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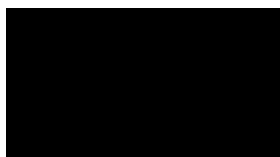
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**Exploring the Relationship between Drama and the  
Well-being of Primary School Children in Cyprus:  
An Ethnographic Case Study**

**by**

**Nandia Tomasidou**

Institute of Education

University of Warwick

September 2013

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**Nandia Tomasidou**

Bachelor Degree in Education Sciences (Primary Education)

University of Cyprus 2007

Master of Arts in Drama and Theatre Education (Distinction)

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre Education

**Institute of Education**

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## Acknowledgements

I embarked on my doctoral journey three and a half years ago, motivated by my passion for Drama Education and my belief in its transformational powers for the students. It turns out that the journey has been transformational for me as well; now a much stronger and more confident person, many of the questions that had been troubling me throughout my life were answered while researching for and writing this thesis. It has been an emotionally difficult journey; it started out in pain caused by my accident in the library, and ended in agony caused by the meltdown of my country's economy. Thankfully, I have had generous and kind people by my side to help me reach my destination safely. I am forever grateful to my supervisor, Professor Joe Winston, whose continuous support, encouragement and wonderful sense of humour have contributed to *my* well-being. He has been more than a supervisor to me; he has been a *role model* and a *good friend* whose valuable advice and wise words will be with me in years to come. My endless gratitude and sincere thanks go to my friends and family, and especially my beloved parents: Mr Constantinos Tomasides and Mrs Evgenia Tomasidou. Their unconditional love, care and support have prompted me to dedicate this piece of work to them. Lastly, I would like to thank God. I have doubted His existence at times, but the completion of this thesis and the benefits I have reaped from it serve as evidence for His caring presence in my life.



## **Declaration and Inclusion of Material from a Prior Thesis**

This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or a diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "T<sup>N</sup> Tomasidou". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop at the end.

Nandia Tomasidou

10/09/2013

## Abstract

This thesis investigates the potential of the arts, and drama in particular, to contribute to the personal, social and emotional well-being of primary school children. It is based on a six-month fieldwork in two educational institutions in Cyprus; a Primary School and a Youth Theatre. I conducted a series of drama workshops with 46 children aged 6-13, in order to examine whether and how their engagement with drama led to benefits associated with the following aspects of their well-being: Happiness and pleasure; sociability, social skills and skills of working with others; self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement; beauty; and children's voice. I have decided to focus on these, among many others, because when recent official reports in the UK and Cyprus suggested that the well-being of children is under threat, they translated the phenomenon into terms that fall into these categories. Additionally, while looking at the data generated during my fieldwork, I realised that they pointed strongly to these directions.

The recent interest with well-being has led governments in the UK and Cyprus to invest in the designing and implementing of special educational programmes that aim to help children develop their social, emotional and behavioural skills. These programmes are *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (SEAL) in the UK, and *Social and Emotional Education* (SEE) in Cyprus. Yet a number of critical reports have pointed out that the very programmes designed to address the well-being of children, are actually posing the risk of undermining it. These criticisms focus on their 'target-driven', 'management-by-objectives' approach, that has been evaluated as having had little substantial impact on student welfare.

In my thesis, I will argue for an alternative understanding of children's well-being; one that can be achieved in a more natural, organic way, through their participation in drama and the arts, and through their taking pleasure in aesthetic experiences. I will mount my argument using practical evidence from my research, which made use of the methodologies of ethnography, case study and reflective practice, and which implemented the methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, practitioner's journal, and drama conventions as research tools.

However, it is important to note that the approach of addressing well-being through drama and the arts is not without its problematic aspects. It invites a different set of challenges and implications to those of SEAL and SEE, some of which conflict with general pedagogical approaches. For example, my findings suggest that youngsters flourish on a personal, social and emotional level when they are allowed to engage with *horror fiction* and *boisterous play*. These are areas that teachers and parents might understandably perceive as crossing the boundaries of what is permissible and what is not within a classroom context. Whereas I am not denying that these approaches involve certain risks, in my thesis I propose a classroom pedagogy that can help deal with these challenges.

As it will become evident throughout my thesis, issues relating to the correlation of drama to the personal, social and emotional growth of children are not technically straightforward. It is a multi-layered and more complex relationship than what the immediate responses to it might be. What I hope to have achieved is to have unpicked some of the complex issues and limitations arising from this relationship, and to have offered certain pedagogical suggestions that can make flourishing through participation in drama and the arts possible for students.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**SEAL:** Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

**SEE:** Social and Emotional Education

**PS:** Primary School

**YT:** Youth Theatre

**YT1:** Youth Theatre Group 1 (participants aged 6-8)

**YT2:** Youth Theatre Group 2 (participants aged 9-13)

***Note:** All the italics found in the thesis are mine, unless stated otherwise.*

## Chapter 1: Introduction



Figure 1: Comic Illustration (Hearts Newspapers 2010)

### 1.1 Purpose of Research

Well-being is a buzzword for our times. It is a concept that has recently received much attention from European governments in the face of the economic crisis, which they see as seriously threatening the quality of life of their citizens. Politicians in the UK, France and Cyprus have addressed this issue, arguing for the need to prioritise the well-being of the population over the economic interests of their countries (Layard 2011, p. 272).

This new value system is reflected in the educational policies of the UK and Cyprus. The economic models that underpin their educational systems have recently been subject to increased scrutiny (Parker, in McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 6). The purely

economic factors on which their educational policies were based has been questioned; notions of ‘future competitiveness’, ‘the fear of falling behind’ and learning being ‘merely a stepping stone on the path to working’ revealed as inherently problematic (Parker, in McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 6).

Two recent reports in the UK, *A Good Childhood* by Layard and Dunn (2011) and *Children: their World, their Education: The Cambridge Primary Review* by Alexander *et al.* (2010), have suggested that the well-being of children is under threat for reasons that derive from these economic factors. Layard and Dunn translate the phenomenon into terms such as children being less happy, experiencing emotional difficulties and exhibiting behavioural problems (2009, p. 4). Alexander *et al.* note a loss of play due to school testing, as well as a decline in children’s enjoyment, creativity and imagination because of the modern construction of childhood as a preparation for adulthood (2010, pp. 65-66, 99).

Layard and Dunn find that the common theme that links all the problems that make today’s children unhappy is ‘excessive individualism’, the notion that ‘the prime duty of the individual is to make the most of her own life rather to contribute to that of others’ (2009, pp. 4, 6). This attitude leads to a competitive way of living and working, which implies that one person’s success involves another person’s failure (2009, pp. 4, 6). Although this competitiveness forms the basis for human progress, contemporary philosophers find that it is also a recipe for unhappiness (Layard *et al.* 2009, Ehrenreich 2007, Phillips and Taylor 2009). There is indeed a strong argument that I will outline in my thesis, that the modern way of living negatively affects the well-being of children: It deprives them of opportunities for pleasure, play and

beauty; it makes them socially isolated and brings difficulties in working with others; and it has detrimental effects for their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Although no similar reports were put together in Cyprus, the concern with student well-being is very much alive. Officials have addressed the issue, arguing that its undermining relates to students being thrown into a battle to succeed professionally in the future as part of an economic agenda. The new concern with child welfare has led the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance to set its promotion as one of the government goals during the 2012 Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Cyprus Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance Website 2012).

In the spirit of enhancing student well-being, recent governments in the UK and Cyprus have invested in the designing and implementation of special educational programmes: *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (SEAL) in the UK, and *Social and Emotional Education* (SEE) in Cyprus. Yet a number of critical reports have pointed out that the very programmes designed to help children develop their personal, social and emotional skills, are actually posing a risk of undermining it. These criticisms focus on the ‘target-driven’, ‘management-by-objectives’ approach of the programmes, that are seen to have little or no impact on student well-being (Craig 2007, p. 4).

In my thesis, I will argue for an alternative understanding of children’s well-being, one that can be addressed through their involvement with the arts and through their enjoyment of the aesthetic experience. Using practical evidence from my fieldwork, and supporting these with the theories of ancient and contemporary philosophers, I will illustrate how the arts - and drama in particular - hold the capacity to help children flourish in the following areas of well-being:

- Happiness and pleasure
- Sociability, social skills and skills of working with others
- Self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement
- Play
- Beauty
- Children's voice

I will adopt more of a *sociological* rather than *psychological* approach to argue that the arts can achieve this in an *organic*, rather than a *technical*, way: not through specially designed schemes, but through children taking pleasure in the artistic experiences themselves.

## **1.2 Personal Interest in the Research**

I grew up in a small, suburban village in Cyprus. My parents were both primary school teachers. When I was in the fifth grade, they were assigned to work in an urban school. My younger sister and I had to leave our small village school and to move to a much bigger one. Unlike my previous school, things were quite competitive here. For the first time, I felt the pressure of not only doing well at school, but also doing *better* than my peers.

The pressure was even greater in high school: Overload of teaching material and homework, testing, grading, and the constant reminder of the need to study in order to succeed professionally in the future. Much of my learning was mechanistic, while the pedagogy of some of the teachers felt uncomfortable; they displayed little passion for the subjects they were teaching, and I felt that they lacked understanding



and genuine care for their students. There was little space for creativity and pleasure. The exams for getting into university produced much stress, and to this day I cannot bear to look into the textbooks that were my companions during many sleepless nights.

In 2007, I started my Master's Degree in Drama and Theatre Education at the University of Warwick. It was an insightful experience for me as it paved the way towards playful ways of teaching and learning that I did not even know were possible. It showed me what it feels like to be passionate about your object of study and what it means to share knowledge with others, rather than keeping it to yourself for your personal benefit. I learnt that pleasure and learning are not mutually exclusive factors. Nevertheless, this experience also brought about the sad realisation of how many beautiful experiences our students are missing out on. And this is because the educational system is tailored in such a way that it puts constant pressure on them to succeed academically and to be competitive towards one another. Most importantly, I realised how *unhappy* it can make students feel; from the moment they are forced to strand themselves on a chair in class, until the moment they close their books after finishing the forceful task of homework.

I decided to embark on a doctoral journey that would hopefully shed some light on some of the issues that make today's children unhappy, and on the ways they could be revived from this state. Prompted by my own experience with the arts, I wondered whether they could serve as a getaway from the pressures children experience at school. Even if a child did not have a genuine interest in art, music or drama, could these still offer her aesthetic experiences which she could enjoy and through which she could flourish?

What I hope to have achieved through my research is to have highlighted the contribution that drama and the arts can make towards different aspects of children's well-being. In the light of my evidence, I will argue in favour of the arts being used as an alternative approach to technical programmes designed to address student well-being, such as SEAL and SEE. In doing so, I hope that more room for drama and the arts will be made in the school curriculum, and that students will be given the opportunities to engage with them for the intrinsic values they carry.

### **1.3 Research questions**

My research project was conducted in two educational institutions in Cyprus, namely a Primary School and a Youth Theatre. It involved 46 Cypriot children of ages between 6 and 13 years old, who participated in drama workshops over a period of six months. Contributions to the research were also made by their parents and teachers, as well as 'knowledgeable people' in administrative roles (Ball 1990, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 117). I combined the methodologies of ethnography, case study and reflective practice to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways can the arts, and drama in particular, contribute to the following aspects of children's well-being:
  - To their *happiness* and *pleasure*?
  - To their *sociability*, *social skills* and *skills of working with others*?
  - To their *self-esteem*, *self-confidence* and *sense of achievement*?
  - To their opportunities for *play*?
  - To them acquiring experiences of *beauty* and *aesthetic quality*?

- To opportunities for them to express their *voice* and to have this taken into consideration?
2. What *pedagogy* should a teacher who is interested in enhancing her students' well-being follow? What are the *challenges* that this pedagogy conveys?
  3. What are the theoretical and methodological *limitations* of this approach?

The research methods used were observation, interviews, questionnaires, practitioner's journal and drama conventions as research tools. My role was that of an active participant. The methodological issues will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

#### **1.4 Overview of the thesis**

*Chapter 2* focuses on the Literature Review of the definitions and concepts explored throughout my thesis. In *Subchapter 2.2* I provide a theoretical underpinning of the concept of well-being and the sociological aspects I initially chose to examine it by. In *Subchapter 2.3* I draw on philosophical theories and report findings to highlight the problem of children's well-being under threat. In *Subchapter 2.4* I examine the educational policies designed and implemented to address this problem. I provide their philosophies and evidence of impact, and offer a critical review of their methods based on published reports. In *Subchapter 2.5* I bring into the picture the theoretical writings of educationalists, to argue in favour of the potential of drama and the arts to contribute to children's well-being. I also outline some important theoretical limitations regarding this contribution. I conclude the chapter with the initial research questions which I set before I embarked on my project and which served as my guidance during my fieldwork (*Subchapter 2.6*).

In *Chapter 3* I discuss the paradigm, methodologies and methods I employed in my research, and I outline the methodological and ethical considerations that are pertinent to it. I also offer my strategies of data coding and analysis.

*Chapter 4* deals with the presentation and analysis of the evidence I have gathered. *Subchapter 4.2* focuses on the data regarding the socio-economic and family background of the participating students. *Subchapter 4.3* is concerned with the expansion of the concept of well-being with three additional aspects that came to light during my research; play, beauty and children's voice. In *Subchapter 4.4* I provide my research questions that were reformed to include these additional aspects. In *Subchapter 4.5* I discuss the factors that pose a threat to all the aspects of well-being explored in my thesis, as these were suggested to me by the evidence I gathered. *Subchapter 4.6* offers the data regarding the impact of Social and Emotional Education (SEE) to the well-being of Cypriot students, as well as the criticisms it was subjected to by the teachers and myself. The final part of the chapter (*Subchapter 4.7*) highlights further limitations with regard to the contribution of drama to child well-being, as these surfaced during my research.

In *Chapter 5*, I engage in a discussion of my findings. *Subchapter 5.2* concentrates on how the choice of stories on which the drama workshops were built contributed to the personal, social and emotional welfare of my students. *Subchapter 5.3* relates to the kinds of play they engaged with in drama – boisterous play and free, socio-dramatic play – and offers an insight as to how these allowed the participants to flourish. *Subchapter 5.4* deals with the matter of children's voice. In this, I explain the process and pedagogy I used in encouraging them to express their ideas, thoughts

and feelings in drama, and illustrate how taking these into consideration contributed to their welfare.

*Chapter 6* features my concluding remarks. In this, I summarise the findings of my research project and its limitations. In addition, I put forward suggestions for further research and advise those who might be interested in the outcomes of this project.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers a theoretical underpinning of the definitions and concepts explored throughout my thesis. In *Subchapter 2.2*, I will provide the definitions of well-being and the different sociological aspects I have chosen to examine it by. In *Subchapter 2.3*, I will describe the problem of children's well-being under threat, as suggested by recent reports in the UK and Cyprus. In *Subchapter 2.4*, I will discuss the educational efforts made to address this problem, namely Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) in the UK and Social and Emotional Education (SEE) in Cyprus. In *Subchapter 2.5*, I will review the literature on the relationship between arts education and well-being, focusing on the contribution of drama to the personal, social and emotional flourishing of children. I will also outline some important theoretical limitations regarding this contribution.

### **2.2 The concept of well-being**

In the section that follows I will explore how ancient and contemporary authors define well-being. I will then set up this notion within the Cypriot educational context that my study is interested in. Lastly, I will introduce the key sociological aspects of well-being that were initially pertinent to my study.

#### **2.2.1 Definitions of well-being**

Interest in well-being has mushroomed in the past few decades, influenced by the new ways of thinking in the fields of economics and psychology, but also with contributions from other fields, such as sociology (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 9). Concern with the well-being of citizens has also been expressed by politicians worldwide due to the recent economic crisis (Layard 2011, p. 272).

Different disciplines have produced different definitions of well-being, as well as different methods for its evaluation (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 9). It is used interchangeably with terms such as ‘happiness’, ‘flourishing’ and a ‘good quality of life’ (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 9). For the purposes of my thesis, I will be using well-being in terms of the *personal*, *social* and *emotional flourishing* of children. I will explain why I have decided to use these terms in Section 2.2.3.

Attempts for the conceptualisation of well-being trace back to ancient Greece and the philosophical thought of Aristotle. In his book *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle uses the word *eudaimonia* to describe an ethical theory of good standard of living (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 18). For this philosopher, happiness, a term which *eudaimonia* is loosely translated into, is the greatest of all goods (Aristotle and Butcher 1895, p. 187). It is also self-sufficient; ‘we always choose it for itself and for no other reason’ (Thomson 2004, p. 14). The key to Aristotelian happiness is *moral goodness*; it is attained through virtuous activities and fine deeds that benefit the fellow human and society (Thomson 2004, p. 21). Therefore, it is not merely an interior state of being, but a disposition to behave in certain ways (Eagleton 2008, p. 81). This implies that its realisation involves a degree of human agency. In Aristotle’s words:

(...) assuming that it is better to win happiness by the means described than by chance, it is reasonable that this should in fact be so (...). That the most important and finest thing of all should be left to chance would be a gross disharmony. (Thomson 2004, p. 21)

Aristotle does, however, set another condition for the achievement of a good quality of life; adequate external goods:

(...) the body must too be healthy, and food and other amenities must be available. On the other hand it must not be supposed that, because one cannot be happy without external goods, it will be necessary to have many of them on a grand scale in order to be happy at all. (Thomson 2004, p. 275)

The contemporary economist philosopher Sen also recognises the value of sufficient external goods in achieving a good quality of life. He sees them as important in the fulfilment of *functionings*: ‘the various things that a person manages to do or be in leading a life’ (1997, p. 31). In his famous *Capabilities Approach*, he considers the alternative combinations of the individual’s functionings to constitute the basis of her *capability*. There are *basic* functionings, such as being sufficiently nourished or being in good health, but there are also more *complex* ones, such as maintaining self-respect or becoming socially integrated. The emphasis placed on each functioning differs among individuals (1997, p. 31). The functionings of the person are central to her well-being because her personal welfare depends on whether she is adequately nourished or able to move (elementary functionings), but also on whether she has self-respect or is taking part in the life of the community (complex functionings) (1997, pp. 36-37).

Sen draws attention to the fact that, whereas functionings are central to the *nature* of well-being, the *sources* of well-being can be external to the person (1993, p. 37, italics in original). He gives the example of the inability to be happy (which is widely perceived to be a failure of the basic functioning of being happy), to illustrate how it can arise from sources within one’s own life (such as from being ill or undernourished), or outside of it (such as from the pain of sympathising with another’s misery) (1993, p. 37).



Nussbaum has elaborated on Sen's *Capabilities Approach*. Her list of the *Basic Human Functional Capabilities* includes what are, in her opinion, the 'most important functions and capabilities of the human being'; a life that lacks any of these 'will fall short of being a good human life' (1995, pp. 72, 85). Their fulfilment ensures that marginalised groups of people will be provided with basic elements of well-being (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 27). The list includes the following:

1. To be able to lead a life of normal length.
2. To be able to have good health, to be adequately nourished and to have a shelter.
3. To be able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid unnecessary pain.
4. To be able to use the senses; to imagine, to think and to reason.
5. To be able to attach to other things and persons, to love and to care for others.
6. To be able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life.
7. To be able to show concern for others and to engage in social interactions.
8. To be able to laugh, play and enjoy recreational activities.
9. To be able to form choices about one's own life which are personal and definitive of selfhood.
10. To be able to live with freedom of association, and freedom from unwarranted search and seizure (Nussbaum 1995, pp. 83-85).

Nussbaum points out that objective and subjective components of well-being have to be considered together in order to ensure proper *flourishing* of the individuals, rather than their just ‘existing’ or ‘being happy’ (2003, cited in McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 28). The *objective* component of well-being refers to external factors, such as indicators of health and wealth, while the *subjective* component refers to people’s responses as to how they feel inside (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, pp. 2, 7). Economic theorists find that, whereas areas of objective well-being are easily measurable, the complexity of subjective well-being cannot be fully grasped (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, p. 8).

Many of the elements found in Nussbaum’s list are advocated by the English economist Layard (2011) as being central to well-being. He interprets this notion in terms of ‘feeling good – enjoying life and wanting the feeling to be maintained’ (2011, p. 12). For Layard, the key to a happier society lies in our *social relationships* and in helping others (2011, pp. 273-274). Martin finds Layard’s approach to be *hedonistic*, in the sense that it reduces happiness to the idea of *pleasure* (2012, p. 15). The latter comments:

Like body temperature, pleasure levels fluctuate considerably, and Layard defines lives as happier insofar as average levels are high. (2012, p. 15)

However, the most important point about Layard’s theory is not his perception of well-being, but his belief that its enhancement should be the business of the government (2011, p. 256). He notes a growing interest towards well-being, which he justifies as the result of the recent global economic crisis (2011, p. 272). Faced with the meltdown of their countries’ economies and the huge surge of unemployment, policy-makers are prioritising the well-being of the population over

the interests of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of their countries (2011, p. 272). In the midst of public service cuts and soaring living costs of 2010, the English Prime Minister Cameron stated:

It's time we admitted there's more to life than money and it's time we focused not just on GDP but on *GWB – general well-being*. (Stratton 2010)

Talking in the Google Zeitgeist Europe Conference later, he added:

Well-being can't be measured by money or traded in markets. It's about the *beauty* of our surroundings, the *quality* of our culture and, above all, the strength of our *relationships*. (Stratton 2010)

Similarly, in France, one year after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, President Sarkozy initiated an enquiry into happiness (Stratton 2010). He commissioned five Nobel prize-winning academics, including Sen, to examine how the relentless efforts for the rise in GDP interferes with a government's other goals, such as sustainability and work-life balance (Stratton 2010).

In this spirit of promoting the well-being of citizens, many new policies have been put in place (Layard 2011, p. 268). The list includes Mental Health Programmes, Life Skills programmes and Behaviour Change programmes (Layard 2011, p. 268). Layard refers to SEAL as a Life Skills programme introduced into schools which is based on the idea that 'it is better to prevent mental illness than to have to cure it' (2011, pp. 268-269).

In this opening section, some of the factors influencing well-being have already come to the surface. **Social relationships** have been highlighted by Aristotle,

Nussbaum, Layard and Cameron, and **pleasure** has been introduced by Nussbaum. I will examine these, and one other, shortly.

### **2.2.2 The well-being of children**

While the definitions provided above concern human well-being in general, it is essential to differentiate between adult well-being and that of children. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, views children as individuals in their own right who have concerns and priorities and who need to be consulted about matters that affect them (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 29). This leads to the conclusion that research on adult well-being cannot be extended uncritically to children, and that the latter need to be consulted on matters regarding their personal, social and emotional development (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 9).

Although much policy documentation is concerned with promoting ‘a good life’ for children and young people, questions are raised as to who decides what constitutes a good life for them (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 29). Ben-Arieh argues that creating an index of child well-being is made difficult because of the methodological challenges, such as different approaches to gathering data and gaps between different national contexts (2008, cited in McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 29). Recent reports in the UK on the well-being of children, namely the *Good Childhood Inquiry* (2009) and the *Cambridge Primary Review* (2010) were very much concerned with taking students’ perspectives into consideration as to what contributes to a happy life for them. I will refer to the findings of these reports later (Section 2.3).

### 2.2.3 The well-being of children in Cyprus

An important point to make is that the experience of well-being is *culturally specific*; different societies have different views of what it is comprised of (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, p. 1). Taking this into consideration, any interpretations of well-being should take the cultural context into account (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, p. 1). Since my research project was conducted in educational institutions in Cyprus, it is essential to define it with regard to the Cypriot educational context.

The Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture considers well-being to be:

the *physical, emotional* and *social* state of students, the enhancement of which can be achieved through the strengthening of their personalities and through the upgrading of their social and natural environment (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website 2012b).

It is for this reason that I have chosen to use well-being in terms of the *personal, social* and *emotional flourishing* of children.

The notion of children's well-being in Cyprus is strongly associated with the realisation of their human rights, as these were proposed by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (Cyprus Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance Website 2012). The Convention was ratified by Cyprus in 1991 (UNICEF Website 2012). It contains 54 rights for children internationally and sets basic standards for their well-being in different stages of their development. It demands that authorities in different countries ensure that they grow up in an environment of happiness, love and understanding so that they can develop on a physical, spiritual, moral and social level (UNICEF Website 2012).

#### **2.2.4 Aspects of well-being**

For the purposes of this thesis, I have adopted more of a *sociological* than a *psychological* perspective. Sociological work emphasises the need to examine well-being in relation to the social context, as well as in terms of the individual (McLellan *et al.* 2012, p. 29). This idea is pertinent to my study; I will be considering how the social context influences the different aspects of children's well-being, and will be focusing on the following key aspects of it:

- *Happiness and pleasure*
- *Sociability, social skills and skills of working with others*
- *Self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement*

These aspects are interwoven in the sense that they relate to and influence one another.

I have chosen these lenses because recent official reports in the UK and in Cyprus highlighting the phenomenon of well-being of children under threat, have translated it into terms that fall into these categories. In the third subchapter of the Literature Review, I will describe how this preoccupation - that children's well-being is at risk - relates to each one of these categories. I will now turn to a discussion on how each one of these areas is theoretically linked to the concept of well-being.

##### **2.2.4.1 Happiness and pleasure**

Even though happiness is often taken as synonymous of well-being, it is actually a distinctive and *most important* part of it (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, p. 2, italics in original). In his book *Happiness and the Good Life*, Martin admits that it is an ambiguous term, and that its definition depends on the purpose of its use (2012, p.

3). He adopts a psychological approach in defining well-being, whereby happiness is understood in terms of *emotions* (mainly pleasurable ones), *attitudes* (that is, satisfaction with one's life) and *beliefs* (such as that one's life is going well) (2012, p. 3). He perceives happiness as consisting of three interwoven elements:

1. Loving our lives overall, taking into account their present configurations and aspirations for the future.
2. Taking ample enjoyment in our activities, accomplishments, relationships and possessions.
3. Having a robust sense of meaning (2012, p. 14).

Aristotle's interpretation of happiness has been the object of much criticism as it was understood to imply that happiness is the ultimate goal, but also a *future* goal (Armstrong 2005, p. 154). An answer to the problem of postponing happiness comes from the concept of pleasure; a 'here and now' kind of happiness (Armstrong 2005, p. 154). Whereas pleasure is often mistakenly taken as equivalent to happiness, it is actually a more *transient* experience that has to do with the satisfaction of the senses (Hutchison 2009, pp. 92-93). Baggin distinguishes between pleasure and happiness, viewing the former as a *passing* sensation, and the latter as an *enduring* condition of being (Eagleton 2008, p. 83).

In her book *Dancing in the Streets* (2007), Ehrenreich underlines the importance of pleasure in human happiness. She tells the story of the suppression of the Carnival and other forms of collective festivities in Europe between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a response to the rise of industrialised capitalism and Protestantism (2007, p. 101). The decline of opportunities for pleasure led to an epidemic of melancholy around Europe and to the discovery of the inner self that

needed therapy sessions and prescribed drugs to be healed (2007, p. 137). Ehrenreich's concluding argument is that any possibility of revival lies in the pleasures derived through opportunities for sociability and for engagement with the arts (2007, p. 260).

#### **2.2.4.2 Sociability, social skills and skills of working with others**

Many philosophers have advocated that social relationships are a basic component of well-being. In Aristotle's eyes, happiness – the perfect good - was a *social practice* rather than an individual pursuit (Eagleton 2008, p. 83). This is because virtuous activities – the key to Aristotelian happiness – necessarily involve other human beings. In his words:

(The perfect good is) something that includes parents, wife and children, friends and fellow-citizens in general; for man is by nature a social being. (Thomson 2004, p. 14)

In her list of capabilities, Nussbaum (1995) also draws connections between social bonds and well-being. She suggests that a good life consists in being attached to people outside ourselves and in engaging in various forms of social interaction (1995, p. 84). She emphasises the capability of friendship in achieving well-being and draws attention to protecting the institutions that constitute such forms of friendly affiliation (1995, p. 84).

At the heart of sociability lies the idea of **kindness** (Phillips and Taylor 2009, p. 8). Philosophers, such as Aristotle, have long argued that a measure of 'goodness', translated in terms of being a kind person, is necessary for happiness or flourishing (Noddings 2005, p. 157). The Roman philosopher-emperor Aurelius declared that kindness is humanity's 'greatest delight', and many thinkers have echoed his argument over the centuries (Phillips and Taylor 2009, p. 2).



Phillips and Taylor agree that kindness is fundamental to our sense of well-being and explain that this is because it is rooted in our natural sociability (2009, p. 8). They acknowledge the fact that modern society encourages the individual to suppress any forms of kind behaviour in order to succeed at the expense of others (2009, p. 6). The absence of kindness nurtures the competitive spirit that underlies human progress, but there is a heavy price to pay; the everyday experience of misery (2009, p. 8). The authors are firm on their belief that by denying kindness, we deny ourselves one of the greatest pleasures of our human existence (2009, p. 9).

**Empathy** and **sympathy** are concepts closely related to those of kindness and sociability. Nussbaum (1995) includes them in her list of capabilities that ensure a good life. She defines empathy as the ability ‘to imagine the situation of another’, and sympathy as the ability ‘to have compassion for that situation’ (1995, p. 84). Richard Sennett also distinguishes between the two while highlighting their role in emotional flourishing:

As a philosophic matter, sympathy can be understood as one emotional reward for the thesis-antithesis-synthesis play of dialectic: ‘Finally, we understand each other,’ and that feels good. Empathy is more linked to dialogic exchange; though curiosity sustains the exchange, we don’t experience the same satisfaction of closure, of wrapping things up. But empathy does contain its own emotional reward. (2012, p. 22)

#### **2.2.4.3 Self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement**

In his *Theory of Social Justice* (1972), Rawls describes well-being in terms of happiness. He argues for an understanding of happiness that depends on the individual’s self-confidence and sense of achievement. He appreciates that a person is happy when two conditions apply: Firstly, when she is executing ‘a rational plan

of life' and secondly, when she has the self-confidence that she can successfully execute this plan (1972, p. 548).

For Rawls, the concept of self-confidence is associated with that of self-esteem (1972, p. 440). He defines self-esteem as consisting of two aspects. The first is a person's sense of her own value, her conviction that her plan of life is worth carrying out. With regard to this plan, Rawls clarifies that it is important for it to respond to the natural interests and capacities of the person; otherwise, it will fail to attract her and will reduce the possibilities of her executing it (1972, p. 440).

The second aspect of self-esteem is the person's self-confidence that she has the ability to carry out her intentions and successfully execute her plan (1972, p. 440).

Rawls views self-esteem as a 'primary good' because:

When we feel that our plans are of little value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their execution. Nor plagued by failure and self-doubt can we continue in our endeavours. It is clear then why self-respect is a primary good. Without it nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them (1972, p. 440).

It is therefore evident that in Rawls's theory, the concepts of happiness, self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement are interrelated.

Rees *et al.* (2012) seem to agree that self-esteem and self-confidence are important routes in achieving well-being. In their revised version of the *Good Childhood Inquiry*, they provide a list of key areas needed for a happy childhood. This includes children having a positive view of themselves and feeling that they are respected and valued for who they are.

