A critical ethnographic case study exploring creativity, voice and agency in a school for pupils with physical, learning and additional needs

By

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Declaration by candidate

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signed:

Date:

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The inquiry is set in a medium sized primary school for children aged between 2 – 11 years old with physical, learning and additional needs. The study is relevant to those interested in inclusive research, creativity and the use of kinesthetic research methods. This inquiry's fieldwork took place over a eighteen month period during which a major reappraisal of the role of creativity within school culture was undertaken. The focus of this thesis is exploring how changes to pedagogical practice and the aesthetic design of the school environment affected pedagogic relations within sessions designated as creative.

As a critical ethnographic case study approach is adopted an emphasis is placed upon understanding the particularity and complexity of the single case and, therefore, the thesis is duly cautious in how it generalizes its findings. As is traditional of an ethnographic inquiry this thesis is rooted in thick description accompanied by continual processes of reflection and reflexivity. This process was adopted in order to allow the researcher to identify and interrogate the multiple and diverse lines of inquiry that arose. The thesis concludes by reflecting upon how understanding of creativity and inclusion can be seen to have changed within this particular school culture over the duration of the inquiry. It also provides a summary of how the school's relationship with the concept of creativity has evolved and continues to evolve. The methodological strengths and limitations of the research are identified and suggestions are made regarding possible future areas of inquiry.

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Chapter One: Key theoretical concepts, methodological tensions and epistemological challenges

Introduction

In this chapter ideas and concepts considered fundamental to the inquiry are introduced. This includes an introductory overview of key literature relating to the research's core themes of *creativity, voice* and *agency*. This process is undertaken to highlight the key thematic areas that will go on to form the basis of the analysis framework applied in later chapters. The context of the school in which the inquiry is set is established and information about the school's educational character, size and population are given. In addition key terms and acronyms used in the thesis are detailed along with the rationale for employing them.

An overarching research question is introduced in this chapter, alongside a set of accompanying subsidiary questions. Adopting an inverted approach, the subsidiary questions are outlined first and the chapter concludes by stating the overarching research question and the rationale that underpins it. Through analysis of the ideas that underpin each research question, it is the aim of the chapter to convey the focus and purpose of this research and to provide an introductory overview of the methodological approaches that have been used to gather data relating to these questions. To meet this aim a description of a participant observation event is included, along with a brief analysis of the ethical and methodological challenges that this event provoked.

Research Aims and Core Concepts

This inquiry concerns investigating two distinct but interlinked aims.

Firstly, it concerns capturing and interpreting one school's reflective journey over an eighteen months period (October 2010 to February 2012). During this time the school community reconfigured their understanding of the concept of creativity both from a practice and policy perspective. This resulted

in many new teaching and learning initiatives being developed and many changes to curriculum and assessment processes being implemented. A mixed-methods approach was used throughout as a means of capturing a comprehensive and triangulated representation of the changes the school implemented over time and the rationale that underpinned individual changes that were brought in to effect. Over the duration of this research I have used two particular questions to frame the analysis of this aspect of the inquiry:

Where can areas of congruence and divergence be identified within this community's perceptions of creativity?

&

Where can areas of congruence and divergence be identified within staff approaches to developing and applying creative teaching and learning practices?

The second aim of this inquiry is derived much more directly from my personal research interests and concerns identifying and interrogating the interconnections that exist between the concepts of *creativity, voice and agency* when working collaboratively with children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). I have used four interconnected questions to shape and direct my exploration of this aspect of the research:

- **How is the concept of creativity being defined and recognized within this culture?**

- **How is the concept of voice being defined and recognized within this culture?**

- **How is the concept of agency being defined and recognized within this culture?**

- **How do definitions of these three concepts intersect and diverge within this culture?**

Who has been involved in this research?

An overview of the school in which this research is set

The school where this research has been based caters for children who have a very broad spectrum of physical, learning and additional needs. At one end of the spectrum there are learners who are educationally assessed as being at, or just marginally below, a level 1 standard in relation to the National Curriculum, whilst at the other end of the spectrum there are a significant number of pupils who are assessed as being at the lower end of the P-Scales (QCA, 2011). A conscious choice has been made within this research to focus on the responses and experiences of pupils assessed at levels P1-3 on the P-scales. P1-3 learners are recognized as having the most complex forms of physical, communication and sensory needs. All P1-3 learners will have profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The decision to focus upon the experience of pupils with PMLD was made on a number of grounds. Firstly, it was made because I believe that this is an under researched area. This assertion is founded on the observation that whilst there are a growing number of research studies exploring the use of creative research methodologies with children and young people with mild and moderate learning difficulties there is a much more scant amount of research exploring the impact of creative research methodologies on learners with the most profound forms of learning difficulty. Secondly, this decision was made because of my personal interest in understanding in greater depth the potential impact of using non-verbal and kinesthetic research methods when working with learners drawn from this population. In order to be able to address this component of the inquiry a purposively selected group of pupils was identified through discussions with key gatekeepers at the school.

As well as pupils, this research consults with many members of staff based at the school, including senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. During the fieldwork process I considered it essential that a broad cross-section of staff were invited to be a part of the data collection activities.

Throughout the fieldwork process I monitored the extent to which different communities were engaging with the research and active steps were taken to redress scenarios where either staff or pupil groups were under-represented.

Three distinctive stakeholder groups

This section will introduce the idea that there have been three dominant and distinctive stakeholder groups involved in this research. These three groups are:

1. Pupils with PMLD

   (Represented as one homogeneous group here, a notion that will be problematised and reconfigured as the thesis progresses).

2. Staff

   (Again, introduced as a homogeneous group, with the acknowledgement that in actuality this is a highly diverse group of participants)

3. Myself

   (Acknowledged as a distinct stakeholder due to my differentiated and 'outsider' position within this culture).

Every attempt is made in this thesis to highlight the subjective and contrived approach I adopt to distinguishing between these three groups. As part of this process this thesis continually reflects upon the choices I have made regarding representing this heterogeneous school community. In later chapters I will argue that critiquing and problematising the boundaries that distinguish these three

groups has been a major focus of this inquiry as it has generated very specific areas of ethical complexity and methodological challenge.

One of the ways in which I have been able to develop an awareness of how different participant groups can be identified within the general population of this culture has been through exploration of 'insider' and 'outsider' status theory. Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue 'an insider' in research is someone who can be considered to be 'a member of the community being studied' whilst 'an outsider' can be understood as a 'non-member of the community' (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, P.55). Whilst this thesis adheres to this definition it also acknowledges that the concepts of 'membership' and 'community' are differently interpreted in contrasting contexts depending on the ideological frameworks that are adopted by specific populations. Rather than uncritically accepting the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' this thesis perceives these positions to be problematic binaries that infer a false sense of research stasis that, in actuality, is rarely achieved, especially in research settings such as schools. Therefore, it is the stance of this thesis that studying the causes of status instability is a valid form of qualitative inquiry as it helps reveal 'greater consciousness of situational identities' (Angrosino, 2005, p.734) as well as some of the triggers that ignite 'role conflict' (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007, p.70).

What is being introduced here is the idea that in qualitative forms of inquiry researchers and research participants do not occupy set and impenetrable positions of power from which they express stable forms of identity. Instead individuals oscillate between different degrees of 'in-ness' and 'out-ness' depending on the research activity that is occurring. For this reason this thesis adopts a position in which the study of 'being an insider' or 'being an outsider' is understood as a pivotal component of comprehending how different research practices enforce or challenge inequitable or oppressive forms of research relations. In conclusion, section 3.2 has stressed the following ideas; Firstly, it has argued that contrasting research stakeholders will ideologically frame their research interests according to different socio-cultural values as each individual participant brings their own unique forms of 'situational identity' and 'role awareness' to the research. Secondly, it has been suggested that one of the key tasks of the qualitative researcher is to identify the ontological and

epistemological frameworks that underpin different stakeholders' approaches to defining key concepts such as 'belonging', 'membership' and 'community'. As part of this discussion an hypothesis has been introduced that in critical forms of qualitative research, orientated within a postmodern paradigm, it is considered problematic to conceptualize power dynamics and research relations according to simplistic forms of dichotomized thinking. This is because a postmodern stance assumes that the identities of all involved are open-ended and plural in nature rather than set entities that will consistently conform and perform according to the logic of pre-ordained grand narratives.

Three core themes: Creativity, voice and agency

Introduction

The next three sections of this chapter will provide an introductory overview of the theoretical and philosophical position this research has adopted in regard to the three conceptual areas I have chosen to prioritize within this inquiry: *creativity, voice* and *agency*. This process begins by exploring the term creativity. The sections dedicated to exploring creativity are slightly longer than the sections that follow on voice and agency. This is representative of the dominant position afforded in this inquiry to debating the meaning of this complex and unstable term. In tandem with introducing the key concepts, the major methodological decisions that have shaped the ethical and conceptual framework of this research will be introduced. In particular, the sections that follow will provide an introductory overview of some of the key challenges that have been encountered as I have attempted to find ways to effectively collaborate with pupils with PMLD and incorporate and translate their nonverbal responses in to comprehensive units of written text. As part of this process an analysis of a selected participant observation vignette of 'Child 1', considered typical of those encountered during the fieldwork, will be presented.

This thesis takes a particular stance in relation to creativity. It sees creativity as an amorphous and promiscuous term that can be adapted to suit the needs of different political and economic scenarios depending on the ideological orientations and intentions of those applying the term. In this thesis creativity is not perceived as a tangible thing but as something that is socially and culturally constructed (Neelands and Choe, 2010). It is also perceived as an amoral concept that only becomes morally grounded where individuals and communities choose to associate their creative practices with particular ethical frameworks.

Within English society the word creativity is currently associated with many contrasting domains of social and cultural activity (Sefton-Green and Sinker, 2000: Neelands and Choe, 2010; Banaji, 2011). Whilst the term has long been associated with the world of the arts, analysis of literature reveals it has been increasingly associated with many other domains of social and cultural practice. This includes diverse areas such as business and entrepreneurial innovation (Jones, 2011; Seltzer and Bentley, 1999), popular forms of psychology (Pink 2009; Brown, 2010), neurological and cognitive-based inquries (Gardner, 1982; Dietrich, 2004), as well as research concerned with understanding the socio-cultural impacts of fostering creativity in different institutional contexts (Csikszentimihalyi, 1996, 2008; Littleton et al, 2008, Thomson, 2010). It is my personal belief that even the briefest analysis of contrasting definitions of creativity is capable of revealing the diversity of agendas that are promoted under the banner of 'creativity' in Westenized societies. For this reason this thesis works from the position that understanding what motivates different communities to become engaged with discourses relating to creativity is a crucial element of any qualitative inquiry in to this subject area. Different communities may be pursuing very different ends in regard to promoting creativity and it is important researchers are able to distinguish between what those contrasting 'ends' may be.

To summarize, in this thesis a position is adopted that individual perspectives on creativity need to be investigated on a case-by-case basis. This is because creativity is a concept that is ideologically formulated and context-specific. For example, what motivates a large profit-making company to position creativity as an integral component of their business plan will be different to what motivates

a cognitive psychologist to study the role of creativity in children's language acquisition. Similarly, the economic and scientific contexts of these two parties will be different to the context the teacher finds herself in when she is encouraged by her senior leaders to augment her teaching practice by being more creative. Of course, there may also be great similarities between these contrasting contexts, both the ideological principles that are adhered to and the underlying motivations that drive individuals' behavior. It is these intersections, where different interpretations of creativity meet, combine and repel each other that this inquiry is interested in understanding in more depth.

In reference to analysis of the ideological principles at play within the school's model of creativity, the following question has been developed:

Which interpretations of creativity can be seen to be having the greatest influence on the school's creative teaching and learning practices?

One hypothesis this research has been particularly interested in exploring has been the idea that within contrasting social settings a process of selection occurs whereby individuals, consciously or unconsciously, prioritize the development of some psychological and behavioural traits over others in order to become recognized as 'creative' within their community. In accordance with theorists who adopt a social constructionist stance in regard to creativity, such as Neelands and Choe (2010) and Rogoff (2008), this research is interested in exploring the hypothesis that the 'creative' traits that become most dominant for individuals are those they feel are most compatible with their personal conceptualization of selfhood and their stance in regard to their society's dominant ideological values. This is why, this thesis will argue, degrees of variance occur within populations regarding how individual and collective understandings of creativity are manifested and enacted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 2003; Neelands and Choe, 2010).

However, whilst this research adheres primarily to a social constructionist interpretation of creativity, it also acknowledges an alternative interpretation of the origins of human creativity. Within this aspect of the thesis' exploration of creativity an hypothesis is pursued that argues that an individual's

creativity is developed through their ongoing embodied engagement with their environment. This interpretation of creativity can be seen to be strongly influenced by theorists such as the neuro-scientist Vilayanur Ramachandran (2003; 2012) and the philosopher Mark Johnson (2007), both of whose work suggests that one's creativity 'grows from our visceral connections to life' (Johnson, 2007: ix). Both of these theorists ground their explorations of creativity within contexts that explore how embodied experiences underpin and shape individuals' approaches to perceiving, conceptualizing and interpreting reality. Their work is acknowledged here as it has profoundly influenced my understanding of the relationship between creativity and 'kinesthetic learning', a term that will be explored and problematised throughout this thesis.

Briefly, an introductory definition of 'kinesthetic learning' will now be provided in order to begin the process of interrogating and contextualising this multi-faceted term. This thesis understands kinesthetic learning as learning that is constructed through embodied forms of engagement. A kinesthetic learning experience will involve learners participating in scenarios where they formulate knowledge about their environment through employing their senses (as opposed to purely their intellect) as a primary tool through which to produce physicalised interpretations of phenomenon they encounter. An example that can be used to illustrate this process is one in which a teacher asks a pupil to demonstrate their understanding of the word 'horse'. In a non-kinesthetic scenario a pupil will intellectually reflect on what they know about a horse and reproduce a representation of a horse that draws upon abstract factors such as 'four legs, big, fast, strong, mane, and a tail'. This is, essentially, a disembodied learning process as knowledge is produced solely through intellectual-recall rather than through an embodied process. In contrast a kinesthetic learning experience is one where a pupil is encouraged to develop their understanding primarily through physical and sensory exploration. In the example of the horse, this might involve considering how a horse feels and smells. It might also involve using one's sense of spatial awareness to compare one's size to that of a horse. Similarly, it could involve using a combination of one's different senses to gauge the velocity at which a horse travels as it gallops, by, for example, sensing changes in the air surrounding both one's self and the horse as the horse moves.

The argument that is being presented here is that kinesthetic knowledge involves combining varied forms of sensory and embodied information in order to be able to summarize one's perceptual understanding of a particular aspect of reality. In a kinesthetic learning experience learners are encouraged to express this knowledge through physical, embodied forms of communication rather than abstract forms of communication such as verbal or written language. Returning to the example of the horse, a very astute kinesthetic learner will be able to identify and isolate very precise movements and characteristics associated with this type of animal, such as the flicking of the mane or the stamping of its hooves. Likewise, a talented kinesthetic learner will be able to succinctly combine this information in to a set of actions that clearly communicate to others 'horse'. Reviews of literature relating to kinesthetic intelligence often include references to scenarios where those such as dancers, musicians and visual artists are acknowledged as demonstrating advanced skills in regard to conveying the power and grandeur of natural phenomenon or human experience using only a few highly specific sounds, movements or marks on canvas. Building upon these interpretations of kinesthetic intelligence, this thesis will argue this form of intelligence is one where individuals become skilled at distilling the meanings of complex components of reality in ways that reveal their fundamental 'felt' characteristics (Stern, 1985; Damasio, 2000).

It is the position of theorists such as Ramachandran (2003; 2012) and Johnson (2007) that by privileging disembodied and abstract learning experiences some forms of educational practice distort and undermine the role played by kinesthetic intelligence in knowledge production. This, they argue, is somewhat ironic given the high status afforded in many societies to artistic disciplines that celebrate and privilege the expression of complex forms of kinesthetic intelligence. This, Robinson (2001; 2009) argues, highlights the double-standards that are often applied to the evaluation of kinesthetic intelligence. On the one hand it receives high praise in exclusive art galleries and theatres, whilst on the other hand it can be considered a surplus talent to express in the classroom. A number of theorists have drawn attention to the idea that the privileging of disembodied knowledge within education has the greatest adverse effect on pupils with additional needs or non neuro-typical sensory-perceptual approaches to interpreting their environment, such as those with autism. As a number of research studies have highlighted, a small, but arguably significant, percentage of learners

from these populations appear to consistently demonstrate heightened levels of kinesthetic intelligence in comparison to their assessed level of academic ability. By under-playing the role of kinesthetic learning in education these studies suggest that the 'intelligence' and abilities of learners from these populations can become misinterpreted and under-appreciated (Sacks, 2007; Bogdashina, 2010; Happe & Frith, 2010; Shaughnessy, 2012; Armstrong, 2013; Brinker & Torres, 2013; Glezerman, 2013).

To conclude, this section has introduced two key ideas relating to creativity. Firstly, it has argued creativity is not a tangible thing, like a tree or a pebble. It is a concept that is brought in to being through socio-cultural practices and for this reason it is very susceptible to ideological forms of contortion. Secondly, this section has presented the idea that individuals develop highly unique ways of interacting with the sensory and aesthetic dimensions of their environment and this in turn produces different forms of knowledge, some of which will take the form of embodied knowledge (stored primarily in the muscle memory of the body) and some of which will take the form of disembodied knowledge (abstract knowledge stored in the brain). An hypothesis has been presented that it is common for individuals who display heightened levels of embodied or kinesthetic intelligence to be categorized as being 'creative' within Western societies. It has also been highlighted that in some social contexts high levels of kinesthetic intelligence are recognized as of value, whilst in others they are considered inferior to more abstract forms of intelligence.

From what paradigmatic position does this research explore creativity?

This section will begin by outlining a further set of questions this inquiry has formulated as a means of problematising and interrogating the meaning of creativity within the cultural context of the school in which it is set. The section will then proceed to outline the paradigmatic orientation of this inquiry and the rationale behind the decision to explore the subjective rather than the objective dimensions of creativity as expressed in this school.

One highly subjective dimension of this school's practice I became aware of early on in the fieldwork process concerned the complex area of how staff were approaching interpreting individual pupils' 'creative' responses. Due to the considerable variances in opinion that I detected in respect to this area during early interviews with staff, I chose to place a strong emphasis within the research on investigating the ontological and epistemological basis upon which different members of staff were formulating their judgments in this area. Specifically, I decided to place an emphasis on exploring how different members of staff were differentiating between 'highly creative', 'moderately creative' and 'less creative' pupil responses. This focus led to two particular questions being developed through which to frame this aspect of the inquiry:

Is there a shared sense of understanding of what a creative response is in this school?

&

What do individual teachers define as a 'creative response' in regard to their work with pupils with PMLD?

To pursue these questions a deliberate emphasis has been placed upon identifying the 'forms of variation, innovation and resistance' being enacted by participants, both adults and children, as they participate in varied forms of creative teaching, learning and assessment activity (Nolan, 2009, P.4). In addition to these two questions a further question was identified to further support this area of the inquiry:

To what extent are staff complying with the rhetoric of established models of creativity, (such as those promoted through Government schemes such as 'Creative Partnerships'), and where are staff developing personalized models of creativity so as to ensure PMLD learners' responses are included and acknowledged?

An idea that shaped this particular aspect of the inquiry was the notion that to be in a position to critically analyse 'forms of variation, innovation and resistance' (ibid) researchers of creativity have to be able to first identify standardized forms of behaviour. In this research this has involved identifying the standardized approaches to interpreting creativity utilized by this school community. In particular it has involved analysing how staff are, or are not, responding to guidance outlined in funding contracts, policy documents or inspection frameworks in regard to definitions of what constitutes effective creative teaching and learning practices. It has also involved exploring areas of divergence, tension and contradiction in regard to the school's emerging 'in-house' creativity agenda and those agendas imposed by external funders and organizations.

Unlike some funders and Governmental schemes this research makes no attempt to measure creativity. This decision has been formed primarily on philosophical and epistemological grounds. As it is my philosophical stance that creativity is a social construct rather than a tangible thing, it is my belief that creativity cannot be measured. With this as my overarching stance, the notion that it is possible to collect objective, quantitative data on the subject of creativity has been rejected in favour of perceiving each set of data relating to creativity, produced by either staff, pupils or myself, as valid only within the context of contributing to an ethnographic investigation of how creativity is constructed and applied within this specific school culture. Therefore, the data that is reported and analysed within this thesis is not considered valid in terms of making generalizable claims about creativity, its value is identified as lying within the 'thick description' (Geertz, 1994) it provides of how this school's interpretation of creativity affected aspects of school culture, such as the degree to which pupils with PMLD were able to access, and participate in, creative teaching and learning activities.

The purpose of this discussion is to make clear that this inquiry is orientated within the paradigms of social constructionism and postmodernism rather than other more positivistic paradigmatic positions, such as those associated with scientific or modernist interpretative frameworks. This stance has been selected on the basis that my interests lay in mapping the subjective dimensions or 'grey areas' of creative experience and not in identifying its fixed components. To pursue these interests this

research has chosen a methodological design that is based upon the tenets of critical ethnography. This decision was made in order, firstly, to develop a methodological framework that allowed me to engage with multiple voices, perspectives and experiences simultaneously. Secondly, it was selected to support analysis of the emancipatory dimensions of this school's creativity agenda. It is hoped through acknowledging these elements of the research's epistemological and methodological framework the rationale underpinning this inquiry's focus, is further revealed and contextualized.

Definitions of contrasting models of creativity

Throughout this research I have encountered, and, indeed generated myself, many varied definitions of what creativity is. I have used three particular questions to frame my analysis of contrasting interpretations. These questions are:

 1. What existing models of creativity do these definitions correspond with?

2. To what extent do these definitions perpetuate dichotomized definitions of social relations, such as 'subject/object' or 'teacher/pupil'?

&

   3. **How inclusive is this definition? For example, can all stakeholder groups participate in the forms of creativity this definition perpetuates?**

In regard to question one, Table 1 has been produced as a guide by which to categorize different definitions of creativity. Although it may seem an over simplification to categorize the concept of creativity according to just four distinct models, following the completion of my literature review I felt this was justifiable on the grounds that other publications on creativity have adopted a similar approach (NACCCE, 1999; Neelands and Choe, 2011; and Banarji, 2014). The theoretical orientation of

each theorist named in column 2 of Table 1, along with the highly selective list of 'defining features' the table suggests can be associated with individual models of creativity, will be dissected and problematised throughout the thesis. These 'defining features' are mentioned in Table 1 purely as a means of introducing how this inquiry has approached distinguishing between different models of creativity and to make clear the contrasting analysis frameworks and forms of categorization that are commonly associated with each individual model.

In summary, what the table below sets out to encapsulate is that whilst there have been many contrasting models of creativity proposed throughout history, in the past fifty years within the increasingly secularized atmosphere of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, models of creativity that have proven popular within Western discourse can be seen to have fallen generally within three distinct categories:

1. Psychologically orientated models
2. Models based upon notions of universality
3. Models based upon elitist precepts

The table, in its outline of a fourth category of creativity, proposes the idea that there is potentially another domain of creativity theory that needs to be considered. This domain, this thesis will argue, is relatively new and emergent. This domain can be located within the loose interdisciplinary field of 'kinesthetic studies' (Reynolds and Reason, 2012), which, as will be explored and defined in 'Chapter 2: Literature Review', is currently bringing together researchers from diverse academic fields; including psychology, neuroscience and education, as well as more arts-based disciplines such as music, theatre and dance. In discussing this fourth category a pivotal hypothesis of this research is being introduced which concerns the idea that a useful, but under-researched, approach to analysing the meaning of human creativity can be located in the interdisciplinary domain of kinesthetic studies.

Table 1: Four Models of Creativity

Name of Model	Defining Features
1. The Psychological Model of Creativity	**Key theorists associated with the model** Csikzentmihalyi (1996, 2005) Amabile (1983; 1996) Gardner (1982, 2006) **Defining feature of model** Creativity is a psychologically and neurologically orientated activity **Examples of what research studies prefigure when approaching creativity** **from this perspective** (1.) Cognitive abilities (2.) Cognitive flexibility (3). Divergent thinking skills
The Universal Model of Creativity (Often associated with the concept of democracy)	**Key theorists associated with the model** Craft (2005) Robinson (2001, 2009) **Defining features of model** This model works from the position that all human beings are capable of being creative as long as they inhabit appropriate social and environmental settings that do not limit or impede their creativity. Proponents of this model argue that it is essential for society to promote creativity as creativity can be understood to be a diverse range of thinking and behavioral skills that are essential for humans' to have if they are to thrive in the rapidly changing environment of our increasingly globalised world. Specific skills that are often cited as essential to

	nurture as part of the universal model of creativity are skills such as being resilient, being open-minded, having self-confidence and being able to collaborate with others. **Examples of what research studies prefigure when approaching creativity from this perspective** (1). Problem-solving abilities (2) Identifying where individuals are producing novel or original solutions to tasks (2.) Interpersonal skills (3). Intrapersonal skills
3. The Instrumental Model of Creativity **(often associated with elitist and neoliberalist behaviours)**	**Key theorists associated with the model** Essentially all theorists who consider creativity to be something you can measure will fall in to this category. For example, many economists and entrepreneurs who see a correlation between 'being creative' and 'productivity' will fall in to this category. So to will educationalists who believe creativity can be measured by studying exam results. **Defining features of model** Not everyone is capable of being creative. Creativity is the domain of a few select individuals who are able to achieve certain defined standards of excellence. **Examples of what research studies prefigure when approaching creativity from this perspective** (1). Exam results or pupils' progress (2). Artistic excellence (3). Degree of productivity (4). Measurable outputs such as profits

4. The Kinesthetic Model	**Key theorists associated with the model**
	Early proponents of this model include sociologists and phenomenologists such as Mauss (1936) and Merleau Ponty (1962). More recent theorists exploring this area include the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2000). Theorists whose work has particularly influenced this inquiry's perspective on the kinesthetic model of creativity include the philosopher and French language scholar Carrie Nolan (2009), the theatre and cultural studies theorists Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds (2012) and the dance movement psychotherapist Bonnie Meekums (2012).
	Defining features of model
	Creativity is an embodied experience. To understand an individual's capacity for creativity the totality of their responses to environmental stimuli have to be taken in to consideration and this will include exploring how they communicate and develop meaning through their body, be that how they physically move, how they use their senses and limbs to explore stimulus or how they choose to position themselves in relation to other people or material objects during social interaction.
	Examples of what research studies may explore when approaching creativity within the framework of this model
	(1). Individual's gait and movement styles
	(2). How individuals position themselves socially and physically within contrasting spaces and environments
	(3). Individual's movement choices
	(4). The kinesthetic quality of people's responses. This will include analysis of their responses from a fluency, tone, rhythm and intensity perspective.

Having presented this table, briefly, analysis will be presented of the purpose of the second and third questions of this analysis framework. The second question has been developed primarily to aid investigation of how contrasting interpretations of creativity can be seen to position stakeholders. In particular, this question has been formulated to frame investigation of the degree to which participant social relations and role identity become fixed, or in any way oppressive, as a result of contrasting definitions of creativity being enacted. Finally, the third question relates specifically to the concept of inclusive practice and concerns the degree to which pupils with PMLD can be said to be involved in shaping a particular definition of creativity.

This section will now move on to discuss three distinct inquiry areas identified as significant by members of each of the three identified stakeholder groups. This introductory analysis is presented here in order to highlight some of the problematic dimensions of pinning down the meaning of creativity when working with diverse groups of people who prioritize very different approaches to constructing knowledge. Deliberately the following sections will raise more questions than they answer. This is done to pave the way for deeper analysis of the inter-relations between the concepts of 'creativity', 'social relations' and 'inclusion' in 'Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings and Discussion of Emergent Themes'.

A question posed by staff on the subject of creativity

This section will analyse a question many members of staff raised with me during interviews. It has been selected for analysis here due to the fact that a broad cross-section of staff consistently raised it, especially on occasions when I asked them to identify what they found most challenging about the concept 'creativity'. This question is:

Can pupils with PMLD be creative?

In the table below I provide an analysis of this question's philosophical and theoretical character. This analysis utilizes the analysis framework outlined on p. 14.

Table 2: Analysis of the question *'Can pupils with PMLD be creative?'*

Question 1: Which models of creativity can this question be associated with?	This question can be assessed as relating to model 3 (The Instrumental Model of Creativity). This assessment is made on the grounds that creativity is presented within this question as being a human trait that people either have or do not have. In this respect the question is constructed as a closed question demanding a 'yes' or 'no' answer.
Question 2: Does the question encourage dichotomized thinking?	Due to the way the question is phrased I understand this question to position pupils as 'objects' rather than 'subjects' because the dominant linguistic inference is that someone other than pupils will be assessing evidence relating to their creativity.
Question 3: How inclusive is this question?	The construction of this question, in my opinion, has not been inclusive. From my observations, Staff have formulated this question during meetings where pupils have not been present and pupils have not had a direct input in to constructing this question.

Let me state clearly, I am aware that the table above represents a highly subjective analysis of the teachers' question. However, it is important to emphasize that I produced analysis such as the above, throughout the research process, specifically to be critiqued and 'pulled apart' by staff in interview scenarios. Through adopting this triangulated approach it has been my ambition that a shared sense of how creativity is being constructed within this school context has been able to emerge for both teachers and myself. It has also been my intention to use methods such as those outlined in the table above to explore the diverse range of values that under-score contrasting interpretations of creativity

held by adults in this setting. Through this process it has been my aspiration to be able to formulate a comprehensive map of the complex character of creativity as enacted within this school culture.

A question posed by myself on the subject of creativity

In this section a question relating to creativity I considered relevant will be analysed, using the same analysis framework as was adopted in the previous section.

The question that I have selected for analysis is:

What do individual teachers define as a 'creative response' in regard to their work with pupils with PMLD?

Table 3: Analysis of the question 'What do individual teachers define as a 'creative response' in regard to their work with pupils with PMLD?

Question 1: Which models of creativity can this question be associated with?	Due to the fact that this question starts with the word 'what' there is an inference that it is demanding an evidence-based response. This emphasis would place this question within the domain of model 3 (instrumental). However, there is some linguistic inference that this question believes it to be of value to consult with a cross-section of teachers and seek to represent 'individual' interpretations. This aspect of the question inclines the question towards model 2 (A universal/democratic interpretation of creativity).
Question 2: Does the question encourage dichotomized	There is a slight, although not conclusive, inference that teachers will be positioned as 'subjects' rather than 'objects' in relation to

| thinking? | exploring this question. This would suggest this question is attempting to resist simplistic binaries where the views of teachers are presented as homogeneous.

This question also makes reference to pupils. However, there is no indication from how this question is framed that pupils will be taking an active role in addressing this question and therefore pupils are essentially positioned as 'objects' rather than 'subjects' according to the phrasing of this question. |
|---|---|
| **Question 3: How inclusive is this question**? | This question is not inclusive. Whilst pupils are referenced in the question the consideration of their views and experiences are not presented as an integral dimension of this question. |

Briefly, this section will conclude by offering some analysis of the similarities and differences between a staff question and my question. Both questions display an inclination for being orientated within an instrumental model of creativity in which creativity is associated with fixed categories and with generating measurable and evidence-based outcomes. Secondly, both questions appear to resist neat categorization within a set model of creativity, seeming instead to be inclined towards oscillating between at least two different models. Thirdly, both questions position pupils as 'objects' rather than 'subjects' in relation to how the questions are structured and both questions cannot be interpreted as being compatible with the tenets of inclusive practice as no pupils have been involved in formulating the questions.

A question posed by a pupil on the subject of creativity

If the previous two sections exploring questions identified as pertinent by staff and I have been relatively brief, this section will defy this trend as it attempts to convey some of the philosophical, theoretical and ethical complexities involved in establishing inclusive and collaborative research practices with pupils with PMLD. Whilst the concept of creativity is not lost sight of in this section, it is explored from a slightly different angle to that which has been pursued in previous sections. The emphasis of this section is to explore how different models of creativity incorporate, interpret and value the concept of inclusion in contrasting ways. In this section the concept of 'inclusive research practice' will be introduced, with particular attention being dedicated to considering Walmsley's (2001) definition of this term.

Walmsley defines inclusive research as research that positions 'people with intellectual disabilities as more than just subjects or respondents' as it is research that is based upon the principle that people with intellectual disabilities 'have the right to be involved in issues that affect their lives' (Walmsley, 2001, cited in Bigby et al, 2013, p. 3). Since Walmsley's original article was published many contrasting practices have become associated with this branch of research and for this reason those such as Nind (2011) argue inclusive research has to be understood as operating along a continuum, with highly inclusive practices positioning people with intellectual disabilities as equal partners in the production of knowledge, and less inclusive practices positioning participants in collaborative and consultative roles on an occasional rather than a fully-integrated basis. This section begins the process of introducing the shortcomings of this research in regard to its position on this continuum as it identifies some of the many factors that have affected the inclusive capacities of this research.

As part of these discussions this section will also begin to address the controversial area of whether it is possible for pupils with PMLD to formulate research questions or identify preferred areas of inquiry focus whilst taking part in collaborative creative research activities. By exploring a set of questions,

allegedly formulated in part by a pupil, this section introduces key questions concerning the ethical complexities of conducting research with children with PMLD. Two particular questions that have been used to frame this aspect of the research are:

Where does adult inference strengthen inclusive research practice and where does it undermine the authentic voice and agency of the child?

&

To what extent is it ethically-sound to 'translate' pupils' physical and non-verbal responses in to formal, written language?

In discussing these elements the idea is presented in this section that one of the key characteristics of ethnographic research is translation. This thesis understands ethnography to be a research discipline that is built upon the core principle that there are different ways of seeing the world and, therefore, there are benefits to researchers entering other's worlds and providing translations of what they encounter, so as to be in a position to contribute to debates concerning 'What is culture?' and 'How are interpretations of reality constructed in different cultures?' (Clifford, 1988; Sturge, 1997; Burawoy, 2003). In this section three key areas of complexity concerning ethnographic translation are made explicit. Firstly, it is stressed that once field data has been translated it inevitably loses many of the distinctive features that characterized it in the moment of the original encounter. Secondly, it is acknowledged that it is not uncommon for field data to gain idiosyncratic characteristics following acts of translation depending on the technical and philosophical biases and literary affectations of the translator (Churchill, 2005, Bakhtin, 2010). Finally, it is acknowledged that translating the culture of 'the minority other' into a language recognized by 'the majority' is rife with ethical complexities and this aspect of ethnography has been, rightly, criticized by many who argue, at its worst, ethnographic translation can contribute greatly to the misrepresentation and oppression of minority groups (hooks, 1989; Davis, 1995; Murphy and Dingwell, 2007).

In regard to understanding the role of translation in ethnography this research has found the work of Churchill (2005) very useful. Briefly, Churchill's three-stage model of ethnographic translation will be considered. From Churchill's perspective ethnographic translation can be summarized as containing three key distinctive stages of translation. Firstly, it involves the 'event scene' stage where researchers translate the objective facts about the location their research occurs into the best of their abilities. This component of translation, Churchill argues, often requires the employment of technical rather than literary or empathic skills. Following this phase the 'transitional space' stage occurs, where the researcher attempts to go beyond the technical dimensions of the event and empathically engage with other's ways of being. In this phase technical methods are often replaced by more participative and immersive methods. Churchill refers to this stage as 'transitional' because he sees it as a phase that involves the mind, and sometimes the body, undertaking a process where other possible ways of being are experientially encountered. During this stage, Churchill suggests, researchers often enter a dual state of awareness in which they are conscious of their personal approaches to processing reality as well as other's alternative approaches.

Finally, Churchill's ethnographic translation framework discusses the 'interpretative stage' of translation, which is presented as involving a series of micro stages in which researchers undertake a process of review and triangulation as they cross-reference their translations with others. In highly inclusive forms of ethnographic research this process involves the continual collaborative influence of those the researcher is seeking to represent in their translations. In less inclusive research processes the subjects of the translation are excluded from the translation process and translation is cross-referenced with others considered 'experts' on the subjects. Reflecting upon this research process I am acutely conscious of the extent to which I struggled in my fieldwork to involve pupils with PMLD as co-collaborators during the interpretative stages of translation.

The many micro stages involved in reviewing and cross-referencing ethnographic data collected in the field are discussed at length here to highlight some of the more ethically and methodologically controversial aspects of researchers constructing written texts that bare little or no resemblance to

the communication styles that were used during the 'transitional space' stage of data collection. Awareness of this fact can leave researchers wrestling with the following question:

What are the ethical ramifications of creating research documents that cannot be accessed or understood by participants whose experiences the document attempts to represent?

This has been a question that has perplexed me throughout this research and it will be an issue that will be addressed in detail in 'Chapter 3: Methodology'.

To conclude, I was drawn to Churchill's writing on this subject because of my interests in the concept of 'the space between' (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009), as in a research discourse space where identity, social role and membership can be temporarily suspended and re-conceptualized by participants as a result of their active and empathic engagement with each other. I was also drawn to exploring in more detail the potential parallels that could be identified between Churchill's notion of 'empathic engagement' (Churchill, 2005, p.4) and my research interests in regard to the role of kinesthetic empathy and kinesthetic learning in research with participants with PMLD. The term 'kinesthetic empathy' is discussed at length in 'Chapter 2: Literature Review' but can briefly be summarized here as relating to forms of communication that generate empathy through processes of mirroring another's body position and movement styles.

Analysis of Vignette 1

Further analysis of the issues raised in this section will be undertaken through the analysis of vignette 1. This vignette has been selected on the grounds that I consider it to be typical of participant observations I undertook in the school during my fieldwork. Vignette 1 took place in a non-classroom space the school had cleared of all furniture and designated as their 'Creative Space'. In this room it was agreed a small group of teaching assistants (TAs) would be given time off-timetable each week to build creative environments with the support of an external scenic artist employed by the school. The

purpose of these temporary environments was generally understood by staff to be to create learning opportunities that fostered pupils' creativity. The title of the environment this vignette is set in was 'The Waterfall'. The environment was constructed using a diverse range of materials including: projections, recorded sounds, lighting effects, contrasting sensory materials, including pebbles, foliage and actual water.

Conversations with staff prior to commencing the participant observation in this environment revealed three additional aims staff hoped the environment would achieve. Firstly, they wanted it to explore aspects of the National Curriculum relating to identifying and handling diverse natural materials. Secondly, they wanted it to provide pupils with the opportunity to take part in child-led exploration and learning. Finally, a third purpose was identified as the desire to use the environment to encourage and support pupils with PMLD to engage in social interaction with staff and their fellow peers that was active and collaborative rather than passive and solitary. On the day when this observation took place there were 6 children in the space all of whom were categorized as P1-3 learners, 3 members of staff all of whom were TAs, and the researcher.

At the time of this vignette Child 1 was 9 years old. Child 1 is a wheelchair user who likes to come out of her wheelchair where possible during lessons. When out of her wheelchair Child 1 is a very mobile child. Although she cannot walk she can crawl at great speed. She is a very tactile person and she constantly uses her hands to manipulate and position materials that interest her. The researcher adopted a combination of event and duration sampling to capture Child 1's participation in this space, noting down the time at which Child 1 made significant decisions and choices regarding her participation in this learning environment.

Time	Child's Actions
2 minutes 35 seconds	Child 1 is excited to get out of her wheelchair. She reaches towards the member of staff who is supporting her in this process. Once out of her chair Child 1 is very still and spends approximately 3 minutes looking around the space.
5 minutes 45 seconds	Child 1 moves towards the waterfall area (far right hand corner of the room). Gathered there are two members of staff and two other pupils. Child 1 does not interact with them but positions herself quite close to them. One of the TAs tries to engage her with the water by encouraging Child 1 to put her hands in it. Child 1's responses are minimal in relation to the water but she does try and get the member of staff to engage in a game of 'Patter-Cake' with her.
8 minutes 20 seconds	Child 1 moves over to some large pebbles that are arranged on the floor of the space away from the waterfall area. She picks up a pebble and puts it in her lap. She begins to run her fingers over its surface. This activity holds her attention for approximately 3 minutes. As she runs her fingers over the pebble Child 1 hums quietly. This is an area of the room that is relatively spacious as there are no specific scenic features in it and no other children or adults are located in it.
12 minutes	Child 1 comes over to me. I am sat in a space slightly to the left of the pebbles. Previous to this moment I have been making notes in my notepad with a pen. Child 1 reaches to take the pen off me. I put the notepad to one side and begins a mirroring 'joint attention' (Bruner, 1995) activity with Child 1 involving the pen. I put the pen on the floor between Child 1 and myself. Child 1 does not move to pick the pen up but does looks at it. I mirror this reaction. In accordance with my participant observation plan, where I have specified my interest in the exploration of kinesthetic research methods, I proceed to mirror each of Child 1's movements and vocalizations with the express aim of setting up 'kinesthetic dialogue' with Child 1. In

	order to establish 'kinesthetic dialogue' I very occasionally add in slightly exaggerated mirrored movements and sounds as an invitation to Child 1 to enhance the 'creativity' of her responses. In this instance this involves me occasionally nudging or moving the pen or using physical action to move the pen in ways that are unusual in this context. I initiate no further provocations then these as the emphasis in this exchange is on Child 1 initiating the direction of the dialogue. This interaction lasts approximately 3 minutes. No additional props are used apart from the pen and as much as possible all of my responses are conveyed using non-verbal forms of kinesthetic and mirrored movement.
15 -16 minutes	During the mirrored interaction Child 1 has been silent. Between the 15th and the 16th minute Child 1 makes two loud vocalizations. These are loud, crisp vocalizations of the sort child 1 occasionally makes.
16 minutes 15 seconds	A Child 1 move back towards the waterfall and sits and watches a TA who is working with another child. The TA is gently flicking water over another child's hand. The TA tries to include Child 1 in this interaction by occasionally flicking water on her hand. Child 1 recoils when this is done but does not move away from the waterfall. Child 1 remains sitting by the waterfall watching others interact with the environment till the end of the session, approximately another 5 minutes.

How can table 4 be used to identify Child 1's inquiry interests and research questions?

Firstly, it is important to note that the phrases ' kinesthetic dialogue' and 'creativity' are placed in parenthesis in the above table in order to indicate that in this introductory chapter, so far, the meaning of these ideas has not yet been definitively established in relation to how I interpret them in my collaborative work with children with PMLD. This issue will now be addressed through analysis of how these terms have been applied in Table 4. This is undertaken with the specific aim of making the process transparent by which I have approached collaborating with Child 1 so as to be in a position to present a translation of Child 1's questions and inquiry foci relating to creativity.

In what follows an analysis framework will be presented that outlines how I have approached conceptualizing creativity in regard to my work with pupils with PMLD. As discussed in section 3.3.4 I am aware of my own tendency for oscillating between slightly different theoretical interpretations of creativity within my research practices within this school. However, the idea will be introduced in this section that within my collaborative work with pupils with PMLD I have adopted the conscious decision to structure my collaborative research practices in accordance with the principles of the universal model of creativity. This conscious decision was undertaken for three key reasons. Firstly, it was undertaken because this is the model I feel the strongest affiliation to in regard to my paradigmatic orientation. Secondly, it was undertaken so as to be able to present a coherent stance to staff during my fieldwork and to ensure I was able, when asked, to answer their questions concerning; *'What do you think creativity is?'* & *'How do you define it in relation to pupils with PMLD?'* Thirdly, it was undertaken so as to formulate a clear hypothesis that could be tested within participant observation scenarios involving collaborations with pupils with PMLD.

When asked by staff to define my stance on creativity I would share with them the selected definitions of the universal model of creativity outlined on p.31. I would also share with them the hypothesis I had constructed relating to creativity as well as the personal statement I had drawn up relating to my stance on creativity (outlined on p.31). Particularly in regard to the latter two items, I was clear with staff that these items were 'work-in-progress' that I was constantly refining as a result of my engagement with the school. It is important to state that I produced the latter two items, largely, as a provocation aid to be used in reflection sessions and in semi-structured interview scenarios where I would encourage staff to identify the elements of my statements they found problematic or challenging. I would subsequently encourage staff to produce their own alternative hypotheses and personal statements on the subject of creativity and how it relates to the responses of pupils with PMLD.

 The three definitions I selected to encapsulate my understanding of the universal model of creativity were:

<u>Definition 1</u>

'All people are capable of creative achievement in some area of activity, provided the

conditions are right and they have acquired the relevant knowledge and skills'

(NACCCE, 'All Our Futures', 1999, p.29)

<u>Definition 2</u>

'At the heart of all creativity is possibility thinking . . . . possibility thinking concerns a

continuum of strategies, with at one end the question 'What does this do?' to 'What can I do

with this?'

(Craft, 2005, p.36)

<u>Definition 3</u>

'Creativity involves engaging with open-ended (heuristic) tasks. Algorithmic tasks do not

encourage creativity.

(Amabile, 1996, p.36,)

One of the early 'work-in-progress' hypotheses (produced in November 2010) I produced on creativity

was the following:

<u>Creativity Hypothesis</u>

It is possible for **all** *human beings to be creative who can move their body and make choices within*

their environment. This hypothesis is developed according to the assumption that being creative

involves an individual expressing agency within their environment so as to affect changes that produce

in them and those around them a sense of completion and satisfaction.

Below is one of my early (again November 2010) 'work-in progress' personal statements, in which I have attempted to articulate my personal definition of what creativity is.

Personal Statement on Creativity

I believe human creativity involves activating one's ability to identify multiple possibilities within one's environment. It is my hypothesis that evidence of creativity can be gathered in scenarios where individuals have generated responses to their environment that are new and novel. I feel a creative response is different to a non-creative response in that a creative response is open-ended and has an intensified perceptual (as in many senses have been utilized in the production of the response) and aesthetic quality. In comparison a non-creative response will be pragmatic and will rely upon using dominant and 'every-day' forms of sensory-perceptual behavior that offer no new form of insight on phenomenon. In summary, a creative response can be understood as a response that causes an intensified physical, emotional and sensory-perceptual reaction in the individual, as well as those who surround the individual. Therefore, a creative experience will foster experiential and 'felt' factors such as curiosity, intrinsic motivation, satisfaction and a desire to persist with an activity.
(Reflective Journal, 23.11.10)

To further aid reflection and discussion on this topic I summarized the ideas contained in these selected definitions, hypothesis and personal statement in to the following five bullet points:

- All people are capable of being creative as long as the 'conditions' for creativity are nurtured and maintained.

- People can enhance their creative skills through practicing being creative. Therefore, one's creativity is not a fixed entity but something that can be expanded as a result of having access to environments where one is allowed to hone their creative skills.

- Questioning, testing and experimenting with the possibilities of one's environment is a crucial dimension of creativity.

- Identifying how individuals are using elements of their environment to produce new and novel outcomes is a useful way of mapping individual's creative development.

- Open-ended (heuristic) tasks are more conducive to engendering creativity than algorithmic tasks where the process of completing the task is set in advance, as is the expected 'correct' outcome.

When collaborating with participants such as Child 1 I used criteria such as that outlined above as a means of framing and interpreting my observations of her responses. For example, in regard to Child 1, this involved investigating key questions such as: *How do different environmental conditions affect Child 1's participation? Is there any evidence of Child 1 honing any particular skills relating to identifying possibilities within her environment? Where is Child 1 acting upon possibilities so as to produce new and novel responses? Is this environment encouraging Child 1 to participate in heuristic tasks?*

Having introduced the analysis framework and the types of process of triangulation used to interpret pupils' creativity, this section will now move on to consideration of the other key concept referred to in Table 4 'kinesthetic dialogue'. A rationale will be presented outlining why this type of communication was prioritized within the research's fieldwork. In this research 'kinesthetic dialogue' is defined as follows:

Definition of Kinesthetic Dialogue

It is the position of this research that the term kinesthetic dialogue can be used to describe any form of non-verbal dialogue that utilizes physical forms of expression to exchange ideas. Kinesthetic dialogue will often take place when two or more individuals are engaging in communication that is

reliant on them moving their body in some capacity. Therefore, kinesthetic communication is reliant on factors such as physical reaction, bodily position, muscle movement and the shifting of weight as felt through nerve endings. Many sports people engage in forms of kinesthetic dialogue with each other, as do many dancers and theater practitioners, and in these arenas these individuals can be said to produce forms of kinesthetic knowledge that is stored, not necessarily in their cerebral cortex, but in their bodies and in their muscle memory. However, kinesthetic dialogue and kinesthetic knowledge are not only produced in specialist arenas such as these. It is the stance of this thesis that these elements of human experience are utilized in many diverse social arenas, including formal and informal learning exchanges.

Before clarifying how this research approaches implementing and interpreting kinesthetic dialogue within its research practice it is useful to also explore this research's position on the more general term 'dialogue'. This research acknowledges that dialogue is often defined as referring to two or more parties engaging in verbal forms of conversation. However, this research does not recognize dialogue as a purely verbal activity, defining it instead as a multi-modal embodied experience. This interpretation is largely drawn from consideration of theorists such as Bruner (1995) and Vygotsky (2012), both of whom emphasize in their theories of child development the role non-verbal dialogue plays in children's learning, language acquisition and social development. This research is also influenced by the many definitions of dialogue that acknowledge that it is possible for individuals to engage in dialogic exchange with their physical environment and the material objects they encounter. In this respect this thesis is particularly influenced by the work of psychologist James Gibson and his theory of affordance (1976, 1979), and in particular his idea that environments create 'action possibilities' that individuals interact and 'dialogue' with. Finally, in relation to this thesis' interpretation of 'dialogue' it is important to acknowledge the ubiquity of the term 'dialogue' in music and dance scholars' narratives and the ways in which practitioners from these artistic disciplines value the concepts of improvisation and play as core elements of their conceptualization of 'dialogue'. This is particularly emphasized here as music pedagogy was an aspect of educational practice that had a high status within the school. Reflecting on these different interpretations of dialogue this research has chosen to prioritize identifying the occurrence of non-verbal, playful and improvisational dialogue

during collaborative sessions involving pupils with PMLD. This is because nonverbal forms of dialogue are considered in this research to be a useful means by which to gauge pupil's overall creative development as this research recognizes a correlation between 'being creative' and engaging in improvisational and playful nonverbal dialogue with others.

To aid the collection of data relating to this area the researcher drew up four definitions of distinct forms of dialogue she felt were commonly evident in learning spaces where pupils with PMLD were present. These four distinctive forms of dialogue were:

1. Scenarios where pupils are engaging in dialogue with the spatial possibilities of their environment. This type of dialogue is occurring whenever pupils are engaging in free movement around a space. Each position adopted or line of travel undertaken by the pupil can constitute a new line of 'conversation' with their environment. The quality and meaning of this type of dialogue can be understood to intensify each time the improvisational and playful dimensions of the interaction are expanded.

2. Scenarios where a pupil is giving an object their full attention and they have become fully absorbed in exploring the possibilities of this object.

3. Scenarios where a pupil is able to establish a call and response dialogue with others in the environment. For example, if a child vocalizes and an adult responds and then the child responds with another vocalization, this constitutes as a form of non-verbal vocalized dialogue.

4. Scenarios where links are made between one person's movement choices and another person's. For example, if a child moves their arm in a particular way and then an adult reflects this back, possibly putting a slightly different emphasis on the quality of their movement and then the child responds with another movement this constitutes as a physical form of dialogue.

What is being introduced here is that whilst in many respects I adopted a position on pupils' creativity that adhered to the tenets of the universal model of creativity, at the same time much of my practical collaborative fieldwork practice drew heavily from the kinesthetic model of creativity. Here, once again, an oscillating and inconclusive position emerges regarding my stance on creativity as I can be seen to be combining two distinct areas of creativity theory within my conceptual framework. This continual oscillation and tension is not perceived in this research as a hindrance, as one of the core aims of this research is to attempt to forge new and refined definitions of creativity that are specifically designed to reflect the character, complexity and specific agenda of this school's creativity agenda. Therefore, through participant observation processes, such as those represented in vignette 1, it was hoped new understandings would be forged regarding the intersections between contrasting, and newly formulated, models of creativity. Hopefully, what this section has made clear is that I approached my collaborations with pupils from the perspective that children with PMLD do have creative capacities. However, I hope what is also becoming clear is that this position was a far from stable position during the fieldwork process, as it was subject to being challenged and refined as a result of my on-going interactions with staff and pupils from this school.

Having concluded the analysis of creativity and kinesthetic dialogue this section will now return to Table 4 and the question of whether it is possible for child 1 and I to collaborate with each other to produce co-constructed research questions. It is the stance of this inquiry that there is a short and a long answer to this question. The short answer is 'no'. It is 'no' because pupils with PMLD are nonverbal communicators operating at a preverbal stage of cognitive development, therefore, pupils with PMLD do not have the ability to use formal language or understand concepts such as 'creativity' or 'research'. Exploring the longer answer to this question is a key component of this research and will concern analysing the inter-relations existing in this school between the concepts of 'inclusion', 'the organization of social relations' and 'creativity'. It will also involve unpicking and addressing questions such as:

What would it mean to afford equal value to each research participant's responses in this research?

What would it mean to contribute equal amounts of time and resources to translating each stakeholder group's responses? How would a process such as this affect the type of knowledge that was produced?

What would need to be in place to establish reciprocal research relationships between stakeholders based upon mutual trust and respect? For example, is it possible to establish research scenarios where the emphasis is on all participants learning from each other rather than processes whereby more powerful participants study the responses of less powerful participants?

Having introduced these questions, this section will now present the 'translations' I produced following the participant observation experience outlined in vignette 1. In the questions and personal statement that follow, I attempt to summarize Child 1's attitude to taking part in 'The Waterfall' creative environment and identify those aspects of creativity I have interpreted Child 1 as considering to be the most engaging and rewarding. I present these questions and the personal statement using a first-person narrative style, writing 'as if' I am Child 1. The ethical complexities of adopting a reflective analysis approach such as this will be thoroughly debated in 'Chapter Three: Methodology'. From an introductory perspective what is being highlighted here is that within this research I chose to adopt a style of analysis that operated from the position that pupils' responses in creative sessions could be translated into research questions that represented aspects of the child's creative interests and priorities. In formulating these questions I was highly conscious that these questions represented my own interests and priorities as well as those of the child. Working within a critically reflexive framework I considered this translation process to be an ethically appropriate approach as long as I always acknowledged that the words on the page were my own creation, and as long as I continually amended these questions through finding ways to share them with pupils and staff and gather their feedback.

Translation 1: Translation of research questions, relating to creativity, considered significant by

Child 1

Child 1's Questions

Does this environment offer me alternative and interesting spaces to position myself in?

Can I find a space to relax in this space?

Are there interesting materials in this space that hold my attention? What are they and what is it about them that holds my attention?

Does this space allow me to be social and interact with others?

Does this space allow me space to observe things without being interrupted?

Translation 2: Child 1's personal statement on creativity following her participation in vignette 1

> *I am someone who engages in creative environments through utilizing my visual and tactile sensory capacities. I like to exercise a high degree of independence when in this type of space. Sometimes I like to socially interact but this is often in a one-to-one capacity rather than taking part in whole-group activities. Mostly, I like it when I am left to my own devices. If I want to be social I will come over to you, so please don't feel you have to initiate new activity with me if I am being still and quiet. I like to take a good look at things before I get involved. I am most creative in spaces like this when I am independently exploring new or unusual objects or when I am experimenting with new forms of social interaction that I have initiated.*

To be clear, I am entirely aware that these are not Child 1's words; they are words produced by myself, and as such, they are biased towards my literary affectations and theoretical and philosophical interests. My justification for producing translations such as Translation 1 and Translation 2 are based upon the hypothesis that there are benefits to adults attempting to translate pupils' actions, choices and responses in to conventional narratives that make the voice of the child more powerfully present within debates conducted by adults than they would be if their responses were represented in technical or un-empathetic forms of language. Connected to this idea is my hypothesis that through using phrases like 'I think . . .' and 'I feel . .' the voice of the child is presented as belonging to someone who is 'a human *being* and human *becoming*' (Uprichard , 2008, my emphasis) with feelings and with rights, who is able to be self-determining and active within the research process when afforded sufficient amounts of space, time and status.

One of the many ethical issues that surround this type of translation is the issue of how the originator of a view, in this case Child 1, feels about the translation that has been produced. The obvious problem in the case of vignette 1 is that Child 1 can neither understand the translation that has been created nor offer feedback on its accuracy, so other methods of consultation and triangulation are required. As will be discussed in later chapters, in this research this has involved using sets of questions and personal statements as frameworks through which to review and cross-reference participants' responses. For example, having conducted further participant observation with Child 1 I choose to scrutinize data further through considering questions such as; *Have the same questions remained pertinent for Child 1 over time or have new emphases emerged? And, in what ways does Child 1's personal statement need to be revised and expanded as a result of further observation?* I would also ask these questions of staff, many of whom had known Child 1 since she started at the school in the nursery and who had much greater levels of insight than I in regard to interpreting Child 1's responses. As will be explored in later chapters these acts of translation and triangulation were found to be useful forms of reflective provocation, particularly in regard to exploring the role of concepts such as empathic engagement, shared exploration, play and improvisation in regard to pupils' engagement with the school's creativity agenda.

To conclude, this section has deliberately raised more questions than it has answered as it has attempted to introduce some of the key ethical and methodological challenges I have encountered during this research process in regard to capturing and representing the responses of pupils with PMLD. This section has emphasized my interest in inclusive research practices and my aspiration to establish collaborative forms of research practice that elevates rather than diminishes the contribution pupils with PMLD can make to the production of new forms of knowledge on the topic of creativity. This section has also raised questions concerning the ethical complexity of how to interpret and translate the responses of pupils with PMLD in research documents. Finally, through exploring a vignette drawn from the research's fieldwork this section has highlighted how this research has avoided adopting dispassionate and formal approaches to research relations, in favour of relations that value key principles such as equality, respect and 'human flourishing' (Reinders, 2011).

Introducing this inquiry's stance on voice

In this section I will outline how this inquiry interprets and conceptualizes the term 'voice'. Like creativity, it can be argued this term has become increasingly ubiquitous within contemporary social and educational discourse. The word 'voice', within the English language, can be used to refer to a plethora of contrasting aspects of human behaviour and interaction. As Denzin (1997, p.41) notes the term can be used to refer to 'utterances that announce or report', or it can be used to refer to sounds made through the mouth. Likewise, the term can be used to convey' a characteristic speech act' connected to a particular person, or the right to express one's opinion. Alternatively, Denzin notes, voice can be associated with moments of silence, suspension and withdrawal. What Denzin's analysis highlights is that the concept 'voice' extends well beyond what is said and not said in to domains such as personal identity, subject-hood and agency.

