

**THEATRE ROOTS, LEARNING ROUTES:
EDUCATING THROUGH FORMAL THEATRE
PRODUCTIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – A
SELF-STUDY**

by

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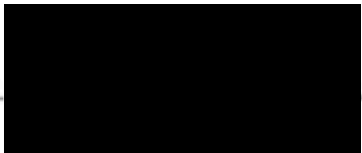
DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

My study grew out of a desire to root my research in my creative practice as both drama lecturer and director of formal theatre productions in higher learning institutions. From my own lived experience, I knew that participation in such formal theatre productions as a student had played a significant role in shaping not just my drama education, but my sense of self. The interplay between these ideas generated my core research question: What is the value of formal theatre productions in a higher education context in relation to teaching and learning?

In this study, therefore, I employ a personal history self-study approach to investigate the relationship between the two aspects of my role as a university lecturer in drama—teaching and directing—through interrogating formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning. This involves four areas of analysis: First, I explore my identity as a director-teacher, working on formal theatre productions in a South African institution of higher learning. Second, I examine the educational potential of formal theatre productions within the discourses of both dramatic education and broader educational theory in order to develop my personal educational philosophy. Third, I investigate the experiences of students who participated in formal theatre productions I directed, and colleagues who have co-directed such productions with me, using Creative Analytic Practice in the form of a data play to discover the kinds of learning that emerge from participation in such projects. Finally, I draw on these ideas to formulate a model for what I call Production-Based Learning and define a role for myself as a director-teacher.

From my analysis, I identify eight different kinds of learning that emerge from participation in formal theatre productions: disciplinary, personal, interactional, emotional, expressive, responsive, cultural, and organisational learning. This demonstrates the power of formal theatre productions as facilitators of both disciplinary and life-learning, and indicates the potential of Production-Based Learning as a pedagogic practice for drama in higher education.

DEDICATION

For my father, Philip Meskin, who gave me the gift of stories, taught me to love learning, and ensured I understood the meaning of justice

and

For my mother, Paddy Meskin, who showed me what it means to live a 'good' life, whose courage inspires me every day, and whose love is the cornerstone of my life

and

For Rachael, Ethan, Giselle, and Emma, who are the heart of my heart, and who remind me what it's all for and why it matters

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	II
ABSTRACT	III
DEDICATION	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	XII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	XIII
PROLOGUE: A BEGINNING	1
ACT ONE: A METHODOLOGICAL STORY	3
SCENE 1: DRAWING THE MAP	4
1.1 MYSELF IN CONTEXT	6
1.2 MYSELF AND MY REASONS	7
1.3 MYSELF AND THE THESIS	9
<i>i. Research focus</i>	9
<i>ii. Objectives</i>	10
<i>iii. Critical questions.</i>	12
<i>iv. Literature and conceptual framework/s</i>	13
<i>v. Methodology</i>	15
1.4 MYSELF AND THE FIELD	17
1.5 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS	18
SCENE 2: MAPPING MY METHODOLOGICAL STORY	21
2.1 LOCATING MYSELF IN THE RESEARCH LANDSCAPE	22
<i>i. A qualitative approach</i>	22
<i>ii. Paradigm or paradigms?</i>	23
2.2 FINDING A HOME IN SELF-STUDY	25
2.3 WHAT IS SELF-STUDY?	26
2.4 UNDERSTANDING PRACTICE	29
2.5 REFLECTION AND REFLEXIVITY	31
2.6 NARRATIVE	33
2.7 THE SELF-STUDY FRAMEWORK	34
<i>i. Personal and self-initiated</i>	36
<i>ii. Improvement of practice</i>	37
<i>iii. A collaborative, interactive process</i>	38
<i>iv. Transparent, multiple qualitative methods</i>	40
1) Personal History Self-Study	41
2) Memory Work	42

3) Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN)	44
4) Bricolage	46
5) Creative Analytic Practice (CAP)	47
<i>v. Validation through examples and making knowledge public</i>	49
2.8 PARTICIPANTS AND DATA	53
2.9 PRESENTING MY THESIS	58
2.10 CONCLUSION	59
ACT TWO: A DIRECTOR-TEACHER'S STORY	60
SCENE 3: DIRECTING ROOTS – SCENES FROM A PERSONAL HISTORY NARRATIVE	61
3.1 I WAS ALWAYS A 'DRAMA QUEEN'. . .	62
3.2 A WHOLE NEW WORLD. . .	64
3.3 THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY. . .	66
3.4 WHAT NEXT?	67
3.5 OLD PLACES, NEW BEGINNINGS	68
3.6 FINDING NEW ROUTES. . .	70
3.7 ANOTHER LEAP. . .	72
3.8 CONCEPTUALISING DIRECTING PRACTICE	72
<i>i. A reason for doing it</i>	73
<i>ii. Directors and actors – an interactive relationship</i>	75
3.9 DIRECTING IN ACADEMIA	78
SCENE 4: LEARNING ROUTES – SCENES FROM A SCHOLARLY PERSONAL NARRATIVE	82
4.1 THE FREEDOM TO THINK	83
4.2 CHOOSING TO LEARN	84
4.3 ACTIVE LEARNING	85
4.4 LEARNING COMMUNITIES	86
4.5 LEARNING IN A NEW SPACE	88
4.6 LEARNING THROUGH FAILURE	89
4.7 LEARNING AS A NOVICE EDUCATOR	90
4.8 LESSONS LEARNED	91
4.9 LEARNING (AND TEACHING) AS A UNIVERSITY LECTURER	93
4.10 MOVING FORWARD	94
ACT THREE: AN EDUCATIONAL STORY	95
SCENE 5: BETWIXT AND BETWEEN DRAMA, THEATRE, AND PRODUCTION – NAVIGATING THE MINEFIELD	96
5.1 OPENING SALVOS	97
5.2 THE SHOT ACROSS THE BOW	100
5.3 BATTLE LINES ARE DRAWN	101
5.4 AN UNEASY TRUCE	103
5.5 BREAKING THE SIEGE	105

5.6 A SECOND FRONT	105
5.7 THE HOME FRONT	109
5.8 NO-MAN'S LAND	111
5.9 LEARNING COURAGE UNDER FIRE	116
5.10 COMING IN FROM THE COLD	118
5.11 A PLACE AT THE TABLE?	120
SCENE 6: EDUCATION – MAPPING A “NEW” WORLD	122
6.1 THE EXPERIENCE IS ALL . . .	124
<i>i. Dewey, experience, and education</i>	125
<i>ii. Experiential learning perspectives</i>	129
6.2 THE ‘HOUSE’ I BUILD – CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE	134
<i>i. Social constructivism</i>	136
<i>ii. Becoming a constructivist teacher</i>	140
6.3 LIFE IN THE LEARNING PARADIGM	141
6.4 SEARCHING FOR DEEP LEARNING	143
6.5 EDUCATING WITH THE ARTS – OPENING DOORS	145
6.6 FINISHING THE MAP	150
ACT FOUR: PARTICIPANTS’ STORIES	153
SCENE 7: PARTICIPANT STORIES – LEARNING BY THEATRE	154
7.1 SETTING UP THE STORIES	154
7.2 FINDING A WAY IN	157
7.3 UNDERSTANDING CREATIVE ANALYTIC PRACTICE (CAP)	158
7.4 THEATRE AND CAP	160
7.5 THE PLAY’S THE THING. . .	162
7.6 CODING THE DATA	164
SCENE 8: MAPPING THE PARTICIPANTS’ STORIES	169
8.1 PROLOGUE / SCENE 1 – OPENING THE UNOPENED DOOR	170
8.2 SCENE 2 – ON DOING PRODUCTIONS	170
8.3 SCENE 3 – IT MATTERS BECAUSE. . .	172
8.4 SCENE 4 – ON THE PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE	173
8.5 SCENE 5 – A TEACHING MOMENT	175
8.6 SCENE 6 – ON LEARNING THE DISCIPLINE	176
8.7 SCENE 7 – AND NOW FOR THE EXPERTS. . .	178
8.8 SCENE 8 – ON LEARNING THE SELF	180
<i>i. Lessons for the self</i>	181
<i>ii. Lessons for the self with others</i>	182
<i>iii. Transferable lessons</i>	184
8.9 SCENE 9 – MAKING THE JOURNEY	188

8.10 SCENE 10 – ON SEEING REFLECTIONS OF MYSELF	189
8.11 SCENE 11 – ON THE FUNCTION OF PRODUCTIONS	192
8.12 EPILOGUE – IN THE END IS THE BEGINNING	196
8.13 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER	197
ACT FIVE: A RESEARCH STORY	200
SCENE 9: CONVERGING ROUTES – DIRECTING, TEACHING, LEARNING AND PRODUCTIONS	201
PART A: WHAT ARE THEY LEARNING?	202
9.1 FIRST, THE THEATRE ITSELF. . .	203
9.2 AND NOW FOR THE REST. . .	205
<i>i. The 4 Cs: Critical thinking</i>	212
<i>ii. The 4 Cs: Communication</i>	213
<i>iii. The 4 Cs: Collaboration</i>	214
<i>iv. The 4Cs: Creativity</i>	215
9.3 PUTTING THEM ALL TOGETHER	217
PART B: HOW IS THE LEARNING HAPPENING?	218
9.4 PLAY AND THE NOTION OF FUN	218
9.5 ACTIVATING THE IMAGINATION	220
9.6 ACTING, IDENTIFICATION AND EMPATHY	221
9.7 THE ENSEMBLE AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE	222
9.8 SPONTANEITY AND THE IMPROVISATIONAL IMPULSE	224
9.9 EXPERIENCING FLOW	227
PART C: WHY IS THE LEARNING HAPPENING?	229
9.10 REFLEXIVITY	230
9.11 DIALOGIC LEARNING	232
9.12 THE PRESENCE OF THE AUDIENCE	233
9.13 RECOGNITION	236
9.14 THE FORMAL THEATRE PRODUCTION AS SITE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING	237
SCENE 10: A MODEL FOR PRODUCTION-BASED LEARNING	240
10.1 PRODUCTION-BASED LEARNING	240
10.2 THE TAXONOMY OF SIGNIFICANT LEARNING	243
10.3 THE ELEMENTS OF THE TAXONOMY	244
10.4 APPLYING THE TAXONOMY TO PBL	250
<i>i. Foundational Knowledge</i>	250
<i>ii. Application</i>	251
<i>iii. Integration</i>	253
<i>iv. Human Dimension</i>	254
<i>v. Caring</i>	256
<i>vi. Learning How to Learn</i>	257

10.5 STRUCTURING PBL	260
10.6 THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR-TEACHER IN PBL	263
EPILOGUE: WHAT REMAINS. . .	267
A TICKET TO TRAVEL	268
A PASSPORT	268
POINTS ON THE MAP	269
TRAVELLING COMPANIONS	270
THE TRACKS OF MY LEARNING	271
UNVISITED PLACES	272
ITINERARIES FOR FUTURE TRAVEL	273
MY FOOTPRINTS	273
COMING HOME	274
REFERENCES	278
APPENDICES	320
APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE	321
APPENDIX 2: CHANGE OF TITLE	322
APPENDIX 3: MY PERSONAL HISTORY NARRATIVE	323
APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONS FROM THE RSI	344
APPENDIX 5: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS	345
APPENDIX 6: UKZN PRODUCTION LIST 1995-2019	348
APPENDIX 7: FORMS OF DRAMATIC EDUCATION	350
APPENDIX 8: THE DATA-PLAY SCRIPT	351
THEATRE ROOTS, LEARNING ROUTES – MAKING THE MAP	351
APPENDIX 9: WORD-PORTRAIT EXAMPLES	373
APPENDIX 10: DATA ANALYSIS MATERIALS	381
APPENDIX 11: SAMPLE PBL CURRICULUM	387
APPENDIX 12: SAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT LETTER	390
APPENDIX 13: SAMPLE CONSENT FORM	392
APPENDIX 14: TURNITIN REPORT	393

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1. A diagrammatic representation of the twin foci of my study.</i>	11
<i>Figure 2. The Idiot's Guide to Self-Study (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018, p. 45).</i>	35
<i>Figure 3. "As You Like It" (1994). Photograph by Jillian Hurst.</i>	70
<i>Figure 4. "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" (1995). Photograph by Jillian Hurst.</i>	71
<i>Figure 5. The tenets of my directing practice.</i>	80
<i>Figure 6. Composite diagram of my directing practice with learning principles added.</i>	81
<i>Figure 7. A conceptual web of the relationship between theatre and drama in relation to productions.</i>	99
<i>Figure 8. My educational bricolage 'map'.</i>	124
<i>Figure 9. A diagrammatic representation of educational theory in relation to formal theatre productions.</i>	152
<i>Figure 10. Educational bricolage 'tree'.</i>	169
<i>Figure 11. Educational bricolage becoming the formal theatre production tree.</i>	198
<i>Figure 12. Visualising the emerging data about learning through formal theatre productions.</i>	199
<i>Figure 13. Learning streams from formal theatre productions.</i>	203
<i>Figure 14. Life-learning areas of PBL.</i>	207
<i>Figure 15. Word cloud representing learning from formal theatre productions.</i>	239
<i>Figure 16. Connecting the elements of my thesis – education, dramatic education, formal theatre productions, and significant learning.</i>	242
<i>Figure 17. Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning (2013, p. 35).</i>	245
<i>Figure 18. Relating Fink and Bloom's taxonomies (Brewley, Boindala & Sinclair, 2015, p. 31).</i>	247
<i>Figure 19. Production-Based Learning and Fink's Taxonomy.</i>	259

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AT	:	Applied Theatre
BA	:	Bachelor of Arts
CAP	:	Creative Analytic Practice
DIE	:	Drama-in-Education
LA	:	Los Angeles
LP	:	Learning Paradigm
MA	:	Master of Arts
MFA	:	Master of Fine Arts
P21	:	The Partnership for 21 st Century Learning
PBL	:	Production-Based Learning
PhD	:	Doctor of Philosophy
RSI	:	Reciprocal Self Interview
SIG	:	Special Interest Group
SPN	:	Scholarly Personal Narrative
SRR	:	Self-Reflexive Research Group
S-STTEP	:	Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practice
TES	:	Transformative Education(al) Studies
TFD	:	Theatre for Development
TIE	:	Theatre-in-Education
UCLA	:	University of California, Los Angeles
UKZN	:	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UND	:	University of Natal, Durban
US	:	United States of America
ZPD	:	Zone of Proximal Development

PROLOGUE: A BEGINNING

I am a theatre-maker, a creative artist. I make the theatre I make because of who I am, where I am, what I believe, and what I value.

I am also an educator, a facilitator for learning. I educate in the way that I do because of who I am, where I am, what I believe, and what I value.

My first love is the theatre; my passion is for creating on-stage magic that can transport us, challenge us, and inspire us. However, I make such theatre primarily in an educative context, a space of teaching and learning. I seek to make theatre of which I can be proud and which speaks to my ontological position in the world; but I also make it out of pragmatic need and contextual specificity. Theatre-making is not my primary job in my context—that is teaching—but I believe that it is through my theatre-making that the most profound, the deepest, and most effective teaching happens; that it is in these circumstances that real learning happens – not just facts, or ideas, or exam preparation, but deep learning, about the self, about the self and the other, about identity, agency, critical thinking, and engaged living. This thesis is about interrogating that belief.

I always wanted to be an artist—an artist of the stage. I have been fortunate to practice my art for some time and in so doing, to offer my own interpretation of the world around—and within—me. The art of which I speak is directing. Directing is a strange art: It produces an artefact that has no permanence or materiality. It exists only in the ephemeral moments of the performance, in the living interaction between actors and audience that makes the theatrical event. The director's art is to all intents and purposes, invisible – especially when it is done well, ironically. When we think of a production we have seen, we remember the performances, the design, the music, the lights, the costumes, the lines; very seldom do we see—or consciously recognise—the director's work. All this work is done to make a work of art that is formed of the skills and artistry of others. And yet, the director is like the magician who knows that if you see how the trick is done, it is no longer magical; thus, as directors, we create the invisible framework on which rests the entirety of the theatrical event.

I never imagined becoming a director; I wanted to be an actor, I wanted the applause and the accolades afforded a performer, I wanted to lose myself in the lives of myriad characters, to tell stories and live in many different skins. And yet, I have become a director.

I also never imagined becoming a teacher; I did not want to teach, I wanted to do. I had no desire to stand on the side-lines cheering others on, helping them to find success, I wanted the success for myself. And yet, I have become a teacher.

And it is from this as-yet-unmapped space of a director-teacher artist that I tell my story, exploring its connection to my personal history and the lives of those with whom it has collided. In this way, I seek to map the roots of my practice, and the routes along which it might lead me as I pursue a journey of becoming.

ACT ONE: A METHODOLOGICAL STORY

“We can think of self-narrative then as a series of conversations with particular and generalized others within one’s own consciousness. Through these conversations, an individual decides what and how to write, debating various events, actions, emotions, and so on with imagined others, be they particular or general. On occasion, the writer might even engage particular others in ‘actual’ discussions about the project, either verbally or through written form, as part of an effort to better understand possible reactions. Consequently, because the self-narrative is an intimate and intense series of imagined and/or actual conversations, it produces a new self.”

(Rhoads, 2015, p. 240-241)

SCENE 1: DRAWING THE MAP

This study seeks to interrogate my practice as a director and teacher of theatre, working in higher education in South Africa. Through my research, I want to explore whether my work as a director of formal theatre productions at a university can facilitate learning of both theatre skills and life skills for those participating in such productions. Based on my findings, I want to explore the possibilities of producing a model for teaching through formal theatre productions. To fulfil these aims, I am undertaking a personal history self-study to explore my practice and how it affects those with whom I work, specifically in relation to teaching and learning for the twenty-first century. Because I am both an artist-practitioner and a teacher, I want to be able to connect my directing and educational practices, both of which draw on my “personal practical knowledge” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 579); in particular, I want to understand how the roles of director and teacher might intersect, overlap and inform each other within my theatre-making practice. My main research objective is to explore the learning potential of formal theatre productions (as distinct from classroom learning), from the perspectives of making (the director), participating in (the students), and educating through (the teacher), such productions, particularly in institutions of higher learning.

It is important to state at the outset that the notion of learning through drama is not original; it is a well-established, well-researched field of study. There is a long history of drama as a participatory learning method, involving drama as methodology, Drama-in-Education (DIE), Theatre-in-Education (TIE), and Theatre for Development (TFD) practices, all of which are fully enmeshed in the existing literature around drama (and theatre) in relation to education and learning. I am, however, concerned to elucidate a different connection between drama and learning, one that is not central to the dominant modes of what is collectively termed “process drama” (O’Toole, 1992). While similar educative principles are relevant to my study, the way in which these principles play out is different. What unites the various models of process drama, is the focus on participatory learning, where the work is structured with the learning imperative uppermost and intended to occur irrespective of the performance dynamics. I am interested in what I am calling “formal theatre productions,” by which I mean productions that are directed in formal theatre settings, where the primary imperative is to produce theatrical works, performed by students, for

public audience reception. This creates a different experience from the more developmental and process-focused, participant-centred models.¹ Here the educative goal is often not explicitly stated or interrogated. In fact, there are many who would be surprised to know that there is an educative element at all. Rather than educating, the role of the director within this model is to draw together all of the various aspects of the theatre to deliver a coherent aesthetic work for the audience.

I have chosen to use a self-study approach because I see my directorial practice as being rooted in my sense of self, given that directing as an art form, like other art forms, must negotiate its nature as the expression of the self and the self's connection to the world. The world in which I practice my art is one whose primary function is educative. Students come to university to study, to learn, and thus to equip themselves for the real world of work. Given this focus, one might ask the question: Why would participating in what are essentially extra-curricular events that are not integrally connected to the syllabi they are studying, be of value? It is my contention that a different kind of educative process is embedded in the experience of participating in formal theatre productions. On one level, the students involved learn technical and useful theatre skills in action, rather than (purely) in theory; on a more profound level, production work can function like a change agent in shaping, refining, stimulating, and facilitating a different kind of learning, one less rooted in course syllabi but integrally connected to the journey of discovery leading to self-determination and consciousness. In this study, I will therefore explore how being involved in formal theatre productions I directed affected those students who participated in them, how they experienced my directing and what effect, if any, this work had on them in their educational development.

My central research question, thus, asks what value participation in formal theatre productions—and particularly those I have directed—might have in relation to teaching and learning for students in an institution of higher education? To answer this question, I will interrogate how my practice as a theatre director intersects with my position as a university

¹ I will discuss specifically the kind of learning potentially generated through participation in formal theatre productions later in this thesis. However, I think it is important to note this distinction here as a key parameter for my study. I should add that I am not dismissing the importance of process drama in the education context, nor am I rejecting its conceptual underpinnings. What I am seeking to do, however, is to explore the potential for more traditional models of theatre, too, to be vehicles for learning within the higher education context.

educator by examining what effect participation in productions I directed had on students who were involved in them, specifically in relation to whether—and how—these productions may or may not facilitate life-learning.

In this thesis, then, I will trace my evolution as a director who teaches, through a personal history self-study in which I will explore the formal theatre productions I have directed as sites of teaching and learning. In so doing, I hope to explore the place and power of formal theatre productions as pedagogical practice within the field of dramatic education, and argue for their inclusion.

1.1 Myself in Context

I have worked as a lecturer in the Drama and Performance Studies department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College) (UKZN) since 1995. In my time there, I have taught in almost every area of the discipline—from communications, to textual analysis, to theatre history, to educational drama and other forms of applied theatre (AT). My primary interest, however, has always been in the theatre and, more specifically, the various elements of theatre practice. In particular, I have concentrated on acting (my first love) and directing (my major practice). While I started off as an actor wanting to perform, my focus has shifted—sometimes slowly, sometimes in great leaps—toward the other side of the stage, and I have found a home of sorts in the (metaphorical) director’s chair. Directing has provided an opportunity to remain a theatre-maker as well as a teacher, and has generated a deep sense of connection between my creative work as an artist, my educative work as a teacher, and my research work as an academic. The act of directing has woven together the threads of these different processes to establish a director-teacher space in which I root my consciousness, my subjectivity, and my practice. This study seeks to understand, interrogate and explore that space and its impact on both my creative practice and my educative purpose.

In thinking about my practice as director and teacher, I was struck by Jonathan Cole’s (2008) astute observation that despite the concerns of the director in academia being “split between mentoring students and directing a play in an artistically successful manner. . . the available literature concerning the methods and practices of directing contains very little discussion of this double task and its peculiar challenges” (p. 191). Much of the impetus for my study derives from wanting to address this gap, since, like Cole (2008), I believe that

“The role the director in higher education plays is unique, and it is one that has clear and valuable connections to the structure and organization² of the higher educational classroom” (p. 192). Hence, from my self-study of my practice as a director-teacher in higher education I hope to elucidate the challenges and potential educative rewards of this unique position. My study is thus retrospective, in that it looks back over my more than twenty years as a director in a drama department in an effort to trace how that work intersects with my role as an educator. In this sense, I am investigating who I am in my context, as well as what, how and why I do what I do (De Lange & Grossi, 2009).

Writing about how directors learn to direct, Tom Mitchell (1992) noted “idiosyncrasy in directing practice” (p. 52) as a key phenomenon, and Richard Trousdell (1992) asserts that “Most directors learn their art through practice” (p. 25). In other words, directing is a subjective act and it is learnt through doing. When I direct, I am not simply concerned to make a work for an audience (although this aspect is a critical component of my argument in this thesis); I have to direct in a way that remembers, and resonates with, the educational odyssey on which my students (the participants in my productions) are embarked. Finding a way to navigate the intersections between these two goals is the core of my thesis.

1.2 Myself and my Reasons

Exploring my work as a South African artist and educator, I find myself thinking that in South Africa today, we are negotiating complex socio-political and cultural phenomena deriving from the legacy of both colonialism and apartheid, and from the demands of Africanisation. We articulate our environment as multicultural, but, in practice, much of our experience is divisive and divisory. We have a tradition of protest theatre which utilised workshopping practices but offered (of necessity, given the then-context) a primarily didactic and polemic view of the world, calculated to elicit a particular conscientising response as resistance to the apartheid regime. We are part of the ever-shrinking global village, but we seek to maintain a local identity even if we do not agree on what that ‘local identity’ looks like. I believe that theatre offers a space for engaging the past, the present and the future, through which engagements we may explore our conceptualisation and representation of self.

² Throughout this thesis, I use British spelling except when quoting sources directly, where I retain the original spelling.

This happens because the process of acting—and consequently of directing—necessitates an engagement with multiple signifying systems simultaneously and a recognition of the power of multiple voices, all of which contributes to an understanding of the world as a complex environment of polyvocality (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015, 2018b, 2019) in which our understandings and positions must always be challenged against those of others in a space of dialogue. The complexity that I see in my own context shapes my need to make theatre, to teach about it, and to reflect on my practice of it.

When I think about my own experience of learning as both an undergraduate and postgraduate student of drama, I confess that I remember very little of what I learned in lectures and tutorials. By contrast, I can recall vividly, and in some detail, all the productions in which I was involved, whether in a significant leading role or as a member of a non-speaking chorus. Investigating why that is the case has led me to this self-study. I participated in numerous productions as a student, working with a host of different directors each of whom taught me something. When I think of myself as a director, I wonder what lessons I am teaching. Mary Lynn Hamilton & Stefinee Pinnegar (1998) suggest that self-study is

The study of one's self, one's actions, one's ideas . . . it is autobiographical, historical, cultural and political . . . it draws on one's life, but it is more than that. Self-study also involves a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known and ideas considered. (p. 265)

I want to draw on these ideas to uncover the roots of my practice as a director-teacher.

The process of directing involves constant interaction with the actors—in my own context, students—who form the material embodiment of one's directorial ideas. Debates about the position of drama and theatre in the curriculum abound; usually these debates devolve into the dichotomy of theory and practice. In the Drama department at UKZN today, we pursue a praxis-based curriculum which insists on the holistic interactional nature of drama and theatre, of theory and practice, in the study of the discipline. However, our current praxis does not always include formal production work, which, I believe, offers one method for drama praxis to be made apparent, and this is the first element of the learning process I want to explore. I am, however, more interested in learning that goes beyond the theatrical learning (what to do on stage, when to do it, how to do it) and moves further into the realm of what are often generically referred to as “life skills.” It is this kind of learning,

implicit rather than explicit, experiential rather than cognitive, and holistic rather than curriculum-based that I want to interrogate through this exploration of formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning.

1.3 Myself and the Thesis

i. Research focus

This thesis was born out of my passion for directing and my determination to recognise that directing as a critical component of my work, rather than something pursued simply for the sake of fun, entertainment or applause. I wanted to write about who I was as a director, how I got there, and why, because what I did in that role mattered more to me than most of my other work. In grappling with these issues, and through an exhaustive personal history self-study of my directing practice, I came to understand that my concerns were not so much about directing *per se*, but rather the value attributable to the results of my directing: the formal theatre productions I made. I came, too, to understand that the value of these formal theatre productions lay primarily in the experiences afforded to those who participated, which seemed to me to indicate a deep and profound learning, both as theatre students and as human beings. From that understanding emerged my desire to explore if such learning was indeed happening, and if so, how and why. While my final thesis is less about my directing and more about the teaching and learning value of formal theatre productions, it is only through learning to understand my directing practice—and my director-self—that I was able to negotiate its pedagogic implications.

My thesis is rooted in the belief that my work as a director is not separable from my work as a teacher; the two are integrally connected, informing and influencing one another in a symbiotic way, so much so that the line between the two functions has, for me, long since become blurred. I teach the way I do because of the way I direct—the art form that has become the primary focus for my creative expression—and I direct the way I do because of my educative practice. In this PhD, I seek to understand how this hybrid director-teacher I have become functions, and to discover if what I sensed was happening—an alchemical connection between my creative practice and my students' learning—was indeed taking place. To find the answers I was seeking, I needed to take myself metaphorically through the

looking glass of time, to look back and excavate my experiences, to test my conception of myself as a creative artist and educator through engaging with those with whom I have worked over the years, and, through this process, interrogate under a focused spotlight, my construction of theatre-making practice as teaching and learning.

I direct, but I do not work alone; the people I direct (the actors) are, in this instance, university students. Making a theatre production requires constant interplay between the director and the directed; there are, of course, others who contribute to the making of a production—set designers, lighting designers, technical crew, and the like. However, for the purposes of this research I am focusing specifically on the director-actor relationship, since it is primarily through the actors' performances that the directorial concept can be communicated. Moreover, it is “the director's work with actors in an educational environment” (Cole, 2008, p. 191), I believe, that creates the space for learning as we practice “co-investigative theatre” (Cole, 2008, p. 192).

Similarly, I understand teaching in higher education as an interactive process, where learning occurs not through the simple transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, but rather through an interchange of ideas between teacher and student, and a focus on experiential learning. The parallels between the structure of the two halves of my director-teacher self are evident, in that both function dialogically to make and understand meaning. When that dialogue is interactive, it has the potential to produce the “sustained and substantial influence on the way people think, act, and feel” (Bain, 2004, p. 17) that is deep learning (Entwhistle, 2009). For me, the space of the production offers an environment where that kind of effective dialogue is possible; as Ronne Hartfield (1993) notes, “Learning happens when the teacher and the learner can risk a leap of the imagination, when the challenge of change and the challenge of difference are welcomed” (p. 18). I want to know if this is happening in my formal theatre productions.

ii. Objectives

The core research question in my thesis asks: What is the value of formal theatre productions in relation to teaching and learning in a higher education context? Addressing this question leads me to following objectives:

1. To examine my own practice as a director of formal theatre productions within a higher education context.
2. To examine whether—and how—my directing practice affects the students who participate in my formal theatre productions in relation to teaching and learning.
3. To determine how to incorporate formal theatre productions into dramatic education to operate as sites for teaching and learning.

The focus of the study, thus, is to interrogate the interactional relationship between my directing practice and the students' learning process. I see this interactional process as operating like a bridge between the two areas of my practice—directing and teaching (as shown diagrammatically below in Figure 1). I use this image to indicate the interconnectedness between the two aspects of my own practice, and how those twin concerns position the student (or the actor, in this case) at the centre of the process.

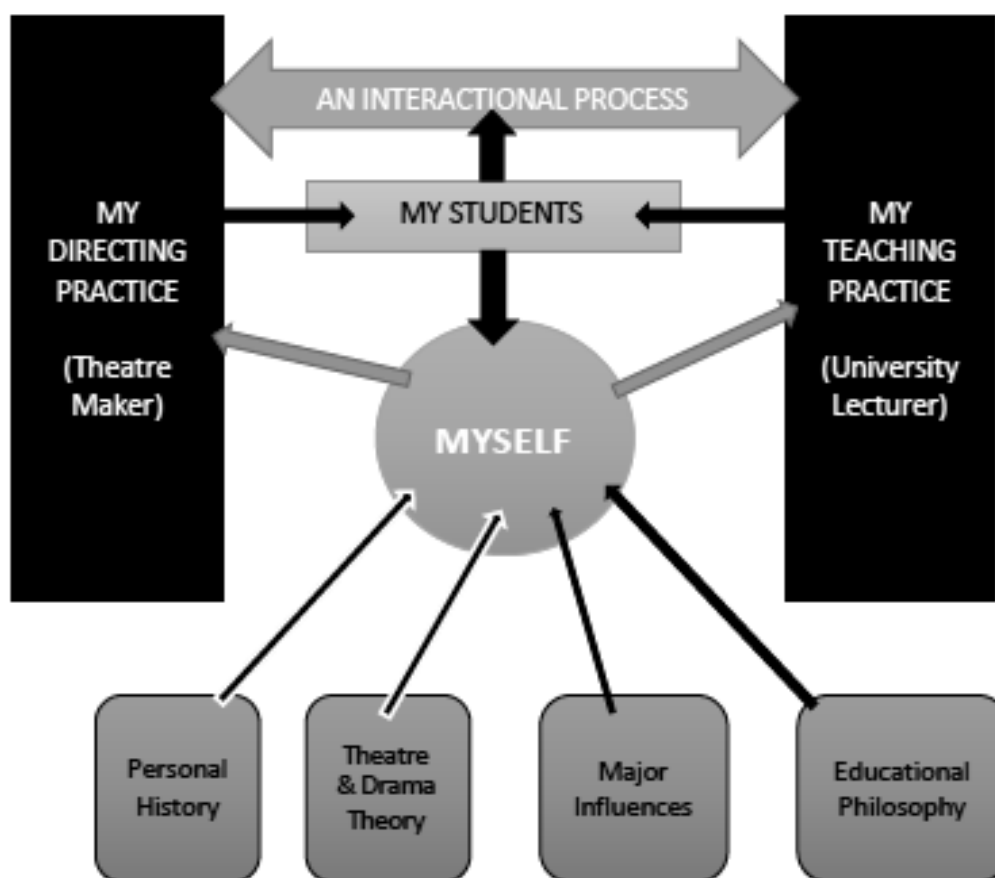


Figure 1. A diagrammatic representation of the twin foci of my study.

iii. Critical questions.

My objectives lead to the following critical questions that this study seeks to answer:

1. Who am I as a director-teacher?

To answer this question, which forms the core background to my study, I will use personal history self-study methods to map how directing and teaching intersect in my practice as an artist-educator.

2. How do I understand teaching and learning in relation to formal theatre productions?

To answer this question, I will use self-study methods, along with other approaches, to consider the relationship between what I do as a director and how I understand the processes of educational philosophy and practice, including:

- a. What is my teaching and learning philosophy and practice?
- b. How do I negotiate my role as a director-teacher?

3. What kinds of learning might emerge from the experience of being directed in formal theatre productions?

To answer this question, I will explore how participants experience my directing in formal theatre productions, specifically in relation to teaching and learning.

4. How can formal theatre productions be organised to operate as sites for teaching and learning?

Through addressing these questions, I hope to map a potential response to the main inquiry into the educative value of formal theatre productions in higher education contexts. My intention here is not to engage in curriculum development *per se*, but to offer a model of practice for teaching drama in higher education.

In sourcing participants, I have chosen to engage with ex-students, who have worked with me over the years and have shared their reflections. I have opted to use past students rather than current ones for two reasons: first, to avoid the possibility of the direct power relationship between teacher and student inhibiting the study (as I will explore further in

scene 2). Second, and more importantly, I am interested in these former students' memories of production work and of me as a director; I want to know how these production experiences impacted on them from a long-term perspective, where there has been time for the experiences, and their effect, to solidify and integrate into their life journeys. I ask the participants to think retrospectively, and then discuss their experiences as remembered, in order to reflect on the value these experiences have for them now.

iv. Literature and conceptual framework/s

The landscape of my research encompasses my study's focus on the relationship between formal theatre productions and education. Navigating that landscape has led me to multiple discourses of drama, theatre, and education, between—and within—which I have mapped the path of my study. I have, therefore, chosen to weave the various literature/s into the tapestry of my study rather than creating artificial boundaries between what might be considered literature, theory, or concept, since for me, they all overlap. I have done this in an effort to reflect the multi-layered and entangled nature of my thinking in relation to myself as director-teacher; rather than separating the strands of my web of practice and knowledge, I want to construct my landscape in a way that highlights the interconnectedness of the ideas and their (often) subconscious collisions with each other. In this, I am seeking to act upon Mary Lynn Hamilton's (1995) observation, "I had always been looking outside to find which person or theory matched my ideas—I never looked inside to see what fit with myself" (p. 32), by working from the inside, out.

To understand how directing and teaching intersect in formal theatre productions, I first sought to discover my identity as a director. Cole (2008) notes, "there is no hard evidence to confirm precisely how a professor directs. Such information is simply not available, nor it is attainable through empirical study or survey, since the act of observance or self-critique spoils the objectivity of such data" (p. 192). In the absence of this evidence, and in an attempt to connect my director-self to my teacher-self, I constructed a conceptual framework from within which to make sense of my practice. This framework, then, helps me to address the first concern of personal history self-study, namely "self-knowing and forming—and reforming—a professional identity" (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004, p. 907).

Exploring my understanding of teaching and learning in relation to my directing led me to develop a conceptual map covering dramatic education as a phenomenon as well as more general theories and philosophies around educational practice. Since I am considering teaching and learning through the lens of my individual understanding, I need to interrogate how that understanding has been formulated and what its tenets might be in order to elucidate “what current beliefs and values [I] bring into [my] practice” (Samaras, 2011, p. 95). To unpack the kinds of learning that might emerge through participation in formal theatre productions, my own beliefs about learning—and by extension, my understanding of how I teach as a creative artist—have to be contextualised if I am to find the answers to my questions. Cole (2008) observes that “the educational director must adapt the procedures learned to the specifics of the educational rehearsal hall—applying, softening, or reconstructing exercises and principles to fit the particular context in which the artistic endeavor is taking place” (p. 193). To do this requires reflection on what that context demands and how I as the director-teacher respond. In this sense, I engage with the second premise of personal history self-study, “modeling and testing effective reflection” (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 907).

I want to understand how my directing affects student participants in formal theatre productions. Cole (2008) notes that in contexts where genuine dialogue is taking place between teachers and students, “The result is a classroom dynamic where narration and reception are replaced by engaged praxis and confrontation of subject matter” (p. 195). I need to explore the connections between my understanding of what I do, and others’ experience of my actions in order to see if the two correlate, and I can only do that interactively. Thus, my part of the investigation is only one half of the research dynamic; the other half comes from critical engagement with those who can gauge the accuracy and trustworthiness of my beliefs. This requires vulnerability on my part in order to “disrobe, unveil, and engage in soul-searching truth about the self *while also* engaging in critical conversations, and most importantly, continuing to discover the alternative viewpoints of others” (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 910, original emphasis). My work is predicated on a basic understanding that I work as a director in a particular way because I am working in a context of higher education, rather than a professional or commercial venture; given that the primary purpose of a university is to foster learning, I need to understand how (or if) that learning might be a product of participation in formal theatre productions. In that process, as Cole (2008) observes, the director is catalyst rather than creator (p. 200).

The third aspect of personal history self-study is “pushing the boundaries of teaching” (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 907). Through the interweaving of the various theoretical and conceptual elements within my research, I hope to expand the parameters of what constitutes higher education in drama, by searching beyond its borders for a new kind of pedagogy. Hartfield (1993) states, “Through theatre, we can teach students to become more thoughtful and active in determining the quality of their own lives and the larger environments within which they must interact and which will ultimately be in their care” (p. 18). I seek to map a route to this goal through the border-crossing and transdisciplinary conceptual framing of my study.

v. Methodology

Given all of the above, I needed to find a way to integrate my research into directing and learning as phenomena, with an inward-looking, reflexive approach. I found this approach in self-study, and the more I read about self-study, the more I began to understand that at the core of the self-study premise is not simply the self, but rather the self in relation to other. This was a serendipitous discovery since it mirrors in many ways the collaborative nature of theatre making; as a director, I cannot create without actors to realise my ideas in stage action, so an approach that engages a relational structure of knowledge seems especially powerful for those, like me, who work in the theatre. Further, I could not satisfy my curiosity about the effect that participation in theatre production had on student actors, without hearing their stories and reflections. Both aspects of my study, therefore, seemed to resonate with this new (to me) methodology.

Within the self-study realm, there are multiple possible research paths to follow, including narrative studies, memory studies, artefact studies, visual studies and others. The path I have chosen is to embark on a personal history self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Cole & Knowles, 1996; Graham, 1989; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1994; Krall, 1998; Samaras et al., 2004). Here, the basic intention is to write a personal history, a story of the self so to speak, and then to explore and interrogate that narrative by subjecting it to rigorous questioning, probing and unpacking. Given my belief that my history has shaped my identity and my practice as a director-teacher, examining this history is critical to finding the answers

to my research questions. I did not come to this point quickly or easily; I travelled down many rabbit holes which lead me in multiple different directions that ended in cul-de-sacs for my research. When I found the personal history self-study method, it was as if someone turned a light on or rang a bell in my mind, opening the door to my exploration.

However, I could not adopt self-study uncritically, especially since it came from a different academic world to the one I normally inhabit. Self-study as a methodology is more commonly associated with teacher education where it first began. The premise there is that teachers reflect on their own experience as learners in order to improve their teaching practice. For teaching practice, I substitute directing-teaching practice, thus using self-study in a similar way to explore that practice in order to deepen my self-knowledge and to improve what I do both as a director and a teacher. In addition to the improvement imperative, I want to consider how directing might provide a pathway to experiential learning for those who participate in formal theatre productions in a university context. I am, thus, bringing self-study, theatre-making, and teaching into a dialogic relationship, stretching the methodology to include not just teaching but also the creative process.

Key to all of this work is the notion of reflexivity. In numerous discussions with critical friends, I have explored what it means to be reflexive, and whether or not there are significant differences between reflexivity and reflection. For me, reflexivity is rooted in asking the question why. When we reflect, we look back on and/or try really to see something (metaphorically as well as, possibly, literally); when we are reflexive, I believe, we are asking why we see and remember and reflect in the way that we do. This process is deeply connected to theatre practice; as an actor, one must constantly ask why a character pursues a particular objective in order to perform the role with any degree of success. Similarly, as a director, I am involved in a continuous internal debate between the multiple potential options available as choices in the directing process; to choose any one requires a consideration of why. It feels almost instinctive now for me to think reflexively and it is, I believe, a critical component of learning. Thus, I was excited to find the self-study methodology with its deeply rooted focus on reflexivity as the starting point for understanding. Here, I occupy the twin roles of the researcher and the researched simultaneously; to avoid the potential risk of self-indulgence or self-promotion in the process (pitfalls self-study practitioners must safeguard against), critical reflexivity is essential. I will expand on methodology and the methods I have employed in scene 2.

1.4 Myself and the Field

My research offers three potential areas of contribution, related to my directing and teaching practices, others' experience of those practices, and the intersection between directing and learning. The first area of contribution is rooted in my interrogation of the learning potential within formal theatre productions, and through that interrogation to make explicit and theorise the role of formal theatre productions as another kind of practice within the teaching of drama in higher education. Such theorising applies to my role as a director-teacher, and could potentially allow for the development of a model for learning through productions.

My second contribution relates more specifically to directing, as the basis for my discoveries. Cole (2008) notes that much current literature on directing is "is procedurally bound to and based on the author's understanding or experience of directing professionally" (p. 194), and laments that connections are not often drawn between individual directors and the broader field of directing as an art form. Initially, I wanted to address Cole's concern by tracing the development of my individual directorial history in order to theorise directing practice more generally. However, since my research evolved into a more focused interrogation of the value of formal theatre productions in an institution of higher learning, I have included, from my discussion of directing, only those aspects of relevance to this issue in the main body of my thesis.³ Nonetheless, I believe my theorisation of the directing process offers a useful contribution to the discourse and an area for further research.

As a third contribution, I hope to offer an argument to expand the parameters of self-study research more consciously beyond the realm of teaching and teacher education, and specifically to engage self-study as a methodology for creative artists to conduct practitioner inquiry and practice-based/practice-led research (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018).

My research crosses disciplinary borders: It is relevant to theatre studies particularly in relation to the growing discourse around studies of practitioner experience; to education

³ Part of my discussion about directing is my original personal history narrative, which is included in Appendix 3 for reference.

studies particularly in relation to experiential and deep learning models; to higher education studies particularly in relation to modes of learning in university drama departments; to the self-study research methodology in relation to expanding its reach and applicability beyond teacher education practice; and to theatre/drama in and for education studies, particularly in relation to the efficacy of formal theatre productions as sites for teaching and learning, and it is this gap in the current research that I most seek to fill.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

To present my thesis, I have chosen to use the frame of a play in five acts so that the disciplinary knowledge that supports and runs through my self-study narrative might be tacitly referenced. Thus, I have imagined the acts corresponding to aspects of conventional dramaturgical structure – inciting incident, exposition, rising action, climax, resolution.⁴ Remembering that my personal history is the springboard of my thesis, and that I am exploring my ideas and experiences through a series of narratives, I have identified each act of my play with an aspect of my self-study.

I ask you to remember that what you are reading is a narrative account of my life in theatre and education, and my attempt to understand the what, the how, and the why of my identity as a theatre artist, a theatre teacher, and a theatre researcher. I am stringing the beads of my life story on the necklace of my practice as artist, teacher, and researcher, in order to seek out the patterns that connect the many-coloured moments that are my lived experience. I do so, too, to find the “Spirit of the piece” (Bailey, 2003, p. 23), summoned from within my subjectivity and the consciousness that animates and activates my work. Through this process, I seek to connect all aspects of my narrative, clearly and accessibly, so that I can come to grips with my core research question.

Here, then, is the outline of my doctoral play:

Prologue: A Beginning

⁴ A detailed discussion of dramaturgical structure is outside the scope of my study; I note these terms only to frame my representation of my thesis as a ‘play.’ For more detail on dramaturgy, see Converse, 1995, Flitsos, 2011, and Kiely, 2016, among others.

This serves to offer an opening insight on how I see myself in relation to art, directing, and teaching.

Act I: A Methodological Story

In this act, I will present the focus, rationale, objectives, and outline of my study, and then discuss the methodology for this thesis. Since it was the starting point for my research, self-study is, for me, the inciting incident that sparked this research journey. Hence, I believe it is critical to begin the journey with my methodological story.

Act II: A Director-Teacher's Story

Here, using a personal history narrative, I will embark on the 'exposition' of my life as a director, a learner, and a teacher in order to sketch the outlines of my personal map. I seek here to establish my understanding of myself as a director-teacher, of my practice/s in that hybrid role, and the key ideas and people that have influenced me. To create my personal stories, I engage primarily with memory work, as well as my personal records, the archives of productions I have directed, and responses from my co-director and performer participants. These, then, become a key component of the data for my thesis.

Act III: An Educational Story

In this section of the thesis—constituting the 'rising action'—I will explore what Jack Whitehead (1998) calls my "autobiography of learning" (p. 11). Reflecting on myself as an educator in higher education, I will articulate my personal understanding of education while exploring the web of learning concepts that inform that understanding. In doing this, I am seeking to elucidate the kinds of learning I want to engender through formal theatre productions.

Act IV: Participants' Stories

My doctoral play climaxes in this act, where I examine the intersections between my practices as director and educator. From the data generated by my research participants, I will investigate the effect of the formal theatre productions on the learning process, and will seek to determine whether what I believe to be happening is actually taking place, and how.

Act V: A Research Story

In this act—the ‘resolution’ of my play—I will seek to assess the value of formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning. In exploring what, how, and why learning takes place (or does not), I hope to articulate an epistemological position in relation to the twin components of my practice—directing formal theatre productions and educating students in the contemporary South African higher education context—and to theorise that practice. Further, I will draw the threads of my thesis together by exploring how formal theatre productions might be organised to operate as sites of teaching and learning, and as fully integrated components of a drama education.

Epilogue: What Remains. . .

In concluding my study, I will return to the starting point in myself as director-teacher, in order to explore the consequences of my self-study on my practice as a theatre-maker/educator in this increasingly globalised and challenging world that is the twenty-first century.

My beliefs and my values—as evidenced in my theatre making practice and my educative process—are key to my interpretation of what Nancy Kindelan (2012) calls “artistic literacy,” which establishes learning experiences and creative thinking as critical components of a pedagogical philosophy that seeks to prepare our graduates for our current context. Knowledge gained through formal theatre productions is not only related to theatre itself, resonating beyond the immediate performance experience; it is the shaping of such knowledge that excites me as director and educator. My self-study is, finally, intended to locate myself in the need “to create a better future which is not yet in existence” (Whitehead, 1998, p. 11) for our students, our selves, and the world.

SCENE 2: MAPPING MY METHODOLOGICAL STORY

My PhD methodological story begins with myself as an academic and the idea of research—a world in which, for a long time, I felt I did not belong. Seeing myself primarily as a practitioner, I had little interest in the kind of research to which I had been exposed, which seemed disconnected from what I was actually doing in my academic life; what I wanted to do was research related to my actual work and my individual passions. I had already started doing this in my work with my friend, colleague and research partner, Tanya van der Walt,⁵ with whom I have had a collaborative relationship for more than ten years, directing productions, teaching, and writing together; but I had little idea as to how to go about doing this on the scale of a PhD. I had several false starts until I found my way to the world of self-study. To get there, I took a rather circuitous route, meandering through several potential methodological approaches, from narrative inquiry, through autoethnography, and finally to personal history self-study which is where this thesis really begins. As Tanya and I note, “Self-study has offered a home in which we can explore our practice in a way that recognises the complexity of our selves, and creates space for interrogating how that complexity drives our pedagogic and creative experience” (Meskin & van der Walt, 2014, p. 56).⁶

It has not been a journey without obstacles, both personal and methodological. I have never studied education formally as a discipline, so working in a context where the discourse was entirely unfamiliar to me was challenging. My research experience (such as it was), was located purely within the Humanities, and my Master’s degree was in Acting, so exploring the myriad new ideas, while interesting, was also daunting. Mid-way through my studies I was diagnosed with cancer, and spent a year away from my thesis focusing on recovering my health; this also had a profound impact on how my study evolved, practically, intellectually and emotionally. I frequently wanted to quit the entire project but through the recursive research process, in dialogue with my critical friends, and by following the sometimes-twisted pathways of reflexive thinking, I discovered the “grit” (Duckworth, Peterson,

⁵ Tanya has played a significant role in my research journey in a number of different areas; thus, her name will appear frequently in this thesis, and I will refer to her hereafter only by her first name.

⁶ As part of our ongoing collaborative relationship, Tanya and I, along with Lorraine Singh, have published a number of papers that engage with our use of self-study as a methodology for interrogating our practice as artists, researchers, and teachers (Meskin & van der Walt, 2014, 2017, 2018; Meskin, Singh, & van der Walt, 2014). Since much of my methodological story is covered in these articles, in order to avoid self-plagiarism, I have quoted from these papers directly when necessary.

Matthews & Kelly, 2007) I needed to stay the course, to find my own researcher-voice and explore my own research concerns. Self-study provided the map for this journey, as well as the points of departure into other realms of thinking; how that process evolved is the subject matter of this scene in my thesis-play.

2.1 Locating Myself in the Research Landscape

The chief attraction of self-study for me lies in its flexibility and openness as a methodology. However, before moving on to discuss how I have engaged with self-study and other forms of research, I want to locate my work within the broader research discourse.

i. A qualitative approach

The first point to note is that my research is qualitative, and rooted in “the presumption that meaning and human practice merit scientific interest as genuine and significant phenomena in their own right” (Weinberg, 2002, p. 13). Outlining the nature of qualitative research, Sharan Merriam (2009) observes that it seeks to understand “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). This is the kind of knowledge that I want to uncover in my thesis in order to understand the relationship between my directing practice in formal theatre productions and my teaching in a university drama department. I am not concerned here with statistics or verifiable facts, but in how those participating in my productions have experienced them, what I can learn about myself as a director-teacher from exploring that phenomenon, and how it engages teaching and learning.

I employ qualitative research as a means to engage with the subjective meanings of experience. In such research, the researcher’s position is central—as it is in self-study—since, as John Creswell (2009) points out, “Researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (p. 8). Recognising the subjectivity of the researcher, and a necessity for engagement with how the self is positioned within the research, is also critical for the self-study project. As Pinnegar

and Hamilton (2009) note, “we may stand in the present, but our history – personal and social – affects our stories and potential for change” (p. 9).

A final point about the significance of the qualitative approach: Creswell (2009) explains that individual subjective meanings are, of necessity, “varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas” (p. 8). This notion of complexity and multiplicity underpins my own worldview and the crux of the theatrical process, which engages multiple stories, multiple voices, and multiple modes of expression in crafting its representations.

ii. Paradigm or paradigms?

Until I began working on this thesis, I was unaware of what Peter Taylor and Milton Medina (2013) call the “paradigm wars” (p. 1), so it was somewhat daunting to be asked, at the first meeting of our formal research cohort,⁷ to define the paradigm in which my research would be located. A crash course in reading several volumes on qualitative research (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Meriam, 2009; Willis, 2007, among others) ensued, leading me to the conclusion that my research is located primarily in the interpretive⁸ paradigm, which is “characterized by a concern for the individual” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 21). The interpretive paradigm posits that we understand the world in relative terms based on our experience of it, thus allowing for the interrogation of experience as a valid research concern. Indeed, as Cohen et al. (2007) go on to explain, “The central endeavour in the context of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience” (p. 21). I am interested in my own subjective experiences as a director, the experiences of my students as participants in the production making process, and in the intersections between the two. Hence, I locate my study within the interpretive paradigm which offers the ontological, epistemological and methodological space in which to interrogate those experiences.

⁷ In the Education programme at UKZN, PhD students participate in a research cohort, separately from their individual supervisors, which it intended to assist initially with preparation for writing the thesis proposal.

⁸ There is some confusion over terminology in regards to this paradigm. Some (Guba and Lincoln, 2005, for example) call this paradigm constructivist; some call it constructivist-interpretivist (Creswell, 2009), and some interpretivist (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 2009). I have chosen to use the term ‘interpretive’ paradigm to distinguish it from constructivist education theory which will be discussed later in my thesis.

Delving deeper into self-study methodology led me to its imperative to improve one's practice as a result of one's study. Contemplating this, I began to see self-study as located at the intersection between the interpretive and critical paradigms, because of its improvement agenda. Thus, while my study is primarily situated in the interpretive paradigm, it also draws on aspects of the critical paradigm, engaging what may be called a 'critical-interpretivist' strategy. The goal of the critical paradigm, according to Merriam (2009), is "to critique and challenge, to transform and empower" (p. 10), where research is framed "in terms of power" (p. 10), and the distinctions between those who have it and those who do not. Cohen et al. (2007) note the centrality of the reflexive principle within the critical paradigm, observing that "ideology critique has both a reflective, theoretical and a practical side to it: without reflection it is hollow and without practice it is empty" (p. 29). Thus, the purpose of the research goes beyond description of practice into the more emancipatory area of improvement of practice, through reflecting on it, and as such, dovetails well with the self-study approach.

Patti Lather (1992) offers a useful way of distinguishing between the interpretive and critical paradigms, suggesting that the former seeks to understand the world, while the latter seeks to emancipate. Lather (1992) includes under the emancipator heading praxis-oriented, participatory work, which supports the intersection between interpretive and critical paradigms in my study. Cohen et al., (2007) also observe that the critical paradigm is concerned with praxis, adopting Kincheloe's (1991) construction as "action that is informed by reflection with the aim to emancipate" (p. 177). Since my study is integrally related to notions of praxis and reflexivity, these ideas are useful to me.

Notwithstanding the above, I do not consider myself a critical researcher in the pure sense of the word since I am not specifically interrogating the power relations at work either in productions or in my teaching; I am, however, interested in the processes of transformation and change that might occur as a result of those productions and the experience of participating in them. Taylor and Medina (2013) suggest that critical researchers adopt a position "of advocacy, a change agent who argues for and leads the way towards a more equitable, fair and sustainable society" (p. 7), a goal I fully support.

Armed with two paradigms, I thought I was all set; but more reading and thinking exposed me to the value of the postmodern paradigm and, in particular, the spaces it opens by

questioning and exploring modes of “representation” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) in research. In discussing the postmodern paradigm, Taylor (2014) refers to “blurred genres” (p. 20), and the privileging of the individual writer’s voice rather than what Lyotard (1979/2004) calls “metanarratives”. The exciting aspect of this paradigm for me lies in its recognition of multiple forms of representation, and the space for playfulness in research that it engenders, ideas that I have endeavoured to explore in my thesis.

Having made all these discoveries, I have come to believe my research belongs in what Taylor and Medina (2013) call “Multi-Paradigmatic Research” (p. 10), where one can explore the intersections between the paradigms and find the unique confluence that serves the researcher’s individual purpose. This is certainly where I have found myself, not least because of the transdisciplinary nature of my study, which straddles the worlds of education on one hand, and theatre on the other. Finding ways to connect the two and to navigate a path between, and within, them might definitely be called multi-paradigmatic as will become clearer in the next sections of this methodological story.

2.2 Finding a Home in Self-study

As noted above, one of main challenges for me as a researcher was to find a way to conduct research that would matter to my actual practice, and would help me negotiate some of the contradictions I saw between my work as a creative artist (directing) and my work as a university educator (teaching and researching). Self-study, which is part of the broader construct of practitioner inquiry, offered a space in which I could explore that negotiation.

The term self-study is abbreviated from the S-STTEP (Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices) model. It emerged as a phenomenon through the desire for teachers and teacher educators to utilise their own lived experience and practice in interrogating ideas and constructions around teaching and learning. This fact, however, does not negate its applicability to other fields of study; as J. John Loughran (2004) notes, “The organization of the S-STEP SIG⁹ should not be interpreted as limiting self-study to teacher

⁹ S-STEP SIG refers to the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices Special Interest Group which was established as part of the AERA (American Education Research Association) group in 1992. The newer abbreviation—S-STTEP (Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices)—was adopted to expand the

educators or teacher education practices alone” (p.17). Indeed, Vicki Kubler LaBoskey (2004) asserts that the focus on teacher education should not “imply that self-study cannot be done by educators in other venues and/or professions” (p. 861); this is important as my research hopes to contribute to expanding the potential of self-study research into the field of theatre and performance studies more generally. Further studies have already shifted the parameters into professional inquiry (Kitchen, 2020; Meskin & van der Walt, 2014, 2018; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015, 2017, 2018b, 2020; Wilcox, Watson & Paterson, 2004) and I will discuss some of these ideas later in this chapter. First though, I want to make explicit my understanding of self-study and how I am using it.

2.3 What is Self-Study?

What is clear from the vast array of self-study literature is that there are multiple approaches and understandings on which a researcher might draw. This awareness was liberating for me, in that it afforded me the opportunity to explore a number of different research strategies within my self-study stance. It is still useful, however, to offer a definition as a starting-point for the unfolding of my self-study narrative. As noted in scene 1, Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) define self-study thus:

Self-study is the study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the ‘not self’. It is autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political and it draws on one’s life, but it is more than that. Self-study also involves a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known, and ideas considered. These are investigated for their connections with and relationships to practice. (p. 265)

This definition offers some indication of the breadth of research possibilities evident in the self-study project. Common to all the options, however, is the notion of wondering (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) and a particular “stance to understanding the world” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. v). For me, this wondering concerned what I do as a director of formal theatre productions within a university context, and whether or not such productions provide valuable learning experiences, both in theatre and for the wider world.

potential usage of the method to teachers as well as those engaged in teaching teachers. This initial expansion supports the possibilities for further ones to occur.

For self-study researchers, the term ‘self-study’ primarily references the intentions of an inquiry, rather than the specific processes selected to conduct it (Loughran, 2004; Samaras, 2011; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) suggest we choose areas of study based on our worldview, on “what [we] believe the world should be like optimally, and how [we] believe we ought to act and be in the world” (p. 52). Thus, personal perspective guides our research journeys; for many in self-study, this involves confronting “living contradictions” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 52) in their practice, or a mismatch between what they believe they do and what they actually do. My study, however, started from a different orientation, described by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) as the desire to “explore what the way we act in the world reveals to us about how we experience and come to know the world and our practices” (p. 52), and through our research to “[use] what we learn to reframe our practice” (p. 52). The core ontological concerns in self-study are to bring one’s values to one’s practice, and to understand that practice in order to improve it in some way (LaBoskey, 2004; Whitehead, 2000). Thus, my research focus stems from my desire to explore what I do as a director, to understand it in ways that are not simply intuitive, and to use that knowledge to interrogate the theatre productions I make as vehicles for learning—and change—in society.

Although self-study positions the ‘I’ at the centre of the research question it should not be confused with simple autobiographical description. Rather, as Loughran (2004) observes, “the involvement of others, the checking of data and interpretation is crucial” (p. 20) in self-study. The movement beyond what is often pejoratively referred to as ‘navel-gazing’ occurs because self-study is premised on a dialogic dynamic between the self as researcher, the people with whom the research interacts, and the critical community (or “critical friends,” as Samaras [2011] calls them), which frames the research and supports its claims to validity. Indeed, as Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) point out, “The value of self-study depends on the researcher/teacher providing convincing evidence that they know what they claim to know” (p. 243-244), and that evidence comes from the dialogue with one’s research participants and research material.

Through this dialogic practice, self-study researchers are able “to develop understanding of practice that then turns back on itself to be useful both to the self-engaged in the practice and others who are practitioners” (Pinnegar, Hamilton & Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 205). Moreover, as LaBoskey (2004) notes, “learning is processed thorough previous

experience so personal history and cultural context must be considered; and learning is enhanced by challenging previously held assumptions through practical experience and the multiple perspectives of present and text-based colleagues” (p. 819). These ideas reinforce my own interest in constructivist and experiential learning, and also offer a frame in which to position my directing practice as a practical teaching methodology. I am particularly interested in the idea of “present and text-based colleagues” as this provides scope for including my co-directors (the present) as well as existing theorists (text-based) in my research journey. It is the insistence on evidence and interaction that creates trustworthiness and authenticates the self-study research model. LaBoskey (2004) observes that “Self-study exists. . . at the intersection between theory and practice, research and pedagogy” (p. 827); it is this intersection that interests me, since my work must negotiate these same boundaries to be effective.

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) note the “simple truth” (p. 14) of self-study, namely that “to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other” (p. 14). The “simultaneous focus on understanding self as it enacts practice” (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014, p. 6) separates self-study from other forms of practitioner research and facilitates discoveries about the self, the self-in-practice, the practice itself, and the experience of that practice. Thus, my need to understand who I am as a director-teacher, what I do as a director-teacher, and how my practice is experienced by others is served by a self-study approach.

A final general comment about self-study: In much of the literature the terms ‘methodology’ and ‘method’ are used virtually interchangeably in relation to self-study, but they are not the same (Samaras, 2011). Samaras and Freese (2006) explain that, as a methodology, self-study is “a body of practices, procedures, and guidelines used by those who work in a discipline or engage in an inquiry” (p. 56); by contrast, methods are the processes used in conducting a self-study, and they are multiple. Indeed, Loughran (2004) notes that “There is no one way, or correct way, of doing self-study. Rather, how a self-study might be ‘done’ depends on what is sought to be better understood” (p. 15). The distinction between methodology and method is important for me, since I engage with a wide variety of different methods in conducting my study, as I will explain later in this scene.

2.4 Understanding Practice

Before framing my thesis as self-study more specifically, I need to establish three of its fundamental principles that are critical to my study: practice, reflexivity, and narrative. First, since my *practice* is integral to this research, I want to show how I understand the term.

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) define practice (in relation to self-study) as “the activity or activities engaged in by a person in a particular profession or as an artist or craftsperson” (p. 15). They go on to explain that “practice refers to all the activities of a person engaged in that role. It includes the responsibilities, beliefs, and knowledge that informs and shapes that practice” (p. 15). This definition is the starting point for my investigation of my practice as a director. They also insist that practice “involves engaging with others in ways that lead to the accomplishment of goals through the use of knowledge, theories, and understandings” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 16). Thus, in order to understand my directing practice in relation to learning, I need to engage with those who have participated in and contributed to the evolution of that practice through involvement in formal theatre productions I have directed.

I use D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly’s (2004) conception of practice as “personal practical knowledge” (p. 579) as the basis for my investigation. Personal practical knowledge is “knowledge that comes from experience, is learned in context, and is expressed in practice” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 679). Thus, in writing about my directing practice, I explore the different stages of my directorial journey in order to uncover how experience and context have shaped what I do and how I do it. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) go on to explain that “by personal [they] do not mean idiosyncratic or private, but something that has both a personal and cultural origin and quality” (p. 579), while Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) suggest that such knowledge “emerges from our narrative history as humans and names the things we have learned that have become intuitive and instinctive” (p. 21). These concepts establish a clear relationship between our individual personal narratives and their emergence in—and influence on—our professional practice, which is the focus of Act II of my study. In addition, personal practical knowledge privileges the individual experience of the teacher, and positions teachers as “knowing and knowledgeable persons” (Ross & Chan, 2016, p. 5); that “knowing” is “revealed through interpretations of observed practices over time and given biographical, personal meaning through reconstructions of the

teacher's [or, in my case, the director-teacher's] narratives of experience" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 363).

In addition to understanding practice, I am engaging with the notion of praxis, which is central to my understanding of theatre and how it engages the world, and to my understanding of the educational process. The concept of praxis relates to the interconnectedness between theory and practice, or more simplistically, between thought and action. In discussing notions of praxis, Sandra Pensoneau-Conway and Satoshi Toyosaki (2011), drawing on the work of Calvin Schrag, reference the praxis-oriented self and intersubjectivity in relation to what they call "automethodology" (p. 378), a term which I believe encompasses self-study. Schrag (in Pensoneau-Conway & Toyosaki, 2011) sees the self as "constituted within communicative praxis" (p. 383); this establishes that self is constructed in relation to other, and thus, in order to understand the self, we need to examine it intersubjectively, or in its "complex network of social practices and relations with others" (Bell, cited in Pensoneau-Conway & Toyosaki, 2011, p. 38). This constitution of 'self' parallels self-study's recognition of the interactive nature of all educational practice, and thus of educational research.

The process of directing formal theatre productions requires both theoretical knowledge and practical action in the world, and is thus an example of praxis. The role that I occupy as director-teacher—and my desire to explore my practice—are aspects of my own praxis-oriented self within the communicative practice that is theatre-making. The praxis-oriented self is characterized by "three concepts of temporality, multiplicity and embodiment" (Pensoneau-Conway & Toyosaki, 2011, p. 383). These three notions connect directly with theatre: it is situated in the immediate moment of performance but has a past, present and future implicit in its structure; it invokes a multiplicity of voices and signifying systems; and it relies on active embodiment for its representative models.

Similar principles apply to the educational process: as a teacher, I teach a specific curriculum at a particular moment in time, but behind those specific moments lies the complete body of my personal practical (as well as theoretical and pedagogical) knowledge; multiple systems are in operation at any given moment in a teaching environment and multiple voices abound, although not always outwardly expressed; and it relies on embodiment and presence to create and maintain an educational dialogue. Key to all these

aspects, in directing and in teaching, is the concept of intersubjectivity, which “recognizes that meaning is based on one’s position of reference and is socially mediated through interaction” (Anderson, 2008, p. 467). Thus, subjects are constituted only in relation to one another because “knowing or understanding is not an individual endeavor but rather is socially situated” (Anderson, 2008, p. 468); as with self-study, everything is relational.

2.5 Reflection and Reflexivity

To a significant degree, self-study relies on reflexive practice since it is premised on being “critical of one’s role as both practitioner and researcher” (Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2004, p. 974). The journey from “not knowing to knowing” (Pithouse-Morgan, Mitchell & Pillay, 2014, p. 1) is facilitated by “bending or turning back” (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2014, p. 1) to view—and re-view—our selves with the reflexive eye. Doing so reminds us of the constructed nature of reality and thereby, creates the space for change to happen. As Rodgers and LaBoskey (2016) note, for people to change

requires learning to look at situations from multiple perspectives and through novel lenses; . . . to be able to ‘imagine otherwise to develop the passion, perhaps even the outrage, which will move them to act and to transform on behalf of themselves and others. And the means for learning to think and act in these ways is reflection. (p. 84)

Thus, an understanding of the practice of reflexivity is critical for my study.

I have used Gillie Bolton’s (2019) definitions of reflection, reflexivity and reflective practice in my study, as stated below:

Reflection is a process of focused thinking – about anything. We focus upon specific situations or relationships.

Reflexivity is self-critical reflection. It focuses upon one’s actions, thoughts, hopes, fears, role, values, assumptions with the aim of gaining insight into them.

Reflective practice concerns our work, and areas of our experience which impinge upon it. Reflection involving reflexivity is critical questioning which can be initiated and supported by creative reflective processes. (2019, para.3, 4 and 5, original emphasis)

These constructions have shaped the way in which I have reflected on my personal history, my directing and educational practices, and my beliefs about formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning.

I was first exposed to Bolton's (2010) ideas when Tanya, Lorraine and I wrote our paper on the Reciprocal Self Interview (RSI) (Meskin et al., 2014); there we note the intrinsic connection between drama (and, for me, theatre), and reflexive practice:

We believe that the field of drama, by its very nature, constitutes training in reflexivity. In performance we are constantly trained to reflect on our actions, and to use this process of reflection as a springboard for improving the performance in an iterative manner. Actors are required to examine their action/s onstage through fine observation of themselves, and through the daily routine of notes given by the director. Thus, performance can be seen as training for reflexive research practices, with the director acting as a critical friend, the 'other' against whom the actor can test her or his insights and understandings. Through the ongoing processes of rehearsal and performance, theatre provides training in iterative thinking, which is the basis of reflexivity. Performance requires the asking of questions—of the text, of the actors, of the audience—in the same way that self-study demands a questioning of the self: in action. (Meskin et al., 2014, p. 7)

This belief is a critical component of my self-study research and offers one explanation for the synergy between theatre and self-study through a reflexive lens. Self-study, theatre, and education, require a constant negotiation of the "inward-outward dynamic" (Meskin et al., 2014, p. 6), since they are engaged in an ongoing dialogic relationship involving self and other on multiple levels of experience. Bolton (2010) asserts that "reflexivity is making aspects of the self strange: focusing close attention upon *one's own* actions, thoughts, feelings, values, identity, and their effect upon others, situations, and professional and social structures" (p. 14, original emphasis); this, for me, encapsulates what I have attempted to do in my study—trying to place my practice as director-teacher under a metaphorical microscope in order "to look at it as if from the outside" (Bolton, 2010, p. 14). As Jackie Kirk (2009) observes, "The self is a starting point for professional and academic development, the place from which to identify what it is I want and need to do, and the place from where I can start to do that better" (p. 124). Or, as Robert Rhoads (2003) claims, the

place from where to pose “fundamental questions about who we are as people and what we want from our lives” (p. 255).

2.6 Narrative

Self-study in most of its guises adopts a narrative form. Susan Chase (2005) suggests that “we know the world through the stories that are told about it” (p. 641); in self-study, those stories are our own personal ones, where “the researcher becomes the research subject” (p. 645). Chase (2005) goes on to explain that,

Narrative is retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience. . . . a way of understanding one’s own and others’ actions, or organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time. (p. 656)

This is an accurate description of what I am seeking to do in my study. Using narrative as “a way of understanding experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi), presents a particularly apposite methodology for investigating the experiences of directing and participating in formal theatre productions. Just as theatre tells stories to make meaning, so the narratives told by self and participants may provide useful insights into the pedagogic value of formal theatre productions. Notions of stories and experiences are, thus, critical for my study.

In adopting Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) methodological process, I am using their construction of the characteristics of narrative inquiry, namely, that it is “a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. . . narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (p. 20). Clandinin (2006) notes that narrative inquiry engages an awareness of “the personal and social (interaction). . . past, present and future (continuity). . . place (situation)” (p. 47); these three components—interaction, continuity, and situation—are also critically important to self-study research and the way in which meaning is made from attention to the multiple narratives told. I have, therefore, been very careful in my study to pay attention to these concerns as I narrate my stories of directing and teaching in a higher education institution in post-apartheid South Africa, and explore the stories of those whose lives have intersected with mine during these

experiences. In this way, “personal stories become a means for interpreting the past, translating and transforming contexts, and envisioning a future” (Jones, 2005, p. 767–768).

Two further contentions around narrative are important in framing my research. The first is Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) observation that the narrative approach can capture multiple voices rather than a single one, thus facilitating polyvocality (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015, 2018b, 2019). The second is Riessman’s (1993) argument that narrative does not sit neatly within the boundaries of a single field but is inherently interdisciplinary. These two views are critical to my study, as is Webster and Mertova’s (2007) observation that “It is only in retrospect that an event can be seen to have been critical for the storyteller” (p. 74). Since my research is retrospective, and crosses disciplines, these positions are important in establishing and supporting the parameters of my study.

2.7 The Self-Study Framework

Given the multiple possibilities inherent in the self-study approach, it is perhaps unsurprising that numerous different examples of how to conduct self-study have emerged. In writing about using self-study to engage in theatre research, Tanya and I constructed a framework that synthesised some of the key ideas about self-study as methodology, which we called “The Idiots’ Guide to Self-study” (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018, p. 45). I reproduce that framework here (see Figure 2), and use its structure to explain my methodological approach in this thesis:

The Idiot's Guide to Self-Study: A synthesis of LaBoskey and Samaras' ideas

Drawing from the ideas of Samaras (2011, p. 72-82) and LaBoskey (2004, p. 842-853), we can characterise self-study research as follows:

1. It is personal and self-initiated
 - It draws on the practitioner's knowledge in/of/about practice
 - Cycles of critical reflection produce knowledge about the practice
 - This knowledge is local, situated, and context-specific, and often takes the role of culture into account
2. It is aimed at improvement of practice
 - Self-study is the study of one's practice, in order to improve it
 - Improvement is an ongoing goal of the research, not a result
 - This is the 'so what' of our practice and teaching
 - Two kinds of knowledge are generated through self-study
 - Embodied knowledge
 - Public knowledge
 - Through cycles of critical reflection, embodied knowledge becomes public knowledge, which is accessible to others
3. Self-study is a collaborative, interactive process
 - Validation of findings is through collaboration and dialogue with critical friends
 - Self-study research is both personal and inter-personal
 - Collaboration takes place between colleagues in practice and as researchers
 - Self-study researchers collaborate with a range of 'texts' of different types
4. Self-study uses transparent, multiple qualitative methods
 - Multiple methods are used to gather the evidence
 - The research is a hermeneutic spiral of questioning, discovering, framing, reframing and revisiting
 - It is a transparent process of clear documentation of the research process through dialogue and critique
5. Validation of the research is through examples and through making the findings and the knowledge generated public
 - The authority of one's own experience provides a warrant for knowing
 - Readers judge the validity of the claims made, based on the evidence presented, and the rigour of the approach
 - We must make visible our data, our methods, and the links between the data, the findings, and the interpretations made
 - We must share our findings with a larger audience, in order for this validation to take place.

Figure 2. The Idiot's Guide to Self-Study (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018, p. 45).

i. Personal and self-initiated

My study engages my personal practice as a director working in higher education in Durban, South Africa. It started from a place of wanting to research something that would be useful to me as a creative artist and a teacher, as well as the desire to reflect on years of experience of directing productions that I thought were significant learning experiences for participants, but which the attitude of my colleagues and my university seemed to suggest were mere extra-curricular activity for fun, and limited to the privileged few who actually wanted to be actors. The reason for my investigation, therefore, was first to see whether or not this was an accurate perception; second, and more important, I wanted to interrogate my belief that formal theatre productions offer unique spaces in which teaching and learning can occur, and to see whether I was doing so in my own practice. Thus, I am conducting a retrospective analysis of my directing practice in order to investigate both what I do as a director-teacher and what the formal theatre productions I direct have to offer in terms of teaching and learning. In this way, I make the past “usable” (Mitchell & Weber, 1998).

I chose to look at the body of my directing practice over a period of twenty years (1995–2015), rather than examining one or two specific productions, because I wanted to explore the evolution of my directing longitudinally. In practice, this has made my self-study profoundly challenging in relation to the sheer volume of material and the selection of appropriate—and limited—exemplars. It has also, however, provided me with rich and complex data on which to base the examination of my practice.¹⁰

In order to interrogate my practice as a director-teacher, I have had to locate myself contextually and culturally, and to recognise the changes to those understandings that have occurred over the time period under discussion. As a teacher at a research university in South Africa, I have witnessed a massive change in the student body and in the material practices of the university, and these too have impacted on my practice. It is not my intention in this thesis to explore questions of race, gender and culture directly, but an awareness of my context is critical for conducting an honest and probing self-study.

¹⁰ Much of this detailed analysis of my directing practice has not been included in the main body of my thesis, due to considerations of length; however, conducting the analysis was critical, allowing me to make sense of my directing in order to understand my teaching more fully and frame PBL.

ii. Improvement of practice

As self-study researchers, we do not examine our personal practice purely to understand it; rather, as LaBoskey (2004) notes, we do so to gain “an enhanced understanding of that practice. By making changes in this way and then taking them public, we also hope to contribute to a larger reform agenda” (p. 845). Improvement of practice is, thus, the “so what of what we do as teachers” (Samaras, 2011, p. 72) in self-study work.

In addressing this improvement agenda, “codifying and communicating what is largely tacit knowledge, creates the opportunity for artists to learn from their practice in order to transform it” (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018, p. 46-47). Tanya and I (2018) argue that “Self-study enables us to make the implicit, explicit, and in so doing expose the processes guiding our knowledge and practice” (p. 47). Elucidating processes that are often viewed as undefinable opens so many doors for creative artist-researchers, and this is one way I hope my study will improve my practice.

On another level, I seek to understand the relationship between what I do as an artist and my purpose as an educator. As a director-teacher, I confess that prior to this research I had paid little attention to the educative potential of formal theatre productions. Instinctively, I believed that the students who participated in the productions were learning important things (since that was my own experience as a student), but what those things were, and how and why they were happening, were questions I had not contemplated. Indeed, my initial belief was that, for the most part, any learning that did occur would be largely tangential, a by-product of the theatre-making project rather than its focus. Thus, the second aspect relating to improvement of practice for me involves unpacking the director-teacher relationship, and finding ways to make the facilitation of learning deliberate rather than accidental. To do this, I have had to explore concepts from fields of study of which I was hitherto unaware, and think more formally about the processes of teaching and learning generally, and specifically what my pedagogical philosophy might be. In this sense, self-study has been my guide to a deeper understanding of myself, “teaching; learning; and, the development of knowledge about these” (Loughran, 2004, p. 9).

This is embodied knowledge in the sense that it changes what I do, how I work, the way I engage the world, indeed, I would argue, the very essence of my being. In discussing how self-study facilitates personal growth, Samaras (2011) highlights how self-study makes us “question the taken-for-granted assumptions about [our] practice. . . the alignment of [our] beliefs with [our] practice and . . . the influence of [our] backgrounds, experiences, and culture on [our] teaching” (p. 79). When our own discoveries are then shared with others through our self-studies, the knowledge becomes available to them; in this way, my embodied knowledge becomes public knowledge through the dissemination of my work, in this thesis and the other self-study research I have produced.

iii. A collaborative, interactive process

Like theatre-making, self-study is a collaborative project; as Samaras and Freese (2009) note, “Self-study is not done in isolation, but rather requires collaboration for building new understandings through dialogue and validation of findings” (p. 5). They go on to explain that “although self-study involves an intrapersonal quest to understand one’s practice, it is the interpersonal mediation” (Samaras & Freese, 2009, p. 8) that gives such research its power. Thus, as Loughran and Northfield (1998) observe, “the self in self-study cannot be solely individual. The experience of an individual is the focus of the study but the individual need not be, and should not be, the sole participant in the process” (p. 8). It is this collaborative, interactive component, embodied primarily in the concept of “critical friends” (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Samaras & Freese, 2009; Samaras, 2011; among others), that establishes the “dialogic validity” (Samaras, 2011, p. 219) of self-study research, and makes it intersubjective.

My own work is interactive and collaborative on a number of levels. First, my ongoing collaborative relationship with Tanya is one of critical friendship, where she both challenges and supports my work through multiple conversations in many different contexts. This is evidenced in our co-directed productions and co-authored research, but it also a significant component of my thesis. Tanya has been my critical friend throughout this process, both formally and informally. Costa and Kallick (1993) describe the critical friend as

a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work. (p. 50)

This is an apt description of Tanya's role in my work. Apart from our many informal connections, her role in my study includes participating in the Reciprocal Self-Interview (RSI), a lengthy face-to-face interview, several papers written together drawing on our research, and reading the final thesis before submission.

A second level of interaction has been provided by my research supervisor, Lorraine Singh, who has worn the dual hats of supervisor and critical friend. I have also presented my work regularly in TES¹¹ group meetings and at the Self-Reflexive Research (SRR)¹² support group to which I belong. This community of scholars includes people from multiple disciplines and backgrounds and has been a space of profound learning and emerging insights, not to mention encouragement and support. I have also had the opportunity to interact with Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan¹³ on a personal level throughout my thesis journey, and in personal conversations, collegial moments at conferences, ongoing email correspondence, and shared material, she has provided me with invaluable critical friendship that has enriched my study profoundly. In particular, her advice to trust my creative instincts and allow that voice to come through more strongly in my thesis, was powerfully liberating. Finally, my sister, Justine Hess, has been an invaluable critical friend from outside the self-study community, who has read my work and offered her comments, insights, and responses throughout the process, as well as acting a memory-checker of my personal narratives.

¹¹ The Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) project, established in 2011 is a "multi-institutional, multicultural, and transdisciplinary community of university educators" (Pithouse-Morgan, Chisanga, Meyiwa & Timm, 2018, p. 2018), which seeks "to foster self-study methodology. . . [and] to develop self-reflexive, innovative educational practice" (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2019, p. 196). I have been a member of this community since its inception.

¹² The Self-Reflexive Research (SRR) group, comprising students, supervisors, and researchers, was established by Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and some of her colleagues to operate as a support and critical friend community for self-study researchers; the group meets approximately eight times per year, at which meetings participants can present their ideas and work-in-progress for feedback and support. I have been a member of this group since its inception.

¹³ In addition to organising both the TES and SRR groups, Kathleen is a lecturer, researcher and supervisor in the School of Education at UKZN, and is herself a recognised and significant self-study scholar and researcher.

The third level of interaction has been with the wide range of ‘texts’ that have contributed to my study. In addition to numerous research texts across directing, education, teaching, and learning discourses, I have also used the multiple ‘texts’ from my various productions (programme notes, director’s books, posters, press releases, reviews, photographs, and the like), the word-portraits written by my research participants, the text of the RSI, my multiple research notebooks and journals, and audio-recordings of my presentations at the TES and SRR meetings. Some of these texts I will discuss further later in detailing the methods I have used, but all of them contribute to “the multiple perspectives of present and text-based colleagues” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 819) that are fundamental to self-study research. Loughran and Northfield (1998) describe the interactive element of self-study as a ““shared adventure”” (p. 16), whose “learning outcomes broaden the understanding of the individual whose situation is the focus of the self-study and the significant ‘other’ with whom the sharing of the adventure occurs” (p. 16). This has certainly been the case in my self-study journey.

iv. Transparent, multiple qualitative methods

As a methodology, self-study does not offer only a single approach; rather, it embraces multiple potential research strategies, relating to “(1) what is being gathered (the data) to answer the research question(s) within the study, (2) how the data are gathered, and (3) the process by which that data are analyzed” (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020, p. 5). Samaras (2011) notes that the use of these multiple methods must be “transparent” and “systematic” (p. 80), and Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) assert that, “The value of self-study depends on the researcher/teacher providing convincing evidence that they know what they claim to know” (p. 243). In keeping with these ideas, I have utilised a number of different qualitative methods, described below, sourced from a variety of contexts. These methods have emerged through the process of my research, which, as Samaras (2011) observes, “is a change journey in a hermeneutic spiral of questioning, discovery, challenge, framing, reframing, and revisiting” (p. 81). The spiralling in my study has taken me down many new and unexplored (for me) pathways, seeking ways to make sense of, and make meaning from, my unfolding learning. It is an iterative cycle, involving a recursive engagement with my practice as a director, my ideas about education, and the intersections between them, to understand how the formal theatre productions I direct operate as sites for teaching and learning experiences.