### **2.3 Stating the problem: Children's well-being under threat**

The *Good Childhood* report by Layard and Dunn (2009) and the *Cambridge Primary Review* by Alexander *et al.* (2010), have received much attention as they suggested that the well-being of children is under threat. Even though no similar reports were put together in Cyprus, the same concern exists in the country. This has led the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance to set the well-being of children as one of its priorities during the 2012 Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Cyprus Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance Website 2012). On May 20<sup>th</sup> 2012, the Minister announced that the Cypriot government had invested €3 200 000 to programmes designed precisely for this purpose (Cyprus Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance Website 2012). On March 29<sup>th</sup> 2013, four days after the measures of austerity for the Cypriot economy were announced causing national panic, the Commissioner for Children's Rights in Cyprus issued an announcement in which she suggested that the economic crisis was expected to undermine the emotional well-being of Cypriot children. She advised them to deal with this difficult situation by expressing their views and feelings about it, by investing in their social relationships, and by helping those in need (Commissioner for Children's Rights in Cyprus Website 2013).

In this section, I will offer the findings of *The Good Childhood* report (2009) and the *Cambridge Primary Review* (2010), as well as the theories of several philosophers, in an attempt to illustrate how the well-being of children today is seen to be under threat in relation to the aspects presented in Section 2.2.4. It is important to note that there is not much literature in Cyprus regarding the well-being of children and how this is affected by the modern way of living. This has led me to rely on international

literature to mount my arguments with regard to these issues. Even though the findings of *The Good Childhood* report (2009) and the *Cambridge Primary Review* (2010) refer to English children, their findings are broadly applicable to the reality of the Cypriot children's lives.

### **2.3.1 Happiness and pleasure**

In 2007, UNICEF compiled a report that was concerned with the evaluation of the well-being of children in twenty-one countries in North America and Europe (Staff of Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, cited in Sennett 2012, p. 138). The study concluded that a society's raw wealth should not be equated with the well-being of its children, because 'no obvious relationship between levels of child well-being and GDP per capita' was found (Staff of Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, cited in Sennett 2012, p. 138). Sennett comments that, even though this finding suggests that wealth is not a necessary precondition for welfare, basic needs still have to be met; 'malnutrition is certainly no recipe for well-being' (2012, pp. 138-139).

Regarding English children in particular, the 2007 UNICEF report suggested that, despite the high quality of their standards of living, they seemed to be *less happy* than children in other countries (cited in Cambridge Primary and Alexander 2010, p. 1). A question naturally arises: What is depriving them of their happiness? A possible explanation is offered by a recently published article in *The Guardian* (2012). It reported that the reason that British children are so unhappy is because they are under 'the exceptional pressures that modern life imposes on them' (2012).

This accords with the view expressed in the *Good Childhood* report, that children's lives are becoming increasingly difficult (Layard *et al.* 2009, p. 2). Layard and Dunn argue that the common theme that makes them unhappy is *excessive individualism*:

the idea that the prime duty of the individuals is to make the most out of their own lives rather than to contribute to the good of others (Layard *et al.* 2009, p. 6). They argue that ‘the pursuit of personal success *relative* to others cannot create a happy society, since one’s person’s success necessarily involves another’s failure’ (Layard *et al.* 2009, p. 6, italics in original).

Children in Cyprus are also reported to endure pressures which have to do with parental and societal demands for academic success. According to the Commissioner for Children’s Rights in Cyprus, they are deprived of opportunities for pleasure and play as soon as they are thrown into a battle for future professional success (Commissioner for Children’s Rights in Cyprus Website 2010).

### **2.3.2 Sociability, social skills and skills of working with others**

In her book *Dancing in the streets*, Ehrenreich (2007) claims that the rise of the competitive society led to the undermining of the sociability and social skills of human beings. She explains that a competitive, market-based economy is necessary for the achievement of technological progress. However, the rise of such economy has also resulted in the suppression of the human needs to socialise, to enjoy communal pleasures and to engage in collective festivities. This modern tendency has given birth to a new type of individual; the *isolated* human being.

Phillips and Taylor agree that when people are placed under the pressure to succeed at the expense of others, they unavoidably ‘become estranged from each other’ (2009, p. 107). In their view, the spirit of excessive individualism has made kindness, empathy and sympathy seem like distant possibilities. This is because the human capacity to care for each other is contaminated by fears and rivalries (2009, p. 5).

It is now generally assumed that people are basically selfish and that fellow feeling is either a weakness or a luxury, or merely a more sophisticated form of selfishness. In this picture, kindness becomes something we are nostalgic about, a longing for something that we fear may not really exist. (Phillips and Taylor 2009, pp. 50-51)

In the case of children, the spirit of excessive individualism translates into them being competitive and unkind towards one another. The *Good Childhood* report (2009) considers the unkindness and **behavioural problems** children exhibit to be an expression of the downgrading of their social skills (Layard *et al.* 2009, p. 2). The same concerns regarding student behavioural problems led the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture to set the development of *respect, responsibility* and *solidarity* among students as a primary educational goal for 2010-11 (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website 2012a).

### **2.3.3 Self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement**

Seldon, who was the first head teacher in Britain to introduce happiness lessons in school timetables, argued that the testing and assessing of children has ‘detrimental effects’ on their emotional and mental well-being (cited in Suissa 2008, p. 576). This is because testing produces low self-confidence and causes stress for them. Seldon’s assertion is consistent with the findings of the *Cambridge Primary Review*, according to which, as children progress through primary school, they appear to become ‘more wary’ and use words like ‘worried’, ‘nervous’, ‘scared’ and ‘upset’ to express their feelings about assessment (Cambridge Primary and Alexander 2010, p. 149).

Bunker agrees that children’s sense of self-worth is shaped by the types of assessment experiences they have, as well as the nature of the feedback they receive

(1991, p. 469). Due to the evaluative nature of the educational system, children find themselves being assessed several times during a school day. Bruner writes in relation to this:

School judges the child's performance, and the child responds by evaluating himself or herself in turn. (1996, p. 37)

## **2.4 Dealing with the problem: Well-being education**

The new concern with children's well-being led to the designing of technical educational programmes that aimed to address the issue. Such programmes involve Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) in the UK and Social and Emotional Education (SEE) in Cyprus. In the following section I will present their philosophies, evidence of impact and criticisms that these programmes have undergone based on theoretical evidence and published reports.

Even though my thesis focuses on Cypriot education, I consider discussing aspects of SEAL to be important. This is because the SEAL policy has influenced the SEE, as is often the case with the English educational policy influencing the Cypriot.

### **2.4.1 The philosophies of SEAL and SEE**

SEAL first emerged in the UK in the early decade of 2000 (Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 57). The programme aimed towards providing schools with an explicit, structured, whole-curriculum approach that would help children develop their social, emotional and behavioural skills (DfES 2005a, p. 5 cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 58). It focused on the development of the following:

- Social skills
- Motivation

- Self-awareness
- Managing feelings
- Empathy (DfES 2005a, p. 5 cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 59).

These skills were to be ‘explored, reflected on and taught both in and out of the classroom and progress to be made in them’ (DfES 2005a, p. 5 cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 59). The ‘progress made within them’ would be assessed against key outcomes such as: *‘I have a range of strategies for managing impulses and strong emotions so they do not lead me to behave in ways that would have negative consequences for me or for other people’* (DFES, 2007d, p. 53 cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 58). By 2007, SEAL was delivered to 90% of primary schools across England in the form of a non-compulsory programme (Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 58).

Influenced by the English and Greek educational policies, SEE was introduced to the Cypriot primary school curriculum in 2001 (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012). According to the guidelines given by the Ministry of Education and Culture, SEE aimed towards:

- offering students emotional and social support,
- helping them develop their skills of communication with others,
- getting to know themselves,
- acknowledging, expressing and managing their emotions, and
- accepting those who are different from them (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012).

The ultimate goal of SEE was reported to be the creation of an ‘effective’ and a ‘caring’ school that would enable teachers to advise and to guide their students, and



that would empower them to deal with challenging classroom situations (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012).

The first stage of the implementation of SEE in Cypriot primary schools occurred between 2001 and 2004 and it was experimental. A few schools participated in the programme voluntarily and teachers received training in SEE by the launching committee. The programme was subject to evaluation after this trial period, the outcomes of which will be discussed in the following section. In the years that followed, an increasing number of schools took part in the programme (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012).

In September 2011, the spirit of reform in the Cypriot educational system brought about significant changes for SEE (The Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website 2012a). SEE was re-launched, and this time it was to be taught under the umbrella of Health Education Programmes (The Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website 2012a). Health Education is reported to be an educational approach that teaches students how to deal with problems in their social relationships; how to avoid antisocial and delinquent behaviour; and how to develop the skills of resolving conflicts, of communicating with others, and of working effectively with them (The Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website 2012a).

#### **2.4.2 Evidence of impact of SEAL and SEE on the well-being of children**

A 2008 report for the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) found that SEAL had ‘failed to impact significantly upon pupils’ social and emotional skills, general mental health difficulties, pro-social behaviour and behavioural problems’ (2008d, pp. 2-3, cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 74). In assessing the

impact of SEAL, different methodological problems were thrown up, such as poor documentation of methods, over-reliance on self-report criteria of success and failure to assess longer-term outcomes (Matthews *et al* 2004, p. 542, cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 63). In a 2011 BBC Radio 4 broadcast called *Testing the Emotions*, the Department of Education stated that ‘the lack of any overall positive impact from SEAL reinforces the need to prevent further time and resource expenditure on this project’ (BBC 2011, cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 75).

As far as SEE is concerned, its implementation in primary schools between 2001 and 2009 was evaluated, and the outcomes were published in a report (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012). According to this, SEE had a ‘positive and beneficial impact’ on the lives of students and teachers who had participated in the programme (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012). Student well-being was allegedly promoted through the programme in the following ways:

- They learned about new ways of non-verbal communication with others.
- They enriched their vocabulary about emotions.
- They were helped towards self-realisation and in discovering their identity in terms of personal traits, rather than in terms of academic achievement.
- They were helped in areas of social and emotional competency, such as the enhancement of their social skills, the development of their emotional intelligence, and their management of stressful situations (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012).

It is worth mentioning that the Health Education Programmes (which SEE is now taught as a part of) have not undergone any form of evaluation yet due to their recent addition in the curriculum.

### **2.4.3 Criticisms of SEAL**

Children's well-being has recently been seen to be in danger of being undermined by the very programmes designed to address it (Hutchison 2009, p. 98). In this section, I will outline few of the most important criticisms that SEAL has undergone. Even though there are no published reports regarding criticisms of SEE, many of the critical reviews concerning SEAL can be applied to SEE, because the two share the same philosophy and principles. In the Results chapter I will offer the critical reviews of teachers who have taught it, as well as my own critical perspective of it informed by my observation of a SEE class (Section 4.5.2).

In critiquing educational programmes designed to 'teach happiness', Suissa finds that one of their main problems is that they offer a 'pre-packaged list of techniques' that children are advised to develop in order to achieve well-being (2008, p. 582). She argues that this approach is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, well-being programmes advise children to take steps such as to 'avoid conflict' or to 'care for others' (2008, pp. 579, 582). However, unless children develop some *empirical understanding* of what it means to care for others, or what the consequences of engaging in conflict are, these pieces of advice hold little weight (2008, pp. 579, 582). In her words, 'one comes to make these choices as a moral agent through an appreciation of the texture of one's life' (2008, p. 579). Suissa brings Nussbaum's ethical approach into the picture to point out that, even if children do follow the steps

of these ‘pre-packaged recipes’, it does not protect them from the unpredictable events in their lives:

(We) cannot get away with doing anything by rote; (we) must be actively aware and responsive at every moment, ready for surprises (Nussbaum 1990, pp. 94-95, cited in Suissa 2008, pp. 582-583).

Craig has been an outspoken commentator on the place of well-being in educational contexts (cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 4). She stands firm on her position that the notion of well-being in schools has been overshadowed by a psychological and mental health approach, and that in our attempt to help children feel better we are preventing them from experiencing a range of emotions that are necessary for their healthy emotional development (cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 4). She calls upon evidence suggesting that an excessive focus on the self and self-esteem of the child leads to ‘unhealthy *materialism* and *individualism* and so undermines, rather than contributes to well-being’ (Crocker and Park 2004, cited in Craig 2009, p. 6, cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 4).

Watson *et al.* call SEAL ‘an unprecedented large-scale experiment on children’s emotions’ (2012, p. 73). They maintain that it ‘operationalises children’s emotional lives according to adult concepts’ (2012, p. 34). They point to the absence of children’s voices in educational policies concerning their well-being, and find that the views of those in positions of authority are imposed on the designing of such programmes (2012, p. 34). This results in ‘denigrating the right of children to speak about their wellbeing (sic), or to vocalize on matters that concern them’ (2012, p. 34). Butler and Rumsey note in relation to this:

If we were to really listen to children and hear what they have to say, it would result in the need to radically change many of the services that are currently provided. While they (i.e. the services) are ostensibly designed to enhance the well-being of children, in practice it could be argued that they are organised around the desire to maintain the current position of children in society and existing power relationships (2000, p. 15, cited in Boylan and Dalrymple 2009, pp. 75-76).

Hutchinson advocates that any educational efforts made to address the well-being of children are to be judged based on whether they place their voice in the centre of the enquiry (2009, p. 93). Taking my lead from Watson *et al.* (2012) and their argument regarding the absence of children's voices in programmes such as SEAL, I believe that these practices should be reconsidered.

In my Discussion chapter, I will refer back to the points raised during the critical evaluation of SEAL, in order to support my argument that drama is in position to help children flourish in a more organic way.

## ***2.5 Exploring the relationship between drama and the well-being of children***

I now will turn to the key question of my thesis regarding the role of drama in the personal, social and emotional flourishing of children. I will first offer a review of the literature regarding the relationship between the arts and human well-being, before I move onto a discussion on the contribution of drama in particular to the well-being of children. I will conclude with signalling some important limitations as far as this contribution is concerned. Before I set out to explore the relationship of the arts and the well-being of children, it is important to look at the wedge often drawn between two traditions; one that claims that the arts hold instrumentalist value and another that argues in favour of their intrinsic worth.

### 2.5.1 The arts: Instrumentalist or intrinsic worth?

In his book *Educating artistic vision*, the American arts educator Eisner distinguished between two major types of justifications for the use of the arts in educational contexts (1972, p. 2). The first type places emphasis on the instrumental effects of the arts. Eisner referred to this type as *contextualist*, because the means and the ends of the arts education programmes are designed by taking the context into consideration (1972, p. 3). The programmes are tailored according to the characteristics and the needs of students or the society so as to address specific issues (1972, p. 3). In this respect, the arts are seen as having a *therapeutic* role and are used as a vehicle for the attainment of the *mental health* of students (1972, p. 8).

Eisner saw a problem with the contextualist or instrumentalist view of the arts. He argued that this model seemed to imply that the needs of the students or the community are somehow ‘out there’ and can be revealed through appropriate social analysis (1972, pp. 3-4). What is more, these needs are dependent on the views and values of those responsible for the implementation of the arts programmes (1972, p. 4). The same argument can be made for the SEAL and SEE practices which, as I mentioned before, are said to be designed according to the views of those in places of authority. With regard to the arts programmes, what the students of a particular school or country need from them is different for individuals holding different values (1972, pp. 4-5). This realisation led Eisner to believe that:

(...) the prime value of the arts in education lies (...) in the unique contributions it makes to the individual’s experience with and understanding of the world. (1972, p. 9)

This brings us to the second type of justification for the use of the arts. It places emphasis on the contribution to human experience and understanding that only the

arts can make, highlighting what is indigenous and unique to art (Eisner 1972, p. 9). Eisner referred to this as an *essentialist* justification. Supporters of the essentialist view of the arts believe that they form ‘a unique aspect of human culture and experience’, and that their most valuable contribution is related to their particular characteristics (1972, p. 5). Therefore, what the arts have to offer to education cannot be offered by other fields (1972, p. 5).

Dewey too perceived the arts to be intrinsically valuable. In his book *Art as Experience* (1934), he suggested that aesthetic experiences provide us with a sense of heightened vitality and encourage ‘active and alert commerce with the world’ (1934, p. 18). In the modern world of ‘stress and conflict’, one that is always moving and culminating, we often lose equilibrium with our surroundings (1934, p. 16). The arts experiences help us retain a connection with the environment and attain a sense of inner harmony and a kind of fulfilment that ‘reaches the depth of our being’ (1934, p. 16). These feelings of vitality, harmony and fulfilment make it possible for us to perceive the arts experience as unique in our lives (Eisner 1972, p. 5). This is where the intrinsic value of the arts lies for Dewey. Eisner uses Dewey’s response to the instrumentalist view of the value of the arts to argue that:

To take objects and events that are capable of providing such experience and to distort them so that they are used exclusively as instruments for other ends is to violate the very characteristics that art, as experience, possesses. (Eisner 1972, p. 5)

Thompson (2009) raises a similar point. He warns that a focus on the utility of the arts poses a danger of losing the substance of the art work; of ‘abandoning the terrain of sensation’ (2009, p. 117). He draws attention to the fact that, when studies of arts

activities are designed to measure impacts and outcomes on a personal and social level, they might neglect the arts' capacity for *affect*:

(...) the 'bodily capacities to affect and be affected or to the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, engage, and to connect, such that autoaffection is linked to the self-feeling of being alive – that is aliveness or vitality' (Clough, 2007, p. 2, cited in Thompson 2009, p. 119).

Winston (2006) has articulated a case for 'arts beyond utility'. In his article, he refers to the educational tendency for the instrumental efficacy of schooling that arose in the 1970s (2006, p. 287). In the climate of the demise of progressive education, the arts were called upon to justify their value in terms of social utility (2006, p. 287). This tendency gave birth to reports, such as the one by Matarasso (1997) discussed below. These instrumental approaches to valuing the arts have been largely criticised. Reports pointed out to the problems that exist when narrowing the value of the arts down to 'quantifiable, target-related, measurable outcomes' (Winston 2006, p. 287). Winston argues for the need for a new language to bring the intrinsic worth of the arts to the surface (2006, p. 287).

Whereas I do not wish to align with one side or the other, I believe it is important to acknowledge the distinction drawn between the two traditions, as this will help the reader understand the platform from which the theories discussed throughout my thesis spring from. Moving away from the dichotomy, in my thesis I will demonstrate how drama contributed to the personal, social and emotional flourishing of my students because of its particular characteristics (intrinsic value), but also how it was used to address particular issues relating to their well-being (instrumental value).



## 2.5.2 The contribution of the arts to well-being

### 2.5.2.1 Philosophical views

The belief that the arts can make people feel better goes back to classical times (Carey 2005, p. 96). Plato's view of the arts was purely *instrumentalist*. In his *Republic*, he acknowledged the power of the arts in shaping one's character, and argued that this power should be used by the state in order to benefit its citizens (Allen 2002, p. 19). However, he warned about the wiles and evils that the arts bring with them. He found that they imitate life, but do so *deceptively* because they present a false picture of reality. Because the arts have the capacity to stimulate human emotions, people tend to imitate them and are consequently led astray because of their dishonest representations. For Plato, the arts should indeed make people better, but in order to do so they have to be restrained, and they have to be rational and responsible. If they are not, they pose the risk of becoming politically subversive and corruptive to people, and should then be abandoned altogether (Allen 2002, p. 19).

In response to Plato, Aristotle in his *Poetics* argued in favour of the *intrinsic* value of the arts. He saw their emotional power as a good thing, because through them an individual can experience *catharsis*; a release of unsettling feelings (Allen 2002, Cowling and Institute for Public Policy Research (London England) 2004). In discussing the end of imitative art, he draws a sharp distinction between the arts viewed as *useful* and the arts viewed as *pleasurable* (Aristotle and Butcher 1895, p. 185). When the arts are perceived as *useful*, they are seen to offer the necessary means of existence and to satisfy material desires. Their end is subordinate to a superior end. Aristotle believed that the end of fine arts is rather to offer *pleasure* and *rational enjoyment* (Aristotle and Butcher 1895, p. 185).

The eighteenth century Enlightenment brought the invention of aesthetics, and the idea that the arts benefit the individuals morally, emotionally and spiritually (Carey 2005, p. 96). This idea penetrated Western intellectual thinking, and led Hegel to advocate that the arts can ‘mitigate the savagery of mere desires’ by ‘fettering and instructing the impulses and passions’ (Carey 2005, pp. 96-97).

In the nineteenth century, there was a widespread assumption that the arts *can* and *should* improve people morally and emotionally (Carey 2005, p. 97). This resulted in the initiating of public access to art galleries. Those in places of authority believed that social tranquillity could be achieved by encouraging the poor to engage with high art. In their view, the arts experience would allow the poor to transcend their material limitations, and to forget their agitation and desire for a share in the possession of their superiors (Carey 2005, p. 97).

The belief that exposure to the arts produces moral and emotional advantages is still powerful in modern times. The philosophy of arts education is underpinned by the view that the arts can make students feel better and become better people. In his book *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), Eisner argues that aesthetic modes of knowing can transform our consciousness, improve our cognitive functioning and promote our personal growth (cited in McLellan *et al.* 2012, pp. 53-54). He espouses that, unlike other disciplines where ends are achieved through the manipulation of pre-determined means, in the arts *ends follow means* because the individual’s actions may determine the ends. He also offers a view of the arts as a *therapeutic process* that can result in enhancing a person’s freedom to self-expression and well-being (2002, cited in McLellan *et al.* 2012, pp. 53-54).

Different authors have argued in favour of the potential of the arts to contribute to sociability and social relationships. Ehrenreich gives the example of ritual dance to demonstrate how it aided the strengthening of the social bond in prehistoric communities:

To submit, bodily, to the music through dance is to be incorporated into the community in a way far deeper than shared myth or common custom can achieve. In synchronous movement to music or chanting voices, the petty rivalries and functional differences that might divide a group could be (...) forgotten. (2007, p. 27)

In his book *What is Art?* (1899), Tolstoy answered his own question by arguing that it is the communication of emotion among human beings. When the emotions transmitted through the arts are genuine and deeply felt, they can serve to unite humans.

In the opening chapter of his classic work of sociology, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), Bourdieu suggested that the arts are a means for pleasure. However, the types of pleasure vary according to the educational level and the social origin of the individuals. For Bourdieu, a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who, because of her social origin and/or educational background, has the cultural competence to understand its codes (1984, p. 2). For the individual who *does not* possess these cultural codes, pleasure derived from the arts is 'facile' and is reduced to the mere satisfaction of the senses (1984, p. 6). For the individual who *does* possess these cultural codes, pleasure associated with the arts is 'pure' and is 'predisposed to become a symbol of moral excellence and a measure for the capacity for sublimation which defines the truly human man' (1984). Taking these into consideration, Bourdieu claims that there are problems

with the cultural assimilation of the arts in terms of potentially producing problematic social differences (1984, p. 7). He writes:

The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences (1984, p. 7).

I agree that focusing on the children's enjoyment of the artistic experience is one way of potentially escaping from the production of the social differences to which Bourdieu draws attention. By producing and focusing on *natural* enjoyment, my work attempts to avoid reproducing the problematic hierarchy that places the cultural acceptance of an artistic product's quality over and above of what is more important; namely the enjoyment and understanding of the profane which Bourdieu highlights as ultimately the basis for all art and culture in the first place.

### **2.5.2.2 Report findings**

Between 1995 and 1997, Comedia, an independent research centre in Britain, undertook a long-term study of the social impact of art programmes (Matarasso and Comedia 1997, p. v). It drew on case studies the UK, Ireland, Finland, and New York, and included a wide range of amateur, semi-professional and community work (Matarasso and Comedia 1997, back cover). The research focused on participation in the arts, which was the area most widely claimed to support personal and community development (1997, p. v). Matarasso's report *Use or Ornament* (1997), described the findings of the first stage of Comedia's study. Some of the aspects of well-being that were reported to be enhanced are the same to those my thesis is concerned with.

Matarasso mentioned that **social cohesion** was born through the supportive and co-operative atmosphere that the arts fostered (1997, pp. vi-vii, 15). Other findings included the sense of **happiness** and **pleasure** that the participants allegedly had derived (1997, pp. viii, x). The report also revealed that involvement with the arts was an effective route towards enhanced **self-confidence** and **sense of self-worth** (1997, p. x). As Matarasso explained, these feelings were connected to the **sense of achievement** the participants had experienced; their accomplishments changed how they felt about their capacities (1997, p. 15). He pointed out that their sense of achievement was not limited to an individual level, because ‘being part of a collective success gave people the same sort of pride as having made something of their own’ 1997, p. 15). Lastly, the arts reportedly helped the participants to find their own **voice** and to express themselves in a way that made them feel that they were taken seriously and that their ideas were appreciated (1997, p. 17).

In her book *For Art's sake?* (2004), Cowling invited a number of authors to discuss the arts’ potential in achieving wider social goals. Hewitt introduced the notion of the ‘transformative power’ of the arts (2004, p. 19). He argued that it is their *inherent value* that allows for transformation on a social and individual level (2004, p. 19). He explained that people undertake arts activities because they **enjoy** them, and because they are vital to their physical and mental well-being (2004, p. 21). Muschamp drew evidence from arts’ inspections in UK schools to emphasise how students’ involvement with the arts led to the enhancement of their **self-confidence** and their **skills of working** and of **interacting with others** (2004, pp. 27, 31). Equally importantly, the arts provided students with sheer **enjoyment**, a haven and release from school pressures, and encouraged a healthy shift of focus from themselves to

the artistic expression (2004, pp. 31-32). In the concluding chapter, Cowling called the arts ‘experiential goods’, explaining that this is because ‘the more you put in, the more you get out’ (2004, p. 137).

A research report by Jermyn called *The Art of Inclusion* (2004), was concerned with the impact of the arts on enhancing social inclusion. The report was based on fifteen participatory arts projects taking place in various settings in England, ranging from prisons to theatres, and from community centres to hostels for the homeless (2004, pp. iii-iv). The participants were people of all ages, ranging from older people to children aged under 5 (2004, pp. iii-iv). The report suggested that, through their involvement with the arts, participants experienced a boost in their **self-esteem** and **self-confidence** because they felt better about themselves (2004, p. x). They also felt proud of their arts projects, because these were based on their own ideas (2004, p. x). Another outcome was the development of their **social skills**, with many of them admitting to having made friends through the arts projects, to having worked as part of a team and to having developed skills of trust, co-operation and listening (2004, p. 60). Lastly, most participants admitted to having experienced much **enjoyment** and **fun** during their involvement with the project (2004, p. 61).

A 2004 Australian study by Bryce focused on whether engagement with school-based arts education programmes can have a positive impact on student learning. Four schools were selected to be involved in the study based on their good practice of the arts (Bryce 2004, p. 2). The study results stressed that exposure to the arts led to enhanced engagement in learning in several ways. Firstly, it contributed positively to students’ **self-esteem** and **self-worth**. This was particularly the case for those who were labelled as ‘low-achieving’ or who came from dysfunctional backgrounds. In

the arts, students were able to express themselves without having to read or write. Avoiding the initial discouragement of having to display weak reading and writing skills, they could enjoy the aesthetic experience and to learn through it. Secondly, involvement in the arts led to the growth of students' **social skills** as they were able to work co-operatively with others in different tasks, such as putting together a performance. Thirdly, students learned to make plans and to set goals. These in turn led to experiencing **a sense of achievement** (Bryce 2004, p. 2).

In a more recent publication, McLellan *et al.* (2012) offer the theoretical evidence of the impact of creative initiatives on pupil well-being. Given the role of the arts in fostering creativity, they look into the relationship between arts-based approaches and children's flourishing. They conclude that creative interventions bring positive results for their well-being (2012, p. 10). Nevertheless, they draw attention to some important considerations regarding this contribution. Firstly, the perception of well-being that the institutions taking part in the research held, dictated their strategies for its implementation (2012, p. 71). Secondly, when the subjects in the curriculum emphasised *outcomes* regarding well-being rather than *processes*, students did not appear to be as motivated (2012, p. 71). This prompted the authors to the conclusion that:

It is not necessary to have *special schemes* to prevent bullying because in the course of this transformation pupils come to respect and care for each other as they grow in their ability to 'manage things for themselves'. (2012, p. 72)

This of course contradicts the teaching methods of SEAL and SEE, which include the designing of lesson plans with set objectives to address particular problems.

### 2.5.3 The contribution of drama to well-being

The belief that drama can benefit the well-being of children is not new. As early as 1930, Ward introduced the approach of ‘creative drama’ in America (Taylor 2000, p. 99). Influenced by the ideas of Dewey and Mearns, Ward argued that creative drama contributed to children’s physical, intellectual, social and emotional development. She promoted the power of creative drama to enhance skills which the society of her time viewed as important; communication skills, concentration, co-operation, tolerance, sensitivity and trust (Taylor 2000, p. 99). Her book *Creative Dramatics* (1930) outlined her philosophy that the arts add ‘immeasurably to the joy of living’ (Ward 1957, p. 4, cited in Anderson 2012, p. 31).

In 1954, Slade began to develop a view of drama as ‘eternally bound up with mental health’ (Slade 1954, p. 25, cited in Robinson 1980, p. 144). In his publication *Child Drama* (1954), he proposed that the dramatic activity of children is an art in its own right and separate from the theatre of adults (Robinson 1980, p. 44). With clear influences from the romantic views of Rousseau and Fröebel, he saw drama as having its roots in play and as being a manifestation of the child’s innocence and sanctity (Robinson 1980, p. 44). For Slade, the purpose of drama was to develop the child from within through creative self-expression (Robinson 1980, p. 44).

A few years later, his follower Way advocated the capacity of drama to develop the ‘individuality of the individual’ (Taylor 2000, p. 101). Drawing inspiration from the progressive education movement of the 1960s, his text *Development through Drama* (1967) placed emphasis on the ‘development of people’ over the development of drama (Way 1967, p. 2, cited in Anderson 2012, p. 30). It suggested exercises that concentrated on ‘speaking’, ‘consciousness of self’ and ‘self-control’ (Anderson



2012, p. 31). Nevertheless, his approach was criticised for removing what is educationally attractive about drama education and for leaving little place for working with others and for building a community (Anderson 2012, p. 31).

Bolton discussed the movement of Personal Development pioneered by Slade and Way (1992, pp. 117-118). He admitted that the ideas they supported, namely self-expression, personal identity, self-esteem, sensitivity, the uniqueness of the individual and the maturing process, were indeed valuable in themselves (1992, p. 117). What he found problematic, however, was the *emphasis* placed on them (1992, p. 118). Bolton believes that Personal Development should be seen as an *ongoing* aim in education and that, when it is overemphasised, the following problem arises (1992, p. 118):

(...) there are times when Personal Development, especially in responding to evident special needs of an individual, is uppermost in the teacher's mind and takes priority over content/form objectives (...). It does not matter a bit whether or not the child has a grasp on the central concept; that the drama has created an opportunity for self-advancement is all that is important. (1992, pp. 118-119)

What Bolton seems to be saying here is that the emphasis on personal development leads to drama being used for *instrumentalist* purposes. Its *intrinsic* value is ignored.

Despite these criticisms, the approaches of Ward, Slade and Way have contributed to current thinking regarding the role of drama education in the personal, social and emotional development of children (Taylor 2000, p. 101). In the sections that follow, I will offer the theories of contemporary drama educators to draw links between drama and the various aspects of children's well-being.

### 2.5.3.1 Pleasure

Numerous authors agree that pleasure is a primary element in good drama (Winston 2004, Neelands 1998, Fleming 2003, Dickinson *et al.* 2006) Its playful nature is seen to invite opportunities for entertainment, fun and aesthetic pleasure (Dickinson *et al.* 2006, p. 12). Fleming (2011) associates the goal of attaining pleasure through drama with the argument about the intrinsic value of the arts. He uses Susterman's definition of entertainment to draw a connection between drama and well-being.

