mimic poor examples of others might adopt their negative habits and characteristics. Aristotle on the other hand felt that drama and imitation was natural to people both as a means of entertainment and a way to learn.

> "The impulse to imitate is inherent in man from his childhood; he is distinguished among the animals by being the most imitative of them, and he takes the first steps of his education by imitating." (Aristotle. Translated by Potts, 1968, p. 20).

Aristotle believed that people could gain pleasure from engaging with objects they may not have seen in their original form through observing portraits or imitations, and that through engaging with these imitations people could learn more about the objects. He also believed in learning through 'habit' which he explains as learning through doing a thing. Aristotle discussed the idea that anything that does not come to us by nature (eg being able to see, hear etc) - that we need to learn to do - we learn by doing them. "We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts." (Aristotle Translated by Ross, n.d.). He goes on to say that because we learn through doing, and our practised behaviour forms our abilities, attitudes and virtues, that it is of utmost importance that we are mindful of what and how we practise.

Leaping forward to the Twentieth century, Piaget (1896-1980) posited the theory of assimilation and accomodation as key elements in learning. He believed that children progressed through developmental stages, the first involving imitation of the behaviour of others. Piaget believed that this imitation was a child's way of beginning to understand the world around them and their attempts to assimilate and accommodate the behaviours of others in order to make sense of the world around them. When

behaviours or events did not fit neatly within a child's existing understanding, they would be more likely to imitate the behaviour. This imitation would then allow children to explore and process information in order to better incorporate it into their existing knowledge and understanding of their world. This imaginative play potentially allows children to explore situations, changing actions and reactions as required until they have a better understanding of what has occurred and why.

> "The child who plays with dolls remakes his own life as he would like it to be. He relives all his pleasures, resolves all his conflicts. Above all he compensates for and completes reality by a kind of a fiction" (Piaget, 1964, p. 23).

Similarly, Caldwell Cook (1917) suggested that the make believe element of acting leads to real understanding and thus to learning – "Natural education is by practice, by doing things, and not by instruction…" (p. 1). Caldwell Cook proposes that since children get so involved in their games, becoming immersed and invested in their characters, that this is a more effective way of helping them learn new ideas and skills than the more traditional 'book focused' learning encouraged in schools.

Deliberate incorporation of imagination and 'play acting' - mindfully practising behaviours and reactions to events and people - is also a key element of a drama based education tool called Process Drama developed by Dorothy Heathcote (Heathcote, 2012; Wagner, 1976). In short, Process Drama encourages students to take on roles in order to act out and explore different perspectives related to certain situations in order to understand them or consider them from different points of view. In Process Drama, students take on roles of a fictional organisation working for a fictional 'client'. Through this role playing (and with the support of their teacher) students develop their understanding of issues from different perspectives. In their roles they discuss options, make decisions, and consider consequences, without the fear of real world consequences or negative outcomes from any mistakes (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

Similarly, Way (1967) encouraged the use of drama by students as a tool to practise the skills and problem solving needed as an adult.

> "If education is concerned with preparing young people for living rather than for a job in life, then it must concern itself with the whole person … In this sense, a basic definition of drama might be simply 'to practise living' (Way, 1967, p. 3-6 as cited in Abbs, 1994).

Continuing to move towards present day educational theories, the focus has been shifting towards skills needed for 21st Century and beyond (or Future Skills).

Interestingly, in attempting to look forward, many educators look back to John Dewey (1859-1952) and John Piaget (1896-1980) who both posited that rather than teaching students what is already known, we should be encouraging them to be *creative* and capable of discovery and life long learning. Sir Ken Robinson (2006) (international advisor on education) defines creativity as "the process of having original ideas that have value" and argues that creativity comes about through the combination of disciplines – the way our brain thinks visually, kinesthetically, abstractly, in sound and in movement. He argues that our brain is designed to incorporate all of these styles of learning and that students should be encouraged to learn in a greater variety of ways rather than focusing so heavily on the subjects of Reading, Writing and Math and learning by sitting still and listening (Robinson, 2007, 2013). Drama is one of those ways that can incorporate visual, kinesthetic, sound and movement skills as children explore more abstract ideas.

This idea of broadening the ways through which we learn is also supported by Dr L. A Jana (2018) who has labeled Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic as IQ skills, and suggests that more focus be given to the Executive Functions (EF) of Self Management, Collaboration, and Curiosity. Dr Jana points out that we focus on these EF skills with toddlers and preschoolers, but believes they should continue to be recognized as important in adulthood. She discusses the importance of impulse control, self awareness, focus, the ability to communicate and collaborate, listening skills, empathy, exploration and curiosity – learning to ask the right questions not just knowing the answers.   Drama can be employed to teach and encourage many of these skills - because drama requires students to explore situations while in role, it is a relatively safe way of considering different points of view, taking risks with new ideas, and exploring different reactions to events (Lin, 2010). Drama also requires students to engage their interpersonal skills and their ability to consider situations through more than their own (relatively limited) experiences. Being engaged in developing a drama requires the use of collaborative skills, whether on a relatively basic level of simply sharing space, or the more complex interplay of making use of each other's strengths and ideas to create a cohesive presentation.   It also encourages students to pose questions and consider possibilities (Lin, 2010).

Furthermore, even at a very basic level, drama requires a degree of physical movement – the need for people to move and experience their learning through movement. This is what Dr Jana calls Wiggle skills. She believes that physical and intellectual restlessness go hand in hand and that students need to be allowed to move in order to explore ideas and be creative with their thinking (Jana, 2018).

1.3 The Learning Challenge

As schools increasingly adopt a more student centered approach to teaching and learning, the challenge becomes how to co-construct lessons with students that include student voice and agency while also covering the required academic elements of reading, writing, math and science. Including drama as a tool for teaching and exploring these subjects, may help involve students in their learning as they develop ways to explore and share their learning. "In drama, children are encouraged to make their own decisions, to engage in, and to contribute to their own learning, instead of learning by authority" (Lin, 2010, p. 111). In other words, using drama as a tool in teaching and learning allows students to take ownership of their learning and be involved in its development, rather than relying solely on their teacher for information. Lin's study found that through the use of drama, students felt that they were able to be more imaginative and to come up with solutions, and use different ways to develop and express their ideas, rather than focusing on repeating back 'correct answers'. This is not to say that finding the correct answer is not important, rather that allowing students to find the answer themselves was more interesting to them – they enjoyed the challenge of finding their own solutions and exploring their own ideas. As Plato said "Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each" (Benson, 2010)**.**

1.4 Using drama to meet the requirements of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Ka Hikitia – The Ministry of Education's Māori Education Strategy document talks about the need to nurture every child's potential through (among other things) greater focus on tailoring education to the student and through collaboration and co-construction. In particular Ka Hikitia discusses Ako – where the teacher and the student are learning together from each other and where the culture, history and family of students are considered and involved as an integral part of a child's education (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The practice of Ako acknowledges that the teacher is not required to be the only source of knowledge. Students are also able and encouraged to contribute to the building of a knowledge pool around subjects. Teachers then, become more responsible for guiding the context that allows students to be involved in this co-construction of understanding (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007).

This in turn creates opportunities for students to have their voices heard within the classroom – an important part of recognising the unique perspective each student brings to their classroom. This is hugely important for our Māori students, but also for all learners (Zipes, 2012). Story telling through drama as a means to include cultural heritage is another way we can support our Māori students, while also providing opportunities for greater understanding of each other's cultural background. This may also give our students more ownership of their learning as well as a sense of control over their own narratives - using their stories to develop and share their own understanding of who they are and the society they live in (Ota, 2000; Zipes, 2012).

The aims of Ka Hikitia sit well with the idea that concepts based within Māori culture are focused on benefits to the collective and working together for the benefit of the family group (whanau, hapu, iwi), friends and community members, whereas the focus of the NZ European culture is more inclined towards individual achievement and growth (Podsiadlowski & Fox, 2011). In an individualistic culture, individuals place more importance on personal goals rather than those of the group. In a collective culture on the other hand, the goals of the individual are strongly tied or even inseparable from those of the family or group (Podsiadlowski & Fox, 2011). Certainly from a Māori perspective, children are an integral part of the wider collective. With this in mind, it makes sense that students who have been brought up with a Māori world view would be more comfortable with and benefit from opportunities to work with others to achieve group goals, rather than focusing primarily on individual achievement. Drama is one tool where collaboration is developed and encouraged, providing opportunities for students to achieve more as they work with others (Piazzoli, 2012; Taskin-Can, 2013), particularly when the learning relates to, or is linked to aspects of their culture. Interestingly, this also applies to other minorities within the New Zealand context, with Pacific Island families and Chinese families showing similar or even greater levels of collectivism in their culture than Māori (Podsiadlowski & Fox, 2011). Having said this, it is important to recognise the impact of urbanization and the resultant shift away from traditional cultural norms. Not all Māori, Pacific, or Chinese families (or those from any other background) necessarily identify with their traditional collective cultures. However, in New Zealand, it is often said that what is good for Māori is good for everyone. Therefore, regardless of whether the focus is on the traditional, or a more modern cultural norm, it could be argued that the ability to work collaboratively, rather than

competing against each other would benefit all students, not just those students for whom a collective tradition is the cultural norm.

In addition to the need to promote greater engagement and support for our Māori students, the vision of the New Zealand Curriculum is for "young people who will be confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners" (The Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 7). To support this vision, the curriculum provides Key Competencies such as Thinking; Using language, symbols, and texts; Managing self; Relating to others; and Participating and contributing. The question becomes, how do teachers teach these competencies? How does one create opportunities for students to put themselves into the position of another in a way that allows, and in fact demands, that they see things from another's point of view? One answer is through drama.

By creating dramatic scenarios students are able to take on the persona of another and explore what they might look and feel like. However, in addition to this, the act of constructing dramatic scenarios with others in order to share learning, provides multiple opportunities for discussion among peers, and the combining of ideas and understandings while also encouraging the consideration of different perspectives as students craft their presentations for an audience.

In looking at *Using language, symbols, and texts*; drama can not only provide students with a means to develop their language skills (Baraldi, as cited in Staples, 2009; Staples, 2012), it can also provide opportunities for students to consider myriad different ways to present (or respond to) a given situation in order to gain different responses. Through drama, they can test their understanding of how different types of communication can affect not only people's interpretation of a message, but also the different ways with which people might respond to information depending on how it is presented. However drama can also be used as a form of story-telling or narrative. This may be important in its ability to provide a platform for students to share their own narrative – itself a potentially valuable tool in self-development (Ota, 2000). This sharing of narratives may also lead on to an increase in the awareness of others' backgrounds, beliefs and experiences, which may in turn lead to a greater ability for students to relate to others (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007).

Next we can consider *Relating to Others*: " … Students who relate well to others are open to new learning and able to take different roles in different situations" (The Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 12). Drama has been used and shown in a number of studies to support students to develop greater empathy for others, to reduce incidents of bullying, and to encourage inclusion of students with special needs (Aitken, 2009; Burton, 2013; Catterall, 2007; Graves, Frabutt, & Vigliano, 2007; Miller, Rynders, & Schleien, 1993; O'Connor, 2013). Drama opportunities also allow students to practise taking on different roles in a safe and fictional context (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

We can also consider *Participating and contributing*: This competency "includes the capacity to contribute appropriately as a group member, to make connections with others, and to create opportunities for others in the group" (Ministry of Education, 2007 p. 13). Again, drama provides opportunities to develop these skills through working with groups to develop dramatic scenarios that portray scenes from different points of view or to show learning from different perspectives. Working together to create these presentations also allows for the development of collaboration skills in order to include the different points of view and understandings of the members of each group (Wright, 2007).

Certainly drama is not the only medium through which these skills can be learned, however as is argued in the NZ Curriculum document:

> "Arts education explores, challenges, affirms, and celebrates unique artistic expressions of self, community, and culture. It embraces toi Māori [Māori Arts], valuing the forms and practices of customary and contemporary Māori performing, musical, and visual arts." (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20)

and in relation to cultural benefits:

> "As [students] perform, analyse, and respond to different forms of drama and theatre, they gain a deeper appreciation of their rich cultural heritage and language and new power to examine attitudes, behaviours, and values." p. 21

It is therefore suggested that there is an argument for including more drama in the classroom as a means to meeting the needs of the New Zealand Curriculum, and more importantly in meeting the needs of students.

1.5 Rationale

The study aimed to explore the use of drama as a pedagogy so as to understand how it might help to improve learning for students within a primary school setting. Following a school production, reflections on the students' learning led to questions about why and how drama helps students to learn and whether dramatic approaches might be an important pedagogy to include in primary school teaching and learning.   Students appeared to retain much more knowledge about a topic when they were given the opportunity to explore and develop their learning through hands on activities - particularly through drama. When students were asked to act out a situation or a process, they became visibly more enthusiastic about what they were doing and continued to discuss their projects well after a particular lesson was over. This observation is supported by Bakhtin (1981, as cited in Tam, 2010) who suggests that when classrooms include a dramatic approach, it encourages students to become active participants in their learning, more able to put their learning into their own words and more confident in contributing to discussions on the set topic.

It is important to clarify what is meant by drama and what a dramatic approach entails. *Drama* is defined as the specific mode of fiction represented in performance (Elam, 1980). According to Arts Online "Drama expresses human experience through a focus on role, action, and tension, played out in time and space" (Ministry of Education, n.d.). For the purpose of this study *Dramatic Approach* means to deal with learning new skills and/or knowledge using drama or the creation of drama. In other words using a Dramatic Approach for teaching and learning means giving the students an opportunity to explore a new skill or new knowledge through scripting and creating a scenario that involves that new skill or knowledge – not simply focusing on performance skills.

As mentioned above, this approach can give students more confidence to contribute to further discussions, forming learning partnerships with their teacher. This is an important element of Ako or Reciprocal teaching (Ministry of Education, 2013a). Giving students opportunities to build on their own knowledge and share it with their peers, rather than the teacher being the source of all learning. This is a vital part of successful teaching of all students and particularly those of Maori heritage, as it acknowledges preferred Māori learning styles (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, &

Teddy, 2007). This idea is further supported by research from John Dewey (1859–1952), Jean Piaget (1896–1980), and Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), who all posited that students learn best when they are allowed to construct their knowledge through making meaning from their experiences. Being able to create a drama in order to share knowledge with others, requires that students develop meaningful questioning, problem solving and reflective skills (Costa, Faccio, Belloni, & Ludici, 2014). Drama also allows students to make use of their varied learning styles, including those discussed by Howard Gardner, such as verbal/linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, body/ kinesthetic and one of the more recent intelligences – Pedagogical, or the ability to teach others (Gardner, 2013).

1.6 Research Questions

1. What are student experiences of drama in their learning?
2. What are teacher perceptions of how drama can be used in teaching?
3. How can dramatic approaches be used in my teaching to improve learning?
4. In what ways can my school enhance learning using dramatic approaches?

1.7 Definition of key terms

- Dramatic Approach: learning new skills and/or knowledge using drama or the creation of drama
- The Six Competencies (6 C's): Collaboration, Character, Critical Thinking, Citizenship, Creativity, and Communication from the New Pedagogies for Deeper Learning (NPDL). These relate well to the Key Competencies listed in the New Zealand Curriculum
- Hot Seating: Interviewing a person while they remain 'in character' so as to answer questions from the character's point of view.
- Process drama: Employing drama to make meaning for the students rather than for an audience, mainly through improvisation. The focus is not on an end performance, rather students are both participants in the drama and a reflective audience outside of the drama. Teachers and students work together to reflect on elements of the drama, supporting students to consider issues and deepen their understanding of what is being explored.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Ma te rongo, ka mohio, ma te mohio, ka marama, ma te marama, ka matua, ma te matua, ka ora.

> *Through listening, comes awareness, through awareness, comes understanding, through understanding, comes knowledge. Through knowledge, come life and well-being. (Māori proverb)*

2.1 The Process of Learning - Social Constructivism

The learning theory of constructivism suggests that as learners we build our knowledge through our experience and from our interpretation of that experience (Bandura, 1986; Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). Piaget (1896–1980) believed that people learn through accommodation and assimilation of their physical and social environment. New ideas are initially fitted into or attached to existing knowledge (or schema) before eventually becoming part of that schema. Using drama as a way to explore new learning provides students with opportunities to make connections between skills and knowledge they already have and new ideas, as they build scenarios that put their new learning into a context they are already familiar with. Through drama, students can also apply their knowledge to new situations without the risk associated with a more 'real world' situation (Moore, 2004; Lambert & O'Neill, 1990, as cited in Staples, 2012). In other words, exploring new ideas through drama allows students to first activate their existing 'schema' of information, before applying their existing knowledge to the new situation or information (Moore, 2004), using the medium as a way of constructing their knowledge through imaginative experiences.

As a subset of Constructivism, Social Constructivism might then be seen as where the focus on knowledge development shifts from individual accommodation and assimilation of information, to the building of knowledge through *social* interactions or connections with others. (Pritchard, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). The theory of Social Constructivism argues that knowledge is formed through cultural and contextual factors and then developed through contact with those more knowledgeable or experienced than the learner. This idea is based largely on the work of Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Bandura (1925-present).