1) Personal History Self-Study

The chief framing method for my study is personal history self-study. Samaras et al. (2004) describe personal history as “those formative, contextualized experiences that have influenced teachers’ thinking about teaching and their own practice. Personal history research is reviewed as the historical or life experiences related to personal and professional meaning making for teachers and researchers” (p. 909-910), and they argue that its most important function is to provide “support for the notion that who we are as people, affects who we are as teachers and consequently our students’ learning” (p. 906). This is a sentiment with which I completely agree; there is no doubt in my mind that my lived experience—my history—has shaped, and continues to shape, not just the way I live in the world, but everything I do both personally and professionally. My personal history narrative, therefore, forms both the background and the starting point of my research.

Personal history self-study, while an autobiographical method, is not just about autobiography. Rather, it is about “the self in relation to others in historical and social contexts that facilitate the educative experience. The individual ‘uncovers biography’ by situating herself/himself within history” (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 911). As with all self-study, the work must be dialogic and thus,

the self-studier does not travel the road alone. . . . one of the hallmarks of personal history self-study is its collaborative nature. . . . [it] entails the opportunity to disrobe, unveil, and engage in a soul-searching truth about the self while also engaging in critical conversations, and most importantly, continuing to discover the alternative viewpoints of others. (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 910)

Moreover, personal history self-study is not complete in and of itself; it is not enough just to tell one’s story, one has to subject that story to analysis, critique, and interpretation. As Florence Krall (1988) observes, “Without some form of critical evaluation, the narrative descriptions, no matter how poetic, are at best creative nonfiction and at worst solipsisms. For exegesis to occur, the text, the descriptions of experiences, must stand against other views” (p. 472).

I chose personal history self-study as my primary method largely because of the retrospective focus of my study. Since I am exploring my practice as a director-teacher over an extended period, much of what I need to examine is located in my past, and is thus “retrospectively interpreted, in terms of the meaning that life is now seen to hold” (Graham, 1989, p. 99); I cannot re-enact or repeat it, I can only examine it through memory. In addition, it is critical to understand that I write this history at a particular moment in time; consequently, as Weintraub (1975) asserts, my history “is being interpreted in terms of the meaning (or meanings) that [it] now is seen to possess” (p. 827). Given this, “The dominant autobiographic truth, therefore, is the vision or pattern or meaning of life which the autobiographer has at the moment of writing his *[sic]* autobiography” (Weintraub, 1975, p. 827). For this reason, the “self-knowing” (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 910) that emerges from my personal history must, of necessity, be negotiated in conversation with others. When this happens, personal history can “awaken and educate the self” (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 909).

2) *Memory Work*

I used memory work to construct my personal history narrative of directing, addressing my first research questions: Who am I as a director-teacher and what is my practice? In articulating memory work as a method, Kathleen O'Reilly-Scanlon (2002) describes it as “a tool for self-reflection that may be carried out individually or collectively, involves both the collecting and analyzing of memories, and requires its participants to work backwards into the present and future” (p. 74). Motivating such work is the belief that “if we want to make connections between what we know, what we understand and what we teach to others, we need to look back to our pasts” (O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2000, p. 60). For me, this meant examining the different stages of my life history in order to uncover how—and why—my directorial and educative identity/ies evolved. The point of the process is to provoke memories of the past that can be used to transform the present. As O'Reilly-Scanlon (2002) concludes, “Through the careful consideration of what was once there and what is there for us now, lies the potential to ‘re-invent’ ourselves as we reflect upon and examine how our memories are manifested in our lives today” (p. 77).

To write my personal history, I relied on the exploration of “nodal moments” (De Lange & Grossi, 2009; Graham, 1989; Tidwell, 2006) relating to my journey to becoming a

director and an educator, since these are the twin axes of my self-study. Graham (1989) describes a nodal moment as “a moment of crisis or a set of experiences which approximates the same function as a crisis” (p. 98), at which points, “the course of a life is seen to have connecting lines that were previously hidden, [and] a new direction becomes clear where only wandering existed before” (p. 98). Tidwell (2006) sees nodal moments as centres from which other events and experiences radiate. Thus, I examined my personal history for events and experiences which, from a retrospective vantage point, have shaped my directorial and educative selves. De Lange and Grossi (2009) liken a nodal moment to a “knot, which requires reflection and working through to get it ‘undone’ in the memory” (p. 204), a term which seemed particularly apt as I worked through my personal history, which is filled with what David Hiles (2005) calls “the centrality of trouble” (p. 113).

To construct a retrospective on my directing practice of more than twenty years, I utilised nodal moments, as well as prompts located in my personal production archives, including programme notes, director workbooks, posters, publicity material, reviews, photographs, preparatory work, and even research articles. This entailed what Claudia Mitchell (2005) describes as conducting “an archival dig into my own past” (p. 117) and “translating personal documents into artefacts for study” (p. 121); in this way, these various objects became artefacts of memory that helped me to re-connect with the specifics of each production in its own context, as well as from the perspective of my current position. Thus, they assisted me with the looking forward-looking back dynamic of personal history self-study. While the totality of this narrative does not appear in the main body of my thesis, it was integral to the research process, providing an overview of my evolution as a director-teacher in a university context (see Appendix 3).

In addition to the memory work, I used material gleaned from my RSI, my interview with Tanya, and the responses of my colleague-participants to ensure that I was not simply “story telling” (Samaras et al., 2004, p. 911), but “addressing the multiple selves, the never-ending complex, and incomplete self” (p. 911). This is part of the interactive, collaborative nature of self-study and creates the dialogic exchange between my story and the way others have participated in, or observed, that story, as well as the intersections, contradictions, and mysteries that emerge from that exchange. These materials also formed part of the data for my study.

3) *Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN)*

To answer my second research question, how do I understand teaching and learning in relation to my directing practice, I employed a different form of narrative exploration, the Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) as established by Robert Nash (2004). I was introduced to Nash's work by Kathleen at a time when I was struggling to fuse the threads of my research, and I found in Nash's (2004; Nash & Bradley, 2011) work a way to connect my personal story to the broader concepts I was trying to incorporate into the complex web of my self-study. Thus, I wrote an SPN about my understanding and experiences of learning in order to uncover—and discover—what my philosophy of education might be, so that I could interrogate whether or not it was taking place in the formal theatre productions I directed.

There are remarkable overlaps and similarities between personal history self-study and the SPN approach; both are invested in recovering the past in order to make sense of the present and to shape the future, and both are concerned with the individual's personal story as a means to engage with broader discourses. Nash and Bradley (2011) describe SPN as “a methodology that allows for the ‘subjective I’ of the writer to share the centrality of the research along with the ‘objective they’ of more traditional forms of scholarship” (loc. 294 of 3578¹⁴). Thus, the SPN is essentially an autobiographical story, rooted in the life experience of the writer; however, it “tells the story of the author in such a way as to analyze, interpret, and reflect upon some larger idea, event, or important figure in the writer's life (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 350 of 3578). There is no set form for the SPN, but the essential criterion is that “SPN writers intentionally organize their essays around themes, issues, constructs, and concepts that carry larger, more universalizable meanings for readers” (Nash, 2004, p. 43). When such narratives are written in the context of education, Nash (2004) refers to them as “personal pedagogical reflection” (p. 43), a term which captures, for me, the core of my research in this thesis.

Like self-study, the intention of the SPN is not simply to narrate the story of one's life, but to do so in order to make some kind of impact on both the researcher and the world, or as Nash (2004) observes, “the individual and the community” (p. 29), wherever that community may be situated. Thus, as with self-study, a transformation and improvement

¹⁴ All location references in this thesis are in respect of Kindle Edition e-books.

agenda is present in the SPN method, which “puts stories in the service of ideas” (Nash, 2004, p. 110). The SPN model is also always context-specific, written “under the influence of our context bubbles” (Nash, 2004, p. 39). Thus, like Weintraub (1975) and Graham (1998), SPN method insists on a clear explication of context and an awareness of the particular perspective of the writer at the given moment in time.

One of the key features of the SPN (Nash, 2004) is the need “to draw larger implications from your personal stories” (p. 60). In working towards developing a model for a pedagogy rooted in production work, I am using my personal story as a catalyst for something that, while rooted in my personal practice, also goes beyond my singular experience. In this way, I have addressed the demand of SPN for “universalizability” (Nash, 2004, p. 6). “Universalizability”¹⁵ is the preferred term for SPN writers in referencing questions of validity and generalisability. Like self-study, and other forms of qualitative research, SPN rejects the conventional notions of generalisability and replicability as measures of research validity. Instead, Nash & Bradley (2011) suggest using “inside-out criteria” (loc. 1339 of 3578); Nash (2004) lists as these criteria, “trustworthiness, honesty, plausibility, interpretive self-consciousness, introspectiveness/self-reflection, and universalizability” (p. 5). In particular, universalizability refers to “the necessary function of an SPN manuscript to be able to transcend outward and beyond the writer’s individual experiences” (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 1712 of 3578). This is what turns “me-search” (Nash & Bradley, 2011) to “we-search” (loc. 1710 of 3578), the term they use to describe what happens when larger implications of one’s SPN are discussed.

Another significant aspect of SPN has been important for my whole study, namely the concept of “proof-texts”¹⁶ (Nash, 2004, p. 65), the term used in SPN to reference others’ works and ideas. These proof-texts can provide support, or critique, or simply illuminate the writer’s narrative in some way. Nash (2004) advises SPN writers to “Lace [their] SPN with appropriate allusions to cherished texts and quotations. Think of these as your ‘proof texts,’ or your signature scholarly references” (p. 65-66). However, he goes on to caution that the

¹⁵ I am aware that the term ‘universal’ is problematic, when used to imply that a single concept can have universal applicability. I use the term here strictly in relation to Nash’s (2004) definition, which is rooted in the intersubjective connections between self, other, and the world.

¹⁶ Nash (2004) sometimes uses the hyphenated term “proof-texts,” and at other times refers to “proof texts.” For the sake of consistency, I use the unhyphenated form in this thesis, except where quoting a source directly.

“proof text reference serves only to enhance and add something to the writer’s text. It never becomes the central pivot of the text” (p. 80). I found the idea of proof texts especially valuable in finding a way to integrate my academic and my writerly voices.

While similar in intent, there are also differences between personal history self-study and SPN, mainly to do with the framing of the narrative and the methods for creating it, but also in terms of its positioning in a complete study. In particular, I found the freedom to write a broader narrative around a theme (Nash & Bradley, 2011), as opposed to focusing on specific nodal moments alone, very helpful particularly in relation to connecting my personal narrative about learning to the complex web of education theory and philosophy that I construct to make sense of my pedagogical beliefs and practices. In addition, the concepts of proof texts, universalizability and narrative truth offer additional validity methods for self-study research.

I have found in the course of writing my thesis that the similarities and differences between the two approaches provide a rich framework in which to investigate and reflect on the self; the different foci make for deeper insights and more surprising moments of storytelling, allowing me to offer a more three-dimensional portrait of my director-teacher self. This discovery has been one unexpected finding from my thesis and is certainly something I want to explore further, since there is great potential for enriching both self-study and SPN approaches through considering the parallels and dissonances between them. In a way, the SPN becomes a method *for* a method (i.e. personal history self-study), through the guidelines and questions offered as stimuli for writing oneself into the story.

4) *Bricolage*

In trying to connect the twin aspects of my thesis—theatre and education—I found myself getting lost among the myriad concepts and theoretical perspectives potentially relevant to my study. Engaging with bricolage as a methodological approach (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras [with Coia & Taylor] 2016, 2017, 2018a, 2019, 2020) allowed me to draw from multiple sources in constructing my own conceptual framework for an interdisciplinary approach that would fit the interdisciplinary nature of my study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe bricolage as “a pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation. . . . that changes and takes new forms as the bricoleur adds different tools, methods, and techniques of representation and interpretation to the puzzle” (p. 4). The implication is that adopting a bricolage approach opens up a space for working outside the boundaries of individual or narrowly defined models. Indeed, Kincheloe (2001) asserts that methodological bricolage means “using any methods necessary to gain new perspectives on objects of inquiry” and that “as researchers draw together divergent forms of research, they gain the unique insight of multiple perspectives” (p. 687). This is possible because, as noted above, “there is no one way, or correct way, of doing self-study. Rather, how a self-study might be ‘done’ depends on what is sought to be better understood” (Loughran, 2004, p. 15). Thus, Pithouse-Morgan and Samaras (2019) note that they have “employed combinations of methods and even invented new methods, often through choosing to ‘let things unfold in the absence of a pre-planned method’” (p. 7-8).

For me, these ideas provided a key to a locked door, opening up a space for imaginative and inventive usage of multiple ideas and sources in discovering and defining the ‘routes’ of my learning. Freed from the need to establish one single theoretical framework that would encompass the full scope of my study, I drew on many different kinds of knowledge and knowings to build my story, going where I needed to go as and when I needed to. In this way, I have constructed “a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations. This structure is like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6). Whitehead (2004) comments that self-study researchers “create their own unique way through their research by exercising their methodological inventiveness” (p. 884), something he sees as a critical distinguishing feature of self-study as a methodology. I believe that in adopting the bricolage approach, I am continuing this trend.

5) Creative Analytic Practice (CAP)

One particular form of methodological inventiveness for me was the use of Creative Analytic Practice (CAP) in dealing with the data generated by my study. Throughout my doctoral journey, I have struggled with the dissonances between the demands of educational research and the creative practice of theatre-making, since I locate myself as an artist and

teacher between these two phenomena. In discovering CAP, I found a way to reconcile this disjunction and establish a form of data engagement that reflected my own engagement with theatre-making, teaching, learning and the world. It was a particularly exciting discovery for me, since it enabled me to draw on my own discipline of drama, with its unique “ways of thinking and practicing” (Entwhistle, 2009, p. 58), and as such, constitutes part of my contribution to self-study’s methodological discourse.

Laurel Richardson (2000) argues that “Creative arts is one lens through which to view the world; analytical science is another. We see better with two lenses. We see best with both lenses focused and magnified” (p. 254-255). While Richardson was specifically referencing ethnographic research, her observations have proven valuable for me as a humanities researcher, particularly given the disciplinary structures of drama education. Being able to apply a creative lens in my data discussion and analysis opened up the space for reimagining how such research might be pursued. I felt trapped in the more conventional methods of data analysis and representation, and needed to find a way to express the data in a creative, artistic way that reflected the multi-player and polyvocal nature of the work. This was particularly important because I wanted to use verbatim texts to highlight the individuality of my research-participants. As Lisbeth Berbary (2015) observes, “where traditional analysis often reduces and decontextualizes data. . . more narrative and/or rhizomatic analysis of story-based data maintains tensions, multiplicity, and complexity while remaining contextualized” (p. 37), and in so doing, “shifts away from objectivity and instead moves towards telling the story that needs to be told” (p. 40).

For those engaging in CAP, notions of validity and reliability associated with conventional research processes also shift. Richardson (2000) originally set out five criteria for CAP that speak to its creation, its trustworthiness and its credibility. These are: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and expresses a reality (Richardson, 2000, p. 254). To these five criteria, Berbary (2015) added another three:

Rigorous Data Collection: Was the data collected in a way that can be documented? Has the researcher considered alternative, creative, and/or arts-based data collection procedures? Is the data rich enough for thick description and robust context?

Onto-epistemological and theoretical sense: Is CAP the most useful for the researcher’s purpose, ability, preference, and audience? Does it align with the

underlying philosophies of the research? If not, has the researcher explained these tensions?

Genre ‘Props’: Is the representation respectful of the traditions of a certain genre?

Would artists in that genre positively evaluate your use of it? (p. 40–41)

All of these criteria were taken into consideration when negotiating my CAP and were critically important to the evolution of my data-play script, which was the method I employed to interrogate the data for my study. While the actual play text is not included in the main body of my thesis, it is included in Appendix 8. In creating the text, I paid careful attention to—and integrated—the above elements to shape the story being told.

I have offered here an introduction to the various methods I have employed in this thesis, in keeping with the need to clearly document and make visible the research processes employed, since “It is this full reporting of the data process that enables us to make sense of what we know and. . . to confirm the efficacy of our research practice” (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020, p. 43). I will address certain of these methods further in relation to specific elements of my study. At this point, I return to the framework for self-study which I began earlier.

v. Validation through examples and making knowledge public

The growth of practitioner inquiry and “automethodologies” (Pensoneau-Conway & Toyosaki, 2011) within qualitative research practice necessitated a re-evaluation of how to gauge the quality of such studies, since the traditional criteria like validity, generalisability and reliability did not really apply (Merriam, 2009; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Willis, 2007). Even Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) re-imagined criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity, were not truly apposite. Indeed, Wolcott (1994) argued “the absurdity of validity” (p. 364), and suggests instead “something other, a quality that points more to identifying critical elements and wringing plausible interpretations from them, something one can pursue without becoming obsessed with finding the right or ultimate answer, the correct version, the Truth” (p. 366-367). Despite the temptation simply to accept that the quest for validity is indeed absurd, Feldman (2003) suggests that “although it may be impossible to show that the findings of educational research are true, they ought to be more than believable – we must have good reasons to trust them to be true” (p. 26), and thus, it is necessary to find the “something other” to which Wolcott (1994) refers, since without it, self-study will not be

seen “as a research genre that generates knowledge and understanding that is to be shared and used by others” (Feldman, 2003, p. 26-27).

Two of the chief criticisms levelled at self-study research are (a) that it lacks validity and reliability because there is no separation between the researcher, and the researched; and (b) that there is no way to verify the accuracy of the personal narratives and discoveries that are the heart of the self-study project. First, as Feldman (2003) notes,

when we engage in reflective processes that focus on ourselves. . . we cannot be sure of the accuracy of what we see. That is because when we reflect, we do not know if what we see in the mirror is accurate or the distorted view provided by a funhouse mirror. Our new knowledge, understanding, or insight may be flawed because it is based on a distortion of the world. (p. 27)

Second, as Ovens and Fletcher (2014) explain, “Conceptualisations of selfhood that are limited to the individual’s internal point of view can lead to misunderstanding self-study as a confessional story about one’s experiences of practice or a criticism that it is simply ‘navel gazing’” (p. 8).

In response to these criticisms, self-study researchers have developed validity criteria that offer new ways for ensuring research quality. Elliot Mishler (1990), for example, argued for “trustworthiness or verisimilitude rather than truth” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 853), and suggested an exemplar-based validity, where each piece of research could be evaluated not for generalisable findings but as examples of specific individual practice; he asserts that, “exemplars contain within themselves the criteria and procedures for evaluating the ‘trustworthiness’ of studies and serve as testaments to the internal history of validation within particular domains of inquiry” (Mishler, 1990, p. 422). A slightly different approach is offered by Feldman (2003), who notes the need to pay “attention to and [make] public the ways that we construct our representations of research” (p. 27), and asserts that “if we want others to value our work, we need to demonstrate that it is well founded, just, and can be trusted. By making our inquiry methods transparent and subjecting our representations to our own critique, as well as that of others, we can do so” (p. 28). Hamilton and Pinnegar (2015) take this idea further, noting that “researchers make themselves publicly vulnerable to questions about the viability of the practice, the evidentiary and interpretive basis of the assertions for action, and the understandings revealed in the study of the selected practice” (p.

182) in order to achieve validation. Effectively, all this means that “the self-study researcher must be utterly specific about the context in which his/her work takes place, and meticulous in constructing accurate, multi-sourced records of their practice” (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018, p. 50).

These are the basic validity constructs used in most of the existing self-study literature. However, Hamilton, Hutchinson and Pinnegar (2020) offer some exciting new ideas on validation and quality assurance in self-study. Rejecting the tendency to be “defensive about the work we do, responding to critique and trying to fit our work within the shell of modernist works” (Hamilton et al., 2020, p8), they argue “for a more holistic view of quality and trustworthiness, one we embody and live out in research” (p. 4). They believe that “S-STTEP researchers demonstrate quality and trustworthiness when we live out our responsibility to shifting practice through our research” (Hamilton et al., 2020, p. 19) and through “developing. . . conceptual framework[s]. . . [that] demonstrate who [we] are as scholars” (p. 26). These ideas, for me, suggest a strong movement toward an evolving frame for quality and trustworthiness criteria specific to self-study and crafted from its unique design, a process which will certainly open up the methodology for wider usage, something that is very important to my own scholarship as a theatre-maker working in education.

In pulling all of these ideas together, Samaras (2011) offers the following key categories for self-study researchers to use in attempting to ensure the quality of their work: transparency, trustworthiness, dialogical validity, and generating knowledge that is made public through presentation and publication (p. 216–225). These are evident in my work as follows:

- Transparency

I have sought to make all aspects of my research process explicit in order to provide “convincing evidence that [I] know what [I] claim to know” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 243). This includes explaining the various methods I have used, as well as describing how I have generated and presented my data (which I will do below).

- Trustworthiness

Mishler (1990) explains this as “the degree to which we can rely on the concepts, methods, and inferences of a study. . .as the basis for our own theorizing and empirical research” (p. 419). I have tried to do this through using multiple methods and varied data sources in order to give my work the “authority of experience” (Pinnegar, 1998, p. 32) and avoid offering only my own personal perspective. I have tried to provide “rich description of the context and the research” (Samaras, 2011, p. 221) to establish trustworthiness. In addition, I have ensured that the voices of my participants are present in my study, thus demonstrating the interactive nature of my research process.

- Dialogical validity

I have engaged in multiple ways with critical friends, as I have described above in discussing my interaction with Tanya, Lorraine, Kathleen, the TES and SRR groups, my sister, and the multiple texts I have sourced. Through these dialogues, I have been able to view my work with a critical eye and to interrogate my insights and conclusions rather than simply accepting them.

- Generating public knowledge

Loughran (2004) exhorts self-study researchers to make their work public, “so that it might be challenged, extended, transformed and translated by others” (p. 25–26), which I have done in a number of different ways over the course of my research: I have presented papers at both local and international conferences, both alone (Meskin, 2017), and with Tanya and others of my collaborators; I have led seminars for postgraduate students based on the work emerging from my research; and I have offered my work for critique at meetings of the TES and SRR groups. In addition, Tanya, Lorraine and I have published a number of research articles in books and journals that have emerged from our ongoing work, not just in terms of our doctoral self-studies but also to show how self-study is impacting on our work as creative theatre-makers and artists, and to share the potential that self-study offers with others in our knowledge domain.

In this section, I have detailed my self-study research design in relation to the “Idiots’ Guide” (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018, p. 45) to self-study. Having done this, I will now address how I have sourced my research participants and generated my data.

2.8 Participants and Data

To generate data for my study, I have used a number of different methods. The first of these, as I have outlined above, are my own personal and scholarly narratives around directing, teaching, and learning, the results of which are presented in Act II of my thesis. In this way, I position myself at the centre of my story, and through introspective reflexivity (Finlay, 2002) use “personal reflection as a form of self-revelation to gain in-depth meanings and insights about the research” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 77). The process is retrospective in that it looks back over an accumulated body of work (my directing and teaching practices) and reflects on that body of work, both from the inside (as a reflexive inquirer) and from the outside (as a narrative inquirer), as well as in dialogue with critical friends and research participants.

In addition to constructing my personal history and SPNs, I have explored my practice interactively, through an unstructured interview with my critical friend and collaborator, Tanya, and through the RSI. My interview with Tanya lasted approximately one hour and was largely conversational, as is our established practice. I used similar prompts to the ones I used for other participants, but the interview covered a much broader range of topics. The full interview was transcribed professionally, and I then listened to it several times to ensure the transcript was accurate and complete.

The genesis for the RSI¹⁷ was a series of informal conversations with Tanya in which we both spoke about the difficulties of writing a personal history, particularly in terms of self-censoring and the temptation constantly to edit. In discussions with Lorraine (who supervised both our PhDs), we developed the idea for the RSI, building on the ‘hot-seating’ technique, a method of character-development for actors, and Lorraine’s experience of the self-interview that she had used in her own doctoral study. The RSI is essentially a method for conducting a self-interview, using a critical friend, in my case Tanya. The details derived from my RSI, along with the several layers of reflection on both the content and the process, became a significant data source in my thesis.¹⁸

¹⁷ For a full discussion on the development of the RSI and its use as a method for self-study research, see Meskin, Singh & van der Walt, “Putting the Self in the Hot Seat: Enacting Reflexivity through Dramatic Strategies” (2014).

¹⁸ I have included the questions I used for the RSI in Appendix 4.

To extend my study beyond myself, as is critical in self-study research design, I included two different sets of participants, who could comment on, and offer insight into, both my practice as director and the value of formal theatre productions as sites for teaching and learning. The two sets of participants were (1) colleagues with whom I had co-directed productions over the years, to whom I refer as colleague-participants, and (2) graduated students who had participated in formal theatre production I directed while they were students at my university, who I have called performer-participants.

In selecting these participants, I have employed purposive sampling, which, as Merriam (2009) notes, is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 77). The participants are thus selected in order to provide “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 230), which are “those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 230). Thus, on the most basic level, I needed people who had either co-directed with me or had participated in productions I had directed, since only they would be able to provide knowledge about my research topic. As regards co-directors, there was a limited pool since I had only co-directed with seven people during the period I was examining (i.e. 1995-2015). Of these seven, two were people who had co-directed with me when they themselves were students, so I eliminated them, since I was interested in hearing the views of colleagues who had been working in academia when I directed with them, thus enabling them to offer a peer-perspective. The remaining five agreed to participate, and all but one agreed to use their real names. I have given a pseudonym to the other member of the set.

With regard to students, there was a vast pool of potential participants given that I have directed over 50 productions during the time frame under review, most of which had casts of at least ten members, and usually far more (up to eighty in one production). Given the impossibility of using all of them, from among those who qualified, I had to select “the members of the community who are likely to provide the best information” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 314). In developing the criteria for selection, I was forced to rely on convenience sampling to some degree, based on potential participants’ accessibility; however, in addition to accessibility, I identified key criteria to assist in my selection.

Merriam (2009) notes the necessity “not only [to] spell out the criteria you will use, but [to] also say why the criteria are important” (p. 78). Thus, I made my selections based on the following criteria:

- They had to have participated in at least two productions I directed. I chose this criterion because I believe that those who had done more productions would have a stronger sense of their value;
- They had to have participated voluntarily in productions. I wanted the participants to have chosen to do formal theatre productions during their studies, rather than having them imposed upon them; this would give me insight into why someone was motivated to do productions.
- They had to have auditioned for the productions in which they participated. This is important because I wanted to hear from people who had willingly taken the step of auditioning, since again this would allow me to explore how the potential benefit outweighed the risk.
- They had to have been students within the Drama and Performance Studies programme. I wanted to hear from people who were studying drama but who may not necessarily have done productions, had they not chosen to.
- They had to have graduated by 2015 (the end of the time frame I had selected), and preferably earlier. This was one of the most important decisions I made and there were two reasons for it. First, I wanted to avoid any potential for coercion that may have arisen with students with whom I am still currently involved as a teacher; I did not want anyone to feel pressured to deliver an answer in a particular way because they felt they had to. Second, and more importantly, I wanted my participants to have had time to reflect on the learning that occurred during their time as students; in other words, I wanted them to have some distance from the productions they had done so that they could assess their educational value more objectively.
- They had to be people with whom I was in contact, since I needed to be able to reach them. Initially, I had toyed with the idea of issuing an open call for participants, via Facebook, to anyone who had ever done a production with me at UKZN. However, in consultation with my supervisor, I rejected that idea since there was the potential for an overwhelming number of responses or none at all, in favour of reaching out personally to students with whom I had stayed in touch to invite their participation. This decision was partly rooted in convenience, but also in my belief that people who

had remained in contact with me would be more willing to offer honest and complex responses to my research questions. I am aware that this might also create an issue of bias, since clearly those with whom I have stayed in contact are those with whom, potentially, I experienced a deeper connection while they were students. In an attempt to address the potential bias, I opted to invite a large number of performer-participants—twenty in total—in order to get as wide a range of responses as possible. I also selected students who had worked with me at different times over the course of my career (including someone who was in the very first production I directed at UKZN), so that I could chart how my practice has shifted over time and with greater experience. Of the twenty ex-students I had invited, seventeen agreed to participate and all agreed to waive their anonymity.

The next question was how to gather the actual data. Partly because of the logistics of my study (participants were scattered all over the world), I elected to use written responses rather than oral ones. Initially, this was largely a pragmatic decision, but as I toyed with how to elicit the responses, I began to think more creatively about this exercise. In this, I was influenced by increasing use of arts-based methods in self-study research that I had noted in the literature and in our TES and SSR groups;¹⁹ from poetry to drawing, from storytelling to photographs, from dance to dialogue, self-study researchers were exploring these and many other methods, which encouraged me to experiment.

Influenced by these ideas as well as by Richardson's (2005) idea of "writing as a method of inquiry" (p. 959), I realised that I wanted to avoid the idea of a traditional interview, and instead create a research instrument that would allow the participants to respond freely to a series of prompts based on their own personal choices. I had read about the methodology of portraiture, in which Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) wrote about creating a "painting with words" (p. 6); I had also taken note of Cole and Knowles (2008), who comment on "extending the idea from qualitative inquiry of 'researcher as instrument,' in arts-informed research the 'instrument' of research is also the researcher-as-artist" (p. 61),

¹⁹ We have explored numerous arts-based methods in these programmes. Among the most useful to me have been: East, Fitzgerald & Heston, 2009; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Mitchell, Weber & O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2005; Pillay & Pithouse-Morgan, 2016; Pillay et al., 2017; Pithouse, Mitchell & Weber, 2009; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2016; Pithouse-Morgan & Pillay, 2013; Pithouse-Morgan, Pillay & Mitchell, 2019; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020; Pithouse-Morgan & van Laren, 2012; Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020; Van Laren, Pithouse-Morgan & Masinga, 2019; Weber, 2014; Weber & Mitchell, 2004.

which made me wonder whether I could, similarly, construct the research participant-as-artist. These ideas inspired me to develop what I have called ‘word-portraits’, using words and language as a medium to create portraits rather than paint or crayon. I wanted the word-portraits to reflect each participant’s individuality and to allow them to express in their own form how they understood their experiences of participating in formal theatre productions I directed.

I constructed a research instrument²⁰ that consisted of a series of prompts relating to two areas (performing in productions, and me as the director) and an introduction, in which I stated:

They are, however, ONLY prompts, and please feel free to ignore them, reimagine them, rewrite them, offer alternative suggestions, or choose which ones to respond to – there are no rules. . . . The form and the structure you choose is entirely fluid and at your discretion; I am really looking for a narrative that expresses your subjective understanding of my practice as a director gleaned from your experience as a performer in productions I have directed or co-directed. (Meskin, 2015)

As is evident from this instruction, I was trying to elicit creatively imagined data, and was hoping to hear the individual participant’s voices in the way they responded. A few performer-participants elected to use the prompts directly as questions and answered them in this way; but most chose to write relatively freely and focused on some prompts more than others. Essentially, I was seeking to encourage a kind of freewriting (Nash, 2004) model that would provide me with a rich variety of data. To a significant extent, this was the case. Some performer-participants even sent in drawings and diagrams as part of their response. Some wrote significant amounts running to several pages while others focused on only one or two of the prompts and wrote about them. Some remained very personal and spoke only about their own experiences, but most spoke not just about their own learning, but the learning they observed around them. These word-portraits comprise a second methodological invention alongside the RSI, which was created as part of this research.

My final source of data was my personal archive. I am an inveterate hoarder, and thus have all of my directing notebooks from the multiple productions I have done. These contain my directing preparation and such details as blocking choices, technical notes, and

²⁰ See Appendix 5.

acting notes, giving a feel of the production as it happened. I also have the programme notes for each production. I collated all these programme notes together, organising them chronologically, and made a bound copy to serve as a data source. They have helped me to trace the evolution of my directorial voice and to understand what I was thinking at the time of each production, as opposed to my current memory of that experience. They have thus proved an invaluable source in constructing a record of my directing practice. I have supplemented these two sources with my personal journals, reviews, publicity material, press releases, photographs, and video recordings of many of these productions, all of which have contributed to authenticating the narrative of my directing practice.

I have discussed here the sources of my data, and the methods for collecting it. The coding of the data and the methods for analysis will be discussed in scene 7, as a precursor to my analysis of the data.

2.9 Presenting my Thesis

My thesis does not follow the standard pattern of literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, and so on. While all of the different components are present in my study, I have treated them more holistically, and woven literature, theory and method into all sections of my thesis. Thus, as noted in the Prologue, I have chosen to present my thesis using the format of a play, separated into five acts, each of which deals with a specific section of my study. In doing this, I am seeking to root my work in my own theatrical discipline, and to engage the presentation of my research in a creative manner. Similarly, I have used the play form to frame my data.

I have used several diagrams and graphic representations throughout the thesis, as “analytic display” (Miles, Huberman & Saldña, 2014, p. 24). Some of these diagrams and model may appear a little ‘positivistic’ and outside the parameters of the interpretive paradigm; however, they are a technique I have used to stabilise the many layers and strands of my study, amongst which I have frequently lost myself in the course of writing this thesis. I have, therefore, endeavoured to create order within the chaos and to assist the reader by providing signposts—the map of my roots and routes—to follow along the way. I should say, too, that I am not a visual artist, so the diagrams and models are presented not for their

aesthetic value, but as a means of making explicit how I have arrived at the various ‘knowings’ that emerge in my study. This, too, adds to the trustworthiness of the work.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have detailed my methodological approach and the various methods I have employed to conduct and present my research. As noted above, self-study is a methodology derived from teaching and teacher education; since my work does not come from that field, I have sometimes struggled to create the necessary links between the two worlds of my study – theatre, and education. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of current self-study research, however, is the way that it is beginning to shift into other disciplines and discourses, especially into the field of professional practice (see Wilcox et al., 2004; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020; Kitchen, 2020, among others). My work has already benefitted from some of this new research (in relation, particularly, to the emergence of methodological bricolage), and the discussion I have offered here of my methodology, together with some of my methods, I believe, has the potential to contribute to the ever-expanding self-study community. In this sense, I have come to feel finally like I have carved out a place of belonging in the once-terrifying world of research, and self-study has been the chisel allowing me to find myself as a researcher. In Act II, I will chart the beginning of my voyage to becoming a director-teacher.

ACT TWO: A DIRECTOR-TEACHER'S STORY

“There is nothing more exciting than directing a play. The collaborative atmosphere, in which talented artists all work together towards the same goal, is unique to this profession. To be a great director, you have to be egotistical while being sensitive, firm while being flexible. You have to know everything and be willing to admit you know very little. You have to love the process.”

(Wainstein, 2012, p. 8)

“[Teaching] involves an *act of the imagination*, seeing how to present ideas and set up conditions for learning in ways that will engage students’ interest and encourage them to develop their own understanding of the subject area. Done well, university teaching can help students to acquire a way of thinking and learning that is indelible, and can be useful throughout their life; done badly, it can alienate them from the whole idea of learning and studying.”

(Entwhistle, 2009, p. 4)

SCENE 3: DIRECTING ROOTS – SCENES FROM A PERSONAL HISTORY NARRATIVE

As I have explained in scenes 1 and 2, my thesis journey really began with writing a detailed personal history narrative in order to make sense of my directing practice. At the outset, I wanted to explore who I was as a director, how I directed, and why, since I saw that as my first research objective. However, in the process of writing this narrative, and thinking about my work as a director, I came to realise that my primary concern was really about if—and why—my work as a director *mattered* in the context of my university drama department’s pedagogy. I saw the productions I directed as a significant and necessary component of my work, but in the UKZN drama department productions are not seen as central to the curriculum. Instead, they are treated as extra-curricular opportunities, largely aimed at entertainment, where learning is very much a secondary outcome, if it is one at all. Writing my personal history of becoming a director and practicing as one allowed me to understand why I believed this position to be wrong, and why I believed the formal productions I directed were, in fact, profound teaching and learning experiences. Making this discovery focused my research more specifically on my role as a director-teacher: While I still wanted to excavate my directing practice, rather than simply doing this for its own sake, I wanted to understand how that practice *facilitates* the process of learning through participation in formal theatre productions. Thus, it was the personal history narrative that led me to the desire to elucidate what I will describe later in this thesis as Production-Based Learning (PBL).

In this scene, therefore, I have decided not to include the entire personal history narrative.²¹ Instead, I have used the narrative as the primary data source from which to extract the nodal moments shaping my directorial identity that I have come to consider central to my practice as an educator. In doing this, I am foregrounding the *director* aspect of the director-teacher hybrid, the role that I articulate for myself in this thesis.

As I noted in the Prologue, I never set out to be a director: By training, history, experience, and vocation, I wanted to be an actor. My journey of self-discovery towards understanding what I do as a director and why, has been a circuitous one. It has been mapped on a lattice of knowledge drawn from my experiences working with directors as an actor, working with students as a director, and eavesdropping on the practice of others whose work I was privileged to observe. Most

²¹ As noted earlier, the personal history narrative is available in Appendix 3 for further explication.

important, perhaps, it is an iterative learning journey—I have not ‘arrived’ at an end point where my knowledge is complete; every time I direct, it is like starting again, in some ways, because every production is unique with its own life force and trajectory. The foundation, however, remains in place, rooted in the bedrock of my learning, and the storeys of knowledge built upon it.

3.1 I Was Always a ‘Drama Queen’...

It might be said that destiny determined my career would be in theatre: My parents met during a theatrical production (my father was acting, my mother was the stage manager) and they continued to be involved in amateur theatre productions throughout my childhood, writing, directing, and performing in them. It was this involvement that provided the impetus for the first nodal moment in the map of my journey. When I was 14, my father directed a production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Hackett & Goodrich, 1956) for the annual *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day)²² observations, and he asked me to play Anne. Notwithstanding the sombreness of the occasion, I was very excited to perform in a ‘proper’ play and it solidified my desire to be a performer ‘when I grew up.’ I loved the experience of being in a theatre: of rehearsing, of the camaraderie of the cast, of engaging in the detailed character development that offered a space in which to create something new and different.

Perhaps even more significant to my life-path than being in the production, however, was what happened subsequently. My parents, always involved in human rights and activism, were invited to work with a Coloured²³ community in Wentworth to stage the play with them. I had not really been consciously exposed to apartheid before. I went to a private Jewish day school where we were taught tolerance as a key aspect of life, so, even though this did not always play out in real life, the principles were inculcated. Similarly, although both my parents and my grandparents often referenced apartheid as wrong, its structures and purposes had not yet fully been explained. Thus, the darkest dynamics of the apartheid regime had not penetrated my existence in any significant way before. I vaguely knew about the Soweto uprising (I was eleven in 1976 and had a teacher who told us what was happening, if only in a generalised way); I knew who Nelson Mandela was and that he was in prison; I knew that there was a system called apartheid and that it meant

²² *Yom Hashoah* is the day when Jewish communities across the world commemorate the events of the Holocaust, during which 6 million Jews (alongside many others) died in Nazi concentration camps.

²³ In South Africa, under apartheid, people were classified into four race groups: white (of European origin), black (of indigenous African origin), Indian (of Asian origin), and Coloured (of mixed race origin). An essential component of apartheid policy—and its specious ‘separate but equal’ agenda—was to keep people racially segregated, and move the ‘non-white’ population to the peripheries of urban centres into areas called townships. Wentworth was, at the time, a large Coloured township on the outskirts of Durban.

separation of races. But these were all abstract facts rather than lived reality for me, until I went with my parents into the Wentworth community, and we worked on the play together. I helped my mother do the make-up for the cast members each night of the performance, and felt like I was part of an extended family. I did not think about race at all, until after the final night's performance. We all went out together (the cast, crew and my family) to celebrate and we ended up at one of Durban's beaches. I wanted to walk on the beach with my new friends; but I was told this was not possible since we were not allowed to be on the same beach together.

For years, this moment has stuck with me as the moment that apartheid became real for me, the moment I recognised it as cruel and inhumane, and the moment I determined never to serve its goals. The story is thus significant not only for the experience of the theatre that it offered—the community feeling, the shared endeavour, the sense of being an extended family—but also because of the way in which it shaped my emergent political consciousness. This was thus a nodal moment in the shaping of my values as an individual and an artist, the kind of human being, and the kind of theatre-maker, I want to be.

In high school, two events formed the basis of the second nodal moment of my personal narrative. The first was when I performed in the school production of *The Insect Play* (1961) by the Brothers Čapek in Standard 9²⁴ in which I played the role of the Chrysalis. She is on stage for most of the play, performing the role of observer to the action, meaning I was present for most rehearsals and able to observe the process from within, as it were. As I witnessed the play taking shape, I was enthralled by the way in which what at first had seemed so rough and messy gradually transformed into a coherent and polished production. I had some sense that this was due to the director's work, but I did not know how and why it happened.

The second event was my first directorial experience where I directed my school house's play for the annual competition. I have no recollection of the actual play, only of feeling rather out of my depth. I remember feeling quite overwhelmed with the idea that all these people were looking at me to make the necessary decisions on where to stand, how to move, what to do, and how to say their lines. I was confident of my own ability to create characters and deliver lines (something I was doing regularly in my extracurricular²⁵ drama lessons); but being able to elicit characters and line delivery from other, mostly untrained, actors, was more challenging. At the end

²⁴ This is equivalent to Grade 11 in today's school structures.

²⁵ The school I attended did not offer drama as part of the curriculum.

of the process, I decided that I preferred acting, and would rather be told what to do than have to do the telling.

What these early experiences of being directed and directing highlight most is that my interest in theatre-making was primarily driven by my desire to perform, to be on stage, in front of the audience, rather than offstage and ‘in’ the audience, the perspective from which a director must finally view a play. I did learn a few key things about directing though:

1. It is a lonely task for the most part; directors are part of the production group but also separate, as the others of necessity rely on them and look to them to make decisions.
2. There are different ways to direct, but the basic purpose is to elicit the performances and pictures one wants from the group with whom one is working.
3. People listen to the director because they must; they are reliant on the director to ensure that they look good on stage, so it is a position of power.
4. Creative and artistic decisions are always open to critique; there is no one ‘right’ interpretation and different directors will make different choices and work for different responses.

I also learned something important about myself: Being on stage, performing and responding to a director’s requests, was much less daunting than being the one making the requests, and that attitude stayed with me for some time. This, then, constitutes a very early version of my directorial understanding. As is evident, there is little conscious awareness of learning—or the potential for teaching—that I would later come to see as the crucial aspect of my identity as a director-teacher.

3.2 A Whole New World. . .

The next nodal moment in my personal history narrative comes from my experiences as a student in the Speech and Drama department at UND. I started my university career as a shy, anxious student, but determined to engage with my studies and driven to pursue excellence. I quickly grew to love my drama course and spent more and more time in the department, getting involved wherever I could, treating it as a home away from home.

My first year in the drama department culminated in being cast in a play, a Christmas production of *The Butterfingers Angel* (Gibson, 1975) to be staged at the Elizabeth Sneddon

Theatre²⁶ that December. I was playing a relatively minor role, but was on stage for a significant portion of the play. As in *The Insect Play*, this allowed me to observe the other cast members working and the director's interaction with them. At the time, I saw the experience as laying the groundwork for a career as a performer, as well as allowing me to get to know senior students in the department, who became my friends and colleagues. In this way, I came to see the production-making space as a safe environment for learning and growing.

While these were important discoveries in relation to my self-development, in thinking about this experience in relation to the idea of formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning, I came to understand some of the key tenets underpinning that concept. It was clear, for example, that the cast and crew of the play became like a family; spending so many hours together, united by a common goal, a strong 'team spirit' emerged. While not always of the same depth, this kind of communal feeling occurs, I would suggest, in every production, and is called theatrically, an ensemble. It is an almost inevitable consequence of creating an imagined world inhabited by this particular group of people, on whom you have to rely on stage, and whose support and collegiality is essential to the success of your performance. When I started directing, I knew unconsciously that I had to build this sort of community; as I progressed, I began to understand this more consciously and so began to explore more deliberate methods for establishing such communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Another important step in my discovery of what it means to be a director-teacher was thinking about my directorial experience in my Honours²⁷ year of study. As part of the curriculum, each student was required to direct a one-act play, to be cast from among the other Honours students, in one of the departmental theatre spaces. As my Honours production, I chose to direct Christopher Durang's one-act play, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* (1981), which I chose primarily because I thought it was funny and had some great parts for women, thus suiting the demographics of our Honours class. To direct the play, I essentially followed my intuition and directed the piece as I would have acted it. This was largely subconscious in that I did not set out to give line readings, or to make the actors move like I would have, but acting was, at this point, my only frame of reference. Once complete, I ticked it off my to-do list of tasks for my Honours degree and moved on.

²⁶ This is the main theatre on the UKZN campus, named after Elizabeth Sneddon, the founder of the Speech and Drama department at UND and key figure in the history of drama as a university discipline in South Africa.

²⁷ In South Africa, the Honours degree is a one-year postgraduate programme, usually undertaken to specialise in a single discipline, and is the prerequisite for entry into Masters' programmes. It is most often taken immediately upon completion of the three-year Bachelor's degree.

While I did not engage in any serious self-reflection about my own directing, I did think about the way my classmates directed their plays, both the ones in which I acted, and those I saw simply as an audience member. Essentially two models emerged. Some adopted a *laissez faire*, haphazard approach, with the actors given free rein to do as they chose; others, like me, adopted the model where the director ‘played’ the roles for the actors, showing them how they wanted the characters to sound and move. There was, in fact, very little directing (as I came to understand it later) going on, unsurprisingly since we had no theoretical foundation on which to base our efforts. The result was a kind of hit or miss feeling; no-one really knew what they were doing – it was all just instinct, intuition, guesswork. At the time, I thought this must mean that directors were actually incidental to the process: As long as you had actors who knew what they were doing, and you had a basic sense of how to move those actors around in the space, the rest took care of itself. I had very little respect for directing as an art or craft, largely because it didn’t seem to be one. Part of my development as a director was learning how mistaken and short-sighted these feelings were. I needed to dispel them before I could begin to articulate my own directorial identity, let alone recognise the pedagogical value of directing.

I graduated from the UND with a BA (Honours) in 1987, and the singular intention to pursue a career as an actress. My experience at university, however, had taught me virtually nothing in practical terms about making a living out of theatre; it was simply not talked about, except in the most oblique of ways. I muddled along doing a series of different short-term acting jobs, none of which proved especially satisfactory. I also had my first official teaching experience, when I stood in for one of the dance lecturers in the department and choreographed a dance drama. Because I had never done anything like this before, I was forced out of my comfort zone as actress. I realise now that, ironically, I learned far more about directing from choreographing the required movement piece than I had from the various plays I had directed. Significantly, it required me to engage in an act of learning just as the students had to, facilitating a dynamic interactive engagement between us, that resembled the actor-director relationship, but was also different in intention. Unpacking that relationship and its signifiers is a key part of this thesis.

3.3 The Undiscovered Country. . .

My thoughts about myself, my career, and my future, all changed when, in early 1988, I was informed that I had won the Emma Smith Overseas Scholarship for graduate study anywhere in the world. After deciding to go to the United States (US), and after several auditions, I ended up at the

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) studying for my Masters in Fine Art (Acting) (MFA). When I went to America, it was with the intention of leveraging my MFA as a pathway into a career as a professional actress. It was, however, my experiences at UCLA that opened my eyes to other potential careers in the theatre and re-introduced me to the possibilities associated with directing.

The most significant nodal event of my time at UCLA took place when I played Masha in a production of Chekhov's *The Seagull* (1896/1954) directed by the then-head of the Directing MFA programme, a recognised expert in Russian theatre, and specifically the work of Konstantin Stanislavski.²⁸ For some reason, he thought I had a good eye and asked me to be his Assistant Director on the production. It was an enlightening experience to see how he worked, and in particular to see the attention to detail on which he insisted. Sitting on the other side of the stage, I could see how the suggestions he was making were shaping something out of the raw material of disparate talents and egos that went far beyond the capacities of the individual performers. Clearly, he had a vision and as long as we were contributing to the realisation of that vision, the play worked, as if he were the conductor of the orchestra and we were all playing in separate rooms and relying on his skill to ensure we played the right notes in the right place. In thinking about my directing now, I realise how important that experience of watching and learning was, giving me a muscle- and thought-memory on which to draw in beginning to craft my own directorial identity.

Apart from this experience, at UCLA I was also given many opportunities to work with directors and artists that opened up new vistas of knowledge for me. Among these were Ann Bogart, Tadashi Suzuki, Peter Sellers, Andy Robinson, Kate McGregor-Stuart, and Marshall Mason, all of whose ideas have found their way into my own practice, small gems of knowledge to thread together into a necklace of my own crafting. All of these experiences happened with me as an actress, but through the performance experience, something of the vision required to craft those performances sank into my psyche and over the years, I have found myself thinking about exercises, techniques, maxims, and ideas gleaned from these artists, and using them in my own work.

3.4 What Next?

²⁸ There are two variants regarding the spelling of Stanislavski; it is also spelt Stanislavsky. I use the first form except where quoting directly from a source, in which case I retain the original spelling.

I graduated from UCLA in 1992 with my MFA in Acting, and ended up staying in LA to try to ‘make it’ as an actor. Armed with my new degree, a headshot and a resumé, I set out to pursue the same dream as thousands of other hopefuls arriving in LA seeking stardom. It quickly became apparent that it was not easy. Gradually, and reluctantly, I began to realise that an acting career demanded a personality type at odds with my own. I loved acting, I loved the process of rehearsal, the act of storytelling, the sense of community that being in a play engenders; but I did not love the necessary hustle required to secure work, and I could not see myself doing it for the rest of my life. It became clear to me that I needed to start to think about embarking on a different career.

And then South Africa’s miracle happened: Nelson Mandela was released, apartheid was dismantled, the predicted violent revolution did not materialise, and in April 1994, South Africans would vote in the first free elections of the new South Africa. I had not kept abreast of South African politics; indeed, I had often tried to forget I was South African at all, even pretended not to be, ashamed of being white in apartheid South Africa. The chance to be proud of one’s nation again was profoundly liberating for me, in ways I still don’t even really understand. I took myself off to vote at the South African embassy in midtown Manhattan, and stood in a long line of people snaking down 38th Street. All around me, I heard South African voices speaking—the accent that I had deliberately lost completely in my attempt to sound American in order to be cast—and the whole experience made me think that just maybe it was time to go home. And so, I made the decision to return to South Africa at the end of 1994, without any clear plan for what I wanted to do, other than a vague idea that I would study further, and see if I could get a job in a university.

3.5 Old Places, New Beginnings

Back in South Africa, a friend who was lecturing in the Speech and Drama department at UND, told me that the department was looking for part-time tutors and that she had given them my name. It was a strange being interviewed by the very people who had taught me, but I was confident I had learned enough at UCLA to have something of value to offer, and that, together with what they knew of me as a hard-working, conscientious student, sufficed for them to offer me a job. And thus, in 1995, I began working at my *alma mater*, where, somewhat to my surprise, I have been ever since.

That year, I was invited to direct a departmental production of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre. The prospect was daunting. Taking on Shakespeare as a first major project seemed somewhat foolhardy. Despite my misgivings, I agreed. As a nodal moment,

this production was significant largely for all the mistakes I made, and some hard personal lessons I had to learn. My inexperience manifested itself in my second-guessing every decision I made. I agonised over every choice and was so concerned that the performers would not listen to me or understand me, that I forgot my own prime directive: that making theatre had to be fun! While the final production appeared to be successful, the process was fraught from beginning to end.

In the first place, being thrown in at the metaphorical deep end by attempting Shakespeare for my first major directing project was perhaps not the wisest choice, but it certainly provided a steep learning curve. I think I understood fully for the first time the notion of true experiential learning: I could not have learned or studied to accomplish this task without actually trying to accomplish it. It seems obvious, but it is a truism that has shaped what I do as a director and as an educator and forms the bedrock of my personal practical knowledge.

I learned too the importance of detailed preparation. I thought I had done enough but very early in the process, I realised I had not. The lack of preparation also fed into the difficulty of earning respect from the cast. I came to understand that their behaviour was, partly at least, the consequence of them feeling increasingly insecure and floundering, and that those feelings were mirroring my own sense of insecurity. It was clear that if I wanted to direct more successfully—and with less trauma—I would have to prepare myself more thoroughly and in many more areas. Thus, in no small way, the difficulty of the experience, painful though it was at the time, created a foundation on which to build a methodology for myself as a director. In addition, the lesson about being assured and confident translated completely to my work as a teacher.

Perhaps most significantly, at the conclusion of this process, I finally thought of myself as a director. Despite everything that happened, I had directed a play, and no matter the problems, there was a sense of pride and accomplishment. The significance of this for me at that particular moment in my life cannot be overstated. I was still feeling vulnerable in many ways. I had returned from America lacking in confidence and, I believed then, achievements. Thus, seeing this production on opening night, with a completed set, beautiful lighting, costumes, sound, all the elements of theatre, and even some not-too-bad performances, a work of art that I had nurtured (though not alone, of course) and brought to fruition, was profoundly important for my sense of myself as a creative artist with potential.



Figure 3. "As You Like It" (1994). Photograph by Jillian Hurst.²⁹

3.6 Finding New Routes. . .

The university appointed me permanently in 1996 and, armed with what I saw as a vote of confidence, I took on a full teaching load, including teaching an Honours directing course³⁰ again and developing a new third-year module in acting. There had been no formal 'acting' class at the university prior to this; acting was taught, almost as a by-product of voice and speech, movement and textual analysis. I modelled my course on what I had learned at UCLA, although necessarily summarised. Central to my beliefs about teaching acting was the necessity for working on the self and with others as core practices within the art and craft of acting. So, I included two major practical components: an individual performance piece, and participation in a formal theatre production, the first time I directly connected production-participation to curriculum.

For that first production, I chose to direct Bertolt Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948/1971), primarily because it has a large, potentially expandable cast making it possible to use all the members of the class as well as having significant roles available for other students. In total, the cast numbered well over 30 people, drawn from the third year acting class, and all other students in the department. I also chose it because I was teaching Epic Theatre, and, remembering the idea

²⁹ All production photographs are used with permission. As these photographs were all used in publicity for the productions and are already in the public domain, informed consent was not needed for their use in this thesis.

³⁰ I had developed this course in the previous year at the request of the Head of Department.

of praxis, thought that directing a production in that style might help me to figure out how to teach it effectively. The idea of connecting my directing work to my teaching work was undeveloped at this point, but I see this production as a nodal moment in the evolution of myself as a director-teacher. By the time the production was complete, I had decided that directing was fun and potentially, a powerful vehicle for creative expression. If I couldn't be an actress, then in directing I had found a creative outlet for my love of the theatre and my desire to be an artist.

I often think of this production as the first real rung on my directorial ladder; the first time I actually decided to direct as a positive choice of going towards something, rather than as simply a replacement for the missing acting work in my life. I think, too, that it was here that I began to catch a glimpse of what was possible through my directing practice. Here, the first challenge was how to make Brecht not 'boring,' which was the reaction from the acting class on being told they were going to work on a Brecht play. More significantly, I had to think about how to negotiate Brechtian theory in action. I understood the ideas intellectually, but had yet to understand fully how to translate theoretical knowledge into staged action. I did not succeed completely in this goal, but I certainly took a step in the right direction. The rest of this thesis explores that process and is part of my self-study commitment to improvement as a director, a teacher, and a researcher.



Figure 4. *"The Caucasian Chalk Circle" (1995). Photograph by Jillian Hurst.*

Directing *Chalk Circle* marked a seminal shift in my life-story. By the time I had completed it, I was fully committed to a career as a university lecturer, and was excited about the potential creative and artistic possibilities open to me as an emerging director. I was still very naïve and

idealistic, with many lessons to learn, but I had found a fixed point on the map of my adult life from which I could travel in any direction knowing I could find home. In subsequent chapters of my thesis, I will interrogate this ‘fixed point’ more thoroughly in finding my way through the intellectual landscapes of directing and education in order to locate myself as a director-teacher.

3.7 Another Leap. . .

If the first section of my personal history narrative charted my journey to becoming a director, the second aspect involved looking at my directing practice in detail as it has evolved over the years. To do this, I wrote a detailed narrative tracing the aspects of my directing practice in relation to what I identified as the key conceptual categories of theatre directing. Initially, I had intended to include this detailed analysis as the basis for the educative component of my study. However, in refining my research focus, I have again used the narrative as a data source, looking at those aspects of my directing practice that impact on their capacity to educate. As with the first section of this scene, I have extracted the nodal moments from my narrative, which speak to my belief that formal theatre productions are sites of teaching and learning.

How, then, do I manage the twin responsibilities of delivering a polished and professional production while also providing a safe learning space in which risk is encouraged, and self-confidence embodied? For me, this is the crux of my thesis, seeking to understand the duality that encompasses my practice as a creative artist and my educative goal as a teacher in higher education.

3.8 Conceptualising Directing Practice

As noted in scene 2, I use the term practice in Pinnegar and Hamilton’s (2009) construction, where

Practice is a word attached to the work someone does in a particular role whether that role be personal, professional or artistic. [It] refers to all the activities of a person engaged in that role. It includes the responsibilities, beliefs, and knowledge that informs and shapes that practice. (p. 15)

Therefore, I interrogate my directing practice from an engagement with experience, an awareness of context, and an exploration of cultural origin, filtered through my perspective and rooted in my sense of myself, my worldview, and the specific demands of my art. My goal here is to place my directing under the metaphorical microscope in order to make my practice visible and explicit, so that I can interrogate the formal theatre productions I direct as sites for teaching and learning.

Directing, for me, like teaching engages both theory and practice, or praxis. Most directors describing their art probably would not call themselves ‘theorists’, and whatever theoretical positions they might offer were not usually formulated *a priori*. In most cases, practice comes first, followed by the attempt to develop ideas into coherent theoretical treatises. It is clear, though, that the theory and practice of directing are not discrete; they interweave, inform each other, and operate in a continuous dialogue that allows a production to be realised in action. For me, practice is about *what* is done—the techniques, approaches and actions employed in the process. Theory is about *why* these things are done in a particular way, distinctive to each director, which explains why discussions about theorising directing usually reference individual director’s interpretation of practice.

My conceptualisation of directing centres around the decisions the director has to make in relation to the tasks one has to accomplish as a director. For me, these are:

- Having a reason for making theatre;
- Engaging (re/dis-engaging) with the play text;
- Constructing the space and the visual world of the play;
- Working with actors to elicit performances;
- Watching from the audience’s perspective;
- Understanding one’s personal response to the material of production, emerging from the synergistic relationship between the text and the director’s subjectivity, and following its dictates.

All of these elements, of course, impact on the teaching and learning experience, but it is firstly, my purpose in making theatre, and secondly, the interaction and dialogue between director and actors—or teacher and students, in my case—that provide the basis for the pedagogic potential of formal theatre productions. Thus, I focus here primarily on those two aspects.

i. A reason for doing it

I have been a director for almost 25 years as a professional, and more than that if I include my student days. In that time, I have directed more than fifty productions³¹ and read an enormous amount of literature about directing, both to inform my process and to teach directing as a skill. In writing this thesis, I have struggled to delineate which ideas are truly my own and which ideas are

³¹ I have included a partial list of the productions I have directed in Appendix 6.

the product of my internalisations of others' works. In many ways, the line between the two is completely porous; so much of what I know and understand about directing is now part of my embodied consciousness, my "fund of knowledge"³² (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133), or what Ahart (2001) calls "the library within us" (p. 13). I draw on this library and its fund of knowledge every time I step into a rehearsal room to direct a production, or a classroom to teach students about directing; it is part of my hybridised and multifaceted identity as a director-teacher.

In thinking about why I make theatre in the university context, I find myself influenced by the views of Peter Brook (1968), who observes:

the theatre has one special characteristic. It is always possible to start again. In life this is myth, we ourselves can never go back on anything. . . . In the theatre, the slate is wiped clean all the time. In everyday life, 'if' is a fiction, in the theatre 'if' is an experiment. In everyday life, 'if' is an evasion, in the theatre 'if' is the truth. When we are persuaded to believe in this truth then the theatre and life are one. (p. 174-175)

This conceptualisation of theatre is very significant for my own practice. The "if" of the theatrical event is what gives it its magic; we can play because we accept the fundamental premise of pretence. Embracing this pretence is profoundly important since it creates a space of possibility in which the imagination can flourish. Releasing the imaginative muscle, as it were, facilitates an engagement with something beyond the self, beyond the mundanity of ordinary reality, and thus opens the doors of both creativity and learning.

A second key influence has been the work of South African theatre practitioner Barney Simon, the crux of whose work is, I suggest, contained in the phrase a "theatre of possibilities" (Stephanou & Henriques, 2005, p. 72); exploring different possibilities is the fundamental job of the theatre director and the teacher. For me, therefore, the notion of possibilities is a constant thematic thread weaving through my work, a belief in our infinite capacity to create. Above all else, according to Simon, our role is to tell stories; he says, "there's a Hasidic saying, 'God created man because he loves to listen to stories.' That's as close to a religion as I get. I'm fascinated about the stories of people" (Tomkins, 1995, p. 96). In this thesis, I am recounting my own story as I navigate my path through the landscapes of theatre-making and education. Simon's brilliance, as argued by Sarah Roberts (2015), was not in teaching other artists to imitate his methods, but rather

³² Esteban-Guitart & Moll (2014) observe that "funds of knowledge are funds of identity when people use them to define themselves. . . . funds of identity are historically accumulated, culturally developed and socially distributed resources that are essential for people's self-definition, self-expressing, and self-understanding" (p. 27). These concepts are useful to me in framing my identity—as a director and educator—within broader social, cultural, and shared explorations.

to enable “a range of diverse personalities to hone their own emergent voices. His emphasis lay, always, on respecting the dignity of each individual while appreciating their role within a collective” (p. 34). In so doing, he was able to “trigger the creative agency” (Roberts, 2015, p. 34) which, I believe, is critical to the theatre-making—and educative—project.

Fundamentally, I believe that theatre is a change agent; it has the power to change because its core subject matter is the nature of human experience and our interactions with each other and our world. In its liveness, it compels—and enables us—to confront ourselves and our multifaceted experience. The theatre offers a space in which to learn—and experience—empathy and, as a result, to make deeper and more compassionate connections to others. I imagine my theatre as a theatre of—and for—engaging with humanity. In examining as “proof-texts” (Nash, 2004) my programme notes from almost every production I have directed, I can trace this common thread. In my self-interview, I speak about the purpose of theatre, suggesting that,

theatre is necessary. . . because we can bear witness, we can understand something about ourselves and more importantly something about other people through the act of theatre, because of its aliveness, because of its immediacy.³³ (Meskin, 2015, RSI)

This purpose manifests itself in virtually every production I have directed, although it is more explicitly articulated in some. Through examining those productions, I can trace the emergence of a pattern of thinking and feeling, an interpretive stamp, a conceptual language that makes the work mine and resonates with my directorial voice. The recurring ideas, the repeated motifs, the stylistic choices, suggest an ontological positioning articulated through/in my directorial practice. These are the critical components of my emergent director-teacher identity.

ii. Directors and actors – an interactive relationship

While my narrative detailing my directing practice yielded a vast amount of data related to how and why I direct in the way that I do, the most significant discovery was the potential for teaching and learning embedded in the director-actor relationship during a formal theatre production. Here, I want to discuss some of the ways in which I imagine—and engage—that relationship, which I believe establish the basis for pedagogic possibilities through and in formal theatre productions.

³³ In this scene, to differentiate between quotations derived from secondary sources and extracts from various data, I use bold text for material that is part of the data for my study. The data sources, here, were my RSI (2015), my interview with Tanya (2017), and the word-portraits of my colleague-participants (2015-2016).

As David Jones (1986) observes, “Directors make actual in one world (the theatrical) something only projected or imagined in another (the literary)” (p. 10). It is this process that forms the fundamental project of directing and it is filled with the potential for creative expressivity and co-constructed meanings. Actors are the raw material of the director’s art and represent the most visible result of a director’s work in the performances elicited from the actors involved in a production. In the university context where I work, the priority is student experience rather than commercial success. For me, engaging with performers has always been the most instinctive part of my practice. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given my focus on acting in my studies and career, seeking to elicit the best possible performances from a cast has always been a fundamental element of my directorial craft, and the area around which I have the most confidence. Most important, working with student actors, and seeing them evolve into confident and convincing performers, is the most rewarding aspect of the job, and crucial to the educative agenda.

The major part of the director-actor engagement is the rehearsal process: It is within this space that the transformatory potential of production work can be realised, and it is in this space that I have witnessed the educative power of theatre in action. The complex and dynamic relationship is described by Charles Marowitz (1978) as the “actor-director two-step” (p. 49), and the analogy of a dance is apt. The director and the actor must move together, dance with each other, in order to give birth to the character that will inhabit the world of the play being created. There is no right way to accomplish that goal; it is all a series of experiments. However, in order for those experiments to succeed, the director wants actors who will make choices, offer suggestions, engage their minds, bodies and spirits, share in the voyage of discovery that is rehearsing a play. The key word is *play*. In essence, as a director, one engages in constructed play, and such playing drives the directorial process. A similar interactive dynamic underpins successful teacher-student relationships.

For me, it starts with building an ensemble, where everyone involved can feel equally invested. This can be difficult in the university context because the role of a teacher is not the same as the role of a director, especially in terms of what end product is being demanded. So, I have to negotiate the building of the ensemble very carefully to ensure shared ownership but also to maintain the educative focus. This I have not always done successfully. Sometimes, as some of my performer-participants have articulated, I have been too emotionally involved, and this has at times made me lose perspective. I have become better at this with age and experience, but I still feel deeply for the students who work in productions under my care.

Once the play is cast, the work of turning the words of the text into living, breathing action begins in rehearsals. Brook (1987) says, “The rehearsal work should create a climate in which the actors feel free to produce everything they can bring to the play” (p. 3); this exploration—the trying out of things in a space of shared experimentation and trust—is the directorial work that excites me and is the chief catalyst for learning. When one works on a production, the participants become like a family; the shared experience bonds those involved in a complex web of interdependence that can become a powerful learning environment.

My rehearsal philosophy is grounded in the idea of play, and creating a rehearsal space where such play can take place. Acting is rooted in pretence; we learn pretence as children through playing and a similar child-like freedom of expression is necessary for a conducive rehearsal experience. In this environment, as Sally Bailey (2011) explains it, “‘as if’ (dramatic play) provides a staging ground on which ‘what ifs’ (imagination, ideas, images, or hypotheses) can be explored” (p. 139), and it is this exploration that drives the voyage of discovery that is both rehearsing for a production and engaging in complex learning. On this metaphorical voyage, actors and directors, as co-creators, sail on a “stream of possibilities as they emerge in each moment” (Gordon, 2009, p. 5), and from these possibilities both the theatrical magic and the learning potential are made manifest.

Theatre creates a unique environment for learning, for me, because it offers an access point to a world of infinite possibilities—the world of Brook’s “if”—a world in which imagination is valued and empathy is prized, a world in which the potential for mutual understanding and human connection is deeply embedded. This is theatre I seek to make, the directing I want to explore, and the learning I hope to evoke. Bogart (2007) offers this assurance:

We need courage and a love of the art form. . . . art can unite and connect the strands of the universe. When you are in touch with art, borders vanish and the world opens up. Art can expand the definition of what it means to be human. . . . Art demands action from the midst of living and makes a space where growth can happen. (p. 4)

Such expansion is critical to the educational project. In her interview, Tanya described the rehearsal process as one that **“unlocks the whole world for [the students]”** (van der Walt, 2017, Interview), and it is this unlocking that is the basis for the kind of learning I see happening in formal theatre productions.

Referencing my work with actors in my self-interview, I noted:

if you’ve got a group of . . . people all of whom are very motivated. . . and who are committed to the process and are excited about doing it, then it becomes a journey of

discovery and then it's exciting, because then you can see the creativity and how the total is always more than the sum of the parts, like when you suddenly start to see the synergies and the dynamics that emerge from other people, from people's creativities bouncing off each other. (Meskin, 2015, RSI)

The potential to make this kind of work is what drives my love of directing and my passion for practicing it in a learning environment. The directing and the teaching are both so much a part of my being now that the line between them has blurred. Making the best play I can—and giving the participants the best learning experience possible—is the crux of my director-teacher identity, driving my choices and the actions in every moment of the process. In his book *The Actor's Way*, Benjamin Lloyd's (2006) teacher-character says of watching a young boy rehearsing: "What a joy it was to watch you drop your defences [*sic*]. You became an exceptional young actor. How hungry you were to express yourself, to feel life, to grasp a passion and shake it to tatters" (p. 32). This might be my expression on watching the work my students produce in our shared formal theatre production space.

Bogart (2007) says, "we always see the world around us through the current lens of our particular cultural and political moment" (p. 12). Whatever that moment might be, the function of the director is to forge a connection between the world of the play and the world of the audience. Similarly, a teacher, for me, must facilitate the exploration of intersections and knowledges between the world of the learners and the world of reality. In the theatre, where we find ourselves in an immediate—and continuous—present, there is an infinite (if only in that precise moment) potential for change, for enlightenment, for knowledge, for hope, and for community, because, in Neil Coppen's (2018) words, theatre "can open up empathetic reserves we didn't know we were in possession of. It can allow us to truly see each other stripped of our armour and defence" (p. 112).

3.9 Directing in Academia

One last nodal element of my directing narrative is important in relation to the rest of my study, namely that I direct primarily in a university context, which is a critical signifier in my work. Because I work in higher education, and my primary responsibility is to teach, my theatre has to have an educative component. However, within the space of experimentation and learning that is directing in the university, I am still first and foremost, making theatre for a public audience. Nonetheless, the freedom afforded by making theatre in an academic environment is not to be underestimated. Being able to choose plays impossible to stage in the 'real world' is a great privilege, as is the opportunity to work with people who have the energy and enthusiasm of youth,

and a desire to learn. Those privileges carry with them the responsibility to provide instruction, guidance and support along with the theatrical experience. Thus, the university context carries dual demands for delivery—to the students who participate, and to the audiences who, finally, are the reason for what we do as theatre-makers.

I direct an eclectic range of productions, and am fortunate to be able to select plays that excite me, choosing works that allow for the learning and practice of theatre skills. Working in a university context provides a space for more experimentation and risk-taking, and thus for personal development and growth as a creative artist. The choice of what play to direct is always context-dependent. My directorial identity, therefore, as idealist, thinker and artist, as visual, textual and physical creator, frames the kind of work I choose to direct within the constraints my university context.

From analysing my directing practice, I can conclude that I am an eclectic director, and my methodology shifts depending on the demands of the piece. Directing itself is a fluid process, constantly evolving and responding to the specific vagaries of circumstance and experience, context and subjectivity. However, I have been able through my personal history exploration to create a conceptual frame that expresses my directorial signature. Thus, as the director, I must:

- Want to say something;
- Create an ensemble;
- Facilitate authentic performances;
- Engage the body and physical expression;
- Activate the imagination;
- Embrace a visual aesthetic;
- Respect the writers' words;
- Work in a playful way that makes theatre fun to do;
- Speak to the human experience for an audience;
- Make works that matter in the world.

I can, thus, represent my directing practice graphically:

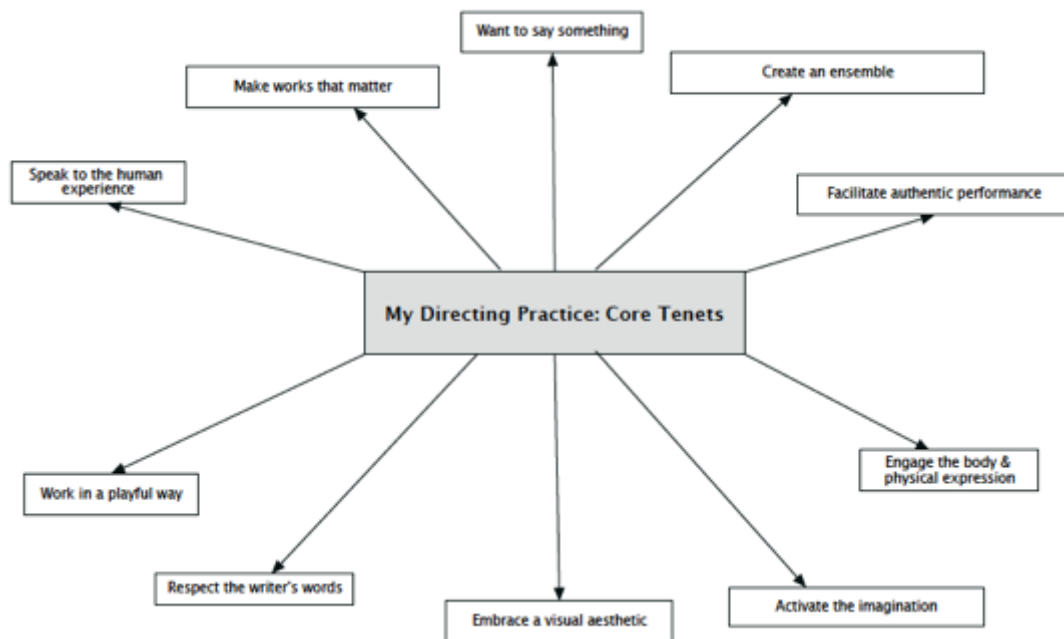


Figure 5. The tenets of my directing practice.

In discussing the connection between theatre and education, Bogart (2007) observes:

It is others who teach us how to see. If we are open to influence, we can be altered by another person's point of view. Our lives can be enriched and widened by the act of putting on an alternate set of eyes. . . . Education as interaction stimulates novel impressions and encourages an altering and a widening of perspective. (p. 87)

This interpretation of education is, for me, very powerful, connecting to my own sense of the educative process, especially where it intersects with theatre-making.

The dynamic of making a production with a group of people all of whom are participants in a shared experience with a common goal, I believe, creates a uniquely powerful learning environment as I will explore in the rest of my thesis. To guide that exploration, I have expanded my conceptualisation of my directing practice to suggest the kinds of teaching that I believe are occurring when I direct (see Figure 6 below). Thus, as a director in an educational context—a director-teacher—I must also:

- Teach technical theatre skills;
- Embed life skills;
- Facilitate deep learning;
- Empower the participants;
- Develop creative, engaged and confident citizens of the world.

These aspects will guide the exploration of my data to interrogate whether—and how—my sense of directing as pedagogy is supported.

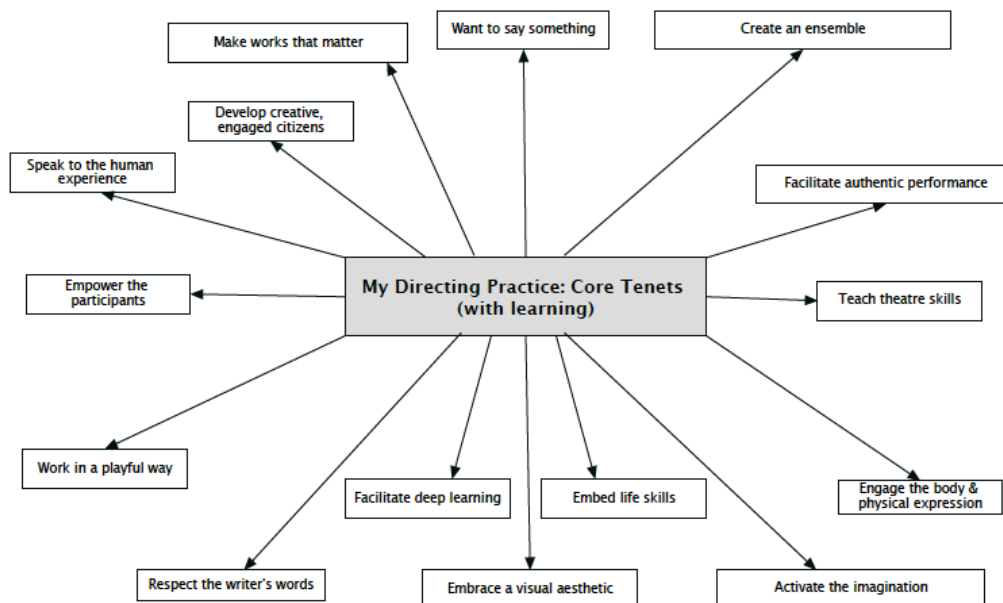


Figure 6. Composite diagram of my directing practice with learning principles added.

As is evident above, this learning is not just about theatre. It is also related to living and functioning in the twenty-first century context, with all the challenges that entails, and being a productive citizen within that context. In addition, there is a more personal component, rooted in the intent behind my theatre practice, as I explain in my RSI:

theatre is about going, open your eyes and see. . . . it is a lot about learning, learning behaviours, learning skills, learning techniques, learning ways to *be* in the world, what I suppose Boal would call the rehearsal—would not necessarily say for the revolution, but rehearsal for life. (Meskin, 2015, RSI)

That this might even be possible is testament to the unique nature of theatre and its capacity to forge meaning. That potential meaning evolves through the relationship between actors and audience, as shaped by the director's concept and actions. As Bogart (2007) concludes, "In the theater, we create experiential journeys for audiences" (p. 50), and also for participants. Like theatre, teaching, I believe, is intersubjective and collaborative, and this is the starting point for the next section of my thesis.

SCENE 4: LEARNING ROUTES – SCENES FROM A SCHOLARLY PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Since my directing practice takes place in an institution of higher learning, I need to examine how I understand educative practice in order to interrogate whether, and how, my directing practice might facilitate learning. Thus, my second research question asks, how do I understand teaching and learning in relation to my directing practice in formal theatre productions?

Answering that question involves, in the first instance, considering who am I as a teacher and a learner, and the nature of my teaching and learning experience. In keeping with my self-study method, I explored my own learning experiences using a “Scholarly Personal Narrative” (SPN) (Nash, 2004) that “puts the self of the scholar front and centre” (p. 31). SPN provided a method for articulating my story about my own learning, which has profoundly influenced who I am and what I do as a teacher

Just as occurred with my personal history narrative, I wrote a very detailed SPN covering various phases of my learning experience in order to excavate my personal educational philosophy.³⁴ The SPN spelled out the origins of that philosophy within my own lived experience. By working through this SPN, I came to understand that the narrative of how I learned led me to think about what kind of educator I wanted to be and why. Thus, in a similar way to directing in scene 3, my personal story opened the doors of a broader investigation, helping me to uncover and locate the educational principles that underpin my belief in formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning. The SPN thus becomes an additional data source in my study.

Nash (2004) asserts that “what happened to the writer is not what matters; what matters is the large sense that the writer is able to make of what happened” (p. 40). By exploring some of the nodal moments extracted from my SPN in this scene, I am seeking to “make sense” of my own learning experiences in order to lay the groundwork for my discussion of education theories and their application to PBL. In doing this, I am foregrounding the teacher aspect of the director-teacher hybrid. Both scenes 3 and 4 should be read as key to the investigation of learning through

³⁴ In my SPN, I drew extensively on a keynote speech about directing, drama, and education in schools, that I was asked to deliver in 2012 at a conference of high school drama teachers. The speech became the main archival proof text for the SPN since it covered “some of what I do as a teacher, some of the lessons I have learned about teaching” (Meskin, 2012). Although I do quote directly from the speech, because the material is a personal record, the speech is not referenced in my final source list.

formal theatre productions that will follow. None of the ideas and philosophical positions that I articulate later in this thesis, would have been discovered without the ‘self’ part of this self-study.

I framed my SPN around the different phases of my learning experience—as a school girl, a university student, a novice educator, and a university lecturer. I will present nodal moments from those phases to root my educational philosophy in my own embedded knowledge.

4.1 The Freedom to Think

I never studied drama at school, so the lessons for my drama-teacher future came from other sources. My history teacher, to whom I shall refer as Mr. W, provided one of the earliest of these lessons in the art of teaching, learnt from having it modelled for me by someone who loved learning, and taught us to do the same. If I had to name the single most important educational influence on me as a school girl, it was my three years studying history with Mr. W.

Mr. W was a maverick and he was one of those teachers who make space to imagine an infinity of possibilities. For my final two years of high school, we studied in his completely redecorated classroom, complete with armchairs and coffee, and learnt the art of argument, the importance of independent thinking, and how to challenge what constituted ‘truth.’ Above all, he would say, “Think for yourself, don’t just accept what is told to you – make your own decisions, be informed, stay outside the crowd.” What he taught me went beyond a history lesson and I will never forget those lessons and that experience. He made me realise that learning is not about how many facts you can remember and regurgitate back; instead, it is about providing the tools to make sense of your world. Or, as I have discovered in later years, what education icon John Dewey articulated as his mantra: “Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”³⁵ This lesson has stayed with me longer than any specific piece of content. And it is this kind of lesson that I believe the drama classroom—the drama experience—provides.

It might seem that this learning is not related to directing or teaching theatre in any way, but for me, that history class changed how I knew the world. I think that the way I direct, my fascination with context, and with how events fit into a broader

³⁵ While this statement is commonly attributed to John Dewey, it is actually a paraphrase from two separate sources: In *Self-Realization as the Moral Ideal* (1893) he writes, “Cease conceiving of education as mere preparation for later life, and make it the full meaning of the present life” (p. 660), and in *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897) he writes, “education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living” (p. 79).

*frame than may be presented in any given play, stems from these years. In addition, the significance of being told to think for myself, to make my own informed decisions about what was happening around me, cannot be overstated. I often think that who I am as an educator is rooted in those lessons, modelled on a pedagogy that taught **how** to think, rather than **what** to think, and that finally, content matters less than process. If I think about my philosophy of learning, that is as close to a basic principle that I can come, and that principle is translated into my directing practice in my desire not to dictate, but to evoke; not to give answers, but to ask the right questions to elicit the students' own answers.³⁶*

4.2 Choosing to Learn

A nodal experience that was important in my developing directorial identity—participating in *The Insect Play*—proved equally important in shaping a key aspect of my teacher identity. Initially, when I found out that although I was on stage for a significant amount of the play I had very few lines, I was very disappointed. I see that as my first lesson in the old theatrical adage, there are no small parts, only small actors! Because it turned out to be true: The experience is what we make of it.