As Foucault (1971) famously argued, the term 'voice' can be used to relate to everything that can be communicated, whilst simultaneously relating to everything that is not communicated. What both

Denzin's and Foucault's analysis of voice highlights is that this amorphous term can be used to refer to profoundly diverse forms of communication and human and material relations. In their reflections on voice both these theorists emphasize that 'voice' is not just produced through the domain of human choice and action, voice can be powerfully conveyed by inanimate objects such as a building's architecture, or the towering presence of a mountain or the beauty of a sunset, as well as through the enactment of particular power relations and social structures. In regard to this view, Foucault in particular, has strongly emphasized the powerful and far reaching forms of voice that are produced by the social relations enacted in social institutions such as prisons, asylums and schools (1977).

In this research I have been interested in exploring what the difference is between forms of expression that constitute as 'voice' and forms of expression that constitute as a 'response'. One theorist who has helped me understand the difference between these two states in more detail is the musician and philosopher Franziska Schroeder (2006). In her writing Schroeder explores the relationship between musicians, their instruments and the production of voice through musical expression. Schroeder argues that when one 'gives voice' to an idea or a feeling, one is essentially 'producing oneself' in some new way rather than 're-producing an old score that's been played many times' (ibid, p. 132). In her analysis of voice the term becomes defined as an act that involves 'going out of myself' so as to create a 'new interpretation of me' (Ibid). According to this frame of logic, if one gives voice to a feeling or idea one becomes someone with a distinctive perspective in the moment of the voice act. In my reflective journal I summarized this idea as follows:

> '*I am me in the here and now but I am also someone who is capable of changing who I am. Therefore, my voice is that part of me that is able to convey who I am now as well as who I may become in the future*'.

What Schroeder's definition of voice strongly conveys are the temporal dimensions of this concept's character. Powerful voice acts, according to Schroeder's logic, convey a strong sense of past, present and future simultaneously. In my opinion this is primarily how an expression of voice differs from expressing a response. A response is not attempting to communicate with the future. A response

proffers neither questions nor desires. It is a statement connected entirely to the present. This thesis will argue, these, primarily philosophical reflections on voice and response, have significant ramifications for how researchers approach interpreting the differences between 'voice' and 'response' when collaborating with pupils with PMLD. As will be explored in 'Chapter 2: Literature Review' a number of theorists argue that due to the degree of their cognitive impairments children with PMLD are unable to express a point of view and, therefore, their capacity to participate in pupil voice activities is profoundly limited. Whilst this research does not question the validity of these observations, it does put forward an alternative argument where the suggestion is made that there are social and inclusive benefits for reflecting further on this matter and questioning how voice is interpreted within the context of PMLD educational practice.

In this thesis voice is interpreted as having a dynamic and affecting character. It is suggested that unlike a spontaneous response, a voice act is a form of expression that is capable of affecting social, spatial and temporal relations. Voice is understood as a phenomenon that travels away from its creator. It flows in to the environment in which it is produced. It causes both affects and effects. The affects and effects of voice are unpredictable. No neat, predictable ripples occur, such as those that arise as a pebble is dropped in a pond. Acts of voice produce patterns that are more akin to diffraction patterns as their effects reverberate off uniquely situated obstacles (people, material objects, metaphysical concepts) within the environment. Some of the obstacles the voice act encounters will diffuse the energy of the original voice act, whilst others will intensify it. The potentiality of the expression of voice, and the possible reactions and trajectories it can provoke in others, are impossible to predict in advance and impossible to recreate in the future. Voice is a highly situational performance that is uniquely connected to the sensory, social, material, spatial and temporal conditions in which it is produced.

These ideas, concerning how voice and environment interact, are derived from ideas originally developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1984). In their interpretation of voice Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize voice as a form of machine. Within their philosophical framework the term 'machine' is used specifically to refer to an entity that creates a series of interruptions and breaks in experience.

Therefore, they argue human beings are machines, but so too are all other forms of material and metaphysical phenomenon, including disparate entities such as; money, air, education, traffic, a flood, religion, capitalism. According to their philosophical framework a machine is anything that you can name. Their theory establishes the following argument; machines form relationships with other machines within the environment. Therefore, every machine is part of a system of machines; no machine operates entirely on its own. The relationships that machines form within these systems create *flow*. Thus, within any system you have multiple relationships occurring simultaneously, all of which are producing different systems of interruptions and breaks. A key element of this theory is that there is no start or end point to a machine's flow. Machines, they observe, make it look like there are definite beginnings and ends in the flow, but this is an illusion. All new forms of flow are borne out of their intersections with previous forms of flow. Deleuze and Guattari argue that human voice becomes most apparent in situations where the flow between machines has become interrupted or experienced a break, resulting in 'the flow' adopting a new direction or forming a new trajectory.

Returning to Schroeder (2006) in her reflections on Deleuze and Guattari's theory of voice she argues interrupted flow is an integral aspect of human experience. This is because, she suggests, an integral aspect of the production of self is formulated through learning how to manage interruptions and disruptions in one's experience of flow. This is why, she reflects, human beings often engage in activities that interrupt the flow of their personal 'machine'. As a musician she uses the example of Jazz improvisation to demonstrate how this process occurs. Jazz musicians continually listen to how their fellow musicians are using notes to create harmony and/or discordance. Schroeder describes how the jazz musician is permanently on edge, poised on the balls of their feet with excitement and anticipation, ever ready to launch into the flow of the music as soon as they hear a phrase that they can become a part of. Jazz, as an art form, is not concerned with pre-empting the notes that will come forth or predicting what will happen when the musician joins the flow. A true jazz musician wants innovation and experimentation as they play. They want to expand their sense of being part of the language of the music. To do this they will seek harmony but at the same time they do not shy away from discordance, for they know that harmony is no harmony at all if it has no awareness of discordance.

What Schroeder emphasizes here in her analysis of 'flow' and 'voice' is that anticipation, poise, control and improvisation are key elements in the production of self and identity. Schroeder observes, in jazz, a musician does not aspire to play a piece of music all the way through in a predictable fashion. They listen and they use their senses to feel when it is the right time for them either to accelerate or de-accelerate their input. This thesis will argue that for the creative researcher collaborating with pupils with PMLD the experience is very similar to what Schroeder describes. In generating creative environments the researcher aims to create a sense of expectation, anticipation and excitement but the researcher does not seek to create a formulaic participative structure. In my collaborations with pupils with PMLD I am always aspiring to create environments where there is the space for pupils to enter the flow and develop the improvisation.

This section has introduced a series of key ideas on the concept of voice that are integral to this research. Firstly, the section has suggested that voice interrupts and breaks experiential flow so as to create new forms of flow. Secondly, a connection has been made between the concept of voice and processes of being and becoming, as a hypothesis has been presented that voice relates to both these concepts simultaneously. Finally, a suggestion has been made that voice represents a form of interaction concerned with innovation rather than the repetition of established behaviours or social scripts. Therefore, a key idea of this section is that authentic forms of voice are defined by the extent to which they bring forth new forms of interaction and understanding.

Introducing this inquiry's stance on agency

Agency is often conceptualized as the capacity of an individual to act in the world and is regularly defined in terms of an individual's ability to make choices. Hilter and Elder (2007, p. 170) describe the term agency as 'slippery', arguing its definition shifts depending on the epistemological orientation of those using it. Many theorists suggest agency's slipperiness as a term arises because too often agency is studied as if people enact choices in sociological voids. This is an idea that Bourdieu's (2005) theory

of habitus directly challenges, as he argues agency does not stem from a blank slate, instead, agency represents an individual's enactment and reproduction of their society's social structures and dominant ideology. However, in his critique of Bourdieu's theory of habitus, Giddens (1991) critiques the concept of habitus by arguing that even in the most rigidly structured social contexts human beings do not blindly adhere to ideological principles and social structures as if they have no free will. To be human, Giddens argues, is to find unique embodied ways in which to respond to the sensory and material environment in which you are situated. Therefore, agency is never *just* about choice; it is about enacting personally situated forms of analysis that draw upon complex layers of experience relating to one's social, physical and cultural engagement with one's environment. Therefore, agency can be understood as one's temporal and spatial potentiality within, inevitably, complex socio-cultural contexts.

The history and application of the term agency within Western discourse can be traced back to a number of founding philosophical traditions concerned with debating the role of individual freedom within society (Descartes, 1596-1650, Kant, 1724-1804 & Hume, 1711 - 1776). In these contexts agency is often discussed in relation to the lone subject acting as a locus for social action. As stated above, in more recent times, in contrast to these founding philosophies, a plethora of models have emerged that define agency, not in terms of individual action, but in terms of the notion that no action is free or independent of the society in which the individual lives as all action unconsciously reproduces the milieu in which the individual finds them selves (Foucault, 1971; Bourdieu, 2005; Giroux, 2004)

Hilter and Elder (2007, p. 70) argue that an individual's agential potential is affected by many factors of which biology and culture, in their opinion, can be perceived to be the most influential. Camic (1986) posits a similar idea arguing that it is common for individual's enactment of agency to take on a pragmatic character as much of human action is driven by habit and necessity. This was an idea that Dewey (1934) also explored when he argued that as we go about our daily lives we rely upon pre-established routines to guide our social interactions and our negotiation of material reality. If habit fails us, Dewey argued, we have to make choices, and those choices always occur within a flow of

activity. Flow, within Dewey's philosophical framework, is shaped by one's emotions, physical idiosyncrasies, personal histories, moral codes and general predispositions. Therefore, the power and character of our agency can be seen to wax and wane in relation to the influence of factors such as these.

Mead (1932, 1938) was one of the first social theorists to argue that there is no such thing as a random choice, as behind all choices is a strong sense of 'I' and 'Me'. For Mead one's 'I' is the intrinsic part of the self that is spontaneous, instinctual and idiosyncratic whilst one's 'me' is the extrinsic, socially developed self. Mead suggested that most of our choices in daily life are governed by the 'me' part of our identity. But in non-routine situations the 'I' part defiantly takes the reigns. This is why Mead argues that agency can be seen as the reflexive, enacted relationship between the spontaneous 'I' and the more stable, socially-developed 'me'. Mead argues this theory can be evidenced through scenarios such as running for the bus or daydreaming in class. In both these situations the individual is applying agency to deliberately shape their experience of time and employing particular skills (running and shutting off their attention) to satisfy the demands of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. For example, in the latter case of the boring class, the 'me' has decided they cannot leave the class as this would be socially unacceptable whilst the 'I' part has decided it must find some way of overcoming the tedium, thus the agency enacted is a combination of 'I' and 'me' factors.

Whilst from a philosophical perspective I am a great appreciated of Mead's observations, I consider the challenge of applying this theory within research practice to be considerable. However, many researchers have tried to overcome the problem of agency's illusive and abstract character through the application of empirical research processes. In research studies agency has been imbued with multiple empirical characteristics, ranging from studying diverse aspects of human behavior such as; 'notions of self-efficacy' (Gecas, 2003), 'planful competence' (Clausen, 1991), 'moments of freedom and effort' (Alexander, 1992), 'intentionality' (Bandura, 2001), all of which, it has been argued, represent valid categories through which to capture, analyse and interpret agency.

Although reflecting upon studies such as those named above has assisted me in formulating my own interpretation of how to approach the concept of agency, in my fieldwork, I have preferred to put in to practice a definition of agency produced by Carrie Noland (2009). Noland locates her interest in agency as arising from her experiences of watching graffiti artists 'repeatedly shake their can, swing their arms up over their head, follow the vertical extension of their body then sweep in a half moon back down to their feet' (ibid, p.3). She describes this kinesthetic sequence as being simultaneously a repetitive routine and an improvisational dance. Such observational experiences led her to formulating research questions such as; *What is the relationship between agency and subversion in social institutions? How and why do variance, innovation and resistance continually infiltrate people's agenic actions? Why do agential scripts come to differ within the same population of people? How does our agential identity evolve?* These are all questions that have greatly influenced this research's approach to exploring agency and one's that I have included within this research's analytical framework where appropriate.

5: Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the three key concepts that are integral to this inquiry. Alongside this, the core philosophical, theoretical and ethical dilemmas that have shaped and influenced the paradigmatic and methodological character of this research have been outlined. This chapter has also introduced the subsidiary questions that will be interrogated and problematised throughout the duration of this thesis. As stated at the beginning of this chapter this chapter will conclude by stating the overarching research question this research seeks to address. This question is:

Overarching Research Question

How is the concept of creativity constructed and enacted in this school environment?

It is acknowledged here that only one of the three key concepts is mentioned in this question. This is because creativity, compared to the other two concepts, is acknowledged as the core concept that will be questioned, challenged and investigated in the greatest depth within this thesis and this concept that is the one that has been consistently prioritized within my collaborations with staff and pupils. This question was also chosen because of its simplicity and the way in which staff were able to easily understand its meaning and engage with its concepts. Having piloted some other questions during the early stages of the research, that did include the words voice and agency, I felt this question was more appropriate as I was able to share it with staff and clearly explain to them my rationale for choosing to use it as the basis of this inquiry.

This chapter will conclude by briefly summarizing the main points this chapter has sought to highlight.

- This inquiry is set in a special school that works with children with a highly diverse range of additional needs. I have made a conscious choice to work with only a very small percentage of the pupils who attend this school as I am interested in studying in depth how these pupils enact creativity, voice and agency within their school culture. All pupil participants taking part in this research are categorized as operating at an educational ability level of P1-3 (QCA, 2011,) and are considered to have PMLD

- The significance of the concept 'inclusive research practice' to this study has been introduced. It has been made clear that whilst this research aspires to work within this particular research paradigm there have been many factors that have made establishing this form of methodology complicated. Attention has also been drawn to the significance of the terms 'insider status' and 'outsider status' to this research, and the idea that research roles and identities are not fixed entities but components of research experience that can change radically depending upon what research methods are being employed.

- It has been stressed that creativity is the dominant concept that will be problematised and interrogated within this thesis. The research's stance on creativity has been made clear,

along with the aspects of creativity this inquiry will prioritize. These aspects can be summarized as: *how does the application of different models of creativity affect this school's creative teaching and learning practice?* And *what forms of analysis framework can be used to interpret the creativity of pupils with PMLD?* In addition to these areas of focus it has been made clear that this research will explore how the concepts of voice and agency are interpreted within this school's model of creativity, and how different forms of creative teaching and learning practice affect pupils' expression of voice and agency.

This thesis will now move on to discussing the core areas of literature that have been used to form the basis of the theoretical and philosophical framework that underpins this inquiry.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review is divided into three sections

- (i) Ways of seeing

- (ii) Scenic design, Kinesthetic empathy and performance affects

- (iii) Participation and emancipation

This chapter presents a rationale explaining why each of these areas is considered to be an integral component of this inquiry. The emphasis of the first section is on exploring how human beings approach constructing an understanding of their environment through the body and the senses. The section will emphasize this inquiry's stance that perceptual understandings of how reality 'means' is constructed through processes whereby individuals utilize many contrasting forms of perceptual behaviour. This section will conclude by arguing each person develops a highly individual perceptual relationship with reality that is unique to his or her embodied experience. The second section concentrates on exploring how contrasting forms of aesthetic and performative activity can enhance forms of intersubjectivity and empathic engagement. This section particularly concentrates on introducing the themes of kinesthetic empathy, embodied understanding and the interplay of affect and effect within different forms of arts education. Finally, the last section explores some of the different social and political ramifications of conducting research with children with special needs. In particular it problematizes the concepts of voice, choice and participation as it questions how contrasting paradigmatic orientations affect the production of knowledge and the (re)production of oppressive social narratives about people with learning difficulties.

Part One: Ways of Seeing

Introduction

> *'Colour is like music, it uses a shorter way to come to our senses to make our emotion'*
>
> (Quote above Deputy Head Teacher's desk)

> *'The obvious fact that we usually cannot put into words what we have experienced in our encounter with an artwork does not make the embodied, perceptual meaning any less a type of meaning'*
>
> (Johnson, 2007, p. 234)

Within English-speaking Western culture what is seen is, arguably, venerated as being the truth. One way in which this can be evidenced is through reference to the popular saying '*seeing is believing'*. But no individual literal*y* sees what another person means. How a situation means is brought in to being through a complex interplay of visual, auditory, physical, emotional and abstract forms of perceptual processing, all of which have been uniquely honed by the individual undertaking the interpretation of phenomena since the time of their birth, and according to some theorists, since the very earliest stages of conception in the womb (Arabin, 2002; Ilari & Polka, 2006). Thus, one person's perceptual interpretation of phenomena can stand in stark contrast to those created by the next person. However, despite the immense propensity for perceptual variance it is the stance of this thesis that human beings still remain capable of forming highly intuitive, empathic and shared understandings of how phenomena 'mean'.

When working with children who are non-verbal communicators, who have complex sensory impairments and who are operating at a pre-intentional cognitive level, the production of such moments of interpersonal, intersubjective, empathic awareness can be difficult to define, interpret and articulate. However, it is the hypothesis of this thesis that the generation and interpretation of such moments are integral to understanding how voice, agency and autonomy are produced, enacted

and sustained by learners with PMLD. The sections that follow will outline a series of theories and philosophical perspectives on perception, empathy and the production of 'felt' understanding designed to highlight the important roles of perception and empathy in the production of intersubjectivity within the context of collaborating with people with PMLD.

Definitions of felt understanding

This research's fieldwork has involved establishing, sharing, developing and observing many non-verbal joint attention sequences between supporting adults and pupils with PMLD. Following joint attention exchanges adult participants, as 'Chapter Four' will discuss, have often reported a strong sense of 'felt' understanding between pupils and themselves, describing how, whilst no words were exchanged, they felt a strong sense of collaboration and shared attention was achieved between themselves and pupil participants. Such observations have led to my interest in exploring literature relating to the interconnected subjects of 'felt understanding' and 'the mind/body dilemma'. As well as unpicking the question *'How do different types of knowledge become marginalized and legitimized within different approaches to education?'*

The philosopher Mark Johnson (2007, p.26) defines the term 'felt understanding' as pertaining to 'meanings that develop prior to any conscious conceptual understanding of phenomenon'. Similarly, the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2000, p.184) uses this phrase to refer to the process whereby individuals encounter a 'subconscious feeling of knowing' long before they are able to articulate a conscious or abstract awareness of how a particular element of reality has meaning. Damasio suggests 'subconscious knowing' arises as the individual refines the connections between their immediate experiences of reality and their previously gathered sensory understanding of phenomenon. Therefore, 'felt understanding' can be understood as a subconscious process of internal cross-referencing, where formative awareness of how an aspect of reality means is stored in one's muscles and nerve-endings rather than being intellectually processed in the mind. Recent neurological studies have further defined the term felt understanding as pertaining to tacit embodied

knowledge that individuals continually draw upon as they subconsciously interpret their position within a given environment, particularly in regard to the degree of threat or opportunity they sense within the environment (Gallagher, 2005; Gallese, 2008).

Relating these ideas to the 'mind/body question' it can be argued that in Western philosophy little status has traditionally been afforded to 'felt' knowledge', with it often being firmly consigned to the bottom rung of socially legitimized forms of knowledge about the world. Such disparaging attitudes to felt understanding can be seen to have their origins in the philosophical tracts of those such as Descartes and Kant who argued the body was a suspicious and un-trustworthy entity when it came to the challenge of producing reliable knowledge about reality. This, their theories suggested, was because the human body was strongly inclined towards deceiving and debasing the superiority and purity of the mind.

In this review of literature I have consistently been drawn to the work of philosophers who adopt an oppositional position to those such as Descartes and Kant. One philosopher who has particularly influenced my understanding of felt understanding is Mark Johnson (2007, p.10-12) who argues philosophical practices that deny the influence of the body on how human beings produce meaning are at best 'delusional' but at worse capable of silencing complex webs of understanding that often exist in 'the spaces between' formal units of legitimized knowledge, unspoken and unwritten, but strongly valued and understood by those, such as people with PMLD, who rely upon them to access forms of interpretation and communication that transform the multi-sensory chaos of their environment in to an accessible, controllable and manageable experience. Within his theory of embodied perception Johnson argues all meanings human beings produce start with a felt, pre-conscious sense of 'potentiality' that gradually, through a process of continual refinement, builds to a conscious awareness of how different units of phenomenon 'mean'. The process that is being described here is one in which an individual learns to differentiate between different forms of experience, leading to a state where they are able to understand how different forms of perceptual encounter have different levels of value within the complex socio-cultural surroundings in which the individual operates.

This theory has parallels with John Dewey's (1934; 1938) theory of continuity. Dewey argued human beings learn and acquire knowledge through continually encountering differing qualities of experience. The educational philosopher Philip W. Jackson (1998, p. 32), in his analysis of Dewey's theory of continuity, suggests one outcome of these differentiated experiences is that the individual gradually develops an ability to distinguish between 'ordinary 'and 'specialized' forms of experience within their everyday life. Jackson suggests that through encountering more complex forms of experience, the individual becomes increasingly skilled at regulating their internal (affective, emotional and proprioceptive) and external (physical and extereoceptive) responses so as to suit the demands of the contrasting environments they encounter. Jackson suggests that this internal regulation process is an essential component of how an individual develops embodied forms of knowledge and felt understanding.

Dewey, in *Experience and Education* (1938), notes most of the time, if a human being lives in a secure environment, they encounter relatively repetitive and non-disruptive forms of experience that provoke limited conscious reactions, as these experiences do not threaten the individual's emotional and perceptual sense of equilibrium. However, an integral aspect of Dewey's theory of education and learning is that to cognitively and emotionally mature, and acquire what Dewey refers to as 'higher level' knowledge, an individual must encounter forms of experience that allow them to safely test and transcend the limits of repetitive, non-disruptive experience. This element of Dewey's theory, I would like to suggest, has particular relevance regarding PMLD pupils education as it indicates the importance of learners having access to learning environments that allow them to safely go beyond forms of experience that are safe and predictable for them in to experiential terrain that offers them increasingly more complex experiential chanllenges

In his book 'Art as Experience' (1934) Dewey suggests 'specialized experiences' that engender 'higher forms of knowledge' come in many different forms depending on the socio-cultural context the individual inhabits. For example, a religious ritual can be a specialized experience, just as undertaking a science experiment or climbing a mountain can be. What defines a specialized experience within

Dewey's theory of continuity is the qualitative opportunities it offers the individual to transcend the limits of their ordinary experience. Within Dewey's model the context of an experience is pivotal, particularly in terms of its ability to generate powerful and positively re-enforcing forms of affect for an individual. These ideas are pivotal to Dewey's conceptualizations of the role of aesthetics within human meaning making in which he argues an aesthetic experience is any experience in which intrinsic, consummatory meaning dominates over extrinsic instrumentalist meanings. By this he means specialized experience is any experience where the sub-conscious *felt* meanings outweigh the practical and utilitarian meanings. Therefore, aesthetic experience for Dewey is not exclusive to the domain of the arts, being available within many other domains of human experience, but it is a form of experience that art can greatly support. It was on this basis that Dewey put forward his manifesto advocating for the arts to be afforded a pivotal position with education. In *Art as Experience* (1934) Dewey argued pursuing knowledge through the arts was one way in which the student could encounter a 'specialized' form of experience in a relatively safe and comforting context.

This section has emphasised a series of key philosophical principles adopted within this inquiry. It has explained why a non-Cartesian, post-Kantian position regarding the mind-body question is adopted and has introduced the significant role that can be played by felt understanding within education generally and specifically within education designed to support pupils with PMLD. Building upon the theoretical perspectives of John Dewey (1934, 1938) and Mark Johnson (2007) a hypothesis has been presented that suggests that comprehension of reality is the result of continual experiential engagement with one's environment in which felt forms of understanding emerge as the primary initiators of increasingly complex and abstracted forms of comprehension. Following the introduction of this idea, the suggestion has been made that the quality of experience available within educational settings has a significant impact on the types of knowledge and understanding that are available to learners. It has also been suggested, through reflection on Dewey's aesthetic and educational theories, that the level of autonomy and self-control experienced by the learner during educational encounters has a direct impact on the quality and depth of their learning. These are all ideas that will be explored in greater detail in the analysis section of this thesis.

Questioning the limits of learners' with PMLD worlds

Learners with PMLD, by definition, will have complex difficulties in regard to their ability to cognitively interpret their environment. It is often said of PMLD learners that they are operating at what Piaget (1952) defined as the 'sensorimotor stage of development' and that they will stay at this stage of development for the duration of their life (Jones et al, 2002; Imray, 2008). Piaget developed this phrase to describe the formative stage of human cognitive development during which knowledge of reality is amassed through sensory exploration. This category is generally used in education to refer to the developmental stage 'typically developing children' encounter between birth and approximately two years old. At the beginning of this stage children's actions are motivated primarily via reflexes whilst at the end of this stage, as children begin their transition to what Piaget refers to as the 'pre-operational stage', they become capable of intentional action and forms of representational thought. On the surface this sounds like an easily comprehensive developmental phase. However, in reality, evidence would suggest the sensorimotor stage represents a complex spectrum of sensory and perceptual behaviours that many children, regardless of whether they have additional needs or not, progress through laterally rather than sequentially. However, lateral forms of progression are known to be much more common amongst children with complex needs (Ware, 2003, Carpenter, 2011) than their typically developing peers. As Simmons and Watson (2014) observe, it is common for children and adults with PMLD to oscillate between different sub-stages of the sensorimotor stage as they develop highly individualized ways of making sense of sensory reality.

Some evidence exists suggesting it is possible, although incredibly rare, for people with PMLD to demonstrate cognitive behaviours that infer they are capable of operating at a higher cognitive stage of development than that represented by Piaget's sensorimotor stage (McLinden, 1999; Emblem et al, 1990). Lacey (2009) argues for great caution in this area as her research suggests many people with PMLD have developed learnt behaviours that they become very successful at enacting within certain environments. This might include things like opening doors or switching on electrical devices. On the surface, Lacey observes, this can imply a more advanced stage of cognitive development than the person actually has because whilst the person with PMLD may have learnt physical actions, such as

turning a door handle or pressing 'on' on a remote, they have no cognitive awareness of the cause and effect of these actions. These gestures, she argues, need to be understood as learnt physical behaviours that people become skilled at performing but which people do not cognitively understand.

Equally, observation of people with PMLD is complicated by the fact that many people may consistently reject or withdraw from certain forms of stimulus, which can lead to it being assumed that they have very minimal understanding of how particular objects can be used and manipulated. However, evidence would suggest withdrawal of children with cognitive and sensory impairments in certain sensory environments is caused by many different sensory-perceptual factors and does not necessarily mean that the individual has no understanding of how to manipulate or engage with stimulus. Instead, people's adverse reaction, it is argued, may be related to experiences associated with sensory over-loading, whereby environments, and particular objects, can become temporarily over-whelming for people (Bogdashina, 2010, Ware, 2003).

Lacey (2009) suggests that where people with PMLD are denied opportunities to explore and interact with diverse and challenging social and material environments their ability to develop strategies for managing sensory overload can become severely under-developed. Lacey suggests, regardless of the degree of neurological impairment, a person's synapses continue to form new connections throughout their lives. Thus, Lacey argues, as long as an individual is having experiences that challenge their perceptual instincts new neural pathways will be forming in their brain and new ways of processing reality will be being created. Therefore, just like any other learner a person with PMLD will continue to make new neural connections that lead to new ways of approaching their interactions with sensory reality throughout their lives. This leads Lacey (2009, p.24) to concluding that 'Sensory stimulation, experiences with objects and new activities remain important for PMLD learners throughout their lives 'regardless of age'.

In her exploration of how learners with PMLD acquire knowledge of their environment Lacey (2009) poses the following question: *Do people with PMLD have the capacity to remember experiences?* She observes that it is commonly argued by cognitive scientists that this population has no capacity for

remembering experiences. However, if this is the case Lacey asks how does this population learn and acquire new skills? For, as she observes, people with PMLD clearly do learn many diverse skills and behaviours that they are then able to employ across their lives in diverse situations. Lacey argues what debate on this subject highlights is that assessing an individual's knowledge of the world based solely on how their reactions equate with prescriptive models of cognitive development represents a very short-sighted approach to interpreting the limits of human understanding. It is her conclusion that pupils with PMLD are continually amassing experience of how reality is structured and enacted in the social world and, therefore, this on-going process needs to be acknowledged by educators as they create educational experiences that are designed to meet the developmental needs of their students.

In conclusion, this section has highlighted the problematic dimensions of apply prescriptive and restrictive models of human development within educational practice designed to support PMLD learners. The section has also emphasized that how people with PMLD learn can be extremely varied and may produce many ambiguities that educational professionals have to be able to assimilate and interpret within their pedagogical framework.

Schematic Learning

This section will explore the role schematic learning plays in how people with PMLD access and make sense of their environment. In this section a connection is made between Piaget's (1952) theory of 'schema' and the idea that people develop highly personalized forms of sensory-perceptual behaviour that are unique to their biological and cultural being. References are made to studies exploring how and why people with autism develop highly specific forms of schematic behaviour. It is acknowledged that people with PMLD do not necessarily have autism, (although some of them will), but that in this research this literature is considered relevant due to the attention it draws to how people with cognitive and sensory impairments are affected by experiences relating to sensory overload.

Piaget (1952) defined schemas as mental plans that help the individual shape action within their environment. An individual's schematic preferences, Piaget suggested, have the capacity to profoundly affect their perceptual behaviours, as particular schematic frameworks create contrasting forms of perceptual bias. Developing perceptual bias is a fundamental skill humans need to acquire in order to become confident at negotiating the sensory dimensions of their environment. Without perceptual bias, it is argued (Markram et al, 2007; Bogdashina, 2010) the world can become an extremely confusing and chaotic place. Bogdashina (2010) argues if an individual has not developed forms of perceptual bias suited to their physical and socio-cultural environment it is highly likely that the individual will be exposed to forms of sensory stimulus and sensory overload that make navigating the physical and socio-cultural environment difficult. An example that can be used to illustrate this situation is one where a person who has lived all their life in a very rural setting enters a busy, noisy urban setting. In this scenario the individual would have to adjust their perceptual filters in order to be able to process and manage the intensified sensory milieu of the urban setting. For a human being who has no sensory or cognitive forms of impairment this process can be relatively straightforward and will be achievable after a period of adjustment. Research in to the experiences of people with autism, such as those conducted by Bogdashina (2010) and Markram et al, (2007), highlight that for people with sensory and cognitive impairments moderating their sensory-perceptual filters as they enter new environments can be a difficult and protracted process to undertake. Bogdashina (2010) observes, people with autism often struggle in new environments initially and may resort to using perceptual behaviours that seem quite odd or potentially extreme to 'neuro-typical' people.

Returning to Piaget, he argued to progress developmentally a child must continually expand the nature and character of their schematic orientation so as to become skilled in assimilating and accommodating increasingly complex forms of sensory information. Piaget summarized this developmental process as one in which the individual continually oscillates between a sense of equilibrium (comfortable perceptual experience) and disequilibrium (uncomfortable and problematic perceptual experience). Piaget argued the desired conclusion of this experiential process is that the individual is able to progress to a state of equilibration with relative ease as they enter new and contrasting environments. What Bogdashina's (2010) research highlights is that for people with

cognitive and sensory impairments equilibrium is often hard to achieve. Where they persistently experience sensory-perceptual discomfort children may resort to withdrawing from certain types of environment and adopting self-soothing behaviours that 'tune out' the difficult sensory components.

Johnson (2007, p. 155-175), in his critique of Piaget's schematic theory, extends Piaget's original interpretation by arguing that it is through a continual life-long process of combining, embedding and sequencing actions that human beings are able to construct the large scale narrative structures that make it possible for them to make sense of their actions in the world. Therefore, Johnson argues, it is overly simplistic to think one's schematic logic is only developed in childhood. Alternatively, Johnson argues ones schematic framework is continuously evolving as the body interacts with the physical and socio-cultural environment. Johnson's main critique of Piaget's theory of schema is that Piaget suggested that the production of schematic knowledge was an essentially mental process. In contrast, Johnson argues schemas have a physical, social and cultural character as well as a mental dimension. This, Johnson suggests, is because schematic behaviour involves intersubjectively comprehending one's 'intercorporeal social connectedness' (ibid, p. 162).

Johnson (2007, p.40) observes that from early infancy humans develop 'ontological categories' in which they store their embodied, pre-conscious experience. The categories a human produces, he suggests, are dependent on 'the nature of their bodies, their brains, their environment and the type of social interactions they encounter'. Therefore, Johnson's position on schemas represents a very different stance than that of Piaget's in that Johnson argues against understanding schemas as mental structures, putting forward an alternative argument where schemas are interpreted as the 'embodied ontological categories' that are socially constructed through participation and exploration of the social environment. Importantly, Johnson stresses that one's schematic inclinations are subject to continual change depending on one's socio-cultural experiences as it is possible for one's schematic behaviours to morph and adapt as one ages (ibid).

Viewed through the lens of Johnson's schematic theory the task of supporting adults working with a child with sensory and cognitive impairments is to support them to identify forms of sensory-

perceptual processing that help them achieve equilibrium quickly and comfortably. What Johnson's schematic model particularly emphasizes is that practices that encourage children to physically explore their environment and express schematic logic using their bodies can be very beneficial as schematic logic is not just stored in the mind as a mental faculty but is an integrated embodied element of one's being.

This section has outlined the relationship between one's schematic preferences and one's perceptual behaviour. This process has been undertaken in order to stress that within this inquiry these concepts are not perceived within a cognitive development framework but a framework that sees schematic knowledge as developed through embodied exploration of the varied and challenging socio-cultural environment one encounters in life. It has also been stressed that one focus of educators working with children with sensory and cognitive impairments concerns the creation of adaptive and multi-sensory learning environments that can be responsive to learners' emergent perceptual behaviour. A key element of this process, it has also been suggested, is educators devising scaffolded experiences that provide opportunities for children to extend their understanding of how their actions and responses can affect sensory and perceptual change within the environment.

Having established how important the sensory and material properties are of learning environments designed to support children with sensory and cognitive impairments the literature review will now move on to consider the concept of 'affordances'. In the next section an argument will be presented that suggests that pupils with complex needs greatly benefit from engaging in learning environments that offer them stimulating and provoking affordances.

Affordances

The term affordance is associated with the work of Gibson and Gibson (1968; 1976; 1979) who developed a model of perceptual development in which they suggested an individual selectively interacts with the array of possibilities a particular environment affords them. James Gibson (1968,

p.301) defines the term 'affordance' as referring to the properties of an object that create 'the opportunity for rewarding forms of action to emerge'. For example, to a small child a shiny, uncluttered, smooth floor may offer a particularly exciting set of affordances not commonly open to them in their everyday environment. The child may be drawn to such a floor because, according to their perceptual logic, it offers a plethora of visual, aural and touch sensations. Of course a child may have encountered many floors previously, and these others floor have affordances too, but what a floor such as this may offer is an increase in what Gibson (1968) referred to as 'action possibilities'. What this description highlights is the idea that an object's sensory properties, its aesthetic qualities and its overall unusualness within a particular social context all have an effect on the affordances the object provides for the individual. This theme is introduced here as a prerequisite to the argument that understanding the concept of affordance is an integral aspect of understanding how adapted learning environments encourage and support pupils' with PMLD learning.

Part of Gibson's (1968, p.303) theory of affordance is his belief that it is wrong to think of human agency purely as a mechanistic experience. To him the material and social environment is not a collection of 'causes and effects that push individuals around', but a collection of 'action possibilities' from which the individual actively selects. Withagen and Chemero (2011), have recently extended Gibson's original model, suggesting that rather than 'producing possibilities' the affordances of an environment should be perceived as evoking 'behavioural invitations' that, in turn, create complex multi-dimensional relationships between the individual, their environment and the socio-cultural context in which these factors are situated. This is an idea summarized by Putnam (1987, p. 40) when he argues 'what we take as real depends on how we experience things via the affordances of our world at a given time and place, relative to our bodies, our interests, and our purposes in making conceptual distinctions'.

As he expanded his interpretation of affordances Gibson (1979) argued that as an individual engages with an environment they seek two distinct forms of qualitative experience. On the one hand they are motivated by a desire to engage with an environment's affordances, as in those elements that offer possibilities for action. However, on the other hand they are motivated to seek information on the

contrasting values or meanings assigned to different objects within a given environment. As these related, although distinctive, forms of qualitative inquiry are enacted Reed (1993), building upon Gibson's observations, argues the concepts of agency, intention and motivation become fore-grounded to differing degrees depending on the level of genuine choice afforded in the environment. Reed suggested where there are high degrees of affordance but low levels of information strong and differentiated intentional patterns emerge. However, where there are high levels of information but low levels of affordance weak forms of intentional pattern emerge. A weak form of intentional pattern consists of very few realized action possibilities, whereas, according to Reed (1993), a strong intentional pattern will be defined by the complexity of the action possibilities it has realized.. Reed argued that the emergence of strong intentional patterns lead to goal-orientated behaviours that in turn can lead to purposeful self-directed forms of action emerging, but the degree to which purposeful action occurs, Reed observed, is continually regulated by factors such as ideology and culture.

As Ingold (2000) has argued culture is not a collection of mental representations the individual stores in their mind. Cultural variances in affordances are better thought of as variations in perceptual motor-skills (ibid). Following this logic cultural identity can be seen to emerge through our embodied response to the environment and the particular forms of responsiveness permitted by the socio-cultural environment and subsequently subsumed by our embodied sensory-perceptual sense of self. As Withagen & Chemero (2012) observe an object may have diverse and multi-dimensional affordances but this does not mean an individual will be attracted to its action possibilities. In many contexts objects that present individuals with an unusually open level of affordance, in comparison to what they are used to, can have the effect of repelling them and shutting down their sensory-perceptual reactions. This is because an individual does not just have a functional response to an object they also have an affective, embodied, encultured response

One theoretical field in which the behavioural and affective impact of different affordances has been explored in detail is that of architectural design. It is often suggested within design theory that architects can contrive designs so that they encourage certain behaviours over others. For example,

great attention is often given to the design of public spaces and their related affordances. However, as Hertzberger (1991) stresses evaluation of public spaces would suggest that those spaces that are neutral and free of behavioural contrivance consistently emerge as those most popular with users of the space. In Hertzberger's opinion, such spaces stimulate the creativity of an individual because they permit genuine agency to be enacted.

This section has explored the importance of being aware of how different factors relating to interior and architectural design can affect individuals' sensory-perceptual responses. It has also suggested that the quality of an environment's affordances can affect how people behave and relate to stimulus. The observation has been made that different environments create different opportunities for agency and voice to be enacted and as part of this the suggestion has been made that researchers who are interested in these factors need to be aware not only of the sensory and spatial properties of material objects but also the social, cultural and affective meanings that are affixed to them. Finally, in regard to Reed's (1993) theory of 'intentional patterns' it has been suggested that those environments most suited to producing high levels of voice and agency are those that offer individuals multiple 'action possibilities' but which do not tie down the meaning of those possibilities through the use of prescriptive ideological frameworks.

Perception and Communication

Building upon theories such as Bruner's (1983) 'functional model' of children's acquisition of language, Ware (2003) argues that *all* children develop their ability to communicate through having their pre-intentional communicative acts taken seriously. In her book *'Creating Responsive Environments for People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties'* Ware presents a series of models that outline how responsive environments can be used to support children's communication development, a central component of which is her suggestion that the spontaneous and reactive behaviours of children with PMLD must be responded to *'as if'* they were positively loaded with meaning.

Ware stresses the benefits that can be produced for children with PMLD through experiencing the ebb and flow of dialogic exchange (2003, p. 52). Within her discussion she makes links with Bruner's theory that joint action formats motivate children at a very early cognitive stage of development to be playful with the structures of language, encouraging them to experiment with the experiential gains of communicating, both from an intra and inter personal perspective. As Ware notes the majority of children with PMLD will never master formal language and will remain non-verbal communicators throughout their lives. However, she stresses they will become competent in using sophisticated and subtle approaches to negotiating sensory reality that can be understood by supporting adults who work regularly with them. As Ware's work observes, fostering a responsive and enabling environment is pivotal to the development of this type of non-verbal communicative development.

Young (2011, p. 190), building upon Bruner's functional theory of communication suggests that unfolding joint action events, as they become more playful and physically more experimental, ripen with non-verbal, inferential meaning which in turn lead to children initiating other forms of play and improvisation outside the frameworks of the joint action formats. Thus, simple game of peek-a-boo can turn into more elaborated forms of hide and seek as children begin to experiment with the material and spatial aspects of their environment and the affordances of the objects they discover. Through engaging in joint action activity, supporting adults work closely with children with PMLD to encourage them to extend their levels of social and communicative engagement so as to feel a level of affect that is subconsciously motivational and which has the explicit goal, over time, of encouraging children with PMLD to initiate and lead interaction with others.

Sherrat and Peter (2006) explore how playful joint attention activities can positively support children with special needs in becoming emotional stakeholders in the business of social interaction (ibid, p. 39). They argue activity that is inherently playful, open and responsive has a greater tendency to generate stronger emotional responses from children that directly affect the parts of the brain that can be under-functioning in children with complex sensory and/or developmental impairments. The

work of Sherrat and Peter in this area has connections with other research studies that have identified a causal link between emotional arousal in the mid-brain and cortical operations and children's degree of motivation to take part in lateral thinking and problem solving activities (Iveson, 1996).

The Artful Brain

This section will explore a series of contrasting neurological studies that have attempted to define how the brain reacts to aesthetic stimulation. Ramachandran (2003, p. 46-69), argues that whilst culture has an enormous role to play within the appreciation of art, there are such things as artistic universals and they relate to the 'figural primitives of our perceptual grammar' (ibid, p. 67). He observes that many philosophers and psychologists are reluctant to entertain this idea, being inclined to see art as 'the ultimate celebration of human individuality and originality' (ibid, p. 46-47). In his hypothesis he suggests that powerful art will convey certain fundamental qualities of existence that are felt and understood by all human beings. This 'felt understanding' is generated through the receiver recognizing certain sensory patterns.

At the heart of Ramachandran's argument is the notion that it is wrong to think that art that is very appealing to a large cross-section of human beings has anything to do with the creation of realistic representations of life,

> *'Art is not about creating a replica of what is out there in the world (....) it's the exact opposite. (Art) involves deliberate hyperbole, exaggeration, even distortion, in order to create pleasing effects in the brain'*
> (ibid, p.49)

Here, Ramachandran is presenting a view similar to that expressed by Picasso when he argued 'Art is the lie that reveals the truth'. Picasso believed, with its exaggerated forms, colours, rhythms and

tones, art was able to reveal the elemental and felt aspects of lived experience that objective, dispassionate enquiry failed to convey. Picasso saw the purpose of art lying, not in capturing a realistic image of, for example, a beautiful flower, but in capturing the essence of what makes a flower beautiful, be it the way in which its shading and colour are formed, or the differing configuration of its various parts. Ramachandran's argument is that it is these sensory and abstract factors that successful cross-cultural pieces of art are able to achieve. Powerful art communicates with individuals regardless of cultural background. For this reason Ramachdran argues when people make their own forms of art what they are attempting to communicate is not what something literally looks or sound like, they are attempting to express the felt dimensions of their experience upon encountering such phenomena. Therefore, artists are not concerned with conveying the literal, sequential, 'what happens' but the abstract felt flow of what being *in* and *of* this phenomenon feels like.

Ramachandran's theory is that often, for successful artists, it is as a result of trial and error and in some cases unknown and/or undiagnosed forms of neurological condition such as synaesthesia, that artists develop the skills required to convey these universal sensory patterns within their art. In his analysis of how this process occurs, experientially and neurologically, he offers some useful insights in to why non-realistic art is *consistently* more affecting for the human brain than literal representations of phenomenon. Ramachandran concludes by positing the hypothesis that non-realistic art creates 'a-ha' moments in the human brain in which the sensory neural pathways become excited in ways that they do not experience during commonplace, realistic experiential encounters.

As part of his analysis of how 'the artful brain' is developed Ramachandran provides analysis of a number of case studies exploring the aesthetic responses of people who have autism. One example he uses that stands out is that of Nadia, a young girl with severe autism (ibid, p. 61). Nadia, Ramachandaran reports, was barely able to speak but consistently drew the most amazing pictures of animals, a phenomenon well documented within autism studies. To illustrate his point he compares a horse drawn by Nadia which he describes as 'leaping out at you from the canvas' to a stick drawing made by a 'neuro-typical' eight year old, alongside a drawing of horses made by Leonardo da Vinci.

His suggestion is that the drawings done by both the eight years old and da Vinci are inferior to Nadia's because they are both unable to isolate and attend to the movements of a horse in the same way that Nadia is able to. This is because Nadia's brain, due to the nature of her cognitive impairments, is able to comprehend the horse in a more holistic way then the other two artists. Nadia, Ramachandran argues, does not become bogged down in analysis of disparate elements of the concept 'horse', particularly those, he argues, produced through formal language usage. Instead, Nadia is able to concentrate on the felt understanding of how a horse moves at speed. Nadia's drawing is not concerned with conveying the concept 'horse', but of conveying the essence of how a powerful animal uses their muscles and builds velocity through its movement.

Nadia in her drawings, therefore, is able to achieve what most artists have to learn to do through years of training. Nadia is able to isolate and attend to the sensory patterns and felt qualities of the different objects and experiences she encounters with relative ease compared to her 'neuro-typical' associates. The concepts of 'isolation' and 'attention' are central to Ramachandran's theory of the significance of art and metaphor within how human beings conceptualize reality. Metaphorical conceptualizing, according to his theory, is something all human beings engage in regardless of cognitive ability. He describes this process as a process that involves the individual juxtaposing seemingly unrelated things in order to highlight the most important aspects of them (ibid, p. 66). Ramachandran suggests that whilst it is commonly accepted that metaphors are important few people explore why metaphors are essential to comprehending reality. Similarly, he argues there is limited research currently exploring the neural basis for metaphor, and it is his assertion that this is a major oversight regarding understanding the role and status of aesthetics within human communication.

Another theorist who dedicates considerable time to exploring this area is the philosopher Mark Johnson. Johnson (2007) places a strong emphasis on understanding metaphor within his philosophical interpretation of how humans generate and share meaning. His argues metaphor is an inescapable component of human existence and our embodied relationship with the sensory world. Johnson argues it is inaccurate to think of metaphor as 'merely a linguistic form', alternatively,

arguing metaphor represents 'cross-domain mapping' of 'experienced correlations of motion and temporal flow' (2007, p. 31). This mapping, he argues, forms the basis of an individual's language but it also forms the basis of *all* of their conceptual understanding of how life means and functions. Therefore, his work challenges the Cartesian idea perpetuated by many Anglo-American philosophers that meaning is simply a linguistic phenomenon disconnected from embodied experience. His counter assertion is that 'meaning grows from our visceral connections with life' (ibid, p. ix) and, therefore, any philosophical stance that seeks to deny this 'ignores vast stretches of the landscape of human meaning making' (ibid, p. 207).

To illustrate this point Johnson provides a detailed analysis of how metaphor functions within music. He argues music is meaningful because it 'appeals to our felt sense of life' (Ibid, p.236). For Johnson, music orders experience, using aspects such as tone, quality, pitch, meter and rhythm to provoke 'affect' within our bodies. Johnson argues the power of music lies directly in the fact that it does not try to represent life, it is instead concerned with the presentation and enactment of felt experience or what can also be described as universally recognised sensory patterns.

Johnson juxtaposes his view on this subject with consideration of Stern's (1985) theory of vitality-affects contours, which Stern defines as 'those dynamic, kinetic qualities of feeling that distinguish animate from inanimate and that correspond to the momentary changes in feeling states involved in the organic process of being alive'. (Stern, 1985, p. 156, cited by Johnson, 2007, p. 238). Johnson's suggestion is that some forms of music are able to tap into the feelings encountered during vitality affect contours as they follow the same pattern of emotional flow that occur at a pre-reflective level of awareness. This, he notes, corresponds with Susanne Langer's view (1947, cited by Johnson 2007, p. 239) that powerful artistic forms are 'congruent with the dynamic forms of our direct sensuous, mental, and emotional life'.

Johnson also notes connections between Stern's work and work by the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2000) where Damasio has argued the meaning of music is not verbal or linguistic, but rather bodily and felt. Music, Damasio suggests, provokes interwoven images, that he describes as being 'not

merely, or even primarily, visual' as they are actually 'patterns of neural activation' that arise from the 'ongoing interaction of organism and environment'. Damasio's definition of image here refers to any 'mental pattern in any of the sensory modalities'. Therefore, he refers to music as being able to provoke 'sound image, tactile image, olfactory image, gustatory image'. He argues that one of the types of image music most powerfully and consistently evokes is the concept of somatosensory image. Soma, as he explains, comes from the Greek for body, and therefore, refers to all of the interwoven forms of body sense, including 'touch muscular, temperature, pain, visceral and vestibular' sense (2000, p. 318). Viewed from this perspective it becomes clear that the meaning music has for people cannot be seen as relating to simply extramental content as its meaning arises from the connections that are formed between an individual's experience of particular sensory patterns and the music's expression of those sensory patterns. As Oliver Sacks has argued:

> *'Musical activity involves many parts of the brain (emotional, motor, and cognitive areas) (….) This is why it can be such an effective way to remember or to learn. It is no accident that we teach our youngest children with rhymes and songs (….) music burrows its way deep into the nervous system, so deep, in fact, that even when people suffer devastating neurological disease or injury, music is usually the last thing they lose. The right sort of music can literally unlock someone frozen by Parkinson's disease, so that they may be able to dance or sing, even though, in the absence of music, they may be unable to take a step or say a word'*
> (Sacks, 2007, p. x)

To conclude, this section is introducing the idea that there is now increasing research evidence emerging from the fields of neuroscience and autism studies that suggests, regardless of cognitive ability or cultural background, there are certain aesthetic forms that human beings are inclined to respond to. Research appears to suggest that certain reactions can be said to correspond with 'foundational metaphors' (Johnson, 2007) and 'vitality affect contours' (1977; 1985, 2010) which, it is suggested, lie at the heart of all human communication. I draw attention to literature on this subject because it is my belief that this, interdisciplinary concern, warrants further exploration. In this

study, as will be explored in later chapters, I am particularly interested in exploring the ideas outlined in this section in relation to children with PMLD reactions to creative learning environments.

Extraordinary Sensory Perception

> *'We are all born with excess connections in the brain. A person 'prunes' away the excess connections they don't need in order to create the molecular connections characteristic of adult brains in their society'*
>
> (Ramachandran, 2003, p.25)

Ramachandran argues the human brain has the capacity to develop extremely refined sensory filters and neurological connections that can work like an advanced dimmer switch throughout people's lives. This dimmer switch capacity has been essential in order for the human species to thrive. Where human beings are unable to develop this capacity, Bogdashina (2010, p.4) argues, negotiating the sensory cacophony of their social environment can become very difficult. This, Bogdashina notes, is the case for many children with autism who experience difficulties with processing sensory information. This experience can mean that children encounter forms of 'Gestalt perception'. During a Gestalt perception encounter the sensory environment is interpreted by the child as having no distinguishable, functional features. Instead all sensory information morphs in to one before the perceiver, creating what is often experienced as an overwhelming sensory assault. Children who experience Gestalt perception often adopt behaviours that attempt to minimize the overpowering elements of this experience. This can include reactions such as a child withdrawing to the furthest corners of the room or a child covering their eyes or ears. Compensatory behaviours, such as rocking the body, flapping the hands or shaking the head, are also commonly employed by people. Both Bogdashina (2010) and Sherrat and Peter (2006) argue the timing of interventions for young children displaying such behaviours is critical. They also argue that it is essential supporting adults understand that whilst these behaviours can appear socially inappropriate or harmful, they are the normal and

most comfortable behaviours the child, at this stage of their life, has found to make new sensory experiences bearable.

Bogdashina argues there is a general lack of awareness within society of how people develop highly individualized approaches to accessing and interpreting sensory reality (2010, p. 12). It is her suggestion that this lack of awareness means that 'extraordinary sensory experiences' are dismissed as deviant or inferior when in fact they represent highly sophisticated sensory-perceptual behaviours. To reduce this prejudice, she suggests, would involve going beyond the limits of traditional approaches to reporting 'paradoxical, extraordinary, shocking or baffling perceptual experiences' and embracing that such experiences 'are part of everyday life for people with ASDs' (2010, p. 194-195). Oliver Sacks (1993; 1995) has long presented a similar argument in his popular books on unusual neurological conditions in which he explores the brain's remarkable plasticity and capacity for adaptation (1995:xvi). As he observes, it is a great paradox that what society categorizes as 'defects, disorders and diseases' play a pivotal role in developing knowledge of the latent power of the brain and its creative potential for extending the limits of human understanding of sensory reality.

Building upon Edelman's (2000) 'neural theory of personal identity' Sacks suggests it is not possible to create 'a grand theory' of brain function. Instead, he argues, what is required is 'a global theory' capable of showing how the 'micropatterns of individual neuronal responses' and the 'macropatterns of an actual lived life' (Sacks, 1995:Xv) interact in the production of self-hood. Personally, for Sacks, as he details in his book 'An Anthropologist on Mars', pursuing this research aim involved removing his metaphorical white coat and adopting a research stance more akin to that of a critical anthropologist. Bogdashina argues, similarly, that those concerned with understanding and representing alternative sensory-perceptual modes of being should 'follow the example of anthropologists who take the extraordinary experiences of cultures they study seriously and appreciate that there are different ways of perceiving the same world' (2010, p. 194)

Considering perception within a post-structuralist framework

Doreen Massey's (2005) is a human geographer who is interested in exploring how human perception is affected by different interpretations of space. Writing from an anti-globalization stance, she argues single narratives of how the world works have been created so as to deny the possibility of 'contemporaneous plurality' (ibid, p. 8). In her writing she explores numerous examples from Western history of people, places and cultures being immobilized and deprived of their history as a result of the discursive practices imposed on them by colonizing Western powers. Her suggestion is that within the neo-liberalized globalized world of the 21st century societies who continue to use discursive practices based upon perceptions of social reality that are alternative to those of Westernized forms of social perception are continually positioned at the margins of power within the neo-liberalized global economy.

I would like to suggest that something similar happens in society to children and young people who have alternative sensory-perceptual behaviours to those considered 'the norm'. My assertion, building upon Massey's theory, is that due to the fact that some children display alternative and non-conformist sensory-perceptual behaviours their views and opinions on how social reality 'means' are dismissed and marginalized as the grammar, syntax and style of the languages their sensory-perceptual behaviours generate cannot be assimilated and translated in to the homogenous registers employed in the dominant discursive practices of their social environment. Massey argues that in order for different perceptual trajectories to be acknowledged within either local and/or globalized discourse a radical rethinking of the politics of place and space is required. I would argue a similar re-conceptualization of educational space is required if the alternative sensory-perceptual modes of children with complex sensory and cognitive impairments are to be incorporated successfully and meaningfully within educational discourse.

Conclusion

Part one of this literature review has outlined the different aspects of child development theory I consider to be most pertinent to this inquiry. It has presented an argument explaining why being conscious of the sensory and aesthetic dimensions of the learning environment are important when working with children with PMLD. Finally, it has stressed the problematic dimensions of imposing 'neuro-typical' perceptual values uncritically within environments such as schools. Finally, it has suggested within any form of social discourse many contrasting sensory-perceptual ways of being will be enacted but that in most societies there is a dominant form of sensory-perceptual behaviour that is afforded a higher status than others. This, it has been suggested, can lead to non 'typical;' sensory-perceptual behaviours being dismissed or demonsized. Finally, it has been argued that an individual's perceptual behaviour is influenced as much by environmental and cultural factors as it is by specific neurological conditions and this means that exposure to certain environments can strengthen or reduce certain forms of sensory-perceptual behaviour.

Part Two: Scenic Design, Kinesthetic Empathy and Performance Affects

Introduction

This section of the Literature Review will contextualize and explore the use of adapted, creative and multi-sensory environments within SEN education. It will also explore how ideas and practices relating to architectural and scenic design can be incorporated in to creative practice that aims to support enhanced voice and agency when working with pupils with PMLD. The section will conclude by exploring some of the different ways in which arts education practice provokes 'affect' and 'effect', and with particular reference to the concept of affect this section will consider how engaging with adapted and aesthetically-orientated learning environments produces contrasting forms of knowledge and enhanced forms of intersubjectivity.

The tradition of utilizing multi-sensory spaces in schools

Much of the fieldwork of this research took place in an adapted, multi-sensory environment the school entitled '*The Space*'. The idea of transforming a room in a school into a designated space set up exclusively for aesthetic, creative and multi-sensory forms of learning is not an original idea. There is a long tradition of schools transforming traditional classroom environments in order to establish spaces that offer alternative learning experiences to those afforded in traditional classrooms. This is especially the case in regard to special educational settings' use of multi-sensory environments that can be dated back to the 1970s, and in particular the Dutch tradition of developing 'snoezelen' environments (Bozic, 1997). The term 'snoezelen' was coined by the De Hartenberg Centre (Lancioni et al, 2002) to describe the environments they created for their community of learners in the mid 1970s, which were specifically designed to engender a heightened sense of relaxation, freedom and sensory engagement for their residents with severe learning difficulties..

In addition to the tradition of multi-sensory rooms in schools there is also a long tradition of schools creating environments that are solely designated for the purposes of aesthetic expression and aesthetic learning. Often taking the form of 'studio' spaces, such rooms are designed to offer a space for staff and pupils in which conventional staff-pupil relations are typically collapsed in preference for more egalitarian interpretations of educational relations where all participants are afforded the title 'artist' or 'creator' as opposed to being known as 'teacher' or 'pupil'. The *Room 13* project (Adams, 2011), for example, is a well-known contemporary example of this type of approach to supporting staff-pupil creative endeavor. Room 13 began as a project in a school in Scotland where a designated space was created where pupils could drop in and work with a resident artist as long as they had finished their other schoolwork. This project now has achieved national and international recognition and has significantly contributed to discourse debating the value of schools creating such spaces. A major difference between the Room 13 project and *The Space* is that in Room 13 external artists are employed to lead the practice that is undertaken. In contrast, external artists were employed to have some input in to *The Space* but the overarching focus in the school where this research was based was that staff and pupils were to be in charge of designing and shaping the activities that took place in this collaborative learning environment.

Many aesthetic educational spaces place an emphasis on acknowledging students as 'artists-learners' and teachers as 'teacher-artists', acknowledging that making art and having aesthetic experiences is not something individuals just experience when in designated educational spaces such as 'art-rooms' or 'drama studios' but is something individuals pursue and encounter in many diverse areas of their lives (Adams, 2011). When viewed from this perspective, creative learning spaces often place a strong emphasis on bringing the outside world in to the creative space and creating circumstances that allow teachers and pupils to bring the creativity of their home culture into the school culture (Holden, 2008). This, Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 100) argue, often means that established pedagogical structures become transformed as teachers and pupils are able to establish a 'community of practice' based upon shared exploration of how aesthetic expression produces meanings.