Bandura has continued to develop his initial theory on the importance of others' (teachers, parents and others) modelling as the basis for learning behaviour (the *social)* of social cognitive theory, so that it also focuses on the importance of evaluating that modelling and the judgements we make. In other words the *cognitive* element of the theory relates to how individuals consider the behaviour – whether it fits in with our beliefs, and/or expectations**.**   Bandura (1963) also found that reward and punishment of the behaviours modelled had an impact on whether a behaviour was immediately copied, but not necessarily on whether the behaviour was learned. He found that modelled behaviour was so influential that it was more likely to be repeated by the observer even when the model received negative consequences for the behaviour. The theory of social constructivism suggests that when we watch others, read, watch T.V or even browse through the internet, we are accelerating our own learning through vicarious learning (Schunk, 2001)**.**   "We come to understand our surroundings through processes of thinking based upon what is observed or otherwise experienced." (Pritchard, 2010 p. 2)**.** More specifically, Vygotsky developed the idea of a 'zone of proximal development' where learners would gain more benefit from working with someone whose knowledge was similar to, but slightly more developed than themselves, or when new information is pitched at slightly above the current independent ability of the learner (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed that working with others would provide students with the opportunity to learn from and support each other (Smith & Elley, 1998)**.**

Using dramatic approaches to learning can make learning a more social process where students can construct knowledge together, leading to a better understanding of subject content (Taskin-Can, 2013). In line with Vygotsky's theory on social support, drama can give students the opportunity to combine imaginative play with scripted scenarios to explore a new concept from different points of view and/or to support them to understand the importance of the new learning in relation to real world situations (Cremin, Goouch, Blakemore, Goff, & Macdonald, 2006)**.** Vygotsky also believed that learning is first established through social interaction and it is then internalized by the student (Vygotsky, 1981 discussed by Pressley & McCormick, 1995)**.** As the students observe, listen to each other and discuss how to present their information, the social interaction may be helping them to develop their personal understanding of the subject.

In addition to the sharing of information within groups, having the opportunity to observe other groups share their learning acts as a form of modelling. Schunk (1981, 2001) found that when students were exposed to an adult modelling the solving of mathematical problems, they achieved higher accuracy than those students given written instructions, even though both groups had access to follow up activities for practising their learning. Later Schunk and Hanson (1985) as cited in Schunk (2001) found that peer modelling was more effective even than modelling provided by adults. Bandura (1977) also discussed the importance of both spoken information and visual imagery as an aspect of memory and learning. He stated that the visual imagery was particularly important to those lacking verbal skills (such as younger children). It might then be said that working with others to build and share knowledge will provide more opportunities for group members to both watch others and hear others, which in turn will aid retention of the information being shared.

2.2 Motivating and Engaging Learners

According to Pressley & McCormick, (1995), motivation in students starts out high with students starting school having a clear expectation of success. "Students come to school to learn; drama and theatre provide contextual parameters that invite and require research" (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. 194). Unfortunately, this expectation reduces as students progress through their school experience. They cite research arguing that this is due to the competitive emphasis of some classroom environments where students compare themselves to others and learn to avoid the risk of failure or confirmation that they have a lower ability than other students (Nicholls, 1989 as cited in Pressley & McCormick, 1995). Pressley and McCormick also argue that a competitive educational environment fails because students are aware that the 'best students' are already far ahead and there is therefore little motivation to compete. On the other hand, drama can increase motivation through its greater focus on collaboration and creativity. Lin, (2010), noted that students were able to identify drama as increasing their motivation for learning, as well as helping them to develop more creative problem solving and imagination and increased their willingness to take more risks with their learning.

As the act of learning through drama is intended to focus more on the process than on simply knowing the answer, there is less focus on competition between students and more on collaboration. In other words, the emphasis is on students developing their

understanding and creating a scenario that shares that knowledge with others. Therefore, the more able students have an interest in helping the less able, rather than competing with them, in order to develop their learning. Pressley and McCormick believe that this focus on 'task-oriented learning' is more likely to result in the development of students' focus on effort, interest and trying to learn, rather than on being 'smarter' than others, in turn resulting in higher motivation and interest in learning.

An aspect of using drama as a means to learning and/or reinforcing new learning, is that it provides an opportunity for students to see their peers modelling their learning through the development and the presentation of the information through performance. Schunk (2001) found that not only did modelling problem solving strategies and processes associated with new learning increase students' ability to perform similar tasks themselves, it also increased the confidence students have in their own ability. This in turn resulted in an increase in motivation to persist, even when learning was difficult.

This is in line with Albert Bandura's social learning theory that suggests that people learn by observing and interacting with others (Bandura, 1977). In his well-known Bobo doll experiment, Bandura found that children tended to copy behaviour that was modelled to them by adults, either becoming more or less aggressive depending on the behaviour they had seen exhibited by adults in similar situations (Bandura, 1963). As discussed earlier, Bandura later included the importance of learners evaluating this behaviour. When we also consider Baraldi's (2009) research, which found that overall students enjoyed being involved in drama sessions and were able to learn and apply content through their involvement (Baraldi as cited in Staples, 2009), students watching their peers model new learning and enjoying sharing their learning, may be more likely to want to participate in the learning activity. Some studies have also found that working in small groups increases intrinsic motivation, as well as raising the expectations among the group participants (Johnson et al., 2007).

Working collaboratively to create a drama relies on creating a supportive environment where students are working together to ensure everyone understands their role and the learning they are sharing. According to Lin (2010) drama offers a learning context where learners feel safe and where thinking, innovation, play, and self-determination

are encouraged (as cited in Staples, 2012).   McNaughton (1997) found that when compared to students given opportunities to discuss situations (rather than act them out), the drama group demonstrated greater improvements in how much they wrote, they included more varied and appropriate choices of descriptive language, included more dialogue, and could describe the feelings of their characters in greater detail.

Using mixed ability groups combined with a dramatic approach also allows students to seek and accept support from their peers. This is important because it may help to reduce the negative aspects of a more competitive learning environment. Working within mixed ability groups, students can share knowledge, set plans and collaborate on creating a drama piece to share learning, which may help to reduce the sense of competitiveness.   Rather than focusing on one 'right way' to do things, drama can also create opportunities for more experimentation and therefore potentially mistakes, providing further opportunities to learn. As discussed in Te Matauranga o Aotearoa:

> "The Arts is about fun, laughter, mistakes, experimental play, frustration
> and personal triumphs. It is also about a willingness and perseverance to
> try and resolve an idea ...." (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 50)**.**

 Lin found that in students' reflections recorded during his 2010 study, students felt that through the drama activities they had the opportunity to "have our own thinking instead of saying correct answers", "find our own solutions" and that they were "willing to cooperate with others" (p. 113). O'Toole (1995) touches on this idea in his paper on the charms of drama, when he says that "the one unique thing that classroom drama can achieve, suspending at will the status relationships within the class, most notably between the teacher and the students…" (O'Toole, 1995, p. 85). Although O'Toole was discussing the power students had within a drama to control the information shared and to take on the role of others, this might be seen as connecting to the students feeling that they were 'allowed' to find their own solutions, rather than being told what to do by a teacher.   O'Neill, (1995) also argued that the experience of drama is what engages students to learn, and process drama in particular, with its range of role taking and lack of pressured acting techniques, allows students to feel more at ease and therefore motivated to learn (as cited in Staples, 2012**).**

Other research into increasing motivation in students show that student agency appears to be a factor. Student agency is where students have more control over what and how they are learning, as well as how they present their learning. For example, Smith and Elley argue that when students are given more freedom in their topic and style of sharing their learning, they develop more ownership of the work and therefore more commitment to improving it (Smith & Elley, 1998). Graves, (1994) expresses that children are more able than we think and when given the responsibility to learn independently they can show great progress (as cited in Staples 2012). Greenwood and Bolton (1985) also advocate for drama to be used in the classroom to encourage and motivate students and in turn support their learning and understanding of a number of curriculum areas (Ibid).

According to the Horizon Report: K-12 Edition one of the two long-term trends agreed by experts, is how schools adapt their programs in order to increase student engagement and encourage more creative thinking (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, and Freeman, 2015). This is not just to keep students in school, but more importantly, so students will develop the creativity to be able to contribute to fields that may not yet have been developed. As future employees, students need skills that ensure they can adapt to an ever changing work environment, as well as being able to contribute to the ongoing development of new technologies and ways of working (ERO, 2012). Schools will therefore need programmes that encourage curiosity, allow students to ask questions, and develop problem solving skills. Using drama as a tool for sharing knowledge will not only require students to consider a more three dimensional approach, it could also prompt thinking about others' points of view (Costa et al., 2014; Moore, 2004) in order to solve the problem of portraying the information to their peers in a clear and informative format. Drama puts the student at the centre of learning as an active participant, seeing, hearing, and acting, not just listening to or reading (Tombak, 2014).

In addition, the Education Review Office (ERO), in their 2012 report on Priority Learners in New Zealand, has stated that schools needed to put their students at the heart of "learning and teaching rather than on the periphery" (ERO, 2012, p. 6). Using drama can help to do this through allowing students to explore (and express) their own opinions and/or feelings about issues through putting themselves into the role of another (Costa et al., 2014; Dunn & Stinson, 2012). In order to create a drama,

students must first activate their prior knowledge which may help to consolidate learning (Moore, 2004; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998) and having to consider an audience reaction may also prompt them to think more deeply about what they are sharing. Rather than pushing students to focus on learning answers to our questions, we would be encouraging them to express their own thoughts and ideas, and develop their own questions, critical thinking skills and creativity (Luton, 2014). This involves "creating and using knowledge to solve problems and find solutions to challenges as they arise" (Bolstad & Gilbert with McDowell, Bull, & Hipkins, 2012, pg 4). Because of the participatory nature of drama and its emphasis on creativity, communication and negotiation, drama is particularly useful in providing opportunities for students to develop skills in meta-cognition (learning to learn) (Wright, 2007)**.**

Discussions with teachers and parents indicate that people want their children to become independent, life-long learners - interested in learning and motivated to find out more. This curiosity and creativity can be encouraged through a dramatic approach to learning because students are investigating problems with the aim of experiencing a situation through drama and sharing that experience with their peers, rather than trying to 'learn the answer' from their teacher. Bournot-Trites, Belliveau, Spiliotopolous and Seror (2007) found that students learning a new language using drama were "creating their own knowledge *through* the drama" whereas those learning through a teacher centered method relied on their teacher for new learning (as cited in Stinson & Piazzoli, 2013, p. 211) This is important as it creates a switch in the focus from an end result of finding the answer, onto the *process* of learning (or learning how to learn) and onto working through the task where the learning itself is valued over the end result. This change in focus has been shown to have a positive impact on students' motivation because it positions students as an integral part of the learning process (Filippatou & Kaldi, 2010). In another study by Graham & Golan, (1991) it was found that task oriented learning led to greater retention of information than competitive tasks. In other words learning through drama with a focus on the process of learning and engaging with information might lead to greater educational gains than simply trying to learn more than one's peers or to complete an assessment task.

2.3 Reaching a diverse range of learning styles and needs.
One of the key goals of the Ministry of Education is to ensure that our education system

caters for the needs of diverse learners, in order to raise the achievement level of all learners (Bolstad & Gilbert with McDowell, Bull & Hipkins, 2012). According to Sir Ken Robinson a broad curriculum that utilises a variety of children's skills and talents provides the best outcomes for students (Robinson, 2013). Giving students more opportunities to act out situations, events, or real world problems and challenges - letting them work together to explore and come up with solutions and present their findings to others - could support students to extend their existing skills and knowledge, help them make meaning of their learning, as well as empower them to express their thoughts and feelings on subjects (Moore, 2004). This idea is supported by Singer, (1973), who found children demonstrating higher levels of fantasy in their play (based on answers to a questionnaire) were more creative, verbally fluent, better at making up stories and more patient when waiting than their lower fantasy peers. From this Singer theorised that make believe play during early childhood was the influencing factor (Peterson, 1989).

Piaget (1936) believed that there are four stages of cognitive development – sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational. In order to move from concrete operational to formal operational individuals need to be able to allow for different sets of variables or be able to work through different possibilities (McLeod, 2018). In other words the subject needs to be able to think hypothetically and deductively. Working with others to plan a drama representing knowledge of different situations may help students to develop these skills while also helping them to develop the ability to consider things from other's points of view.

Drama allows for and makes use of a wide range of learning styles. Giving students an opportunity to learn in a manner that utilises *multiple* learning styles (for example learning from reading, discussing, or through doing - or what Howard Gardner (Professor of Cognition and Education at Harvard University) calls Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2013), rather than just one or two is likely to increase achievement (Kalidas, 2014). Constructing a dramatic presentation requires research (both reading and recording information), the ability to work with others (negotiating roles and engaging with others as part of both the preparation and the performance of a drama), structuring the information into a logical order, being spatially aware (from the point of view of using a space effectively as well as considering what the audience might need to see), using

one's physical abilities, speaking, and in some cases including music and/or sound effects. All of these skills relate to different areas of intelligence (Gardner, 2013) and allow students to succeed in areas other than just the traditional academic subjects of reading, writing and maths.

Howard Gardner (2009) discusses the importance of differentiating teaching to connect with the different needs of students and the value of teaching any new learning in multiple ways so that students can experience new information from different perspectives (for example written, images, movements, and charts among others) (Woolfolk, 2013). Cohen (1989) studying memory of events found that when students were asked to remember a list of actions, they are better able to remember the list when given the opportunity to act out the actions, rather than simply verbalising the list. This may be because in doing so, people are processing the information through the multiple senses of hearing it, thinking it (either through mental verbalising or possibly visualising), and physically enacting the actions. This is supported by Wolff, Levin et al who found that pre-school students were better able to learn paired associations (cow, dog) when they acted out actions that connected the two words compared to simply imagining paired actions (Wolff, Levin & Longobardi, 1972).

Humans have a tendency to interpret new experiences through a lens made up of previous experience (known as invariant representations), however using the role and narrative associated with drama can help to interrupt this tendency and allow students to see experiences through new perspectives and/or consider new ways of responding (Saxton & Miller, 2013)**.** An example of this is Heathcotes' use of Mantle of the Expert technique which asks students to consider problems or situations from the point of view of a member of an organisation involved in a situation (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). This technique allows students to create a world where they have to consider new ideas from different points of view in order to achieve their invented goals, rather than relying on their own experiences and points of view. Reflecting on issues from the point of view of another, also appears to develop students' empathy and understanding of others (Saxton & Miller, 2013). Another example of this technique was employed by O'Connor (2013) when he used the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff to explore the point of view of terrorists after the September 11 attacks in the USA. O'Connor's use of the story in various contexts, including New Zealand, allowed students to consider the point of view

of the Troll and who the Troll might be in various contexts - Terrorist, settler, coloniser - with empathy rather than demonizing them. (O'Connor, 2013)**.**

Lin found that students involved in learning through drama were aware of their own development in social skills, including communication, collaboration and their ability to empathise with others. Students also commented on their growth in confidence and their new willingness to take risks and try new things. Drama has also been used successfully to teach students effective ways to deal with conflict. For example Burton used drama as a teaching tool in his *The Arrivals* project, working with newly arrived refugees in Australia. He found that the use of drama (combined with peer teaching) empowered students to deal with bullying situations, in a safe fictionalized context (Burton, 2013).

Drama has also been shown to improve acceptance of students with special needs in group learning with their neural typical peers (Miller et al., 1993) and in teaching students to manage conflict resolution (Graves et al., 2007). This success may be because Drama allows students to try out new situations, experiences and risks without any 'real life' consequences (Moore, 2004).

2.4 Enhancing Oral Language and Writing with Drama

There have been a number of studies looking at the impact of drama on writing, often specifically looking at drama as a motivational tool to generate more and better quality writing.   For example Cremin et al. (2006) looked at two methods of including drama in literacy teaching – the first was to combine explicitly genre based teaching with drama, while the second allowed students to 'seize the moment' and choose a style of writing which arose from experience with the drama. They found that both methods resulted in improving the quality writing, however the 'seize the moment' method also resulted in higher engagement and more effective writing. They believed this may have been due to the students having greater ownership of their writing and having greater connection to the drama activities, whereas the explicit teaching group tended to see the teaching and writing activities as separate from the drama. Similarly, Marino (2012) found that using drama to build an imagined context provided students with an authentic need to write which resulted in higher student engagement and with students employing strong personal voice to enhance their writing (as cited in Staples, 2012). In other words, teachers do not necessarily need to find or construct a real world context and purpose

for writing, when they have access to drama as a tool for constructing a context. Participating in drama can provide students with a visual and physical experience, enabling them to picture in greater detail the scenario they are creating. Through drama, students can explore contexts and gain a greater insight than they might, were the context to be from the real world. Through drama, students can ask questions, consider different points of view and imagine what it feels like for the actual participants of an event. Ackroyd (2000) agrees saying that drama is the "act of crossing into the world of the story" (p. 13) and that when children share drama they enact as if it were true, building their knowledge of the subject (as cited in Staples, 2012).   Agreeing that drama is an effective tool to improve literacy – particularly writing, Cremin (1996); Flennoy (1992), and Laurin (2010) **(**as cited in Staples, 2012) all found that participation in drama increased student interest in the topic which then led to increased understanding. Wagner (1994) also found that groups who had experienced role play wrote significantly better persuasive letters than those exposed to class instruction only (as cited in Staples, 2012)**.** Evans (1984), (as cited in McNaughton, 1997) had similar results finding that drama was particularly effective in generating inclusion of feelings and developing depth of character descriptions in students' writing. McNaughton also found that students who experienced drama as opposed to discussion as a precursor to writing wrote more, included greater varieties of descriptive language, were more likely to include references to the feelings of the characters within their stories, and also demonstrated more accurate and natural use of grammatical structures (Ibid). This supports the idea that not only does drama provide students with a context and purpose for their writing, it also helps to develop their use of deeper writing features such as descriptive language and the inclusion of other points of view, as well as surface features such as sentence structure.   "As students work with drama techniques, they learn to use spoken and written language with increasing control and confidence (Ministry of Education 2017d p. 21 as cited in Staples, 2012)**.**

2.5 Collaboration

Researching, developing and performing a drama may also help students to develop their collaborative skills, as long as the task is structured so that each student within a group has some responsibility for the overall success of the group (Barron et al., 1998; Kalidas, 2014; Tam, 2010). This is known as positive social interdependence, where members of a group believe they will achieve their goals if and when the other members of their group also achieve their goals (Johnson et al., 2007). This environment is likely

to result in students actively encouraging and supporting each other, increasing their motivation to succeed (Barron et al., 1998). Drama projects also work well when they are based on a 'pre-text'. A pre-text can be an image, an article, a story – anything that prompts questions or triggers motivation (Piazzoli, 2012), giving students a reason for reading or researching their section of a project. This information can then be communicated and shared with the group as a whole to complete a collaborative dramatic presentation.