In thinking further about this experience, I realise that I was engaged in a process of experiential learning, and not just about theatre, but about finding my place in the world. As noted above, the production was also my introduction to the theatrical injunction regarding small parts and small actors, which is connected fundamentally to the notion of the ensemble, a concept critical to the act of theatre-making; building this kind of ensemble is the necessary starting point for any type of learning through drama and an essential construct for anyone wanting to pursue a career in theatre. This is why it forms such a strong component of my directing practice – because it reflects the educational proposition that one can learn from anything if one only wants to.

³⁶ In my SPN, I used a layered writing technique (Ronai, 1992) to create the idea of a quasi-dialogue between my past self in my memories and my present self in the reflection. To delineate this reflexive self, I have indented it and italicised it in a different font to make the distinction clear. The technique allowed me to explore a nuanced meta-narrative, and added validity to my study. Thus, while the entire SPN is not included here, I have retained that structure of a double-layered narrative that presents the nodal events in my life alongside my reflection on those events and how they have contributed to my evolution/s as a director-teacher.

*One thing is certain, I always seek to ensure in my work with students that all possible options are valued equally. I have learned that, in seeking to further learning for others, what one **says** matters less than what one **does**; to demonstrate one's values in action makes them real and, therefore, teachable. This is the constant subtext of my narrative, and key to the self-study approach, which challenges us to "walk the talk" (Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar & Placier, 1996, p. 166).*

4.3 Active Learning

At UND, I threw myself into my studies with as much vigour and energy as I could muster. In particular, I committed myself wholeheartedly and enthusiastically to life in the drama department, participating in production after production, learning by doing. Being a part of those productions taught me more than any lecture or tutorial ever could. In fact, when I think back on my undergraduate drama days, I confess that I remember virtually nothing of formal lectures or tutorials, even less of the essays I wrote or exams I endured, but I recall vividly every production I ever participated in and all of the directors with whom I worked, all of whom taught me something—about theatre yes, but more importantly about life.

There were two kinds of learning happening in the Speech and Drama department at UND while I was a student there: one kind was experiential and active, the other was teacher-driven and, largely, passive. In the main, I, like most of my peers, really enjoyed the former and tolerated the latter because we had no choice. Sometimes the theory and the practice would intersect, but not often. In thinking about my own learning—and the teacher I want to be—this is a crucial consideration: providing experiential, active learning.

Not only the learning, but the teaching, too, is different in today's context.

When I was an undergraduate student, there were never fewer than ten staff members, whereas today, with a student body of approximately 400 students, we have five. This makes for a very different kind of teaching and learning experience, with limited potential for the kind of detailed individual attention I enjoyed as a student. This is a function of the changing face of higher education globally, but in the field of drama, it is particularly difficult to engage effective teaching within this model. In addition, everything is semesterised and modularised, which, while

convenient in many ways, also atomises the learning. There is a sense each semester of a line being drawn underneath that material, as if it is filed away in some corner of one's mind, and, mostly, forgotten as one moves on to the next hurdle. In these new conditions, we have all had to re-imagine our pedagogic practice. My passion for formal theatre productions is part of that re-imagined practice since in rehearsals there is the time—and, indeed, the necessity—to work with individuals to improve their craft, something which has become increasingly difficult to do as student numbers have swelled and staff numbers have dropped.

4.4 Learning Communities

Perhaps the most influential aspects of my university experience on the teacher I would become, were the people I met. Among these were my peers; senior students who became, largely through production experiences, friends; teachers who became colleagues; and companions who have shared the majority of my adult life with me. Thematically, I can see how my learning narrative is rooted in those individuals who influenced me, because we learn not just from formal learning experiences but from those around us.

My directing was profoundly influenced by my own experience of being directed, and by my witnessing of powerful productions that activated my imagination; my learning was framed by my own understanding of the learning process and by specific individuals, each of whom contributed something uniquely theirs that then attached itself to my own self-construct. This reality does two things: First, it suggests that who we are as practitioners and teachers is largely the sum of all the lessons learned, filtered through the prismatic lens of our own subjectivity (or how we connect what we learn to who we are), in a mostly subconscious process that continually knits the disparate pieces together in an ever-evolving cycle of becoming. Second, and more personally for me, this awareness of how my sense of self has been affected so strongly by individuals with whom I have interacted over time, has led me to understand why I seek to direct and educate by forging personal connections to those in my sphere of influence, be that a production I have directed or a lecture I have taught. In other words, I want to be an inspirer for others in the same way that others inspired—and continue to inspire—me.

In my English studies at UND, I also learned some valuable lessons—both positive and negative—about teaching, and the difference between teacher-centred and learner-centred education. There were quite a number of lecturers who subscribed to the top-down, sage on the stage, school of educational theory. From them I learned how not to give a lecture: not to read directly off lecture notes, not to ignore the students, not to be completely dependent on illustrative devices like (in those days) the overhead projector, not to silence debate, not to assume ignorance on the part of students, and not to treat them with intellectual disdain. On the other hand, however, I was also privileged to experience great teaching delivered by enthusiastic, engaged, exciting lecturers.

My favourite lecturer was Dr. P, a maverick who reminded me of Mr. W from history class. He seemed to embody anti-establishment rebellion, in his language usage, his humour, even his dress sense. He was also insightful and exacting, demanding of us our best, even while he smiled and joked with us. His subject was American fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the works we studied were fascinating and varied, ranging from *The Scarlet Letter* (Hawthorne, 1850/1947) to Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962/1999). One of my favourites was Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), whose protagonist's search for self-determination resonated strongly with me and the life lessons I was learning.

In reflecting on how literature impacted on my educational identity, I realise that its power rested in its ability both to excite my literary interest and to resonate with my personal experience. And also, of course, how it was taught. The combination of an enthusiastic and motivating guide (the teacher), with interesting material (the content) to which those participating in the class (the students) can relate, seems to me to be the core of any successful educational exchange. It is a symbiotic process, a dialogue unfolding through the interplay of the elements, that creates the fertile environment in which learning can thrive. I have no doubt that there are many teachers who do engage in this interactional learning process, but certainly in my undergraduate experience, it was in relatively short supply. All of this is significant for my learning narrative because, consciously or not, I was filing different teaching models away in my brain, labelling them useful or not useful, to be accessed when I came back to education after my adventures in theatre-land. Ellison's invisible man is told that "The world is a possibility if only you'll discover it" (1952, p. 87), an idea at the core of my educational beliefs. Our job as teachers is to ensure our students know that all possibilities are open to them, to help them to

overcome the social, economic, political, and personal barriers that function to limit their dreams, to enable their discoveries.

4.5 Learning in a New Space

As noted earlier, the course of my life changed quite suddenly when I was awarded the Emma Smith Overseas Scholarship for postgraduate study. And thus, it was that I left my family and my country, and found myself at the UCLA, studying for my MFA in Acting.

I had numerous significant experiences at UCLA, but perhaps the most important was that I realised almost immediately how little I actually knew, which came as a surprise since I'd thought myself extremely well-educated in the field of theatre. The teachers assumed a basic knowledge about theories and principles that I simply did not have. I had never learned Stanislavski's acting technique, for example; my sole exposure to Stanislavski—a key theorist of acting, whose work forms the foundation of many acting techniques—had been as the interpreter of Anton Chekhov's plays, which I had merely read as an undergraduate, in performance. I realised my classes at UND had separated theory and practice completely; we studied plays as literature, separately from those in which we acted; we did practical work, but the connection of the practical work to its underlying theoretical and ideological principles had largely been ignored. Learning this alternative pedagogy—one that recognised and was rooted in the utterly essential connection between theory and practice—which underpinned the work at UCLA was perhaps the most significant educational element of my entire MFA programme.

This pedagogy—that I came later to understand as praxis—is profoundly important to my work as a director and an educator. I believe we learn by doing in an iterative process of experiential learning. The act of making theatre educates us about theatre. The connection of practice to theory seemed so logical after I did my MFA, and so fundamental to a discipline like drama, that it has informed all of my practice since then. It also informs the way I direct: Participation in productions is, I suggest, a unique form of praxis-based learning. By immersing ourselves in a particular practice and its attached theoretical principles, a more enriched, deep learning process can occur, whilst simultaneously creating a better production.

I had no name for this at UCLA (they never called it praxis) or when I first came back from the US and started to work at UKZN (where the term was used, but

*differently); as I have thought more about the learning that happens through participation in formal theatre productions, it has become clearer to me that this deep learning is the cornerstone of my educational—and therefore directorial—philosophy. The way we run our programme today at UKZN reflects an awareness of the relationship between thinking and doing, theory and practice, understanding and experience, as well as the recognition that these aspects are neither oppositional nor mutually exclusive; indeed, they exist **because** of each other. Thus, we try to create an integrated learning experience, adopting a Freirean (1972) approach that facilitates an active learning process, is student-centred, and experiential. For me, this is a critical aspect of my pedagogic beliefs, and something I only occasionally experienced as a student. As a director-teacher, therefore, I have tried always to highlight and enact this perspective in my work. Unfortunately, however, the praxis-driven philosophy has not always extended to formal theatre productions for audiences; addressing that absence is part of the reason for my study.*

4.6 Learning through Failure

Upon graduating from UCLA, I flung myself into the fray that is the acting industry in Hollywood. I had headshots taken, made my resumé, called hundreds of agents, pored over the dailys,³⁷ auditioned for Equity-waiver shows,³⁸ and generally did what all my classmates were also doing: trying to start a career. It was exhausting, and soul-destroying, learning that no matter how good an actress I might be, talent was only a miniscule part of the equation. I had always known this intellectually, but the reality of living it was far more devastating than I could have anticipated. I gradually became more and more disillusioned, not with acting, but with all the paraphernalia around it that seemed far more important than being able to play a character convincingly.

It was at a Hollywood party—a very fancy one, high up in the Hollywood Hills, with A-list celebrities as guests and vast quantities of alcohol and any other substance you might imagine flowing free—where I found myself ‘working the room,’ making conversations with agents and

³⁷ Dailys are trade papers in which auditions are advertised, and casting requirements for various films, television shows, commercials, and theatre productions are listed.

³⁸ Equity is the powerful actors’ union in America. Equity-waiver shows are productions staged in theatres seating no more than 99 people in the audience. They are called Equity-waiver because they are one of the few spaces in which actors who have not yet earned their Equity cards can perform, and one of the few ways in which it is sometimes possible to get that Equity card that is the prerequisite for playing any substantial role in theatre or films.

casting directors, trying to sell myself as someone with whom they needed to work, that I felt a seismic shift in my sense of self. I remember so distinctly the moment of decision, when I let go of my Oscar dream, realising that while acting was my passion, I didn't want to spend my life playing the role necessary to make it in the soul-crushing industry that is acting in America, where talent counts less than looks, and who you know matters more than what you know. I stopped playing the Hollywood game. I still acted, and my friends and I formed our own theatre company and did a number of productions, but I withdrew from the constant pressure of agent-hunting and audition-stalking that is the life of the average unemployed actor.

I can speak of this decision dispassionately here, but it was difficult giving up on something that had been so important to me. At the time, I had no positive response to the experience but in thinking about it years later, and in particular about how it altered the trajectory of my life, I have realised that while it certainly was painful, it was also liberating. I had held on to a singular vision of myself for so long that I was unable to recognise other options. Letting go opened up the doors of possibility for me. This has also become a very important aspect of my teaching: I believe that we learn from our (perceived) failures as much as from our successes. The important thing is to recognise that 'failure' is also opportunity. Thus, as a teacher, my job is to ensure that no matter what the final outcome of a project like a formal theatre production might be, the learning experience retains its potential to enrich and expand a participant's life.

4.7 Learning as a Novice Educator

When I started teaching at UND, I had no idea actually *how* to teach; it was not something I was ever taught, and indeed, not something I'd ever consciously imagined myself doing. For most of my early years as a lecturer, I suffered agonising doubts and exhibited all the characteristics of someone with "imposter syndrome" (Clance & Imes, 1978). I would be terribly nervous before any class, worried that the students might ask a question to which I didn't know the answer, which seemed, then, like a fate worse than death, since it would prove I didn't know what I was doing. To avert that disaster, I over-prepared for everything. One particular nodal moment from my SPN stands out as demonstrating these feelings.

I was asked at short notice to teach a section on DIE and, specifically, the work of Dorothy Heathcote. I had about four days in which to prepare a double lecture (one and half hours) on

Heathcote's DIE theory. Since I knew (at the time) almost nothing about the subject, I began reading. About four books later, I felt I had enough material to try to prepare a lecture. Terrified I would forget something important, I wrote out my whole lecture word for word; it came to 63 pages! When, after half an hour of the period, I had covered only seven pages, and the students were restless and disengaged, I knew I was in trouble. And so, taking a deep breath, bracing myself, and mentally reminding myself about what lecturers I liked had done, I closed the folder, stepped out from behind the lectern, and began to teach them. I didn't cover nearly as much as I should have, and there were large gaps in the theory that I didn't have time to explain, but I believe they left the lecture knowing something about Heathcote and her ideas on drama as methodology. My overwhelming feeling at the end was relief at having gotten through it; but after my heart rate had slowed, I thought about what had happened and made some early decisions about the kind of teacher I was going to be. It was the first time that I called myself a teacher without mentally adding an asterisk to the title to note that it wasn't my real job, just something I was doing because I couldn't think of anything else. It was the first time I saw teaching as opening up my world rather than as a second choice that constricted it.

I also learned the important lesson that while research is good and one can almost never do too much, when it comes to teaching, one must tell learners what they *need* to know, not *everything* one knows. Teaching, like art, requires a process of selection, based on choices about what knowledge matters most at any given moment. Such awareness filters through all my work as a teacher, as a recognition that my time with the students is limited and must be used wisely for optimal effect. This is an important aspect of my philosophy of teaching and learning and underpins my view as to the value of productions which, I believe, engage deeper learning in shorter spaces of time, through the focus and intensity of the experience, as I seek to show in this thesis.

The experience outlined above remains vivid in my memory; I still have the notes on Heathcote who has become, over the years, one of my favourite theorists, some of whose ideas I will discuss later in this thesis. The folder is dirty and torn in places from lots of use, and the handwritten 63 pages are still there, although slightly yellowed with age. I keep it as a reminder of how I began to learn how to become a teacher.

4.8 Lessons Learned

At this point, it seems appropriate to pause and consider some of the ideas that have emerged through these personal stories as signifiers of my approach to teaching and learning. These markers have come from my experiences as a learner in different contexts, and from different people's influences. They are lenses through which to view and interrogate what I do as an educator, and how what I do affects those with whom I work, because, as Nash (2004) notes, "What [we] do a professionals is inseparable from who [we] are, and who [we] are striving to become" (p. 113). Thus, a review of my lessons learned:

- From my history teacher, Mr. W, I learned not to be afraid to be an individual and to think independently.
- From being in *The Insect Play*, I learned that any experience is what you make of it, that it is possible to learn from anyone and anything, and therefore to engage all opportunities without arrogance.
- From my failures, I learned to survive through pain, to fail and try again, and, to quote Samuel Beckett, "fail better" (1989, p.101); and to seek agency in my life rather than waiting for life to happen to me.
- From my experiences at UND, I learned that hard work matters and that what you put into something determines what you get out.
- From my English lecturer, Dr. P, I learned to read deeply, to look for the subtext in everything, to find excitement in the learning and to locate my personal connections to it.
- From UCLA, I learned to embrace how much I didn't know, and the importance of discipline, the joys of independence and self-discovery.
- From my time in LA, I learned that dreams have a shelf-life, that no matter how hard it is you sometimes have to let go in order to move on.
- From my first experiences as a full-time teacher, I learned that while it is important to prepare, sometimes you have to let go of the rail and leap, trusting to your preparation to keep you safe and to your knowledge to give you the necessary wings. This is a lesson I am still learning, requiring the acceptance of vulnerability and the willingness to surrender some of one's control.

These beliefs represent my pedagogical ideals. Of course, I do not always live up to them, and the students do not always respond as I hope. As with anything, there are many different factors in play: Some students are passionate and diligent, others are less so, and some may not even care at all; some enjoy the material, some do not; some find my teaching exciting, others find it intimidating. My job, however, remains the same—to create an environment in which deep and

lasting learning can occur, and to guide that learning to the best of my ability. For me, the production space is such an environment and it is in directing that I believe I do my best teaching, as I am interrogating in this thesis.

4.9 Learning (and Teaching) as a University Lecturer

This part of my narrative is still being written, as I will discuss in subsequent chapters through articulating some of the theoretical concepts that underpin my educative practice. Here though, I want to complete the narrative framed by my 2012 keynote address, which marked a nodal point for me in the way I understood myself and my work. I think in writing and delivering the speech, I was enacting Nash's (2004) notion that "I write what I have lived" (p. 34), summing up the past and its influence in my work, but also drawing an imaginary line beneath it to make room for the new thinking and the new influences that are shaping—and will continue to shape—my directing and my teaching practices.

In the speech, I was seeking to express my belief in drama's importance in the world of learning, and in doing so, I called drama "a pedagogy for life." I wanted to explain the elements of that pedagogy both for the teachers in the audience, and for myself. I don't think that I had ever consciously sat down to think about how I teach and why, prior to this, which is why this proof text is so important for my study. I began the speech quoting the novelist Richard Bach (1998,) who says, "Learning is finding out what you already know. Doing is demonstrating that you know it. Teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you. You are all learners, doers, teachers" (p. 23); I think that as drama practitioners we are always engaging in a complex dance, moving between and within these categories—learning, doing, and teaching—as we explore our practice. In the speech, I explained that drama's significance for learning is rooted in

[the] experiential process [which] provides the richest and most effective basis for learning and . . . is the root of the dramatic method – drama is action, doing, it is by definition experiential, and thus it is an effective learning methodology. . . . providing an education beyond the discipline facts.

I went on to describe the core tenets of my emergent 'philosophy' of education, namely that it must be experiential, ongoing and lifelong, interactive rather than solitary, and determined by context. All of these are reflected in the world of the theatre, the door to which drama teachers—because they are artists—hold the key.

I concluded my speech thus:

[What] we do every day in the theatre [is to] teach and learn and move seamlessly between the two. We often have to fight to have drama valued as we believe it should be. In our current context, where people continue to be without housing or basic needs, where AIDS continues to scourge our nation, where corruption and graft menace our future, where evil continues to flourish throughout the globe – in that space how do we fight for drama as a necessary and fundamental part of life and learning? Something so apparently flighty and really a luxury rather than an essential? Well, we do it by remembering that art has the power to change the world. . . . we trust in the power of our knowledge and our creativity, of our art, to change our students' lives and to make those lives—and the world at large—a richer and more profoundly beautiful place. We practice a pedagogy for life.³⁹

4.10 Moving Forward

I have in this scene discussed nodal moments in my learning, from childhood to adult, from learner to educator, in order to ground my thesis in my personal narrative. In exploring my work as a director who teaches (and a teacher who directs), this narrative provides a crucial component of the backdrop to my self-study. Nash (2004) observes that in our narratives, “Each of us is both constructivist and constructed. The stories we construct then turn around and construct us, and we them. . . forever” (p. 49), a process he calls the “Constructivist Circle” (p. 49). My own circle encompasses my work as an artist, a researcher, and a teacher, and all of the stories told from each perspective, shape and re-shape each other to construct the intersecting, multi-storied self upon which I am reflecting in this study.

In the next Act, I will explore conceptual ideas located in discourses of education, learning, and drama to frame my discussion of teaching and learning in formal theatre productions, the space in which my director-self and teacher-self operate simultaneously to co-create an educative experience.

³⁹ These were concerns when I wrote the speech in 2012, and continue to matter today. In 2020, the year when I concluded writing this thesis, we faced another major trial in the COVID 19 pandemic, which forced educators and artists alike to rethink their practices in the light of lockdowns and the need for social distancing. While the options that I espouse in this thesis do not reflect this revised vision, I believe that the same principles hold true and are important in finding a way into—and through—this new paradigm.

ACT THREE: AN EDUCATIONAL STORY

What I am describing here is a mode of utopian thinking: thinking that refuses mere compliance, that looks down roads not yet taken to the shapes of more fulfilling social order, to more vibrant ways of being in the world. This kind of reshaping imagination may be released through many sorts of dialogue When such dialogue is activated in classrooms, even the young are stirred to reach out on their own initiatives. Apathy and indifference are likely to give way as images of what might arise. (Greene, 1995, p. 5)

SCENE 5: BETWIXT AND BETWEEN DRAMA, THEATRE, AND PRODUCTION – NAVIGATING THE MINEFIELD

In Act II, I used personal history self-study and SPN (Nash, 2004) to establish the roots of my identity as a director-teacher and the starting point for my belief in the educative value of the formal theatre productions I direct. In Act III, I want to explore some of the challenges and possibilities that emerge at the intersection of drama, theatre, and education, a space where, I believe, formal theatre productions might be situated. In the literature about educational drama, there is limited discussion of formal theatre productions for audiences. Since my focus in this thesis is to understand such productions as sites of teaching and learning, I need to interrogate what that teaching and learning might look like. To do so, I start with the conceptual tenets of dramatic education, to uncover the connections, and the divergences, between drama, theatre, and production work as teaching and learning practices.

Scholarship in dramatic education has for many years been deeply divided and inscribed with histories of conflict and confusion. Virtually everyone agrees that there is educational value in drama and theatre work, but the actual practice of that work, and the methods of education it employs and provides, is the subject of much argument. As Canadian drama education scholar David Booth (2003) observes, “Of course theatre educates, but often not in the ways we think, and not always within the traditional confines of grand stages. We need to continually remind ourselves of the complex and different contexts that allow us to enter the ‘as if, what if’ world” (p. 17). My goal in this thesis is to explore the possibilities of the formal theatre production context.

While the scope of my thesis does not permit a full analysis of dramatic education discourse, I have often found myself stranded on what seems to be an island of theatre-making in a sea of practices that eschew it. At my university, formal theatrical production has become increasingly marginalised over the twenty-five years that I have worked there. My challenge in this thesis, therefore, is to uncover and articulate what value such formal theatre productions might have in an institution of higher education.

In this Act, I am addressing sub-question (a) of my second research question: What is my teaching and learning philosophy and practice? To do this, I will examine the complex narrative linking drama, theatre, and education from my perspective, drawing on ideas and methods that speak to my emergent education(al) self. I do this to create a framework in which I can discuss my

participants' experiences of being directed by me, understand whether they have learned from those experiences, and explore what relationship there might be between what I do as a director and the performer-participants' learning. In simpler terms, I am seeking to discover what might be termed my 'directorial pedagogy.' This scene specifically looks at the dramatic education field while scene 6 will consider broader educational concepts.

Multiple terms are used to explain the relationships between drama, theatre and education, reflecting the many different perspectives on the topic.⁴⁰ While recognising that there are no definitive boundaries, for the purposes of this study I have chosen to use the term 'dramatic education' to refer to the general notion of education through drama and/or theatre processes. I do so in an attempt to keep all the threads disentangled (although this is an artificial process), and to reference the shared principles and theories that affect all aspects of drama and theatre work in educational contexts. Anderson (2012) refers to the field of dramatic education as "a laboratory of choices" (p. 6); within this laboratory, multiple experiments have been—and continue to be—conducted, among which I place my own inquiry for analysis.

5.1 Opening Salvos

A relatively small percentage of current literature actually relates directly to formal theatre productions as education. Indeed, I have seen the term "formal theatrical production" only once in my reading, in John O'Toole's (2009a, p. 118) discussion of what he calls the "Civil Wars" (p. 117) that characterised the early days of the dramatic education movement, and in particular the conflict between those who espoused making plays like Caldwell Cook (1917) and John Allen (O'Toole, 2009a) and those like Peter Slade and Brian Way who, according to Allen (1979), wanted "to drive a wedge between more traditional forms of theatrical activity and the work of the new wave of specialists with their enthusiasm for all those aspects of drama which distinguish it from theatre" (128). While I have adopted O'Toole's metaphor of a 'war,' my view of formal theatre production extends beyond this limited definition.

By formal theatre productions, I do not simply mean something that is different from classroom drama; rather, I want to explore these productions not just as entertainment but as education. Anderson (2012) observes that "Drama sits in a unique place in the curriculum at the intersection between intellectual, creative and embodied education" (p. 10). This, for me, seems

⁴⁰ For an explanation of the various forms of dramatic education that I identified in my research, please see Appendix 7.

like a good starting point for my discussion in this Act of my thesis, since it recognises the multiple potential foci in dramatic education and thus, provides a space within which to locate my investigation of theatre production as educative agent.

One exception to the general lack of investigation around the educative potential of formal theatre productions, is the discussion of productions as teaching occasions in American university theatre programmes, where they are used to train professionals for the industry. This is relevant to me because of my own experience in one of those professional training programmes, and it is certainly the case that American universities are far more ‘production-friendly’ than their counterparts in the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Africa, for example. Perhaps my interest in formal theatre productions as educative stems in part from my experience at UCLA, where much of our training as actors was conducted through participation in productions; it is true, too, as I have pointed out elsewhere, that my university experience as a student in South Africa was also characterised by production work which seemed to me far more effective a method for learning about acting than all the lectures and drama exercises we did in class. Thus, there is certainly a personal bias here. However, my argument in this thesis, while not excluding learning about acting in productions, is about a different kind of learning that happens through participation in the production experience. Before I can discuss that learning, however, I need to locate it within the broader discourse of dramatic education.

It is useful to begin with a broad definition:

drama education can be conceived of as a spectrum of theory and practice. Drama education can be described as pedagogical strategies to be used for achieving diverse learning goals, as a subject or discipline area studied in its own right, as a form of co-curricular activity with participants/students creating and sharing theatrical events and a toolkit or set of practices for engaging participants in organizational learning and change. (Davis, Clemson, Ferholt & Jansson, 2015, p. 5)

This definition is useful in its inclusivity of different potential forms, and in its willingness to consider the “theatrical event” as also belonging to the discourse, something not all definitions do. The recognition of multiple pedagogic strategies is also significant, since I am seeking to offer an additional strategy in this thesis. Apart from this overall framing, I believe that all of the different forms of dramatic education derive from the core nature of dramatic practice, which involves participation, action, play, role, and dialogue in varying degrees. How those different aspects are engaged, and the forms of representation that they take, differ significantly depending on mode, but in all of the modes there is a necessary engagement with—for want of a better word—pretence, or

the “what if” (Davis et al., 2015, p.7) world. In that pretence lies the potential for exploration of character, issue, curriculum, change, text, or any other concern one might imagine. The level and display of the pretence differs, but it is always there, and is the key to drama’s capacity to drive the educational experience.

There has been much debate about the differences between drama and theatre, and whether what we do is theory or practice, subject or methodology, process or product. For me, most of the debates seem semantic since, in reality, drama and theatre are just two terms for describing what happens in the moments of pretence, or what Heathcote calls “the Big Lie” (Wagner, 1976, p. 65). In general, though, drama has become associated with process and methodological practices, while theatre refers to the art form and its aesthetics. However, for the purposes of my thesis, I believe there is a conceptual web that accommodates both theory and practice, explores process and product, and engages both methodology and aesthetics:

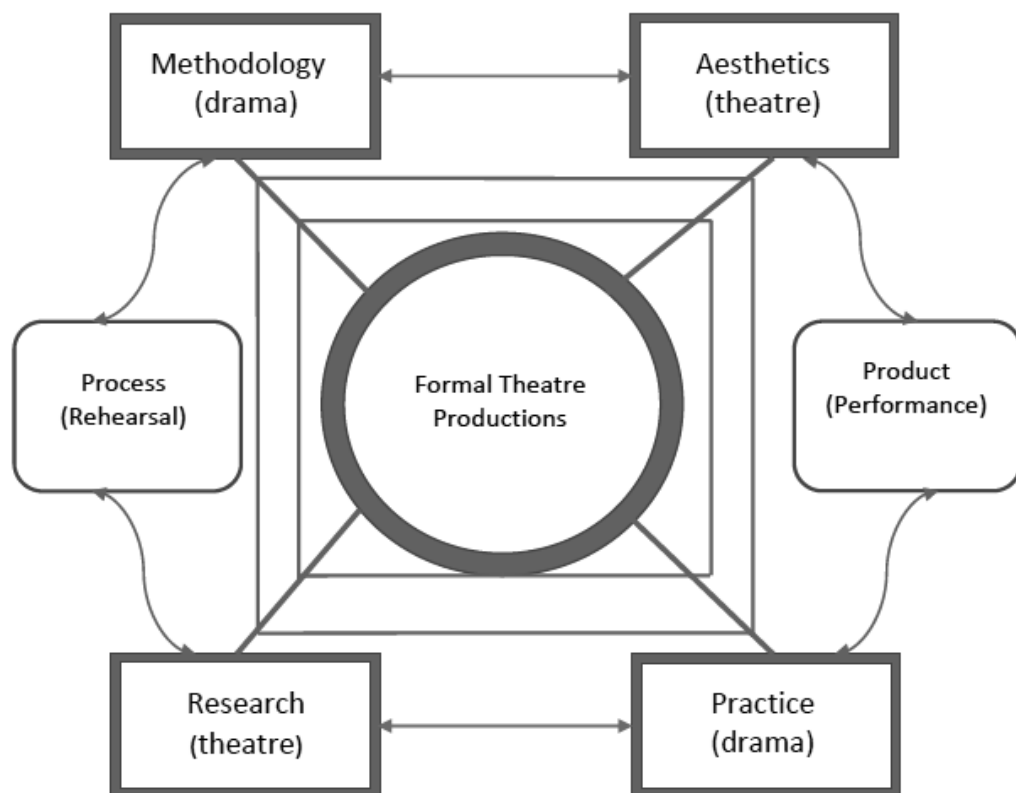


Figure 7. A conceptual web of the relationship between theatre and drama in relation to productions.

At the centre of this web, I place formal theatre production which, I believe, engages all aspects of dramatic education—methodology, aesthetics, research, practice—to function optimally as an educative model. This section of my thesis allows me to examine the multiple threads making

up that web in order to conceptualise learning through formal theatre productions in higher education.

5.2 The Shot Across the Bow

The origins of all of the debates around dramatic education are to be found in the philosophy of “Progressive Education,” which, as Helen Nicholson (2011) notes, categorised an approach to education that reflected emerging psychological theories around childhood. The most significant architect of progressive education was John Dewey whose key premise was the promotion of the idea of “learning by doing and experiencing rather than it being a passive experience” (Aubrey & Riley, 2016, loc. 170 of 4900). Dewey’s (1938) analysis of the difference between traditional and progressive education describes the former as “the acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of elders” (p. 19), whereas the latter insists on an “intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (p. 20), captured in the well-used phrase “learning by doing.” The pedagogical tenets of this progressive education, which I will address more thoroughly in the next scene, may be summarised as learning that is socially constructed, child-centred, experiential, interactive, democratic, and interdisciplinary. The advocates of dramatic education adopted Dewey’s philosophical reasoning, but were also in need of methods and techniques with which to deliver this “productive pedagogy” (O’Toole, 2002).

Dramatic education began in the school system, and has evolved from there. Schools and universities, of course, demand different approaches and theorising (although there are, naturally, overlaps). In Britain, the emphasis has been predominantly on drama in the school classroom; traditional university courses tend to be literature-based, or located in the AT realm, while conservatory academies teach what are considered professional courses, like acting, playwriting, design and directing. In America, universities adopt more theatrical models, particularly in relation to graduate study, but there is also a strong general education focus for drama in American universities (see Fliotsos & Medford, 2004; Hobgood, 1988; Kindelan, 2012; Levy, 2001; Marranca, 1995, among others).

In South Africa, as with most things, the situation is complex. The overriding political necessity of anti-apartheid theatre altered the landscape of dramatic studies profoundly; so have the ongoing tensions and pressures of such social problems as poverty, corruption, poor schooling, lack of housing, access to healthcare, and the scourge of HIV/AIDs. The current COVID 19 pandemic has already impacted on performance modes and theatre productions. It is unclear as yet what the

overall effects of the pandemic will be on how education will be delivered and what effect this will have on drama departments in higher education. All of this affects the approach to drama in South African universities. Protest theatre taught us to be political, and it also shaped the narrative and aesthetics of South African theatre for a long time. The styles employed, and the forms it generated, dominate the theatrical landscape. At the tertiary level in the post-apartheid era, drama has become largely (although not exclusively) a staging place for AT projects, which are rooted in using drama as a social change agent, and are less concerned with aesthetics than with purpose (see Baxter, 2013; Chinyowa, 2009; Dalrymple, 2006; Young-Jahangeer, 2013, among others). In addition, the economic pressures and increasingly managerial culture in South African universities, along with the challenges of the growing demand for a decolonised, Africanised curriculum that locates drama and theatre “under the African sun” (Wetmore, 2002), create a discipline in flux as it seeks to adjust to the evolving paradigm. All this means that there is currently a need—and an opportunity—to explore how to engage with dramatic education in a post-colonial, post-apartheid, and post-modern, twenty-first century world.

These ideas are important for my thesis, because the current condition of dramatic education in South African tertiary institutions (particularly my own), has sometimes left me feeling adrift. Trained as an actor, initially within a British-based learning process at UND, and then an American-based learning process at UCLA, I have struggled as a South African to navigate these conflicting concerns and demands. My thesis emerges from that negotiation.

5.3 Battle Lines Are Drawn

Rooted in the idealism of the Enlightenment and the Romantic notions of the perfectibility of mankind, the educative goal for drama, articulated by Slade (1958) and Way (1967), two of the important early theorists, was to ensure the child’s development towards consciousness as an individual and as a contributing member of society. While this model provided the entry point, it was really two later theorists of DIE who had the most profound impact on dramatic education in schools, namely Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton.

While I am not making DIE, Heathcote’s explanation of how and why drama is able to educate, is important for my thesis. She states,

Drama for learning . . . works by creating fictional worlds that allow human events and motivations and outcomes to be explored, thus widening our experience of the capacities of

human beings to learn, endure, overcome, accommodate to and empathize with others. It may, but need not, involve performance to and for audiences. (O'Neill, 2015, p. 56)

All of this correlates with the construction of my directing practice as theatre for humanity in which certain recurring themes emerge: compassion, empathy, pacifism, a rejection of fear, the importance of facing the truth, the interconnectedness of everyone and everything. These are my “fictional worlds,” in which I explore similar experiences to the ones Heathcote (O'Neill, 2015) lists here. Whatever the specific project might be, the process itself “widens” our ability “to look at ourselves and the variety of relationships we experience as we go through life” (Heathcote in O'Neill, 2015, p. 153). And while the last sentence about “performance for audiences” appears somewhat tacked on, it is, nonetheless, significant that the notion of formal performance is there.

Perhaps the most important of Heathcote's ideas for my study is her conception of the nature of education itself and the idea of exploring “what [we] already know, but don't yet know [we] know” (Wagner, 1976, p. 8). I think this concept is especially useful in theatre-making in a university. As I sit in a rehearsal room facing a room full of actors all waiting for me to tell them what to do, I am acutely aware that my knowledge is only one half of the equation for making theatre; the other half must come from the students who are the ones the audience will finally see and upon whom rests, finally, the success of the project. Part of my job as director-teacher is to show them that they know more than they think they know, and in so doing, provide them with the confidence and freedom to engage fully in the playing that must happen in order to make the work.

Heathcote's colleague and protégé Gavin Bolton (1979, 1984, 1985, 1986, among others) was arguably the first person to offer a clear theoretical discussion of the relationship between drama and education. Through his writings, Bolton attempts to codify his own and Heathcote's ideas both to validate them as theoretical constructs in and of themselves, and to provide a coherent explanation of their nature and the source of their efficacy. There are far too many theoretical discussions in Bolton's work to cover here, but I want to highlight two aspects that have been important in my work as a director-teacher. First, he identifies metaxis (1985, 1986; Davis, 2014) as crucial to making dramatic experience educational. He explains metaxis as “a way of identifying two worlds, the real and the fictitious, which are necessarily held in mind simultaneously by a participant or percipient of drama. The meaning of the drama lies in the interplay between these two worlds” (Bolton, 1985, p. 155). For me, metaxis captures the concept of what I call ‘in-the-moment reflexivity,’ enabling us to do and to reflect in the immediacy of the theatre experience.

The second significant aspect of Bolton's (1986) work, for me, is his very clear articulation of "dramatic playing" and "performing" (p. 264) as two ends of a "continuum of acting behaviour rather than two separate categories" (p. 264). This is important firstly, because it puts to rest the notion that drama and theatre are two separate and unrelated entities, but, more importantly, because it provides a shared space in which the work of a director might intersect with the work of a teacher, moving seamlessly, and as needed, along the continuum, in the process of theatre-making. As a concept, this captures my sense of the complexity—and the potential—inherent in the production process for, on the one hand, eliciting fine acting performances from the participants while on the other hand, using the process to frame an educative experience.

I have framed this section as "Battle Lines" (after O'Toole, 2009a) because while Heathcote and Bolton were usually in agreement and were generally admired, there were some dissenting voices among the general chorus of approval directed at these two pioneers. Of the critics, the most violently opposed was David Hornbrook (1998), who systematically excoriated Heathcote and Bolton's work, dismissing it as at best useless, at worst actively destructive, to the purer discipline of drama, or perhaps more accurately, theatre. While Hornbrook's (1998) tone—and his focus on individuals rather than methodology—is rather off-putting, some of his arguments seem to me worth considering. Certainly, in the early days of DIE, there was a distinct lack of awareness of the elements of the dramatic form (theatre), in action; however, this was probably not directly the responsibility of either Heathcote or Bolton, both of whom always insisted that the core of the discipline should be maintained. Nonetheless, there were many practitioners who focused almost entirely on the improvised drama and role-play that were the basis of DIE work.

I cite this to reflect on the depth of the division between DIE adherents and those who, like Hornbrook, wanted their drama in schools to look and feel more like the theatre that process drama had, supposedly, turned its back on. The polarisation between process drama and theatre implied that the two forms were inherently disconnected and that educationalists, therefore, had little choice but to adhere to one or the other if they were to address their educational goals. While this extreme divide was not as pronounced in other parts of the world as it was in Britain, I do think that the long-term effects of that divide have impacted on the way formal theatre work is valued in the educational context, not least because much of the South African drama curriculum is a direct derivative from Britain.

5.4 An Uneasy Truce

While not entirely resolved, some of the overt antagonism began to shift as new theorists and practitioners emerged in the mid-1990s on either side of the ideological divide, and began to develop more nuanced understandings of dramatic education in all its guises. A new terminology emerged that offered space for multiple configurations of drama and theatre practice within the educational context, namely process drama.

The term, originally coined by O'Toole (1992), is described thus by Cecily O'Neill:

Process drama is a complex dramatic encounter. Like other theatre events, it evokes an immediate dramatic world bounded in space and time, a world that depends on the consensus of all those present for its existence. . . . Process drama shares the key features of every theatre event and is articulated through the same kinds of dramatic organization. (1995, p. xii)

In making this definition, O'Neill was effectively advocating for a form that “has both aesthetic value and educational value” (Anderson, 2012, p. 43), and much of her work was rooted in finding methods to unite the structural components of theatre and the educational components of drama in creating a form that came to be called “drama as art” (Taylor & Warner, 2006, p. 5). For me, O'Neill's (1995) model—process drama framed through theatrical form—is useful since my practice as a director who teaches, requires the primary task to be making theatre, while as a teacher who directs, the emphasis is on the experiences undergone through the process part of the work. There is, thus, a duality in operation for me and I am, as I note in the title to this scene, constantly navigating betwixt and between the different intentions.

Where I differ from O'Neill is in relation to the place of public performance in the model, which I believe is an essential element of the educational and artistic efficacy of my work; what I share with O'Neill is a philosophical understanding of how education works, and a determination to take students outside their comfort zones to facilitate learning through “artistic praxis” that includes “elements of reflectiveness, self-discovery and surprise” (Taylor & Warner, 2006, p. 25). The same perspective underpins my directing practice; by challenging my students to see with critical, alert vision, and to recognise the contradictions and the ambiguities that abound in contemporary life, I believe a learning environment is constituted, within which the participants can expand their worlds and learn to think—and speak—for themselves. This, for me, is a critical aspect of university education and theatre-making provides an effective method for accomplishing this goal; in O'Neill's words, “We can use both drama and theatre to help our students realise their potential, fulfil their destiny and become makers of the future” (in Taylor & Warner, 2006, p. 125).

5.5 Breaking the Siege

The shifting concerns of the twenty-first century demanded a re-thinking as to the basic purpose of dramatic education in a profoundly altered world. Thus, the siege of the drama/theatre wars was broken, but in its place rose other—perhaps more dangerous—causes for dissent. Chief among these is the struggle to define the purpose and practice of education itself. Davis (2014) describes the devastating impact of the neo-liberal movement not just on drama but on all aspects of education, arguing that it represents “a culture that is the embodiment of the worship of the market, finance and the commodification of everything” (p. 18). Davis’ argument is focused on the British context; however, much of what he says is equally applicable to the South African context today. In addition to commodifying education, Davis (2014) suggests “neo-liberalism is bent on destroying the essential striving of humans for a unified humanity” (p. 22). For me, Davis’ (2014) observations (and his significant evidence) make for rather sad reading, given that the entire purpose of my work, the philosophical idealism that drives my practice, is the notion of a theatre of humanity. Like him, then, I believe we, as artists and teachers, need to find a way to resist what Wooster (2016) calls the “hegemony of utilitarianism” (p. 4). Davis (2014) observes:

The artist and the philosopher can imagine another way of understanding ourselves that can open a path to a more human future. Picasso can paint *Guernica*, Shakespeare can write *King Lear*, and a child can watch people out of a window and wonder. (p. 135)

I love this sentiment and explanation; it is also particularly apt for South Africa, when one considers the pernicious authority of apartheid that artists and philosophers helped to bring down. That should give us courage and hope for the future.

5.6 A Second Front

The second front I refer to here is the American dramatic education context. For me, this context is critically important for a number of reasons, the most significant being first, a far greater focus on the university experience of dramatic education (as opposed to that in schools), and second, my own experience at UCLA. It is also important to frame my own teaching and artistic practices in my university: The higher education system in South African universities is modelled on the British system, which framed my undergraduate and Honours experiences and largely persists today. While it is true that there are increasing demands for the decolonisation of education in South African universities, at this point in time, our degrees still mirror those in British universities, a system that, as Gillespie (2004) observes, while “embracing the scholarship of theatre, has shunted the training of practitioners to specialized academies” (p. xii).

Theatre historian Oscar Brockett (1973) posed the questions that are at the heart of theatre's position in higher education, asking "What place, if any, should theatre have in a university" and "for what are students being educated?" (p. 11). These questions remain relevant, and indeed, may have become more so in the education climate of the twenty-first century. How they have been answered has shaped the dynamics of theatre education in many contexts.

In American universities, theatre is studied as both a professional discipline and as part of a broad liberal arts curriculum (Berkeley, 2004), a combination that, according to Berkeley (2004), has led to a paradox since the two aspects are seen as largely incompatible. Given that my thesis seeks to explore the educational benefits of formal theatre productions, this argument is significant, if only for offering a perspective that needs to be challenged. For me, the frustrating aspect here is the apparent inability—despite the years of debate and the vast libraries of opinion—to understand that the distinctions between theory and practice, art and craft, drama and theatre are largely artificial and, for the most part, unnecessary. There is a place for many kinds of thinking and ways of knowing in university theatre programmes, and we should be supporting each other rather than fuelling the rhetoric of division. The problem is not the term used; it is when one or other aspect is privileged to the detriment, or even total exclusion, of the other. For me, theory and practice are always co-producers of meaning, and this is evidenced in production work, which requires engagement with both to be successful.

In an insightful article on how theatre is engaged in American universities, Jonathan Levy (2001) states that "Theatre was an art and a business long before it was an academic subject. . . the further theatre studies gets from its roots in the art and the business, the less valuable it gets as an academic subject" (p. 31). This is an extraordinarily salient point for me, and one often relegated to the status of an afterthought or simply ignored. I think that connecting the art form as practiced in professional and academic contexts is critically important for the discipline known as "theatre" to survive. The way to make that connection is, I believe, through formal production work.

The four questions Levy (2001, p. 33) poses go to the heart of why theatre belongs in a university curriculum:

- Why should theatre be taught in universities?
- Who should be teaching in university theatre departments?
- What should be taught in university theatre departments?
- What should be learned in university theatre departments?

Levy's answers provide useful insights into my own beliefs about the value of theatre education in South Africa.

1) Why should theatre be taught in universities? (Levy, 2001, p. 33)

Levy (2001) starts his argument with the assertion that this should not even be a question, noting, "We are all tired to death of having to make the case for something that should be taken for granted, namely, that the arts in general and theatre in particular should be taught on an equal footing with the 'core' subjects throughout a student's education" (p. 33). While this is certainly a sentiment I fully endorse, the reality is that all over the world drama and theatre departments are still engaged in an ongoing struggle to survive, especially in the packaged education model that seems to dominate universities today. The value of theatre needs, therefore, to be repeatedly articulated not just in relation to the theatre industry itself but to the demands of a twenty-first century curriculum that values twenty-first century skills, as I will discuss later.

However, the philosophical acceptance of theatre's role in education needs to be supported by more tangible and cogent arguments. In providing his reasons, Levy (2001) identifies three key areas: First, the intricacy and complexity of theatre art is best engaged in the university context; second, the necessity for play that theatre engenders, which, he notes "psychologists call 'deep play,' the kind Nobel Prize winners so often talk about when they describe how they did what they did" (p. 34); and third, and for me most significant, theatre should be taught at universities "because it teaches that, at their most intense work and play are indistinguishable from one another. The university is where most students choose their professions, and I cannot imagine better professional training than that" (p. 34). It is this framing of theatre education that resonates with me.

2) Who should teach theatre in theatre departments? (Levy, 2001, p. 34)

In discussing the optimum kind of instruction for theatre teaching, Levy (2001) argues for what he calls a "loose confederation of specialists, rather than a perfect union of generalists" (p. 34). It is quite common in British training conservatories for students to be taught by professional artists in the industry; this also happens in American university graduate theatre programmes, and even, occasionally, in South African universities although increasingly less so as budgets shrink. Levy's (2001) position is premised on the notion that professional artists who become teachers must remain part of the professional world or risk finding "teaching year after year what they used to know" (p. 34), but at the same time must see teaching as "a pleasure and a privilege, not a chore" (p. 35).

As I have discussed earlier, the teachers who were the most significant for me in my own educational journey were those who were passionate about their work, who taught with the conviction that what they were teaching mattered, and who made the process of learning exciting and personal. These are the kinds of teachers I hope to emulate. The critical task might be to create space for teachers who are also artists to treat these roles intersubjectively, allowing each to inform and influence the other in a dynamic and synergistic internal dialogue. In this way, the educator must work on both artistic and pedagogic skills, keeping fit for their dual responsibilities. This, at least for me, offers a real possibility for giving our students the best of both worlds.

3) What should be taught in theatre departments? (Levy, 2001, p. 36)

The answer to this question should be, as far as Levy (2001) is concerned, obvious, namely “theatre itself: its arts, its crafts, its traditions, its limitations, and its possibilities” (p. 36), and he follows this list with the admonition that while this might sound obvious, “a good many other things are taught as, but in fact instead of, theatre” (p. 36).

For my thesis, which seeks to understand the educational value of theatre production, the most significant thing Levy (2001) identifies as being in the theatre curriculum but not being theatre, is what he calls “School Art” (p. 38). This, he suggests, takes two forms. First, it is “art that has been altered or modified to fit school culture” (p. 38); second, it is “art designed or bent to school purposes . . . [which] because it is theatrical in form and used for an educational purpose, is sometimes mistaken for educational theatre” (p. 38). Levy (2001) states:

Theatre is most educational by being most intensely and more purely itself. It is best taught by accretion. One intense theatrical experience followed by a period of analytic reflection on that experience, which is then followed by another intense theatrical experience of another type, and so on, is to my mind a model theatrical education. (p. 38)

This position resonates with my own belief that the idea of educational theatre as a separate form unrelated to other modes of theatre, is at best artificial, at worst destructive. The pressure in the education context overtly to demonstrate *how* theatre educates, leads, in my mind, to narrow definitions that fail to recognise the full breadth of theatre’s potential as an educative tool. There seems to be a tacit belief that in order for theatre to educate, it must *say* it is going to educate. For me, as for Levy (2001), theatre can—and does—educate even when the educational intent is not front and centre in the experience. Indeed, my entire thesis is rooted in my conviction that by making theatre and performing it before audiences *as* theatre, a process of learning is facilitated.

4) What should be learned from theatre studies? (Levy, 2001, p. 38)

Levy (2001) offers several suggestions for what might be the learning goals in theatre education, among which is that students can “learn from the study of theatre the truth of the particular” (p. 39). For Levy (2001), this constitutes the most important learning that happens through theatre. He goes on to explain further what he means, noting:

Virtually every course a university student takes encourages him or her to generalize, to look for the commonalities in a group of instances and to find some general principle that comprehends and explains them. Theatre teaches the opposite of this. Theatre is about specifics and particulars. . . . about learning to see particularly. . . .[something] more difficult. . . than any but the most exalted abstract thinking. . . . the kind of thinking that leads to deep truth, the artist’s truth. (p. 39-40)

When I direct a production, the choices I make in regard to all aspects of the project are peculiar to my imagination, my being, my subjectivity at the specific moment of inspiration that evolves into my directorial concept. When I direct the students’ acting, I am always asking them to make choices, to find specific actions, to make specific moves, not to be neutral. Thus, specificity seems to be at the heart of the production experience, and it is, as Levy (2001) observes, the thing that makes it possible to redo *Hamlet* for the tenth time and still find something new. The something new is the creative spark from which all the other elements ignite, to create “the artist’s truth.” In the specific instance of making, we might find guideposts leading to learning; that this can happen is because, as Heathcote (1984) explained, “Art experiences insist upon a restructuring of ordinary perceptions of reality so that we end by seeing the world instead of numbly recognising it” (p. 27-28). This is what makes theatre education unique, and we need to retain its distinctiveness so that it can continue to produce graduates who are able to think for themselves, willing to embrace creativity and change, and who know they have the power to determine—and live by—their choices. For me, this is what all education should be seeking to do, but I believe that theatre has the potential to do it particularly well, given that it is a form “that most closely resembles actual living. . . a social act where people are and do, and other people may see them doing and being” (Heathcote, in O’Neill, 2015, p. 89).

5.7 The Home Front

Having discussed dramatic education from a global perspective, I want to provide a brief overview of dramatic education in my university, since it is in this context that I am examining the educational potential of formal theatre productions. In particular, the difference between the UND

Drama department, whose ethos shaped my own development as an artist, and UKZN now, which frames my practice as a director and a teacher, is important in relation to my study.

The Speech and Drama department at UND was founded in 1949 by Professor Elizabeth Sneddon, with a philosophy grounded in humanism and progressive education. Indeed, Sneddon's view was that, "The true aim of education should be to enable the individual to achieve an integration of his total being: physical, intellectual and emotional. A proper education in Speech and Drama involves exactly that integrating" (quoted in Herrington, 1988, p. 252). Sneddon's educational perspective has been critiqued, notably by Dalrymple (1987), as lacking political understanding, demonstrating ideological naiveté, and rooted in "an assumption of an absolute and constant world full of universal truths" (p. 63). While Dalrymple's argument reflects accurately the rather paternalistic attitudes that characterised much of white liberal politics under the apartheid regime, it was nonetheless Sneddon who originally forged the path for dramatic education in South African universities.

In 1984, when I started my BA degree, Professor Sneddon had already stepped down as Head of the Department, but the evidence of her beliefs, values and ideas was everywhere, knitted into the very fabric of the department's life. Despite the general acceptance of this position, however, changes were happening, as departments began to shift from the liberal arts model to a more professional and vocational one, with a far greater emphasis on specific training in the arts of theatre as opposed to using drama to teach communication and individual development. Dalrymple (1987) notes this increasing "drive towards vocational training, including a preparation for commercial theatre" (p. 94), thus demonstrating that the difference between training students for careers in the theatre and using drama as a "way of educating the mind" (Dalrymple, 1987, p.361), appears to be a constant debate, no matter where—or when—dramatic education is considered.

Notwithstanding the oft-cited ideas of communication and self-development that were the pillars of Sneddon's view of dramatic education, the department into which I was inducted was one in which production work was central to our dramatic education, both participating in them and watching them. This was an environment in which it was common practice for productions to feature staff members in leading roles, where productions were chosen based on staff members' preferences, and where productions took precedence over almost anything else in the curriculum. When I think about the department I knew as a student, I wonder how that has shaped my understanding of theatre and what it does. Certainly, my sense of theatre at university is integrally connected to the production experience, since those were the markers of my self-development as a

student. There is no doubt that my belief in the educational value of productions is rooted in those student experiences, although the productions themselves—particularly the plays that were selected—were not unproblematic.⁴¹

At UKZN today, the ratio of production work to other forms of dramatic study is heavily weighted in the latter's favour. When I was an undergraduate student at UND, it was a very different model, and a compulsory component of our courses at second and third year was to participate in a formal production, directed by either a staff member or an invited guest, and performed in one of the department's theatre spaces. By the time I returned from the US, however, the idea of year productions had been quietly, and without much fanfare, put to bed, replaced largely by group projects, rehearsed and performed in class, and optional extra-curricular productions for those who felt so motivated. While this solved the dilemma of staff members having to direct plays that could accommodate a set number of students, it also meant that there were fewer opportunities to perform, since, without the obligation to cast everyone, directors could be more selective about the plays they chose and who should be in them. It was this situation that began the slow diminishment of productions as central to the curriculum of the drama department, and it is partly this situation that has driven my desire in this thesis to explore why productions matter as education rather than just 'fun,' and should not be so lightly abandoned.

5.8 No-Man's Land

Having discussed the various debates around dramatic education, and noted the limited engagement with formal theatre productions within existing models, I want to address some of the arguments that have been offered in favour of their inclusion in higher education in order to substantiate my position. For me, the key factor is whether or not an audience is considered central to the process, since it is the presence of an audience at the culmination of the process that is a core defining feature of theatre as opposed to drama. Indeed, as Schonmann (2011) observes, "it is in the interaction and engagement of the audience that artistry turns into truly affective performance" (p. 20). To suggest that it is only the presence of an audience that distinguishes theatre from drama is, of course, a simplification of a more complex issue but a useful one, nonetheless, at least for the purposes of my thesis, which seeks to understand whether or not such "formal expression"

⁴¹ The two year productions I participated in, for example, were T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and Eugene Ionesco's *The Killing Game* (1970). While I enjoyed them, in retrospect, neither of these seem appropriate choices for South African students in the 1980s, and demonstrate the department's Eurocentric perspective on the kind of theatre that 'mattered.'

(O'Farrell, 2011, p. 253) through producing a "play before an audience" (p. 253) may yield educational results beyond simply the experience of putting on that play.

In defining the conditions of theatre, Neelands (2004a) observes, "There is always a performer function (the transformed self) and an audience function (reacting and responding to the performers' actions) . . . Whatever form theatre takes, there must be communication between performer and audience" (p. 4). Given the centrality of the audience to the theatre experience, it is perhaps unsurprising that it is in relation to the presence of an audience that so much anti-theatre rhetoric has emerged within the education field. There are very strong and conflicting views on how the presence of an audience affects potential learning. Hobgood (1998), for example, argues that, "it is in the atmosphere of the supportive classroom or studio that the mentor has the best chance to influence the young talent" (p. 19) and insists that,

In the calm and friendly tone of the well-ordered classroom, away from the tensions and emotionality of performance, the process of developing young talents can proceed constructively. In such a setting, the student can begin to perceive the major object of all education: to learn how to teach oneself. (p. 19)

While I might agree with him on the object of education, I think his assertion that learning is possible only in a closed environment is short-sighted and assumes that the pressure of an audience must be a contra-indication for learning. There are scholars who oppose Hobgood's position, but it is fair to say that the majority of dramatic education theorists and practitioners appear united in their rejection of an audience in their work. There is, as I see it, a logic to this position; certainly, when one is in front of an audience, the atmosphere is definitely altered and this can impact on the participants' freedom of action and level of confidence. It is often in such cases that one sees learners or students engaged in the "showing off" that Fleming (2011) has observed. However, I am convinced that there are also occasions when the presence of an audience can heighten the learning experience, providing powerful motivation for the participants' actions and thereby precipitating moments of profound shift, since, as Brian Edmiston (2015) notes, "The more people feel present, the deeper the experience and the richer the meaning made about an event" (p. 91). For me, there is no more 'present' experience, no more immediate experience, than live theatre performance.

Given my beliefs, I want to discuss now two proof texts (Nash, 2004) that do engage with theatre in relation to university education. Both offer points of connection and illumination to my own views on what the learning based in formal theatre productions that I am seeking to elucidate might look like. The first of these is Domenico Pietropaolo's (2003) essay, which is relevant

because it reflects many of my own experiences with teaching theatre in a university; the second is Robert Benedetti's essay 'Zen in the Art of Actor Training' (1988), which offers an alternative view from the norm on how formal theatre productions in the presence of an audience can create effective learning opportunities.

Pietropaolo (2003), while writing specifically about the Canadian context, is one of the few scholars who have discussed the position of formal theatre productions in an educational environment. Pietropaolo's (2003) essay begins by quoting a warning issued by Wilson Knight to the University of Leeds in 1949, that there were

serious risks involved in establishing a university drama department . . . unless its programs were correctly structured, such a department was likely to do more harm than good to the development of the art of drama. Its courses were bound to overwhelm with abstract knowledge the creative imagination of potential artists and would tacitly mislead students into thinking that, upon graduation, they could find a place for themselves in the commercial theatre outside academia. (cited in Pietropaolo, 2003, p. 56)

The warning is interesting because it connects to the central philosophical question about what university education is for. Because of its innate duality, drama occupies a strange position in humanities discourse, and Knight's observations might equally be articulated today. The argument against teaching theatre appears to be that too much 'theorising' around the art of theatre will strip it of its very essence *as* art, reducing the unknowable mystery of an artist's inspired creation to a formulaic, paint-by-numbers kind of effort. The application of abstract, theoretical thinking to artistry is fraught no matter what the art form under discussion might be, and essentially renders the extraordinary mundane and the transcendent explicable. This position is, of course, rather prejudicial and assumes a disjunction between *making* art and *thinking* about art that cannot be bridged.

The other part of Knight's argument is that by teaching theatre skills to students we are setting them up for failure because the theatre industry is simply too small to accommodate vast numbers of drama graduates flooding the market, expecting to be the next De Niro or Streep. Moreover, no matter how much one studies and how much one works, there is no guarantee that things will pan out exactly as planned, for being a theatre professional requires more than just talent and is contingent on many other elements of which a good number are outside the control of the out-of-work actor wanting a job, as I discovered in my own pursuit of an acting career. That said, correlating the study of theatre directly with the number of jobs in the professional theatre, seems to me a rather simplistic notion, which effectively argues that only the very small minority of people

who actually end up working as directors, actors, designers, playwrights and the like, will find the study of the discipline useful.

Drama is now a well-established discipline in universities across the world, but there are still tensions between those who see drama in universities strictly as a subject within the broader humanities field, those who see it as vocational training for the industry, and those who think—like myself—that there is room for both within a well-structured, well-resourced, dramatic education curriculum. As a result of these tensions, there remains an uneasiness about how drama/theatre is positioned in the curriculum.

Drama departments are expensive, especially if they espouse a pedagogical philosophy of praxis, where theory and practice must be taught interactively. It is, after all, far more cost effective to restrict the study of drama to textual analysis, which can take place in large lectures where one lecturer can teach a hundred students simultaneously, rather than engage with practice-based learning which requires many more lecturers (or the same lecturer teaching more often) teaching ten students at a time. This economic reality is particularly important for my study because one of the highest costs in a drama programme is productions, since they require all sorts of additional expenditure on copyright, sets, costumes, publicity, and the like, as well as demanding significant time investment from staff members working on such productions, which might also take them out of the teaching pool for a period. The pragmatic argument is that since very few students taking drama as a discipline will actually end up working in the theatre industry, it is better to teach them a broader range of skills through lectures, and even practical classes, albeit ones which are not as time-consuming or demanding of added resources, financial or human. This is an argument I do not support. The abandonment of productions tacitly promotes the idea that they have no real educative potential. By contrast, I believe in the value of productions because I have experienced their teaching power on innumerable occasions in my own life, as I have articulated throughout this thesis, and which I will interrogate through my participant responses in the next Act of this doctoral play.

At the root of Pietropaolo's (2003) essay is his understanding of the force of economic pressure on artistic education, in which such aspects of humanities study that are classified as "artistic production" (p. 58) are constituted as "an intellectual luxury we can allow ourselves in times of abundance, when market value is not the first item on the agenda, but which we must keep within limits or even sacrifice in times of need" (p. 58) because they are "merely decorative" (p. 58). The commodification of knowledge and the corporatisation of universities have left drama,

and other arts, fighting for their lives as necessary academic disciplines with important things to offer in this rapidly changing world. Discussing his own context in Canada, Pietropaolo (2003) describes the effect of corporate strategies on drama as a discipline. His observations eerily reflect my own experiences as UKZN:

Small drama departments, especially those shrinking due to faculty attrition, were to be rolled into the drama programs of language and literature departments, which would encourage the **alienation of production work from the discipline** and the reconfiguration of research priorities in drama along the lines of literary scholarship. . . . If we add to this picture the fact that **significant budget cuts—which in drama departments normally concern production work**—occurred around the same time, we can appreciate how the temptation to abandon optimism might appear difficult to resist. (2003, p. 59, my emphasis)

The similarities with my own context are apparent, paralleling what is happening—and has happened—at UKZN, in the wake of the challenges of increased student numbers, fewer staff members, and rising costs. The perception appears to be that productions matter least because not everyone wants ‘to be an actor.’ However, the marginalisation of production work, I believe, effectively eviscerates the art of the theatre as a key component of drama pedagogy in higher education.

In some ways, Pietropaolo’s (2003) essay conveys the crux of my whole argument for the value of formal theatre productions. He says we must consider

the traditional concept of academic work. . . . the received wisdom on this point is still that, in a respectable program, academic work, which is based on reading lists and essays, is to be carefully correlated but never confused with production work, which has to do not only with the written text, but also with artistic reinterpretation and with the mechanics of performance. This line of reasoning presupposes that production work has no academic status, that its only purpose is to illustrate and reinforce what is properly academic, and that is, regrettably, the case in many well-known programs. (p. 64, my emphasis)

This position expresses exactly my frustrations with the reduction of formal theatre productions to an extra-curricular option for the few. The circumscribed notion of what constitutes academically appropriate work, of what material should be considered worthy of study, and of what university drama should be for, are implicit in “production work has no academic status, that its only purpose is to illustrate and reinforce what is properly academic.” I would argue that any educational rubric which subscribes to this point of view is deeply flawed. The study of drama as an art form, the *study* of theatre, is incomplete without engagement in the *practice* of theatre, whatever that practice

might be. Indeed, it is not the location of the practice that matters, but the concept of practice itself. My practice is based in directing which requires actors; for students studying acting, surely participation in productions—the format which the vast majority of theatre jobs will take—should be implicit? I would take it further though: I submit that even for the student taking drama for fun, or as an elective, or as a hobby, or as a corequisite for something else, participation in productions provides an effective means of life-learning that surely is the meta-disciplinary goal of university education, at least in the humanities or arts. Whether someone wants to be a film star or a geographer, the experience of production work will leave them better prepared for what Ken Robinson (2006) maintains is the unknown and unimaginable future. Pietropaolo (2003) insists that we must aspire

to a concept of academic work that includes production as one of its parts, recognizing it as a component that is no less academic than the others, though it is materially distinct from them. Unfortunately, there is still too much resistance in the discipline to the reclassification of production work as academic, and so reform in this area is likely to be slow in coming. (p. 64)

This thesis in my contribution to embracing such reform by recognising formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning.

5.9 Learning Courage under Fire

Unlike Hobgood (1988), who claimed that the appropriate venue for student actors to practice their nascent art was the classroom, Benedetti (1988) offers an alternative argument, which I quote below in full since it encapsulates the main thrust of my thesis:

The traditional view is that productions serve as the ‘laboratory’ in which the techniques taught in classes are applied, but the reverse can also be true: productions can establish in students the **need** to acquire the skills that are taught in the class. This approach can minimize that awful lack of carry-over from the class to the stage: ‘They could do it in class, why didn’t they do it on stage?’ we ask, and the answer may be that they did not really learn it; **production provides that necessity**. The principle involved here can be stated as no technique in advance of need. . . . [L]earning is maximized when real need is felt. (p.100-101, my emphasis)

It is the matter of “need” that resonates so strongly with me. For me, the presence of the audience—the ‘reader’ of the work—creates the need and generates a particular kind of learning experience. Something about the pressure of delivering a performance for an audience because you *have* to in that exact moment, heightens the interaction and its results. Indeed, as Keith Sawyer

(2012) notes, “Social psychologists have known for decades that performance often improves in the presence of an audience; they call this *social facilitation*” (p. 363, original emphasis). Certainly, the stakes are higher than in a classroom context; by extension, however, if the risk is higher, the potential reward is also higher.

So, if Benedetti’s (1988) argument is accurate, and, from my perspective, it certainly is, there should be no debate about the value of productions. However, as already noted, that is not always the case. At UKZN, for example, the current curriculum operates within a heavily modularised structure, leading to an ever-narrowing focus on vocational learning, but, crucially, vocational learning that must above all be cost-effective. Theatre-making is generally considered—and can be—an expensive art form, but it does not have to be, which should be abundantly clear in a context like South Africa, where protest theatre, mounted with virtually zero budgets for actors, sets or publicity, was such a powerful medium for change. Often, I think, to say it is ‘too expensive’ is the easy response, because, to deal with the question pedagogically and with a clear critical eye, might elicit an unwanted answer.

In addition to expense, however, there is also little understanding outside of theatre workers and academic researchers (and not even some of those academics) of how theatre happens. In part, this is because the work—especially when a production is successful—is largely invisible, and meant to be so. It doesn’t look like work. Actors do not portray demonstrable skills, like ballerinas, or cellists, or acrobats; in fact, the greatest actors make it look easy, and, because it looks like real life, it appears to be something anyone could do without too much study or rehearsal. And if the invisibility of the work is true of the actors, it is true even more so for directors. For the average theatre-goer, the director’s role is largely irrelevant; no-one outside of the company involved in the production is ever privy to the director’s entire interpretive, decision-making process, even if there is a director’s note to focus attention on a particular aspect. From the outside, directing looks ridiculously simple: Tell the actors where to move and when to speak, and then get out of the way and let them do their job. Given this lack of understanding, it is perhaps not surprising that formal theatre productions are so often neglected in discussions about dramatic education.

There are very real and significant challenges related to directing formal theatre productions in a university context. There are also, however, very real and significant rewards. The work of becoming an artist is not linear, and therefore, the work of the educator teaching art is also not linear. Benedetti (1988) argues for a “*cyclical* rather than *sequential*” (p. 103, original emphasis)

process, and this, for me, is perceptive. It reflects the production-making process itself, which works through repetition, working and then reworking, and then reworking again a particular moment over and over, as part of discovering the arc of the character or the shape of a scene

Benedetti (1988) concludes his essay thus:

Most important, ALWAYS BE LEARNING YOURSELF! The teacher who has ceased to be learning has ceased to teach. . . . we do not teach rules and formulas but rather assist the student in developing richer perceptions and capacities. To do this well requires infinite patience and humility. The right answer to a problem becomes the wrong answer when it comes from us instead of from the student. (p.104, original emphasis)

For me, these ideas are crucial, both to my own practice (as a director, a teacher, and a researcher), and to my understanding of the purpose of education. I want to explore this kind of learning with my students, which is why I continue to want to make theatre in amongst all the reasons I shouldn't. In doing so, I seek to claim the “gift word ‘teacher’” (Heathcote in O'Neill, 2015, p. 153).

5.10 Coming in from the Cold⁴²

Common to all forms of dramatic education is the experiential aspect, which for me is crucial for any educational exercise. I believe that it is by acting in theatre productions—where the direct goal is to produce a product for an audience, and the chief purpose is not to ‘develop self’ but to deliver an authentic performance—that the deep learning that equips students for the exigencies of twenty-first century life can happen. This does not sound like such a radical conclusion, so I wonder where the resistance to formal theatre production in educational contexts comes from. In her article “‘Master’ versus ‘Servant’: Contradictions in Drama and Theatre Education” (2005), Shifra Schonmann controversially argues that theatre work in education is being squeezed out of the dramatic education fold by the upsurge in applied drama and theatre. Schonmann (2005) does not make this claim in order to diminish the importance of AT models, but rather, as she states, to make “a claim *for* another proportion (balance) between the instrumental function and the artistic-aesthetic function of our drama and theatre work in education” (2005, p. 31, original emphasis).

In researching the kinds of topics making the rounds in drama and theatre conferences today, Schonmann (2005) notes her surprise at her findings, which “show the majority of the topics were concerned with the *by-products* that drama and theatre can produce but *not* with the *artistic*

⁴² The title of this section is taken from John Le Carré's (1963/2001) classic novel of the same name.

and/or the aesthetic dimensions of the field” (p. 32, original emphasis). Alarm bells might be ringing at this point because is this not the exact same issue that caused the ‘drama/theatre wars’ I described earlier in this scene? I think that it is a very similar debate, but I also believe alarm bells should be ringing for another reason, namely as a warning not to make the mistake of turning dramatic education into a house divided against itself again; in the current commodity-driven, globalised, corporatized context, neither drama nor theatre nor any combination of the two might survive another battle.

My own experience supports Schonmann’s (2005) observations and her reservations. Her explanation of applied drama and theatre as being “primarily concerned with finding tools for, or with targeting, learning and empowerment, personal development, discussing themes, effecting social change, making decisions” (p. 34) seems remarkably apt. I should also add here that all of these are good things; it is not a question of not needing such practices in our discipline. It is also true that the ideas Schonmann (2005) lists here correlate very clearly with the kinds of humanist—and humanising—aims that I think theatre supports. It may sound a little like a shopping list, but it is a list of the basics we need to keep our cupboards well-stocked (to extend the metaphor).

However, Schonmann (2005) goes on to explain the crux of her concern, which is also mine:

Applied drama and theatre employ their main ideas, and accordingly their terminology, to instrumental and practical concerns that have been borrowed from the fields of *sociology*, *psychology*, and *communications*. . . . In the language used to describe their essence, there is usually nothing at all or very little about the art we are teaching or creating, or the theatre we want them to be able to enjoy. (p. 34-35, original emphasis)

The position Schonmann (2005) articulates here is scarily accurate and needs to be addressed if theatre is to survive in an educational frame at all.

Neither Schonmann (2005) nor I dispute the importance of such worthy goals as “patience, tolerance, respect, judgment, and social concern” (p. 35), but, like Bolton (1986) suggests, these qualities are by-products of the drama rather than the drama itself. The problem as Schonmann (2005) sees it, is that “these by-products have become the *main* (not the only but definitely the main) target or purpose of drama and theatre education” (p. 36, original emphasis). As Schonmann (2005) observes, and I have argued, “it is not necessary to choose between drama and theatre in education. In fact, the use of them both in the curriculum is essential in providing a comprehensive aesthetic experience and facilitating full modes of expression” (p. 36). Recognising the core difference as being between “education *for* theatre and education *through* theatre” (Schonmann, 2005, p. 36, original emphasis), can help us to re-establish formal theatre productions as valid

educational practice. Schonmann (2005) refers to a “‘compromise zone’ of expectations” (p. 37), in which recognising the purpose of an exercise or project will determine a teacher’s (or a director’s) response. This is important for me because it allows room for a choice made for the good of a production or for the good of the student, or finding a compromise between the two, which is usually the path I walk as a director-teacher. As a director, I must, for example, cast the best person for the role in order to deliver a successful production, but as a teacher, I must also be aware that I am responsible for the education of all my students, not only the ones who might demonstrate a particular talent for acting. Schonmann (2005) argues that the apparent contradictions are “dialectical in nature, which means that opposing elements can coexist within the same entity and yet the whole constructed enterprise can work well” (p. 37), and indeed, the very challenge of the contradictions provides the resistance necessary for the constructivist learning process to unfold.

In offering her theoretical argument, Schonmann (2005) asserts that, “The aesthetic-artistic dimension is the foundation upon which the field of theatre and drama education is constructed. The essence of the field is that it is an art form” (p. 38). She concludes her argument thus:

The Master metaphor is a call for a strong artistic-aesthetic orientation that has to be supported by a wide range of research. The Servant metaphor is a call for using theatre/drama as a tool for holistic education focusing on the autonomy of consciousness.

But, as it is now, the Master has become the Servant and the Servant has become the Master. (Schonmann, 2005, p. 38, original emphasis)

Like Schonmann (2005), I believe that there is a definite need to (re)explore the way formal theatre as evidenced in production work can operate within this artistic-aesthetic orientation whilst simultaneously engaging with teaching and learning processes.

5.11 A Place at the Table?

I have used the metaphor of war in this scene to highlight some of the divisiveness that has characterised the way drama and theatre have been associated with educational practice, but also to signpost some of my own struggles to make sense of what I do. In the aftermath of war, and in the hope of a new peace, my goal, finally, is to obtain for formal theatre production a place at the ‘negotiating table’ as dramatic education moves forward in the twenty-first century. In this hope, I am heartened by the work of Fleming (2011), who starts from the perspective that performing and responding (i.e. making and watching) are both “central to all drama” (p. 128). With this in mind, he suggests that the argument and controversies related to the binaries so in evidence in the dramatic education field, are not about whether there should be performance or not, but rather, “the

degree to which performance should be considered central. The key question is whether having pupils present work to an audience changes the nature of the drama experience and hence the potential educational objectives” (2011, p. 129).

There are, of course, differences between works that are *primarily* concerned with performance and those that are intended as developmental, educational, motivational, experiential processes. I do not think this needs to be disputed; but I also do not believe that the two are mutually exclusive. For one thing, whatever form the drama takes, there are inherent structural similarities since all drama “operates in a fictitious mode” (Fleming, 2011, p. 131). Whether one is participating in a process drama improvisation, or playing Medea, one is engaged in pretence. The distinguishing element is the audience but, rather than assuming the presence of an audience will have a negative impact, I would argue that in certain instances it is exactly the presence of that audience that creates the possibility for learning. As Fleming (2011) notes, having an audience “can lead to superficiality. . . but that is by no means a necessary consequence” (p. 131). Recognising that performance in productions is not necessarily to be avoided in educational contexts is the first step in getting that seat at the table; the next step is to understand that those productions might also yield profound learning opportunities for their participants through the “terrifying, unstable, and magical art” (Levy, 2001, p. 41) that is the theatre.

In the next sections of this doctoral play, I will explore in more detail how formal theatre productions—Production-Based Learning (PBL), as I have named it—might earn its place at the dramatic education table. First, though, I will interrogate the aspects of more conventional education discourse that might provide the platform on which to build a theoretical framework for PBL.

SCENE 6: EDUCATION – MAPPING A “NEW” WORLD

Thus far, in my thesis, I have been dealing with concepts and experiences with which I have been familiar for a long time. However, in order to answer my primary research question regarding the value of formal theatre productions in relation to teaching and learning, I have had to embark on a voyage into unknown territory, seeking knowledge and exploring a new world of ideas to connect what I do as a director in making theatre productions, with the discourse of educative practice. Faced with the overwhelming volume of literature in the field, I have, of necessity, had to limit my exploration to a set of concepts that will help me to investigate the relationship between formal theatre productions and student learning, as it happens under my direction in an institution of higher education. I have therefore adopted a “bricolage” (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2017, 2018a, 2019) approach, since I am concerned with the “diverse theoretical and philosophical notions of the various elements encountered in the research act” (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 682). My understanding of education is “multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological” (Rogers, 2012, p. 1), and I want to reflect that in conceptualising my director-teacher practice. In this sense, I see myself as a “theoretical bricoleur” (Rogers, 2012, p. 6), investigating various interpretations of the phenomenon of education, and selecting aspects of educational theory and practice that resonate with my personal experiences of learning and with my goals and values as a director-teacher. I will use these ideas alongside those sourced from the body of dramatic education knowledge (discussed in scene 5) to establish an educational framework within which to situate this study, and to develop the key features upon which to rest my construct of Production-Based Learning (PBL).

My own experience of learning has shaped my exploration of educational theory, prompting me to seek knowledge and understandings that could explain how different learning experiences made their impact on my life. The lessons I articulated in scene 4 describe the ‘what’ of my learning; here, I am interested to interrogate the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of that learning as part of my quest to discover the theoretical concepts and structures through which to articulate how and why learning might happen as a result of participation in formal theatre productions. I do this in order to continue mapping a metaphorical web—woven from the strands of directing, dramatic education, teaching, and learning—within

which to explore the kinds of knowledge emerging through the process of formal theatre productions. In so doing, I seek to situate and theorise PBL, and identify the pedagogical aspects of my directing practice, so that I can conceptualise my position as a director-teacher. I am thus interested, finally, in exploring the intersections between directing and teaching, between performing and learning, and between dramatic education and pedagogical discourse. In a sense, here, I am mapping my journey through the educational landscape towards an imagined space where theatre-making might constitute a recognised educational practice, and where directing might claim a pedagogical significance beyond simply staging plays.

Continuing the map metaphor, I have imagined this scene as mapping the world of my educational quest. Viewed metaphorically, the ‘countries’ on the map (see Figure 8 below) through which my educational journey winds, include experiential learning, constructivist education theory (and specifically, social constructivism), deep learning, the Learning Paradigm, and arts-based education. Tracing a pathway through these multiple ‘realms’ allows me to locate key ‘landmarks’ along the way, and to find a route to the kind of life-learning that is my imagined destination.

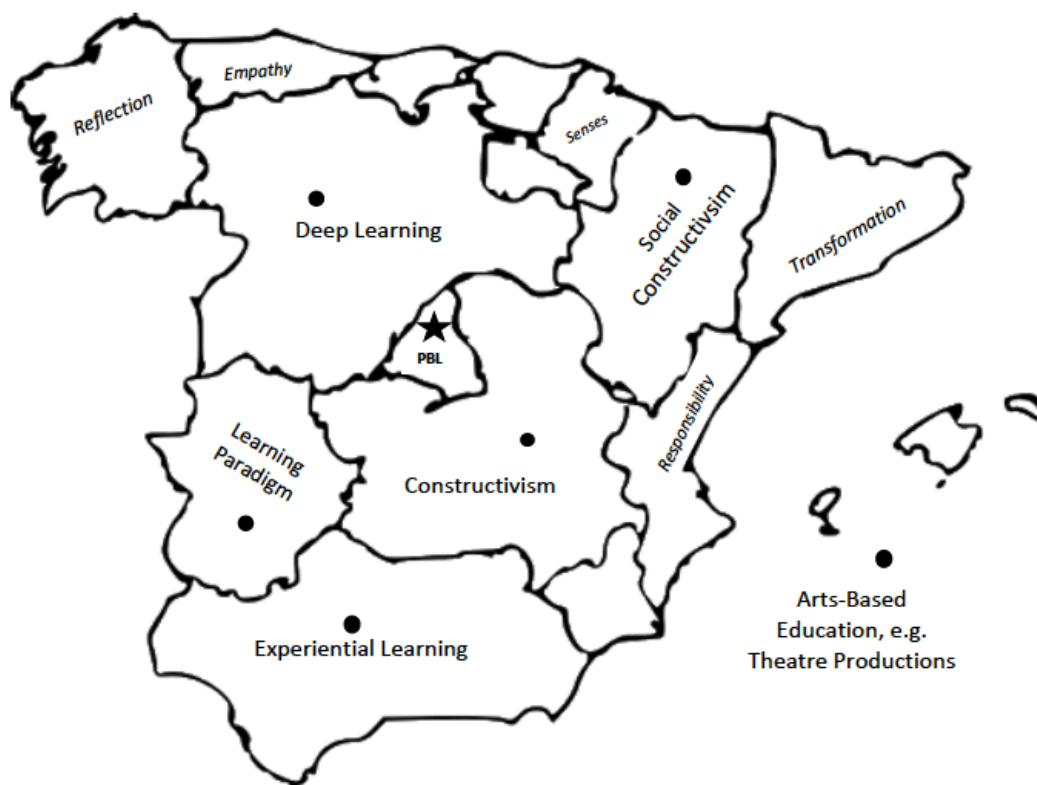


Figure 8. My educational bricolage 'map'.

I employ this whimsy here, as a reminder that my map is not designed as a literature review or analysis, nor to cover in minute depth all the different fields of theoretical discourse that these concepts represent; rather, it is a *personal* odyssey at the end of which, I hope to elucidate coherently my *personal* educational philosophy. My journey is individual and rooted in the same principles that govern my entire study: an examination of self and other in the context of my personal history and my personal practice.

6.1 The Experience is All. . .

In reflecting on my personal narrative thus far, I think it is clear that I learned most when I was actively engaged in ‘doing’ something, whether as a student or a novice educator. Thus, the first point on my educative map is located in experiential learning. I understood instinctively the idea of experiential learning from a very early age: When I did something, and I was fully engaged in it, it stuck in my memory and became a marker of meaning. This instinct was confirmed when I began reading the vast storehouse of literature in this field (for

example, Beard & Wilson, 2013; Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1993; Boud & Miller, 1996; Boud & Walker, 1990; Fenwick, 2000; Kolb, 2015; Meittinen, 2000; Moon, 2004). I make no attempt here to grapple with the subject in all of its complexity; instead, I have examined the literature to distil from it the aspects most relevant for my exploration of learning through formal theatre productions, and to establish a starting point for my ‘bricolaged’ vision of educational theory and practice.

i. Dewey, experience, and education

The origins of experiential learning are to be found in the work of educational philosopher and architect of the progressive education movement, John Dewey, whose ideas, though written in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, remain central to much of today’s educational discourse. My first taste of Dewey’s writing was his “Pedagogic Creed” (1897), which sets out many of the tenets that would become significant components of his comprehensive educational theories. The four most pertinent affirmations for my purposes address the nature of learning, and the goals and processes of education:

I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. (p. 2)

I believe that education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. (p. 3)

I believe. . . that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing. (p. 6)

I believe. . . that the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life. (Dewey, 1897, p. 2, 3, 6, 9).

Dewey articulates here the core premises of experiential learning as I understand it: First, that while it is the individual who is educated, that individual exists within a broader social context that influences his/her actions and development; second, that education should not be imagined as something that happens to people before they begin their lives, but something that is ongoing and continuous; third, that our learning is effected by living through real-time, real-world events; and fourth, that a teacher’s responsibility is not to the individual learner alone, but to educating that learner to be a productive and engaged member of society. As a philosophy, it is rooted in the belief that education should “teach the essential relationship

between human knowledge and social experience” (Apple & Teitelbaum, 2001, p. 196). This, then, is my starting point, since, like Dewey, I believe that the self and the society inextricably tied to each other, given that “all human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and communication” (Dewey, 1938, p. 38). Certainly, for the purposes of articulating a theoretical framework for PBL, the philosophy outlined above seems apt.