These discussions, exploring how social relations can be transformed by re-designating school spaces as creative spaces, is discussed here because of the connections that arise between these ideas and perspectives put forward by Bernstein (2000, p. 6-9). Bernstein argued that when school's undergo processes of re-interpreting school spaces and restructuring the forms of pedagogic relation that are permissible within contrasting spaces there is often an impact on the forms of social relation that are possible and permissible within the school culture. This, Bernstein argues, in turn, affects the types of knowledge that a school is able to produce and legitimize. Bernstein notes where boundaries are very rigid between what it means to 'learn' and what it means to be an 'artist', factors such as the personal expression of creativity, learner autonomy and learner identity are likely to be highly restricted and controlled. In contrast, in schools where teachers and pupils are encouraged to collaborate with each other and see each other as equal contributors to the process of producing knowledge then the well-insulated boundaries between these aspects of learning and learner identity become conceptually weakened and new types of socially acceptable expression and 'being' are able to emerge.

In conclusion, what this section highlights is that there is a considerable body of literature dedicated to exploring the political and philosophical ramifications of certain forms of school design. There is also a considerable body of literature exploring the history, evolution and use of adapted creative and multi-sensory rooms in schools. The literature cited above has been identified as particularly relevant to this inquiry and has been used to inform and shape my understanding of how this school's space is located within these various traditions and narratives. Bernstein in particular is cited above in acknowledgement of the extent to which his theories were pivotal to analysis undertaken in Phases Two-Four of the fieldwork process.

The role of contemplative spaces in education

The educationalist Maria Montessori (1972) placed a great emphasis on silence within children's education, stressing within her educational philosophy the idea that children need time to simply 'be' in their environment and listen to its many sounds, whilst tuning in to the environment's multiple

sensory dimensions. Within her '*Lesson of Silence'* (2011) theory Montessori encourages teachers to let children connect with an environment's various material, spatial and sensory properties, not through speech acts but through embodied multi-sensory exploration. Montessori argued that this type of engagement encouraged children to identify 'the work' required to give a learning space meaning, and that it is through this self-directed process of identifying how their learning has meaning and purpose that children acquire knowledge about the world.

Haskins (2011) following her analysis of the role of Montessori's educational philosophy in contemporary schooling, argues children in today's society are increasingly bombarded with a deluge of adult-supervised activity, and therefore, little time is afforded, she argues, to children being allowed to be still and just experience their environment. LeClaire (2010) suggest that the benefits of moments of pause, quiet and reflection in schools are that they create the space for 'ideas to surface and connections to be made'. The theories of Montessori, Haskins and LeClaire are mentioned here to foreground analysis in later chapters of how 'silence' was utilized in the school's creative teaching and learning practices.

Balance, Coherence, & Continuity: The use of scenic design in the spaces of childhood

> *'The sense of beauty . . . (is) brought into actual existence by the experience of living in the*
>
> *midst of certain sorts of things to look at, listen to, handle, think about, cope with, and react*
>
> *to'*
>
> (Geertz, 1983:118, cited by Winston, 2010, p. 133)

Some spaces have a physical impact on us as we enter or pass through them, leaving us feeling daunted, exalted, restrained or unfettered by their physical dimensions and their sensory properties. As Dudek (2005) and Vischer's (2009) respective work observes, architecture can provoke a kinaesthetic reaction as the body swells and retracts in response to the contrasting environments it encounters. This, some argue, such as Woolner et al (2007) & Cardillino et al (2009) is why the design

of public buildings such as schools matters so much. As Montessori (1972) observed the sensory and spatial quality of a child's learning environment affects their learning, and to thrive, in her opinion, children need to encounter a range of experiential settings. This, she suggested, is because environmental diversity not only supports their cognitive development but all other aspects of their learning as they develop their personal identity and the embodied skills required to physically negotiate contrasting environments. It is this set of assertions that this section will explore. This will be done by giving particular attention to the following questions: *how do different environments affect how children learn?* And, *can children's kinaesthetic awareness and empathy be developed through the use of unusual or eccentric design features in schools?*

Dudek argues that school environments send out powerful messages about how societies feel about children (2005, p. vii), and, as he stresses, even the most cursory glance around the landscape of educational architectural design in the 21st century tells one that views such as Montessori's have little influence within, for example, the current British state-sponsored education system. Alternatively, he suggests, what emerges from consideration of contemporary school design is an awareness that schools are one of the most graphically arresting examples of a social vision based upon the idea that one-size fits all (ibid, p. viii). He develops this idea by arguing children's lives are shaped by the physical and bureaucratic structures they encounter, arguing that the sensory and spatial qualities of the nurseries, schools and play parks children experience become the material culture of their childhood. He suggests, certainly within Western societies, children's material culture is one that is essentially imposed upon them based upon adultist values that rarely take into consideration children's views and preferences.

Writing over 40 years ago Nicholson (1972, p.30-34) outlined his theory of 'Loose Parts' regarding school and classroom design, arguing what was required were schools that resembled a humane environment and not a prison, which, in turn, through their design, were able to promote values such as joy, creativity and 'freedom to explore'. It is the job of schools, he suggested, to promote 'interaction and involvement not exclusion and passivity. As Dudek notes, throughout the 20th century, and certainly long after the writing of those such as Nicholson, mass education has continued

to mirror late 19th century industrial society with its attitude that education's role is to control and

discipline children in order to create pliant citizens' who fit into an industrialized world (Dudek, 2005,

p. 30). However, in the post-industrial, globalized society of the early 21st century the effects of this

approach, Dudek suggests, can increasingly be seen as being the creation of disaffected and

disengaged students, who are more chaotic and less disciplined, partly as a result of the educational

conformity they are forced to endure. Sommers has argued 'a design problem is a values problem,

and will often be resolved through identifying whose interests the design serves (1969, p. 99, cited by

Dudek, 2005, p. 64). Dudek, writing in response to Sommers' observation, suggests contemporary

school design still perpetuates a set of values concerned with maintaining the status quo whereby

schools continue to be content with adopting the role of 'conveyor belts happy to play to a tune of a

bygone age' (Dudek, 2005, p. xii).

However, as Dudek observes, young children, regardless of the level of design complexity or

innovation their schools are, or are not, able to offer them, consistently seek situations that afford

them a 'sense of adventure' where they can test 'their mental and physical coordination with a strong

illusion of their own independence' (Dudek, 2005, p. xvi). Linked to this idea, Jilk (2005, p. 30) argues

there is such a thing as 'environmental literacy' and his view is that educators need to become much

more aware of the role school design can play in developing this area of children's knowledge. Jilk

suggests the concept of 'environmental literacy' is one that is already well established, if

marginalized, within educational discourse, having been popular since the 1970s, as this passage from

David demonstrates:

> *'The development of environmental literacy involves the transformation of awareness in to a*
>
> *critical, probing, problem solving attitude towards one's surrounds. It entails the active*
>
> *definition of choices and a willingness to experiment with a variety of spatial alternatives and*
>
> *to challenge the environmental status quo. Old roles, which were characterized by*
>
> *submission, or apathy or dependency on the 'experts' to determine one's environment, must*
>
> *be unlearned'*
>
> (David, 1975, cited by Nicholson, 2005, p. 64)

A number of the values David emphasizes in his definition of environmental literacy are put into practice within the work of Michael Laris (2005), a designer of contemporary play equipment. Laris, in his study of how children and adults respond to installations created by Guadi in Guell Park in Barcelona, observes how Gaudi's designs provide a 'complex yet abstract spatial quality, with interesting shapes and textures that reflect colour and light' (2005, p.16). His observations go on to detail how the children he observed in this setting engaged in 'spirited interaction' with the 'strange sensuous shapes' they encountered as they 'transformed' the installations' meanings to 'meet their particular play needs'. These observations led Laris to draw up descriptions of the roles he saw children and designers playing within children's play environments. Children, he argues, instinctively, adopt the role of 'inventor', their task being to invent new ways of giving and reconfiguring meaning within 'space'. The designer's role, in contrast, he suggests, is that of 'translator', responsible for giving form 'to something that will meet the diverse needs of children's developing imaginations and personalities'. Gaudi, of course, did not set out to develop a play park for children, and this is a critical element of Laris' analysis of Guell Park. Good design, he argues, is brimming with imaginative possibility and routes for exploration that can be accessed regardless of age.

The Guell Park is now a hundred years old and Gaudi's colourful, eccentric designs inhabit the park alongside wonderfully gnarled trees and exotic plants. In the park, Laris (2005) notes, there is now an old crooked tree growing out of one of Gaudi's sculptures. Many children, he observes, are immediately drawn to it, and, he describes the tree as the 'bench-table-climber-balance-beam' (ibid, p.17). This tree, Laris suggests, provides 'diverse play possibilities' as it provides children with 'unexpected' opportunities to test their 'agility, flexibility and proprioception'. Also, because of where the tree is in the park and its position amongst other aspects of Gaudi's architectural designs, its location offers children a 'multi-functional' range of activities, that includes 'colour variation, moving-parts' and 'diversity of form, material and spatial arrangement' (ibid), all elements Laris considers essential in the design of children's play equipment, but elements too often, he suggests, overlooked within contemporary design.

However, you do not have to travel to Barcelona or have a designer with the skills and vision of Gaudi on hand to witness children identifying multi-functional play opportunities, especially those that embrace natural phenomenon. Put children in an interesting space and they will consistently locate and uncover the elements Laris places such emphasis on, namely 'unusual configurations' and 'eccentric materials'. I discuss these ideas in detail here because these factors were of a major influence regarding how staff approached the design of *The Space* in the school where this inquiry is set.

Another theory on design and learning that has relevance for this inquiry is the concept of 'critical pedagogy of place' (Jilk, 2005). As Jilk notes the practice of critical pedagogy is concerned with 'reading the world through taking it apart' (ibid, p. 33). Therefore, critical pedagogy of place practices are concerned with dislodging dominant ideas regarding what constitutes an appropriate learning environment and generating new ideas about how learning environments can be conceived. Jilk argues school's that value the concept of 'critical pedagogy of place' will ensure they provide spaces that are full of incomplete areas, alongside learning environments that remain incomplete without the user's participation and imaginative intervention. Each school space within this model of education, Jilk suggests (ibid), has to be designed so as to generate 'creative gaps', where the processes of learning and meaning production are not predetermined, instead arising as a result of a process of continual collaborative exploration and shared authorship.

As part of his outline of critical pedagogy of place Jilk describes how this design approach incorporates a number of architectural theories developed in the late 20th century, such as 'the idea of uselessness' and 'the architecture of disjunction' (ibid, p. 34). The concept of uselessness in architecture concerns rejecting determinism about the future use of space, whilst the architecture of disjunction concerns 'fragmented situations' which the user has to engage with in order to imbibe meaning into seemingly disparate architectural elements. He places a particular emphasis on the role of 'useless places' in education as he argues they allow for 'the natural formation of communities of practice' (ibid, p. 35), which can support creative forms of pedagogy and 'powerful place making' which not only critically explores existing ways of being in a given environment but places participants

in the role of architects capable of shaping alternative ways of organising material and social practice (ibid, p. 37).

Worple (2000, cited by Koralek & Mitchell, 2005, p.148) has argued 'it is the people who use space who create it just as much as those who design it; indeed arguably more so'. Schools, he observes, can become social sites where ideological values are imposed upon people through architectural design but, importantly, they can also become sites in which people actively and collectively transgress ideological dictates as spaces are re-defined through usage so as to become places of meaningful interaction. Pupils and staff alike, he suggests, often excel at this type of subversion and transformation as they combine their experience of what makes learning joyful and comfortable with instinctual interior and exterior design skills. Worple's argument is that consideration of how school environments can be meaningfully transformed needs to become an active, and most importantly, inclusive aspect of the educational curriculum in the 21st century and not something people do surreptitiously.

One renowned educational philosophical approach that makes the transformation of school environments an explicit component of their curriculum, is the Reggio system developed in Emilia, Italy. Reflecting on the educational philosophy of the Reggio schools, Nicholson (2005, p. 50) argues it is possible for a school building and the geography of the school environment to become an additional teacher, as, she notes, it is possible to produce school architecture capable of stimulating pupils' sensory perceptions to such an extent that they become an essential component of the learning experience. As she observes, one cannot talk about the architecture of a architecture of a Reggio school without including reflections on the pedagogy of the school in question, as these elements are intimately bound and mutually dependent. As Loris Malaguzzi originally argued, Reggio schools are explicitly designed to act as a kind of 'aquarium that reflects the ideas, ethics, attitudes and culture of the people' who inhabit it (cited in Edwards et al, 1996, p. 29)

Reflecting upon approaches such as Reggio's, Loi and Dillon (2006) adopt a more pragmatic approach within their 'ecological' theory of learning where they argue all educational environments are

adaptive and creative by nature, as all schools have to respond to change, (as any other ecological system does), as the relationships between people and resources evolve. Building upon the work of Sternberg and Lubart (1999) and their theoretical framework regarding creativity and education, Loi and Dillon argue traditional educational models, unlike the alternative model perpetuated by Reggio schools, often seek to implicitly deny pupils the capacity to affect ecological change, seeing school change as the domain of teachers and policy makers but, significantly, *not* pupils. Their argument is that traditional models primarily achieve this by denying pupils the opportunity to synthesize or apply their learning directly within their school environment.

In their model of Creative Education, Sternberg and Lubart (1999) identify three intellectual abilities associated with creativity they consider integral to the production of new knowledge, 'analysis, synthesis and application'. Loi and Dillon suggest that within traditional models of education analysis is often valued very highly, with pupils regularly being asked to 'say what they see' and clearly identify the different components that traditional ideology suggests constitutes a given subject area. Prized almost as highly, they argue, is the presentation of ideas arising from analysis, for example, this might include acts such as organizing information into chart form. However, they observe, what is often left out in traditional models of education is the process of synthesis, or what might be referred to as the practical hands-on exploration of new ideas. This, they go on to argue, is their main justification regarding the use of creative spaces within educational environments, which they see as spaces that can be adapted to accommodate the fluidity of collaborative, integrated work, essential for not just analyzing but synthesizing and applying knowledge.

Central to Loi and Dillon's hypothesis is that a correlation exists between teachers using designed interventions and the forming of creative spaces within schools. In their article 'Adaptive Environments as Creative Spaces' (2006) they outline a series of different types of designed intervention teachers can use that they sees as particularly effective at sustaining change-orientated dialogue within education. The first designed intervention concept they introduce is that of the playful trigger. The aim of a playful trigger being, they suggest, to provoke 'a mode of consciousness that is free to be non-verbal, holistic, nonlinear, and intuitive', and which appeals, first and foremost,

to one's sensory and perceptual way of accessing information. Playful triggers, therefore, seek to activate a receptive mode of engagement that is not reliant on verbal, analytical, sequential and logical communicative acts, instead, encouraging playful, spontaneous and exploratory reactions. Playful triggers, they argue, can take many forms, as they concern presenting learners with 'tactile, visual, mysterious, playful, three-dimensional, poetic, ambiguous and metaphorical qualities' that are specifically designed to encourage an embodied rather than an artificially intellectualized response to stimuli.

Eccentric objects, they argue, differ from playful triggers in that they can be defined as any artifact that is unexpected or unanticipated in a given context. To illustrate this Loi and Dillon use the example of a goat, which would be nothing unusual on a farm, but in a classroom becomes a distinctly 'eccentric' object. Odd experiences are similar in that they stop people in their tracks, and may often involve a degree of unexpected social encounter. This terminology, I would like to suggest, is very compatible with much drama education praxis, such as that, for example, outlined by Dorothy Heathcote (1991), which concerns itself with designing dramatic interventions that students feel compelled to get involved with as they appeal directly to pupils' inclination for hands-on problem solving and adopting the role of an expert in the field, and that often have as their basis eccentric and provoking props deliberately selected to provoke inquiry and critique.

As Loi and Dillon note, there is nothing new, necessarily, about their hypothesis of designed interventions in education as there is a long established tradition of the usage of pre-planned eccentricity and oddity within educational and organizational learning contexts, that seek to stimulate collaboration, phenomenological awareness and to initiate and deepen reflective practices, and within their analysis of this tradition they cite previous research in this area by Schon (1983) and Kolb and Moeller (1984). However, they do feel it is essential to re-iterate the potential role playful triggers, eccentric objects and odd experiences can have within education at this particular moment when all too often the space to reflect and act upon one's personal sensory and perceptual instincts is denied within educational practice in preference for the generation of highly formulaic and uniform forms of pedagogy.

Loi and Dillon are very clear that they see their model of adaptive education as being based upon ecological principles and the idea that learning arises as a result of interaction between an individual and his or her environment. They concur with Green et al (2005) that the logic of contemporary education needs to be reversed so that it is the system that conforms to the learner, rather than the learner to the system. They provide a simple example of what this might look like through their analysis of how a lesson that utilizes playful triggers could be assessed in an inverted educational system. They observe creative sessions based around playful triggers often produce rich group conceptualizations, elaborated descriptions of collaborative work and sculptural representation of ideas, all of which, arguably, from an assessment and measurable outcomes point of view can be perceived as intangible assessment criteria. However, their point is that factors such as these do not have to be perceived as intangible. Alternatively, their argument is that a shift is required whereby an emphasis on measurable outcomes and product is replaced by an awareness of the complexities of process, in which the subtleties of perceptual change, ecological development and social dynamics are able to be valued as much as quantifiable learning outcomes such as tests and exams.

In this section I have introduced the significance of the concept of environmental literacy within this inquiry, as well as introducing a number of educational design principles that I feel are highly relevant to the work of staff in the school where this inquiry is based. In the next section I will build upon these ideas through exploration of the concept of scenography.

Scenography

Within this section a strong emphasis is placed upon the scenographic practice of Joslin Mckinney (2012, p. 221-235). McKinney defines scenography as the practice of seeing 'the spatial aspect of performance environments, and the orchestration of materials and constructions (costumes, objects, architechtonic elements, light and sound) as an intrinsic part of performance' (ibid, p.221). Performances constructed around the concept of scenography, she argues, involve inviting the

audience to become immersed in the scenographic experience, as members are encouraged to find their own routes through the performance environment's evocative spaces. In creating their scenography artists and practitioners working within this sphere seek to generate significant encounters between audience and the sensory and material dimensions of the performance space. This form of theatre aesthetic has become increasingly popular within the UK, with companies such as Punchdrunk and Stan's Café, (to name but two I particularly favour), providing opportunities for audiences to encounter theatrical experiences that take place in unusual settings where the atmosphere of the environment is as much a character in the play as any performer. Whilst much of this work is designed to appeal to adult audiences there are an increasing number of companies and artists who specialize in developing this kind of work for younger audiences, with some of the most exciting and innovative work within the field concerning developing scenographic performances for, and with, children with special needs.

The most challenging, and in some respects, arresting aspect of scenographic performance is the way in which it problematizes notions of audience within performances, often from the outset explicitly dismissing any notion of the fourth wall. Therefore, upon entering the performance space audience members are typically placed within' the theatrical environment rather than beyond as they are cast in the role of co-participants in the theatrical encounter. Thus, within a scenographic performance participants are able to construct their own experience as they make decisions regarding how they would like to approach interacting with the scenographic environment.

Within her research McKinney outlines a practice-led approach that seeks to capture evidence of scenographic exchange in a tangible form directly through the performance encounter itself (2012, p. 222). Within her applied research methodology audience members become co-creators of the research journey as their choices and reactions within the scenic environment actively shape the ontological dimensions of her research framework. Therefore, forms of communication and research based upon the concept of Scenography are primarily concerned with giving audience members real agency, whereby their power to influence the scenic dimensions of the environment are not tokenistic or mediated by a third party but genuinely capable of producing, through personal choice

and kinesthetic reaction, an augmented performance environment. Thus, within any scenographic performance, based upon these principles, the choices an audience member makes become integrated within the flow of the performance and subsequently have the power to affect the temporal and spatial theatrical experience for all involved (ibid, p. 225).

Developing the idea of scenographic exchange further, McKinney argues, this concept represents an opportunity to explore how objects in the context of performance can function directly as mediums of communication (Ibid, p. 222). As part of this hypothesis she suggests that a re-conceptualization of empathy is required that sees it as something that can be generated not only through interpersonal relations but also within the embodied relationships people develop with objects. To illustrate this idea she analyses audience members' reactions to various examples of evocative and emotive props, such as old coats and battered suitcases. Her suggestion, here, is that such items consistently arouse imaginative speculation through their material qualities, that lead, in the case of her adult research participants, to the production of extended narratives regarding the qualities of emotion and types of image such objects evoke in their imaginations. She extends this analysis to include consideration of participants' reactions to more abstract props such as pieces of tulle and indiscriminate objects that seemingly have no prior life or function outside of the scenographic environment. These later objects, through their more abstract forms and material properties still draw audience members attention, generating expressive bodily engagement and the interaction of the senses, which, for many of her audience members subsequently became the foundation for deeper emotional and intellectual engagement regarding their overall sense of the meaning of the environment (ibid:, p.223).

Building upon the work of choreographer and Cultural Studies philosopher Susan Leigh Foster (Foster, 2011), who in turn is heavily influenced by the work of American psychologist, James Jerome Gibson (1968), as well as the philosopher Robert Vischer (1994), Mckinney outlines a kinesthetic framework whereby audience members can be seen to engage in a process of detecting information through the interaction of, or flux of energy between, bodies and environment' (Gibson, 1968, summarized by McKinney, 2012, p. 224). Here, she makes links with Foster's work in terms of how this process operates 'like a duet between perceiver and surroundings' (Foster, 2011, p. 116, cited by Mckinney,

ibid, p. 224).This Mckinney argues, through her summary of Gibson and Foster, is a process more reliant on scanning then seeing, as the process involves not just clocking surroundings and acknowledging different things, which can be rationally seen to exist, but, instead, activating an embodied sense of gaze that reaches out through the senses to develop a felt sense of the environment. Scanning, therefore, activates an embodied effort to 'find our bearings' amid a plethora of available sensory relationships provided by the environment (Visher, 1994, p. 94, summarized and cited by Mckinney, ibid). Responding to scenographic environments, therefore, McKinney concludes, involves scanning the patterns (or rhythms) created by architectonic structures, colours, textures and sounds, shifting intensities of light or movement of fabrics. This, as Foster has similarly argued, pulls audience members into a 'volumetric totality' whereby a dynamic interaction between body, space and objects occurs (Foster, 2011, p. 155 & McKinney, 2012, p. 224).

Her observations here, McKinney acknowledges, link with previous research undertaken by Michael Polyani in the 1960s. Polyani (1976) developed a series of studies dedicated to illuminating the empathic relationship that can be seen to emerge between object, person and environment in certain scenarios. He concluded that when we perceive an object we undergo a process of extending our body to include the object, and in some cases we do this to such an extent that we come to dwell in it (Ibid, p. 16). On the surface this sounds illogical, but Polyani provides a series of astute examples that illuminate this process. For example, one of the most accessible is that concerning how an individual masters driving a car. Here, he argues, a tacit process occurs as the individual's driving skill increases to such an extent that the driver comes to know in an embodied sense much more about driving than they can intellectually explain. This, he suggests, is because a process of indwelling occurs whereby a reciprocal relationship has been developed between object, body and environment. As Reynolds and Reason (2012, p. 330) note the influence of work such as Polyani's can be seen within other fields such as sports science studies. For example, Fogtmann (2012, p. 303-315) has studied how athletes can train so as to greatly enhance their kinaesthetic and psychomotor skills in order to maximize their athletic performance. Here, the primary skills Fortmann observes athletes developing are anticipation and translation, as they develop an intuitive sense of what environmental change, such as the movement of other players or the movement of material objects such as hurdles, poles, bats and

balls, requires of them in order to maintain a heightened kinaesthetic awareness and the fastest forms of kinaesthetic reaction available to them.

This type of research has led to a number of researchers, particularly, I would like to suggest, a growing number of whom work in the sphere of arts education and SEN, formulating questions such as: *Why do we experience a greater sense of flow with some objects rather than others?* And, *how does the development of empathetic relationships with objects affect the development of our overall social confidence and communicative skills?* It is an area Nicola Shaugnessey (2012, p. 33-50) explores within her research where she analyses the impact of applied drama techniques within the context of working with children with autism. One way in which she addresses these questions is through her analysis of the use of puppets within her practice. Puppets, she argues, are able to provide a dual function when working with children with autism. On the one hand they are lifeless material objects that the child can explore and manipulate in their own time, whilst on the hand they are objects that can be manipulated by supporting adults to convey a powerful sense of animation. Autistic children, (as has been explored in detail within autism studies regarding 'the triad of impairments'), can sometimes struggle to comprehend the social and emotional expressions of other people, becoming disorientated and confused by the inconsistency of people's reactions; however when working with puppets both the child and supporting adults can pace and augment the puppets behaviour to meet the child's individual perceptual needs.

There is, as Shaughnessey notes, a considerable existing body of evidence that suggests puppets can be less threatening for children with SEN than people (Baron-Cohen et al, 1985; Di Benedetto, 2010). This is an idea Reynolds, (2012, p. 29), also explores, arguing that puppets can support all children to act out social relations in a predictable, non-threatening way. Likewise, Tringingham's (2010, p. 262) work suggests that children are able to project on to puppets a sense of mind, and that this may operate in a similar way to Winnicott's (1969) theory of transitional objects in transitional spaces, in that puppets are able to operate as a safe bridge between what is predictable about social relationships and what is alien or challenging to existing perceptions.

Mckinney (2012, p. 230) explores within her practice how puppets often become sacred objects within the scenographic environment, as they emerge as key sites in which empathy can be developed and enacted. This, she suggests, is because the empathic exchange takes place within a one-step removed domain, in which the participant does not have to manage a direct intimate kinaesthetic exchange with a real person, instead being able to experiment with their reactions with an object imbued with life, which is, at the same time, very sensitive to their movements and emotional needs. Tacit agreements, McKinney argues, are often made between performers and audience members regarding puppet characters and how they should be treated, with it often being agreed that the puppets should be treated with respect and reverence and not, for example, thrown on the floor or left unattended during the performance. Returning to Shaughnessey, she argues, this type of theatrical experience offers children with autism an opportunity to become consciously rooted in an empathetic response, which in some theatrical contexts can be extended through forms of joint attention and improvisation into the development of a shared, communal sense of empathetic responsibility to objects within the overall performance atmosphere. This, in turn, she suggests, is an important bridging technique drama practitioners can use in their work when looking to use drama as an approach to support children's empathic awareness as part of their overall social and emotional development.

Linked to Shaughnessey's work on how puppets can make interpersonal communication feel more accessible for children with autism is the work of Hayes and Tipper (2012, p. 67-86) who explore the impact of perceptual fluency on how individuals feel and react in different environments. They propose within their research on kinaesthetic empathy that there is a particular type of kinaesthetic pleasure that is generated by perceptual fluency, and that this type of reaction arises largely as a result of familiarity and predictability. Their suggestion is that children experience perceptual fluency where they encounter an object they perceive to be safe and which they feel confident will behave in ways that they can translate and develop in their own fashion. Hayes and Tipper extend this observation to a hypothesis that fluent action often leads to more positive affect than non-fluid action (ibid, p. 70), concluding that the fluency of motor actions play an important role in affect regulation (ibid, p. 79). This is why they suggest some pastimes that are repetitive and predictable, for

example knitting or walking at a leisurely pace, are consistently perceived as relaxing by individuals, this being, they argue, because these actions consist of performing fluid, straight-forward movements which engender a smooth, uninterrupted sense of perceptual fluency.

Hayes and Tippers, however, are not just interested within their research in the effects of perceptual fluency; they place an equal emphasis on analysing why individuals are drawn to non-fluent action. Here, their suggestion is that non-fluid action acts as a provocation as it demands an embodied, immediate, sub-conscious reaction. Here, their suggestion is that an individual is compelled to reappraise how they feel in relation to this type of interruption, and undertake an immediate process of re-gaining perceptual equilibrium. This process, they observe, will be satisfying, sometimes highly satisfying, for some as it leads to a sense of competency and relief as perceptual equilibrium is re-established, but at the same time non-fluent action can produce feelings of disequilibrium which, for example, in the case of a child with PMLD, may involve feeling overwhelmed by the stimulus. Hayes and Tippers', however, suggest that learning to deal with non-fluid action is an integral component of learning to master interaction with one's environment as one's assessment of fluency and the consequences of non-fluent action develop as one inevitably becomes more comfortable with their environment and the types of action their environment typically produces.

These ideas, in turn, link with work by Reason and Reynolds (2010) where they have observed how for some people their enjoyment of dance performance arise directly from watching non-fluid action and actions that are difficult to perform and which incur jagged and discordant movement. As Reason and Reynolds explain audience's reactions to dance performances are dependent on a number of different factors including,

> '. . . their expectations of what they will experience, their knowledge of the dance form and their levels of experience in performing the observed movements, their degree of kinaesthetic involvement with the observed actions, and the self-perceptions that are evoked by the observed performance'

(Reason & Reynolds, 2010, cited by Hayes and Tipper, 2012, p. 80-81)

Similarly, the assessment of fluency is influenced by an individual's cultural values, as societal norms often tacitly specify what are appropriate ways of using energy, and cultural practices such as dance can both collude with and subvert such values through their performances (Reynolds, 2007, cited by Hayes and Tipper, 2012, p. 80).

In conclusion I would like to return to Mckinney and her specific observations of the role of perceptual fluency within scenographic performance. She observes that scenography can both unify and dislocate an audience member's sense of perceptual fluency. Her research findings suggesting that it is not uncommon for audience members to report experiencing a sense of flow, or what might be translated as complicite, as the scenographic experience unfolds. Annabel Arden (of the theatre company Theatre de Complicite) describes complicite as the 'excitement which works to bridge any sense of distance between audience and actor' (Cited by Callery 2001, p. 104) and, I would like to suggest, this particular definition of complicite correlates with McKinney's observations that participants experience the scenographic environment passing 'into them' as well as 'them into it' as the performance evolves. Her interview data also seems to infer that audience members become immersed in the performance through elements of the scenography they interacted with 'for their own sake', thus implying that they did not find a lack of previously devised narrative problematic (McKinney, 2012, p. 228), as, on the contrary, many interviewees appear to have reported a lack of set narrative as being integral to their enjoyment of the theatrical experience.

These ideas, in turn, link to reflections made by the theatre practitioner Tim Etchell (Etchells in Brine and Keiden, 2007 p. 29, cited by McKinney, 2012, p. 231) who has observed apparent lack of order can in and of itself be productive within theatrical experience. Mckinney, developing these ideas, argues participants in scenographic performances often oscillate between speculation and playful engagement, which, for the individual, may, or may not, result in immersion in individual elements of the scenographic environment. Mckinney's argument, however, is that scenographic environments can provide a safe space within which audience members can test and extend the limits of their reactions to perceptual interruptions. Alongside this, audience members can immerse themselves in

extended perceptually fluent improvisations in which they are able to extend their ability to merge with objects, thus developing the nature and quality of their kinaesthetic repertoire.

Therefore, to conclude, scenographic performance rarely has as its central function the communication of narrative. Instead, scenographic practice concerns using designed, theatrical environments to stimulate audiences' awareness of colour, patterns and qualities of objects so as to build their kinaesthetic confidence to react and interact with contrasting environmental phenomenon. Thus, a key element of the pleasure engendered by this type of experience lies in its capacity to sustain creative dialogue based upon the notion of open-endedness and the exploration of intersubjectivity. As Mckinny notes, Maurice Merlau-Ponty said of painting 'no painting completes painting' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993, p. 149, cited by Mckinny, 2012, p. 233) but it does represent a contribution to the on-going exploration of how paint on a canvas deepens our understanding of the felt world'. Mckinny's conclusion is similar regarding scenography, suggesting that it has the capacity to trigger reactions that will 'have resonance long into the future, as:

> *'Artworks are the beginning of something, not a definite event; 'they open up on a*
> *perspective that will never be closed'*
> (Mckinny 2012, p. 233 summarizing Merlau-Ponty, 1993, p. 149)

Finally, I have explored the concept of scenography at length here because as I undertook this literature review I felt a strong affinity with Mckinny's work as it seemed to have strong parallels with what I observed teachers and pupils performing and creating through their interactions in *The Space* and it provided me with a useful set of theoretical terms by which to explore ideas with staff.

What is kinesthetic empathy?

Now, I shall turn specifically to exploring the concept of kinesthetic empathy. This term relates to the process of creating felt understanding through the observation of, and response to, others' movements. Arts education practice based upon the principles of kinesthetic empathy will be concerned with actively seeking to use physical movement as a means to garner an interpersonal empathetic understanding of how sense can be made of the world through the body.

From a neurological perspective, theories of kinesthetic empathy are intrinsically linked to the field of mirror neuron theory. Mirror neurons were first discovered through experiments on monkeys in the early 1990s where scientists identified the types of neural activation that occurs in the motor and pre-motor cortices of the brain when a monkey watches another monkey, or a human or other primate, do a task such as grasp a banana and go to eat it (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004; Gallase, 2008). The phenomena was subsequently demonstrated in humans (Gallese et al, 1996) where electro-encephalogram readings (EEGs) were able to demonstrate that when a person watches another person undertake a physical action their understanding of the bodily actions performed are based upon the activation of their own bodily sense of performing such an action. Thus, mirror neurons became affiliated with the experience of empathy with research suggesting that an empathic urge arises in the brain as the observer's neural substrates for the corresponding state are activated (Preston et al. 2007). Mirror neuron theory is seen as having a strong correlation with the experience of proprioception, and of sensing from within how stimulus makes you feel. However, there is much debate regarding the inner/outer distinction of perception and neuroscientists continue to debate how experiences of proprioception and exteroception are actually distinguished and processed neurologically.

Since the 1990s considerable technological progress has occurred regarding the development of methods suited to undertaking unobtrusive brain scans and video recording during joint attention

activities. As Dumas et al (2010) report, this has meant neuro-scientists can now produce detailed readings of the interactional synchrony that occurs in the brain during actions such as the mirroring of hand movement or mutual gaze (Meekums, 2012, p. 58). Research suggest that the more mirroring individuals experience the more sophisticated neurological synchronizing they are able to achieve. This links with earlier research by those such as Bruner (1995) and Stern (1977) who argued that joint attention formats have a critical role to play in children's social and communicative development. For example, Stern observes that infants who are exposed to greater levels of joint attention activity show a greater inclination for participation in, and initiation of, shared attention sequences. Interestingly, Stern uses the aesthetically driven metaphor of dance to convey this observation;

'*The more they have danced together, the longer sequences of programmed patterns they can string together without requiring a lead stimulus and a following response*'
(Stern 1977, p. 100)

Echoing aspects of Stern's research Schermer (2010) argues 'The social brain is in a constant dance with other brains', suggesting there is always, 'a motoric dimension to empathy, attunement, and attachment' (2010, p. 222). This links with research by Lyons-Ruth et al (1998, p. 284), who explore the processes whereby humans develop forms of 'implicit relational knowing' (Ibid, 1998, p. 284) in which they learn 'the moves' of social interaction based upon non-verbal tacit social agreements. Their research suggests that individuals develop sophisticated embodied awareness of the structural principles that govern differing social contexts. Examples of this include implicitly knowing how to respond to socially and culturally situated acts, for example the waving of the hand as a gesture of greeting. Implicit relational knowing, they argue, is determined by social (including cultural and gender defined) norms. This means that whilst certain embodied reactions feel spontaneous and subconscious they are actually strictly socially governed.

What is being highlighted here is that there exists a wealth of studies exploring the neurological and sociological implications of mirror neuron theory. One factor that arises from analysis of such studies regards the ethical challenge of negotiating the relationship within one's praxis between 'pre-

intentional' kinaesthetic empathy and socially and culturally initiated forms. As Reason and Reynolds observe, embodied understanding can be 'mobilised to exploit and reinforce difference' just as it can be used to develop increased empathic awareness of 'the other' (2012, p. 324) Stereotyped physical impressions have immense power to hurt, just as, in contrast, evidence would suggest some forms of embodied creative practice such as that practiced by Meekum's (2012) (from a dance movement therapy (DMT) perspective) and Shaughnessey's (2012) (from a SEN drama education perspective) can have the power to calm and engage children with behavioural and learning difficulties where other forms of intervention have failed. Arguably, therefore, the task of the drama educationalist working in this field is continually to seek to develop methods that look to 'breakdown monolithic identities' and raise awareness in the individual of difference and their own autonomy (Reason and Reynolds, 2012, p. 326). This links to Jones' (2012, p. 12) idea that creative practice, drawing upon kinaesthetic empathy theory, must acknowledge that 'we are never whole and final as subjects but always porous', (ibid). Therefore, whilst mirror neuron theory may alert us to the fact that the brain is able to recognize and react to felt forms of knowledge, this must not be interpreted from a reductionist, or universalist, perspective as, ultimately, any 'embodied simulation is modulated by our own personal histories, by the quality of our attachment relations and by our sociocultural background.' (Gallese, 2008, p. 775).

In the introduction to their recent book on kinaesthetic empathy, Reason and Reynolds (2012, p. 15) make the bold assertion that a 'paradigmatic shift' is currently taking place within creative and cultural studies, driven by what Shaugnessey describes as a 'cross-disciplinary dialogue between the arts, humanities and sciences regarding the physiological basis for empathy, language, culture and morality' (2012, p. 35). If this is the case, and I am inclined, optimistically, to think it is, I would suggest that a second challenge for drama educationalists interested in developing practice in this area arises in the form of forging a praxis that is able to be part of this interdisciplinary discourse. *How do we make sense of our position in the world through creative forms of embodied action?* In practical terms, this means developing forms of drama education that can embrace the gist of the grand theories of neuroscience and philosophy of mind but which do not lose sight of the ethical

dimensions of practically translating theory into practice capable of supporting empathic, aesthetic communication, meaningful to the specific communities with whom the practitioner collaborates.

Through the body: Encountering felt experience in theatre and dance

As part of this research process I have worked alongside staff to design and implement adapted creative learning spaces designed to support enhanced learning experiences for children with PMLD. The aim of these creative spaces has been to encourage child-led exploration of the sensory environment and to establish forums for joint attention and shared exploration of the meanings of different objects and designed areas within the environment. Engagement in these environments is semi-structured, improvisational and largely open-ended in nature. A great deal of attention goes in to the preliminary design process of these spaces but upon entering the environment adults and children jointly initiate exploration of the sensory meaning of the environment. This section explores some of the contrasting theoretical perspectives on theatre aesthetics this approach to adaptive creative environments can be seen to draw from.

The notion of participation in society being like a 'social dance' has much credence within the field of dance and physical theatre praxis, as does the suggestion that our embodied social identities are inherently connected to the ideologies of the societies we inhabit. Brecht encapsulated this notion in his conceptualization of gestus, in which he tasked actors to create an embodied representation of a character's social status (Willet, 1964, p. 42). Extending this notion within his broader theory of epic theatre Brecht created a theatre praxis that conveyed not the minutiae of individual emotional states, but the primary felt qualities of experience encountered by communities of characters living under particular ideological conditions.

Many other theatre and dance practitioners have adapted and extended Brecht's ideas, particularly in terms of how the body can be used in performance to express that which is felt and embodied rather than intellectually, or emotionally, constructed. For example, Lloyd Newson (Volcano Theatre, cited in

Callery, 2001, p. 8) writes that 'the visceral power of dance precedes thought, that's its power', here, reiterating Eugino Barba's belief that true creativity resides in the 'pre-expressive' realm (ibid). This has parallels with Peter Brook's idea that a performance can convey that which is pre-lingual, an idea he explores in 'The Empty Space', when he suggests that 'a word does not begin as a word . . . . it begins as an impulse' (1968, p. 58). Callery, summarizing these views, suggests that, whether performing on the stage or performing as a social actor in the performance of everyday life, devising responses to social stimuli starts through searching for the 'somatic impulses' that become 'scored' through the body (2001, p. 8).

Bonnie Meekums (2012, p. 51-66) is interested in this area in relation to how spectators respond, in an embodied sense, to the experience of watching dance performances. In her recent research she has been specifically concerned with exploring how the concept of kinesthetic empathy relates to the types of felt experiences encountered by participants during dance-based activities. Her research suggests the spectator undergoes a process whereby they watch the dancers' movements and subsequently experience a series of emotions '*via association*' (ibid, p. 54). She describes this process as an embodied, participatory sense-making activity, her inference being that if the dance 'moves' the spectator it is moving them directly as a result of the activation of mirror neurons in the brain and the experience of kinesthetic empathy felt, first and foremost, within the muscle-memory of the body. She summarizes this process as

> '. . . . *essentially one of noticing how the movement feels in one's own body, and recalling this within a bank of prior and complex experience, symbolically encoded. What is being tapped in to here may be a pre-reflexive implicit (embodied) memory'*
> (Meekums, 2012, p. 54).

Meekums' research, as a dance movement therapist, has an explicit psychodynamic dimension, her focus being to understand the types of felt knowledge that propel us to act and make choices in our lives. This process of re-awakening awareness of one's felt knowledge lies at the crux of her practice, which often supports participants to re-engage with their feelings and emotions following traumatic

experiences. Therefore, Meekums' practice looks to co-construct movement sequences that support participants in reconnecting with their embodied voice. When outlining how this is achieved, Meekums describes a process that utilizes specific techniques such as mirroring, witnessing and forms of leaderless dance improvisation, that are introduced in order to grow a shared, safe, mutually respectful intersubjective understanding between therapist and client. As Meekums summarizes;

> *'The move towards intersubjectivity within psychotherapy assumes a different and more socially progressive reality, in which I acknowledge that you, like me, have thoughts, feelings, experiences and cultural practices of your own that may be very different from but have equal validity to my own'*
>
> (ibid:62).

As Reynolds (2012, p. 30-32) suggests work such as Meekums' infers that the embodied experience of 'moving together' leads to the construction of 'dialogues', where contrasting approaches to cognition and understanding can find ways to 'dance' together. Reynolds suggests such dialogues are fundamentally kinaesthetic in nature, deriving their power from heightened levels of empathic engagement and cognitive awareness of how one's feelings and experiences relate to other people. Reynolds argues it is appropriate to describe such kinaesthetic dialogues as *creative*, as they fundamentally involve developing and testing ideas so as to form new ways of conceptualizing lived experience. Reynolds suggests a potential model arises from Meekums' research which involves a cyclical process in which information is received through observing the movements of others and then physically reflected back, with the person responding 'subtly altering and inflecting' what the other's movement conveyed to them. As part of this process, particular forms of interaction are established that are able to support what Reynolds refers to as an evolving relationship between 'what is unconscious and unsymbolised, and that which is consciously known, accessible and expressible' to participants (ibid, 31).

The Contrasting impacts of affect and effect in aesthetic experience

Two theorists who are interested in exploring the problematic aspects of sidestepping uncertainty within forms of arts education are Winston (2010) and Thompson (2011). Thompson argues 'side-stepping' occurs where social discourses are produced that 'elevate systems of certainties over systems of possibilities' (Thompson: 2011, p. 134). Central to the work of Thompson is the proposal that a shift is required within applied theatre praxis from 'effect' to 'affect' if the complexities and challenges posed by the 21st century globalized world are to be addressed. Thompson argues personal and social transformation arise as a result of the individual being able to move beyond an 'exclusively meaning-based relationship to the world' (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 77, cited by Thompson, 2011, p. 121). Personally transformative processes, he argues, start primarily as felt and sensed experiences, often eluding intellectual comprehension, because:

> '*Learning is an affective, felt state –comprised of many elements of awe, fear, love and intrigue – that is only diminished in its banishment to that part of the body called the mind*'
> (ibid, p. 130)

This is an issue Winston also explores in his articulation of a case for 'arts beyond utility' (Winston, 2010, p. 287). He suggests too often, in order to meet educational targets, children are condemned to 'the same genre of narrative all day, every day with no mystery, no suspense, no surprise' (Winston, 2010, p. 136). Interestingly, both Winston and Thompson strongly align themselves with the writing of Elaine Scarry (1985, 2001) in which she argues that encountering beauty is one of the most powerful ways in which individuals experience 'unselfing' and transformation in life. Scarry's argument is that where the individual encounters phenomenon as involving the qualities of beauty (which she associates with factors such as awe, humility and contentedness) they experience a heightened sense of 'inter-connectedness' and of 'being in the world', generating, in turn, a stronger 'sense of presence' as they feel rather than conceptually define the meaning of experience.

Summarizing these ideas Thompson defines beauty, be that in the classroom or increasingly in his theatre practice in war zones and situations of conflict, as a form of 'invitation to participate' (Thompson, 2011, p. 145), that conjures 'that which is absent' (ibid, p. 153) but which the individual requires in order to be able to make sense of the relationships that exist between elements of experience that have previously felt uncomfortably disconnected. Interestingly, as part of his analysis of beauty's role in affecting personal and societal change, Thompson advocates an ethnographic disposition, in which he presents the hypothesis that working with beauty is not about seeking a single universal definition of a phenomenon. Instead, particularly within an applied theatre context, he argues working with beauty involves using aesthetic practice to identify a shared sense of what makes up a good and beautiful life.

John Dewey: Art as Experience

Dewey argued in his 1934 book *Art as Experience* (2006) that art was an exemplary form of human meaning-making, representing human experience in its 'most consummated, fully realized form' (ibid, p. 212). Within his writing Dewey dedicated much time to exploring the distinction between general experience and more specialized forms of experience, such as those arising from engagement with the arts, sciences and religion (Jackson, 1998, p.1). In *Art as Experience* Dewey argued in order to appreciate extraordinary experience an individual had to develop an awareness of the variants of an ordinary experience through embodied engagement with reality. Therefore, one of the most distinct features of his analysis was his oppositional stance to Cartesian logic that he saw as conceptualizing experience as an exclusively psychological concept, an approach he considered to be based upon a philosophical fallacy (Jackson, 1998, p. 3). Instead he perceived experience as transactional, describing it as:

' . . . not just what registers in our consciousness as we make our way through the world but

(our experience) includes the objects and events that compose the world. The objects and

events are as much a part of experience as we are ourselves. When we are fully immersed in

experience, its components so interpenetrate one another that we lose all sense of separation

between self, object and event'

(Dewey, 2006, p. 26).

Through these reflections Dewey was able to construct a theoretical framework by which to

encapsulate how individuals' develop the ability to differentiate between different qualities of

experiences. Here, he placed a strong emphasis on the individual being able to recognize the

breakdown of experiential coherence (ibid). Such a breakdown, he observed, was often integral to

learning and developing new knowledge. This, he argued, was what occurred in an ideal learning

experience. However, in contrast, in environments where the individual struggles to find the space or

time to reflect, he observed, some forms of experiential incoherence lead to the individual

experiencing perceptual stasis as they become overwhelmed by the incoherence they encounter. It

was through these contrasting encounters with experience, he observed, that the individual defines

the distinct experiential qualities of what defines ordinary and extraordinary experience. As Dewey

observed:

'It is when situations become problematic - when something goes wrong or when for some

other reason we pause to reflect upon the circumstances at hand – that such distinctions

become evident. Then we start to isolate this or that element within experience so that we

might better deal with the situation as a whole'

(Dewey, 1980:34).

This is an idea that Thompson (2011, p. 124-129) is also interested in. Thompson argues that in

difficult situations the individual seeks ways to locate the self and reconfigure signs so as to be able to

sustain sensation. This, Thompson argues, will often involve moving against an interpretive norm, and

affect, he suggests, plays a critical role in this process 'disrupting an easy relationship between events and experiences'. This experience of 'shock to thought' as Massumi (2002) refers to it, in turn, has the power to fuel inquiry (Thompson, 2011, p. 125). Deleuze, and Massumi, Thompson notes, have both argued that art experiences offer particular aesthetic qualities that human beings repeatedly seek out so as to encounter shock to thought in social contexts they are comfortable with. This is an idea also pursued by the literary theorist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2004 & 2006) who stresses that art is able to provide the type of experience that our everyday worlds are not capable of offering us (2006, p. 100).

> 'Once we understand our desire for presence as a reaction to an everyday environment that has become overly Cartesian during the past centuries, it make sense to hope that aesthetic experience may help us recuperate the spatial and bodily dimension of our existence, it make sense to hope that aesthetic experience may give us back at least a feeling of our 'being-in-the-world, in a sense of being part of the physical world of things'
> (Gumbrecht 2006, p. 116, cited in Thompson, 2011, p. 126)

Similarly to Gumbrecht, Dewey, in *Art as Experience,* wanted to specifically dissect what specific needs were satisfied in an art experience that were not satisfied in more ordinary experience. He suggested specialized experiences, such as those presented through engagement with the arts, were able to interrupt the 'continuous and cumulative interactions of an organic self within the world' (2006, p. 4) in such a way as to transform and disrupt the individual's perception of how ordinary experience means. Therefore, aesthetic experiences, Dewey argued, were capable of engendering many different forms of enduring perceptual change. On the one hand they were able to increase an individual's own sense of presence (a concept Gumbrecht strongly emphasizes) and on the other hand aesthetic experience is able to heighten an individual's sense of being a participant in a constantly evolving world much grander than the minutia of their daily experience. Therefore, Dewey argued, through aesthetic experience an individual is able to experiment with reconfiguring the spatial, temporal, material and interpersonal relations that define their existence. As Thompson argues few experiences in life represent as radical a call to action as this and yet consistently aesthetic

experience is conceived of as something nice rather than an integral component of educational and social change.

Interestingly, for Thompson, this dismissive and conservative attitude to aesthetic experience can be seen to arise from a 'growing suspicion of collective joy and celebration' (Thompson, 2011, p. 122) within many societies that privilege Cartesian dualism and protestant social values. Through his analysis of the writing of feminist political theorist Barbara Ehrenreich (2007) he explores the correlations between these values and what he refers to as the 'epidemic of social isolation, individualism and depression' that appears to be rife within contemporary Western society. To further elucidate this perspective Thompson cites the fantastic example of Emma Goldman (1869-1940), the Russian-American Anarchist, and her response to her fellow comrades when they questioned the frivolity with which she used dance as a medium to express anarchic sentiments. Dance, she protested, represented a beautiful ideal that was able to encapsulate values such as freedom, the right to self expression and the right to enjoy radiant beautiful things (Goldman, 2006, p. 42 cited in Thompson, 2011, p. 1). As Thompson notes;

> '*Dancing and other forms of aesthetic expression are places of respite, but they are also integral and necessary parts of change itself. In a world of inequality, social injustice and endemic violence, they become acts of resistance and redistribution, made in an intimate and sensory key*

(Thompson2011, p. 11).

Conclusion

This section has discussed the distinctions of affect and effect in preparation for analysing the purpose of creative spaces in schools later in the thesis. It has suggested that consideration of the concept of beauty is one way through which understandings can be generated of the contrasting experiential qualities of creative spaces and the forms of learning they support. The idea has been proposed that creating beautiful experiences within education can be an empowering process that allows participants to question and challenge monolithic interpretations of how meaning is constructed.

Part Three: Children's Participation in Research

Introduction

As stated in the opening chapter the children participating in this inquiry all have PMLD and are assessed at an educational level below level 1 of the national curriculum. I have worked with a number of different class groups during my research and with each class I chose to focus my observations specifically on the experiences of this population of pupil. In this section a number of different perspectives drawn from the field of SEN and Disability Studies will be considered in order to analyze contrasting theoretical perspectives on how pupil voice work is approached and theoretically conceptualized when working with children with PMLD.

Changes to educational and social policy

Changes to educational and social care policy have led to an increase in people with PMLD being recognized as the principle stake-holders in their own well-being. (Gheera, 2009; HM Government White Paper 'Caring for our Future', 2012; SEN Code of Practice (DfE & DoH), 2014). However, concerns have been raised regarding the subjective and inferential nature of the forms of engagement typically employed to collect the views of people with PMLD. Perry and Felce (2002) have suggested greater caution is required than is evident regarding the validity and status afforded to views passed on via proxies or facilitators within this area, whilst Hart (2002, p. 252) raises concerns about what is considered reasonable expectation regarding the levels of participation of children and adults with PMLD. Building upon such opinions, Lewis and Porter (2006, p. 224), suggest that an 'over-familiarizing and/or pressurizing of the process of hearing the views of children' can be seen to be occurring generally within children's services. They suggest that this has become particularly exacerbated in the case of children with learning disabilities, and

that the directive nature of governmental policy on promoting voice can be insensitive to children's right to silence, privacy and non-response.

The Children's Act (1989 & 2004) states that it must be assumed that disabled children are capable of participating in decision-making unless incapacity has been established. The Mental Capacity Act (2005) defines capacity as decision-specific and suggests that it should be explored on a decision-by-decision basis. Both of these Acts place an emphasis on professionals adopting collaborative approaches with children to ascertain shared understandings of the limits of participation and comprehension. They stress the need for suitable arrangements to be in place for capturing children's views, tailored specifically to individuals' preferred communication styles. Lewis and Porter (2007) observe that this emphasis on establishing flexible and diverse forums for participation links to principles outlined in Article 13 of the UNCRC (1989) with its emphasis on a child's right to receive and exchange information in a variety of forms.

What does it mean to formulate and express a view?

Ware (2004) addresses this question through exploring two fundamental questions. Firstly, what does it mean to express a view? And secondly, what is the difference between having a view and expressing a choice or preference? It has been argued that to have a view requires a relatively advanced level of cognitive thinking (Ware, 2004; Arnot & Reay, 2007) whereas formulating a choice is a much simpler cognitive procedure. Ware suggests that there are two fundamental components to formulating a view. Firstly, the less cognitively challenging aspect involves being able to compare different experiences and develop preferences regarding the types of experience you like and dislike; secondly, the more cognitively challenging aspect involves understanding that the choices one makes, based upon those preferences, will subsequently affect what happens in the future, be that the next few seconds or far ahead.

A considerable volume of literature exists demonstrating that it is possible for children with PMLD to learn to communicate preferences given the right environmental conditions, levels of adult intervention and support and in some cases through using technological aids (Lancioni et al, 1996; Schepis et al 1996, Lewis and Porter, 2007). However, as Ware (2003) observes, such literature concentrates predominantly on children making choices and preferences with regard to immediately available activities. There is currently no satisfactorily conclusive evidence of children with PMLD making choices that can objectively be said to demonstrate that the children involved had an awareness of how those choices could affect their future experiences. Within her writing, Ware analyses a series of participative scenarios involving children with PMLD. Her focus is exploring where the line can be drawn between non-conscious reactions and conscious and deliberate actions. At the heart of her argument is the notion that a view stands apart from a reaction in that it has communicational intentionality and a future-orientated nature. A reaction, for Ware, is situated in the moment, being neither consciously motivated nor intentional in its accompanying communicative expressions. A deliberate action in contrast is something that actively seeks to provoke affect.

Ware, as well as exploring the differences between reaction and view, also explores the difference between expressing a preference and formulating a view. Her suggestion here is that for supporting adults to deduce objectively a child's preference, a child's reactions need only be consistent, not necessarily intentional. Therefore, following this line of reasoning, a consistent reaction, whilst demonstrating what a child may like or dislike, may have no conscious intentionality behind it. Ware observes that the process of being able to understand and interpret children's preferences is hugely important to both adults and children and she stresses the importance of acknowledging the considerable, positive impacts that can occur within the lives of children with PMLD when adults are able to read their reactions accurately (Ware, 2004, p. 176). However, Ware also stresses the importance within research of practitioners seeing a clear distinction between processes such as these and processes that claim to be ascertaining the views of children with PMLD.

Many children with PMLD will have an action or a series of actions that they continually repeat. In many ways such actions represent their *modus operandi* in the world. Supporting adults who work regularly with children with PMLD become acutely tuned to what different physical and vocal reactions represent. Bogdashina (2003, p. 26) suggests that some children with complex sensory and communication impairments undertake obsessive ritual behaviours in order to overcome the difficulties they experience when perceiving the environment. Therefore, building upon the work of Bogdashina and Ware, I would like to suggest that it is where there is variance in the duration and nature of the physical and vocal nature of a child's actions that analysis can begin with regard to the potential relationship between deliberate action and the formulation of a view. Within this hypothesis, the proposal is that a deliberate action will be one where the action is noticeably different from a child's usual *modus operandi*. This will be an action that holds a child's attention beyond what has been observed previously as typical. It may be an action where there is a heightened sense of a child fashioning and extending initial actions through adopting alternative movements, vocalizations and behaviours.

Also of relevance when conducting research with children with PMLD is the the fact that the negative reactions of children do not necessarily equate with them not wanting to participate in activities. It is common for children with PMLD initially to reject objects that are presented to them, sometimes in very direct ways that can appear aggressive, such as throwing them across the room or hitting out at those who are close by. This may be accompanied by loud vocalizations, which to the untrained ear or unfamiliar eye may appear as if the child is communicating a strong dislike for an activity and/or that the child is upset. As Ware (2004) and Bogdashina (2003) argue, it is important to acknowledge in instances such as these that sustained observations can often contradict initial observations, with distinct changes occurring over time in terms of the amount of time children need to become comfortable in different environments.

Barriers to participation

In this section I am going to analyse some of the different barriers to participating in research experienced by children with learning difficulties. I am also going to consider some of the different ideological factors that produce and sustain these barriers. Alongside this I will explore some of the obstacles that researchers experience as they try to establish consultative relationships with children and the supporting adults who care for them.

Franklin and Sloper (2009, p. 4) analysed the views of practitioners specializing in consulting with children with complex learning needs. Their findings suggest that the barriers practitioners encounter have multiple characteristics. Their interview data suggests barriers to participation are made up of complex and interwoven factors, such as demands relating to medical support, staff availability, time pressure and financial considerations, to name but a few of the leading influences. One of their key observations concerns how barriers become exacerbated as researchers fail to establish a shared understanding with supporting adults regarding research focus and purpose. This lack of shared purpose, their data suggests, manifests itself in distinct culture-clashes, where research agendas are rejected by supporting adults due to the lack of empathy and/or awareness demonstrated with regard to the pressures encountered on an everyday basis in participants' familial and/or professional lives.

Mike Oliver (1996, 1997) has argued that participative and emancipatory research with children with disabilities has for many years approached consultation with this group with striking naivety, which has led to many different forms of research being inappropriately described as collaborative. Disabled children's voices, he argues, are continually 're-produced and re-interpreted' by non-disabled academics in ways that contribute very little positive benefits to the material and economic lives of disabled children and their families. In contrast, academics can be seen to

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experience increased prestige and recognition. It is Oliver's stance that too often formalized academic channels perpetuate narratives that bear little resemblance to the authentic voices of those they claim to represent (Oliver, 1997, p. 36). Stalker and Connors (2003) make similar observations, arguing that research into the lives of disabled children has historically relied on data collected from professional experts rather than on the actual voices of disabled children and their carers. This, they observe, has led many supporting adults to become suspicious of claims made by academics and of the logic and values by which they formulate their interpretations.