The aim 'to provide entertainment and relaxation' may appear trivial and superficial on the surface but could instead be associated with arguments about the *intrinsic value* of the art. Susterman (2003) has questioned the widely accepted polarity between 'art' and 'entertainment', arguing for a deep concept of entertainment with overtones of 'sustaining, refreshing and deepening concentration'. This type of argument can lead to the *linking of drama to well-being*, not necessarily in the narrow sense of using drama as a method to develop understanding of specific health-related topics, but in the broader sense of contributing to pupils' *social and mental health*. (Fleming 2011, p. 9)

The act of performing for an audience in drama can also be claimed to generate pleasure. Winston explains that, for children who love performing, the moment of sharing their work is 'thrilling' (2010, p. 79). This is not only because they are seen and admired for their accomplishment, but also because this thrill is interwoven with a sense of risk that things might not go as planned. 'Risk', he writes, 'is the rigor upon which their pleasure depends but their level of pleasure will equate with the experience of beauty' (2010, p. 79). Winston invites *beauty* into the discussion about drama and pleasure. This beauty refers to both that of the *dramatic product*, and that of the *experience of making drama* itself (2010, p. 79).

### 2.5.3.2 Sociability, social skills and skills of working with others

Various drama theorists consider that sociability is at the core of drama. The pioneer Heathcote articulated the relationship between the two in her 1984 lectures:

If you want to use drama you're basically looking at social behaviours. You're not looking at the private person in the private moment; you're looking at social behaviours. (1984a, p. 4, cited in Anderson 2012, p. 27)

The social nature of drama is seen to arise from the interactions among group members needed to create the artistic product (Bolton 1992, p. 121). According to Bolton, the organised group experience in drama renders it a unique learning context for the participants (1992, p. 121). Winston argues that it teaches them 'the importance of collective endeavour' and of 'sacrificing their immediate self-interest for the good of a shared enterprise' (2004, p. 53). In order for them to play effectively in the group, they are required to understand and adopt the attitudes of the others (Taylor and Warner 2006, p. 66). This idea is closely associated with the neo-Freudian theory that 'all human intercourse provides the projection of scattered parts oneself into another person' (Taylor and Warner 2006, p. 66).

Key to the building of the community spirit in drama is the *ensemble approach*, which is extensively theorised by Neelands (2009). When working in ensemble-based drama, young people 'struggle with the demands of becoming a self-managing, self-governing, self-regulating social group who co-create artistically and socially' (Neelands 2009, p. 182). In order to achieve this, they are required to 'look for new ways of living together rather than against each other; to find solidarity in their common disadvantage; to create new models of pluralist community' (2009, p. 176).

The importance of the co-operative activity was underlined by O'Neill and Lambert (1982). They argued that the schooling system encourages students to work individually and to be competitive and possessive about their achievements (1982, p. 13). Whereas this claim was made in 1982, it seems relevant to modern schooling where excessive individualism and competition reign supreme (Layard *et al.* 2009, Phillips and Taylor 2009). O'Neill and Lambert contradicted this individualistic spirit to the spirit of drama, which works from the strength of the group, draws on a common stock of experiences and in turn enriches the minds and feelings of its members (1982, p. 13).

The social character of drama is also reflected in its symbolic representation of human experiences (Bowell and Heap 2001, p. 21). Bowell and Heap summarise this point elegantly:

*(....) drama is essentially about people and their relationships, dilemmas, concerns, hopes, fears, aspirations, celebrations and rites of passage, all of which create ties which bind them together.* (2001, p. 21, italics in original)

**Empathy** and compassion (another word for **sympathy**) are mentioned by Neelands as key principles in drama education (2011). He defines them as follow:

Empathy: caring for others with a forensic curiosity that constantly seeks new ways of being together and creating together.

Compassion: engaging with the world and each other, knowing there may be mutual pain in doing so. (2011, p. 11)

Empathy in drama can be achieved on two levels. Firstly, when playing a role, the child is required to find what she shares in common with the character so that she can incorporate it, regardless of how distant she feels that it is from her own identity

(Winston 2004, p. 55). Secondly, when working in groups, she is required to develop an empathetic understanding of the attitudes of other members in order to work effectively with them (Taylor and Warner 2006, p. 66). Compassion can be encouraged in drama through powerful experiences of dramatic events which, although imaginative, can yield real emotions of sympathy towards others.

### **2.5.3.3 Self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement**

Different writers on drama education claim that drama holds the potential to help children flourish with regard to their self-esteem and self-confidence in different ways. Firstly, the real and imaginary encounters with others taking place in drama enable them to discover their capabilities and potentialities (O'Neill 1995, p. 91). Through the fictional roles and worlds offered in drama, they can realise who they are and who they may be (O'Neill 1995, p. 91). Dickinson *et al.* call drama a 'self-realisation' project, because 'it draws out strength, it encourages dreams, and it gives you the chance to reach your potential' (2006, p. 15).

Secondly, the imaginative engagement in drama allows for the loosening of tyrannies that govern everyday life, and particularly that of identity (Winston 2004, p. 13). When taking on the role of someone powerful, the child is respected and listened to by her peers within a fictional context. By internalising these feelings of being respected and of being deemed as an important person, her self-worth is reinforced (Winston 2004, p. 13). Through assuming roles of influential people who change their actions and lives through collective and social action, participants can realise that they can also lead, be assertive and alter the circumstances of their lives (Dickinson *et al.* 2006, p. 15). In this sense, drama can also give children a *voice* (Winston 2004, p. 13).

Thirdly, drama can offer children the opportunity to experience a sense of achievement which, according to the theory of Rawls (1972), has a direct input to their self-esteem. In sharing this achievement with an audience, they are offered an opportunity to be seen, admired and praised (Winston 2010, p. 4). As O'Neill articulates it, they can be 'perceived by others in an entirely new light' (cited in Winston 2010, p. 69). When sharing a piece of work that the audience and themselves deem as beautiful and good, they identify with it and *see themselves* as beautiful and good (Winston 2010, p. 79, italics in original). Armstrong refers to Plotinus to make a similar claim:

When we find something beautiful, Plotinus suggests, we don't just want to keep it or own it. Rather, we want it to take possession of us. We want to be transformed by our encounter with it, so that we too may come to share some of its attributes. (2005, pp. 76-77)

Fourthly, the 'no penalty area', a concept introduced by Heathcote, can act as a basis for the reinforcement of children's self-confidence. It suggests that 'participants will be able to test out ideas, try them over again, and generally examine them, without necessarily having to fulfil, in actual life situations, the promises they have tried out in the depicted one' (Heathcote *et al.* 1984, p. 128). This principle implies that children can experiment and offer their ideas without having to worry about the outcome (1984, p. 130). Every contribution is seen as valid and is accepted by the group, and this provides them with a sense of security and confidence.

Fifthly, Rawls's *Theory of Social Justice* recommends that an enduring basis of self-esteem can be established through the person's involvement in an association (1972, p. 441). By joining a community of shared interests, a person's actions are found to be rational and are publicly affirmed by her associates (1972, p. 441). Rawls argues

that the internal life of such associations is ‘suitably adjusted to the abilities and wants of those belonging to them, and provides a secure basis for the sense of worth of their members’ (1972, p. 441-442). If we consider a youth theatre or a drama group to be such an association, then it is evident how a basis for the self-esteem of the participants can be realised. Children meet others who share their love for drama. Their actions in the institution are seen as rational, and are affirmed and often praised by their peers. What is essential is that the dramatic activities and ways of working are tailored according to the levels of ability and desires of children. This underlines the importance of the *pedagogy* of the teacher, and of taking *children’s voice into consideration*.

#### **2.5.4 Important limitations of the contribution of drama and the arts to the well-being of children**

Before I move on, it is important to set out the parameters of what a research project such as mine can be expected to achieve. This will provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of my initiative, and will offer a realistic picture to educators aspiring to achieve similar goals for their students.

- a. A short-term project like this cannot be expected to produce long-term or sustainable results on the personal, social and emotional state of students. This point is raised by McEvoy in forwarding *The Art of Inclusion* report (2004) which measured the impact of the arts in enhancing social inclusion. She warns that high-level outcomes are ‘largely unrealistic’ when it comes to short-term projects (Jermyn 2004, p. i). Any positive benefits reported by the participants are of ‘*personal and transitory nature*’ (Jermyn 2004, p. i).

Nicholson expresses similar scepticisms about claims that drama always transforms beliefs and attitudes for the better (2005, p. 82). She draws

attention to the fact that the social effects of drama cannot be gauged immediately. She attributes the claims made by participants regarding ‘profound changes’ in their attitudes to either them being complicit in following the script of the workshop, or them positively but *temporarily* identifying with a kindly practitioner (2005, p. 82).

Thompson also stresses the transient nature of the positive change in the self-esteem of individuals participating in arts projects (2003, p. 98). He tells the story of a 2003 theatre project taking place in a UK prison. Most of the prisoners who were involved with theatre activities claimed a positive change in their self-esteem. Thompson makes a note of caution, arguing that the self-esteem in this case should be understood as a product of the interrelation of the person and the situation they were in. A drama activity that makes a person feel significant, valuable and appreciated creates a sense of self-esteem in *that moment* (2003, p. 98, italics in original). This sense is not guaranteed to be sustained if the person is taken into a different environment. The examples of McEvoy, Nicholson and Thompson serve as useful reminders of my project’s limitation as far as long-term impacts are concerned. Even though children’s responses pointed to the positive contribution of drama to their flourishing, these may have been influenced by the content of the workshops (Nicholson 2005, p. 82), my benevolent approach and my values as a practitioner (Nicholson 2005, p. 82). My project would be more likely to achieve longer-term outcomes for their well-being if I was able to offer them drama workshops on a regular basis and for a considerably longer period of time (McEvoy in Jermyn 2004, p. ii).



- b. The well-being of children is affected by many different factors, such as social and economic circumstances, family situation and cultural background. This idea traces back to the Sceptics, who believed that inescapable factors (such as poverty or physical pain) have a negative influence on human happiness (Annas 1993, p. 429). Any approaches aiming towards promoting the well-being of children should take that into consideration when evaluating their impacts. I do not expect that my approach could overwrite such powerful factors. It is an important point to bear in mind, especially now that the financial crisis is affecting the everyday reality of Cypriot children. Nevertheless, I have chosen to concentrate on what drama *can* offer to the personal, social and emotional welfare of my students, rather to what it *cannot*.

These and further limitations will be offered in the Results Chapter and the Conclusion, and will be supported by evidence from my fieldwork.

## **2.6 Initial research questions**

Having the theories outlined above in mind before I embarked on my research project, I focused on the following questions:

1. In what ways can the arts, and drama in particular, contribute to the following aspects of children's well-being:
  - To their *happiness* and *pleasure*?
  - To their *sociability*, *social skills* and *skills of working with others*?
  - To their *self-esteem*, *self-confidence* and *sense of achievement*?

2. What *pedagogy* should a teacher who is interested in enhancing her students' well-being follow? What are the *challenges* that this pedagogy conveys?
3. What are the theoretical and methodological *limitations* of this approach?

These initial research questions guided me through the conduct of my fieldwork. In the following chapter I will outline the research methodologies and methods that I employed in order to investigate these questions. As I will discuss in the Results chapter (Section 4.3), further aspects of child well-being were revealed through my research. My research questions had to be reformed in order to include these additional aspects.

## 2.7 Summary

My Literature Review was divided into four parts. In *Subchapter 2.2*, I looked at the various conceptualisations of well-being from antiquity till modern times. Starting from Aristotle, who saw the realisation of happiness in the virtuous way of living, we were led to the nuances of well-being offered by politicians in the face of the current economic crisis; strong **social relationships**. That aspect, along with **happiness** and **pleasure**, **self-esteem** and **self-confidence** were the areas of well-being I initially decided to focus on in my thesis. A key point that has arisen is that, even though economic wealth was not found to be a factor influencing children's well-being, a degree of financial comfort is required in meeting their basic needs.

In *Subchapter 2.3*, I discussed how children's personal, social and emotional health is seen to be under threat with regard to the key areas mentioned above. We saw that an important issue preventing their flourishing is *excessive individualism*. The fact that they are encouraged to succeed professionally in the future and at the expense of others, results in them being unhappy, being deprived of opportunities for pleasure

and play, and experiencing low self-confidence and problems in socialising with others.

In *Subchapter 2.4*, I focused on the educational efforts made to address student well-being; SEAL in the UK and SEE in Cyprus. I presented their philosophy, the evidence of their impact and the criticisms SEAL has undergone. One important criticism is that the pre-packaged lists of techniques SEAL (and in extension, SEE) offer hold little value because children lack the empirical understanding. Also, these programmes encourage an excessive focus on the self and an emphasis on individualism that undermines well-being. Equally importantly, they are designed without taking children's views into consideration.

In *Subchapter 2.5*, I discussed the wedge drawn between two traditions; the emphasis placed on the instrumentalist value of the arts and the emphasis placed on their intrinsic worth. I then offered a theoretical review of the relationship of the arts, and drama in particular, to the key areas of well-being. I concluded with signalling some of the challenges I faced in evaluating the impact of drama to the well-being of my students: The inability of the project to produce sustainable results because of its short duration and the influence of other, powerful factors to their well-being.

The theories discussed in my Literature Review will serve as lenses through which I will attempt to interpret my data in the Discussion Chapter. I will now turn to the chapter of my Research Methodology.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is divided into six parts. *Subchapter 3.2* will deal with research viewed as a medium of answering questions about the world. This will lead to a discussion about two major paradigms in social research, and how these have given birth to qualitative and quantitative approaches to data. According to D'Cruz *et al.*, it is important for a researcher to be aware of the different paradigms that exist because they help her see the 'political and ethical dimensions' that penetrate the research methods and techniques (2004, p. 28). I will discuss the methodologies and methods I employed in *Subchapter 3.3* and *Subchapter 3.4* respectively. I will provide their definitions, demonstrate how and why they were utilised in my research, and outline the challenges they presented. In *Subchapter 3.5* I will present the ethical considerations that are pertinent to my research. *Subchapter 3.6* will focus on my strategies of data coding and analysis. In this, I will exhibit the process in which I gathered and made sense of evidence.

### **3.2 The theory of research**

In this section I will explain what research is and why I chose to undertake it. I will provide the theoretical framework of two major research paradigms, positivism and interpretivism. This will lead to a presentation of quantitative and qualitative approaches to data, and to a discussion about the wedge that has traditionally been drawn between them. This section concludes with my implementation of the interpretivist paradigm and the mixed methods approach.

### 3.2.1 Research and social research

According to Dane, research is ‘a critical process for asking and attempting to answer questions about the world’ (1990, p. 4). The research undertaken for my project was of a social character, as I investigated aspects of the social world in order to gain an insightful view into the modes and motives of human behaviour (Marvasti 2004, p. 1).

### 3.2.2 Ontology, epistemology and paradigms

In their quest for truth throughout the ages, philosophers have formed theories about the different ways one reaches knowledge about the world. These ways of reaching knowledge are called paradigms (Sedlack and Stanley 1992, p. 2). Paradigms reflect the different sets of ideas, beliefs and assumptions of scientists in their attempts to influence the objects and modes of research, and the ways of interpreting its conclusions (Bryman 1998, p. 4, cited in D'Cruz and Jones 2004, p. 29).

In order to best capture the meaning of different paradigms, it is essential to first explain the concepts of ‘ontology’ and ‘epistemology’ that lie at the heart of any research. Ontology is defined as ‘the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the *nature* of social reality’, while epistemology relates to ‘the claims or assumptions made about the *ways* in which it is possible to gain knowledge of this reality’ (Blaikie 1993, pp. 6-7, cited in D'Cruz and Jones 2004, p. 50). Put in simple terms, ontology relates to *what* there is to know about the phenomenon under investigation, while epistemology refers to the *ways* of investigating the phenomenon (Matthews and Ross 2010, p. 17).

In the history of social research, different paradigms have arisen. I will now provide a description of the two major paradigms in social research: Positivism and interpretivism. I will examine these within the scopes of ontology and epistemology.

### **3.2.3 Positivism**

#### **3.2.3.1 What is positivism?**

Positivism is a school of thought that arose in the nineteenth century by the founding father of sociology, Comte (1798-1857) (Babbie 2010, p. 35). The positivist tradition argues that social phenomena can and should be scrutinised using the same logic of enquiry with that of natural phenomena (Corbetta 2003, May 2011, McLaughlin 2012). This is because both natural and social phenomena are ‘subject to invariant laws’ (Blaikie 2007, p. 112).

The ontological assumption of positivism argues that the world is independent of people’s knowledge of it, and can be measured and predicted (Corbetta 2003, Grix 2004). It views human behaviour as being a series of mechanistic acts responding to external forces, in the same way that physical forces are exercised on objects (Neuman 2000, p. 67). Positivism perceives the observation of external behaviour of humans to be more substantial than their internal, subjective cosmos (Neuman 2000, p. 65). Epistemologically speaking, positivists believe that what cannot be captured through the human senses does not qualify as knowledge (Blaikie 2007, p. 113). Knowledge is reached through the conducting of experiments and observations (Gray 2004, p. 18). Positivism gives priority to the use of *quantitative* methods and tools of research (Wagner 2009).

### **3.2.3.2 The researcher's stance in positivism**

In positivism, *objectivity* is the key; emotions or subjective interpretations have no place in research. The researcher is a 'disinterested scientist', detached in relation to the topic under examination (Neuman 2000, p. 69). The phenomena under investigation are believed to exist independently of the researcher's presence (Neuman 2000, Corbetta 2003, Della Porta and Keating 2008, May 2011). Therefore, she cannot affect them in any way possible (Mark 1996, p. 207).

### **3.2.3.3 Criticisms of positivism**

Positivism has been strongly criticised as being 'one of the heroic failures of modern philosophy' (Williams, May *et al.* 1996, p. 27, cited in Gray 2004, p. 18). Anti-positivists attack this stance on the basis that theories cannot be formulated solely based on scientific experiments and detached observation (Gray 2004, p. 18). Additionally, scientists cannot be as objective as the positivist stance demands, because of their human nature (Babbie 2010, p. 40). Their personal feelings, beliefs and experiences inevitably get in the way of reaching absolute, unbiased truth (Babbie 2010, p. 40).

Positivism's greatest weakness is considered to be its inability to recognise important qualities in human beings (Hampden-Turner 1970, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 18). Elements of human nature, such as free will, motivation and values, cannot be captured through the sole use of quantitative tools that the positivist stance alleges superiority for (Corbetta 2003, pp. 24-25). In the words of the critical theorist Habermas, positivism's tendency to focus upon the explanation and the prediction of human behaviour 'diminishes the very characteristics that make humans human' (Habermas and Shapiro 1972, p. 300, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 18).

### 3.2.4 Interpretivism

#### 3.2.4.1 What is interpretivism?

Interpretivism is the research paradigm that proposes that social phenomena require *subjective* understanding and different ways of exploration to those used in the natural sciences (McLaughlin 2012, p. 28). The construction of interpretivism is associated with the German philosopher Dilthey (1833-1911) and the German sociologist Weber (1864-1920) (Neuman 2000, p. 70). Interpretivism notes that the world is dependent on our knowledge of it, and that any form of knowledge is a socially constructed product with symbolic meaning (Grix 2004, p. 83). Ontologically speaking, human acts are considered to be intentional and can be explained (D'Cruz and Jones 2004, p. 51). Epistemologically speaking, any form of knowledge is based on the subjective perceptions that humans hold of the world (Della Porta and Keating 2008, Blaikie 1993).

Interpretivism refuses to reduce human behaviour to its component parts in order to analyse it (as positivism does). It rather views the human being as *a whole* (Corbetta 2003, p. 25). It considers the everyday reality of humans, which positivism neglects, to be the most important step in any social inquiry (Blaikie 1993, p. 101). Interpretivists favour the *qualitative* tools of data gathering in order to acquire in-depth understanding of how people negotiate meanings in their everyday lives (Neuman 2000, Della Porta and Keating 2008).

#### 3.2.4.2 The researcher's stance in interpretivism

The interpretivist researcher is described by Guba and Lincoln as a 'passionate participant' (1994, p. 115, cited in Neuman 2000, p. 75). She deconstructs social meaningful action by empathetically communicating with the people under study



(Corbetta 2003, Grix 2004). She strives to discover the reasons behind the actors' behaviour while taking the social context of action into consideration (Neuman 2000, p. 71). In order for her to reconstruct meanings, she needs to articulate her reflexivity and to openly recognise her subjectivity as part of the process (O'Toole 2006, p. 42). Qualitative tools for data gathering enable the researcher to capture the individuality of each case researched (Corbetta 2003, p. 24).

### **3.2.4.3 Criticisms of interpretivism**

One of the main criticisms against interpretivism is its lack of credibility due to what Giddens calls a 'double hermeneutic': The phenomenon of actors producing a series of interpretations which are based on their social position, and which are then additionally interpreted by the scientist (1976, cited in Della Porta and Keating 2008, p. 25). One important accusation against the interpretivist view is that it depends on the perceptions of social actors with 'imperfect knowledge and complex motivations' (Della Porta and Keating 2008, p. 25). Hence, interpretations are said to involve a degree of 'uncertainty' and to not be representative of social reality (Denscombe 2002, p. 21).

A response to this criticism comes from King *et al.*, who argue that 'a researcher who fails to face the issue of uncertainty directly is either asserting that she knows everything perfectly, or that she has no idea how certain or uncertain results are' (1994, p. 9, cited in Brady and Collier 2004, p. 35). There is always a degree of uncertainty involved in research and interpretivists are not afraid to admit it. Moreover, this paradigm does not strive for elusive objectivity. Weber asserts that 'there is no absolutely "objective" scientific analysis of culture – or (...) of "social phenomena"' (2003, p. 111). Interpretivism seeks objectivity within *intersubjectivity*;

it seeks truth within social interactions (Laing 1967, p. 66, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 267).

Bernstein challenges the ways of interpretivism by suggesting that the meanings that social actors produce are products of the circumstances they are placed in (1974, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 25). The definitions and interpretations humans make of situations are influenced by the visible and invisible powers imposed on them (1974, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 25). In Bernstein's words:

The structural relationships, implicitly and explicitly, carry the power and control messages *and* shape in part, the form of the response to them at the level of interaction. (1974, p. 153, *italics in original*)

For example, a student interviewed by a teacher-researcher might be affected in her responses by the authoritative figure of the teacher, or even by the school settings she is interviewed in.

Bernstein's criticism is an important one because it reminds us that the reflexivity of the interpretivist researcher is a *sine qua non* element in the research process (Greene 2010, p. 70). A researcher cannot eliminate the issues of 'inequalities in power' that exist in the research process (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 25). Nor can she eliminate her values and biases (Greene 2010, p. 70). She can, nevertheless, be aware of these and their influence on the data produced. Bredo and Feinberg argue:

When such reflexivity is successful the inquiry findings represent primarily the meanings and values of respondents, and the inquirer's role becomes one of translator or intermediary among different communities. (1982b, pp. 430-431, cited in Greene 2010, p. 70)

### 3.2.5 Quantitative and qualitative approaches to research

The two philosophical traditions, positivism and interpretivism, led to the birth of quantitative and qualitative approaches to research respectively (Creswell 2003, p. 68).

As a descendent of positivism, the quantitative approach is concerned with providing an objective view of reality (Bryman 1988, p. 140). In their attempt to achieve this, quantitative researchers are usually concerned with conducting research with samples of a large population (Roberts 2002, cited in Wagner and Okeke 2009, p. 62). They believe that examining a single case or small number of cases can lead to a distorted picture of reality, whereas data yielded from greater numbers of participants increase the possibility of averaging out the peculiarities of a single case (Ragin 1994, p. 132). The quantitative approach employs methodologies and methods with which human experience is represented in numerical categories, widely known as *statistics* (Marvasti 2004, p. 7). The tools for gathering quantitative data are usually questionnaires, surveys and experiments (Creswell 2003, p. 19).

The qualitative approach is concerned with smaller population samples in its attempt to achieve *quality* rather than *quantity* in data (Brink 1991, cited in Wagner and Okeke 2009, p. 63). It places emphasis to words rather than numbers when collecting and analysing data (Bryman 1988, p. 366). It focuses on methods and tools that depict and analyse the human experience in detail (Marvasti 2004, p. 7). As it is closely associated with interpretivism, it strives to offer interpretations to the meanings people negotiate in their everyday lives (Payne and Payne 2004, p. 175). Qualitative data usually rises from interpretive methods, such as in-depth, open-

ended interviews, direct observation and written documents (Patton and Patton 2002, p. 4).

### **3.2.6 The war of paradigms and approaches to research**

In the history of research, a wedge has been drawn between the traditions of positivism and interpretivism, as well as between quantitative and qualitative approaches to data (Wagner and Okeke 2009, p. 62). However, such dichotomous distinctions are considered by many social scientists to be unnecessary.

A social researcher is not forced to choose sides between positivism and interpretivism. Babbie suggests that each philosophical mode ‘compensates for the weakness of the other by suggesting complementary perspectives that can provide useful lines of inquiry’ (2010, p. 42).

The ‘argent dispute’ between the quantitative and qualitative approach is based on the antagonistic view of them as being incompatible and irreconcilable (Bryman 2006, p. 26). Nonetheless, King *et al.* insist that the two approaches share common concerns, and the authors encourage the researcher to look for their ‘common language’ (1994, cited in Brady and Collier 2004, p. 17). Axinn and Pearce argue that both approaches strive to reach conclusions about social reality; the only difference is that the former employs numeric methods, whereas the latter employs textual methods (2006, p. 3). Cresswell suggests that a mixed methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative tools of data offers the researcher a chance to capture the benefits of both practices (2003, p. 22). Brady and Collier warn us that it is hard to perform either quantitative or qualitative research well in the social sciences (2004, p. 22). They encourage us to make use of a combination of the two because ‘each tradition can and should learn from the other’ (2004, p. 22).

Besides, the combination of different strategies of inquiry serves the purpose of *triangulation*; it enables us to scrutinise the research question from a plethora of angles and perspectives (Christensen 2010, p. 148).

### **3.2.7 My research project**

My research project is of a *social* nature as it was based on the interactions of children within the educational contexts of a Primary School and a Youth Theatre (Matthews and Ross 2010, p. 19). In order to perform research on the relationship between drama and student well-being, I had to actively examine the modes and motives of their behaviour (Marvasti 2004, p. 1). My research follows the *interpretivist* paradigm, because it places emphasis on the meanings that the participants negotiate in relation to the social settings in which they occur (Della Porta and Keating 2008, Neuman 2000). As an interpretivist researcher, I tried to see things from the participants' perspectives and to reconstruct the meanings they made of social events (Grix 2004, Blaikie 1993). The study makes use of a *mixed methods*' approach. *Qualitative* methods of research, such as observation, interviews and drama conventions, were extensively used. Questionnaires, which are traditionally viewed as a *quantitative* method, were used within the interpretivist paradigm, as they involved open-ended questions and complemented qualitative methods.

### **3.3 Research Methodologies**

Research methodology is the activity of ‘choosing, reflecting upon, evaluating and justifying’ the methods one uses (Wellington 2000, p. 22). It is concerned with outlining the methods’ limitations, resources, implications and potentials for generating knowledge (Kaplan 1973, cited in Wellington 1996, p. 23). I consider that an *ethnographic case study* that also serves as a *reflective examination of my practice* to be the methodology that best suits the purposes of my research. In this section, I will present the methodologies of case study, ethnography and reflective practice. I will discuss their characteristics, the reasons for grounding my research within them, and their limitations in relation to my research.

#### **3.3.1 Case study**

##### **3.3.1.1 What is case study?**

Case study first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a type of educational inquiry that had epistemological and political significance in the field of research (Winston 2006, p. 41). It falls within the interpretivist paradigm and has ‘subjective dimensions’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 181). Until the 1960s, educational research methods concerned ‘large-scale surveys, quantification, and experimentation’ (Bogdan and Biklen 1982, cited in Merriam 1988, p. 26). Case study arose as a need to answer questions about the relationship of classroom practices and the social phenomena influencing them (Merriam 1988, p. 26).

Case study is, in the words of one of its leading theorists, Robert Stake, ‘the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances’ (1995, p. xi). Stake’s key definition of case study gives us some of its most distinguishing characteristics:

- a. *Concern with the particularity and complexity of a single case:* Studying the singleness of a case helps the researcher gain a better understanding of other cases or events similar to it, and provides a general view of the social world (Basit 2010, p. 19). When conducting a case study, emphasis is placed on the uniqueness of events combined with the meanings that participants attribute to them (Pring 2004, p. 40, cited in Basit 2010, p. 19).
- b. *Activity within important circumstances:* Looking at the case in its wider context helps the researcher achieve a deep insight into the causal relationships of the phenomenon (De Vaus 2001, Gerring 2007).

Other distinguishing characteristics of case study include:

- c. *Focus on depth:* The researcher explores ‘a program (sic), an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals’ in depth (Creswell 2003, p. 15). By focusing ‘on depth rather than breadth’, the researcher gets an informed view of the phenomenon under study (Winston 2006, Gerring 2007).
- d. *Detailed and vivid description of research events:* A thorough account of events, feelings and perceptions involved in the research process provide the researcher with a ‘unique portrayal of real people in real situations’ (Basit 2010, p. 19). The detailed information offered in case study enables the reader to capture the ‘here and now’ of the situation described (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p. 315).
- e. *Range of different kinds of evidence:* Case study draws evidence from multiple sources (Gillham 2000, Stake 1995). This evidence exists in the research setting and it is up to the researcher to abstract and collate it (Gillham 2000, p. 1).

### 3.3.1.2 Types of case study

Stake cites three types of case study:

- a. *Instrumental case study* is concerned with exploring a social matter or reforming a theory. Its results are subject to application to the wider population.
- b. *Intrinsic case study* is usually carried out for its own sake, because the researcher has a personal interest in the ‘particularity and ordinariness’ of the case. There is no interest in generalising the results.
- c. *Collective case study* is a combination of numerous individual studies (usually instrumental) and aims towards investigating into an issue, group, phenomenon or condition (1995, p. 237).

Yin draws a distinction between the types of case studies based on their *end product*:

- a. *Exploratory case study* seeks to explore situations where the researcher’s intervention does not have clearly defined outcomes (Yin 2003b, p. 15). It can serve as a pilot before the actual research project, so that research questions can be generated, tested whether they are viable, and reformed if necessary (Yin 1984, cited in Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p. 321).
- b. *Descriptive case study* has to do with the description of a phenomenon within the real-life context it occurs (Yin 2003b, p. 15). It provides detailed, narrative presentations of social reality but does not largely depend on theory (Yin 1984, cited in Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p. 321).
- c. *Explanatory case study* aims to explain causal relationships in real-life situations when these relationships appear to be too complex for survey or experimental strategies (Yin 2003b, p. 15). It results in forming a new theory



or testing one that already exists (Yin 1984, cited in Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p. 321).

### **3.3.1.3 My case study**

The *focus* of my case study was the relationship between drama and the well-being of school children in Cyprus. I conducted my case study in two educational institutions:

#### **I. *Primary School (PS)***

The fieldwork in the PS took place between early February 2011 and early June 2011, as the school year was coming to an end. I led drama workshops within the Theatre Education module which was part of the after-school activities. For the children who had registered for the after-school activities, attendance in the drama workshops was mandatory. The case study in the PS focused on a group of 7 children of ages ranging from 8 to 12 years old. The workshops took place twice a week, every Tuesday and every Friday, and lasted for 40 minutes each. The total of drama workshops conducted by the end of the fieldwork was 23. This produced an estimated total of 15 hours of drama workshops for the PS children. The workshops took place in the premises of the PS.