The notion of experience has been defined in different ways; indeed, Dewey (1925) described it as “a weasel word. Its slipperiness. . . evident in an inconsistency characteristic of many thinkers” (p. 1). Everyone experiences events based on their own subjectivity, and thus, no two people’s experience of an event are exactly the same (Beard & Wilson, 2013, p. 23); moreover, the interpretations of that event will continue to evolve and shift as subjectivity evolves, resulting in impermanent, contingent meanings that alter and deepen as other experiences influence them. Boud et al. (1993) offer a particularly pertinent observation in this regard:

For the sake of simplicity in discussing learning from experience, experience is sometimes referred to as if it were singular and unlimited by time or place. Much experience, however, is multifaceted, multi-layered and so inextricably connected with other experiences that it is impossible to locate temporally or spatially. It almost defies analysis as the act of analysis inevitably alters the experience and the learning that flows from it. (p. 7)

This recognition, I believe, identifies the complexity of the phenomenon of learning itself, and the challenges for educational practitioners in finding methods to guide its development. Isolating separate incidences of experience and approaching learning as if it were linear and unidimensional seems rather foolish, for those strategies do not equate to real-world experience. Instead, methodologies have to be found to educate holistically, allowing for many different kinds of experience to co-exist, and providing complex environments for multiple types of learning to occur, often simultaneously. For me, formal theatre productions offer one such space.

In light of the above, I want to explore three key concepts in Dewey’s (1938) understanding of experience that are relevant for my thesis: namely, that experience is characterised by continuity, interaction, and that it is multi-layered. Dewey (1938) refers to the first of these as the “experiential continuum” (p. 33), and explains that “continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone

before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (1938, p. 35). In essence, this implies that no experience can be examined in isolation, and nor can it be erased; everything that happens to us shapes our being and our future. Therefore, as Kolb (2015) asserts, “all learning is relearning” (p. 39). This concept is especially important for theatre-learning since performers (and all other artists of the theatre) must constantly expand their capacities, building on what they have already done in order to discover new creative options. We do not begin the process afresh with each new production; I take my directing history with me into every rehearsal room and indeed, it is reflecting on that history through the lens of current practice that allows me to grow as an artist.

Interaction is a critical feature of experiential learning, rooted in the “transactional relationship between the person and the environment [which] is symbolized in the dual meanings of the term *experience*—one subjective and personal. . . and the other objective and environmental” (Kolb, 2015, p. 46, original emphasis). Rather than an either/or binary, however, Dewey’s argument asserts that such opposite aspects in fact produce each other, and the continual interaction between them drives the learning process. For Dewey (1938) interaction “assigns equal rights to both factors in experience – objective and internal conditions. Any normal experience is an interplay of these two sets of conditions” (p. 42). From the interaction emerge “situations” (Dewey, 1938, p. 42), and thus, “the concepts of *situation* and *interaction* are inseparable from each other. . . experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment” (p. 43, original emphasis). Formal theatre productions, then, can be constituted as “situations” necessitating the “interaction” that Dewey references. Kolb (2015) suggests replacing the term interaction with transaction which “implies a more fluid, interpenetrating relationship between objective conditions and subjective experience, such that once they become related, both are essentially changed” (p. 47), and this is a useful reframing since it points clearly to the change-making element that is so central to my philosophy of theatre-making and education.

The third important Deweyan concept is that experience is always multi-layered, meaning that learning happens not in the singular, but in multiple ways. Each experience provides learning not only directly, but indirectly too, a factor that is especially significant for my study. Dewey (1938) states:

Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time. **Collateral learning** in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. The most important attitude that can be formed is the desire to go on learning. (p. 48, my emphasis)

When I read this, the first thought that came to me was how his argument reflected exactly my experience with Mr. W in my school history classroom: While the subject matter was certainly important, the lessons learned were infinitely more far-reaching than simply preparation for an examination. In that classroom, I began to discover the attitudes to knowledge that have shaped my life. Perhaps this is the basis of all life-lessons and indeed, as Dewey (1938) observes, “education as growth or maturity should be an ever-present process” (p. 50). It is also a profoundly significant observation for my study: When I direct productions, my primary purpose is not to teach *per se*, but to direct, and those participating in the productions are concerned in the immediate moment and overtly with developing and improving their theatre skills. My research, however, seeks to understand whether, and how, a more broad-based life-learning involving a “covert curriculum” (Appleby, 2001) of skills, attitudes and values, is being almost tangentially produced. Thus, the notion of “collateral learning” is particularly relevant and, I would argue, accurate, as will be evidenced in the discussion of my research data.

The final two points I wish to make regarding Dewey’s theories relate to the crucial component of reflection within the experiential learning process, and the role of the teacher. In discussing the latter, he highlights the need for flexibility and describes teachers’ suggestions as “a starting point to be developed into a plan through contributions from the experience of all engaged in the learning process” (Dewey, 1938, p. 72), insisting that “development occurs through reciprocal give-and-take, the teacher taking but not being afraid also to give” (p. 72). For me, this description captures remarkably well the function of the director in production work, where the process unfolds through reciprocity and shared endeavour, with the contributions of everyone involved, such that the final product is communally owned and valued.

For learning to result from experience, Dewey (1938) claims the individual cannot simply have the experience, but must examine that experience with “reflection and judgment” (p. 64); indeed, he avows that “we do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on the experience” (Dewey, 1933, p. 78). Reflection is thus a critical component of the experiential learning process (see Bolton, 2010; Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Boud & Miller, 1996; Moon, 2004, among others), being the “primary source of the transformation that leads to learning and development” (Kolb, 2015, p. 57). For my purposes, reflection is a critical element because the life-learning I am imagining can only take root through reflexive engagement with the experience. As Jennifer Moon (2004) observes, “deep reflection is generally characterized by perspective transformation, transformatory critique, or transformative learning” (p. 96), and it is the focus on transformation that resonates with my view on learning through productions. I would argue that the entire theatre-making venture is an iterative exercise,⁴³ requiring continual reflection, for both director and actors as they seek to discover, through the investigative process of rehearsal, how best to tell the story in question. Similarly, transformation is at the heart of the theatrical experience: transforming a text into stage action, a theatre space into an imagined environment, actors into characters, and individual members of the public into a theatre audience. Transformation is also, finally, surely the goal of education in the best sense of the word. In the next section, I will explore some of the other perspectives on experiential learning, with a view to understanding how such transformations might happen.

ii. Experiential learning perspectives

Many different scholars have written about experiential learning in a wide variety of fields, from higher education, to human resource management, to corporate training, and to life-skills coaching. Some of the important ideas include the view that “Learning begins with experience and transforms it into knowledge, skill, attitude, emotions, values, beliefs, senses” (Jarvis, 1999, p. 65); or, that “knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 51); or that experiential learning occurs when “the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied” (Keeton & Tate, cited in Cell, 1984, p. viii). The most comprehensive and useful definition I have found, however, is Colin Beard and John P. Wilson’s (2013), which describes experiential learning as

⁴³ See Meskin & van der Walt (2014), for a more detailed discussion of theatre as an iterative process.

a **sense making process** involving significant experiences that, to varying degrees, act as the source of learning. These experiences **actively immerse** and **reflectively engage** the **inner world of the learner**, as a **whole person** (including physical-bodily, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually) with their intricate '**outer world of the learning environment** (including belonging and doing – in places, spaces, within social, cultural, political context etc.) to create **memorable, rich and effective experiences** for and of learning. (p. 4, my emphasis)

I see in theatre-making evidence of all of these aspects: The participants in a production must understand the project in all its complexity, and **make sense** of their particular roles therein; the actors in a production (and the director) must **immerse** themselves in the work and continually explore **active** choices to construct their characters; the entire process of a production, as noted above, engages constant **reflection** since rehearsals are iterative and require continuing evaluation of each moment of action; the participants must draw on their own **inner world** in order to produce authentic character work, rooted in the uniqueness of the self; performers are somatically invested in production work since the audience will experience the narrative of the play filtered through the actors' **bodies**, voices, and imaginations; the **environment** that is the **world of the play** impacts every choice and every action in the production since everyone involved must do their part to maintain the veracity of the fictional world (see Henry, 2010); and the intention of a production is always to be **memorable** and **effective**, both for those on the stage and, importantly, for the audiences for whom it will be performed, a factor that adds a powerful motivator for learning. Thus, for me, a theatre production offers a unique opportunity for a powerful experiential learning event.

Beard and Wilson's (2013) multi-layered analysis of how experiential learning works identifies six key components of the process: the learning environment, learning activities, the senses, emotions in learning, reasoning and intelligence, and learning and change (Beard & Wilson, 2013, p. 7). Each component is also positioned in a broader category: Environment and activities constitute the external aspects of the experience (or Dewey's objective arena); emotions, reasoning, learning and change constitute the internal elements (or Dewey's subjective arena); both of these are experienced through the senses by which we interact with the world. Beard and Wilson (2013) suggest that engaging with these elements facilitates the shaping of an effective experiential learning exercise.

I am drawn to this particular framework of experiential learning because of its focus on the senses and its inclusion of the emotional self as a key component; both of these are critical aspects of drama generally, and theatre-making in particular. Indeed, it may be argued that among the distinguishing characteristics of theatre as a form are first, its reliance on the senses and the body both for discovery (in the classroom or in rehearsal) and presentation (on the stage). Much of an actor's training consists of learning to access the senses and control the body in order to convey character choices effectively; Lee Strasberg's performance technique of emotional memory (or the "Method"), for example, is premised on the ability of the actor to access sense memory (see Strasberg 1988, 1993).

A second feature of theatre is that it is rooted in emotional exploration, and specifically, facilitating empathy. In genres like realism, the ability to act rests in our capacity to identify with others, to place ourselves in someone else's shoes; even in anti-realist models, part of what drives the theatrical exchange is to let the audience witness an embodied imaginative narrative and be moved to emotion or, at times, to action. The foundation of my directorial practice is my belief that theatre can be used to foreground compassion and humanity, both of which are only possible through empathy. In his discussion of empathy and intersubjectivity, Joshua May (2017) suggests that empathy is intersubjective because it mentally connects us with others (p. 169) and is thus "tied to compassion. . . since it allows one to become vividly aware of another's situation" (p. 170). He goes on to explain how "Sharing the pain or joy of others provides vivid reminders that they too are individuals with their own concerns, relationships, and values" (May, 2017, p. 177), and finally, that "Optimists believe empathy puts us in touch with others in a way that generates a compassionate concern that forms the foundation of morality" (p. 178). Given my own value system, it is clear, I think, why these ideas are important to my self-study.

The recognition that students must be emotionally connected and engaged as a prerequisite for learning to occur is also a cogent argument for me. This is borne out by other experiential learning theorists; for example, Boud and Miller (1996) maintain that "the affective experience of learners is probably the most powerful determinant of learning of all kinds" (p. 17). What we feel often impacts us more deeply than what we think, and this certainly constitutes a potent argument for theatre-based learning, where emotion is welcomed as necessary and powerful, and is thus, actively sought. This valuing of the affective domain is particularly important for me.

As part of the affective learning dynamic, Beard and Wilson (2013) reference the power of play, which “serves to *rehearse and exercise skills* in a safe environment” (p. 149, original emphasis), and this idea connects strongly to the notions of role-play and improvisation at the heart of DIE methods, as well as Boal’s (2008) concept of theatre as “a rehearsal for the revolution” (p. 98). Both of these operate from the premise that the fictional space created in the drama allows for problems to be addressed in safe and secure environments of trust that facilitate the potential for change. I think those same principles and factors apply to the theatre-making exercise; Beard and Wilson (2013), however, appear to accept the same—for me, false—binary distinction between drama and theatre, to which I have referred in scene 8, that sees drama as a teaching method (which they call “creative dramatics” [p. 153]), and theatre as an “art form that focuses on a product: a play or production for an audience” (p. 152). They go on to explain their perception that,

Classroom drama is not learning about drama, but learning through drama. Drama’s goals are based in pedagogical, developmental and learning theory as much as or more than being arts-based. Significantly, the focus is on the growth and development of the learner rather than the entertainment or stimulation of the observer. (Beard and Wilson, 2013, p. 153)

Herein lies the crux of my argument; while I do not dispute any of the claims regarding how drama in a classroom might operate, I challenge the notion that there is necessarily such a clear-cut division between drama for learning and theatre for entertainment. Instead, I would argue that there is at least the potential for the theatre experience to be as pedagogically significant as classroom drama exercise if learning goals are embedded into the process. That said, it seems to me that Beard and Wilson’s (2013) description of role-play as a “form of imaginization and communication” (p. 153) might equally apply to playing characters in a play, with similar positive learning outcomes.

One further element of Beard and Wilson’s (2013) theory is important for my study, namely the significance of “feelings” to experiential learning. They describe feeling as involving “the emotions (*heart*) where we perceive, interpret and emotionally respond to stimuli from the external environment. . . we internalize the external learning experience” (Beard & Wilson, 2013, p. 8, original emphasis). For me, “feeling and theatre are fundamentally linked. . . doing things with feeling is the primary reason for theatre’s existence” (Hurley, 2010, p. 4). Hurley (2010) describes this as theatre’s “feeling-labour” (p.

4), and argues that it is “the most important aspect of theatre’s cultural work” (p. 4). Feeling affects audiences’ emotions, critics’ responses, scholars’ analyses, and actors’ performances. Feeling is also a crucial component of directorial conceptualisation, including the physical aspects thereof; indeed, Stanislavski (1989a) says “the setting is a definite stimulus to our emotion” (p. 180). It is clear, therefore, that the affective domain can be engaged through theatre-making within an experiential learning framework.

Just as actors, directors, and audiences engage with experiences emotionally, so, too, does learning require a feeling investment. In acknowledging this, Beard and Wilson (2013) observe that students in higher education “experience a very real emotional journey: one that affects their whole being, containing many significant events that influence their disposition to learn” (p. 191), and indeed, claim that “the affective domain can be seen to provide the underlying foundation for all learning” (p. 195). Thus, just as emotion is fundamental to the theatre-making process, so, too, is it foundational in educational practice. Not least, this is because our emotions are an intrinsic component of our identities and our pasts, both of which are critical to the learning experience; our pasts, consisting “of banked emotional ‘experiences’” (Beard & Wilson, 2013, p. 204) that define our subjectivities and shape our interactions in the present, constitute the foundation for our educational journeys. The particular virtue of theatre as a medium for this journey, is that it allows for the experience of emotions in the present tense, in what Heathcote calls “the eternal time-present of drama” (in O’Neill, 2015, p. 89), and that very immediacy heightens the learning potential, in my view.

Beard and Wilson (2013) go on to suggest that,

Significant change and transformation often involve an intense emotional dimension and emotions can act as a bridge to personal change. When our very ‘being’ is transformed, changes can involve shifts in identity and the inner psyche, the development of wisdom and the letting go of ego, the development of presence and authenticity, and the development of mindful states. The key to deep learning is of course self-awareness; the ability to know oneself. (p. 251)

These goals of self-awareness, authenticity, mindfulness and, finally, transformation are, for me, the core purposes of education beyond any disciplinary knowledge; certainly, they are challenging and difficult to achieve, but they are supported and actively encouraged in the formal theatre production process. As Moon (2004) notes, “creative activity involves working with imagination, and imagination can be free from already known time and space”

(p. 172-173); in the emergent space of possibilities constructed by this process, deep learning can take root.

6.2 The ‘House’ I Build – Constructing Knowledge

Having established the value and the parameters of experiential learning, the next point on my educative map lies in the domain of constructivist educational theory and its associated approaches to learning. I should point out here that to see constructivism and experiential learning as separate entities is artificial since the two are closely allied and, indeed, experiences form the basic raw material from which learning might be constructed. For my purposes, however, it is important to explore the key aspects of constructivism as a theoretical perspective in and of itself in order to concretise a framework for PBL.

As with experiential learning, the literature on constructivism in education is extensive, with many variations in emphasis and analysis. I begin this section, therefore, with a general definition of constructivism that establishes my understanding of the key concepts:

constructivism focuses on what people do with information to develop knowledge.

In particular, constructivism holds that people actively build knowledge and understanding by synthesizing the knowledge they already possess with new information. For constructivists, learning is an active process through which learners ‘construct’ new meaning. (Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008, p. 55)

Important here, for me, is the separation between “information” and “knowledge,” the implication being that information by itself is not sufficient to drive learning; rather, the information has to be subjected to a constructed “learning” process through which it might be transformed into knowledge by interacting with learners’ already established understandings of themselves and the world they inhabit. In this sense, learning is continuously processual and cumulative, and it is also never ‘finished’ – we continue to construct knowledge through every experience of our lives, which means there is infinite learning potential in the world. For me, that is exciting; it also explains my own learning experiences and how they became not just transmitters of disciplinary information but shapers of my identity, my beliefs and my values. I see my theatre-making as an example of an active learning process that provides a space in which students might participate in the ongoing construction of their own education.

Given this position, the next question that arises, for me, is how constructivist theory operates in practice, or more specifically, how does the actual constructing of knowledge happen, for both the learner and the teacher involved? Sue Mathieson (2015) states:

Constructivism challenges the idea that students are a ‘blank slate’ to be filled with content knowledge; instead, it views learning as a process of building and adjusting the structures in the mind through which we hold knowledge. These structures are known as ‘schemata’ and need to be amended in order to incorporate new knowledge. Learning is thus not simply about adding new knowledge, but about making changes to existing knowledge in order to accommodate new ways of understanding. . . . Learning is thus an active process of individual transformation and changes in understanding. (p. 65)

Shifting the structures, these schemata underpinning knowledge—constructing and reconstructing them with each experience—seems to me to describe the essence of what lifelong learning should be about. Such shifting, however, does not happen automatically or easily; indeed, new knowledge emerges when existing knowledge is challenged or disturbed in some way, or, as Jordan et al. (2008) suggest, “when new knowledge conflicts with old” (p. 56). It is, thus, exposure to new ideas and ways of thinking that creates the potential for learning. This kind of engagement is key to the theatre-making process, where each production presents its own individual challenges and aesthetic demands, requiring that we “reconsider and reconfigure mental constructs” (Jordan et al., 2009, p. 56) to enable the specific creative processes necessary for that particular work. Each time I direct, although I bring my history with me, I am in some sense starting over since I cannot simply repeat what I have done before (even were I so inclined), because the context is different and thus the experience, too, is different. As a result, while my directing is always unique to me and my subjectivity, the parameters of my art shift all the time, ensuring a continuous process of experience, reflection and meaning-making that ‘construct’ new schemata with which to work.

Equally, the challenge for students alters with each production they do; the more experience they have, the more they know, the more they understand what is still to be learnt, from their own individual perspectives, as well as within the production ensemble. The process is iterative. Constructivist theory, as Fosnot (1996) observes, requires learners to “take on more ownership of ideas. . . autonomy, mutual reciprocity of social relations, and empowerment become the goals” (p. ix), and certainly I see a core intention of production

work to be the discovery and practice of agency. Acting in productions provides a route to self-discovery and self-knowledge, as well as understanding of others and alternate world views, primarily because actors use themselves as the raw material for their art. In her discussion of drama's ways of learning, Malika Henry (1999) offers an insightful explanation of this phenomenon:

Actors must understand the deeply personal perspectives of the character they play, the perspectives of other characters and the total perspectives being created by the drama as a whole. Actors must take into account their own perspectives, those of the director, those of the playwright and those of the audience. In order to play a role, an actor needs most of all to switch perspectives. In all learning, *wider and deeper* perspectives are the hallmarks of wisdom and knowledge, while understanding many *different* perspectives comes from and contributes to maturity of feeling. (p. 252, original emphasis)

The wisdom and maturity to which Henry alludes here are signifiers of constructivist learning, supporting the notion that “Exploring and rehearsing a repertoire of behaviours is the work of constituting a self” (Henry, 2010, p. 50), and that through participating in such practices, students can engage “issues of affect and cognition, personal knowledge and action, Being and development” (p. 50). As a director, my interest is primarily in using those actor explorations as the means of realising the production in living form; as a teacher, however, these same explorations seem to me to offer an opportunity for the kinds of learning that will equip students not just to be in plays, but to be in the world.

i. Social constructivism

Thus far, I have focused on constructivist theory in relation to the individual learner, but in today's context, most constructivists acknowledge that learning is as much a social and cultural practice as it is an individual one, noting “the importance of social interactions in the acquisition of skills and knowledge” (Schunk, 2012, p. 243). We do not learn in a vacuum, and we do not enter any learning experience as blank slates; we bring to each experience our personal, social and cultural contexts, which profoundly influences what we learn, how we learn, and why we learn. As Jordan et al. (2008) observe, “our experience in everyday life is not of difference but of similarity. We participate in the construction of a shared world. . . . Knowledge is constructed in the context of the environment in which it is encountered” (p.

59). This is crucially important in understanding how theatre works as an educative medium, because theatre is, above all, a collaborative, social, and culturally specific phenomenon.

In discussing different ways of learning, Alan Pritchard (2009) offers a clear definition of social constructivist theory, noting its focus on the “interaction between the learner and others” (p. 24), and the important aspect that “The other can come in many forms” (p. 24). Thus, in theatre-making, others might include the director, fellow cast members, additional collaborators, or the audience for whom the production is made; similarly, in teaching, the teacher is engaged in a constant give-and-take with the learners, and the learners equally are engaged in shared experience and interactive processes. Even at this very basic level, the importance of the social element is evident. When one adds to that interactive factor, the idea that environment, culture, and lived experience, are also key components of any learning event, the level of complexity deepens.

One of the reasons I believe formal theatre productions offer such fertile ground for learning is because they create a space in which “It is the creative subject who constructs knowledge, and . . . the interaction between the subject and the subject’s social and cultural lifeworld. . . is the basis for meaning making” (Sæbø, 2011, p. 60). Through the theatre-making process, participants share an intersubjective journey of discovery, through which they encounter themselves, their peers, and the world, in ways that challenge the parameters of their existing knowledge and offer opportunities for growth along often unexpected and surprising trajectories. That this happens through creative adventure is critical to the process since creativity is the prime mover in generating playful environments, and “play transforms relationships by converting tensions, fear and hopes into sources of reflection and understanding” (Marjanovic-Shane, Connery & John-Steiner, 2010, p. 222). Directing productions, therefore, for me, enables me to construct a teaching and learning space in which transformative education might be made possible. In this belief, I am echoing Marjanovic-Shane et al.’s (2010) claims regarding education and the arts, that

the creative process allows both young and old to construct cognitive-affective connections across our nested realities, so we might imagine the possible, new, and profound. . . . As we individually and collectively make sense of our roles and values and perform actions beyond our lived experiences, the creative process allows us to gain an enhanced understanding about ourselves, our relationships, and

our cultural-historical moment. . . . to develop a sense of significance and belonging.
(p. 227)

While Marjanovic-Shane et al. are not referring specifically to drama as the art form in question, I believe their analysis aptly describes the goals of my theatre-making practice.

The concepts articulated above emerge largely from social constructivists applying the ideas of educational pioneer Lev Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory to creative education. Vygotsky's (1978) philosophies underpin much of social constructivist thought, in particular the notion that learning happens predominantly through social interaction and collaborative working and thinking. The specific focus in much of Vygotsky's work is on the key issues of language and culture, as the primary means by which human beings experience, engage with, and make sense of the world and reality. Dale Schunk (2012) summarises Vygotsky's theory thus:

[It] stresses the interaction of interpersonal (social), cultural-historical, and individual factors as the key to human development. Interactions with persons in the environment. . . stimulate developmental processes and foster cognitive growth. But interactions are not useful in a traditional sense of providing children with information. Rather, children transform their experiences based on their knowledge and characteristics and reorganize their mental structures. . . . learning and development cannot be dissociated from their context. The way that learners interact with their worlds—with the persons, objects, and institutions in it—transforms their thinking. (p. 242)

From this description, we can see that Vygotsky echoes the basic constructivist notion that education is about transforming the pre-existing schemata that frame our understanding of the world (as noted above) and this ongoing process happens only through the active participation of the learner in the learning experience. For me, the clear delineation of the individual, the social, and the cultural-historical contexts, all of which are critical in the educational process, is useful in providing markers for the kinds of learning that happens through formal theatre productions.

Two other concepts articulated by Vygotsky are useful: first, the relationship between play and the development of the imagination, and second, the zone of proximal development. Aubrey and Riley (2016) explain Vygotsky's idea that, "During play, children copy the way that adults conduct themselves in their culture and in so doing prepare themselves for their

future responsibilities and values” (loc. 1115 of 4900). Part of the function of play is to facilitate the development of the imagination and to enable children to learn to understand the ‘rules’ of any given ‘game’, so that this understanding can be applied later in adult life. Similarly, theatre practice engages with play on multiple levels, allowing for creative discoveries to be made and improvisatory explorations to unfold in the meaning-making process; as Gordon (2009) observes, “Playfulness carries the presence, flexibility, and openness needed to improvise with and expand the stream of possibilities as they emerge in each moment” (p. 5). In this sense, play connects theatre-making with Vygotsky’s understanding of the learning process.

For Vygotsky (1978), both play and learning are preparations for life, and they are facilitated through the generation of a “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) amongst the players and learners. The ZPD is defined as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In essence, it refers to the idea that through social interaction and dialogue students can move beyond the existing levels of what they themselves know through sharing the process with more experienced others.

In a conference paper⁴⁴ discussing our collaborative teaching practice, Tanya and I described the learning environment created in our working process as a ZPD, “in the sense of it being a peer-based, collaborative learning activity in which students co-construct meanings and understandings through their interactions with each other” (2015, p. 9). The same description could apply to my directorial practice, where the intention is to develop a ZPD through building, and trusting, the ensemble made up of students, usually at different levels of study, and with differing abilities, who are able to co-construct knowledge through the mutual goal of making the theatrical work. For me, the production process constructs a unique ZPD, where the potential for scaffolding knowledge, implicit in the developmental structure of a rehearsal process, is immense.

⁴⁴ The paper was entitled “Teaching through absence: the gentle art of stepping out of the classroom” and was presented at the UKZN International Teaching and Learning Conference in 2015.

ii. Becoming a constructivist teacher

Constructivist theory concerns teaching processes as well as learning ones; Greg Light and Roy Cox (2001) explain that in a constructivist context, the “Teacher regards the student as a participant in a shared situation. . . . The situation is not now simply a ‘void’ across which content and knowledge is transmitted but. . . part of an interactive process” (p. 31). Thus, the role of the teacher shifts from expert-instructor to facilitator-guide. This reframing of the teacher’s responsibility creates spaces for new understandings of pedagogic practices. Rather than occupying the top spot in the classroom hierarchy, teachers have to reimagine what they do to encourage students to begin to construct their own learning. Entwistle (2009) argues that teaching can “no longer be seen as a set of techniques, but as an act of imagination that translates ‘dead’ information into the more engaging ways of thinking that bring it to life, creating an expanded awareness of the effects of teaching on learning” (p. 75). In this sense, then, even though the teacher might cede a portion of their authority in the constructivist mode, the potential result of an active classroom filled with engaged and motivated students connecting to the ideas being discussed and bringing their own subjectivities to the exchange, I would argue, makes the partial ceding of power more than worthwhile.

In thinking about my own teaching practice, I am aware that I have reflected on the structures surrounding it far less fully than I have those surrounding directing. Perhaps, this is because the artist in me still wants to put the artist first. However, I believe that my approach to teaching is in many ways similar to what I do as a director. Just as I want to work collaboratively in making productions, so my desire is to teach in a democratic, active way that involves students in constructing their own meaning from what they do. In other words, I try not to be what Heathcote calls “the one who knows” (O’Neill, 2015, p. 29); by attempting to do this, as Tanya and I (2015) noted, we are “constructing an experiential learning context within which the students become agents of their own learning. . . [engendering] what Biggs and Tang (2011) call ‘effective learning [that] changes the way we see the world’” (p. 7). Despite these lofty goals, however, the reality of classroom teaching within an understaffed, under-resourced drama department means that very often I find myself reverting back to the ‘sage on the stage’ model, lecturing from the front of the room, trying to cover as much material as possible in the extremely limited time available to me. In

such contexts, as Carrie Lobman (2010) observes, “where learning is seen as a commodity to be acquired, it can be difficult to imagine what a creative ZPD might look like” (p. 203).

It is perhaps for this reason more than any other that production work is so important to me and why I believe it is vital in the higher education context. Within the theatre-making space, there is the time and the shared sense of purpose to engage in the kind of teaching and learning I wish I could accomplish all the time. Lobman (2010) describes Vygotsky’s ZPD as “an activity that people engage in collectively. By participating in creating environments where development can occur, people develop” (p. 202-203). I particularly like her emphasis on “people” developing; in the final analysis, as educators, it is the people—the students—rather than the knowledge in and of itself, that must be nurtured and shaped. When I make theatre, I am more able to address these goals than on the higher education treadmill as it currently moves. It is through productions that I have learned to become a constructivist teacher.

6.3 Life in the Learning Paradigm

Constructivism is, of course, learner-centred, which brings me to Barr and Tagg’s (1995) notion of a “Learning Paradigm” (p. 14), established in contrast with the more conventional “Instruction Paradigm” (p. 13) found in many higher education contexts. The Learning Paradigm (LP) is essentially a constructivist model of education but identifies key strategies and concepts for facilitating learning that are particularly useful for understanding the learning that occurs in productions. Barr and Tagg’s (1995) primary contention is that the traditional, lecture-based model of higher education is one where learning “consists of matter dispensed or delivered by an instructor. The chief agent in the process is the teacher who delivers knowledge; students are viewed as passive vessels, ingesting knowledge for recall on tests” (p. 21). Such a system, they argue, is ineffective in generating deep learning that is lasting and transferable beyond the strict confines of the examinable material. By contrast, within the LP, the purpose of higher education is “not to transfer knowledge but to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solve problems” (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 15).

As with most constructivist models, the idea is that students become co-constructors and co-producers of their own learning; however, Barr & Tagg (1995) place strong focus on the notion of the students' responsibility in the learning interaction. Students and teachers are engaged in the process together, Barr & Tagg (1995) argue, as "two agents [who] take responsibility for the same outcome even though neither is in complete control of all the variables. When two agents take such responsibility, the resulting synergy produces powerful results" (p. 15). This analysis is useful for me: The "two agents" might also be director and actor, both of whom must take responsibility for their parts of the production process for it to succeed. Actors are responsible for their part of the action (for example, learning lines, remembering blocking, connecting with each other, delivering the performance); similarly, the director must do his/her part, including developing a concept, preparing the production, and creating an environment in which creative work can occur. In a way, therefore, the production process embodies dual responsibility, perhaps with even more efficacy because there are not just two agents involved here, but many: All of the performers interacting with each other and director, the production team who contribute to realising the production in performance, and then the audience which adds another unique dimension to the learning experience. Thus, formal theatre production participation might be seen as an instance of the LP in action.

The notion of responsibility has further resonances too. Barr and Tagg (1995) state: when one takes responsibility, one sets goals and then acts to achieve them, continuously modifying one's behavior to better achieve the goals. To take responsibility for achieving an outcome is not to guarantee the outcome, nor does it entail complete control of all relevant variables; it is to make the achievement of the outcome the criterion by which one measures one's own efforts. (p.15)

This is an important perspective. As teachers, we often are held accountable for our students' success in acquiring the requisite knowledge to complete their degrees and become 'educated'; however, this cannot be a one-way process. Students have to be invested in their own education, and need to take responsibility for their part in the interactive exchange. Without this kind of active dialogue, a deep and meaningful education is not possible. Theatre-makers understand this truth; it is why we spend so much time building an ensemble and focus on involving all the participants fully in the experience to ensure equal investment and commitment. Only by working together can we make powerful theatre.

It seems then to me that theatre offers an ideal model for understanding the LP, demonstrating its efficacy when it is working well. By the same token, I believe that theatre in universities needs to be positioned within an LP to thrive because it cannot function in a system that respects only the accumulation of disciplinary knowledge for the circumscribed goal of a high pass rate. I often think that we only really discover what we have learned at university years after we have left its halls – certainly, this was true for me; the lessons I learned that prepared me to write my examinations and do so well from an objective, marks-based perspective, pale into insignificance when compared to the life-learning and self-knowledge I gained from my truly constructive learning experiences. This is what I hope to achieve with PBL. Barr and Tagg (1995) express their vision of the LP thus:

Knowledge is not seen as cumulative and linear, like a wall of bricks, but as a nesting and interacting of frameworks. Learning is revealed when those frameworks are used to understand and act. Seeing the whole of something . . . gives meaning to its elements, and that whole becomes more than the sum of component parts. Wholes and frameworks can come in a moment—a flash of insight—often after much hard work with the pieces. (p. 21)

Such flashes of insight, moments of inspiration, are the heart and soul of theatre, which creates a space in which they are perhaps more likely to occur.

6.4 Searching for Deep Learning

Within the LP, “deep learning” as opposed to “surface learning” (Biggs, 1989; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Entwistle, 2009) is the goal. Surface learning, according to Biggs and Tang (2011), “arises from an intention to get the task out of the way with minimum trouble, while appearing to meet course requirements” (p. 24). For me, this speaks to the increasingly evident ethos in higher education of focusing solely on the end-product, on ensuring students can pass their examinations and graduate within the minimum permitted time, thus guaranteeing the institution’s status based largely on statistical and quantitatively measured data. In this kind of context, while lip service may be paid to the notions of lifelong and transferable learning, in reality, the institutional (and often political) emphases are on immediate results and positive throughput; anything else is a welcome bonus, but not essential. Perhaps even more significantly, learning itself often loses its attraction when only surface approaches are engaged since “Emotionally, learning becomes a drag, a task to be got out of the way. . . . Exhilaration or enjoyment of the task is not part of the surface approach”

(Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 25); this surely is something that needs to be addressed if education is to succeed in preparing students for productive and fully engaged lives.

The deep approach to learning, by contrast, “arises from a felt need to engage the task appropriately and meaningfully, so the student tries to use the most appropriate cognitive activities for handling it” (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 26). When students engage in deep learning, they are fully invested in their own processes and able to take responsibility for their learning (as I have discussed above); only in this kind of environment is constructivist education truly effective because students are encouraged through the process actively to construct new knowledge and make new meanings. Biggs and Tang (2011) suggest that the deep approach facilitates “positive feelings: interest, a sense of importance, challenge, exhilaration. Learning is a pleasure. Students come with questions they want answered, and when the answers are unexpected, that is even better” (p. 26). This description corroborates my own positive learning experiences, which I identify from today’s perspective as deep learning, and demonstrates why they were so effective and lasting. The teachers and role models who shaped my identity and gave me the skills with which to function in the world of work were able in their teaching methods to create environments in which deep learning was possible. Experiences like these, where interrogation of possible meanings and alternatives is encouraged, provide the keys to life-learning. In addition, it is clear that only deep learning can result in the development of higher-order thinking and the facility to manage the complexities of twenty-first century existence.

In encouraging deep learning, it is necessary to remember that “the approach depends on the student’s intention” (Entwhistle, 2009, p. 33); if students are not encouraged to have intentions beyond simply gaining disciplinary knowledge at best, or memorising in the short-term sufficient material to pass an examination at worst, then deep learning will not often be in evidence in university classrooms. Key to promoting deep learning is discovering how to motivate students to learn and, even more particularly, how to locate—and excavate—the students’ intrinsic motives so that they can be guided on to the path of discovery that is the gift of education. Such motivations, Biggs (1989) suggests, are “most likely when the learner is actively involved in the planning and delivery of the task, and thus has some proprietorial interest or ‘ownership’ in it” (p. 17-18).

For me, it is this final point of intrinsic motivation that connects so strongly with theatre-making and its learning potential. Students who participate in productions do so, for the most part, because they want to, for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from wanting to be performers to wanting to be part of something communal to wanting to have fun. No matter what the reason, however, they are there because they choose to be, at least when a production is extracurricular. Thus, the question of missing intrinsic motivation does not often arise; even when it does, the group dynamic is usually sufficiently powerful to generate the extrinsic motivation necessary to keep the participant interested. In this sense, then, the baseline for deep learning is already established.

Deep learning is also encouraged because the students involved in productions have to be active participants and co-producers of meaning, since, as Biggs (1989) notes, “the more ways in which the learner is involved, the more interconnections, the stronger the learning” (p. 18). When we make a production, students have to bring their ideas, emotions, and imaginations to the process; they cannot simply rely on being told what to do in my rehearsal room, especially because I consciously do not offer those kinds of ready solutions. I look for ways to guide them to their own discoveries which are all the more powerful and richer for having emerged out of their own search. As a result of this deep approach, the kinds of learning that might emerge from performing in formal theatre productions go beyond the disciplinary knowledge and skill set that are the immediate result. Instead, the deep learning that signifies transformation and shifting consciousness is, I believe, the more significant outcome, as I will discuss later in my thesis. Biggs (1989) suggests that “The goal of tertiary education—indeed, of education at any level—should be to change students’ interpretations of the world” (p. 10). A similar goal underpins both my educative and theatre-making practices, and I believe it is actively promoted through PBL.

6.5 Educating with the Arts – Opening Doors

Since theatre is first and foremost an art form, the final element in my bricolage is the relationship between education and artistic practice in general, which can then be applied to formal theatre productions. This is, then, the landscape in which my educational map is situated.

One significant theorist of the arts in education is Elliot Eisner, whose extensive body of work considers the role of the arts, particularly in schools' curricula, and who has been a vocal advocate for the arts to become integral to the learning process. In his article "What the arts taught me about education" (1991), Eisner lists the "lessons" he has found in the arts that speak to education more broadly, and I think it is useful to look at these as they reflect many of my own positions:

I have learned that knowledge cannot be reduced to what can be said. . . . that the process of working on a problem yields its own intrinsically valuable rewards and that these rewards are as important as the outcomes. . . . that goals are not stable targets at which you aim, but directions towards which you travel. . . . that no part of a composition. . . is independent of the whole in which it participates. . . . that scientific modes of knowledge are not the only ones that inform and develop human cognition. (p. 19)

In much the same way as Dewey's "Pedagogical Creed" (1897) establishes premises for experiential learning that supports for my model of PBL, so Eisner's response here adds to that framework. The notion of learning that goes beyond words or observable cognitive outcomes or atomistic approaches, that privileges instead embodied practices, process-driven intents, holistic experiences, and an ongoing search for knowledge, captures for me the essence of what formal theatre productions seek to do with, and for, students to facilitate learning. This kind of education offers "a process of learning how to become the architect of our own education" (Eisner, 2004, p. 9), a fulfilment of constructivist thinking.

This is perhaps more necessary now than it has ever been before. Eisner (2004) asserts that the contemporary world-view, and the prevailing models of education it supports, have fundamentally altered the structures of education such that "Achievement has triumphed over inquiry" (p. 3), and this certainly mirrors my experience. Higher education, from my perspective, seems increasingly concerned only with statistics, quantifiable outcomes, and the pursuit of financial success, instituting a technicist and corporate management style that appears to ignore the human aspects of education in favour of facts, figures and the so-called 'bottom line.' In such an environment, the arts, which are expensive to maintain and labour-intensive to teach, are at risk of at best marginalisation, at worst eradication, so it is imperative to foreground the value of arts within the education arena. As Eisner (2004) so accurately observes, "Opening oneself to the uncertain is not a pervasive quality of our

current educational environment. I believe it needs to be among the values we cherish” (p. 6), a sentiment that echoes my views.

Such “uncertainty” is not about lack of knowledge or ideas; it is about a willingness to engage with the unknown, with the undetermined, and, as a consequence, the changeable. In supporting this notion, Eisner (2004) maintains that “Not everything knowable can be articulated in propositional form. The limits of our cognition are not defined by the limits of our language. . . . Meaning is not limited to what is assertable” (p. 7). The arts provide a space for expressing these kinds of fluid, impermanent, perspectival meanings, for discovering the unique potential within everyone for creative engagement, or what Uhrmacher (2002) calls the “cultivation of ‘productive idiosyncrasies’” (p. 250). Eisner (2004) concludes that the employment of the arts in education gives rise to a particular kind of thinking that is “far more appropriate for the real world we live in than the tidy right angled boxes we employ in our schools in the name of school improvement” (p. 10). While Eisner is referring specifically to schooling, I believe the same observation applies to institutions of higher learning. The kind of thinking he describes can be messy, and circuitous, difficult to assess, and challenging to teach, but, like Eisner, I believe it is a kind of thinking necessary for twenty-first century existence, and all that entails; it is, in effect, a humanist mindset, one that recognises both the individual and the collective (Hartfield, 1993, p. 17).

Hartfield (1993) offers an additional perspective on the need for the arts to return the human aspect to education, noting:

I believe the arts process, because it is inherently a process predicated on self expression [*sic*], self-direction, self control [*sic*], and self transcendence [*sic*], provides for us a model for a new millennium. This is not a self-centered model, but rather a coming to the human center where all significant transformations begin and terminate. (p. 17)

For me, this is a critical point: The goal of formal theatre production is not a solipsistic, indulgent, ‘let’s-all-just-have-fun’ experience. It is not simply about ‘feeling good.’ The primary purpose of the exercise is to make quality theatre work for an audience, with the added benefit of facilitating deep learning for the participants through the process. Only through striving for the best artistic experience possible—an experience which is exacting,

demanding, and purposeful—can the kind of transformative learning I think is achievable, occur. If we can do so, independent agency becomes a critical outcome of theatre practice.

The arts can accomplish the kinds of learning articulated above because of their specific nature—what Maxine Greene (1996) describes as the “artistic-aesthetic” (p. 120) experience—which enables them “to combat that numbing objectification which characterizes contemporary society” (Pautz, 1998, p. 32). Pautz (1998) suggests that “The constant consumption of information, experiences, and products leaves little space for reflection. . . . [making] it easy to remain unaware of our landscapes within and against which we live, work, and learn” (p. 29); this is the terrain we need the help of the arts to traverse. The specific contribution of formal theatre productions to that process is my interest in this thesis.

These productions are not just educational but aesthetic experiences, which Greene (1996) argues are characterised by “a desire to move beyond, to break with the ordinary” (p. 121), demonstrating the “cognitive capacity to constitute ‘as if’ worlds, to move into provinces of meaning beyond the provinces of ‘common sense’” (p. 122). For me, this speaks directly to the core principle of theatre-making: the constructing of fictional worlds, inhabited by characters embodied by actors, all engaged in active communication with an audience, all of which can only take place outside the bounds of the prosaic or the ordinary ‘everyday.’ In fact, I would argue that it is precisely this element—the aesthetically driven component—that distinguishes drama used purely as an educational tool from the drama of theatre-making. In making theatre, we are actively engaged in constructing temporary alternate realities that are positioned outside of the normal status quo of existence; for the duration of the theatre experience, we are inhabitants of a world based on, but still outside of, real-time and real life. Heathcote argues that “Theatre is life depicted in a no-penalty zone” (in O’Neill, 2015, p. 89) because “it looks like, seems like, but is not actuality” (p. 89); she goes on to explain that because of its unique nature, “the theatre frame relieves us of the burden arising from our actions [while employing] the communication structures of real life” (in O’Neill, 2015, p. 89). It is this phenomenon that supplies the educative potential; theatre educates through the “exploratory creation of metaphoric worlds [which provide] different perspectives that result in learning” (Henry, 2010, p. 56). As Leon Botstein (1998) notes:

What the products of the aesthetic imagination do is create realities in our social experience about which we ultimately have to talk. And they create, in a way,

diversionary experiences that open up the range of how we talk to one another. What the arts do is create something that does not already exist, that is not predictable or entirely rational, which forces us to talk to ourselves and to other people in new way. (p. 67)

At the centre of my theatre of humanity are notions of empathy and compassion; both are contingent upon recognising the diversity and multiplicity manifest in our contemporary lived realities. Understanding other people, seeing their humanness and discovering their stories—talking to, with, and for them—are critical to the process, not just in terms of individual growth but in the quest for a better world for all. Such ‘talk’ is the material of theatre.

All of this work depends on the activation of the participants’ imaginations, since [t]he imagination works as a stage to play out our roles and juxtapose ideas giving us the ability to see the other side, to weigh alternatives, and to use what some refer to as intuition. . . . The dialogic experience of negotiating between what we can imagine and our existing framework of knowledge is the drama of learning. (Cramer, Ortlieb & Cheek, Jr., 2007, p. 38).

For me, this describes accurately both the theatre-making process and the educational imperative, capturing precisely the relationship between the two discourses. Playwright José Rivera (2016) described theatre-education as the “training ground of the imagination” (para. 5),⁴⁵ and indeed, imagination sits at the core of my personal relationship to theatre, directing, and teaching. I believe, as a teacher, if one can speak to the imagination of one’s students, then the potential for learning is multiplied exponentially. Dramatic experience offers a unique possibility for exploring action, and the consequences thereof, creatively and freely through imaginative role-play within a controlled, and therefore, relatively safe space. In such spaces, what Dewey (1934) calls the “adventure in the meeting of mind and universe” (p. 267) can occur, and theatre is, for me, such a meeting place, because it provides the “passion [that] is the doorway for the imagination” (Greene, 1995, p. 16).

One further significant observation for my thesis from Greene’s (1996) work is her assertion that “our approaches to aesthetics must always be interpretive and provisional” (p. 124). This seems especially relevant to the theatre-making process, where so much is

⁴⁵ The quote is taken from Jose Rivera’s 2016 Commencement Address as the University of Southern California’s School of Dramatic Arts, where programmes in acting, directing, playwriting, design, musical theatre, and stage management, among others, are offered.

dependent on interpretive work, and each production is unique to its time, place and circumstances. Greene (1996) goes on to offer an incisive explanation of the relationship between art and education:

In the realm of the arts. . . learning goes on most fruitfully in atmospheres of interchange and shared discoveries. There must be those who can point out what is not yet noticed, not yet heard, people who can provoke the young to reach beyond where they are. To reach beyond is to realize that there exist a tradition and a community of knowers, of seekers, none of whom has the final answer to any question, all of whom are engaged in a communal construction of knowledge. . . . When active learners find themselves reaching beyond to wonder and imagine, they may find themselves deliberately constructing worlds. (p. 126)

The notion of a space outside of the real world, where we can look beyond our ordinary everyday existences, where possibilities are endless, seems aptly to describe theatre's unique qualities and certainly underpins my own philosophy of theatre-making. As Greene (1996) states, "Moving us to interpret differently, to see from unexpected angles, to forge meanings we might never have anticipated or even welcomed, such experiences may well change our lives" (p. 135).

In this thesis, I have talked about the concept of a theatre of humanity, and Greene's discussion articulates a theoretical lacuna in which that theatre of humanity might sit. Greene (1996) finds in the arts "a model not only for engaged experience but for constructivism as a mode of liberation and expansion" (p. 139); in doing so, she offers a compelling argument for ensuring—and promoting—the presence of the arts in constructivist educational practice, since their goal "is to open perspectives, untapped perspectives; it is to look out windows never opened; it is to climb stairs never attempted and look for keys to unknown doors" (p. 139). This is precisely the purpose of all education, as I see it, and what makes theatre so profound a vehicle for learning about self, other, and the world.

6.6 Finishing the Map

In this chapter, I have explored a variety of theoretical concepts and perspectives around education to develop a bricolaged framework within which to position my understanding of the relationship between learning and the formal theatre productions I direct. As I have journeyed through the landscapes of educational discourse, I have been

considering how each idea, each element, might speak to the theatre-making project with which I am concerned. In discussing bricolage, Rogers (2012) suggests that “bricoleurs have an aptness for creativity – they know how to artistically combine theories, techniques and methods” (p. 6), and my choices of concepts is definitely tied to my sense of my artistic practice. That said, Kellner (2003) observes that “the more perspectives one can bring to [the] analysis and critique, the better grasp of phenomena one will have and the better one will be at developing alternative readings and oppositional practices” (p. 45). In Act V, I will draw these ideas together further using the “taxonomy of significant learning” (Fink, 2014), but for now, my hope is that the educational map I have drawn might deepen my understanding of the learning potential of formal theatre productions and my role in facilitating it. I sum up my position in the following purpose statement, and in Figure 9 below:

My educational map positions formal theatre productions as experiential learning, operating within a constructivist domain, with a clear engagement of social constructivist methods. Productions find their home in the LP, in which education is learner-centred and oriented towards deep learning. The theatre—as with most arts—provides opportunities for exploring imagination, creativity and experiment, opening metaphorical doors to new experiences and possibilities. As a director-teacher in this world, I construct production environments in which the potential for learning is enriched and expanded through ZPDs, scaffolding, and collaborative exploration, and seek to engage with students from a place of vulnerability and shared purpose. In such spaces and moments of theatre-making, optimal inner experiences may arise through which students may discover the flow state and the happiness attached to it. Csikszentmihalyi (2009) observes that someone “who has achieved control over psychic energy and has invested in consciously chosen goals cannot help but grow into a more complex being. By stretching skills, by reaching toward higher challenges, such a person becomes an increasingly extraordinary individual” (p. 6). The theatre, I believe, provides unique and powerful opportunities for this to happen.

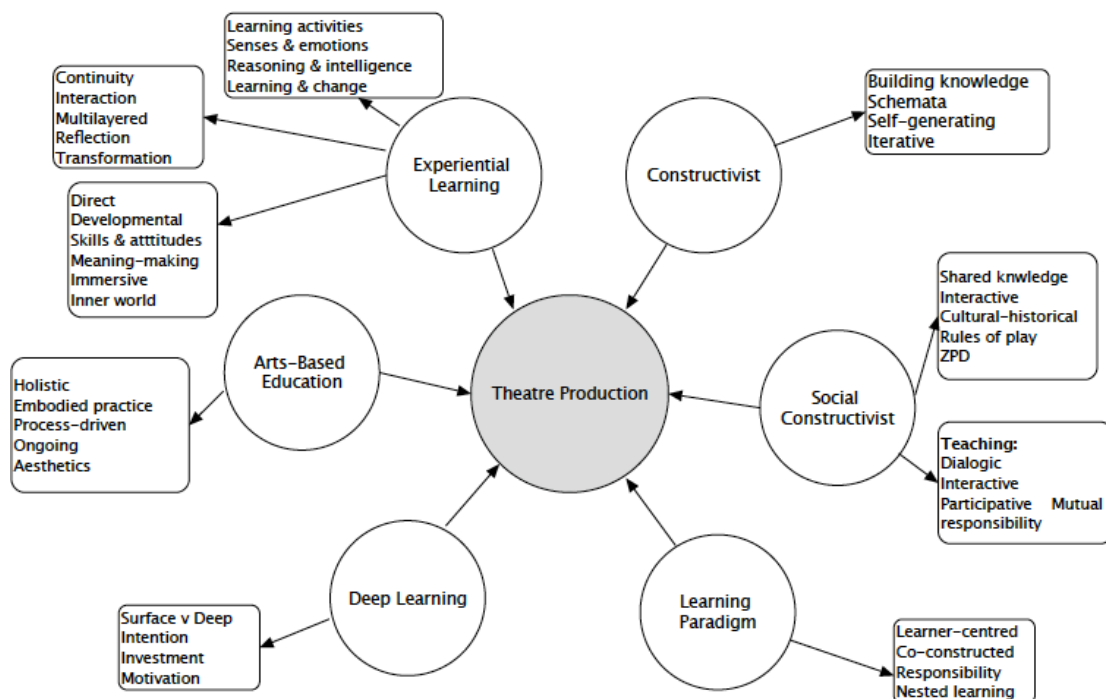


Figure 9. A diagrammatic representation of educational theory in relation to formal theatre productions.

In Act IV of my thesis, I will examine the data collected from my research participants in the light of these ideas around learning through productions, in order to assess their validity and to trace the connections between what I do as a director-teacher, and what my actor-student participants may learn.

ACT FOUR: PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

“Artists and scientists are activists. They look at the world as changeable and they look upon themselves as instruments for change. They understand that the slice of the world they occupy is only a fragment but that fragment is intrinsically connected to the whole. They know that action matters.” (Bogart, 2014, p. 12)

“As children and adults, we are all inspired to play, make meaning, and engage in the creative process. Across time and space, politics, and religion, we are united in our collective roles as muses and dancers, teachers and learners. Education, in the truest sense of the word, can only be measured by its social, emotional, and transformative impact on our individual and collective growth.”
(Marjanovic-Shane et al., 2010, p. 229)

SCENE 7: PARTICIPANT STORIES – LEARNING BY THEATRE

In Act III of my doctoral play, I explored the learning potential of participation in the formal theatre productions that I direct. Thus, I first reviewed the dynamics of dramatic education in its multiple forms, and second, developed a bricolaged framework rooted in education theory discourse that reflects my philosophical perspective on what higher education should seek to do. Both of these are necessary to address my central research question about the value of formal theatre productions in relation to teaching and learning. Thus far, my responses to this question have been centred in my personal engagement with the debates around the issue. In this Act, I want to look at this question from the perspective of those who have participated in my directing practice both as co-directors and colleagues, and as performers and students. Guiding my discussion is the conceptualisation of my directing practice as described in scene 3, where I articulate these educational goals for my work as a director-teacher:

- Teach technical theatre skills;
- Embed life skills;
- Facilitate deep learning;
- Empower the participants;
- Develop creative, engaged and confident citizens of the world.

7.1 Setting up the stories

Directing as an art form requires performers to implement and embody directorial choices and concepts. It is the performers who communicate meaning to the audience. Thus, much of my work as a director is bound up in the way I interact with the performers in my productions. Moreover, since my thesis seeks to interrogate the educative effect of participation in the formal theatre productions I direct, the data generated by my performer-participants is critical to my analysis, particularly in light of self-study's requirement to explore the relational and dialogic parameters of our research (LaBoskey, 2004; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Samaras, 2011, amongst others).

To inform my self-study, I have gathered data from both colleagues and former students, who were asked to reflect on their experiences either of directing with me, or being directed by me, between 1995 and 2015. I chose use a broad time frame in order to examine my practice as it was experienced at different points in its maturation. As noted in scene 2, the data was collected primarily in the form of individual writing, whereby each participant was asked to construct what I

called a ‘word-portrait’ in response to a series of prompts provided as stimuli for the process. In part, this was a pragmatic choice in that a number of my participants live abroad and I would not have been able to conduct face-to-face interviews; additionally, however, I used this method in the belief that it would allow respondents greater honesty in their responses than might have been achieved had they been talking to me in person. As it turned out, the same prompts rendered very different stories from the various participants, across a wide range of possibilities; for me, this indicates that they did not feel as constrained as they might have by a direct question and answer model. The word-portraits provided for a fluidity to the responses, reflecting the individuality of the people writing them.

For me, the word-portraits drawn by the participants are the touchstones by which to determine how much of what I articulate as my practice is actually experienced within the theatre-making project. It is important to remember here that the performer-participants in this study are all graduates of the Drama and Performance Studies programme at UKZN, the primary space within which I teach and make theatre. In addition, they had all graduated prior to my writing of this thesis since I wanted to engage with people who might have had time to reflect on their experiences of university productions from a position of relative distance. In this way, I hoped to ensure a degree of reflection as well as trying to limit the potential for responses tailored to please the teacher—in this instance, me—who sits in a position of authority with the power negatively to affect the participants’ learning experience.

In examining the data generated by my research participants—designated as colleague-participants and performer-participants—I am seeking first, for the evidence to support the presence of learning in the formal production experience; second, to determine the nature of that learning; and third, to understand my role in that learning as a director-teacher. Thus, my analysis draws on the concepts in which my personal directing and teaching practice is grounded, and I am looking for the intersections and connections between my own personal narratives and the various layers of ideas and understandings that emerge from the participant responses.

It is important to note that I am not just observing that productions facilitate learning, although I do believe that is the case. Rather, I am seeking to understand whether, and how, my *specific practice* (methodology) as a *director* facilitates the learning through the theatre-making process. So, in analysing the data, I am looking for evidence that supports what I specifically am doing as a guide for the learning experience. I inhabit here two worlds: In one world, I am just the director, and my focus is on making a production ready for an audience to see. In this world, I am

not consciously thinking about teaching at all, other than the necessary teaching of stage conventions and notes for actors that any director has to do. Often this learning is overt and evident to the participants, as I will show in the data. In the second world, however, I am a director-teacher, concerned with my students' overall learning. Crucially though, the kinds of learning I am imagining are largely by-products of my actions in the first world, what Dewey (1938) called "collateral learning" (p. 48) – learning that happens subliminally, tacitly, emerging from the students' doing of the production work. This learning is indirect, tangential to the goal of mounting the production, but critical to my more philosophically-based educational goals and to the development of twenty-first century learning and living skills. To uncover this kind of learning requires a deeper reading of the data, an excavation of sorts, to locate within the participant responses the shifts in awareness and understanding that, for me, signify the deep learning in which I am interested. For the most part, the participants are simply telling their production stories, explaining *what* they experienced; from these descriptions—and the way in which they are offered—I can begin to contemplate the *how* and *why* questions that are at the heart of my research.

My starting point, as always in my self-study, is my personal belief in regard to these questions. I believe that something is happening in the theatre-making experience that stimulates the kind of deep learning in which I am interested as an educator. The great majority of students who participate in productions while at university do not become professional actors; some never wanted to be actors and some who may have wanted to, are unable to break into the industry and hence, move elsewhere. Acting, for the most part, is neither a secure nor lucrative career. Given this reality, why am I convinced of the value of productions for learning? The answer to this question is my primary focus here; in brief, I think that even if the person never sets foot on a stage again, the experience of being in a formal theatre production leaves behind imprints denoting significant learning across many different areas, of which theatre is only one. This is what I seek to explore in this section of my thesis.

Theatre-making is by its nature dialogic, in its relationships, for example, between actors and audiences, directors and performers, the text and the body, to identify but a few of the dialogues that happen constantly throughout the theatre-making process. A similar dialogic process, in my view, underpins teaching and researching, particularly in the humanities. For these reasons, in keeping with this dialogic phenomenon and my own theatre discipline, I decided to use a theatrical form to interrogate the data gathered for my study. In this way, I hoped to navigate the data by foregrounding the unique, individual voices and responses of my participants as they relate their experiences of formal theatre productions in higher education.

7.2 Finding a Way In

As I noted in scene 2, I chose to work with my data using Creative Analytic Practice (CAP) (Richardson, 1999, 2000) as a method for navigating the complexities of the data generated in qualitative research. In essence, this method involves “the use of creative genres such as fiction, poetry and screenplay for data representation” (Berbary, 2015, p. 29-30); to these three might be added drama, as evidenced in the theatre script I constructed.⁴⁶ In this script, the dialogue consists of text that has been extracted from the raw data collected in the participants’ word-portraits, and reconfigured into the form of a play script. This allowed me to retain what R. Donmoyer and J. Y. Donmoyer (2008) refer to as “the human dimensions of the life experiences qualitative researchers attempt to study” (p. 216). In their discussion of using readers’ theatre⁴⁷ as a form for data representation, they go on to explain their “desire not to lose the people in [the] data or to transform them in to dehumanized concepts, abstract constructs, or mere ideal types” (R. Donmoyer & J. Y. Donmoyer, 2008, p. 216). For me, this equates to recognising the specific individual voices of the participants and thus retaining their individual idiosyncratic responses that reflect their personal experiences of formal theatre productions.

My initial plan was to include the entire play script in the main body of my thesis in order to facilitate a deeper reading of the data and the analysis. When I realised that the word limit of my thesis would not permit space for everything I wanted to include, I had to make some difficult decisions. While the play script was, for me, extremely important as a methodological tool and as a data source, I knew that the analysis and discussions it generated were more important to my central research questions. Thus, I made the decision to leave out the actual text of the play (although it is included in the appendices for reference), and instead focus more comprehensively on the knowledge it generated. However, although I have not included the text of the play script in the main body of my thesis, I do want to clarify here my understanding of CAP, the process of data coding I employed, the style and specific elements of my data-play, and the structural framework I used in constructing the script and the analysis.

⁴⁶ In order to control the length of my study, I have chosen not to include the actual play script constructed from the data in the main body of my thesis. Since constructing the script was the methodology I employed to interrogate and code the data, I believe that my discussion of that data is more critical to the argument of my thesis than the script itself. However, I have included the complete script as Appendix 8 and make detailed reference to it in my analysis (scene 8).

⁴⁷ In readers’ theatre, scripts are read aloud in staged performances, usually with minimal settings and blocking, and with the actors holding scripts. It is used extensively as a practice in education, both in terms of the studying drama texts, but also in relation to literacy projects, encouraging children to read aloud, and in teaching second languages. It is also often used by playwrights working on new plays, in order for them to hear how the work sounds in performance so it can be edited and adjusted accordingly.

7.3 Understanding Creative Analytic Practice (CAP)

In her collection of higher education teachers' stories, Mia O'Brien (2012) describes CAP as,

a qualitative research approach that seeks to acknowledge the complexity and multifaceted nature of lived experience. This complexity is a challenge to fully apprehend and represent using traditional forms of research presentation and meaning making. Instead creative analytic practitioners aim to devise authentic and holistic representations of what is seen and learned through research by using evocative creative writing techniques. (p. 39)

Certainly, for me, this was the case. The sheer amount of data generated in my study between my RSI, a lengthy face-to-face interview with Tanya, four colleague-participant responses, and sixteen performer-participant responses, created a logistical problem of how to reflect the complex and multiple ideas and voices that emerged. Like O'Brien (2012), I found in CAP a method that "allows me to portray the complex, messy, personal, emotive and intertwined threads of teacher thinking that pedagogical reasoning actually entails" (p. 39). In addition, given the personal history that underpins my self-study research, I needed a data presentation and analysis format that would allow both self-study's individuality and its focus on others' experiences of one's practice to find appropriate expression. O'Brien (2012) refers to CAP as a "humanising mode" (p. 39) and certainly its flexibility and potential for inventiveness speaks to my own personal and creative instincts.

In this humanising practice, it also reflects the new focus on methodological inventiveness (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2017, 2018a, 2019, 2020) that is a significant thrust of contemporary self-study research; as Jack Whitehead (2004) observes, "how practitioners choose to research, and a sense of control over this, can be equally important to their motivation, to their sense of identity within the research, and the research outcomes" (p. 884). Given this awareness, self-study researchers are increasingly engaging with processes and techniques that expand the boundaries of conventional research practice, particularly in the field of data generation, representation and analysis. Part of this focus, I would argue, is a recognition of the different disciplinary paths and strategies that are available to the self-study researcher as a function of its interdisciplinary nature and its acceptance of multiple modes of meaning-making. As I noted in scene 2, employing a representational mode drawn from my drama discipline is an example of this methodological thinking.

The specific benefits of CAP are related to the way in which we understand the relationship between the researcher, the researched, the data, and the interpretation. Berbary (2015) suggests a number of reasons why CAP offers a powerful alternative to conventional methods; in terms of my research, the key problems of the conventional approach are that such representations

claim authority over participant lives when the researcher's voice is privileged over participant voices – voices that are reduced to evidence . . . decontextualize data by 'reporting' it out of context; [and] impose 'false' organizing structure onto the realities of messy lived experiences. (Berbary, 2015, p. 35-36)

CAP methods mitigate against these concerns and, in particular, offer a way in which to position the data as situated, personal, contextual and unique, thus retaining the textures of the raw data within the analytical process. The theatre form is especially useful in this regard because of its dialogic and character-based nature, which permits the overt and immediate interplay between the different ideas emerging from the various participants' responses. Berbary (2015) claims that "story-based data maintains tensions, multiplicity, and complexity while remaining contextualized. Such context and complexity thus lends itself to be represented by multiple creative genres" (p. 37), and in these instances the "focus shifts away from objectivity and instead moves towards telling the story that needs to be told from the data" (p. 40). This is what I sought to do in my play script: tell the multiple stories emerging from the data in a way that retains their individuality, contextuality, and complexity, while embracing the richness of the thinking apparent in the word-portraits collected. The play I constructed thus, features "complexity and multiplicity through polyvocal juxtaposition" (Berbary, 2011, p. 187), and demonstrates the notion of "polyvocality" (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015, 2018a, 2018b, 2019) in a theatrical format.

Actually constructing the play text required several different levels of coding and analysis in order to arrive at the core notions that seemed most significant in relation to my central research question. This is a dual exercise: On one hand, it is about collating the material in ways that will render the key concepts visible and explicable; on another level, it is about constructing work that utilises the specific elements of the genre and making decisions about how best to render the narratives in action. Importantly however, as Mienczakowski (2003) points out,

although the stories may be perceived as crafted, they do not lose authenticity or truthfulness because of it. . . their fashioning in the authentic words and voices of respondents guarantees a form of accessibility not ensured by styles of report writing that are singularly aimed at academic interpretation. (p. 428)

In imagining my data in theatrical form, I found the freedom to engage my own creativity within my research practice and to locate my disciplinarity within the broader frame of educational and self-study research. By pursuing this path, I have been able to avoid what Richardson (1997) calls “objectifying ourselves out of existence [by voiding] our own experience” (p. 19), a process which she argues, “separate[s] our humanity from our work” (p. 19). By inserting myself into the play as a character, and constructing imagined interactions between myself and the various participants, I located myself in the research and created a space within which my director-teacher self might find expression. Because the created dialogue is drawn largely verbatim from the participant responses, the interplay between their words, and my reading of their words, creates a research meta-narrative that allows for the immediate interpretation of the play as an entity and a secondary interrogation of the play as data. In this sense, I am enacting Berbari’s (2015) articulation of CAP, which, she argues,

often place[s] the creative representation first and then offer the researcher’s explicit interpretations last in an attempt to alter power relations among researcher/audience.

While researcher interpretation is always implicit in the representation itself, holding off on explicit interpretation allows for the reader to engage with the data and share in the interpretation prior to having researcher ideas imposed. (p. 42)

For me, this offers a parallel experience to what actually happens in the theatre, where the director, actors, designers, and all the other artists making the play, create the production for the audience’s reception, and accept that finally, that reception is outside of their complete control.

7.4 Theatre and CAP

Using the theatre form as a mode of research is neither new nor original to me. Alongside the multiple applied theatre possibilities, drama has become an important part of what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have called the “performance turn” (p. 646) in research. One thread emerging from this movement has been the development of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre as examples of both performance studies and the broader field of arts-based research (Ackroyd & O’Toole, 2010; R. Donmoyer & J. Y. Donmoyer, 2008; Saldaña, 2005, 2008, 2011). Arguably the leading theorist of drama in ethnographic study, Saldaña (2011), offers this definition:

An *ethnodrama*. . . is a written play script consisting of dramatized, significant selections of narrative collected from interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journal entries, personal memories/experiences, and/or print and media artifacts such as diaries, blogs, e-mail correspondence, television broadcasts, newspaper articles, court

proceedings, and historical documents. . . . Simply put, this is dramatizing the data. (p. 13, original emphasis)

Ethnotheatre, by contrast, “employs the traditional craft and artistic techniques of theatre or media production to mount for an audience a live or mediated performance event of research participants’ experiences and/or the researcher’s interpretation of data” (2011, p. 12). Here, the purpose is primarily to make the production and the research provides the data with which to do so, or, as Saldaña (2011) notes, “This investigation is preparatory fieldwork for the theatrical production work” (p. 13). For both forms, Saldaña (2011) insists, the intention is to make a piece of live theatre for an audience (although who the audience might be does shift).

While my study is neither an ethnography nor a live performance, some of the concepts drawn from ethnodrama have been useful in constructing my play script. Saldaña (2008) suggests that an ethnodramatic script “is a written, artistically composed arrangement of qualitative data using such dramatic literary conventions as monologue, dialogue, and stage directions” (p. 196). These three elements are important markers to consider in my play. The opening and closing scenes for example, are constructed as monologues through which I am able “to reveal not just autobiographical factual details, but inner thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values and beliefs through spoken narrative” (Saldaña, 2008, p. 197). Providing this necessary information from within a character perspective and with an awareness of aesthetic and literary choices, enables a far more personal and thus, I would argue, probative exposition of my thinking as the researcher-participant and interpreter of the data. Similarly, turning the data from the separate individual word-portraits into interactive dialogues between participants, makes it possible not just to present multiple perspectives in a polyvocal manner, but also to create juxtapositions between elements of the data that allow for interpretive richness and depth of analysis. The final component of stage directions is another critical factor, lending detail and texture to the representation of the data through the addition of visual and aural signifiers that serve to frame the reader’s understanding. In writing such stage directions, I, as the researcher-playwright, am encouraged “to think both verbally and visually” (Saldaña, 2008, p. 202). Given my own directorial commitment to the visual aesthetic in productions, this seems an appropriate addition. By examining the stage action described in the stage directions, the reader can gain deeper insights into my perceptions surrounding the data as well as making their own determinations regarding meaning.

One version of ethnodrama is readers’ theatre, which can be used as a “data display technique” (R. Donmoyer & J. Y. Donmoyer, 2008, p. 210). Through using the actual words of the participants as dialogue, the form can capture the “authentic dimensions of human experience”

(Van Laren et al., 2019, p. 227). One result of this technique is that the experience comes to resemble a “montage rather than a narrative form. . . more akin to creating a review (in this case, a review of ideas and life experiences) than a well-made play with a beginning, middle, and end” (R. Donmoyer & J. Y. Donmoyer, 2008, p. 213). This is particularly significant for my play script because I made no attempt to write a well-made play with a conventional linear plot; instead, I employed an episodic form juxtaposing a number of scenes from different time frames into a montage-like representation that might in its totality offer important insights into the value of formal theatre productions in higher education. As R. Donmoyer and J. Y. Donmoyer (2008) note, “the montage-like format. . . [allows] us to display a plethora of perspectives” (p. 215).

Ideally, of course, this script would also be performed since, as Saldaña (2008) accurately notes, “mounting [a script] on stage for performance in front of an audience. . . is the true test of a play’s effectiveness” (p. 204). That said, I believe that the written version offers enough to convey the meaning of both data and play experience, albeit only in the reader’s imagination. For my purposes, the script is not the end point, but a step along the path towards understanding PBL. It should, therefore, be viewed as a point on the map rather than the final destination. In this sense, it functions primarily as a discussion source, “[giving] us a concrete reference to talk about; something to interpret and critique; a rich, engaging particular from which we might be able to extract something a bit more universal, something that might be applicable to other times and places” (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995, p. 423).

7.5 The Play’s the Thing. . .

Discovering CAP provided me the means to use the form with which I am most familiar to work with my data. I am a theatre-maker, and I think best through theatre, so it seems apt to integrate a certain ‘theatricality’ (at least, text-wise) into my research. Exploring a dramatic method of data representation also connects to the way that I conducted my research. Some people chose to respond quite systematically to my questions, treating the prompts as quasi-interview questions, but also choosing which ones to respond to and which ones did not apply to them; others chose to use the prompts as stimuli for their own thought processes and memories of their work with me, resulting in a free-flowing thought narrative. Because the responses were written, they have come to be, for me, unique miniature stories, scripted in people’s own words, representing their own selections as to what to add in and what to leave out. These are the personal stories told by people whom I directed in productions between 1995 and 2015, or with whom I have worked alongside in collaborative creative projects during the same time frame, forging artistic—and friendship—links

along the way. I am, of course, also a protagonist in the story, and as such, I am adopting a stance described by Pithouse (2007) as, “working from an understanding of my ‘self’ as protagonist that is situated amongst storylines, settings, and characters of an unfolding life story and yet is able to take action within and in response to these narrative conditions” (p. 19). In this way, I situate myself as director-teacher amongst the narratives of the various participants within a dialogue of learning.

As noted above, I utilised various forms in my episodic play. There are monologues that express core feelings, in the way that a Shakespearean soliloquy reveals an argument and an unfolding thinking process. This form is most appropriate for the parts of the stories that stand alone as bounded entities, becoming what Anjalee Hutchinson (2018) calls “surprising, sparkling moment[s]” (p. 77). These individual word-portrait extracts capture an idea, an observation, an experience, in and of itself, and they are presented verbatim, except for minor grammatical editing and streamlining.⁴⁸ They are the most revelatory and powerful expressions of the process of formal theatre production, and what it means for those involved in it.

There are also dialogues in my play, since dialogue is the basis for dramatic writing. Dialogue, like every other artistic artefact, it is constructed. So, here I construct from the data a series of imagined dialogues between my performer-participants, my colleague-participants, and myself. This did not happen in reality, of course (except for my interview with Tanya), as each participant wrote their own responses in isolation. However, in reading and rereading the transcripts, there are many observations, comments, criticisms, and descriptions that are repeated by a number of participants. It seemed, thus, possible to imagine these different stories being placed in relation to each other, so they could, in some way, talk to each other; so, like the adaptor of a novel or a screenplay, I have ‘adapted’ these texts to shape them into a script format. In this process, I have not changed the contributions of individual participants in any way; the words are mostly taken verbatim from the original source material. However, I have taken the liberty sometimes to change tenses, or pronouns, or other grammatical elements, in order to create flow in the text.⁴⁹

The third aspect from playwriting that I am borrowing here is the notion of subtext, through which my responses to the participant stories is chronicled. Subtext is a term coined originally by

⁴⁸ I have included a few examples of the original word-portraits in Appendix 9, to demonstrate that I did not significantly alter the content of people’s responses in constructing the play.

⁴⁹ Most of the dialogue in the play comes from the participant word-portraits, which were written. The one exception is the material taken from my interview with Tanya, which was recorded and then transcribed. Rather than changing the tone of Tanya’s responses, I have kept them in their original format. This accounts for the difference in tone between her lines and those of the other ‘characters’.

Stanislawski in developing his acting system, specifically in relation to Anton Chekhov's plays, which rejected the conventional theatrical norms of the day to explore "the inner drama" (Allen, 2000, p. 4) of those who "come and go, eat, talk about the weather and play cards" (Chekhov, in Allen, 2000, p. 4). For me, the notion of subtext seems an interesting one to employ in my analysis of the data, enabling me to look beyond the words themselves to the deeper experiences and motivations that underpin them. Thus, I use the concept of subtext in my analysis to trace the thinking in my participants' responses; they provide the 'what' (or the text) and it is my job to look for the 'how' and the 'why' (or the subtext) of their experiences—and then verbalise them—in order to connect these stories to my central research question about the value of formal theatre production in relation to teaching and learning in higher education. In the same way that, as a director, I analyse a text and its subtext to discover its inner meanings in order to conceptualise a production, so do I analyse the text and subtext of my data-play to discover the key ideas important for my final research findings. I am, in this sense, using my disciplinary knowledge and experience as critical components of my methodological approach.

7.6 Coding the Data

In order to construct my data-play, I engaged in a process of what Saldaña (2012) calls "data condensation" (p. 31); importantly, for my purposes, he goes on to observe that,

Data condensation is not something separate from analysis. It is a part of analysis. The researcher's decisions—which data chunks to code and which to pull out, which category labels best summarize a number of chunks, which evolving story to tell—are all analytic choices. Data condensation is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that 'final' conclusions can be drawn and verified.

(Saldaña, 2012, p. 31)

This process involves coding the data through a number of cycles or levels, in order to locate the significant meaningful elements in relation to the research focus. Doing this generates rich, textured material and ideas "that are vivid, are nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has a strong impact on the reader" (Saldaña, 2012, p. 30).

Codes are essentially labels for categories emerging from the data that can be used as organisational devices for the raw material that is the participant responses. Saldaña (2012) describes coding as "a data condensation task that enables you to retrieve the most meaningful material, to assemble chunks of data that go together, and to further condense the bulk into readily analyzable units" (p. 80). Through the iterative process of coding and recoding, it is possible to

discover recurring patterns and ideas that then become markers of discoveries that connect to one's research questions. These patterns can then operate as focal points for conceptual and theoretical analysis and discussion as one weaves together the threads of one's research output.

My coding process followed this pattern. To begin the process, I read and reread all of the word-portraits, the interview with Tanya, and my RSI, repeatedly, looking for commonalities and categories around which I could structure my analysis. At first, I separated the data into five categories:

- Stories about **performing** in productions;
- Stories about **learning** from productions;
- Stories about the **skills** and **personal development** related to productions;
- Stories about the **value** of doing productions, both in the moment and thereafter;
- Stories about the **teaching** and **learning** that are part of the production making process on a university campus.

I then distilled these five categories into three broad themes using the “unifying paradigm” (O’Toole & O’Mara, 2007, p. 213), which recognises “drama as an art form” (O’Toole, 2009b, p. 127). Within this paradigm, O’Toole (2009b) suggests that there are three basic focal areas rooted in three interrelated aspects of drama/theatre, encompassing the artist (who makes the art), the performer (who re-makes, or interprets, or communicates the art), and the audience (who receive, respond or appreciate the art) (p. 140). Using these terms, I established the following new categories:

- **Making** productions – covering stories that reference my directing specifically, that engage with what I do, and how I make theatre; these responses cover the kinds of plays I make, the rehearsal processes that I employ, the context and content of the body of my work as a director, my skills, my weaknesses, my beliefs, my values, all of which generate what I would call my directorial signature.
- **Performing** in productions – in which individual participants’ narratives of their performing experience in the productions I have directed are explored, including why they chose to do productions and what they gained from their experiences.
- **Receiving** productions – focuses on stories that discuss what participants learned from doing productions, both in relation to the discipline of drama/theatre, and also in the broader context, thus addressing the different knowings that emerge out of production process.

This took me to the second level of coding, where I began to make selections within the data categories. I realised, however, that these categories were still too broad and would result in far more information than could be dealt with in my thesis. More important, they diluted the focus of the data which, I believed, should be on the key research question, namely the learning derived from participation in formal theatre productions. Hence, I narrowed the focus again, still using three categories but redefining them as data about me as a director, data about students' learning in productions, and data about the value of productions in higher education. I used the same three categories to create loosely defined sections in which to place the different aspects of the participant responses. In doing this, I was seeking to eliminate repetition and to choose the most powerful and insightful of the responses in each of the three categories, but also to ensure that all the participants were represented. These categories thus became the frames for representing the data.

My third coding cycle involved converting the data into dialogues and actually writing it up as the play text. Doing this necessitated a re-examination of the categories and re-assignment of some of the data as the structure of the play took shape. Initially, I wrote the play in several unrelated scenes, with each scene followed by analysis; the scenes were then separated into three larger collections, each of which were treated as a separate entity. However, as I worked through this process, it became clear that there was simply too much material to fit effectively into this model, and that there was too much repetition across the three sections. Writing the data up in this way very clearly showed me when I had reached saturation point and was simply repeating similar conclusions and observations in different ways. At this point, I reminded myself of the old theatrical adage of "less, is more," and essentially went back to the drawing board, thus enacting Berbery's (2015) injunction that "CAP takes time, multiple attempts, and most importantly creativity" (p. 49); I had to find a new way in.

I decided to scrap the idea of three separate sections and instead write up a single episodic text, that consisted of dialogic scenes interspersed with monologues, which were connected through a narrator-type figure. The decision led to another round of coding, where I refined my selections and categories, unifying some of the separate themes into broader patterns that could be addressed in a single scene. Thus, for example, instead of looking at performer-participants' experience of my directing practice in five separate scenes relating to my strengths as a director, my weaknesses, my rehearsal methods, my directorial choices, and my technical skills, I pulled all of that data together into a single scene that allowed me to cover the key ideas but not to swamp the reader with the volume of data and multitude of examples the participants had offered. I treated each of the three

original categories in the same way, creating out of them the final twelve-scene play that formed the basis for my analysis.

Having written the actual play script, I then embarked on my next level of analysis by actually interrogating the data as expressed in the play script in relation to the key concepts I have already established regarding directing, education, and learning (see scene 6). At the final level of analysis, I will connect the data to the broader themes and questions of my research to navigate my path towards the concept of PBL in higher education (see scenes 9 and 10).

In constructing the script, I did not include every response to every prompt provided in the word-portrait request. Rather, as noted above, I analysed each response and grouped together those that had the same or a similar theme. I have, however, ensured that every participant is represented in the script and that the various *types* of response have been included. Presenting the data in this form—apart from being appropriate to the subject matter of my thesis and the tenets of my discipline—allowed me to produce what I believe is a very accurate assessment of my practice as it is experienced by those I direct and teach, and the colleagues with whom I have shared these processes.

Discussing the power of CAP, Berbary (2011) suggests that it changes our expectations of research because rather than disconnect and reduce experiences, it instead encourages involvement, inspires curiosity, creates inclusivity, and constructs depictions that remain in the thoughts of readers in ways that traditional representations sometimes do not. (p. 195)

In framing my data as a play script, I am seeking to reflect the genuine and authentic responses of the participants in my study and their understandings of their formal theatre production experience.

All of this is in order to formulate a tentative ‘map’ of PBL, the key construct I am seeking to discover in from my study. Part of this process is to delineate and define the skills, qualities and experiences that emerge from the participants’ responses and to establish how these may formulate the base for a philosophy of teaching and learning in this educational model. I imagine this process as theatrical epistemology – a way of knowing that emerges out of the theatre experience specifically. This epistemology is the focus of PBL, where the learning—whether theatrical or otherwise—is embedded in, and emergent from, the students’ participation in formal theatre productions for audiences. It is multi-levelled, constructivist, deep learning, and my data-play was a key step in discovering and articulating the characteristics of this epistemology; I am interested in

the concepts and strategies that facilitate transformative—and transferable—learning through participation in formal theatre production experiences, where the theatre work becomes the basis for broader learning about life, the self, and one's role in the world.

In scene 8, I will analyse the discoveries derived from my data-play so that I can construct a clear picture of how the participants engage formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning.