An illustrative example of the challenges researchers face in terms of establishing clear research agendas and building relationships with supporting adults are provided by Davis et al (2008, p. 220-238) who describe a research project they undertook in a school for children with multiple impairments in Scotland. Their ethnographic study was concerned with understanding the diverse nature of disabled children's identities and their aim was to study children's verbal and non-verbal languages as applied within a school context. As they detail, persuading adult support staff that this was a worthwhile research topic took significantly longer than they had originally anticipated, leading them to make the observation that these differences in perspectives between researchers and school staff, particularly regarding what constituted appropriate research methodology, subsequently became a leading aspect of their research inquiry. These experiences, they observe, are not unusual, particularly in ethnographic studies, as their experiences have links with previous observations by those such as Oakly (1975, cited by Davis et al, ibid, p. 222) where he argued that the cultural meaning of the impact of the ethnographer on the research setting, and vice versa, will often emerge as an integral and unexpectedly leading aspect of the research inquiry.

Davis et al (ibid) conclude that it is essential for researchers not to lose sight of the fact that children's lives are enacted within tightly defined ideological frameworks. This is an area also explored by Christensen and James (2002) who emphasize the need for researchers to be aware that research relationships always take place within social relations and cultural contexts and that these aspects form the fundamental character of the research process and its results (Christensen

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and James, 2002). In many ways, particularly from an ethnographic perspective, this process of learning about the differences between their cultural values and the cultures of those they study is the point of the research and therefore should be embraced in all its complexity, especially as the researcher attempts to conceptualize the relationship between the knowledge they purport to have developed, the findings they report in their texts and their own evolving identity as one who researches within this area.

This section has sought to stress that underlying all research processes, regardless of epistemological stance, are complex power dynamics concerning the interplay between researcher, the researched and who makes the decisions about the distribution of research findings. The views of Oliver and Stalker and Connors are cited to emphasize the extent to which research power dynamics have the capacity to both adversely and positively impact upon the material dimensions of people's lives. The work of Davis et al is cited as an example of how researchers' epistemological stances contribute to researcher-researched dynamics, with the example of their case study included in order to demonstrate why critical ethnographic research adopts an iterative approach to methodological design, often constantly revisiting research methods and relations in order to adapt to emerging priorities and themes within the research site. It has been stressed that this process involves the researcher reflecting upon the values and ethical principles of their research project. Therefore, what is stressed here is that identifying and critiquing barriers to participation is an integral aspect of the critical ethnographer's process. What the critiques of Oliver highlight is the central role of factors such as ethical engagement, theoretical orientation and critical reflexivity within disability research, especially where claims are made that the research concerns the empowerment of children with disabilities.

Children's participation in research

Introduction

Lewis and Porter (2007, p. 222) identify a growing body of interest in developing innovative participatory research practices with disabled children that bring together interdisciplinary and creative approaches. However, similarly to Oliver (1997) and Arnot & Reay (2007), they argue for caution when considering the capacity of participative research to effect tangible change to people's lives. Related to these views Franklin and Sloper (2009) issue a caution to researchers, suggesting that all participatory forms of research should be seen as operating along a continuum, with no emancipatory impact anticipated at one end of the spectrum and total control of research production by children with disabilities ascribed to the other end. With these views in mind, this section will detail why one of the key tasks of a reflective practitioner who aims to research *with* participants not *on* them is to be able to clearly articulate where along this continuum they position their particular methodological stance and on what ethical and epistemological grounds they justify this. Therefore, this section will concentrate on two particular areas of inquiry: *What does it mean to participate?* And, *What does it mean to be emancipated?*

What does it mean to participate?

Creating circumstances in which children are able to take part in shaping social discourse is a complex process. This section will analyse the theoretical positions of a series of philosophers, anthropologists and child development theorists who have posited theories on contrasting approaches to participation that, they respectively argue, lead to authentic generation of child voice and agency. Here, I undertake this analysis in order to emphasize the extent to which children's lives are shaped by the particular participative paradigms favoured by the cultures in

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which their lives are enacted. Each paradigm I explore here presents a contrasting ideological and cultural approach to the social orientation of children within discursive activities.

Disability studies scholar Leonard J. Davis (1995, 2006) has argued that the study of disability cannot be separated from the study of culture, as different cultural values lead to disability being conceptualized in contrasting ways. The anthropologist Barbara Rogoff (1990, 2003) suggests that the same is true of participation, in that what it means to participate cannot be separated from the cultural context in which the participation occurs. Central to Rogoff's (1990) hypothesis is that children gain social competence through acts of encultured participation. With a distinct connection to Vygotskian socio-cultural theory, and in particular Vygotsky's exploration of the processes of internalization and appropriation, Rogoff presents a model of participation in which children learn through being supported by advanced learners who share 'a cultural register' with the child. She suggests that the general process of acquiring socio-cultural knowledge is underpinned by experiences in which advanced learners support children to become familiar with the rules of participation normalized within their community. Rogoff's research, drawn from contrasting cultural contexts, outlines significant differences between cultures with regard to how children are explicitly and implicitly exposed to the rules of participation. Her conclusion is that each distinct society generates contrasting principles of participation drawn from a complex mix of ecological factors including legislative trends and economic flux. Rogoff observes;

> *'One of the most powerful variations in children's lives in different cultural communities is the extent to which they are allowed to participate in and observe adult activities. Segregation of children from mature community activities is taken for granted in (Western) middle-class settings, but it is rare in many other communities'*

(Rogoff, 2003, p. 133)

Rogoff also notes that in many communities it is common for infants and children to be orientated to group activities rather than to exclusive, one-to-one (dyadic) interaction with a caregiver as is often favored in Western middle-class settings (ibid, p. 141). She observes that some of the key ways in which these differentiated, formative experiences of participation impact upon children and their sense of social confidence, of which voice and agency are leading aspects, can be evidenced through studying children's early experiences of education. She argues that in traditional U.S classrooms, where many children are present, interaction is nonetheless usually structured 'dyadically', as two sides of a conversation, in which students are expected to speak only to the teacher and only one at a time or in unison so that they can act as one side of a dyad. She notes that such forms of communication can be confusing and alienating to children who have previously experienced primarily collaborative and group forms of interaction (ibid, p. 147).

These are ideas also explored in detail by Lisa Delpit (2006, p. 178-193) who has argued that many schools operate according to highly regulated sets of both explicit and implicit rules regarding participation. Explicit rules include aspects such as where children can go within the school complex, what they should wear and what time they should arrive, whilst implicit rules, Delpit suggests, include factors such as when they are allowed to speak, when they should remain silent and what types of communication are afforded status and what are considered inappropriate. Her hypothesis is that children from marginalized backgrounds, (and much of her writing draws specifically from Native and African-American children's experiences), are often socially disadvantaged within such settings. She argues that, in order for such forms of disadvantage to be addressed, schools need to explicitly develop processes within their learning cultures whereby the ideological codes that inform different forms of participation are critically analysed and made explicit. Processes such as this, she argues, make the rules of participation accessible to *all* students, rather than to a privileged minority. An essential part of this involves acknowledging that alternative participative approaches exist outside of the dominant ideologies that shape formalized educational practice. Therefore, central to her argument is the assertion that schools need to

support children's critical ability to engage with the moral and ethical dimensions of what constitutes fair and productive participation and what, in turn, inhibits it.

Delpit acknowledges that approaches such as these are only possible where teachers see the critical analysis of participation as a valid component of education. Too often, she argues, students are excluded from participating in the shaping of educational participative norms and rules. Through this omission, she argues, children's literacy - and here she is referring not only to their speaking and listening but also to children's ability to comprehend and apply complex forms of social and empathic communication in diverse social scenarios - is dismissed and devalued as educational systems fail to understand children's strengths regarding their ability to shape participative strategies. This leads to children's instinctual participative strategies being categorize as problematic. The consequences of this, she argues, are that many children's capacity to learn becomes undervalued as they are labeled 'socially deviant' and/or 'low attainers'. This leads to children being removed from mainstream classroom to educational environments where they, in her opinion, are taught 'down to', being given simplified curricula that decontextualize information as they prioritize the learning of isolated skills, thereby limiting children's ability further to form a holistic sense of how the component parts of their education relate to their lives (ibid, p. 173).

Delpit's writing in this area has clear links with Foucault (1971, 1977) and Bourdieu (2005). Foucault argued that human beings are transformed into subjects through different forms of social discourse and regulatory practice. He suggested that the objectification of the subject within society evolved as a result of processes of classification and division. Foucault argues in the late 19th and throughout the 20th centuries schools became the prime sites in which this ideologically driven process could be enacted. He argued that the use of testing, examining, profiling and streaming in education, alongside the formulation of different types of intelligence, ability and scholastic identity became fundamentally dividing practices through which education became a central aspect of 'the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses' within Western society. Viewed

from this perspective, education is conceptualized as a socially controlling process able to select 'which individuals get access to which types of discourse' (Ball, 2003, p. 26).

Building upon the work of Foucault, Bourdieu defined the concept of habitus as a set of dispositions which generate particular attitudes, social behaviours, perceptions and tastes. Through inculcation, structure and regulation, Bourdieu argued, individuals acquire and internalize their own personal sense of habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). From this perspective one's habitus becomes embedded in one's sense of identity, and is continually reproduced and regulated by the norms and conventions of the social institutions and systems one encounters. Dominant forms of habitus inform and shape every aspect of a culture's preferred participative structures, including those used within its education systems. What I am arguing here is that certain dominant forms of habitus have the power to significantly affect a pupil's instinctual, authentic and holistic participation in social discourse, and can in some circumstances be obstructive to their inclusion in social discourse.

Bourdieu (1991, p. 63) explored the concept of participative alienation and its causes. He developed his theory of 'social adaptation' where he suggested that individuals develop different strategies in order to adapt to the rules of particular social institutions and their practices. He suggests that societies produce social players and 'The good player does at every moment what the game requires'. Within this theory Bourdieu stressed an individual's capacity for invention and double game playing. This, he argued, could include the individual becoming adept at performing participative activities so as to appear to conform. This is an area also explored by Scott (1990, cited by Dodson et al, 2007, p. 824) in her research which analyses the experiences of individuals from marginalized communities taking part in social research. She suggests that people learn to 'code, camouflage and submerge opinions' as they apply their 'experiences from the fringes' that 'a voice lost in the crowd is far safer than a lone speaker'.

Rogoff states 'To understand human development, it is essential to understand the development of the cultural institutions and practices in which people participate' (2003, p. 327). Kincheloe (2004, p. 39), similarly, argues that one's notion of self emerges through the relationships one forms with 'multiple dimensions of the world'. For Kincheloe, the self, therefore, 'is by its nature a participatory entity', constantly evolving through taking part in the practices and discourses of the multiplicitous social environments it inhabits. Researchers who embrace the interactive dynamism of the production of the self, Kincheloe argues, undertake processes of re-conceptualizing the concepts of individualism and self-interest within their epistemological frameworks, so as to be able to comprehend pluralistic conceptualizations of selfhood.

Law (2004, p. 8) suggests that research does not in and of itself 'discover and depict realities'. Instead, inquiries 'participate in the *enactment* of those realities' (Law, 2004, p.45, his emphasis). What this section has emphasized through its analysis of key theorists such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Roggoff and Delpit is the extent to which research has an ethical responsibility to consider which realities it wishes to participate in creating and promoting. The observation has been put forward that this process involves researchers becoming critically conscious of the participative structures and relationships their methods promote, as well as being conscious of the implications of their own position within these methodological structures.

Conclusion

In this section I have provided an overview of some of the contrasting cultural and ideological factors that influence the structure and purpose of research conducted with children. In particular I have explored issues relating to children's participation. I have analysed contrasting theories of how children's participation is affected by social and political forces, particularly in contexts such as schools. I have also made reference to areas of innovation within this field where practitioners

have used creative and alternative methods to address in-balances of power within the research

process.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will outline a rationale for each of the methodological choices that have been made over the duration of this research. The chapter will explore the paradigmatic orientation of this research, making it clear on what philosophical basis individual methodological choices have been formulated. It will then go on to explore why a mixed-methodological approach has been selected that combines ethnography and case study methodologies. In the second half of the chapter the 'toolkit' (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004) of methods that has been assembled to support the data collection process will be presented. Here, the strengths and weaknesses of adopting a diverse range of creative qualitative methods will be analysed. In conjunction with this the anlaysis framework used to categorise and interpret data will be outlined.

A Freirian Approach

The methodology this research adopts is influenced by a number of different philosophical and theoretical influences. However, in this introduction I would like to begin by discussing the fundamental influence of the Brazilian critical theorist and educational philosopher Paulo Freire. This is because, as a 'researcher-practitioner' (Robson, 1993: Jarvis, 1999; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) I believe my methodological approach cannot be separated from my identity, both my personal identity, as a woman of a certain age from a certain socio-cultural background, and my professional identity as a drama practitioner and educator. Therefore, when I conduct research I work within a methodological framework that acknowledges that personhood, identity, personal values, professional identity and inquiry interests are all interlinked and cannot be separated.

Freire argues:

> *'There is no such thing as teaching without research and research without teaching. . . . . . As I teach, I continue to search and re-search. I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and re-educate myself. I do research so as to know what I do not yet know and to communicate and proclaim what I discover'*
>
> (Freire, 2001, p.35)

In this citation Freire suggests that the focus of an educational researcher, who chooses to frame their practice according to the principles of a critical paradigm, is to challenge reductionist attitudes to knowledge, both the question of what knowledge is and how it is constructed. Freire also argues that by prefiguring the dialogic and applied aspects of teaching and learning, through continually 're-searching' how knowledge is produced in different contexts, critical educational research positions itself so as to be able to critique the causes and consequences of oppressive educational practices and inequitable epistemological relations.

According to Freire's philosophical stance every pupil, every teacher and every researcher is an 'active agent', capable of 'refiguring, reconstituting and re-imagining' the concepts of 'learning' and 'education' during any study of educational practice (2001, p.37). These are principles the methodological design of this research has tried to adhere to and, as this chapter will discuss, one of the key ways in which the principle of active agency has been acknowledged has been through adopting methods that prioritise space, time and procedural flexibility.

An aspect of Freire's model of educational research that I have kept at the forefront of my mind has been his argument that where participants' active agency is denied the emancipatory capacities of a piece of research becomes compromised (2001, p.36). This is because, Freire suggests, where

participants' active agency is thwarted forms of academic and technical language often start to emerge that oppress and distort participants' original reactions and points of view (2001, xxxi). When this happens, Freire suggests, both the critical and emancipatory dimensions of the research come in to question as issues concerning *'Whose voices are really being represented within this text?'* and *'Whose needs are actually being served by the production of this text?'* come to the fore. As this chapter will emphasize, in this study one of the greatest challenges has been how to represent the voice and agency of pupils who have taken part. This research does not provide neat and conclusive answers on how to address this challenge but, using the framework of Freire's model of educational research, the inquiry attempts to problematise and critique the complex area of how to incorporate the voice and agency of pupils with PMLD in a research text such as this.

Having explored the pivotal influence of the philosophy of Paulo Freire on this research's design, this section will now proceed to introduce two other core dimensions of its methodological approach. Firstly, a rationale for the research's mixed-method approach will be outlined. Following this, the rationale that underpins the distribution of quantitative and qualitative methods will be introduced.

A Mixed-Method Approach

An approach has been adopted in this research in which contrasting methodologies have been combined so as to ensure a data collection process that complemented the specific needs and characteristics of the culture in which the research is based. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 14-19) suggest that when researching culture methodological pluralism can be seen as superior to mono-methodological approaches. This, they suggest, is because mono-methodological approaches have historically demonstrated a tendency for generating technical portrayals of people's lives that can under-play the complexity of how individual culture's function and evolve. In contrast to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's view there are many advocates who argue against this stance, favoring approaches that demonstrate methodological purity (Howe, 1988; Guba, 1990). Researchers who side with a purist position assert that this approach supports greater levels of rigor and validity as methodological

purity is able to create clear boundaries in regard to what constitutes appropriate forms of data collection and what does not. This stands in contrast to methodological plurality which continually calls into question what constitutes effective data collection.

This research has chosen to adopt a position more akin to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's methodological pluralism then a stance associated with the methodological purity tradition. This research utilizes two, (as well as possibly a third in regard to the school's strong tradition of utilizing action research within its evaluation practice), contrasting qualitative methodologies within its methodological design. In combining two distinct methodologies the aspiration of this research is that a greater degree of depth and critical reflection will be achieved than if just one of these methodologies was used in isolation. However, in combining these methodologies I am conscious of the importance of remaining attentive to each methodology's distinct core principles as well as remaining aware of the factors that have been consistently acknowledged as limitations within these methodologies.

It is also important to state that this research has also chosen to utilize a pragmatic and mixed-method approach in regard to the individual methods that have been utilised in its fieldwork. Essentially, a 'toolkit' of eclectic methods has been assembled in order to create a bespoke research process suitably robust to engage with the ecological diversity of the environment in which the study is situated. The 'toolkit' approach to assembling methods is largely associated with the work of Kincheloe (2004; 2005; 2012) and Kincheloe and Berry (2004) and their exploration of the concept of bricolage. Kincheloe and Berry argues (2004, p. 84-6) it is the task of 'the bricoleur' to capture the voice of participants by developing methods that expand the possible meanings available within a given context. Reflection upon Kincheloe's theory of bricolage has allowed me to remain aware of the importance of abandoning or amending individual methods where they have started to restrict individual participants' ability to contribute to research discourse or where I feel research relations have become (re)organized in ways that may be excluding for key stakeholders.

The balance between qualitative and quantitative methods within this research

A deliberate decision has been made to foreground qualitative rather than quantitative methods in this research. This decision was made on the basis that I am aware that quantitative methods have historically dominated research that explores people with learning difficulties educational experience. As those such as Oliver (1996, 1997; Campbell & Oliver, 2013) and Barnes (1997; 2003; Barnes, Oliver and Barton, 2002) have argued, inquiries that solely utilize quantitative methods to explore people with learning disabilities experiences of social institutions have tended to produce research documents that perpetuate restrictive and oppressive narratives about people with learning difficulties lives. What more recent discussion on this topic, such as the recent work by Simmons and Watson (2014), highlights is that what quantitative research tends to fail to acknowledge is the complex, unique and ambiguous nature of how people with PMLD learn and interact with the learning environment. Therefore, reflecting upon these views, I have chosen to construct this research's methodology on the basis that people, their day-to-day experiences and their feelings and attitudes towards their school, are the focus of this research and, on these grounds, qualitative methods that prioritize detailing their views, their voice and their agency within this school culture will be this research's chosen focus as opposed to analysing more quantitative forms of data relating to this population's academic progress.

Conclusion

In this introduction it has been explained that this chapter will discuss the theoretical and philosophical values that underpin this research's methodology. It has been acknowledged that as part of this process key theorists who have influenced the methodological choices enacted within this inquiry will be identified and their ideas contextualised. This section has begun this process by introducing the influence of Freire and Kincheloe within this research's methodological design. In the

sections that follow other key theorists, such as Barad (2007) Habermas (1975) and Gramsci (1996) will be introduced as the paradigmatic orientation of this research is outlined.

Paradigmatic Orientation

Introduction

Thomas Kuhn (2012) argued that what the researcher observes is intimately tied up with the paradigm in which they have chosen to operate. Therefore, paradigmatic choices impact upon the types of knowledge researchers produce. Law (2004, p. 13), building upon the work of Kuhn, defines the term paradigm as consisting of 'law-like generalizations, implicit assumptions, instrumental and embodied habits, working models, and a general and more or less implicit worldview'.

This section will explore my decision to operate within an emancipatory paradigm. It will also explore the strengths and weaknesses of this particular paradigmatic orientation, whilst introducing the pivotal role of critical theory within this paradigm.

Critical Inquiry

Critical forms of research are driven by a belief that there exist forms of social organization that privilege some individuals and communities over others. This is why critical research follows an explicit agenda to 'empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices' (McLaren, 1994, p.168). Critical research is often conceptualized as being an ethically and politically orientated act (Roman & Apple, 1990, p.41). Developing this idea Greene argues that critical knowledge claims need to be judged according to their ability to contribute to the concept of a 'good and true life' (Greene, 2003, p.73). Therefore, in many people's views critical research concerns

addressing fundamental question such as *'How and why do these experiences happen to us/them as they do?'* and '*What is our/their response to this situation?'* (Ng and Mirchandani, 2008, p.38)

Jurgen Habermas (1975; 1987, 1991) is widely acknowledged as being responsible for developing the concept of critical theory in the twentieth century. Habermas drew together many disparate strands of theory on critical practice within his model of social theory. Habermas' model seeks to address the tensions and epistemological barriers that inhibit social research's capacity to positively affect change in people's lives. His model is built upon the principle that empirical forms of inquiry, with their historical emphasis on prediction and control, have tended to limit the extent to which social research is able to interact with, and change, oppressive social structures. In his theory of praxis he attempted to produce a research model that was able to unite theory and practice in ways that could ensure that social researchers focused as much on changing the material conditions of the environments in which their research was set as they focused on grappling with the theoretical and philosophical complexity of the power relations and social structures they investigated.

Habermas' acknowledges that his model is greatly influenced by the work of the nineteenth century Italian Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci (1996) who argued that forms of socially controlling ideology are exercised in advanced industrial societies, not necessarily through obvious channels such as physical force, but increasingly through the distribution of technicized facts and norms. These norms, Gramsci suggested, become institutionally legitimized as they form the basis of institutional practices, arrangements and interests. This scenario leads, Gramsci argued, to the production of 'ideological hegemony', which in turn can lead to the manifestation of social stasis. For Habermas, praxis was an epistemological stance designed to challenge both ideological hegemony and social stasis as Habermas saw praxis' central purpose as being to question hegemonic attitudes and their impact on social progress generally and specifically their impact on individual groups sense of progress and emancipation within society.

As this section concludes it is important to acknowledge I am aware that through citing such 'grand theories' (Mills, 2000) as those associated with Habermas and Gramsci it may appear that I am losing

sight of the focus of this inquiry. However, the theories of Habermas and Gramsci are considered

relevant to this inquiry on the grounds that one of the primary aims of this research is to explore how

research, and particularly creative forms of research methodology, can be used as tools to support

participants to express heightened levels of voice and agency. Therefore, as a researcher, I am very

interested in understanding how forms of 'socially controlling ideology' and 'technicized facts and

norms' affect teachers, TAs and pupils confidence as social actors within the school in which this

research is located. On these grounds the theories of Habermas and Gramasci are considered relevant

theoretical frameworks by which to understand how ideological influences affect participants'

expression of voice and agency in this school context.

The influence of posthumanism and anti-representationism on this inquiry

As stated previously, with reference to key theorists such as Oliver (1996, 1997; Campbell & Oliver,

2013) and Barnes (1997; 2003; Barnes, Oliver and Barton, 2002) this inquiry has attempted to remain

critically conscious of some of the oppressive ontological boundary practices that have been

established in previous research studies with participants with PMLD. By 'oppressive ontological

boundary practices' what I am specifically referring to here are practices in which the capacities of

people with PMLD, along with the complexities of their lives, are undervalued, overlooked or

dismissed in research on the grounds that this population are perceived to produce ambiguous and

unclassifiable responses that are perceived as being too difficult, too inconsequential or too

ontologically challenging to be represented in research reports.

One theorist who has assisted me to comprehend my perspective on the relationship between

ontology, voice and agency within applied research practice is the American feminist quantum

physicist Karen Barad. Central to Barad's (2007) research philosophy is her application of the concept

'posthumanism', which she describes as an epistemological framework that works against the

entrenched perspective that phenomenon is 'out there' waiting to be revealed by research. One of

the fundamental reasons Barad argues for a posthumanist approach to research is that she argues

without adhering to the values of posthumanism many opportunities and possibilities, for personal,

social and scientific forms of discovery, remain 'out there' simply because they are denied existence

on the grounds of not conforming to current ontological ways of thinking.

Alternatively, Barad argues new forms of ontological awareness can emerge through research that

places an emphasis upon acknowledging that all 'agential action' is interconnected within the

research site. What Barad introduces within this idea is the notion that each individual agential action

is created through other acts of agency being enacted. Therefore, agency cannot be studied as a

stand-alone factor within the research process. It has to be understood as a component of reality

that, in many respects has no end and no beginning and which always is unique as individual acts of

agency have never been performed before and will never be performed again in exactly the same

way.

Barad (2007, p.135 – 141) uses this argument as the justification for her own adoption of an anti-

representaionalist stance within her personal research practice. For her, a representationalist stance

is untenable because it works from the notion that creating the conditions of separateness is

foundational to the act of producing meaning. She suggests that in a representationalist paradigm the

world is ontologically divided into distinct domains of words and things and this is problematic for

Barad because she argues this process inevitably creates research 'subjects' who then become

enmeshed in 'thick webs of representations'. Where research concerns people's lives, Barad argues, a

representationalist stance has the potential to transform research participants in to 'prisoners of

representationalism problematic metaphysics' (Ibid, p.138), where aspects of their reality are denied

and silenced. This is why Barad recommends researchers, who value participants' voice, agency and

autonomy, adopt an anti-representationalist stance in which they conduct research from the

perspective that people, ideas and the environment are all interconnected.

Barad's reflections on this subject have significantly contributed to my own realisation that adopting an anti-representationalist stance is appropriate in this research context as I wish to collaborate with participants in ways that expand rather than restrict the ontological understandings that can be said to exist amongst participants. I am also aware that this research wishes to be very mindful of embroiling pupils with PMLD in 'thick webs of representation' that have no practical meaning within their, or their teachers' and carers', day-to-day lives. Reflecting upon the research question that has been developed to guide and focus this inquiry, namely:

How is the concept of creativity being constructed and enacted in this school culture?

The aim of this research is to generate meaning that is able to elucidate how different members of this school community interpret creativity. Therefore, it is my personal belief that to study a pupil's creativity as separate to a teacher's sense of creativity, or indeed my own sense, is counterproductive to investigating and comprehending this research topic.

To conclude, a researcher who chooses to adopt an epistemological approach that is in keeping with a Baradian interpretation of posthumanism is concerned with understanding how research practice can be used to become increasingly aware of the 'differential constitution and differential positioning of the human' within research praxis. Within this epistemological model the researcher resists presuming the separateness of anything connected to the field of inquiry, especially 'alleged spatial, ontological and epistemological distinctions' designed to set humans apart from each other (Barad, 2007, p. 134 -146).

Exploration of the contrasting methodologies that have been combined within this research

Introduction

This section will discuss the strengths and weakness of the two methodologies that have been combined within this research's methodological approach. In conjunction with this process various definition of critical inquiry will be explored and their relevance to this research will be outlined and contextualised. This will specifically involve exploring how Habermas' four-stage model of emancipatory practice has been used to guide many contrasting aspects of this research's methodological process. This section will conclude by outlining why an emphasis has been placed upon utilising creative approaches to gathering data and how methodological choices in this area can be seen to relate to my personal philosophical inclination for adhering to the theoretical values of Paulo Freire's model of critical pedagogy.

Ethnography

Ethnography is the study of social groups and situations in their real-life contexts (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 170). Ethnographic inquiry produces 'thick description' (Geertz, 1994). Geertz defines thick description as in-depth descriptions of a particular culture's values and norms that is presented in forms that are comprehensible to those who inhabit alternative cultures. Thick description may acknowledge 'facts' about a culture but the ethnographer's attitude to facts differ significantly from those produced during positivist forms of inquiry as the ethnographer seeks out facts specifically to analyse and interpret their socio-cultural origins and the processes that produce, sustain and validate the culturally situated customs and norms they produce. An ethnographer therefore, is concerned

with extracting 'meaning structures' that organize and define a culture's 'being' from the data that is collected (Geertz, 1983). Geertz saw meaning structures as complex and multi-layered in nature as they are influenced by social customs generated within and without a specific cultural context. For this reason Geertz suggests ethnographic findings cannot be generalized as they are always localized and contextualized in nature, being based upon the semiotic codes that make up the intercultural milieu and 'extrovert expressions' of a specific culture (ibid).

Traditional ethnography, such as that associated with the practices of Mead (1956; 1975) and Malinoswki (2002) has been conceptualized as a process of 'writing culture', largely underpinned by the notion that it is possible to make the world's diverse cultures somehow objectively visible through analysis of their component parts (Taylor, 2006). However, from the mid twentieth century onwards poststructuralist and postmodernist thinkers have continually questioned the authenticity and trustworthiness of these principles. The central criticism of traditional ethnography being that communities of people have historically been presented as the exotic and/or primitive other and this is perceived as deeply problematic from a critical perspective.

As various Marxist, anti-imperialist, queer, feminist and disability studies perspectives have argued (Hooks, 1990; Carusi, 1991; Davis, 1995; Butler, 2002;) traditional ethnography has been based upon the assumption that it is acceptable to sustain 'processes of other-ing' (Barad, 2007). As Taylor (2006, p. 26) argues traditional ethnographic practices that circumnavigate the role of critical forms of analysis remain at risk of perpetuating master narratives that enforce imperialist and globalized forms of ideological hegemony. This is largely because non-critical research practice imposes systems of representation rather than acknowledging that the intra-actions of 'researcher' and 'researched' produce situated experiences that create unique forms of voice and agency that are intimately influenced by factors such as politics, economics, power relations and social structures.

Critical Ethnography

A critical ethnographer is a researcher who considers the act of critiquing the ideological frameworks underpinning research practice as equally important as the process of producing interpretations of cultural practices and actions (Taylor, 2006). Critical ethnographers are driven by the idea of what Britzman (1995) refers to as the 'second glance', as they concern themselves with identifying those forms of knowing the world that on deeper inspection, whether second, third or fourth glance, defy established and predictable forms of ontological categorization. Upon gaining an in-depth and triangulated understanding of socially situated forms of oppression, a critical ethnographer is concerned with generating forms of action that seek to challenge current circumstances. Without this last component 'action', essential to Habermas's theory of praxis, an act of critical ethnography can be seen to have not fulfilled the stipulations of its core principles. This is because critical ethnography is ultimately judged according to the extent to which it generates praxis within a given cultural context.

In order to acknowledge the centrality of praxis within critical ethnography, I have often referred to Habermas' four-stage model of emancipatory praxis as I have constructed this research's methodological plan. As well as drawing heavily from Habermas' original outline (1975) this inquiry's interpretation of praxis is also strongly influenced by others exploration of this concept, such as Greene (2003), Neelands (2006) and Cohen et al (2007).

The table below outlines the four stages of Habermas's model of emancipation. This table proved to be a very useful guide as I embedded myself within the culture of the school as it helped me to identify the aim and purpose of certain acts of observation and focus group discussions. The table also helped me to evaluate how successfully this research had approached and concluded particular stages of the model.

Stage 1	A description of the existing situation is created through the researcher immersing themselves in the research context.
	This involves extended periods of comparatively passive and unobtrusive participant observation as the researcher amasses detailed field notes pertaining to how socio-cultural relations are enacted. This stage can be conceptualized as a primarily hermeneutic phase, undertaken to identify the various ideological influences considered significant within the culture in question.
	During this stage the researcher continually relates what they observe to big picture factors (Greene, 1995). In a school context this may include relating observational data to issues such as changes in governmental policy as well as the researcher making connections to previous research studies.
	During this stage the researcher aims to produce an interpretation of the culture in question that is Gestalt in character, in that it presents an interpretation of culture, not as an isolated phenomenon but as something integrally connected to diverse social and ideological factors (Neelands, 2006).
Stage 2	An outline is created that summarizes how the current situation has come to exist in the particular form that it has.

	This is often referred to as a 'penetrating' interrogation of social and historical factors that can be seen to create the conditions of certain forms of oppression.
	Neelands (2006) relates this stage to Freire's concept of conscientisation as it concerns establishing critically conscious forums in which research participants and researchers uncover, debate and critique the taken-for-granted and tacit meanings that define the social systems that underpin the culture being researched.
Stage 3	An agenda is created using democratic processes. The agenda is focused upon altering the situation so as to create heightened levels of freedom and emancipation for research participants.
	This section is defined by participant voice and agency
	This stage is fundamentally concerned with praxis.
Stage 4	An evaluation of the achievements of the research process is undertaken.
	The effectiveness of the research is judged according to the extent to which participants consider their lives to have been transformed and emancipated following their participation in the research process.

Criticisms and limitations associated with Habermas' model of emancipatory praxis

Several problematic factors are associated with Habermas' four-stage model. Firstly, those such as Morrison (1995b) and Wardekker and Miedama (1997) have observed that there is no automatic link between undertaking ideological critique and producing conditions suited to emancipation. Undertaking ideological critique, they suggest, may lead to many varied outcomes of which praxis is just one. Gallagher (2006, p. 64) alternatively, defends Habermas' model, arguing one benefit of staying focused on the importance of praxis is that one is able to avoid becoming lost in 'overly dense theoretical analysis' or 'obsessive self-conscious navel-gazing reflexivity' that can, she suggests, become a defining feature of some postmodernist and/or post-structuralist research that has lost sight of the role of praxis within social inquiry. To avoid this, Gallagher argues, theory and practice, as Habermas originally emphasized, must be able to continually 'converse' as they embed within each another (Gallagher, 2006, p. 66).

Another theorist who remains sceptical about the innate power of Habermas' model is Neelands (2006) who observes that he detects a degree of idealism implicit in Habermas' four-stage model as it assumes that people have the power to put their ideas into action and affect change. In reality, he argues, many social institutions, schools being a prime example, are highly regulated environments in which people are afforded 'only the very smallest modicum of power' (ibid, p. 30). This means that effecting actual change may be extremely difficult and that different stages of the model may pose varying amounts of challenge for those involved. For example, Neelands points out, stages one and two may be quite straight-forward, indeed they may even be relatively easy to organize where the researcher has an existing, trusted relationship with the community participating in the research. However, stage three with its emphasis on praxis may be difficult to undertake as participants are required to participate in directly challenging the social structures of the institutions and social settings in which they are situated. In some social contexts, where social structures are particularly rigid, this stage may even involve a degree of genuine threat to the equilibrium of people's lives (ibid, p.29 – 33).

Reflecting on the challenging aspects of implementing stage three and four of Habermas' model highlights the extent to which ethical considerations come to the fore within critical research. This is because different phases of the research process present different degrees of ethical complexity in regard to the levels of potential harm research can expose participants to. This means critical researchers have to be prepared to continually re-visit the 'fit-for-purpose' nature of their ethical framework (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). As stated in 'The Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' (BERA, 2011) and in 'The ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics' (2010), first and foremost, it is the responsibility of the researcher to select a form of methodology that will ensure that no harm will come to those who participate in the research process. Alongside this it is their responsibility to select individual methods that will enable them to construct research narratives that achieve the highest standards of validity according to the research paradigm in which they operate. For the critical ethnographer this will involve continually (re)negotiating with participants, through the establishing of reflective and reflexive forums, what constitutes as a safe and conducive research environment and what sorts of knowledge, in participants' opinions, contribute to ethically valid forms of emancipatory praxis.

As Oliver (1996) argues, if a researcher is going to genuinely operate within an emancipatory framework it is not for the researcher to decide what forms of emancipatory action each individual research participant can and cannot choose to undertake. For this reason it is important to acknowledge that critical ethnographers, working within an emancipatory framework, often find themselves in situations where they have to acknowledge that they have different perceptions of the boundaries of what constitutes appropriate emancipatory action from members of the cultural group with whom they are collaborating with. This is not in itself problematic, for, as Gallagher (2008, p. 1-2) observes, research is nothing 'if not about choices' and a critical ethnographic methodology is fundamentally concerned with understanding what choices are available in a given moment to a community of people. Gallagher argues critical analysis of the nature of the choices available to participants is capable of revealing more about the reality of a cultural moment, in all

its contemporaneous and ethical complexity, than methodology associated with other form of social inquiry. For these reasons, critical ethnographers must be able to embrace the idea of constantly 'riding a wave' of 'uncomfortable cultural norms' and 'problematic truths' so as to genuinely be able to identify new emergent forms of agency and voice that tell the 'stories-so-far' of all those involved in the research act (Barad, 2007; Massey, 2005; Gallagher, 2008).

In conclusion, this section has emphasized that it is naïve to think that by simply following a model of critical inquiry a research process will be capable of achieving outcomes that enhance participants' personal sense of freedom and emancipation. Emancipation cannot be gifted by a research process. Emancipation is a highly personal existential experience. Therefore, to avoid naïve idealism the critical ethnographer must adopt a methodology that acknowledges their limited capacity to understand exactly what emancipation and/or freedom feels like for another individual. Instead, their central task is to select research methods that allow them to analyse the multiple forms of transformation and praxis being enacted by individuals within a culture. This will include identification, analysis and ideological critique of the various inhibitors of change that research participants encounter. In addition to the above this section has also acknowledged the extent to which the critical ethnographer is required to be able to embrace and manage a high degree of unpredictability, uncertainty and flux within their research, particularly in terms of the social, political and ethical complexity of the environment in which the research is set.

Case study

Case study methodology has a particular affinity with ethnographic research practices as both are concerned with producing 'thick description' that graphically brings a socio-cultural situation to life. As Geertz (1983) emphasizes, case studies strive to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation and therefore, they have a tendency to produce detailed, interpretive analysis of what it means to inhabit a particular social context. There are several types of case study (Yin, 1984) all of which have contrasting strengths and weaknesses depending on the perspective from which they are being judged.

One key weakness commonly associated with case study methodology is its propensity for generating reams of data (Winston, 2006; Cohen et al, 2007). Therefore, one of the key tasks of the researcher adopting case study methodology is to discern which aspects of the data available within the complex social environment in which their research is located are of value and which are surplus. One way in which researchers begin to hone this focusing process is through defining the parameters of what constitutes exceptional and non-exceptional incidents within the social context under scrutiny. Wragg (1994, p. 64) defines exceptional moments as 'critical events' that appear to the observer to have more relevance than other events. Similarly, Cohen et al (2007, p. 404) argue exceptional moments are often very revealing as they generate data that challenges previously established ontological boundaries between hermeneutic categories. Researchers who adopt a case study approach are often interested in analyzing the quality and intensity of exceptional moments through the application of a mixed-methods approach. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data is often gathered. However, a defining feature of case study methodology is how, as a methodology, it resists producing fixed accounts of how phenomenon means through continually establishing processes of triangulation in which the meanings that are being produced by different interested parties are continually questioned and reframed as the process unfolds.

Case studies, therefore, with their emphasis on uniqueness and the role of exceptional moments, place an emphasis on the idea that no single master narrative of how social reality means is possible. In some research contexts case studies may produce tentative generalizations but commonly case studies see meaning as uniquely situated and arising as the result of highly specific socio-cultural conditions. For many researchers this is the key strength of case study methodology because it alleviates the pressure to provide evaluation that is conclusive and, instead, generates opportunities for researchers to reflect upon their own and others' attitudes to how phenomenon is ascribed meaning in a designated social context.

Another potential weakness of case studies is that they have a tendency to produce knowledge that is of great interest to those who operate within the environment in which the research is produced whilst appearing to have significantly less interest to those operating outside of the research context. Case studies will commonly generate narrative-based forms of analysis as the presentation of findings are structured around telling exceptionally detailed stories of the events that unfolded during the research process. This can lead to those who read case studies feeling like they were almost there themselves, but it can also lead to the response of 'So what' as the reader of the narrative fails to see a connection between the case study's narrative and their personal area of inquiry or practice. Therefore, whilst case study findings may be favoured by many for their realist and detailed interpretation of human experience they are often dismissed by policy makers, for as Neelands (2004, p. 52) observes 'research-as-stories' sits on the bottom rung of the ladder of epistemological validity within Westernized societies.

What this section has highlighted is that case study methodologies offer researchers, especially those who may already be inclined towards the use of creative and collaborative methods, many tempting features. Alongside great flexibility, case study methodology offers the in-built capacity for both etic and emic forms of questioning as researchers oscillate between exploring established areas of inquiry and identifying those areas that emerge as significant as the research process progresses. The problematic aspects of case study methodology is that defining the boundaries of the specific case under consideration is often much harder then initial encounters may imply. This is because the socio-

cultural boundaries of social institutions such as schools are, on closer inspection, often maintained by complex sets of tacit institutional values, the power and influence of which are often only revealed once the research process is in motion. Therefore, researchers using case study methodologies have to be continually alert to the centrality of triangulating their data and questioning how boundaries are being generated, maintained and critically appraised.

Utilising creative methods when undertaking a critical ethnographic case study

This section provides a justification for the use of creative methods in critical ethnographic case studies. This inquiry defines the term 'creative method' as referring to any method that draws upon aesthetic forms of expression, participation and interpretation. As a researcher who is particularly interested in drama education particular attention is given in this section to exploring how drama-based methods can be applied within this type of methodology. In particular, I will summarise the connections I perceive to exist between Freirian inspired forms of drama education and critical research practices.

Previously in 'Chapter Two: Literature Review' it has been stated that drama, as a form of human interaction, is defined by its open-ended nature and its emphasis on continual 'human becoming' (Neelands, 2004). Within drama education practices this particularly manifests itself in the ways in which drama activities encourage the exploration of what Massey (2004, p. 8-11) refers to as participants' 'contemporaneous plurality'. Massey defines 'contemporaneous plurality' as the heterogeneous production of voice and agency in contexts that are able to embrace 'radical contemporaneity'. For Massey, a 'radically contemporaneous' discourse space is one in which participants' identities, values and aspirations are allowed to coexist without being coerced in to conforming to the dominant ideology's homogenous framework.

Construed through the philosophical lenses of those such as Massey, drama education can be seen to generate forms of narrative that are not 'out there' waiting to be discovered but which are forms of situated aesthetic expression that are created through participants' 'in-the-moment' intra-action, dialogue, and in-action reflection (Gumbrecht, 2007). Therefore, for the critical ethnographer one particular strength of drama-based research methods, (and here I specifically refer to those practices influenced by the philosophy of practitioners such as Freire and Massey), is that these methods are able to challenge monolithic interpretations of human existence based upon 'master narratives' (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004) as they operate from a position that sees sustaining multiple narratives, multiple interpretations and multiple ways of being as an essential component of drama initiated discourse.

Within drama education the concepts of space and time are often intensified or reconfigured in some way so as to deliberately encourage different forms of affect than those traditionally provoked in classroom pedagogies (Winston and Tandy, 2001, p. viii). In this research I have deliberately used drama-based activities as a tool by which to create circumstances in which learning outcomes and pedagogical conclusions cannot be anticipated or predicted in advance of participating in the activity. Therefore, I am suggesting that certain drama education practices are beneficial to critical ethnographic practices due to their propensity for positioning participants in radical discourse environments where inevitably new forms of interpretation, meaning and lines of inquiry are going to emerge for participants as they are placed in aesthetic situations where to move or to vocalise is to affect the meaning of the aesthetic environment.

Within this framework high levels of participant and researcher 'presence' are demanded (Gumbrecht, 2007) as the meaning and boundaries of the aesthetic encounter are continually reconfigured in the moment. Within this model of drama education as a session concludes, participants leave, not with a sense of neat closure, but with a sense of being part of new ways of

interacting with other humans and the material environment that, ideally, continue to inspire curiosity and exploration beyond the limits of the individual drama session. The aim here is to embrace and incorporate the Freirian core value that the purpose of pedagogical experience is to leave participants intrinsically motivated to continue to question how reality is constructed and with an attitude they sees the future as unfinished and in need of their further consideration.

What is also being presented here is the idea that a Freirian model of drama education sees transformation and emancipation as integral components of the drama experience. This is why within this model the concept of change and transformation are conceptualized, not as linear processes with beginnings, middles and ends, but as concepts that an individual is continually engaged with reframing and reinterpreting. Within this framework the human subject is presented as being on an ever-expanding trajectory of experience, in which they are continually experimenting with how to produce and expand knowledge. In summary, this model of drama education can never be completed as it works from the stance that there will always be new roles to be created, new dialogues to be undertaken and new narratives to be improvised.

To conclude, as Clair (2003) observes many contemporary critical ethnographers deliberately seek aesthetic methods within their research practice in order to overcome the restraining aspects of traditional ethnographic practice. One key factor influencing this choice is that the employment of creative methods often demands of the ethnographer that they become physically involved in activities rather than permitting themselves to stand on the periphery looking in.

> '*Critical ethnography is not a methodological process concerned with capturing the experience of anthropological fieldtrips. It is a process in which an ethnographer is implicated in the creation and expression of who and what culture is all about*'
>
> (Clair, 2003, p. 19).

What has been stressed in this section is that one of the central tasks of a critical ethnographer is to find ways in which to tell 'untold, unheard, unseen, and heretofore unimagined possibilities'(Gallagher, 2008, p. 69). Viewed from this perspective, aesthetic encounters become tools by which critical ethnographers are able to negotiate how this telling of the previously untold can be done so as to accurately represent the significance of the felt and yet not fully concluded transformative experience.

Conclusion

This section has provided an overview of this research's methodology. It has also further outlined the philosophical, theoretical and paradigmatic orientation of this research. In doing so it has attempted to elucidate some of the ethical and practical complexities of conducting research within an emancipatory framework. This section has also stressed my awareness that whilst I have constructed a methodology that is orientated within an emancipatory paradign I am acutely aware that the experience of emancipation may or may not be something that is deemed, firstly, relevant, and secondly, possible, by participants who take part in this research. Therefore, what is being stressed in this section is a theme that will be explored in much more depth in the next chapter, which is, whilst I see myself as inherently connected to the research process and the meanings that are generated through myself and participants taking part in individual research activities, I acknowledge that I am an 'outsider' (Kanuaha, 2000; Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) in regard to individuals unique experiences of transformation and emancipation and that, therefore, it is essential I remain critically engaged with the process of capturing and interpreting multiple participants 'stories-so-far' (Massey, 2004).

Methods

Introduction

This section will explore the methods that were utilised during the five phases of data collection. For a comprehensive overview of which methods were used in which phase of data collection please refer to Appendix One. This section will highlight that a pragmatic and reflexive approach was taken to selecting methods in the field. This approach was adopted on the grounds that, as a piece of critical ethnography, I wished to be open, flexible and reciprocal when method suggestions were made by participants during the planning and evaluation stages of each phase of data collection. Through making this methodological choice it was my hope to ensure I was able to develop research relations with participants that positioned them as 'social actors' within the research process and not passive subjects.

This section will begin by providing a rationale for why I, as a critical ethnography, decided to embrace the school's suggestion of using an action research methodology in the first two phases of the data collection process. The section will also explore how this scenario helped me to understand the complexities of my status within the school, particularly in terms of the insider/outsider research status dichotomy (Kanuha, 2000: Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Action Research

Introduction

Firstly, let me be absolutely clear that I am aware that action research is a methodology and not a method. Discussion of the strengths, weaknesses and complexities of action research has been positioned in this section of the chapter (section five 'Methods') rather than the previous section (section four 'Methodology') on the grounds that action research is not a defining component of my methodological approach. However, it is an approach greatly valued by staff based in the school and, for this reason, staff were keen to foreground this methodology in their collaborations with me.

During phases one and two of the data collection process I became aware that there were interpretations of action research being promoted in the school that were not necessarily compatible with my own methodological orientation. This was particularly the case in regard to the emphasis being placed by senior leaders on encouraging teachers to use this methodology to primarily map pupils' progress and attainment. I felt that this approach demonstrated a more instrumentalist and positivist agenda than my own approach that was more concerned with exploring the subjective dimensions of pupils' and staff members' creativity, voice and agency. Becoming aware of these differences in emphasis challenged me to think further about how I was approaching constructing and negotiating research relations in my fieldwork and the importance of being transparent and clear regarding the philosophical and theoretical orientation of my chosen methodological approach. It also made me aware of the importance of reflecting upon my status within this school environment and the differences between being an 'insider' and an 'outsider' within a school setting. This is an area of the research process that will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

Despite concerns about the ideological clashes between my own and the school's preferred methodological approach, the experience of becoming practically involved in teacher-led action

research cycles was to prove invaluable. The experience allowed me to understand first-hand how important studying a social institution's methodological choices and evaluation practices are in terms of formulating a comprehensive understanding of an institution's defining cultural values and ideological leanings. For example, the experiences I encountered in phases one and two of my fieldwork led me to engaging much more specifically with questions such as:

Which forms of evaluation and methodology are dismissed as invalid within this culture?

And;

What sorts of data relating to voice and agency become marginalised as a result of particular methodological choices being enacted?'

Finally, the experience emphasised the following ideas to me regarding attempting to conduct and enact critical ethnography in a school setting. Firstly, it taught me the importance of methodological flexibility and of not imposing methodological structures on participants but letting methodological ideas develop through engagement with reflective, reflexive and collaborative forms of planning and evaluation. Secondly, it graphically drew to my attention the importance of monitoring how participants are (or are not) being established as social actors within the research scenario and prioritising this factor in conversations with staff so that, especially powerful gatekeepers, were constantly kept informed of the philosophical and paradigmatic orientation of my research practice and how its emphasis was different to that of an instrumentalist or positivistic emphasis. These elements, I found, were fundamental components of the research process in terms of establishing trusting, respectful and mutually beneficial research relations in this setting.

What this discussion highlights is the methodological complexity of establishing collaborative forms of research in social settings such as schools. Gallagher (2008, p. 67) argues that 'wrestling with dilemmas of methodology' need to be understood as integral to critically inclined research inquiries. Through being open to compromising, expanding and reinterpreting my own methodological stance

in different phases of the fieldwork it is my belief I was able to extend my reflective and reflexive exploration of creativity, voice and agency in ways that would have not been possible if I had adopted a more rigid methodological approach. It is also my belief that when participating in action research projects initiated by teachers that pursued an instrumental agenda I was still able to remain true to the principles of an emancipatory paradigm, despite collaborating with people who were following a contrasting agenda to my own.

In summary, action research is discussed in this section so as to distinguish it from my personal methodological orientation and to clearly associate it with decisions relating to method that were formulated in the field as a result of my collaborations with staff. The next section will provide a brief overview of the components of action research methodology I assimilated and reflected upon in preparation for undertaking phases one and two of this research's fieldwork.

Definitions of Action Research

Action research is a methodology that can be used to improve practice and initiate change at a local level. It has a long-established reputation within education as an effective tool for improving teaching and learning practice. It is often argued this is due to how it positions teachers as experts within their professional field (Somekh, 1995; Elliott, 1991; McNiff & Whitehead, 2005). Action research utilizes research methods that support teachers to apply their specialized insight into how their pupils learn best, providing them with structured opportunities to test and extend their knowledge regarding how to enhance educational progress and opportunity. Action research combines diagnosis (*What is the educational problem here?*), with action (*What pedagogical intervention can be used to alleviate this problem?*) and reflection (*How effective was that intervention, did it achieve what we wanted it to?*) Therefore, action research is often perceived as being capable of bridging the gap between research and practice (Somekh, 1995, p. 340).

There are many different schools of action research (Kemmis, 1997) and, like all forms of

methodology, action research can be adapted to meet the needs of contrasting paradigms. In his original conceptualization of action research Kurt Lewin (1946) described action research as a scientific process designed to improve the life chances of disadvantaged people. Writing after the Second World War, Lewin, a Jew who had fled Nazi Germany in the early 1930s, argued that traditional scientific methods had proven themselves to be inadequate as tools for capturing the ethical complexities of human existence. In his post-war writings he called for a new approach to social research to be developed.

Since Lewin's original conceptualization of action research was produced a plethora of alternative models of action research have been developed, many of which, building upon Lewin's original ideas, are designed to challenge dichotomized interpretations of 'subject' and 'object' in research. These alternative models increasingly allow researchers to adopt facilitative roles within the research process, that provide opportunities for them to work alongside participants, guiding, summarizing and raising questions as cyclical inquiry processes take place. Within this type of framework teacher-researchers are able to increasingly utilise creative and responsive ideas in their interactions with research participants, allowing increased opportunities for participants' feedback to be incorporated in to the design of future action inquiry cycles.

Conclusion

This section has introduced two key areas. Firstly, it has highlighted the value placed upon action research within the school culture in which this research is located. Secondly, it has highlighted the idea that there are many different types of action research and that the types of institutional change, professional development and personal transformation that are initiated through action research are intimately entwined with the ideological context in which the action research is developed. Participating in this school's action research process highlighted to me the extent to which school-based action research projects can be easily taken over by instrumentalist agendas relating to 'attainment', 'targets' and 'standards', sometimes regardless of what the action research project's

original focus was.

This section will now proceed to discuss three other methods that were consistently used throughout the fieldwork process; semi-structured interviews, participant observation and specially designed kinaesthetic methods.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Oppenheim (1992, p.30) argues that semi-structured interviews provide valuable opportunities for qualitative researchers to develop heuristic forms of knowledge in partnership with research participants. This, Oppenheim suggests, is because the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews encourages researchers and interviewees to reflect on what has been said, to question their own and others ideas and to probe deeper in to the meaning of each other's comments. Therefore, for Oppenheim, semi-structured interviews can be seen to be concerned with testing hypothesis rather than collecting facts and figures.

Kvale (1996, p.30) argues that semi-structured interviews allow researchers to engage in debate with participants about the 'key features of their life-worlds', often in ways that allow the vernacular of participants to guide and structure the nuances of the knowledge that is produced. Kvale also notes that semi-structured interviews are more inclined to generate open-ended forms of discourse than more structured interview approaches. This is particularly the case in regard to researchers becoming acquainted with the defining characteristics, ambiguities and limitations of phenomenon within participants' lives as subsequent interviews on the same subject can highlight how participants experiences are changing and evolving over time.

The factors outlined above in regard to semi-structured interviews can all be considered as strengths in regard to conducting critically orientated inquiries. However, there are a number of weaknesses associated with this particular approach to interviewing. Firstly, semi-structured interviews produce

data that can be difficult to analyse as it has not been produced using systematic processes. In particular it can be difficult to clearly identify the connections between different participants' responses as highly contrasting inquiry areas may have been pursued in contrasting interview settings. Secondly, there is a much higher propensity for researcher and participant bias to affect the direction of conversation within this type of interview and this can lead to the original focus or hypothesis being undermined or research aims becoming lost.

In this research semi-structured interviews were used in all five phases of the fieldwork. This was considered appropriate as an iterative analysis framework was utilised to interpret data in which a 'loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting data' was developed (Berkowitz, 2013). Therefore, semi-structured interviews allowed me to revisit data and explore connections and emerging insights over an extended time period (eighteen months). This method also allowed me to progressively refine my understanding of creativity, voice and agency in collaboration with participants and develop a number of negotiated and co-created definitions of creativity, voice and agency. As the research progressed I increasingly used semi-structured interviews to develop definitions with specific class groups, which then, with permission, I was able to triangulate with other class groups, which in turn led to a stronger sense emerging of an overall whole-school definition of creativity.

Observation Methods

Participant and non-participant observation methods were used throughout the five phases of data collection. Cohen et al (2007, p. 260) argue that observation is a superior method to experiments or surveys where research is concerned with analysing non-verbal behaviours. For myself, whilst I was interested in collecting data relating to adults verbal and intellectual perceptions of their school's creativity agenda I was also committed to collecting data that related to pupils' and staff members' non-verbal acts of voice and agency within this school culture and the tacit behaviours that accompanied their exploration and implementation of creative teaching and learning practices. For these reasons observation emerged as an integral method within my fieldwork practice.

Through undertaking prolonged periods of observation it was my aspiration to develop a detailed, cross-referenced and triangulated understanding of the social and cultural norms of this school culture. Throughout the data collection process I deliberately mixed participant and non-participant forms of observation. I chose to adopt participant observation methods when I wished to immerse myself physically, emotionally and intellectually within school activities whilst I adopted non-participants methods where I wished to step back and look from a more dispassionate position at the school's creative practice. My rationale for using this approach, which I informally termed as 'zooming in' and 'zooming out', was based upon the idea that this approach allowed me to constantly return to questions such as: *What am I observing? What am I not observing? What do I need to change about my current use of methods to be able to see in more detail participants' creativity, voice and agency?*

In my use of participant observation I was greatly influenced by Gallagher's (2008, p. 75) argument that using drama-based methods, as I commonly did when establishing participant observation opportunities in this setting, often changes 'the terms of engagement' for researchers and participants. Gallagher suggests through using participant observation methods, especially those that utilise improvisation, aesthetic expression and open-ended exploration, researchers and participants develop shared forms of verbal, and importantly non-verbal, vocabulary that affect the interactional qualities of the discourse that is generated. It is Gallagher's conclusion that such forms of participatory practice can create scenarios where the modes of communication available to participants and researchers become significantly expanded, particularly in terms of their tacit and empathic qualities. Developing appropriate non-verbal forms of communication has been a challenging and integral component of this research. As the next chapter will explore this element of the research has involved drawing upon an extensive range of creative and drama-based non-verbal methods and continually reflecting upon the quality of individual pupils' responses.

Finally, on the topic of utilising observational methods it is important to acknowledge the ethical issues that arise when this type of method is prioritised. One of the most significant issues is that of

informed consent and ensuring during each new observational encounter participants' consent has been (re)negotiated and (re)established in ways that mean participants or staff supporting participants clearly understand that they can withdraw from the observation at any time if they wish. In regard to pupils this involved working very closely with members of staff and agreeing how individual pupils assent and dissent was going to be interpreted and communicated between pupil, staff and myself during individual sessions.

Finally, as the next chapter will detail, I found that in observations in this setting it was essential I established clear and comprehensive 'ways of being' that participants felt comfortable with and which complemented the ethos and cultural practices of this particular school. This arose as an issue due to the school's core value that visitors are requested not to position themselves at the periphery of school activity and dispassionately observe what is happening. Instead, the school is clear that any visitor, regardless of rank or position, is expected to get involved and contribute to the school activity they have requested to learn more about. This was a value the Creativity Coordinator continually reiterated and one that made non-participant observation very difficult to negotiate and establish in this school context. As the fieldwork progressed it was my observation that non-participant observation was generally frowned upon in this school unless key gatekeepers could appreciate a strong argument regarding its necessity.

Kinaesthetic Methods

As stated in 'Chapter one: Introduction' a conscious choice was made at the beginning of this research to focus on the experience of pupils with PMLD. Through developing this focus my aim has been to try to understand how this population engages with, responds to and interprets the school's creativity agenda. Due to the profound and complex nature of this group of pupils' physical, learning and additional needs members I was aware pupils' from this group are non-verbal communicators. This meant that any research data co-created with participants drawn from this population had to be generated using non-verbal forms of communication.

In this study I have attempted to develop forms of non-verbal practice that utilise my skills as a drama practitioner. The primary way in which I have done this is through developing kinaesthetic practices that utilise physical expression and embodied action as opposed to spoken language. As chapter four will explore behaviours that are core to my use of kinaesthetic methods include behaviours such as: mirroring, following, shared joint-attention sequences exploring the manipulation of objects and the co-development of movement improvisations. In addition factors such as how participants use space to arrange materials or how they move within contrasting environments were also considered as important forms of data within this inquiry. I came to this conclusion as I felt these types of kinaesthetic expression contained invaluable forms of data relating to participant's unique voice and agency within this school culture.

To summarise, many different forms of kinaesthetic method have been developed by myself and staff to support the expression of pupils' creativity, voice and agency during the duration of this inquiry. Some of these methods can be ascribed to established drama education practices, whilst others have arisen directly out of the specific practice developed by this school. In the next chapter the theoretical influences on these methods will be further elucidated along with questions regarding how this school's practice can be seen to contribute to developments in the wider field of creative kinaesthetic practice with pupils with PMLD.