Allowing students to work in small groups to explore the solutions to problems through a dramatic approach also means that individual students will have access to the different points of view and experiences of their peers (Dunn & Stinson, 2012; Luton, 2014; MacFarlane, 2004).

> "In drama the children are allowed to talk themselves into believing in the fiction of the story, to hear their ideas bounced back, to reframe and refocus their own information and attitudes, to recognise the need for communicating what they believe to those who believe differently, to actually hear their own language at work" (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 11, as cited in Staples, 2012).

Having the benefit of these different points of view could help students to develop their critical thinking skills as they realise that there is more than one filter through which to view and solve a problem (Almajed, Skinner, Peterson, & Winning, 2016). This idea is supported by a study on students' views on collaboration which found that ensuring that members of groups have a mixture of knowledge, learning styles, life experiences, cultural backgrounds and points of view was an important element in successful collaboration (Clifford, 2016). Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, (1983 as cited in MacFarlane, 2004) also believed that when students from different cultures worked collaboratively together, it improved the level of respect, status and understanding of all members of the activity. While the co-operative learning involved in drama can be beneficial to all students, its connection to the Māori concept of Ako (or reciprocal teaching) and potential use of Tuakana -Teina (experienced or knowledgeable students supporting less experienced students) makes it particularly important for Māori students (MacFarlane, 2004).

2.6 Culture

A significant consideration for educators in New Zealand are the multicultural backgrounds of the students – specifically the culture of the tangata whenua: Māori.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Māori language was exclusively oral (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2013). History, events and important information were put into stories, waiata, and haka in order to be shared with others and remembered through generations. As a result, performance is a key element in sharing and preserving this culture. Similarly, the culture of many of the islands around New Zealand to where numerous citizens trace their origins, share this oral heritage. The stories of Māori themselves relate the importance of performance – relating the connection between Haka or Waiata and the beginnings of unions, reunions, or significant escapes from capture in their history (ibid). While the emphasis of the stories is on the importance of Haka and Waiata, not drama, the stories themselves are a key element of the culture, as is performance. Being able to explore these stories through drama, may help students to gain a greater understanding of the culture and the reasons such value is given to performance. Becoming immersed in the stories of the culture may also help students to come to a deeper understanding of the Māori world view – an important element of understanding any culture (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2013). Of course, the focus in such activities would necessarily be on evaluation and understanding – not simply on performing – it would be important to avoid the risk of trivialising the stories or losing opportunities to gain greater insight into the culture through its legends (Bolton, 1995).

Although it is incorrect to make assumptions about all Māori based on the records of one or two iwi, some concepts might be assumed to apply to many iwi throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand prior to the arrival of Europeans. Elements of the education of children might be one such area of commonality, in that education was not provided via classroom structures with a set curriculum. Rather, pre-European Māori learned through observation of others and through participation in day to day activities and events (Metge, 2015). Children learned things that would help them contribute to an appropriate degree by being instructed, shown, or encouraged to perform certain tasks – a similar style of learning to that involved when teaching through collaborative drama techniques. Māori teachers were the immediate and extended family of students who would help children to build on their existing knowledge, ultimately growing each child's mana through helping them contribute to the needs of the family (Pere, 1982). The history, legends, mythology, genealogy, karakia and much more was passed from the older generations to the younger not through books, but orally (Metge, 2015). Through this method Māori culture was kept alive and ancestors could be traced back generations without having anything written down. Perhaps including more of this

method of transmitting knowledge (i.e. through discussion and dramatisation) would give opportunities for success for those students who are struggling with our current 'book heavy' style of education.

Another aspect of Māori education was finding a balance between the individual and the group. Although the expectation was that individuals knew their role and performed it to a high standard, students were also encouraged to work with others in order to learn from the range of human relationships and challenges that would present themselves to group situations (Ibid). As mentioned earlier, effective collaboration within a group has been highlighted as one of the key skills required for success in the twenty first century and beyond. However, it could also be a way of weaving present educational theory with the past cultural practices of our tangata whenua (indigenous people) in order to further develop and improve pedagogical practice.

In his keynote presentation on Drama and Cultural Values, Gavin Bolton (1995) discussed the need for caution when considering the use of drama to investigate differences between cultural values. He believes that having students watch plays about a country's cultures may not be helpful due to the potential for multiple layers and meanings being portrayed, resulting in any focus on cultural values specifically being lost. Bolton also warned about the risk of having students portray different cultures, where there may be a risk of stereotypes being reinforced, rather than critiqued. However, despite his concerns, Bolton also discussed the use of drama as a way to allow students to view and analyse situations in which cultural differences and levels of values are present. Using a script provided by a teacher, together with information for students to watch out for, drama has been used successfully to highlight for students how awareness (or lack thereof) around different cultural values can help or (or hinder) interactions between two or more cultural groups (Bolton, 1995).

O'Toole (1995) also discusses the opportunities drama provides for students (particularly from minority groups) to feel and wield power – if only in a fictional context. He asks "where, apart from in their fictions, could they learn the strategies of managing power?" (O'Toole, 1995, p. 85). Drama can allow teachers to construct scenarios where questions can be asked and situations explored, without waiting for a real-world example to present itself. Creating such scenarios and situations, particularly using a cultural context allows students to explore power relationships from different

perspectives (MacFarlane, 2004). Doing so within the relative safety of a learning environment where feelings and behaviours can be discussed and evaluated (as opposed to real world power struggles) might also help all parties gain greater insight and empathy for each other's point of view. Giving students the opportunity to explore situations from the point of view of different characters can also help to take away the idea that there is only one right answer to a problem. In this sense, drama can be used to actively encourage students to ask more questions and look deeper into issues, learn to share power, as well as develop their empathy for and understanding of others.

2.7 Potential Negatives

A clear issue with a Dramatic Approach and the need for collaboration, is that students who do not work successfully together can have a negative impact on the group's achievement. This means that there is the potential for students who are less motivated, co-operative, or organised to hold up the achievement of the entire group (Almajed et al., 2016; Bektaş & Kızkapan, 2017). There are a number of reasons why one group member may not contribute as effectively as their team mates, which could be attributed to their own perceptions or actual instances of repeated failure (Filippatou & Kaldi, 2010). However, these factors may be reduced with the inclusion of teaching collaborative skills resulting in the opportunity for group members to learn from and support each other. This is supported by Vygotsky's (1896–1934) theory that children learn through social interactions, particularly when they are working with others who are within the same 'zone of proximal learning' (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, students who are learning within a group of peers can help each other to construct new knowledge, building a better understanding together and making it less likely that one person is left behind to fail.

Another concern is that teachers may fear 'losing control' of the class due to noise level and students needing to be using space rather than sitting at desks (Kalidas, 2014). However, with careful planning and ensuring a clear structure to learning opportunities this concern could be minimized.

Some students may also struggle with the performance aspect of sharing their drama with others, particularly when they have to develop their own actions and dialogue rather than being given a script to follow. This idea is supported by (Lin, 2010) who found that some study participants would have preferred for the teacher to "tell us

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directly how to perform and what to do" (p. 115). Student reflections in the study also indicated that they were concerned about making mistakes and/or looking foolish in front of others. Having said that, Lin recorded that most students preferred the less conventional style of learning (Lin, 2010). This reluctance to take risks or make mistakes may simply have sprung from a history of teacher directed learning and may well diminish with more opportunities to focus on the process of learning rather than 'correct' outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND SOURCES OF DATA

Pai Tu, Pai hinga, Nāwai rā ka oti

> Good to stand, good to fall, Continue on and eventually the work is completed.
>
> *(Māori proverb)*

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have introduced the background of drama as a pedagogy and reviewed the literature around the potential impact of using drama in the classroom. As discussed, there are many elements to using drama as a tool through which to learn curriculum subjects, with a number of studies already reviewing the success of drama in supporting writing and social skills (McNaughton, 1997; Piazzoli, 2012; Staples, 2012). While the aim of this research project sought to evaluate drama as a teaching pedagogy generally, the lesson plans and activities explored applied a dramatic approach to two key subject areas – Maths (specifically measurement) and Ecology of Learning (specifically the six competencies of New Pedagogies for Deeper Learning (Fullan, Butler, & Quinn, 2012). When planning the activities, it was my intention to leave a degree of flexibility in order to allow the students to take responsibility for how they developed their knowledge. Due to the many and varied interruptions to a primary school day, flexibility was also required around the timing of lessons, however as much as possible the lessons flowed on from each other to ensure continuity and to avoid any one topic going on for longer than initially planned for.

The key research aims of this study were:

1. To explore the use of drama as a pedagogy in which to improve learning for students within a primary school setting.
2. To improve the use of dramatic process as a learning tool in my school.

The research questions being asked were:

1. What are student experiences of drama in their learning?
2. What are teacher perceptions of how drama can be used in teaching?
3. How can dramatic approaches be used in my teaching to improve learning?
4. In what ways can my school enhance learning using dramatic approaches?

To address these research aims and questions, a Practitioner Developmental Research model of Action Research was employed, aimed at improving practice (personal and school). This approach has been identified as suitable for school-based teacher research (Cardno, 2003; Mutch, 2005), through helping teachers to deepen their professional knowledge and refine their teaching skills (Timperley, 2004), and as a path through which teachers can become more effective practitioners (Aitken, 2019a). However, it is important to note that this form of research may make the study difficult for another teacher to replicate and that any replication may produce differing results.

Another consideration important for this type of research is the issue of Power Relationships between the Researcher (who is also the classroom teacher) and the students. With this in mind it was important to ensure families and students were given sufficient information about the study to be able to give 'informed consent' (Cardno, 2003). Families were therefor given information about the study in the form of written information which was sent home using both hard and soft (digital) copies. All students and the family of the students were also given the opportunity to ask questions about the project, and if desired, to opt out of participating in the project. Students who did opt out were still given the opportunity to learn the same subjects as those in the study, however they were not required to develop or share their learning using a dramatic approach. Similar options to opt out of specific learning units have been offered and accepted in the past, so families understood that their child's education would continue whether or not they were involved in this particular study. To further avoid any pressure to be involved, no Koha/donation, or reward was offered to those choosing to participate. To further reduce the impact of any perception of an unbalanced power relationship between the students and the researcher, reflection sheets could have been collected by a third party. However given the time constraints and lack of availability of a third person at the time of the lessons, this option was discarded.

3.2 Ontology and Epistomology

This section has been included to acknowledge the potential for my own beliefs about learning and behaviour to impact on the way I have conducted or interpreted this research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Mutch, 2005). It is therefore important to

identify that my personal view on learning and education leans towards that of constructivism. In other words, the idea that people construct their knowledge through watching and listening to others, and also that what we learn relates to our interpretation of events and experiences.   I therefore tend to view knowledge as personal and subjective, rather than hard and tangible, leading to the requirement of my being involved with my subjects and trying to understand what interpretations they may be applying to what they are doing and why (Ibid). Having said that, it is also important that I resist the urge to place my own interpretation of actions and events as more important than that of the subjects. As such, student questionnaires were included as part of the data collection in order to allow the subjects of the study their own voice in evaluating activities and their effectiveness.

Another part of my personal philosophy, is that I believe it is important that learners have input into what and how they learn rather than relying on an outside source determining what is 'best' (Bolstad & Gilbert with McDowell, Bull & Hipkins, 2012). As such, it is important that a degree of trust between the subjects and the researcher exists so as to give the subjects confidence to contribute their ideas into how the project might be improved or developed. With this in mind I concluded that Action Research conducted by myself (the classroom teacher of the students involved) is well suited to my Ontological and Epistemological philosophies.

3.3 Participants

Participants were from one mainstream mixed ability class in a New Zealand school. They were part of a larger team of approximately 100 students which made up the senior team (years six, seven and eight) of a full primary, decile nine school. In total there were twenty six students in the class (a mixture of year seven and year eight students, boys and girls). Their ages ranged from ten to twelve years. Most students were assessed as being at or above the expected academic standard for their year level, however, at least one child had health related challenges.

Of the 26 students who made up this class group, two did not give their consent to be involved. Any quotes, reflections, and assessments from these two students have been excluded from the results and discussion.

The student cohort had recently been involved in working together to present a whole school drama production (involving 380 students). Roles included Acting, Dancing, Designing and Building Props, Movie Making and Digital Sound Effects, Ticket and Poster design, and Stage Crew. This had given students experience in working together to present a drama, however, although the production told a classic story, it was not intended as a dramatic approach to learning as identified for the purpose of this study. The cohort had also spent some time looking into the collaboration rubric provided by New Pedagogies for Deeper Learning (Fullan, Butler, & Quinn, 2012). This involved discussing the rubric and attempting to highlight the key phrases that made up each level. It was hoped that this experience with a collaborative model would support students in their ability to work positively with others in their assigned group. This ability was not taken for granted however, and support was provided when it was needed to ensure students were able to resolve disputes or struggles to collaborate effectively.

3.4 The Developmental Action Research Approach

Action research was chosen as the method of investigation due to its flexibility and responsiveness to the research topic (Cardno, 2003; Cohen et al., 2007). It was also chosen because the purpose of this study was to focus on an element of my own practice with the aim of improvement, while investigating its potential effectiveness for the benefit of others (Mutch, 2005). The action research cycle of identifying a problem, formulating an intervention, implementing the intervention, and then evaluation of the intervention was well suited to this project, as it allowed changes to be made throughout the process.

One definition of Action Research developed by participants of the Brisbane International Symposium on Action Research in 1989, suggests that Action Research involves participants gathering data themselves (or with the support of others), reflecting on their work and linking that reflection to action that improves their work (learning through their self-reflections), while working together as a critical community to continue improving (Altrichter, Kemmis, Mctaggart, & Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). Another important element of Action Research is the free flow of information and communication between participants and the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007; Timperley, 2004). To this end the students who were the focus of the study were given multiple opportunities to report back on how they were feeling about the activities and whether they perceived the

activities as useful to their learning. If the students reported a need for more time to review their presentation or to further develop their knowledge on a topic, they were given it.   This feedback was also used as a form of formative evaluation that helped to inform the next cycle of activities – another important element of Action Research (Cardno, 2003).

As part of this student reporting, a Likert scale was used to ensure students were aware of the possibility for a range of reactions from negative to positive – in other words, that they might not find the activities fun or useful. This is important to minimize the risk of students feeling pressure to respond in any particular way, simply because it 'might help' their teacher's research. It was also important to be able to evaluate students' strength of feeling either for or against each activity, and the Likert Scale has been identified as appropriate for gathering this kind of information (Bell, 2005). Giving students the opportunity to record their reflections on paper, rather than discussing things as part of a group, also allowed any quieter students the opportunity to contribute their thoughts without being overshadowed by the more vocal students in the class.

3.4.1 Stage one: Identifying the Issue

The first stage of the Developmental Action Research Approach is to identify an issue (Aitken, 2019b; Cardno, 2003). Reflection following a number of shorter drama activities related to various areas of student learning had revealed that students appeared to show more interest in, retain more knowledge, and continue discussions on topics that were taught through a dramatic approach. This observation prompted the theory that perhaps a dramatic approach could be used to better effect across the school to support other pedagogies.

3.4.2 Stage two: Formulating the Investigation

Having identified an issue, the second step was to formulate an investigation. To begin with, this involved asking what, if any, dramatic approaches/pedagogies were currently being used by teachers within the school? To find out this information a student questionnaire was distributed to students within the target class, designed to evaluate student perceptions, and any recollection of previous opportunities to learn through drama. This was supported by an online questionnaire distributed to staff across the school (years 0 to 8, including staff working specifically with children with special needs)

designed to ascertain opinions on the effectiveness of drama as a pedagogy, as well as current practice with regard to using drama as a teaching tool. This second questionnaire also asked whether dramatic approaches to teaching and learning had already been trialled, why this method was used (or not), what worked, what didn't and what teachers thought had contributed to these outcomes.

Initially my aim was to follow up this questionnaire by interviewing teachers from each level of the school to ascertain perceived strengths and weaknesses of, as well as any challenges or barriers to using a dramatic approach to teaching at specific year levels. However due to constraints on staff time, it was decided that the online questionnaire was a sufficient method for gaining this information. It was hoped that analysis of the information provided by the questionnaires would help to guide any future efforts to include more drama as a pedagogy within our school teaching and learning programmes should the study show it to be effective. Information such as what had worked /not worked in the past and why, could also help to provide an insight as to how the inclusion of a dramatic approach might be made more effective.

3.4.3 Stage three: Planning

The third stage of an action research approach is planning. The planning for this study was initially based on the data collected from students. This included information from previous measurement assessments, as well as self-assessments from students on their understanding of the Six Competencies.   Part of the reason for selecting a measurement unit of learning for use in this drama study was that students seemed to struggle to retain their knowledge of perimeter, area and volume, despite having covered these topics in previous years. The idea was that rather than simply re-teaching the students the formulae for working out these measurements, having them construct a scenario when these measurements might be needed would help them to link their knowledge to a wider context. This relates to Graue and Walsh's discussion on local and larger contexts in research. They describe a local context (the classroom, the playground) compared to the larger context (within which the local context sits) – for example the classroom is within the school, which is within the community. While research and measurements can be conducted within a local context, it should be considered with reference to the wider context (Graue & Walsh, 1988 as cited in Cohen,

Manion, and Morrison (2007)). Further adjustments were then made following reflection and feedback from the students throughout the project.

As part of the planning stage, consent was obtained from parents of the students as well as an agreement to being involved from the students themselves. This request for consent included a letter explaining what the project was about, in line with the ethical expectation that consent is informed (Anderson, 1998). Students were given the opportunity to take the letter and Consent/Assent forms home, so they might discuss the implications of being involved in the study with their families, rather than feeling any pressure to sign the documents at school (Bell, 2005). Parents were invited to discuss the study with me further should they need more information before making a decision.