SCENE 8: MAPPING THE PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

My data-play was constructed from the multiple different responses to the various prompts offered by my research participants in their word-portraits. I reframed the data as a play script in order to preserve the individual voices of the participants and to engage further the theatrical frame that bounds my thesis. In this scene, I will analyse the data from the play in order to map the kinds of learning that are articulated by the participants. The data play itself appears as Appendix 8, and the section titles in this scene parallel the scenes in the play. Understanding the participant views on learning through formal theatre productions is the prerequisite for examining those views in relation to the framework of learning I established in scene 6. Thus, I intend to connect the specifics of the learning identified by the participants to the educational bricolage I have constructed, which I have shown here as an education 'tree':

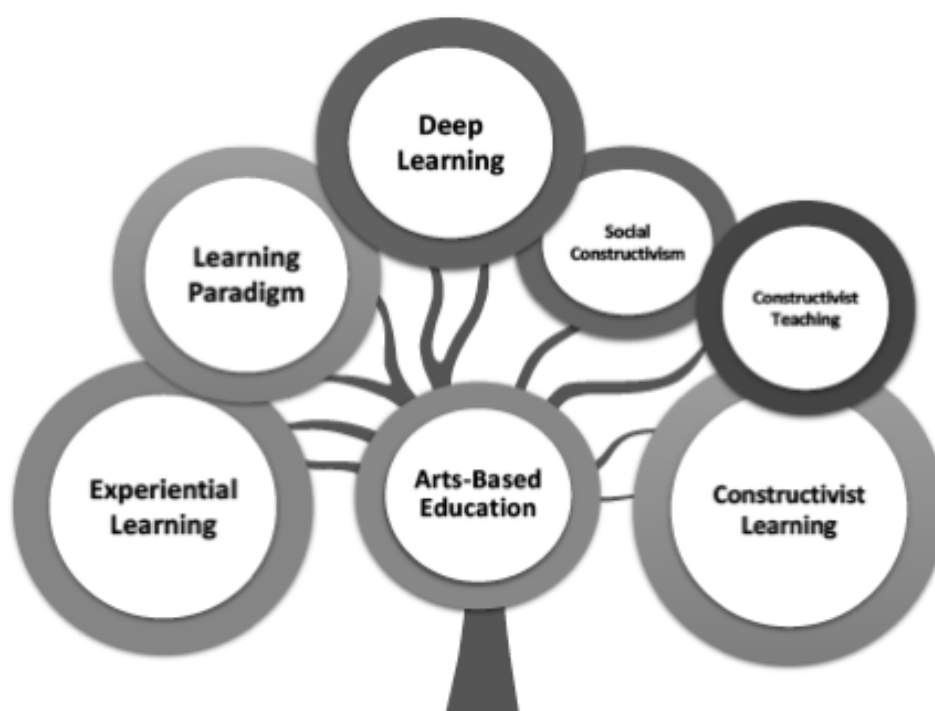


Figure 10. Educational bricolage 'tree'.

Each section in this scene parallels a scene in the data-play, using the same title, for ease of reference, and the word-portrait prompts serve as anchors for my discussion. In this way, I can connect the stories the participants have told to my own perceptions around what

participation in formal theatre productions yields in relation to learning. By combining these ideas, I begin to draw the threads of my thesis together, working towards articulating the value of formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning. I am engaging here with the self-study imperative of seeing the self always in relation to the other. Powerful theatre, like deep learning, only happens collaboratively; similarly, only through examining how my beliefs intersect with others' can I trace the paths of PBL.

8.1 Prologue / Scene 1 – Opening the Unopened Door

In the prologue and scene 1 of the play, I set the parameters for the action. In doing so, I establish what I *think* I am giving the students when they participate in my formal theatre productions, from theatre skills to life skills. I start from a set of values and beliefs which underpin my practice as a director-teacher, the hybrid identity I have been establishing throughout this thesis. The rest of the play interrogates the impact of these values and beliefs on others, to determine if learning is, in fact, happening, and how and why this might be so.

8.2 Scene 2 – On Doing Productions

In scene 2 of the play, the text comes from performer-participant responses to the first two word-portrait prompts:

- What was your most memorable production experience while at university? Why?
- What made you do productions at university? How did you get involved in them?

Thus, in this scene I am exploring the reasons for their participation in productions in order to understand how the production work fitted into their overall experience at university.

Generally, the responses seem to cover two overarching ideas for why the students decided to participate in productions: first, a desire to prepare of a career in the theatre, and second, an opportunity for social interaction and making friends.

Almost all of these participants speak about wanting to act, which is probably the case with most production casts – those who choose to participate are the ones who are most interested in the profession, or a related one (like directing, or design, or writing). In this sense, they possess the intrinsic motivation necessary for deep learning to occur. This fact points to the biggest unknown about PBL. Without curricular productions, it is impossible to

see whether PBL would be as effective with students whose main interest is not in performance of some kind. That said, by far the majority of students that have been in productions I directed have not become professional actors. One reason why I wanted to work with past graduates in this thesis was so that I could get a sense of what they think now about their learning experiences then. I think that the benefit of education is often not felt or evident at the time of learning; reflection is easier with distance and hindsight, because, since it is in the past, it can be scrutinised less emotionally. Thus, even though the initial impulse for production-participation might be related to a desire to act, I think that the kinds of learning the participants articulate as being connected to their production work, suggest that there is, at the very least, an argument to be made for exploring whether or not PBL would be effective with more widespread application as part of a curriculum in theatre disciplines.

The other significant aspect revealed in their responses is the idea of becoming part of something bigger than themselves. People involved in a production very quickly become a quasi-family, everyone connected to everyone else with a sense of shared need and effort. For these students, the productions formed access points to a more intense and varied drama experience than those of their peers who did not do them. The forging of friendships, the involvement in a community of practice, the sense of fun, the feeling of accomplishment associated with production work, all of these things point to one of the most obvious benefits of PBL – a social, interactive learning opportunity. As I noted in scene 6, this process in effect constructs a ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) where participants teach and learn from each other, leading to a deepened understanding of human relationships. In recognising this aspect, the performer-participants are mirroring some my own learning narrative; in my own experience, doing productions gave me a sense of belonging that I didn't find anywhere else in the university. In their responses, it is evident that, for these students, their production experiences were significant and powerful components of their university learning; as Derosha observes, they are the “bearers and markers of my student life” that “demarcated my growth as a person and a student actor.”

The last two observations I want to make here relate firstly, to the recognition of experiential learning as is expressed in Sacha's observation: “It's in doing that we learn, and I don't think there is a more valuable way in which to learn the craft of acting than through an active and committed involvement in the rehearsal process of a well-directed production.” Whether it is learning theatre skills, or gaining practical experience, or putting on

professional productions, all point to a key aspect of the learning I am seeking to explore – learning by doing. In the various responses, we can see evidence of Beard and Wilson’s (2013) experiential learning model, and specifically in the areas of “doing” (p. 7) and “feeling” (p. 7), pointing to a kind of learning that reflects transformation of some kind.

Finally, here, I want to highlight Noxolo’s narrative, which reflects the views of someone who did not participate in productions from the beginning of her university career. In many ways, her story offers one of the most salient examples of the benefits of PBL. Noxolo refers to being “too timid” to audition, so the first important marker is how she was able to move through the fear and take the opportunity offered. Fear is a hurdle we all face at different junctures in our lives; conquering it here has long-term ramifications, I believe, providing a memory of successfully overcoming fear, which is an invaluable lesson. In addition, this narrative points to the role of the director-teacher in these situations. In any education context, there is duty of care for the director-teacher; what Noxolo’s story reveals, though, is how much a little encouragement can accomplish providing a salutary lesson in constructivist teaching. Noxolo ended up playing several lead roles for me and developed into a fine and powerful performer; these instilled a sense of self-confidence that has been part of her process of becoming an excellent academic. This then is an example of how teachers of drama can effect life-learning: Pushing students to do productions, making them stand in the literal spotlight, enables them to learn not to shy away from the metaphorical ones they will encounter in life. In this sense, production work can provide life-defining experiences in the formulation of one’s complex identity.

8.3 Scene 3 – It Matters Because. . .

In this first monologue, I find Martin’s observation that “Drama is for everyone, not just those with a talent in performance” particularly significant. While I have very few doubts about the efficacy of productions as vehicles for teaching and learning, I understand why some might conclude that this efficacy would work only for those specifically interested in, and committed to, drama and a career in the performance industry. In Martin’s statement, however, I find support for my belief that PBL would be effective for every student in a drama programme. He asserts that drama is empowering, giving us the skills “to speak, . . . to think, to feel and to live.” And from this perspective, it isn’t really about acting at all; it is about discovering the feats of which we are capable when we let ourselves explore all the

possibilities we can imagine, free from fear and from disapprobation, when we surprise ourselves with our own capacity to soar. This, for me, is, as Hartfield (1993) advocates, “coming to the human center where all significant transformations begin and terminate” (p. 17)

8.4 Scene 4 – On the Production Experience

For this scene, the text is derived from responses to the prompt, “How would you describe the value of your production experience?” I am, thus, looking at the general, overall response to the value of the production experience from the perspective of the performer-participants. Interestingly, most of them interpreted this value in terms of learning, although such a correlation was not prescribed, so these are the first comments that explore learning in the wider context of life emerging from the microcosm that is the world of a play.

In discussing their production experiences, there are comments about the application of theory, finding friendship, having fun, developing a sense of belonging, expressing curiosity, dealing with people, navigating social environments, adaptability, and organisational skills, alongside such issues as self-confidence, trust, self-knowledge, and making connections. All of these are indicative of the powerful educative capabilities inherent in formal theatre productions.

Apart from the general observations, I want to highlight a few specific responses that offer insight into my position in this thesis. Jason’s observation of “performing for cheering audiences” and experiencing the “thrill of entertaining others,” suggests that the performing component of the work—the stepping on to the stage in front of an audience—is noteworthy in the PBL process. Similarly, Derosha notes the important of testing what was learnt in class before “an actual public audience.” While obviously performing for an audience has its own stresses, like Benedetti (1988), I believe that the necessity of delivering a competent performance for the paying public is critical to the efficacy of such projects; without the presence of the audience, a production never needs to make the transition from the (hopefully) relaxed play of the rehearsal room on to the theatre stage, from which space the gift of theatre magic is given. The feelings associated with these events imprint themselves on a participant’s consciousness, becoming permanent memories of accomplishment.

Both of these comments point to an excitement regarding the presence of the public audience and an awareness of the need to deliver the best job they can do. For me, the pressure of the ‘public-ness’ of the performance heightens the learning potential exponentially. The idea of role play as a means of gaining self-confidence and self-awareness is not new—it is referenced in virtually all the DIE/TIE/AT models—but I think the enhanced value of the theatrical production lies in the shared ensemble experience, everyone playing interlinked roles, everyone needing to deliver for everybody else, within the frame of the play and for a public audience, with the result that the skills are heightened. These are also often lessons in self-affirmation: Realising one can do something so difficult and potentially terrifying is an empowering experience, serving as a marker for future actions and behaviours.

Productions also appear to offer a space for different kinds of experiences, predominantly because every production is unique. Zanele offers a particularly telling observation in this regard as she reflects on having “something new to discover and learn and assess about myself as an actor as well as my personal life,” and insightfully asserts wanting “to learn and experience failure and success and observe the transformation happen to others as well.” For me, this is as good a description of the purpose of education as I have read. These comments, for me, speak to the constructivist model of building continually on existing schemata to drive the discovery of new knowledge.

From Josette’s narrative, I want to point out her concept of the production as a “playground for discovery”; this is exactly the kind of process that I seek to engender in my rehearsal rooms. In such a playroom, one can explore all kinds of imaginary situations and structures; the possibilities are endless. While the notion of play as teacher is significant, what is also captured here is the sense of curiosity that is the necessary pre-condition for deep learning. In her description of her process, she reflects on her understanding that self-discovery is about figuring out who one is in the real world, and how that can happen through one’s experience in the world of the play that is the production context.

I think Lucy’s story about her costume in *Three Sisters* provides an excellent example of how much can be learned from one single moment. It is also interesting because it is a lesson drawn not from positive reinforcement but from the honest and overtly stated recognition of an inner struggle. The maturity of Lucy’s self-reflection itself points to the

kind of learning I believe we should be aspiring to offer. This is the kind of deep learning about self that excites me as an educator.

The idea of learning to live is echoed in Jason's description of learning to deal with people through production work, and particularly, the importance of "knowing your own short-comings and strengths." Simply understanding the necessity of knowing this is itself a marker of maturity. In addition, however, the kinds of skills to which he refers have application to many life and work settings. Hence, the implication here is of the acquisition of an extensive set of transferrable skills, gained through the production experience, which illustrates the potential significance of PBL.

My final comment here refers to the closing passage of this scene, appropriately written by Zoë, who was part of my very first acting class. For me, this is arguably the single most important response for my study because it captures exactly what I believe theatre—and education—to be for. The notion of generosity, the spirit that is the source of the humanity I seek to engender, is my own centre, around which everything else must circle. That Zoë has named this—calling it "an act of altruism", "an act of service"—indicates that I was clear in my purpose, and that I was heard, and that whatever else has impacted on my life, this one thing remains always unbroken.

8.5 Scene 5 – A Teaching Moment

In scene 6, I cited Jordan et al.'s (2008) explanation of constructivist learning as being about individuals "synthesizing the knowledge they already possess with new information" (p. 55). I think this idea is evidenced in Josette's monologue describing her failure to be cast in a particular play, where she says, "My most memorable 'experience' was in a production I didn't even take part in." The idea of learning through struggle and failure is a recurrent element of teaching and learning; in fact, it is a truism to say we learn more from failure than from successes! So, this entry reveals Josette's significant ability to be self-reflexive and to understand the learning experience, in order to make new meaning for herself. Perhaps it also points to the importance of time; at the moment things happen, we may not see them as turning points for us, but from the perspective of distance, they seem to stand out in high relief. The point, of course, is that we can learn from anything if we *choose* to, as is demonstrated first, in Josette's eagerness to discover why she was not cast, and second, her

willingness to embrace the answer as constructive and use it to grow. Perhaps this is why I found this response to be one of the most important in my whole thesis. However, the really fascinating point here, for me, is that I hadn't considered this particular event at all in the intervening years when Josette was regularly cast in my productions. As I read it, though, I remembered having the conversation—and being surprised because it is so rare for students to ask why they don't get in to a production (I certainly never did, even when I felt I was being wronged by not being cast)—but the details were a surprise to me. I think it is important because it demonstrates clearly the principle of getting the specific lesson when it is needed, as well as pointing to the importance of teachers taking all opportunities to share knowledge, not just the formal experiences. It also speaks to Dewey's (1938) notion of "collateral learning" (p. 48); offering this lesson was not my focus in this instance, and, once the moment had passed, it was gone from my mind. For Josette, though, the moment was especially significant, and this points to the power of such moments to affect—and, perhaps, effect—deep learning, even when the teacher's focus is not on the teaching moment.

8.6 Scene 6 – On Learning the Discipline

In this scene are collated the performer-participants' response to the prompt, "What skills, if any, did you acquire from participation in productions?" The particular focus here are the disciplinary skills relating to theatre-making that emerge from participation in formal theatre productions. This the first level of the learning that I am seeking to engender, since it is at the heart of my practice. I should note, though, that there is no neat dividing line between the disciplinary knowledge and the more general self-knowledge since the two naturally overlap; the distinction is used here purely for the analytic process.

What is evident in the discussion is that on the level of disciplinary learning, productions are very important, leading to increased skills development. Learning theatre skills is a big part of the learning from formal theatre productions, which are such effective teachers of skills because they engage the students in action, experientially, through the process of the theatre-making work. These skills, as discussed by the performer-participants, include

- group dynamics and teamwork (the idea of the ensemble);
- the collaborative nature of the theatre-making process;

- genre and style;
- learning to “think differently” (Brett);
- audition technique;
- elements of the actor’s craft (learning lines, blocking, being punctual, etc.);
- performance attributes like projection, presentation, and confidence;
- understanding how to use your body and voice to perform;
- differences in various forms of language;
- “textual analysis” (Libby);
- “focus and concentration” (Lucy);

These are the tools of the drama that are explored best through the production process, the foundational elements of PBL.

There is also evidence in this data for the learning about the self that is the direct focus of later scenes. Because the comments are associated with theatre skill, I have included them here under the disciplinary learning banner although they speak to questions of self-learning and self-development. Partly, this is about recognising that we learn from any experience, from those we like and want, as well as those we do not. For me, this leads to the recognition of skills and interests that assist in the maturation process. This is, I believe, a huge part of what university education is about—you learn what is *not* as much as what *is*. Thus, Sacha speaks to the honing of performance technique but at the same time recognises the transferability of this learning to other kinds of contexts and careers. This transferability is one of the key pillars of PBL as I imagine it.

In Libby’s response we see the referencing of skills but also the holistic nature of the learning that is taking place, and the applicability of the learning to other fields of study and endeavour. She also comments on learning through observation; this response is particularly significant for me because it points to the necessity of considering the audience, whether our art form is writing fiction, making theatre, or teaching. How we understand the idea of audience shapes who we are as theatre-makers and, I believe, global citizens.

Josette’s description of her production experiences as “formative” is significant; it references the idea of educating for the future. In any kind of learning, the process involves trial and error, and multiple different experiences that, together, shape the lesson and thus are

formative in the constructivist sense. For Josette, this formative education happened through participation in productions. In part, the constant engagement with the process and the experience, developed a store of what I would call ‘mind-muscle-memories’ that eventually become instinctive and available on demand. This is a critical skill for an actor, but also, I would suggest, for anyone seeking pathways for learning for the future. It is about internalising the learning, absorbing everything like the proverbial “sponge” to which Lauren refers, till it becomes a natural and inseparable part of your being. When that happens, we have entered the realm of deep and lasting education.

8.7 Scene 7 – And Now For the Experts. . .

To this point in the play, we have been hearing predominantly from the performer-participants. Since my thesis seeks to understand whether formal theatre productions are environments conducive to learning, it is useful to see what other directors and/or teachers working in higher education have to say about that question, as well as the more personal question relating to my directing methods as educative practice. I am, therefore, exploring here the data generated by my colleague-participants and my critical friend Tanya, in response to the prompt, “What do you think are the learning values to be obtained through production work? Does my directing practice foster such learning? How?”

All five colleague-participants agree that productions are the best way to learn the skills of theatre-making, be that acting, designing, writing, or directing. Their various responses reference experiential learning as central to this endeavour: We learn by doing. Marié-Heleen offers perhaps the most analytical summary of the value of productions, noting the various aspects of theatre that are taught through the production process. I am particularly interested in her observation that productions foster “understanding and tolerance for difference, and emotional competency” since this correlates precisely with my view. Moreover, her references to “multivision,” “cognitive development,” and “social skills” point to the extensive possibilities for learning embedded in formal theatre productions. Lloyd’s idea of the production as a “testing ground” is useful; through their participation in productions the students are able to test out much of what they are learning in their theoretical classes. The production operates through a dynamic mix of theory and practice, and through this “praxis,” as Lloyd notes, a “unique kind of learning” is engaged. Martin says that this learning offers a “meaningful preparation for life,” which suggests that the

skills that emerge from the theatre-making exercise extend well beyond the moment of the particular play or even the wider boundaries of the discipline. This broader learning is profoundly connected to individuals and their self-realisation, and to the notion of taking responsibility for claiming agency – a key aspect of the LP.

In her interview, Tanya referred to the phenomenon of having to deliver something for an audience as “sink or swim pressure” and what emerges in this discussion is how such pressure acts to forge more confident, more self-aware, and more engaged people. This, for me, is at the heart of theatre’s power to educate. Stepping on to a stage in front of an audience is always an experience that contains tension, even for those of us who want to perform. The unnaturalness of the event always provides an adrenalin kick as we choose to place our vulnerable selves before an audience, risking rejection but hoping to guide them on a journey. Without the audience, the element of risk is removed, and without the risk, the potential learning is greatly diminished. This is not to suggest that everyone in the world must suddenly become an actor; however, the sense of accomplishment and the conquering of fear are profoundly powerful shapers of identity. Both Tanya and I express a similar observation, noting that if a student can successfully participate in a production, if they can do something so hard, they learn to believe they are capable of anything, and this is the real power of education: to make people believe in their own possibilities. The self-discipline, the self-reliance, and the trust that accompany taking that step on to the stage are tools that open up the world.

During the scene, I pose the question, “When I am directing do you think that I am making a space where that kind of learning can happen?” I ask this because my interest in this thesis is not only with the learning that occurs in formal theatre productions; on another level, I want to know whether my specific directing practice, what I am doing as I direct, actively facilitates the kind of deep learning that is my educative goal. Tanya’s response to the question in the scene is therefore a critical component of my study, and what she says speaks to the learner-centred, experiential, constructivist ethos that underpins my understanding of education as a whole. Many participants commented on the idea that I challenge the students, as is evidenced in Tanya’s comment that I “push them and . . . expect them to show up physically and emotionally and mentally.” She goes on to note that this is about taking students “out of their comfort zones” in order to facilitate growth, and this is certainly my intention. Even though I sometimes do step in to explain things, I do not like to

spoon-feed actors or give them answers to key character questions; I always want the work to start at least with them and their own ideas. In this, I am pursuing a constructivist agenda. For some students, this can be very scary, and I think, sometimes I am not sufficiently aware of that. Tanya notes that we “don’t learn anything unless you are feeling a little bit out of your depth,” and this points to the significance of the risk/reward ratio: To risk means to be open to the potential that you will surprise yourself. Thus, when students are choosing performance monologues, for example, I will always tell them to pick something they think is difficult, something they will not find easy to play, because that’s the only way to get better. This is something I was always told throughout my studies; never settle, never stagnate, and it’s something that drives me to encourage students to explore the outer edges of their boundaries. Some choose to do so, some do not, and one of my own lessons to learn is to recognise when to stop pushing. Tanya’s description of how I use everything that happens as I direct as a “teaching moment” offers arguably the most important evidence in my thesis for my self-perception as a director-teacher, where the two functions are integrally connected allowing me to move seamlessly between them when the process is working well. In these moments, I find myself in what Csikszentmihalyi (2009) terms the flow experience, in which everything seems to slot together perfectly and creativity is unleashed.

8.8 Scene 8 – On Learning the Self

In many ways, the data presented in scene 8 of the play forms the centre of my thesis since it is here that the performer-participants discuss their learning about themselves through productions. In doing so, they are addressing the following prompts:

- Are there things of lasting value that you derived from your participation in productions?
- What, if anything, did you learn about yourself by being involved in the production?
- What, if anything, did you learn about others by being involved in the production?

I am interested here in a second level of investigation into the consequences of their participation in formal theatre productions on the level of personal, as opposed to disciplinary, learning.

What is clear from the dialogue is that, in addition to the expected theatre skills, there are many other kinds of learning happening through the production process. In thinking

about these responses, three broad categories of learning emerge: lessons for the self, lessons for the self and others, and transferable lessons.

i. Lessons for the self

The lessons here are about the kinds of skills and abilities that enable people to function successfully and to realise their full potential. This involves both self-learning, in the sense of personal growth, development and maturation, and skills acquisition, in the sense of learning the kinds of behaviours that provide the wherewithal for coping with the demands of adulthood and responsibility. I like Hannah's description of these as "soft skills," because I think the general sense is that one should learn to command of all these skills almost as a matter of course, that there is some natural inborn ability to manage all of these complex interactive systems. I certainly make no claims to psychological expertise, but it seems, from my layperson's experience as a director and a teacher, that that assumption is deeply flawed. Hannah's description of these soft skills is worth repeating, I think. She references patience, the ability to listen, the need to find common ground, being able to follow directions, encouraging one's peers, reducing our sense of self-importance, and focusing on the overall goal. We might include the skills Lucy notes, such as trust, tenacity, resilience, acceptance of criticism, openness, vulnerability, determination, and focus. Lauren also suggests key skills like having a work ethic, finding one's passion, self-reliance, and communication. And then there are Noxolo's insights about the development of confidence and self-belief, and the discovery of a voice as a critical component for self-improvement.

When I look at this list, it seems to me that perhaps these are the most important lessons we can offer our students as tools for coping with what life throws in one's path. Significantly for this study, almost all of these skills might be acquired as a consequence of formal theatre production experience, even though they are not the direct focus of the production work. Thus, these soft skills, or life-learning as I prefer to call it, are the natural by-products—the "collateral learning" (Dewey, 1938, p. 48) of the production experience—offering a learning that is quite different from the performance or technical elements that are the more natural and expected results of formal theatre productions. Such 'by-products' are my primary focus in my study because they represent the kind of learning that I believe

education should foster, namely the deep learning that drives our most important and significant life choices.

Finally, here, I want to point to Lucy's observation about the "shared sense of purpose," and the joy associated with it, as a critical aspect of PBL. The notion of purpose is very important for my own story. For a long time after I decided to let go of my dream of becoming a professional actress, as I described in scene 4, I felt broken on the inside. Finding a purpose in my teaching and my creative practice brought me back to myself in the world. Thus, as with many of these performer-participant narratives, I find resonances to my own lived experience and echoes of the self-learning that was also central to my own life story. At the heart of the theatre-making process is a sense of absolute commitment and dedication, and the idea of never giving up is central to its ethos: As theatre-makers, we always have to find a way to persevere, to problem-solve, to find a plan to fix what isn't working, so determination becomes deeply embedded in our being. I think we learn to embody the spirit of "laughing wild amid severest woe" (Beckett, in Durang, 1996, p. 3): Even when things are at their worst and one cannot believe the production will actually happen, we keep going because, as the adage says, the show must go on.

Josette's summing up of her experience as leading her "closer and closer to [her] true 'self,'" and the lessons learned about herself as a person and as a performer, captures my own beliefs accurately. She suggests that her experience was "in the true sense invaluable"; this was certainly true for me and it is that belief that forms the bedrock of my construction of PBL.

ii. Lessons for the self with others

At the centre of the kind of learning I am imagining, is the notion of community, the theatrical ensemble. Theatre is a collaborative art form; it requires the energies and efforts of many individuals with different abilities to make it happen. Thus, one of the director's most important functions in the theatre-making process is to create a working environment in which the community, comprised of the cast and crew of the production, can come together as a unit. In this way, they become an ensemble in which everyone has a role, and everyone is respected and valued for that role. This sounds like a simple task but it is not, as one has to

negotiate numerous variables, personalities, and conflicting views, in order to forge this cohesive group. It is also true, however, that, in my experience, those productions with close-knit, mutually supportive participants were invariably more successful than those in which there were conflicts amongst the various members of the group. In this sense, perhaps the most important social learning that happens in productions is the development of teamwork, group dynamics, and a sense of trust and shared responsibility, all of which are critical aspects of any collaborative enterprise. Partly, this is just the result of the ensemble building process, but it also, for me, reflects the kind of performance synergy—where the alchemical process linking bodies, minds, spirits, emotions to generate a whole (in performance) greater than the sum of its parts—is manifest. From this perspective, the social constructivist framework can be clearly identified, as the productions construct learning environments conducive to the creation of ZPDs and play, in which students can co-create meaning with each other, and with me as the director. This is also the basis of the “community of practice” (Wenger, 1988) generated by the shared experience and the pursuit of a unified goal.

The sense of community is also significant as a teacher of tolerance and empathy. Zanele’s observations that we are unique but also alike, that no one is either all good or all bad, and that therefore we need to learn not to judge are significant. Theatre, by its nature, encourages the practice of empathy and tolerance; as Zanele so incisively notes, we can connect the world of the play—where everyone’s role is important, no matter the size—to the real world in which “each individual . . . has a part to play no matter how big or small that individual is. Everybody matters.” Such sentiments are surely key to developing understanding and acceptance in a world where too often the forces of divisiveness and fear govern our actions. The recognition and acceptance of diversity as natural and necessary reflects the community of spirit that is the production experience. In this space, the sharing amongst equals, the tolerance and acceptance of difference, and the desire to find ways to problem-solve together any of the challenges associated with the project, are key to the success of the production and are also, perhaps more importantly, invaluable in relation to broader life-learning.

I find Zanele’s insights about tolerance, honesty and vulnerability also interesting: She refers to the interdependence of honesty and vulnerability, suggesting they are powerful elements of any authentic relationship. Significantly, here, she recognises what she calls the

“ripple effect,” where honesty begets honesty, and openness is the prerequisite for meaningful connections to be made. This is, of course, a critical component of theatre-making. The greatest actors are those who are able to allow their vulnerability to inform and shape their performances; the goal of most acting theory and technique is to enable the actor to create such authentic, convincing performances. In the real world, however, vulnerability is often avoided at all costs because of the power it potentially cedes to others – power that can be used to wound. I think that’s why seeing the rehearsal room as a place where vulnerability will be treasured—like Chekhov’s belief that, “Whatever we do in the moment of performance. . . is perfect” (Chamberlain, 2004, p. 118), or Heathcote’s “no-penalty zone” (in O’Neill, 2015, p. 89)—is so important. It is a place of safety where whatever is revealed of the self is respected as a pathway to developing individual performances of power and authenticity, and valued as a gift of generosity made to one’s peers and the audience, who may or may not know the source of the authenticity, but will nonetheless recognise it in the way they see and understand the performance they are witnessing.

This is, however, not just about the vulnerability engendered by performance; Zanele’s response demonstrates an understanding that trusting oneself and being honest with oneself are necessary if we want to be open to all possibilities. Being vulnerable opens up choices for the decision-making process, ensuring that decisions are made from a place of self-trust. My all-time favourite quotation comes from Frank Herbert’s (1990) *Dune* trilogy, in which these lines are frequently repeated: “Fear is the mind-killer. . . I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. . . . Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain” (p. 12); Zanele’s awareness that one must “break through the fear” reminds me of those lines. What this supports, for me, is the idea that what happens in—and through—the production process, can establish patterns and behaviours for life that operate long after the greasepaint from the performance has rubbed off.

iii. Transferable lessons

For me, the narratives described here form the central pillar of PBL, since I am looking for learning beyond the curriculum of theatre or drama, beyond the skills of actor or director; I’m looking for a learning that manifests in the day-to-day rhythms and patterns of life in all its complexity.

Fundamentally, my thesis seeks to determine and understand whether learning that happens through formal theatre productions is more broadly applicable than simply being about the acquisition of performance or theatre skills. Thus, I am looking for data that show whether—and how—such learning is transferable into other spheres of life, both personal and professional. This transferal is integrally associated with the practice of reflexivity and engages the participants in a process of meta-learning. Thus, when the performer-participants offer observations on the transferability of their lessons from formal theatre productions into other spheres, I am excited to see my own thoughts reflected in theirs.

A number of motifs are apparent in these observations, affording me the opportunity to examine the responses as indicative of the “universalizability” (Nash, 2004, p. 18) that is a key part of the SPN method. Among the most important, is what Brett describes as “think[ing] outside of the box”; here, the intellectual playfulness is evident, and it is this kind of independent thinking that drives creativity. The creative process involves “an individual weav[ing] together concepts and experiences with new ideas and imagined possibilities that may transform them into a new form” (Vadeboncoeur, Perone & Panina-Beard, 2016, p.291). The ability to expand upon and shift one’s thinking into hitherto unknown scenarios and opportunities is a crucial component of the deep learning that I believe is the goal of education. This serves to reiterate my observation in scene 6 that in actual fact the content of a subject is less important than the skills surrounding the educational journey through that subject, or to paraphrase Gilbert Ryle (1945), learning *how* is more important than learning *what*, in the grander scheme of life-learning.

Another motif arises from Josette’s response concerning the kinds of learning associated with self-awareness and reflexivity, both of which are critically important to deep learning. Her analysis of herself as a new graduate being concerned only with “getting it right” indicates a degree of meta-learning that reveals her self-learning. It also echoes my own belief that often the most important lessons are not recognised as such at the moment when they happen; understanding these moments of learning requires time and distance. Josette’s insightful observation that the “experiencing of things . . . now is the achievement,” seems to me elegantly to capture the realisation that experience *is* the learning. For someone like Josette, who has a career in the performance industry, that experience yields professional

development and growth as an actor; it may also, however, yield the life lessons one needs to ensure our personal development and actions as a human being.

Part of the significance of formal theatre production for learning derives from its iterative nature. As one rehearses a production, one repeats over and over the various moments, experimenting with different choices, gradually building a complex, layered performance. The effect is necessarily cumulative; we do not start from scratch at every rehearsal. We expect the actors to build each day upon what has gone before. I believe that this same kind of cumulative, developmental process should be the basis of all learning, especially in higher education. One of the struggles for disciplines like drama is the modularisation of education, the boxing off, or isolation of individual pieces of knowledge, as if they exist in a vacuum of nothingness. Theatre can only thrive in a world which recognises that education is cumulative; as the constructivist model asserts, the sum of all our experiences shapes and reshapes us continually. This is what Dewey's (1938) understanding of the nature of the learning experience as ongoing, continuous, and interactive implies. We learn from and with each other, and we learn across time, too; past, present and possible futures collide in the continual cycles of learning and teaching and learning again, like the ever-circling wheel of time (to borrow Robert Jordan's [1990] famous metaphor).⁵⁰

Lucy's reflection on her memories of productions offers a further example of meta-learning in action. Part of our maturation process in becoming adults is learning to recognise—and come to terms with—our inner thoughts, beliefs, and motivations, through a kind of internal voyage of discovery. In the theatrical context, the necessity for what Lucy describes as “emotional depth” is readily apparent since actors must play characters and convince audiences that those characters' emotions are authentically represented. Similarly, learning to accept criticism is essential for actors since their work is constantly subject to such critique from directors, audiences, and critics alike. Likewise, the ability to trust both oneself and those with whom one works (directors and fellow actors alike) is a prerequisite for the playing that happens in the rehearsal space. All of these are lessons for the theatre,

⁵⁰ The reference here is to fantasy author Robert Jordan's monumental 14-book series entitled *The Wheel of Time*, published between 1990 and 2013. Although I have referenced only the first book in the series, *The Eye of the World* (1990), every book begins with the same paragraph which concludes, “There are neither beginnings nor endings to the turning of the Wheel of Time”; it seems to me a powerful reminder of the cyclical nature of life and experience.

but they also transcend theatre moving into wider, more life-changing aspects of existence, as one develops deeper awareness and self-understanding, or what Yeager (2006) calls “self-concept” (p. 205).

One of the most personally powerful observations for me is Lucy’s reference to her “perfectionist” nature and how it “stopped [her] from fully engaging, for fear of failure.” This resonates for me since it echoes my own struggle with those twin saboteurs, perfectionism and fear. Learning trust and letting go are not qualities which come easily to me, nor are they ever permanently attained; in the constantly shifting terrains of work and life, I have to remind myself that I can let go and accept what Bjorn Rasmussen refers to as being “good enough” (2010, p. 544). In our work, Tanya and I often use the phrase, “It is what it is” as a way of drawing a line under particular tasks or projects, and accepting that at a certain point, it is necessary to move forward no matter what. The same idea underpins the notion of being “good enough” and, for me, it constitutes an invaluable life-lesson.

In Lucy’s response, there is also evidence of the reflexive engagement that leads to self-learning. Her comments demonstrate critical thinking, as well as a willingness to see constructive criticism as something to be embraced, not rejected. These were terribly difficult lessons for me to learn, so it gives me great joy to think that here I was part of a process that helped someone else to these discoveries. In the theatre, one is critiqued all the time, by the director, by the audience, by the critics, by one’s peers (a bit like academia some might argue); the key is to learn the difference between judgement, which is valueless because it offers no alternative and essentially pegs you where you are without any real potential for change, and critique, which is intended to help you to solve problems—whatever they might be—and thus grow into more possibilities and fulfil one’s potential. This, for me, is transferable learning at its most powerful and profound.

Finally, here, I want to reference Janna’s observation that, from working with me, she learnt “to keep moving even when all the odds are against you,” and Brandon’s assertion that the lessons gleaned from my directing were to problem solve and “to never back down from a challenge.” Both of these reflect the lesson of determination and what has been called “grit” (Duckworth et al., 2007, p.1087), defined as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (p. 1087). Duckworth et al. (2007) go on to explain:

Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress. . . . Whereas disappointment or boredom signals to others that it is time to change trajectory and cut losses, the gritty individual stays the course. (p. 1087-1088)

I cite this here because it captures for me a key lesson about theatre and life. It took me some time to learn the value of grit, but I believe that in my work as a director-teacher, I have been able to demonstrate and model such gritty behaviour. This, I would suggest, is borne out in the performer-participant responses articulated in the play. When we make theatre, nothing ever goes completely according to plan; every day brings new crises and problems that threaten to derail everything. However, no matter what happens, the show goes on. In the end, the problems are irrelevant to the finished work the audience sees; they don't know what it was 'supposed' to look like, so they receive it as if it were exactly how it was always intended to be. This, for me, is one of the most significant lessons learnt from theatre-making. The stamina, the tenacity, the determination, and even the courage, necessary to keep going against all odds, even when things seem hopeless, are the markers of this lesson, the qualities we can take forward into all our endeavours. And perhaps this is the most important life lesson of them all in today's world.

8.9 Scene 9 – Making the Journey

In Josette's narrative about the difficulties she experienced in *Confusions*, my desire to challenge students to move outside of their comfort zones is evidenced. As an actor, one of the most important lessons I learned was that the key to authentic performance is to focus not on your own actions but on those of the person with whom you are acting. Doing this is scary, because it requires significant risk to trust to another person to ensure you do not fail. It is especially difficult for people who like to maintain control of everything in their environment, because it is fundamentally about ceding control to someone else. In some ways, this is the most frightening part of theatre-making—having to make a conscious leap of faith. In this story, Josette captures clearly the moment at which she realises the need to make this leap. It is also not only acting or theatre that requires such leaps; for me, all learning requires some kind of stepping off the ledge, whatever that ledge might be. Through risk, we grow. It is, of course, the director's (and/or the teacher's) responsibility to ensure a safe landing zone for those who make that leap. Interestingly, with regard to this specific production, my directorial instincts knew that this pairing would work, despite all the

evidence to the contrary – something about the extreme control of Josette and the extreme improvisational element in Mike, spoke to the character definitions and the shape of the overall play. Their differences made it work; the very polarity made the learning exponentially more effective.

Perhaps though, it is also about the teacher in me recognising what each student needed to learn and putting them in a position where they could learn it from each other. In any event, this excerpt highlights the idea of me as an actors' director, and recognises that my primary talent as a director is finding ways to elicit performances from the students involved to shape the final product. What is also clear is that only a process that starts from a place of trust can accomplish this kind of result; with trust, anything is possible, without it, nothing. In narrating this story, and her realisation of the need "to totally re-evaluate everything I thought about what it was to be a good actor," Josette is demonstrating Beard and Wilson's (2013) understanding of experiential learning as "a sense making process involving significant experiences that. . . act as the source of learning" (p. 4).

8.10 Scene 10 – On Seeing Reflections of Myself

In this scene, I have collated the performer-participant responses to the prompts referencing me as a director and their experience of my practice. Many of the participants wrote extensively about my qualities as a director, both strengths and weaknesses, as well as commenting on my rehearsal methodologies and the kinds of values and recurring motifs they identified in my work. Indeed, these responses could have formed an entire play on their own. I will reference only a few of the most interesting and evocative responses here, since my primary purpose with regard to the data is to examine the learning that is happening through formal theatre productions, rather than analysing their experiences of me *per se* although these are, of course, important in terms of self-study. Thus, I have tried to offer a sampling of the commentary within the overall focus on learning.

Zoë's response, coming from a member of the first acting class at I taught at UKZN, offers a kind of testimonial and, perhaps more than any other response, has allowed me to believe that I "earned the gift word-teacher" (Heathcote in O'Neill, 2015, p. 153). Her statement that my "directing influence gave shape and purpose to [her] life" points to the way in which my directing operated as teaching, even though it was not specifically constituted as

such. This is a critical comment in relation to my sense of being a director-teacher. In observing that I “showed [her] that [her] life had a creative purpose and that [she] could follow a road that would lead to both personal and professional fulfilment,” Zoë highlights my pedagogical focus as being to educate students into a vision of possibilities for themselves, rather than simply delivering content knowledge. In terms of my study, these comments are immensely valuable and affirming.

Much of what is shared here speaks directly to my directing practice. Lauren’s comments, for example, focusing on “keying in on specific talents of others, and encouraging a collaborative approach” point to the value I place on the ensemble and drawing from each person their particular contributions. My treatment of students as individuals is also borne out in Zanele’s observation that I “saw something unique in us that we could not see in ourselves,” and Hannah’s recognition of the importance of challenge and “step[ping] out of the comfort zone,” echoes Tanya’s earlier observation, and points to my belief in pushing students into spaces where they can “explore and surprise” themselves. To accomplish this requires creating an environment conducive to experimentation and play, and encouraging the actors to use that environment to explore any and all possibilities. Key to this practice is asking the right questions to stimulate and support this exploration; another part is encouragement and demonstrating my trust in them to make choices and deliver a performance; and another part is recognising each individual’s capacity for growth and development and knowing, therefore, when to push and when to leave it alone. All of this is integral to the theatre-making project.

The multiple references to the issue of trust throughout the various participants’ narratives are a vital piece of my director-teacher persona. In both the LP and the constructivist model, it is necessary to trust what one’s students bring to the situation in order to engage them in their own meaning-making. The same is true, I would suggest, for a director; a production is made by blending different energies and qualities together creating the necessary synergy that takes the play from the page to the stage. As the director-teacher, I want to demonstrate belief in the students in order to draw out of them “what they already know, but don’t yet know they know” (Wagner, 1976, p. 48). My philosophy, like Heathcote’s, is that if you believe in them, they will deliver.

In the interests of my self-study, I want to explore briefly some of the narratives which chronicle my weaknesses—or, perhaps, more accurately, my lapses—as a director. While these are not specifically about the learning potential of productions, they are important to my study, first, because they add to its validity, but more significantly, because understanding these concerns is the key to improving my practice as a director-teacher. Many of the responses speak to similar issues such as micro-management, outbursts of anger, over-sensitivity, frustrations, and being too personally invested to see problems that need to be addressed. For example, Lauren notes the “moments of extreme anger when outside influences filtered into the director’s chair,” and Noxolo observes my “exasperation. . . if an actor didn’t quite seem to understand what she was communicating.” These are valuable comments that point to the dissonance evident between what I believed I was doing, and what was being ‘read’; this is the kind of self-knowledge that can assist me to improve my practice and be more conscious of such lapses, and speaks to my role as director-teacher in this process.

One critique is raised by virtually every participant in my study, namely that I take things personally and invest too much; and that the very real pressure of responsibility weighs heavily on me. Libby remarks on my becoming “so immersed in the work, and [my] relationship with [them], that [I] seemed to feel overwhelmed”; this is insightful and accurate, and harks back to my need to let go. Often, I take things personally, and always I wear my heart on the proverbial sleeve; however, I never imagined that it was this visible and apparent to students who need me to be calm and fearless in order to help them deal with the pressures of performance and the rehearsal room. Thus, this an important life-lesson for me from the production process, but it is also an example of the kinds of self-knowledge that can emerge through such experiences.

Noxolo points out a tendency to show an actor how to do something; this is definitely something I actively try not to do, as is evidenced by many other comments noting my unwillingness to give line readings, for example, or Libby’s observation that she “never felt judged or criticised.” Thus, this comment is very significant for my own journey as a director-teacher, in that it highlights a blind spot for me and ensures a conscious attempt to shift and to reflect on my own process more thoroughly to find better ways to manage this kind of process. Interestingly, elsewhere Noxolo also comments on my fairness and the sense of an ensemble with shared responsibilities and goals. These observations point to

more knowledge emerging from formal theatre productions. For me, the production itself becomes a self-contained and self-sustaining community of practice building on the interconnections between the various participants, both on stage and off. It also indicates how relationships shift as the circumstances do. As I got to know students more, I could challenge them more, and expect more from them. I think this is one of the chief values of formal theatre productions as it is in the rehearsal room of the production that such discoveries and shifts might be made.

In relation to this, Josette notes my ability to make the actors “feel at ease,” which for me points to the building of trust and my concern with doing no harm. A space of discovery and change can only evolve in a space of trust: They have to know they can trust you not to let them down or make them look like fools in order to let go of the fear and the tension that cripple self-belief and creativity. In such spaces, challenging the students is possible and, such challenge, as Zanele observes, also teaches them they can do more than they think, thus promoting agency; everything, finally, is about teaching them that they should look always for as many possibilities they can find in regard to all the life choices they will make over their lifetimes. Giving people the gift of understanding that there are multiple possibilities in any context, opens up the world and in so doing creates the inner freedom necessary for creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication from a place of self-knowledge and broad vision.

Finally, I want to point to Hannah’s observation that, “Sometimes we only realised while performing what we were producing, providing a sense of achievement for the people involved.” From the perspective of being inside the process, it is hard to see the overall arc of the work and difficult to engage in self-reflection; it is in the performances, the delivery of the production to its audience, that the efficacy of the learning can, in part at least, be measured.

8.11 Scene 11 – On the Function of Productions

In this scene, the views of the performer-participants on the function that productions serve in institutions of higher education are expressed. The text is thus drawn from responses to the final prompt, “What do you think is the function of formal production work (i.e. putting on plays for audiences), particularly in an institution of higher learning?” This, of

course, is the crux of my thesis, and I was interested to see how my beliefs about why productions are important in terms of their functionality would relate to those of the participants. In many ways, this question has already been addressed in the data about learning from productions; however, the specifically focused prompt led to some very significant and interesting responses. In bringing Tanya's views on the topic into the same scene, I draw the two groups of participants together and, in so doing, hope to demonstrate the broad spectrum of support for PBL.

In general, as has already been discussed, the comments support the notions of practicing theatre skills, learning by doing, gaining marketable experience, developing life skills such as commitment, dedication, stamina, discipline, tolerance, and self-awareness. They also reference community building, learning about oneself and others, and translating texts into action. All of these point to the value of PBL both for the discipline of theatre and for life-learning. There are, however, a few particular ideas I want to reference here, which reflect some additional understandings of why productions matter, specifically in university drama departments.

The first point to note is the vehemence with which the performer-participants argue for the benefits of formal production work, and their perception that without this experience, the learning is fundamentally diminished. As Devaksha asserts, "If they never experience performing in a live show, then what is the worth of their learning?" Obviously, my own positionality makes me agree with Devaksha's (and the others') avowal; however, what is important to note is that these observations are not made irrationally or just from the perspective of having had a good time in productions. Rather, what is evident from all of the data, both here and in the rest of the play, is the clarity of understanding these performer-participants demonstrate with regard to *why* they feel this strongly. It is important to note here, too, that I did not limit the prompt to productions directed by me, and, while there are some references to my practice, for the most part, the responses in this scene are to the *concept* of productions *per se*, as powerful vehicles for learning, thus evidencing a broader applicability that just what I personally do when directing.

This applicability is echoed in Libby's statement that working on productions "eclipse any other memories of [her] time as a student." The lines of connection she draws between the production work and the other aspects of her degree study, indicate how being involved in

productions has ramifications beyond simply the performance of that particular play at that particular moment. The learning is transferable, which is critical to purposeful education in my view. In addition, Libby's references to learning about relationships, questioning views on the world, and interrogating politics from her production work offers direct evidence, I would suggest, of the kind of change agency that I see as being the goal of my theatre-making.

Like many of the performer-participants, Brett cites the practical importance of learning theatre skills through formal theatre productions, but he also raises two other key notions for me: changing the way we think, and facing our fears. Facing one's fears is a critical learning point for life in the fractured and fractious twenty-first century global village; the way productions help participants manage their fear provides an invaluable skill to use in facing the many other fears of adulthood that come our way. To change the way we think is also critically important; in order to cope with an unknowable future, we have to be able to move our thinking, to allow it to evolve as it meets different challenges and issues requiring new modes of address to problem-solve. Only by teaching our young people to think for themselves can we really educate them for the future they will inherit.

Importantly for me, Josette raises the question of the audience and their role in creating the learning event. Her observations reflect her career as a professional actor, noting the importance of delivering authentic, believable performances. However, the most significant aspect of this response is her assertion that even if a student's intent is not to become an actor, there is a profound value in participating in production work, a value that is about being part of something "bigger than your own daily needs," a value that finally is about the kind of person you want to be and making the contribution you wish to make to the world. For me, this infers the compassion and humanity deriving from the practice of empathy at its best; of course, this will not always be the case, and certainly, not everyone will emerge from a production completely changed. However, the possibilities associated with being part of a production make it worth the effort required to make the theatre-making project the learning space in which this can happen. These ideas are, perhaps, best summarised by Zoë in her description of a university as a "place for thinking about the hard questions in our world and in our art" and in her own belief about the value and power of theatre as a source for learning "what it means to be a human being."

Tanya's assertion that productions are "part of our job as teachers" reflects absolutely my own belief, as does her comment that we are not teaching only theatre, but life, something that is, for me, a key aspect of a teacher's overall responsibility. This adds weight to everything I have already discussed in this chapter: the teaching of theatre skills; the opportunities to learn life skills such as critical thinking, creativity, social interaction, tolerance, and self-reflection; and the exploration of one's potential through involvement in the physical, intellectual and emotional engagement that are central to theatre practice. An important additional point to note, here, is the recognition that performing for an audience involves risk, but that it is also an essential part of the discipline—and of life—and provides the necessary pressure to deepen and enrich the learning experience. Understanding the risk/reward ratio is a crucial competency for anyone involved in theatre-making and anyone espousing PBL. As educators, we have to weigh up the risks carefully to avoid doing harm; at the same time, however, never having a final product at the end of an experience, while it might avoid the anxiety associated with risk, will also never offer up the same kind of fulfilment the actor feels when the lights of the auditorium come up and they take their bow. Not being able to do that would be equivalent to denying an athlete the opportunity to go to the Olympic Games; even if they had no hope of winning the gold medal, I have no doubt that all would still choose to participate if given the opportunity. Thus, even for those students who may not be the most talented actors, or who may not want to become actors at all, the opportunity to participate is everything.

In the final comment, Josette speaks about creativity and storytelling, and the importance of both in students' lives. Her observations here are profoundly important affirmations that speak to my philosophy of theatre-making, teaching, and learning, and reference the core of twenty-first century necessities. I believe her statement is worth repeating. She says,

For a student to embark on a production process is to honour the deep need for creativity in their lives, it is to unlock a part of themselves that will create a new kind of flow and understanding of self. This could, if taken seriously, move them to a place of true fulfilment in life by discovering what it is that makes them work, or tick. They might find themselves in the midst of a creative experience unlocking a part of their being they never knew was there.

The core idea here is the significance of the creative experience in the development of self-concept. Josette suggests that it results in "flow and understanding of self"; this, for me,

connects this to Csikszentmihalyi's (2009) theory on flow which, I believe, provides one possible key to understanding why participation in productions offers such a potentially rich educative opportunity. For Csikszentmihalyi (2009), his understanding of flow results from addressing the question, "When do people feel most happy?" (p. 2), and his answer states:

Happiness is not something that happens. It is not the result of good fortune or random chance. It is not something that money can buy or power command. It does not depend on outside events, but rather, on how we interpret them. Happiness, in fact, is a condition that must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person. People who learn to control inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives, which is as close as any of us can come to being happy. (p. 2)

He goes on to define the flow state as "optimal experience" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 3) and argues that it is critical to making for ourselves "a life worth living" (p. 7). Thus, for me, education that provides such experiences is truly life-education, and theatre offers one such environment in which these processes can occur. Josette's observations here support my position, particularly her recognition of the need to "control inner experience," a fundamental aspect of flow.

8.12 Epilogue – In the End is the Beginning

I conclude the play with my final thoughts on theatre's power and its potential as a change agent. The data here comes from my RSI, done in the presence of both Tanya and my critical friend and supervisor Lorraine Singh, and speaks to my overall sense of the purpose of theatre and how it changes us, both those of us who make it and those of us who witness it.

In the play, I use the device of a student—me—moving through time, engaged in the study of theatre, that allows me to arrive at the end point of the final monologue. Everything I say in this monologue is already part of my narrative journey from my beginnings, to becoming a director, to understanding my own education, to conceptualising what education means for me, to exploring others' experiences of my work as director and teacher, and to the emergence of a director-teacher self, engaged in theatre-making and using PBL to build my theatre of humanity and to share its teachings. Csikszentmihalyi (2009) argues that,

it is when we act freely, for the sake of the action itself rather than for ulterior motives, that we learn to become more than what we were. When we choose a goal

and invest ourselves in it to the limits of our concentration, whatever we do will be enjoyable. And once we have tasted this joy, we will redouble our efforts to taste it again. This is why the self grows. (p. 42)

This, for me, is the reason for making theatre, for directing productions; above all else, it is about finding the joy because with the joy comes the openness to change in terms of who we are, what we know, and how we want to be in this world. Such is the basis of deep and lasting life-learning.

8.13 Bringing It All Together

At the beginning of this Act, I spoke about the educational components of my directing practice as being to teach technical theatre skills; to embed life skills; to facilitate deep learning; to empower the participants; and to develop creative, engaged and confident citizens of the world. These aspects are clearly reflected, I believe, in the ideas emerging from my data play. Now, I want to connect these ideas to my educational bricolage to express their theoretical foundations. To do this, I have distilled from the data a number of different kinds of learning, and, as a starting point, have grouped them together into three broad categories: theatre learning, personal learning, and social learning.⁵¹ Visually, I can incorporate these new elements into my education tree and represent the connection thus:

⁵¹ In my analysis, I explored a number of different categorisation methods to distil all the learning elements into a manageable form. I include copies of some of my original categorisation exercises as evidence of the process in Appendix 10.

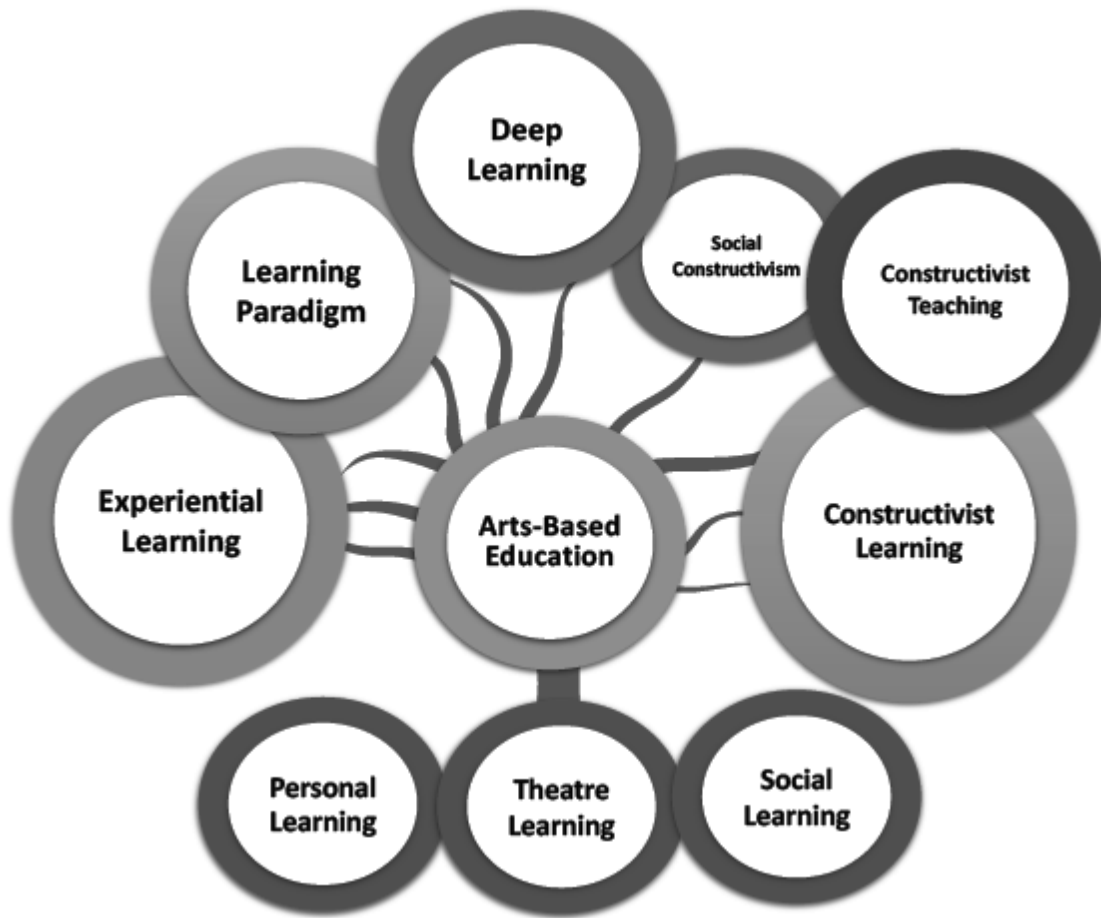


Figure 11. Educational bricolage becoming the formal theatre production tree.

From my perspective, I see these different areas of learning connecting to the various aspects of my bricolage, coalescing into a metaphorical formal theatre production ‘tree.’ The different facets are not separate and distinct, but integrated and organically joined—roots, branches, and leaves—through the vehicle of the production, a space in which such learning might take place.

This educational production tree serves as the basis for the rest of my thesis, in which I will theorise and articulate in more detail my construction of PBL. To facilitate this process, I have constructed a more comprehensive visual summary (see Figure 12 below) of the learning that the data suggests is taking place through participation in formal theatre productions:

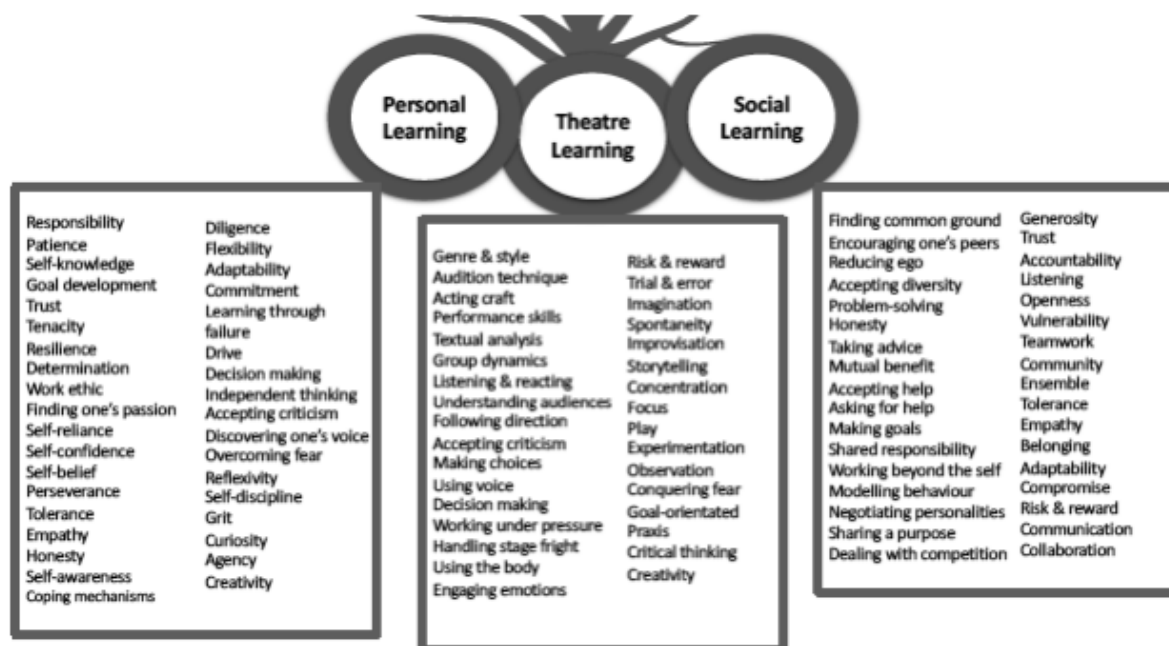


Figure 12. Visualising the emerging data about learning through formal theatre productions.

In Act V of my thesis, I will use these different kinds of learning to theorise my understanding of what, how, and why, such learning is happening through formal theatre productions, to establish the key tenets of PBL. Thereafter, I will explore constructing a framework for PBL and locating it within the dramatic education landscape, to give productions, as it were, a seat at the table of dramatic education in higher learning.

ACT FIVE: A RESEARCH STORY

“The theatre speaks to us about our lives, it embraces both the joy and the tragedy that conspire to make a human story. It allows us to walk in the shoes of our brothers. Those brothers we love, those we hate. Those we fear. Those we must never actually encounter. And in walking in those shoes, we become awake to the ineffable uniqueness of every being on this planet. And at the same moment awake to the many-colored coat of our sameness.”

(Coleman, 2002, p. 12)

“There is always more, as we choose the demarcations of our landscapes, as we describe and redescribe, as we move—embodied minds—through the world.” (Greene, 1996, p. 133)

SCENE 9: CONVERGING ROUTES – DIRECTING, TEACHING, LEARNING AND PRODUCTIONS

In Act IV of my doctoral play, I explored the participant stories emerging from my data, focusing on the relationship between participation in formal theatre productions and learning. In the final act of this thesis play, I want to draw the threads of my study together in order, finally, to develop a model for Production-Based Learning (PBL) as an integrated aspect of dramatic education. To do this, I continue to work with the participant data to understand the nature of the learning potential contained in formal theatre productions in institutions of higher education, and to theorise that learning. Many universities, of course, do engage with formal theatre productions in a variety of scenarios and with different intended outcomes; my attention here, however, is necessarily focused on my own context where, as I have noted, productions have become marginalised as optional extras for the few, whereas I believe they should be available to all drama students regardless of their intended career choices. In this Act, I seek to provide the intellectual framework for that belief and to establish formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning.

As is clear from the literature discussed in scene 5, there is little dispute about the capacity of drama to offer educative experience; I am interested, though, specifically in the kind of dramatic experience that occurs when students participate in formal theatre productions, guided by a director, and performed for public audiences. In these productions, as was evidenced in my research data, students may learn from each other (the ensemble), from the director-teacher (me), and from a broader community (the audience). This unique confluence of educative experiences creates a space in which multiple learnings are possible across a number of areas.

In order to interrogate this space and to offer an analysis of the pedagogic potential of formal theatre productions rooted in both my views on education in general, and dramatic education in particular, as well as the data articulated in my data-play, I frame my discussion around three questions:

1. What are the students learning from their participation in formal theatre productions?
2. How does participation in formal theatre productions engage learning?
3. Why does participation in formal theatre productions lead to learning?

All of these are connected my third research question: What kinds of learning might emerge from the experience of being directed in formal theatre productions? Addressing these issues will allow me to answer my central research questions about the educational value of participation in formal theatre productions. Question 1 leads to a deeper discussion of the findings from my data and forms Part A of this scene; questions 2 and 3 allow for a broader reflection on, and theorising about, the findings in Parts B and C.

PART A: WHAT ARE THEY LEARNING?

My data-play clearly showed that those who participated in formal theatre productions I directed were engaged in positive learning experiences and emerged from those experiences with new and/or refined knowledge. Their stories reflected a wide variety of learning experiences, both individual and group-based, and those stories provide the raw material for understanding what learning is taking place. In scene 8, I divided the various kinds of learning into three categories – personal, social, and disciplinary learning. I then positioned the different kinds of learning evidenced in the data within these three categories (see Figure 12). From my analysis of the learning situated within those three initial categories, I have (re)articulated the data into eight ‘streams’ of learning that allow me to interrogate what exactly is learned through participation in formal theatre productions. These streams are:

- Disciplinary learning
- Personal learning
- Interactional learning
- Emotional learning
- Expressive learning
- Responsive learning
- Cultural learning
- Organisational learning

In the graphic below, I have distributed the original data-derived elements of learning into these eight learning streams (see Figure 13 below). I should note here that these streams are not necessarily discrete, and there are numerous overlaps since certain kinds of knowledge operate across numerous categories. However, for discussion purposes, this categorisation is useful:



Figure 13. Learning streams from formal theatre productions.

All but the first of these streams are not specific to theatre, and therefore constitute what I see as the life-learning potential of formal theatre productions, which is, for me, the primary purpose of higher education, and I will expand on these ideas later in this scene.

9.1 First, the Theatre itself. . .

At the most obvious level, the first area of learning through formal theatre productions concerns the disciplinary skills of theatre. Almost without exception, the participants observed that their understanding and application of the ideas being studied academically was deepened and enriched by participating in production work. The productions provided opportunities to test their emergent skills in action, to experiment in a safe environment with pushing their performative boundaries, and to experience theatre-making as a concrete reality rather than an abstract conception; as Derosha, for example, noted, “Being in productions actually allowed me to apply whatever acting theories I learnt about in a class, in a theatre, where an actual audience was present.” This, for me, seems an essential element of teaching theatre in higher education. Indeed, I would agree with Kindelan’s (2012) argument that productions are an integral part of theatre curriculum, and that mounting theatre productions is standard (normative) practice; as she asserts, “Theater

studies programs are not complete without a final presentation – the performance of a play” (Kindelan, 2012, p. 103). As I noted above, this is not the case at UKZN; data from participants, however, suggests that Kindelan (2012) is accurate in her conceptualisation of learning from productions. Devaksha echoes the sentiment in her word-portrait, noting her concern with students graduating with a drama degree “without ever having partaken in a theatre production for an outside and paying audience. If students never experience performing. . . in a live show, that what is the worth of their learning?” Notwithstanding the undisputed value of process drama and its various incarnations, there must surely nonetheless also be space within the educational sphere for the aesthetic form of theatre to thrive. Like Schonmann (2011), I am convinced that theatre needs to reclaim its place and cease being the “servant” to the “master.” Of course, I am not suggesting that we make theatre productions to the exclusion of other forms of dramatic education; that would be equally short-sighted and counter-productive to the health and power of the discipline. As I have already observed in this thesis, there is no necessity for a binary position where it is one or the other; there is room for all the various modes and models to coexist and, indeed, improve each other through their interaction.

The chief theatre skill learnt through my productions is, of course, acting, since it is the guidance of student actors towards authentic, effective performances that drives my directing practice. Teaching acting theoretically, in the absence of practical engagement, is both limiting and counter-intuitive. As Tanya noted, it might be likened to teaching doctors but never letting them see actual patients (see scene 11 of data-play, Appendix 8). Learning to act requires one to engage in ‘doing’ acting. The vocal, physical, intellectual, emotional, and imaginative skills actors must develop to fulfil their performance function, are best practiced through using these skills in action, as was repeatedly noted by most of the performer-participants. Brett, for example, asserts that he learned “how to act, direct, produce, embody different characters, [and] play multiple roles,” while Sacha notes the “trying out of performance options, experimenting, receiving performance notes and ‘feeling’ where performance rhythms failed” as particularly significant. Thus, it appears that at the level of the discipline, the value and benefit of formal theatre productions is indisputable.

Theatre skills and improved performance skills, effectively taught though they are by formal theatre productions, are, however, only the tip of the educational iceberg. The more significant learning from formal theatre productions is to be found in the life-learning that

these projects engender. When the experiences derived from the formal theatre productions are internalised, the learning potential progresses to another level, where the different kinds of learning experience are synthesised to produce skills, values and attributes relating not only to theatre/drama, but to life, the world, and the self. This is the deep learning that I seek to illustrate and explore next.

9.2 And Now for the Rest. . .

I would argue based on my own personal history and the data I have collected in this self-study that there is an enormous life-learning value to be gained from participation in formal theatre productions. I use the term ‘life-learning’ to reference the vast body of knowledge and skills that are critical for equipping our students to live full and fulfilled lives, but which are often neither taught nor even discussed except in the most tangential of ways. There are many different versions of what constitutes these skills, but they are often referred to as ‘soft skills’ to delineate them from the core academic curriculum which generally contains the ‘hard skills.’ One useful way of thinking about such skills is offered here:

Unlike academic or disciplinary knowledge, which is subject-based, content-specific and formally assessed, soft skills comprise a range of competencies that are independent of, albeit often developed by, formal curricular and rarely assessed explicitly. (Chamorro-Premuzic, Arteche, Bremner, Greven & Furnham, 2010, p. 221)

Despite the fact that there is wide-spread acceptance of the importance of such skills, Walker and Finney (1999) suggest that in higher education, “Skill development is often thought of in a somewhat perfunctory way” (p. 532). My own experience certainly bore that out, the assumption being that those skills would simply be acquired naturally as if by osmosis. Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2010) add that “academics refuse to acknowledge their importance, seeing them as a distraction from other academic priorities, in particular research” (p. 222). This view of life skills learning is disconnected from what the twenty-first century world requires of educators, which is to equip graduates with the skills they will need to function in what David Perkins (2014) describes as “our dizzyingly complex contemporary society” (p. 5). He observes that, “The familiar disciplines in their traditional versions, sitting in their silos, constrained by regional perspectives, and taught to all comers for purely academic understanding aren’t enough. The universe of what’s seen as worth

learning is expanding” (Perkins, 2014, p. 3). This is the kind of education to which I believe PBL might contribute.

The learning I am interested in may be equated to what Daniel Goleman (1998) has termed “emotional intelligence” (p. 11), which, as a result of the popularity of his work, is now broadly recognised as essential to business success; I would argue it is necessary for success in any field, including most importantly, making the most of one’s life and one’s experiences. Emotional intelligence, according to Goleman (1998), allows one to develop the “emotional competence” (p. 51) that permits one to achieve one’s maximum potential. It is, therefore, critical to the life-learning objective that is the heart of my educational philosophy. Walker and Finney (1999) suggest that this learning is

much more than a continuing accumulation of further knowledge, but more. . . a way of being, an interest in ongoingly [*sic*] transforming the very basis of one’s knowledge and understanding, of utilizing critical faculties to continue developing in outlook and capability. The holistic development of both skills and knowledge appears to offer an entry point to autonomous lifelong learning, and critical thinking. (p. 546)

Only through this kind of life-learning is it possible to connect our learning to our values and our sense of the world beyond the self. The opening up of the world—of the individual mind—and connecting it to efficacious behaviour, is for me the most important aspect of my role as an educator and it is the one best accomplished, to my mind, through my work with students in formal theatre productions. Perkins (2014) refers to this kind of learning as “Lifeworthy Learning” (p. 7), and in Figure 14 (below), I have extracted the life-learning areas from my original graphic, along with core components from each stream, to represent these aspects. This model comprising the particular streams of learning constitutes one possible example of a specific application of the educational bricolage I constructed in scene 6, as I will show later in my thesis.

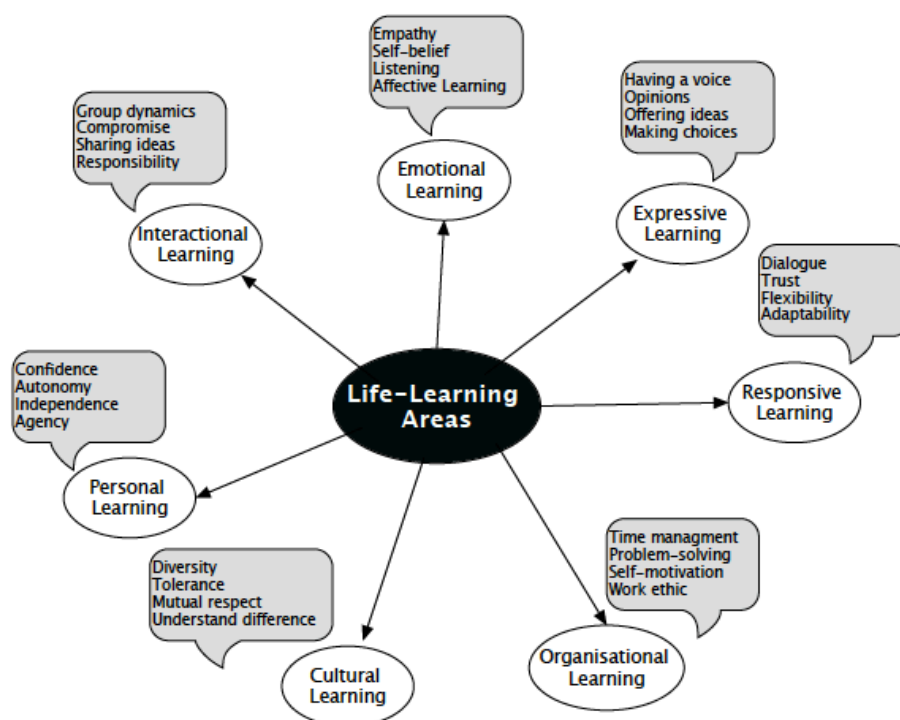


Figure 14. Life-learning areas of PBL.

I do not intend here to interrogate every category in detail, as much of that analysis has already been conducted in Act IV, scene 8. However, it is useful to look at these categories to facilitate an awareness of the breadth of learning possible through formal theatre productions.

While there is significant overlap, broadly speaking we can divide these areas into learning that emerges in relation to the self, and learning that emerges through the interaction of the self with others individually and socially, what we might call intrapersonal and interpersonal learning. Intrapersonal learning includes personal learning, emotional learning, expressive learning, and organisational learning, since these are skills, attitudes and qualities relating primarily to individuals' sense of themselves. Interpersonal learning, on the other hand, includes interactional learning, responsive learning, and cultural learning, which are socially-driven skills, attitudes and qualities. Goleman (1998) refers to the two areas as personal and social competencies (p. 54-57). To reflect further on what is being learnt through formal theatre productions, I will reference these two broad areas of life-learning, rather than examining each category as a separate entity.

For Goleman (1998) personal “competencies determine how we manage ourselves” (p. 54), and encompass the following:

- Self-awareness, including emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence;
- Self-regulation, including self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovation;
- Motivation, including the achievement drive, commitment, initiative, optimism. (p. 54-56)

Social competence constitutes “how we handle relationships” (Goleman, 1998, p. 56), and include:

- Empathy, including understanding others, developing others, service orientation, leveraging diversity, political awareness;
- Social skills, including influence, communication, conflict management, leadership, change catalyst, building bonds, collaboration and cooperation, team capabilities. (p. 56-57)

These are useful umbrella terms within which to consider the kinds of learning I am referencing. More particularly, learning about oneself primarily involves developing a clear “self-concept” (Yeager, 2006) in order to develop agency and self-belief. Related to this is the critical concept of “self-efficacy” (Goleman, 1998, p. 135), which Goleman (1998) describes as “the positive judgment of one’s own capacity to perform. . . [which] is not the same as the actual skills we have, but rather our belief about what we can do with the skills we have” (p. 135-126). It is the learning of self-efficacy that perhaps more than any other factor imbues formal theatre productions with their educative power, and evidences their constructivist capacity to foster deep learning.

Interpersonal learning involves, as Vygotsky (1978) argues, socio-cultural interaction, through which we learn from and with each other in a social constructivist process, and where the capacity to engage with others positively is facilitated. Goleman (1998) calls these “people skills” (p. 251), chief among which is empathy which Goleman (1998) calls “our social radar” (p. 256) and which, he argues, “represents the foundation skill for all the social competencies” (p. 261). There is, arguably, no better way to learn about empathy—and practice it—than through performance. Being part of a formal theatre production requires the engagement of empathy on multiple levels: First, the performer must find points of empathy

with the character in order to breathe life into the fictional construct; then, there is the empathy required to participate fully in the ensemble, in a shared experience of creative synergy; and empathy is again part of the performer's relationship with the audience, since in the majority of cases, they are seeking to elicit the empathy of those watching for those whose story is being told. Finally, there is the empathetic relationship that emerges between the director and the actors, between the teacher and the students, in order for a constructivist learning experience, and simultaneously a quality production, to be fully realised.

Taken together, these learnings, the personal and social competencies, constitute the kind of attitudinal shift and transformative learning necessary for life in Sardar's (2010) "postnormal world" (p. 435), one characterised by "complexity, chaos and contradictions" (p. 436). This kind of learning is, for me, key to what we should be seeking to engender at universities, since the goal of higher education, as Walker and Finney (1999) argue, is "the development of a more thoughtful, enquiring and open-minded approach in both professional and personal life" (p. 531).

The question, of course, is why these particular forms of learning are so significant, and the answer rests in an understanding of what have come to be known as twenty-first century skills or learning. There is growing consensus that the conventional modes of teaching and learning—even those belonging to the progressive and constructivist schools—are insufficient for the purpose of preparing graduates for life in the twenty-first century. For one thing, as Robinson (2006) points out, things in the world of work are changing at such a rapid pace that we cannot actually know what kinds of jobs we are preparing our students for, since we do not know what will be required of people as more and more of our society is digitised and mechanised. Traditional career choices are no longer certainties which makes teaching for career preparation fraught with uncertainty. Even in slow-moving professions—of which, arguably, teaching is one—the changes are coming; the way we teach and the way students learn are inexorably shifting requiring us constantly to reimagine what we do and how we do it. As Robinson (2011) observes, this means that the only certainty is "that in the next 50 to 100 years, our children will need to confront challenges that are unique in human history" (p. 6), and as a result, as Perkins (2014) asserts, we are "educating for the unknown" (p. 23).

The kind of deep learning I have been discussing offers a way to address this concern. This is not, of course, a new idea amongst arts-based educators; Bersin (2017), for example, points out the need for soft skills in the twenty-first century workplace and argues for the importance of the arts in accomplishing this. He states:

The jobs of the future, driven by the increasing use of technology taking over rote tasks, require social skills complementing more technical abilities. . . . all in-demand jobs. . . draw upon empathy, social skills, communication, and synthetic thinking. . . . but machines are not yet much good at listening, empathizing, communicating, and convincing. (Bersin, 2017, p. 69-72)

The value of formal theatre productions is that they encompass—and encourage—these very ideas in action and, in so doing, create an inner map that might prove exactly the tool needed to meet these twenty-first century demands. Perkins (2014) advises that in order “To envision what might be lifeworthy about what we teach surely is. . . [an] act of the educational imagination” (p.18), and for me, imagination leads me to theatre.

However, imagining the possibilities is only the first step; these possibilities need to be implemented in concrete ways. Perkins (2014) describes it thus:

the difference between knowing something worthwhile in principle and putting it to work in practice is so important that it deserves its own word. Alongside what’s lifeworthy, let’s also speak of what’s lifeready. Lifeworthy learning is lifeready when it’s ready to come together in particular contexts to solve problems, make decisions, formulate plans, embrace and enjoy an experience, or simply make sense of a puzzling world. (p. 98)

Creating “lifeready” students seems to me a core function of education. Innumerable publications, both scholarly and popular, have emerged that seek to address the question as to what ‘lifereadiness’ might look like, and these are most often referenced as twenty-first century skills (see Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2011, among others). The centrality of the arts in this pursuit is also regularly argued. Kindelan (2012), for example, claims that artistic literacy is key for twenty-first century life, since it creates people who demonstrate leadership skills; critical thinking and analytical skills; personal and social awareness; practical problem-solving skills; teamwork civic responsibility; creative thinking; knowledge integration; interpretive skills; intentionality and responsibility; and ethical thinking. She adds that the arts (and specifically drama) also teach humanistic values in action including self-confidence, open-mindedness, integrity, passion, and curiosity

(Kindelan, 2012). All of these are accomplished, she argues, through “transformative educational experiences” (Kindelan, 2012, p. xi), which, I believe, formal theatre productions constitute.

One of the most useful and comprehensive discussions of twenty-first century learning is offered by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)⁵² who have produced the framework of twenty-first century learning skills (2015a) that has been adopted by many educational organisations, and is widely referenced in the literature. The framework distinguishes four learning areas: key subjects and twenty-first century themes; information, media and technology skills; life and career skills; and learning and innovation skills (P21, 2015a). Of these, the latter two areas are significant for my research. Under life and career skills, the framework lists flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility. Virtually all of these appear among the skills identified by my performer-participants as developing through formal theatre production participation. Jason, for example, wrote that “Knowing your own short-comings and strengths, which theatre-making can teach you, also enables you to know when to back down, when to stand up, how to ensure you don’t lose your cool and how to project the best of yourself,” while Lucy noted that “Embracing [the] level of freedom to play within the rehearsal process encouraged me to develop flexibility and adaptability and these tools have been invaluable in my professional life.” These life skills—what I am calling life-learning—are key by-products of the theatre production experience; while the primary focus is on the improvement and honing of theatre skills, the process of making productions creates opportunities and spaces for the discovery and evocation of far more broad-ranging and powerful learning that can address the “need to develop thinking skills, content knowledge, and social and emotional competencies to navigate complex life and work environments” (P21, 2015a). I would argue, therefore, that productions constitute the kind of educational project for which Perkins (2014) advocates, where the focus is on “a tool-like application of ideas, inspired by the rich problem or project” (p. 117), or thinking with the topic rather than just about it (Perkins, 2014, p. 121).

⁵² The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) was established in 2002, and, as Paige Johnson (2009) notes, “has been the leading advocacy organization in the United States focused on infusing 21st century skills into education” (p. 11). Their Framework for 21st Century Learning “champions a fusion of the 3Rs (or core subjects, including the arts) and the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity)” (Gilbert, 2016, p. 15), while also focusing on “student preparedness for life and the workforce” (p. 15).

The overarching benefit of this kind of thinking is evident in Lauren's observation that "You learn more by doing and by listening. Every production experience was a teacher of different skills and brought with it a different set of expectations," which articulates clearly the educative power of experiential learning generally, and the production experience in particular.

Apart from the life and career skills identified above, perhaps the most significant aspect of twenty-first century learning, as evidenced in multiple sources including P21, is the emphasis on what have come to be known as the 4Cs: critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity. These four learning and innovation skills "are what separate students who are prepared for a more and more complex life and work environments [*sic*] in the 21st century, and those who are not" (P21, 2015b, p. 3). I want to look briefly at each of these aspects to highlight their relationship to PBL.

i. The 4 Cs: Critical thinking

Of the four, critical thinking is the skill most commonly associated with traditional higher education models; most academic disciplines would cite critical thinking, which is "purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed" (Halpern, 2013, p. 8), as a key objective. Making a formal theatre production requires the deployment of critical thinking on multiple levels, particularly with regard to the actors' work with the text, their performance choices, and their ability to accept constructive critique; similarly, as a director, I am constantly engaged in a dialogic critical relationship with the work and the participants in order to realise the production as successfully as possible. Decisions, options, conceptualisations, visual signifiers, rehearsal strategies, all of these require a critical disposition to manage effectively. Libby noted in her word-portrait that, productions "taught us about relationships, questioned our views on the world, caused us to interrogate politics, and that is what I remember about university"; this for me evidences the development of critical skills through the creative production process. Even more importantly, perhaps, one of the keys to critical thinking is the process of reflection, and this is a fundamental aspect of all theatre work: Only through the iterative cycle of action and reflection can a theatre production emerge from the working process. Moreover, the self-reflexivity necessary for both director and performer in order to continue to grow in one's art embeds the reflexive process in theatre behaviours, which can

then translate to other spheres. In Josette's observation that "Plays teach people about the human condition, they teach us to look inside and begin a kind of internal reflection. . . [they] inspire students to ask questions about themselves, their lives and their relationships," this engagement with reflexivity is apparent. For P21, the key components of critical thinking are reflective, analytical, and evaluative skills (Dilley, Kaufman, Kennedy & Plucker, 2015, p. 7), all of which are engendered through the production-making process.

ii. The 4 Cs: Communication

Of all the life-learning skills I am discussing here, communication is perhaps the one most obviously associated with theatre. Most people would agree that communication skills are important in society and in the work place, and at universities, reading and writing have always been key components of the curriculum. However, communication in the twenty-first century has become even more critical, especially given the various communication technologies that have evolved (National Education Association, n.d.). Communication is also closely allied with another twenty-first century skill, collaboration; indeed, without communication, collaboration is impossible. Theatre, at its core, is both an act of public communication (between performers and audience), and a series of acts of interpersonal communication (between the performers acting together); indeed, I would argue that theatre exists only because of the desire to communicate something to someone else, whether it be a story, an idea, or a perspective on the world.