The role of reflective and reflexive practice in this research

Reflective and reflexive practice has been core to this research's methodological practice. Briefly, this section will outline some of the theoretical influences on the reflective and reflexive frameworks that have been used to shape this area of my methodology.

A reflective practitioner adopts a research stance in which they argue understanding and improving one's practice is a legitimate research aim. Within this stance researchers seek to continually be 'self-knowing' whilst simultaneously being 'other-knowing' (Neelands, 2006, p. 17). Reflective practitioners make a conscious decision to acknowledge that all practice is the product of learnt behaviours and unconsciously assimilated systems of values and beliefs and that to be reflective one must employ methodologies that support a process of identifying where those values, beliefs and behaviours improve their and others experience and where they inhibit it.

In contrast, reflexive knowledge is knowledge that is produced as a result of processes of self-reflection that have critical*y* scrutinized one's biases and which fully acknowledge how 'the inquirer is part of the setting, context and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand' (Schwandt, 2007, p. 224). It is possible, therefore, to be reflective without necessarily being reflexive. Barad (2007) summarizes how this can occur when she argues that reflective practice can be seen as holding a mirror up to one's practice in order to identify its component parts, whilst reflexive practice can be seen as holding multiple mirrors up to one's practice that have very different qualities of reflection. Barad argues reflexive practice is a much more dynamically dialogic process as it demands researchers become critically engaged with the question of why certain features are reflected back with greater intensity then others during the research experience.

Here Barad's view emulates that of Hacking (1983) who suggests that intervention, rather than just reflection and reflexivity alone, should be seen as the key to understanding the complexity of how

phenomenon comes to have meaning within a social context. In Hacking's opinion, if the researcher wants to realistically understand how phenomenon is 'brought in to being' through research processes they 'can't just peer, they must interfere' (ibid, p. 189). He argues that what this notion stresses is the distinction between ontological realism and epistemological realism. For Hacking, ontological realism always has an agenda to be experimental and to constantly shift the angle from which phenomenon is viewed. In contrast, epistemological realism is concerned with theory construction and representation. From this later perspective, intervening or changing one's position is often frowned upon because being experimental is considered to have a negative impact on the reliability and validity of the research. As someone who is more interested in ontological realism than epistemological realism Hacking's perspectives have helped me understand my rationale for using and adapting certain methods within this inquiry process so as to be able to challenge my own perceptual behaviours and to increase my awareness of how others are viewing phenomenon.

Returning to Barad, she, like Hacking, advocates an ontologically realist approach to social research. However, in contrast to Hacking, she argues it is not enough to just intervene, one must 'enact the between'. In other words, one must find ways to 'be alive to the possibilities of becoming' that the newly founded experimental, ontologically driven, research space generates (Barad, 2007, p.190). This, she suggests, involves the researcher 'getting their hands dirty' and 'thinking on one's feet'. For Barad it is a process whereby the researcher actively seeks to collaborate with diverse aspects of the environment, be that the people that surround her, the material objects she encounters, or the sensory qualities or ideas she is presented with. Barad's description here is one that has greatly influenced my own reflexive practice as it has reminded me of the importance of using creative methods so as to be able to rearrange the social, material and sensory dimensions of a research space in such a way that participants (including myself as researcher) are forced to address questions such as; *Who am I in this space? What communication modes are available to me? Where can I find and expand meaning within this environment?*

What is being stressed here through analysis of Hacking and Barad's theories is that experimentation, creativity and improvisation are integral to how some researchers develop an understanding of how

phenomenon 'differentially becomes' (Barad, 2007, p.379). Both hacking and Barad's theories suggest that reflection and reflexivity are less active and responsive methods when they are constrained by forms of epistemological realism. What this section wishes to highlight is my own awareness of how, when used in a theoretically rigid manner, both reflective and reflexive practices can become static and inward facing activities. Within this research process I have tried to work against these instincts and instead generate practices that support me to be vigilant in regard to how I am participating in processes of 'performatively articulating how phenomenon comes to matter' (Barad, 2007, p. 364).

Ethical Considerations

Introduction

This section will explore the primary ethical considerations of this research. It will outline the key values and principles that have influenced the ethical choices I have made. It will also highlight areas of controversy and tension within my fieldwork practice relating to ethics, particularly in regard to how I negotiated and maintained ethical boundaries with gatekeepers.

Conducting researching *with* children not *on* children

> 'It is often the case that those with more power, information and resources research those with less'
>
> (Cohen et al, 2007:174)

It has been observed that, despite the ratification of charters such as the U.N.C.R.C (1989) and the predominance of policies such as *Every Child Matters* (2004) and *The Children's Act* (2004), research is still being conducted in to children's lives without children's explicit consent being sought (Christensen and James, 2008). Research on this topic suggests that this scenario commonly arises as a result of researchers seeking consent via proxies (Fielding, 2004; Cline & Frederickson, 2009). Typically this will involve researchers negotiating access to child participants via gatekeepers, such as parents, carers, teachers and social workers. Many practitioners, specializing in research with children, argue vehemently against the ethical appropriateness of assuming children lack the maturity, capacity or the inclination to play a direct role in negotiating the terms of engagement of research that requires their participation. Approaches to establishing consent that do not directly involve children's active participation, many argue, deny children's right to be respected as active

agents in society. This is increasingly perceived as an unethical position for researchers to adopt within research involving children (Alderson, 1995; Uprichard, 2004; Christensen & James, 2008).

What these debates highlight is that consent is an ethically complex and multi-layered concept that extends way beyond researchers asking participants basic questions and participants issuing straightforward 'yes' or 'no' answers. As this section will explore, the complexity of establishing voluntary and informed consent cannot be solved through the designing and signing of simple consent forms or through one-off conversations with powerful gatekeepers. Negotiating and renegotiating consent are integral and ever-present dimensions of collaborative research with children and, therefore, researchers working with children are required to formulate robust and transparent reflective and reflexive approaches to ensuring their use of adult-centric language and practices that compromise or, at worse, deny children's active participation is as minimized as possible.

My intention within this research has always been to conduct research *with* children and not on children. Therefore, I have always tried to use methods that allow concepts such as collaboration, respect and friendship to flourish as part of the research process. A key influence on this emphasis has been Gallagher et al's (2010, p.471 - 482) argument concerning 'the social nature' of how participants construct informed consent. Gallagher et al (ibid) suggest that informed consent can only be established where participants have been able to develop a tried and tested awareness of the social attitudes and behaviours of those that seek their consent. Specifically in regard to researchers seeking children's voluntary and informed consent, Gallagher et al (ibid) argue, this will involve researchers allowing plenty of opportunity for children to question the researcher about why they have entered the child's environment as well as the researcher establishing plenty of space for children to test out how the researcher responds to their preferences and decisions.

Becoming friends with someone and establishing a position where respect and understanding are mutually established takes time and cannot simply be wished in to existence. In this study working towards being in a position where factors such as friendship, respect, empathy and mutual

understanding have been possible has entailed spending extended periods of time getting to know

individual children and observing more experienced adults working with them. It has also involved

being open to criticism, listening to others and being prepared to stop or abandon research plans

following participant feedback. Specifically, in regard to collaborating with pupils with PMLD it has

involved dedicating time to collaborating with pupils with no other agenda but to follow and

understand the child's agenda.

Conducting research with children with PMLD

It is often assumed that conducting research with children with SEN is somehow more ethically

complex then conducting research with other populations of children. However, many SEN theorists,

such as Cline & Frederickson (2009, p. 18), refute this idea arguing that investigating the perspectives

of children with SEN is no different to investigating the views of any other population of children. This

is because from an ethical perspective the same fundamental ethical principles remain paramount

that no harm must be caused and all participation must be on a voluntary basis. However, as

Fredrickson and Cline acknowledge, research within the field of SEN tends to reflect, in stark ways,

the complexities and challenges involved in researchers ascertaining that children's consent has been

established in a non-coercive, voluntary and informed manner. This is especially the case where

children are non-verbal communicators and where they have the most complex forms of physical,

learning and additional need.

Lewis and Porter (2007, p. 224) suggest that it is essential that researchers collaborating with children

with PMLD generate continual opportunities for children to express 'assent and dissent' within

activities. This, they argue, is essential in regard to ensuring supporting adults are in a position to

assess a child's participation is voluntary. They also suggest this should be a triangulated process with

more than one supporting adult assessing a child's responses. In summary, what Lewis and Porter's

work highlights is that in this context it is essential that ethical reflexivity is placed at the centre of

each individual research activity. As will be discussed in the next section ethical reflexivity involves

continually questioning one's adult-centric values. It also involves reflecting upon how issues of power and control are affecting the environment in which the research is taking place. Finally, as will be explored ethical reflexivity involves assessing the extent to which children are being supported to express choices and preferences without being interrupted or manipulated towards pre-ordained outcomes.

Developing an Ethically Reflexive Checklist

At the beginning of my fieldwork, aware that I was in an environment with many professionals with vastly more knowledge of how to read and interpret pupils' communicative acts than I had, I undertook many hours of observation of staff working with pupils with PMLD so as to extend my awareness of how staff negotiated and established consent in their interactions with pupils. These observations were followed up with reflective conversations with staff where I shared with them my observations on their practice and where I asked staff to explain to me their approaches to negotiating consent with individual pupils. This was an invaluable preparatory process as it allowed me to reflect upon the school's ethical procedures and codes of practice in tandem with developing my own ethical framework through consideration of key documents such as The British Educational Research Associations (BERA) 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' (2011) and The Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) 'Framework for Research Ethics (2010; 2012).

Through this process I was able to gain a deeper insight in to how staff at the school used techniques such as establishing eye contact, mirrored body language and call and response vocalizations to ensure they had a child's attention and to ensure that the child was aware that a joint attention exploratory experience could be initiated if the child was interested. Through this process I gained a stronger awareness of the highly individualized ways in which pupils communicated that they were ready for a learning activity to take place. For some children, this involved becoming very calm and still in comparison to agitated movement. For other pupils it involved actions such as humming very quietly, extending their hands or looking very directly at the adult. I also became aware of particular

pupils preferences in regard to activities that provoked strong positive responses for them, for example, one particular child like patter-cake games whilst another child liked gentle rhythms being tapped on the tray of his wheelchair. Through gaining an insight in to these behaviours I was able to begin to develop my own interactions with children and start to get to know them on an individual basis. During these initial exchanges with pupils I also became aware of the specific characteristics that shaped individual children's social identities and the ways in which individual children accessed social activities within their class groups.

This preparatory process led me to considering the concept of ethical reflexivity. Luttrell (2010, p. 4) argues 'ethical reflexivity' is the process whereby critical ethnographers identify 'ways to incorporate human subjects as 'people' and 'thinkers' in research'. Ethical reflexivity is employed by researchers to over-ride any sense of research subjects being seen as simply a source of data and/or as 'data producers' (ibid). For me, in my collaborations with pupils, this was an area I was strongly committed to integrating in to every phase of the data collection process as my aim was to understand pupils views, perceptions and attitudes on the school's creativity agenda not simply to observe them participating in it. To aid the process of ethical reflexivity, I adopted the following list of reflexive questions, many of which were identified via consideration of the work of Fielding (2004) and Lewis and Porter (2007). I then used this checklist both on my own in my reflective journal and in collaboration with staff during post-session discussions as a means of critiquing the extent to which ethical consideration were remaining at the forefront of the research process.

Ethically Reflexive Checklist

- *How am I handing over control to children within this research activity and resisting being a controlling adult?*

- *How is this research activity providing children with opportunities to stop and start the participatory experience? For example, am I sure children can genuinely stop the activity and opt out of participating when they wish?*

- *How is this research process going to make sure that it doesn't only represent the more strident or easily comprehendible voices in the group?*

  And related to this question;

  Whose voices are becoming lost during this research activity?

- *Am I genuinely open to criticism from others regarding how I am approaching capturing and interpreting children's voices? How am I communicating this openness to children and other adults?*

- *Am I aware of how my professional and adult status frames my perspective of children's voice and agency? For example, where am I using behaviours that alienate rather than encourage children's participation?*

- *How confident am I that this research does not perpetuate oppressive values and social structures regarding children's expression of voice and agency?*

By engaging in the process of drawing up a list of questions such as these Dadds and Hart (2001, p. 31) argues researchers are able to begin to move beyond the confines of forms of 'research egocentricism' into a research terrain that is more ethically reflexive and critically engaged. Fielding (2004, p. 305) extends this idea by arguing that researcher reflexivity on its own is often an insufficient process. Instead what is required is that the researcher is open to radically transforming the research roles that are available to children in the setting in which the research is being conducted. Where this occurs, Fielding suggests, children are able to adopt positions where they are more likely to challenge and question the status quo of research relations than they would typically be willing to do in a non-reflexive environment.

What this section seeks to emphasize is that for many critical researchers this dynamic engagement with ethics, inclusion and the meaning and morality of one's research process is not a hindrance within the research process. Instead, especially where research involves understanding voice and agency*, it is the research*. This is very much a stance I have endeavored to maintain and respect throughout this research process.

Gatekeepers

Introduction

This section will explore the pivotal role of gatekeepers within this research. In particular it will identify specific incidences that occurred during the research process that challenged the boundaries of the ethical framework I had developed prior to my fieldwork commencing. In undertaking this analysis this section seeks to highlight how I practically applied the ethically reflexive checklist during my fieldwork and how, and why, I chose to remain open and flexible to actively engaging with gatekeepers methodological and ethical concerns and suggestions throughout the research process.

Understanding the role of gatekeepers in educational research

The primary responsibility of gatekeepers is to evaluate and manage the degree of risk that is posed by a researcher. For this reason gatekeepers are concerned with ensuring that they, their institutions and those they are responsible for are not brought in to any level of disrepute or harm as a result of them taking part in research. With these factors in mind gatekeepers often ensure the level of access a researcher is able to negotiate is conditional rather than unconditional. This means, typically, gatekeepers will allow researchers access to some locations and groups of people whilst keeping other areas and individuals strictly off-limits. The conditional dimensions of access can have considerable effects on the scope and direction of research. In some scenarios matters relating to conditional access can lead to researchers having to make minor changes to aspects of their methodology. In extreme cases issues of conditional access can lead to researchers changing the entire focus of their inquiry.

Research undertaken in a school will inevitably involve negotiating with powerful gatekeepers such as head teachers, deputy head teachers, governors, class teachers and parents. Hammersley and

Atkinson (1983, p.65, cited in Cohen et al, 2007, p. 123) observe that gatekeepers not only control access to participants and data sources but they will also often control what a researcher is able to see and/or report following the data collection process. This, Hammersley and Atkinson observe, can lead to gatekeepers 'shepherding the fieldworker in one direction or another' (ibid) depending upon the agendas the gatekeepers consider to be priorities and the particularities of their personal and professional ideological orientations.

Morrison (2006) observes establishing conducive, trusting and mutually beneficial relations with gatekeepers can be 'a minefield', observing that a contributing factor to this scenario often lies in the fact that educational researchers approach gatekeepers with the intention to research contested and/or controversial areas of educational practice. This can lead to gatekeepers becoming suspicious of researcher's intentions and nervous about the consequences of allowing access. Inevitably, where gatekeepers experience such feelings there will be a high propensity for gatekeepers choosing to maintain a high degree of control over what a researcher is able to do, where they are able to do it and who they are permitted to involve.

What this discussion highlights is that issues of power and control can be said to be defining features of relationships that develop between gatekeepers and researchers. It also highlights that a variety of challenging questions must be addressed by gatekeepers and researchers, both individually and together, prior to any research taking place. Whilst an idealized interpretation of gatekeeper-researcher relations is one in which there is a consistent harmonious level of clear and transparent communication between both parties at all times, in reality the chances of gatekeeper-researcher relations adopting this format is slim. This section will now proceed to highlight some of the more challenging aspects of gatekeeper-researcher relations during this research.

Three key gatekeepers

During this research there were three main gatekeepers that I regularly negotiated with. These people were: the head teacher, the deputy-head teacher and the creativity coordinator. In negotiations with each of these individuals contrasting issues arose regarding the negotiation of ethical, methodological and professional boundaries. In order to ensure these issues are made clear each of these gatekeepers will be discussed individually in this section and the nature of the negotiations I undertook with them will be presented and contextualized.

The Head Teacher

Upon first approaching the head teacher to discuss the possibility of undertaking my research with the school I found the head teacher to be very accommodating and receptive to my research proposal. Following an introduction from the creativity coordinator (who I already had an established relationship with) and a brief initial meeting the head teacher gave her permission for me to proceed with planning my fieldwork. At this time she also referred me to the deputy head teacher and the creative coordinator who she explained would be the individuals responsible for approving my data collection proposal.

Forthwith the majority of my gatekeeper negotiations involved these two people rather than the head teacher. However, there was one specific area where I chose to directly negotiate with the head teacher. This area concerned the extent to which pupils' parents and guardians were to be consulted with during the research. In BERA's 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' (2011) it is clearly stated that parents and guardians of participants:

'whose age, intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstances may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily'

(BERA, 2011, p.6)

are required to be consulted with and informed in regard to any research that involves their child. Here, in interpreting these guidelines the head teacher and I disagreed in regard to how to approach this area within this research. The head teacher felt it was appropriate for her to contact parents via a letter. In this letter the head teacher proposed that a brief paragraph was included explaining the purpose of the research along with a paragraph stressing to parents or guardians that they could withdraw their child from this research if required. Whilst I felt this was a very efficient approach to communicating with parents I expressed my concern to the head teacher that I felt that this was the absolute minimum level of contact with parents and guardians that was permissible in this kind of study. I also explained that, with her permission, I would greatly appreciate being allowed to contact parents and invite them to a creative session and if possible conduct short semi-structured interviews with a small sample group of them.

The head teacher was adamant that she did not want to bother parents with a request for them to be involved in this research. Whilst I was disappointed with this decision I felt I had to respect the boundary she had established. I was conscious that to strongly challenge her view on this matter would compromise the entire research process at this early stage. I could also appreciate the head teacher's argument that parents were very busy and that, from her point of view, there were other school priorities that she needed parents to get involved with.

This scenario represents a relatively clear-cut situation in which I had to compromise both the ethical and methodological ambitions of my research. What this situation emphasized to me was that within the context of this school there were clear boundaries within which I had to operate and that my power to challenge these boundaries was limited. Following these negotiations it was clear to me that the head teacher was supportive of research being conducted in the school focusing on the area of

creativity, voice and agency but only as long as this research did not affect or compromise other agendas that were being pursued within the school. An additional area I felt this scenario highlighted was that the status of creativity, and most definitely the status of my research, was much lower in the head teacher's priorities than the status of school agendas such as parental engagement and inclusion.

The Deputy Head Teacher

The deputy head teacher was a gatekeeper I greatly enjoyed talking to. It was not uncommon for me to engage in long conversations with her on the subject of creativity. The deputy head teacher was someone who appeared to be strongly committed to developing the school's creativity agenda and who brought to discussions a wealth of previous experience of developing creative teaching and learning practices.

I was conscious, however, that the deputy head teacher and I had different agendas in regard to our research interests. I was conscious that my agenda focused on exploring creativity in terms of how it affected both pupils' and staff members' expression of voice and agency within their participation in school culture. In contrast, the deputy head's focus was finding ways to evaluate creativity's impact on pupils' educational attainment. The consequence of this was that the deputy head teacher and I greatly enjoyed debating fundamental questions relating to questions such as *'What is creativity?', 'Can pupils with PMLD be creative?'* , and if so *'How do you map and evaluate pupils creativity?'* but our enthusiasms waned in regard to pursuing each other contrasting methodological ideas and emphases.

The deputy head teacher often challenged me to explain how I justified adopting a qualitative and critical approach to studying this subject area when she felt strongly a more quantitative approach would be more successful at revealing the impact of the school's creativity agenda. These conversations were invaluable in terms of supporting me to reflect upon my own paradigmatic orientation and the values and principles that underpinned it as she often challenged me to articulate

them. These conversations also helped me appreciate in much clearer detail the pressures and responsibilities of this particular gatekeeper's role within the school, particularly in terms of how she justified to the head teacher her decisions regarding how funding was allocated from the school's budget to creative projects.

During the fieldwork I would meet with the deputy head teacher (along with the creative coordinator) regularly, usually at the beginning and end of each phase of data collection. During these meetings she never recommended I made radical changes to my research plan. However, she did often question individual aspects of my methodological choices and offer alternative suggestions, many of which I chose to pursue, as the next chapter will make clear. To conclude, my relationship with the deputy head was one I extremely valued as I considered it to be one based upon honesty and mutual respect. I greatly appreciated the reflective, forthright and informed feedback this gatekeeper took the time to provide me and I am certain this research would not of been able to achieve the depth that it did without her patience, support and enthusiasm.

The Creative Coordinator

As will be made clear in the next chapter this gatekeeper was hugely influential in regard to the sampling strategy undertaken during this research, both in regard to influencing which members of staff participated in the research and which pupils.

The school had created the role of creative coordinator approximately five years before this research started. The person in this role was relieved of full-time classroom duties. Instead, the creative coordinator worked in a peripatetic capacity visiting each class once a week to collaborate with classes using creative teaching methodologies. The creative coordinator was also responsible for overseeing and managing the many diverse collaborative projects the school undertook with external partners and arts organizations. The particular member of staff in this role during the duration of this research had been with the school for over fifteen years and was a hugely valued and respected member of staff.

Without the support of this gatekeeper this research would not have been possible. This gatekeeper initiated many pivotal meetings with the head teacher, deputy head teacher as well as crucial meetings with members of staff with whom I would later undertake extensive collaborative practice. There were a number of beneficial dimensions of this gatekeeper-researcher relationship. For example, this gatekeeper made himself very available to me throughout the research process and was very responsive in regard to returning emails and phone calls and establishing meetings. This member of staff was also able to communicate very quickly with any member of staff within the school regardless of their status and position, as he seemed to be respected and admired by all who worked in the school. This meant that he was often able to negotiate complicated issues of access quickly and efficiently. A more problematic dimension of this gatekeeper-researcher relationship was that this member of staff had very definite ideas about whom I should and should not work with and how the research should compliment the school's creativity agenda. This meant that I had very little control over the sampling of teacher participants, especially in the first few phases of data collection.

As my fieldwork progressed I became conscious that this gatekeeper- researcher relationship potentially added a problematic level of bias to my data collection process, as I was tending to only work with members of staff who were positively for the school's creativity agenda. This issue of bias was something I decided to explore over time rather than confront outright. This was because, as an ethnographer, I was interested in exploring with this gatekeeper the rationale underlying his sampling strategy decisions and to do that I felt I had to cooperate with his choices rather than challenge them.

Conclusion

This section emphasizes the importance of critically reflecting upon the relationships that are formed between researchers and gatekeepers. It acknowledges that from an ethnographic perspective the complexities of these relationships can be seen as important units of data worthy of analysis and interpretation in and of themselves within this type of inquiry. In this study reflecting upon the

process of negotiating access with gatekeepers has been considered an integral way through which I have been able to develop an understanding of how this culture's dominant ideological values are impacting on the forms of social relation that are available to participants and myself. Finally, this section has highlighted how uncritical or passive forms of gatekeeper-researcher relations can lead to bias infiltrating aspects of the data collection process, particularly in regard to how sampling strategies are formulated. This in turn can lead to some research participants being excluded from participating in the research. As the fieldwork progressed I became increasingly aware that, as a critical ethnographer, it was essential I applied the ethically reflective checklist as a tool to try and maintain and challenge this type of bias.

Confidentiality

In this study it was a pre-requisite of the Head Teacher that all names of children and staff, along with the name of the school, were anonymized within this thesis and that this procedure was also followed in any other further publications that arose from this thesis. Although the data collected during this research was not considered to be of a highly sensitive nature the importance of respecting staff confidentiality was discussed and emphasized in initial conversations with the head teacher. Therefore, the importance of storing data securely and not sharing information between class groups or individual members of staff without consent being attained was discussed and agreed with the head teacher prior to the study commencing.

As Cohen et al (2007, p. 65) acknowledge research participants often judge researchers on the extent to which they 'keep faith' with those who have helped them with the research process. Kimmel (1988) extends this idea observing that where practice concerning confidentiality is perceived as weak research participants' cooperation is likely to be minimal. As a critical ethnographer I knew one of my key aims was to delve deeply in to staff and pupils differing perceptions of the school culture as the creative agenda was implemented. Many staff from the outset appeared open to discussing their personal feelings on this topic with me. However, this placed me in a highly responsible position

within the school in which the maintenance of a clear and transparent code of conduct regarding confidentiality was required.

One way in which I chose to overtly demonstrate my commitment to maintaining confidentiality was through providing written summaries for class groups and interested parties at the end of each data collection phase so that they could clearly see how I was writing up and reporting data and so that they could offer feedback on the ways in which I was anonymizing people's personal comments and observations. In keeping with the ethically reflexive checklist I tried to always remain open to staff feedback and to assimilate ideas staff made in terms of how I could improve how I was reporting participants voice and agency during creative activities. Staff feedback was particularly invaluable in this area in regard to representing the voice and agency of pupils in ways that reflected the ethical values of the school.

Conclusion

This section has outlined the ethical code of practice that has been implemented in this research. The core values and principles used to guide the practical dimensions of the implementation of an ethically reflexive checklist have been detailed. Finally, the ethical complexities of conducting social research with participants of various levels of status, power and influence have been acknowledged, along with the specific challenges that arose in this research in relation to establishing mutually respectful, empathetic and ethically sound research relations.

Sampling Strategy

A non-probability approach was taken towards sampling during this research. Through utilizing this type of sampling technique I am aware that there is no possibility of generalizing the findings of this inquiry beyond the participants who were involved. However, the data gathered is still considered valuable due to its ability to contribute to discourse within the fields of '*research with children with PMLD'* and '*creativity and education*'. In regard to pupil participants a purposive sampling strategy was employed as these participants were selected specifically on the grounds that they were pupils with PMLD who were situated in classes led by teachers who were open to volunteering to be involved in this research.

It can also be argued in later phases of the data collection process I used 'boosted' sampling methods (Gorard, 2003; Cohen et al, 2007) as I approached gatekeepers to discuss how I could include more TAs in my sample as I felt their views had been under-represented to date in the data collection process. It is also important to note that I regularly approached gatekeepers to request that I be permitted to interview and work with teachers I knew to be resistant to the creativity agenda during the fieldwork process. This form of sampling is often described as 'negative case sampling' (Cohen et al, 2007). However, gatekeepers were against this process taking place. This led to me becoming aware that the sampling strategy I was able to employ was biased towards those who were positively in favour of the school's creativity agenda.

Analysis Framework

Introduction

This research has adopted an iterative approach to analysing data (Berkowitz, 2013). This approach demands the researcher utilizes a looped approach to analysing data, where they undertake multiple rounds of revisiting data in the hope of identify new and emerging questions about phenomena, as well as, hopefully, unearthing new connections between contrasting data sets. Within my interpretation of iteration I see iteration as both a mechanical operation and a reflexive operation. Therefore, I consider it essential that codes and categories are comprehensive and transferable across contrasting sets of data, whilst at the same time I consider it essential that in my fieldwork journal I continually make note of individual components of data that defy neat categorization. In turn, this means that I am able to identify and develop new codes and categories by which to understand social phenomenon.

Discourse Analysis

During this research I have amassed a wealth of interview and observational data. I have used techniques associated with discourse analysis to organize and interpret this data. Discourse analysis typically involves researchers identifying recurring words, phrases and uses of language. It can also involve researchers looking closely at the kinds of social action and social relations that stem from particular linguistic constructions and behaviours being enacted within the research site. Habermas (1970, p.368), in his exploration of the role of discourse analysis in social research, argued that all speech acts have a 'double structure' and that they can be studied not only in regard to what is said but also in regard to what is done or, in his language, 'performed' as a result of the speech act. Therefore, according to Habermas' interpretation of discourse analysis, the aim of analysing data is to discover, through ideological critique, the repressive forces that 'systematically distort'

communication (cited in Cohen et al, 2007, p. 389). Heeding Habermas's words, I have attempted to use discourse analysis as a means of revealing how staff and pupil's words and non-verbal voice acts are translated in to social action within activity associated with the school's creativity agenda.

Selected writing style

Rather than adopting a detached and passive writing style in this thesis I have made the decision to adopt a first-person, reflexive and empathic writing style throughout the text. For this reason I use the pronoun 'I' in each chapter. This decision is influenced by my identification with various feminist and critical theorists' work on the concepts of personhood and authorship, and my on-going contemplation of the notion that at the heart of all feminist and critical inquiries lies the challenge of unpicking 'the politics of knowing and of being known' (Lather, 1992, p.91). It is my belief that to confront the complexities of this challenge it is essential as a researcher I am able to critique, deconstruct and challenge my own sense of subjecthood and identity within this text. For these reasons I consider it essential I remain committed to revealing my own subjectivities and insecurities within this text.

Reflecting upon my own status and influence within this text has been a critical component of the production of this text. However, arguably more important and fundamental to the success of this text, has been finding a philosophically, ethically and theoretically sound ways of representing Others. One area that I have consistently struggled with throughout this research is the issue of how to represent the voices of pupils with PMLD in this text. Deciding how to approach this aspect of the research has been beset by both practical and ethical ambiguities from the outset and I see this as an on-going challenge rather than one that I have been able to resolve within this research experience.

All of the pupils I have collaborated with during my fieldwork, in my opinion, have a very strong voice and sense of agency that has the power to greatly influence the structure and direction of creative practice within this school. However, each pupil's voice and agency is expressed entirely through

physical movement and non-verbal vocalizations. Whilst physical movement and vocalizations can be measured in terms of duration, intensity and frequency this research has chosen to avoid such positivistic approaches to interpreting voice and agency. Alternatively, this research has made its focus exploring what physical movements and vocalizations mean in terms of concepts such as subjecthood, identity, power and autonomy. This means that fundamental questions have had to be addressed regarding what constitutes a legitimate and valid translation of a pupil's non-verbal responses and actions. The analytical and representational solutions I have come up with for tackling these challenges are far from perfect and they are presented in the next chapter in a way that I hope fully acknowledges their imperfections and ambiguities. By fully 'showing my workings' in regard to analysing pupils' voice and agency my aim is to contribute to further discourse on the subject of research with pupils with PMLD and not to offer any form of conclusive commentary. Ultimately, I conduct this research so as to be able to delve deeper in to questions such as 'What is voice?' and 'What is the connection between voice and social agency?'

In the chapter that follows I have chosen to include first-person narratives, produced by my self, that I am arguing constitute translations of pupils' voice and agency in creative sessions. The 'voice' that is represented on the page is neither strictly entirely my own, nor, do I consider it to be in any way entirely the voice of the child. It is a hybrid interpretation of the voice acts that have been produced during particular forms of situated participatory activity.

Komulainen's (2007, p.11-28) analysis of Bakhtin's theories of 'multivoicedness' and 'mutuality' has helped me understand some of what is occurring when I attempt to produce written interpretations of pupils' non-verbal voice. In her analysis of Bakhtin, Komulainen suggests that any written interpretation of voice enacted in a social context needs to be understood as being the amalgamation of many layers of voice being enacted simultaneously. Therefore, where I present an interpretation of a child's view on a creative activity, this view is partly the child's, partly the many members of staff who have commented on the child's voice acts, partly my own voice and partly the many social, economic, political, philosophical and theoretical values that influence how social interaction is structured within this environment.

To conclude, I wish to make it explicit that I am conscious that I am not representing the authentic voices of pupils when I try and put their voice acts in to a first-person narratives in this text. What I am trying to do in these sections is to problematise and deconstruct representing the concept of voice in this type of study. I fully acknowledge my approach is floored and ethically challenging but in acknowledging this and struggling with the dilemmas this situation produces I am trying to remain critically engaged with the concept of translating voice and voice acts within a text that is restricted to only using written language. I am acutely aware that what ends up on the page is a poor relation of what was physically, socially and emotionally exchanged in the creative session.

Finally, I acknowledge that the concept of 'giving voice' to communities of people whose voices are perceived to be maginalised within society is a complicated and ethically challenging concept. An individual's voice is theirs it is not something that can be gifted by others. However, by establishing forms of social interaction that place an emphasis on voice, in some contexts, individuals' voices can become amplified and more accessible to those who have previously failed to hear or understand the meaning of their voice acts. Returning to Bakhtin (1935), he argued that meaning is only generated when opportunities are generated for two or more voices to come in to contact. Therefore, according to Bakhtin, voice is always a social construction. Acknowledging the strong influence of Bakhtin upon this aspect of my inquiry, the position I am trying to convey in this section is that any knowledge claims I make in this text of a pupil's sense of reality needs to be understood as a social construction and as an invitation for further debate. What I am stressing here is that my interpretations are not in any way an attempt to present an accurate, definitive or fixed interpretation of a pupil's voice.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the contrasting paradigmatic and methodological influences that have shaped the design of this research process. The chapter has stressed the extent to which this inquiry's research methodology can be best understood in relation to the concept of 'bricolage' as outlined by Kincheloe and Berry (2004). The chapter has also emphasized that the methodological design of this research is one that has continually evolved as my understanding of the research site, its culture and the complex nature of research participant's identities has become clearer. It has also stressed the centrality within this research of maintaining a continually reflective and reflexive awareness of the dynamic influence of participant voice and agency within the research process.

Chapter 4: Presentation of data and discussion of findings

Introduction

This chapter takes a non-traditional approach to presenting and discussing data. Rather than presenting results followed by discussion the chapter juxtaposes the presentation of results with continual analysis and discussion of the strengths, weaknesses and complexity of the data that was gathered in each individual cycle of data collection. This is considered an appropriate approach in this context due to the iterative and narrative nature of the research process.

During the fieldwork process data was collected using cyclical data collection methods that allowed the researcher to engage in an extended reflective and reflexive analysis process. Over a sixteen months fieldwork period meaning arising from data was incrementally produced, interpreted, questioned and reinterpreted. In this chapter it is considered appropriate to present each data collection cycle in chronological order using a narrative approach. A narrative approach was selected on the basis that when employing critical ethnography methodology it is essential to draw attention within the text to the major areas of challenge, conflict and resolution that have been encountered, as this, in many respects, constitutes the overarching meaning of the research process.

Briefly, prior to commencing the chapter two decisions regarding terminology will be explored and contextualized. Firstly, a rationale will be provided that explains why the term 'PMLD' is used very sparingly within this chapter. Secondly, the distinction between the terms 'creative teaching' and 'creative learning' are examined and a rationale is provided that highlights why it was considered important to analyse staff usage of these terms throughout the data collection process.

In previous chapters it has been made clear that a central focus of this inquiry lies in understanding how pupils with PMLD access and interpret the school's creativity agenda. Whilst all pupils attending this school have a physical, learning and/or additional need there is immense variety of learning

ability amongst the pupil population of the school. All pupils are assessed educationally according to the P-level scales (DfE, 2014), an assessment scale that outlines attainment targets for pupils aged 5-16 with special educational needs. This emphasis on the P-scales means that in school discourse pupils are categorized according to their assessed P-level rather than terminology such as 'PMLD', 'SLD' or 'MLD'.

At the beginning of the research process the researcher asked key gatekeepers if they could select pupils for her to collaborate with during the fieldwork process with PMLD. These gatekeepers were able to do this; however, the researcher noted that these staff, as well as the other staff members who took part in the data collection process, rarely used the term 'PMLD'. Instead they commonly used the phrase 'P1-3 learner' to refer to pupils who had the most complex and profound forms of learning need within their pupil population. Therefore, to reflect the language of staff who took part in this data collection process the term 'P1-3 learner' is used repeatedly throughout the chapter.

Secondly, understanding the theoretical difference between the two terms 'creative teaching' and 'creative learning' emerged as an important component of interpreting teachers' discourse on creativity within education. These two terms, as interview data will reveal, were used fairly interchangeable by staff in interview scenarios. From a theoretical perspective distinctions are often drawn between these two terms (NACCCE, 1999; Craft, 2005; QCA, 2005a). As Craft (2005, p. 41) acknowledges 'creative teaching' is a term used to specifically refer to the creative aspects of a teacher's pedagogical practice whereas in contrast 'creative learning' refers to any form of experience that a member of an educational environment encounters that they, or those around them, identify as having creative features. Therefore, creative learning experiences are not unique to one sub-group within a school culture. Instead, 'creative learning' is an experience that may be experienced by diverse groups within a school culture, including pupils, teachers, TAs, parents and Governors. Therefore, as Craft highlights (2005, p.41-46) it can be interesting to compare and contrast participants' contrasting views on the 'creative' aspects of their learning experiences following a creative teaching input as this can assist interpretations being formulated of what components of pedagogical practice constitute 'being creative' within a specific educational setting. In summary,

following Craft's recommendation, this is a process the researcher instigated many times within her fieldwork.

Another factor to acknowledge prior to commencing the presentation and discussion of data is the pivotal position of the adapted multi-sensory learning environment staff refer to as *The Space* within this chapter. From the outset of the fieldwork process it has been clear that staff attitudes to *The Space,* and its contribution to creative teaching and learning practices has varied and, therefore, within the data collection process I have been committed to accessing a cross-section of this school community's views on *The Space* so as to be in a position to formulate a response to the question:

How pivotal is *The Space* to this school's model of creativity?

Finally, in the fieldwork process I have continually tried to achieve a balance between collecting the views of staff and collecting the views of pupils. As will be detailed, in each cycle I have had to be flexible in terms of where I am located within the school and with whom I am allocated to collaborate with. This has meant that in some cycles I have spent a greater amount of time collaborating with one participant group rather than another. This continual process of re-negotiating and re-establishing collaborative research relations is mentioned here as it became a major component of the fieldwork experience. As a result of this, an emphasis is placed within this chapter on detailing how gatekeepers and I approached negotiating how to identify appropriate participants to be involved in each individual cycle of data collection. In addition an emphasis is placed on analysing how particular decisions affected the depth and validity of this research.

For a full breakdown of the data collection process, including a breakdown of which methods were used when and with which participants, please see Appendix One.

Phase One

Introduction

The first research cycle was undertaken from October to December 2010. During this initial fieldwork process I was conscious that I was attempting to establish new forms of relationship with staff and experimenting with new ways of collaborating with this community of learners. One of the key aims of this first data collection cycle was to test the methodological plan I had constructed and the robustness and appropriateness of individual research methods I had selected to use. This formative data collection process generated some valuable observational and interview data and some important reflective methodological experiences that were to greatly influence the structure and form of following cycles of data collection. For these reasons key methodological reflections relating to the challenges involved in establishing research relations in this context are discussed in detail in this section.

Cycle One was undertaken in collaboration with a Year 3 teacher and 'Child 1', a participant that has been previously introduced in 'Chapter 1: Introduction'. As well as exploring data gathered through collaborations with these two parties the section will also detail data gathered through two other events; firstly data gathered through attending an after school staff meeting and secondly data collected through attending a twilight staff consultation session.

During this cycle one form of methodology (action research), hereafter referred to as a method in this chapter (in accordance with the rationale set out in the previous chapter) and three other contrasting methods were utilized to collect data. These methods will be discussed and analysed separately in this section. The methods were:

Method 1: Action Research

This method was used to frame the collaborative work between the teacher and the researcher.

Method 2: Semi-structured interviews.

Interviews were undertaken at the beginning and end of this cycle with the Year 3 class teacher and the Creativity Coordinator.

Method 3: Participant Observation

Within the interpretation of this method, specific emphasis was placed upon Mandell's (1988) theory of ' the role of least adult' and the use of kinesthetic forms of communication. This adapted interpretation of this method was used to frame the collaborative work between Child 1 and the researcher.

Method 4: A combination of participant and non-participant observation.

This combined method approach was used during the staff meeting and the staff consultation session.

Alongside discussion of how these methods were applied during the fieldwork process the framework used to analyse data is articulated and further clarified in this section. The analysis framework employed in this research can be summarized as an iterative process in which I combined forms of reflective and reflexive practice to produce sets of questions and reflective statements that I then triangulated with participants in order to produce modified lists of questions and statements that more accurately represented participants' personal experience and understanding of creativity within their school during the period of the data collection cycle. This approach was used so that I could,

over time, analyse how individuals' questions and statements were changing and developing as their participation in the school's creative agenda was evolving.

To conclude, the structure of this section will be as follows: Firstly, the timeframe of the cycle is outlined. Then each individual method of data collection is presented. Discussion of each method includes sections where data is analysed and potential findings are discussed. Alongside these processes the analysis framework used to interpret data is continually reflected upon as its strengths and weaknesses are identified. This scrutiny is undertaken so as to continually emphasize the subjective and iterative nature of the inquiry.

Timeframe: October to December 2010

During this period I worked with a year three class two half days a week over a five weeks period. In addition to this I came in to school for specific after school meetings as was deemed relevant and appropriate by the Creativity Coordinator.

My time in the school during Cycle One was structured as follows.

1. I undertook five fifty minutes sessions once a week where I collaborated with the teacher in the classroom according to the action research plan that we had agreed.

2. I undertook five fifty minutes sessions in *The Space* collaborating with Child 1. The theme of *The Space* during this period was 'Snow World'. Either the teacher or a TA from the class led these sessions. As well as the session leader, myself and Child 1 there would also be present at least one other TA and between three to four other pupils.

3. I attended one after school staff meeting lasting approximately one hour. Eight class teachers, the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head teacher and the Creativity Coordinator attended this meeting. Whilst not deeming it appropriate to invite me to all staff meetings the Creativity Coordinator invited me to

attend this meeting due to the fact that the focus of discussion was exploring how teachers felt using

The Space with their individual classes was affecting pupil progress.

4. I attended a whole-staff after school consultation session discussing the range of themes that were

to be explored in *The Space* over the coming year. Teaching Assistants, Class Teachers, the Deputy

Head Teacher and the Creativity Coordinator attended this meeting. The Creativity Coordinator

facilitated the meeting.

Method 1: Action Research (AR)

In regard to the use of this method the teacher and myself had two planning meetings to establish an

AR focus prior to their cycle commencing. At the first of these meetings the Creativity Coordinator

was present and he assisted the teacher and myself in establishing a shared understanding of what

the purpose of this action research process was and how, particularly in terms of the teacher's

experience, this AR cycle was to relate to the school's overarching creativity agenda. It was

acknowledged by all that in many respects the AR process was supporting two distinct aims. For the

teacher it was an opportunity to explore in detail an aspect of her teaching practice with the support

of an external practitioner (myself) whose drama education practice she was familiar with. For myself

it was an opportunity to gain a greater insight in to how a member of teaching staff approached

developing their creative teaching practice. During this meeting it was established that the teacher

had a basic understanding of the concept of AR and that she was keen to use this type of method as a

means to reflect upon her pedagogical practice.

At the start of the AR cycle the teacher was entering her fourth year as a teacher and her second year

of working at the school. The teacher was clear from the outset that she did not want the findings of

this AR process to be shared formally with her peers but she was happy to discuss her experiences

with the Creativity Coordinator and myself and to produce short written reflection sheets that

detailed the AR intervention she had chosen to use. On these sheets the teacher also outlined her

reflections of how she felt the intervention had gone and ideas for future sessions. I requested

permission from the teacher to discuss the content of these reflections in this thesis. The teacher

gave her consent on the grounds that all information was anonymized.

Defining my role within this action research cycle

Following the first planning meeting attended by the Creativity Coordinator where roles, aims and

boundaries were debated and agreed in regard to the structure of the AR process I spent some

additional time with the teacher further elaborating ideas on the types of role she and I would ideally

like to adopt within the AR cycle. I was conscious during these discussions of not compromising any of

the boundaries that had been formally agreed with the Creativity Coordinator. Instead, my intention

during these conversations was to clarify further with the teacher what our shared sense was of what

our ideal collaborative working style would be.

In these discussions I summarized that my preferred role in this AR cycle would be that of a 'critical

friend' (Swaffield & MacBeath, 2005; Deuchar, 2008). When clarifying what was meant by this term I

described this role as one in which the individual offers reflections and feedback to the person they

are supporting whilst not offering any form of direct instruction as they are not the person leading the

practice intervention. Alongside outlining this concept I emphasized that in practical sessions I would

like to adopt a stance akin to that of a participant observer, in that I would like to work alongside the

teacher, other members of staff and pupils as much as I could whilst not being in a role of

responsibility or authority at any time.

Through further discussion it became clear that the teacher wished to negotiate a more active and

collaborative level of engagement than I was proposing. It became clear that she wished me to adopt

a role where I was willing to offer ideas and practical solutions should she feel stuck during creative

sessions. Upon reflection I felt it was appropriate to agree to these terms in this instance, as I was

aware following discussion with the Creativity Coordinator, that the teacher had been clear from the

outset that her motivation to get involved in this cycle was based upon her desire to receive some

mentoring in regard to the development of her creative teaching practice. I was conscious the role of

mentor was not my preferred research relation option and that In future cycles I would like to be in a

less responsible and interventionist role. However, I felt it was important to respect the teacher's

request in this instance and not compromise the trust and respect built up between myself, the

teacher and the Creativity Coordinator during our previous planning meeting.

I was conscious during this period that as Hanley & Brinton Lykes (2010, p.121) argue 'Collaborative

forms of inquiry often blur the boundaries between research and practice' and for this reason

researchers are required in their fieldwork to continually reflect upon the intersections between

methodological design, practice etiquette and ethical considerations as they negotiate and establish

their collaborative relationships in the field. As these initial discussions between the teacher and

myself progressed I became conscious of how both the teacher and I were bringing to the AR process

many varied aims and objectives as educators and researchers. Therefore, I reflected upon how

significant compromise was going to be within this particular collaborative relationship if mutually

respectful and reciprocal research relations were to be established. I also reflected that it was going

to be essential to proceed at a pace that allowed sufficient space and time for consent to be

continually re-examined and re-established between the teacher and myself as our collaborative

practice evolved.

During this time I was aware that, in regard to my work with pupils, in my fieldwork plan I had

allocated considerable amounts of time and space to renegotiating and reestablishing consent with

pupils. During this first AR cycle I became conscious of the extent to which I had neglected to reflect

upon the significance of this matter in regard to my collaborations with staff. This process led me to

consider perspectives such as Ridpath et al's (2009, p. 371-375) theory that social researchers need to

be aware of the 'crude nature' of some forms of consent, such as consent gathered through

participants signing consent forms or meetings with gatekeepers (two methods I was conscious I had

used). This is because, as Ridpath et al argue, such means can create 'concrete forms' of collaborative

practice that, in turn, lead to participants becoming resistant to taking part in research as they feel

they have not been able to execute any influence in regard to negotiating the defining features of their role within the research.

In conjunction with my analysis of Ridpath et al's work I also considered other perspectives on this topic such as Heron and Reason's (2001, p.179) model of 'collaborative inquiry' where it is argued placing an emphasis on continually revisiting the concept of informed concept is a critical component of effective collaborative social research. By problematizing the collaborative relationship between the teacher and myself during this first AR cycle I was able to appreciate the importance of acknowledging negotiating consent with staff as an on-going and dynamic element of this research process rather than an element that was static or easily resolved through simple forms or conversations with gatekeepers.

At this time I was also aware that I was undergoing a process of transition in regard to my role within the school. I was conscious that, over time, I had become an 'insider' within this school culture due to the many peripatetic drama projects I had led in the school and the close working relationships I had developed with individual teachers during these projects. However, through beginning to implement my methodological plan I was aware I was increasingly creating situations where I was re-positioning myself as more of an 'outsider' in relation to some of the school's creative practice. This scenario, I felt, was arising because I was directly challenging, through the questions I was posing, how collaborative relationships were being established in the school. This led me to reflect more deeply upon the strengths and weaknesses of undertaking research in environments where participants already know the researcher, and therefore, potentially have established expectations of how they will conduct themselves.

This experience led to me noting in my reflective journal the precarious status of her research at this stage of the fieldwork as I attempted to negotiate new terms of engagement with individual members of staff and, essentially, formulate a new kind of role identity for myself within the school culture. As things transpired these precarious, sometimes insecure, status experiences, that seemed so insignificant yet troubling at this early stage of proceedings, were to become an important catalyst for

me in terms of me being able to decipher one of the key dimensions of the school's creative agenda namely; the role of power and interpersonal relations in shaping the school's creative practice.

Through these early and unexpected experiences of feeling like an 'outsider', where previously I had felt like an 'insider', I was able to acknowledge the fundamental importance of balancing within my methodological plan time spent stepping back and observing school activity in as non-intrusive fashion as possible and time spent outwardly demonstrating to staff my passionate commitment in regard to making contributions to the school's evolving creative practice. Ultimately, these experiences led me to reflect upon the fact that I was an 'invited guest' within this culture and like all guests my position was temporary and fragile. Whilst the school appeared happy to let me in to their daily culture I became aware that this invitation was gifted with the caveat that I adhered to a particular set of expectations. The dominant expectation, as I interpreted it, was that I participated as an active and honest co-collaborator within this environment who was open to having her educational and research values challenged. I did not mind adhering to this expectation because, whilst daunting at times, it was an expectation I felt strongly complimented my own paradigmatic and practice values.

Defining the teacher's inquiry area

In the initial planning sessions the teacher identified that she wished to develop creative sessions in the classroom that extended the work she and her pupils undertook in their weekly sessions in *The Space*. She also wished to look at the transitions from the classroom in to *The Space* in terms of the use of 'objects of reference' (Ockleford, 1994; McLarty, 1995; Parks, 1997). To frame the AR process the teacher formulated the following question:

Does undertaking preparatory classroom activities lead to an increase in pupils' participation in *The Space*?

In addition to this focus, from a practical perspective, the teacher identified she was interested in exploring the affects of techniques such as role-play and thematic free-play within the classroom activities she developed.

What data was collected during this AR cycle?

The table in Appendix Two summarizes the actions, reflections and amended actions the teacher developed during this AR cycle. I constructed this table through analysing the teacher's weekly reflection sheets and then triangulating with the teacher whether each condensed entry in the table could be said to represent an accurate description of the AR process. Outcomes of this AR process can be summarized as follows:

- Despite professing to be unconfident in regard to using drama techniques the teacher used a range of sophisticated drama education tools during the AR process.

- The teacher consistently thought of original and creative interventions to use with her class. This meant I was able to maintain a relatively non-intrusive role within the AR cycle and that I contributed very few ideas to each weekly session.

- The teacher introduced many multi-sensory dimensions to her creative practice. In particular she developed activities that combined aural and tactile experiential qualities.

- Over the weeks the sessions took on a distinctly ritualistic character with physical and musical motifs being repeated and extended each week.

- Repetition emerged as an important component of this class' creative practice.

What does this data suggest about how creativity is being interpreted within this school culture?

After each session in the classroom the teacher and I would spend approximately 20 minutes discussing the AR session. This would involve reflecting upon the key areas of (1) Actions implemented (2) Reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of actions implemented and (3) New action ideas for the following session. Over the week the teacher would also undertake two additional reflective tasks. Firstly, she would write a few notes on each pupil participant's responses during the session, linking her notes to the school's overall learning targets for that pupil for that term. Secondly, she would write up her personal AR reflections. The teacher would then share these items with myself during the following week when we met.

Something I noted during this AR cycle was that this teacher had a high level of uncertainty regarding the extent to which her pedagogical ideas were compatible with the school's vision of 'being creative'. In reflective sessions the teacher often appeared highly concerned about whether her choices had been 'right' or 'wrong' in regard to what was expected of her. This led to me reflecting upon the significance of the following question:

To what extent is there currently a shared sense of understanding of what creativity is amongst teaching staff?

And the related question:

What are the cultural and pedagogical impacts of staff developing their own individual interpretations of creativity in isolation of each other?

Secondly, what emerged from this AR cycle was that this particular teacher was very concerned about what her team of teaching assistants (TAs) thought of her creative practice. In particular she was

concerned about how they were evaluating her skills when she went in to role as a character in sessions. In this respect the teacher appeared to be concerned about looking silly in front of these members of staff. During my time spent in this classroom I became aware that different TAs had significantly different opinions on the benefits of the creative practice being developed in this class environment. In regard to this dimension of the AR experience I became increasingly empathetic towards the teacher in regard to acknowledging how much effort and courage it took to put some of her more ambitious ideas in to practice, especially where she was being met with antipathy and resistance from other members of staff based in the class.

Another aspect of the teacher's practice that struck me was the teacher's interest in creating a sense of 'flow' for her pupils within creative sessions (Csikzentmihalyi, 1996; 2008). Here, the word 'flow' is being used to refer to pedagogic activities in which pupils are able to generate a sense of experiential fluency within learning activities through being able to select, shape and pursue learning experiences 'as an end in itself' (Csikzentmihalyi, 1996, p.113). In reflective discussions the year three teacher regularly stressed that she placed an emphasis on this type of pedagogy because she wanted to create opportunities for her pupils to be able to extend their interaction with aspects of their learning environment in ways that were self-governed, pupil initiated and open-ended.

Connected to her commitment to creating experiential flow within sessions was the teacher's commitment to adopting a thematic and cross-curriculum approach to sessions. I became aware that one of the practical ways in which the teacher did this was through ensuring objects of reference and role-play characters' costumes and props were available during free-play periods in the classroom as well as during transitions within the school undertaken by pupils and TAs from one place to another, such as everyday transitions to the lunch hall at dinnertime. In addition, during one post AR reflection meeting (week 3) the teacher informed me that she was currently using props from the creative sessions in maths lesson, thereby replacing the usual materials that were used during this lesson.

Finally, towards the end of Cycle One (week 4) the teacher commented that she had noted that one TA from her class, (one out of a team of four TAs based in the class) was increasingly joining children

in extended free-play activities that utilized the objects of reference used in creative sessions and that this was leading to this TA choosing to be more involved in discussing potential creative learning activities. I felt these interactions represented a significant event in the life of this class group and I was interested in exploring with the teacher the extent to which she felt this TA's actions were relieving some of the burdens she was experiencing in regard to being solely responsible for fostering a sense of creativity within this class community. I chose to specifically concentrate on this experience during the interviews I conducted with the teacher during week five of this cycle. In addition to the questions I had already formatted for this interview I asked the teacher to elaborate on how important she felt developing a sense of collegiate working was to fostering successful creative teaching and learning practice.

Method 2: Semi-Structured Interviews

I undertook four semi-structured interviews during this cycle. I undertook two with the teacher and two with the Creativity Coordinator. The first set of interviews took place in week two of the cycle and the second set in week five. I made the decision to ask the same questions of both individuals in order to collect interview data that could be cross-referenced. As the AR cycle progressed I became increasingly conscious of specific inquiry angles I wished to pursue with both interviewees and, therefore, I developed a subsidiary list of interviewee-specific questions in advance of each interview. The pre-set questions I asked both interviewees were:

<u>Interview 1</u>

Please outline your understanding of the word creativity?

Please describe a time when you have felt your practice has been particularly creative?

What do you find most challenging about being creative?

> *How have you found the creative activity you have been involved with this half term?*
>
> *What do you think are the strengths of the creative practice you have developed this half term?*
>
> *What do you think are the weaknesses of the creative work you have undertaken this half term?*

Both participants gave their consent for the researcher to record these interviews on a dictaphone. The researcher then transcribed these interviews and began the process of clustering units of relevant meaning, identifying themes and generating summaries of what people had discussed.

Summary of teacher's interview

The teacher defined creative teaching as 'teaching that takes me off the script'. In the interview the teacher observed that she had been surprised by the extent to which she had 'quite enjoyed' parts of the AR sessions. In the second interview the teacher stated:

> *'I still feel out of my comfort zone, particularly when I try and play characters. I feel self-conscious. I worry that I am doing it wrong'.*

In terms of identifying aspects of her creative practice she felt were effective the teacher reflected that the forms of thematic and cross-curriculum activity that she had developed over the five weeks had pleased her the most. In terms of weaknesses she felt that she had been too directive in some of the activities she had used and that some activities were not open-ended and sensory enough to engage P1-3 learners. She observed:

> *'I think sometimes I move the action on too fast when really I should let pupils have more*
>
> *time to explore objects. This is why I have started to leave things from the creative sessions*
>
> *within easy reach of pupils and TAs during free-play sessions'.*

When asked to identify the most challenging part of her creative practice the teacher acknowledged it was the process of engaging some of the more resistant TAs who worked in her class:

> *'One of my TAs asked me if she could take a lead in our session in The Space the other day, I*
>
> *said yes, and she was fantastic. But, I also work with three other TAs who seem disinterested*
>
> *during the creative activities. To be honest I find this stressful sometimes'.*

To conclude, this AR cycle appeared to positively support the teacher in developing areas of her creative teaching and learning practice whilst at the same time appearing to be quite challenging for her from a personal and managerial perspective. Through this collaboration I became conscious of some of the contrasting pressures and responsibilities this teacher was juggling as she developed her creative practice. Some of these pressures related to the teacher's own self-confidence and knowledge in regard to using creative methods. However, a larger percentage of these pressures appeared to arise due to factors relating to the teacher's management responsibilities in relation to the other adults she worked with in her class. This led me to reflect upon the pivotal role played by TAs in regard to the success of the school's creativity agenda. Subsequently, this reflection led to me framing the following questions in my reflective journal, as this was an area I wished to explore in more depth in future cycles:

What are some of the contrasting forms of motivation that are influencing staff involvement in the school's creative agenda?

&

Specifically, what are some of the key factors motivating TAs decisions to opt-in, or conversely opt-out, of participating in the school's creative agenda?

Summary of the Creative Coordinator's Interviews

As should be becoming apparent by this stage of the thesis, the role and status of the Creativity Coordinator within this school environment was a powerful one and in terms of the school's hierarchy this individual occupied a space located between the senior management tier and the classroom teachers tier in the school's staffing structure. With so many individual creative projects happening simultaneously in the school the Creativity Coordinator was often very busy. However, I observed he was consistently incredibly generous with his time, not only in regard to myself but also in regard to questions posed by teachers and TAs.

The individual undertaking this role during the time I was based in the school was highly committed to building a culture of open and transparent communication and, from my observations, appeared to work tirelessly to ensure all staff members (senior leaders, teachers and TAs) were kept informed of what was happening in school in relation to the creativity agenda. Within each project he managed he placed a great emphasis on ensuring projects were afforded sufficient time to allow planning, reflection and the sharing of ideas, even if this involved bringing together a great number of people. I observed him consistently demonstrating a very caring, open and empathic stance in regard to his colleagues' experiences on projects and it was clear teaching staff and TAs alike felt confident in going to him and sharing both their successes and their concerns.

When asked how he defined creativity the Creativity Coordinator answered:

'That's the million dollar question! I'm asking staff that question all the time. I don't think it is for me to impose a definition on staff but I do think it is important we get together as a staff team to debate what we think it is'.