#### **II. *Youth Theatre (YT)***

The fieldwork in the YT took place between early January 2011 and late June 2011. The YT is funded by an independent community organisation in an attempt to promote the arts and children's involvement with them. Children join the YT by choice and label it as an extra-curriculum activity. The YT participants were divided into two groups according to their age. Group 1 (YT1) involved 13 children aged 6 to 8 years old, whereas Group 2 (YT2) involved 26 children aged 9 to 13 years old.

There were some exceptions to YT children joining groups according to their age. These exceptions occurred when a child had another obligation at the time of the group coming together. Exceptions also occurred when parents preferred that siblings joined the same group.

The workshops were conducted on a weekly basis and lasted for 60 minutes for YT1 and 60 to 90 minutes for YT2. The YT workshops took place every Saturday. For YT1, they were conducted between 10.00-11.00 a.m., whereas for YT2 between 11.00-12.00 a.m. or 11.00-12.30 a.m., depending on the drama scheme.

The total of drama workshops conducted for each group by the end of the fieldwork was 31. This amounted to an estimate of 32 hours of workshops for YT1 and of 38.25 hours of workshops for YT2. The workshops took place in the premises of the community's primary school, which was different to the one in which the PS research was carried out in.

Based on the *types* of case study mentioned in Section 3.3.1.2, my case study falls into the following categories:

- a. *Collective (Stake 1995)*: My case study is a combination of two individual instrumental studies; one conducted in the PS and the other conducted in the YT. It can also be called a 'multiple' case study (Gillham 2000, p. 1). It looks into the matter of the personal, social and emotional flourishing of school children and seeks to form a theory regarding its relationship to drama. The outcomes of the study are intended to be subject to a wider population of students.

The reason why I chose to conduct a case study in two educational institutions simultaneously was because I believed that this would yield richer data and would thus give me a more informed picture of the area under

study. However, there is an important point to make here. In the Results chapter, I offer data from both the YT and PS children. In the Discussion chapter, I draw data from the responses of the YT children exclusively. Even though there were more children participating in the research and offering me their responses, I decided to concentrate on those of the YT participants in the Discussion chapter. This was because it is *their* responses that best suited the themes explored in the Discussion and that therefore helped me mount my arguments. If there was more space availability, I would have offered another subchapter of Discussion that would accommodate the responses of the PS participants.

- b. *Explanatory (Yin 2003b)*: The study sought to develop a theory about the relationship between drama and the well-being of children.

#### **3.3.1.4 Reasons for choosing case study as a methodology**

Yin asserts that case study is a suitable research strategy when a study is concerned with *how* or *why* questions, and when the boundaries between the phenomenon under investigation and the context are somewhat blurred (2003b, pp. 1, 13). My study has explored a *how* question: How can drama contribute to the well-being of children? It has also explored a *why* question: Why does drama help, if it indeed helps, in the enhancing of children's well-being? Additionally, the phenomenon of children's well-being is not 'readily distinguishable from its context' (Yin 2003a, p. 4). Their personal, social and emotional state can be affected by the educational environments in which they act, and 'the complex of variables involved in educational realities' (Stenhouse 1993, p. 18). Examples of such variables in the contexts of the PS and

YT are the students' interactions with their peers, the teachers' pedagogical approaches, and the norms and routines of the institutions.

O'Toole argues in favour of the appropriateness of case study as a research methodology for drama education on the basis that it allows for 'the structures, processes and outcomes of a project' to be explored (2006, p. 46). He explains that an often perceived weakness of case study is that one cannot generalise from it, works to the benefit of drama, which can be viewed as a 'framed context' and a bounded case' (2006, p. 46). The social interactions and meanings that the participants produce within the drama context are unique and cannot be reproduced. They can be analysed and studied as a 'single unit of experience' and should be looked at holistically so as to grasp their complexity (2006, p. 46).

Winston points out that, like drama, case study helps the researcher to 'seek out rather than solve problems, provoke rather than answer questions, deepen our understanding rather than rush to closure' (2006, p. 45). The utilisation of the case study in my research project was useful in my investigation of the area of children's flourishing, the factors influencing it and the role drama can play in its realisation. However, by no means did I set out to invent the 'magic potion' that would miraculously heal student well-being. On the contrary, more complex issues arose as the fieldwork progressed and new questions and problems came to light.

### **3.3.1.5 Limitations of case study as a research methodology**

One of the greatest criticisms against case study is that one cannot generalise from it because it concerns the *particular* rather than the *general* (Thomas 2011, p. 3). This is because the experiences of a single person or group of people, as well as a single set of 'uncorroborated observations', are unique and cannot be repeated (Thomas

2011, p. 4). Hence they cannot serve as a basis for forming conclusions about the wider population (Thomas 2011, p.5).

A response to this criticism comes from Stake, who argues that, even though *statistical* generalisations from case studies cannot occur, *analytical* generalisations can (1994, cited in Basit 2010, p. 19). Statistical generalisations are concerned with the enumerating frequencies and the reaching of conclusions that can be applied to the whole population (Basit 2010, Yin 2003b). Analytical generalisations, on the other hand, can naturally arise from case study because a single case can serve as a platform to theorise about similar cases, phenomena and situations (Robson 2002, cited in Basit 2010, p. 19).

Case study has been disdained for its lack of authenticity (Gomm *et al.* 2000, p. 7). Opponents claim that authenticity in case study is denied because any real situation under investigation is inevitably influenced by the principles of this investigation. The voice of a participant is claimed not to be authentic if mediated by the researcher, because her own personal views and values will eventually penetrate the research process and analysis (Gomm *et al.* 2000, p. 7).

Simons admits that the subjectivity of the researcher exists and is part of the frame (2009, p. 24). Still, she does not consider this to be a problem; on the contrary, she perceives it as *sine qua non* in gaining a better understanding and in making informed interpretations of the case. The reflexivity of the researcher is necessary in this process, as it helps her monitor and discipline her subjectivity in conducting the research and in analysing its results (Simons 2009, p. 24).

### 3.3.2 Ethnography

#### 3.3.2.1 What is ethnography?

Ethnography is a research approach in which the researcher describes, documents and interprets human actions in the context in which they occur for a sustained period of time (Greig *et al.* 2007, p. 142). It is considered to be a type of social research and falls within the interpretivist paradigm, as it is largely concerned with the meanings participants attribute to social situations (Clifford 1988, Hammersley 1983). It is mainly associated with qualitative research, but can also make use of quantitative methods (Taylor 2001, p. 3). Its origins lie in the nineteenth century Western anthropology, whereby researchers lived with a group of people for extended periods of time so as to understand and then describe their way of living, beliefs and values (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 1).

Some of ethnography's most distinctive characteristics are:

- a. *Intense interaction with participants:* The researcher gets deeply involved in the cultural structures of the group and interacts intensely with the participants (Silverman 2005, p. 49). She acts as a *participant observer* (Clifford 1988, p. 31). She tries to understand and then describe social events from the 'insider's perspective' (Fetterman 1998, p. 2).
- b. *Natural context:* The principle of naturalism that ethnography rests on argues that the actions of participants are best understood when studied in their natural context (Fielding 2001, p. 148). This is in agreement with the concept of *thick description* of the celebrated anthropologist Geertz (1973). According to this, when interpreting social meanings it is important to take

into consideration the *context* in which they occur; otherwise, any cultural interpretation is rendered ‘vacant’ and incomplete (1973 , p. 18).

- c. *Prolonged period of time*: The researcher focuses, if not on one, on a few cases for a considerable amount of time in order to achieve rich, intense and in-depth study and analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Cohen *et al.* 2007).
- d. *Data drawn from multiple sources*: The ethnographer draws her data from multiple sources to shed light on the research question from various angles and to develop a holistic understanding around it (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Christensen 2010, O'Toole 2006). Participant observation, interviews and informal conversations with the participants are the most common and most valuable sources of data in ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 3). Christensen advises that, in ethnographic encounters with children, employment of multiple research methods comes especially useful (2010, p. 151). This gives them the opportunity to take part in different tasks, and therefore encourages their active participation (2010, p. 151).

### **3.3.2.2 My ethnographic case study**

Even though my research draws heavily on case study, its extensive use of ethnographic elements renders it an *ethnographic case study*. Because the project was conducted in educational contexts, it entails the notion of ‘educational ethnography’. As an educational ethnographer then, I tried to ‘describe, interpret, analyse and represent the lived experiences’ within the educational institutions (O'Toole 2006, p. 40).

The ethnographic elements described above were employed in my research project as follows:

**I. *Primary School***

- a. *Intense interaction with participants:* My role as a teacher in the PS presupposed deep involvement with the children. My encounters with them were not limited to the drama classes. I shared lunch with them, helped them with their homework and acted as a referee in their football matches. The small number of children in the group (7) and the sustained period of time spent in the institution (5 months) enabled my interaction with each child individually.
- b. *Natural context:* The PS environment in which the students acted was a part of their everyday lives. I observed them and interacted with them during ‘natural, ordinary situations’, such as lunch time, breaks and other classes (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p. 119).
- c. *Prolonged period of time:* The research project in the PS was conducted over a period of 5 months. Even though the amount of time I spent leading drama workshops was only 15 hours long, the total time I spent observing and interacting with the students within the school context was considerably longer (approximately 70 hours).
- d. *Data drawn from multiple sources:* The study employed various research methods. Apart from participant observation, I distributed questionnaires to the children at different stages of the project, and I conducted interviews with them, their parents, their teachers, and the General Co-ordinator for Health Education Programmes in Cyprus.



## II. *Youth Theatre*

- a. *Intense interaction with participants:* Interaction with the YT children was not as intense as with the PS children. This was due to the fact that I only saw them once a week during the workshops. Because there were many children in each group (13 in YT1 and 26 in YT2), I did not have the opportunity to interact with each one individually to a great extent.
- b. *Natural context:* Observation of and interaction with the participants occurred within the context of the YT in which they acted *naturally*; that is, as they would have acted if a research project was not in progress.
- c. *Prolonged period of time:* As mentioned before, the ethnographic case study for the YT children was conducted over a period of 6 months and amounted to a total of 32 hours of drama workshops for YT1 and of 38.25 hours for YT2. The time spent observing and interacting with my students was within the drama workshops, as I did not have a chance to see them at another time or place.
- d. *Data drawn from multiple sources:* The study made use of multiple research methods: Observation conducted by both the critical friend and myself; questionnaires and feedback slips distributed to the YT members at different stages of the project; questionnaires distributed to their parents; interviews with the children, their parents, the president of the organisation funding the YT, the critical friend, as well as other drama practitioners. Drama conventions were also used as data gathering tools. The notes from my practitioner's journal were also useful in the process of collecting data.

### 3.3.2.3 Reasons for choosing ethnography as a methodology

Mathews and Izquierdo espouse that the experience of well-being is *culturally specific*; different societies have different perceptions about what contributes to one's flourishing (2009, p. 1). They advise that any interpretation of well-being should take the cultural context into account (2009, p. 1). They further suggest that ethnography is the research methodology that best serves the attempt to portray the experience of well-being in a given society (2009, p. 12). In the light of these, I have adopted an ethnographic approach to my case study research on the well-being of primary school children in Cyprus.

Prior to the conducting of my research project, I was aware that certain ethnographic elements would be present in my research project. As I had worked in both institutions before, I expected that I would have an *intense interaction* with my students, and that they would act in *natural contexts*. While planning my research methodology, I ensured that I would spend a *considerable amount of time* in the institutions, and that I would employ *various research methods*. Having these factors available acted as a motivation in attributing an ethnographic character to my case study.

Employing ethnography worked to the benefit of both my research and teaching practices. Having spent a sustained period of time in the institutions, and having interacted with the participants intensely, I was in position to gain an understanding of each one's personality, background, and personal, social and emotional state (Silverman 2005, p. 49). This quality was important to me as a *researcher*, because it enabled me to note down changes in the children's behaviour that were relevant to my enquiry; that is whether and how different aspects of their well-being were

affected by their dramatic experience. This quality was also important to me as a *teacher*, because getting to know my students could only benefit the teacher-learner experience. As the educational philosopher Noddings (2005) would argue, an education that is not only concerned with the transmittance of knowledge but is also enriched with the teacher's caring attitude towards the child, makes the teaching and learning experiences more substantial.

My ethnographic encounters with my students, characterised by the prolonged period of time spent in the institutions and my intense interaction with them, allowed me to develop 'rapport', 'trust' and 'empathy' with them (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, Donelan 1999, Clifford 1988). These qualities were in themselves important for my study. If there ever was a possibility for drama to assist the personal, social and emotional growth of children, I felt that my pedagogy as a drama practitioner should have had these elements at heart. Cultivating an empathetic attitude was vital for my role both as a drama educator and as a researcher, because it would give me the opportunity to see things from my pupils' perspectives (Clarke and Moss 2001, cited in Christensen 2010, p. 156).

Aligning with Geertz's concept of *thick description*, the use of the ethnographic lens in my study enabled me to place meanings of events within a wider context (Clifford 1988, p. 34). In relation to this, Pole and Morrison emphasise how ethnography makes it possible for the researcher 'to view education not in isolation but as part of the wider social and economic context' (2003, p. 160, cited in Scott and Morrison 2007, p. 93). This idea is of primary importance in my study. The notion of the well-being of children is not restricted to its educational aspect, but takes the whole

picture into consideration: Their socio-economic and family background, culture, ethnicity, gender, and so on (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, p. 120).

Another reason for choosing ethnography as a methodology was because it serves the research purposes of drama education well (Donelan 1999, Gallagher 2000, O'Toole 2006). Because drama events are 'ephemeral' and unique and cannot be repeated, they need to be studied in the social and cultural settings in which they occur (Donelan 1999, p. 68). Drama and ethnography 'share common aims' (sic) of examining, understanding and representing human experience' (Donelan 1999, p. 68). They both require the development of empathetic skills which will enable the participant researcher to understand the meanings of events from the perspectives of those involved (Donelan 1999, p. 68). Gallagher makes an argument in favour of the use of ethnography in drama education by claiming that ethnography, with its rich description of events, can grasp 'the process of classroom action and the spontaneity of reflection' (2000, p. 14). In one of her later writings, she argues that ethnography can help the researcher deconstruct the dramatic processes, and then tell the story of how it all came to be (2006, p. 63).

#### **3.2.3.4 Limitations of ethnography**

As with case study, subjectivity is an issue which ethnography is often criticised for (Hammersley 1991, O'Toole 2006). This accusation is based on the fact that ethnographic data rises from loosely structured methods, such as informal conversations (Hammersley 1991, p. 9). It is also based on the fact that the researcher's biases, preconceived notions, beliefs and values can make their way into the processes of data collection and analysis (Fetterman 1998, O'Toole 2006).

Ethnography has been accused for using loosely structured methods (Hammersley 1991, p. 9). A response to this comes from Hammersley, who maintains that tight structures in the processes of data collection and analysis do not necessarily ensure a greater degree of objectivity (1991, p. 9). He gives the example of a question in a strictly structured interview which can be interpreted in different ways by different people (1991, p. 9).

In response to the criticism that the ethnographer's personal views influence the research process, techniques such as triangulation can place a check on their influence on the data (Hammersley 1991, Fetterman 1998). Geertz reassures us that a researcher is bound to enter the field with preconceived notions, as one does not, or ought not, start 'intellectually empty-handed' (1973, p. 27). Fetterman further points out that the ethnographer's biases often work to the benefit of the research, because when they are put under control they can help her 'focus and limit' the research effort (1998, p. 1). O'Toole advises the researcher to balance her preconceptions, to challenge them and to alter them as data arises, as well as to maintain an 'open-minded and critically reflexive approach' (2006, p. 42).

A further challenge ethnographers have to face is the degree of their personal involvement with the participants (Fielding 2001, p. 151). Deep personal involvement is likely to lead to two phenomena: Firstly, the researcher's personal feelings distorting the objectivity of the data collected and analysed (Hammersley 1991, Fetterman 1998). Again, the technique of triangulation can act as a safety net regarding this (Hammersley 1991, Fetterman 1998). From a retrospective point of view, I realise that, in my case, developing a personal relationship with my students was inevitable. My role as their teacher rather than as a mere observer, in

combination with the ensemble nature of drama contributed to the strengthening of our bond (Gallagher 2000, p. 15). I was a receiver of their affection, as they were of mine. My emotional responses to the events occurring in and out of the drama workshops filled the pages of my reflective and observational accounts (Patton 2002, p. 262). This led to the blurring of the line between the field notes taken in my ‘cold’ role as a researcher, and those taken in my role as a teacher/active participant (Donelan 1999, p. 69).

Another phenomenon that the cultivation of a strong emotional relationship with the participants can lead to, is the researcher feeling obliged to help them in exchange for their putting up with the research (Fielding 2001, p. 151). Again, retrospectively speaking, this was certainly true in my case where I found myself giving car lifts to a parent to show her my appreciation for finding the time to offer me an interview. In dealing with this challenge, Donelan recommends a stance of ‘involved detachment’ (1999, p. 69). This idea implies that a researcher is, on the one hand actively involved with the participants, but on the other hand looking at research events with an objective eye, and divorcing any personal feelings from the processes of collection and interpretation of data (1999, p. 69). Cohen *et al.* advise the researcher to make her ‘personal, social and interactional position’ in the situation explicit to the participants but, most importantly, to herself (2007, p. 170).

### **3.3.3 Reflective Practice**

#### **3.3.3.1 What is reflective practice?**

Reflective practice is an interpretive research methodology that was first introduced by Schön in 1983 (O’Toole 2006, p. 56). It refers to ‘an ongoing and continuous self-inquiry into one’s own professional practice’ (Taylor 2000, cited in Neelands 2006,

p. 17). It aims towards better understanding and improving one's practice (Neelands 2006, p. 16). The practitioner adopts a spectator's perspective to critically evaluate her actions and to create new theories about practice based on a unique case (Edmiston 1995, Schön 1991).

Reflective practice is linked to the concept of *wideawakeness* pioneered by the American philosopher Greene. This concerns 'an alert state of consciousness where individuals reflect on the world and the role they play in it' (cited in Taylor 2000, p. 83). Rising out of her concern that teachers are gradually becoming 'strangers to their own practice', Greene found that only when they perform a critical examination of their pedagogy can they thrive as professionals (cited in Taylor 2000, p. 83).

Schön suggests a model of reflective practice which incorporates three dynamic concepts (1987, cited in Neelands 2006, p. 19):

- a. *Knowing-in-action*: This concept focuses on the kinds of knowledge that are embedded in professional actions and interactions (Schön 1987, Neelands 2006). Knowledge derives from practical, professional, existential and theoretical sources (Neelands 2006, p. 19). It is inherent in the spontaneous execution of one's practice, but is difficult to be made verbally explicit (Schön 1987, Schön 1991).
- b. *Reflection-on-action*: When reflecting-on-action, the practitioner thinks back on her practice to find out what has led to an unexpected outcome, and what she could have done differently to ensure greater effectiveness in her teaching (Schön 1987, Neelands 2006). This type of reflection can be performed retrospectively; that is, after the action is concluded. It can also be

performed in the midst of action, in which case the practitioner reflects but does not interrupt the action (Schön 1987, p. 26).

- c. *Reflection-in-action*: This involves the practitioner reflecting on her practice and altering it on the spot so as to deal with an unforeseen episode (Schön 1987, Schön 1991). The practitioner draws on her theoretical and practical knowledge to deal with the situation immediately, intuitively and spontaneously (Schön 1987, Schön 1991). This approach is imperative to drama education, where the educator needs to respond to and to build on the participants' contributions to the dramatic processes (Neelands 2006, p. 19).

### **3.3.3.2 The reflective examination of my practice**

The reflective examination of my practice was an integral part of my methodology. Schön's model of reflective practice was incorporated into my methodology as follows:

- a. *Knowing-in-action*: My practice was informed by the theoretical and practical knowledge I had gained through my degrees in Education Science and Drama Education, as well as through my work experience as a school teacher and as a drama practitioner.
- b. *Reflection-on-action*: My reflection on events occurred after the workshops had ended and once the 'rawness of the actual events' had faded (Gallagher 2000, p. 16). Part of the reflection-on-action process was to identify any problems that had occurred, to try to isolate their causes and to come up with ways of dealing with them (O'Toole 2006, p. 57). Another part of the process was to distinguish the dramatic activities and conventions that had worked well with children so as to repeat them. The critical friend's contribution to



the reflection-on-action process was significant (Edmiston 1995, Gallagher 2000). As soon as the workshops were over, we discussed any problems that had arisen and how these could have been dealt with through my pedagogy.

- c. *Reflection-in-action*: Acting on the spot was a skill that was often required of me. I had to ‘think on my feet’ when problems surfaced during drama workshops, such as children having disputes in their groups. This skill also came in useful when I employed drama conventions such as *teacher-in-role* or *forum theatre*; I had to listen carefully to the children’s responses to dramatic events and to build on them.

### **3.3.3.3 Reasons for choosing reflective practice**

Various authors argue in favour of the use of reflective practice in drama education (Neelands 2006, Taylor 2000, Gallagher 2000, Thornton 2005). Gallagher suggests that reflective practice lies ‘at the heart of effective teaching’ (2000, p. 115). It helps one to improve her teaching and to reform it in order to respond to her pupils’ needs, desires and ideas. In this sense, reflective practice can be seen to promote *children’s voice*, which was a fundamental idea in my study (Neelands 2006, p. 21).

Taylor warns us that ‘the cultural capital of each classroom is different’ (2000, p. 85). This means that the techniques and material that are suitable for one setting might not work for another. Reflective practice helped me to acknowledge what teaching methods and content worked well for each group of children.

Because drama education is a new field in Cyprus, its demands in terms of space and resources are not often met. Suffice it to say that the drama workshops in the PS took place in the Art classroom which was unsuitable; the room was small, the space was mostly occupied by tables and chairs, and light could not be prevented from coming

in. As for the YT, the room was too big and the noise from outside often interrupted the process of working. Lack of resources was an issue in both contexts; I had to carry around a small suitcase filled with props. As a ‘matter of survival’ I had to continuously reflect on my practice and to adjust it to the given circumstances (O'Toole 2006, p. 57).

#### **3.3.3.4 Limitations of reflective practice**

Taylor observes that a challenge often met by reflective practitioners is liability to error (2000, p. 85). This is especially the case with *reflection-in-action*, where the practitioner is required to respond to situations as they rise and to make decisions under the pressure of time (2000, p. 85). This was true in my case. Looking at the events retrospectively, I realise that the pressure of time combined with the great number of YT participants, as well as the lack of external help, often resulted in my making of decisions which were not effective. An example of this comes from the second workshop of *Yallery Brown* (22/1/11), where I made a rushed decision to change the theme for the group improvisations, out of fear of it being too complicated for the students. As I was not well-prepared for the new theme, I failed to give children clear instructions. This led to some groups spending time arguing about what they were supposed to do and, in the end, not presenting at all. This experience served as a valuable lesson for me and helped me improve my practice by preparing adequately for the workshops that followed.

### 3.4 *Research Methods*

Research methods refer to ‘the ways in which evidence is obtained and manipulated, or, more conventionally, to techniques of data collection and analysis’ (Blaikie 2007, p. 232). My research study employed *mixed methods*: I used *qualitative* research tools, such as participant observation, interviews and drama conventions, as well as *quantitative*, namely questionnaires. In the section that follows, I will firstly offer a summary of the research methods I used, a general timeline of the data collection process and a summary of the data actually collected. I will also discuss the issue of establishing a balance between the workshops and the rehearsals for the performances. I will then explain what each research method dealt with, how I employed each one in my study, and the reasons why I chose to do so. I also will refer to the limitations of each one in relation to my study. Lastly, I will explain how each method complemented each other through the process of triangulation. It is important to note that this section is a retrospective account of what actually happened rather than how I planned to carry out the research.

#### 3.4.1 **Summary of research methods, general timeline of data collection and summary of data collected**

In my research, I employed the following methods of data collection:

- Participant **observation**, both direct and indirect, of children’s behaviour and responses during the drama workshops.
- Group and one-on-one **interviews** with the students, parents, teachers, head teachers, drama practitioners and other knowledgeable people.
- **Questionnaires** and feedback slips with the students and their parents.
- **Practitioner’s journal** kept throughout the fieldwork.

- **Drama conventions** used as research tools during two drama workshops, namely teacher-in-role, hot-seating, still images and thought-tracking, Mantle of the Expert and writing-in-role.

A general timeline of data collection and a summary of the data actually collected in the two institutions are as follow:

### I. Primary School

Research Method	Time	Data Collected
<b>Observation</b>		
<i>Participant observation</i>	8/10/10-3/6/11	23 workshops (15 hours)
<i>Non-participant observation</i>	28/9/11	SEE class (80 minutes)
<b>Interviews</b>		
<i>Group interviews</i>	12/10/10-30/5/11	7 interviews with students
<i>One-on-one interviews</i>	20/9/11-27/9/11	3 interviews with parents
	18/5/11-1/10/11	8 interviews with teachers
	13/10/10-27/9/11	3 interviews with head teachers
	6/7/11	1 interview with the General Co-ordinator of Health Education

		Programmes (SEE)
<b>Questionnaires</b>	12/10/10-24/5/11	3 paper questionnaires and 1 game-like questionnaire with the students
<b>Practitioner's journal</b>	8/10/10-3/6/11	Observation of children's behaviour and responses to dramatic activities

Figure 2: General timeline of data collection and summary of data actually collected for PS

## II. Youth Theatre

<b>Research Action</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Youth Theatre</b>
<b>Observation</b>  <i>Participant observation</i>	2/10/10 - 30/6/11	31 workshops  YT1: 32 hours  YT2: 38.25 hours
<b>Interviews</b>  <i>Group interviews</i>  <i>One-on-one interviews</i>	19/3/11-7/5/11  26/3/11-1/10/11  7/10/10-29/9/11	7 interviews with students  8 interviews with parents  4 interviews with drama

	29/9/11  19/7/11	practitioners  1 interview with critical friend  1 interview with the President of Organisation funding the YT
<b>Questionnaires</b>	9/1010-30/6/11  2/4/11-21/5/11  29/6/11	6 paper and 7 game-like questionnaires with students  4 feedback slips with students  1 paper questionnaire with parents
<b>Practitioner's journal</b>	2/10/10-30/6/11	Observation of children's behaviour and responses to dramatic activities
<b>Drama conventions as research tools</b>	28/5/11	2 workshops  YT1: 45 minutes  YT2: 80 minutes

*Figure 3: General timeline of data collection and summary of data actually collected for YT*

A more detailed timeline of data collection for each group separately (PS, YT1, YT2) can be found in Appendix 1. It is worth pointing out that some of the interviews and questionnaires concern both YT1 and YT2; these are the questionnaires with the YT parents, the interviews with the previous YT teacher, the drama practitioners, the critical friend and the president of the organisation funding the YT. For this reason, I have included them in the timelines of both groups.

### **3.4.2 Balance between workshops and performances**

It is important here to discuss the balance between the workshops conducted and the rehearsals for the final performances.

In the case of the PS, I conducted 16 workshops with the students which amounted to a total of 10 hours and 40 minutes. We conducted 6 rehearsals for the final performance '*Ocean in the ER*' which resulted to an amount of 4 hours.

In the case of the YT1, I conducted 18 drama workshops with the students which amounted to a total of 18 hours of drama work. There were 12 rehearsals for the final performance '*The King with Horse's Ears*' which came to a total of 15 hours.

In the case of the YT2, I conducted 19 workshops with the students which resulted to 20 hours and 30 minutes of drama work. There were 11 rehearsals for the '*Yallery Brown*' final performance which came to a total of 14 hours.

The following table summarises the above:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Workshops</b>	<b>Rehearsals</b>
<b>Primary School</b>	16 workshops	6 rehearsals
<i>Duration</i>	10 hours and 40 minutes	4 hours
<b>Youth Theatre Group 1</b>	18 workshops	12 rehearsals
<i>Duration</i>	18 hours	15 hours
<b>Youth Theatre Group 2</b>	19 workshops	11 rehearsals
<i>Duration</i>	20 hours and 30 minutes	14 hours

*Figure 4: Balance between workshops and performances*

What becomes evident from the above is that I placed greater emphasis on conducting drama workshops rather than doing rehearsals for the final performances. This is because I considered the work that was done in the workshops to be essential in setting the base for the rehearsals and for the final performance. In the workshops, the students explored and became familiar with the stories that we presented in the final performances through the various drama conventions. Furthermore, they practiced their acting and directing skills which came useful for the final performances. Therefore, I thought it was important to spend more time in drama workshops and less in rehearsals.

Whereas a rehearsal could often be a repetitive process, it was also a creative process for the children. This was because the students were responsible for composing the content of their performance and the way it would be presented to their audience.



The process of putting together their performance will be thoroughly explained in the Discussion Subchapter 5.2 called '*Children's voice and well-being*'.

### 3.4.3 Observation

#### 3.4.3.1 What is observation?

Observation is a research method in which the researcher is in 'an on-going social setting for the purpose of making a qualitative analysis of that setting' (Lofland 1971, p. 93, cited in Patton 2002, p. 262). The collection of information occurs 'directly via the senses' (Foster 1996, p. vii, cited in Pole and Lampard 2002, p. 71). It takes the form of field notes which are 'systematically and unobtrusively collected' (Bogdan 1972, p.3, cited in Wilkinson and Birmingham 2003, p. 118).

According to Cooper and Schindler, observation can be considered in two dimensions:

- a. whether the observation is *direct*, requiring the presence of the observer, or *indirect*, requiring the use of video recording equipment,
- b. the *role* of the participant, ranging from *non-participant* to *participant* (2001, p. 375, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 398).

Flick adds another worthwhile dimension to observation:

- c. the degree of *structure* of observation, thus resulting to *structured*, *semi-structured* and *unstructured* observation (1998, p. 137, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 398).

### 3.4.3.2 How observation was employed in my study

Based on the categories of observation listed above, observation was employed in my study as follows:

- a. I employed both *direct* and *indirect* observation for my study. In the first case, I observed children's behaviour in context and in real time, and took some field notes whenever possible.

A critical friend, Michaela, was invited for the purpose of direct observation in the YT. Even though it would have been useful to employ her for the PS observation, this was not allowed. Michaela was selected based on her willingness, availability and her knowledge on drama education, as she had received a Master's Degree in the field from the University of Warwick in 2010 (Gallagher 2000, p. 97). She was no stranger to the children of the YT as she had worked with them for two months prior to the conducting of the fieldwork, substituting for me while I was away for my Upgrade exam in the UK (October till December 2010). I therefore hoped that her presence would not affect children's responses and that the 'authenticity of the data' would not be 'lessened' (O'Toole 2006, p. 103). She came in for most of the sessions, interacted with them and offered me her observations, interpretations of events and reflective thoughts.

Video recording equipment was used for the purposes of *indirect* observation. I watched the videos of the drama workshops at a later time, usually within two weeks. The total time of workshops recorded were 9 hours for the PS, 25.5 hours for the YT1, and 27.25 hours for the YT2. However, it is worth mentioning that not all drama workshops were recorded. The workshops conducted prior to the granting of permission for the use of video recording

equipment were not recorded. This was especially the case for the PS; hence the short amount of time of recorded workshops. Some rehearsals for the final performances were not recorded. This was because the children worked in groups, and capturing their work on video would mean that the camera would be obtrusive to the process of working. For the workshops that were not recorded, I conducted direct observation to the extent I was able to, or took notes as soon as the workshops were over, based on my recollection of events.