Given that this is the case, it seems natural that communication skills would be honed by the practice of theatre-making. In order to communicate effectively, one has to think clearly, listen attentively, and have control of one's voice – both literally (as in, the capacity to speak clearly and articulately) but perhaps more importantly, control in the sense of being willing and able to make oneself heard, or as many of the performer-participants articulated the idea: to find one's voice and learn to use it. Finding a voice is also key to agency and self-concept since that voice gives one the capacity to make one's own decisions and choices in life, rather than simply accepting what is given. As Noxolo noted, "The stage was one of the primary platforms in which I discovered my voice." At some level, that is surely the purpose of education: to give students the power to think for themselves, to make their own discoveries, and not to be afraid to express them. Certainly, for me, I feel most excited as a

teacher when students are able to make connections beyond those I have taught as they begin to craft their own understandings of the world.

iii. The 4 Cs: Collaboration

Collaboration, for P21 (2015), involves:

- demonstrating the ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams;
- exercising flexibility and the willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal;
- assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work; and
- valuing the individual contributions made by each team member. (Plucker, Kennedy & Dilley, 2015, p. 2)

All of these are reflected in the production-making process. Everyone involved must work together across a variety of areas and functions: actors with the director, the director with the playwright, the designer with the construction crew, and so on. Without this collaborative effort the production cannot happen. To achieve this level of collaboration requires flexibility and willingness to compromise – everyone’s ideas must be valued.

Collaboration may be defined as “the activity of working together towards a common goal” (Hesse, Care, Buder, Sassenberg, & Griffin, 2015, p. 38). Hesse et al. (2015) go on to observe three elements in collaboration: communication, cooperation, and responsiveness (p. 38), all of which are clearly evident in the theatre-making process. I have already discussed above how theatre relies on communication mechanisms both for development and meaning-making; similarly, cooperation between the various participants is also essential since everyone must work together to realise the play in action. Finally, responsiveness is key to the process since actors must respond to each other, directors must respond to actors and other crew members, and the fundamental purpose of the production is to elicit a response from an audience. Thus, the entire iterative process is dependent on continuous cycles of action and response which, of course, also necessitates adaptability and flexibility as circumstances and stimuli change. For me, the learning of such responsive behavioural skills is critical to a pedagogy sourced in formal theatre productions; in working together, we are learning with and from each other, and in so doing, building up our collaborative ‘muscles’ and our understanding of theatre’s efficacy as a working method.

Significantly, collaboration is premised on everyone contributing their own particular skills and expertise to the project – as Zanele highlighted in her comment that “each member of the cast had a part to play no matter how big or small the role was.” Indeed, it is vital to a successful collaboration to have a company that offers different things to the project, not just reiterating those common to the group. I often cast actors in roles that are quite different from their real personalities, and also ensure that there are many different kinds of people in the company of a play. This builds contrast and variety into the production, and helps to generate a productive energy from the dynamic created as they work together. It is, perhaps, ironic that differences between participants can actually create more synergistic possibilities and greater problem-solving capacities, thus demonstrating in action the value of diversity. This makes collaborative work a vital aspect of a theatre—and a pedagogy—of humanity; as Stephani Woodson (2004) suggests, “theatre arts. . . have the potential to be a way of simultaneously understanding and acting on the world.”

Making meaning from the work of art is simultaneously deeply personal and profoundly social, creating in theatre an intersubjective engagement with the art of collaboration that few other disciplines can match. As such, it provides a perfect training ground in collaborative action.

iv. The 4Cs: Creativity

From my perspective as a theatre-maker, creativity is the most important of the skills identified by P21. Building on the work of Dewey, Eisner, and Greene, I believe in the value of the arts in constructing holistic education practice. There are many theoretical debates around the notion of creativity, and whether or not it can actually ever be ‘taught’. It is increasingly evident, however, that creativity is no longer the purview only of professional artists; with the postmodern democratisation of arts processes, creativity has become central to the education of everyone, whether artist or not. Ironically, however, for such an important aspect of twenty-first century thinking, creativity, as James Kaufman (2009) observes, “is rarely defined” (p. 19), despite the many scholars writing about it, because creativity is evident in so many widely differing endeavours making it hard to consider in singular terms. The most encompassing definition states: “Creativity is the interaction among

aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context” (Plucker, Beghetto & Dow, 2004, p. 90).

The complexity and uncertainty of the twenty-first century workplace renders creativity the essential commodity in continually reinventing oneself as the world changes. Given this reality, it is important to recognise that creativity is not the preserve of the artistic genius as has sometimes been imagined (Moran, 2010, p. 82); indeed, as Moran (2010) points out, creativity is “a possibility in any domain that allows novelty and has mechanisms for evaluating that novelty relative to the domain’s current state and, ideally, the wider society in which the domain operates” (p. 75). She goes on to suggest that creativity is characterised by a sense of “moving beyond what exists now” (Moran, 2010, p. 76), and that “with creativity, the future becomes an opportunity, not a threat” (p. 77). For me, the crucial purpose of creativity in the twenty-first century ethos is to seek out and discover ways of building a future that goes beyond the present state of postnormality (Sardar, 2010).

At the core of the creative project is the imagination, which Robinson (2011) describes as “the process of bringing to mind things that are not present to our senses” (p. 2). It is imagination that gives all forms of drama their efficacy, as is evident from my discussion of dramatic education in scene 5. Theatre operates through the creation of an imaginary world, in which actors are engaged constantly in imaginative action – building characters and working on sustaining belief in the fiction created on the stage. In theatre, we understand action as improvisatory and it is, of necessity, inventive and responsive. Practicing spontaneity, paradoxical though that may sound, fosters the creative impulse and provides an embodied and ongoing experience of creativity as the actor continues to grow through rehearsals and performances. Theatre-making, as I see it, is generative in Arnetha Ball’s (2012) sense of the word, where “we strive to create or nurture things that will outlast us; we strive to contribute to positive changes that benefit others” (p. 287). Thus, in formal theatre productions, the creativity muscle is being exercised and the imagination coaxed out of its real-world-induced hiding place.

When we do not know the future or how we will function within it, the only sure path through the minefield is to trust our improvisatory response, to respond spontaneously to whatever the world or other people might throw at us, and in so doing, find creative solutions

to whatever problems or concerns might affect us. The creative impulse, therefore, has to be nurtured; being involved in theatre does that, because the formal production experience provides a safe space in which to discover the satisfaction and joy of creativity, and such experience provides a template for creativity in future contexts.

9.3 Putting them All Together

In the light of the above discussion, it is clear that the most significant learning outcome of formal theatre productions, apart from disciplinary learning, relates to the categories of collaboration and creativity. This is perhaps not surprising given that theatre-making is a collaborative form rooted in creative, shared imagination. That so much of the learning identified by my performer-participants engages with these two crucial aspects of twenty-first century learning, supports my contention that significant learning is taking place through the process of participating in formal theatre productions, even though that life-learning is not its overt objective. There seems to me to be little doubt as to the efficacy of formal theatre productions in promoting the skills necessary for twenty-first century learning and life. Perhaps most importantly, these skills are being acquired through active engagement in real-life experience. Perkins (2014) argues that

educating for the unknown favors a vision of learning aggressive in its effort to foster curiosity, enlightenment, empowerment, and responsibility in a complex and dynamic world. It favors a broad and visionary reach for meaningful learning. (p. 24)

It is the potential to facilitate this “meaningful learning” that drives my directing-teaching practice. Hannah described productions as “an integral part of my university experience” and noted that she “studied many other subjects, but the drama department became my ‘home’,” Zanele called them “life changing,” while Zoë observed simply that they “made me a better person”; these comments testify to the meaningfulness of the work and the legacy of its impact on the students long after they have left the university’s halls. Productions are, therefore, for me, examples of “lifeworthy learning” (Perkins, 2014) for “lifereadiness” (Perkins, 2014). Simply put, “To be lifeworthy, it has to matter to the lives learners are likely to live” (Perkins, 2014, p. 110), and this appears to be the case for those whom I directed in productions across the span of twenty-five years.

PART B: HOW IS THE LEARNING HAPPENING?

Having established that learning is taking place through the formal theatre production process, the next step in theorising PBL is to address how this learning happens. From a practical perspective, it is relatively easy to identify how learning is enabled; as I have already discussed, it is largely the result of experiential, constructivist processes reflected in the kinds of teambuilding, improvisation and technical exercises that make up a standard rehearsal experience. It is also because of the shared goals, the constantly evolving ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978), and other aspects of the educational bricolage I developed in scene 6, which create a space for students to learn from each other. It happens, too, through responding to a text and the challenges issued by the director, as well as simply working with the discipline required from those involved in a formal theatre production. Together, all of these build the skills, abilities and attributes I have discussed above. However, in order to probe deeper, it is useful to consider how the various practical aspects function to awaken different parts of a student's personality and to build capacity across a range of possibilities. I make no claims to expertise in psychology but my research has revealed a number of significant observations, relating to the cognitive, affective and motor domains. These address the underlying structures that I believe are facilitating the learning process, and are thus at the root of my theorisation of PBL.

9.4 Play and the Notion of Fun

The first significant contributor to the learning experience is that being in a production is fun. It seems to me that by making the learning fun, we might be (re)discovering some of the most important components of teaching and learning. In many ways, these components generate feelings similar to the delight children feel in making discoveries about themselves and their world, which is, of course, fundamentally about play. Play is generally accepted as a “key developmental activity for preschool age children” (Lobman & O'Neill, 2011, p. ix), because in play “children can take risks and learn new things, because they can try out activities that they do not need to already know how to do” (Lobman & O'Neill, 2011, p. ix). Granted, higher education may not be quite so simple (or innocent), but certainly developing a ‘play-full’ attitude to the process might serve to remove some of the barriers and eliminate some of the stress generally associated with higher

education. In theory, we ‘grow out of’ the desire and need to play but more recently, as Lobman and O’Neill (2011) have argued, more attention is being paid “to the importance of pretend play throughout the lifespan” (p. ix). Play is, of course, the root of drama, and it is the performative aspect of play that makes it so useful a method for learning since “Everyone can make use of the human ability to be both who they are and who they are not” (Lobman & O’Neill, 2011, p. xi). Most significantly for my thesis, such ability “enables people of all ages to do new things and go beyond themselves” (p. xi). The notion of going beyond oneself is critical to deep learning, and thus, the fun to be experienced through being free to play as adults is an important key to the learning potential of formal theatre productions; as Sally Bailey (2011) observes, “dramatic play provides a safe haven in which players [in this case, students] can rehearse skills and behaviors that transfer directly to performance on all of life’s stages” (p. 137).

For me, the idea of play and the notion of fun are especially important because they serve to mask the learning intention within a much more sought-after goal. Gwen Gordon (2009) states:

Play detaches messages, experiences, or objects from their context of origin, creating a new frame that allows for greater freedom, interactivity, and creative possibilities. When we throw off the constraints of a given context, we are free to move, to engage with new contexts as well as to engage the context of our recent experiences as an object of play. (p. 4)

In “throwing of the constraints” often associated with academic pursuits and the process of teaching and learning specifically, we make room for new possibilities and a different kind of learning. While engaging in play to make the theatre production, we are focused on that goal, which drives our choices; however, in exploring the choices, making discoveries, and determining meanings, we are simultaneously—if unconsciously for the most part—developing pathways along which new knowledge can travel and planting seeds for another kind of learning. The beauty of this process is that it happens almost implicitly without needing to be highlighted; Bolton (1985) insightfully observes that the learning “does not occur because they intended to learn something from the beginning. The intention to learn is subsidiary to their main intention, their minds and feelings being necessarily engaged at a level Polanyi (1966) terms ‘subsidiary awareness’” (p. 156). This is what gives PBL its power.

9.5 Activating the Imagination

Allied to the notion of play is the exercise of the imagination that takes place while working on a production. Imagination is critical for both dramatic education and, I believe, in life, since, as Vera John-Steiner (2015) notes, imagination “is central to human adaptation” (p. xv). In making a production, the imagination must be activated in a variety of different ways in relation to understanding and speaking text, working with fellow actors, responding to directorial critique, resolving problems, finding ways through challenging material, and interacting with audience, among others. To stimulate the imagination is a critical component of actor training and of the director’s work; I would argue it is similarly crucial in teachers’ work. Speaking about play, Bailey (2011) suggests that one of its outcomes is “the creation of imagination – a symbolic state in which children can explore reality through a system of signs to learn about thinking, problem-solving and functioning with others under the rules of society” (p. 138). While she is referencing children’s learning specifically, I believe that a similar experience happens for university students in the production process; it is perhaps just a little harder for them to arrive at a place where they can release their imaginations as freely as young children do. This is the reason for exercises to build trust, establish a safe space and create a community, since only in those circumstances is it possible to step outside of the world of ‘adult’ behaviour and into the world of imagination, the world of ‘what if’? That pretending is the core practice of theatre-making and, as Bailey (2011) goes on to point out, “imagination and pretend, while different processes, are intimately connected to and build on each other reciprocally” (p. 139). This has certainly been my personal experience in productions; once activated, the imaginative capacity to pretend—and to believe the pretence—has a momentum all of its own.

I think, too, that this is connected to the notion of stories; as both children and adults we tell stories, albeit of different kinds, to make sense of our world and to connect with something larger than ourselves. Story, for me, is the gateway to the imagination and thus, it has a place of prime importance in my directing practice. As Josette pointed out: “she [Tamar] always says, ‘tell the story’”. When we share stories, we begin to see the world differently, from different perspectives, as our imagination draws us in, and on, to a more fulfilled sense of being. As Bailey (2011) describes it, “we learn how to share, compromise, listen to, and respect each other. We can open up and honestly be ourselves, because we feel we will be accepted. As a result, we get to know ourselves better, we get to know our

playmates deeply, and our playmates get to know us” (p. 140). I would add that when such imaginative play happens in a formal theatre production, that knowing goes beyond just the participants and into the audience watching the unfolding of the stories, allowing them to connect, too, with everything that is being played out. The audience is, in effect, being brought into the circle of the imagined world, and that is the uniqueness of theatre – its liveness affords us that opportunity.

9.6 Acting, Identification and Empathy

Acting is the core methodology for learning through formal theatre productions, because, as I have noted before, acting engages identification and empathy in its execution. Not for nothing, does Henry (2010) call the actor the “illuminator of the human heart” (p. 47). At its most basic, the actor’s job is to play a role; doing this alerts them to the feeling states of those people the role exemplifies, thereby constructing an experience of empathy. As Wright (2011) notes, by “metaphorically. . .[putting] themselves ‘in others’ shoes” (p. 127), performers may become “personally involved with the imaginary context and . . . able to identify with the characters that they have developed” (p. 127).

For me, the most important attribute to try to nurture through education is empathy, because it is empathy which facilitates the practice of humanity (as I understand it). In discussing the art of the actor, philosopher Martin Buber (1969) argues that an actor “does not put on masks but penetrates—surrendering his soul and winning it back again” (p. 13). Through this “surrendering,” the actor is able to engage in a subjective experience of ‘otherness,’ thereby increasing their facility for understanding such ‘otherness’ in the real world. Henry (2010) points to this as “a study of experience in the immediacy of its living ground, explicitly employing both an imaginary and an actual frame of reference” (p. 52), and it is the capacity to be inhabiting both the fictional and the real worlds simultaneously—metaxis—that makes acting such a powerful tool for learning about the self and other. It is an example in action of the subjective-objective dualism evident in discourses of dramatic education (Anderson, 2012; Bolton, 1985, 1992; Davis, 2014) and experiential learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 2015) that is also core to most acting theories (Hagen, 1973; Harrop, 1992; Meisner & Longwell, 1987; Stanislavski, 1989a).

Henry (2010) goes on to offer this analysis, which encapsulates the basis for acting's efficacy in the practice of teaching and learning:

The actor's work. . . is to create personal and imaginary worlds, which serve as media for learning. Creating personal worlds is a learning process that moves in a direction opposite to many kinds of learning, in that it begins with an idea, an analytic or abstract form of knowledge, and shapes it into contextualised knowledge. Drama creates worlds that enrich and cultivate meanings. . . . [T]he adult's experience of world-creation invokes the tacit resources for recreating one's world, and for transformation – learning. (p. 53)

When we transform our perspectives—of ourselves, of ourselves in the world, of ourselves and others, of the world itself—we are engaging in deep learning, the kind of learning that can sustain for a lifetime. Abstract knowledge really only has value when transformed into usable knowledge, knowledge that can be applied in multiple concrete situations across multiple experiences. Just as actors use their abstract knowledge of performance techniques to build in concrete terms a particular character representation in a particular play for a particular audience in that fictional world, so human beings must use their abstract life-knowledge actually to function and thrive and make meaning in the real world. Like actors, we must embrace our emotional responses and grow from them, rather than be paralysed by them, and perhaps that is the most powerful aspect of formal theatre productions – the freedom provided for feeling. Thus, as Henry (2010) notes, we can see “the ‘how’ of learning through drama: intuitive and affective receptivity, objective observations and the aesthetic act of world-creation” (p. 48-49), potentially, at least, encapsulated in the work of an actor in a formal theatre production. Through acting, we are equipped to “explore deeply [our] own struggles over meaning, identity, and power” (Woodson, 2004, p. 28).

9.7 The Ensemble as a Community of Practice

Learning also happens through the theatre production company emerging as its own community of practice. Primarily, this is due to the development of the ensemble where every participant is (ideally) equally invested and equally responsible for creating the work of art—the world of the play. In this communal space, we learn with and from each other through the process of rehearsal which is, at heart, about trial and error, and working between intuitive and intellectual modes of thinking and behaviour – a trying out of options, in the same way that we must try things in life, to know them. In this sense, rehearsal becomes a

space for interpersonal and intrapersonal learning, in which to ‘practice’ our personal and social competencies (Goleman, 1998).

To make the connection between the ensemble and the community of practice is fairly easy (see Banning, 2005; John, 2014; Whittaker, 2015, among others). A community of practice may be defined, basically, as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to it better as they interact regularly” (E. Wenger-Trayner, & B. Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1). Thus, a group of people making a formal theatre production together share a concern to make the play as good as it can possibly be; presumably, they possess a passion for the process since (in most of my experiences) their participation is voluntary; and certainly, through the process of interactive rehearsals their general abilities, as well as their specific performances, improve. I think, however, that the effect of the community of practice goes further than simple improvement and spills into the realm of life-learning.

In discussing the cultivation of communities of practice, Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) suggest that when such groups

. . . spend time together, they typically share information, insight, and advice. They help each other solve problems. They discuss their situations, their aspirations, and their needs. They ponder common issues, explore ideas, and act as sounding boards. . . . However they accumulate knowledge, they become informally bound by the value that they find in learning together. This value is not merely instrumental for their work. It also accrues in the personal satisfaction of knowing colleagues who understand each other’s perspectives and of belonging to an interesting group of people. (p. 4-5)

The detail explored here seems to me to reflect many of the processes involved in formal theatre productions, in particular the ideas of shared aspirations, problem-solving, and creative exploration, all of which are at the heart of the theatre-making experience and are also the most significant tools for building capacity to function in the twenty-first century world. The interactive nature of the process—and the concomitant necessity of mutual reliance and collaborative responsibility—creates a space for deeper learning about the nature of society and how one might be an active and contributing member of that society. To a significant extent, this happens because of the relationship between the individual member and the community, a relationship that Roth and Lee (2006) describe as dialectical, where

“students concretely realize the collectively defined motive and have some choice and control in the matters” (p. 31). Such a relationship, Whittaker (2015) argues, “is characterised by an elevated level of individual student choice within a context of collective responsibility, thus constituting a learning community” (p. 59), which is surely what our educational practice should seek to do.

Working within the ensemble also creates a safe space, something essential to the practice of experiment and the vulnerability required for deep learning to occur. In discussing learning processes, Fink (2013) observes:

most people find that making meaning entirely by themselves is not the most effective way of accomplishing [a] task. When we engage in dialogue with others, the possibility of finding new and richer meanings increases dramatically. In addition, when people collaboratively search for the meaning of experiences, information, and ideas, they also create the foundation for *community*. (p. 118, original emphasis)

Herein lies the efficacy of the ensemble: Because the work is happening initially in a rehearsal room in which everyone is ‘in the same boat’, as it were, any discomfort or fear is lessened, making it more likely that the shared experience of learning might develop.

Working together to solve problems and make sense of things facilitates those processes and makes them more feasible and probable. In many ways, the experience assumes the nature of a participatory ritual, in which we are all engaged, with the shared goal to make the work happen; as with any ritual (Schechner, 2013; Turner, 1982), a synergy arises where the sum of our parts becomes greater than what we can do individually. This synergy is then what is carried into the performance space and turns the production into more than just entertainment, but constructed, deep learning.

9.8 Spontaneity and the Improvisational Impulse

In his 2006 TED talk,⁵³ Ken Robinson states:

Kids will take a chance. If they don’t know, they’ll have a go. . . .They’re not frightened of being wrong. I don’t mean to say that being wrong is the same thing

⁵³ Robinson’s talk, “How Schools Kill Creativity” (2006), is currently the most viewed TED talk of all time, with viewership sitting at over 65 million (as of 8 May 2020).

as being creative. What we do know is, if you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original – if you're not prepared to be wrong. And by the time they get to be adults, most kids have lost that capacity. They have become frightened of being wrong. . . . And the result is that we are educating people out of their creative capacities. Picasso once said this, he said that all children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up. . . . we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it. (Robinson, 2006)

For me, Robinson's acute observation speaks to the idea of the improvisatory impulse and the ability to embrace spontaneity. When we "have a go," we are trying things out, experimenting, playing with multiple possibilities; when we do so without fear, we are accessing the spontaneous reactive capacity not to worry too much about the outcome, but to engage the process without judgment or censorship. These goals are at the heart of dramatic education practice and indeed, virtually every theory connecting drama to education is rooted in the ability to improvise and to respond to stimulus freely. By opening the spontaneous response, working through improvisatory methods, we (re)access the creativity and energy of the child making sense of his/her environment before the fear of being wrong sets in to censor our behaviour and stop us from fully exploring the world. I believe that what is true for dramatic education generally, is also true for PBL.

Improvisation is widely accepted as a tool in both educational drama and theatre practice (Frost & Yarrow, 1989; Johnstone, 1981; Spolin, 1983), not least because of its use in multiple actor training methods (Chekhov, 1953; Meisner & Longwell, 1987; Stanislavski, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c; Strasberg, 1987), its prevalence as a rehearsal method (Bogart, 2001, 2007; Brecht, 1965; Brook, 1968, 1987, 1993; LePage & Charest, 1998; Mitchell, 2008), and its application as devising practice (Govan, Nicholson & Normington, 2007; Heddon, 2005; Oddey, 1996). Innumerable definitions have been offered across the literature explaining the essence of improvisation: Pickering (2010) explains it as a process "used to obviate blocks to creativity, to sensitise and release the imagination, to establish a unity of body, emotion and vocalisation and to enable actors to undertake a wide variety of roles on the basis of observation and inner exploration" (p. 106). All of these hold true for formal theatre productions which also require creativity, sensitivity, imaginative engagement, effective use of the voice and the body, employed in service of playing a role. There seems, therefore, to be little reason to exclude formal theatre productions from the list of dramatic forms that benefit from the improvisation process.

In terms of life-learning, the value of the improvisatory capacity is even more evident. Seham (2001) refers to improvisation as a mixture of “making do” and “letting go” (cited in Vera & Crossan, 2004, p. 731), and for me, these two ideas encapsulate the educational agenda. Learning how to “make do” is critical to becoming a functioning adult, capable of coping with everything the world might throw at us; we have to learn to work with what we have, to engage in self-determination, and to become agents within our own lives, rather than waiting for things to happen or wishing they might be different. Fundamentally, as a theatre-maker, I am always involved in an ongoing process of compromise, making do with the material and tools at my disposal in order to realise my theatrical dreams in living action. Nothing we make as artists is ever perfect, especially when working with live actors as in theatre, but this is part of both the challenge and the joy of the medium. When I say to students, “maximise the positive and minimise the negative,” I am modelling the making do that is so much a part of our everyday existence. To do so requires flexibility, adaptability and the willingness to change, all of which are critical twenty-first century skills, and all of which are products of the production-making experience.

The companion to making do—“letting go”—also provides a powerful life-lesson. Here is captured the necessity of not holding anything too tightly, of trusting to the moment and to our community of peers, in order to ensure our ongoing safety (both literal and metaphorical) and thus free us from the constraints of externally imposed outcomes. In theatre, rehearsals are about experimentation, exploration; if one begins with an outcome already fixed in one’s mind, very little of creative value can happen in the rehearsal room. The evolution of a production is premised on the willing contribution of all participants throughout the process, operating interactively and responsively in order to determine the most effective choices to communicate meaning(s). Vera and Crossan (2004) suggest that improvisation⁵⁴ allows actors to “free themselves from socially accepted frames of reference and assumptions of expected behaviour” (p. 731), and a similar divestment needs to happen to encourage development of the creative impulse and the necessary coping mechanisms for the twenty-first century world. They go on to explain how improvisation requires

⁵⁴ In their article, Vera and Crossan (2004) are specifically discussing improvisational theatre (where an audience offers suggestions and outcomes), in order to comment on the applicability of improvisation to organisational studies. In intention, however, similar ideas are articulated to those referencing other forms of theatre and dramatic education, as I am positing here.

“embracing the uncertain, trusting intuition, acting before thinking,⁵⁵ adapting to circumstances, and working as a group in a process of creation” (Vera & Crossan, 2004, p. 731-732). Recognising the uncertainty inherent in the twenty-first century world of work and experience, the idea that one can ‘prepare’ for that uncertainty by practicing trust, listening to one’s intuition, working collaboratively, and making the spontaneous response, provides a powerful teaching and learning tool.

Improvisation is, of course, allied to play, and, like play, it operates through experiment, with the potential for both failure and success. However, because of all the other factors in evidence that complement the improvisation, success and failure take on different meanings. Frost and Yarrow (1989) describe improvisation as “failing and not minding about failure. It is about trying again, and about enjoying the process without straining to get a known result. It is about creation” (p. 3). I cannot imagine a better exposition of the life-learning goal.

9.9 Experiencing Flow

Another important element of the production experience generating learning is, for me, contained in the notion of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Csikszentmihalyi’s ideas were important for me in relation to understanding my own experience of learning and provided a lens through which to view my participants’ responses. His ideas also connect production experience to the kind of teaching and learning that I am seeking to practice in my work as a director-teacher. Simply put, Csikszentmihalyi’s (2009) observation that “the control of consciousness determines the quality of life” (p. 20) seems to me to indicate what we should be doing as educators, namely giving our students the ability to control their own consciousness in order to find their own happiness. I would argue that one reason formal theatre productions can provide significant learning is because, in the process, students are able to immerse themselves in a flow experience; Csikszentmihalyi (2009) notes that “control over consciousness. . . requires the commitment of emotions and will. It is not enough to *know* how to do it; one must *do* it, consistently, in the same way as athletes or musicians who must keep practicing” (p. 21, original emphasis), in order to experience flow. The connection

⁵⁵ I should note that they do not mean here acting in the real world without awareness of consequence; rather they are referring to the need for actors to try to circumvent the inner judge that can sabotage a performance and prevent an actor from reaching their full creative potential.

to will and emotion, to the necessity of doing, of delivering the final performance, as well as the repetition associated with practice, links with what I believe happens in the formal theatre production process.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) describes a number of the recurring elements that determine enjoyment and thus, engage the flow experience (p. 111-113). These elements, I would argue, might equally describe the theatre-making experience. To illustrate, I will explore how some of them play out in production work. He talks of establishing clear goals: When I direct a production, every moment of the process is goal-directed, from selecting the play, to formulating the concept, to casting the actors, to mounting the production; the participants also are goal-directed in that their focus is on working through the rehearsal process to develop the performance that will eventually be placed before the audience. Then he emphasises the need for immediate feedback: In rehearsals, the entire process depends on the feedback loop from action to note to revised action, and in performance, the feedback of the audience is an essential marker of a production's success. Another element is ensuring a balance between challenge and skill levels: As the director, I try to match the abilities of each individual actor to the requirements of a specific role; importantly, as skills increase, so must the challenges in a state of "dynamic equilibrium" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 196), since something too easy leads to boredom and something too difficult leads to anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009), both of which impede flow. Thus, I monitor closely a student's progress in the hopes of ensuring an ever-increasing level of challenge to keep them fully invested.

Three elements he mentions are all linked to the concept of absorption: In moments of flow, performing without "distractions", and "freed from the fear of failure" (because there is no time or space to think about it), the "self-consciousness" that so often prevents spontaneous and fully engaged action dissolves, liberating the individual from that inner judge. As Csikszentmihalyi (2009) notes, "in flow there is no room for self-scrutiny. Because enjoyable activities have clear goals, stable rules, and challenges well matched to skills, there is little opportunity for the self to be threatened" (p. 63). This aspect is heightened even further in theatre where the participant is also freed from fear through role-play and mutual responsibility within the ensemble. As an actor, I have had many moments on stage where it felt like time stopped, when I felt so connected to what I was doing in that instant, that I forgot I was acting and simply rode the wave of spontaneous pleasure that is the

ultimate actor's reward. Finally, action is "autotelic" when it is done for its own sake, when it is "intrinsically motivated" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 195), and when "there is no reason for doing them except to feel the experience they provide" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 113). For me, theatre-making at its best is an autotelic experience; I do it above all else because it brings me joy. This view is supported by Martin and Cutler (2002), whose research found that "theater was rewarding because it was perceived as a way to achieve external and personal goals that lead to gratifying feelings" (p. 350).

Because the students are (mostly) electing to do the productions, they are self-driven, meaning they experience motivation – both intrinsic and extrinsic (as is evidenced in my data-play). When we are motivated, things are more likely to stick; thus, because the participants usually want to make the theatre-work, a deeper investment and engagement results, allowing them to make the connections, experience flow, and thus open themselves to the potential for deep learning. When we are engaged in autotelic experience—i.e. self-motivated—the doors to a more powerful learning are opened, and because "The play state promotes both heightened attention and emotional rewards, students are more motivated to remember what they learned" (McCammon, Sæbø & O'Farrell, 2011, p. 218). Numerous participants referenced how their production experiences stayed with them long after they were over, testifying to the accuracy of this observation.

In a sense, then, one could argue that theatre creates learning by facilitating the experience of flow; having the flow experience gives us confidence and desire to do more, and this becomes a self-perpetuating cycle. Key to flow is that the action must challenge you to go beyond what is easy and this is why flow is so critical in framing deep learning. Fundamentally, education is about "the development of an increasingly integrated self-concept" (Yeager, 2006, p. 205). The experience of flow contributes to this process in multiple ways as discussed above, but it is perhaps most important "because it builds the self-confidence that allows us to develop skills and make significant contributions to humankind" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 42).

PART C: WHY IS THE LEARNING HAPPENING?

Reflecting on why the kind of learning I have described above happens during formal theatre productions, brings me closer to answering my main research question. The how and the why of learning are integrally connected; thus, the reasons I outlined above for the educational efficacy of productions, including the engagement of play and fun, empathy and the playing of role, being part of a community of practice, rediscovering spontaneity, and the experiences of flow, are all factors that explain *why* theatre works as a tool of education as well as *how*. However, in considering why such education happens, I believe there are four additional factors, connected very specifically to the practice of theatre-making, that offer insight into why the processes of teaching and learning are so powerfully present in formal theatre productions. In this final theorising section, I want to highlight these factors as the conceptual keys to understanding the pedagogic processes implicit in the practice of making formal theatre productions. Thus, I conclude this scene with a discussion of

- Reflexivity
- Dialogic learning
- The presence of the audience
- Recognition

9.10 Reflexivity

I explored in scene 6 the significance of reflection to the experiential learning process, and I have already identified, in scene 2, my own use of self-reflexivity in terms of looking at my practice “as if from the outside” (Bolton, 2010, p. 14). Just as reflection is a critical aspect of experiential learning and self-study, so reflection, reflexivity, reflective practices—some form of reflexive process—is a key component of any dramatic education process. In their discussion of how drama educates, Dunn and Anderson (2013) highlight this, observing:

Reflection. . . [is] a critical feature of drama, offering opportunities for both individuals and groups to deconstruct, reconstruct and ‘articulate complexity’ (O’Connor). This key aspect of drama pedagogy. . . is clearly a feature of our work that is being increasingly acknowledged as central to the activation of learning. (p. 298)

As I have noted already in this thesis, I agree that a key reason for drama’s efficacy in teaching is its in-built demands for reflection at various stages in the dramatic process; it is this feature largely that makes it “capable of producing learning that is active, reflective,

critical, political and personal” (Dunn & Anderson, 2013, p. 300). Dunn and Anderson (2013), like most theorists of dramatic education, are discussing more conventional drama in education modes that are not performance-focused; I would argue, however, that their observations are equally applicable to productions, which are also spaces where opportunities for deep reflection on self, other, and the world, exist. In fact, participating in a production creates an ongoing experience of reflexivity and reflexive processes.

In the theatre-making process, we are constantly engaging in a cycle of action and reflection in order to develop a show. Rehearsals consist of an iterative process: Make an acting choice, explore how it affects the action, listen to the director’s notes, and then begin again, taking the note into account. Thus, an ongoing sequence of note, choice, explore, note, develops, which itself articulates a practice for problem-solving and for life in general. In this process, reflection is the critical component, since without engaging in reflection, the actor can never improve a performance nor the director make successful changes to the action. Doyle (2008) describes reflection as “a combination of intellectual and affective activities in which we engage to explore our experiences, leading to a new understanding” (p. 81), and this is certainly true of theatre-making. As we work, we involve our intellectual and emotional capacities, since both are critical to the performance, and through doing so, we are able to make the discoveries that give us new understandings, which then enable us to play our roles effectively. The argument then, as I noted in scene 2, is that productions “constitute training in reflexivity” (Meskin et al., 2014, p. 7).

Another form of reflexivity is evident when the performances take place. Here, reflexivity is also critical, and self-reflexivity perhaps even more so, since while performing for an audience the actor must rely on his/her own instincts to make decisions, rather than the eye of the director, practicing ‘in-the-moment-reflexivity’ as it were. To do so requires actors to be aware of themselves (without being self-conscious), their fellow performers, and the audience, in order to make the subtle shifts and nuanced changes that accompany every piece of live theatre.

The practice of reflexivity as part of participating in formal theatre productions offers crucial experience to facilitate self-learning and self-direction, both of which are key to twenty-first century life. From this perspective, the power of the training in reflexivity offered through participation in formal theatre productions is evident. Given the increasing

need for flexibility and adaptability as the world becomes ever more complex, the ability to learn from our experiences, to *reflect* upon them in order to *learn* from them so that we can forge new pathways, the kinds of reflexive skills honed through theatre experiences become increasingly significant. Only through reflexivity—through thinking about ourselves in action, what we have done, what we might have done, how we might do it in the future—can we expand our horizons and our capacities for understanding.

9.11 Dialogic Learning

Just as dialogic knowledge underpins self-study, so it is crucial to learning from formal theatre productions. Fundamental to acting is the art of listening so that one can respond in the moment to one's fellow performers; in part, listening matters because theatre relies primarily upon dialogue to reveal its meanings to an audience. Indeed, as Jackson (2005) suggests, “the dialogic can be (should be) at the heart of any theatre experience that is powerful, moving, and educationally provocative” (p. 106). Taking this further, it is possible to argue that dialogue operates as a meaning-making device, and this aspect is crucial to its value as an educational practice.

Just as in theatre, actors must listen to each other—and, in fact, to the audience—so teaching and learning requires active listening and interactive processes, or, put another way, dialogue. This is not a new idea; Freire (1972) describes dialogue as “an existential necessity” (p. 69) and notes that it is through dialogue that people “achieve significance as human beings” (p. 69). Jackson (2005) goes on to refer to

dialogic encounters in which tutor and learner alike are both engaged equally, in which listening and two-way communication happen in a collaborative spirit, in the interests of ‘naming the world’. . . and so gaining a progressive control over social processes – encounters in which the educator has as much to learn from the learner as the learner does from the tutor. (p. 113)

More recently, other scholars like Robin Alexander (2006) and Rupert Wegerif (2015, 2018) have developed the concept of dialogic education. I am particularly interested in Wegerif's (2015) observation that “learning to think is about being drawn into a dialogue with multiple perspectives” (p. 437) and that “Thinking implies seeing as if through the perspective of another which is only possible through dialogic relations with outside voices and outside perspectives” (p. 437). Both of these ideas reflect what I believe happens through the

theatrical experience. Wegerif (2018) explains further that “Real dialogues happen when people listen to each other and learn from each other” (p. 3), and that in such dialogues “shared thinking occurs” (p. 3-4). From this perspective, it is possible to see the synergistic exchanges that happen in the rehearsal room and on the performance stage as both listening environments and “dialogic spaces” (Wegerif, 2015, p. 432), in which “the potential for infinite meaning” (Wegerif, 2018, p. 7) is opened up.

For me, therefore, production work becomes a modelling of dialogic teaching and learning, which is interactive and contextual, just as our real-life dialogues must be if they are to be of use in shaping our experience of the world. As the theatrical dialogue conveys the meaning of the play to the audience, so other words exchanged in dialogue shape cognition; if we change the words—or are able to see them in relation to words spoken by others—we can potentially change our thoughts and, crucially, change behaviour. This kind of give and take, the genuine dialogue that occurs when “all parties are honest about their positions in the moment while remaining open to new perspectives” (Cummings, 2016, p. 18), is key to achieving effective collaboration and communication. Just as dialogue is a crucial element in self-study that reflects the intersubjective nature of our experiences, so theatrical and educational dialogues “broaden awareness, so imagination and horizons expand, encouraging alternative choices” (Goldblatt, 2006, p. 18); the experience of participating in productions offers the opportunity to live this process in action and to lay down the pattern for its use in the future.

9.12 The Presence of the Audience

As I have noted throughout this thesis, the prevailing wisdom in most dramatic education discourse is that the work is for the participants, rather than audiences, and that indeed, the presence of an audience can be counter-productive to the learning experience. For me, as for Pietropaolo (2003) and Benedetti (1998), this is not the case; rather, an audience is critical component of PBL for without the audience, there simply is no production. As Pitruzzella (2009) notes, the “audience is not an additional datum, without which theatre can subsist anyway, but one of its fundamental components: theatre is essentially a relational phenomenon” (p. 12). Thus, all of the learning that has been discussed thus far is, in many ways, dependent on finally presenting the work to an audience, since it is “the inscription of the audience into the play [that is] the means for creating a

dialogic encounter that is at the heart of theatre as a learning medium” (Greenwood, 2011, p. 50). Without that step, much of the intensity—and therefore the depth of impression—of the learning is dissipated. This is not to suggest in any way that *only* performance for an audience creates learning potential; rather, as I have argued throughout this thesis, my position is that the exclusion of performance-driven theatre from the dramatic learning family of processes is unnecessary and short-sighted.

In support of these ideas, it is useful to examine O’Neill’s (in Taylor & Warner, 2006) key strategies for engaging learning through drama, where she notes, “I am in the business of **dislocating young minds** and am keenly searching for strategies which **unsettle, create ambiguity**, and force students to **struggle with contradictions**” (p. 21, my emphasis). For me, these same strategies may be applied to PBL; indeed, I would argue that some apply even more to theatre experience than to process drama, precisely because of the performance element. Acting in a production, in front of an audience, positions students in a space where these processes occur, almost of necessity, through seeking to accomplish the core task of performing the role in the play.

The experience of dislocation, unsettlement, ambiguity, and contradiction, is rooted in the specific phenomenology of acting, and particularly acting for a public audience. The foundation of acting is the complex relationship between real performer and fictional character, and the necessity for the performer to function simultaneously within the real world and the imagined world of the play. Negotiating this interplay is filled with contradictions and ambiguities. For example, sometimes we have to play characters we may not like or people of whom we might disapprove, but as actors we cannot judge those characters; rather, we must find some way to perform them authentically for an audience. To do so, requires us to engage with the contradictions, to learn through our sense of dislocation, not to be afraid of being unsettled. To dislocate the mind is to question its assumptions, to apply critical thinking to that which we think we know or accept as given, all of which is central to the pedagogical process. Such dislocation is intended to lead us to new understandings; in conventional learning, these understandings provide knowledge transformation; in theatre, they might provide an opportunity for personal transformation. Constructivists suggest we learn when what we know is disturbed; performing for an audience takes us out of a comfort zone, and in so doing provides a powerful environment for

learning. As Dunn and Anderson (2013) note, “By playing with ambiguity and instability, drama provides rich opportunities for individuals to re-imagine their futures” (p. 303).

To make the leap from the rehearsal room to the theatre stage requires one to cross a threshold of sorts. It is, perhaps, about having the courage to take the risk, where risk is understood as “engaging and providing opportunities for growth and development—the ‘hard’ fun often associated with the arts” (Wright, 2011, p 112). The presence of the audience generates a particular kind of knowledge; it creates a pressure-cooker-like experience, where the stakes are higher and the rewards are thus—potentially anyway—correspondingly higher. Of course, I am aware that there is also a corresponding potential for disappointment and perceived failure, which is the reason for being very careful as a director to guide the experience and support the entire process from start to finish. In my experience, however, which is echoed in the responses of my performer-participants, the result is usually positive reinforcement and the enrichment of self-concept and self-worth. Overwhelmingly, the performer-participants expressed increased confidence and self-belief as a result of their production experiences: Noxolo, for example, observed that she gained “Self-confidence. . . both as a performer and as a person in general. I learnt to believe in my abilities and to trust that my contributions (both onstage and off) are valuable.” All of their observations signify for me the deep-seated personal learning that can happen through the production process. The element of risk also ensures the greatest reward, for when a student has successfully delivered a performance for an audience, the memory of the accomplishment provides long-term evidence for that student’s ability to go beyond his/her own perceived limits and/or expectations. My belief—rooted in my own lived experience—is that such memories form the blueprint or map to guide us, providing a quasi-muscle-memory of confronting fear when we are faltering or struggling to find a way forward.

Given the above, it is important to note that the dichotomies of drama and theatre, process and product, are finally beginning to be elided, as I explained in scene 5. Increasingly, what has always been an artificial divide is becoming more porous, and drama and theatre practitioners alike are beginning to explore the crossovers between more process-focused and more product-driven projects, “leaving behind binary notions of process/product to embrace a more comprehensive view of drama as a complex and diverse art form capable of continually reshaping itself according to its context, purposes and participants” (Dunn & Anderson, 2013, p. 293). This shift is profoundly important in terms of PBL, since it opens

the door for a new understanding of what formal theatre productions might have to offer the world of dramatic education. In discussing the aesthetic power of drama, Joe Winston (2013) notes,

if drama is to teach *about* beauty then it must also teach *through* beauty, which means that we must conscientiously find ways to help our students experience its sensual lure, its affective appeal, to identify and discuss its charms without denying that element of mystery that will always persist in anything we find beautiful. (p. 159, original emphasis)

For me, the thrill of the theatre, the adrenalin-rush of stepping on to the stage, the feeling of an expectant audience, and the magic of being part of something larger than oneself, are all part of the beauty that we must allow our students to experience; in this way we might enable them, as Neelands (2004b) describes it, to learn “through the **aesthetic**” (p. 50, my emphasis) of theatre, not only the practice of drama.

9.13 Recognition

I believe that theatre is a formidable teacher because it creates a space of witnessing. When we act in a play, it is possible for us to be *seen*, on a literal and metaphorical level. My own lived experience taught me this; I often felt invisible, but never when I was on stage. Perhaps because playing a character creates a safe space in which to allow our imaginations and our creativity free rein, being in a play provides the opportunity to see and to be seen, to be visible in a paradoxically safe way. Of course, this does not mean there is no fear, and there are times when an audience may respond negatively, but in the educational space, the opportunity is there to cushion any blows within the frame of learning. The teaching must make it ‘OK to fail,’ because it is only in such spaces that the risks which lead to self-discovery can be taken. We might even learn more from failures than from successes, since it is often the failures—or perhaps more accurately, our reaction to them—that teach grit, endurance and determination.

Everyone needs a feeling of belonging, needs to feel recognised and validated in order to develop a strong, secure self-concept. I would suggest this happens in a theatre performance; the collaborative nature of the experience means that everyone involved—both onstage and off—is simultaneously constituting, and being constituted by, everyone else. Directors and actors, actors and audiences, actors and other actors, all of these operate in

symbiotic and synergistic relationships, to bring a production to life. Being part of the ensemble, part of the community of practice, part of making something unique together, generates a kind of affirmation and confirmation. And even if the person never steps on a stage again, having once had that experience becomes a memory of what is possible. In this sense, the theatre production becomes its own ZPD, a space in which we learn to witness self, and other, and in so doing, explore social connections, individual agency, and our ability to go beyond our own expectations.

9.14 The Formal Theatre Production as Site of Teaching and Learning

Given the challenges of the twenty-first century, and the uncertainties of a postnormal (Sardar, 2010) world, it seems to me that we are sorely in need of teaching and learning strategies that provide more than just the conventional knowledge of a discipline, more than the knowing *what* of any particular discourse. Perkins (2014) sees in this a two-pronged crisis for education, noting on the one hand that “much of what we typically teach most likely won’t matter to learners’ lives” (p. 226), and also that “there is much we don’t typically teach that likely would matter a lot” (p. 226). I think formal theatre productions offer a space for foregrounding that which is typically not ‘taught’, and that PBL can facilitate the development of the kinds of skills, attitudes and abilities that will allow our students not just to survive the perils of twenty-first century existence, but to thrive within them. To do this requires an understanding beyond that which is conventionally accepted as desirable and appropriate knowledge.

Dwight Conquergood (2002) observes that conventional learning is rooted in “‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing about’” (p. 146); in contrast, he describes a “knowing that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection: ‘knowing how’ and ‘knowing who’. . . .a view from ground level, in the thick of things” (Conquergood, 2002, p. 146). Productions can generate this kind of “knowing,” through focusing on the experiential, practical engagements that are the framework of a theatrical production. It is an ephemeral knowledge, situated in ‘liveness’, and therefore different from other kinds of knowledge commonly associate with education; it is, however, also the kind of knowledge that provides the critical capacity required for education in the twenty-first century, which relies on contingent meanings, constant recreations, seeing things from different angles, valuing different kinds of meaning-making, and everything else that we cannot know or

anticipate, but is most certainly on the horizon. The ‘thinking on your feet’ of drama, the sense of community engaged, makes it a natural companion to these new modes of thinking and ways of knowing. I would argue, though, that perhaps theatre does this even more than drama (if one sees them from the perspective of the conventional binary), because the experience of delivering for an audience requires a self-reliance and self-confidence that are crucial qualities for a twenty-first century citizen.

Creating fictional worlds, activating the imagination, and playing characters in action are theatre’s versions of the “common geographies” (Dunn & Anderson, 2013, p. 299) of drama. In addition, “Imagining the inner life of others and comparing it to one’s own. . . [develops] empathy, understanding, and trust of others, as well as personal coping skills” (Brown, 2009, p. 87, cited in McCammon, Sæbø & O’Farrell, 2011, p. 218); these processes are equally evident in theatre as they are in process drama. To these basics—role, context, fictional worlds, imagination, characters, empathy, trust—we can add the particular characteristics of learning through theatre that I have discussed above to begin to construct a framework for PBL.

In scene 6, I constructed a map for my bricolaged educational theory, referencing experiential learning, constructivist education (and particularly social constructivism), deep learning, the LP, and arts-based education. I want to conclude this scene by showing the connection between what I mapped earlier and what I have theorised here.⁵⁶ Thus, PBL is **experiential** because those involved are actively **doing** it. It is **constructivist** because they are responsible for **building** their own knowledge through the experience, and **expanding** on what they already know. It engages **social constructivism** through its emphasis on **interactive** and **intersubjective** processes. It inspires **deep learning** because it is not just for the moment but **long-term**, and because it is **self-motivated** in that the participants **want** to be there. It is **learner-centred** because it requires the participants to **drive** the process, working together **collaboratively** with the director. It belongs in **arts-based education** because it functions through **play** and the **imagination**, and uses the **theatre form** and **theatre aesthetics** to construct the experience. It works because it establishes **communities of practice** and **Zones of Proximal Development**. It encourages the development of **spontaneity**, **reflexivity**, and **grit**. It facilitates **dialogic learning** and the achievement of

⁵⁶ This summary is based on the more detailed tabular version included in Appendix 10.

flow experiences. It is rooted in **empathy** and **identification**, providing **recognition** and a safe space in which to **risk** and reap corresponding **reward**. In doing all of this, it generates **artistic literacy** (Kindelan, 2012) and operates as a **liberatory pedagogy** (Cole, 2008), facilitating the development of **twenty-first century skills** and promoting **life-learning**. I have captured these ideas in the word cloud below as a visual signifier of the kind of learning formal theatre productions might offer.



Figure 15. Word cloud representing learning from formal theatre productions.

These, then, represent the educational value of formal theatre productions and their function as sites of teaching and learning. In my final scene, I will discuss one possible approach to developing a practical framework for PBL learning, drawing on Fink's (2013) conception of significant learning, which for me encompasses the breadth of educational possibilities offered by participation in formal theatre productions.

SCENE 10: A MODEL FOR PRODUCTION-BASED LEARNING

Having established the educational value of participating in formal theatre productions, I want to draw the threads of my thesis together in this final scene, by addressing my final critical question: How can formal theatre productions be organised to operate as sites for teaching and learning? Thus, first I will offer a potential model for how Production-Based Learning can be implemented as a pedagogic practice amongst the discourses of dramatic education. Second, I will reflect on my role as the teacher-director within my practice since this is first and foremost a self-study, and I am examining my own practice as it reflects this process. From this discussion, I hope to articulate some core characteristics for teacher-directors to use in PBL. In this way, I seek to connect my practice as a director-teacher with the concept of PBL as the signifier of the learning value of formal theatre productions in higher education contexts, and as a coherent method of teaching and learning drama at university.

10.1 Production-Based Learning

In previous scenes of my thesis, I have discussed how, and why, formal theatre productions can operate as sites for teaching and learning, and what might be learnt. Thus far, I have been focused on my own experience of this phenomenon, as it has been evidenced in my work as a director and educator in an institution of higher learning. However, I believe learning from participating in formal theatre productions is not simply about me as an individual director providing a learning experience for a specific group of students. I believe that this methodology is transferable and available to anyone working in the field, the point being that one does not have to direct in the same way I do, in order to reap the benefit of this kind of work. No matter what directorial approach is adopted, the experience of participation has the potential for constructing PBL. It does require, however, a mode of teaching and learning that enables it to achieve its goals. While there is no one right way to do this, I will offer here one possible model for implementing PBL.

The PBL model I have developed is embedded in my own experience as a learner, performer, director, and teacher. It is grounded in my understanding of my practice as director and teacher (as illustrated in scenes 3 and 4), which is the basis for all my

discoveries. It emerges out of my understanding of dramatic education discourses and the multiple possibilities contained therein (as discussed in scene 5). It is rooted in my engagement with educational theory and the bricolage I constructed (in scene 6) to establish my personal philosophy of education, namely that it is experiential, constructivist, and social; that it is located in the learning paradigm and seeks to engender deep learning; and that it is anchored in a recognition of the value of arts education to the individual and society. And it draws on my understandings gleaned from my analysis of the data in my study (as discussed in scenes 8 and 9). In order to develop my approach to PBL, I have had to find a suitable unifying frame for all these elements. There are many possible strategies, but I have chosen to adopt Fink's (2013) taxonomy of "significant learning" because it offers a way to connect the multiple threads of my study in one coherent model. I stumbled upon Fink's work late in my thesis-writing journey, but when I did, I saw immediately how his construct might provide a vehicle for negotiating what PBL might look like, and so I use it here.

The points of connection with my own understanding of education are evident. Significant learning, as Fink (2013) imagines it, is centred in the LP, it engages experiential, constructivist, and social processes, while focusing on deep learning; it also lends itself to the strategies of dramatic education which are critical for effective PBL. Locating PBL within the structures of significant learning thus offers the educational hooks required to establish an effective and practical model for others to use in developing their own PBL, while simultaneously connecting with my own ideas on the educative process. In Figure 16 below, I show the relationship between the various elements discussed in my thesis and the taxonomy of significant learning; this hybrid construct explains the connection between the various educational aspects of my study.

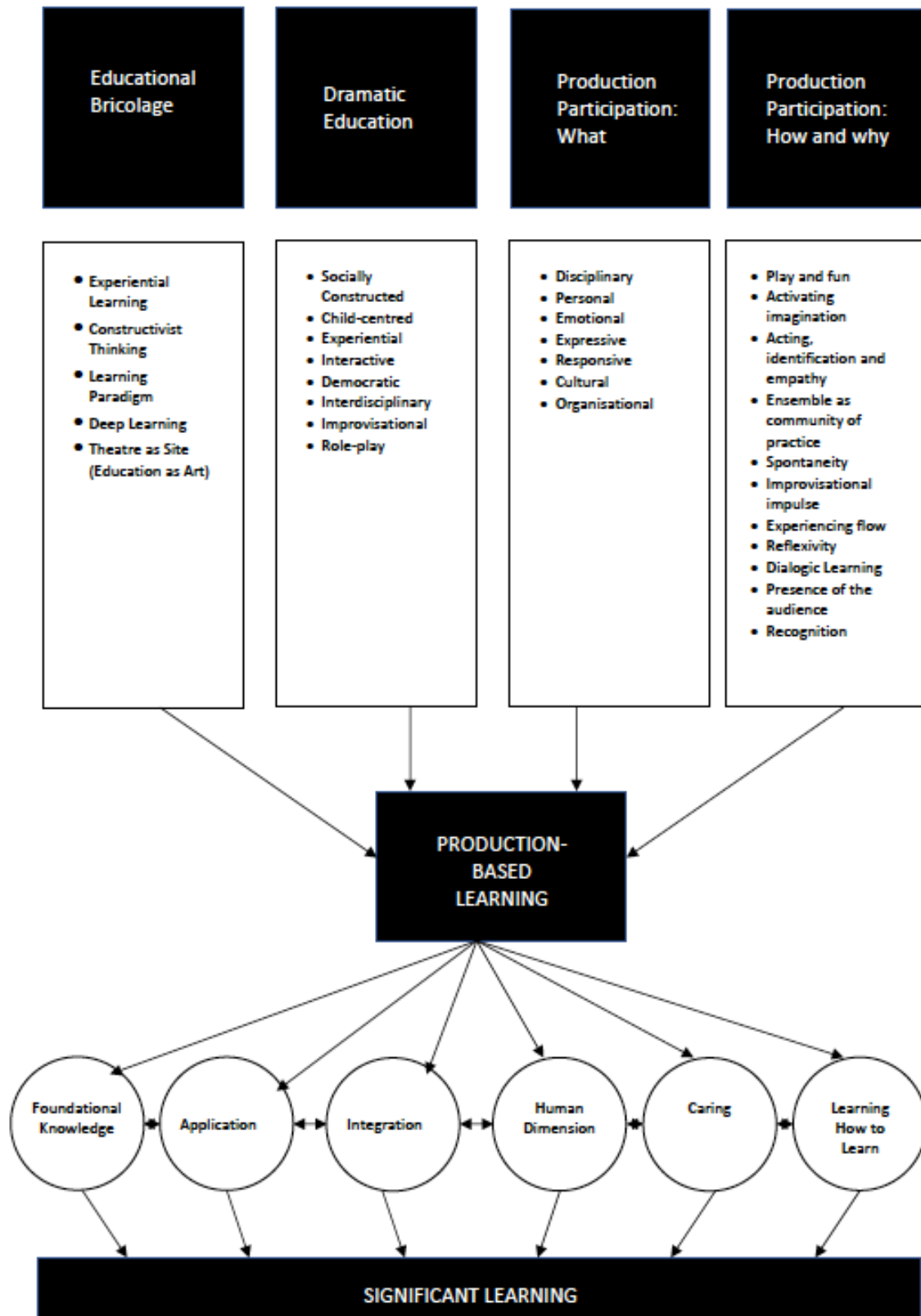


Figure 16. Connecting the elements of my thesis – education, dramatic education, formal theatre productions, and significant learning.

10.2 The Taxonomy of Significant Learning

In establishing his taxonomy, Fink (2013) offers an alternative approach to understanding the objectives of education. In contrast to Bloom's widely-accepted taxonomy (1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), specifically of the cognitive domain,⁵⁷ Fink categorises the different aspects of the learning in a circular, iterative form, rather than the more-established linear version. This shift emerged from his belief in the necessity to move from a content-centred to a learner-centred mode of education (Fink, 2013, p. 31), and a determination to place emphasis not on "how much" but on "the quality of the learning" (p. 26). While not dismissing Bloom, Fink (2013) references additional kinds of learning that are key for twenty-first century life, including "learning how to learn, leadership and interpersonal skills, ethics, communication skills, character, tolerance, and the ability to adapt to change" (p. 34). These goals parallel—and in some cases are synonymous with—the kinds of life-learning skills and attributes that I discussed in scene 9 and the synergy is clearly apparent.

For me, perhaps the most important theoretical underpinning of significant learning is Fink's (2013) particular perspective on learning, which he defines as change: "For learning to occur, there has to be some kind of change in the learner. No change, no learning. And significant learning requires that there be some kind of lasting change that is important in terms of the learner's life" (Fink, 2013, p. 34). Given my belief in theatre as a change agent, this view of learning seemed appropriate for me to adopt; in addition, the notion of significant learning has provided me a way to understand why I remember certain teachers and experiences so vividly – because in their various classrooms some change was happening to me. Thus, significant learning offers a concept that blends my beliefs about theatre and about learning, and thus underpins my model of PBL aptly.

For Fink (2013), work that leads to significant learning must:

- challenge students (p. 32);
- use active forms of learning (p. 32);

⁵⁷ Bloom's taxonomy was originally established in 1956, and differentiated six kinds of learning operating progressively; from lowest to highest these are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) changed 'knowledge' to 'remember' and 'synthesis' to 'create', and altered the order placing 'create' at the top. This taxonomy is widely used across educational practice.

- have teachers who care (p. 33);
- have teachers who interact well with students (p. 33);
- have a good system of feedback, assessment, grading (p. 33).

He goes on to note that of these, the most important is the concept of challenge, since “If students have indeed been challenged to and have achieved something that can meaningfully be called *significant learning*, then the learning experience has been good, no matter what else is bad about the course” (Fink, 2013, p. 33, original emphasis). I think that challenges are everywhere in a theatre production, both individual and social, and those challenges create multiple opportunities for significant learning experiences to occur. This is evidenced by the responses of the performer-participants who note repeatedly both the challenges and the rewards of their participation.

Toby Jenkins (2014) has used Fink’s taxonomy to develop a module on cultural leadership and activism, and offers a useful summation of the value of the model. He notes:

Fink’s significant learning taxonomy concerns the way in which education provides opportunities for students to come to know themselves more deeply, develop important attachments to the process of learning, connect what they learn to their personal lives, establish a sense of caring and commitment about a particular topic, and take action on what they have learned in some meaningful way. College learning experiences should help students to function in life not just in college. (Jenkins, 2014, p. 4-5)

Identified here are the same life-learning goals that I place at the centre of my educational practice and that I believe are engendered through the formal theatre production experience. Like Jenkins, therefore, I have used Fink’s (2013) taxonomy to frame my imagined PBL model.

10.3 The Elements of the Taxonomy

There are six components in Fink’s taxonomy, all of which operate synergistically to create significant learning experiences. Ideally, all of these kinds of learning will be part of an educational experience, such as a university module or a project (like a production). Within each category, additional kinds of learning are present and different methods for achieving the end-goal identified in the taxonomy. In order to use this taxonomy to create a

model for PBL, I will discuss briefly each of the categories of the taxonomy, which are represented by Fink (2013) graphically, as seen below in Figure 17.

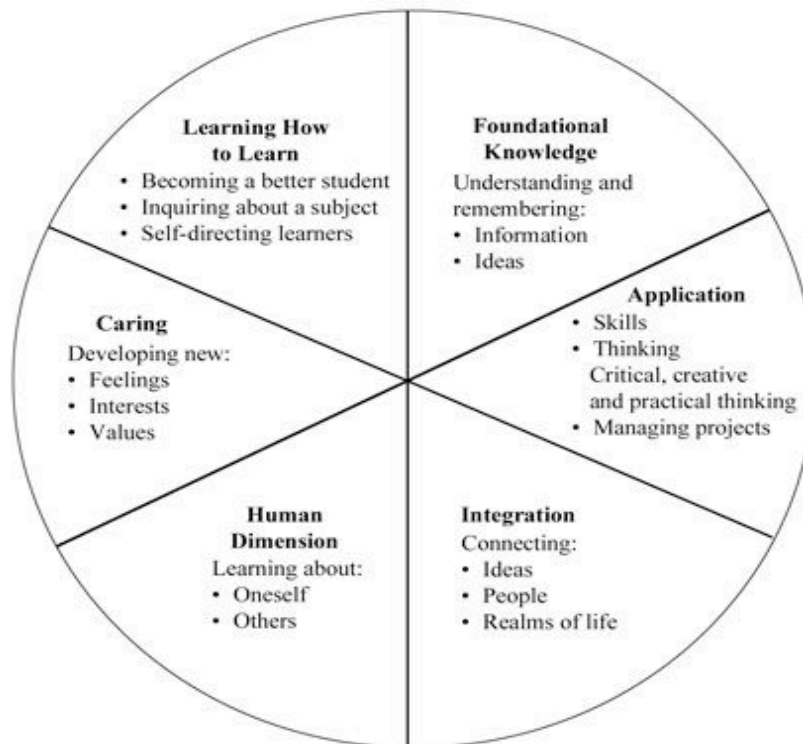


Figure 17. Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning (2013, p. 35).

Foundational Knowledge is the basis for all the other kinds of learning but, importantly, does not have to be engaged separately from everything else. Fink (2013) describes this knowledge as the “need for students to know something, . . . [where] knowing refers to students’ ability to understand and remember specific information and ideas” (p. 34). This is the “basic knowledge” (Fink, 2013, p. 34) about whatever particular discipline or topic is being studied, and is the starting point for whatever other knowledge or skills will emerge from that study. Thus, what Fink (2013) calls the “Special Value” (p. 35) of foundational knowledge is that it “provides the basic understanding that is necessary for other kinds of learning” (p. 35) – the information and ideas necessary for making sense of whatever discourse is being engaged. In this sense, it equates with the core disciplinary knowledge to which I have referred elsewhere in my thesis.

Application refers to implementing the foundational knowledge in some way, be it physical, social, or intellectual (Fink, 2013, p. 35). Fink (2013) describes application as “Learning how to engage in various kinds of thinking (critical, creative, practical)” (p. 35), but also—and importantly for PBL— “developing certain skills. . . or learning how to manage complex projects” (p. 35). The delineation of the three different kinds of thinking—critical, creative, and practical—is useful in that they equate well with different aspects of production work as well as articulating with the 4 Cs of twenty-first century learning (discussed in scene 9). In addition, the fact that there is no hierarchical differentiation between thinking and doing is very important for PBL, which is rooted in active, experiential learning activities requiring holistic participation, rather than the purely intellectual work of a written examination or essay. The value of application is, therefore, that it “allows other kinds of learning to become useful” (Fink, 2013, p. 36), a crucial feature of education in the contemporary university.

Integration occurs “when students are able to see and understand the connections between different things” (Fink, 2013, p. 36). These connections can be between ideas, people and “realms of life” (Fink, 2013, p. 35), or any combination thereof. Thus, the integration is not simply about being able to connect the different aspects of a module together on an intellectual level, but to learn to see the connection points with all areas of lived experience, personal and social, bringing the world of learning and the world of life together. For me, this is crucial to developing self-concept and agency, which requires one to have a clear sense of oneself in the world.

These first three categories of the taxonomy, on the right-hand side of the circle, equate most strongly with Bloom’s cognitive learning components, as is evidenced in Figure 18 below.

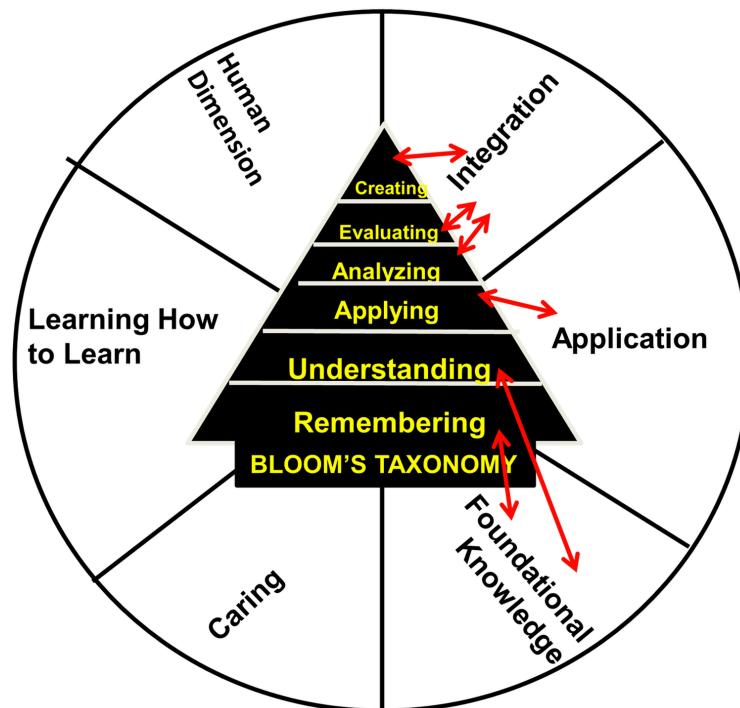


Figure 18. Relating Fink and Bloom's taxonomies (Brewley, Boindala & Sinclair, 2015, p. 31).

Most exciting about Fink's (2013) taxonomy, for me, is that it brings what are effectively aspects of Bloom's affective domain,⁵⁸ into direct—and equal—relationship with the cognitive ones. In fact, the affective elements—the human dimension and caring—are, in some ways, the more important components of the taxonomy; they elevate conventional learning experiences that engage the cognitive domain into significant learning that recognises the need for equal focus on emotions, social interaction, and empathy to equip students for twenty-first century life.

The **Human Dimension** concerns learning about the self and others, and, in particular, the relationship *between* the self and other. Fink (2013) describes it thus:

when students learn something important about themselves or others, it enables them to function and interact more effectively. They discover the personal and social implications of what they have learned. When they learn or the way in which they learn sometimes gives students a new understanding of themselves (self-image), a new vision of that they want to become (self-ideal), or greater confidence that they

⁵⁸ There are, in fact, three domains within Bloom's (1956) taxonomy—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—but, as Fink (2013) asserts, in practice, the cognitive domain is the one most frequently associated with educational practice. Arguably, though, theatre is more strongly rooted in the affective and psychomotor domains, making Fink's (2013) adaptation particularly apposite.

can do something important to them. At other times, they acquire a better understanding of others: how and why others act the way they do or how the learner can interact more effectively with others. (p. 36)

From these observations, we can see the social constructivist ideas that I discussed in scene 6, embedded in significant learning. This aspect is profoundly important to PBL since theatre is fundamentally about human experience, and the representation of such human experience in action, for the benefit of other human beings, is its primary purpose. The human dimension is also especially important for my personal theatrical philosophy which is about striving to make a theatre of humanity. The live human experience is what separates theatre from other art forms, and it is thus vital to any learning associated with it. More than just theatrically, however, the human dimension involves the very core of the twenty-first century challenges I have discussed – how to cope with the ever-changing, increasingly-uncertain, and technologically-driven world. We can only do this if we understand ourselves and understand our relationship to the others who share that world. Fink (2013) calls this value the “human significance of what they are learning” (p. 36), and argues that it “assists students on their journey towards self-authorship” (p. 51). In addition, the human dimension is responsible for “counter[ing] the strong attitude of ‘me-ism’” (Fink, 2013, p. 52) and is also reciprocal since, “when one learns about one’s self, one almost inevitably learns about others, and vice versa” (p. 54). These are all potential outcomes of PBL.

Caring is about empathy and passion and is, therefore, highly significant for PBL. Theatre-making, I believe, provides a key for teaching and learning—and experiencing—empathy, and it requires passion and investment in order to be really powerful and effective. Moreover, without passion—without self-motivation and the sense that what one is doing matters—there is little possibility to achieve the flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) that is the artistic goal of the work. Fink (2013) refers to changes in the way we care about things as the result of learning experiences, whether those things be “feelings, interests, or values” (p. 36); he adds, “Any of these changes means students now care about something to a greater degree than they did before or in a different way” (Fink, 2013, p. 36). Given my focus on theatre as a change agent, this notion of change in care is important and, given Fink’s (2013) insistence that learning is reflected in change, it would be hard to over-estimate the significance of this element. Fink (2013) observes the special value of caring thus: “When students care about something, they then have the energy they need for learning more about it

and making it a part of their lives. Without the energy for learning, nothing significant happens” (p. 36). This sentiment parallels my own perspective on both theatre and education.

The final category is called **Learning How to Learn** and is about the kind of meta-learning that must develop if one is to become a “self-directing learner” (Fink, 2013, p. 37), a critical component of twenty-first century learning. As noted in scene 9, the changes accompanying the paradigm shift caused by increasing technological innovation and altering the landscape of work, require us to become continual learners. Without the capacity to think for ourselves, to drive our own knowledge-development, we will have little hope of navigating the complex future ahead of us. Thus, the special value of this category of learning is that it “enables students to continue learning in the future and to do so with greater effectiveness” (Fink, 2013, p. 37). It is, finally, the kind of learning that Perkins (2014) says might prepare us “to engage the unknown future, a complex and changing personal and public world, and [to] learn [the] way into its intricacies and opportunities” (p. 61), or “lifeready learning” (p. 97). For me, the chief value of formal theatre productions is that they offer one potential environment in which to foreground learning how to learn.

The central feature of significant learning is its *experiential* and *interactive* nature, and the taxonomy, as Fink (2013) notes, is “not hierarchical but. . . relational” (p. 27). As such, it seems a suitable structure for building an holistic, integrated, dynamic educational experience like PBL; indeed, it is those very characteristics which makes such experiences significant. As Fink (2013) notes, “each kind of learning is related to the other kinds of learning and . . . achieving any one kind of learning simultaneously enhances the possibility of achieving other kinds of learning as well” (p. 37). They are thus “synergistic” (Fink, 2013, p. 37), and that synergistic nature speaks powerfully to the similarly synergistic nature of theatre work. A theatre production requires all the various elements and participants to work together, creating something that is larger than the sum of its individual parts. That is the nature of the art form, but it also reflects its potential learning efficacy.

Perhaps the most interesting repeated observation made by my performer-participants was the *unexpected* learning that occurred by virtue of their being in productions; they expected to learn theatre skills, but it was the other learning—the “collateral learning” (Dewey, 1938, p. 48)—that marked their experiences, I would argue, as significant, in Fink’s (2013) sense of the word. Those unexpected outcomes were also not part of my specific

objectives as the director; they were, to all intents and purposes, by-products of the artistic journey on which we were all embarked. For me, it is the apparently tangential nature of this learning that makes it so powerful; the students involved in productions are not thinking about learning *per se*, they are thinking about playing their roles effectively on stage for the audience and, hopefully, reaping the applause and the plaudits that go with successful performances. Long after the applause has died down, however, and the lines they spoke have been forgotten, and the moves faded into memory, the deep learning, the self-learning, the sense of accomplishment remains. These are the “shadow tracks” (Levy, 2005, p. 25) that Levy (2005) so insightfully named as the real power behind theatre’s efficacy as an educational medium, and they are the products not of individual moments, or individual actors, or even individual director-actor relationships, but of the interactive, collaborative nature of the whole experience, the result of the synergy emerging from the dynamic phenomenon that is the formal theatre production.

10.4 Applying the Taxonomy to PBL

In this section, I will show how the learning experience of participating in a formal theatre production engages all six categories of significant learning. Hypothetically, a model for PBL based on the significant learning taxonomy might look something like this.

i. Foundational Knowledge

The foundation for PBL lies in the theatre skills that it engages, which it teaches through active, experiential means. These might include:

- Auditioning to participate – even if everyone involved in a given project is to be cast in the play, it is nonetheless important to conduct auditions.
- Reading the text – the text (when used)⁵⁹ is the basis of the production so reading it in preparation for rehearsals—and in between rehearsals—is a necessity.
- Understanding theories of practical performance – the basic components of theatre performance are established through introducing specific theories and approaches to

⁵⁹ While I am referencing productions that use play texts here, a similar concept would apply in devised theatre, although the reading material might be different. Whatever the case, participating in a production requires reading and understanding skills.

using the voice and body as the tools of performance, and practicing ways of controlling these facilities.

- Using space – the production offers an active learning environment in which to explore the basics of scenography, how space is used to create the fictional world of a play, and performers' movement through the space. The opportunity here is to explore how spatial dynamics can alter the interpretation of text as well as focusing on the visual language that is so important in the contemporary context.
- Learning lines – obviously, one of the most basic skills for actors is the ability to learn, remember, and deliver the lines of the play. It is a skill, however, that is made infinitely easier in context. In terms of life-learning, this skill is rooted in the concept of discipline; it requires constant repetition and attention to detail, which teach focus, control, and commitment.
- Basics of acting a role/performance technique – the starting point for acting is understanding the character one is to portray. Learning acting technique without practical experience is virtually impossible; to become an actor requires one to act in as many different kinds of context as possible, which is how one learns versatility and control of one's instrument.

In summary, therefore, the foundation must be laid for students to understand the play, their roles in the play, the different elements of the production process, their responsibility, and their creative task. Ideally, all of these aspects are engaged both theoretically and practically, so that the experience is holistic and experiential; it is also constructivist in that the participants build on what they already know, improving with each production.

ii. Application

Application is putting into action the ideas we are learning about in the classroom and/or the rehearsal room. Crucially, the production is a space that requires real-life commitment and total participation; there is no room to hide since everyone involved must play their part in the final presentation for an audience. The rehearsal process for a production is a continuing, iterative experience of knowledge application; each time students work on a scene, for example, they receive directorial feedback, which is then incorporated

into their performances the next time the scene is rehearsed. The processes of application, thus, are ongoing, complex, and multidimensional since all levels are being employed simultaneously, as they would be in the 'real' world. Among the key learning areas here are:

- Understanding the demands of particular genres and styles of theatre – knowing what kind of play one is in, is key to developing a successful performance. We can explore genre and style theoretically, but we are able to grapple with their individual characteristics far more effectively when we experience those genres and style in action.
- Application of theories – the production provides an environment in which to explore theories in action. For example, staging a production of one of Brecht's plays allows students to engage with Brechtian theory in a hands-on, active manner. Similarly, other theories relating to acting, movement, voice, theatre history, or any other aspect of drama, become more accessible and useful when they are physically experienced as opposed simply to being studied.
- Thinking on one's feet – in rehearsals, new ideas and suggestions are being offered constantly as the process evolves; these experiences teach one to respond to stimulus and to think quickly, and because it is play, the pressure to deliver a 'correct' response is reduced. Similarly, engaging in improvisation and learning to react to all the different things that can happen during a performance gives students the experience of being self-reliant and able to respond to whatever is thrown their way. Thus, spontaneity is being encouraged and developed through production work, alongside the ability to cope with constantly-changing situations.
- Making acting choices – the primary job of the actor is to create characters in whom the audience can believe. To do this, actors must bring characters to life through their performance skills, so that the audience is able to suspend their disbelief and believe they are watching the unfolding of Hamlet's life, for example. However, each actor will play a character differently because at the heart of the characterisation process is actors making choices. Decision-making is a critical life-skill and working on a production requires continuous decision-making based on what is happening in any given moment.
- Language and meaning – the vast majority of plays employ language as a chief bearer of meaning. Being able to work with the language of a play, particularly if that language is challenging, provides an opportunity for students to improve their

language skills—both intellectually and orally—and their ability to make sense of language in multiple contexts. Language in life can act as a barrier between people; having production experiences where language questions are explored and resolved, might provide a way address these real-life concerns.

All three of Fink’s (2013) modes of thinking—critical, creative, and practical—happen in the production and are critical for life learning: to be conscious and aware and able to hold and express opinion and self-generated thinking (critical); to be inventive, self-reliant, capable of independent thinking, thinking outside the box, seeing possibilities (creative); able to implement ideas, moving from abstract to concrete, understanding the ramifications of decisions, recognising the idea of consequence, knowing how to manage oneself and others, working towards goals, problem-solving (practical). All of these emerge in application.

iii. Integration

The focus in this area is on bringing the different elements of learning into relationship with each other, ensuring that there is coherence between all the various individual pieces. The emphasis is on understanding the interwoven nature of the work, resulting in holistically engaged rather than atomised experience. When approached in this way, education becomes *useful* (beyond simply passing an examination) as we learn to connect different components together to create more complex experiences. In a formal theatre production, integration is vital not just in accomplishing the educational objective, but in making the production work for an audience – the disparate pieces all have to combine together to make meaning. This process would include:

- Playing – in that the playing begun in the initial phases of the process continues throughout, with the play becoming increasingly complex and layered through the progression.
- Character development – building authentic characters is a cumulative and iterative process, which happens through integrating the various ideas, opinions, choices, and actions that manifest themselves every time the actors work on the play.
- Working with set, costumes, lighting (and any other elements of the theatrical event) –integrating other concrete components with one’s personal work as a performer is also critical, since the actor acts within the world of the play. In life, ultimately, we

cannot isolate completely all the individual pieces of our experience; they affect us as total phenomena, and we must learn to adapt to that process. The production space quite literally shows how this occurs, both within an individual and for a group.

- Repetition – the French word for rehearsal is repetition, and it is useful to think about the production process as being rooted in repetition. We work through the play repeatedly, all the time deepening our level of understanding and interpretation, building the sense of coherence and ensuring the communication of the directorial concept. It is the repetition that drives the integration process since we cannot accomplish everything simultaneously; making the final production is instead an ongoing, developmental, iterative process.
- Joining the building blocks – this happens throughout the production experience. Those blocks are material and abstract, and include inanimate and animate components. To realise the production in performance requires the integration of text, directorial concept, design, costumes, lighting, sound, individual actors' portrayals of roles, the synergy that evolves from the operations of the cohesive ensemble, and finally the energy of the audience. This offers a parallel to the way life is constructed from multiple experiences and actions, and thus provides the kind of learning that can assist with these life skills.

iv. Human Dimension

Engaging the human dimension is about working with other people, and understanding how to be part of a high-functioning group dynamic. Since collaboration and communication are two of the key twenty-first century skills, the value of thinking about the human dimension of learning is significant. Life requires us constantly to interact with other people, both familiar and unfamiliar, and anything that provides practice in being able to do so with self-confidence, conviction and an openness of spirit is a powerful educational tool. In productions, such opportunities abound, since theatre is above all a collaborative art form. Some of the most important activities related to this dimension include:

- Building the ensemble – as I have discussed throughout this thesis, one of the core values of formal theatre productions is the sense of community they engender amongst the participants. Almost without exception, the performer-participants commented on the friendships and connections they made through participating in

productions, and this is testament to the efficacy of such ensemble work. The group must work together since the production can only succeed when every individual does their part; thus, group dynamics, and the communication and collaboration skills that go with them, become an essential component of the work, and their value is reinforced continually throughout the process. The beauty of the ensemble is that it allows for expressions of individuality while simultaneously ensuring a belief in common goals and the good of the whole. When someone feels assured as to their own contribution, they are more likely to allow the room for others to contribute, and in this way, the guidelines for doing so are embedded, to become available for future use in other contexts. The power of the ensemble as a learning community is one of the most significant components of PBL and certainly, as a director, I see it as an essential element for both the theatre-making and the educational purpose.

- Working with the director – students who participate in formal theatre productions invariably will have to learn to take direction. The ability to take a note, to accept constructive criticism, and to endeavour to improve on the basis of that critique, is a key factor in PBL. All sorts of life-learning skills are embedded in that process, from listening, to flexibility and adaptability, all of which are critical for twenty-first century life. Moreover, learning to engage in dynamic interaction, whether between equals or within the normally hierarchical relationships of director-actor, or teacher-student, and to be proactively responsive and actively willing to make such an effort, constitute vital learning for the world of work. No matter what is thrown at one, one must not shut down but instead rise to the challenge, and navigate between one's own feelings and the demands of one's leaders, be they directors, teachers, line managers or boards of directors. Further, in the instances where clear direction is not given, the structure of the production and the necessity to produce a final presentation, provide an experience in self-management and discipline that are equally important for future employers and employees.
- Working for the audience – on another level, a production provides experience in being assessed and evaluated because of the presence of the audience in performances. As I noted in scene 9, the necessary presence of the audience is perhaps the most significant difference between PBL and other forms of dramatic education, and it is another opportunity to function within the human dimension. Fink (2013) suggests that what he calls “feedback and applause” (p. 107) are crucial

components of the learning experience; we must know how we are doing in our work and we must be given the reward of approval when something is well done. Both of these are of primary importance to formal theatre production: Both the director (repeatedly) and the audience (in their reactions) are constantly dispensing feedback throughout the process, and this can be enhanced with detailed and frequent reflexive exercises. Similarly, when the audience applauds, the sense of achievement is made palpable. Of course, there are times when an audience might not applaud quite so loudly, but invariably there will be specific reasons for this, especially when the production is an educational context and audiences attend with an awareness of the learning agenda; and even in those circumstances, the opportunity for feedback and learning from the interactive experience is significant.

- Improvisation, listening, creativity – the improvisatory process is used throughout a production experience, both formally and informally. Actors must always be able to improvise and respond to what is happening in the present moment; this is the nature of live theatre. At heart, improvisation is an interactive project, and is rooted in listening and responding to what is given as stimulus. As noted above, this is training (or re-training, perhaps) of the spontaneous impulse and above all teaches the capacity for invention and imaginative engagement. Both of these are critical twenty-first century skills and indeed, constitute the basis of creativity, which is arguably the most important skill we need to encourage and nurture as educators.

v. Caring

Fink (2013) suggests that caring is in relation to the subject, the self, and the other people involved in any particular project (p. 56). Therefore, when discussing the notion of caring, one can examine it in relation to how the production (a) makes students care about drama as a discipline, (b) makes students care about their own self-growth, and (c) makes students care about those with whom—and for whom—they are working. From my perspective, the caring dimension is fundamentally about engaging in the experience of compassion and shared humanity; this, for me personally, is the ultimate purpose of education, since I am interested in educating students to be more compassionate, humane citizens of the world. In productions, there are innumerable (potential) instances of caring: As I note in the graphic for PBL (see Figure 19 below), these include the necessity for

supporting each other through the process since everyone in the ensemble is equally important and equally responsible; participating fully in the community of practice and caring about the other members all of whom might be at different levels of experience but all of whom also must matter to the final product. Taking the work seriously, and recognising that it matters for oneself, for one's fellow cast members, for the director and other members of the production team, and for the audience is something that was noted by a number of performer-participants. All of these can be teaching and learning opportunities.