It was clear during the interview that the Creativity Coordinator was extremely excited about the development of *The Space* and in particular the evolving attitude of the Head Teacher;

'When she started at the school I could tell she wasn't convinced about The Space. (The Head Teacher had been in post approximately 18 months at the time of this interview). *It wasn't what she was used to in her last school but now she's really on-board. She doesn't necessarily want to get involved but she trusts what we're doing and she's supportive of us developing The Space'.*

In regard to identifying the strengths and weakness of the school's current creative practice the Creativity Coordinator outlined his vision for staff involvement as follows:

'I'm aware that we have various pockets of creativity going on in the school and that some staff are really involved whilst others are not. We've deliberately set up The Space so that each class group has access to it one morning or afternoon a week. This was a conscious decision designed to send out a clear message that The Space is not just for a select few; it is for all staff and pupils and the idea is that everyone gets involved, not just a select few'.

To conclude, these interviews suggested that at the heart of the Creativity Coordinator's vision at this time was an egalitarian ideal that all members of the school community should be afforded an equal right to participate in the school's creative practice. Alongside this stance I noted he adopted the attitude that access to creative projects should be distributed equally across the school community. I also noted his non-dictatorial stance in regard to defining creativity. Viewed through the lenses of his egalitarianism this stance made sense, as it seemed to operate from a position of believing all staff members were equally entitled to develop their own definition of creativity. However, one

problematic dimension I reflected-back to him in regard to this stance concerned my awareness that

a number of the year three teacher's pedagogical insecurities arose from the fact that she was

developing creative practice without having access to a strong conceptual framework through which

to interpret and evaluate her creative practice. The Creativity Coordinator acknowledged that this

situation was inevitable where a fixed definition was not imposed. However, he stressed that it was

his hope that through confronting these issues the year three teacher would be able to contribute

valuable insights to whole-staff conversations concerning 'What does creativity mean in the context

of our school?' Following these interviews I noted this area of tension as one I wished to return to in

future data collection phases.

Method 3: Participant observation with pupil

During this cycle I attended five sessions in *The Space* where my focus concerned collaborating with

Child 1 and collecting data relating to Child 1's voice and agency in creative sessions. As stated in

'Chapter 1:Introduction' in order to collect data on this subject I used a combination of event and

duration sampling techniques in conjunction with the method of participant observation. During this

cycle I decided to specifically concentrate on one particular form of interactional approach I wished to

test in regard to engaging Child 1. The results of this process will be outlined in this section alongside

discussion of some of the challenges that arose in regard to capturing and interpreting Child 1's

unique attitude to the creative teaching and learning she was encountering.

 A full description of Child 1 was provided in 'Chapter 1: Introduction' but a brief reiteration will be

provided here to further contextualise how Child 1 approaches learning and socializing within the

school environment. Child 1 can be described as a child who is very responsive to forms of adult

interaction where she has the adult's full attention. Physical touch is a key way in which she

communicates and she will often outstretch her hands as a form of greeting, responding positively

when people take her hands or play variations of the game patter-cake with her. Child 1 rarely

interacts with her peers and will often resist participating in activities in lessons that involve her

working alongside other children. For this reason, teachers often work with Child 1 in a 1-2-1 capacity or in very small groups of pupils. Following initial observations of staff working with Child 1 I was conscious that staff were using various strategies during this period to encourage Child 1 to extend the range of communicative gestures she was using. This often involved not playing patter-cake games with Child 1 but offering her other tactile experiences. Modeling this behaviour I adopted a similar strategy when I was working with Child 1.

Child 1 is a highly curious, playful and alert child who often spends significant periods of time looking around an environment and assessing its potentiality before she chooses specific elements to interact with. In ad-hoc classroom observations, undertaken during periods when I was invited to stay after AR and *Space* sessions, I noticed that Child 1 was often drawn to spaces where adults were immersed in non-directive teaching activities (such as making notes or tidying up). Building upon these observations, in *The Space* I chose to experiment with how I approached engaging Child 1's attention. I decided to use a specific tactic where I presented myself in *The Space* as an adult deeply engaged in immersive activity. To this end I would busy myself with selecting materials (such as pieces of tulle, boxes, instruments, any prop that had the potential for multiple uses) and immerse myself in exploring the many properties and affordances of the chosen object. My aim here was to study how, when and why Child 1 approached me when I was engaged in this type of actively and to investigate how this immersive stance affected the quality of joint-action exploration that subsequently occurred between Child 1 and myself.

When deploying this tactic I would position myself in an area of *The Spa*ce where there were no other staff or pupils and in a focused way start manipulating the prop. I tried to do this in as subtle and aesthetic fashion as I could, as I was interested in analysing whether my use of fluid and expressive movements, as opposed to jagged or disconnected movements, had any particular impact on how Child 1 chose to get involved with the action. For example, if I had a piece of tulle I might slowly begin to wrap myself in it or spread it out on the floor, using a range of fluid, repeated movements, or I might begin to tie it in my hair. It is important to note here that Child 1 often liked having her head touched, as well as often choosing to position things on her head. Also Child 1 would often wear her

hair in very elaborate styles with lots of clips and baubles in it. In times of focused concentration Child 1 had a tendency to touch these clips or pat her hair. In summary, I adopted an entirely non-verbal and non-directive stance in *The Space* in regard to my collaborations with Child 1. This approach was adopted in order to gain greater insight in to Child 1's decision-making processes and specifically to investigate Child 1's preferences regarding initiating social and creative forms of dialogue within creative sessions.

In four out of the five weeks of this phase the tactic of focused immersive behaviour successfully attracted Child 1's attention and resulted in Child 1 choosing to come over to where I was positioned. When Child 1 came over I would continue exploring materials with the same intensity as I had applied before, seemingly, at first, to ignore Child 1. During these moments Child 1 would often sit quite still and watch me intently. Then gradually I would begin to introduce actions that created space for Child 1 to get involved with the manipulation of materials if she chose. I would then count the amount of different forms of movement and expression Child 1 and myself were able to generate as we explored materials and how often Child 1 initiated and led changes in the expressive action. During these sequences I would try to mirror Child 1's responses as much as possible, adding-in subtle forms of expressive extension from time to time. I would also try and time these collaborations, which in my estimation tended to last for between 2 – 5 minutes.

By selecting a particular interactive tactic and sticking to it over the five weeks period I was able to amass a useful amount of accumulative observational data on Child 1's responses in *The Space* and gain greater insight in to what Child 1's preferences were in regard to starting and ending joint-action sequences. Through this experience I noted two key areas of significance I wished to explore in more depth as the cycle progressed. Firstly, I noticed how important watching, waiting and assessing were as behaviours for Child 1 in *The Space* and this led to me becoming interested in exploring how these behaviours corresponded to other children's responses in *The Space*. For example, to what extent were other children extending their use of watching, waiting and assessing when in *The Space* compared to their responses in classroom scenarios? Secondly, I was conscious of how independent Child 1 appeared to be in *The Space* and how often Child 1 spent long periods sitting, seemingly

contentedly, in her own selected private area. This led to me speculating about the extent to which Child 1 saw *The Space* as a more relaxing environment in comparison to the classroom as in this environment she had much greater autonomy over what actions she undertook and the duration of time she was able to dedicate to individual actions.

This, in turn, led me to reflect upon the extent to which the pedagogical and social values perpetuated by *The Space* could be seen to be different than those expressed in the classroom. As the five weeks observational period concluded I drew up the following table in which I attempted to organise some of my observations in regard to the different pedagogical values that I observed being enacted in *The Space* in comparison to the classroom.

The Space	The Classroom
Children afforded greater autonomy over how they participate in activities.	Clear boundaries are established in regard to how participation is structured.
Sessions have clear themes but often do not have a set structure. Although, it is clear some teachers are happier when a set structure is imposed.	A strong sense of structure is maintained
A non-linear learning process is allowed to unfold.	Learning often takes on a linear and sequential character.
Teachers place an emphasis on noting incidences of child-led exploration, rather than placing an emphasis on mapping pupils' developmental progress.	An emphasis is placed upon using teacher-led pedagogy. Generally, a developmental model is followed in regard to pupil's learning rather than a child-led model.

Having drawn up this table I was keen to triangulate my observations on this matter with teaching staff. If discussion relating to the pedagogical values of *The Space* arose in semi-structured interviews I would share this table with staff and use this opportunity to gather their views on the extent to which they felt it was possible to discern a difference in values between the pedagogical practice happening in classrooms and the pedagogical practice happening in *The Space*.

In terms of discerning Child 1's views on this matter I had to rely upon data gathered through non-verbal collaborations undertaken in *The Space* juxtaposed with non-participant observations undertaken in the classroom. Keen to attempt to capture some sense of Child 1's voice within this written text I chose to pursue two forms of analytical tactic. Firstly, I decided to write up my observations of Child 1's responses using a third person narrative style. Here, I attempted to incorporate as much descriptive detail as possible. I then shared these observation notes with staff who had also been in the session for triangulation purposes. Following this process I drew up a list of first person statements, in which I postulated statements 'as if' from the perspective of Child 1. Within these first-person narrative statements I am attempting to summarize my understanding of Child 1's interpretation of creativity, as expressed through her actions. I am also attempting to summarize how Child 1 feels creativity is fostered in *The Space.*

I, Child 1, like creativity sessions where I have a high degree of freedom to choose what I am going to do.

I have particular actions that I like doing and which I do a lot as they help me self-soothe. Where I've had plenty of time and space to familiarize myself with the environment and evaluate its properties I will do my self-soothing actions less and try other actions more.

I like the opportunity for being social that The Space creates. I particularly like the way The Space creates opportunities for me to be social with adults in new ways. For example, I like the way I can go over to adults whenever I feel like it in The Space and find out what they are doing.

In The Space the two schemas I use most are 'enveloping' and 'positioning' (Louis & Featherstone, 2008; Nutbrown, 2006). This is because I like to be able to wrap myself up in materials or position them is such a way that they are balancing on my head or hand. Therefore, the expressive forms of interaction I like best in The Space are those that allow me to put these schemas in to practice.

What does the data gathered suggest about how creativity is being interpreted within this school culture?

During the five sessions I collaborated with Child 1 I gained a valuable insight in to the potential of *The Space* for being a learning environment in which pupils could take part in collaboratively constructing a shared understanding of the concept of creativity. During this observation period I observed Child 1 assessing, exploring and interpreting many contrasting materials and spatial configurations in ways that allowed her to re-evaluate her understanding of the possibilities of working with others in this

type of learning environment. This experience led me to formulate a new interpretation of creativity, specific to this class group and particularly Child 1, in which creativity was associated with the following notions:

1. To be creative in this context is to be conscious that every material and sensory aspect of one's environment is ripe with possibilities.

2. To be creative in this context involves embracing taking part in joint action sequences with others where touch, eye contact, movement, improvisation and mirroring are prefigured above other more conventional forms of communication.

3. In this class community creativity is conceptualized as a human trait that is produced through creating 'a dialogic relationship with others' (Craft, 2005, p.75). However, for this community to produce dialogic interaction it is important that each pupil is provided sufficient time and space to establish their own individual sense of their surroundings before any adult expectation of interaction or collaboration is expressed.

Method 4: Participant observation with staff

This section will present data collected during a staff meeting I was invited to attend in week four of Phase One. Although I wished initially to attend this meeting in a non-participant capacity, the Creativity Coordinator requested that I attend in a participant capacity as he felt that someone observing rather than participating was not conducive with the school's overarching ethos of inclusion and participation. On reflection, I was happy to acquiesce to this request. I sought and was granted permission from staff present to record discussion on a dictaphone. This recording was then transcribed and comments from that transcription will be referred to in this section as key observations and questions arising from the meeting are detailed. The Head Teacher opened the

meeting and made a short speech about her commitment to the practice being developed in *The Space*. The Head Teacher then left and the Deputy Head teacher proceeded to facilitate the meeting.

Although the focus of this meeting was to discuss teachers' reflections on how *The Space* was affecting pupil progress, the vast majority of the meeting was taken up with teachers discussing the subject of whether sessions in *The Space* should be pre-planned or spontaneous in nature. Over half of the 8 full-time teaching staff (n = 5 teachers) felt strongly that each environment constructed in *The Space* should be accompanied by a list of pre-planned suggested actions teachers could follow. A number of staff made the suggestion that these plans could be drawn up by the Creativity Coordinator in consultation with the external scenic artist who was employed by the school to help design and build *Space* environments with staff. This, teachers argued, would be helpful for staff as it would mean working in *The Space* did not involve teachers undertaking additional planning to that they already undertook in regard to their classroom responsibilities.

The Creativity Coordinator expressed some concern about the idea of everybody following the same format in sessions in *The Space*. His argument was this approach could limit both staff and pupils' creativity as they would be following instructions rather than using their own imaginations to generate creative ways of responding to the adaptive environments the scenic artist and the team of TAs had produced. One of the five teachers (from year 1) who was in favour of following a set structure argued she felt 'a crib sheet to fall back on' would greatly support her work in *The Space* as she explained she did not require a full lesson plan but simply a list of ideas to do with children that meant she 'wasn't completely starting from scratch'. In contrast to these views three teachers, to varying extents, argued against pinning down what was to happen in *The Space.* Their arguments reflected upon their observations that some of the most effective pedagogy happening in *The Space,* in their opinions, was arising out of pupils' self-selected interactions with the environment. One of these teachers was the year three teacher I had recently been collaborating with. This area of debate interested me greatly, as it appeared staff were quite polarized in their opinions. For me this area of tension seemed to be connected to the following unresolved questions:

What is the purpose of *The Space?*

&

To what extent is *The Space* different in its pedagogical purpose from other learning environments in the school?

One conclusion I came to following this meeting was that whilst senior leaders were very committed to establishing *The Sp*ace and promoting the message that *The Space* was to be the centre-piece of the school's creative agenda, at this time there appeared to be an absence of consensus amongst all tiers of staff, including senior leaders, of what the pedagogical purpose of *The Space* was. As I listened to the various strands of argument being presented for and against adopting a pre-planned approach to using *The Spac*e I felt what was emerging was a tension between interpreting creativity through the lenses of instrumentalism (i.e. a view that believes creativity should have tangible outcomes and that its application should produce behaviours that can be mapped and assessed) and interpreting creativity through the lenses of democratic or universal human values (i.e. a view that sees creative education as concerning learners developing key life skills such as curiosity, lateral thinking, perseverance, self-confidence, reflection, aesthetic appreciation).

During the meeting I was asked on a couple of separate occasions to share my views on the topics being discussed. I shared my view that, from what I had observed this term, *The Space* offered staff and pupils something alternative in terms of depth in regard to the quality and duration of staff-pupil collaborations. Here, I used an example from my observations of Child 1 where I had observed her choosing to work with an igloo-maker character (played by her teacher) in *The Spac*e, a scenario that had arisen spontaneously as a result of Child 1's teacher deciding to integrate this role-play opportunity in to a session. The year-three teacher joined the discussion at this point as the matter concerned her practice. The teacher commented to her colleagues that she had started to integrate more teacher-in-role elements into her practice in *The Space.* She explained to colleagues that her

rationale for doing this was so that she could react more directly to pupils' responses and enthusiasms and encourage pupils to extend their explorations of elements of *The Space.*

Both the Creativity Coordinator and I commented to the year-three teacher how confident she had appeared in the meeting in articulating the role of spontaneity within her creative teaching practice. Although still reluctant to acknowledge herself as a 'creative teacher' the year-three teacher did acknowledge that she was aware that her views on the role of creativity within her own pedagogical practice were changing and that reflective discussions, such as those undertaken in this meeting, were helping her to identify certain emergent features of her creative teaching practice.

What does the data gathered suggest about how creativity is being interpreted within this school culture?

I felt that data gathered during this staff meeting highlighted some of the tensions and challenges facing this staff community as they attempted to reappraise the role of creativity within their pedagogical practice. The meeting suggested teachers were formulating a number of contrasting interpretations of what they felt a teacher's role should be within pupils' creative learning. One comment that particularly struck me during the meeting was a comment made by one of the teachers (from Year 6) who was arguing against having a set list of actions to accompany sessions in *The Space.* As she left the meeting this teacher commented;

> 'The pupils in my class have so many things done **to** them (teacher's emphasis). Where is their choice in what they do? I know we try and build choice in to every aspect of our work in the classroom but classrooms are limited. What I've enjoyed about my class's time in The Space is that this is a place where **the children** *do things* (teacher's emphasis). They chose'.

To conclude, this meeting highlighted a number of ways in which teachers' views on creativity were conflicted at this time. It highlighted that contrasting attitudes existed amongst staff in terms of what they perceived creativity's role to be within the school's pedagogy. For some teachers creativity was considered to be a concept that could be used to greatly enhance how pupils with additional needs access learning, whilst for others creativity appeared to be something they associated with additional work and additional pressure that could take them away from the main business of their teaching practice. This meeting also raised some interesting issues relating to the relationship between creative teaching and pupil voice practice as teachers shared their observations of how creative teaching choices were appearing to impact upon individual pupil's participation and expression within *Space* sessions.

Method 5: A combination of participant and non-participant observation undertaken with staff

Finally in this section a whole-staff twilight session will be discussed. The Creativity Coordinator facilitated this session. The Deputy Head Teacher but not the Head Teacher was in attendance. Seven of the eight class teachers attended and seventeen of the twenty-five TAs employed at the school attended. The meeting took place after school and lasted an hour. The purpose of the session was to discuss the following:

1. What cross-curricular themes have staff felt were effective in *The Space*?

2. What new ideas for cross-curricular themes do staff have?

To further put these questions in context, by the time of this meeting the school had been developing its thematic approach to teaching for just under a year. The school's aim in developing a thematic curriculum was to provide cross-curricular learning experiences for pupils that allowed pupils to

explore a theme in an in-depth and personalised fashion, whilst still covering elements of the National Curriculum considered essential. So far the school had experimented with five separate themes, pursued over five half-term periods, prior to the researcher undertaking her first data collection phase. It is important to note that the idea to develop a thematic approach to curriculum coverage predated the idea to create *The Space*. Therefore, in some respects the motivation to create *The Space* can be seen to have evolved through the school developing their thematic curriculum agenda. However, in terms of what came first, the creativity agenda or the thematic curriculum agenda, here the creativity agenda was established first and this can be seen to have then given rise to the thematic curriculum agenda.

To begin with the Creativity Coordinator tasked staff in small groups to rank the five themes according to those they perceived to be most successful and those they considered to be most difficult for pupils to access. Staff were then asked to develop a list of factors that they felt contributed to the creation of a successful theme in this school. There was some variation amongst groups (groups were divided up according to class teams) but themes considered generally successful were:

The Desert

The Rainforest

Snow World

And those considered less successful were:

The Circus

The Theatre

In this meeting I did not use my dictaphone to record conversations as the meeting took place in the school hall and this would not have been practical. Instead, I floated between groups and participated

in conversations, writing up my observations after the meeting. In summarizing staff discussion I noted the following emergent themes;

1. Successful themes tend to lend themselves to generating learning environments, whether in *The Space* or the classroom that produces strong forms of sensory stimulation. For example, during The Rainforest scheme staff were able to use many natural materials and strong smells and sounds within their teaching. This, teachers reported, leant itself to creating lessons where P1-3 learners were able to access the core elements of the theme through forms of multi-sensory engagement alongside their higher ability peers.

2. 'Successful themes do not need to be explained they just are' (comment from Year 2 teacher).

The teacher who made this comment explained that in his opinion many of his pupils, the majority of whom were pupils categorized as P1-3 learners, had little to no cognitive understanding of what, for example, a desert was or where deserts were located in the world. However, in his experience this was not a problem in regard to creating meaningful teaching and learning experiences using this theme. This, he argued, was because his pupils were not engaging with the factual interpretation of the theme but its sensory and aesthetic qualities. The teacher went on to note that the interpretation of the desert theme in *The Space* had been the most popular theme with his class as many of his pupils had an established preference for handling sand, feeling sand poured over their hands, and, in some cases, shifting sand form one reciprocal to another. Therefore, compared to other thematic environments pupils immediately experienced a sense of familiarity upon entering this environment. This teacher also noted that the week in *The Space* dedicated to visiting the Bedouin village had been particularly popular with his P1-3 pupils, not because they understood what a Bedouin village was, but because the sensory aspects of this particular design were very effective at engaging these pupils' attention. Here, the teacher reflected upon the success of using real mint to make mint tea during the session and the opportunity for students to explore essential oils and herbs such as frankincense and myrrh, as well as certain food products such as couscous, apricots and dates.

In discussion this teacher emphasized his perspective that a successful theme is capable of conveying strong sensory possibilities to both teachers and pupils. He also stressed that in his opinion thematic teaching and learning, in the context of his class, was never going to be about providing an experience of a 'real' desert or a 'real' rainforest (teacher's emphasis). Instead, its focus is to establish a process whereby the class, as a group, is able to explore materials and multi-sensory experiences in such a way that a 'shared-understanding' (teacher's phrase) is produced of what 'desert' means in this context. Finally, the Year 2 teacher reflected, people could come in to his class and have no idea what theme the class was exploring because they would see a class exploring a seemingly random collection of materials. This, he noted, has the potential consequence that if the head teacher or a Ofsted representative enters the classroom they will find it hard to immediately identify what is being taught, as they have not been part of the shared process of constructed the theme's meaning.

This discussion with the Year-Two teacher led me to note the following definition of creativity in my reflective journal:

For this community of learners (i.e the Year-Two class) to be creative is to take part in a collaborative constructive process whereby a shared interpretation of reality is co-created through shared-experience and reflective practice.

I also reflected that this teacher's observations placed a great emphasis on moving away from themes that were 'too concrete' (teacher's phrase) and replacing concrete themes with themes that were more susceptible to multiple forms of interpretation.

Interestingly the Deputy Head Teacher and a highly experienced teacher who had been with the school for many years (she had started with the school in the mid 1990s as a TA and after qualifying as a teacher had returned to the school in the early 2000s) had suggested the two least popular themes, 'The Circus' and 'The Theatre'. Both these members of staff were happy to reflect on what their original ideas had been for these themes and their observations on why, in their opinion, these

themes had not been successful. For example, the teacher reflected that she had felt designing a theatre environment in *The Space* with a small stage, a rack of costumes, a lighting desk that pupils could manipulate and curtains that could open and shut would be an excellent opportunity for pupil-led role play and storytelling. She observed that it had been her experience that this had been the case for pupils assessed as P4 learners and above but that this theme had been less successful at engaging P1-3 pupils as the multisensory aspects of the theme were limited.

In regard to 'The Circus' theme the Deputy Head Teacher observed that this theme had been successful for the first week or so that it was delivered as it had a certain novelty factor but had then run out of steam because a significant percentage of pupils had found it limiting in terms of the activities they could access. She observed that in the creative work associated with 'The Circus' staff had started off by playing lots of different characters, such as ring masters and clowns but this had tended to lead to higher ability pupils becoming engaged rather than P1-3 learners. This was problematic because the primary aim underpinning the development of the thematic curriculum was to create accessible themes that were engaging to all learners in the school. Therefore, the Deputy Head Teacher concluded that this theme had not been a success on the grounds that it appeared to exclude a large percentage of pupils at the school.

After this discussion the Creativity Coordinator proceeded to task staff with suggesting new themes for exploration. Popular suggestions were 'The Moon' or 'Outer Space', 'Inside the Human Body', 'The Souk' or 'The Market' and 'The Indian Wedding'. The Creativity Coordinator explained that the plan was to try and settle upon eight to ten themes that could be rotated so that pupils attending the school were likely to encounter themes between two to three times during their time at the school. The thinking here was that through repetition accumulative understanding of both the themes and the cross-curriculum learning opportunities they fostered would be developed by pupils and staff.

To conclude, this twilight session highlighted that staff from all tiers of the school's staffing structure were enthused by the idea of continuing to develop the school's thematic curriculum. I felt this meeting also highlighted a strong collegiate attitude amongst staff to developing this aspect of the

school's teaching and learning practice. My views here are based upon the high percentage of staff that attended the meeting and the in-depth and reflective nature of the discussion I observed. Finally, I noted that in regard to reflecting upon strengths and weakness of the work undertaken so far in regard to the school's thematic curriculum staff were very honest with each other in terms of what had and had not worked. I felt that in regard to establishing a trusting and respectful reflective culture the Creativity Coordinator and the Deputy Head Teacher represented pivotal drivers of this process as they continually scrutinized and critiqued their own practice and invited critical feedback from others.

Final Conclusions on Phase One

This section has presented key findings from the first cycle of data collection undertaken between October and December 2010. During this period I was able to test my methodological plan and further clarify what methods were best suited to collaborating with this school community so as to establish mutually respectful and reciprocal research relations. On completion of this cycle I noted the following key observations that I wished to use to reframe and refocus the second phase of data collection:

1. I remain committed to finding ways to observe, comprehend and interpret pupils' voices. In regard to understanding Child 1's unique voice as a learner I feel that utilizing non-verbal and kinesthetic forms of communication in my collaborations with her has assisted me in developing new insights in to how Child 1 is constructing her understanding of the school's creativity agenda. However, I conclude this phase of data collection conscious that capturing and conveying the nature of Child 1's voice within this text remains a challenge, particularly in regard to finding satisfying and comprehensive ways to represent the independent and expressive nature of Child 1's voice acts.

2. Through my participant observations I have become aware that tension can be identified within some classes between teachers and TAs in regard to their contrasting perceptions of

what the role and status of creativity should be within this school. During this phase I have witnessed three TAs actively resisting participating in creative activities and, as a result of this, undermining a teacher's status and confidence. In contrast I have also observed a teacher and a TA working very closely together in ways that defy a traditional interpretation of hierarchical power relations associated with teachers and TAs. I conclude this data collection phase conscious that to understand how creativity is being constructed in this school culture I am going to be required to understand and engage with TAs perceptions of creativity much more directly than I had originally expected, as this group of staff are heavily implicated in ensuring the success or failure of different forms of creative initiative within this school culture.

3. I conclude this cycle aware that amongst teachers very different interpretations of what creativity is can be seen to exist. Attending the staff meeting has allowed me to gain greater insight in to how individual members of the teaching team are constructing their understanding of the role of creativity within their pedagogy. For example, for some teachers creativity is associated with enhancing pupils' attainment, whilst for others it is associated with concepts such as pupil voice and enhanced forms of staff-pupil collaboration.

4. Finally, during this phase I have experienced both feelings associated with being an 'insider' and feelings associated with being an 'outsider' in regard to my status within the school. I conclude this phase feeling that this oscillation between these two states is going to be an inevitable part of the research process from here on in and that it is important I embrace this aspect of the research through enhancing my reflexive attitude to this experience rather than denying its impact on this research.

Phase Two

Introduction

In the second phase of data collection I collaborated with a year-four class, consisting of nine pupils, one teacher and five TAs. Many of the TAs based in this class were employed on a part-time basis. This meant that it was not uncommon for me to meet different configurations of staff each time I visited. This phase took place between January and March 2011 and was slightly different to cycle one in that it took place over a term rather than a half term. During this period I visited the year-four class once a week on a Wednesday morning.

Once again it was agreed I would undertake an Action Research (AR) project with a teacher. Originally this phase's project was only supposed to be for a half-term period. However, following the collaboration between the teacher and I during the first half-term period the teacher approached the Creativity Coordinator and myself to enquire whether this AR process could be extended in to the second part of the term. I was keen to do this as I felt I was gathering useful forms of observational and interview data by working closely and intensively with this particular class.

During the first half of the term the teacher and I collaborated on an AR project based around the theme of the Greek myth 'Pandora's Box'. In the second half of the term the AR project focused upon exploring the life and times of the historical figure Mary Seacole and involved me collaborating with TAs on an AR project. The work relating to these AR projects took place in the classroom rather than *The Space*. During this period there were two themes explored by the school in *The Space,* these were 'The Moon' and 'The Moroccan Market'. However, I chose not to attend any of these sessions.

Defining the teacher's inquiry area

The year-four teacher who took part in this phase is the same teacher mentioned earlier in reference to coming up with the idea of using *The Theatre* theme within the thematic curriculum. To reiterate, by the time I worked with this teacher she had amassed over ten years experience of working in the school. During that time she had worked with classes of all ages and had gained first-hand experience of the complexities of operating both as a TA and as a teacher within the school culture. This teacher stood out amongst her peers as an individual who was confident to try out different forms of creative teaching practice and as someone who was willing to embrace diverse arts education disciplines such as teaching through drama, dance and storytelling. Once again two initial planning meetings took place, one facilitated by the Creativity Coordinator and one facilitated by myself. During these meetings the aims were;

(1) To finalise an inquiry question the teacher wished to pursue over the duration of the AR cycle.

(2) To discuss, in collaboration with the Creativity Coordinator, what the connection was between this AR intervention and the school's overarching creativity agenda.

(3) To agree what type of collaborative relationship would be established between the teacher and I during the AR project, so as to ensure a mutually meaningful and beneficial experience.

In the first meeting the teacher stated she was interested in exploring how she could improve her delivery of aspects of the National Curriculum (NC) through the use of creative forms of pedagogy. She extended this idea by stating that she was specifically interested in exploring how she could make her teaching of certain subject areas more inclusive and engaging for P1-3 pupils in her class. She explained that whilst she felt confident about developing her creative teaching practice in *The Space*

she was conscious that when it came to teaching certain aspects of the NC in the classroom she had noted previously her personal sense of being creative could become diminished, which she felt in turn diminished the scope of the creative experiences available for pupils. Therefore, the teacher wished to focus the AR cycle on classroom practice that explored core areas of the NC. She summarized her inquiry focus in the following question:

How can creative teaching methodologies be used to support teachers to cover areas of the National Curriculum they consider to be challenging to teach to P1-3 pupils?

The year-four teacher and the Creativity Coordinator had worked together for many years and it was common when they met for discussion to become very reflective in nature. In the first planning meeting I deliberately held back in terms of making contributions to their discussion, preferring instead to let these two colleagues freely discuss what they felt was important. Much of the first planning meeting focused upon discussing the transition the school was currently undertaking between following a curriculum that could be described, using the educational sociologist Basil Bernstein's terminology, as a 'collected' curriculum to one that was attempting to be more 'integrated' (Bernstein, 1973; 1996; 2001). Neither the teacher nor the Creativity Coordinator made reference to Bernstein in their discussion but I was conscious of how closely their debate mirrored some of Bernstein's key observations in regard to what happens to power relations when educational institutions attempt to move away from a collected to an integrated curriculum.

Bernstein (1973; 1996; 2001) defined collection curriculums as those that perpetuate hierarchical, mechanized and segmented forms of social relation. Bernstein argued that collection codes have a tendency to produce subject experts who are socially ranked within the institutions in which they operate according to their abilities to negotiate the rules that govern their individual subject domains. Therefore, where a collection code is practiced members of educational institutions tend to know their place as either a 'subject expert' or a 'subject non-expert'. In contrast Bernstein observed that integrated curriculums tend to produce different forms of social relation as experts and non-experts become more interdependent within the educational processes they participate in. He also observed

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that integrated curriculums tend to be initially unsettling in terms of power relations and educational identities as they are inclined towards generating 'frameworks of cooperation' rather than dissociated and hierarchal forms of professional relations (Bernstein, 2001, p.22).

Towards the end of the meeting I chose to share some of these observations on Bernstein's work with the teacher and the Creativity Coordinator, as I was interested to hear their opinions on how this theoretical framework related to their understanding of how changes to curriculum coverage were affecting power relations in the school. For example, did they perceive any changes in the type of power relation occurring between staff or between staff and pupils since the new approach to covering the curriculum had been implemented? Both the teacher and the Creativity Coordinator felt power relations were changing within the school and they had lots of ideas about how they felt power relations could be changed further to support the creative agenda. These ideas mostly concerned integrating TAs in to whole-school creative projects in ways that would encourage TAs to take greater levels of ownership of the creative teaching practices that were being delivered.

Defining my role within this AR cycle

As I entered this second phase of data collection, having reflected upon the first AR cycle with the year three teacher, I knew I wanted to allow ample time and space for the teacher to outline her expectations of me and the AR process prior to me sharing any of my methodological ideas or ambitions. I felt a major area of learning for me following phase one had been an increased awareness of the importance of developing a co-created approach to the AR process that allowed the teacher to have a strong voice in terms of shaping the research relations that would be enacted.

When asked to outline the type of role she would like me to adopt, the year-four teacher explained that she wished me to be collaborative and to take an active role in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the AR process. The teacher also stressed that she would be interested in some weeks handing over the running of the creative elements of sessions to individual TAs and that where this happened the teacher would like me to facilitate planning and evaluation meetings with TAs. I was

delighted by this proposal as working more closely with TAs had been an identified aim of mine following phase one.

Identifying the focus of the first AR project: January to February 2010

In the second planning meeting the teacher explained that one area of the NC she wished to cover with her class during this half term was 'Myths and Legends'. In the meeting the teacher explained the many contrasting and highly varied differentiated learning outcomes she hoped to achieve for the nine individual pupils in her class. She also explained some of the challenges she felt had occurred when she had taught this subject area on previous occasions, particularly in regard to P1-3 learners' levels of response and engagement.

The teacher and I agreed that it would be useful to explore one myth in detail over the five weeks rather than dip in to a succession of myths and legends. Following this discussion the teacher and I agreed to develop a scheme of work based around the Greek myth 'Pandora's Box'. In the second planning meeting the teacher and I developed a loose structure for the five weeks in terms of how thematically and pedagogically the story of Pandora's box was going to be explored. The teacher then shared this with the majority of her TAs (n = 4) at a weekly after-school planning meeting. TAs offered their feedback and made suggestions about how different areas of the scheme of work could be approached and the plan for the scheme of work was subsequently modified in accordance with their feedback. Three TAs also volunteered to make props and play different characters during the scheme of work as was required.

What data was collected during this AR cycle?

The table in Appendix Three summarizes the actions, reflections and amended actions the teacher developed during this AR cycle. Following a similar process to that followed in Phase One, I constructed this table through analysing the teacher's, and in this case, the TAs reflective comments and then triangulating the table with staff in order to ascertain whether each condensed entry in the table represented an accurate description of what staff felt had occurred. The main areas of reflection that emerged from this AR process were:

1. Close, trusting and respectful professional relations existed in this classroom.

2. TAs in this class demonstrated a high level of confidence in regard to using creative methods

3. The types of creative practice being developed in this class appeared conducive with pupils fostering closer friendships with each other. Of particular note were the occasions where P4+ pupils chose to collaborate with P1-3 pupils.

4. Staff reflected that this AR process had brought to their attention the importance of undertaking thematic collaborative activities with P1-3 pupils in between creative sessions. Particularly where props used in the session had sensory properties pupils found engaging or new.

5. Ensuring resources used in sessions had strong sensory elements consistently emerged as significant within this scheme of work.

What does this data suggest about how creativity is being interpreted within this school culture?

Following this AR cycle I noted five factors that I felt came to the fore in regard to how this class was interpreting creativity during this AR project. Prior to discussing these five areas it is important to state that I was invited by the teacher to observe lessons either side of the Myths and Legends sessions. This meant I was able to gain some comparative sense of how the pedagogy of the Myths and Legends sessions compared to other lessons that were being taught over this period. During these observations I was interested in analysing how the supposedly 'creative' Myths and Legend sessions differed pedagogically from the 'non-creative' sessions I observed.

The first area of significance this section will discuss is how non-creative and creative lessons appeared to vary in terms of the extent to which they promoted concepts such as friendship and togetherness within their pedagogical practice. In lessons labeled as non-creative the teacher, supported by TAs, applied great effort to planning and preparing differentiated learning activities for differently able pupils to do in small groups and, I noted in the majority of non-creative lessons I observed (n=8, out of a total of 10 lesson observations), pupils were taught in either very small groups (two to three pupils) or in a 1-2-1 capacity. Whilst this pedagogical approach remained a component of creative sessions an alternative emphasis was placed upon ensuring sustained periods of time were dedicated to pupils being taught together as a whole group. It was apparent the rationale underpinning this decision was to allow more space for pupils to interact with each other. Therefore, in creative sessions staff remained aware of pupils' differentiated learning goals and of the need to tailor activity so as to ensure it was accessible to all abilities whilst simultaneously being mindful of the value of supporting collaborative learning between pupils as well as between pupils and staff. These observations led me to identify the following question in my reflective journal:

Is 'being creative' a concept that these staff members associate with ideas such as 'togetherness', 'friendship' and 'closeness'?

Throughout this period of observation I was able to gather data relating to the differences in how social relations were being enacted in creative and non-creative sessions. I noted difference not only between adults as they collaborated with each other, but also between pupils, particularly in regard to the forms of social interaction that were occurring between P1-3 and P4+ pupils. A number of staff, in their post-session discussions, consistently commented on the increased incidences of P4+ pupils including P1-3 pupils in their play and role-play during the Pandora's Box scheme of work. The regularity with which staff commented on this matter highlighted to me the extent to which they felt that these forms of interaction between pupils of contrasting abilities were not typical within their observations of this group of pupils.

The second area of significance I felt emerged as a theme from this AR process related to how this staff team functioned as a group and the extent to which they were much more trusting, respectful and integrated in their approach to working with each other than the other class group I had observed during Phase One. In my reflective journal I made a note that I wished to discuss this area with both the class teacher and the TAs in more detail in order to understand their specific perspectives on their class dynamic. I also noted the hypothesis that this increased level of pedagogical collaboration and experimentation may be due to the level of confidence and understanding the teacher exuded in regard to her personal interpretation of creativity, which she was able to communicate assertively and clearly to staff on a daily basis. This approach, I reflected, appeared to lead to TAs in her class being much clearer in terms of what the teacher's expectations were of them in terms of their involvement in creative sessions.

The third area of significance I identified during this AR cycle was the notion that in this class creative learning could be understood as a process in which staff and pupils worked together to create new and shared interpretations of aspects of the curriculum. This meant that the curriculum area 'Myths and Legends', when taught using this class's model of creativity became a topic that was continually

negotiated, questioned and problematised through many different types of interactional activity, including collaborative free-play, shared joint-attention sequences and collaborative explorations of sensory props. If a particular aspect of an activity emerged as popular amongst the class group this became an important dimension of the meaning of this curriculum area for the group. For example, the laurel crowns used in sessions were very popular with pupils of all abilities and became a significant object of reference for a number of pupils. Therefore, the meaning of the story of 'Pandora's Box' for this class community could not be separated from their interactions, both physically and socially, with these particular objects of reference. Reflections such as this helped me to further refine my sense of the differences that could be detected within this class in terms of their 'non-creative' lessons and their creative lessons. Following the completion of the AR process I decided to summarize these difference in the following table:

	National Curriculum delivered through 'non-creative' forms of pedagogy.	National Curriculum delivered through 'creative forms of pedagogy
What is the role of teachers within this interpretation?	Teachers cover a list of set objectives in order to achieve prescribed learning outcomes.	Teachers and TAs introduce key curriculum themes to pupils using a range of stimulus. The teaching and learning experience is open-ended and learning outcomes are identified at the end of the pedagogical process rather than prior to it commencing.
What are the expected learning outcomes for pupils within this interpretation?	Pupils will be able to demonstrate particular forms of interpretative skill or response as pertinent to their level of ability.	Pupils are provided with an opportunity to collaborate with each other in order to produce new and enhanced interpretations of the chosen theme.

Having drawn up this table I was keen to triangulate its content with staff during AR reflection discussions. My aim in doing this was to explore further how conscious staff were of operating contrasting pedagogical frameworks during creative and non-creative sessions. It was my conclusion that staff in this class were very aware of the differences in the types of pedagogical values they expressed in the two contexts. It also came to my attention that staff were in agreement that it was important that pupils in their class were able to experience a diversity of pedagogical approaches and that they felt that solely relying on either their creative or non-creative approaches would be problematic.

The fourth significant area I was conscious of as the AR project concluded was that when in role as Gods and Goddesses, staff were able to operate a dual pedagogical identity. On the one hand staff maintained a role very similar to that which they would maintain in any lesson, in that they would allocate themselves to work with one to two pupils in a 1-2-1 capacity for the duration of the lesson. However, on the other hand, in role as characters, I observed staff were able to scaffold pupils' interactions in ways that extended their usual pedagogical practice and that relied more heavily on skills such as being playful and spontaneous. I observed staff did this through overtly posing and presenting reactions to pupils that in turn encouraged pupils to take their explorations in new or expanded directions. During the AR process I noted that pupils were sometimes producing stronger forms of reaction to staff in creative sessions than they were typical producing in non-creative sessions and that this, in my opinion, could possibly be as a result of pupils perceiving staff reactions as being more like a game than in other learning contexts.

Finally, I felt it was significant that the class teacher was encouraging TAs to work to their strengths in creative sessions and not putting pressure on any TA to get involved with any activity that they had not expressly requested an interest in doing. For example, one member of staff did not want to go in to role and instead operated the sound during sessions. In another example another member of staff took it upon herself to keep notes of pupils responses during sessions. A role both the teacher and the researcher found very useful.

To conclude, this AR process allowed me to see creativity within this school from a range of new perspectives. Due to the fact that an honest and trusting relationship had clearly been established between this teacher and her TAs, the boundaries of creative teaching and creative learning were able to be pushed, questioned and reinterpreted by this class community in more pedagogically challenging and reflective ways than had been apparent in the year-three class during Phase One. Throughout this phase I was struck by how integrated and non-hierarchical learning was in terms of staff and pupils shared participation within creative sessions, with staff seemingly responding to pupils' reactions as much as pupils were reacting to staff actions. Finally, I was struck by how flexible and ambitious staff were in regard to the types of exploration and improvisation they were comfortable with experimenting with in sessions.

Participant observation with Child 2

In the next section observational data gathered in reference to Child 2 will be discussed. When I observed Child 2 he was nine years old and had been attending the school since he was four. Child 2 has very complex learning, mobility and sensory needs. Child 2, in the time I was observing him, was never taken out of his wheelchair during lessons. When I asked TAs why this was they informed me this was because physically Child 2 has to be continually supported by his wheelchair when in class but, they explained, Child 2 does regularly come out of his chair for extended periods during, for example, swimming sessions and meetings with his physical therapist. Child 2 has good hearing but very minimal sight. For this reason staff often worked with him by placing things on the tray of his wheelchair and by working in very close proximity with him. Staff are very conscious that Child 2's head will often droop during lessons and gradually move closer to his tray. Staff shared with me that in their experience this is sometimes, simply, because he is tired and sometimes because the lesson does not involve stimulus that he can access. Therefore, when his head begins to droop staff will often use tactics such as bringing sensory objects closer to him to invite Child 2 to take part in a shared attention sequence.

I was conscious that during the Myths and Legends sessions, as operator of the Pandora puppet, I was heavily embroiled within sessions in practical ways that made collaborating exclusively with Child 2 difficult. Therefore, an alternative data collection strategy was adopted in consultation with the teacher and the TA. It was agreed that the TA, who had put herself forward to take notes on pupils' general reactions and progress during sessions, would place a particular emphasis on making notes on Child 2's responses. This process started with me meeting with the teacher and the TA to clarify and agree the specific observation categories the TA would use to code her observations.

In this meeting we were also able to delve in to the teacher's and TA's in-depth knowledge of how Child 2 approached learning. During this meeting the teacher shared with me Child 2's individual education programme (IEP) and explained the learning targets she and staff were working with Child 2 on that term. The teacher explained that Child 2, like many children in her class oscillated between different levels of the P-scales depending on the activity that was being undertaken but that he was assessed as being between P1(ii) and P2(i) and that his learning targets for this term reflected this fact. According to 'The P-Scales – Level Descriptors P1-8' (QCA, 2011, p.8) for the curriculum area of English P1(ii) is defined as follows:

> '*Pupils show emerging awareness of activities and experiences. They may have periods when they appear alert and ready to focus their attention on certain people, events, objects or part of objects, for example, attending briefly to interactions with a familiar person. They may give intermittent reactions, for example, sometimes becoming excited in the midst of social activity'.*
> (QCA, 2011, p.8)

Whilst level P2(i) is described as follows:

> '*Pupils begin to respond consistently to familiar people, events and objects. They react to new activities and experiences, for example, withholding their attention. They begin to show*

interest in people, events and objects, for example, focusing their attention on sensory

aspects of stories or rhymes when prompted'.

(QCA, 2011, p.8)

I found this contextual information very helpful. However, I emphasized to the teacher and the TA that whilst I was interested in their views on Child 2's educational progress I was specifically interested in analysing how Child 2 was responding to new forms of teaching and learning as developed within creative sessions. For example, I explained I was interested in hearing from the teacher and the TA, from their observations, whether there were any significant moments within sessions where they felt that Child 2 was reacting or responding in ways that were more alert or engaged than they felt were typical of him, and what role particular creative teaching methodologies were playing, in their opinion, in affecting Child 2's responses.

Prior to detailing staff response to this question the diverse character of the pupils allocated to this class will be further contextualised. As stated at the beginning of this cycle there were nine pupils in this class of varying abilities. The pupil perceived as having the highest level of educational ability in the class was assessed as being between P8, the highest ability level identified by the P-Scales, and level 1 of the National Curriculum. The school was conscious that this pupil had made rapid progress in the year that he had attended the school. This pupil had started at the school as a newly arrived child from Afghanistan who had very little understanding of English. However, just one year on, and this pupil's spoken English was fluent. Recently, the school had been working with this pupil and his family to explore the option of him being transferred to a mainstream setting. However, at the time of Phase Two, this child was very clear with staff that he did not want to go to the mainstream setting he had visited because, in his view, he did not like the class as much as he liked this class. This child's situation is discussed here to highlight the complexity of the challenge facing staff working in this class in terms of creating teaching and learning scenarios that were suitably differentiated for pupils with such vastly different levels of ability as Child 2 and this particular peer.

Alongside this peer there were two other children in Child 2's class who were assessed as between P4 and P8. As they are referred to below in reference to staff's identification of two significant moments they are given the pseudonyms B1 and G1. Both these children are confident verbal communicators who commonly use a considerable range of vocabulary when they interact with others, utilizing aspects of language such as prepositions and pronouns. In addition to these pupils Child 2 had four other peers in his class all of whom were assessed as being between P2 and P4 on the P-Scales. This meant that these pupils were able to communicate using greater levels of intentionality than Child 2 was assessed as being capable of. Whilst these pupils did not use language necessarily recognizable as formal language they were all vocal communicators in one-way or another. For example, these pupils would use vocalizations such as letting out a loud noise to communicate preference whilst others would use selected words to indicate their choices.

Having established the peer population of this class the significance of the two moments the TA and teacher identified as most striking following the completion of this scheme of work becomes easier to comprehend. The first moment involves firstly B1 and then G1 coming over to Child 2 during session one of the AR process in an unprompted and spontaneous manner and involving him in their role-play. B1 and G1 appeared during this moment to be mirroring behaviour typical of staff as they interacted with Child 2, placing themselves very close to his wheelchair and speaking to him in a soft voice and offering him the props they had selected to use in their role-play. During this sequence Child 2 looked up and lifted his head up and with his eyes tracked B1 and G1's movements. In his body language he did not recoil in any way from B1 or G1. This interaction lasted approximately three minutes. Staff felt this interaction was significant for all three of these pupils, largely because no adult intervention was required and, therefore, this interaction can be seen as an autonomous and entirely pupil-led experience. The second moment, occurred in week five of the scheme of work and involved B1 choosing to fan Child 2 with a Chinese Fan that the session included as a prop. B1 asked his teacher for permission to do this, which she gave. During this sequence Child 2 raised his head and tracked B1 with his eyes. He also moved his hands and his arms in jerky movements throughout the sequence. B1 asked if he could sit next to Child 2 for the rest of the session and permission was given.

Staff were struck by the consistency of Child 2's gaze, focused towards B1. Throughout the session as B1 spoke or moved Child 2 often responded by lifting his head or moving his arms.

In reflective post-session discussions with the teacher and the TA, I raised the issue of forming friendships in regard to the experiences of children with PMLD. I asked the teacher and the TA what their perceptions were of whether pupils with PMLD, such as Child 2, were able to form peer-to-peer friendships. The staff commented that they felt Child 2's opportunity to pursue or explore such experiences were often limited due to environmental and pedagogical factors. For example, they explained that Child 2 was very spatially restricted within his wheelchair so unrestricted movement was difficult for him and, therefore, in terms of building bonds with other children Child 2 was restricted in terms of what he could initiate himself. They also explained that due to the way contrasting IEP's were developed for Child 2 and his peers it meant that Child 2 was often engaging in learning tasks that meant he was learning separately to his peers.

Whilst very interested in staff's reflections on the environmental and pedagogical impacts I was keen to push staff to explore the specific question of whether they felt pupils such as Child 2 were capable of forming friendships or whether they felt Child 2's level of complex cognitive, physical and sensory needs prohibited the possibility of him making friends and taking part in friendship-based activities. When asked directly *'Can pupils with PMLD form friendships?'* the teacher's response was that she did not feel she could say whether Child 2 considered B1 as his friend or not as she felt any answer she provided to this question would be purely speculative. However, the teacher commented that she believed that within her teaching she worked from the philosophical position that having friends and being supported to make friends was a fundamental right of children with PMLD regardless of what cognitive development theory may suggest about this population of pupils' capacity to consciously maintain an awareness of individual people in their class. The TA's response to the same question was 'everybody needs friends' and that whether Child 2 was conscious of having friends or not did not matter in her opinion it was the 'in the moment' experience of friendship that mattered. When I asked her to comment further on what she meant by this the TA commented that what she had liked about the 'Pandora's Box' scheme of work was that it set up a friendly and caring environment and

that she felt this was important and motivating for Child 2 regardless of whether he was consciously aware that his peers were his friends or not.

What does this data suggest about how creativity is being interpreted within this school culture?

Through this experience of observing Child 2, and through being able to reflect upon my observations with two members of staff who knew Child 2 extremely well, I became increasingly aware of the significance of the concepts of 'friendship' and 'togetherness' within this class' model of creativity. Similar to how I had done at the end of Phase One with Child 1, I was keen to try and conceptualise the concept of creativity as perceived through the choices, reactions and responses of Child 2. To this end I drew up the following two hypothetical 'I' sentences based upon my observations of Child 2's reactions:

1. *In creative sessions unexpected things happen such as loud noises, lots of moving about and different people coming to sit by me. I do not like it when the noises are too loud, this makes me jump, but I don't mind the moving about. I become more alert during these sections and track people and objects using my sight and my hearing.*

2. *In creative sessions I interact with my classmates more. This means I get to be close to people whose voices I have often been able to hear and I experience other pupils being near me who look and act very differently to my teacher and the TAs who I work with most of the time.*

Creating these two statements subsequently led to me summarizing my observations of Child 2 by producing the following definition of creativity, expressed 'as if' in the first person by Child 2. As was becoming standard within my fieldwork the statement was produced to aid reflective debate amongst staff and myself and was motivated by the desire to attempt to bring the voice of the pupil in to the foreground of debate concerning defining creativity in this school context:

'To me creativity is an embodied state where I am physically and emotionally closer to my classmates then I would usually be in lessons. Participating in creative sessions involves encountering unexpected things, that might make me jump for a bit, but which then become more comfortable and relaxing as they progress'.

Action Research Project 2: February to March 2010

As described previously the year-four teacher requested that a second AR process was undertaken in the second half of the term where I worked exclusively with the TAs from this class to plan, deliver and evaluate an AR process. As stated before I was keen to accept this offer, as I was interested in exploring TAs views on the school's creativity agenda in more detail. The second AR process concentrated on an area of the history curriculum concerning the life and times of the Crimean nurse Mary Seacole. Again, staff chose to establish the focus of their AR process within the domain of creating inclusive creative learning environments that were designed to be as engaging and accessible to P1-3 students as they were to higher ability students.

In our planning session TAs and I agreed to organize a box of storytelling props associated with Seacole. As Seacole was famous for developing herbal remedies on the battlefield in the absence of available medically approved remedies many natural and herbal materials were placed in the box, such as lemongrass, ginger, echinacea and albas and tea-tree oil as well as pestle and mortars to encourage pupils to participate in creating their own new forms of herbal remedy. Other more conventional medical paraphernalia was also placed in the box such as a stethoscope, a thermometer and bandages. Again, the AR process took place over a five-week period and an emphasis was placed upon repetition and incremental storytelling processes whereby information on characters and dramatic situations was gradually extended each week.

The focus of the first AR session will be described in detail below as this basic structure was followed for the next four weeks with only minor amendments to factors such as introducing slightly different props and slightly different characters. This repetition of the same structure was pursued as TAs felt repetition would support pupils to become more confident within role-play scenarios and more familiar with key objects of reference being used in the sessions. The structure of the 'Mary Seacole' sessions was as follows:

1. Staff and pupils explore the box of props. Pupils smell herbs and oils and feel and manipulate the medical paraphernalia. The TA who is facilitating the session continually asks of the group 'What is this?' and 'What is this for?' Many P4+ pupils verbally engage with her. Other TAs ensure that whilst these verbal interactions are taking place that P1-3 pupils are supported in exploring the different textures and smells of the different natural materials that the box contains.

2. Another TA enters the classroom in role as Mary Seacole. She explains and physically demonstrates that her box of remedies is very precious to her. She observes that children have been looking at them and she requests that all the things children have got out of the box are put back in as it is very important field hospitals are kept very tidy. The TA playing Seacole explains she is expecting some casualties.

3. A TA is helped in by another TA. The character being helped in is an injured solider who is wailing in pain. The solider is placed in the middle of the story circle. The Mary Seacole character explains she needs help from the children and she requests that they chose items from her box to help her heal the injured soldier. Depending on what a child offers her the Seacole character uses it, asking different pupils to help her. This might involve actions such as taking someone's temperature or mixing up a herbal remedy.

4. Following making the injured solider comfortable the session becomes a free-play session in which pupils can interact with the pop-up field hospital as they chose. In this free-play section from week one onwards P4+ pupils were keen to play medics as well as patients.

An observation I noted was that this AR process took place with almost no involvement from the class teacher. Whilst the teacher attended three out of the five sessions that took place and made occasional comments on aspects of the creative sessions she observed her approach to supporting this process could be described as essentially 'hands-off'. Therefore, I became conscious that the teacher was placing a great degree of trust in her TA team and essentially allowing them to be responsible for this area of the curriculum during this half-term period.

It has been argued that within educational policy discourse the role of TAs is one that is perceived as peripheral rather than pivotal to teaching and learning practice (Watkinson, 2002). However, for a growing number of researchers who have investigated the role of TAs within education defining this professional group as peripheral is problematic in terms of the social relations such attitudes can perpetuate (Howes, 2003; Menter et al, 1997). For example, Mansaray (2006, p.175) argues that where TAs are defined as inhabiting a peripheral role within schools there is a greater likelihood of 'ambivalent relationships' developing between teachers and TAs and of TAs developing an 'ambiguous professional identity' as a result of the tension between their highly developed situational knowledge and expertise and their periphery position within school policy and practice discourse. Through reflecting upon the studies of those named above I began to frame my participant observations of this school's TAs in relation to whether individual TAs were seeming to identify themselves with either a periphery or involved school identity. I also became interested in the liminal position of some TAs within the school culture, as their status appeared to be transgressing traditional educational and pedagogical boundaries commonly associated with this role.

As stated earlier there were five TAs who worked regularly within this class. In Phase Two references have already been made to one of these TAs in regard to the support she provided to the teacher and myself in collecting observational data on Child 2. In this section this TA will be allocated the

pseudonym TA 1 to distinguish her from other TAs who will be discussed. All five of the TAs allocated to work with this class were involved in the AR process, although not all of them were present at each session. This is with the exception of one individual who will be referred to as TA 2 in this section who attended all five sessions and put herself forward as the person to facilitate the storytelling elements of each session.

TA 2's status within the school was of interest to me because in many ways this TA appeared to oscillate between a peripheral and highly involved role within the school's creative agenda. In the year-four classroom TA 2 was a pivotal driving force in regard to motivating her colleagues to get involved and support creative initiatives and TA 2 would often spend considerable amounts of her own time at home in the evening making and collecting props for creative sessions. However, TA 2 rarely joined in with whole school after school sessions exploring creativity and generally withdrew herself from conversations about creative initiatives happening in the school.

TA 2 had worked in the school for just under four years at the time of Phase Two taking place and during that time had been allocated to four different classes and class teachers. This practice of TAs changing teachers each year was common practice within this school as was the practice off ensuring TAs worked intensively with certain year-groups for an academic year before moving on to work with a different group of pupils. Upon speaking to the year-four teacher and the Creativity Coordinator the researcher was surprised to discover this seemingly enthusiastic TA had a reputation for being resistant in regard to creative teaching methodologies and that there had been some tension between the TA and the year-four teacher at the start of the academic year. This tension seemed to revolve around the fact that TA 2 was allocated to the same class as the high-ability pupil from Afghanistan as, unusually, she had been allocated to a class including a pupil she had previously worked with the year before. TA 2 clearly had excellent rapport with this pupil and they would often share jokes and humorous banter with each other in lessons. From my understanding tension had arisen between the year-four teacher and the TA when the teacher had made the decision that TA2 should not be this pupil's main support person this coming academic year but rather she should work with other pupils in the class. Although, it had not been apparent to myself it appeared TA 2 had been

rather disgruntled by this decision and this had affected her participation in class sessions in *The Space* where she had expressed a reluctance to attend sessions.

Upon sitting down to plan with TAs it was apparent to me that in terms of age and social and cultural identity there were some noticeable disparities amongst the group. TA 1 and TA 2 are both women. TA 2 was in her 20s whereas TA 1 was older and the mother of teenage children. TA 3 was one of only four male TAs working at the school and was in his twenties. TA 4 and TA 5 were both women who were slightly older than TA 1. I was also conscious that in terms of class and social background all five of the TAs lived relatively close to the school and had strong regional accents and regional cultural identities. All five TAs were from white-British backgrounds. In contrast to the TAs I was conscious of my different accent and of my more middle-class identity.

I noted early on in the AR process that TA 2 was a very confident and assertive person who was able to demonstrate many leadership qualities in regard to making the 'Mary Seacole' scheme of work happen. It also became apparent that TA 2 and TA3 had very good rapport with each other and during creative sessions were very confident in terms of going in to role as different characters and improvising with each other in response to pupils' reactions. TA 2 was also very good at making props and turning pieces of fabric in to new story-related costumes for both staff and pupils.

During the evaluation meeting for this AR process four of the five TAs were present; the TA who was not able to attend was TA 4. During this evaluation process as well as letting staff generally discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the AR scheme of work I requested permission to discuss three questions specifically about the school's creativity agenda. I asked permission to record this discussion. Staff gave their permission on the understanding that all recordings would be stored securely and all staff members would be anonymized within this thesis report. The questions that were asked were:

1. Do you think it is a good idea that your school is trying to be more creative in terms of its approach to teaching and learning?

2. How involved do you feel in the creative practice that is being developed in school at the moment?

3. In terms of the class you work with how would you like to see creativity being developed over the remaining months of this academic year?