A unit of work was then co-constructed with the target class, based around the needs of the curriculum and next learning steps for the students. This unit included students being placed into random groups of between 3 and 5 students per group in order to research and plan their presentations. This group size was chosen to promote meaningful interaction between group members (Clifford, 2016; Dahley, 1994; Johnson et al., 2007), potentially including encouragement, sharing of knowledge and resources, providing feedforward and where appropriate, challenging each other's points of view (Almajed et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2007). The small size of each group also allowed group members to get to know each other personally and academically, which it was hoped would encourage them to work more effectively together (Johnson et al., 2007). When students are required to explain their thinking to others, it can help them to deepen their own understanding (Almajed et al, 2016). Working together with others can also help students to feel more capable and able to achieve their goals than working alone (Bandura, 1994).

3.4.4 Stage four: Action

In the fourth stage – Action - the students were involved in co-constructing a criteria for the presentations that included elements of the drama techniques discussed in the first term of the school year. These elements included use of voice and movements to show character and use of space while being aware of the audience's need to see the action. The class were then told they would be given the opportunity to research their set topics and plan presentations.

The research and presentation stage of the project took place over four months – most of the second term of the school year, overflowing into the third term. To support their learning, workshops on elements of the topic content were provided to the whole class. However these workshops were deliberately kept as overviews, driven by questions designed to activate prior learning. Students were then expected to work together to research and share information in order to ensure that everyone in their group understood the topic being presented. When needed, guidance and support were also given to assist group collaboration, ensuring that students were able to work together successfully.

Time to research, plan and practise presentations was provided three to four times per week for up to an hour at a time as the timetable and school wide commitments allowed. Through each session, observations were made and field notes recorded (although these were limited due to the need to support students throughout the sessions). After each session students were asked to complete Feedback forms about levels of enjoyment, collaboration and usefulness in terms of learning for the activity.

Having the participants report on their experiences and reactions is an important part of maintaining validity (Cohen et al., 2007). An evaluation of the student reflections as well as the field notes and my observations were therefore made after each session. This provided information that helped to make any necessary changes to the programme. Including student voice in reporting and co-construction of the planning also meant that additional sessions were included as we progressed, in order to give the students more time to research their topic and/or to prepare their presentations.

3.4.5 Stage five: Revision

The final stage of action research - Revise – will be included in the results and discussion chapters of this document. In those sections all data (including student assessment data) is used to provide recommendations for my own and future practice and practices within the school. In line with the Developmental Action Research approach, it was expected that more than one cycle of Analysis, Planning and Evaluation would take place in order to gain sufficient information to make recommendations (Cardno, 2003).

3.5 Framing the Approach

The study was based over two teaching and learning units. To maintain consistency across the teaching team, project topics were chosen with those reviewed across the team in mind. The teaching approach used was designed to encourage students to independently investigate, reflect and take responsibility for their learning. It involved questions, reframing student questions, prompting, think alouds, and sharing of each other's solutions in order to provide peer level scaffolding.

The initial plan allowed for three weeks per unit, however after students requested more time in which to develop their understanding of the topics and then to develop their presentations, this time was extended. While the topics of the units were set by myself (the teacher), students were involved in co-constructing the process by which they completed their learning. This involved students setting how they would develop their knowledge (reading, reviewing videos via the internet, discussing knowledge with peers, and recording notes).

During the first unit, the students worked in groups of approximately four per group to decide which context they would use for demonstrating their knowledge of each measurement concept. The students were also free to choose their roles within the drama. The teacher and students agreed that the purpose of the drama was to share their understanding of the measurement concept in a way that would help others to understand a) how to work out the measurement, and b) when that measurement might be used in a realistic context.

The second project involved students again working in groups of approximately four to research elements of the Six Competencies. This topic was chosen because the school has been working with New Pedagogies for Deeper Learning (Fullan, Butler, & Quinn, 2012). A key part of the assessment process for this learning is related to the development of competencies such as Citizenship, Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity and Character (the Six Cs). Although the students in this class had reviewed at least one of the Six Cs in detail, they were not yet familiar with the other five. An earlier unit involving students reviewing rubrics for each of the Six Cs and then creating a visual representation had failed to capture the students' imaginations and not resulted in any significant increase in their understanding of what

each competency involved. It was therefore decided to include the Six Cs unit as part of the drama study in order to evaluate whether using drama as a pedagogy was more effective in developing the students' understanding of this topic.   Again, students were able to select their preferred method of developing their knowledge and in some cases, asked for teacher support through group conferencing when they wanted to clarify their understanding of difficult concepts. At the end of each activity, students then reflected on their learning and completed a brief questionnaire.

3.6 Ethics in Research

In the instance of this research, the researcher was also the teacher of the students involved and was therefore an inside researcher. This meant that in part, the data being collected was already a part of the researcher's regular practice as a teacher. However, because the focus of this investigation was on the impact and effectiveness of a dramatic approach to teaching, additional data was also collected. In order to protect the privacy of the students taking part in this project, students' names remain confidential in any related documents shared both within and outside of our school context.

One of the key principles of Informed consent is that it protects and respects each person's ability to determine what happens to them (self-determinism) and the freedom to stop what is happening if they are no longer comfortable with it (Cohen et al., 2007). As such it was important that not only was consent sought from the parents of the subjects for this study, but that the subjects themselves were also asked to review and sign an Assent form. This Assent form was provided to all students in the study to take home and discuss with their families. As it was important that the students and parents were given an opportunity to ask questions and ensure they understood what the study entailed (Bell, 2005; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988), parents were invited to contact the researcher should they wish to discuss the study further and students were also given the opportunity to discuss the study in class, before taking the Consent and Assent forms home. Students were then free to decide whether or not to be part of the study, as well as given the option to withdraw at any point during the study should they no longer wish to participate. As a result, two of the students chose not to be part of the study. No students withdrew once the study had begun.

Key stakeholders in this project included the school management and the parents of the students within my class. To ensure the school management was comfortable with the scope of the project, discussions were had with the school principal and guidelines for regular reporting were established. In addition, parents were consulted (a Participant Information Letter and Consent Form was sent home, together with a soft copy which was emailed). An online sharing portal (https://web.seesaw.me/) was set up to digitally share student's learning with parents, so they were kept informed of what their children were doing on a regular basis.

With consideration to the learning environment, a safe, supportive, and respectful culture had already been established within the school and the senior team (years 6/7/8) so that students were comfortable working with each other. There is also a culture of students being able to speak confidentially, or email the classroom teacher with any work or social problems, so that students could confidently ask for help if required. Student groups continued to be closely monitored to ensure that students were not restricted by any individual's or group's lack of collaborative skills. Whilst the key variable in this research was the use of Dramatic Approaches to teaching and learning, not ethnicity, it was anticipated that there would be Māori participants in this research. They are a key group of students with a unique place as tangata whenua (original people) of this land. As such, care was taken to ensure their participation reflected their cultural needs. The cultural needs of other ethnicities within the school (which include Pasifika, Asian, and European) were also carefully considered. To assist with this, advice was sought from the Māori and Pasifika representatives of the School Board.

In preparing this study, there was also a high probability of the participant group including a student who had health related learning challenges. However, an investigation into the effectiveness of a dramatic approach to learning for students with learning needs (Miller et al., 1993) found that students with special needs did gain benefits from this method of teaching and learning. The study also showed that using drama as a pedagogy helped the higher needs students to gain more support and social acceptance from their more-able peers. This is also in line with Vygotsky's (1978) theory on a zone of proximal learning which suggests that students learn more when the help they receive is of a slightly higher level of achievement than the level at

which they are currently operating individually. Vygotsky suggested that this help could come from a teacher or a more-able peer (Vygotsky, 1978).

3.7 Data Collection

The project used a qualitative data approach gained from the following:

3.7.1 Student Reflections

As mentioned above, one definition of Action Research requires that participants are involved in gathering data themselves (or with the support of others), reflecting on their work and linking that reflection to action that improves their work. (Altrichter, Kemmis, Mctaggart & Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). Accordingly, students were instructed and supported to reflect on their learning and progress with the project, setting goals that might help them achieve further progress for the next day. These reflections were recorded on a questionnaire document set up for this purpose. The student reflections formed part of the data used to compare attitudes and knowledge development within and between groups.

3.7.2 Field Notes

Field notes were recorded from teacher observations, photos and video of students' work process throughout, as well as the presentations of students' learning. This allowed notes to be taken within the classroom context of the teaching and learning environment as well as allowing student comments, discussions and actions to be included when evaluating information. Including observations added an extra layer to the student reflections in case some behaviours or comments were taken for granted and therefore not recorded by the students themselves.

3.7.3 Formal Assessment

A pre-post test design was included in order to measure any changes in knowledge of the measurement topic. The aim of this testing was to help construct reports to parents and support evaluation of any changes to knowledge related to explored topics.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Ahakoa he iti, he pounamu

> *Although it is small, it is greenstone (Māori proverb)*

The findings in this chapter relate to specific lessons in Mathematics (Perimeter, Area and Volume) as well as a broader Ecology of Learning lesson on the Six Competencies from the New Pedagogies of Deeper Learning (Fullan, Butler & Quinn, 2012), using drama as a pedagogical learning tool. They are based on observations by the researcher, and on the self-reflections provided by the students involved, as well as a survey sent to teachers within the school.

As outlined earlier the two research aims of this study were:

    a. To explore the use of drama as a pedagogy in which to improve learning for students within a primary school setting.

    b. To improve the use of dramatic process as a learning tool in my school.

The research questions being asked were:

    1. What are student experiences of drama in their learning?

    2. What are teacher perceptions of how drama can be used in teaching?

    3. How can dramatic approaches be used in my teaching to improve learning?

    4. In what ways can my school enhance learning using dramatic approaches?

The key findings of this study were:

    1. Overall, the students involved in this study perceived that learning through drama supported and deepened their understanding of each topic.

    2. The students found using drama a motivating and enjoyable way to learn and to share their learning with others.

    3. That learning through drama encouraged and supported the development of collaborative skills at a basic level and provided opportunities to *practise* collaboration at a more complex level, but did not contribute to the *development* of more complex levels of collaboration.

4. The teachers within this school setting perceive drama to be an effective way to engage students over a wide range of topics.

4.1 Participants

As previously outlined the participants in this study comprised a mixed year seven and eight class with ages ranging from ten to twelve years. The class included slightly fewer boys than girls, and a mix of ethnicities as shown in the graph below.

Ethnicity
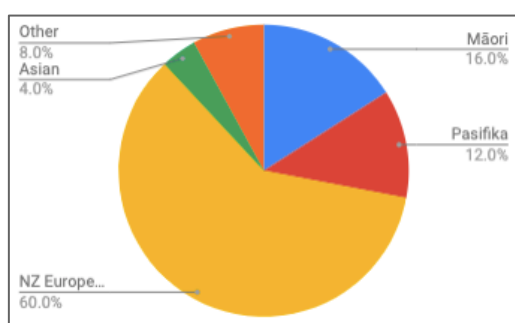
The students had previously been introduced to the Six Competencies of the New Pedagogies for Deeper Learning (Fullan, Butler & Quinn, 2012) with a particular focus on Collaboration. As a result many of the students could identify varying levels of collaboration, although were still developing their own collaborative abilities. Students had also been introduced to the mathematical terms Perimeter, Area, and Volume, however Asttle assessments showed that most had difficulty recalling the formulae needed to work out these measurements, or even to distinguish one measurement from the other – confusing their purpose. It was from this basis that the two teaching units were devised.

In preparation for this study and to ensure the students felt capable of using drama to share information, the class had participated in a number of drama sessions during term one of the year. These sessions were designed to give the students some background skills in drama (such as using freeze frames, creating characters through voice, movements, gestures/mannerisms, voice projection and being aware of and facing towards the audience).

4.2 The Lessons

The three key areas of learning that the class were asked to report on were whether the activities *supported their understanding of the topic*, whether they found the activity *fun*,

and whether they felt the group were *collaborating* effectively. This information was gathered through reflection questionnaires issued to the students after each activity. These areas of focus were chosen to help evaluate whether students considered the drama helpful to their learning. If they found it easier to learn through existing group work and follow up activities then there would be fewer reasons to include more drama. On the other hand students enjoying the drama –finding it fun - might link in with future motivation to learn (O'Neill, 1995; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Staples, 2012). Collaboration was included because the literature review had highlighted the effectiveness of drama in developing collaborative skills (Barron et al., 1998; Kalidas, 2014; Tam, 2010), with students working together rather than competing against each other (O'Neill, 1995), and potentially enhancing the motivation of all students (Lin, 2010; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Schunk, 2001). As Collaboration is also one of the six competencies being developed as part of the school's association with NPDL, it was important to evaluate whether drama might be an effective tool for developing collaboration within student groups.

Prior to beginning our work with drama, the class was asked to complete a self-evaluation recording their current level for each of the six competencies (Communication, Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Citizenship, and Character). Although all students in the class had been provided opportunities to explore the competencies and the levels within each competency, they found this task difficult. They had not retained enough knowledge about what each level involved, and even with access to rubrics, struggled to recognise key indicators for the different levels within each competency (with the exception of Collaboration which they were more familiar with). The class also completed a measurement assessment (Asttle). This was to support later teacher judgement on progress within this subject area, and to identify areas that required additional teaching.

Having completed the initial data collection, the class moved on to discussing how we might use drama to help us learn more about the selected topics. The reflection document was also introduced and discussed, so that students understood how to complete the document and why they were being asked to do so.
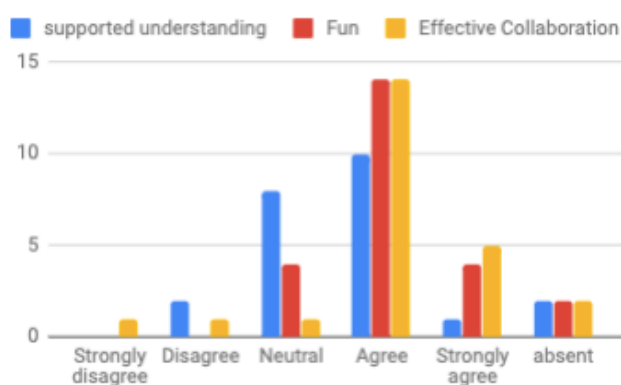
4.2.1 Perimeter
Perimeter was chosen as the first lesson because a number of students felt confident

that they understood what perimeter was and how to work out the perimeter of shapes (despite their assessments indicating otherwise). They claimed that their reason for not doing so well in the assessment was that they had been confused about the difference between Area and Perimeter. We therefore agreed to start with Perimeter – focusing on a scenario when we might need to work out the perimeter of a space in the real world. The aim was to help them connect the math to a real world situation and therefore support their memory of what it was and when they might need to know how to work it out.

The groups were quick to start discussions on Perimeter, with those group members more confident in their knowledge, explaining things to their peers to ensure that everyone knew what they were doing. Although the aim was to record observations during this rehearsal/preparation time, in fact it became more important to support the students with their planning. This included ensuring group members were listening to each other's ideas and reminding groups to include the process for working out perimeter in their presentation – not just focusing on the situation where it might be needed. While most groups worked positively together, one group (containing a student with high health needs) found it more challenging to engage everyone in the process. A second group also needed support to ensure everyone had an equally important role to play in the presentation, as everyone wanted to be the 'star'. Once these problems were overcome, the groups were able to move on with their presentations.

The graph below shows a summary of student reflections after this activity.

Perimeter Preparation/rehearsal

Although a number of students reported that the activity did not necessarily support their understanding of the topic, this was largely explained by the students' claims that they

already understood how to work out the perimeter of a shape.   Those students who hadn't been so confident, perceived that the activity supported their understanding.

> "I knew about the perimeter but this still made me understand what to do with the numbers." (Student reflection)
>
> "I already knew a bit about perimeter and I found out how to properly measure the outside." (Student reflection)
>
> "Doing the role play made it easier for me to understand how to measure out a perimeter." (Student reflection)

Most students also reported that the activity was fun:

> "It helped me better because we were having fun at the same time as learning." (Student reflection)
>
> "We get to have fun by acting and being creative rather than just always writing in our book." (Student reflection)
>
> "We all enjoyed our characters and had fun practicing." (Student reflection)
>
> "We get to be creative with our maths and show different ways to explain the perimeter." (Student reflection)

Finally, the students reported that their groups had collaborated successfully to prepare their presentation;

> "We listened to everybody's ideas and included most of them in some way". (Student reflection)
>
> "We all got the part we wanted to play and we all agreed on what we were going to say." (Student reflection)
>
> "Everyone was working well together, nobody shouted at anyone or disagreed." (Student reflection)
>
> "We all helped each other and we all got a chance to share our ideas." (Student reflection)

Unfortunately when it came time to present their scenarios to the class, a number of students (8) were absent. This meant that some last minute changes had to be made to the presentations. However the changes were negotiated quickly and successfully and this need for flexibility and adaptation highlighted each group's ability to negotiate and collaborate to ensure their presentation was still successful.

Perimeter performance
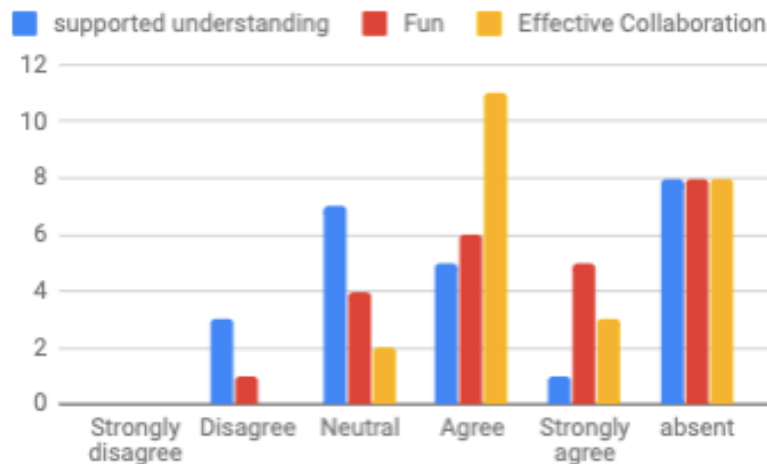
Again reports that the presentation did not support learning related to the students' claims to existing confidence with the content, rather than being a commentary of the drama process.