There are two additional aspects that I want to foreground here that are particularly important for my version of PBL: generosity and empathy. At the core of my belief about theatre is a sense of generosity – rather than arrogance or self-centredness, one must make the work and share it with a sense of that generosity, as if it were a gift one is giving, both to oneself and to the audience. When that happens, the production becomes more than just a piece of entertainment or a university exercise, it becomes a sharing of our sense of humanity and human experience. Similarly, I have written often in this thesis about empathy, and what a crucial capacity I believe it to be for theatre-making and education, indeed for life; empathy enables us to learn understanding, tolerance, acceptance, compassion, all the qualities whose absence creates suffering and injustice in the world. Clearly, these are my personal views and PBL does not have to foster these specific goals, but they do provide an example of how one might educate through, and about, caring in relation to any set of goals or beliefs.

vi. Learning How to Learn

This is what my thesis, finally, is interrogating: the metacognitive possibilities of PBL, and the notion of transferable learning and potential for change. Education must be for more than just getting a diploma or a degree; it must be about preparation for life and for the continual learning that it will demand. Thus, we seek for learning that translates into other contexts and other circumstances, a learning that provides the individual with the capacity to be a life-long learner, learning and adjusting as and when necessary. The educational ideas that I have referenced in this thesis, all the kinds of learning that I uncovered in my participant-responses, all are, finally, about furthering the goal of learning how to learn. At the most basic level, the production creates a space for learning about meaning-making, how it comes through experience, and for discovering how to process different experiences, and

find one's place within them. Whether it is learning lines, reading the text, or listening to the director's notes, the core of the process requires the participant to make meaning from the various aspects. This is, however, just the starting point: Other transferable skills include independent thinking; adaptability to change; confidence and flexibility; imagination and creative thinking; trusting oneself; knowing how to ask for help when needed, and knowing how to integrate that help with one's own unique perspective; recognising the need to take risks and finding the courage to do so; and discovering the immense power of grit as a vital quality for life. All of these skills I have discussed in more detail at various stages throughout the thesis, and they are all linked in the notion of self-concept – that thing we must build to become high functioning members of society, that we must nurture to become self-directing learners, and that we must rely on to carve a space in the world. This is the kind of deep learning finally that I seek to foster through my directing and teaching practice. I believe the formal theatre production operates as a laboratory, constructing a learning environment in which multiple and varied experiences are possible, and facilitates the final piece of the educational puzzle, which is the development of self-generated, self-driven, self-constructed knowledge. It is also, finally, for me, not just learning how to learn, but learning how to live – a better life, a life that engages humanity, empathy, and caring for the world and the people in it.

In Figure 19, I have constructed a graphic representation of PBL in relation to the taxonomy of significant learning as a tool for educators wishing to engage in PBL to use. It encapsulates the ideas discussed above:

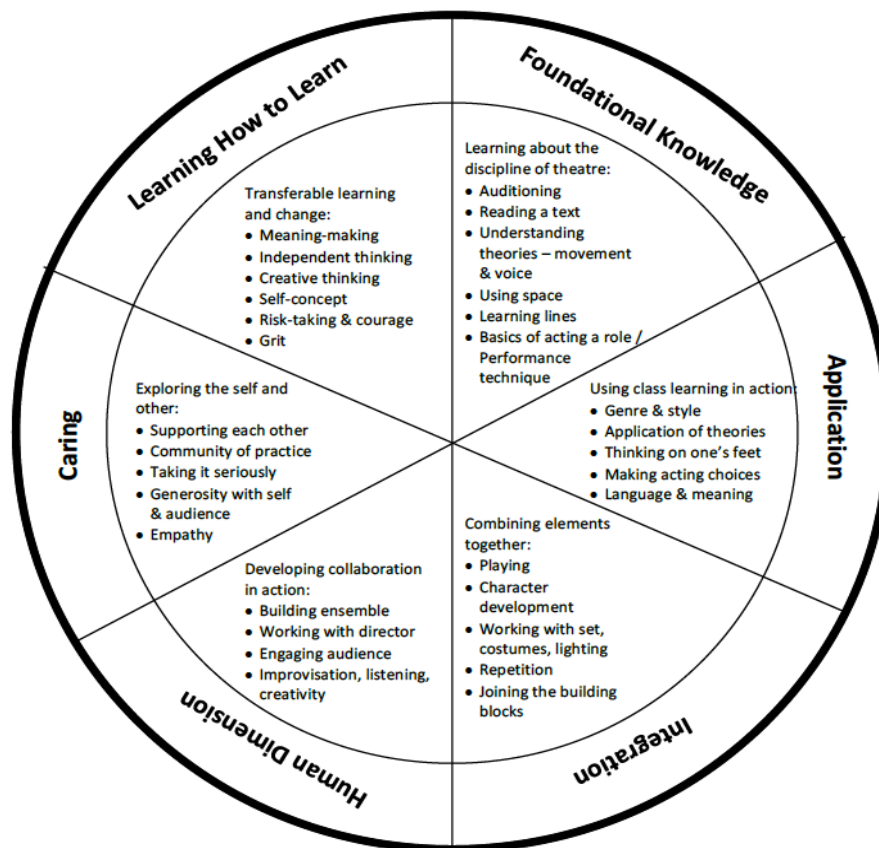


Figure 19. Production-Based Learning and Fink's Taxonomy.

The circle reminds us always that the elements of the taxonomy do not operate hierarchically; rather, they are co-existent, happening simultaneously and across multiple layers of meaning. They are equal parts of a holistic experience, and *together* can make for deep learning and twenty-first century education. Fink (2013) notes that “when a course or learning experience is able to promote all six kinds of learning, one has a learning experience that can be deemed significant” (p. 38). This is the kind of learning I believe is offered through formal theatre productions. Each component is not isolated in a silo, but together they operate synchronically and diachronically, simultaneously and through time, not separated but linked and sewn together – just as the production is made of multiple individual parts that when connected, make meaning. This education is holistic and engages the student in ongoing, continuous learning processes that continue long after the production itself is only a memory.

10.5 Structuring PBL

While I am not here engaging in detailed curriculum development, in order to understand PBL, I think it is helpful to consider how a PBL module might negotiate some of the core concerns that may arise during that process. Using Fink's (2013) significant learning approach again, the most important thing is to provide an experience, which Fink (2013) describes as "doing and observing" (p. 115), and to get students to reflect on that experience. To do this, he argues, "we need to incorporate more active modes of learning into the design of the course experience" (Fink, 2013, p. 116). For me, a formal theatre production is an example of such an active learning experience.

The key question to be asked, according to Fink (2013), relates to "What it is that you want students to do with this subject after the course is over" (p. 116). In scene 9, I described eight learning areas that I believe are appropriate goals for PBL: disciplinary, personal, interactional, emotional, expressive, responsive, cultural, and organisational learning. Thus, when developing a course outline for a specific instance of PBL, these overall learning goals should be the guiding factors. Fink (2013) refers to courses that seek to engender significant learning as having "integrated course design" (p. 68), and suggests they must include three basic elements: learning goals, teaching and learning activities, feedback and assessment, which are then combined with situational factors (p. 69). There are five questions that must be addressed in designing a learning experience:

1. What are the important situational factors in a particular course and learning situation?
2. What should our full set of learning goals be?
3. What kinds of feedback and assessment should we provide?
4. What kinds of teaching and learning activities will suffice, in terms of achieving the full set of learning goals we set?
5. Are all the components connected and integrated, that is, are they consistent with and supportive of each other? (Fink, 2013, p. 70, original emphasis)

In developing a PBL model, we can use these same questions to structure an exemplar programme.

Situational factors include the context for the teaching and learning, the demands of the discipline, the characteristics of the learners and the teachers, and any specific

pedagogical challenges (Fink, 2013, p. 76-77). Thus, we would start with the question who are the students that will participate in this PBL course, where are we located, what background do they have, what level of study are they at, etc., in other words, the context for our theatre production.

Establishing the **learning goals** depends on the specific nature of the production, but the primary obvious goal will be to deliver the production for performance. To that basic goal, can be added any number of other desired outcomes depending on what the situational factors have established. For me, these goals would encompass the eight areas already highlighted and a focus on twenty-first century life-learning.

Feedback and assessment would consist first of the performances of the production for the audience for whom it is made. As noted throughout this thesis, I consider the presence of the audience a crucial and defining feature of PBL. Beyond that, however, it is possible to build in multiple forms of feedback and assessment, including such things as evaluating the progress made by individual students, engaging reflexivity in written and oral forms, peer assessment, small group projects, and the like, as well as more traditional elements such as essays and examinations. The key is what kind of essays and examinations, and those would connect back to the particular production that is the core of the experience.

In terms of **teaching and learning activities**, PBL can draw on multiple methods of instruction; critically, though, all of these methods must be connected to the overall purpose of the exercise which is to deliver the production for an audience. In addition, I would argue that the teaching and learning processes should seek to engage constructivist ideas and focus on collaborative, active learning. This does not mean that we abandon the lecture or the seminar entirely; rather, it is that those educational forms become part of the integrated design to deliver a coherent, holistic learning experience. Moreover, productions offer the opportunity for teacher-, or director-guided learning, small group project learning, and self-learning, all of which are part of a typical production preparation process.

Finally, **connection and integration** are relatively simple to achieve if the focal point of the production is kept at the forefront of all other pedagogical choices. As the director, I would say that everything is done for the ‘good of the production’; that phrase has as its corollary, that everything that is done feeds that production and that the learning agenda is

therefore coherent, integrated and holistic. Working towards the same goal provides the participants with the kind of experience where synergies become apparent, deep learning can take root, and significant learning can emerge. Thus, the knowledge acquired from participating in the production “becomes the basis for achieving several kinds of learning—learning how to use the content and how to integrate it with other realms of knowledge, understanding its personal and social implications, and so forth” (Fink, 2013, p. 65).⁶⁰

As is evident from all of the above, the model is flexible and personal; each director-teacher will bring to it their own perspectives and educational agendas. Similarly, each group of students who participates will offer a different set of challenges and possibilities. This combination makes for exciting learning, and hopefully enthusiastic teacher-directors. Finally, though, this kind of work allows the creative artist that is part of the drama-teacher identity a voice and a space to work within. PBL, thus, is not the only kind of dramatic education for which I would advocate, but I do believe it has sufficient educational potential to be included in the possibilities available to drama educators.

Most of the dramatic education theories I discussed in scene 5 suggest that the power of drama (or theatre) to teach lies primarily in role-play and improvisation, and that its fundamental premises involve problem-solving, exploring human action and motivation, and using participants’ existing knowledge. Virtually all of these can apply equally to productions; the focal point and emphasis might shift, and the presence of the audience is a key difference, but these are not hindrances to the learning. In fact, I believe they possibly increase it. Certainly, I remember more from the productions I participated in than from any classroom exercises. PBL’s unique features are that it involves directors, actors, and audiences, and perhaps a higher degree of self-motivation amongst its participants. There is the potential for joy in productions and that joy translates to joy in learning, which is perhaps the most important message we can give our students.

⁶⁰ In Appendix 11, I offer an example of a generic drama course outline developed along the principles I have outlined here, which demonstrates how such a programme might be structured.

10.6 The Role of the Director-Teacher in PBL

The final component of PBL is to position the director-teacher at its centre. This is the role that I have come to understand through my research process. I always saw the director role and the teaching role as related, but separate, and, to be honest, I preferred being a director because I believed it to be the more creative and rewarding aspect of my work in higher education. However, as a result of this self-study, my grappling with my directing practice, my understanding of dramatic education, and my development of an educational philosophy, I have learned that the two aspects of my ‘self’ are not just related, but indeed are completely intertwined, informing each other with increasing seamlessness as I learn more about both directing and teaching, and, paradoxically, realise how much more there is yet to learn as I improve both aspects of my educative self.

The self-knowledge I refer to above did not come in a blinding flash of inspiration. For much of my thesis journey, I believed that the life-learning that was happening through formal theatre productions was largely unintentional, even accidental, since my goal was always first and foremost to make a successful production. The participants’ word-portraits, my RSI, and my interview with Tanya, exposed me to a whole other set of understandings that began to shift my perceptions. Perhaps the most important idea to emerge from my thesis personally is my sense now that both my directing and my teaching can be improved immeasurably by recognising their symbiotic relationship, and by seeking to explore more deliberately the learning potential of the production work, so it is not just tangential but in fact, central. After all, the most significant learning is always that which relates to life as opposed to a single discipline, as was repeatedly pointed out in the participant responses.

The beauty of production work is that students can meet us from wherever they find themselves and grow from there. As Fink (2013) observes, “When facing a high challenge. . . a person has to learn new and better skills. Once greater skills have developed, the person is ready for new challenges, which call for the learning of additional or better skills. And the cycle goes on and on” (p. 170). Further, because each person brings their knowledge into the process with them, we do not have to enforce the learning, we facilitate it, operating like a “helmsman” (Fink, 2013, p.278), whose job is “to steer and to coordinate the efforts of the oarsmen” (p. 279), which is how Fink describes the teacher wanting to engage in significant learning.

As I have come to understand, directors and teachers actually do very similar things, if using different lenses. As the director, I must:

- Prepare – understanding my task, what I need to do and how I will go about it;
- Read and analyse – choosing a play (or an idea), and analysing it in order fully to understand it and its multiple potential meanings;
- Imagine and conceptualise – determining the approach I will use and developing a directorial concept;
- Visualise and interpret – creating the visual language for the production as I understand it;
- Build a community of practice – ensuring that that group becomes not just separate people working together but a genuine ensemble, a community working toward the same goal;
- Use ideas and exchange and/or transfer knowledge – working collaboratively with the actors, sharing ideas, and building the work together;
- Analyse and assess – watching the actors’ work in rehearsal and assessing it continually in order to give notes and improve it;
- Guide and instruct – exploring collaboratively and interactively, but also knowing when to make the important decisions for the good of the production;
- Encourage and control – knowing when to play, and when to be more definitive, giving feedback and applause when necessary and also knowing when to stop the discussions and make the work happen;
- Challenge and believe – asking students to take the risks that will bring them the rewards, and showing them the belief they can succeed;
- Demand excellence – insisting they do the necessary work and take themselves, and it, seriously;
- Protect and nurture – ensuring that they feel safe at all times and being there to catch them if they fall, doing no harm always;
- Reflect and learn – remembering that there is always learning to be done, room to grow, and discoveries to be made to do better next time.

I believe, from writing the personal directing history narrative that began my research journey, that all of these aspects are built into my directing practice. What has gradually

become clearer for me, is that as a teacher, I must pursue and fulfil the very same functions. Every one of the above tasks are equally applicable to my work as a teacher in the production, or in a classroom; teaching requires the same kind of investment as does directing a play. Thus, the concept of a director-teacher seems like a natural evolution of the role for someone like me, an artist who wants to be creative but who also teaches in an institution of higher learning where those demands are as important—if not more so—than the art being produced. There are, however, three additional aspects attached to the work of theatre-making: the aesthetic element, the performance element, and the audience element. These might not always be present in a non-drama classroom, although sometimes they are. For me, though, these three elements are precisely what give formal theatre productions such power as learning environments

Fink (2013) suggests that “Good teaching and learning . . . require good interaction between teachers and students” (p. 283), and that leadership involves “motivating and enabling others to do important things well” (p. 286). The same principles apply to directing. If the subject (here, theatre – or drama) is the centre for this “hub of relationships” (Fink 2013, p. 287), then, “the teacher and the students [are] fellow learners trying to learn some truth about the subject” (p. 287). This is the same basic relationship that must be built between director and actors working together on a play – each is necessary for the other’s journey.

Thus, in thinking about how to approach teaching through productions, I think the most important thing to remember is that it is a learning journey: I see the role of the director-teacher as being to provide opportunities to learn, possibilities to explore, mysteries to solve, treasures to seek, and wisdom to discover. We are, in effect, creating a learning map which our students might follow to find their own paths. In his study *What the Best College Students Do*, Ken Bain (2012) offers this vision:

Imagine for a moment a different world, a place in which students find deep meaning in everything they learn. In that universe, learning changes who people are and how they view the world. It makes them into better problem solvers, more creative and compassionate individuals, more responsible and self-confident people. Students are able to think about the implications and applications of what they learn. Not afraid to make mistakes and full of questions and ideas, the citizens of this place easily and happily explore new areas with ease while possessing a deep humility

about how complex their world can be. Learning remains an adventure. Someone may forget a few facts but still know how to find them when needed. (p. 9)

For me, PBL offers one possible map by which we might explore such a world.

EPILOGUE: WHAT REMAINS...

I have always been fascinated by maps – concrete representations of journeying along myriad pathways, many possibilities; I’ve also always thought that the lines on them are relatively arbitrary, especially in Africa – drawn in an office somewhere with little thought for how the people who lived there might be affected. The traditional ‘map’ of academia left me always feeling lost and directionless; I did not know how to belong in that world. By trusting my theatre roots, and following the untraveled routes (for me) of education and self-study, I have begun to draw my own map, or to re-draw it. I feel a little like Columbus or Diaz must have felt when they realised there was a whole new world in front of them, open for them to explore. Those explorers took huge leaps of faith – trusting something would be there even as they sailed away from everything and everyone they knew. I, too, have had to make the leap in order to embark on the journey of becoming I spoke about in the Prologue; the reward is in the learning.

I began my study by confessing that I was by inclination and initial training neither a director nor a teacher, but an actor, and that it was from the “as-yet-unmapped space” of a director-teacher that I embarked on my self-study. I wanted to discover the relationship between the roles of director and teacher as I inhabit them, and in so doing examine the results of my labour—the formal theatre productions I direct in a university context—as sites of teaching and learning. My journey began from “a space of not-knowing” (Pithouse-Morgan & Pillay, 2013, p.6); each step along the way, brought new knowledge and new questions that guided the next choice of destination, in an ongoing process of forward-mapping. This thesis chronicles my exploration of the relationships between theatre, directing, education, and productions, and thus, effectively constitutes the map that guided my journey. If the Prologue referenced “becoming,” in this Epilogue I want to articulate what, and who, I have become through this research process, and how my identity-construct as a director-teacher has evolved. The map is my own; I make no claims to generalisability or objectivity. It is my story, anchored in my roots, and traced through the routes of my thinking, to my understanding of the educational value of participation in formal theatre productions, for theatre training and for life. It might be called the map of my directorial-pedagogy for life-learning.

A Ticket to Travel

Self-study provided me with the metaphorical ticket that allowed me to embark on my journey. Until I discovered self-study as a methodology, I had no framework with which to research what I was interested in, namely the educative value of formal theatre productions from my perspective as someone who directs them in an institution of higher learning. By working in the self-study paradigm, I have been able to position my “praxis-oriented self” (Pensoneau-Conway & Toyosaki, 2011) and my “personal practical knowledge” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 579) at the centre of my research journey. Self-study requires “a stepping back, a reading of our situated selves as if it were a text to be critically interrogated and interpreted within the broader social, political, and historical contexts that shape our thoughts and actions and constitute our world” (Pithouse, Mitchell & Webber, 2009, p. 45). As such, it enabled me to examine who I am as a director working in higher education, and to understand my directing practice as a phenomenon in that context. The dialogic nature of self-study ensured that I could see myself in relation to others—my fellow-travellers, as it were—thus exploring my practice intersubjectively and, crucially, as subject to change. Fundamentally, as Bridget Campbell (2018) notes in her doctoral thesis, self-study is not undertaken as “an egotistical navel-gazing exercise” (p. 31), but rather to “make changes that will impact both inside and outside of the classroom and . . . have positive results for the students’ learning” (p. 31). This goal guided my travels, enabling me to bring my directing and teaching selves into close contact with each other to discover their existing connections, and make new ones. In scene 3, I spoke of theatre as a “change agent”; I believe that self-study too functions as a change agent, facilitating altered perceptions, deeper understandings, and new insights that together improve our practice as educators, and as artists. I believe, too, that it is indeed multi-paradigmatic—straddling the interpretive, critical, and postmodern paradigms—allowing for the exploration of individual perception and experience, the transformation of self and other, and the embracing of multiple representational modes.

A Passport

My personal history and SPNs operated like travel documents, allowing me to visit the various sites on my map. By beginning with myself, I was able to root my study in my own history and identity; liberated into a research space where the self is the focal point rather than something to be ignored, I felt able to tackle the key concern of how that self

intersects and overlaps with everything and everyone else in the continually evolving effort to make meaning from what we do. The memory work I undertook to write my personal history of becoming a director allowed me to revisit and unpack many of the shaping experiences of my life as an emergent artist. The SPN I constructed explored my evolving understanding of learning and what education means for me, providing the bedrock for my emergent educational philosophy. I told my stories, not as ends in themselves, but to open windows into who I am, what I do, and why, for myself and for others, so that I could then place my discoveries under the metaphorical microscope and learn from them. I could not look to the future without first understanding my past and its influence on what that future might look like. Moreover, exploring the intersections, continuities and situations (Clandinin, 2006) of my narratives has allowed me to see the connections, to note the places of comfort and discomfort, to locate the highs and confront the lows, and thus, to trace the paths of my experience as a director-teacher.

Points on the Map

In my journey, there were two main ports of call on my map. The first is the world of theatre-making – the space in which my directing practice is located. It is the place closest to home because I have spent so much time here; it is the place where I practice my art, which reflects my worldview and my values. To interrogate that space required me “to go outside myself in order to see my external world in a different way” (Nash, 2004, p. 60), to ‘make it strange’ as Brecht might have said. Doing that enabled me to reflect critically on my identity as a director in order to construct and understand my identity as a director-teacher. Thus, my “narrative of experience” (Clandinin, 1985, p. 363) constituted the preface to discovering the educational value of the formal theatre productions that are the product of my directorial practice.

The second point on my map marks the world of education – the space in which my teaching practice is located. This was a place quite foreign to me at the start of my research journey. What I knew of education was limited to my own experiences of teaching and learning, and to what I knew about the theories of dramatic education. About education more broadly, I knew relatively little, and was thus traveling into the unknown. Not wanting to get lost, I followed the markers I knew to get to where I believed I needed to go. Thus, I moved from my personal experience of education, through the stages of dramatic education (both the

familiar and the unfamiliar), into the vast sea of knowledge that is educational theory, seeking understanding and a way to explain what I believed was taking place in my formal theatre productions. Operating as a bricoleur, I drew from multiple sources and utilised many different conceptual tools to construct a web of learning in which to situate my formal theatre productions in order to understand them as sites of teaching and learning. Thus, I examined the debates around how drama and theatre are navigated in the educational context to make sense of dramatic education as a concept; I interrogated how formal theatre productions are negotiated in the dramatic education arena; and I explored multiple educational theories to extract the key components of my educational bricolage. Through this process, I developed a framework for my personal philosophy of education: It is experiential, constructivist, and social; it is located in the Learning Paradigm and seeks to engender deep learning; and it belongs in the realm of arts-based educational methods. Travelling this route led me finally to significant learning (Fink, 2013) and a model for teaching and learning that could serve my imagined construct, PBL.

Travelling Companions

In the self-study universe, one does not travel alone – for it to be effective, there has to be a dialogue with others embarked on one’s journey; similarly, SPN writing seeks “the point of intersection between I and you [that] becomes the we” (Nash, 2004, p. 127). I had many people alongside me on my journey: my supervisor, my colleague and collaborator, my critical friends, my self-reflexive community, all of whom helped shape my learning. There were my colleague-participants whose insightful observations propelled many of my discoveries. Most of all, there were the performer-participants whose stories formed the other half of my dialogic narrative. Their responses and insights guided my search; the learning they described and demonstrated, experienced through their participation in the formal theatre productions I directed, illuminated my thinking.

This point on my map marks not only the contribution of the participants, but also the methodological inventions I drew on to elicit the responses—the word-portraits—and to interrogate the data. I knew I needed to retain the participant voices so I explored CAP to find a creative means of communication, leading me to my data-play, and the dialogic exploration of learning it chronicles. My participant stories provided the seeds from which my identity as a director-teacher began to grow.

The Tracks of my Learning

The various stops on my metaphorical journey led me eventually to my imagined model for PBL. I do not offer this model from the perspective of knowing all the answers or to prescribe an exclusionary way of working; I offer it to make explicit my knowings and in so doing to “draw larger implications from my personal story” (Nash, 2004, p. 60). I discovered these knowings and implications through examining my own practice in dialogue with critical friends, participants, literature, and various texts (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), arriving finally in a space from which I was able to articulate an answer to my research question. Thus, if I ask what value do formal theatre productions in higher education have in relation to teaching and learning, I can now hazard a response. I think they have significant value and I believe that now, not just because it is my instinctive—and experiential—response, but because my research process has unpacked and revealed how and why formal theatre productions work as sites for teaching and learning.

They work because they create environments for active, engaged learning. Nash (2004) calls this “authentic learning” (p. 108), and crucially, it is “both for teachers and students” (p. 108). The formal theatre production is an intersubjective phenomenon; it works through shared exploration, dialogic exchange, mutual responsibility, and co-constructed meaning. Students who participate in these formal theatre productions become part of a unique community of practice that creates a safe, shared space in which to explore meaning-making without fear.

Wanting to understand the process more deeply and seeking to theorise it more formally, I explored the how and the why of the learning from formal theatre productions. Thus, I extracted from my participant stories evidence of core practices—play, activating the imagination, identification and empathy, working as an ensemble, spontaneity and improvisation, and flow—that offer one possible set of explanations for the kind of learning that is taking place. These are the experiences that make drama a “productive pedagogy” (O’Toole, 2002, p. 52).

Probing even deeper, I asked why do students learn from their participation in formal theatre productions? O’Toole (2002) suggests it happens because “Drama is both about

exploring—discovering and creating—and about performing [and] creating *models*—models of behaviour and action that can be practised and performed safely” (p. 49, original emphasis). While agreeing with this position, I added my own specific understanding of why productions educate. Thus, I referenced the four key tenets—reflexivity, dialogic learning, the presence of the audience, and recognition—that for me explain the efficacy of theatre as a learning medium.

These thoughts represent my learning: how I have *constructed* knowledge, *experienced* it, *processed* it, using my own *reflexive lens*, seeking my own *deep learning*. They are my map’s destination, even more than PBL, because they reflect the change in myself. The playwright David Greig (2008) wrote, “Theatre cannot change the world, but it can offer a moment of liberated space through which we can change ourselves” (p. 220); coming to understand what, how, and why formal theatre productions educate has liberated my own thinking, allowing the change that is critical for growth to occur.

Unvisited Places

Of course, I could not visit every part of the map. The limitations of this study reflect the limits of my exploration. First, this study is retrospective, so it does not test these ideas in action, so to speak, but in memory, for both the participants and myself. As such, it will, of necessity, suffer from memory’s vicissitudes; however, I believe that the multiple methods used as well as the breadth of responses have, to some extent, alleviated that concern. It would be interesting to do a similar study with students who are participating in a current production, although it would raise other issues.

Second, my study engages primarily with formal theatre productions as extracurricular activities. Thus, those participating clearly are self-motivated and want to be there. I do not know whether similar areas of learning would emerge were the productions to be part of a curriculum or compulsory for participants. In particular, it would be interesting to see whether the findings would be the same or if the learning would be less, where the participation is not necessarily autotelic.

Third, this self-study is specific to my personal context at UKZN, and the particular structures of the department in which I work, where productions are increasingly less evident.

Further study would involve interrogating the question of the educational value of formal theatre productions in different contexts, and to see how much would translate.

Finally, I am referencing in this study only my own directing; it would be useful to examine the experiences of other directors working in higher education contexts in relation to the core research question. In addition, the PBL model I have developed is largely theoretical, and would benefit from being tested in practice.

Itineraries for Future Travel

There are many other places to which I might travel, having made this journey, as it has established many more questions to explore. In scene 1, I referenced Cole's (2008) study of directing in a university context, which suggests there is a lack of literature on how academics negotiate the relationship between the teacher and director roles that they straddle. My thesis offers one response to this situation, but there are many other possible avenues to follow. Because productions are coherent events in and of themselves, there are infinite possibilities one could pursue. There are also a number of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary possibilities connected to PBL, as well as expanding into other taxonomies besides Fink's (2015), which might reshape PBL in any number of different ways. There is room to explore in more detail the concept of the director-teacher, and to develop models of working within that dynamic that might contribute to the development of directing practice, combining theory, practice, technique and philosophy. In a sense, all of these evoke van Manen's (1990) observation, that "what we need more of is theory not consisting of generalisations, which we then have difficulty applying to concrete, and ever-changing circumstances, but theory of the unique" (p. 229), and that we can begin to discover these theories "by strengthening the intimacy of the relationship between research and life" (p. 229). This makes exploration possible in directing, teaching, learning, and self-study more generally.

My Footprints

What, then, have I left behind as my mark on this map of formal theatre productions as sites of teaching and learning? What is the "so what" of my study?

Clearly, the most obvious conclusion is that formal theatre productions offer rich opportunities for promoting many kinds of learning. In scene 5, I spoke about giving PBL a seat at the table of dramatic education discourse. While there is some movement towards expanding dramatic education parameters to include more theatre-work, it is still relatively under-represented. Thus, I see my chief contribution to the discourse as being to offer an argument in support of recognising formal theatre productions not just as fun projects for those few interested in acting, but for everyone engaged in dramatic learning. Not least this is because productions offer an holistic method of education that focuses on the totality of the experience, not simply teaching towards an examination or a final grade.

Apart from my central conclusions, I want to reference two additional sets of “footprints” that I believe are useful. First, as regards education and pedagogy, using bricolage as a method, I have mapped a practical and usable model for PBL that can operate as a means for promoting twenty-first century learning, both in relation to the theatre/drama discipline, to life-learning in general, and especially for the 4Cs that are so critical as we move deeper into Sardar’s (2010) postnormal world.

Second, in relation to a methodological contribution, I have mapped connections between self-study and SPN, by combining the personal history method and the SPN in my discussion of myself as director, learner, teacher, and director-teacher. Effectively, I used SPN *as* a method *for* self-study, thus offering another potential mode of exploration to the self-study methodology tool-box. I have also engaged with methodological inventiveness in developing the RSI (with Singh and van der Walt), using layered writing to highlight the relationship between memory and reflection, creating the word-portraits as a data-generating device, and in employing the disciplinary construct of a play both as a frame for my overall study and as CAP in presenting my data. Finally, alongside my critical friend and colleague, Tanya van der Walt, I am engaged in ongoing exploration of the synergies between self-study and practice-based research as methods for artists to use in interrogating and theorising their practice, of which this thesis is one result.

Coming Home

Returning ‘home’ allows me to reflect on my thesis as a whole. I chose to write it in the form of a play, to connect to my theatre roots. Discussing how theatre teaches, Levy

(2005) suggests that it does so through “three things: what it elicits—curiosity, a thirst for thoroughness; what it expunges or debunks—misconceptions, fixed ideas; and what it leaves behind when it is over, that is to say, what remains” (p. 24). As a director-teacher, everything that I believe, value, and do leads me to agree: That question—“what remains”—points to the end of my journey. It applies to my directing practice, to my teaching practice, to PBL, and to this thesis: What remains?

Levy’s (2005) answer to his own question is that “Only emotion endures” (p. 25), and that theatre teaches “by *what it causes us to retain of what we have felt*” (p. 25, original emphasis). He calls these the “shadow-tracks of emotion” (Levy, 2005, p. 25) and sees them as part of the “rich, unconscious storehouse and archive of our emotional life” (p. 25). This viewpoint helps me to answer my questions. Thus, I want to remember that the efficacy of my pedagogical practice cannot be measured in the immediate or even short term, it is measured by what remains. What remains from participating in formal theatre productions has been articulated in multiple ways by my performer-participants, and their responses overwhelmingly suggest that what remains are powerful memories and deep learning about theatre, yes, but also about life and how to live it. Both my director-self and my teacher-self are thus invested in creating rich, nuanced experiences that will carve deep shadow-tracks of emotion within my performers/students, and build vast storehouses of self-belief, accomplishment and agency that can be accessed long after the productions themselves have passed into memory.

This is also how education works—and why I wanted my performer-participants to be people who had already graduated—the traces remain, and our responses to them, the core memories that shape identity. This is evident in my own personal history: I don’t remember every specific thing I learned from Mr. W, but I remember the feeling it left me with, the kind of emotional connection made. From him, I learned to love learning and to find a way to make it interesting, life lessons that have shaped my identity long after the history lessons themselves were forgotten. Similarly, the memory of the productions for the participants remain—not the specific details or the day-to-day positives and negatives, perhaps, but the feelings they evoked. What remains is the sense of accomplishment and the self-belief engendered by doing something for oneself, with other people, and being witnessed by those other people and the ones who come to watch. This is what delineates production experience from others in the dramatic education field, and what makes it uniquely powerful for me.

I do not yet know what will remain from this thesis-writing experience; but three ideas—three “shadow tracks”—I believe, will continue to guide me through whatever new territories I may traverse, providing the routes for me to follow. All three are rooted in Ann Bogart’s philosophical advice:

1. “Ultimately, our job is not to teach others but to learn with them” (2007, p. 88).

I have discovered a philosophy of education that guides an intersubjective process, and liberates me from the role of “the-one-who-knows” (Wagner, 1976, p. 41). One thing that will remain is the necessity to be not a demagogue, but a co-creator and co-explorer.

2. “The world is a lesser place when compassion or the ability to empathize are lacking” (2007, p. 67).

I always knew that compassion was one of my core personal values. I have discovered through this thesis an understanding of empathy that goes beyond the instinctual and recognises how compassion is rooted in shared, dialogic experiences. Another thing that will remain is my capacity for empathy, for an ethic of care towards those I teach and direct.

3. “We create journeys for others to be received in the spirit of a gift” (2001, p. 5).

For as long as I have been a director and a teacher, I have spoken about generosity, and that what we do as teachers and directors is to offer gifts to whichever audience might be watching. I have discovered through this research process a way to articulate the root of this generosity which, for me, lies in responding to the human need for recognition, for what Martin Buber (1965) calls the “‘Yes’ that allows [a person] to be and can come. . . only from one human person to another” (p. 71). The final thing I know will remain, is my willingness—and hope—to offer to those I teach and direct that affirming “yes,” that is, finally, the gift of theatre.

Self-study, finally, is not just about answering questions, but about asking them because questions open our minds to new possibilities. I began my study wanting to research my directing practice because it was important to me primarily as a creative artist. Doing this study—asking the questions—has allowed me to see my directing a little differently: It is the pebble that sets the ripples going. Each ripple creates its own questions, allowing for an infinity of potential discoveries. Thus, the map expands into new countries, with new mountains, and oceans, and landscapes to be explored, and charted, and embedded into the

cartography of my life and my learning, with roots and routes intertwining to navigate my journey.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



15 November 2012

Ms Tamar Meskin 841840635
School of Education – Language and Arts Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Meskin

Protocol reference number: HSS/1217/012D
Project title: Teaching from the Director's Chair: A narrative self-study of my directing practice

Expedited Approval

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor Dr Lorraine Singh
cc Academic Dr D Davids
cc School Admin. Mrs S Naicker

Professor S Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee
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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



APPENDIX 2: CHANGE OF TITLE



06 November 2019

Ms Tamar Meskin (841840635)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Meskin,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1217/012D

New project title: Theatre Roots, Learning Routes: A self-study of my directing practice in higher education

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 11 July 2019 has now been approved as follows:

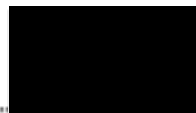
- Change in Title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



Professor Urmilla Bob
University Dean of Research

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Lorraine Singh
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Ansurie Pillay
Cc School Administrator: Ms M Ngcobo

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APPENDIX 3: MY PERSONAL HISTORY NARRATIVE

1. I Was Always a ‘Drama Queen’ . . .

It might be said that destiny determined my career would be in theatre: My parents met during a theatrical production (my father was acting, my mother was the stage manager) and they continued to be involved in amateur theatre productions throughout my childhood, writing, directing, and performing in them. Thus, I grew up in a theatre-friendly space. As a teenager, I would stage elaborate theatrical productions of Shakespeare’s plays in our lounge, involving my brother, sister, and our friends in these efforts, in which I always played the main role (sometimes more than one!). My parents had instilled in me a love of Shakespeare early on – my father read me Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare* (1886) when I was very young, and encouraged me to read the plays on my own, which I did. As I read, I would imagine the plays as they would have been performed, and envisage myself acting in them. Recognising my love of drama, my parents organised extra-curricular drama classes for me and so my official study of the discipline began. Mostly, the classes were structured around preparation for various eisteddfods and competitions, or Trinity and Guild exams. I continued going to drama class throughout my high school years, and increasingly was determined to become a performer ‘when I grew up’.

There were a few particularly significant events during my teenage years that impacted on my life in the theatre. Firstly, when I was 14, my father directed a production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Hackett & Goodrich, 1956) for the annual *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day) observations, and he asked me to play Anne. Notwithstanding the sombreness of the occasion, I was very excited to perform in a ‘proper’ play. With my father directing, and both he and my mother also in the cast, the production has a real family feel. The experience was very powerful for me, and the reviews were so positive and complimentary, that I felt as if I had accomplished an enormous feat. More than that, I loved the experience of being in a theatre: of rehearsing, of the camaraderie of the cast, of engaging in the detailed character development that offered a space in which to create something new and different. It helped that my father was at the helm, who was, in retrospect, an excellent director: calm, generous and clear in his instructions and notes, and, of course, my biggest fan.

Perhaps even more significant to my life-path than being in the production, however, was what happened subsequently. My parents, always involved in human rights and activism, were invited to work with a Coloured community in Wentworth to stage the play with them. In this environment, the story took on added resonances beyond the tragedy of a young girl and the impact of Nazi savagery on her life. I had not really been consciously exposed to apartheid before. I went to a private Jewish day school where we were taught tolerance as a key aspect of life, so, even though this did not always play out in real life, the principles were inculcated. Similarly, although both my parents and my grandparents often referenced apartheid as wrong, its structures and purposes had not yet fully been explained. Thus, the darkest dynamics of the apartheid regime had not penetrated my existence in any significant way before. I vaguely knew about the Soweto uprising (I was eleven in 1976 and had a teacher who told us what was happening, if only in a generalised way); I knew who Nelson Mandela was and that he was in prison; I knew that there was a system called apartheid and that it meant separation of races. But these were all abstract facts rather than lived reality for me, until I went with my parents into the Wentworth community, and we worked on the play together. I enjoyed attending the rehearsals, which were productive and fun, and I was genuinely amazed by the performances these ‘untrained’ actors were able to deliver, how authentic and real they felt. I helped my mother do the make-up for the cast members each night of the performance, and felt like I was part of an extended family. I did not think about race at all, until after the final night’s performance. We all went out together (the cast, crew and my family) to celebrate and we ended up at one of Durban’s beaches. I wanted to walk on the beach with my new friends; but I was told this was not possible since we were not allowed to be on the same beach together.

I continued to be involved in drama as an extra-curricular activity both privately and at school. I performed in the school production of *The Insect Play* (1961) by the Brothers Čapek in Standard 9 in which I played the role of the Chrysalis. She is on stage for most of the play, performing the role of observer to the action, meaning I was present for most rehearsals and able to observe the process from within, as it were. The director of the play was our English teacher who was enthusiastic and energised, but also somewhat dictatorial and insistent on his version of things. In fairness, he may have adopted this approach to manage the large cast drawn from different school levels, who had varying levels of experience. It was a very long rehearsal process, after hours, and on weekends, and it became increasingly evident to me that this theatre business was somewhat more complex

than my personal theatricals in the lounge. However, as I witnessed the play taking shape, I was also enthralled by the way in which what had seemed so rough and messy gradually transformed into a coherent and polished production. I had some sense that this was due to the director's work, but I did not know how and why it happened.

My first directorial experience was also in high school: I directed my house's play for the annual competition, not because I had a particular urge to do so, but because no-one else was willing. I have no recollection of the actual play, only of feeling rather out of my depth. Fortunately, my sister was in it, which alleviated some of my stress; and I would come home and ask my parents for advice on what to do, which was also helpful. I remember feeling quite overwhelmed with the idea that all these people were looking at me to make the necessary decisions on where to stand, how to move, what to do, and how to say their lines. I was confident of my own ability to create characters and deliver lines (something I was doing regularly in my drama lessons); but being able to elicit characters and line delivery from other, mostly untrained, actors, was more challenging. At the end of the process, I decided that I preferred acting, and would rather be told what to do than have to do the telling.

2. Taking a Leap. . .and Falling

Outside of school, another key event in my personal history was taking place. At the age of 15, I decided, after several years of absence, to take up ballet again. I had left many years earlier, but I had continued to be fascinated by—and love—the form. In a new studio, a family-oriented environment, I slowly began to flourish. As I got older, I began teaching some of the younger children, and eventually, between the teaching and my own classes, I was dancing every day after school and most of the day on a Saturday; the ballet studio became the centre of my existence. In my heart, I knew that I was not a great ballerina, but the fantasies of my early years of dancing *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty* would not go away. When I finished school, therefore, encouraged by my teacher and my family, I decided to go to ballet school in England to change the fantasy to reality.

Thus, at age 18, I packed my bags and went to London to chase my dream of dancing at Covent Garden. It quickly became apparent that I was not, and probably would never be, dancing at the level required of a professional ballerina. I was not terrible, but I was nowhere near good enough to succeed in that most competitive of fields. When the end of term

evaluations happened, and the head of the school told me, very gently, that they did not think I should carry on in the ballet stream, I cannot say that I was surprised. I actually felt relieved to walk away, although also, simultaneously, like an abject failure. I had never ‘not succeeded’ before, and I was ill-equipped to cope with the fallout.

The fallback plan had always been to go to university and study drama. I felt relatively confident that I would have a different experience at university, plus I could go home. However, my air ticket was booked for the end of the year, and in any case, the university term had already begun, so, I stayed in London to wait until the following year to start my studies. In retrospect, it was not the right decision as it left me dwelling on everything that had gone wrong. When I finally went home, I lacked confidence and felt incapable of succeeding at anything. However, I duly registered for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) at the then-University of Natal, Durban (UND), majoring in Speech and Drama (as it was then called) and English.

3. A Whole New World. . .

I started my university career as a shy, anxious student, but determined to engage with my studies and driven to pursue excellence. I quickly grew to love my drama course; I was learning about theatre history, design, movement, voice and speech, and I was working with experts in their fields. In addition, I was being challenged to expand my capacity as an actor by working on my technical skills. The Speech and Drama department was its own little world. Separated geographically from the rest of the campus, attending classes there felt like stepping into an alternative universe. And it quickly became apparent, too, that there were two kinds of drama students inhabiting that universe – those for whom drama was the number one priority, and those for whom it was just another subject. I clearly belonged to the former, and I spent more and more time in the department, getting involved wherever I could, and treating it as a home away from home.

My first year in the drama department culminated in being cast in a play, a Christmas production of *The Butterfingers Angel* (Gibson, 1975) to be staged at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, the main theatre on the UND campus, that December. I was ecstatic about getting my first professional theatre job. It seemed an affirmation of my ability and gave me the sense of belief that I could be a ‘real’ actor, although the director was quite dictatorial and

rather intimidating. I was playing a relatively minor role, but was on stage for a significant portion of the play. As in *The Insect Play*, this allowed me to observe the other cast members working and the director's interaction with them. The cast members were generous and easy-going, and they welcomed me into their midst with open arms. I felt like I was finally establishing myself, laying the ground work for a career as a performer. It was also good to get to know senior students in the department, whose work I had watched with admiration, and whom I now began to see as friends and colleagues, rather than distant stars. Most exciting, for the first time I was being paid to act – in itself very affirming for me because, in a tangible way, it gave value to my efforts.

From this point on, I became increasingly committed to drama and to the department. I participated in numerous productions, both extracurricular and those that were part of our coursework. We would rehearse partly in class time, but it was also expected of us to attend rehearsals in the evenings and over weekends. We were learning the discipline of theatre-making, after all, and how it works in the real world. While many of my classmates found this frustrating and galling, I loved it. I felt so alive when performing on stage, and I did not mind what part I played. With each production, I learned more and more about drama, about theatre-making, and about acting.

One particular experience stands out for me as significant because it taught me a lot about how plays are cast. The department was staging a production of *The Sound of Music* (Rodgers & Hammerstein, 1959), for which I auditioned. I was called back a number of times to read for the part of Liesl, the oldest daughter of the von Trapp family, as one of a number of people being considered, both students and staff members. Finally, I was given the part, but was double cast with a junior staff member. Double casting was a common practice in the department then (and, indeed, continues to be so now, although less frequently). Women outnumbered men in the department, but plays mostly had more male parts than female ones; this meant that the female roles were usually double cast, to give more people opportunities. I was, thus, used to the idea of double casting, but in this instance, the two of us were nothing alike, and I found it quite intimidating to work alongside a staff member playing the same role I was.

It was during my third year of study that I had my second experience as a director. In small groups, we were required to stage a play directed by someone in the group. I was

chosen to direct a production of Peter Terson's *Never Right, Yet Again* (in Self & Speakman, 1979), which revolves around a rather eccentric family, and a particularly loud-mouthed father. I remember feeling that directing was quite scary because I felt unequipped for the task, never having studied directing in any formal way. I had to rely on instinct, and I based my efforts almost entirely on my own sense of things as a performer, which I then tried to foist on to the actors playing the various roles. Despite my fumbling efforts, we ended up with a reasonably well-shaped product to perform.

My next major directorial experience was in my Honours year of study, where, as part of the curriculum, each student was required to direct a one-act play, to be cast from among the other Honours students, in one of the departmental theatre spaces. Despite the centrality of the project to the degree, however, we were never actually taught *how* to direct. Directing as an art form in and of itself was not part of our syllabus; we were simply expected to be able to direct, to demonstrate our skill and ability as theatre practitioners through directing other students in a production format. Thus, no one taught us about such things as conceptualisation, staging techniques, rehearsal procedures, note-giving, or any of the other skills associated today with the teaching and practice of directing; instead, we were thrown into the task and expected to cope mostly through reliance on our own previous experiences. I had been in a significant number of productions so fancied myself somewhat more prepared than many of my peers, having seen more directors at work and been directed by them. I thought that those experiences would create a kind of directorial osmotic effect – their skill would emerge in my practice purely by virtue of that participation.

As my Honours production, I chose to direct Christopher Durang's one-act play, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* (1981). The play is a particularly virulent critique of religious fanaticism and blind allegiance to dogma, which it achieves through its farcical situation and hilarious dialogue. Durang is a master of the dialogic form and insightful character construction, both of which elements make the play a triumph of language and action. Most of this, however, I did not really understand when, at age 21, I tried to direct this work; I chose it simply because I thought it was funny and had some great parts for women, thus suiting the demographics of our Honours class. I saw the biggest directorial challenges as being how to manage the character of the young boy (since we could not use a real child), and how to negotiate a camel appearing on stage. I solved the first problem through the expedient solution of casting a regular student in the role, but dressing

him in a schoolboy costume, complete with shorts and tie. The second problem, I solved with the assistance of our design lecturer, who created a camel-shaped piece of fabric that the two actors playing the camel could hold over their heads for their entrance, and crafted a reasonably convincing camel head for them to carry.

For the rest of the process, I followed my intuition and directed the piece as I would have acted it. This was largely subconscious in that I did not set out to give line readings, or to make the actors move like I would have, but acting was, at this point, my only frame of reference. And it seemed to be effective; the play went well, the actors were happy, and the audience appeared to enjoy the show, laughing in the right places and applauding appropriately. I ticked it off my to-do list of tasks for my Honours degree and moved on. I never imagined that I would come back to directing—indeed, that I would actually direct this same play again with far more awareness and insight—because I considered myself an actress; that was my focus, that was what mattered, that was the career I was going to pursue. The directing had simply been a necessary part of my degree studies.

4. And So, To Work. . .

I graduated from the UND with a BA (Honours) in 1987, and the singular intention to pursue a career as an actress. Beyond wanting to do it, however, I had no explicit plan of how to go about achieving it. My experience at university had taught me virtually nothing in practical terms about making a living out of theatre; it was simply not talked about, except in the most oblique of ways. I had a vague sense that breaking into the ‘real’ world of theatre (as opposed to the protected environment of a university drama department) would be challenging; but I had been quite successful as a performer at university and so thought it would be relatively simple to continue along that trajectory. This belief was reinforced when almost immediately after graduation, I was offered two acting jobs – one in a play at the Sneddon theatre entitled *Tea in the Garden*, and the other alongside one of my fellow Honours graduates in a TIE schools’ touring programme on poetry. In addition, I was offered a temporary part-time job in the Speech and Drama department, teaching movement studies while the regular movement teacher went on sabbatical. I accepted all three offers, as well as a temporary job as a receptionist/secretary at an insurance brokerage to ensure a steady(ish) income. None of the four projects turned out the way I had imagined. *Tea in the Garden*, although it had won an award for playwriting, was actually not that good a play. While I

enjoyed the feeling of working as a professional actress, the actual process seemed rather uninspiring; in terms of directing, it didn't serve to change my sense of the director's purpose being to ensure that blocking looked believable, entrances and exits were managed logically, sightlines were clear, and to provide the actors with occasional notes about line delivery.

The TIE project was initially quite fun to do, especially during the devising phase, but soon became repetitive and exhausting; performing several times a day, often in totally unsuitable venues, for school children with little to no interest in poetry, was a chastening experience. Educational theatre was (and still is) one of the key areas in which performers can wield their skills and earn an income; captive, built-in audiences, and often quite beautiful material, make for wonderful potential creativity. The reality, however, is that often these educational programmes are thrown together with the minimum of thought and care, and seen largely as money-making projects to fund 'real' theatre work. While I like to think that our poetry programme did not fall into this category, and that we did our best to stimulate and inspire our young audiences, it brought me down to earth with a significant bump in terms of what the actual opportunities for a career in acting might be.

Of my job at the insurance company, the less said, the better. Suffice to say, I was not good at it, lacking the necessary patience and appropriate demeanour. I found the work onerous, although the environment and the people were supportive, generous and kind; mainly, though, the experience demonstrated vividly that working in an office would never be for me. I am grateful now, however, for the administrative lessons and hands-on experience of computers I gained there; they have proven unexpectedly useful and important in my directing and teaching practice.

It was the teaching that ended up being the most interesting—and frightening—to me. Facing a room full of students, staring at you and expecting you to teach them something of value to take away, was an eye-opening experience. Being on the other side of the exchange felt very different; it was maybe the hardest creative work I had done up to this point in my life, primarily due to the weight of responsibility I felt for these students. It was here I became aware, maybe for the first time, that teaching draws this sense of responsibility to itself, and because of this, it is an emotionally demanding profession, much like performance.

5. An Unexpected Opportunity

My thoughts about myself, my career, and my future, all changed when, in early 1988, I was informed that I had won the Emma Smith Overseas Scholarship, and was being offered the opportunity to study for a Master's degree anywhere in the world. It was a bolt from the blue; I had not even considered the possibility of studying further so when this landed in my lap as an option, I was quite stunned. It also seemed like it had come at a really good moment for me: None of my current projects had convinced me that I was in the midst of something too good to leave behind, and the opportunity the scholarship provided was too good to turn down. After my ballet-school experience, I was apprehensive about going to a new place and starting over, but I did think it would be different this time. I felt more confident and assured in my own abilities for one thing, and I believed that I could act in a way that I had never believed I could dance.

Choosing where to go was difficult; the sheer number of options was quite daunting. I knew that I wanted to be on the stage, not only theorising about it, so I wanted to find a programme that would allow me to work on my practice as a performer while still expanding my knowledge. My search led me to the United States of America (US) (influenced no doubt by my childhood fantasies of Hollywood and winning an Oscar), where practical degrees were available, and eventually to an MFA—a Master in Fine Arts—degree in Acting. Many universities offered this degree, all of which required an audition and an interview as entrance prerequisites.

Another key element of the application process was writing a statement of purpose, explaining why I wanted to pursue this course of study and outlining how I saw myself fitting into the school and the programme. In my essay, which I cite here as a “proof text” (Nash, 2004), I spoke about my passion for acting and my dedication to the craft, my discipline and my willingness to work hard, my experience and my learning, but I also wrote about why I wanted to be an actress:

As a child, role-playing always fascinated me. I played games in which I could do and ‘be’ all things, sublimating my ‘self’ in the characters and thereby finding an infinite number of other selves. . . .out of this my love for acting has grown.

Naturally, the ‘game’ has become more refined as I have been educated in its finer points. . . . One thing, however, does not change – the pleasure that I derive from being able to experience, through the medium of performance, an infinite number of

worlds and people, and to communicate those experiences to others. (1988, Personal Record)

In September of 1988, I travelled to the US to do the auditions that would determine where I would study the following year. This was my first visit to America, and I was excited to see the sights of New York and Hollywood, to visit museums and art galleries I'd only read about, to explore the living history on display in Washington DC, and go to Broadway, of course. I was determined to enjoy the experience despite the stress of the auditions. Some of the auditions went well, others were terrible; in some places, I felt really welcome and in others I knew almost immediately I wouldn't fit in. Mostly though, people were really encouraging and supportive, and promised to let me know the outcome as soon as possible. They were also intrigued at the idea of a South African coming to study acting in America; it appeared that this was not something that happened often.

When I auditioned at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), I felt an immediate connection to the school and the staff present at the audition. This was due, in no small part, to their reaction to the news that I had walked to the campus from downtown Los Angeles (LA) (taking about three hours to do so) which both appalled and amused them. They told me that no-one walked in LA and why had I not taken a taxi? It resulted in much hilarity and eased the tension before the actual audition. When the audition and interview were over, the head of the school very kindly insisted that he would drive me back to the hotel. On the way there, he told me that a place in their programme was mine if I wanted it. I was delighted; I think partly it was just the relief of knowing that at least I had been accepted at one school, even if none of the others came through. It was a huge weight off my shoulders and allowed me to enjoy the rest of my stay in a more carefree and relaxed fashion. It was also really good to be able to go home knowing that I could tell the scholarship administrators that I had secured admission at least to one school, and a really good school, at that.

As it turned out, I was accepted at three schools, but I never really had any doubt where I was going to go: UCLA it was going to be. I had some family living nearby, who offered to help me settle in once I arrived, and even found me a place to stay across the road from the campus. Soon it was time for me to leave, and although there was some trepidation,

I was excited. I imagined it all as a new beginning, being able to reconstruct myself in a new way, in a place where no-one knew the old me, and thus, anything was possible.

6. The Undiscovered Country. . .

When I went to America, it was with the intention of leveraging my MFA as a pathway into a career as a professional actress. It was, however, my experiences at UCLA that opened my eyes to other potential careers in the theatre and re-introduced me to the possibilities associated with directing. Two particular experiences are significant.

First, as part of our MFA programme, we were required to participate in the directing course taught to the students doing MFAs in Directing, just as they were required to take acting class with us. There was a clear rationale to this: Directors need actors on whom to practice their craft, and actors need to learn to work with different directors. Thus, they practiced their directing in scene study class using us as actors, and they did the same acting exercises we did so that they could become better equipped to deal with actors, developing mutually understood jargon, as it were. Some of the best moments of my MFA happened in the directors' scene study classes, and I worked with directors whose methods were as varied as they were fascinating. More importantly, in retrospect, I was learning about directing from being an actor in that classroom, hearing what they were learning about and working on their projects in different styles and forms. I never thought about it then as learning about directing *per se*, but when I began to work as director, many of these lessons came back to me.

The other significant experience was far more specific and I can pinpoint much of my excitement about directing to this event. I was cast as Masha in a production of Chekhov's *The Seagull* (1896/1954) directed by the then-head of the Directing MFA programme, a recognised expert in Russian theatre, and specifically the work of Konstantin Stanislavski. For some reason, he thought I had a good eye and asked me to be his Assistant Director on the production. It was an enlightening experience to see how he worked, and in particular to see the attention to detail on which he insisted. In my mind, I contrasted it with my own fumbling attempts to direct my Honours project and was again struck by how little I knew, how unrefined my craft had been then, and that, as a consequence, my directing could only scratch the surface of what was possible. Sitting on the other side of the stage, I could see

how the suggestions he was making were shaping something out of the raw material of disparate talents and egos that went far beyond the capacities of the individual performers. Clearly, he had a vision and as long as we were contributing to the realisation of that vision, the play worked, as if he were the conductor of the orchestra and we were all playing in separate rooms and relying on his skill to ensure we played the right notes in the right place.

Being part of this experience was novel to me, having, up to this point, worked only with either novice directors or somewhat dictatorial ones (other than my father). This director knew what he wanted from us—something that he saw very clearly—but he didn't define how to get there; rather he just insisted on the outcome. This certainly made me think about the work of the director in a completely new light; for one thing, contrary to my perception that a director didn't really do very much, it required a lot more thought, preparation, and skill than I had ever contemplated. The next time I tried to direct something, it was his meticulous preparation and surety of purpose that stuck with me and guided my approach. In thinking about my directing now, I realise how important that experience of watching and learning was, giving me a muscle- and thought-memory on which to draw in beginning to craft my own directorial identity.

7. What Next?

I graduated from UCLA in 1992 with my MFA in Acting, and without ever deciding formally to do so, ended up staying in LA to try to 'make it' as an actor. Armed with my new degree, a headshot and a resumé, I began the process. I secured a visa to work for a year, found myself a part time job in a bookstore, moved into an apartment of my own, and set out to pursue the same dream as thousands of other hopefuls arriving in LA seeking stardom. It quickly became apparent that it was not easy. The myth of the unknown being discovered purely by accident by a famous Hollywood director remains, for most people, an unfulfilled fantasy. Gradually, and reluctantly, I began to realise that this career demanded a personality type at odds with my own. I found the constant need to grab attention from others exhausting, and the pattern of anticipation and rejection with every audition became soul-destroying. I was not thick-skinned enough, and I didn't want to be; I worked, I acted, but the reward of the performance did not outweigh the bleakness of the constant search for the next role, and the realisation that every passing day meant less chance that the miracle of success would happen. I loved acting, I loved the process of rehearsal, the act of storytelling,

the sense of community that being in a play engenders; but I did not love the necessary hustle required to secure work, and I could not see myself doing it for the rest of my life. It became clear to me that I needed to start to think about embarking on a different career.

My brother had by this time moved to New York, and he and my family encouraged me to move to the East coast, stay with him (at least initially), and see if I couldn't find another path. Neither my parents nor I wanted me to return to South Africa at this point. So, in the absence of options, I agreed, and moved to New York, where I sank into a deep and debilitating depression. Without a clear goal, and lacking direction, I did not know how to re-imagine myself.

And then South Africa's miracle happened: Nelson Mandela was released, apartheid was dismantled, the predicted violent revolution did not materialise, and in April 1994, South Africans would vote in the first free elections of the new South Africa. I had not kept abreast of South African politics; indeed, I had often tried to forget I was South African at all, even pretended not to be, ashamed of being white in apartheid South Africa. The chance to be proud of one's nation again was profoundly liberating for me, in ways I still don't even really understand. I took myself off to vote at the South African embassy in midtown Manhattan, and stood in a long line of people snaking down 38th Street, a line that contained members of all race groups and was characterised not by frustration or tiredness at the hours we had to wait, but by joy and community and an unspecified hope for a renewed future. I spoke with an elderly Indian couple standing in front of me in the queue who told me with tears in their eyes they had been waiting all their lives for this moment, for the chance to go home. All around me, I heard South African voices speaking—the accent that I had deliberately lost completely in my attempt to sound American in order to be cast—and the whole experience made me think that just maybe it was time to go home, to start over and reinvent myself again. I don't want to make it sound like it was an epiphany. It wasn't. It wasn't really even conscious then, but the seed was sown in that line on that day. New York is an incredible city, but without money and status and something to do every day, it is a very hard place to live, and it had never felt like home as LA had done. And so, I made the decision to return to South Africa. I had been in America for about five years; I was an entirely different person to who I had been when I'd arrived there; and I came home to South Africa not really knowing what I wanted to do, but certain that the search would be better in a place with real roots. A new chapter had to begin.

8. Old Places, New Beginnings

I returned to South Africa at the end of 1994, without any clear plan for what I wanted to do, other than a vague idea that I would study further, and see if I could get a job in a university. I had virtually no money (although I had worked and tried to save, my small income had really only covered expenses) and no real idea of what to do next. I moved into my parents' flat and began trying to pick up the pieces of my life. It was challenging; I was clinically depressed and had little confidence about getting a job. I was eventually persuaded to see a therapist to try to work through my depression, which I did. It took time and some hard soul-searching but gradually I began to heal and look forward again.

I made a few tentative steps into the job market, teaching extramural drama in schools (mostly to pre-school children) and performing with a touring TIE company. Neither was very successful. The TIE was back-breaking, chastening work; mostly, the schools did not have formal theatre spaces and the learners were not particularly interested in what we were doing. This was certainly not the glamorous profession I had imagined as a young girl dreaming about the stage. As for the teaching, I quickly realised it was a poor fit for me, especially since the company's syllabus expected the children to learn to recite poems and choral verse and the like, rather than simply allowing the drama of play to unfold. Instinctively I knew this was not the kind of learning through drama in which I was interested. I could feel that there was something in me that wanted to try something different, to explore other possibilities that would open up the learning potential of the dramatic experience, but I didn't know enough about Drama-in-Education (DIE) methods, or participatory theatre practice, to enable me to find a way to do that.

Fortunately, by the time I gave up my teaching contract, I had managed to secure some other work. A friend who was lecturing in the Speech and Drama department at UND, told me that the department was looking for part-time tutors and that she had given them my name. I called the department to find out more and was asked to interview. It was a strange experience, being interviewed by the very people who had taught me, but I was confident I had learned enough at UCLA to have something of value to offer, and that, together with what they knew of me as a hard-working, conscientious student, sufficed for them to offer me

a job. And thus, I began working at my *alma mater*, where, somewhat to my surprise, I have been ever since.

Employed originally on a temporary, part-time basis, my responsibilities quickly expanded; I taught more lectures, tutored on more courses, and eventually was asked to work with the Honours students on their directing projects. One thing was certain: There needed to be far more direct guidance and instruction about the practice of directing than I had ever had as a student, and so I requested permission to develop a new course to offer that guidance and instruction. Again, to my surprise they agreed, and I set about constructing my first university course.

I had no formal template to follow or specific outcomes toward which to work. I was improvising and figuring it out as I went along. Ever diligent, I knew I couldn't rely only on what I'd learned from experience, so I began to read extensively around directing. I discovered very quickly that there is no one theory of directing; indeed, it seemed that there were as many different approaches as there were directors, as I will discuss later in this thesis. There were, however, numerous books detailing the processes involved in directing, and the responsibilities of a director; so, I started with these. The first part of my course would be to give the students the basic information about what directors do and how they do it. Whereas most of my undergraduate theoretical study had been based on play texts and voice and speech theorists, I also knew now that there was a whole body of knowledge around the current practices in theatre to be gained from studying the work of key directors. Thinking about the idea of theory and practice intersecting and informing each other, I decided to teach a section on the history of directing and key directors alongside the practical processes of the actual directing project. I believed the students would benefit from understanding and exploring the ideas and thinking behind directing, as well as learning how to do it. And thus, I drew up my semester-long course, building in workshops to deal with different styles – an idea that came directly from those directing classes I sat in on at UCLA, where they did scene studies from plays of different eras and in different styles to demonstrate skill in all forms of directing.

Finally, having constructed the course, I asked a colleague to look at it and give me some feedback, and waited anxiously for the response. When I received his comments that said he thought the course looked great, but was too long and covered too much information,

it felt almost as good as the curtain call after a great performance, or the elation at graduation. I had done something of worth for what felt like the first time in so long, and it was something that was new to me and formulated in a process that I was only beginning to discover, in a context in which I was just setting out. This was one of the key events that solidified my decision to work in higher education.

9. Learning by Doing

In 1995, I was working on a contract at the university, when the head of department asked me to direct a departmental production of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre. The prospect was daunting. Although I was now running my newly-created directing course, I did not consider myself sufficiently skilled in the field to be called 'director'. Taking on Shakespeare as a first major project seemed somewhat foolhardy. Notwithstanding these thoughts, I agreed, reasoning that I could not turn down such an opportunity either to see if I could direct or to entrench my position in the department in order to be considered for future employment.

Having agreed, I was then told of some unexpected caveats which had not been part of the original offer. First, I was told that I had to cast certain students (the current Honours students) in the lead roles as it was a production primarily aimed at giving them performance opportunities. Indeed, to all intents and purposes, the production had been pre-cast and this did not sit well with me; it smacked of favouritism and went against every tenet of theatrical practice that I had learned at UCLA and in the professional theatre. Further, I was not yet familiar with any of the students in question and thus had no knowledge of their potential or their work ethic. In addition, since the number of people in the cast was far greater than the number of Honours students, I would have to hold auditions amongst the rest of the student body for all the other roles, and it seemed to me unfair to expect one set of students to audition but not others. I was, however, too new to the job and too unsure of myself to argue, so suggested a compromise that the Honours students would be guaranteed speaking roles, and that they could audition separately from the other students and be cast first, but would still have to audition – I reasoned that I needed to see what they could do before deciding who they should play. I would then hold open auditions for the rest of the students in the department. I was concerned how this would play out amongst the student body but was told

it would not be a problem and thus went ahead. The inauspicious beginning accurately foreshadowed what was to follow.

It started with the Honours students: They were angry that they had to audition, given the production was supposed to be for them and they had been assured of privileged casting. Mostly, their anger surfaced in a disrespect of the audition process, and only a few members of the class prepared for it. The situation was compounded by the fact that the class also included a group of students from the then-Technikon Natal, another institution in Durban, who had been enrolled for the first time in an Honours programme in a pilot project. The two sets of students had very different training and skills levels, and they had not spent sufficient time together to be comfortable with one another. Inevitably, there were feelings of competitiveness that led to an undercurrent of jealousy and frustration during the rehearsal process and in the production as a whole. The undergraduate students did turn out to audition, but many of them had discovered that the casting had been 'fixed', and were understandably dissatisfied. That they still auditioned was testament, I suppose, to their desire to participate and gain performance experience.

I did my best, but before rehearsals had even begun, it was evident that a large part of my directorial work would be to try to ease the tensions between the various people involved to create a reasonably cohesive ensemble. Nevertheless, I was still excited, if nervous, about my first major production. I was fortunate to be working with a very experienced and talented designer who was instrumental in helping me find a concept for the production, which, at that time, I believed meant deciding what the world of the play should look like. I shared my ideas with the designer, who then came up with a 'look' for the production, locating it roughly in the Napoleonic era costume-wise, but keeping a more symbolic feel for the set design. I was enormously pleased with how it looked: beautiful and filled with possibilities for interesting staging. As with conceptualisation, I had little sense of how to create blocking theoretically and most of what I did staging-wise came from my actor instincts of when to move and where.

If the set was beautiful and highly satisfactory, the rest of the experience was not. My inexperience manifested itself in my second-guessing every decision I made. I agonised over every choice and was so concerned that the performers would not listen to me or understand me, that I forgot my own prime directive: that making theatre had to be fun! It was also eye-

opening in terms of discipline and technical proficiency. My time at UCLA, and in the profession, had taught me to expect actors to be focused, prepared, and willing to work; to listen, to respond, and to have the technical skill to do what was being asked of them. That was patently not the case, which is not to say the students were not talented (they were), but rather that they had little idea of how to *work* on a production. They had little or no understanding of the idea that they needed to be *co-creators* in order to make the project successful. They were unwilling to offer ideas and resented the questioning and the constant repetition that I had been encouraged and trained to employ in making theatre. Again, this was not everyone, but a large enough number to make the process more difficult and trying than it should have been.

Without the self-knowledge that was yet to emerge, I was left to search for other solutions to the problems in the production. I worked harder and I worked them harder; some of them thrived, some resisted. A few cast members demanded that I meet with the whole cast to hear their concerns. Despite my surprise (this would not have happened at UCLA), and still wanting to forge an ensemble, I agreed. Two cast members spoke saying they believed I was making them work too hard, being unfair to them, and had unrealistic expectations; they continued, noting their own experience, stating repeatedly that they knew what they were doing and didn't need to be stopped continually in rehearsal. In short, they felt that they were performing just fine, that the production was perfectly alright, and that I was a tyrant.

I was shocked into silence. Partly, my shock was at what I perceived as their temerity; but more significantly, I was dismayed that they had no understanding of what a rehearsal process should look like, nor the effort that a professional production required. The production clearly was not fine, their performances—to any eyes but their own—were not good enough, and the entire project was teetering on the brink of failure. I think that the designer and the theatre manager, who were both sitting with me, could sense that I was about to explode. The theatre manager led me out of the theatre before I could speak, to her office, where I sobbed tears of rage, exhaustion, humiliation, and fear. I could hear the designer in the theatre speaking very calmly and in the most quietly intimidating way, telling the cast their behaviour was unacceptable and unbefitting for students in the drama programme she represented. She was the kindest, gentlest, most unaggressive person one could imagine, but she was devastating in her condemnation of their behaviour and demand

that they either leave the production, or agree to behave appropriately as theatre professionals. She left them then, asking them to think about what they wanted from the project specifically, and from studying drama generally, and indicated that if they had any desire whatsoever to be successful in the theatre industry, they should very quickly change their thinking.

The next day when I arrived, the atmosphere was palpably different. Part of me wanted to carry on as if nothing had happened, but I knew that I needed to speak to ensure that I had addressed my own fears. I gathered the cast together and very calmly thanked them for expressing their concerns, but, also very calmly, stated that I had to make decisions for the good of the production as a whole. I told them that I was uncompromising in my demands for them to do better because I believed they could. I spoke about my own experience of learning about the discipline and rigour necessary for working in the theatre. And finally, I offered them the option to leave the production if they felt they could no longer continue, but that if they chose to stay, I would continue to demand of them every ounce of their creativity and their commitment. I spoke calmly, but inside I was trembling; I did not know what would happen. No-one left. There was not a word of muttering or commentary; they all left the stage to set their props and begin the rehearsal. In the end, we had a show – a flawed show, certainly, and extremely rough around the edges, but a show nonetheless; and we performed for audiences who applauded and seemed to respond. I had directed my first major production. Without the designer, though, it might have been the last of a very short directing career.

Whether it was the designer's words or mine that had impacted on their thinking, the energy of the production was different from then on. It still did not feel like a completely unified ensemble; there were still cast members who clearly resented me for pushing them and for not giving them the credit they believed they deserved. And there continued to be problems with making everything and everyone work together without ego or self-consciousness. I got through to some cast members; others continued to ignore what I was saying and eventually I stopped asking them. I learned a very important lesson that I have subsequently communicated to every class of directing students I have taught: If you have to give a note more than three times, stop giving it. You will not get the desired result; instead, find a different way to shape the action in the form you want it to be.

10. Finding New Routes. . .

The university appointed me permanently in 1996 and, armed with what I saw as a vote of confidence, I took on a full teaching load, including teaching my directing course again and developing a new elective module in acting. There had been no formal ‘acting’ class at the university prior to this; acting was taught, almost as a by-product of voice and speech, movement and textual analysis. With my Masters in Acting, I saw an opportunity to offer something to the department that was new and, hopefully, of value. I modelled my course on what I had learned at UCLA, although necessarily summarised. Central to my beliefs about teaching acting was the necessity for working on the self and with others as core practices within the art and craft of acting. So, I included two major practical components: an individual performance piece, and participation in a formal theatre production.

For that first production, I chose to direct Bertolt Brecht’s *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948/1971), primarily because it has a large, potentially expandable cast making it possible to use all the members of the class as well as having significant roles available for other students. In total, the cast numbered well over 30 people, drawn from the third year acting class, and all other students in the department. I had neither directed nor acted in a Brecht play before, and it was a challenging choice for me. Partly I chose it because I was teaching Epic Theatre, and, remembering the idea of praxis, thought that directing a production in that style might help me to figure out how to teach it effectively.

Contrary to my experience with *As You Like It*, this production was almost wholly positive. The cast worked extremely hard, and there were no complaints, no unwillingness to play and rehearse. The cast responded well, and seemed to pull together, work for each other, and create a sense of excitement at the theatrical event. This unity was, no doubt, the result of a number of factors, but certainly one was that I myself was calmer throughout the experience (or at least was able to manage my stress levels more effectively); I also felt less terrified of the whole process and more assured in my approach to the technical aspects of directing (staging, blocking, actor coaching, and so on). By the end of this very positive production experience, I had decided that directing was fun and potentially, a powerful vehicle for creative expression. If I couldn’t be an actress, then in directing I had found a creative outlet for my love of the theatre and my desire to be an artist.

Chalk Circle marked a seminal shift in my life-story. By the time I had completed directing *Chalk Circle*, I was fully committed to a career as a university lecturer, and was excited about the potential creative and artistic possibilities open to me as an emerging director.

APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONS FROM THE RSI

The RSIs were conducted over a single day at Tanya's house; we interviewed each other, and were observed by Lorraine. The questions I constructed for the RSI were:

1. How do you understand the function of theatre in society? What do you want your theatre to 'say'?
2. Who are the directors that have influenced you, how, and why?
3. How do you understand the audience/actor dynamic in your directing practice?
4. How do you use space?
5. How do you use text?
6. What techniques do you use when directing?
7. What function does the director serve in the making of theatre?
8. How do you understand the role of the teacher?
9. What kind of teaching and learning practice do you embrace?
10. What kind of skills are taught through the theatre-making process?
11. What is the relationship between what you do as a director and what you do as a teacher?

The RSI was then transcribed and the details therein, along with the several layers of reflection on both the content and the process (see Meskin et al., 2014), became a significant source for developing my personal narratives.

APPENDIX 5: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

TITLE OF STUDY: From the Director's Chair: A Narrative Self-Study of My Directing Practice

RESEARCHER: Tamar Meskin

INSTRUMENT: Prompts for Colleague-Participants

MY 'SELF' AND MY CO-DIRECTORS

All forms of self-study necessitate an engagement with the self in relation to the other/s who are participant in the shaping of that self. Since my self-study is of my directing practice, those who have co-directed alongside me are critical to an understanding of what I do – and who I am – as a director.

In order to understand these perspectives, I would like you – as someone who has directed alongside me – to give me a word-portrait of your sense of me, as a director, and my actions and practice in that role.

To assist you in constructing this word-portrait, I offer the following prompts, which may be of use in shaping your response and guiding your writing. They are, however, ONLY prompts, and please feel free to ignore them, reimagine them, rewrite them, offer alternative suggestions, or choose which ones to respond to – there are no rules. You may also choose to use the prompts in lieu of a more formal question and answer exercise, if you are more comfortable with that format. The form and the structure you choose is entirely fluid and at your discretion; I am really looking for a narrative that expresses your subjective understanding of my practice as a director gleaned from your observation of me playing that role in action.

Here are some prompts for writing, based on your experience of working with me:

- How would you describe me as a director? What kind of a director am I?
- What are some of my strengths as a director? What are some of my weaknesses?
- Have you observed and repeated motifs, themes, ideas, interpretive choices, etc., in my directing? If so, how would you describe these?
- Are there any particular instances and memories that stand out when you think about me as a director? Which productions stand out the most, and why?
- How would you describe my relationship to, and engagement with, the various responsibilities and aspects of directing that lead to the final performance project (e.g. the use of space, language, working with actors, communicating with the audience, etc.)?
- What do you think are the learning values to be obtained through production work? Does my directing practice foster such learning? How?
- What do you think is the function of formal production work (i.e. putting on plays for audiences), particularly in an institution of higher learning?

I thank you for your participation in my research and look forward to reading your response.

Tamar Meskin

TITLE OF STUDY: **From the Director's Chair: A Narrative Self-Study of My Directing Practice**

RESEARCHER: **Tamar Meskin**

INSTRUMENT: **Prompts for Performer-Participants**

MY 'SELF' AND THE PERFORMERS IN MY PRODUCTIONS

As you may know, I am conducting a self-study of my directing practice for my PhD. Since all forms of self-study necessitate an engagement with the self in relation to the other/s, the experiences of those who have performed in the productions that I have directed or co-directed are critical to an understanding of that practice, namely what I do – and who I am – as a director.

In order to understand how my directing practice affected you as a student performer in productions, I would like you to draw me a word-portrait that describes firstly, your experience of being in productions, and secondly, your sense of me, as a director, and my actions and practice in that role.

To assist you in constructing this word-portrait, I offer the following prompts, which may be of use in shaping your response and guiding your writing. They are, however, ONLY prompts, and please feel free to ignore them, reimagine them, rewrite them, offer alternative suggestions, or choose which ones to respond to – there are no rules. You may also choose to use the prompts in lieu of a more formal question and answer exercise, if you are more comfortable with that format. The form and the structure you choose is entirely fluid and at your discretion; I am really looking for a narrative that expresses your subjective understanding of my practice as a director gleaned from your experience as a performer in productions I have directed or co-directed, and from your observation of me in the role of the director in action.

Here are some prompts for writing, based on your experience firstly, of productions and secondly, of working with me:

Performing in Productions

- What was your most memorable production experience while at university? Why?
- What made you do productions at university? How did you get involved in them?
- What skills, if any, did you acquire from your participation in productions?
- Were there specific incidences in specific productions that impacted on you particularly strongly? Is there anything you experienced that you still remember? Are there things you experienced in productions that you have used – and/or continue to use – in your daily life?
- Are there things of lasting value that you derived from your participation in productions?
- What, if anything, did you learn about yourself by being involved in the production?
- What, if anything, did you learn about others by being involved in the production?
- How would you describe the value of your production experience?

Me as the Director

- How would you describe me as a director? What kind of a director am I? What are some of my strengths as a director? What are some of my weaknesses?
- How would you describe my relationship to, and engagement with, the various responsibilities and aspects of directing that lead to the final performance project (e.g. the use of space, language, working with actors, communicating with the audience, etc.)?
- Have you observed any repeated motifs, themes, ideas, interpretive choices, etc., in my directing? If so, how would you describe these?
- Are there any particular instances and memories that stand out when you think about me as a director? Which productions stand out the most, and why?

- What kinds of learning do you think can happen through production work? Does my directing practice foster any learning? How?
- What do you think is the function of formal production work (i.e. putting on plays for audiences), particularly in an institution of higher learning?

I thank you for your participation in my research and look forward to reading your response.

Tamar Meskin

APPENDIX 6: UKZN PRODUCTION LIST 1995-2019

- 2019: *Trojan Women* by Euripides, translated by David Stuttard, co-directed with Tanya van der Walt, Square Space Theatre
- 2016: *The Past is Prologue* devised by Tamar Meskin based on works by William Shakespeare, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2015: *Adam's Rib* co-devised and co-directed with Tanya van der Walt based on works by Carol-Ann Duffy and Jeanette Winterson, Square Space Theatre
- 2011: *The Love of the Nightingale* by Timberlake Wertenbaker, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2011: *FrontLines*, co-devised and co-directed with Tanya van der Walt and Marie-Heleen Coetzee, interinstitutional project with the University of Pretoria, Durban University of Technology and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Masker Theatre (Pretoria)
- 2011: *Metamorphoses* by Mary Zimmerman, co-directed with Tanya van der Walt, joint project with the Durban University of Technology and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2010: *FrontLines: The Remix*, with Iain ewok Robinson, Karen Logan, Liam Magner and Tanya van der Walt, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2010: *The House of Bernarda Alba* by Federico Garcia Lorca, co-directed with Tanya van der Walt, Square Space Theatre
- 2010: *The Comedy of Errors* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry and Verne Rowin Munsamy, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2010: *FrontLines*, co-devised and co-directed with Tanya van der Walt, Courtyard Theatre, Durban University of Technology
- 2010: *Blood Wedding* by Federico Garcia Lorca, co-directed with Tanya van der Walt, Courtyard Theatre, Durban University of Technology
- 2009: *FrontLines*, co-devised and co-directed with Tanya van der Walt, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2009: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2008: *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Verne Rowin Munsamy, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2008: *Electra* adapted by Tamar Meskin based on works by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, part of *Family*, based on *The Oresteia*, Square Space Theatre
- 2008: *The Eumenides* by Aeschylus, part of *Family*, based on *The Oresteia*, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry and Lliane Loots, Site-Specific Project
- 2007: *Threesomes* workshopped with Travis Hudson, Patrick Letterii and Kevin James, Square Space Theatre
- 2007: *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2006: *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, Square Space Theatre
- 2006: *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Tanya van der Walt, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2005: *Land Ahoy* by Marc Kay, Dylan Edy & Clinton Small, Loft Theatre, The Playhouse, invited production for Hip Kulcha Festival
- 2005: *Noises Off* by Michael Frayn, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2005: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2005: *Spoils of War*, co-adapted with Mervyn McMurtry, directed for the International Festival of Student Theatre in Liege, Belgium, and subsequently presented at the Square Space Theatre.
- 2004: *The Good Person of Setzuan* by Bertolt Brecht, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre.

- 2004: *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2003: *Confusions* by Alyn Ayckbourn, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2003: *Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2002: *The Comedy of Errors* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2002: *Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2001: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, co-directed with Mervyn McMurtry, Pieter Scholtz Open Air Theatre
- 2001: *You@UND* Orientation Play, original devised project*
- 2000: *People Are Living There* by Athol Fugard, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 2000: *War Cry* by John van de Ruit, Loft Theatre, Durban and the Hilton Festival
- 2000: *For Better, For Worse, four Chekhov One-Acts* by Anton Chekhov, Square Space Theatre
- 2000: *You@UND* Orientation Play, original devised project*
- 1999: *War Cry* by John van de Ruit, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 1999: *You@UND* Orientation Play, original devised project*
- 1999: *Each in their own tongue*, devised poetry programme, Square Space Theatre, and Standard Bank National Schools' Festival (Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre)
- 1998: *The Actor's Nightmare* by Christopher Durang, Square Space Theatre
- 1998: *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* by Christopher Durang, Square Space Theatre
- 1998: *You@UND* Orientation Play, original devised project*
- 1997: *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 1997: *You@UND* Orientation Play, original devised project*
- 1997: *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* by Don Nigro, Square Space Theatre
- 1996: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre
- 1995: *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre

* This project involved workshopping a new production each year for incoming students. I ran the project for the first five years, but it continued as an annual event with other directors until 2010.