- b. My role as the drama teacher enabled me to act as a *participant observer*. I was ‘fully engaged in experiencing the setting’ while simultaneously observing and interacting with my students (Denzin 1978b, p. 183, cited in Patton 2002, p. 265).
- c. The observation was *unstructured*. My field notes from indirect observation were rich in detail and contained a combination of *contextual information*, such as the time of event, the participants and the location, as well as *detailed information* about the events occurring (Gibson 2010, p. 63, italics in original). It is important to note that my *journal notes* were integrated with my notes from indirect observation. My journal notes consisted in my recollection of events not captured in the video, the interpretation of events from my perspective and that of the children, and my reflective thoughts on my teaching material and methods (Patton 2002, p. 262, 302).

When conducting observation, I was mindful of the participants’ responses in and out of the drama workshops which somehow revealed useful information with regard to the following sociological aspects of their well-being, as these were presented in the Literature Review:

- *Happiness and pleasure*
- *Sociability, social skills and skills of working with others*
- *Self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement*

I looked for incidents that suggested that my students were dealing with difficulties with regard to these areas. I also looked for incidents that revealed any progress made in the areas due to the children's engagement with drama.

I also conducted *non-participant observation* of a Social and Emotional Learning (SEE) class given by a teacher in the Primary School who had specialised in it. Having read some theories underpinning SEAL, I found the observation of an actual SEE class to be important in informing my understanding of SEE and in gaining a critical perspective on it. I observed an 80-minute SEE class involving 9-year-old students. My observation was *direct* and *non-participatory*. The observation was *unstructured*, with my field notes focusing on the content of the lesson and the pedagogic practices employed. Nevertheless, since the observation of the SEE class was of secondary importance to my research, in the sections that follow, I will refer to the observation of children's behaviour in the drama workshops, which I consider to be my primary focus.

#### **3.4.3.3 Reasons for choosing observation**

Observation was integral to the design of my research. In order to answer the question of the relationship of drama and the different aspects of children's well-being, I was required to observe their behaviour in the workshops. Additional observation of their behaviour out of the drama workshops (which was particularly the case for the PS students) complemented my data, enriched my understanding of

their personalities, backgrounds and general well-being, and helped me develop a 'holistic perspective' of the situation under study (Patton 2002, p. 262).

Observation can provide a 'permanent account of a transient situation' (Simpson and Tuson 1995, p. 17). I captured the ephemeral dramatic events of the workshops via the video recorder and then noted them on paper in the form of field notes. In this way, I could visit the archive of my field notes at a later time, remember the little details that had faded in my memory, and reflect on the events (Gallagher 2000, p. 16).

Observation came very useful when the other research methods failed to provide children's honest opinions and feelings, as other factors came into play (Patton 2002, p. 263). Such factors include reluctance in filling out the questionnaires or giving random responses to them, misinterpretation of the questions or difficulties in understanding them. In the case of group interviews, children's responses were often influenced by the presence of their classmates and/or of the teacher-interviewer, or they were inadequate because of their limited language skills. I engaged in the observation of the 'non-verbal clues' of the participants' behaviour, such as body positioning, facial expression and social interactions (Simons 2009, p. 61). These clues helped me unveil their genuine feelings and opinions which I often found to be contradictory to their responses to the questionnaires and/or interviews (Wilkinson and Birmingham 2003, p. 117). What was particularly helpful in my decoding of their real opinions and feelings was the fact that, through our ethnographic encounters, I had developed an understanding of each child's personality and modes of behaviour, as well as an empathetic understanding that enabled me to see things from their perspective (Patton 2002, p. 268, 290).

#### **3.4.3.4 Limitations of observation**

Direct observation was a task that was almost impossible for me to carry out. Leading the PS and YT workshops was very demanding and did not often allow me the time to take notes. As I was aware of this limitation prior to my embarking on this project, I decided to invite a critical friend who would also act as an external observer at the YT. However, because of the large number of participants, I soon realised that Michaela's help was more needed in the facilitation of the workshops and in the assisting with the video recording process. For these reasons, the use of direct observation in my research project was very limited. I mostly relied on indirect observation and my recollection of events.

Indirect observation performed through the use of two video recorders conveyed technical difficulties. Firstly, as I was occupied with the facilitation of the workshops and did not always have assistance in the video recording process, the cameras would often be out of focus (Patton 2002, p. 278). I would sometimes get so absorbed in leading the workshops that I would only remember to start recording later on in the workshops. Secondly, some parts of the workshops, such as group work, were impossible to capture on video (Pole and Lampard 2002, p. 76). This was because it was difficult for me to give feedback to the groups and at the same time record their work, and also because recording group work would mean that the camera would be obtrusive to the process (O'Toole 2006, p. 105). Thirdly, cameras caused 'flushes of interest and attention' for the youngsters (O'Toole 2006, p. 105). They were often distracted by them, treating them as toys, making funny faces or watching their classmates through the lenses. Lastly, light and sound would sometimes affect the quality of the recordings. The frames would sometimes be too

bright or too dark, whereas the sound would be lost at times (O'Toole 2006, p. 105). However, despite these setbacks, I found that the overall data gathered via the video-recording equipment was satisfactory in terms of quality and quantity.

### **3.4.4 Interviews**

#### **3.4.4.1 What is an interview?**

Interview is, according to Kvale, 'an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest' (1996, p. 14, cited in Hobson and Townsend 2010, p. 224). Data produced from interviews are recorded as a *transcript*, 'a verbatim record of the spoken word translated into a written form (Hobson and Townsend 2010, p. 224).

Distinctions among types of interviews are based on:

- a. The degree of *structure*. Depending on how loyal the interviewer remains to her pre-determined agenda, she can conduct *structured*, *semi-structured* or *unstructured* interviews (Wellington 1996, p. 26).
- b. The *number* of interviewees. A *one-on-one* interview involves one respondent, whereas in a *group* interview several respondents are interviewed at one time (Creswell 2003, p.186).

#### **3.4.4.2 How interviews were employed in my research**

Based on the distinctions referred to above, the interviews I conducted for the purposes of my research were:

- a. *Semi-structured*: I had an interview guide consisting of 'topics to be covered', 'default wording' and 'order for the questions' (Robson 2011, p. 280). As the interview progressed, the wording and the order were altered

and unplanned questions were added based on the responses of the interviewee(s) (Robson 2011, p. 280).

- b. *One-on-one* interviews and *group* interviews: The former type mainly involved adults as interviewees, whereas the latter involved children. Two PS children were interviewed one-on-one, as they were absent on the day that I conducted the group interviews.

The interviews were audio recorded and were then written up in the form of a word-to-word transcript.

The following interviews were conducted:

#### **I. *Primary School***

- 6 out of 7 children (each group consisting of 2 children). Out of the 7 children participating in the PS drama workshops, one I did not insist on interviewing because he generally exhibited difficult behaviour. The children were interviewed once or twice in different groups every time.
- 4 parents (of 3 participating children).
- 8 teachers. Out of these 8 teachers, 7 worked in the PS. One worked in another school but I chose to interview him because of his experience in both drama and SEE teaching.
- The previous head teacher.
- The current head teacher.
- The General Co-ordinator of Health Education Programmes (including SEE) for primary schools in Cyprus.



## II. *Youth Theatre*

- 27 children (each group consisting of 2-7 children). The groups for the interviews involved different children every time. No YT participant was interviewed twice. A 6-year-old YT child, Peter, was interviewed one-on-one because of his multiple health and emotional issues. His mother was also present in the interview. I considered one-on-one interview to be the most appropriate type because sensitive issues were to be discussed in the interview. In this way, the child would be protected from disclosing private information to his classmates. Also, it would allow both him and his mother to feel more comfortable in sharing this kind of information with me, which I of course treated according to the ethical rules penetrating my research.
- 8 parents (of 13 participating children).
- The critical friend.
- The previous YT teacher.
- The president of the organisation funding the YT.
- 4 drama practitioners.

### 3.4.4.3 Reasons for choosing interviews

I will justify my choice of employing interviews across three dimensions: Why I chose interviews as a research tool, why I chose these particular types of interviews, and why I chose to interview these particular groups of people.

- a. *Interviews as a research tool*: Following the interpretivist idea that knowledge about the world is a social construct, then interview can be seen as the means for the production of such knowledge because it is a form of human interaction (Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 267). It generated 'in-depth' data that other methods, such as observation and questionnaires, could not

because it posed the question ‘why’ (Opie and Sikes 2004, Hobson and Townsend 2010). Interviews were particularly useful in exploring children’s views when they appeared reluctant in expressing their thoughts on paper (Opie and Sikes 2004, p. 111). This was because they were either bored of writing or had difficulties in doing so.

- b. *Types of interviews*: The *semi-structured* type of interview allowed for most of the interviews to turn into a friendly conversation. It made the process enjoyable for both parties, and contributed in the building of rapport and trust between the interviewees and myself (O'Donoghue and Punch 2003, p. 87). This led to the respondents willingly disclosing private information to me, hence providing rich, honest and credible data (Hobson and Townsend 2010, p. 231). Most parents trusted me with private information about their children and their family situation. My students confided in me their concerns and disappointment regarding the behaviour of some of their classmates. The teachers felt comfortable enough to admit their weaknesses as professionals and to share their views on the flaws of the educational system. The semi-structured type also enabled both parties to elaborate on areas of interest (Denscombe 2010, p. 167). It further allowed us to explore the ‘unexpected insight’ and to make clarifications where it was needed (O'Toole 2006, p. 115).

I decided to conduct *group interviews* with the children because they were economical in terms of time (Simons 2009, p. 49). With great numbers of students, such as in the case of the YT, group interviews helped me gather data from the majority (O'Toole 2006, p. 114). Additionally, group

interviews allowed for one respondent's idea to serve as a stimulus for the ideas of another, hence resulting in the generating of data that might not have surfaced otherwise (Taber 2007, p. 156).

I considered *one-on-one* interviews to be the most appropriate type for adults because this gave them the opportunity to express their thoughts on the sensitive issues discussed (Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 256). Additionally, this type of interview contributed to the fostering of an atmosphere of rapport and trust with the interviewee (Bryman 2008, p. 201).

- c. *Interviews with particular groups of people:* Interviews with the *children* of both institutions were very important in enabling me to listen to their voices (out of role). According to Scott, 'the best people to provide information in the child's perspective, actions and attitudes are children themselves' (2008, p. 88). I gave them the space to talk about what really mattered to them; their school experiences, their experiences in drama, and the issues that affected their well-being (Mayall 2008, p. 121). Their responses helped me decode their behaviour in and out of the drama workshops, and served as constructive feedback on my teaching (Seidman 2006, p. 10). Furthermore, the interview itself served as an indicator of their *social skills* and *affective attitudes* towards one another (Mayall 2008, p. 122). Their affective attitudes involved children listening to and supporting one another, and encouraging one another to speak. These were two issues that were central to my research. As I explained in the Literature Review, I consider social skills and kind/affective responses towards one another to be aspects of children's well-being.

In the case of the PS, the small number of students made it possible for me to interview almost all of them. In the case of the YT, this was impossible.

Hence, I chose to interview YT members whom I thought were interesting as far as aspects of their well-being were concerned, or whose responses to particular dramatic activities I found interesting enough to discuss in detail. I chose to interview children who, based on my observations and on data from the interview with the previous YT teacher, were judged as lacking basic social skills and skills of working with others, as having low self-esteem and self-confidence, or who seemed generally unhappy.

Interviews with *parents* of students of both institutions provided me with insightful data on their children's background and helped me construct a picture of each one's well-being. The parents whom I interviewed towards the end of the fieldwork were asked whether they thought that their children's dramatic experiences had contributed to their flourishing in any way. Interviewees were chosen according to their willingness and availability.

Interviews with various *PS teachers* took place. I conducted interviews with the teachers of the participating children. These were useful in providing me with further information about their students' backgrounds and educational welfare. Some of these teachers had specialised in the teaching of Art, Music and Drama. They offered me their views on the general contribution of the arts to student well-being. Others had received training in SEE and had spent some time teaching it. These teachers expressed their opinions on whether SEE fulfils the educational aim of enhancing well-being. Interviewees were chosen according to their willingness and availability. I also conducted an interview with the teacher whose SEE lesson I had observed. She informed me of the philosophy and teaching methods of SEE.

Interviews with the *head teachers of the PS* yielded insightful data on the socioeconomic background and family situation of the PS students. The previous head teacher had retired in September 2010, five months before I commenced my fieldwork in the PS. I felt that an interview with him would be useful, because he had served as a head teacher of the school for five years and as a teacher for twelve. He was also an active member of the village community. For these reasons, he was well aware of the socioeconomic and family background of the children participating in my research.

The *General Co-ordinator of Health Education Programmes* (of which SEE is part of) was the official source of data regarding the content, educational aims, pedagogic principles and teaching methods of SEE. She is responsible for the implementation of SEE across primary schools in Cyprus. Data extracted from this interview informed my critique of SEE which will feature as part of my Results chapter.

Interview with the *president of the organisation funding the YT* aimed towards eliciting information on the general socioeconomic background and family situation of the YT members.

Interview with the *previous YT teacher* was conducted as part of my pilot project. Based on her experience, she offered me information on each child's personality, well-being, and nature of participation in the drama workshops.

Interview with the *critical friend*, taking place at the end of the fieldwork, was useful in terms of general reflection-on-action regarding the YT workshops.

Interview with *drama practitioners* in Cyprus benefited my research in terms of them providing me with an insider's perspective on the place of drama in

the school curriculum, and its role in the personal, social and emotional growth of students.

#### **3.4.4.4 Limitations of interviews**

The interviews employed in my research project conveyed various challenges. In the group interviews with students, the dominant personalities of the group tended to monopolise the conversation, thus not letting the quieter ones contribute or even threatening them with their presence (Simons 2009, Wellington 1996). There was one case in which a shy and introverted 6-year-old YT member, Gina, was intimidated by 7-year-old Valerie, who had a more dominant personality. When Gina appeared reluctant in responding to a question, Valerie cried: '*Oh, come on already!*' (19/3/11). This form of peer pressure resulted in Gina refusing to respond to any of the questions that followed. This incident, occurring early in the interview process, made me realise that the synthesis of the group is an important factor influencing how the interviewees respond. From that point onwards, I was careful in sorting out the groups based on their personalities and friendships.

The synthesis of the group to be interviewed is also important in terms of the *relationships* that exist among the respondents. Taber asserts that the presence of certain individuals might 'contaminate' the data gathered (2007, p. 157). This was evident in the interview with the older YT children. As the children were randomly put together in the group, it so happened that some of them were not particularly fond of each other because of their unpleasant experiences in group work or the ways they associated in school. When asked whether they had come across with any difficulties during group work, they hesitated in expressing their thoughts and feelings, out of fear of insulting their classmates or of starting an argument. They

chose to either remain silent or to respond in a ‘socially desirable’ way (Hobson and Townsend 2010, p. 228). Had I put children in groups according to their friendships, more valid and more credible data would have been generated (Hobson and Townsend 2010, p. 231). Another incident worth mentioning involved 9-year-old Andrew, who asked to talk to me in private after the group interview (12/3/11). He felt the need to express some of the thoughts he had not felt comfortable enough to share in the presence of his peers, some of whom had been bullying him at school.

A further issue that surfaced during the group interviews with the younger students was the lack of focus on the research topic (Simons 2009, p. 49). The YT1 children were easily distracted while waiting for their turn to answer a question. A 9-year-old boy, Steven, even got down to dusting the furniture, because he could not focus on the interview ‘*with such dirty furniture lying around*’ (19/3/11). While reflecting on the interview process later I came to the conclusion that, because of their young age and short attention span, the youngsters should have been interviewed in smaller numbers (Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 287). This would have kept the interview short and the interviewees interested (Sharp 2009, p. 79). Nevertheless, I did not get the opportunity to interview the younger children again because of time constraints.

Another limitation of the method was the bias penetrating the interview and influencing the data (Robson 2011, p. 281). An example of this comes from the interviews with the YT parents. I had sent out a letter to the parents asking for some volunteers to be interviewed. Those who were kind enough to do so were asked to offer feedback on the work done in the Youth Theatre and to share their views on whether drama had contributed to their children’s flourishing. They all responded positively to these questions. However satisfactory their feedback was for me, my

researcher's role kept my feet on the ground because it occurred to me that the 'whole truth' might not have been given (Walford 2001, p. 90). I had to constantly remind myself that these positive comments came from parents who were in favour of the arts and who supported their children's decision of joining the YT; parents who had responded to my invitation for an interview so as to help me in my research and might not have wanted to upset me with negative feedback; or parents who, even if they did have negative comments to make, kept these to themselves because of our 'complex social relationship' (Verma and Mallick 1999, p. 128). Questionnaires administered to all of the parents helped me place a check on the bias related to the sample of the parents interviewed. This issue will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.4.5 Questionnaires**

#### **3.4.5.1 What is a questionnaire?**

A questionnaire is a research tool in which the participants are asked to answer the 'same set of questions in a predetermined order' (Gray 2004, p. 337). It is an instrument that can gather both quantitative and qualitative data (O'Toole 2006, p. 118).

#### **3.4.5.2 How questionnaires were employed in my research**

I used the following types of questionnaires:

- a. *Structure and types of questions:* The questionnaires were *semi-structured*, as they contained a mixture of closed and open-ended questions (Sharp 2009, p. 62). *Closed* questions are those 'to which all possible answers are provided', whereas *open-ended* questions 'allow for the respondent to answer a question in the manner she sees fit (Wilkinson and Birmingham 2003, p. 11). In my



questionnaires, closed questions came first and open-ended ones followed. The questionnaires made use of the Likert scale (1932) which seeks to measure attitudes and which gives the respondent a scale of possible answers, ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ (Wilkinson and Birmingham 2003, p. 12). The number of possible answers for my Likert scale questionnaire was: 5 for the questionnaires of the PS and YT2 students and the parents, and 3 for the questionnaires of YT1 students as the latter were younger in age. I decided to give them fewer options to make it easier for them to decide.

- b. *Form: Face-to-face, paper questionnaires* were distributed to the PS and the YT2 students. Questionnaires were also given out to the parents of the YT members (Sharp 2009, p. 63).

*Feedback slips* were short questionnaires containing 5 open-ended questions. They were given to the YT2 participants for the first time halfway through the fieldwork for reasons I will refer to later (in Section 3.4.5.3).

A *game-like* form of questionnaire was developed for the YT1 participants. This involved 3 signs that were put up on the wall, in equal distance from one another. The signs were: ‘*Agree*’, ‘*Neither agree or disagree*’ and ‘*Disagree*’. I introduced it as a game to children, asking them to stand under the sign that represented their view every time I read a statement.

The following questionnaires were administered:

### ***I. Primary School***

- 3 face-to-face questionnaires with the students.

- 1 game-like questionnaire with the students. A game-like questionnaire was conducted with the PS children because they were reluctant in completing a paper questionnaire that day (24/5/11).

## ***II. Youth Theatre***

- 7 game-like questionnaires with YT1.
- 4 face-to-face questionnaires with YT2.
- 1 game-like questionnaire with YT2. A game-like questionnaire was conducted with YT2 participants because it was our last session and I wanted to offer them an opportunity for play (30/6/11). The fact that fewer children had joined the workshop that day made it possible for the game-like questionnaire to be conducted.
- 4 feedback slips with YT2.
- 1 face-to-face questionnaire with the parents.

### **3.4.5.3 Reasons for choosing questionnaires**

I will justify my choice of employing questionnaires across three dimensions: Why I chose questionnaires as a research tool, why I chose these specific forms of questionnaires, and why I chose to conduct questionnaires with these particular groups of people.

- a. *Questionnaires as a research tool:* Questionnaires were useful in collecting straightforward information from a large number of participants (Sharp 2009, p. 62). They helped me 'explore the prevalence' of their views and opinions and achieve a 'high level of standardisation' (Sharp 2009, p. 62).
- b. *Forms of questionnaires:* YT2 participants were reluctant in filling out long questionnaires. Therefore, I decided to distribute *feedback slips* after each

session as a way of obtaining regular feedback on the drama processes and their influence on the different aspects of their well-being. Feedback slips were quick and easy to fill out. In these, I asked the participants questions that I would have asked them in an interview if there was enough time to conduct one after each workshop. They were offered the option of writing their name on the slips. I found that the children chose to do so when there were particular issues they wanted for me to know and address. Such was the case of 9-year-old Andria, who wrote on how her group had pressured her into performing on stage, even though she was a newcomer, and how this pressure had caused her to burst into tears (Feedback slip 2/4/11).

I considered *game-like questionnaires* to be appropriate for the younger children because of their limited literacy skills (Gillham 2008, Scott 2008). My pilot project, conducted at the beginning of the school year (October 2010), revealed that they were still struggling with reading and writing. In the game-like questionnaires, the signs on the wall contained few words and emoticons, serving as ‘visual stimuli’ and helping their memory (Scott 2008, p. 91). Game-like questionnaires saved time and were much enjoyed by the children. This idea sits well with Christensen’s theory that children engage in research willingly if they have fun (2010, p. 146). Also, in my pilot project, the questionnaire with YT1 was particularly time-consuming because I had to read the questions aloud, explain them to the children, and then help those struggling with reading and writing. What is more, because I had captured their responses to the game-like questionnaires on video, I was able observe their non-verbal behaviour (Simons 2009, p. 61). I could therefore tell whether their responses

represented their actual views or whether other factors had influenced their responses, such as them following their friends around or not understanding the question.

- c. *Questionnaires with particular groups of people:* Questionnaires and feedback slips distributed to the *students* were important in providing me with their views on issues that were central to their well-being, and with their feedback on the work done in the workshops. Because they were anonymous, they could provide ‘frank and revealing responses’ (Oppenheim 1966, p. 37). It is worth mentioning that two of the questionnaires distributed at the beginning of the fieldwork were given to them in the same form at the end of the fieldwork, in my attempt to trace changes regarding their attitudes. The questionnaire for the *parents* of the YT members was useful because it was the only research tool that could gather the views of all of them. Few had responded to my invitation for an interview and, even if they all had done so, there was not enough time to interview them (Sharp 2009, p. 62). As I mentioned earlier, these questionnaires placed a check on the bias related to the sample of the parents interviewed. Parents were given the questionnaires to complete while waiting for the final performance to start (29/6/11). This condition rendered them a ‘captive’ audience and established a great rate of response (Gillham 2008, p. 9). I considered questionnaires for the parents of the PS students not to be necessary. Because of the small number of the participating children, I was able to interview most of the parents.

#### **3.4.5.4 Limitations of questionnaires**

Game-like questionnaires presented considerable limitations. Firstly, it was not always clear under which sign children stood. Because they thought of the process as a game, they would not always take it seriously and would often be competitive towards one another, thus giving rushed responses (Gillham 2008, p. 9). Some of them would follow their friends around and the more dominant ones would drag their friends with them. Furthermore, it was evident that there were moments when they did not understand the question due to ambiguity or imprecision in the wording, but did not stop to ask for clarifications (Bell 2010, p. 143). My assumption is that children did not stop to ask for clarifications because they did not want to stop playing or because they were just being shy. Leading questions were also an issue because of the tone of voice I used in my attempt to make the questions comprehensible for children (Greig *et al.* 2007, p. 125).

Another challenge of the game-like questionnaire was the fact that the participants' responses were visible to their classmates and teacher. I believe that there were times when they responded in a 'socially desirable' way in their attempt to present themselves in 'a favourable light' (Hobson and Townsend 2010, p. 228).

A further limitation to the game-like questionnaire was that it did not give children the opportunity to respond to any open-ended questions. I managed to ask some of these questions in the interview. Despite all the challenges, I found that much of the data gathered through the game-like questionnaires were useful.

For the PS and YT2 children, filling out a questionnaire was not a task they particularly enjoyed because it involved writing which took time and effort (Gillham 2008, p. 13). They would sometimes give hasty and careless answers (Gillham 2008,

p. 9). At other times they would not respond to the open-ended questions at all (Opie and Sikes 2004, p. 107). For this reason, I made sure that the questionnaires were short and - in the case of the YT2 children - that I kept the open-ended questions separately in feedback slips (Verma and Mallick 1999, p. 118).

### **3.4.6 Drama Conventions**

#### **3.4.6.1 What are drama conventions?**

Drama conventions are devising and rehearsal processes used in playmaking which, according to O'Toole, can yield 'subtle and indirect forms of data collection' (2006, p. 110). This is because drama conventions reveal the degree of involvement of the participants, the level of their understanding of the dramatic context, and the nature of their responses to the dramatic challenges, without them interfering with the normal operation of the drama work (2006, p. 110). In their book *Research Methods in Education* (2007), which is considered to be the standard text for educational research, Cohen *et al.* propose the role-play convention as a legitimate research technique (2007, p. 448).

#### **3.4.6.2 How drama conventions were employed in my research**

I built two drama schemes that made extensive use of drama conventions as research tools. The drama schemes were taught in the YT, but not in the PS due to pressure of time. For YT1, the drama scheme was based on Michael Rosen's *My Sad Book*, whereas for YT2, the drama scheme was based on Shaun Tan's *The Red Tree* (see Appendix 3 for the drama scheme).

The drama schemes employed the following conventions:

- a. *Teacher-in-role* as the main character of the story.

- b. *Hot-seating* the character.
- c. *Still images* of the character's past life and *thought-tracking*.
- d. *Mantle of the Expert*, where children acted as specialists in child psychology and wrote (*in role*) ideas on the following key questions:
  - *What makes children unhappy?*
  - *What can serve as a remedy for their unhappiness?*
  - *Can drama and the arts make children happy? If so, how?*
  - *What should a drama lesson consist of in order to make children happy?*

Through the *teacher-in-role* and *hot-seating* techniques, the participants were given an insight as to what was making the main character in the story unhappy. They used the information gained from these techniques to compose *still images*. In these, they highlighted key moments of the character's life where her unhappiness and the reasons underlying it were clearly depicted. In the most important part of the workshop, children in role as child psychologists used their experience to offer ideas on the above questions. This was an indirect way of gathering their responses as to what makes them happy and unhappy, whether drama and the arts can contribute to their flourishing, and what should a drama workshop consist of in order to help them achieve this. The use of drama conventions as research tools provided an opportunity to include children's voices (*in role*) in the research. It enabled them to become 'active subjects rather than objects' (Alldred 1998, cited in Boylan and Dalrymple 2009, p. 72). Their responses helped me gain a fuller understanding of the issues affecting their lives (Boylan and Dalrymple 2009, p. 75). These ideas will be explored in detail in the Discussion Subchapter 3.

### 3.4.7 Triangulation

#### 3.4.7.1 What is triangulation?

As I explained above, subjectivity was an omnipotent threat to the validity of my research strategies and findings. The interpretivist paradigm implemented in my research invited a degree of subjectivity, because my biases and preconceived notions inevitably penetrated the research process and interpretation of events (Denscombe 2002, Greene 2010). The validity of my data was also vulnerable to the limitations that each research methodology and method carried with it.

A way to maximise the validity of data is triangulation. Triangulation is a research instrument that serves as a medium of scrutinising perspectives and arguments from various angles in order to produce and to strengthen evidence supporting important claims (Simons 2009, p. 129). It also aims towards eliminating deficiency or bias deriving from the employment of any one research method or methodology (Simons 2009, p. 129).

Denzin identifies four *types* of triangulation (1978, p. 294):

- a. *Data source triangulation* examines whether the case under investigation carries different meaning when different circumstances apply, such as place, time and different types of social interaction (Denzin 1978, cited in Stake 1995, pp. 112-113).
- b. *Investigator triangulation* refers to the employment of multiple observers as oppose to just one in order to eliminate any bias of a single person (Denzin 1978, p. 297).
- c. *Theory triangulation* is achieved through the comparison of different theoretical viewpoints against the same body of data (Denzin 1978, Stake



1995). Stake is confident in his view that investigator triangulation ensures theory triangulation because two researchers are bound to come from different theoretical backgrounds and therefore interpret events differently (1995, p. 113).

- d. *Methodological triangulation* involves *within-method triangulation*, in which the researcher employs multiple strategies within one method (Denzin uses the term ‘method’ for what I call methodology and the term ‘strategy’ for what I call method). It also involves *across-method triangulation*, in which she combines dissimilar methods to investigate the phenomenon (Denzin 1978, pp. 301-302). The idea underlying methodological triangulation is that different approaches combined together compensate for each other’s weaknesses (Denzin 1978, p. 302).

#### **3.4.7.2 How triangulation was employed in my research**

I made use of the different types of triangulation in my research project as follow:

- a. My project was concerned with examining the correlation of my students’ well-being to their dramatic experiences. *Data source triangulation* was achieved through the comparison of their behaviour and responses at the early stages of the fieldwork with the kind of behaviour they exhibited and the responses they offered as the fieldwork progressed. In this example, the different circumstances under which the phenomenon was examined were those of *time*.
- b. *Investigator triangulation*: The contributions of my supervisor and the critical friend were significant in the restriction of my subjectivity penetrating the research process and interpretation of findings. My supervisor reviewed

my drama schemes and research designs prior to each session and, while maintaining a critical distance, offered me constructive feedback. The critical friend and I had regular discussions in which we shared our observations of children's behaviour, our interpretations of events and our reflective accounts on the teaching content, methods and research techniques.

- c. If we take Stake's argument of *theory triangulation* established through the employment of different investigators to be valid, then the cross-checking of the theoretical viewpoints of my supervisor, the critical friend and myself made theory triangulation possible.
- d. *Across-method triangulation* was achieved through the combination of the different methodologies of case study, ethnography and reflective practice. These complemented each other in multiple ways. Case study highlighted the particularity and complexity of each case researched (Stake 1995, p. xi). Ethnography placed emphasis on the context and how this affected the interpretation of meanings negotiated in the drama space (Fielding 2001, p. 148). The notion of 'prolonged time' that ethnography advocated made it possible for case study to monitor and interpret the dynamics of changes occurring (Simons 2009, p. 23). Reflective practice's contribution to the study consisted in ensuring a critical distance from events so that the personal feelings I had developed through my social interaction with children did not distort the interpretation of findings (Fielding 2001, Hammersley 1991). Additionally, it enabled me to improve my teaching and to adjust my practice to the needs and demands of each institution (Taylor 2000, p. 21).

*Within-method triangulation* in my study was attained through the utilisation of different research strategies, namely observation, interviews, questionnaires and drama conventions. These methods compensated for the weaknesses of one another. Observation enabled me to interpret the ‘non-verbal clues’ in children’s behaviour which, as I have mentioned, often revealed their genuine feelings (Simons 2009, p. 61). The expression of honest opinions was also encouraged through questionnaires and the anonymity that they offered (Oppenheim 1966, p. 37). Interviews enabled me to elicit in-depth data that were not accessible through the limited space, time and children’s willingness for the completion of questionnaires (Opie and Sikes 2004, Hobson and Townsend 2010). Responses to drama conventions gave some analytical, authentic data. Yet the issue of time in combination with the large number of participants did not allow for drama conventions to accommodate elaborate responses in the way that the interviews did.

### **3.5 *Ethical Considerations***

#### **3.5.1 What are ethical considerations?**

Ethics are defined by Cavan as ‘a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others’ (1977, p. 810, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 56). When undertaking research, it is necessary to ensure that the relationship between the researcher and the participants is characterised by a sense of trust and respect towards their dignity and integrity (Simons 2009, p. 98). Researchers are required to achieve a balance between ‘the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of the truth, and their subjects’ rights and values potentially threatened by the research’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 49).

In educational research, the ethical issues that arise can be particularly complex and subtle, because of the involvement of children in it. Even though the consideration of these issues is a demanding and often puzzling process for the researcher, it cannot be omitted. Lindsay affirms that this consideration will *enhance* research in the long run (2010, p. 111, italics in original).