In regard to question one all four TAs answered that they felt it was a positive that their school was trying to be more creative. However, TA 3 observed that he did not always understand why such an emphasis was being placed on this area of the school's practice as he observed 'I think this school is pretty creative already'. In regard to question two answers were more varied. TA 2 and TA 3 both spoke about their reluctance to stay after school to discuss creativity as they felt this was not always convenient or necessarily. They also commented that this type of activity was not detailed in their job descriptions. TA 2 then went on to speak about how it had been her decision not to get too involved with creative projects. For example, other TA colleagues had approached her about becoming part of the team of TAs who were excused from their class duties on a Friday afternoon to work with the external scenic artist who led the process of designing new environments for *The Space,* but TA 2 felt strongly she did not want to get involved with this process. She commented:

'In my job I like to concentrate on the pupils in my class. I don't like to spread myself too thin. For me this job is about getting to know the children you work with. If you are out of the class all the time doing different jobs that doesn't happen'

TA 1 and TA 5 both commented that they felt involved in the school's creative work and that, in contrast to TA 2 and TA 3, they did not resent being asked to participate in the after school meetings where creativity was discussed. TA 1 commented:

'I like the direction the school's creative work is taking. It encourages me to think about what is effective for our children and I think that X (Creativity Coordinator) is brilliant. By involving

> *us in those after school meetings at least (names Head Teacher and Deputy Head teacher)*
>
> *are acknowledging that TAs have something to contribute. They could easily not invite us'.*

In terms of how staff hoped the creative practice in their class would be developed over the coming year TA 2 commented:

> *'I like the way we've just got to lead the Mary Secaole sessions. I appreciate being given the*
>
> *opportunity to do that. I'd like to lead more things like this. Its good fun and its good to see*
>
> *the children get so involved'.*

Whilst TA 5 commented:

> *'I think we work well as a team. I've been so impressed with what some of you lot (indicates*
>
> *colleagues) can do. I know my limitations (laughs) but I think because we've all just thrown*
>
> *ourselves in to it it's been fun and its been much better than I thought it would be'.*

To conclude, this AR process highlighted further to me how the TAs 'voices from the margins' (hooks, 1989, p.213) were operating in ways that were inadvertently shaping, influencing, destabilizing and critiquing the school's creative agenda. TAs discourses could be creative and encouraging, but they could also demonstrate great ambivalence in regard to the school's creativity agenda. I concluded Phase Two aware that some TAs were reluctant to relinquish the liminal positions they inhabited. Instead of finding the environment of the periphery alienating I observed that some TAs were comfortable occupying this position within school culture. Such positions allowed TAs to covertly transgress pedagogical boundaries within their participation in creative activities in ways that allowed them to engage with pupils according to their specific frameworks of educational and care values.

Conclusion of Phase Two

Following the highly immersive experience of working with this class over a term, I felt my sense of how creativity was being interpreted and constructed within this school culture had evolved in a number of new significant directions. These directions can be summarized as follows:

1. During Phase Two I was able to collaborate much more closely with TAs than I had been able to in Phase One. This experience further highlighted to me the importance of reflecting upon factors such as 'positionality' (Merriam et al, 2001; Aguilar, 1981) during ethnographic fieldwork. During Phase Two I was able to comprehend Merriam et al's (2001, p. 405) argument that 'culture is more than a monolithic entity to which one belongs or not'. Instead, culture is characterized by what Aguilar (1981, p. 25, cited by Merriam et al, 2001, p.405) describes as 'internal variation'. Specifically, through my collaborations with TAs I was able to gain new insights in to how 'positionality', a term used to convey the heterogeneous and multiplicitous character of cultural environments (Villenas, 1996; Banks, 1998), is underpinned by factors such as class, gender, sexuality and age in institutions such as schools. Compared to some teachers I had collaborated with previously I found the group of TAs I worked with in Phase Two to be much more explicit in terms of how they related aspects of their cultural identity to their professional practice and due to this fact my awareness of how elements of my 'positionality' were being challenged and reinforced by this group of professionals observations became more pivotal within my reflexive practice during this phase.

2. At the end of Phase Two I had increased my awareness of how tensions, relating to the interplay of power dynamics and the effect of established social hierarchies between different staff groups, were affecting the progress of the school's implementation of a clear creativity agenda. This led me to note the following questions in my reflective journal:

Which staff in this school have a sense of ownership in regard to the school's creativity agenda?

And

Whose aims is the current creativity agenda serving? Is it all staff or does it reflect the educational aims and aspirations of some staff more than others?

3. Finally, I concluded this cycle aware that I wished to specifically investigate peer-to-peer interactions within creative sessions in more depth in regard to the quality of pupils' interpersonal interactions during creative sessions. This interest had arisen through observations of Child 2 and the tendency staff had noted for Child 2 to respond to peer interaction during creative sessions in ways that were more alert and engaged than in other sessions they observed him in.

Phase 3: A focus on music and cognition

Introduction

> *'Music captures us, carries us along on a sensuous, rhythmic tonal adventure, then deposits us, changed, in a different place from where we started'.*
>
> (Johnson, 2007, p.237)

During Phase Three a new form of research relation was established in negotiation with the Creativity Coordinator. During this phase it was agreed that I would not collaborate with staff in a practical capacity, adopting a dual role as researcher and practitioner, but, instead, work alongside a class in a participant observer capacity. I wished to do this on the grounds that I felt I had gained a constructive and in-depth insight in to staff perspectives on the school's creativity agenda through the previous two phases of data collection and, therefore, I wished in this third phase to focus my attention much more closely on pupils' experience. In doing this it was my intention to attempt to address some of the issues of sampling bias I had identified within the data collection process so far in terms of collecting more data relating to adult perspectives compared to those of pupils. The Creativity Coordinator gave his permission for this augmented approach to take place and he negotiated permission for me to be based in a year-two class for the Summer term.

A defining feature of this phase, to acknowledge form the outset, is its emphasis on understanding the role of music education within this school's creativity agenda. The year-three teacher I was allocated to observe in this phase was a musician who, like the Creativity Coordinator, brought a considerable amount of music in to his pedagogical practice. Both these two individuals contributed regularly to school assemblies and to promoting music as a pedagogical tool within the school. Through observing these two individuals' musical contributions I had become conscious of the elevated status of music, in comparison to other artistic disciplines, within the school's pedagogical

practice and due to this fact I was keen to explore further how the school's music education practice related to their creativity agenda.

Also of significance to the context of Phase Three is the school's established involvement with the 'Sounds of Intent' research project (Ockleford et al, 2004; Welch et al, 2009; Ockleford et al, 2011). This long-established programme of research seeks to map musical development in children and young people with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD). Its theoretical basis and pedagogical approach was very popular with a number of members of staff in the school during the period I was in situ and the school regularly invited researchers from the 'Sounds of Intent' project in to the school to collaborate directly with pupils and staff. It was clear from conversations with staff that they had found collaborating with the 'Sounds of Intent' researchers a productive and informative experience and it had motivated them to become more conscious of the role of music within their teaching practice.

For over a decade the 'Sounds of Intent' research project has conducted multiple case studies in schools across the UK in which SLD and PMLD pupils' responses, actions and interactions, following musical stimulus, have been carefully collated and analysed. This has led the researchers working on this project to develop a detailed framework by which to map SLD and PMLD children's musical progress. The 'Sounds of Intent' evaluation framework is divided in to three segments in order to aid practitioners to map a child's *proactive, reactive* and *interactive* responses (Welch et al, 2009, p.359). Welch et al (ibid) describe the development of this framework as being driven by their concern that descriptors provided within the QCA's P-Scale framework for mapping SLD and PMLD children's musical progress is virtually non-existent as music is not recognized within the National Curriculum guidelines for this group of learners. Welch et al (2009) question the logic of this decision as, they argue, evidence is consistently gathered through research with this population of learner that suggests that engagement in musical activity can support many areas of learners' development, including areas such as communication, emotional well-being and social confidence (Papousek, 1996; Welch et al, 2009).

Having reviewed literature produced through the 'Sounds of Intent' project I was struck by the extent to which the 'Sounds of Intent' framework took an holistic, as opposed to an instrumental or developmental, approach to framing SLD and PMLD children's development. I reflected that within the 'Sounds of Intent' framework participation in musical activity was not presented as an end in itself but as an experience that is capable of influencing many diverse aspects of pupils' learning and development. In Phase Three I was keen to observe the extent to which staff reflected this ethos in their music pedagogy and the extent to which there was any crossovers between these values and the pedagogical values perpetuate by the school's creativity agenda.

Method 1: Participant Observation

During Phase Three I was allocated by the Creativity Coordinator and the Deputy Head teacher to observe Child 3, a child who, I noted, responded particularly strongly to his class teacher's musical interventions. Child 3 is a non-verbal communicator with limited mobility and limited sight. His hearing, however, is very good. Child 3 is someone who needs time to get used to new objects or people being introduced within his vicinity. Once Child 3 has acclimatized to new stimulus he will engage in sustained forms of shared attention. During the time I was based in Child 3's class Child 3 would regularly experience anxiety and repeatedly hit his left forearm with his right hand. I was aware that due to this circumstance Child 3 had to wear a protective sleeve to reduce the bruising on his forearm.

As explained previously Child 3's teacher was a confident musician who used musical pedagogy, (such as him playing music on his keyboard or his computer, him singing or generating sounds and rhythm through tapping on surfaces), in many of his lessons. Through visiting this classroom once a week for three hours over a term I was able to participate, alongside the class, in many varied musical activities. In the first few weeks of undertaking participant observation in this classroom I observed that when his teacher came and sat by Child 3 and sang very close to him or tapped a gentle rhythm on his wheelchair tray Child 3's distress and anxiety were quickly relieved and Child 3 would become

much stiller, desisting from hitting his fore-arm and, interestingly, often starting to gently hum. I informed the teacher I would be interested in adopting a role in sessions where I sang to Child 3 where appropriate and used tapped rhythms to gain his attention.

I volunteered to do this as I was interested in understanding the contrasting qualities of Child 3's humming responses in more detail. The teacher agreed to this request and to support this process kindly provided me with additional information on Child 3's current IEP. Through this process the teacher communicated what his rationale was in regard to specific interventions he was using with Child 3. I observed that many of Child 3's learning targets concerned establishing sustained and collaborative forms of engagement and encouraging Child 3 to initiate communication exchanges independently as well as to respond to them.

During Phase Three's weekly observations I became increasingly aware of how different types of musical stimulus affected Child 3's responses, particularly in regard to how he moved and the length and quality of his humming. For example, if Child 3 had become calm and relaxed he would often take part in one-to-one turn-taking musical activities. These typically involved me singing a musical phrase and Child 3 responding by first becoming very still and then, after a short period of silence, humming. Usually the tone of Child 3's hum during these sequences would be fairly flat and atonal. Child 3's humming would usually last as long if not a little longer than the duration of the musical phrase I had used. Occasionally, Child 3's humming was undertaken accompanied by him rocking gently from side to side and by him moving his head from side to side. Child 3's humming is of significance in this context due to the fact that he rarely used any form of vocalization in other school scenarios except in these intimate, musically orientated, one-to-one exchanges.

During this time I was fortunate to observe many different curriculum areas being taught in this class. Through this I was able to observe how Child 3's teacher repeatedly engaged Child 3 through introducing curriculum activities, such as counting in numeracy lessons or handling materials in science, through using musical motifs. I would follow the teacher's lead as he moved on to work with another pupil by picking up the musical motifs he had used and seeing if Child 3's attention was held

through the continuance of certain rhythms or musical phrases being repeated. This experience led me to becoming increasingly interested in juxtaposing this participant observation process with researching literature on the subject of how musical engagement is thought to augment and affect child development.

A plethora of theory exists exploring the role and impact of music on human cognition and its potential impact on the development of social and emotional forms of intelligences. Music is present in all cultures and, as Johnson (2007) argues, an individual's sense of musicality is strongly influenced by the culture in which they live. It is also well known that music has the capacity to affect people physically and mentally and that listening to music can generate a powerful embodied learning experience for individuals. Many theorists (Spychiger, 2001; Johnson, 2007 and Sacks, 2007) also present a strong argument asserting that music has been under-examined in terms of its power to affect neurological and physiological responses in populations of people affected by neurological impairments, such as adults who have had strokes or who develop conditions such as Alzheimer's, as well as the many people who are born with complex neurological impairments such as Child 3.

Current theory suggests a human being's relationship with music starts in the very first months of life (Ilari & Polka, 2006; Parncutt, 2009; Honing, 2014) and many studies have now been conducted that argue it is possible to detect babies responding to music in the womb (Arabin, 2002; Schwartz and Ritchie, 2004; James, 2010). In particular, ultrasound research has presented evidence that suggests a fetus at sixteen weeks of gestation will respond to outside sounds. These same studies highlight that it is thought that babies in their mother's wombs learn to adapt to their mother's breathing and movement, creating a kinesthetic awareness of how to respond to changes in rhythm and pace within one's environment prior to birth. These studies also imply that it is extremely noisy in the womb and what protects an unborn baby from a deluge of indiscriminate sound is the powerful and calming effect of the regular beat of the mother's heart, which Konareva (2005) speculates is a contributing factor as to why steady and predictable rhythms have the power to calm human beings throughout their lives.

During my time collaborating with Child 3 I began to increasingly reflect upon research findings such as those outlined above as well as work by other theorists such as the psychologist and infant development theorist Daniel N. Stern (1985; 2010). In his theory of 'vitality affect contours' (Stern, 1985) Stern argues human beings who are at a very early stage of development do not formulate 'meanings' as such from participating in their environment. Instead, Stern argues, they engage in processes of participating in patterns of sensory organization. Viewed through the theoretical lenses of this theory an individual at a very early stage of development develops knowledge not through processing instructions but through becoming increasingly aware of the patterns and sensations afforded by the sensory environment. Fundamental to Stern's theory is the idea that it is through this process that individuals begin to formulate a sense and awareness of self and their individual sense of autonomy in regard to their ability to affect the patterns and sensations of their environment.

Stern (1985; 2010) elaborates upon this hypothesis by arguing that as human beings develop their unconscious sensory and physical awareness of how they receive and process environmental stimulus they become increasingly discerning in their ability to distinguish between, and participate in, increasingly complex sensory patterns and sensations produced by their environment. Stern suggests that humans store this knowledge in their nervous system, the neural pathways in their brains and their muscle memory. Therefore, different sensory experiences, based upon contrasting forms of sensory patterns, start to evoke and trigger ever more predictable forms of response in the individual as their sense of self, (essentially driven in Stern's opinion by their unique muscle memory and neural pathway fusions) becomes more clearly delineated.

One conclusion of Stern's, following his analysis of his theory of vitality affect contours, is that all human beings develop certain aspects of musical intelligence regardless of their cognitive capacities. For example, he argues all humans will develop a sense of tempo as they begin to recognize how their movements correspond with other sensory properties in motion within their environment. Likewise, he argues all human beings will develop a sense of meter out of their unconscious awareness of the movements of their internal body, such as their heartbeat or the rise and fall of their chest cavity as they breath. He also argues that humans develop an instinctual response to rising and falling pitch,

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with a falling pitch becoming associated with a reduction in an embodied sense of tension and a rising pitch being associated with an increased embodied sense of tension rising.

All of these factors greatly interested me and assisted me in interpreting the potential meanings of Child 3's responses during this phase. I concluded my participant observation process aware that how Child 3 responded to, and interpreted, a musical phrase was very different to how he responded to spoken forms of formal language which he often ignored or turned away from. I also concluded this cycle aware that Child 3's ability to communicate could be construed as much more sophisticated and varied if the context of communication had a musical dimension than if it did not.

Method 2: Interviews with staff

This section will now move on to describe an event defined as 'significant' by a number of members of staff. The event occurred in the school during the same time period as I was working with the year-two class and is relevant to this section due to it pertaining to another pupil with PMLD producing an interesting and unusual set of reactions during a lesson where musical pedagogy was being used as the central teaching approach. Prior to this event the pupil had been listening to Beethoven's 5th Symphony in C minor, arguably one of the most famous and dramatically affecting pieces of classical music ever composed. The event took place in a music lesson that was being taught by the Creativity Coordinator. I was not in the lesson when the event occurred. Therefore, the descriptions that follow are drawn from the many conversations I had with staff following the event.

The event involves a peer of child 3's, also in Child 3's class, who shall be referred to in this section as Child 4. Child 4, like Child 3, is assessed as being a P1-3 learner. Child 4 has complex mobility and cognitive impairments. However, he has less complex sensory impairments than Child 3 has as he has good sight and good hearing. Like Child 3, Child 4 very rarely vocalizes and if he does it tends to be in the form of a loud, single-pitch shout. During the lesson in question a classical music CD, with contrasting examples of classical music, was being played. One of the tracks on the CD was

Beethoven's 5th Symphony. During the session a TA was working closely with Child 4 in a one-to-one capacity and noting down Child 4's different responses to contrasting pieces of music. Child 4's reactions during the lesson, the TA observed, had been similar to those typically demonstrated by him in such lessons. He had looked up during certain pieces of music and made eye contact with the TA but, in the TAs opinion, he had also appeared quite tired and resistant to being engaged with. At the end of the lesson the TA continued to write up her observation notes whilst sitting by Child 4 and it was her understanding that at this time Child 4 had fallen asleep. As the TA was putting the finishing touches to her notes Child 4 sang the opening bars of Beethoven's 5th Symphony (approximately sixteen notes) in time and in tune and then laughed. The TA noted that Child 4 sang this phrase approximately fifteen minutes after he had originally been listening to it.

In conversations with staff in the weeks following this event I inquired as to whether Child 4 had engaged in this type of response previously or indeed whether he had repeated the singing of this musical phrase in the weeks that had followed. Staff informed me that the answer to both these questions was no, this seemed to be, from their observations, an entirely one-off event. I noted that following this event the Creativity Coordinator and the staff based in the year two class were strongly inclined to debate the question:

What does it tell us about Child 4's cognitive ability that he is able to remember and repeat a sixteen note musical phrase?

Typical of the types of staff observation made during this time is the following comment made by the Creativity Coordinator:

'I think this is evidence of how children with PMLD can be seen to progress laterally rather than in a linear fashion when it comes to musical intelligence. I think there is something different about musical language, how it is phrased and structured, to spoken language and this means children can access and interpret it more directly'.

(Interview with Creative Coordinator, June 2011)

This comment from the Creativity Coordinator encouraged me to reflect upon Bogdashina's perspective on this debate (Bogdashina, 2010, p.67-71). Similar to Stern, Bogdashina argues that prior to human beings developing formal language they develop 'sensory forms of knowing'. Bogdashina observes that for some people with complex neurological impairments this 'sensory knowing' remains the primary way in which people negotiate and comprehend reality. Bogdashina argues that it is important for educators to be aware of the difference between sensory forms of knowing and cognitive forms of knowing. In Bogdashina's opinion these two distinct ways of interpreting reality should not be viewed as operating along a continuum, with sensory knowing perceived as somehow inferior to cognitive knowing, as they are distinct neurological and embodied approaches to interpreting reality. In her opinion these interpretative behaviours develop alongside each other as two distinct interactive systems that are governed by very different sensory-perceptual responses. This, she concludes, is why learners with complex neurological impairments produce responses, primarily using their senses and their established awareness of sensory patterns and sensations, that suggest a degree of 'intelligence' that is far in advance of what is perceived possible in terms of their cognitive capacities.

Conclusion: Phase Three

I concluded Phase Three aware that music-based activities were very popular amongst teachers and TAs in the school and that many staff considered music-based pedagogies to be very conducive to supporting P1-3 pupils' learning. I also concluded this cycle aware that I had been involved in many interesting conversations regarding children's musicality and individual children's inclinations in regard to formulating strong responses to musical stimulus. During these conversations teachers and TAs with diverse professional backgrounds became animated and enthused about music's role within their school culture. However, I was also aware that during this term I had been involved in very few discussions that had involved the word 'creativity' and this, in some respects, perplexed me as it led to the formulations of the following questions in my reflective journal:

Do members of staff, heavily involved in developing music-based pedagogical activities, not consider this aspect of their work to be 'creative'?

And, the related question:

Do members of staff leading on developing music pedagogies in the school not see this practice as linked to the school's creative agenda?

This led me to identify that the concept of creativity was increasingly becoming associated in school discourse with some aspects of the school's pedagogical practice more than others. For example, creative practice in the school, from my observations, was strongly associated with new innovations in drama education practice but not so commonly associated with other arts-based disciplines such as visual art or, as had been demonstrated this term, with music education practices. Upon reflection I wondered if this was because teachers felt that the work in *The Space* and projects involving drama and storytelling techniques represented new forms of pedagogical practice, whilst in contrast music education was a highly established and respected forms of pedagogy within the school culture which had been confidently led by the Creativity Coordinator for many years and which had recently been significantly endorsed through participation in the 'Sounds of Intent' project. Therefore, music, I reflected, had an established status and prestige amongst staff that *The Space* and drama education activities did not have at this time. This in turn led me to note the following question in my reflective journal:

To what extent is creativity in this school culture associated with pedagogical activities that are considered to be new and untested?

Following the logic of this notion, the year two teacher's approach to musical education becomes 'non-creative' as it is a form of pedagogy he is very confident in delivering and his practice is based upon pedagogy that has been tested in the school over many years. This teacher also, I observed, was

able to become a periphery figure within the school's creative agenda as his pedagogical practice was more focused within the domain of 'music education' than 'creativity'. It was only, I observed, when this teacher worked in *The Space* that he became involved in creativity discourse and his pedagogy became associated with 'creativity'. This anomaly seemed odd to me as this teacher seemed to more than fulfill the criteria set in recognized definitions of a 'creative teacher' as provided in literature. For example, The NACCCE Report (1999) defines creative teaching as:

> 'Using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting and effective'
>
> (NACCCE, 1999, p.89)

Whilst Sawyer (2004, pp.12-20) defines creative teaching as 'improvisational', arguing that creative teachers are able to demonstrate two particular types of knowledge simultaneously within their teaching. Firstly, Sawyer argues, they have 'pedagogical content knowledge' but, secondly, they have 'creative performance skills' which means they are able to effectively facilitate group improvisations involving themselves and students. Sawyer acknowledges the term 'improvisation' may, in some context, suggest a bias within his model of creative teaching towards arts subjects but Sawyer challenges this view by arguing creative teachers are able to apply an improvisational framework to the exploration of any subject domain within the curriculum of which art subjects will just be one component. For Sawyer, this cross-curricular pedagogical skill is a core component of creative teaching as, in his opinion, being a creative teachers means that the teacher has embraced a particular philosophical pedagogical orientation in which the boundaries between subjects are considered to be fluid and collaborative. Within this model inquiry-based forms of learning are considered to lead to more holistic and deeper forms of understanding being produced by pupils. Taking in to consideration both NACCCE (1999) and Sawyer's (2004) perspectives on creative teaching it was my opinion that this year two teacher's teaching practice could be considered as an exemplary example of creative teaching. However, I concluded Phase Three aware that neither the teacher nor his senior managers were particularly aware or interested in investigating and analysing his practice through the lenses of creativity theory and practice.

In regard to observing pupils, Phase Three had represented a very beneficial experience. I had found the experience of collaborating with Child 3 very useful in terms of extending my understanding of how researchers and PMLD pupils could strengthen the quality of their collaborations through using musical language as oppose to formal forms of language. As had been established in previous phases I concluded Phase Three by producing a series of first person statements 'as if' in the voice of Child 3:

Child 3's 'I' statements

In order to engage with creative activities I need to feel secure and at the moment what makes me feel secure are gentle vocal phrases and gentle rhythmic patterns being tapped out on my wheelchair tray or sung near to my ear.

I will respond to stimulus I like by humming and by gently moving my upper body from side-to-side.

I like taking part in joint actions sequences involving music. You will find that I often do not respond straight away after a musical phrase has been presented. However, if you sit very quietly and still, I will usually begin a humming phrase after about twenty seconds.

To summarize, in regard to my experiences of collaborating with Child 3 I concluded Phase Three with a strong sense that being able to express responses and feelings through musical language was a core component of Child 3's individual relationship with being creative and that, therefore, where the school wished to create a 'creative educational environment' that was accessible for Child 3 it was important that practitioners within the school considered how they were going to utilize music within teaching session's atmosphere and pedagogy.

Phase Four

Introduction

By this stage of the research process (Autumn 2011) the Creativity Coordinator and, where she was available, the Deputy Head teacher and myself had established a routine of having an end of term review meeting where I shared my observations from the data collection phase that had just been completed. In addition to this, during these meetings I would negotiate with these gatekeepers my preferred focus for the coming phase. During the meeting at the end of Phase Three I requested that I be permitted to focus the next phase once again on TAs practice, this time in *The Space*. I explained that my rationale behind this was that one hypothesis I had developed over the previous three phases was that going in to *The Space* was having a strong impact on TAs motivation to participate in creative forms of teaching and learning practice. To test this hypothesis I explained I wished to have the opportunity to interview a broad cross-section of TAs and to observe different TAs working in *The Space*. The Deputy Head teacher gave her permission for this to take place and the Creativity Coordinator led on the process of contacting TAs to see if they would like to take part.

In preparation for this cycle I drew up the following list of questions I wished to explore with TAs:

1. What, in your opinion, is the pedagogical value of *The Space*?

2. *To what extent would you agree with the statement '*different forms of teaching and learning take place in The Space than take place in the classroom'?

3. What impact do you feel *The Space* is having on school culture?

4. What challenges do you associate with *The Space*?

5. What is your opinion of how P1-3 pupils' are experiencing *The Space*? Do you think, for example, going in to *The Space* is a beneficial experience for this group of pupils?

The Creative Coordinator secured nine TAs who were interested in being observed and interviewed as part of this data collection phase. I observed each of these TAs once in *The Space* and conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant during which I asked each participant the questions outlined above.

Following the completion of the semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations, I analysed the data using an analysis strategy in which both open and axial coding strategies were used. Open coding was used as I wished to enter the interview and observation scenarios with no pre-identified categories by which to organize data. Instead, I chose to explore data through iteratively identifying units of analysis as the data collection process developed. By following this process I was looking to identify repeatedly used words and phrases, as well as commonly expressed feelings and repeated actions and events. In addition to being open the coding was axial because I was keen to identify the links between the categories and codes that emerged through the open coding process. This approach is in keeping with Cresswell's (1998, p.57) argument that 'the essence of axial coding is identifying the interconnectedness of categories'.

In summary, this analysis and coding process was undertaken in order to investigate what TAs pedagogical behaviours and interview responses indicated about what their core pedagogical values were in *The Space*. Following this process four key categories emerged as prioritized by TAs. These four categories will be discussed individually below. The analysis begins by discussing how the relationship between affect and creative practice is interpreted within TAs' interpretation of creative practice.

Category 1: Affect and experience

'*I think our class gets excited about going in The Space each week. The children know it is not a usual teaching time. As we travel from our classroom to the door of The Space I try and build up a sense of excitement and curiosity'.*

(TA, Year 5)

'*You get nervous some weeks about going in there. Sometimes that's because I don't like the theme we are using or I'm not sure what I am supposed to be doing. But, you just have to trust that when we get in there something exciting is going to happen. It inevitably does, and once I am actually in there I forget about how anxious I felt and time flies'*

(TA, Year 3)

I have selected the above two interview extracts to open this section on the grounds that they contain some of the most commonly cited forms of affect TAs associated with *The Space* during interviews, namely; excitement, anticipation, curiosity, nervousness and anxiety. As the interviews progressed I noted that the identification of strong affect states such as these emerged as a consistent theme across all interviews. I also noted that some of these affect states could be construed as more negative and challenging than others. For example, affect states such as feeling anxious or tense about what your expected role was, or feeing agitated as a result of entering an unpredictable environment, could be construed as difficult or challenging affect states to have to grapple with in a professional setting. However, interview data also seemed to suggest that despite encountering negative affect states TAs enthusiasm for working in *The Space,* and their motivation to collaborate with others in *The Space,* did not seem to be diminished. This led to me becoming increasingly aware of the relevance within this inquiry of exploring in more detail the relationship between strong affect states and creativity within this learning context.

Through analysing the interview data, I began to reflect upon how TAs' observations connected to wider theory relating to affect and how humans are understood to acquire increasing complex levels of knowledge. The role of affect in learning has long since been of interest to educational theorists (Dagleish & Power, 1999; Efklides & Volet, 2005; Linnenbrink, 2006). One of the earliest contributors to this field of debate, and a theorist whom the researcher felt was increasingly relevant to this group of TAs vision of creativity as Phase Four progressed, was the early twentieth century philosopher and educational theorist John Dewey (1934:2006; 1938:1987).

Fundamental to Dewey's theory of how humans acquire knowledge is the idea that experience and affect are pivotal components of learning. Dewey argued that strong forms of affect were incapable of producing a neutral learning experience, as strong affect would always evoke some form of felt awareness for the individual, be that conscious or unconscious, that demanded a response. These responses, Dewey argued, could manifest in many different types of embodied reaction. For example, reactions might be physical and external (such as a change to facial expression or a sigh) or they might be internal or cognitive in nature (the production of adrenalin or a conscious thought concerning future action), or, more likely, in Dewey's opinion, involve all these elements being simultaneously engaged. Similarly, reactions might be immediate or delayed. Either way for Dewey, affect was a critical component of what motivates an individual to participate in learning. For these reasons Dewey's theory of learning can be understood as an embodied theory of learning as within in his theoretical framework learning is defined as an experience that is holistic and which needs to be understood as a process that engages every processing faculty of the person, including mind, body and the senses (Dewey, 1938:1987).

Also fundamental to Dewey's theory of learning is the idea that different types of experience generate different qualities of affect and that there are particular forms of affect that are particularly conducive with creating learning experiences that will provoke lasting and motivational reactions in the learner. In this respect Dewey is acknowledged as one of the first educational theorists to present the argument that nurturing positive forms of affect within educational institutions is important, as without it learners become disengaged with the educational process (Dewey, 1916:1985; 1938:1987).

However, Dewey's theory of affect and experience is more complex than a simple inference that if you have positive affect in an educational institution powerful forms of learning will occur. Instead, Dewey observed that there are certain forms of experience that may produce temporarily uncomfortable forms of affect that may be initially destabilizing for the individual that can, over time, generate intense motivation to engage in learning. This is because, Dewey argued, learning to manage and interpret temporarily destabilizing information is a critical component of becoming a robust and motivated learner. Therefore, Dewey considered a degree of destabilizing experience within education to be essential for learning as long as the learner is supported to resolve and rationalize their experience in ways that leave them feeling in-control and knowledgeable about what their experience means and how it connects to bigger questions about their lives and their environment (Dewey, 1897:2009; 1938:1985).

In his writing Dewey refers to many contrasting examples of intense and immersive forms of experience, such as aesthetic, spiritual and scientific forms of experience (Dewey, 1938:1985). Dewey argues during their lives learners may experience many contrasting forms of intense experience that produce powerful destabilizing affect states such as uncertainty, powerlessness, frustration and confusion. Dewey argues where these affect states are followed by experiences of emotions such as wonder, awe, satisfaction, resolution, (and here Dewey discusses a particular type of resolution, in that it is a form of resolution that leaves the learner curious and hungry for more exploration rather than a form of resolution that leaves the learner feeling that there are no further questions to ask), learning is at its most powerful. It is these types of learning experience that Dewey, in his document 'My Pedagogic Creed' (1897:2009), suggested educational institutions should aspire to provide for their pupils. Through analysing Dewey's theories on experience, affect and learning I became conscious of the extent to which these three components were being prioritized and synthesized within the practice being developed in *The Space*. The led me to reflect upon the following question:

> **To what extent is this school following a Deweyian interpretation of learning within its practice in *The Space*?**

It was my conclusion by the end of Phase Four that TAs were highly committed to pursuing strong affect states and increasingly challenging forms of collaborative experience in *The Space* in order to achieve two distinct pedagogical aims. Firstly, for many of the TAs their explicit aim was to experiment with new forms of pedagogy, that they had not engaged in previously, thereby extending the limits of their pedagogical experience within this school environment. Secondly, TAs were focused upon creating experiences for pupils that allowed pupils to experience heightened forms of affect that were different and more challenging to those encountered in the classroom. TAs' rationale for doing this was to support pupils in becoming more versatile in regard to the forms of affect pupils could encounter, tolerate and interpret without becoming distressed or disengaged with the stimulus provided in *The Space*. Therefore, I concluded Phase Four conscious that Dewey's model of learning had great relevance to this school's creativity agenda as experience and affect could be seen to be strongly emerging as core component of the school's evolving model of creativity.

Category 2: Kinesthetic empathy

When interviewed, many of the nine TAs were forthcoming about the contrasting forms of pedagogy they were enjoying developing and experimenting with when in *The Space*. This next section aims to capture some of the key areas of pedagogical practice that were being fore-grounded by TAs during this period. Through this process the section will specifically summarize some of the key features of this group's emerging attitude to kinesthetic teaching methodologies. In doing this, the term kinesthetic empathy is re-interrogated (following the initial discussions presented in 'Chapter Two: Literature Review'), and set in context in regard to its potential meaning within this specific educational context.

As discussed in the 'Chapter Two: Literature Review', Reynolds and Reason (2012) define kinesthetic empathy as 'the ability to experience empathy merely by observing the movements of another human being' (2012, p.19). The significance of kinesthetic empathy within this school's creative

practice began to emerge as a number of staff started to identify within interviews that they were relying upon movement and physical expression within their pedagogical practice in *The Space* much more than verbal exchanges. Three out of the nine TAs interviewed commented specifically on how they liked the fact that less verbal language was being used during sessions in *The Space.* One of these TAs commented that she felt this was particularly appropriate in sessions designed specifically to support P1-3 learners. This TA commented:

> *'What I like about The Space at the moment is that the design team have really started to experiment with what they are doing in there. So, when you first go in it is like 'Wow'. I, personally, don't want to talk during those first few minutes. . . . I'm taking it all in. Then when we start exploring I don't want to be telling or directing the children what to explore. So I think . .(.).. us adults , , (. .) start exploring the space through touching things and moving about, similar to how the children approach The Space'.*
>
> (TA, Year Four)

It is important to be clear that the term 'kinesthetic empathy' was not a phrase used by TAs during interviews. This was a term I identified as relevant as I researched literature relating to embodied and kinesthetic forms of learning. The specific language used by TAs, as evidenced in the extracts below, included phrases that describe actions such as 'mirroring', 'following' and 'copying' pupils' responses. In a number of interviews TAs also described how they physically used their bodies and the movement of specific objects to initiate physicalized and non-verbal forms of dialogue with pupils.

> *'In The Space I think my role is to wait and watch and to try to understand what areas of The Space are interesting to the child I am working with. This means I will often follow a child's gaze and try and work out where they are looking and what items in The Space the child is tracking with their eyes. Yesterday, I could see a child was following the projections on the wall with their eyes. So, I got the big reflector* (a circular white item used to reflect and create lighting effects) *and started to use it to change where the projections were being projected'.*
>
> (TA, Year Five)

Another significant factor that emerged during the observations and interviews conducted in this phase was that many TAs were taking a lead, compared to teachers, in sessions in *The Space,* especially in terms of going in to role as specific characters. The majority of TAs (n =,6) when interviewed, stated they did not begrudge taking on this additional responsibility within sessions, and all six expressed a great appreciation in regard to having the opportunity to collaborate with pupils through this type of pedagogic experience. For example, the following TA from a Year Four class discussed during her interview how she always chose to develop a theme-related character within her interactions with pupils in *The Space*:

> *'When I am in The Space I like to communicate with pupils through being a character. My class is used to that now, they know it is what I like to do. The characters I chose to be will be ones that I think go with the theme that is being explored. So, this morning, I was a small bird, like a sparrow. I was trying to move my head and my arms in such a way that I was like a bird pecking crumbs off a bird table. To start with only one boy from my class started to copy me, moving his head like I was moving mine. But, a couple of other pupils reacted too. This is what I'm trying to do when I go in to character. I'm trying to see how many of the children I can get to react to my movement. Some children will copy my actions but others might just lift their head to look or follow me with their eyes'.*
> (TA, Year Two)

This interview took place in the first week of the five weeks interview and observation process and as the weeks progressed this TA developed her adopted bird character considerably. Therefore, this character made an appearance not only in this session, but continued to be a presence for this class throughout the five weeks period of this data collection process. The movement style of this character gradually became more exaggerated and clearly defined as the weeks progressed. Alongside honing the physical aspects of her character the TA also developed various costume elements to accompany the character, including the use of a mask and a cloak. As she added in these elements the sensory aspects of the bird's character were extended, as was the bird's capacity for

challenging children, sometimes in ways that caused strong, seemingly negative reactions. The following interview extract from another TA based in the Year-four class explores some of the impacts of the bird character becoming more expressive within *The Space;*

> *'The other day my colleague was playing a bird character and I was working with a child who just kept shaking his head every time my colleague came near him and saying 'no, no, no'. As my colleague moved away I started to copy some of her movements in a slower, more gentle style. I toned my movement down, as I was aware that my colleague was making the bird a little more expressive then usual as some other children were really enjoying petting the bird's head. The child I was working with was not appreciating this more dynamic interpretation of the bird. So, we moved to a more quite area of The Space and I made some gentler bird-like movements. After a while the child did calm himself down and at the end of the session he did let the main bird character come nearer to him and very briefly he touched the bird character on her head'.*
>
> (TA, Year 4)

Another significant area connected to kinesthetic empathy that emerged during this data collection phase was the extent to which TAs were approaching establishing joint attention sequences with pupils using methods that placed a strong emphasis on watching, waiting and not intervening when children were engaging in activity that on the surface could be construed as potentially anti-social or self-excluding. I observed that many TAs were adopting stances that were much less interventionist and much less didactic then were typical of their collaborations with pupils in the classroom. The following interview extract highlights this as a TA from a Year Five class describes the significance of watching a child she was working with and waiting for the child to initiate a shared action sequence;

> *'I was supporting a child the other day who decided to just stand facing the wall for the first part of the session. During this time it appeared that he was entirely ignoring his peers and the staff in The Space. This is quite typical for him, in that he will sometimes remove himself from the teaching activity and want to be away from the group. I decided to sit close by to*

him and watch him but not to interrupt him from facing the wall. If this had been happening

in the classroom I would probably have gone up to him and tried to persuade him to come

back to the teaching activity. In The Space I don't feel it is as appropriate for me to do that as

it is in the classroom. All the other pupils in The Space on that day were choosing what they

did, so why shouldn't he? After a while he came and sat by me and together, in silence, we

just watched the group go about their activities in The Space. I think all the time he was

looking at the wall he was listening to what was happening around him'.

Following the collation of data from the interviews with TAs and observations of their practice in
sessions in *The Space* I drew up the following list of factors I felt staff were identifying as core
elements of their kinesthetic pedagogical practice:

- Within sessions TAs place an emphasis upon using strong, but not overpowering movement
  motifs. These motifs will sometimes be used to relax pupils, whilst at other times they are
  used as a means to invite participants to get involved in shared movement sequences.

- In sessions an emphasis is placed upon using movement that has a strong aesthetic character
  and a distinctive flow and fluency. This means that characters who use jagged or
  unpredictable movement are incorporated very rarely in *The Space* and only often a period
  in which pupils have been able to access the character in ways that are moderated according
  to individual children's reactions.

- Many staff are conscious that, where a pupil is tracking physical movement with their eyes or
  listening very carefully to the sounds that are being produced in *The Space,* these actions
  needs to be understood as an important component of kinesthetic and empathic learning in
  this educational environment. Staff are also aware that for many pupils being allowed an
  uninterrupted period of time to get used to the subtleties of the sensory dimensions of *The
  Space* is an integral part of their participation within this environment.

- A key goal for staff within sessions is that pupils begin to lead physical movement sequences, such as sequences that utilize mirroring, following and copying behaviours. The aim within these movement sequences is that exchanges will become dialogic between pupils and staff and that there will be a balance achieved between staff and pupils in regard to who is leading the sequence.

Category 3: Creativity, Leadership and Professional Development

As Phase Four progressed I became conscious of the extent to which TAs were discussing in their interviews aspects such as job satisfaction, professional ambition and what motivates them in regard to realizing and extending the scope of their involvement within teaching and learning practices at the school. This, in turn, led me to become more conscious of the potential relevance of literature and research relating to creativity, professional development and organizational change.

Research by Ryan and Deci (2000, pp.68-82) suggests that professional environments that successfully nurture creativity combine supportive mechanisms for acknowledging the affecting components of employees' job roles whilst simultaneously encouraging and rewarding staff for original and innovative practice. These types of professional environment, Ryan and Deci suggest, produce workforces that are more 'solution focused' and 'task orientated' than other work environments where these characteristics are not nurtured.   Similarly, Pink (2009, p.27-36) argues that creativity in the workplace is fostered through three pivotal concepts being in place. Firstly, he suggests the concept of 'autonomy' is critical to fostering creativity as the more in control of the task the employee feels the greater the level of intrinsic motivation that is generated. Secondly, Pink argues, for organisations to foster creativity ample space needs to be provided to allow employees to develop 'mastery' within their professional responsibilities. Finally, Pink places a strong emphasis on 'purpose' within his interpretation of organizational creativity arguing that a creative organization will encourage staff to explore how their professional practice contributes to wider issues and discourses within society.

Following this review of literature I identified links between comments made by TAs during this period and Pink's (2009) theory of 'autonomy, mastery and purpose'. The following two extracts are selected on the basis of their relation to Pink's theory:

'When I started at this school I had no ambition to train as a teacher. But, through working in The Space my attitude has changed. I've realized that what I do as a TA is teaching as much as it is supporting children and its made me want to go on to do my teacher training. . . . (. . .) . . . I think some of this confidence has come from being on the team who design the environments in The Space. I couldn't believe it at first that I was going to be allowed out of class to do this on a Friday afternoon but the fact that five of us TAs have been allowed to do this shows you that The Head believes this is something that is important'.
(TA, Year One)

'I've worked in this school a long time. I can feel things are really progressing in terms of the creative projects we do. I focus my work more on the classroom stuff then The Space. I like to get ideas from what we do in The Space and then take them back to the classroom and develop them with individual children. I'm sure the teacher I am working with this year gets exasperated with me sometimes, always building little areas for children in the classroom. But, what I like about him is he lets me try things. He let's me fail. Then he let's me try again. I respect that'.
(TA, Year Three)

Amabile et al (2005) in her analysis of affect, creativity and motivation in the work-place argues that the experience of successfully solving problems and identifying new challenges produces a strong emotional reaction from employees which can, in turn, generate what she refers to as a 'virtuous cycle of creativity' being established (2005, p.367). Amabile argues this cycle will be strongest in cultures where directed and immediate feedback is provided to people on the quality of their solutions. Amabile also suggests that this cycle can be identified in environments which place an

importance on incubating ideas and letting staff have time to think through and reflect upon their ideas and interventions. Amabile suggests that valuing incubation does more positive good then simply being a means of solving problems as it also triggers wider cultural events such as changes to which combinations of staff work with each other and how tasks are delegated and organized within organisations. Amabile concludes that the incubation of ideas is significant to fostering creativity because it broadens a person's repertoire in terms of being able to think flexibly and laterally about challenges faced in the workplace as well as encouraging new forms of engagement with the material and social dimensions of one's workplace.

Following a process of considering the data emerging from interviews with TAs, in conjunction with considering relevant literature and research undertaken within the field of creativity and organizational change, I approached the Head Teacher for an interview as I felt at this stage of the research process it was important to consult with the Head Teacher on her perspectives on how the school's creativity agenda was affecting issues such as staff motivation and staff development.

During the interview that followed, when asked to share her views on how leadership style might affect the development of institutional creativity, the Head Teacher made the following comment:

> *'My approach is to not interfere. I try and create an atmosphere of trust. I don't have a background in creativity. Creativity does not particularly interest me. When I arrived at this school creativity and Creative Partnerships was something I had not previously had much to do with in my previous school. I decided to observe for a period. I was curious to understand why creativity was so important in this school. What I learnt was that creativity is an integral part of what motivates people in this school. Now, this might not be the case for another school down the road, but it is for this one. I could see both staff and pupils got so much from the creative work that was taking place. So, part of my role in this school since I arrived has been to make creativity possible, be that from a financial, timetabling or staffing capacity, because when creativity is encouraged and supported many other initiatives in the school flourish'.* (Head Teacher, October 2011)

In conclusion, this section has highlighted that, by Phase Four of the data collection process, significant attitudinal changes could be detected in regard to how staff were interpreting their role and status within the school's creativity agenda. During both Phase's One and Two of the data collection process I had been conscious of many interpersonal tensions existing between teachers and TAs in regard to establishing and pursuing the school's creativity agenda. In Phase Four some of those tensions could still be detected in some TAs views, but the majority of the nine TAs who were interviewed during Phase Four expressed greatly increased levels of motivation and commitment in regard to participating in, and contributing to, the creativity agenda. I deduced from this analysis that the school's approach to fostering and nurturing creativity was having a positive affect on aspects of school culture relating to staff members' professionalism, their motivation to pursue excellence in regard to teaching and learning practice and their commitment to pursuing the school's creativity agenda.

Category 4: The distinction between an individualistic and collective interpretation of creativity

Csikzentmihalyi (1996, p.283) argues that creativity emerges 'from systems and through relationships'. Pivotal to his theory of creativity is the idea that creative innovation, the kind that has cultural and organization impact, is rarely individualistic in character but is often undertaken through 'communities of practice' being initiated. Nichol (1998, p.16) also explores this idea arguing that creative activities undertaken without a clear purpose or reference to networks and debates outside of the creative activity itself will often stagnate and lose focus quicker than those activities that bring individuals together to critique and investigate the wider purposes that underpin their creative ideas and initiatives. Nichol's concludes that creative activities that lack purpose or an identifiable affiliation to a specific area of inquiry can produce problematic social relations as different individuals involved in contributing to the creative activity become unsure of each other's intentions and ambitions for

the creative initiative. This is why, Nichol argues, dialogue is so central to creative cultures as it allows individuals to negotiate the frameworks by which creative activity is to be judged and understood.

During Phase Four I became conscious of the relevance of theoretical perspectives such as these as I reflected upon the extent to which TAs made reference to dimensions of their current practice that concerned collegiate working and reflective practice within their interviews. The following two interview extracts are typical of TAs attitudes to these dimensions of their professional practice.

'I get annoyed when there is not time for us to evaluate what happened in The Space. If we don't talk about our observations good ideas just get lost. Even if only a couple of us find five minutes to sit down and write up a few notes it's better than none of us doing it. I'm happy to be the one to write them up'.
(TA, Year Six)

'For the last few weeks I have not been able to go in to The Space due to staff being off sick and things happening in the classroom. I've told my teacher that if this happens again it is not fair that I am the one that has to stay in the classroom. He understands and I know he will make sure I go in next week. I just don't like it when everyone comes back from The Space talking about all the exciting things that happened. I feel out of it and I don't want to feel out of it'.
(TA, Year Three)

David Bohm (2004, p.136), the famous theoretical physicist, places the concept of dialogue at the heart of his interpretation of how 'generative thinking' leads to the production of creative cultures. In his theory of creative dialogue Bohm argues that an emphasis needs to be placed on collective rather than individualistic thinking at the same time intersubjectivity needs to be valued as a core component of creativity. Bohm and Peat suggest this is essential where the ambition is to 'transform the culture', reduce 'destructive misinformation' and 'liberate' generative thinking abilities (Bohm and Peat, 1987, p.172).

Interview data collected during Phase Four appeared to emphasize the growing consciousness of staff in regard to valuing the opportunity to collaborate with each other and to be part of the wider 'generative thinking' being undertaken in the school at this time. In this respect it was my tentative conclusion at the end of this phase that a transition was occurring amongst staff from staff developing isolated and individualistic interpretations of creativity to a greater emphasis on the staff community developing a shared commitment to pursuing what creativity could be said to mean within this school context and how it could potentially be applied in regard to enhancing teaching and learning practice.

What does this data suggest about how creativity is being constructed within this school culture?

In Phase Four a number of significant observations emerged regarding how TAs views on the school's creativity agenda could be seen to be evolving. It is important to acknowledge that during this period just under thirty people were employed as TAs at this school. This means that around a third of this population was consulted with during Phase Four. It is important to stress that these TAs were not selected at random. The Creativity Coordinator, who took great care to ensure each TA had enough time to be interviewed and that they were comfortable with having their practice observed, selected them. There are many reasons to suggest that the nine TAs who took part are individuals from this school population who demonstrate a higher than average interest in the school's creativity agenda and a stronger inclination for getting practically involved with creative teaching and learning practice than their peers. This is stated here to stress the potential areas of bias that may exist within this group of participants' in regard for their enthusiasm for creativity.

What emerged strongly from this period of data collection was the degree to which these TAs were, seemingly, happy to take on considerable roles of responsibility within *The Space* that involved heightened levels of leadership compared to the roles they performed in the classroom. At this stage of developing the creativity agenda one effect the agenda appeared to be having on this stakeholder

group was one in which individuals were encountering heightened levels of professional motivation and fulfillment in regard to their job. This was illustrated in interviews by the scarcity of comments relating to *The Space* causing individuals extra work or unappreciated levels of stress or pressure. On the contrary, during many interviews, interviewees stressed the extra tasks they would be interested in doing to support the development of pedagogical and aesthetic dimensions of *The Space* further.

Another area Phase Four emphasized was the sophistication of staff members' kinesthetic and theatrical practice in *The Space.* Although time did not permit this, as Phase Four progressed I became increasingly interested in finding out which members of staff had undertaken or encountered any form of formal training in either the disciplines of dance or theatre. Of the nine TAs that took part in this phase, just under half (n = 4), from my observations, were using highly expressive and sophisticated forms of physical theatre and movement practices within their practice within *The Space.* This observation led me to note the following question in my reflective journal:

Is it just luck that this school had employed TAs with these skills or is there something about the school's current practices that are supporting these members of staff to identify and incorporate these skills within their practice?

Another aspect that strongly emerged during this phase was the sophisticated character of the forms of kinesthetic dialogue staff were developing with pupils in *The Space*. Rather than opting to follow prescribed lesson plans the majority of TAs observed during this phase appeared confident at allowing pupils' to develop physical and vocal forms of improvisation and exploration that were open-ended and child-led. Following pupils' responses it was common for staff to not respond verbally, but to use their bodies or instruments such as microphones or lights to collaborate with pupils in ways that extended pupils' initial ideas and that produced new and augmented forms of kinesthetic collaboration between staff and pupils.

Finally, what emerged from this phase was TAs' awareness of the role of affect and empathy within their practice within *The Space*. It was clear from the language TAs used that they wanted to create

learning experiences in *The Space* that engendered an affective response, not only for pupils but for themselves as well. This strongly indicated that pivotal to these staff members' interpretation of creativity was an overarching sense that being creative in this context involved allowing one's self to engage with stimulus in ways that produced an affect-based outcomes as well as learning outcomes..

Phase Five

Introduction

During Phase Five, delivered from January to February 2012, I requested to observe Child 5, a child I had been able to work with during projects that had taken place prior to this inquiry being established. The Deputy Head Teacher agreed this request. Throughout Phase Five I used non-participant observation methods to construct an understanding of Child. In conjunction with this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Child 5's teacher and one of the TAs based in his class. Through this mixed-method approach I aimed to investigate how this pupil responded to, and interpreted, the creative stimulus he was presented with.

About Child 5

At the time of this data collection process Child 5 was ten years old. He had been at the school for over five years, having started at the school in Year One. Child 5 is tall for his age and, as a result of this, is considerably larger than his peers. Child 5 is unable to walk unassisted, although at the time of this data collection process he was making considerable progress in terms of walking with assistance from staff. Child 5 is a non-verbal communicator who vocalizes, often using load, crisp shouts to express himself. Child five has good sight and good hearing. Child 5 has a low tolerance for new people and unusual objects and, as a result of this, will often thrust out his arm if he feels things coming towards him that he has not had time to process. This means it is not uncommon for him to thrust out his arm if a child or a member of staff enters the vicinity of his wheelchair unexpectedly. However, once Child 5 has got used to the presence of new people and materials he often becomes calmer. In terms of exploring objects and new materials Child 5 generally likes to do this uninterrupted and without adult support. Child 5 will often reject items off his tray in the early stages of an adult introducing a new object to him. As a result of this, in class staff often worked with Child 5

in a one-to-one capacity and this means that in differentiated learning tasks Child 5 rarely collaborates with his peers. Child 5 at the time of the data collection process was assessed educationally as a P1-3 learner.

I spent a five weeks period observing Child 5's class. I visited the class once a week on a Monday morning and observed Child 5's class both in the classroom and in *The Space*. I had met Child 5 on previous creative projects I had been involved with at the school and during this time I had become aware of Child 5's interest in manipulating natural materials as opposed to synthetic materials. Particularly memorable for me had been a trip to the local botanical gardens where Child 5 had greatly enjoyed wrapping large leaves around his face and covering himself in foliage. I had also become aware during these previous collaborations of how difficult Child 5 found socially interacting with others during educational experiences and the extent to which he preferred learning experiences where he could be on his own to those where he was expected to work alongside his peers.

Ironically, during Phase Five due to space issues in *The Space* the decision was made that Child 5 would not go in to *The Space* with his fellow classmates. Instead a decision was made that he would go in on his own supported by two members of staff. It was agreed it would be too many adults in *The Space* if I joined Child 5 and the two adults when they went in to *The Space*. However, kindly, the Year 6 teacher and the TA accompanying Child 5 in *The Space* agreed to be interviewed by me weekly and to share their observations of Child 5 in *The Space*. Therefore, I continued to expand my awareness of how Child 5 engaged with teaching and learning practices through observing him once a week during classroom-based activities and through hearing weekly from the teacher and TA how Child 5's learning and participation was evolving in *The Space*.

Semi-structured interviews with staff

When interviewed at the beginning of the five weeks observation period Child 5's teacher explained her rationale for Child 5 going in to *The Space* without his peers:

> *'We made the decision that Child 5 would not go in The Space at the same time as the other pupils mainly on the basis of health and safety. The Space is not a very big room and Child 5 is a big child. We were also worried about how he would react to The Space. He can become quite agitated quite quickly if he does not know what is going on. When he's agitated he'll flail his arms and if he is out of his wheelchair he can move very quickly and we were worried about what the consequences of this might be for other children. Long-term, we are working towards a scenario where Child 5 can go in to The Space with the rest of the class but it just felt sensible to build in a period where he could be in there on his own and spend some time getting used to it'.*
>
> (Teacher, Year Six)

I conducted a short interview with the Year Six teacher and the TA on a Monday lunchtime for the duration of Phase Five. As the weeks progressed both members of staff shared their observations on how Child 5's reactions to the various environments in *The Space* were developing. In week four of the cycle the TA made the following observation:

> *'I think Child 5 is more expressive in sessions in The Space then he is in the classroom. I think this is because he is much less irritated and bothered in The Space.*
>
> (TA, Year 6)

In addition, during the week 4 interview the TA also commented on how her pedagogical approach to working in *The Space* was developing as a result of her two separate visits to *The Space* per week, once with the majority of Child 5's class and then later in the week solely with Child 5.

> *'Each week I go in to The Space twice. First I go in with the other pupils from our class. During these sessions I'm constantly thinking what will Child 5 like and dislike about this environment? What should I take out and what should I leave in? For example, with the music I always make sure it is on low or not on at all when we first go in with Child 5 as I know he doesn't like too much noise. I also make sure there is not a load of clutter on the floor because space to move around is really important to Child 5. I might add in music while we are in there or put props on the floor for Child 5 to explore but only if I think he is relaxed enough. First I want to see what is catching his attention. Where is he looking? How long is he spending looking at certain items? Then I gradually start responding to his choices through moving items or taking items away'.*
>
> (TA, Year Six)

Following this interview, I reflected on the extent to which the TA was foregrounding factors such as pupil choice, voice and agency within her collaborations with Child 5 in *The Space* in comparison to her work with Child 5 in the classroom. During interviews I felt a stronger definition of what this staff member perceived as pupil voice was emerging. For example, the TA appeared to be placing a strong emphasis within her practice in *The Space* on accessing Child 5's unique point of view through observing three specific components of his responses in *The Space*. Firstly, the TA appeared to be placing an emphasis on observing the varied qualities of Child 5's physical movement choices. Secondly, she appeared to see it as important to analyse Child 5's emotional responses whilst he was in *The Space* and finally the TA appeared to be interested in noting where Child 5 was visually focusing his attention and the duration and intensity of his gaze when in *The Space*.

Similar to the TA, I noted that it was a priority of the teacher's to reflect upon the unique aspects of Child 5's voice and agency during interviews. In a week three interview the teacher made the following observation about Child 5:

> *'What strikes me about Child 5 is that once out of his wheelchair he tends not to want to move about The Space as frenetically as he was during the first couple of weeks. Instead, he tends to look around, look at us and then make a vocalization. When he does move I find it powerful because I am so aware it is him making a definite choice not us guiding him towards doing something. It is him saying this is what interests me and this is what I am going to explore. We so rarely get to see him making that kind of decision in the classroom'.*
> (Teacher, Year Six)

Conclusion: Phase Five

As stated previously in Phase One I had become struck by the extent to which a more child-led approach was promoted in *The Space* in comparison to the classroom. In Phase Five I noted this element of the school's interpretation of creativity was being fore-grounded in staff members' practice once again. In conjunction with this reflection I also noted the heavy emphasis placed in *Space* sessions on encouraging pupils such as Child 5 to express their unique voice and agency.

I was also conscious that both members of staff noted in interviews how they found it a positive experience observing the subtle ways in which Child 5's actions and reactions transformed *The Space* in to a learning environment with unpredictable and open-ended possibilities. For example, the TA observed during her penultimate interview with the researcher:

> *'When Child 5 is in The Space somehow it becomes like a different place to the one I was in two days previously with the rest of the class. Because I have been in The Space with the other pupils I tend to have an expectation of what Child 5 might do. I'm nearly always wrong! Each week it is fascinating to see how different his responses are to other pupils'.*

Whilst the teacher observed in her final interview:

> *'There have been times in The Space this term where Child 5's ability to be social has been*
>
> *transformed. For example, this week, on a couple of different occasions, he stopped what he*
>
> *was doing and he looked from me to the TA and back again. I felt in these moments there*
>
> *was a real sense of collaboration between the three of us. Child 5 did not throw anything. He*
>
> *did not hit out. He was waiting to see what the three of us were going to do next'.*
>
> (Teacher, Year Six)

Observations such as these by the TA and the teacher led me to reflect upon some of the key theoretical and philosophical positions I had noted previously in literature relating to the subject of how the organization of social environments affects how voice and agency are enacted. In particular I returned to literature that explored perspectives on the 'politics of space' (Lefebvre, 1991: Massey, 1992; 2005; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). In returning to this literature I was able to make connections between the teacher's and the TA's reflections and the theoretical perspective perpetuated by the theorists cited above, especially in regard to the idea that certain forms of social and educational space are more conducive than others to promoting learners' voice and agency. Through undertaking this process I was also able to appreciate perspectives such as Giroux's (2004, p.101-2) where he argues 'education is always political because it is connected to the acquisition of agency and the ability to struggle with ongoing relations of power'. I felt there were connections emerging between the teacher's and TA's views and those presented by Giroux as these staff members appeared to be arguing that by accessing *The Space,* and being able to share with others his own unique interpretation of *The Space,* Child 5 was beginning to be able to make a much more direct and participative contribution to shaping social relations in *The Space*.