> "When we practiced yesterday I fully understood." (Student reflection.)

However other students felt that performing and/or watching other role-plays helped them to develop their knowledge further.

> "I think that I learned a little more than yesterday because we got to see other groups." (Student reflection)
> "When I learned perimeter I would always forget how to do perimeter, but doing the role play will make me remember." (Student reflection)
> "It helped me understand why we need to learn about perimeter." (Student reflection)

Students also found the presentation of the role-plays fun.

> "We could watch other groups and it was funny. We also got to be creative." (Student reflection)

4.2.2 Area

The second area for exploration was that of Area. Again this was chosen based on a weakness highlighted by the earlier assessment and again, some students suggested that errors were due to confusion between the different measurements. This belief was reflected in the student reports that the activities did not necessarily support learning as

shown in the graph and comments below.

> "I already knew the area." (Student reflection)
> "I already knew how to do area." (Student reflection)

However others continued to find the experience helpful.

> "We practiced our topic and talked about it a lot." (Student reflection)
> "I didn't understand the m^2 the best and having [student x} reminding me in the role-play helps." (Student reflection)
> "It helped to give me a visual representation of how to measure area." (Student reflection)

Area Preparation/rehearsal
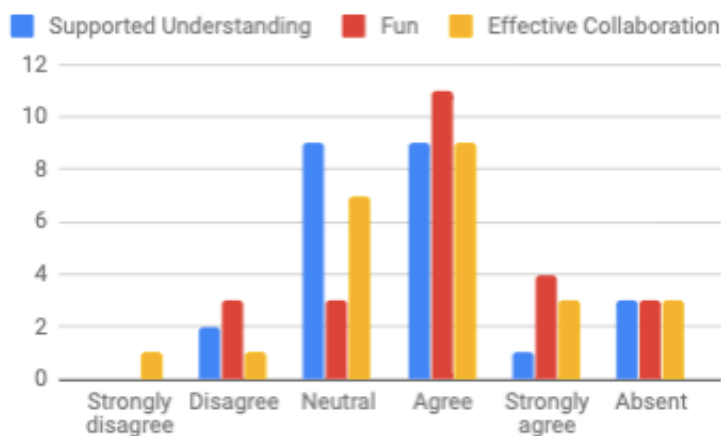
After reviewing the reflections and the comments about some students 'knowing' the subject matter, I proposed to the class that we separate the groups into subject areas so that students already confident in their knowledge could work on other areas. Interestingly the class voted unanimously to continue with mixed ability groups. Their reasoning was that the students who knew what they were doing were helping those who didn't (unknowingly voicing Vygotsky's theory of a Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)). Students who were 'experts' within the groups also claimed that having to explain the concepts to their peers was helping them to clarify their own understanding. This is in line with studies mentioned in previous chapters (Smith & Elley, 1998; Taskin-Can, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, despite the reflections indicating that the activity wasn't supporting their learning, later discussions disputed this, with students insisting that the activities were helpful.

The graph below, showing student's reflections following the presentation of their Area scenarios, indicates that the majority of students enjoyed the presentations (both presenting, and watching others) and that they believed their groups were collaborating well.

"I enjoyed watching other people's role-plays." (Student reflection)

"It was fun because we got to act." (Student reflection)

"It was funny." (Student reflection)

"It was fun watching everybody else's presentation and the different ways to present it." (Student reflection)

"We got to be creative with our learning." (Student reflection)

"It was fun performing it and watching, because it helped me learn it better." (Student reflection)

At this stage it was also noticed that one student was consistently reporting a strong objection to the activities and any perceived benefits. This prompted closer observation of this student. The observations revealed that the student in question did appear to be enjoying the activities and was fully involved with supporting others and in helping to develop the dramas. It is therefore concluded that the negative reporting was more connected to this student's health issues and associated behaviors than a true reflection of his enjoyment levels and value gained.

Area performance
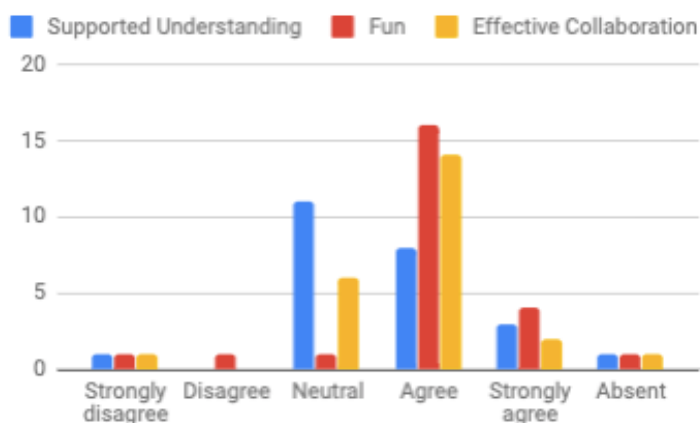
4.2.3 Volume

During the preparation time for the Volume presentations, I became ill and took some time off. Although instructions were left for the relieving teacher to put the activity to

one side and complete other work, the students convinced the teacher to continue with the project. They had been enjoying the work and did not wish to return to a more traditional style of maths. Unfortunately, possibly because the reliever did not fully understand the project, and wasn't prepared for the dramatic method being used, the lesson did not go as well as previous sessions. This is indicated by the student reflections which reported less collaboration and lower levels of helpfulness and fun.

"We didn't get much done because we couldn't really agree with each other." (Student reflection)

"We talked about ideas but struggled to work it out." (Student reflection)

"Our group kept making it complicated." (Student reflection)

"We did not know really what we were doing I feel." (Student reflection)

"No one agreed and we didn't practice and didn't listen." (Student reflection)

However, even with this reporting of less collaboration, some students continued to find the process helpful.

"Before, I didn't know how to work out the volume, but now I do." (Student reflection)

"I really do understand volume much more than I did before we practiced the role-play." (Student reflection)

"I already know about volume but it was a good reminder." (Student reflection)

While the number of students feeling neutral about the usefulness of the activity is similar to those above, at this point, notes from later discussions indicate that the lack of collaboration contributed to the result rather than prior knowledge. Despite this over half of the students continued to enjoy this style of learning.

Volume Preparation/rehearsal
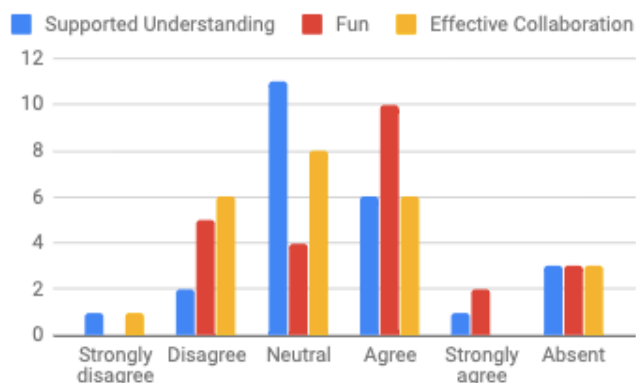
The struggles during preparation unfortunately had a flow on effect on the presentation of the volume learning. While a number students reported that sharing performances on volume was still fun,

> "It was fun doing this because it's a cool way to do math." (Student reflection)
> "I enjoyed acting it out and watching other groups." (Student reflection)
> "Our group was having fun as well as doing work." (Student reflection)

the class were not necessarily very satisfied with the learning that went with it.

> "We were still a bit iffy about it." (Student reflection)
> "No one explained it to me and I wasn't confident with my answer." (Student reflection)
> "I didn't really understand our role-play." (Student reflection)

Volume performance
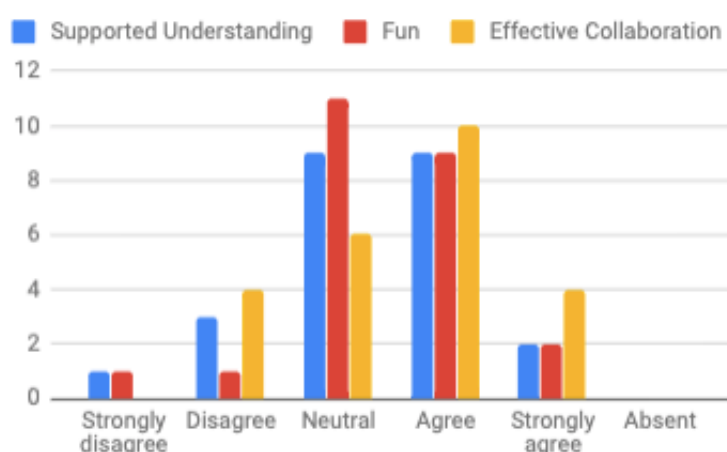
4.2.4 Six Competencies

When preparing the learning activities based around the Six Competencies, I was aware that the students had previously struggled with the content of this subject and were not looking forward to revisiting it. There were also less 'experts' available to support peer teaching and I was concerned that this would result in students avoiding a deeper investigation into each competency in order to spend more time on storyline and character development. To pre-empt this, I suggested to the class that we include a 'hot-seating' element to this series of drama learning. (This meant re-visiting the idea of 'hot-seating', which we did as part of our writing development work.) Having seen how 'hot-seating' can be used to ask questions of a character in role, the students were primed with the knowledge that they would have to gain a sound understanding of their

role with the competency drama in order to be effective in a 'hot-seat' question and answer session.

Despite this extra pressure with a challenging subject area, the students reported having fun with the development of their drama:

"It was fun practicing." (Student reflection)
"It was an easy way to learn." (Student reflection)
"It was fun making a funny but good role-play." (Student reflection)
"My team had the most fun ever!" (Student reflection)

The groups also felt that they were continuing to collaborate effectively on their various presentations:

"We all shared our ideas for our role-play." (Student reflection)
"We…worked well together because we all get along and listen to each other." (Student reflection)
"We all helped each other with no arguments and were very understanding." (Student reflection)
"We were listening to each other's ideas and what we wanted to do." (Student reflection)
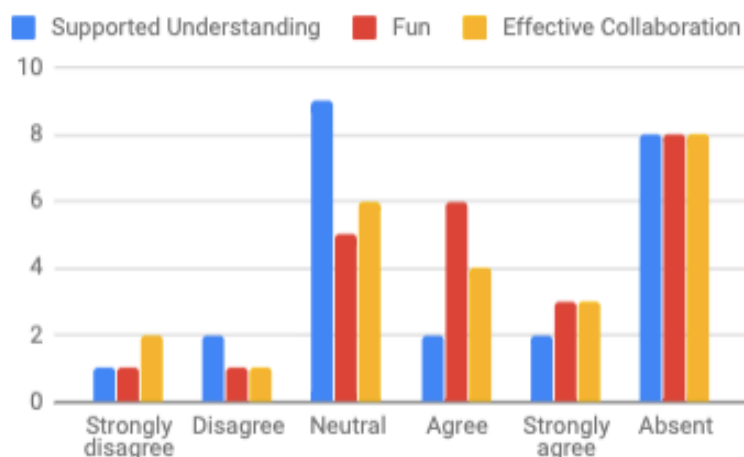
Unfortunately, despite the reported fun and positive collaboration, a number of students clearly were not convinced that the time allocated for the drama preparation was sufficient to help them to understand their competency. To support this, we agreed as a class to hold an extra session to grow our understanding. At this point one group shared that they had decided to assign each 'level' of their competency to a member of

their group. This was helping them to understand the levels better. The majority of the class then took up this idea, with much agreement that it would be an effective way to clarify their roles.

Having taken some extra time to re-work their drama, the students took part in the 'hot-seat' activity. Initially two model 'hot-seat' interviews were conducted in front of the whole class with the teacher either being the character or being the interviewer. These were then followed by each group interviewing characters from within their group about the elements of their behaviour that related to their specific level.

Six Competencies Hot Seat activity
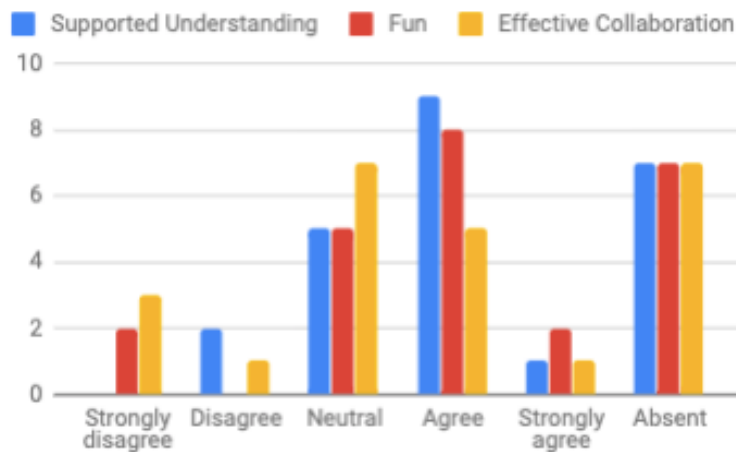
As can be seen from the graph above, more students felt that going through the process of a 'hot-seat' supported their understanding more than simply being part of developing a drama:

> "I really understood how the person at different stages acts when I answered the questions." (Student reflection)
> "It made me understand the 6Cs better." (Student reflection)
> "It kind of made me understand Citizenship more because I was acting it out." (Student reflection)
> "It helped you get into character for the play." (Student reflection)

The students also enjoyed the 'hot-seat' and being interviewed while in character:

> "We had a lot of fun interviewing each other and answering each question." (Student reflection)
> "It was fun because we got to say our own answers." (Student reflection)

50

"I liked being asked questions from hot seat." (Student reflection)

"We got to play around with our character." (Student reflection)

"I thought it was really funny acting out all the different levels." (Student reflection)

Finally, we were ready to share our presentations and show what we had learned.

6 Cs presentation

Unfortunately, a number of students had been absent for the 'hot-seating' activity and this may be why there is an indication that approximately half the class did not find the presentations helpful to their learning. Having missed the more in depth discussion, the process of developing and presenting the dramas on their own may not have been sufficient to give the students a solid understanding of the topics. However there were still a significant number who found the presentations useful:

"I wasn't really sure what it was, but the drama helped me understand and now I know." (Student reflection)

"Before we did this I didn't really understand what the 6Cs were and what they meant." (Student reflection)

"At first I didn't understand this topic but now I do." (Student reflection)

"I have definitely learnt a lot about the 6Cs, mostly how the people from different stages act." (Student reflection)

"We understand it [Citizenship] now so we can do it well the whole time." (Student reflection)

And fun:

> "I really like expressing myself through drama." (Student reflection)
>
> I enjoyed it cause we made it funny." (Student reflection)
>
> "It was fun, to make up a script and perform our drama." (Student reflection)

4.3 Benefits and Challenges of Using Drama to Teach and Learn.

Having concluded our drama based units, the class reflected on the process as a whole. Overall, the majority of the students shared positive comments about using drama to help them learn. One of the key themes was that the students enjoyed the opportunity to be more creative with their learning ("I got to be creative and have fun with maths" – Student reflection). So much so that they convinced a relieving teacher to continue with the drama based lessons, despite knowing that I had left instructions to the contrary. Students also reported finding the use of drama a more helpful way of remembering information.

> "When I act things out it helps me understand it better." (Student reflection)
>
> "It helps more when you act something out. It helps keep that thing in your brain for longer." (Student reflection)

However, the students were also honest about the problems they had encountered:

> "People weren't paying attention and [weren't] putting ideas in to help." (Student reflection)
>
> "They were not doing work and they were mucking around." (Student reflection)
>
> "We probably should not talk over each other next time." (Student reflection)
>
> "Some people in my group weren't listening, talking about things off topic." (Student reflection)

These problems seemed to stem largely from certain groups' inability to agree on a plan as a group. The student's solution for this was being able to choose to work with friends, rather than working in random groups.

> "I feel like it would be better to do it in groups with people we know and not people we don't know." (Student reflection)

Certainly from the more collaborative groups the comments were more positive:

"We all got along really well and learned the script quickly." (Student reflection)

"Everybody agreed in people's suggestions." (Student reflection)

"Whenever we had an idea we would talk about it and decide" (Student reflection)

Other comments were more related to the timing with some students wanting less time ("I think next time we shouldn't spend so much time on it"), while others wanted more ("We should've planned more") (Student reflections).

4.4 Teacher Reflections

In addition to the activities being trialed with the study group, teachers from around the school were asked to comment on their use of drama as a teaching tool.

Not all teachers in the school responded to the questions, but those who did, were unanimous in their support of and use of drama as a teaching tool.