Cohen *et al.* present a conspectus of the main ethical issues that a researcher has to consider while conducting her fieldwork (2000, p. 51).

- a. *Informed consent* refers to the procedures in which individuals decide whether they want to be part of the research provided that:
  - They are *competent* and *mature* enough to do so. In the case of children, their responsible others make this decision for them.
  - They *volunteer* to take part knowing that any exposure to risks is undertaken knowingly and voluntarily.
  - They *fully understand* the nature, procedures and potential risks of the research (Diener and Crandall 1978, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 51, my emphasis).
- b. *Access* to the institutions in which the research is conducted, and *acceptance* by those whose permission is needed, are important ethical considerations prior to the commencing of the project (Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 51). In order to achieve these, the researcher has to exhibit her ‘credentials as a serious investigator’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 51).
- c. The participants’ right to *privacy* entails the concepts of:

- *Sensitivity of information*, which relates to how personal the data collected are.
  - *Setting being observed*, which concerns the degree of privacy of the setting where research unfolds.
  - *Dissemination of information*, which has to do with the ability to identify the participant based on the information she has provided (Diener and Crandall 1978, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 61).
- d. *Anonymity* ensures that the identities of the participants are not revealed in any way and that any data are kept confidential (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 61).
- e. *Confidentiality* means that, even if the researcher is in a position to make a connection between the data and the identity of a participant, she does not make this public (Cohen *et al.* 2000, p. 62).

### **3.5.2 How ethical considerations were implemented in my research**

The ethical considerations listed above were implemented in my research as follow:

- a. I sought *informed consent* before I embarked on the research project. I asked for informed consent in writing from the parents and, in the case of the PS students, from the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture. All of them gave their informed consent, except for the parents of three YT children. The head teacher of the PS and the president of the organisation responsible for the YT gave me their informed consent verbally. I explained the nature, purpose and demands of my research project to my students in the first session, and made sure that they understood them.

- b. *Access* to the institutions and *acceptance* from the people in charge were established through the permission I was granted by the parents, the head teacher of the PS, the president of the organisation responsible for the YT and the Ministry of Education. I explained that the research was undertaken as part of my doctoral degree, that its findings were subject to publication and that some video and audio recording were required. Permission to do so was given by late January 2011 for the YT, and by early February 2011 for the PS. An Ethical Approval form was also obtained by the University of Warwick in November 2010.
- c. The participants were informed of their right to *privacy* and what this entailed.
- The research area of well-being was bound to look for *sensitive information* from the participants. I was careful not to ask questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Disclosure of any sensitive data occurred only if the participants took the initiative to do so.
  - The YT and PS *settings observed* were both public. I conducted 4 interviews with parents, an interview with a PS teacher and 2 interviews with the previous PS head teacher at their homes. An interview with a PS parent, one with a drama practitioner and the one with the General Co-ordinator of Health Education Programmes were conducted at their work places. All of these interviews were conducted in private settings only after the interviewees' invitations.
  - *Dissemination of information* and *non-traceability* were established through the use of pseudonyms for all the children. The adults participating in the research have not been given pseudonyms, but their

responses are offered in anonymity. I have used the real name of the critical friend after seeking her permission.

- d. I ensured *anonymity* by not asking for the names of the participants in the completion of questionnaires, and by keeping any data confidential.
- e. I reassured the participants that the findings of the research would remain *confidential* in the sense that the connections between data provided and their identities would not be made public.

### **3.6 Strategies for data analysis**

The data I collected during my fieldwork arose from several different sources. In order to analyse it all, I first organised it and then coded it. I interpreted the coded data and drew conclusions relevant to my research topic. I used *content analysis* as a strategy of analysing the data arising from qualitative research methods, such as observation, interviews and journal notes. As far as questionnaires are concerned, I employed SPSS to process the results of Likert-scale items, and content analysis for the open-ended questions. Content analysis was also used for the feedback slips. In the following section, I will explain how I used the methods of content analysis and SPSS for the analysis of my data.

#### **3.6.1 Content Analysis**

Content analysis is a 'strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the contents of the written data' (Flick 1998, p. 192 and Mayring 2004, p. 266, both cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 475). In conducting content analysis, the researcher generates or tests a theory by taking texts, analysing them, reducing them and interrogating them into a summary form

through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 476).

Content analysis has several strengths which make it a popular analysis technique among researchers. Krippendorp finds that it is an unobtrusive technique (2004, p. 40, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 475). This is because, in content analysis, one can observe without being observed (Robson 1993, p. 280, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 475). Also, because the data are in a permanent, written form, it is possible to reanalyse it and replicate it at any given time (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 475).

A weakness of this approach is the degree of subjectivity it brings with it. Krippendorp maintains that texts do not have one objective interpretation or meaning, but can rather sustain multiple readings and interpretations (2004, pp. 22-24, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 476). For this reason, when interpreting qualitative data, meanings should be drawn while taking into consideration the specific contexts, discourses and purposes (2004, pp. 22-24, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 476).

Cohen *et al.* advise researchers to follow eleven steps when conducting content analysis (2007, p. 476). I will refer to some of these with reference to my own research.

### **Step 1: Define the research questions to be addressed by the content analysis**

Before I embarked on the journey of analysis, I revisited my key research questions:



1. In what ways can the arts, and drama in particular, contribute to the following aspects of children's well-being:
  - To their *happiness* and *pleasure*?
  - To their *sociability*, *social skills* and *skills of working with others*?
  - To their *self-esteem*, *self-confidence* and *sense of achievement*?
2. What *pedagogy* should a teacher who is interested in enhancing her students' well-being follow? What are the *challenges* that this pedagogy conveys?
3. What are the theoretical and methodological *limitations* of this approach?

During my fieldwork, I conducted direct and indirect observation, transcribed the interviews, and input data from the questionnaires. In doing these, I realised that further aspects of well-being sprang from my data; *play*, *beauty* and *children's voice*. Therefore my research questions were reformed as follows:

1. In what ways can the arts, and drama in particular, contribute to the following aspects of children's well-being:
  - To their *happiness* and *pleasure*?
  - To their *sociability*, *social skills* and *skills of working with others*?
  - To their *self-esteem*, *self-confidence* and *sense of achievement*?
  - To their opportunities for *play*?

- To them acquiring experiences of *beauty* and *aesthetic quality*?
  - To opportunities for them to express their *voice* and to have this taken into consideration?
2. What *pedagogy* should a teacher who is interested in enhancing her students' well-being follow? What are the *challenges* that this pedagogy conveys?
  3. What are the theoretical and methodological *limitations* of this approach?

These questions served as my guidance in the analysis of my data.

## **Step 2: Define the population from which sampling units occur**

Cohen *et al.* perceive population to be both *people* and *texts* that constitute domains of analysis (2007, p. 477). In my case, the people that offered data were the students, their parents, teachers and head teachers, drama practitioners, as well as certain 'knowledgeable people'; these are defined by Ball as individuals 'who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or experience' (1990, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 115). In my research, the 'knowledgeable people' were the General Co-ordinator for Health Education Programmes, and the president of the organisation funding the Youth Theatre. I employed content analysis for the interviews, the questionnaires' open-ended questions, the observation-based fieldnotes and the journal notes. The drama conventions that I used as research tools yielded data that were self-contained and did need to be further analysed.

### **Step 3: Define the sample to be included**

Cohen and Holliday argue that there are two main methods of sampling (1979; 1982; 1996, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 110). In the *probability sampling*, the researcher selects her sample from the wider population by chance (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 110). In this way, every member has equal chances of being selected to participate in the research (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 110). In the *non-probability* or *purposive sampling* the researcher handpicks the cases based on whether the individuals possess the particular characteristics that respond to the research theme (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 115). Within these two categories lie various subcategories, which Cohen *et al.* refer to in detail in their book (2007, pp. 110-117).

I employed a *non-probability* sampling strategy, whereby my targets were particular groups of children (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 113). Any conclusions drawn should take into consideration the specific contexts, locations and discourses.

The type of *non-probability sampling* I employed was *convenience sampling* (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 114). This involves ‘choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained’ (Cohen *et al.* 2007, pp. 114-115). Both institutions were accessible to me because of my previous teaching experience in these.

### **Step 4: Define the units of analysis**

Krippendrop distinguishes among three kinds of units (2004, pp. 99-101, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 477). *Sampling units* are those that are selected to be included in, or excluded from, the analysis. *Recording/coding units* are those that are contained within sampling units and are therefore smaller and less complex. *Context*

*units* are ‘units of textual matter that set limits on the information to be considered in the description of recording units’ (Krippendorp 2004, pp. 101, 103, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 477).

My *sampling* units were particular interviews, questionnaires and notes from my observation and journal that were useful in providing data responding to my research questions. From these units, I extracted phrases and sentences as my *recording/coding* units. In order to provide integrity of meaning, I offered the larger texts these were found in; these were my *context units*. For example, for the purposes of my analysis I chose a particular interview that the YT participants gave (sampling unit), offered a particular phrase a child used to support my theoretical argument (recording/coding unit) and embedded this in a larger text (context unit) to ensure clarity of meaning.

### **Step 5: Decide the codes to be used in the analysis**

Following the advice of Hammersley and Atkinson, I went through all of my data numerous times so as to become familiar with them (1983, pp. 177-178, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 478). I then noted down interesting patterns that emerged, as well as unexpected features, inconsistencies and contradictions (1983, pp. 177-178, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 478).

As I re-visited my data, I ascribed codes to each piece of datum (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 478). A code is ‘a word or an abbreviation sufficiently close to that which it is describing form the researcher to see at a glance what it means’ (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 478). For example, I used the phrase ‘*sense of achievement*’ to describe the data that referred to children’s activities or responses suggesting this. Whereas I had

created this particular code pre-ordinately, others emerged in my revisiting of the data. For example, I used '*stories for w.b.*' to refer to children's responses as to what stories they expressed interest in. The process of coding enabled me to detect the codes which occurred more often and which occurred together (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 478).

### **Step 6: Construct the categories for analysis**

In this stage, I formed categories of key features of the text in order to highlight the links between the units of analysis (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 478). I came up with several different categories, some of which I had created pre-ordinately, such as '*pleasure in drama*'. Other categories emerged from the data, such as '*children liking scary stories*'. Hammersley and Atkinson stress out that some items of data can be assigned to more than one category (1983, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 479). In their view, this is desirable because it maintains the richness of the data (1983, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 479). This was the case with my data as well.

### **Step 7: Conduct the coding and categorising of the data**

Having decided on the codes and categories I would use, I was ready to commence the analysis (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 480). I returned to the texts and ascribed codes and categories to each piece of datum (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 480). This process is called *coding* and is defined by Kerlinger as 'the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis' (1970, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 480). An example from the coding process can be found in Appendix 2.

Because of the large amount of data available, it was necessary for it to undergo the process of *summarising content analysis* which reduced it to manageable proportions while remaining faithful to the essence of the content (Mayring 2004, pp. 268-269, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 480). After performing the first round of assigning codes and categories to the data, I was able to detect emerging patterns and themes and to begin to make generalisations (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 481).

### **Step 8: Conduct the data analysis**

With the data coded and categorised, I composed a 30-page document in which I noted the thematic categories and their subcategories, along with the pieces of data that responded to each one. Composing this document was helpful, not only because it offered a general overview of the data, but also because it highlighted the associations between the various codes and categories (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 481). An example from the document of the categorising of data can be found in Appendix 2.

### **Step 9: Summarising**

After gaining a general sense of the data, I wrote a summary of the key issues that had emerged and needed subsequent investigation (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 482). I included interesting incidents in the drama workshops and intriguing responses in the interviews and questionnaires (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 482). I was then in position to start forming the theories that responded to my data. Patton sets out the preliminary stages of theory generation:

- Finding a focus for the research and analysis
- Organizing, processing, ordering and checking data

- Writing a qualitative description or analysis
- Inductively developing categories, typologies and labels
- Analysing the categories to identify where further clarification and cross-clarification are needed
- Expressing and typifying these categories through metaphors
- Making inferences and speculations about relationships, causes and effects (1980, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 483).

### **Step 10: Making speculative inferences**

In the last stage, the data moved from description to inference (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 483). I sought possible explanations for the situations, and generated working hypotheses that fed into my data and theory (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 483). An example of a hypothesis is the following:

*‘The process of working towards the performance benefited children in terms of their self-confidence because they felt that their ideas and suggestions mattered in shaping the final product.’*

### **3.6.2 Numerical analysis: Likert Scale Questionnaire**

The questionnaires distributed to children and their parents contained Likert-scale items, the results of which were processed through SPSS. This is an electronic programme for the process and analysis of quantitative data that is popular among social scientists (Sarantakos 2005, pp. 363, 368). Sarantakos argues in favour of the use of such programmes because they analyse quantitative data quickly and inexpensively, and because they are reliable and accurate (2005, p. 363). The use of the programme highlighted the frequency of the participants’ positive, neutral and

negative responses in the questionnaires. In this way, I was able to gain a general overview of their attitudes towards drama, the arts and the educational system.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter began with a discussion on social research which I undertook to answer the question of the relationship between drama and the well-being of school children in Cyprus. This led to the examination of the positivist and interpretivist paradigms as ways of reaching knowledge about the world. I then demonstrated how these paradigms encouraged the development of quantitative and qualitative approaches, both of which were employed in my research. What followed was a thorough explanation of how I implemented an ethnographic case study that also served as a reflective examination of my practice. I continued with a summary statement of the research methods used, a general timeline of data collection and a summary of the data actually collected. I then moved on to a thorough explanation of the methods utilised in my project, namely observation, interviews, questionnaires, journal and drama conventions. I demonstrated how each methodology and method complemented each other through the process of triangulation. I then offered the ethical considerations that were taken into account in the planning and the carrying out of my research. I concluded with a presentation of the strategies of collating and coding of my data.

Despite the shortcomings I encountered during the data gathering process, I found that it was stimulating and relevant to my research focus for the most part. I will present the evidence I gathered through this process in the following chapter.



## Chapter 4: Presentation of Data and Results

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter accommodates the data which I gathered during the data collection process and which appears to be relevant to my research focus. I begin with the data regarding the socio-economic and family background of the participating children in order to give a more informed picture of their well-being and how that was influenced by their participation in drama (*Subchapter 4.2*). One of the most important findings of my research is the expansion of what the concept of children's well-being involves. Therefore, in *Subchapter 4.3* I discuss the additional aspects of well-being that my research revealed, namely play, beauty and children's voice. I present the evidence I gathered to support these and underpin the discussion with the theoretical writings of ancient and contemporary philosophers. In *Subchapter 4.4* I present my research questions which were reformed in order to include the additional aspects of well-being. *Subchapter 4.5* focuses on the issues that pose a threat to the various areas of children's well-being as these were highlighted by the teachers, the parents and the students themselves. *Subchapter 4.6* features a presentation of the information given to me by the teachers and the General Co-ordinator for Health Programmes in Cyprus regarding SEE and its impact on student well-being. In *Subchapter 4.7* I provide the theoretical evidence to support the contribution of drama to the additional areas of well-being that my research has revealed, namely play, beauty and children's voice. I conclude with a number of additional limitations regarding the contribution of drama to student well-being, as these came to light during my research (*Subchapter 4.8*).

Before I move further on, it is important to raise the following considerations with regard to this chapter:

- a. The data provided by the teachers and parents originate from their personal opinions. These might have been influenced by different factors, such as reports from the media, their unrealistic memory of their own pasts, and their general attitudes towards life.
- b. Whereas more views of adult participants are offered here rather than those of children, this is merely a case of data availability. It is not a case of placing lesser emphasis on the information collected from children. On the contrary, I consider the latter's contribution to my research to be invaluable because, as Alexander *et al.* would argue, 'children are expert witnesses' on what contributes to their well-being and what does not, and it is 'indefensible' to ignore their voices when it comes to issues of their immediate concern (2010, p. 143). The Discussion chapter is, for the most part, based on the contributions of children.
- c. My data has shown that adult views of the well-being of the Cypriot children are generally pessimistic and alarmist, whereas children's own submissions to the research are more optimistic and hopeful. As it will become evident in the following sections, student responses regarding their well-being did not always fit the bleak picture that the *Good Childhood* report and the *Cambridge Primary Review* have drawn (Section 2.3). This renders my research as one that does not seek to heal children's well-being through the arts, but one that is concerned with what the arts can contribute to the well-

being of children who may well consider themselves already to be quite happy and flourishing.

#### ***4.2 The socio-economic and family background of the participating children***

As mentioned in Section 3.2.2.3, the ethnographic approach requires that social meanings are interpreted while taking into consideration the wider context in which they occur (Geertz 1973, p. 18). Because my thesis is particularly interested in the issue of child well-being, it is vital that the various socio-economic factors influencing it are taken into consideration and act as lenses through which any findings are interpreted. This will subsequently give a more informed overall picture. For these reasons, I believe it is essential to offer a brief account of the socio-economic and family background of the participating children, based on the information extracted from the interviews I conducted.

##### ***I. Primary School***

The Primary School is situated in a village in the suburbs of Nicosia. The majority of the PS children came from the lower middle class, while there were a few from the middle class. The educational level of their parents was relatively high, with a recent survey revealing that 60 out of 99 parents were either high school graduates, or held a university diploma (Interview with the previous head teacher 13/10/10). The financial situation of the majority of the students is of average level. Nevertheless, there were a few children whose families struggled financially and who therefore received support from the Parents' Association. The main reasons for their financial struggle had to do with either the parents working in poorly paid jobs, or one of the parents not working, or the parents being separated or divorced. Approximately 10% of the students came from families whose parents were either separated or divorced

(Interviews with the previous head teacher 13/10/10, 29/9/11; the current head teacher 17/6/11; the assistant head teacher 20/9/11).

## **II. *Youth Theatre***

The YT workshops took place on the premises of a primary school located in the suburbs of Nicosia. The YT members came from the surrounding villages. Some of the children came from families who were very well-off financially (with the parents working in highly-paid posts in the private or public sector). However, the majority came from families who are on average income. There were also a few who came from families who struggled financially. For this reason, it was decided that the registration fees for the Youth Theatre would be very low, namely €30 per student for the entire school year. The parents of 10 out of 39 children participating were either separated or divorced (Interview with the President of the Organisation funding the Youth Theatre 19/7/11).

### **4.3 *Additional aspects of well-being***

The data gathered during my research pointed out towards new directions regarding child well-being. It suggested that other aspects of it include *play*, *beauty* and *children's voice*. In this section I will offer the evidence to highlight these areas as being central in student well-being. I will then support this evidence with the theoretical writings of ancient and contemporary philosophers.

### 4.3.1 Play

In their interviews, students of both institutions often referred to play as being one of the things that make them happy.

Nandia: *What makes you happy in your life?*

Louis (aged 10): *Playing games and doing drama.*

Andria (aged 8): *Same for me. Plus, dancing.*

(Interview 7/5/11)

Furthermore, 20 out of 22 YT and PS students interviewed replied that playing games were among their favourite activities in drama (Interviews with YT children 19/2/11; 12/3/11; 19/3/11; 26/3/11; 2/4/11; 7/5/11; Interviews with PS children 3/5/11; 17/5/11; 24/5/11; 27/5/11). Some of their responses included:

Nandia: *What are your favourite moments in the drama workshops?*

Panos (aged 9): *I like it when we play games and I get to act so crazy.*

(Interview 19/2/11)

Valerie (aged 7): *I have fun when we play games and when we do our improvisations.*

(Interview 19/3/11)

Nandia: *What can I, as a teacher, do so as to help you have even a nicer time in the youth theatre?*

Louis (aged 10): *Give us more games.*

(Interview 7/5/11)

The teachers acknowledged the important role of play in their students' well-being:

*'What make children happy nowadays are very simple things; playing and spending their time in creative ways.'*

(Interview with drama practitioner 28/9/11)

*'Toys are useful; children need them. They play with these toys even after school is finished. Those who had joined the after school activities were always going to the kindergarten area so as to play with the toys there. All children did; both younger ones and older ones.'*

(Interview with teacher 20/9/11)

The significance of play in human flourishing is underlined by Nussbaum's list of capabilities contributing to a good life (1995). Its importance is also stressed in Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. This refers to the child's right to play, but to relax and join in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities (UNICEF Website 2012). Canella espouses play 'as a sacred right of childhood' and as 'a major avenue through which children learn to be happy, mentally healthy human beings' (cited in Grieshaber and McArdle 2010, p. 1).

The association between play and pleasure goes back for centuries. Comenius appreciated that 'delight' is an emotion generated in play (Weber 1984, cited in Grieshaber and McArdle 2010, p. 7). Rousseau who, in his romantic view of childhood, saw play as free and innocent, drew a connection between play and 'cheerfulness' (1762/2007, p. 108, cited in Grieshaber and McArdle 2010, p. 7). Holding a similar view, Fröebel suggested that the value of play lies in its capacity to

help the youngster develop, and to offer her joy, contentment, and inner and outer rest (1900, pp. 54-55, cited in Grieshaber and McArdle 2010, p. 5).

Writing from a psychoanalyst's point of view, Winnicott (1971) claimed that play contributes to both physical and mental health. He considered it to be 'essentially satisfying' and 'immensely exciting' for the child, because in her mind there is an interplay between the objective experience (the actual reality) and the subjective experience (the imaginative situations she is involved in while playing) (1971, p. 52).

A more contemporary theorist, Cook (2000), uses the theory of Csikszentmihalyi to explain the association between play and pleasure. According to this, play reduces boredom because it evokes physical and mental activity (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, 1997, cited in Cook 2000, p. 106). At the same time, it sets challenges that are readily attainable, therefore reducing levels of stress. The result is what Csikszentmihalyi describes as *flow*: a delightful sensation that regulates levels of activity and mood (1975, 1997, cited in Cook 2000, p. 106).

Cook further demonstrates the *social function* of play. He asserts that it is an activity that can lead to the development of co-operation:

In animals and humans alike, play increases contact between 'littermates' (Martin 1984) and may thus lead to increased co-operative efficiency (Fagen 1984). Individuals who are used to co-operating in play, judging each other's capacities, reaction times, and attitudes, are better able to collaborate in more urgent situations and practical acts (...). (2000, p. 103)

In trying to answer the question *Why people play* (1973), Ellis discusses cathartic theories of play. These theories sketch it as an arena through which the emotions accumulated in everyday life can be released, therefore reducing the likelihood of

damage and safeguarding the individuality of the person (1973, p. 55). Groos articulated the view of play as such an arena as early as in 1908, to explain the phenomena of fighting and boisterous play in children (1908, cited in Patrick, cited in Ellis 1973, p. 54).

The issue of play in the drama context and how it influences child well-being is the subject of the Discussion Subchapter 5.3 titled '*Play and well-being*'.

#### **4.3.2 Beauty**

As my data revealed, the beauty of the educational environments in which children live and learn seems to have much influence on them having positive feelings. In his interview, the PS head teacher drew a connection between play and beauty. In his view, a beautiful educational environment – one that allows children to play – positively influences how they feel:

Nandia: *Do you think that the students of this school are happy children?*

Head teacher: *I do. The school environment is a beautiful one for the children. It makes them happy. I can see them playing happily during breaks.*

Nandia: *Do you think that the environment then affects how a child feels?*

Head teacher: *Surely. That is why we have made games available to the students during the breaks. Every class has its games so as for the children to be able to play. There is a circular switching of games between classes so that all children get a chance to play. This makes them happy. Toys are also fun for them.*

(Interview with PS head teacher 17/6/11)



An argument by Winston can serve as the basis to claim that the beauty of educational environments contributes to the well-being of those who work and live in them. In his book *'Beauty and Education'*, he references Greer on her argument that humans are born with an innate love of beauty (Winston 2010, p. 3). He reminds us that interpretations of beauty are culture-dependent (2010, p. 11). As I have already pointed out, this can be also said for well-being and its interpretations. Furthermore, he refers to the Platonic tradition that sees a promise of happiness in beauty (2010, p. 18). He explains that this tradition has influenced his belief that learning through beauty is associated with joy, hope and fulfilment (2010, p. 18). Based on this assumption, he argues that, by letting beauty into our educational contexts, subjects' learning can become 'inherently *pleasurable*' (2010, p. 19, italics in original).

The belief that beautiful educational environments enhance the well-being of students and teachers is central in the pedagogy of the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy. Fraser and Gestwicki describe their environment as follows:

In Reggio Emilia preschools, beautiful objects, potted plants, and bowls of flowers are displayed on shelves and tables, and light is everywhere shining through coloured strips of plastic or reflected in the many mirrors in the room. The beauty so apparent in the classroom is designed to inspire children to become more visually aware and motivate them to create beautiful art work themselves. (2002, p. 221, cited in Winston 2010, p. 97)

Vecchi, a former atelierista in a Reggio Emilia preschool, further comments that the educators firmly believe in the 'right of beauty' in the surroundings (2010, p. 82). They see beauty as a necessary condition for the physical and psychological well-being of both the teachers and the learners (2010, p. 82).

As we saw in the Literature Review (Section 2.2.3), the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture considers that the enhancement of student well-being can be performed through the upgrading of their environment:

(Well-being is) the *physical, emotional* and *social* state of students, the enhancement of which can be achieved through the strengthening of their personalities and through the upgrading of their social and natural environment (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website 2012b)

Several philosophers have observed a connection between beauty and well-being. Schiller offered a poetic quote to describe the powerful role of beauty in human happiness:

Beauty alone makes the whole world happy, and each and every being forgets its limitations while under its spell. (1967, p. xv, cited in Winston 2010, p. 74)

Scarry sees a strong relationship between beauty and pleasure, and bases her argument on the theory of Kant:

(...) unlike all other pleasures, the pleasure we take in beauty is inexhaustible. No matter how long beautiful things endure, they cannot out-endure our longing for them. (2001, p. 50)

What she sees in beauty is what we experience when we are ecstatically happy:

Beauty quickens. It adrenalizes. It makes the heart beat faster. It makes life more vivid, animated, living, worth living. (2001, pp. 24-25)

A concept closely related to beauty is that of **unselfing**. Murdoch describes this as a process in which we forget about our anxieties and self-preoccupations in the face of beauty (1989, p. 84). She gives an example of herself being overwhelmed by anxieties, when she suddenly notices a hovering kestrel. From that point on, her

mind is clear of selfish care (1989, p. 84). Beauty, then, encourages the individual to lift the ‘falsifying veil which partially conceals the world’, and to merely take a ‘self-forgetful’ pleasure in something excellent found in *art* or in *nature* (1989, pp. 84-85).

#### 4.3.3 Children’s voice

The issue of children’s voice was given a central place in the drama workshop *The Red Tree* (28/5/11) with the YT2 students. In the workshop, which made use of drama conventions as research tools, children mentioned that being given the space to express their ideas and feelings and have these taken into consideration, are important elements in their happiness:

Group 2: *A child can feel sad when she feels that no one understands her. She should be allowed to talk to her parents and to express her feelings.*

Group 4: *A child can feel unhappy if she feels that no one pays attention to her. Her parents should always talk to her.*

(*The Red Tree* Workshop 28/5/11)

Group 1: *In order for a child to work well in a group she should express her desires and speak her ideas out.*

Group 4: *In order for a child to work well in a group she should express her opinion and listen to the ideas of others.*

(*The Red Tree* Workshop 28/5/11)

The responses of the YT2 children with regard to their voice being of primary importance for their well-being will be offered in detail in the Discussion Subchapter 5.4 titled '*Children's voice and well-being*'.

The teachers emphasised the need of children to be given the opportunities to articulate their views and feelings, as well as to have these taken into account:

*'In order for a child to be happy at school, she needs to feel that her presence is acknowledged.'*

(Interview with PS head teacher 17/6/11)

*'A child should be given the right to speak. This will make her happy.'*

(Interview with drama practitioner 29/9/11)

The concept of children's voice arose from the 1989 United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. Article 12 refers to the right of the child to be heard, while Article 13 refers to the right of the child to freedom of expression (UN 1990, cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 111). The Convention suggests that children's voice is equivalent to the expression of their thoughts, views and feelings, and it endorses their rights to have these listened to and taken into account in decisions that affect them (Haynes 2009, p. 33). Nevertheless, different authors argue that children's voice is not limited to the articulation of the above (Clark *et al.* 2003, cited in Haynes 2009, p. 35). Rinaldi argues that their voice can be also expressed through the use of symbols, codes and even silence (2005, pp. 17, 20).

Rawls makes an interesting connection between well-being and voice. He suggests that when a person's thoughts and deeds are appreciated and confirmed by others

this enhances her sense of self-worth, which in extent contributes to her well-being (1972, pp. 440, 548). In the same line of thought, Layard and Dunn conclude in their *Good Childhood* report that an important aspect of children's flourishing is to feel respected and to be perceived 'as infinitely precious people' whose feelings and thoughts are taken into consideration (2009, pp. 152-153). In the revised *Good Childhood* report, Rees *et al.* (2012) add that children being autonomous and active participants in decisions that affect them is one of the key aspects that ensures a good childhood.

Watson *et al.* agree that allowing children's voice to be heard goes beyond merely providing them with a platform to speak their minds (2012, p. 123). In their words:

Listening is also about reciprocal *meaning making* and about engaging in a dialogic process that has an outcome where children genuinely feel their views have been regarded (...). (2012, p. 123, italics in original)

#### **4.4 Reformed research questions**

As discussed in Section 3.6.1, with the additional aspects of well-being that came to light during my fieldwork and analysis of data, the research questions that I originally set out to investigate (presented in Section 2.6) were reformed as follow:

1. In what ways can the arts, and drama in particular, contribute to the following aspects of children's well-being:
  - To their *happiness* and *pleasure*?
  - To their *sociability*, *social skills* and *skills of working with others*?
  - To their *self-esteem*, *self-confidence* and *sense of achievement*?
  - To their opportunities for *play*?

- To them acquiring experiences of *beauty* and *aesthetic quality*?
  - To opportunities for them to express their *voice* and to have this taken into consideration?
2. What *pedagogy* should a teacher who is interested in enhancing her students' well-being follow? What are the *challenges* that this pedagogy conveys?
  3. What are the theoretical and methodological *limitations* of this approach?

The reformed research questions served as my guidance when further analysing my data and writing the Discussion chapter.

#### **4.5 Stating the problem: Children's well-being under threat**

In this section, I will offer evidence from my fieldwork to highlight the issues that pose a threat to the various areas of child well-being. These areas include those I focused on before conducting my fieldwork: *Happiness and pleasure; sociability, social skills and skills of working with others; and self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement*. They also include the areas that came to light during the carrying out of my fieldwork and analysis of my data: *Play, beauty and children's voice*. For each of these areas, I will firstly present the data that highlighted the factors negatively influencing them, and will then support the data with relevant literature.

##### **4.5.1 Happiness and pleasure**

As mentioned in the Literature Review (Section 2.3.1), children in Cyprus are often placed under pressure to satisfy parental and societal demands for academic success. In their interviews, teachers and parents expressed their beliefs that Cypriot youngsters experience pressures because of the overload of the teaching material, the

excessive amount of homework, and the numerous private lessons and extra-curricula activities they attend. These result in them having little time left for pleasure, play and creative expression, and therefore negatively influence their happiness. A teacher referred to this in an apologetic tone:

*'The student and her academic progress are always at the heart of our teaching. As a result, we neglect the child who wants to play, to have fun, to express herself, to create and to fully develop as a human being.'*

(Interview 29/9/11)

Alexander *et al.* (2010) raise a similar point in their Review. They justify the loss of 'loosely-structured' play as a result of school testing, and the decline in opportunities for enjoyment, creativity and imagination as a result of the current perception of childhood as being a preparation for adulthood (2010, pp. 65-66, 99).