APPENDIX 7: FORMS OF DRAMATIC EDUCATION

Multiple terms are used to explain the relationships between drama, theatre and education, reflecting the many different perspectives on the topic. While recognising that there are no definitive boundaries, for the purposes of this study I define the relevant terms thus:

- Drama – refers to the ‘doing’ of drama in schools, universities and other contexts, and implies a form that does not require an audience; I also use ‘drama’ to reference British education models rather than American.
- Theatre – refers to the aesthetic form most often performed in conventional theatre spaces, generally for an audience; I also use ‘theatre’ to reference American education models rather than British, partly because almost all tertiary education in the US uses ‘Theatre’ as the programme descriptor.
- Production – refers to the presentation of a theatrical works, whether scripted or devised, as formal acts of theatre-making performed for audiences.
- Drama-in-Education (DIE) – refers to the particular model of drama as methodology that was developed primarily by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton.
- Theatre-in-Education (TIE) – refers to a specific model of theatrical presentation around social issues that was developed first in Britain in the 1960s (see Jackson, 2005; Jackson & Vine, 2013; Nicholson, 2011; Wooster, 2007), and has subsequently been exported to a number of different contexts with many structural variations; one of these contexts is South Africa, where TIE models have been fused with other kinds of process drama to engage with social awareness issues (see Barnes & Coetzee, 2014; Dalrymple, 2006; Meskin & van der Walt, 2007; Young-Jahangeer, 2013; among others).
- Applied Theatre (AT) – refers to the multiple participatory models of theatre practice used within social, political, educational, economic, and cultural spheres; it includes such forms as Forum Theatre, Theatre for Development, Popular Participatory Theatre, Prison Theatre, Workers’ Theatre, Community Theatre, Museum Theatre, and the list continues to grow; AT is arguably the fastest growing kind of theatrical practice in the contemporary context (see Ackroyd, 2000; Boal, 2008; Nicholson, 2005; Prentki, 2015, among others).

APPENDIX 8: THE DATA-PLAY SCRIPT

Theatre Roots, Learning Routes – Making the Map *A Chronicle Play*

Setting:

The action of the play is imagined on the UKZN campus, but the setting for the play is not realistic. The stage is empty apart from five square blocks positioned around the space, which are used by the performers throughout. Hanging above the stage is a screen on which images and captions will appear throughout the play. At the back of the stage is a large board on which is drawn the shape of a map, without any interior lines. At the end of the play, performers will attach information cards to the map, filling in the knowledge required to complete its cartography. The same map shape is painted on the floor of the stage, but here is divided into four areas labelled “Experiential Learning,” “Constructivist Approaches,” “The Learning Paradigm,” and “Deep Learning”; around the outside of the map, an ocean is represented labelled “Arts-Based Education”; and at the base of the map (at the front of the stage) is a title reading “Education and the Theatre.” This is a rendition of the same map that appears in scene 6 of the thesis. At the beginning of the play, the image of the floor map is displayed on the screen so that the audience can take note of its presence. The stage is lit generally except for the moments when a solo piece is performed, at which time a single spot in the centre of the stage will come up.

Characters:

Tamar (*the director-teacher*)

A university student (*referred to as Student throughout*)

The performer-participants:⁶¹

Zoë (*participated in seven productions, completed MA in Drama, works as a teacher and Head of Department, first in South Africa, then in the United Kingdom, and currently in Australia*)

Sacha (*participated in four productions, completed Honours in Drama, works in television as a writer, director, and producer*)

Lucy (*participated in five productions, completed Honours in Drama, worked initially in television production, and is now a life coach and motivational speaker in the United Kingdom*)

Josette (*participated in five productions, completed third year in Drama, works as a professional actor first in South Africa, and now in the United States*)

Libby (*participated in five productions, completed Honours in Drama and an MA in Creative Writing, works as a freelance writer, journalist and academic*)

Janna (*participated in four productions, completed third year in Drama, works as a professional actor, writer, and director, first in South Africa, and now in Austria*)

Hannah (*participated in six productions, completed MA and PhD in Drama, works in Applied Theatre and as an academic*)

⁶¹ I have provided a very brief description of each person’s current status and occupation in order to show the range of careers that have been pursued. Since all of the performer-participants waived anonymity, it is possible to offer this information to give further texture to their comments. The number of productions listed refers only to those I directed, and is affected by the number of years spent as a student in the Drama department at UKZN. They are listed chronologically in relation to their time as students, from my first class in 1994 to 2012.

Derosha (*participated in six productions, completed MA in Drama and a second MA in English, works as a professional actor and an academic*)

Noxolo (*participated in four productions, completed MA in Drama and currently completing a PhD, works as an academic*)

Zanele (*participated in four productions, completed third year in Drama and graduate study in Social Work, currently working in the field of social work and psychology*)

Lauren (*participated in four productions, completed Honours in Drama, works as a teacher and Head of Department, first in South African and currently in Dubai*)

Devaksha (*participated in six productions, completed MA in Drama and currently completing a PhD, works as a freelance writer, director, and actor, as well as an academic*)

Brett (*participated in seven productions, completed Honours in Drama, works as a television director and producer*)

Donna (*participated in five productions, completed MA in Drama, worked initially as an academic, currently as a professional actor and holistic health practitioner*)

Brandon (*participated in six productions, completed MA in Drama, works as a professional stage manager and actor both in South Africa and internationally*)

Jason (*participated in five productions, completed Honours in Drama and currently completing an MA, works as a freelance designer and as an academic*)

The colleague-participants:

Martin (*has requested anonymity and therefore no further information will be provided*)

Lloyd (*completed an MA in Drama, co-directed two productions with me, currently works as an academic*)

Verne (*completed an MA in Drama and currently completing a PhD, co-directed four productions with me, currently works as a writer, director and academic*)

Marié-Heleen (*completed D. Tech in Drama, co-directed one production with me, currently works as an academic*)⁶²

Tanya (*completed MA in Drama and PhD in Drama Education, co-directed eight productions with me, currently works as an academic*)

Note:

This play is episodic; thus, the scenes are self-contained and should be imagined as if they were a montage, connecting different stories and moments.

⁶² In the script, I have abbreviated Marié-Heleen's name to M-Heleen for formatting purposes.

Prologue

ON SCREEN – THEATRE ROOTS, LEARNING ROUTES

Tamar: (voiceover) My name is Tamar. I am the central character in this story, the chief protagonist in this particular drama, although it is populated with many other characters along the way. It is a lyrical rather than an action-packed story, although, as with all drama, there is action—or movement of the spirit, as Aristotle has it. The spirit that moves is my own and we will see how it intersects, meets, separates from, and travels alongside other spirits in this adventure. My drama is introspective, retrospective, reflexive; it is a story of discovery, of directing, teaching and learning, of developing epistemologies and ontology, of coming to understand multiple acts of learning, experienced through the singular act of making theatre. It bears constant witness to the processual nature of the learning experience—we never arrive; and, I can never fully *know* at all, and this is a critical piece of awareness in the study of anything, especially art. But it is a beginning. . .

Scene 1

ON SCREEN – OPENING THE UNOPENED DOOR

A single spotlight comes up centre stage; Tamar is standing in this light holding an A4 notebook. As she speaks, an image of the book's cover's label which reads "Director's Book, Theatre Roots, Learning Routes-Making the Map, 2019" slowly comes up on the screen. She addresses the audience directly.

Tamar: So, my line manager asked me the other day what the point is of all these productions I direct? I think he wants to know what the money is for! I wanted to say, because theatre is fun and we need more of that these days at university. I didn't though – twenty-five years of teaching has finally taught me to think before I speak. Instead I thought, I'll write a thesis to see if what I think is happening, is in fact happening. Fun aside, I believe that the students in the productions are learning so much more than theatre skills, even if they aren't really aware of it; after all, I did, although it did take me some time to figure that out. So, I thought I'd ask them.

I didn't know what they'd say; but, like the diligent student I am, I thought I'll start with what I think. I mean, it seems pretty common-sensical to me, but maybe if I have something to compare their responses to, I can heighten the complexity and give my work more validity. So, I'll give my own thoughts – my 'word-portrait', in a way? I liked that phrase by the way—word-portrait—so I used it to collect the responses I needed.

During the next part of the speech, the general lights slowly come up and the other performers enter, spacing themselves around the stage. They will not leave the stage after this, merely step into and out of light as the scenes shift.

ON SCREEN – TRACING THE MAP

Tamar: My word-portrait begins with what I directed – I chose material to challenge the students, introduce them to new ideas, to explore important issues in the world. I wanted to build a space of creativity and experimentation, a safe space, in which risk was encouraged and rewarded, but failure was not condemned. I taught them to welcome constructive criticism rather than fear it – to take the note rather than resist it. Of course, I made them use

their voices, their bodies, and their imaginations to help them become better actors, but I also tried to help them trust themselves and claim agency. I demanded professionalism, dedication and the pursuit of excellence, and tried to treat them as adults; in return, I gave freely of my own energy and passion, shared my knowledge with them, and hopefully demonstrated my values in action to them. I asked them to take themselves and their work seriously, and in turn took them seriously, invited their contributions, encouraged independent thinking and tried to instil confidence by listening to them. We created a community, building trust through the ensemble which I strove to be part of, rather than being the all-knowing guru on the outside looking in and moving them like the puppet master. I like to believe I broadened their intellectual and theatrical horizons, pushing them beyond their own expectations, exposing them to ideas they didn't know, and showing them connections they otherwise might not have seen. I illustrated the power of empathy and the capacity of theatre to be a change agent; I worked *with* them, not *above* them. I trusted them enough to reveal the truth about what the work meant for me, not just in terms of the play but in terms of the world. I shared my 'life lessons' constantly: what you get out depends on what you put in – do the work; tell the story; make choices and own them; have an opinion – neutrality isn't interesting; be bold; breathe – and remember why you're doing this; respect the work, the audience, and each other; acting is finally about generosity; and do everything with energy, vitality, vim and vigour. And remember: What's the worst that can happen? Somebody might laugh at you – no-one ever died from that! I spoke the lessons so often they could finish the sentences for me. We were embarked on a shared journey, mapped differently in each production with its different goals, but a voyage of discovery each time. This is what I believed. Did it happen? We shall see.

In the second half of the monologue, the 'life lessons' scroll across the screen as accompaniment to the dialogue.

Scene 2:

ON SCREEN – ON DOING PRODUCTIONS

The young student enters, seemingly lost, and speaks to the participants generally.

Student: Um, is this where I sign up for auditions?

Devaksha: Yes, the list is on the door – you just pick a slot. Are you a new student?

Student: Yes, it's my first year. I'm a bit nervous though, I'm not sure if I'm ready. I mean I probably won't be cast, right?

Devaksha: Maybe, maybe not, but you should definitely give it a go.

Student: Did you? How did you summon up the courage?

Devaksha: To be honest, I'm not sure what gave me the guts to go for that first audition in my first year. I was not cast after my first audition but after that, I just kept auditioning over the next four years. Taking part in shows is how I made friends, who I still have relationships with today, and I absolutely loved each experience.

Lauren: I waited a year before involving myself in productions – partly due to the fear of being a newbie and partly because I wanted the academics to come first. What I realise

now though is you learn far more by doing than by listening! I auditioned with my group of friends in second year for the annual Shakespeare and was cast in a minuscule role and then recast in a slightly less minuscule role. I was involved in every Shakespeare, annual production and Honours festival from then onwards.

Student: So, you don't think it matters if I get a small part?

Janna: No, I used every opportunity I could to learn skills by involving myself, in whatever capacity, in all the productions that were on offer to us. They provided me with the tools to embark on a professional career in the arts industry.

Noxolo: I understand your nervousness. It wasn't part of my initial plans to do productions at university – I was too timid to perform, let alone risk a 'bad' audition. So, I never willingly auditioned for any production. It was only after being cast as Mary Brute (the provoked wife in the Restoration play titled *The Provoked Wife*), that I started to audition for productions. I didn't have a choice but to be in this production, as it was part of the Acting module I was doing. When my lecturer saw me on stage, she said, 'You've been hiding all along! Now I want to see you audition.' From then, I think I auditioned for most (if not all) of the departmental productions that followed and I'm so glad I (finally) exposed myself to all those opportunities.

Student: Sounds like it will be worth it?

Sacha: Being involved in productions was not only my greatest joy as a student, but also a vital tool to hone my skill as a performer. It's in doing that we learn, and I don't think there is a more valuable way in which to learn the craft of acting than through active and committed involvement in the rehearsal process of a well-directed production.

Lucy: Absolutely! I auditioned because I wanted to act and be noticed for that acting. I wanted to develop the skills I was learning in the classroom and take them into the performance arena and my plan was always to get bigger and juicier roles as I progressed through university training. I wanted to play and have fun with character work, to be part of a creative group of people who were inspiring and motivated to make beautiful—and sometimes ugly—worlds come alive. You will feel the same.

Brett: I just wanted to act, direct, perform, learn, become different characters/roles and to meet new people.

Zanele: And productions were fun and enjoyable! Sometimes I'd forget that we have to put on a professional production!

Derosha: All the campus productions I was in serve as bearers and markers of my student life. They were invaluable to me, each one demarcated my growth as a person and a student actor. The best moments of my life and acting career were during my student campus productions.

Student: I'm sold – I'm going to go for it!

Devaksha: Excellent. Go well!

Brett: Break a leg!

Zanele: And have fun!

Scene 3

ON SCREEN – IT MATTERS BECAUSE. . .

The single spotlight comes up centre stage, and Martin steps into it; he addresses the audience directly.

Martin: I've been asked to tell you why productions are important in the educational context. For me, participating in productions is a way to demonstrate ideas in action, of exploring human behaviour and the human condition through action. And because dramatic activities are holistic—involving each individual physically, intellectually and emotionally in a variety of situations—drama enables people to understand themselves, empathise with others, and know the world in which they and others exist. Formal production should be an essential component of an education in the arts. Indeed, not only the arts. If the word drama means—from Greek—'to do', 'action', then everyone can be an actor, in our career, in our daily life. Drama is for everyone, not just those with a talent in performance. Studying drama empowers us with the skills to 'do' and 'act', in the fullest sense of the words, to speak, yes, but also to think, to feel and to live.

Scene 4

ON SCREEN – ON THE PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE

The general lights come up again. The young student meets the performer-participants again.

Devaksha: Good to see you again. How's your first year been? Did you do any productions?

Student: Yes, I did, and they were fun, but really it's a lot more work than I thought it would be. From what you all said, I was really expecting something quite laid-back, about socialising and fun, but the director actually makes us work really hard. Still, I feel like I am growing. Were your experiences of being in shows the same?

Jason: For me, productions were exciting and enlightening. Auditions, rehearsals, costume fittings and performing for cheering audiences were, lucky for us, how we got our education. Very few university students get to study in such practical and creative ways, putting theory to the test and really immersing themselves in their chosen field. That's why I chose to study drama and be involved in productions. . . . I admit that the thrill of entertaining others also motivated me, it was the chance to learn my craft and experience being in a professional theatre environment that stirred me.

Student: Are they useful, though? I mean, I don't know if I should rather just focus on my academics if the productions don't connect to that work.

Lauren: That would be a mistake. Production experience is priceless. You cannot buy—with all the money in the world—the type of low-key and high-gain type of learning that occurred in the midst of the productions themselves.

Derosha: Being in productions actually allowed me to apply whatever acting theories I learnt about in class in a theatre, where an actual public audience was present.

Noxolo: I found my production experience thoroughly valuable. The stage was one of the primary platforms in which I discovered my voice and appreciated that I had a skill as a performer.

Devaksha: It is hard work, but because of productions, I now have skills, experiences, knowledge and cherished memories that will last me a lifetime.

Hannah: Honestly, productions were such an integral part of my university experience, I cannot imagine that time without them. They taught me to overcome some fears, but also parts of my ego, forced me to become well-organised and rather good at multi-tasking and helped me to get to know my fellow students better. I studied many other subjects, but the drama department was my 'home' on campus and certainly the space I spent most of my time in.

Zanele: Each production for me felt like a different journey. There was always something new to discover and learn and assess about myself as an actor as well as my personal life. This was the main reason I kept auditioning for productions. I couldn't wait to learn and experience failure and success and observe the transformation happen to others as well.

Josette: The time spent working on productions in the drama department really showed me who I was away from all things familiar. The freedom of the university environment and the 'playground of discovery', that was being in productions, really gave me a chance to push my personality and discover who I was away from restrictions. I think the things I learned about myself in those moments were truly paramount to my progression. They almost set in motion a kind of curiosity and yearning for more self-discovery and a deeper understanding of self, and realising who I was in the real world.

Student: I hear what you're saying about the overall experience. To be honest, though, I love acting, but I don't really know if I'm going to end up as a professional actor, so is it still worth it? I mean, I cope OK, but I'm certainly not the best. . .

Lucy: It's really not just about acting. During the production of *Three Sisters*, I remember very clearly being upset about the costume I had to wear. I don't remember the exact details of what the scene was about or even why I was upset about the costume but I do remember being told very clearly by the department Professor: 'Lucy, remember it's not what we look like that counts.' I remember being furious and completely relieved at the same time. Furious that my self-conscious sulk had been so transparent and relieved that my self-sabotaging fear about not looking good had been called out. That comment has stayed with me since and it is a moment I often return to as a way of enforcing self-worth and value placed on effort, actions and ultimately the work I do.

Jason: My experience skilled me not only for working on productions in the so-called 'real world', but for dealing with other people in day to day life. Knowing your own shortcomings and strengths, which theatre-making can teach you, also enables you to know when

to back down, when to stand up, how to ensure you don't lose your cool and how to project the best of yourself.

Student: You all sound so assured and confident about yourselves. . . I wish I felt so certain about things. Our director's always saying 'do the work' and 'what you put in determines what you'll get out' – sounds like you all have got those lessons down now?

Zoë: Don't let our apparent wisdom fool you. Learning is never done. Really though, the value I gained from being in and directing productions is that it has made me a better person. It is a process of creating a 'gift' for an audience. You can't expect anything back and shouldn't. It is an act of altruism and by the end of the process of a production I generally feel tired, changed and content. For me, and for our director too (I think), it is an act of service. I give the gift and hope it is liked. I am about to embark on directing my first full length Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I am petrified . . . but I am doing it. I am risking BIG and taking a leap of faith, hoping that I will emerge on the other side a better director.

Student: So just go for it?

All: Yes!

Brett: Basically, being in productions is a degree in itself, so stop stressing and do it.

Scene 5

ON SCREEN – A TEACHING MOMENT

The centre-stage spotlight comes up and Josette steps into it; she addresses the audience directly.

Josette: I took part in every production I could while I was in the drama department. From Shakespeare to Brecht I wanted to do it all. We seem as people to learn most through struggle and failure, a curious thing, but struggle often becomes the teacher. My most memorable 'experience' was in a production I didn't even take part in. Tamar was directing a production of Chekov's *Three Sisters* while I was in first year. I had come from an all-girls' school where I spent my best high school years playing male roles thanks to my deep voice. I had come to love my deep well supported sound. It was 'kind-of' my best asset (or so I thought). For the audition, I selected a scene to work on in which I played Irina, the youngest and perhaps most innocent and soft of the three. I had worked for days on this audition and walked into the audition room with a level of confidence but still, I'm sure, desperation. I felt I did a great job and eagerly waited for the cast posting on the board a few days later. To my devastation, a girl in third year had been cast in the role and my name was nowhere to be seen. I went to speak with Tamar and a magical lesson took place. When I asked her why I had not booked the role, and what I needed to do in the future to make sure I could book roles, she told me that my voice did not match my body. She told me my voice and body were functioning at odds to one another, my voice almost betraying all the hard work my body was doing to create a character. I remember thinking, how? But as the next few months unfolded the lesson began to integrate and I did see how. I started to look for where characters sat vocally realising I could shift and move my voice to allow a different voice out. I might not have gotten the chance to play Irina (a role I was hardly right for by the way) but

Tamar had the grace to give me the lesson and for this I am forever grateful. I believe my real work as an actor began on that day.

Scene 6

ON SCREEN – ON LEARNING THE DISCIPLINE

The general lights come up revealing the student, in third year now, speaking with the past students again.

Student: After three years of doing productions, I feel like I really am making good progress with my acting and general performance skills. It's like you guys told me, I'd never have got the same amount of practice without the productions. So, thanks for that heads-up! It's actually amazing how much is crammed into each one!

Lauren: You learn more by doing and by listening. Every production experience was a teacher of different skills and brought with it a different set of expectations. I was often described as a 'sponge' at university – trying my hand at various things and gleaning as much information as possible from an experience.

Brandon: And the more you 'do', the more you learn and the more you evolve as a practitioner.

Derosha: Definitely. I learnt about actor professionalism: learning lines, being punctual, helping out backstage whenever I could, assisting cast members and directors when need be. I learnt what was expected of the actor, director, stage manager, lighting/sound technicians and other personnel involved in the production process.

Brett: I learnt how to act, direct, produce, embody different characters, play multiple roles, deal with different types of people, how to work as a team in a collaborative process and more importantly how to think differently.

Sacha: I think the real learning from participating in productions is in the development of performance instincts – by their instinctual nature they're hard to define in rational terms. Certainly, I learnt acting and directing methodologies in rehearsal, I learnt and honed performance technique through voice and physical movement work in performance, I learnt staging techniques and a fair bit about sound, lighting, set design. But the most valuable lessons, I think, were more felt – through trying out performance options, experimenting, receiving performance notes and 'feeling' where performance rhythms failed, responses were false, emotions were forced etc. I learnt to 'feel' performance truth. This has been the most important tool for me in my career as a writer and director – performance instinct.

Devaksha: It's not just the discipline skills though, I have to say. I learnt a lot about myself doing productions. I learnt what I like to do more, what I have the skills for and what kind of theatre I want to make. For instance, I began drama at university with the desire to become a theatre director. Now, I think my skills lie elsewhere as a playwright, performer and manager in the theatre. With every production comes a learning experience that impacts on who you are as both a theatre maker and a person.

Libby: Very true. Skills like textual analysis, communication (negotiation, crisis-management, a honing of my emotional intelligence because I encountered so many different personalities to my own), time-management and coping with pressure, as well as acting skills, were important. Much of what I observed of my directors in productions informed how I would go on to direct, and to an extent how I would write – as I learnt an innate understanding of the audience.

Lucy: I cultivated a great capacity for focus and concentration from being involved in productions. Embracing that level of freedom to play within the rehearsal process encouraged me to develop flexibility and adaptability and these tools have been invaluable in my professional life.

Noxolo: Self-confidence, too, both as a performer and as a person in general. I learnt to believe in my abilities and to trust that my contributions (both onstage and off) are valuable.

Josette: I consider my time doing productions at UKZN my formative education for my career in the arts. The lessons and the information have long integrated into my body and I don't really 'think' anymore about my process or where it comes from, it's just there; the lessons and all the little bits of information have been absorbed and have all had incredible lasting value,

Student: Right, well, that was more than I anticipated in response – a lot to think about, really. I guess I need to probe and reflect on my experiences a bit more deeply to figure out what I've learnt about theatre and life. Later though, right now, I have a rehearsal to get to – I'm sure I'll be seeing you again.

Scene 7

ON SCREEN – AND NOW FOR THE EXPERTS. . .

Lights come up on the five colleague-participants sitting as if in a meeting. As the light comes up, Tanya lifts her head as if listening to an instruction in an earpiece.

Tanya: Oh, is it our turn now? Finally!!! I was wondering when we'd get to have our say.

Tamar: (voiceover) Patience, please. Everyone will have a turn. To be fair, you guys have said a fair amount in this study already so I thought it appropriate to give the students more stage-time here. But this is it, your moment is here: Let's hear it, what's your take on the learning happening from my directing?

There's a moment of silence as they all look around at each other, waiting to see who will speak first. Verne eventually starts.

Verne: OK, I'll go – someone has to be first. The learning that takes place during a production cannot be matched by only classroom work. You don't really fully understand the theatre unless you are in a production, working on a show. You, Tamar, are good at providing this learning to students. The work you do on productions is extremely valuable and allows students to grow in their abilities and knowledge of the theatre. I learnt a lot of my knowledge from working on shows with you.

M-Heleen: I may not have seen as many of your productions, or being involved in as many, as the rest of them, but I agree. Production work allows students to engage with the demands of the medium (theatre); integrate multiple skills into a synthesised expressive form (application of skills); look at issues or behaviours through the eyes of another – fostering understanding and tolerance for difference, and emotional competency (affective development); fostering multivision (recognising, understanding and integrating different value and belief systems into one's own frame of reference); critical and reflective skills (cognitive development); negotiation/balancing personal politics with group politics (social skills) and more.

Verne: (*with a laugh*) Hey, leave something for the rest of us to say, please!!!

Martin: Because of the way you challenge performers, there is always a sense of focus and energy within your productions, a sense that the performers are committed to giving of their best, that they have developed technically and artistically through the experience.

Tanya: I think you learn everything in productions. I mean yes, you need to learn theory, but it is when you actually put it on its feet that it becomes real and it becomes part of you. It becomes not just something that is kind of tacked on to you but becomes embedded in you on a cellular level. And it is about how to stand on a stage and how to position yourself on a stage and how to not stand with your back to the audience or stand in a straight line, all that technical stuff. And it's understanding how theatre works and how all the pieces come together and how you move a show into a big theatre. All of that is learnt only in production. Because you can't give a lecture on that stuff. You only learn that when you are doing it. . . . But it is also all the intangible stuff. It is working in groups. Working with people that you don't know. It is time management. It is self-discipline. It is learning to be creative. It is learning to problem solve because all of it is solving problems, all of it, every step of the way in rehearsal is about problem solving. It's how we take these words on a page and we make it live on stage in real life. It is about being creative, about making something from nothing, really.⁶³

Lloyd: That is exactly it. A production sets out a series of problems to be creatively solved and challenges to be pragmatically overcome. Production is both the culmination and testing ground for all learning that has come before and all learning yet to come. In and through your praxis, you cajole the students to engage this unique kind of learning journey.

Martin: I really do believe that, through your productions and what you have imparted, you have made young people grow through the experience, and that you have given them strengths and skills that are not simply for a vocation in the theatre, but more meaningfully as a preparation for life.

Tamar: (*voiceover*) When I am directing do you think that I am making a space where that kind of learning can happen? Because I think it would be possible, theoretically anyway,

⁶³ Tanya's comments sound different to the others due to the fact that her responses came from a live interview, whereas the other responses were written. Therefore, they are less grammatical and carefully structured, reflecting the oral form of the interview. Rather than rewrite her responses, I have left them as they are to reflect their different standpoint.

to do a production where you are not doing it. You're learning technical skills but you are not doing that deep stuff, because the problems are all being solved for you.

Tanya: Yes, I think that is possible. You and I—when we work together—are very conscious of not giving the answers. I think sometimes you give more answers than I do and that you will get up and show or say to them do this, try this, but that is also fantastic for kids who are scared. . . . You also push them and you expect them to show up physically and emotionally and mentally to be in that space and you don't take it if they don't. . . . I think that's the way that we have always managed our shows. We understand that it is a learning process for everybody. I think people forget that the theatre is always a microcosm of life. It is always a metaphor for something that is going on in the world. By living in that space, by operating in that space, you are always learning about that other thing that is being referred to, you know? I think a lot of these kids learn. When I look at someone like Susan,⁶⁴ who is a very talented performer but is making a very, very good career for herself doing something completely different and is using thousands of skills that she learned through doing all those productions with us.

Tamar: (voiceover) Yes, I often think that, because actually the percentage of people who go on to make a career in the theatre is minimal. But, you know, it's the idea that even if you never step on a stage again, what is it that you can take from there that is going to translate into . . .

Tanya: Learning to be self-reliant. . .

M-Heleen: OK, time to move on – they're finishing each other's sentences again!!!

Tanya: (with a fake glare) If I can finish? Learning to trust themselves. Learning to know I can do this. It is that sense of I can do difficult things because I've done that. And I think that in choosing challenging material, in choosing plays and pieces that are not run of the mill, and pushing them out of their comfort zone, I think those are very valuable learning experiences because actually you don't learn if you're in your comfort zone. You don't learn anything unless you are feeling a little bit out of your depth. And I think the students take the risks with you. I think for a lot of them, because they trust you, will take huge risks with you. I think you have been so important in their development of their sense of themselves, not just as performers but their sense of themselves as people. They've really crossed huge thresholds when they worked with you. I think partly it is just production work but I think it's also got to do with the way you direct, and the way that you teach as you direct. That everything, every second of it, is a teaching moment that you will always use. You will go over it again and again and really exploit the teaching moment.

Tamar: (voiceover) See, this is why we work together!

Martin: (after a moment's pause) Right, well, if that's all, can we get on with our meeting?

Scene 8

ON SCREEN – ON LEARNING THE SELF

⁶⁴ This is a pseudonym, as the student in question was not part of the study.

The general lights come up to reveal the student, now pursuing postgraduate study, speaking with the performer-participants.

Student: I was wondering when I was going to bump into you all again. I have to say my Honours year has been amazing! I directed my own show which was an incredible experience and we've just finished performing in our Honours production. I can't believe how far I've come since first year.

Devaksha: So, participating in the productions worked out then?

Student: Oh wow, that is an understatement! Thank goodness I took your advice and did that first audition – without the productions, it wouldn't have been the same. I think they are the things I'll remember most when I finally leave this place. . . do you think back on them and what they gave you in retrospect?

Devaksha: On so many levels – I gained skills from my participation in productions which will last me for the rest of my life. In any environment you work in, even if it's not a theatre, the skills and experience you have from working in groups, being creative, doing hard work (theatre is not easy) and handling high pressure situations helps you.

Hannah: It was also the 'soft skills' though, which I discovered when working with a diverse group on a big project given very limited time – like patience, listening to others, speaking your mind, finding common ground, following directions, encouraging fellow performers, reducing one's own sense of self-importance, focusing on the overall goal and probably many others that do not come to mind at the moment.

Lauren: Is it wrong to say that every skill in my skill set (given what I do as a senior drama teacher and Head of Department is so closely linked to my studies) has its beginnings or finer-tunings in my participation in productions? I think that's true. I think that the logical skills of acting, choreography and singing were outweighed significantly by the act of learning to direct via observation of what I would and wouldn't do, learning to administrate, market and sell performances, learning to interact with severely difficult personalities, and learning what styles of theatre work.

Noxolo: I learnt that I'm not reserved as I thought I was, especially considering the roles that I had to play. The more dramatic the role, the more I had fun playing it! I discovered my voice and appreciated that I had skill as a performer.

Zanele: For me, productions were life changing. They made me come out of my shell and speak and share my opinions and thoughts. Participating in so many different plays opened up my mind in terms of how unique we are as people, and yet how we go through the same experiences – that taught me not to judge other people too quickly. I learnt to work as part of a team by tolerating different personalities and different experiences, and that if I didn't play my part by being present in the process, I not only let myself down but the entire production. So, I discovered the practical experience of being committed to a task until it became part of my lifestyle. The productions showed me how each member of the cast had a part to play no matter how big or small the role was. The life lesson was that each individual in this world has a part to play no matter how big or small that individual is. Everybody matters.

Student: I know exactly what you mean – you feel like you are a part of something bigger than just you. Our director always says we are more than the sum of our parts – it took me a while to get it, but I'm starting to understand it now.

Janna: It can take a while to sink in! One of the most important qualities I learnt is to keep moving even when all the odds are against you. I learnt more than just performance technique, character study and honing my craft; I learnt how to manage a company, produce a play and how to keep moving, to produce a final product I could be proud of. And, of course, never to stop having fun.

Brandon: I agree – it's the lesson of never backing down from a challenge; there is always a way and means to do something, you just have to try. I learnt to be a problem-solver.

Brett: I'm a television director now myself, and there are many lessons or experiences that I have used and continue to use not only professionally but in my daily life as well. The main skill that I learnt is how to think outside of the box, how to deal with different personalities of people, and how to access the key to open up the maximum potential of actors and people, as well as how to work in collaborative process. Team work is key and keeping people motivated. I learnt that anything is possible with hard work, dedication and a good attitude. Not everyone has the same vision of the end product and not everyone works in the same process, so consider options – there are many ways to play a scene, don't always go for the first one.

Student: That is a big one for me too – I get excited about the possibilities, about letting my imagination run riot and not worrying so much about the outcome like I used to do, when all I thought about was the audience's applause.

Josette: You're not alone in that. I can tell you that it's been over ten years since I left university, and I am almost certain if you were asking me back then about my learning, I'd have given an answer rooted in some kind of result-based outcome, a kind of 'nailed it' response. In my formative years as an actor and story teller, especially at university, I was bent on 'getting it right'. As time and experience have blessed me, I find my understanding of experience to be the most vital. The experiencing of things to me now is the achievement, there is less and less 'getting it right' the more I do.

Student: Basically, like Stanislavski says, love the art in yourself. . .

All: *(finishing her sentence)* Not yourself in art!

They laugh at the shared memory of hearing the same sentence so many times in so many different contexts.

Lucy: Seriously though, productions opened up the space for me to begin gaining a deeper understanding of my own drive, desires and behaviour patterns. I learned about my own ability to explore emotional depth and how to apply that skill to different contexts both onstage and offstage. I learned about how being a perfectionist meant I often held back in the rehearsal process or stopped myself from fully engaging, for fear of failure. Later on in my training, towards the end of my degree, I learned to trust and give perfectionism the day off when I was in rehearsal. And through those realisations, I learned to build tenacity and

resilience and to accept constructive criticism and feedback, which is a vital skill to have in the workplace.

Student: I definitely agree! I know I'm not the same person I was when I started this process – I really feel those lessons you're describing will stay with me forever.

Lucy: But it was more than just knowledge about myself. I learned about camaraderie and the strong bonds that form between people who are cast together as a company of actors. I learned about the openness and vulnerability of others and how energy can be carried from one performer to the next. I learned about a shared sense of purpose through engaging with other cast members and the joy associated with having a purpose, particularly if it is geared towards creating something vibrant and full of energy, like a play. I learned about determination and resilience, observing other cast members overcome personal difficulties, sickness, fainting, break-ups and domestic tragedies to still deliver an incredible performance, giving energy to the audience and other cast members and allowing the show to go on seamlessly. I also learned that commitment and dedication are vital and if an actor doesn't come to a production with these things to offer, the rest of the company will lose focus and trust, and their energy as an ensemble will scatter. I think that lesson is true of life in general.

Zanele: A lot of it was about honesty. When the performance is honest, there is a ripple effect that happens. Fellow cast members respond in an honest way and the audience also have an honest experience. The lesson I learnt, which can be used in other fields of practice, was that people are receptive to honesty and authenticity. The career I want to venture into is facilitation, and in order to connect with people, you need to be honest. Not only is this a life lesson in that, once you feel the vulnerability you then have an opportunity to decide what you are going to do about that feeling. One has a choice to continue to hide behind blocks or overstep the blocks. The vulnerability taught me to have faith in myself as well as in my abilities as an actor. In choosing to break through the fear you experience another level of acting and I feel as if I was growing as an individual.

Josette: All the productions I did sing beautifully in my memory. The knowledge I gathered through each and every one lead me closer and closer to my true 'self', teaching me invaluable lessons about myself as a person and an actor. It was like building blocks laid neatly on top of one another and each experience made the next possible. The learning and growing into a better actor was everything for me and I really did get my fill of that. I have taken all the lessons as well as the curiosity into my career and they have served me at every stage and with every role I have been blessed enough to play. To even describe a value is hard. I think this is in the true sense invaluable.

There is a moment of silence as they contemplate what's been said.

Student: You've really given me a lot to think about. I thought I'd be done at the end of this year but now I think maybe there's still more to be learnt? Maybe I'll stick around for Masters and see what happens. . .

Scene 9

ON SCREEN – MAKING THE JOURNEY

The centre spot comes up and Josette steps into it; she speaks directly to the audience.

Josette: Thinking about all the productions I did and what I learned from them, one stands out as the first time I knew I had to change drastically to become a better if not great actor. I was working on Tamar's production of *Confusions* by Alan Ayckbourn, and I had been given a scene with a very talented actor named Mike.⁶⁵ In the scene, his character drank and drank becoming progressively more drunk as the scene went on . . . Now in those days I used to pride myself on being the most reliable actor on the stage, I never changed, I would deliver my line exactly the same way every time, with the same actions, like some kind of continuity genius. I figured this was good acting. I was so convinced it was good acting that working with Mike was terribly difficult for me. He was the polar opposite, a daring improviser and the kind of actor with whom you never know what you'll get. Exciting and thrilling for some to act opposite but for me horrifying. To this day, I still think Tamar is a genius for this pairing. Anyway, one night as we were in the height of the scene's climax, Mike was acting drunk and getting more and more impassioned by the second, and completely out of nowhere he grabs the drink on stage and throws it in my face. This was obviously not the planned blocking, nor was it ever discussed. I'm sure he was just so desperate to get some kind of different reaction from me he was forced to perform this amazing feat of improvisation. I can only imagine what my face must have looked like . . . In fact, I wish I could have seen it. I remember being totally outraged and not even wanting to talk to him after the incident. After it had happened I went to talk to Tamar about it. Her response, 'That's the best you've ever done the scene.' I went home that night and had to totally re-evaluate everything I thought about what it was to be a good actor. To this day, I owe my love for organic, truth seeking, intuitive, alive, in the moment acting to that one moment and the Mike-Josette dynamic Tamar set up. Good acting is about discovery and truth for me – repeating it the same every time means never discovering anything and most definitely not being truthful.

Scene 10

ON SCREEN – ON SEEING REFLECTIONS OF MYSELF

The general lights come up—the performer-participants are sitting discussing their experiences at university.

Libby: Writing these word-portraits has really got me thinking back over all those experiences and remembering what it was like to be directed by Tamar. And I have such vivid memories!

Zoë: Well, when I reflect and consider my life as a drama educator there is no one who had a greater directing influence on me. Her directing influence gave shape and purpose to my life. She showed me that my life had a creative purpose and that I could follow a road that would lead to both personal and professional fulfilment. As I look back now I can connect so many dots back to her and the work she did with me at UKZN, as a lecturer, tutor, director and colleague.

Lauren: The best advice she ever gave me was 'just do it!'. She has a knack for keying in on specific talents of others, and encouraging a collaborative approach. It was at her hands

⁶⁵ This is a pseudonym as the actor in question was not part of my study.

I learnt about the ensemble – allowing all individuals to feel important, significant and worthy of opinion but never losing sight of your own vision in that collaboration.

Zanele: She always pushed me to a deeper level. She saw something unique in us that we could not see in ourselves. She knew our potential and challenged us to explore and surprise ourselves.

Hannah: Challenge was definitely a big part of it – go further, think more, and step out of the comfort zone. I think high standards are the best way to inspire people to grow and most rose to the challenges and surprised themselves by what they could do. Sometimes we only realised while performing what we were producing, providing a sense of achievement for the people involved.

Donna: Through my experiences in production, I have learnt that no two performances can ever be precisely the same as theatre is live ephemeral art and different factors will vary and thus affect the performance in different ways on different days. Tamar suggested that this should be freeing for a performer rather than a cause for concern, as we should acknowledge this fact and thus not put pressure on ourselves to try to create and recreate the one ‘perfect’ version, but rather keep exploring and playing and actively allowing ourselves to be open to react to whatever stimuli might occur in each performance, and be excited to discover the multiple dimensions of possibility to any performance.

Devaksha: Of course, the memories of her outbursts when we are days away from opening and the pressure is on also stand out; I will always remember and chuckle about them now. It’s amazing that she didn’t completely fall apart sometimes – the workload was insane. They had their use, though, bringing the group together to focus and get the show ready.

Brandon: Yes, where time was short, she could get herself into a state of stress and worry that sometimes impacted negatively on the morale of the cast. Saying that though, when you are working with over twenty students and everyone is talking at the same time and not listening to what you are saying, it is only natural that one may start to lose their sense of humour!

Lauren: I can’t deny there were moments of extreme anger when outside influences filtered into the director’s chair! Every now and then (read under intense stress–final rehearsals, etc.), a sense of ‘my way or the highway’ would occur and any opposing thoughts are squashed before having time to contemplate them properly.

Noxolo: And a point of exasperation was sometimes reached quite quickly if an actor didn’t quite seem to understand what she was communicating. Maybe also perhaps intervening too soon in the process of showing the actor how to speak a line or how to act a scene, before the actor attempted to experiment and figure it out on their own.

Libby: I never really saw it as flaws or weaknesses. There were times when she became so immersed in the work, and her relationship with us, that she seemed to feel overwhelmed. She sometimes seemed to be consumed by the work she did with us . . .

Lucy: Yes, she was always so personally invested in the outcome. Sometimes towards the end of the process when tempers were a little frayed or perhaps cast members

started getting restless, she would express frustration and then move forward to continue with the work. This is not a comment on a weakness; it is simply a personal observation of a very real human response to any creative project. The goal was always to create the most believable and truthful performance.

Josette: She has an amazing ability to make one feel entirely at ease, we always know she's in control but we never feel controlled; it's freedom to create but knowing you won't really mess up. It's truly the best room to be in. A gift. The only weakness I believe is her devotion to her students, this deep love is what makes her an incredible teacher but sometimes gets her heart broken when students don't show up with the level of commitment required to make a production happen.

Lucy: I just appreciated the warmth and clear passion she shared for every production she directed.

Brett: *(after a slight pause)* Right, well, good talking – see you all soon.

Scene 11

ON SCREEN – ON THE FUNCTION OF PRODUCTIONS

The general lights come up and we see the student and the performer-participants speaking together again.

Student: You all do keep showing up at the most opportune times! I'm about to hand in my MA thesis. You won't believe what it's about!

Devaksha: So, tell us.

Student: I decided to write about productions, and why they are important vehicles for learning. To be honest, a lot of the stories you told me helped me come up with the idea. I hope you don't mind.

Lauren: What were your findings?

Student: Um, it's quite long, but in a nutshell, productions are essential for learning in a drama department. Would you agree?

Brandon: Well, of course. Theatre is very much a practiced field of work in that the more you practice and/or 'do', the more you learn and the more you evolve as a practitioner. This for me is why productions are important because there are a lot of skills that you aren't taught in a university setting, that you can only learn in the productions.

Lauren: Productions are completely necessary. You cannot hope to learn half of what you do in action in a classroom scenario. We need formal production work to be created by and for the younger, up and coming generation – how else will there be a full understanding of what a director does and doesn't do? And how then can we possibly expect the future generations to build on their experience and knowledge to create further strides in theatre if they have no appreciation for what came before?

Devaksha: I shudder to think that a student can graduate with a degree in drama and performance without ever having partaken in a theatre production for an outside and paying audience. If students never experience performing for people other than their lecturers and peers, if they never experience performing in a live show, then what is the worth of their learning? Partaking in a certain number of productions, both as a crew and cast member, I think, should be a degree requirement.

Josette: Agreed! For an actor to learn about acting through books and lectures is like a person thinking they might be able to drive a car after just reading a book. Taking lessons in driving is good but you don't truly learn how to drive until you get your license and sit in the driver's seat alone in the car for the very first time. This is when you really learn how to drive. Productions I think are this moment for actors. When an audience is seated in a theatre space and you have rehearsed enough and are ready for opening night, the curtain raises and then you learn how to act. The audience is the true guide. They sniff out the untruths and tells in your character creation. If they don't believe you, you'll know. For a graduate to leave university never having been on stage in the real sense is for a graduate to not be ready for the world of professional performance. And even if people don't want to be actors, taking part in productions contributes to becoming a functioning member of society.

Brandon: When you go out into the real world and look for a job in the arts, a drama degree will only get you so far; the rest is what experience you have in the theatre, what productions you have done and what skills you can bring with you into the cast.

Student: Yes, I addressed all of those practical questions, and I agree that productions are a part of drama and should be there. But in my thesis, I was looking for the deeper reasons, the collateral learning if you like, that happens through the production work.

Hannah: I think there are so many. For the people involved in the production it is a strong community building exercise, a way to practically learn about oneself in relation to others, and about setting goals and achieving them. In the best case, it not only entertains but also helps the audience ask questions about life and to think about a certain topic in a different way – in any case it is an enriching experience for the audience, a very specific experience that is not the same as watching a movie, for example. And I believe that university should be all about various and new experiences that open one's mind to different ways of looking at the world. This is something theatre can do on so many levels.

Lucy: It's also a constructive and positive method of channelling student performers' energy and providing a platform for creative expression, exploration and safe discovery.

Brett: Productions give learners a taste of the professional world (performing in front of an audience, how a professional production is conducted, etc.), but more importantly, they teach learners how to work with others, to learn from professionals in the industry, to develop and improve their craft, change the way they think, and for many it teaches them to face their fears.

Libby: My memories of working on productions at university eclipse any other memories of my time as a student. I learnt about myself as an individual, I was exposed to practical applications of what I was learning in Drama Studies, and I linked it to what I was learning about media and postmodernism in English Studies, and Media and Communication.

They taught us about relationships, questioned our views on the world, caused us to interrogate politics, and that is what I remember about university.

Zoë: Putting on productions at university level should be about offering cultural depth and texture to the community and country within which it is located. The productions can choose to celebrate, challenge, reflect or reject the rich heritage and present issues of the day. A university is a place for thinking about the hard questions in our world and in our art. It is a place to grapple with new and old forms of theatre whether they are huge successes or even huger failures. Audiences that are present and open to theatre learn about what it means to be a human being.

Josette: That is exactly it. Plays teach people about the human condition, they teach us to look inside and begin a kind of internal reflection. Plays will inspire students to ask questions about themselves, their lives and their relationships. They hold a mirror up to the individual and ask for the student to look deep within themselves. Even if a person was simply in the drama department to fill a credit or skip out on a more boring subject choice, participating in productions will indeed change their lives.

By this time, the colleague-participants have also entered the stage space and become part of the conversation.

Tanya: It's really part of our job as teachers. You are not only teaching them about theatre, you are teaching them about life. There are so many studies that show how important this work is. . . for peoples' psychosocial development, their emotional development and that kind of thing. It is like saying to a doctor, okay you are going to go and be a doctor but you've never actually dealt with a patient in your life. You are never going to see a patient until you've qualified. I mean for goodness' sake, they'd be killing people! It is the same thing in theatre; you can't expect an actor to be able to act if you are not giving them opportunities to learn their craft and to test things, and to fail. The right to fail, in a rehearsal room. And a tutorial is not a rehearsal, it is not the same thing. Yes, there is a right to fail in the tutorials but I think that because there is no audience, they don't care enough. . . about the outcome. It is really only when they do it in front of a proper audience, the audience that it is designed for, that they will know if it works or not. Doing it only for each other is completely artificial. It is like a laboratory in a way, but you are not actually getting an adequate result from your experiment because you are not testing it properly. Obviously, there has to be a balance: There has to be theory, there has to be small group teaching, and there has to be production. And you know, when we were students, it was part of the course and I think it's got to go back in the course, I really do.

Josette: Human beings are hardwired for creativity, a part of ourselves we so readily ignore and discourage; we are raised by elders who were brought up on story telling. Story is a part of who we are as beings. For a student to embark on a production process is to honour the deep need for creativity in their lives, it is to unlock a part of themselves that will create a new kind of flow and understanding of self. This could, if taken seriously, move them to a place of true fulfilment in life by discovering what it is that makes them work, or tick. They might find themselves in the midst of a creative experience unlocking a part of their being they never knew was there. Honouring this could lead to finding true purpose and meaning in life. Song, dance, storytelling and art all exist in this world of production and all of these things are what make humans truly come alive.

During the final scene, all the participants will move slowly towards the empty map board and attach cards with words or phrases written on them to the map. These words and phrases are extracted from the various things they have said during the play, creating finally a collage of ideas that have emerged about formal theatre productions in higher education. As each person attaches their cards, the same image will appear on the large screen, so that the physical action is mirrored in the visual aspect.

Epilogue

ON SCREEN – IN THE END IS THE BEGINNING

The centre spot comes up; the student steps into it and addresses the audience directly.

Tamar: *(smiling)* What did you think was going to happen? I did tell you I was the chief protagonist of this play. So, now you've heard the stories, the word-portraits penned by the people whose lives have intersected with mine, and whose journeys have crossed my map at one point or another. They've told you their thoughts. And what are mine, finally, at the end of this voyage?

To be honest, my first response was a sigh of relief that what I thought I was doing was not entirely a fantasy dreamed up in my overactive imagination. Some of what I believed was actually there, it did happen. I also learned some things about myself that might help make me a better director-teacher as I move forward on my path to whatever new enlightenments await. I have seen in these stories signs of the big ideas of learning – finding agency, taking responsibility, making choices, working with commitment and belief in the self and in others; I have recognised the attitudes of determination, endurance and respect emerging from these narratives. I have taken note of the expressions of courage, honesty, and compassion. I have witnessed the humanity in these tales.

Theatre speaks in different ways, so we can learn to understand experiences outside of our own through watching them on stage. To me, it's about humanity, it's about understanding our human condition, about understanding our place in the world, about how we relate to each other, and to the world around us. It is about understanding human actions and about how the playing out of that human action can create something within us as audience members who watch it or participants who make it – a tool for understanding humanity, for understanding our space, our being, in a way. By bearing witness we are called to think about our own view of the world, our own sense of being, our own sense of identity and how that identity works, and how it impacts on other people. We spend our lives so wrapped up in our own little kinespheres that we forget how much what we do impacts on those around us. That's important to me, to think about the consequences of things, not just about why the actions happen but what are the results of those actions: 'Look at what happens as a result of this thing'. Theatre lets us do that, and that makes for incredibly powerful teaching and learning moments.

This then is the story of my work, my "dream of passion," and my hope for a better future, which rest finally in these young people with whom I work. I remind myself constantly that I am responsible for these students' wellbeing, to first do no harm, and that they are, mostly, young and vulnerable; it calls to my mind Yeats' (1899) beautiful injunction—"I have spread my dreams under your feet; / Tread softly because you tread on my dreams"—and reminds me to tread lightly. Finally, it's the learning that counts most. . . but when the theatre magic works, when they take the risks, make the leaps, that is when it is possible to witness

transformation happening before one's eyes. My friend Tanya told you that some of the students do take risks with me because they trust me, and that is both a burden and a delight for me as a director and as a teacher, something to treasure but also something to treat with great care as I continue my theatre-making odyssey.

The lights gradually come back up to full during this speech. At its conclusion, John Lennon's "Imagine" begins to play, and as this happens, everyone moves to the front of the stage bringing the now-filled in map with them. The cast gathers around the map to take the final curtain call, before the lights fade to black.

APPENDIX 9: WORD-PORTRAIT EXAMPLES

I include here three examples of the word-portraits (two performer-participants and one colleague-participant) to show that I have not altered the content in my data-play, and also to provide a sense of the variety of responses that were obtained.

DEROSHA (PERFORMER-PARTICIPANT)

Performing in Productions

What was your most memorable production experience while at university? Why?

All my productions were equally memorable and special. One that stands out was my last campus production, *Ghosts*. I was doing my masters at this point, so I was in a better position to understand the theoretical acting approaches that the director applied. The rehearsal process was interesting because each rehearsal felt like a psychological exercise and was personally cathartic as well.

What made you do productions at university? How did you get involved in them?

My reasons for studying drama on a tertiary level, were so that I could pursue a career in acting. I knew that to become an actor I had to start acting as soon as I was given the opportunity and I was given this opportunity at the UKZN Howard College Drama Department. I auditioned for productions, like all the other eager students.

What skills, if any, did you acquire from your participation in productions?

I acquired many skills: Being in these productions allowed me to apply whatever acting theories I learnt about in class in a theatre, where an actual public audience was present.

I learnt about actor professionalism: learning lines, being punctual, helping out backstage whenever I could, assisting cast members and directors when need be.

Set creation: I got the opportunity to be involved in creating sets during *Twelfth Night* in 2006. It was an exciting experience, not only was it my first theatre production but our directors Tamar Meskin and Tanya van der Walt, ensured that all cast members were involved in all aspects of the production, not just as student actors. These opportunities increased the value of the theatre for me and made the theatre experience a learning adventure.

Being in a production taught me about the various roles involved in a production. I learnt what was expected of the actor, director, stage manager, lighting/sound technicians and other personnel involved in the production process. It was only whilst being in a production where I was able to understand my role and others' roles.

Being in a production taught me to work with various creative people, it broadened my understanding of the acting/performing field.

Were there specific incidences in specific productions that impacted on you particularly strongly? Is there anything you experienced that you still remember? Are there things you experienced in productions that you have used – and/or continue to use – in your daily life?

All the productions I have been in highlighted the importance of complete relaxation in order to at least enter the 'creative state'. The importance of being relaxed as a person first, then as actor playing the character, is something that I only understood by being in the productions. It is something I am still working on as an actor today.

I was taught warm up exercises during my first year of Drama studies. It involved physically and mentally warming up the body to enter into the creative space. I use these warm ups whenever I need to enter the creative atmosphere as an actor/dancer myself. I also use the warm up exercises in my classroom to alleviate tension or restlessness. These exercises I am always asked to repeat or lead, in a professional production space. In addition to these warm ups, were the group dynamic games, which I continue to use in the classroom, it allows new students to build relationships with each other.

Are there things of lasting value that you derived from your participation in productions?

All campus productions I was in serve as bearers and markers of my student life. The productions were special memories to me, each one demarcated my growth as a person and a student actor.

What, if anything, did you learn about yourself by being involved in the production?

I am a nervous wreck before an audience/any group of people, but the guise of a character made me feel confident and more secure in front of strangers. This discovery, made me realise how insecure I am as a person and how I need to work on my insecurities, which aren't fully resolved yet, but the fact is the productions made me realise how comfortable I felt as 'another person', which was quite eye opening for me.

What, if anything, did you learn about others by being involved in the production?

I learnt about working with different work ethics. Some student actors were confident and were able to perform their characters on the night of a production without extreme off campus rehearsal time, whereas I needed to constantly rehearse on campus and in my own time, off campus.

How would you describe the value of your production experience?

Invaluable to me. The best moments of my life and acting career were during my student campus productions.

Me as the Director

How would you describe me as a director? What kind of a director am I? What are some of my strengths as a director? What are some of my weaknesses?

Tamar Meskin was and is a nurturing person and director. She was the director who would walk us hand in hand through our first productions, helping us understand what an actor is and demystifying our 'glam' perceptions of the acting industry. Tamar was the director who highlighted the responsibility of the actor, by highlighting the actor as a master storyteller, and that the transmitting of stories is extremely important in society, I realised my social significance as an actor. This was something I learnt nowhere else and was surprised at learning.

How would you describe my relationship to, and engagement with, the various responsibilities and aspects of directing that lead to the final performance project (e.g. the use of space, language, working with actors, communicating with the audience, etc.)?

Tamar had a meticulous way of directing a production, everything was organised, dated and adhered too. We knew what we had to do and were never lost or confused.

Have you observed any repeated motifs, themes, ideas, interpretive choices, etc., in my directing? If so, how would you describe these?

I liked the individual attention Tamar gave me. I felt I learnt so much during these times. During the production of *Electra*, I remember doing quite a few individual sessions with Tamar. It was during these individual sessions where I grew as a student actor. The individual attention taught me that, whatever I am feeling emotionally, is okay to reveal physically, especially because this was a Greek character and I was not used to such semi-melodrama before. The production introduced me to a new style of acting, Tamar taught me a new way of acting. The individual attention that Tamar gave me during *Electra* was something she repeated throughout my years on campus, with whatever production I needed assistance with.

Are there any particular instances and memories that stand out when you think about me as a director? Which productions stand out the most, and why?

There are two memories of Tamar as a director which stand out for me:

I did my first campus production audition (and first acting audition), for Tamar, for the production of *Twelfth Night*, for this audition I performed the *Macbeth* piece 'is this a dagger I see before me...'

Tamar greeted me with an enthusiastic smile, she loved the efforts I put into the soliloquy (although in hindsight I made a mess ☺) and clapped for me thereafter. Tamar's enthusiastic display warmed my

heart personally and made me excited about learning from her in the classroom or on the stage. I knew I was going to be taught by someone who was able to see potential and effort.

During the opening night of the production *Winter's Tale* Tamar did a backstage warm up and focus with the cast that was special. Tamar highlighted what was more important than our nervousness and that was remembering our jobs as storytellers. Her warm up and speech made me feel protected by her and my cast on stage.

What kinds of learning do you think can happen through production work? Does my directing practice foster any learning? How?

Production work can develop a person's discipline, confidence, punctuality, co-operative skills, creativity, imagination. I developed most of the abovementioned skills whilst working with Tamar.

What do you think is the function of formal production work (i.e. putting on plays for audiences), particularly in an institution of higher learning?

The function of University production work is twofold.

Firstly, being in a productions serves as an 'internship' for anybody seeking a career in the performing arts industry, because production opportunities are not widely available for students by the industry, if not here where else are students meant to get the experience?

Secondly, University productions are a means of communicating important social messages, for all students to critically think about.

MARTIN (COLLEAGUE-PARTICIPANT)

A personal and informal response to the prompts... I have also focused on your productions, rather than those collaboratively directed; that said, I must emphasise that it was always a privilege to work with you on productions, given your undoubted strengths and expertise, along with your determination to present work of the best quality, while giving many young people of varied abilities the opportunity to benefit from experiences that they would never have otherwise had...

If I had to limit myself to three of the most appropriate words to describe you as a director, they would be: distinctive, challenging, demanding...

Among many of your strengths are thorough preparation and organisation, thorough knowledge of style and content, and thorough integration of concept and text...

You have the skill to understand the intrinsic requirements of the text while giving it an extrinsic interpretation to convey the concept; in that, I would describe your style as akin to Peter Brook ("If you let a play speak, it may not make a sound... you must conjure its sound from it") rather than Jacques Copeau ("Only the text counts")...

Although you portray yourself as lacking confidence in design and have therefore depended on me as the designer to formulate a production concept, you have an outstanding ability to expand on and realise a concept in action... More than any other director I have designed for (and/or with), you have used and extended the design and concept in ways that surpass the original...

To expand on the latter in relation to what is a constant in your productions: there is always a clear union of overall and moment-to-moment interpretation... an inductive process from the 'whole' to implementing that in very moment, every scene and every character... The space is always used to its fullest potential (blocking, groupings, lighting) while characters must 'live' in the space, moment-by-moment...

Although your productions are always visually and aurally stimulating and detailed, in responding to your request for which productions stand out for me the most, I would choose the following that you have individually directed, for their moving clarity and beautiful simplicity: *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines*, *War Cry*, *People Are Living There*, *Three Sisters*, *The Good Person of Setzuan*, and *Spoils of War*.

Your knowledge of genre and appropriate style is a major key to your success as a director, whether in assisting performers to master Shakespearian blank verse, or in using Stanislavskian methods to merge a character's inner life with its external expression, or in communicating the objective 'reality' of Brechtian Epic theatre, or the technical demands of an Ayckbourn or a Frayn comedy...

Because of the way you challenge performers, there is always a sense of focus and energy within your productions, a sense that the performers are committed to giving of their best, that they have developed technically and artistically through the experience... I really do believe that, through your productions and what you have imparted, you have made young people grow through the experience, and that you have them strengths and skills that are not simply for a vocation in the theatre, but more meaningfully as a preparation for life...

Why? Formal production work in an institution of higher learning should be an essential component of an education in the arts. Indeed, not only the arts. If the word drama means – from Greek – "to do", "action", then everyone can be an actor, in our career, in our daily life. Drama is for everyone, not just those with a talent in performance. Studying drama empowers us with the skills to "do" and "act", in the fullest sense of the words, to speak, yes, but also to think, to feel and to live.

Participating in productions is a way to demonstrate ideas in action, of exploring human behaviour and the human condition through action. And because dramatic activities are holistic – involving each individual physically, intellectually and emotionally in a variety of situations – drama enables people to understand themselves, empathise with others, and know the world in which they and others exist.

Indeed, a deep humanistic basis is always present in your productions, and an instinctive part of who you are and what you do as a director.

ZANELE (PERFORMER-PARTICIPANT)

LIFE CHANGING:

- It forced me to come out of a shell and speak & share my opinions & thoughts
- It opened up my mind in terms of how unique we are as people but yet we go through the same experiences. Here I am thinking about exercises that we would do that required me to tap into my own experiences to understand the character. "What if scenarios".
- As I began to understand how that character would reach their choice, it became difficult to judge peoples' behaviours after playing characters that made choices that were socially unacceptable.
- Being involved in productions taught me how to work as a team by tolerating different personalities and different experiences.
- Productions also gave me the practical experience of being committed to a task until it became part of my lifestyle.
- By being involved in productions I realised and learned that each member of the cast had a part to play no matter how big or small the role was. The life lesson that I learnt was that each individual in this world has a part to play no matter how big or small that individual is. Everybody matters.
- I learnt that if I do not play my role in terms of arriving to rehearsals when expected and being present to my fellow cast members I not only let myself down but the entire production

VULNERABLE

- Production's required me to be honest in ways that I would never be, especially in the presences of others.
- I learnt from production that acting requires honesty, when the performance is honest there is a ripple effect that happens. Fellow cast members also respond in an honest way. The audience also have an honest experience. One memorable experience that comes to mind, when for a brief moment I felt this ripple effect in the 2007 performance of *The Winter's Tale*.
- The lesson I learnt was that people are receptive to honesty and authenticity. This lesson can also be used in other fields of practice. The career I eventually want to venture into is facilitation. In order to connect with people you need to be honest.
- Not only is this a life lesson in that, once you feel the vulnerability you then have an opportunity to decide what you are going to do about that feeling. One has a choice to continue to hide behind blocks or overstep the blocks. The vulnerability taught me to have faith in myself as well as my abilities as an actor.
- In choosing to break through the fear you experience another level of acting and I felt as if I was growing as an individual.

EXCITING

- Each production for me felt like a different journey. There was always something new to discover and learn and assess about myself as an actor as well as myself personal life. This was the main reason I kept auditioning for production. I couldn't wait to learn and experience failure and success and observe the transformation happen to others as well.
- Performing is an adrenaline rush. I think I had/have a slight addiction.
- The production also provided an opportunity to socialise and build friendships with other students and learn about different cultures.
- The experience was fun and enjoyable, that at times I would forget that we have to put on a professional production.

Tamar as a director

CHALLENGING

- Tamar always pushed me to a deeper level then I thought I go
- She always saw something unique in her actors that they could not see in themselves
- She knew her actors potential and always made sure she pushed them to that potential

- I found Tamar always challenged her actors to explore and surprise themselves. I would say that this was one of the themes because in each production she would challenge actors in this way.

UNIQUE

- Tamar spent a lot of precious time doing background work or rather preparation for the character. The exercises we did were a lot of fun and I found myself learning thorough experiencing. I found the exercises to be important to me because it made the imaginary world real.
- The exercises opened up my imagination so that I could understand the world that I was supposed to be in and the character I was meant to be play. The exercises also built the relationship amongst the actors, I felt that it built a cast that was somewhat in- sync.
- The amount of time Tamar spent on this preparation was so essential. I realised this after having been directed by others whom did not value the preparation as much as Tamar did. In such productions I felt difficulty connecting with the character that I would at times find myself doing some of Tamar exercises privately in the hopes of trying to find a connection with the character.
- Tamar is also very diplomatic in that there is an opportunity that is provided for the actor can charge of creating their work.

PASSIONATE

- Tamar has an alive, high velocity and enthusiastic energy that she brings to her productions. Her passion for directing is loud and it screams at you, that all you want to do is give her the same amount of energy back.
- Tamar energy is inspiring, because it is easy to see that it is not talent alone that drives her style but she is also well informed about directing.
- It is apparent that there is research and thought and planning that drives her style of directing. This makes it easy to trust her and it makes it easy for me to open up to her ideas. It makes me yearn for her energy because of the anticipation of discovering the new things she will introduce me too.

Productions directed by Tamar were successful and at professional level where they could stand being in any competition. Tamar has the ability to wear her different hats very well. She knows how to get the best out her actors, yet she also knows what may resonate with the audience. Through her use of different genders, races groups, cultures I believe it made it easier for the audience to gather the social meaning of the play since the language particularly in Shakespearean play's was foreign to some. This also provided opportunity for student actors to discover their talents and translate what the theory is saying to a practical sense. It also provided psychological benefits. Also through her visible collaborations with other experts of production it contributed to the success of the production. It is important to mention that the style of directing would not be suitable to those who merely want to look good on stage or in search of fame. I think it would annoy those that just wanted to get up on stage an act.

APPENDIX 10: DATA ANALYSIS MATERIALS

FIRST SET OF OBSERVATIONS FROM DATA

Making friends
Being part of something
Love for theatre
Wanted to act, direct, perform
Learn
Meet people
Practical learning (vs. academic)
Determination to have career in theatre
Learning by doing (rather than by listening)
Acting career – learning the skills required
Want to be professional actress
“in doing that we learn” (Sacha)
wanting to be seen – having an identity (like me)
needing to be coaxed
“so glad I finally exposed myself to all those opportunities” (Nox)
social part of it can be intimidating
learn about different cultures
fun
putting on professional production
“bearers and markers of my student life” (Derosha)
growth
“best moments of my life and acting career were during my student campus productions” (Derosha)
deeper knowledge
closer ties with lecturers and peers
love of language
a degree in itself
apply theories learnt in class
enlightening
performing for an audience ***
practical creative ways of learning
playing characters gave confidence – translating into real life dealing with those insecurities
different journeys
“something new to discover and learn and assess about myself as an actor as well as my personal life” (Zanele)
“couldn’t wait to learn and experience failure and success and observe the transformation happen for others as well” (Zanele)
camaraderie
freedom
friendship
trust
sense of belonging
support structure
priceless – “low-key and high-gain type of learning”
“doubts disappeared – faith in my own knowledge and embodied experiences in productions myself” (Lauren – like me)
discovered my voice
invaluable – skills, experiences, knowledge, memories to “last a lifetime”
playground of discovery
curiosity
“yearning for more self-discovery and a deeper understanding of self” (Josette)
“discovering and realising who I was in the real world”
relief from ‘self-sabotaging fear’
enforcing self-worth
valuing effort

“experience of being challenged in a kind, direct and respectful manner helped shift some of that stagnant self-conscious energy and I moved forward, taking that shift with me into future productions and then later into the work place outside of theatre” (Lucy)

dealing with people

knowing yourself

project your best self

adaptability

navigate social and business environments

dealing with people

overcome fear and ego

organization

multi-tasking

Community building

Learn about self in relation to others

Setting goals and achieving them

Practical theatre lessons

Entertains

Makes them think

Open up minds

Introducing people to theatre – building an audience

Internship

Communicate social messages

Taste of professional world

Theater skills

Face their fears

Coping with difference

Long term learning

Learn more by doing

Discipline

Commitment

Selflessness

Community

Togetherness

Give of yourself for the greater good

“teach people about the human condition” (Josette)

“teach us to look inside and begin a kind of internal reflection (Josette)

for everyone – “productions will indeed change their lives”

they’re necessary

audience is true guide

give personal time to cause bigger than your own

necessity of having performed for an audience

equip students with skills in their chosen field

safe learning environment

translate literary material into performance (e.g. Shakespeare)

develop commitment, concentration and dedication to craft

stamina

focus

platform for creative exploration

safe discovery

storytelling

“song, dance, storytelling and art all exist in this world of production and all these things are what makes humans truly come alive” (Josette)

cultural depth and texture

“audiences that are present and open to theatre learn what it means to be a human being” (Zoe)

DEFINING DIFFERENT KINDS OF LEARNING

- Disciplinary learning
- Theatre skills
 - Group dynamics (ensemble)
 - Collaborate nature of theatre-making
 - Understanding of theatre, genre and style
 - Learning to think differently (Brett)
 - Audition technique
 - Actors craft
 - Encouraging creativity
 - Performance attributes
 - Difference in forms of language
 - Textual analysis
 - Performance instincts
 - Methods of storytelling
 - Concentration and focus
 - Flexibility and adaptability
- Experientially learnt
- Self-learning
- Self-development
- Learn from + and – experiences
- Holistic learning
- Applicability to other fields
- Understanding audiences
- Formative
- Trial and error – one learning method
- ‘mind-memories’ that become instinctive and available
- Internalizing the learning
- Absorbing it till its’ inseparable part of being
- Skills acquisition
- Self-learning
- Responsibility
- Patience
- Listening
- Finding common ground
- Able to follow directions
- Encouraging one’s peers
- Reducing sense of self-importance
- Focusing on overall goal
- Trust
- Tenacity
- Resilience
- Acceptance of criticism
- Openness
- Vulnerability
- Determination
- Focus
- Having a work ethic
- Finding one’s passion
- Self-reliance
- Communication
- Confidence
- Self-belief
- Discovery of voice
- AGENCY
- DEEP LEARNING
- Fun
- Shared sense of purpose
- Never giving up
- PROBLEM SOLVING
- Perseverance
- COMMUNITY
- ENSEMBLE
- Collaboration
- Teamwork
- Shared responsibility
- Tolerance
- EMPATHY
- Everybody matters
- Acceptance of diversity
- Honesty
- Vulnerability
- AUTHENTICITY
- Decision making
- OVERCOMING FEAR
- Problems of competitiveness
- Trust oneself
- Know oneself
- Tell the story
- REFLEXIVITY
- PLAY
- Independent thinking
- CREATIVITY
- Learning how, not learning what
- Self-awareness
- ITERATIVE NATURE OF THEATRE-MAKING PROCESS
- Cumulative
- Ongoing, continuous, and interactive (Dewey)
- EMOTIONS – AFFECTIVE DIMENSION
- Self-understanding
- Being ‘good enough’
- CRITICAL THINKING
- Learning to accept criticism
- Diligence
- Values and skills

FINAL CATEGORIES OF LEARNING (STREAMLINED)

THEATRE LEARNING	PERSONAL LEARNING	SOCIAL LEARNING
Genre & style	Responsibility	Finding common ground
Audition technique	Patience	Encouraging one's peers
Acting craft	Self-knowledge	Reducing ego
Performance skills	Goal development	Openness
Textual analysis	Trust	Vulnerability
Storytelling	Tenacity	Teamwork
Improvisation	Resilience	Tolerance
Group dynamics	Determination	Empathy
Listening & reacting	Work ethic	Accepting diversity
Understanding audiences	Finding one's passion	Problem-solving
Following direction	Self-reliance	Honesty
Accepting criticism	Self-confidence	Taking advice
Making choices	Self-belief	Mutual benefit
Using voice	Perseverance	Accepting help
Decision making	Tolerance	Asking for help
Risk & reward	Empathy	Generosity
Trial & error	Honesty	Making goals
Observation	Self-awareness	Community (ensemble)
Handling stage fright	Diligence	Listening
Using the body	Flexibility	Sharing a purpose
Engaging emotions	Adaptability	Shared responsibility
Imagination	Commitment	Trust
Spontaneity	Coping mechanisms	Accountability
Concentration & focus	Learning through failure	Dealing with competition
Play	Drive	Working beyond the self
Experimentation	Decision making	Modelling behaviour
Working under pressure	Independent thinking	Belonging
Conquering fear	Accepting criticism	Adaptability
Goal-oriented	Discovering one's voice	Compromise
Praxis	Overcoming fear	Risk & reward
Critical thinking	Reflexivity	Negotiating personalities
Creativity	Self-discipline	Communication
	Grit	Collaboration
	Curiosity	
	Agency	
	Creativity	

TABULATION OF DATA FINDINGS ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING	CONSTRUCTIVISM	ARTS-BASED LEARNING	LEARNING PARADIGM	DEEP LEARNING
Reflection	Not just transmission	Beyond words	Learner-centred	Need to learn
Individual in social context	Shaper of identity	Embodied	Communities of learners	Internal motivation
Ongoing throughout life	Active learning	Process-driven	Problem-solving	Take responsibility
Living through real-time, real-world experience	Individual transformation	Holistic	Discovery	Higher-order thinking
Emphasis on individuality	Changes in understanding	"Architect of own education"	Students have responsibility in the process	Complexity
Preparation for the future	New challenge of each production	Opening to the uncertain is the key to growth	Interactive synergy	Intention is key
Self and society	New building on old	Creative engagement is unique potential of everyone	Not outcome, but process-based	Active participants
Subjectively informed	Autonomy	Human centre	Not a one-way process, if seeking to create ensemble	Shifts in consciousness
Multifaceted	Empowerment	Constitute 'as if' worlds	Learning revealed in action	"change interpretation of the world"
Multilayered	Mutual respect	Outside the ordinary everyday	See the whole, not the parts	Autotelic (?)
Holistic vs. atomistic	Ensemble	Aesthetic element	Insight	Flow (?)
Complex environments	Agency	Alternate realities	Inspiration	
Continuity	Self-knowledge because actor uses selves in performance – "constructing self"	"No penalty zone"		
Interaction	Affect	"Metaphoric worlds" lead to different perspectives which is learning		
Collateral learning	Cognition	How we talk to each other		
Simultaneously subjective and objective – metaxis	Personal knowledge	"What we imagine and what 's real" – a dialogue		
Build-up – cumulative	Action	Go beyond the self		
Actively immerse	Social process	Creating worlds		
Reflectively engage	Cultural process	"Open unopened doors"		
Inner world of learner and outer world of learning environment	Learner and others			
Make sense of roles	Collective sense-making			
Body and voice	Contextual awareness			

"feeling-labor"	Play and imagination – discover the "rules of the game" [jeu de theatre- Meyerhold]			
Imagination	ZPD			
Creativity	Dialogue			
Empathy – affective experience	Shared responsibility			
Safe environment	Vulnerability			
	Creating ZPD in commodified HE environment			

APPENDIX 11: SAMPLE PBL CURRICULUM

A drama course outline developed using the PBL model I have developed might look something like this:

1. Choose a play—or develop an idea for a devised play—based on the situational factors in play (who are the students, how many of them, what level are they at, is it castable, etc.).
2. Establish the ground rules of the module in terms of its demands and what the participants are agreeing to be part of.
3. Introduce the play and establish the audition protocol; then hold the auditions and give feedback.
4. Begin the rehearsal process by spending time on developing trust and building the ensemble.
5. From this point, the course can run along parallel threads: One part of the course will be the continuing rehearsal process, moving through play rehearsals, blocking rehearsals, mounting rehearsals, and the like, building the performances through the iterative process that is the basis of theatre-making. Alongside this, however, can run a second part, which connects to the theoretical concepts and academic skills that are being fostered through the production work. These sessions might include theories related to the play text, theatre history, genre, and the processes of reading, analysis and interpretation. They might cover particular approaches to performance and theories of acting, voice, the use of the body, and understanding the dynamic interplay of the rehearsal process. They could also relate to theories around communication and presentation, understanding audience reception, and notions like grit and flow. The most important point to remember, though, is that whatever content is selected, it must feed the practical experience that is making the production.
6. The phased rehearsal process moves gradually from preparation, to integration, to performance, building in reflection and feedback throughout. The accompanying academic components also build upon each other and lead to whatever assignments the director-teacher might want to employ, be they essays, journals, or research papers, or poster presentations, collages, or poetry.
7. The actual performance/s for the audience, where it is important to continue giving notes and feedback to enhance the learning. It should not be like professional theatre where the director would ordinarily leave after opening night; here, it is crucial that the director

continues to operate as an educator as students grow from performance to performance, understanding its fundamentally live nature and its dynamic movement all the time.

8. The theoretical components must also lead to a final assessment of some kind, though perhaps not a conventional summative examination. Just as the final performance must be allowed to grow, so the final academic projects should have the potential for improvement built into their structure. Moreover, the final performance might also operate to 'test' the academic learning in some way. Key to this is finding creative modes of assessment that allow for a variety of methods.
9. Post-production reflection is essential for the kinds of life-learning I have discussed to take root, so that after the production is forgotten, the knowledge continues to flow and learning to thrive.

Alongside this generic outline, it might be useful for those employing PBL to consider the following key questions in shaping their projects:

- What play?
- Who will do it'?
- How will it be cast?
- What approach will I adopt?
- What does the text mean?
- What is my concept?
- Who are the characters?
- What are the functions of the characters?
- How can I connect the play to the broader field in terms of genre, style, history, interpretation, context, etc.?
- What techniques will I use in getting actors to play the roles?
- What rehearsal process will I be employing?
- How much guidance will I give vs. how much independence will I give the students?
- Who will be the audience?
- How long will we rehearse?
- How many performances will there be?
- What feedback will be given and how?
- What opportunities exist for interaction with the audience?
- What kinds of reflexive activities will I use?

- What writing components will I employ?
- How will it be marked?
- How will I debrief the project?

APPENDIX 12: SAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

To:

DATE

Dear

As you may know, I am currently working on my PhD in Education, focusing on my directing practice using self-study methodology. My thesis is provisionally titled *From the Director's Chair: A narrative self-study of my directing practice*.

The project involves the examination of my own directing practice in order to understand who I am as a director, what I do as a director, and what values and learning might attach to my directing practice. In particular, I want to explore the place and power of formal production work in higher education institutions through an interrogation of one director's – my own – practice. The study is based on my contention that the directing process can facilitate learning of both theatre skills and life skills, through the experiential learning process of participating in formal production work. I am, thus, interested in my own subjective experience as a director, the experiences of my colleagues in working with me, and the experiences of my students as participants in the production making process, and in the intersections between these aspects. Since you have been involved as an actor (or co-director) in a production/s I have directed, I would like to invite you to share your experiences of my directing practice.

If you agree to participate, I will be asking you to engage primarily through a written response, in which I will ask you to explore your subjective experience of my directing practice. I will be asking you to construct a word-portrait firstly, of your experiences in production/s, and secondly, of me as a director; I will provide prompts to assist you in responding to both these stimuli. This is not a formal interview with a direct question and answer process; instead, I will ask you to explore through a free writing process how you have experienced my practice as a director. The data that emerge from this exercise will be utilized in my thesis.

Should you be willing, I may ask you to participate in a further face-to-face verbal discussion/s to deepen my understanding of your responses. Any such interviews will be transcribed and sessions will also be videotaped for my personal use and for possible use in the final thesis as examples. Should you agree to your image being used in the thesis, please indicate by checking the relevant box on the informed consent form. If you do not want your image to be used, I will ensure that the videotape of your session/s is only used for my personal research and your identity will be protected.

Should you agree to participate, I will do my utmost to keep your input confidential. However, since the productions in which you performed are in the public domain, it may not be possible to guarantee anonymity. If you do not want your identity to be revealed, I will endeavour to ensure that it is not, by using pseudonyms and masking any visual material utilized; however, people who may have seen the relevant productions may be able to deduce your identity from the productions being discussed. I hope this will not prevent your participation. If you do not mind your identity being revealed, please indicate by checking the relevant box on the informed consent form. If you wish to remain anonymous, I will ensure that your information is only used for my personal research.

You will be given the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of any transcripts and to add or clarify any points that you wish to make.

Please be aware that your participation is not compulsory and that you are at liberty to decline or to withdraw from the process at any time. Data collected will be retained for a period of 5 years and then destroyed.

If you have any questions regarding the study, or would like any additional information, please contact me on 0835392142 or via email at meskint@ukzn.ac.za or meskintamar@gmail.com. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Lorraine Singh on (031) 262-7467 or 0835646039, or via email at lpsingh@telkomsa.net.

I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and has received ethical clearance (HSS/1217/012D) from the Research Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I hope that you do agree to participate and look forward to speaking with you and sharing your experiences. Thank you in advance for your assistance with my research.

Kind regards

TAMAR MESKIN

APPENDIX 13: SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF STUDY: From the Director's Chair: A Narrative self-study of my directing practice

RESEARCHER: Tamar Meskin

SUPERVISOR: Dr Lorraine Singh

I, _____ (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have read the information letter about the study being conducted by Tamar Meskin at the University of KwaZulu-Natal as part of her doctoral research. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and to receive clarification.

I am aware that I will be asked to participate in writing and, potentially, in interactive sessions. I am aware that any face-to-face interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed, and that sessions will also be videotaped. I am aware that excerpts from my written and/or oral participation may be used in the thesis and any subsequent publications. I have been informed that I will be given the opportunity to read all transcripts and view any material that is going to be included in the thesis.

I am aware that owing to the nature of the study it may not be possible to guarantee anonymity but that the researcher will endeavour to protect my identity should I so require.

I have been advised that I may withdraw at any time from the project

This project has been reviewed by and received ethical clearance from the Faculty Research Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I agree to participate in the study: ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to have my interview videotaped: ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree that my image may be used: ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree that quotations from my participation may be used: ☐ Yes ☐ No

I do not mind if my identity is revealed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Participant Signature: _____

Participant Name: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 14: TURNITIN REPORT

<p>Turnitin Originality Report</p> <p>Processed on: 13-Jul-2020 4:35 PM CAT ID: 1356969618 Word Count: 209210 Submitted: 1</p> <p>Thesis By Tamar Meskin</p>	
<p>Similarity Index</p> <p>8%</p>	<p>Similarity by Source</p> <p>Internet Sources: 6% Publications: 2% Student Papers: 4%</p>

<p>< 1% match (publications)</p> <p>Tamar Meskin, Tanya van der Walt, "Knowing in our bones: interrogating embodied practice in theatre-making/theatre-teaching through self-study", South African Theatre Journal, 2018</p>
<p>< 1% match (student papers from 20-Jan-2013)</p> <p>Class: Creating Shakespeare: A creative pedagogy Assignment: Creative Shakespeare: A Creative Pedagogy Paper ID: 298400753</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 06-Apr-2020)</p> <p>https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-1-4020-6545-3.pdf</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 28-Oct-2017)</p> <p>http://libres.unco.edu/ir/unco/ff/Web_unco_0154D_11741.pdf</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 10-Jun-2020)</p> <p>https://1pdf.net/creating-significant-learning-experiences_58f76cb2f6065dae6babc38a</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 15-Oct-2019)</p> <p>https://mafiadoc.com/international-handbook-of-research-in-arts-education_Scaa8fed097c477f198b4Sec.html</p>
<p>< 1% match ()</p> <p>http://hdl.handle.net/10092/7545</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 29-Aug-2014)</p> <p>http://speechanddrama.co.za/FileHandler.ashx?fid=178</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 14-Nov-2017)</p> <p>https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-94-6091-332-7.pdf</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 20-Nov-2017)</p> <p>http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/pie/article/download/1861/1835/</p>
<p>< 1% match (student papers from 25-Sep-2014)</p> <p>Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal on 2014-09-25</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 22-Sep-2017)</p> <p>http://scholar.sun.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10019.1/97821/prigge_serious_2015.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=2</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 27-Apr-2020)</p> <p>https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/10130/Pauluth-Penner_Trudy_Ph.D._2018.pdf</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 15-Jan-2015)</p> <p>http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/articles/Vol_3_No_2_Meskin_pp_5_to_20_November_2014.pdf</p>
<p>< 1% match (student papers from 25-Apr-2017)</p> <p>Submitted to Canterbury Christ Church University on 2017-04-25</p>
<p>< 1% match ()</p> <p>https://hdl.handle.net/10289/9974</p>
<p>< 1% match (Internet from 16-Aug-2014)</p> <p>http://marksilberberg.com/archive/2013/1</p>