Areas where teachers had used drama include:
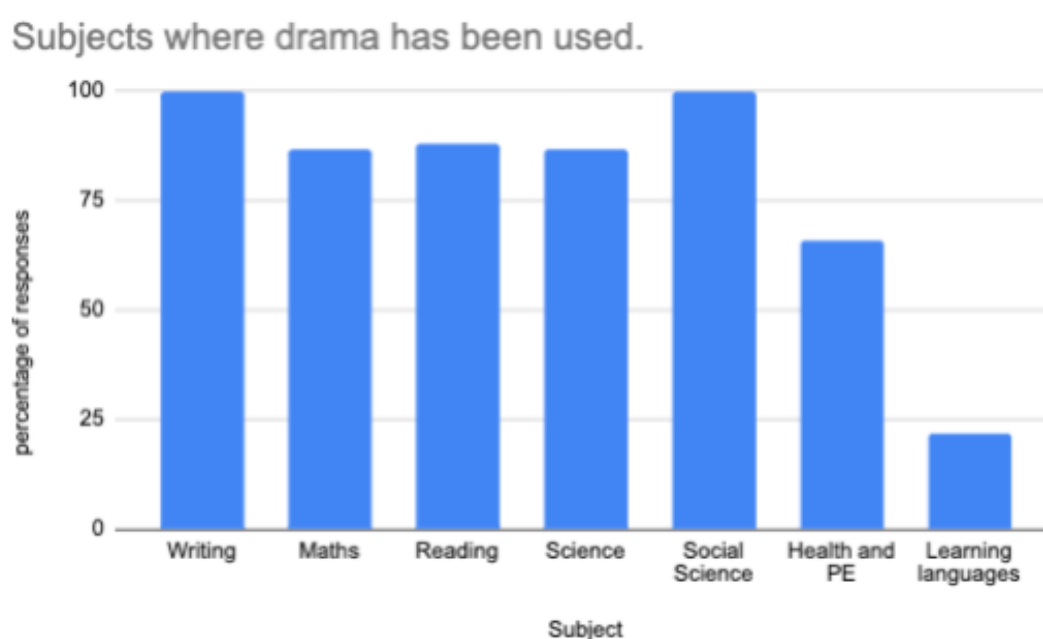
The reasons teachers reported using drama in our school varied, however some consistent themes were evident in the responses.

4.4.1 Freedom of Expression

Drama gives students freedom to respond physically to their learning. This ranges from allowing students to show how learning made them feel, through to giving students an

alternative tool to show their understanding. This is important as the school has recently been looking into Universal Design for Learning to help ensure learning is accessible to every child regardless of their ability.

A number of Teachers also reported the benefits they perceived for students "who are more active and who enjoy using their bodies for self-expression", or who "just like moving around" (Teacher survey).   One teacher felt that "drama adds a physical dimension to learning that cannot be replicated anywhere else" (Teacher survey). Respondents liked that drama can encourage student voice and creativity, both with developing and presenting their learning. One teacher also mentioned that Drama "makes it easier for kids to have a visual, especially if they're involved in it" (Teacher survey), which helps them understand their subject matter. Examples of this included a science lesson where students acted out what happens inside plants when they photosynthesize, and another where students explored how molecules behave. In maths, students have acted out maths problems to help find solutions.   Drama has also been used to support writing, with students exploring character by acting out what a character might look like or how they might behave. Similarly it has been used to help students consider how to describe emotions by exploring what a 'scared face' might look like.

4.4.2 Social Skills

An area previously discussed in the literature review is that of developing empathy and understanding. (Catterall, 2007; Graves et al., 2007; Saxton & Miller, 2013). Without having read the research, a number of teachers, mentioned that they used drama for exploring consequences for actions and inactions, and for allowing students to see things from other's points of view. In one teaching team, they used drama to explore the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Using a similar method to Dorothy Heathcotes' mantle of the expert (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Heathcote, 2009), they gave students the opportunity to experience what life might have been like prior to the Treaty, exploring the possible motivations of the signatories.

One teacher listed drama games as a way to build a sense of teamwork in class. Another included drama in lessons on 'Keeping Ourselves Safe', roleplaying certain situations in order to practise possible responses. Drama has also been used to explore what the school values look like and to encourage students to consider what behaviour might or might not be appropriate in certain situations at school. This

included role plays around what resilience looks like and how we can show resilience to help us when faced with challenging situations.

4.4.3 Peer Support

Peer support was another area where the teachers of the school felt the use of drama is beneficial. Two teachers specifically mentioned that the drama activities they had used helped the students develop their collaborative skills, while others mentioned that the discussion involved in developing drama helped students to "assimilate and synthesize the information" (Teacher survey). There were also comments around drama supporting students who were watching as well as those participating. This observation/comment is supported by the comments made by students in the study group who also found watching others' presentations helpful.

One teacher also reflected that using drama to explore information "gave students more time to think things through and make sense of their learning" (Teacher survey). Certainly the class asking for more time to review their information and presentations supports this idea. Knowing they were going to be sharing their learning through a drama, meant that the groups wanted to be sure they had a good understanding and were prepared to ask for more time in order to achieve that goal.

4.4.4 Deeper Learning

One teacher felt that a key benefit to using drama was that children can be "…free to respond to how they feel and consider the consequences of different actions and inactions…" (Teacher survey). Similarly other teachers believed that the opportunity to consider situations from someone else's point of view "deepened their learning" or "locked in the learning… having fun as they learned" (Teacher survey). One teacher described it as

> "…a means for students to experience and explore the world around them through a variety of roles and different characters. It promotes awareness and understanding of their relationships and their impact on their environment… Students get to see, hear, act out, and experience their learning, and have fun with it all." (Teacher survey)

4.4.5 Summary of Teacher Reflections

The respondents generally seemed to enjoy using drama as a teaching and learning tool. They felt it catered to a wide range of students and their different learning needs.

Drama supported learning in many areas, helping students to deepen their understanding of concepts and explore different points of view. Teachers also found the flexibility of drama made it easy to integrate into a wide range of subjects with one stating that drama "fits naturally into the world of children" (Teacher survey).

Only one teacher touched on the possibility of drama being less effective as a teaching tool. They mentioned that "lots of groundwork is required for students to feel comfortable to get out of their comfort zone" (Teacher survey). However given the high use of drama across a wide range of subject areas, it seems that most of those who responded to the survey were prepared to work that groundwork in for what they believe is a highly effective teaching method.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The results of this study indicate that the students' perception was that through using drama, they had deepened their existing knowledge of topics. The drama gave the students a context within which they could frame their learning and make it more meaningful to them, as well as providing opportunities to discuss and share information to ensure everyone had a clear understanding of each topic.

In addition this study found that the students involved found using drama a motivating and enjoyable way to learn and to share their learning with others. The opportunity to work with a range of people, be creative, and develop their dramatic scenarios with an audience in mind made the learning more fun for the students. Students were motivated to practise their presentations and therefore their learning, much more than they might have been were the practise to take the form of a more traditional book based activity.

Although it was anticipated that this study would find that using drama as a pedagogy would contribute to the development of collaborative skills among the students, this was not as clear as expected. While the drama activities encouraged and supported the development of collaborative skills at a basic level – creating a need for students to work together and be aware of each other, it did not contribute to the *development* of more complex levels of collaboration. Those students who already had higher level collaborative skills used them to excellent effect within their groups, however, those groups made up of students who initially demonstrated collaboration at an emerging or developing stage did not significantly improve their levels of collaboration.

Finally, the results of the teacher survey found that of those teachers who responded, the consensus is that drama is an effective and enjoyable method through which to engage students and explore learning across a wide range of subjects.

CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

Whāia te mātauranga hei oranga mō koutou
> *Seek after learning for the sake of your wellbeing. (Māori proverb)*

This study has investigated the use of drama as a pedagogy with which to improve learning for students within a primary school setting. It has looked at the impact of drama on motivation, deepening understanding of a topic, and development of collaboration skills for year 7 and 8 students in a New Zealand primary school. The following chapter discusses the key themes from the research findings in relation to the study and to the literature review.   It will also discuss issues that may have impacted on the results and outline possible changes for future exploration.

The key themes from this study include:

1. Motivation for learning
2. Developing a deeper understanding of a topic
3. Peer support and collaboration

As stated previously, students came from a middle class, mostly European background. The parents of this group are employed in a range of occupations including lawyers, self employed builders, nurses, accountants, roles within the movie making business, and government workers. While the initial goal was to provide students opportunities to relate their knowledge to something from their own background, for the most part they chose scenes from television shows (particularly crime shows) and movies (Mission Impossible or James Bond style situations).   Nevertheless, providing the opportunity to use at least a slightly wider context than our classroom measurement unit was an important consideration in trying to support students to connect their learning to the wider world.

Rather than focusing on the skills and techniques of drama, this study has used drama as a tool for developing knowledge and understanding of a topic and then as a means to share that understanding with others. In other words a "vehicle for the acquisition of knowledge" (Bolton, 1985, p. 152). However unlike the passive vehicle described by

Bolton, this study aimed to involve the students in developing their knowledge as part of the construction of their drama. It was hoped that as students worked together to build a dramatic scenario they would support each other's learning about the subject being explored.

5.1 Themes from the Study

5.1.1 Motivation

Student engagement in their learning has a strong correlation to higher levels of achievement (Conley & French, 2014). When students are engaged in what they are learning they are more motivated to persist and do well. In order to support students to participate and engage in their learning, some changes may need to be made to the way we are organizing their lessons.

Overall the perception of the students involved was that the use of drama as a pedagogy was seen as successful in engaging them, helping them to understand each topic, and encouraging some level of collaboration. Both teacher and students found the process enjoyable and there was little need to intervene due to lack of motivation. On the contrary, in the absence of the classroom teacher, the students insisted on continuing with using drama as a learning tool for their mathematics investigation, despite instructions to complete alternative activities being given to the relieving teacher.

A number of students found the opportunity to be creative in their learning particularly motivating. They enjoyed being given permission not only to create a scenario of their choosing that would demonstrate the need for a particular piece of knowledge, they also enjoyed adding their own flourishes to their presentations. As the study progressed more of these personal flourishes were added to each performance, whether in the form of props, theme music, or even the type of character used to share the information. Even those students who were initially sceptical about using drama as a learning tool quickly found their place within their group – in some instances taking on non-speaking parts, in others being responsible for controlling any digital elements (such as sound). Any issues around students' lack of desire to be involved on any given day stemmed more from problems with poor collaboration or communication than from a lack of motivation to be part of the process.

5.1.2 Supporting Learning

As can be seen in the findings section, there was mixed reporting (from the student reflection sheets) on the perceived effectiveness of the activities in supporting student learning. However, during follow up discussions, most students reported finding the activities helpful in terms of developing their understanding of each topic. Even those students who indicated on their reflections that they were already familiar with the topic, later qualified those statements during class discussions by saying that the drama still helped to clarify aspects of the learning, or deepen their understanding through having to explain it to others. To some degree this was supported by post activity assessments, although not all students in the class showed notable improvement in their test scores. A post unit Asttle (standardised) test showed that only a third of the class had made significant gains. When this was discussed with the class, students were quick to defend the drama learning and cited the term break, among other factors, as contributing to any poor performance in the assessment.

Drama has also been shown to support the development of a range of social skills and skills for learning (Graves et al., 2007; Miller et al., 1993; Moore, 2004; Singer, 1973). Certainly this study found that using drama as a means to explore a selection of learning areas gave the students an opportunity to work together and learn from each other which effectively allowed them to deepen their understanding of the topics covered.

5.1.3 Collaboration

A discussion on the collaboration aspect of this study is included later in this chapter under the Themes from the Literature Review section, however, generally it is my view that activities would have needed to be structured differently in order to achieve greater levels of collaboration. The students certainly enjoyed the opportunity to work with their peers and found this element of the drama particularly useful in developing each other's knowledge. However, while some groups collaborated successfully, making excellent use of each other's strengths, or supporting each other's perceived weaknesses, others focused more on personal preference for assigning roles. At times this led to disagreements and frustration among the students, for example when more than one person wanted a particular role, or refused to listen to ideas that differed from their own. In this sense the use of drama did not support the collaborative skills of the students, rather, it highlighted the need to develop their skills further.

5.1.4 Student Reflections

The use of student reflections as a means of gaining insight to their feelings on the project worked well to some degree. The comments recorded on the reflections formed the basis of some class discussions around the direction and format of the study. For example it was following a review of the reflection sheets that a discussion was prompted around mixed ability groups compared to ability (or 'next step') groups. The reflections also gave the opportunity for students to share their positive feelings on creativity or how well they felt their group had worked on a given scenario. Some students also used the reflection sheets to highlight the difficulty their group had experienced with members not listening to each other's ideas. These comments were helpful in directing support to particular groups who were struggling.

One issue however, did arise with the completion of student reflections. While students reported enjoying the drama activities as well as the usefulness in terms of learning from each other and the value of drama as a tool through which this happened, they quickly lost interest in completing the reflections. Discussions post activities were often animated and positive, however as soon as the reflection sheet was produced, groans and/or sighs of exasperation took over. This negative attitude towards the feedback sheets was also evident in the lack of explanation or comments recorded on the sheets by a small number of students – particularly those who were not positively disposed to writing. In some cases the comments were brief, in some non-existent. The need for elaboration was discussed with the class, however upon reflection, recording conversations would have elicited more useful and detailed reflections than a written response produced. While a recording method would have resulted in the need to transcribe conversations, it may well have captured more information from the students about their true feelings regarding the activities. Another option to consider for future research is the use of focus groups to capture the reflections of students. These might also serve to further reduce any concerns around students feeling influenced in any way by the need to give their reflections directly to the researcher.   While challenging to arrange given the restraints on time and space in a classroom or school setting, focus groups may have elicited further useful reflections.

Including the Likert Scale on the student reflections was effective and useful, with all students completing those sections of the reflection sheet. Interestingly, one student took the opportunity provided by the Likert Scales to the extreme with every activity,

scoring that they did not enjoy the activities at all, or learn anything, despite observations to the contrary. This student's reporting was in line with their general tendency to report negative attitudes towards learning that may have been connected to their particular health issues and related attention seeking characteristics.

5.2 Themes from Literature Review

5.2.1 The Process of Learning – Social Constructivism

Interestingly, in line with social constructivist theory the students involved preferred to work in mixed ability groups so they could learn from each other. This was highlighted when, worrying that some of the more knowledgeable students might be held back by having to work at the slower pace of their team-mates, the class was asked if they would prefer the next activity to be based on 'next step' groups. This would have meant that students would group together based on what they still needed to know, allowing the more knowledgeable students to extend themselves to a higher level of the curriculum. The whole class dismissed this idea. The lower level learners worried that there would be no-one in their group to explain things to them and help them understand and the higher level learners stated that helping the others was in fact helping them to gain a deeper understanding of the information. This observation is supported by Vygotsky's theory that learning is a social process made more effective when support is provided within the potential reach or 'proximal zone' of each learner (Vygotsky, 1978; Woolfolk, 2013).

Another interesting observation was that students started to demonstrate an awareness of models chosen from other groups. For example when one (largely year 8) group chose to include a 'theme tune' to enhance their drama performance, this idea was later adopted by another (largely year 7) group. This enhancement then spread among the groups and was quickly added to in the form of sound effects to help illustrate that participants were driving a car, or riding a train. This learning from models is in line with Bandura's (1986) suggestion that modelling can result in the acquisition of new behaviours as well as resulting in a change in behaviour in the hope of obtaining approval from someone perceived to be of higher status - in this case the year 8 students (Schunk, 2001).

In considering the size of each group, attention was given to the research around the effectiveness of smaller groups of three to five students to maximise collaboration

(Almajed et al., 2016; Clifford, 2016; Dahley, 1994; Johnson et al., 2007). For the purpose of this study, the smaller group size worked well. All students within each group were actively involved in the development of each scenario – even those students who had previously demonstrated a tendency to sit back and observe rather than contributing to discussions. Having only three to five students in each group meant that there was less ability for those quieter students to 'hide' or withdraw from the discussion. At times the opposite occurred, with some of the historically quieter students stepping forward as leaders of their group. This may be related to Nicholls (1989) discussion on the impact of competition on motivation (Pressley & McCormick, 1995). Certainly, it appeared that having less voices to compete with gave these students greater opportunity to be heard and therefore confidence that they would have their ideas implemented.

5.2.2 Motivating and Engaging Learners

One aspect of using drama that appealed to the students was the choice they had in how they developed their drama to explore and explain their learning. A number of students commented that they enjoyed the opportunity to "be creative" and that learning through drama was much more preferable to working from and with books. This is in line with the idea that when students are given more choice about what they produce, how they produce it, and who they work with, they become more likely to predict successful outcomes, and therefore put more effort into and persist more with their work (Smith & Elley, 1998; Woolfolk, 2013).

Another aspect contributing to the motivation of students was that the drama activities gave them 'permission' to explore different ways of developing and sharing their knowledge. In developing their drama, the students were able to ask questions of each other, propose different solutions, and be creative in developing their scenarios. Effectively the drama was helping the students to develop what Lin refers to as 'possibility thinking' (Lin, 2010).

A third aspect of motivation discussed in the literature review chapter of this document, is related to competition. The competitive nature of many classrooms has been shown to diminish students' motivation (O'Toole, 1995; Pressley & McCormick, 1995). Despite the efforts of many teachers to avoid comparisons between student's levels of achievement by putting more focus on learning steps and fluid learning groups, students

continue to be highly aware of where they 'rank' within each subject. Unfortunately for many students, believing they have a subordinate 'ranking' in the class than their peers can lead to decreased motivation and the lowering of their own expectations of their ability, resulting in less effort being put into future work (Elsner, Isphording, & Zölitz, 2018). The feedback from this study indicates that students appreciated the opportunity to work in mixed ability groups where they were able to learn from each other and share ideas rather than worrying about who was more knowledgeable than whom. It is therefore suggested that some use of drama as a learning tool helps move the focus off competition and shift it onto collaboration (Lin, 2010).

5.2.3 Reaching a Diverse Range of Learning Styles and Needs

While catering to different learning needs has been shown to have only a small impact on learning (Hattie, 2013), it does have some impact. Howard Gardner (Professor of Cognition and Education at Harvard University) believes it is important not only to differentiate learning in order to connect with the different needs of students, but also that skills and concepts should be taught in a number of ways in order to maximise learning for students (Woolfolk, 2013). While drama is only one way through which to teach the subjects covered, it certainly appealed to a large number of students in the class. Most students in the study reported enjoying using drama to develop and share their understanding of each topic, as well as finding it beneficial to their learning. The dramatic approach appealed to those students who liked to be physical and active because they were able to move around during the lessons. The more knowledgeable students in the class reported benefits from having to explain concepts to their peers and took pride in being experts in the various subjects covered. Those with less confidence in their understanding were positive about the benefits of having their peers explain things to them. A number of students also mentioned that being able to watch others' performances helped them to further understand the topics. The more creative students also appreciated having more say in how they shared their learning. Even the quieter students expressed enjoyment in being able to take a role in sharing their learning, particularly when given the opportunity to work with students they were already comfortable with. Having said that there were a small number of students who commented that they would have preferred to return to learning in a more traditional, written form of sharing their learning. This highlights the need for variety in approaches as no one method will necessarily suit every child.