In the same line of thought, Bjorklund observes that adults use formal schooling to rush children through childhood, 'focusing only on the adults (they) will become and not the people that they are' (2007, p. 3). This is what the celebrated philosopher Maxine Greene had in mind when she articulated the case of *seeing things small* rather than *big*:

Seeing schooling small is pre-occupied with test scores, 'time on task', management procedures, ethnic and racial percentages and accountability measures, while it screens out the faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons. (1995, p. 11, cited in Neelands 2009)

As far as pressures *within the classroom* are concerned, interestingly enough children's responses contradicted adult views. Out of the 37 children both in the PS

and the YT, only 3 responded that they were not happy at school (Questionnaires 17/5/11, 21/5/11 and 28/5/11). Four children did however complain in their interviews about having to sit at their desks all day and feeling bored, because of the traditional teaching methods that keep them still in the classroom (Interviews 2/4/11, 24/5/11 and 27/5/11). They expressed their longing for more playful ways of teaching:

Phanie (aged 13): *We are usually bored (in class) because we have to sit around all day listening to our teachers. It would be nice if the classes were more pleasant.*

(Interview 2/4/11)

A 9-year-old boy, Costas, discovered a creative way to overcome boredom in class:

*'I play around in class (...). I play with blue tack. I make little people out of blue tack. And small cars.'*

(Interview 27/5/11)

Bjorklund finds that children sitting quietly in rows does not come naturally to them (2007, p. 4). Also, Noddings's (2005) advice seems useful here. She recommends that the classroom atmosphere should involve opportunities for pleasure and should echo the 'the universal desire for happiness' (2005, p. 246).

Regarding pressures *outside the classroom*, when children were asked if there was anything that made them unhappy, 6 out of 37 mentioned '*too much homework*',



with 2 of them explaining that this was because homework left them with little time for play (Questionnaires 17/5/11 and 21/5/11). Marylin, aged 8, explained:

*'We waste our play time doing homework. When we finish our homework, it's already dark and we can't play outside.'*

(Interview 17/5/11)

The students views that homework and school demands cost them their play time tie in with Ellis's (1973) assumption that:

Play is under attack by the conditions of our modern world. In the life of the child the process of education has assumed critical importance and there has been a tendency for it to expand at the expense of play. (1973, p. 3)

Some of the parents admitted to having encouraged their children to attend many private lessons or extra-curricula activities. One justified this by saying that it is *'part of the bigger plan'* for the young ones to succeed in life (Interview 18/6/11). Another seemed to agree and further commented that it is the only way for her children to keep up with others. In her words:

*'I would like to give them as many opportunities as I can so as to help them choose their own path in life (...). There is so much competition in our society, that opportunities for knowledge are needed. If they don't take these lessons, it will be very difficult for them to keep up with others.'*

(Interview 28/5/11)

The views of these parents are in consistence with the concept of *excessive individualism* and the competitive society it has given birth to, as explained in the Literature Review (Section 2.3.1).

#### **4.5.2 Sociability and social skills and skills of working with others**

In the Literature Review (Section 2.3.2), we saw how adults tend to encourage children to be competitive towards one another in the spirit of excessive individualism. Some of the teachers whom I interviewed acknowledged the fact that we live in a competitive society where children are forced to compete against one another. The pressure that they are under makes them *'more self-contained when it comes to their socialising'* (Interview with teacher 10/6/11).

One of the teachers referred to children being estranged from each other, unkind and selfish as a result of them imitating adult behaviour:

*'Adults are cruel to one another, estranged from one another (...). I think that children today are very harsh to one another because they imitate adult behaviour. I can see that children today only care about themselves.'*

(Interview 30/5/11)

Teachers and parents in their interviews referred to specific incidents of unkindness among children, such as bullying and making fun of each other. In his interview, 9-year-old Andrew admitted having been bullied at school by boys who, interestingly enough, were also members of the Youth Theatre:

Andrew: *One of the boys in the Youth Theatre acts all friendly with me on Saturdays at the drama workshops. However, his behaviour changes when we are at school. Last Thursday we met at the school stairs. He was with his friends. He forbade me to tell other people that we were friends.*

Nandia: *Why did he do that?*

Andrew: *I don't know. Whenever I trust him with my secrets he tells them to other people, whereas I always keep his secrets. He threatens to hurt me if I don't.*

(Interview 12/3/11)

Student responses in the questionnaires regarding unkindness among children were more positive. Only 2 out of 37 children reported that they had received unkindness from their classmates, while 2 admitted that they themselves had been unkind to their classmates (Questionnaires 17/5/11, 21/5/11 and 28/5/11; See Appendix 5, Student Questionnaire 1). One of them justified her unkind behaviour as follow: *'I yell at them because they won't play with me!'* (Questionnaire 28/5/11).

Apart from becoming more isolated and unkind to each other, the wave of individualism seems to damage children's social skills in other ways. According to the teachers, students often engage in conflicts and face difficulties in working with others. A teacher commented on the nature of their conflicts:

*'Children have always fought. However, modern children have developed very aggressive, even violent, behaviour that puts their lives at risk.'*

(Interview 16/6/11)

Her assumption chimes with the findings of the *Good Childhood* report which draws a bleak picture on the well-being of children based on the **behavioural problems** they exhibit (Layard *et al.* 2009, p. 2). As mentioned in Section 2.3.2, it is the same concerns regarding student behaviour that led the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture to set the development of *respect, responsibility* and *solidarity* among students as a primary educational goal for 2010-11 (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website 2012a).

In their questionnaire responses, only 5 out of 37 students admitted to having conflicts with other children at school (Questionnaires 17/5/11, 21/5/11 and 28/5/11). One mentioned facing difficulties in working with others, while 24 out of 37 reported to be happy when working with their classmates.

A few teachers and parents articulated their uneasiness regarding the effects of technological progress on children's social skills. They believe that youngsters spend a lot of their time indoors watching TV or playing electronic games, and this damages their social skills. A teacher argued in favour of returning to *outdoor play*:

*‘Outdoor, collective play gives them a chance to socialise more, in a different way than they socialise online. It gives them a chance to resolve their differences face to face.’*

(Interview 20/9/11)

The previous PS head teacher referred to *social* and *economic inequality* as important factors that negatively affect the social skills of students. He believed that those who are not financially well-off or come from a low social class results in them experiencing social exclusion (Interview 13/10/10).

Ridge also raises this point in her book *Childhood poverty and social exclusion from a child's perspective* (2002). She offers the accounts of students who experienced stigma, bullying and structural exclusion from shared activities because of the financial hardship that they endured and that did not allow them to wear fashionable clothes at school (2002, p. 84). In his book *Together: The rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation*, Sennett makes a similar argument, claiming that social inequality affects children's ability to connect and to co-operate with one another (2012, p. 137).

That social exclusion is a reality in the lives of Cypriot children, is confirmed by the fact that the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture declared ‘the prevention of social exclusion through education’ as a primary educational goal for schools during 2009-10 (The Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website 2012a).

### **4.5.3 Self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement**

In the Literature Review (Section 3.2.3), we saw the arguments of different authors regarding the correlation between a student's self-confidence and the testing and assessing of her school efforts. Seldon asserts that the constant evaluation of a student's academic progress negatively influences her self-esteem and causes her stress (cited in Suissa 2008, p. 576). Bunker agrees that the evaluative nature of the educational system contributes to children feeling little confidence about themselves and their abilities (1991, p. 469). Alexander *et al.* have documented students' responses to the experience of school assessment and have found out that the latter use words that manifest low self-confidence, such as 'worried', 'nervous' and 'scared' (2010, p. 149).

Interestingly enough, my students' responses revealed that the majority felt self-confident regarding their school progress. When asked whether they felt that they were doing well in school, 20 out of 37 children gave a positive answer, with only 1 out of 37 children disagreeing (Questionnaires 17/5/11, 21/5/11 and 28/5/11). Moreover, only 5 out of 37 reported to feel stressed at school because of tests or other forms of assessment (Interviews 17/5/11 and 27/5/11).

### **4.5.4 Play**

As discussed earlier (Section 4.4.1), opportunities for play are reduced for children within the greater agenda of them succeeding professionally in the future. Receiving private lessons in the afternoon or joining extra-curricula activities to complement their school education can take time away from their play.

When asked whether they would have liked more time to play, 20 out of 37 children gave a positive answer (Questionnaires 17/5/11, 21/5/11 and 28/5/11).

Parents commented on the issue of lack of play time:

*'We are forcing our children to take lots of different classes in order for them to respond to the demands of society. As a result, children do not have time to engage in play; even in its simplest form, such as to take a ride on their bikes.'*

(Interview 28/5/11)

*'The problem is that children nowadays have lots of extra-curricula activities as part of a bigger plan. Children (...) miss out on the fun of being a child.'*

(Interview 18/6/11)

This is what Bkorklund means when he writes that, parents are willing to sacrifice their children's play time when it comes to 'improving their children's résumés', (2007, p. 201).

Both parents and teachers noted a shift from *energetic outdoor play* to *sedentary indoor play* in children. This phenomenon does not only relate to the technological progress made in the types of play, but also to parental concerns regarding the safety of their children (Bjorklund 2007, p. 155). As one parent expressed it:

*'(In my time) we played outdoors, we ran, we felt free because there were no cars or dangers to run away from. Our parents did not need to protect us from threats.'*

(Interview 28/5/11)

The views expressed above tie in with the findings of the *Cambridge Primary Review*, according to which the loss of outdoor play has to do with ‘anxious parents, school tests and computer games’ (2010, pp. 65-66). The Review adds another factor that contributes to the decline in outdoor play: The *lack of quality play spaces* both in and out of schools (2010, p. 66). A teacher stressed this point in his interview:

*‘There are no vacant lots for children to play football in nowadays; new houses are built all the time.’*

(Interview 16/6/11)

The lack of play areas within the school environment is an important issue to discuss. The primary school in which I conducted my fieldwork had been famous for its rich playground, containing toys such as slides, swings and ‘merry-go-rounds’. According to the previous head teacher, these had been donated by members of the community when the school was built in the early twentieth century (Interview 13/10/10). In 2008, the primary school was declared as ‘regional’ which signified an increase in the number of students. This increase, in combination with the new architectural demands of the 2008 Educational Reform in Cyprus, led to the building of new classrooms. To the great disappointment of children, the playground was replaced by a much smaller one which consisted in a concrete floor. When the Minister of Education and Culture visited the school soon after the building work had finished, the Students’ Board made an official request for the return of the toys to the playground (Interview with the assistant head teacher 20/9/11). The Minister responded that the general architectural guidelines for Cypriot schools did not allow



for their demands to be met. He further advised them to go to a park if they wanted to play with such toys. The irony of this is that there are no such parks with toys for children within walking distance.



*Figure 5: The yard of the Primary School before the renovation of 2011.*

In their interviews, the PS students expressed their desire for the return of the toys in the school yard. When asked whether there was anything they would have liked to change to make them happier at school, 9-year-old Christie replied that she would have liked for toys in the school yard (Interview 24/5/11). She added that, since the toys had been removed, all that she and her friends could do is to ‘*run around*’.

The mother of a PS child, who worked as a cleaning's lady at the school, had an interesting comment to make while observing children in the new playground:

*'When the yard had toys in it, children could really play. All they can do now is play football (...). They usually fight during football games. They tease each other and beat each other up because they have nothing better to do.'*

(Interview 20/9/11)

#### **4.5.5 Beauty**

In Section 4.3.2, I used the theories of Winston (2010), Schiller (1967, cited in Winston 2010) and Scarry (2001) to argue that the beauty of educational environments can contribute to the well-being of those who live and work in them. This is an important argument to take into consideration when discussing about learning environments in Cyprus. Following the traditional architectural guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education and Culture, school buildings tend to convey straight lines and dull colours. In the PS in which I conducted my fieldwork, the case was no different. In his interview, the previous head teacher reported that, when the primary school's renovation was finished in 2011, students and teachers were confronted by an architectural design of white walls and grey cement. He admitted:

*'I would have preferred for brighter colours to convey.'*

(Interview 27/9/10)



*Figure 6: The yard of the Primary School in the present.*

The Arts teacher of the same school found that:

*‘Today our schools are suffering in the aspect of beauty (...). Our educational system undergoes many changes, but the basic problems remain.’*

(Interview 16/6/11)

When students were asked if there was anything they would change in their schools so as to make them happier places, one responded that she would make them ‘prettier’ (Questionnaire 17/5/11).

In an attempt to beautify the PS environment, teachers encouraged their students to create murals on the walls.

*'Children need bright colours (...). Monotony discourages them. They enjoyed adding some colour to their school. They created murals on the school walls and their classrooms walls with the permission and guidance of their teachers.'*

(Interview with the previous head teacher 27/9/11)



*Figure 7: Murals on the walls of the Primary School created by the students.*





*Figure 8: Murals on the walls of the Primary School created by the students.*



*Figure 9: Murals on the walls of the Primary School created by the students.*

In the opening chapter of his book, Winston introduces the idea that beauty in educational contexts is ‘sleeping’ and that ‘very few educationalists are trying to awaken her’ while the majority ‘seem happy to forget it altogether’ (2010, p. 10). Beauty seems to be sleeping when it comes to the learning environments in Cyprus. Efforts to awaken this beauty, such as those made by the students and teachers of the PS, are necessary in making the learning experience more pleasurable and in enhancing the well-being of children.

#### **4.5.6 Children’s voice**

One of the teachers whom I interviewed had spent two years working in the Commissioner’s Office for Children’s Rights in Cyprus. Her duties involved working with children to raise awareness for their human rights in relation to their social and emotional well-being. It was interesting to hear that - based on her experience both as a Human Rights’ facilitator and as a teacher - she believed that the greatest problem children face today is that they have no one to talk to:

*‘We asked children to tell us who they talk to when they want to discuss something troubling for them. We were amazed by their responses. There were children who admitted to talking to a friend of theirs, to a pet of theirs, or even to a toy of theirs. Cypriot children have everything regarding material wealth. However, they do not have the opportunity to spend much quality time with the adults in their lives, or to really talk to them.’*

(Interview 30/9/11)

Other teachers added to this:

*'We don't have the patience to listen to children. We just tell them what to do.'*

(Interview 20/9/11)

*'As hard as we teachers try to give children opportunities to express themselves verbally, we end up doing most of the talking unfortunately. It is very rare for students to do most of the talking.'*

(Interview 16/6/11)

These views are in accordance with Haynes's assumption that:

More often than not where children are concerned, practitioners are still listening *for* rather than listening *to*. Mechanisms and opportunities for children's voices to be heard in the majority of schools remain limited. (2009, p. 40, italics in original)

As discussed earlier, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child has set out an important route through which the well-being of children internationally can be achieved. Any violation of children's rights, including their right to be heard, is seen as posing a threat to their well-being.

Alexander *et al.* draw our attention to the absence of children's voices in discourses that affect them, and the replacement of these voices with their parents' misplaced assumptions as to what their children think (2010, p. 56). Interestingly enough, this came to the surface in my research when children's optimistic views of their well-being often seemed to contradict the gloomy views offered by their parents. Alldred maintains that the benevolent attempts of adults to represent children's voices in

research are not always in the latter's best interests (1998, p. 151, cited in Boylan and Dalrymple 2009, p. 73).

#### ***4.6 Dealing with the problem: Well-being education***

In the Literature Review (Section 2.4) I discussed the recent efforts made to address the well-being of children through technical educational programmes; Social and Emotional Education (SEAL) in the UK and Social and Emotional Education (SEE) in Cyprus. I offered their philosophy, evidence of impact and criticisms they have undergone based on theoretical evidence and published reports. As there are no official reports regarding SEE, in this section I will offer the critical views of Cypriot teachers that have taught SEE, as these were expressed in their interviews. Furthermore, I will offer my own critical perspective on it informed by my observation of a SEE class, and supported by international critical reports on well-being education.

##### **4.6.1 Evidence of impact of SEE on the well-being of children**

According to interviews with the teachers, SEE was taught as part of other subjects and was non-compulsory (Interviews 18/5/11, 24/5/11, 30/5/11 and 10/6/11). Teachers who chose to teach it did so because they had a personal interest in it, and because they believed it could help their students enhance their social and emotional skills (Interviews 18/5/11 and 10/6/11).

I asked teachers whether they believed that SEE had contributed to the well-being of their students in any way. Out of the 8 teachers interviewed, 5 responded positively and explained the ways in which they thought SEE had helped their students: In developing their social skills (Interview 18/5/11), in learning how to manage difficult



situations (Interview 30/5/11), in expressing their feelings (Interview 10/6/11), in achieving conflict resolution, and in dealing with bullying (Interview 16/6/11).

However, teachers did acknowledge the limitations of SEE's contribution. One admitted that it was difficult to evaluate the results of SEE, because the assessment of children's emotions is not an easy task (Interview 18/5/11). Others admitted that, in order for any effects to take place, the teaching of SEE has to be long-term and frequent (Interviews 18/5/11, 10/6/11). A teacher was optimistic in that SEE could be the first step in dealing with issues that threaten children's well-being, even if it cannot resolve these issues on the whole (Interview 30/9/11).

The General Co-ordinator of Health Education Programmes (which SEE is now taught as a part of) outlined an important limitation; that pupil well-being cannot be enhanced solely through the teaching of SEE (Interview 6/7/11). In her opinion, other factors come into play with regard to child well-being, with the most powerful being those of social justice and equality, as well as that of their family environment. She argued that, when working towards the social and emotional strengthening of children through education, teachers have to bear in mind the limitations of the contribution of SEE. Her view accords with Hutchinson's assertion when problematising well-being education:

'(...) people's lives are hugely shaped by their experience *outside* formal educational institutions and the role of *informal contexts* in contributing to wellbeing needs also to be recognized' (2009, p. 98).

#### 4.6.2 Criticisms of SEAL and SEE

In Cyprus, no official reports were made to challenge the methods or the contribution of SEE to student flourishing. Due to the lack of evaluative reports on SEE, I decided to gather and offer the critical perspectives of teachers that have taught SEE in primary schools in Cyprus. I will also provide my personal critique on it based on my observation of a SEE class (28/9/11) and informed by some of the critical reports on SEAL offered in the Literature Review (Section 2.4.3). As I mentioned before, SEAL and SEE share the same philosophy and principles.

In their interviews, the teachers expressed some of their concerns regarding SEE. One mentioned that it was difficult for her to evaluate whether the SEE goals had been achieved or to know what kind of outcome she could expect from each activity (Interview 30/5/11). Two others shared the concern regarding the role of the *psychologist* which they believed SEE assigns to teachers (Interviews 16/6/11, 30/9/11). They explained that this role has to do with the sensitive issues SEE invites for discussion, and with the sharing of children's personal experiences SEE encourages. However, as one teacher argued:

A teacher is not a psychologist; she is not in a position to give proper guidance to a child who has had traumatic experiences. (Interview 30/9/11).

The other mentioned that, in the SEE training he had received, teachers were guided as to how to avoid assuming the role of a psychologist. They were advised to respond to children sharing their personal stories with empty phrases such as *'I can understand'* or *'I can empathise with you'* (Interview 16/6/11). The teachers' views about the need to distance themselves from such a role, tie in with Craig's (2009) assertion when critiquing well-being approaches in schools. She argues for the need

for teachers to return to being good teachers, rather than acting ‘as surrogate psychologists or mental health workers’ (2009, p. 16, cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 4).

The SEE lesson that I observed (28/9/11) focused on the issue of bullying. The course of the lesson, as described by the teacher in her interview (30/9/11), was as follows: First of all, she asked the students to share their experiences of bullying. Students had some difficulties understanding what ‘bullying’ meant. In order to help them, the teacher told them a fictional story about a child that was bullied. They were then able to narrate some of their experiences. She then asked them to reflect on their feelings as victims of bullying and to share these with the class. They did an exercise from their textbooks whereby they matched the bullying incident described with the action they would take in case it occurred in real life. As the lesson was coming to an end, the teacher advised them to inform an adult in case they ever found themselves being bullied, rather than trying to resolve the conflict themselves. Lastly, they were handed out pieces of paper and wrote down the names of adults whom they would go to in case such an incident ever occurred.

Looking at the lesson from a critical perspective, what struck me was that it was mainly based on discussion rather than physical action. What is more, because some of the students had never experienced bullying, they either did not understand what this meant or made up stories of being bullied. This takes us back to Suissa’s critique of how children need some *empirical understanding* of these experiences and their consequences if they are to learn how to deal with them (2008, p. 582). Discussions in class about bullying might teach children how to deal with it to some degree;

however, this learning is doomed to be soon forgotten in the same way much of the teaching and advising that teachers offer on a daily basis are.

In the Discussion chapter, I will refer back to the points raised during the critical evaluation of SEAL and SEE, in order to support my argument that drama is in position to help children flourish in a more organic way.

#### **4.7 *The contribution of drama to the additional aspects of well-being***

In the Literature Review (Section 2.5.3), I explained how drama can contribute to the enhancement of the aspects of child well-being I had originally set out to explore: *Happiness and pleasure; sociability, social skills and skills of working with others; and self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of achievement*. My research and analysis of data have revealed further aspects of child well-being: *Play; beauty; and children's voice*. Therefore, in this section I will offer the theoretical writings of classic and modern educationalists to highlight how drama can contribute to the additional aspects of well-being. To be more specific, I will explore how drama can contribute:

- To children being offered opportunities to *play*.
- To children acquiring experiences of *beauty* and of *aesthetic quality*.
- To children being offered opportunities to express their *voice* and to have this taken into consideration.

It is important to point out that in this section I will not present any evidence from my project, even though it is part of the chapter of the Presentation of Data and Results. However, I believe it is essential to provide the theoretical framework of the

contribution of drama with regard to the new aspects of well-being, in the same way I provided the theoretical framework of the rest of the aspects in the Literature Review (Section 2.5). This will set a solid theoretical basis for the in-depth analysis and discussion of my findings in the following chapter (Chapter 5).

#### **4.7.1 Play**

The relationship between drama and play is depicted in the early years of a child's life. Booth reminds us that role play comes natural to them from the time that they can first move about, and that drama is at the heart of their casual play (1994, p. 17). Bowell and Heap agree that it is an innate predisposition for children to take on imagined roles and place themselves in fictional situations in order to understand the world in which they live (2001, p. 37).

The theory of Dewey is helpful in illustrating the connection between drama and play. He argues that childhood play, and the problem-solving skills exercised through play, are vital to the cognitive and emotional development of children (Nicholson 2009, p. 14). He considers play to be pertinent to the arts, and participation in the arts to be a playful experience. Therefore, the arts hold the capacity to help children grow emotionally and cognitively. He advocates that, by introducing the arts into the educational system, students can be helped in making lines between their imaginative worlds and the learning environment (Nicholson 2009, p. 14). In Dewey's words, the arts follow for 'a complete merging of playfulness with seriousness' (1934, p. 279, cited in Nicholson 2009, p. 15).

In his book *The Future of Ritual* (1993), Schechner makes strong associations between art, ritual, performance and play:

Indeed, art and ritual, especially performance, are the homeground of playing. This is because the process of making performances does not much imitate playing as epitomize it. (1993, p. 41)

For Schechner, play and performance share common ground. They both involve players, directors, spectators and commentators, each of whom has her own passionately pursued goals (1993, p. 27). Also, when activities feed on the underlying ground of playing, they use play mood for refreshment, energy, unusual ways of turning things around, insights and, especially, *looseness* (1993, p. 42, italics in original). It can be claimed that these elements are evident in good drama.

Winston argues that a spirit of playfulness lies at the heart of drama (2004, p. 9). Things happening in drama are highly playful; for example, people get angry without really being angry, or they die without really dying (Winston and Tandy 2001, p. viii). Its playful spirit is also reflected in the games it largely employs. These allow children to release their energy, connect with others and learn about the rules of social encounter (Winston 2000, p. 101).

#### **4.7.2 Beauty**

The work of Winston (2010) brings into light the interaction of beauty and well-being in a drama classroom. He sees the potential of beauty in the ensemble model of teaching, one which fosters the social and artistic abilities of the many, as oppose to that of the few (2010, p. 79). He urges teachers to aspire to the values of the ensemble when organising their lessons and when cultivating the ethos of their classrooms. This will enable them to recognise moments of beauty when they occur. He explains that the social and artistic ideals of the performing arts can be apprehended through the concept of *aesthetic necessity*, and gives the example of a

student performance in Romania to help us understand it (2010, p. 79). In this performance, a little girl spent much time happily and selflessly supporting those around her rather than focusing on her own performance (2010, pp. 79-80). For Winston, that was a *beautiful* moment because it reflected the principles of the ensemble approach that children were infused with; ‘shared endeavour and mutual support and consideration’ (2010, p. 80, italics in original). He concludes as follow:

Such are the potential achievements of beauty within the performing arts – joyful, profound, morally significant and reaching far beyond the educational limitations of skills-based curricula. (2010, p. 80)

Winston implies a connection between the achievements of beauty and the *intrinsic* value of the arts. Children develop skills such as shared endeavour and mutual support through their enjoyment of the arts and the beauty that the arts convey. In contrast, the practices of SEAL and SEE seek to develop similar skills in an *instrumentalist* way; that is, by setting a series of objectives and by encouraging children to perform exercises that respond to these objectives.

The dramatic performance can serve as an experience of beauty to help children flourish personally, socially and emotionally. In preparation for their performance, the desire to create something beautiful acts as motivational force for their collective work (Winston 2010, p. 78). When they appreciate that their dramatic product is beautiful, they long to share it with others so as to offer them a sense of *aesthetic pleasure* (2010, p. 127). This claim chimes with Scarry’s argument that an experience of beauty cannot be contained within a person; it has to be shared (2001, p. 3). Thompson calls this ‘a desire to *share affect*’ (2009, p. 144, italics in original):

We accept beauty is in our eye, but we are desperate to locate it in an object (workshop, performance, song) and share that feeling with others. (2009, p. 144).

As mentioned before, children can experience a sense of thrill when sharing their work. It could be argued that this thrill is one of the effects of pleasure derived from beauty, as these are mentioned by Scarry: A rush of adrenaline, the heart beating faster and feeling that life is more vivid and animated (2001, pp. 24-25). Thompson describes the experience of beauty when participating in artistic activities as ‘that moment of *pleasurable, world-stopping* sensation’ (2009, p. 140).

O’Neill maintains that drama carries the potential to help participants experience what Murdoch calls ‘unselfing’. The former uses the term ‘self-transcendence’ as a synonym for unselfing (2006, p. 81). She believes that drama’s educational value lies in its capacity to promote a shift of focus from oneself to a different time and location (2006, p. 81). She connects drama and self-transcendence as follows:

Although all art contains the possibility of taking us beyond ourselves, theatre and drama demand actual participation in an illusion, which inhibits self-assertive tendencies and facilitates self-transcending tendencies. Cassirer (1944) asserts that art turns emotion into a means of self-liberation and gives us inner freedom. (O’Neill 2006, p. 81)

#### **4.7.3 Children’s voice**

McClaren argues that a pedagogy that stimulates dynamic forms of participation positively resonates with ‘the dreams, desires, voices and utopian longings’ of students (1988, p. 168, cited in Taylor and Warner 2006, p. 106). Echoing his argument, Taylor and Warner claim that drama can build on the dreams and voices of children, because it marks their contributions as valid (2006, p. 106).



Winston (2004) illustrates several ways in which drama encourages children to express their views, thoughts and feelings, to have these listened to and to listen to those of others. Firstly, its formal structures allow them the space to perform and to watch others perform (2004, p. 50). In this way, they can communicate their voice to the audience and develop the skills of listening to one another. Secondly, drama can make room for the voice of those who are not usually heard. At a fictional level, this means that ‘marginalised voices can be forced to the centre of attention’ (2004, p. 50). At a classroom level, it means that children who are usually quiet can be encouraged to speak through the mask of a different identity (2004, p. 50). Thirdly, by taking on a needy or provocative role, the teacher can encourage them to articulate their views, to debate and raise arguments, and ‘to pit their wits against an opposing position’ (2004, p. 50).

Rinaldi’s argument regarding voice not being limited to the verbal expression of ideas is relevant to drama, as it allows children to express themselves through various means, such as signs, symbols and codes (2005, pp. 17, 20). Furthermore, we saw how Watson *et al.* consider listening to children’s voice to be ‘about reciprocal *meaning making* and about engaging in a dialogic process’ (2012, p. 123, italics in original). This idea is pertinent to the dramatic experience. The ensemble approach requires that the teacher and the participants engage in a democratic dialogue and that they have an equal share in producing meaning.

#### **4.8 Further limitations of the contribution of drama and the arts to the well-being of children**

In Section 2.5.3.4 of the Literature Review, I set out the parameters of what a research project such as mine can be expected to achieve. In doing so, I outlined some of the limitations of my project in order to provide a nuanced understanding of the impact of my initiative. Here, I offer further limitations of the project as these came to light during the analysis of my data.

- a. Different children respond differently to dramatic activities and pedagogies.

Therefore, I cannot anticipate a homogenous, positive response relating to their well-being. In the case of my project, this was particularly evident when comparing the responses of the YT children, who shared a love for drama and joined the workshops voluntarily, to those of the PS children, for whom attendance in the workshops was mandatory and who did not necessarily have a natural interest in drama. This limitation is brought to light by McLellan *et al.* (2012) with regard to arts-based approaches in schools for promoting creativity and well-being. They indicate that participants in the projects are not necessarily a homogenous group and that their social circumstances inevitably influence how they interact with such programmes (2012, p. 59). Winston (1996) makes a similar point for drama in particular, arguing that it has no *single* effect upon a group of children:

Responses can depend upon a number of variations within the individuals watching or participating: their personal cultural baggage, their past narratives and future aspirations, the social nature of the group which shares the drama; or as Robinson insists, whichever ‘self’ happens to be prominent at the moment in time. (1996, p. 195)

- b. As mentioned earlier, the responses of my students regarding their well-being, offered before I embarked on the project, were generally positive. This renders my approach, not one which aims towards healing the damaged well-being of children, but one which is concerned with what contribution drama can make towards the personal, social and emotional growth of ordinary children who may already be flourishing in one way or another. Winston's (2004) metaphors of drama are useful here. I am not looking at drama as a kind of *medicine* to tackle my students' personal, social and emotional ills (2004, p. 1). I am rather looking at it as *food*; it helps us grow, flourish and, when consumed in the company of others, strengthen our social bonds (2004, p. 2). However, as is the case with food, the primary purpose of my dramatic approach was for children to *enjoy* the aesthetic experience (2004, p. 2). Unlike the practices followed in SEAL and SEE, I placed emphasis on children enjoying drama for its own sake, rather than on fulfilling instrumental objectives regarding their personal, social and emotional health.

#### **4.9 Summary**

In the second part of my Data Presentation and Results chapter (*Subchapter 4.2*), I offered some information on the socio-economic background of the participating students, as these were given to me by their teachers and other knowledgeable people. I consider this information to be essential in providing an informed picture of my students' well-being, as this is affected by the various socio-economic factors. My findings suggest that the PS and YT students in their majority came from the lower middle class and enjoyed an average financial situation. The educational level

of their parents was relatively high. There were a few children whose families struggled financially and whose parents are either separated or divorced.