A perspective I particularly re-considered during Phase Five, in light of the teacher's and TA's usage of terms such as 'transformation', 'space' and 'voice' was Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) view that there exists in Westernized cultures an obsession with mapping and controlling discourse space, and that

this obsession arises from a desire to minimize any form of 'discursive surprise' (cited in Patton, 1986, p.25). This perspective interested me in terms of how the school's creativity agenda appeared to be evolving to involve persistent attempts to break free of prescriptive pedagogical practices in preference for forms of creative teaching and learning practice that fore-grounded the unpredictableness of pupils' choice, voice and agency as critical components of the pedagogical experience. Therefore, at the end of Phase Five, I felt a strong alternative emphasis was emerging for the Year 6 teacher and the TA in regard to their emphasis on deliberately developing practices that challenged homogenized perceptions of what Child 5 was and was not capable of achieving in preference for teaching practices that could embrace 'discourse surprise' and which were, in turn, capable of perpetuating open-ended learning possibilities in regard to Child 5's physical, social and emotional engagement with *The Space*.

Another set of philosophical perspectives the researcher chose to revisit during this phase were those developed by the human geographer Doreen Massey. Massey (2005) presents a similar argument to Deleuze and Guattari as she argues that many policies and practices, devised by governments and educational policy writers, demand of professionals that within their practice they attempt to create 'maps' that control the possibilities of educational discourse. Massey argues the motivation to produce ever more detailed discourse maps arises from a deep-seated desire to 'tame the spatial' (Massey, 2005, p.8). According to Massey, in this 'cartographic fantasy', an idea is presented that it is possible to create a definitive map of human experience. Practices that attempt to achieve this, she argues, are concerned with erasing all previous 'cartographic imperfections' (ibid), therefore, ensuring that it becomes almost impossible to ever be lost or unsure again within a particular set of discourse practices. Massey argues such an approach to mapping discourse is often favoured by managers and policy makers because it suggest:

> ' . . . that by following a map you will never drive off the edge of the world'.
>
> (Massey, 2005, p.111)

However, Massey argues, such an attitude to space can lead to stasis as it is only through questioning the accuracy of maps that new maps are brought in to being. Massey puts forward a theory of space in which individuals are allowed to become their own 'cartographers'. Within this philosophical model of the politics of space mapping space becomes a task that acknowledges space as an open-ended concept where social and political relations are constantly open to reinterpretation. Only when this form of interpretation of space is enacted, Massey suggests, will types of space be created that are capable of acknowledging and embracing forms of previously un-encountered narrative, voice and agency.

Massey argues one of the benefits of this type of space is the opportunities it provokes for finding new ways of relating to each other are. She argues these opportunities arise because of 'happen-stance juxtaposition', and:

> in the unforeseen tearing apart, in the internal interruption, in the impossibility of closure, in the finding of yourself next door to alterity. It is in exactly that possibility of being surprised that the chance of space is to be found'
>
> (Massey, 2005, p.116)

My argument here is that Massey's theory of space provides a useful framework by which to interpret some of Child 5's, the TA's and the teacher's collaborative experiences in *The Space* during Phase Five. For example, through structuring participation as she did this half term Child 5's teacher was able to generate new forms of collaborative experience for Child 5 that allowed him to re-map the limits of his educational experience in *The Space*. From my observations I felt that this process was only able to occur as a result of the teacher having the confidence to let 'unforeseen' and 'happen-stance' forms of social interaction take place. Through this re-evaluation of how to organise educational space each of the three participants, Child 5, the teacher and the TA, were able to engage with the open-endedness of this particular learning environment in new ways that allowed them to map each other's actions and preferences according to refined understandings of each other's preferences, voice and agency.

In summary, this section has argued that during Phase Five significant progress was made by Child 5, the TA and the teacher in regard to their understanding of how to utilize *The Spa*ce, as an environment where they can renegotiate and extend their awareness of each other's preferred learning styles. Instead of following pre-planned or formulaic approaches to collaboration each of these participants entered this learning scenario free to map and re-map what learning could 'mean' for them as three collaborators inhabiting this newly formulated educational space. Through this process, arguably, some of the factors that rendered learning an isolating experience for Child 5 were alleviated and he was able to become a more directly involved co-creator of meaning and knowledge within this environment.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Introduction

This conclusion will begin by returning to the questions outlined in 'Chapter One: Introduction'. Having explored each of the subsidiary questions, a conclusive summary will be provided addressing the overarching research question *'How is creativity constructed and enacted in this school culture?* Alongside this, attention will be drawn to possible ways in which the research undertaken during this study could be extended in future studies. Finally, this chapter will conclude by outlining the unique contribution this research makes to the field of study in which it is located.

Exploration of subsidiary questions

Question 1: Where can areas of congruence and divergence be identified within this community's interpretation of creativity?

Addressing this question has concerned investigating how pupils', staff members', and to some extent my own, experiences of 'being creative' have converged and differed, practically, theoretically and philosophically, over the eighteen months of the fieldwork.

It is the conclusion of this research that a number of areas of convergence can be identified between these stakeholder groups, particularly in the domain of reflecting upon participants' use of kinesthetic approaches to exploring creativity. Kinesthetic engagement has been defined in this thesis as forms of engagement that engender embodied learning experiences. It has also been argued kinesthetic engagement takes place when participants communicate responses and ideas through physical actions and physical forms of expression. The main areas of convergence in regard to how this

community of participants have developed and applied their understanding of creativity through kinesthetic engagement have been identified as being located in the following areas:

- Scenarios where a significant percentage of participants appear comfortable and confident to express ideas and responses physically as opposed to verbally.

- Scenarios where a significant percentage of participants appear comfortable to manipulate material objects using non-verbal, joint attention forms of communication.

- Scenarios where a significant percentage of participants appear confident to use methods that support them to establish a heightened degree of kinesthetic empathy with their fellow participants. Such scenarios, it has been observed, involve participants adopting behaviours such as watching each other and adjusting one's bodily position to mirror the bodily position of another person, as well as individuals choosing to physically copy or mirror another person's movement choices so as to gain an insight in to how the other person is using their senses and perceptual preferences to interpret the environment in which the creative activity is set.

It was observed that in scenarios such as these, the shared sense of how individual participants accessed the creative environment and expressed their personal sense of creativity was intensified. One way I was able to quantify this idea during the fieldwork was through noting the extent to which staff conversations shifted from exploring the question *'Can pupils with PMLD be creative?'* to staff alternatively exploring the question '*What forms of creative exchange did pupils and I engage in within the creative session that just occurred?* These changes in language and emphasis suggest a shift in staff perceptions from an instrumental interpretation of creativity to one that, I would like to suggest, is more concisely situated within the theoretical and philosophical domain of the universal model of creativity. By undertaking this shift staff were able to develop an understanding of creativity that was more inclusive of pupils' preferred communication styles and individual world-views, and

consequently, staff were able to identify many more areas of practical and experiential convergence with pupils than they were when their practice was being driven by more instrumentalist values.

What is being emphasized here is that one primary outcome for me as a researcher and practitioner has been to understand in much greater depth the role of kinesthetic empathy in creative practice with pupils with PMLD. One conclusion I have come to is that where staff report encountering a heightened sense of shared understanding of creativity between themselves and a pupil this will almost certainly have been generated as a result of pupils and staff developing ways of collaborating with each other that prioritize 'empathic adjustment' (Young, 2011, p. 191). It is the conclusion of this research, reflecting upon the work of Young and others who have pursued the topic of creativity and kinesthetic empathy such as Reynolds and Reason (2011), Meekums (2011) and Damasio (2002), that empathic adjustment can be understood as a form of interaction in which participants engage in 'processes of attunement' where they 'sympathetically attune', physically, vocally and from a 'felt' or subconscious perspective, with another person's actions and reactions (Young, 2011, p.191). In summary, it is a conclusion of this research that where external parties wish to understand how creativity is interpreted and constructed in this school context a prerequisite of this will be to familiarize themselves with the concept of kinesthetic empathy so as to be able to understand some of the core values of the creative and educational practice being enacted in this school.

In contrast to the areas of convergence identified above, incidences of divergence in perceptual understanding of what creativity is have occurred on numerous occasions between the three central stakeholders. A conclusion of this research is that the primary cause of divergence between stakeholders is generated in scenarios where adult participants choose to prioritize verbal forms of communication and reasoning in their analysis of creativity over kinesthetic forms. It is common in such scenarios for adults to frame creativity as an intellectual pursuit rather than as one that can be negotiated through embodied and aesthetic engagement. Where this type of approach has been adopted the degree of 'empathic adjustment' employed by adults can be seen to be dramatically reduced, and communication between stakeholders becomes dominated by forms of power relation that privilege the views and values of adults as superior to those of pupils. Therefore, in some

scenarios co-created and shared understandings of creativity become difficult to generate and articulate because there is not a sufficiently developed shared language through which to communicate ideas.

Having noted these inconsistencies, it is, however, my conclusion that through valuing the role of exploratory environments such as *The Space* within their school culture this school's creativity agenda is generally able to resist homogeneous interpretations of what creativity is and create an open-ended and flexible approach to creativity discourse that embraces the complex and ambiguous nature of pupils' responses. Therefore, whilst I have observed scenarios where members of staff have been placed in positions where they have been asked to compromise the school's dominant values in regard to creativity and inclusion, such as meetings with external funders where staff have been asked to provide feedback from only those pupils who are verbal communicators, there is an overarching commitment within the school's creativity agenda to ensuring the inclusion of pupils with PMLD, and valuing their non-verbal acts of communication as paramount to understanding how creativity is expressed in this culture. In summary, this research concludes that it is a core value of this school to ensure that pupils with PMLD are seen as competent contributors to debate surrounding the questions '*What does creativity mean in this school context?*' and '*How are we as a school developing creative practices that are inclusive to all members of our learning community?*' In summary, it is a core principle of this school to not just accept the dictates of external funding organizations or curriculum policy makers but to constructively engage with external parties to critically challenge evaluation frameworks that are not able to include analysis of the responses of pupils with PMLD.

What this conclusive analysis is highlighting is that this school adopts a 'bottom up' approach to creativity as opposed to a 'top down' approach. This is, as stated above, despite, considerable pressure to conform to definitions of creativity imposed by external funders and curriculum policy makers. To be explicit here, I am specifically referring to organizations such as The Creative Partnerships scheme (CP) and initiatives such as QCA's 'Creativity: Find it, Promote it!' both of which had an influence on how creative practices were instigated and evaluated within this school culture

during the time of this research's fieldwork. I observed, instead of blindly following the dictates of initiatives such as these, members of staff from this school continually questioning the rhetoric of these organizations and initiatives and problematising the attitudes their rhetoric perpetuated in regard to the creative capacities of pupils with PMLD. This continual questioning has resulted in a scenario in which the school has been able to develop a highly personalized and situated model of creativity that is inclusive of the abilities and talents of all the diverse learners within its community and which stands out as distinct to other models of creativity made popular within contemporary educational during the late 1990s and the present.

Finally, what analysis such as the above draws attention to is that through developing their own personalized creativity agenda this school has been able to engage in forms of critical reflection that extend beyond the limits of simply exploring questions such as *'What is creativity?'* and *'Why should we care about it?'* I would like to suggest the choices, responses and behaviours that have been observed during this research, enacted in *The Space* and within diverse teaching and learning activities, demonstrate evidence of this community of learners being engaged in highly critical and, potentially, political forms of analysis in regard to *'What are our core values as a community?'* and *'How does being creative support us as a community to ensure our core values are maintained within our school culture?* It is my conclusion that what occurs in *The Space* is a complex mix of aesthetic expression combined with focused forms of social and political engagement, during which participants' debate questions relating to fundamental human values and rights concerning equality, inclusion and the identification and celebration of difference. Whilst it is clear that *The Space* is influenced by established arts education practices (Adams, 2011; Brown, 2012) and practices developed in care and therapeutic contexts relating to the use of multi-sensory environments (Bozic, 1997; Ware, 2003,) *The Space* is also influenced by more radical interpretations of discourse space design as proposed by poststructuralist and postmodernist philosophers.

In this regard it is my conclusion that a number of parallels can be drawn between this school's philosophical interpretation of *The Space's* purpose and ideas proposed by those such as de Certau, (1988) Giroux (1992) and Laclau & Mouffe (2001) who see the concept of radical political discourse

space as being defined by 'freedom and autonomy' (Giroux), 'dislocation', as in the suspension of traditional spatial and temporal values (Laclau and Mouffe) and 'surprise', as in accepting and embracing by entering certain discourse spaces you are in unmapped territory and new ways of interpreting reality will inevitably be brought in to being (de Certau). Therefore, what this anlaysis highlights is that according to this school's model of creativity you cannot have creativity without embracing the following:

Freedom

Autonomy

Dislocation

Surprise

Politics

Question 2: Where can areas of congruence and divergence be identified within staff approaches to developing and applying teaching and learning practices?

Investigating this area of the inquiry has involved addressing the following questions:*' What is creative teaching and learning?' and 'How does studying this school's practices in this area contribute to a deeper understanding of the concepts of 'teaching' and 'learning'?'*

A dominant finding to emerge relating to this topic has been the observation that central to this school's approach to developing creative teaching and learning practice is a process in which staff have chosen to critically review the structure of their school's staffing hierarchy. This has involved staff, many of which are employed to fulfill very different roles within the school, collectively debating how power relations are structured and enacted within their school. Through this process staff have been able to critically analyse how conducive or inhibiting different forms of power relation are to establishing effective and inclusive forms of creative teaching and learning practice. In the changes that have been effected following this process of critical reflection, I would argue, a tendency has

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emerged for staff to adhere to Freire's (2001) pedagogical theory that all members of a school community need to be acknowledged as having the capacity to be 'researchers, teachers and learners' if critical forms of teaching and learning are going to occur.

Through this discussion what this section wishes to emphasize is that during each phase of the data collection process it was observed that TAs in this school played a pivotal role in shaping, critiquing and defining creativity within this school culture. Therefore, it is the conclusion of this research that where the role of this staff group was ignored or minimized adverse impacts were identified in regard to the degree of change that senior leaders or individual class teachers were able to effect to teaching and learning practices. What emerged in later phases of data collection was that where mutually respectful and collaborative professional relations were established between senior leaders, class teachers and TAs, radical forms of pedagogical and social change became possible. It was also noted in the latter stages of data collection that it was common for certain TAs to take on roles where they were instrumental drivers of change, particularly in terms of keeping the concept of change on the school's agenda and scrutinizing the ethical dimensions of the change that was being enacted.

It is my conclusion that this school has systematically set about reformatting and reframing pedagogical relations in order to produce a model of creativity that positions each stakeholder group within this community as being capable of adopting a position within creative teaching and learning sessions where they are acknowledged as an informed and autonomous producer of creative knowledge. This, I would suggest, has had the consequence that when it comes to assessing creativity a 'bottom up' approach is again favoured, rather than a 'top down' approach. In practical terms this can be understood as the 'creative experts' being identified as those who took part in the creative teaching and learning experience. This is a contrasting assessment process to those where the views of external 'experts' are seen as the only legitimate assessors of creative knowledge.

Another value that emerged as core for this community in regard to their creative teaching and learning practice was reflection. In the early stages of my data collection process I noted I was able to easily negotiate the establishment of reflective forums with staff and that this was largely because of

the school's established inclination for reviewing their teacher and learning practices through undertaking action research projects. Therefore, rather than having to set up reflective forums I was lucky to be based in a school where many reflective forums already existed in individual classes. By the conclusion of the data collection process it was strongly apparent to me that the concept of reflection was considered to have a direct connection with the school's creativity agenda and that key gatekeepers, such as the Creativity Coordinator, were strongly committed to building in to each creative project significant amounts of time and space to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of individual units of practice that had been introduced and explored .

Analysis of observational and interview data brought to the fore that for many staff 'being creative' involved 'being reflective' and vice versa, as critical to being creative in this school was engaging in activities such as formulating questions, pursuing areas that provoked curiosity and identifying dimensions of experience that required further investigation. This led me to reflect on the relevance of Schon's classical model of reflective practice (1987) to this school's model of creative teaching and learning practice, particularly in regard to Schon's theory that 'reflection-on-practice' and 'reflection-in-practice' are critical components of effective reflective practice (ibid). In this school, whilst it was apparent being a creative teacher involved embracing taking part in reflective discussion with your professional peers and utilizing the principles of 'reflection-on-action', it was also apparent being creative involved being able to be reactive to pupils' responses 'in the moment' in such a way that as a teacher one became confident and skilled at utilizing forms of teaching and learning practice that had not been pre-planned but which were selected 'in the moment' on the basis that they would sustain and extend pupils learning and engagement with stimulus. Adopting spontaneous and reactive teaching methods can be seen as adopting a pedagogical approach that is compatible with Schon's theory of 'reflection-in-action' which he describes as the ability to 'think on your feet' and 'be action orientated' (Schon, 1987, cited in Neelands, 2006, p. 19)

These attitudes to reflection, I would like to argue, also greatly influenced the emphasis that was placed within the school's creativity model on staff adopting a child-led approach to teaching and learning. How this commonly manifested itself in practical sessions was in staff placing a strong

emphasis on supporting pupils to express voice and agency in response to creative stimulus. Therefore, what emerged in creative sessions was that staff placed a greater emphasis on 'responding to' pupils' actions in contrast to 'leading' pupils exploration of creative stimulus. Observational data gathered during this research suggests that this emphasis led to many staff choosing to develop pedagogical practices that involved them working physically or 'through the body' (Callary, 2001) and adopting physical approaches to establishing joint attention with pupils that allowed them to respond to pupils reactions in a spontaneous and physically expressive manner, in contrast to relying on verbal expression and instruction.

Having noted staff members enthusiasm for adopting a child-led approach it is important to note that this was not a universal reaction amongst staff and, particularly during early phases of data collection, a number of staff raised concerns about how the creativity agenda was encouraging practices they were not entirely comfortable with. Here, I am referring to staff concerns about the question of whether teaching in *The Space* should be pre-planned or spontaneous. This was an area, from my experience of attending staff meetings and talking to individual teachers, which divided staff opinion the most and which challenged senior leaders to the greatest degree in regard to being held accountable for defining the core values and aspiration of the school's creativity agenda. In the early phases of the fieldwork process some teachers expressed to me quite strong opinions about the amount of extra work developing *The Space* and other creative teaching and learning initiatives was causing them. Here, staff shared their opinion that they felt this responsibility was detracting from other important areas of their teaching and learning practice with their pupils. These debates highlighted the idea that for some teachers 'creative teaching and learning' was, potentially, considered to be a less important type of teaching to other forms of teaching and learning they were responsible for.

However, over time, it is important to note the number of dissenting voices on this subject significantly reduced and it was apparent that individual staff, in consultation with the Creativity Coordinator, had found ways through this dilemma that suited their needs. By Phase Five of the fieldwork I was aware that each time a new environment was developed in *The Space* the Creativity

Coordinator and the external scenic artist would produce a brief guide to potential learning activities that could be developed in *The Space*. It was my observation that all teachers looked at these notes prior to going in to *The Space* and that staff greatly appreciated the care that these individuals took in preparing these notes. However, only a very small percentage (n= 1-2) of teachers relied upon these notes in their work in *The Space.* In conclusion, what emerged as significant from analysis of this aspect of the school's creative practice was that the vast majority of teachers were keen to embrace working in a spontaneous and reactive way in *The Space* that responded to pupils actions and reactions rather than adopting pedagogical practices in which an emphasis was placed upon following a pre-planned script and directing pupils' responses.

This emphasis on working with pupils in ways that resist didactic forms of engagement connects with the final area of observation I would like to make reference to in this section. This final observation concerns acknowledging the extent to which staff articulated that, from their observations, pupils' with PMLD progress within creative sessions laterally rather than in a linear or predictable fashion. In these observations what staff consistently highlighted was that it was not uncommon for pupils to produce reactions and responses that defied the presumed level of cognitive development the child was assumed to be capable of. The example outlined in Phase Three, concerning Child 4, is perhaps the most illustrative example captured during this fieldwork on this type of event occurring.

These observations led me to reflecting more deeply on Simmons & Watson's (2014) exploration of the concept of 'PMLD ambiguity'. Briefly, to contextualise this term, Simmons and Watson's recent research has concerned exploring the extent to which pupils' with PMLD responses and reactions are defined by their ambiguity and their resistance to conforming to conventional models of child development. In their, arguably quite radical conclusion, Simmons and Watson present an argument challenging the 'very idea of PMLD', arguing that the use of such reductive and objectifying language leads to certain populations of pupils repeatedly being categorized as 'other' or 'different' in regard to how they learn. In contrast, Simmons and Watson argue that new analysis frameworks are required to understand the complex ways in which pupils' with PMLD learning is different, and yet the same, to how other learner learn and acquires knowledge of the world around them.

Simmons and Watson argue a key component of embracing this new analysis framework is through staff perceiving child development as progressing laterally rather than in a linear fashion (ibid, p. xiii). I feel that staff at this school have made significant in-roads in to being able to articulate what types of learning environment support staff and pupils to become more conscious of each other's lateral learning experiences. It is my opinion that this link with Simmons and Watson work represents an interesting area for further inquiry, particularly in regard to mapping what types of adapted learning environments and pedagogical approaches bring forth evidence of lateral learning occurring. Also, I note, the experience of undertaking this research has left me with a strong interest in pursuing further research on the topic of 'PMLD ambiguity' in regard to how pupils awareness of different forms of communication and sensory-perceptual behavior varies and is alternatively manifested in contrasting learning contexts.

Finally, another significant area of Simmons and Watson's theoretical framework that I consider to be relevant to this research is their argument that 'consciousness and agency are embodied and relational' and, therefore, they are profoundly affected by the opportunities afforded in contrasting environments (ibid, p. xvi). Simmons and Watson argue different qualities of relationship bring forth 'different forms of knowledge and awareness' and this is why practitioners need to continually reflect on what types of relationship and knowledge their behaviours are encouraging and which they are silencing. It is the conclusion of this inquiry that the differently formulated interpretation of pedagogical relations that were introduced and enacted in *The Space,* particularly as demonstrated in Phase Five between Child 5 and his teachers*,* was able to bring forth new forms of reaction and intersubjective understanding between pupils and staff that in turn led to new forms of consciousness and agency being enacted. I strongly believe this is an area worthy of further study.

Having outlined the key findings in regard to how staff and pupils have approached defining their core values in regard to creative teaching and learning practice, this chapter will now proceed to summarize what theoretical interpretations of creativity can be seen to have had the greatest degree of influence on this school's creative teaching and learning practices.

Question 3: What interpretations of creativity can be seen to be having the greatest influence on the school's creative teaching and learning practice?

This is an area where distinct progress and evolution can be understood to have taken place within this school culture over the duration of the fieldwork. At the beginning of the data collection process it was apparent that senior leaders were very interested in developing data collection frameworks that were capable of 'mapping' pupils' creative 'progress. This terminology and emphasis, as noted, in the previous chapter, led me to reflecting upon the work of the human geographer Doreen Massey (2005) and, in particular, her theory that the influences of neoliberalist ideology on social institutions, such as schools, has perpetuated the prevalence of educational cultures that are obsessed with 'mapping' how students' learn and acquire knowledge.

Throughout my time in the school I observed the Deputy Head Teacher working tirelessly in this area. Throughout the eighteen months of the fieldwork I observed her draw up and pilot a number of contrasting 'mapping' frameworks for staff to experiment with in regard to evaluating the impacts of their creative teaching and learning practices on pupils' educational progress. Not to denigrate the Deputy Head Teacher's work in any way in this area, as it was very apparent her approach to mapping pupils' progress was hugely respected both in the school and by representatives of regional and national organizations working within this field, yet, it is my observation that many of these pilot frameworks were found to be flawed and problematic by staff when they tried to apply them within their teaching and learning practices.

I believe this scenario arose as a result of two crucial questions remaining unanswered. These questions were: *'Can pupils with PMLD be creative?* and the related question, *'What is a creative response?* Without definitive answers to either of these questions, it was my observation, staff were left surmising and hypothesizing about what aspects of their collaborations with pupils could be defined as 'being creative'. I do not consider the many reflective discussions these assessment

frameworks provoked as being without value. On the contrary I consider them to have been extremely valuable in terms of their contribution to the overall development of this school's creative practice. However, the data these conversations produced consistently proved resistant to being neatly translated within the assessment frameworks the Deputy Head Teacher was developing.

As stated in the previous section in reference to the work of Simmons and Watson (2014), PMLD pupils' reactions and responses during teaching and learning scenarios are loaded with ambiguities. This is why teachers and TAs working with pupils with PMLD spend considerable amounts of time each day reflecting upon the following questions in regard to individual pupils they are working with: *Does the pupil's response mean this or that? Does it mean both these things simultaneously? Bearing in mind that this pupil has in the past reacted like this, what does this new reaction suggest about their progress?* Reference is made to these assessment questions here because it is the stance on this thesis' that it is a socially constructed choice whether individual practitioners see this ambiguity as a positive or a problematic dimension of their teaching and learning practice. It was my belief that the Deputy Head Teacher strongly believed in celebrating the ambiguous and lateral aspects of pupils' developmental trajectories in this school. However, despite these core pedagogical values I felt that in the early stages of this research's fieldwork the Deputy Head Teacher was greatly influenced by the values of the wider education system in which this school was situated and, therefore, she felt duty-bound to try and produce data sets that demonstrated 'outcomes' and which illustrated how certain 'targets' had been achieved.

It is my conclusion, however, that despite powerful influences derived from external instrumental educational agendas this school was able to perpetuate and implement, in the vast majority of its creative teaching and learning practices, a universal model of creativity rather than one that was focused on fulfilling an instrumentalist agenda. This was apparent due to the school's stance that it was a fundamental value of their school that all pupils and staff must have access to *The Space* and all pupils and staff must be considered eligible to take part in creative projects and activities designed by the school. Such analysis draws attention to the pivotal position of inclusion within this school's model of creativity, alongside other factors such as valuing ideological critique and valuing

heterogeneous as opposed to homogeneous interpretations of 'being creative' and achieving set 'creative standards'.

The final point I would like to make on the subject of how creativity is interpreted and framed within this school's teaching and learning practice concerns drawing attention to this school's cutting edge practice in regard to their development of kinesthetic pedagogical practice. This view strongly emerged for me during phase four of the data collection process, during which I was able to observe TAs leading creative sessions and interview TAs about the values they identified as underpinning their pedagogical practice in *The Space.* This process highlighted to me the depth and complexity of the kinesthetic practice these staff members were developing as a result of their collaborations with pupils in *The Space.* Personally, this is an area that I am greatly interested in exploring more through further research, with this school and within, hopefully, other schools, youth theatre and youth dance organizations, which collaborate with children and young people with PMLD using kinesthetic methods. Prior to commencing this research I had no awareness of the kinesthetic model of creativity but I now feel strongly it represents an important and distinct model of creativity that is worthy of further analysis in future research projects. Following the opportunity to conduct research with this school I now feel strongly that to pursue further research in this area would be beneficial for the following reasons:

1. Pursuing research in this area would generate further knowledge on the subject of the connections between inclusive research practice and the use of kinesthetic methods with pupils with PMLD. Pursuing further research opportunities in this area would allow more detailed investigation of the question:

   How do creative methodologies, that prioritize kinesthetic forms of engagement, support pupils with PMLD to become 'social actors' within research?

2. Pursuing research in this area would generate further knowledge about how kinesthetic teaching and learning practices can be used to augment PMLD pupils' educational attainment and social and emotional development.

3. Pursuing research in this area would generate further knowledge about the ambiguous nature of PMLD pupils' creative responses. Data collected in this area could, in turn, be used to further contribute to philosophical and theoretical debate relating to the questions *'What is creativity?* and '*What types of social and power relation do different interpretations of creativity produce?'*

In conclusion, this section is highlighting that three distinct models of creativity could be seen to be influencing this school's teaching and learning practice. These models were the instrumental model of creativity, the universal model and the kinesthetic model. This thesis concludes that whilst there was considerable pressure to follow an instrumental model of creativity, staff generally resisted this pressure. Alternatively, on a day-to-day basis a universal model of creativity was followed, particularly in regard to teaching and learning experiences conducted in *The Space*. However, it is my opinion that some of the most exciting teaching and learning innovation within this school was being developed according to the principles of the kinesthetic model of creativity, and in this area staff were identifying new and provoking interpretations of how creativity could be defined and framed within education.

Having explored these contrasting influences on how creativity is being interpreted within this culture and identified potential areas of further inquiry relating to kinesthetic engagement and collaborating with pupils with PMLD, this chapter will now proceed to explore what this research has revealed in regard to the role and status of the concept of voice within this school's model of creativity.

Final conclusions on voice and creativity

How is the concept of voice being recognized within this culture and how do the concepts of voice and creativity intersect within this school's creativity agenda?

It was acknowledged in the opening chapter of this thesis that exploring the relationship between the concepts of voice and creativity was a particular research interest of my own rather than an area that had been identified as important by the school in regard to their creativity agenda. However, due to the strong emphasis this school places on inclusion and inclusive practice, from the outset of the research, many areas of intersection and convergence have been identified between the research interests of the school and my own in this area during the inquiry. This was particularly the case in regard to our mutual reflections on the pedagogical and philosophical correlations that could be seen to exist between the school's emerging model of creativity and their ongoing conceptualization of the role and status of voice within the inclusive pedagogy already practiced in the school. Therefore, what is being stressed here is due to the concept of inclusion being central to all pedagogical practice within this school, the concept of creativity was more often than not approached through the lens of inclusive practice with questions such as '*Does this creative activity exclude any pupils?'* and *'What measures have been put in place to ensure this activity is accessible to all pupils?'* being considered pivotal when planning any new activity. However, as a researcher I was interested in understanding what types of scenario challenged the centrality of the concept of inclusion within this school's model of creativity and where circumstances arose where there was a predominance of some community members' voices over others.

It was highlighted in 'Chapter Two: Literature Review' that there are many factors that affect effectual pupil voice practice. Literature was cited emphasizing the general view that many pupil voice activities in English schools fall in to the trap of being tokenistic and failing to represent the diversity

of voices that exist, interact and merge within educational institutions (Robinson and Taylor, 2007; Lundy, 2007). It was also noted that those educational institutions that are able to most powerfully articulate the individual and collected voices of their pupils are those institutions that see pupil voice, not as something that can be ghettoized in specific domains of school practice such as school council meetings, but, alternatively, see this concept as a component of educational practice that cuts across all aspects of a school's social and cultural practices (Fielding & Rudduck, 2002; Whitty & Wisby, 2007).

It is the conclusion of this research that Basil Bernstein's theory (1990, 2000), that certain pedagogical practices bring forth particular forms of voice, represents a useful framework through which to reflect upon this school's approach to understanding the relationship between creativity and voice within their school culture. This section will argue that by reflecting on Bernstein's theory of pedagogic voice the specific motivations and values that underlie this particular school's approach to voice praxis become more sharply revealed. Briefly, to further contextualized what is being argued here, Bernstein's definition of the difference between 'voice' and message' within educational practice will be outlined. Bernstein argued (1973; 1990), it is a misnomer to think that by simply promoting 'voice practices' the voices of marginalized pupils will be magically brought forth and elevated to a position where they are able to challenge the powerful social structures and power relations perpetuated by the implicit 'messages' of the educational systems in which marginalized pupils are situated. What this argument highlights is the idea that what types of voices are made audible within cultures are entirely dependent on the values and principles that underpin the 'messages' that are implicitly perpetuated through, what Bernstein referred to as, social, cultural and pedagogic 'devices' (Bernstein, 2000).

This is particularly the case, Bourne (2003) argues, in regard to pupils who already do not have a strong voice within the education system. Such students, Bourne suggests (ibid, p.518), will not spontaneously 'find some inner well of personal expression' that they have not been able to draw upon previously simply due to the fact that people more powerful than them have now requested they give voice to their feelings. As Bourne stresses, to think of marginalized pupils as not having a

voice prior to enhanced voice 'devices' being implemented in a school is at best patronizing and at worse 'woefully ignorant'. Those whose voices are marginalized within certain forms of educational discourse have always had a voice it has just been, Bernstein would argue, that ineffectual or silencing 'pedagogic devices' have been implemented within the school environment. Bourne suggests that the only way the voice of the marginalized pupil can become amplified to an extent that it is heard in inequitable educational systems is if the inner structures of the pedagogic practices perpetuated by the system are questioned and reformatted. It is also Bourne's argument that such a process will only have a long-term impact on the status and identity of marginalized pupils where pupils are genuinely allowed to work collaboratively and equitably with others in more powerful positions to take apart and rebuild the pedagogic structures and relations that have traditionally oppressed their voices. Bourne notes, there are few educational settings that are set up to embrace this kind of radical overhaul.

It is a conclusion of this research that what occurred in this school can be defined as partially achieving what Bourne suggests most educational systems are set up to resist. Rather than engage in tokenistic voice practices where teachers ask pupils to perform and recreate the dominant narratives of the education system in which they are situated, data gathered during this research would suggest teachers and TAs from this school have tried to create discourse spaces where pupils and staff can work alongside each other to critique the pedagogic relations and power structures that their existing pedagogic practices can be seen to be creating. In doing this the school has demonstrated an openness to exploring the politically loaded question *'What types of voice is this school interested in producing through its pedagogical practices?'* and the related question *'How does our interpretation of voice effect the types of social relations and the quality of social life our school is able to engender for our most marginalized pupils?* What analysis such as Bourne's highlights is that most schools, in their pupil voice practices, side step these difficult and challenging questions. What I am stressing here is that this school chose not to do this.

Some of the most interesting data to emerge during this inquiry in regard to the issue of voice has concerned the experiences of TAs based in this school. This is because, within its creativity agenda,

this school has consistently been interested in radically rethinking how TAs are positioned within the creativity agenda and specifically how they are positioned as 'social actors ' and 'agents of change' within the school's creative teaching and learning practices. As Arnot and Reay (2007, p.317) argue the expression of voice within contexts such as schools is controlled by factors such as 'the degree of specialization' that is tolerated and promoted within the school culture. Arnot and Reay outline how 'specialized voices' are produced by social factors such as gender, class, race, religion and sexuality. They also stress that certain forms of power relations provide the conditions for certain specialized voices to come to the fore whilst marginalizing others on the grounds that they do not conform to dominant ideological perspectives.

Throughout the fieldwork process the senior leaders at this school sent out powerful messages about their openness to exploring forms of 'specialized voice' that related specifically to TAs professional identities and social and cultural values, as opposed to generic 'voice' perpetuated by the dominant values of the overarching education system. I noted, especially in Phase Two of the data collection process, some TAs were not comfortable with this newly formatted 'message' from senior leaders, as they were suspicious of what the outcomes would be of this re-evaluation of pedagogic relations. Interestingly, TAs who withdrew from discourse activities at this time often chose to locate themselves in a liminal position within school discourse where they could experiment with being both 'inside and outside' in terms of the school's creativity agenda. It was my conclusion that this process of oscillation for some TAs, in which they swapped between active participation and definite withdrawal, was an empowering experience and led, certainly in the case of TA2 discussed in detail in Phase 2, becoming much more pro-actively involved in the long-term in actively shaping school discourse practice.

What this analysis highlights is that voice is an unstable and amorphous concept that is profoundly affected by elements such as pedagogic relations and pedagogic structures. It also highlights that within particular populations many sub-voices of 'specialised voice' will exist that means 'the acoustic of the school' (Bernstein, 2000, xxi) is constantly changing as different voices become fore-grounded through different forms of social and pedagogic relation being enacted. It is a conclusion of this

research that this school's model of creativity is specifically designed to challenge static voice relations and that the school has taken specific steps within its creative practice to ensure this is achieved. Three particular areas I consider to be worthy of specific note within this school's model of creativity are:

1. The school's choice to utilize adapted creative environments that require participants to actively negotiate how social relations are going to be structured and enacted. In a very practical way this involves participants entering environments like *The Space* and having it made clear to them that there is no leader within this environment and the concept of leadership is to be reconstituted each time the group enters *The Space*.

2. The school's decision to deliberately challenge traditional interpretations of how staffing hierarchies should be organized within schools. Practically, this has involved the school working to the principle that all adults within this school community are eligible to lead and design creative teaching and learning interventions should they chose to take on this responsibility.

3. The school's belief that the 'message' pupils' receive is intrinsically linked to the systems of communication that are celebrated and perpetuated through pedagogical device choices. Bernstein (1990) articulated this idea by arguing pedagogic voice is constituted by the 'pedagogic devices' that control the types of 'grammar' that are used to regulate, position and control the status of individual pupils' voices. What this means in the context of this school is that this school culture has chosen to take a very close look at the types of communication it legitimizes within its pedagogic practices and to ask challenging questions about what forms of communication are being privileged within its culture. For example, rather than dismissing forms of kinesthetic communication this school has deliberately chosen to see kinesthetic dialogues as a valuable form of communication between learners within this school context. This, I would argue, is a radical choice in some respects because it means the 'specialized languages' of non-verbal pupils are afforded a legitimized position

within discourse that they would not be afforded if this school was not willing to change its prioritized 'pedagogic devices'.

In summary, this section has argued that the concept of 'voice' occupies a pivotal position within this school's model of creativity. A suggestion has been made that through developing creative teaching and learning strategies this school has been able to engage in detailed reflective analysis of how voices are differently constituted across this school culture. Finally, a suggestion has been made that through their development of specific forms of creative pedagogical practice this school community has been able to establish new forms of pedagogical relation and structure that mean the communication preferences of more marginalized sub-groups within this school population, such as pupils with PMLD and TAs, have been able to be recognized as legitimate and influential forms of communication as opposed to being considered as subversive, sub-standard or incomprehensible forms of communication.

Final conclusions on agency and creativity

How is the concept of agency being recognized within this culture and how do the concepts of agency and creativity intersect within this school's model of creativity?

In the introduction of this thesis it was argued the concept of agency relates to an individual's ability 'to act in the world' and 'make choices'. In this section conclusions will be made regarding how this school's model of creativity has impacted upon the type and quality of agential action, agential identity and agential subjectivities that are enacted within this school culture.

In the introduction to this thesis I argued one of the ways in which I wished to approach the study of agency in this research was through analysis of how participants were enacting 'variation, innovation

and resistance' (Noland, 2009, p.16) within their participation in creative teaching and learning activities. Specifically, I stated I was interested in analysing how participants were using aspects of embodied communication such as physical movement, gait and spatial positioning to convey their attitudes to the socio-cultural environment. In the methodology section of this thesis it was made clear that this study was more concerned with 'ontological realism' than 'epistemological realism' (Barad, 2007) and that this distinction referred to my preference for studying the qualitative dimensions of 'being alive' and 'being present' within an educational experience as opposed to studying pre-conceptualised hermeneutic categories relating to mapping the outcomes of particular teaching and learning interventions. Through acknowledging this distinction I was able to construct a methodological plan that utilized active and involved methods of data collection, such as participant observation and kinesthetic dialogue. I chose these approaches because they demanded of me as a practitioner that I attuned physically and emotionally to where participants were at during data collection scenarios and reflected not only on pupils agential choices, identity and subjectivities but also my own.

In order to philosophically and theoretically frame this aspect of the inquiry I made reference in 'Chapter Two: Literature Review' to philosophers and theorists such as Johnson (2007). Gibson (1969, 1986) and Barad (2007) and outlined their respective ontological arguments that human agency is produced as a consequence of the following; individuals perceiving the 'affordances' (Gibson, 1969) of their environment; individuals acting upon opportunities to interact with their environment so as to create a heightened sense of 'being-in-the-world' (Barad, 2007, who emphasizes the connection of her thinking on this point to previous ideas formulated by Heidegger, 1962); individuals creating an embodied relationship with their environment where reality is conceptualized through physical metaphors (Johnson, 2007).

Noland (2009, p.16) argues agency can be 'reactive and resistant' or 'collaborative and innovative' and that studying individuals' subtle choices in this area can be very revealing in terms of a culture's implicit rules and tacit social structures. Extending this idea Noland argues by studying how individuals choices vary in contrasting environments research can reveal much about individuals and

communities emergent subjectivities. In my observations of pupil participants in this research I tried to foreground Noland's ideas as I drew up observation frameworks, specifically seeking to create data collection processes that would allow me to gain a deeper sense of how individual children's agency was being augmented and affected by their participation in contrasting creative learning environments. Participants such as Child 1 and Child 5 proved particularly fascinating in this area, as learning environments like *The Space* have appeared to have a significant influence of the quality of their agential actions and their confidence to collaborate and socialize with others.

Nolan (2009, p.14-21) argues in order to affect movement a subject is influenced not only by the learnt routines or the personal or collective social and cultural desires they have assimilated but also by their engagement, and their 'embededness', within their environment. Therefore, the affective, social and material dimensions of a space's design can have a profound effect on the forms of agency that are enacted. This idea has made sense to me as I have reflected upon the differences in children's agential behaviour in contrasting learning environments. For example, if we consider Child 5's reactions to being in *The Space* during Phase Five of the data collection process, what observational data appears to sugges, is that in this environment Child 5's movement choices become much less frenetic and unpredictable. Observational data also suggested it was his choice to engage in actions that prioritized stillness and poise. I would like to suggest one reason for this alternative way of being was Child 5's enhanced sense of 'engagement' and 'embededness' within this environment. It was also noted that Child 5 demonstrated a much higher tolerance for eye contact and social interaction between himself and his teachers in this environment and that his teacher's felt his 'presence' or sense of being actively involved as an 'social actor' within the exploratory experience of being in *The Spac*e was more palpable than in their interactions with him in the classroom setting.

In conclusion, Heidegger (1962, 1977) argued passionately against Descartes argument of 'Cogito ergo sum' (I think, therefore, I am), arguing instead that conscious thought represents only a very small percentage of how human beings experience 'being alive' and 'being present' in socio-cultural environments. Instead, Heidegger placed a strong emphasis on acknowledging the dynamic, embodied relationship that exists between the perceiver and their environment, arguing that agency

is the product of continually encountering, assimilating and interpreting experience and not the product of a process of disembodied mental reflection. It is my conclusion that theories such as this are highly relevant to the type of inquiry this research has pursued because they emphasize that interpreting how life 'means' is profoundly limited when it is reduced to studying objectified units of human subjects responses. To understand someone like Child 5's agency, his agential identity and the complexity of his agential subjectivities, I would like to propose, direct interaction with Child 5 that not only acknowledges Child 5's unique sense of 'being-in-the-world' but also acknowledges one's own agential presence as well as each other agential body in the environment has to be undertaken.

Finally, it is my conclusion that this research has only very tentatively begun to explore how pupils' with PMLD agential behaviours in educational settings can be understood. Therefore, no generalisable statements can be made about the relationship between creativity and agency. However, this is an area I am very interested in exploring further in future research through further exploring the question '*How do adapted creative environments affect pupils' with PMLD enactment of agency?*'

Exploration of the overarching research question

This conclusion has argued that this school is undertaking an on-going process of constructing a school-specific model of creativity. At the time of this research's fieldwork concluding it was clear that the school's model of creativity was being influenced by many contrasting established theoretical and philosophical interpretations of creativity. In particular, it has been highlighted that this school's model of creativity is strongly influenced by ideas associated with democratic and instrumental interpretations of creativity. However, it is the conclusion of this research that this school's model of creativity also displays many original and innovative features and that these elements have strong connections with the concepts of kinesthetic engagement and inclusion.

In regard to kinesthetic engagement it has been stressed that this school wishes to celebrate and value diverse forms of communication within its model of creativity and that staff in their interactions and collaborations with pupils do not want to be restricted to just interpreting creative responses and pupils' creative potentiality through formal, verbal channels of communication. Building upon this idea, the connection between valuing kinesthetic knowledge and valuing inclusive pedagogy within the creativity model's framework becomes apparent. This is because, as has been emphasized in this conclusion, where kinesthetic knowledge and kinesthetic communication are acknowledged and legitimized as socially acceptable forms of communication pedagogic structures and pedagogic relations become radically changed. For pupils with PMLD, studying in this school context, this change in emphasis means their voice, their views, their presence can directly shape creativity discourse in ways that alternative models of creativity would not support. It also means 'the messages' produced by this model of creativity are messages that this population of learners can access, interpret and actively be a part of.

Epilogue

December 2013

Today, I have come into school to return some books and ask a couple of teachers some final questions. Everyone is in the hall when I arrive. On the large screen a dvd is playing. It is a film of the recent work the school has been undertaking with The Welsh National Opera. Loud opera music can be heard and I recognize staff on the screen as they perform tai-chi inspired choreography that eerily complements the music. The film is quite abstract. Staff and children from the school, alongside representatives from another organization who have been involved in the project who work with adults with dementia, sign and gasp as they watch the film for the first time. There is a real buzz in the hall as staff and children watch the screen, recognize each other and evidently enjoy the music of the film's soundtrack.

When it finishes to thunderous applause, the Deputy Head Teacher ushers me out saying 'You have not seen our new Space yet, come and see it'. She takes me down the corridor, past her office to a part of the school I have not been to before and there she reveals a room twice the size of *The Space* I am familiar with. In the room is the external scenic artist. He is busy installing a new lighting rig. The Deputy Head Teacher starts filling me in on how this new room has come to be and all the many ambitions she has for it.

> *'In this room we are going to be able to create much more differentiated experiences for pupils. Since you were here we've got a lot more students with ASD and what this room will really allow us to do, much more than the old one, is create room for children to choose where they want to work in The Space. It was so cramped before'.*

I experience a sensation of being awestruck. This is a greatly improved studio space to the one used previously. From the Deputy Head Teacher I can feel a palpable and powerful sense of pride emanating. Other staff members came in and out and greetings are exchanged. 'Isn't it great', they say. 'I can't wait to do sessions in here'.

Slightly overcome by the size and potential of the new space, I retire to the staff room to make myself a cup of tea. The teacher/musician who I worked with during Phase Three is in there. He starts telling me about a gig he did the previous night. He describes how he and his fellow band mates were dressed and he laughs about how the pub crowd was not quite ready for the level of experimentation his band was unleashing. He comments:

> *'I am going to perform some of my new stuff to my class tomorrow. See what they think.*
> *They are always my best critics'.*

At this point I think about the times I have worked with him in The Space and his ability to create a sonic wall of interactive sound for pupils to participate in. I think about some of the responses of children in his class as they have danced or moved closer to his microphone to join in the process of making sound. I stress to him how much I would like to come into school to be there when he premieres some of his new music.

It gets to about 4.30. I don't want to leave but it is clear everyone else is leaving. I finish my tea and take a last look at the new space. As I leave I think only how important space is whilst reminding myself of bell hook's observation that,

> *'Spaces can be real or imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories'.*
> (1989, p. 210)

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Appendix 1

Table outlining the data collection process from October 2009 until July 2011

Dates	The methods used	The participants who took part
Data Collection Phase One October to December 2010	Action Research 1	Year three teacher & the T.As working in her class
	Semi-structured Interviews	Year three teacher & the Creative Coordinator
	Participants and non-participant observation	Child 1 8 x Teachers The majority of the school's T.As
Data Collection Phase Two January to March 2011	Action Research 2A	Year four teacher & the T.As working in her class
	Participant Observation	Child 2
	Action Research 2B	Year four T.As
Data Collection Phase Three April to July 2011	Participant Observation	Child 3
	Semi-Structured interviews	Year two teacher Creativity Coordinator 2 x TAs from the Year two class

Data Collection Phase Four September to October 2011	Semi-structured Interviews	9 T.As drawn from across the school
	Non-participant Observation	9 T.As drawn from across the school
	Semi-Structured Interview	Head Teacher
Data Collection Phase Five January to February 2012	Non- Participant Observation	Child 5 Child 5's teacher A T.A from Child 5's class

Appendix Two

Table of Findings from Action Research 1

	What action was implemented?	What reflections were made on the action?	What new actions were developed as a result of reflections?
Week 1	A role-play was planned and delivered called 'The Sleigh'. This involved the teacher working with pupils to select items to pack in to a sleigh ready for a trip to Snow Land. (This was the teacher's idea with little input from the researcher).	The teacher felt the sleigh idea had work well. She observed that the fact that the sleigh had a long rope that pupils could experiment with pulling was a successful element. She reflected after the session that she felt more could be done to make the sleigh more engaging for the P1-3 pupils.	Action 1: Adapt the sleigh by attaching some bells and objects that make sound to it. Action 2: In the classroom use some music to create more of a snow world atmosphere.
Week 2	Repeat of the previous week's activity in the classroom. Later in the week the ideas generated during the sleigh activity were used during the transition from the classroom to *The Space* i.e the teacher	The teacher felt the bells were a positive addition. She felt the music helped to frame the session in the classroom as something distinct from other classroom activities.	Action 1: Extend role-play to include the putting on of hats, scarves, gloves and coats. Provide lots of different types of items for children to try on. Including sunglasses and sun hats as red herrings.

	stood at the front of the line holding a rope as the class prepared to go on the journey down the corridor to *The Space*. The rope was then passed down the line and held by each child in its wheelchair. Small bells were attached to the rope so a continual bell sound was heard as the pupils moved down the corridor. The teacher went in to role as the driver of the sleigh and each child was encouraged to help the driver pull the sleigh. (These ideas were largely developed by the teacher with small inputs from the researcher)	She felt pleased with how the transition had gone from the classroom to *The Space*. She felt it helped to build a sense of expectation amongst the group. She noted the extent to which different P1-3 pupils engaged with the sleigh varied.	Action 2: Use different sound effects of wind, blizzards and walking in snow to set the scene and guide elements of the role-play.
Week 3	Hats, scarves, coats role-play/thematic play ideas were delivered. This idea was then repeated later in the week and pupils wore their selected items as they traveled up the corridor to	The teacher reflected one pupil in the class loves wearing sunglasses and spent ages trying on the sunglasses and looking at her self in the mirror. With support all of the children selected items to	Action 1: As a change rather than use the music and the sound effects this week the idea is to experiment with building up a Snow Land orchestra using various classroom

	The Space. (This was the teacher's idea with little input from the researcher).	wear on the sleigh ride. The teacher noted by repeating the sleigh ride ritual some pupils appear to be adding in their own forms of embellishment as the sleigh is moved. She also noted the sleigh is quite affective as an object of reference for this area of work although she feels its sensory properties are lacking in regard to engaging P1-3 learners.	instruments such as chimes and triangles. All other aspects of the role-play sequence will remain the same as the repetition is emerging as an important dimension of the scheme of work.
Week 4	The teacher observed the process of orchestrating the triangles in the classroom went well. Most of the P1-3 pupils cannot manipulate the triangles themselves but engaged well with staff as they played the triangles around the pupils' wheelchairs. Two pupils took the instruments and improvised making sounds with them. (This was the teacher's idea	The teacher reflected she was pleased with the sequence of actions that has now been established as part of this role-play/ritual. She observed that different pupils are engaging with different parts of the activity depending on their interests. As a class the group is now getting in to a routine in terms of preparing and travelling to *The Space*.	Next week the role-play sequence will be repeated in the same stages as has been used on previous weeks. This decision has been made on the grounds that, rather than changing things, the repetition is supporting the pupils to become familiar with the different dimensions of this theme. The rationale behind this decision is that the fixed structure will support staff and pupils to

	with little input from the researcher).		develop aspects of role-play and thematic play they particularly enjoy.
Week 5	Repeat of last week's role-play sequence.

(The teacher questioned whether this was being 'boring'. The researcher reflected she did not think so and encouraged the teacher to acknowledge her reflections on how the repetition had proved important during previous weeks) | By repeating the sequence it is clear that each pupil has their preferences in terms of which bits they engage with most. Pulling the sleigh remains popular with a number of children as does orchestrating the triangles. | See summary of AR sequence below for a breakdown of the teacher's final conclusions. |

Appendix 3

Table of Findings from Action Research 2A

What action was implemented?	What reflections were made on the action?	What new actions were developed as a result of reflections?
Week 1	**Week 1**	**Week 1**
A TA read a storybook version of Pandora's Box to the class. This meant that P4+ pupils were able to articulate some understanding of the story prior to the first AR session. Staff agreed P1-3 pupils had taken very little from the storybook exploration and that their awareness of whom individual characters were would be minimal following this experience.	Following the first session of the AR project the researcher was able to discuss the actions that had been implemented with both the teacher and the TAs who had taken part. Therefore, from the outset a triangulated approach was taken to reflecting upon the strengths and weaknesses of the AR process. The researcher summarized the reflections of the first session as: follows	Staff were keen to use the puppet again in the second session. Staff noted they were keen to develop activities within the story that were able to encourage interaction between pupils.
The teacher and TAs entered the classroom as Gods and Goddesses. They wore laurel crowns that they had made and	1. Those staff that had participated in going in to role had enjoyed the experience and were keen to play their characters	

homemade togas overtop their clothes. Each pupil was then presented with a laurel crown to either wear or handle on his or her wheelchair tray. Children were gathered in a circle in the center of the classroom, either in their wheelchairs or sat on chairs. This idea of conducting this session in a circle was repeated in following sessions. To establish the idea that the God characters lived high above the earth a puppet was used to represent Pandora. During the session Pandora the puppet (operated by the researcher) traveled round the circle introducing herself to each child. The puppet also explored parts of the classroom. As Pandora moved about the Gods and Goddesses expressed their feelings about what a curious child Pandora was, sometimes they were cross or shocked by her	again. 2. The puppet had proven popular and engaging with both P1-3 and P4+ learners. 3. Staff were pleased about the degree of interaction that had taken place between P1-3 and P4+ pupils. They particularly noted the moment where the P4+ pupil, unprompted, had operated the puppet and taken the puppet across the circle to interact with a P1-3 pupil.	

opening drawers and boxes and sometimes they were as intrigued as Pandora was to see what was in the item she had opened. Pupils were encouraged to choose items for Pandora to open and to interact with both Pandora and the Gods and Goddesses.		
Week 2 Repetition of the Gods entering the classroom and the laurel crowns being given out. A large box is placed in the middle of the circle. Children are invited to open the box, when they do loud noises can be heard (operated by a T.A using a remote control) Pandora the puppet enters. She goes to open the box. Some Gods and Goddesses encourage her to do this, some show their shock that Pandora	**Week 2** 1. Staff felt the repetition of certain motifs associated with particular Gods and Goddesses was successful as it was bringing a fun and humorous dimension to the session. 2. Staff noted some pupils were a bit scared by how loud the music was when the box was opened (n = 2, one P4+ pupil and one P1-3 pupil). However, this element did make comprehensible for some children an important aspect of the story.	**Week 2** Staff had enjoyed using voice and sound effects as part of the session and were keen to record new ones for next week.

is going to open a box that does not belong to her. Very loud noises of clashing symbols are heard as Pandora starts to open the box. Pupils are encouraged to express whether they think Pandora should open the box or not. The session finishes with Pandora deciding not to open the box and going home for her tea.	3. Staff noted they were enjoying working together on this scheme of work, especially in terms of improvising their characters and making and collecting props. 4. Staff reflected they were pleased with how the classroom was being used. They noted that as long as there were no interruptions their classroom could operate as an effective storytelling environment.	
Week 3 The theme of this week's session was lots of bad things coming out of the box. The box is taken by staff to children and they choose to take something out of it. Things in the box are things like a	Week 3 1. Staff reflected they liked the way lots of choice was being built in to these sessions and that the structure had both fixed elements and non-fixed elements, allowing space for pupils' to improvise	Week 3 Staff decided they would work in a 1-2-1 capacity with individual pupils with P1-3 exploring opening the box and choosing things from the box in the week following this session. Staff were keen to explore whether

drum, a set of cymbals, an empty food bowl, an empty water bottle, a bandage, a white flag, a blanket and a pop up tent – all items staff felt could be associated with war, death, famine and disaster.

Lots of noise and mess is made in the middle of the circle as Gods, Goddesses and pupils explore the items they have found.

Pandora the puppet arrives to see what people have been doing. She inquires of individual pupils what they found in the box and she interacts with them.

At the end of the session one Goddess instructs the group that all the items need to be put away as they are very messy. Another Goddess goes to open the box and explains she can't open it as it appears

with the story's props.

2. Staff noted this had been the first session where they had felt a bit confused about where activities were heading during the session.

3. Staff were conscious that the free-play section in the middle of the session where pupils got to interact with the props in the middle of the circle had been popular with pupils, particularly going inside the tent and lying on the blankets.

4. Staff reflected the session got a bit noisy and chaotic at times and that compared to other sessions this session was less of a group activity than other sessions as staff had tended to work

maintaining a focus on this aspect of participating in the story in the classroom increased P1-3 pupil's engagement in the following week's group session.

to be locked. Therefore, the props are put in another container.	in a 1-2-1 capacity with children, particularly in the free-play section of the session.	
Week 4 A big messy pile of stuff is created in the middle of the circle using the items from last week's session. Hidden underneath the pile is a small puppet. On a pre-recorded loop is the sound of someone saying 'Help me, I'm squashed'. Pandora the puppet is keen to explore the heap of items and find the person who needs helping. Pupils help Pandora to find the little puppet. Pupils are encouraged to interact with this new little puppet and some pupils choose to show her their classroom.	**Week 4** 1. Staff reflected how engaged some children were by the puppets, whilst noting that as the sessions had progressed not all the pupils had remained interested in the puppets. Staff offered a range of different reasons for why this was; referring specifically to different pupils preferred learning styles and sensory impairments. For example child 2, who will be discussed later in this section, has very poor eyesight but if the puppet was brought very close to him he did not reject its presence and tracked it with his eyes.	Week 4 Staff decided, during free play sections of the following session to support pupils like Child 2 to interact with the puppets. This involved TAs bringing the puppets in to pupils' line of vision or walking them across children's wheelchair trays. Again, the focus here was to get pupils used to the puppets and allow them time to explore the puppets in a pupil rather than a staff-led capacity.

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Week 5	**Week 5**	**Week 5**
It is communicated that the Pandora puppet and the little puppet are now friends. The little puppet is introduced as 'Hope'. The box is reintroduced and Hope reveals a key to open the box. This time nice things come out of the box. Again pupils are encouraged to choose props they find in the box. In the box there are things like flowers, ferns, a parachute, a Chinese fan, some hand cream and fresh herbs.	1. Staff reflected that P4+ pupils bought in to the idea that the Hope puppet was very fragile and three out of the four P4+ pupils got heavily involved in escorting the Hope puppet across the circle. 2. Staff reflected that P1-3 pupils strongly reacted to props like the parachute and the fan and that for these pupils' props of this nature are more engaging and effective than the puppets are able to be.	See summary of AR sequence below for a breakdown of the staff' final conclusions.