5.2.4 Enhancing Oral Language and Writing

In his discussion on Visible Learning, John Hattie highlights listening to students, their thought processes, and their errors – getting students to verbalise their thinking – as one of the three key areas of visible learning that can make the biggest difference in student's learning (Hattie, 2018). In this sense, using drama as a tool through which to learn and share knowledge was extremely useful. Listening in on conversations throughout the development of each scenario enabled an opportunity to check that students understood and could verbalise the concept being focused on. However, the discussions held within each group also provided opportunities for the students themselves to question, challenge and/or clarify ideas with their peers. In some instances this resulted in corrections being made before misunderstanding grew, while in others the need to be clearer forced students to think carefully about how they would articulate their ideas in a way that made sense to their group.

The use of drama also pushed students to use and develop their negotiation skills, including clear communication and considering things from another's point of view. This ability to work with others is one of the key areas of focus for future learning. Many of the students in this study commented on the way their group successfully listened to each other's ideas and then agreed on how they would proceed with the development of their scenario.

In studies on the impact of drama on writing, children have demonstrated greater enthusiasm for writing when they had the power to choose the form, content and viewpoint of their piece, particularly when that writing piece was seen to relate purposefully to the dramatic world they had developed (Cremin et al, 2006). Furthermore, it seems that when writing arises naturally from the experience of the drama, the quality of the writing also improved (McNaughton, 1997). While this study did not look at the connection between drama and writing, it did look at other curriculum areas. As shown in the above studies, drama helped students to explore a scenario from where the motivation to write grew. Similarly, in this study, students were given the opportunity to develop scenarios where they might need to use various measurements - the perimeter of a roof to check that there was room for a helicopter to land, the area of a room laid out in a grid to map evidence. This helped to motivate the students to think of their maths through a different lens. They were so motivated to continue using drama as the mathematical lens that they convinced a relieving teacher

to stick with the program of drama rather than returning to the more traditional format of maths lessons.

As the students created their drama, the importance of the measurement as an integral part of their drama helped them to remember not only how to measure what they needed, but also why that measurement might be used. The scenario they had created meant that they all 'needed' to know the information, either as the character directing the measurement, or the character doing the measuring, making their learning more purposeful, if only in an imaginary context. Effectively the quality of their maths thinking improved in order to meet the demands of their drama.

5.2.5 Collaboration

Collaboration is listed as one of the skills essential for success in the twenty first century and beyond (Jana, 2018; Voogt & Pareja Roblin, 2010). Some of the benefits of collaboration include improved engagement in learning, increased achievement and a more positive attitude towards school (Williams, 2009). However, although a number of studies have shown drama can enhance collaboration among students (Barron et al., 1998; Kalidas, 2014; Lin, 2010; Tam, 2010), there is no particular evidence from this study to support this. Students frequently commented that their group collaborated well, citing evidence such as "we all listened to each other's ideas" and "we all agreed on which roles we would play" (Student reflections), however this is not evidence that the drama was contributing to any collaborative skills. In fact using the NPDL (Fullan, Butler & Quinn, 2012) collaboration rubric to assess the level of collaboration among students, it remained at a low to moderate level throughout the study (Emerging to Developing). This may have been because the activities themselves were not designed to deliberately encourage stronger collaboration. However, the more students did work together, listen to each other's ideas and use each other's strengths, the more positively the students rated their dramatic experience. Reflecting on this, it seems that a key element of successfully using drama as a teaching tool, is ensuring that students first have the skills with which to collaborate successfully. The dramatic approach can then provide opportunities for students to practise their collaborative skills.

With all of that said, one element of collaboration that was clearly prompted by the drama was the need for students to be aware of each other, and the need to share space (Lin, 2010) rather than allowing students to work as individuals. One example

that stands out from the study is the student who (as a result of health related issues) usually insists on working alone and often made it difficult for others who tried to include them in group activities. This student was drawn in through the desire to be involved in the drama activity and through that, ended up sharing their ideas and learning with the others for the benefit of the team. The other members of this student's groups were also given an opportunity to see the skills and knowledge that this student possessed, creating a greater acceptance of them as a group member. This outcome of drama's potential for promoting acceptance was touched on in the literature review chapter (Miller et al., 1993).

To some degree the drama activities helped students develop basic level collaborative skills while providing opportunities to practise higher levels of collaboration such as making use of each group member's skills and knowledge, communicating clearly, and considering how they could work together with others to support further learning and/or opportunities.

Tied in with collaboration is the size of the groups within which the students worked. The smaller group size of 3 - 5 students was intended to encourage students to be actively involved in interactions with each other, sharing knowledge and ideas and feeling able to challenge or provide feed forward to each other (Almajed et al., 2016; Clifford, 2012; Dahley, 1994; Johnson et al., 2007). As discussed above, these group sizes worked well, with all students being actively involved in their group discussions. The size of the group also led to some students taking on leadership roles, when they had previously been more inclined to let others dominate conversations and decision-making.

Another reflection relating to collaboration and its connection with drama, is that the drama did help to illustrate the importance of effective collaboration. The students in the study were able to identify the negative and positive impacts of effective collaboration on their ability to use drama successfully to develop and share their learning. In other words, successful collaboration supported the students' efforts to develop a context for their learning. It also made it easier for members of the group to share their knowledge and learn from each other.   Students who noted that their group had collaborated well, also reported more positive ratings of 'fun' and 'usefulness' for

each activity, whereas those who felt their group had not collaborated well, enjoyed the activities less and found them less helpful.

5.2.6 Culture

One aspect of culture discussed as part of the literature review for this study, was the idea that pre-European Māori had learned more through observing others than from direct lessons on how to do something. In this sense the sharing aspect of our dramatic scenarios provided an opportunity for the students to learn from those outside their immediate group. This was evident from the comments of the students:

> "I think that I learned a little more than yesterday because we got to see other groups." (Student reflection)
> "It was fun watching everybody else's presentation and the different ways to present it." (Student reflection)

It was also evident from the way students took ideas from previous presentations and incorporated them into their own subsequent scenarios (for example adding sound effects and theme tunes, or being more specific in the way they explained elements of their math calculations, or reasons for needing the maths). This form of reciprocal teaching, or AKO is one of the key principles listed in Ka Hikitia – the NZ Ministry of Education's Māori education strategy document (Ministry of Education, 2013b). Although Ka Hikatia describes Ako in terms of the teacher or educator learning from the student, I believe that students learning from each other is also a valid form of reciprocal teaching and learning. In New Zealand, this method is also known as a Tuakana-Teina approach meaning that the older sibling (Tuakana) is supporting the younger sibling (Teina) and vice versa. This reciprocal arrangement is also in line with Vygotsky's theory on a Zone of Proximal Development, where students learn through connection with others, being supported to develop their knowledge through peers or teachers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Similarly, 'collaborating and co-constructing' is another of the areas from the Ka Hikitia document listed as needing more focus in order to better support our Māori students (Ministry of Education, 2013b). Encouraging students to work with others and to be involved in developing their knowledge is all a part of setting high expectations of achievement for all students. Being involved in the development of each scenario and

having their ideas listened to and often incorporated into the final piece can help individual students to develop their Mana – their sense of identity and self respect - through their contributions (Pere, 1982). Working with peers to develop each scenario, also gave each student an opportunity to have their voice heard while negotiating and interacting with group members (Aitken, 2009).

This idea links us to another aspect of culture discussed in the literature review, which is that of power relationships. While this study did not focus on situations where power and control were deliberately central to the theme, the scenarios constructed by the students still contained elements of authority. In this sense the drama gave all students an opportunity to take on roles where they were in charge of what happened, directing others to carry out instructions, and gaining some experience with using power (O'Toole, 1995). While not all students took on one of these roles, it was clear that all students had the opportunity to, and through those who did step into leadership roles, all ethnic backgrounds from within the class were represented.

5.3 Challenges

One of the biggest challenges with implementing Drama as a Pedagogy in the classroom was space. In order to give the students room to develop their learning and their scenarios, each group needed physical space. To help with this, some groups were given permission to work outside the classroom. This spreading out of the students made it more difficult to monitor their progress and keep field notes on their interactions. In terms of the study, this meant that field notes were limited and less useful than they might have been had the class stayed in a contained area. However, in terms of the learning of the students, having room to spread out away from other groups helped them to focus more fully on their own work. This resulted in a wider variety of scenarios - possibly from students having different visual inspiration for their settings.

Being able to work outside, also appealed to those students who simply enjoy the outdoors more. They were able to physically move about in their environment without having to worry about appropriate 'indoor behaviour' or respecting/avoiding furniture. To some degree, this option to work outside the classroom added to the motivation of those students. Unfortunately, this option was limited to days when the weather was suitable for being outside and at times the class were confined to indoors due to poor

weather. The resulting noise and cramped conditions of working indoors did make the lessons less comfortable for those students who struggled in a louder environment. Having access to a larger indoor space would have helped to reduce this issue.

Another challenge during this study was student absence during various stages of developing each scenario. While absence due to illness is an unavoidable part of life, in some cases the absences were due to other events or meetings within the school. This had a particularly large impact during the sharing of the Perimeter scenarios, when eight students were absent. Absences also had a big impact on the investigation into the Six Competencies when again eight students were out during the Hot Seat activity. As the Hot Seat activity had been included to provide an opportunity to ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of their characters and the levels of each competency, absence during this activity meant that a number of the students missed this chance to fully develop their understanding.   Ideally these students would have been given time to experience the same activity at a later date, however in this case that was not possible without repeating the activity with the whole class. As the majority of the class had completed this process and was eager to move on, the decision was made not to hold a catch up session.

This leads on to the challenge connected with supporting students with building stronger collaborative skills. Lack of time. More time with each group would have allowed more opportunities for discussion, prompting and problem solving of issues as they arose. Unfortunately the need to monitor all groups and keep moving around the extended learning space meant there was less time to spend on developing the collaborative skills needed. Initially it was hoped that the work done in previous years and even earlier in the year of this study, would help students with their collaboration, however clearly, more support and guidance was needed. Allowing more time at the planning stage of each section of the study to work with the groups before the dramatic process was started may have helped students to keep their collaborative goals in mind from the start. This may also have helped each group set shared goals on how they would work and make decisions together (O'Donnell, 2018).

5.4 Limitations of the Study
5.4.1 Research in a Classroom Setting

A key element to all schools and certainly primary schools in New Zealand is that they are busy places with many and varied activities taking place throughout the school at all times. These activities result in regular interruptions to classroom programs, whether to the whole class, groups, or individual students within classes. Certainly, interruptions calling students out of class had an impact on this study, with the result that at times up to a third of students were absent from class during the drama lessons.   Clearly absence during lessons meant that some students missed important elements (such as the 'Hot Seat' activity). This may have affected students' understanding of some subjects, as well as putting pressure on those left behind to either accommodate for the absence of team members or to support those students upon their return to the class. It is therefore recommended that where possible flexibility is maintained in planning to allow lessons to be rescheduled in order to maximize students' opportunities to be present during key knowledge development sessions. Priority should be given to these lessons over presentation sessions, as more learning appears to be achieved from developing the scenarios than from sharing or watching them. Having said that, this could be an interesting area of research for the future as a number of students professed to having developed their knowledge further through watching other performances.

5.4.2 The Individuality of Students

Another limitation is the variability of the students themselves. All children come with their own experiences, knowledge, and expectations. Some of the students involved in this study had more experience with drama than others, and some had developed higher-level collaborative skills than their peers.   Although the groups were based on random selections, these individual differences meant that some groups had a tendency to work together more effectively than others. Carefully balancing drama experience and collaborative skills may have led to further learning gains, however the reality of classroom teaching is that individual students will always bring something different to each learning opportunity. This in turn will always have some impact on the outcomes of any lesson. Where possible, it is recommended that consideration at least be given to ensuring a balance of collaborative skills within each group.

Furthermore, including Focus Groups or Student Interviews as part of the data collection phases of the study would have allowed for further Student Voice to be recorded as part of the data. As discussed, the students tended to elaborate more on

their feelings about the project and its effectiveness during informal post activity class discussions than through the written reflections. Formalizing these opportunities and recording them would have helped to support the overall validity of the data. In addition arranging for these interviews or focus groups to be conducted by someone other than the researcher may also have reduced the impact of any perceived power imbalance between the students and the researcher.

5.4.3 The Individuality of Teachers

Similar to students, each teacher will bring their own experience to a classroom. In this case, as the teacher researcher, I believe the experience I have developed through 16 years of teaching primary aged students, along with my 19 years involvement in a local theatre group, has given me the experience and enthusiasm for drama needed to teach and monitor a dramatic approach to learning, while ensuring the needs of the curriculum continue to be met for the students involved. However, I also believe that one of the key elements of teacher success with using drama as a pedagogy is the ability to create a classroom environment based on trust and the willingness to try new things. With this basis, it is my belief that even a beginning teacher with little drama experience could use drama effectively as a tool for teaching and learning. This idea suggests an area for potential research in the future.

Given that high interest and enthusiasm for using drama in a range of subject areas already exists in the school where this study was based, my recommendation is focused on encouraging more sharing of ideas and outcomes between staff members. There is already a high degree of shared and collaborative planning at the school, so encouraging the inclusion of drama as a pedagogy as a conscious choice in this process may help to ensure that drama becomes a deliberate choice for all teachers. This would also include sharing ways with which teachers have implemented the 'groundwork' needed to ensure students feel comfortable participating in this type of learning.

5.5 Reliability and Validity

A key factor to consider when reviewing this study is whether another teacher would reach the same results. As a teacher researcher, I had already established a positive trusting relationship with the students involved in the study. I was also on hand to support students with mediating conflicts and using questions to prompt resolutions to

problems where needed. As a class we had already worked on the 'groundwork' of establishing a relatively safe place where students felt comfortable taking risks with their learning. Without this 'groundwork' the results may have varied. The comments from students reflecting on the sessions taken by a relieving teacher indicate that some students were less inclined to work positively together in the absence of their usual teacher. It is important therefore, to recognize that another teacher attempting research and replication of this study, may well produce differing results.

Having said that, assuming that the teacher responsible for the class has developed a similar baseline relationship of trust, and created a classroom environment where mistakes and risk taking is encouraged, it is my view that the use of drama would continue to be effective. This is an area of potential further research, where observations of other teachers taking similar units in their own class would give a better indication of the transferability and therefore reliability and validity.

5.6 Conclusion

The key learning from this study is that while Drama as a Pedagogy can be effective for many students, it is important to remember that it is only one tool in the teaching tool box. As John Hattie emphasizes in an online interview (McDougall & Hattie, 2012), it is important to consider the impact of any strategy and to remember that while one strategy may work for a student in one instance, it may not work for the same student in another.   This is supported by the comments of some of the students in the study who, while they enjoyed the drama activities, also stated that they reached a point when they had had enough. It is therefore important to consider that while the use of drama as a pedagogy can be an effective tool, its use must be applied alongside other techniques.

It might also be important to consider that drama on its own is not necessarily what makes it effective, but that the opportunities to work together and share ideas with each other is what helped to make the dramatic approach effective.

Having said that, the observations from this study indicate that using drama as a pedagogy was successful in motivating students to learn and share their knowledge with each other. Learning through drama also supported the students in developing their knowledge of each topic, particularly through opportunities to discuss, question, and clarify points of confusion with their peers. Having to explain their knowledge to

others also helped students to consolidate their understandings and consider how best to articulate their knowledge to others. Finally while some elements of the students' collaborative skills still needed work, the drama did provide opportunities for practice and supported those students who would otherwise have preferred to work alone, to work with their peers.

Chapter six – Recommendations

He kai kei aku ringa

> *There is food at the end of my hands.* *(Māori proverb)*

6.1 Introduction

Educators looking to the future have been considering the skills needed in a world where technology is rapidly changing. The question is frequently asked – What skills will our students need to cope in a world where the workplace is changing rapidly and the jobs our students will be working in may not have been created yet?   Aside from ICT skills, the skills being highlighted are Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, and Problem solving (Voogt & Pareja Roblin, 2010).

In addition, The Ministry of Education in New Zealand has been looking for ways to engage and motivate our learners and propose a more child centered focus where students have greater say in what and how they learn (ERO, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2019). There also continues to be concern around the achievement levels of Māori students and those learners who have made their homes in New Zealand, but who continue to struggle in our education system (ERO, 2012, 2019).

Through investigating how dramatic approaches can be used in teaching to improve learning outcomes for students, this study may help to provide one possible solution to the above concerns. The study looked at whether drama helped to develop skills (such as collaboration) needed for the future. It also looked at whether drama could be an effective 'child centered' method that engages and motivates learners, while allowing them to contribute to and help direct their learning. The study also explored whether drama provided opportunities that might allow the students to learn from each other, to explore situations in a safe 'managed' way, and to share their learning through showing, rather than telling or writing.

Creating a wider context from where students can then build their scenarios can help add authenticity to their dramas and their need to learn. For example during the maths learning, students each created a small drama around when they might need to use perimeter, area and volume measurements. However creating a wider context of a

building site or exploring rooms within buildings could help students to more fully appreciate the importance of their measurements. Similarly a broader context might have helped students to relate their use of the six competencies to their own lives, rather than random scenarios. While students successfully created scenarios and were able to demonstrate increasing levels of communication, collaboration, creativity etc., these understandings may have been further embedded in their knowledge, had they related the skills to situations from their own lives.

6.2 Summary of Recommendations

- Including drama as a teaching tool to enable greater student voice, creativity and student selected challenges in learning.
- Using drama to help students create a relatable context within which they can connect their learning to something outside of the classroom setting.
- Encouraging a greater focus on collaboration rather than competition through drama activities in order to increase student motivation. This includes ensuring students have the skills to effectively collaborate.
- Smaller group sizes (3-5 students per group) to encourage increased participation from all students.
- Timetabling priority should be given to sessions where dramatic scenarios are developed (as opposed to sharing sessions) in order to maximise learning.
- Supporting the development of deeper level thinking about issues, particularly those that include more than one point of view, through the exploration of these situations within a dramatic context.
- To support less experienced or less drama confident teachers, professional development sessions should focus on sharing how classroom cultures can be established to encourage and support the use of drama as a pedagogy.

6.3 Including drama to encourage greater student voice and participation in learning

The use of drama as a pedagogy is a relatively simple tool for including more student voice into lessons. It provides opportunities for students to negotiate with their peers about how to develop their own and other's knowledge, as well as how they will demonstrate that knowledge. This enables students to set their own level of challenge and complexity of tasks, which may in turn encourage more of a growth mindset

(Conley & French, 2014) by pushing students to ask "what can we learn?" and "how can we develop our scenario to make it more interesting/ entertaining/ informative?". This in turn may increase motivation.

6.4 Using drama to develop a relatable context

Given the ability of dramatic scenarios to provide a sense of context, it is suggested that drama could be a useful tool for immersion time, when students are being tuned into topics prior to individual exploration. Whether using Dorothy Heathcote's process drama or a slightly less structured program, students could use drama to explore situations or events through drama. Reflections from the students involved in this study certainly indicate that using drama to create scenarios within which they could frame their learning, helped them to remember the information and relate it to the real world. Realistically teachers do not have the time or resources available to take every lesson into a real context, therefore, using drama to bring contexts into the classroom and give students an opportunity to use their imagination to explore those contexts in more depth is the recommended alternative.

6.5 Drama as a tool for teaching and practising collaboration skills

One of the clear messages from the participants of this study was that they preferred to be able to work in mixed ability groups and learn from each other. Those students who reported more effective collaboration within their group also reported higher levels of enjoyment and learning. It is therefore recommended that more focus be put onto teaching effective collaboration skills and providing opportunities for students to work together in order to improve motivation, engagement and learning outcomes.

While this study did not find a significant improvement in existing collaboration skills through the use of drama as a pedagogy, the drama certainly provided opportunities to practise existing collaborative skills. Therefore a combination of explicit teaching of collaborative skills together with drama activities is recommended.

6.6 Making use of smaller group sizes to encourage participation

To further support students with being involved in learning and contributing their ideas and skills to projects, group sizes in this study were limited to 3-5 students. Being able to work in small groups helped to ensure that all students had a role to play in creating and presenting their dramatic scenario. It is therefore recommended that where possible

group sizes are kept to these smaller numbers to promote greater involvement in learning and encourage opportunities for the development of leadership skills among quieter, less assertive students.

6.7 Priority timetabling given to the development of drama scenarios

One of the observations from this study was that students gained more benefit from the development of dramatic scenarios and from the "Hot Seating" activity than from the sharing of scenarios. It is therefore recommended that where possible, priority is given to these activities, rather than to the sharing of performances. While students certainly found the sharing of performances beneficial, there were greater gains in understanding made from the lead up activities.

6.8 Using drama to deepen learning about topics

In this instance, deeper learning refers to the ability not only to learn facts and recognize patterns, but also to a students' ability to think critically, work collaboratively, and communicate their ideas and thoughts effectively (Hewlett Foundation, 2013).   These skills also relate to those highlighted as being necessary for students to achieve well in the 21st Century and beyond (Voogt & Pareja Roblin, 2010). The results of this study indicate that drama supported students' understanding of topics and encouraged deeper level thinking. It is therefore recommended that drama be used to support and develop student's deeper understanding of topics, particularly when those topics can be viewed from multiple perspectives.

However, one of the key things to bear in mind is that while drama can be an effective tool for encouraging students to think critically about what they are learning, including the ability to consider information from more than one point of view, it is not the only way to achieve these outcomes. As indicated by some of the student reflections, it is important to provide a variety of approaches to minimize the risk of boredom for a particular method of teaching and learning. It remains important to consider which method will provide the *best* outcomes for the students in any given moment or learning opportunity (Aitken, 2019a).

6.9 Professional Development to support use of drama as a pedagogy

Responses to the teacher survey indicate that the teachers at this school are already making effective use of drama as a pedagogy and are open to working with others to

develop this use. However concerns remain about the need to lay some sort of groundwork to prepare students for this type of learning and to create a culture where drama is an acceptable tool for learning. With this in mind it is recommended that future Professional Development focuses initially on sharing how others have established this culture in their classrooms. A secondary focus would then be on sharing how drama has been used by others to support learning, so that teachers can develop their knowledge of how they can use drama across a range of subject areas rather than simply viewing it as another subject to fit in.

6.10 Drama as a tool for developing skills for learning

It is recommended that drama is used as a tool for developing a range of social skills that may lead to better collaboration with peers in the future. Further research into the specific impact of existing collaborative skills on the effectiveness of drama as a pedagogy is also suggested as discussed later in this chapter.

6.11 Future Research
6.11.1 The impact of the Variability of Students

One area recommended for future research is that of the differences and similarities of using drama as a pedagogy with students at different levels of school. While this study was completed while working with students working in a year seven and eight class (ages 10 to 12 years) at a full primary school, it would be useful to evaluate whether a similar unit would be as effective when working with younger students. While younger students (for example years three to four) may demonstrate less independence in some areas of their learning, their natural play may be based on more imaginative scenarios. This greater use of imaginative play may lend itself to students being more willing and less self-conscious than older students to take on and commit to different roles within their dramatic scenarios.

Another area of potential research relating to student backgrounds is that of collaborative skills. One of the observations from this study was that those groups containing students with higher-level collaborative skills, tended to work more productively and have a higher level of enjoyment than those who did not. While this study did not specifically compare the level of comprehension of each subject with this collaborative ability in mind, such research may be useful in indicating the impact of these skills on the effectiveness of drama as a teaching tool. Specifically observing

whether students with established collaborative skills would also learn more from drama methods than those without would help teachers to know whether to prioritize collaborative skills before attempting to use drama as a pedagogy in the classroom.

6.11.2 The impact of the Variability of Teachers

As indicated earlier, one of the limitations of this study is that of teacher variability. It is therefore proposed that an area for future research is in observing a variety of teachers implementing drama as a pedagogy in their own classrooms. Comparing the results across a range of classrooms may allow better evaluation on whether the resultant learning correlates more closely to teacher experience (or other factors) or to the use of drama as a teaching tool. Ensuring the inclusion of teachers with a varied range of experience (including beginning teachers) would further support this investigation.

Similarly, conducting an investigation based within a beginning (or newly registered) teacher's classroom may also allow further discussion on the effect of teacher *experience* compared to the use of *drama as a pedagogy* specifically.

6.12 Conclusion

The New Zealand Ministry of Education's Tomorrow's Schools report (2018) talks about the need for the New Zealand education system to be seen as a learning ecosystem. This means that as with other ecosystems, it would thrive on experimentation, innovation, and risk taking, and would be able to adapt and respond to students' needs through including reciprocity and shared responsibility (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce & New Zealand. Ministry of Education, 2018). While reflecting on this statement alongside the findings of this study, particularly in connection to the teacher responses to the survey, I found myself wondering why more teachers did not make use of drama more often. Teachers within the school certainly appear to view drama favorably as a means through which to teach a range of skills – both academic and social.

It has been suggested that longer term research is needed on the effects and ability of drama to achieve consistent gains in students' achievement (Bleaken, 2012). Perhaps if such research validates the effectiveness of drama over time, then more teachers will make the time to include drama in their practice. Certainly the growing body of

research suggests that drama should at least be part of the teaching tool kit for helping students develop the personal and interpersonal skills needed for their future.

One solution is to encourage teachers to see drama not simply as a part of the Arts curriculum, but as a method for weaving together a range of cultural, historical or social perspectives on topics, that also teaches students to ask questions, challenge each other and work together to find their own interpretation of events.   Collaboration between the Social Sciences and the Arts in teacher training institutions could also support the use of drama as a pedagogy*.* Not only would this help lift the profile of both departments, it could encourage new teachers to see the potential for drama as a teaching tool rather than simply another subject to fit into an already crowded curriculum

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Project Title: *Investigating Drama as a Pedagogy.*

Date of study: 10th May 2018 through to 10th May 2019

Investigator: *Sally Ratchford*

I am doing a research study about using Drama to help students learn information and see whether using Drama helps students to remember information they have learned about.

A research study is a way to learn more about people. If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to use drama to share your learning with your classmates and your teacher. This will involve working with small groups of people to research information, agree on how best to present the information and then present your findings to the class.

There are some things about this study you should know. I will be watching to see how well you work with your group to research, organise and present your information and I will be taking notes about all of these things. Sometimes I will video you working with others. This is to help me take notes in case I can't be there watching for the whole activity. There will also be another teacher who will come in, watch our class learning this way and take notes. I will be assessing how much you have learned about each subject to see whether this type of learning is working for you. You will also be asked to reflect on your learning, including how well you think you are working with your group, whether you feel that you are learning anything, and whether you are enjoying using drama to share your learning.

Not everyone who takes part in this study will benefit. A benefit means that something good happens to you. I think the benefits of this study might be that you will develop your ability to work with others cooperatively, that you will have more opportunities to make sure you understand what you are learning about and that you will remember more information about the subjects you are researching.

When we are finished with this study I will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you do not want to be part of the study, you will still have opportunities to learn the same subjects, but you won't be involved in creating and presenting dramas to share your learning. Your parents know about the study too.

Please circle if you DO WANT to be part of this study   - **YES**

Please circle if your DO NOT want to be part of this study - **NO**

_____   _____

        (Sign your name here)   (Date)

Please ask your parent/caregiver to sign the form to show they feel that you understand what the research project is about.

_____ (Parent/caregiver signature)

_____ (Parent/caregiver name - please print)

Parent Consent Form

 Research Project Title:
Investigating Drama as a Pedagogy.

I have read and understand the Project information sheet given to me.

I understand that my child does not have to be part of this research project should I choose not to include them. I also understand that although the researcher would prefer any withdrawals to be within the first two weeks of the project starting, that I may withdraw my child at any time after the commencement of the research project.

I understand that everything my child says is confidential and none of the information they give will identify them and that the only persons who will know what they have said will be the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. I also understand that all the information that my child gives will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 10 years.

I understand that my child's interactions with others in their group may be video recorded during Dramatic activities and that this video recording will be used to help the researcher make notes on their interactions.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give consent for my child to be a part of this project.

Participant Name:

Parent/Caregiver name:

Parent/Caregiver Signature: *Date:*

Project Researcher: *Date:*

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: *2018 - 1003*
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 10th May 2018 to 10th May 2019. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Information for participants

Investigating Drama as a Pedagogy

Synopsis of project

Using a Dramatic Approach to learning involves learning new skills and/or knowledge using drama or the creation of drama. In other words using Drama for teaching and learning means giving students an opportunity to explore a new skill or new knowledge through a form of story telling - scripting and creating a scenario in order to teach themselves and others a new skill or knowledge – not simply focusing on performance.

A Dramatic Approach to learning has been shown to enhance the depth of learning by students through providing contexts that encourage students to explore a wider range of solutions, evaluate information, problem solve and apply their learning to a wider variety of situations. An effective dramatic approach to learning can also lead to greater motivation to complete projects, encourages peer support with learning, and can lead to a deeper understanding of topics through shared discussion of information. This project will investigate the use of Dramatic Approaches to learning in order to evaluate its effectiveness as a teaching and learning tool.

What we are doing
The aim of this project is to explore the use of Drama as pedagogy (method of teaching) and evaluate its effectiveness as a teaching tool.

What it will mean for you
You will continue to work and learn following the usual class program of Mathematics, Reading, Writing, PE and Health, The Arts and Inquiry. However, elements of the class learning will require you to work in small groups of 4-5 students to share information through short dramas. To support you with this, you will be given instruction and support with collaborative skills and drama techniques. Your development and use of these skills and techniques will be monitored and assessed with the aim of measuring any progress you make through using these skills.

If you agree to participate, you and your parent/guardian will be asked to sign a consent form. This does not stop you from changing your mind if you wish to withdraw from the project. Your parent/guardian can also ask for you to be withdrawn. However, because of our schedule, I would prefer it if any withdrawals be done within 2 weeks after we have started the project.

Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential. All information collected from you will be stored on a password protected file and only you, myself and my supervisors will have access to this information.

Please contact me if you need more information about the project. At any time if you have any concerns about the research project you can contact my supervisor:

My supervisor is Jo Mane phone 815-4321 ext. 7146 or email jmane@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2018 - 1003
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 10th May 2018 to 10th May 2019. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Participant Information Form

My name is Sally Ratchford. I am currently enrolled in the Masters degree in the Te Miro Postgraduate Studies at Unitec New Zealand and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is: to explore the use of drama as pedagogy in which to improve learning for students within my class and to Improve the use of dramatic processes as a learning tool in my practice.

 I request your participation in the following way: That you will work collaboratively with your peers to research, script and perform short dramas based on set learning topics within our class programme. Throughout this process, you will also be asked to reflect on your contributions to the group drama and whether this process has any impact on your understanding of the set topics.

Neither you nor the school will be identified in the Thesis. The results of the research activity will not be seen by any other person in your organisation without the prior agreement of everyone involved. You are free to ask me not to use any of the information you have given, and you can, if you wish, ask to see the Thesis before it is submitted for examination.

I hope that you find this invitation to be of interest. If you have any queries about this research, you may contact my principal supervisor at Unitec New Zealand.

My supervisor is: Dr Jo Mane phone: (09) 815-4321 ext. 7146 or email: jmane@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: *2018 -1003*
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from *10th May 2018* to *10th May 2019*. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Student Reflection on Learning   **Number:**

1. Date:
2. The activity I did today was:

_____

3. Today's activity helped me understand my topic better

1	2	3	4	5
Strong disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

_____

_____

4. Today's activity was fun

1	2	3	4	5
Strong disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

_____

_____

5. My group worked collaboratively together

1	2	3	4	5
Strong disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

_____

_____

7. Any other comments or reflections?

_____

_____

8. My goal to improve my learning for our next session is:

_____

_____

1 May 2018

To:
Name
Address

Dear   ,

Re: Organisational Consent

I Bryce Coleman, Principal of Paremata School give consent for Sally Ratchford to undertake research in this organisation as discussed with the researcher.

This consent is granted subject to the approval of research ethics application 2018 – 1003 by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee and a copy of the application approval letter being forwarded to the organisation as soon as possible.

Signature:

Date: 1 May 2018

Drama as a pedagogy survey

Over the previous two years, I have been looking at how I could use drama as an effective tool in our teaching and learning programs. Your answers to this survey will help me to reflect on my research so I can look at how drama is already being used in our school, as well as aspects of drama as a pedagogy that may be of benefit to us and our students.

For the purposes of my research I am referring to any use you may have made of drama as a tool for teaching subject matters. I am not referring to using drama solely with the aim of performance, or to learn about drama. Rather, I am interested to know whether you have used drama to help students explore or understand a subject area, or as a tool to engage students in a topic or subject area.

I am collecting email addresses solely so I can see check who has replied, your responses will be kept confidential. Although I would like to include your responses in my research reflections, you will not be identified in any way.

 If you have any questions about the survey, or the research, please feel free to email me. Thanks for taking time out of your busy day to complete this for me. - Sally
* Required

1. Email address *

   _____

2. 1. Have you ever used drama in your teaching as a tool to help students understand a topic or subject? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

   ( ) Not sure

3. 2. If your answer to question one was NO, please go to question 3. If your answer was yes, please explain what the topic/subject was and how you used drama to teach it.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. 2a. How would you rate the effectiveness of using drama as a teaching tool?

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not effective at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very effective

5. What do you think made drama an effective /ineffective tool for teaching this subject?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

6. 2b. How often have you used drama as a teaching tool?

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Regularly (at least once a term)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Rarely (less that once a year)

7. 2c. How would you rate your confidence with using drama as a teaching tool?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not confident at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very confident

8. 2d. Would you be interested in working with others to find more ways to use drama as a teaching tool?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Maybe

9. 3. If your answer to question one was no, please explain why you have not used drama as a teaching tool (choose as many as desired)

Check all that apply.

☐ I am not sure how to do so
☐ I am not confident using drama in my class
☐ I find drama too difficult to manage with a class of students
☐ I do not believe drama is an effective way of teaching other subject areas
☐ It takes too long compared to other methods
Other: ☐ _____

10. 3a. If you selected 'other' for question 3 please give more detail here

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. 4. If you were to use drama as a teaching tool in the future, which subjects or topics do you think you might use it for?

Check all that apply.

☐ Writing

☐ Maths

☐ Reading

☐ Science

☐ Social Sciences

☐ Health and PE

Other: ☐ _____

12. 4a. Please explain why you would choose drama as a tool for teaching the subjects you selected.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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TE WHARE WANANGA 0 WAIRAKA

Full name of author: *Sally Ratchford*

ORCID number (Optional): ....

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project ('the work'):

Change implementation in teaching

Investigating drama as a teaching and learning pedagogy

Practice Pathway: CISC 9090...

Degree: *Masters Applied Practice*

Year of presentation: *2019*

Principal Supervisor: ....Jo Mane

Associate Supervisor: ....Hayo Reinders

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Declaration

Name of candidate: *Sally Ratchford*

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project **entitled** : *Investigating drama as a teaching and learning pedagogy.*

is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of

....

Principal Supervisor: *Dr J Mane*

Associate Supervisor/s: *Hayo Reinders*

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.
  Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: *2018-1003*

Candidate Signature: ....Date: *19 December 2019*

Student number: *1471180*