In the third part of the chapter (*Subchapter 4.3*), I focused on one of the key findings of my research which was the expansion of what the concept of child well-being involves. I presented the additional aspects of well-being that came to light during my fieldwork, namely *play*, *beauty* and *children's voice*. Firstly, I offered the data which I gathered and which prompted me to include each of these categories under the umbrella of well-being. With regard to **play**, the students appreciated that it is an important element of their overall happiness and a reason why they enjoyed our drama workshops. As far as **beauty** is concerned, the teachers acknowledged that a *beautiful* educational environment can make learning and living in school pleasurable and greatly influences the emotional well-being of students. In relation to **children's voice**, student responses to *The Red Tree* drama workshop (28/5/11) revealed that it is essential for them to know that their opinions and feelings are taken into consideration in order to be happy. I supported the evidence with the theoretical writings of ancient and contemporary philosophers in order to illustrate how these three aspects link to well-being.

In the following part (*Subchapter 4.4*), I offered my reformed research questions in order to include the three aspects of well-being which came to light during my fieldwork.

In the fifth part of the chapter (*Subchapter 4.5*), I presented evidence from my project to discuss the factors negatively influencing each one of the areas of children's well-being that my thesis dealt with, namely *happiness and pleasure*, *sociability*, *social skills and skills of working with others*, *play*, *beauty* and *children's*

*voice*. I then supported my evidence mainly with the findings of the *Good Childhood* report and the *Cambridge Primary Review*. As my data has revealed, opportunities for the **happiness and pleasure** of children are reduced because they are thrown into a battle to succeed academically. They suffer an overload of teaching material, an excessive amount of homework and numerous private afternoon lessons which result in them having little time left for play and pleasure. The **sociability** and **social skills** of children are negatively affected by the wave of excessive individualism which encourages them to be self-contained, competitive and unkind towards one another. The new technologies offered to children have changed the face of their play, making it less sociable and more solitary. Moreover, the social and economic inequality among students has been reported to contribute to social exclusion. Literature on the **self-esteem** and **self-confidence** of students claims that these areas are affected by their experiences in the testing and assessing of their academic efforts. The majority of the children participating in my research reported to be feeling content with their school progress, while a few expressed their worries regarding school evaluation. With regard to **play**, children and their parents acknowledged that the former are deprived of their play time. This is not only because of the overload of homework and private afternoon lessons, but also because of the lack of quality play spaces. The **beauty** of the learning environments in Cyprus is concealed under a pattern of straight lines and dull colours. In an effort to beautify the learning environment of the primary school in my project, the students and teachers created murals on the walls. Opportunities for the expression of **children's voice** were reported to be limited. Teachers acknowledged that this occurs because children have no one to talk to, or because adults lack the patience to listen to them. As a result, the latter end up doing most of the talking and often

replace children's voices with their own misplaced assumptions as to what children think.

In the sixth part of the Results chapter (*Subchapter 4.6*), I turned my attention to the educational effort to address the well-being of Cypriot students; the Social and Emotional Educational (SEE) module. In discussing its evidence of impact, the majority of teachers found that it helped their students flourish in different ways: In the development of their social skills; in learning how to manage difficult situations; in expressing their feelings; in achieving conflict resolution; and in dealing with bullying. Nevertheless, some important limitations regarding SEE's contribution came up. These include difficulties in assessing its impact, the need for its long-term and frequent teaching, as well as the possible overwriting of its contribution by more powerful factors such as those of social inequality and family environment. I concluded this section with the criticisms of SEE offered to me by the teachers, as well as my critical perspective of it informed by my observation of a SEE class. An important point raised by the teachers is that SEE often assigns them the role of a psychologist because it invites sensitive issues for discussion and because it encourages students to share their personal experiences. In my observation, I realised that the students lacked the empirical understanding to contribute to the discussion on the issues raised in class.

The seventh part of the chapter (*Subchapter 4.7*) was concerned with the contribution of drama to the particular aspects of child well-being that came to light during my research: *Play, beauty and children's voice*. Even though in this section I did not offer any data from my research, I believe it was important to provide the theories supporting the contribution of drama to these areas in order to establish a

solid theoretical basis for my in-depth analysis and discussion of findings which will occur in *Chapter 5*.

In the last part of the Results chapter (*Subchapter 4.8*) I outlined further limitations of my project as these came to light during the process of data collection and analysis. Firstly, I realised that different children respond in different ways to the dramatic activities. Therefore, I cannot expect a homogenous response regarding the impact of drama to my students' well-being. How a child responds to drama and how drama influences the various aspects of her well-being is also associated with her socio-economic and family background. Secondly, the responses of my students regarding their well-being before I embarked on my project were generally positive. This renders my approach not as one in which I use drama to heal the suffering well-being of children, but one in which I am interested in finding out what drama has to offer to children who are already happy and flourishing.

In the following chapter (*Chapter 5*), I will focus on three key issues that, in my view, best highlight the contribution of drama to the well-being of my students: The *choice of stories* on which the drama workshops were built and how these influenced my students' well-being; the types of *play* drama accommodated and their impact on the participants' well-being; and the opportunities offered in drama for children to express their *voice* and to flourish through this process. In order to mount my arguments, I will use evidence from my research, some of which I already offered in the Results Chapter and which I will support with interdisciplinary theories.

## Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three subchapters. In the first one (*Subchapter 5.2*), I will discuss how the choice of stories which the drama workshops were based on influenced the different areas of my students' well-being. Taking the story of Yallery Brown as an example, I will discuss how horror stories, which are traditionally ignored in school contexts, can actually contribute to children's flourishing. In the second one (*Subchapter 5.3*), I will highlight the relationship between play and well-being. To be more specific, I will give examples from my students' boisterous play and free, socio-dramatic play within the drama workshops to illustrate how these helped them grow individually and collectively. In the third one (*Subchapter 5.4*), I will explain how, by allowing the space for children to express their voice both in and out of role, and by letting this voice shape the dramatic events and performance, they derived benefits in terms of pleasure, sociability, self-confidence and sense of achievement, self-discipline and beauty. The issues in the three subchapters will be examined through the lenses of gender and pedagogy. Even though gender and pedagogy are not my primary foci in this study, these are issues I cannot ignore in my attempt to provide an informed picture of the contribution of drama to well-being.



## **5.2 *Stories for the well-being of children***

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

In this subchapter of the Discussion, I will discuss my choice of stories in the building of drama work that had children's well-being at heart. As there is not enough space here to present all of the stories that my students explored through drama, I will concentrate on one which the older children of the Youth Theatre found most appealing and chose to present in the final performance: Joseph Jacobs's horror story of *Yallery Brown* (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the story).

I decided to begin the Discussion chapter with the issue of stories for two reasons. Firstly, because it sets the tone for the themes I will be discussing in the chapters that follow, namely the role of play and voice in student flourishing. Secondly, because it raises an important point; issues relating to drama and the well-being of children are not technically straightforward. Stories used in schools to enhance students' positive feelings and qualities tend to be didactic and moralistic in nature; and such is the case with the stories used in the teaching of Social and Emotional Education (SEE) (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012). However, children's responses pointed to a different direction; stories of horror, apart from entertaining them, make a worthwhile contribution to their well-being. In the same spirit, the relationship of drama and the well-being of children is multi-layered and more complex than what the immediate response to this issue might be. It is not limited to drama's potential to entertain children, or to bring them together through its ensemble approach. Throughout the Discussion chapter, I will attempt to depict a more complex side of this relationship, one which is not without its problematic aspects and one which teachers and parents often find difficult to comprehend.

There are five key points I will be discussing in this subchapter. I will start by describing how stories that are traditionally taught in schools can be seen as a way of promoting soft discipline for children (Tatar 1992, p. xvi). Taking the *Yallery Brown* tale as a starting point, I will then discuss the adult concerns that horror fiction often raises. I will go on to argue against these concerns, by demonstrating how this particular story contributed to the well-being of children. This will lead to a discussion on the pedagogy I used in order to protect children from the dangers that engagement with horror fiction entails. I will conclude with a reference to gender and how this influenced the responses to the story. In my effort to illustrate these five points, I will employ data from my research project which I will support with various theories.

An important point to make is that many of the theories I will be using in this subchapter, I have not examined in the Literature Review. This is because literature on well-being does not traditionally include the themes discussed here. Student responses to the *Yallery Brown* story have highlighted significant issues that trouble conventional literature on well-being.

### **5.2.2 Choosing the story**

In the pilot project (Workshop 9/10/10), the YT2 children had the opportunity to choose the type of stories we would work on throughout the year. The horror genre was one that they seemed to be very enthusiastic about. When I asked them how they felt about working with a horror tale, they jumped off their seats and there was a unanimously loud chorus: ‘*Yeah!*’ (Video 9/10/10). In a high-pitched voice, 9-year-old Christopher commented that ‘*It’s perfectly OK!*’ to have a story that was frightening.

I returned a few months later with an English folk tale by Joseph Jacobs called *Tom Tiver*, *Tom Tiver met Yallery Brown* (1894) (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the story). In adapting the story, I changed the setting to that of a toy factory. I portrayed Tom as a kind-hearted man who worked at the factory with his friends and his beloved Greta. I used Winston's suggestions of the warning sign engraved on the stone under which the creature was trapped, as well as of the bag of wish-granting sweets offered to Tom (Winston 1998b, p. 24). The difference in my version was that every time Tom took a sweet, he was able to make any wish he wanted; and every time he did, his loved ones would pay the price. The purpose of these amendments was to enhance the moral dilemmas Tom faced: Helping a person in need while his safety was at risk; getting wishes granted for his own benefit while his loved ones paid the price. Other amendments were made to offer the participants a range of possibilities, contexts and characters to work with.

In Winston's version of the *Yallery Brown* story, the inclusion of the sweets given to Tom is intended to provide a metaphor for drugs and the effects from using them. I used the idea of sweets offered by Yallery Brown so as to provide a didactic platform for the story to be used in school contexts. However, I was not interested with raising children's awareness on drug use. I was more concerned with what the story and the drama work built around it could contribute to different areas of their well-being.

### 5.2.3 Stories in school agenda as means for soft discipline

In their interviews, teachers talked about the stories they used in the teaching of Social and Emotional Education (SEE). One reported that the stories are based on case studies, as part of the greater SEE agenda to help students ‘name, express and manage their feelings’ (Interview with teacher 30/5/11). Another teacher referred to the stories that are read as a stimuli in order to encourage students to talk about their own experiences (Interview 10/6/11). Prompted by the latter’s response, I looked through the literature used in the teaching of SEE. Much of it seemed to be didactic and moralistic in nature, guiding children on how to deal with their emotions through the examples set by the heroes in the stories. An example of such story is one by Violeta Monreal called *Jealousy* (2005), addressed to 6 to 8-year-olds. It is about Christina, a young girl who is upset when a new sibling arrives home. With the help of a genie, she travels forward in time and realises that her being jealous will only make her unhappy. She fights her feelings of jealousy and eventually feels happier inside.

School curricula traditionally include didactic stories that convey implicit moral messages for children. Employing them can be seen as means of achieving soft discipline. This idea ties in with the theoretical work of the French philosopher Foucault (1926-1984). Foucault talks about different forms of power exercised to people (1980, cited in Lawler 2008, p. 57). *Juridical* or *law-like* power is an externally imposed form of power that uses the language of rights and obligations. *Normalizing* or *regulatory* power works from within and uses the language of health, self-fulfilment and normality. When it comes to the disciplining of a child, juridical power tells her ‘obey this or you will be punished’, whereas normalizing power tells her ‘obey this so that you can be happy, healthy and fulfilled’. Didactic stories in the

school agenda use the normalizing form of power in disciplining children. They produce ‘truths’ about the world, such as that enduring hardships will bring you happiness in the end, or that disobeying your parents will only bring you trouble. In order for the child to get the happy ending of the heroes in these tales, she regulates and disciplines herself according to the types of behaviour that the stories dictate. Her values are thus shaped according to those promoted through the stories (Foucault 1980, cited in Lawler 2008, p. 57).

For Foucault, this type of soft discipline is more effective than the type imposed through the juridical form of power because it is less repressive (1980, cited in Lawler 2008, p. 57). When they are explicitly told what they must or must not do, children are more likely to object to the kind of behaviour imposed on them. When presented with this kind of behaviour as a route to pleasure and well-being, they are more likely to accept and to adopt it. Foucault writes:

If power were anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourses. (1980, p. 119, cited in Lawler 2008, p. 57)

In his book *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*, Foucault discusses Bentham’s architectural figure of *Panopticon* to demonstrate how this serves as a means of regulatory power and of soft discipline for the inmates (1977, p. 200). He argues that its disciplinary power lies in the inmates’ anxiousness of awareness. Because they know that they can always be seen and observed, they always behave as they are expected to, even when they are not actually being watched. As a result,

they absorb certain patterns of ‘acceptable’ behaviour and become what Foucault expresses as ‘docile bodies’ (1977, p. 200).

The stories used in school contexts can be seen to have the same effect on students. They discipline them into absorbing certain types of behaviour that they believe will please the teacher, in the same way that an inmate’s behaviour is intended to please the supervisor. Tatar (1992) seems to agree with this view. She argues that the literature we read to children embraces disciplinary principles that aim to construct the ideal child as a docile child (1992, p. xvi). Idleness in the tails is condemned and disobedience is censured. The prevalence of the didactic spirit in stories serves the purposes of the productive socialization, civilization and moralisation of the child (1992, p. xvi).

#### **5.2.4 Adult responses to the horror fiction**

Two incidents involving the parents of two YT members and a school teacher are revelatory of the wider adult concern regarding horror content. Firstly, when children worked with Joseph Jacobs’s *Mr Fox* story with the substitute teacher while I was away for my Upgrade exam (November 2010), the mothers of three girls expressed objections to them engaging with a horror story. They complained to the president of the organisation funding the Youth Theatre about it and asked for more ‘appropriate’ stories for their children (Personal communication with substitute teacher and president of organisation, November 2010). Even though these parents did not complain about the *Yallery Brown* story, their reaction to the *Mr Fox* one is indicative of their uneasiness regarding horror fiction (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the story).

Secondly, when the 9-year-old boys of the Youth Theatre shared their *Yallery Brown* improvisation in class, the school teacher was not pleased with the performance (Informal conversation with children, February 2011). This was a scene in which Tom, tired of being followed by the creature, picks up a fight with it and even attempts to throw a chair at it. That was the first and last time the boys got to present their Youth Theatre work in class. They described the incident as follows:

George: *We asked our class teacher whether we could share our Yallery Brown improvisation (with our classmates). We did, but she hasn't let us perform since.*

Andrew: *We wanted to perform another version of the Little Red Riding Hood, but she didn't let us.*

Nandia: *Why not? What did she say?*

George: *(She just said) no.*

Andrew: *Once we wanted to present an improvisation based on the story of 'Monster House' but we couldn't.*

(Interview 12/3/11)

What would be useful to know here is what exactly it was that the teacher did not find agreeable. Unfortunately, I do not have this data available because I only realised its significance at the stage of the coding of my data. I can only speculate that the teacher must have been anxious about the horror content of the presentation, the messages the story conveyed, as well as the boisterous play drama accommodated. I will discuss the issue of play in the following subchapter. For now,

I will focus on the adult scepticisms regarding the horror content of the story, as well as the ambivalent messages it sends.

### **5.2.5 Scepticisms over horror fiction**

Neither the parents nor the teacher are to be blamed for their reactions of course; they were merely echoing the general adult concern for horror images from which children are to be protected from (Winston 1998b, p. 31). The *Yallery Brown* story contains grotesque and disturbing images, such as that of Tom's first encounter with Yallery Brown or that of Tom's misfortune (Winston 1998b, p. 22). Children reading horror fiction is one thing; but for them to be actively encouraged to set up theatrical images that depict these meanings are issues that parents and teachers might understandably object to.

Bettelheim explains that the adult tendency to forbid fairy tales of horror is based on the rationalisation that, because the child is already afraid of so many things, anything else that looks fearsome should be kept away from her (1978, p. 122). However, as I will argue later on (in Section 5.2.6), it is exactly through dealing with the fearsome aspects that youngsters manage to overcome and master fear.

Horror fiction has largely been omitted from the school agenda. In the infrequent cases of horror stories employed in school contexts, they are used as cautionary tales within what Tatar (1992) calls 'a pedagogy of fear'. The tales encourage students to obey the laws of parental and educational authority using intimidation (1992, p. 30). What this pedagogy of fear really aspires to, according to Tatar, is to encourage docility and conformity for children while condemning curiosity and wilfulness (1992, p. 30).



Apart from the horror images that it entails, the tale also sends ambivalent moral messages that educators do not wish for their pupils to be exposed to (Winston 1998b, p. 22). What happens to Tom is a case of pure bad luck (Winston 1998b, p. 23). In trying to do a good deed, he accidentally releases evil forces that are beyond his understanding and that eventually destroy him. In contrast with the values that the school agenda of didactic stories promote, this one seems to suggest that compassion and altruism are virtues that are not rewarding in themselves, but might well result in the undermining of one's well-being. Tom does not deserve what he gets; and yet there is no way out of his misfortune. This ambiguity of moral messages, and the sense of pessimism and desperation that the story is infused with, renders it a misfit in the school body of literature.

If a story like this ever made it inside classroom walls, its content would need to be revised or sanitised before it was deemed as acceptable for a young audience. This is nothing new to the world of children's literature. According to Shannon, 'the history of the struggle over the content of children's and adolescents' reading material is nearly as long as the history of schooling in America' (1989, p. 97, cited in Taub J. and Servaty L. 2003, p. 53). Children have traditionally been seen as weak and in need for protection from the kind of literature that held the potential of corrupting them and of undermining their values and beliefs (Taub J. and Servaty L. 2003, pp. 53-54).

Perhaps the most famous examples of fairy tales revised are the tales of Brothers Grimm. Zipes describes how the Grimm tales have long been used or abused in schools with regard to their content, morals and types of role models they convey (2007, p. 81). The tales were evaluated by educators and school boards according to

the educational standards of the country and of the historical period. Tales such as *Snow White*, *Cinderella* and *Little Red Cap* have always gained access in classrooms because, in Zipes's words, 'they instruct children through explicit warnings and lessons, even though some of the implicit messages may be harmful for children' (2007, p. 81). For example, *Little Red Cap* has been used to warn children not to trust strangers, but what has been somehow overlooked is its underlying message; if little girls were ever seduced and raped, they should blame themselves for their negligence and compliance (Winston 1998a, pp. 32-33).

Drawing on Foucault's theory of the uses of regulatory power, it can be assumed that these tales were revised so that they could morally discipline children by offering them subtle promises of personal triumph, happiness, health, fulfilment and autonomy (Lawler 2008, p. 57). The stories have served as sites of ideological battles as contemporary authors, such as Zipes, have openly objected to this disciplinary field and have challenged this form of didacticism (Tatar 1992, p. xvi). These authors see themselves as conspiring with their young audience, by helping them work through their problems and by providing them with 'cathartic pleasures' (Tatar 1992, pp. xvi-xvii). They admit that this is not an easy task, because coercive elements cannot be easily eliminated from stories (Tatar 1992, pp. xvi-xvii).

As for the rest of the Grimm tales, the pedagogical debates surrounding them have focused on the brutality and cruelty of some of their content. The folklorists justify this by explaining that the fairy tales were never meant for children's ears alone (Tatar 1987, p. xiv). They were shared among adults at fireside gatherings or in spinning circles, and only joined the canon of children's literature two or three centuries ago (Tatar 1987, p. xiv). Because of the 'inappropriateness' of their

content, these tales had to be censored before they made their way into the school classrooms. Hence, most children will never know that *Cinderella*'s sisters had their eyes pecked out by birds, or that the witch in *Snow White* was forced to dance around in red-hot shoes (Zipes 2007, p. 81). And it is therefore no wonder that some of the darkest stories of the Grimm Brothers, such as *The Stubborn Child*, are not as widely known (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the story). The tales were also criticised for their moral messages, suggesting that virtue is equated with physical beauty and justice with violence and cruelty (Winston 1998b, p. 22). Their moral suitability was further questioned based on the role models they promoted. Lurie offers the example of *Cinderella* who was condemned in the eighteenth century for promoting 'some of the worst passions that can enter a human breast (...) such as envy, jealousy (...), vanity, a love of dress etc.' (1990, p. 17, cited in Winston 1998a, p. 31).

Interestingly enough, Greek tragedies, Shakespearean plays and Jacobean tragedies, which have at their heart the most violent of human attitudes, are commonly appreciated as supreme works of literature and have an important place in school curricula. Their celebration of horror and violence is overlooked because they are protected under the umbrella of the great works of literature. They belong to a 'high aesthetic' culture, as Bourdieu would put it, and engaging with these works is a sign of high class, good education and exceptional taste (Bourdieu 1984, p. 32). Because *Yallery Brown* is a folk tale that is not as widely known, it cannot be defended in the same way. It is a story for 'ordinary people' and belongs to 'popular aesthetic' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 32). Consequently, it is more vulnerable to being mistrusted.

The *Harry Potter* books are another example of literature that has become the subject of challenge and controversy because of the horror and other issues they accommodate. Taub and Servaty (2003) argue against the assumption that the books are harmful for young readers. They quote Stevenson on her argument that adult perception of what is too frightening for children may be inaccurate and based on flawed reasoning (1998, cited in Taub J. and Servaty L. 2003, p. 62). In Stevenson's words:

We can never really experience the children we were without bringing along the adults we've become; our adult-imagined children often do not judge or respond to books as would real contemporary children or even as our younger selves would have. (1996, p. 310, cited in Taub J. and Servaty L. 2003, p. 62).

In defending the *Harry Potter* books, Cantor suggests that the visual images children are daily exposed to through TV and films have a much greater capacity to frighten them than the word portrayals in books do. This is because, when reading aloud, the adult reader can edit and interpret the story as she goes on (1998, cited in Taub J. and Servaty L. 2003, p. 62). Even if an adult is not present, Cantor explains, the child reading independently has the power to control the pace of the story, as opposed to being at the mercy of the pacing of the movie or TV show, as well as their heightened images intended to create further tension and suspense (1998, cited in Taub J. and Servaty L. 2003, p. 62). As I will explain later on (in Section 5.2.7.3), editing and controlling the pace of the story in order to overcome fear can be also performed through drama.

Contrary to these fears regarding the horror content of the story, I will now argue that it is exactly this that children enjoyed and that contributed to different areas of

their well-being. I will draw on the theories of Tatar, Zipes and Bettelheim among others, to support the evidence from my research project. I will discuss the contribution of the story to the well-being of my students in terms of the *content* of the story, as well as in terms of the drama *processes* and *activities* used to explore it.

### 5.2.6 Horror stories and the well-being of children

Throughout the fieldwork, children, and especially boys, sought to experience the thrill of horror. This invites a discussion on gender, which I will engage in later (Section 5.2.8). In the first *Yallery Brown* workshop (29/1/11), while a few girls appeared to be worried over the story becoming too frightening, the 9-year-old boys were eager to know whether it would be even scarier than *Mr Fox* (Video 15/1/11). I replied that it was going to be as frightening, but in a different way. One of them, Andrew, added:

*'I am not scared Miss. Can we make the story even scarier?'*

He also suggested:

*'If the story gets scary for someone, they should cover their ears and let the rest of us enjoy it.'*

(Video 15/1/11)

Taking his request on making the story scarier into consideration, I planned a short teacher-performance in which the frightening elements of the story were intensified (Workshop 22/1/11). In this, I acted in the role as Tom lifting the stone and meeting Yallery Brown for the first time. In order to create an eerie atmosphere, I asked them

to move from the open hall space to the stage where there was lesser space. I also drew the curtains and dimmed the lights. Both the boys and the girls rushed to the stage, with some of them cheering (Video 22/1/11). As they were taking their places, they were restless and buzzing with excitement and it took them some time to quiet down (Journal 22/1/11).

The presentation did not fail to meet their expectations. In my journal, I noted:

*'In a glance, I took out the mask and the children gasped. I acted out as Yallery Brown using a mysterious voice, telling Tom that I would help him with every chore he had as long as he did not thank me. As children were leaving the stage, they commented on how scary the mask was, how much they had been frightened, and how convincingly I had brought the mask to life with the soft-faint voice I had used.'*

(Journal 22/1/11)

In the third workshop (29/1/11), Michaella, who acted both as a teacher assistant and as a critical friend, joined me in the teacher performance of the second encounter between Tom and Yallery Brown. The same conditions applied. The audience was very quiet throughout the performance. Their eyes were fixed on the mask, which was made out of layers of brown paper and strings of yellow rope, as I slowly moved it around the circle.



*Figure 10: The mask of Yallery Brown.*

Reactions from both boys and girls as they left the performance space included:

*'This can't be!'*

*'Oh my God!'*

*'I know what's going to happen! Tom is going to die!'*

(Video 29/1/11)

Their desire to experience this sense of horror, as well as the pleasure derived from horror, are best explained by Tatar. In her book *Enchanted Hunters* (2009), she uses her own experience of reading horror stories to justify the universal attraction to horror fiction:

Horror (...) compels observers to both look and look away (...). Whether the allure of horror helps us master our fears through repeated readings or merely intensifies them is not entirely clear. But I do recall a clear desire to keep reading books that enabled me to explore carnal mysteries that were otherwise taboo, even if I felt caught between a double desire to keep my eyes glued to the page and to stop reading. (2009, p. 83)

Tatar explains that the reason why we choose to expose ourselves to these images is because we derive a thrill from being frightened and from exploring our fears of bodily harms (2009, p. 83). Horror tales allow us to experience this kind of thrill, of sensual pleasure and aliveness in a safe zone; one in which we know that we cannot get hurt (2009, pp. 83, 88). It is evident that children had derived much thrill in witnessing a scene of horror that felt quite real to them, but knew could not harm them.

The idea alone of working with a horror story must have been seen by the students as a 'liberating tonic' to the tyranny of didactic stories they usually listen to in the classroom (Winston 1998a, p. 28). The idea of this transgression takes us back to the cultural interpretations of the Carnival as given by Bakhtin (1968) and Ehrenreich (2007). In their theories, they argue that the festive spirit of the Carnival allowed for the wider public to playfully mock the socially powerful and to invert the social status, therefore taking pleasure in a temporary loosening of tyrannies of everyday life (Winston 2005, p. 313). Creating images of terror allowed my students to cross the boundaries set by teacher and parental authorities. In Winston's words:

In creating images of Yallery Brown, they escape from conventional morality and indulge in forms of expression normally forbidden to them. (1998b, pp. 30-31)



Bettelheim contrasts the positive effects of allowing children to play around with ‘improper stories’ to the negative effects generated by sheltering children from them, as so often parents and teachers do (1978, p. 7). The tendency of presenting the child with conscious reality and pleasant or wish-fulfilling images, results in the repression of the unconscious and in the overwhelming of the conscious with the unconscious elements. Even if the child does manage to keep the unconscious repressed, Bettelheim explains, maintaining its elements under rigid control can negatively influence her psychological well-being (1978, p. 7).

Another interesting incident involved the girls whose parents had complained about the *Mr Fox* story. Annie and Joanna (both aged 11) and Dina (aged 8) came to me in the first workshop (15/1/11) to express their concerns about working with a horror story. They based their concerns on their experience with *Mr Fox*. Annie claimed that her sister, Dina, had trouble sleeping at night because of the horrific images of the story (Journal 15/1/11).

Whether these girls had genuinely experienced the discomfort of horror, or were merely echoing their parents’ concerns, I cannot be sure of. Nevertheless, what is important to mention here is that, by the time they presented the story in the final performance (29/6/11), they appeared to be, not only comfortable, but actually eager to engage with the frightening elements of the story. In their groups, they composed, rehearsed on and presented some of the darkest scenes of the tale.

The following extract and picture describe Annie’s group presentation where she acted as Tom:

After losing his job at the toy factory, Tom goes back to the place where he first met Yallery Brown. He asks the creature to reveal itself, and to leave him in peace. He takes out the bag of sweets and proposes to give it back. Yallery Brown refuses to take it, putting the blame on Tom for setting him free and for accepting his help. He threatens to keep following him and to keep offering his help. Tom watches the creature dance and swirl in the moonlight, spin and twirl and sing in a mocking tone:

*'Now that you've set Yallery Brown free*

*You'll never find serenity again.*

*He'll help you with every chore*

*(But) he'll follow you around as a punishment!'*

(Video 29/6/11)



*Figure 11: Scene from Annie's group presentation. Yallery Brown is dancing and spinning in the moonlight while Tom is watching in desperation (Performance 29/6/11).*

The following extract and picture describe Dina's group presentation where she also acted as Tom:

Six months later, Tom is still haunted by the creature. When he gets a job in a confectionary shop, Yallery Brown pours poison in the cake that Tom makes. When his boss tries the cake, she immediately falls to the ground. Yallery Brown's devilish laugh fills the room. In that moment of desperation, Tom makes one last wish: *'I wish that Yallery Brown disappeared!'* He rushes out as he hears the creature's cry coming from the bottom of the earth: *'Nooooooooo!'*

(Video 29/6/11)



*Figure 12: Scene from Dina's group presentation (Performance 29/6/11).*

The theory of Bettelheim is useful in explaining how these girls eventually managed to, not only overcome the discomfort of horror fiction, but to actually embrace it (1978, p. 122). He admits that a horror story might cause anxiety to children, but once they become acquainted with it 'the fearsome aspects seem to disappear, while the reassuring features become more dominant' (1978, p. 122). Eventually, the displeasure of anxiety that children originally experience through the story turns into the pleasure of anxiety, which help them successfully face and master the images of terror (1978, p. 122).

The rest of the girls generally seemed to have enjoyed the story. In their interview, two of them reported:

Nandia: *What kind of stories would you prefer we worked on?*

Phanie (aged 13): *Funny stories or scary stories with a sense of humour.*

Savvia (aged 12): *I mostly prefer scary stories, but I don't mind working on a funny story.*

Interview (2/4/11)

Out of all the stories we had worked on, it was Yallery Brown that most appealed to the YT participants. This was made evident through their responses regarding which story they liked most so as to present to the final performance. The vast majority chose this one.

### **5.2.7 Pedagogy on horror stories**

The potential of horror fiction to contribute to the well-being of children in the ways described above could serve as an argument on why such stories should not be avoided in school contexts. However, there are pedagogical challenges that have to be taken into consideration when using these stories. The pleasure children derive from horror stories should not overwrite the fact that there is a possibility of experiencing the displeasure of anxiety Bettelheim refers to (1978, p. 7). In this section, I will discuss the pedagogy I used in order to protect my students from the discomfort that horror fiction entails. My pedagogy consists of the following points: listening and respecting their concerns regarding the content, helping them distinguish between the real and the imaginary, and giving them the space to adjust the pace and content of the story to what made them feel comfortable.

### 5.2.7.1 Listening and respecting their concerns

In my effort to guide the children safely through the darker areas of the story, I asked them to let me know whether the story became dangerously frightening for them at any point. I assured them that, if it did, we would immediately stop the action (Video 15/1/11). My approach accords with the views of Taub and Servaty who, in offering advice on how to approach the *Harry Potter* books, suggest that the educator should respect the decisions of children to ‘opt-out’ of *Harry Potter* read-alouds (2003, p. 69). This ties in well with the first condition of theatre, as noted by Neelands: *Theatre is by choice* (1998, pp. 4, 44). Taking these into consideration, I tried not to pressurise the participants into engaging with dramatic material that made them feel uneasy (Neelands 1998, p. 42). No children opted out of the narration of the story or its exploration through drama.

### 5.2.7.2 Distinguishing between real and imaginary

I reminded the children that events taking place in drama are imaginary, even if they feel real at times (Video 29/1/11). In his book *The Promise of Happiness* (1981), Inglis argues for the need to balance the dose of terror to the incredibility of the story, so that the experience is kept within the realms of the fictional:

Children, of course, like a dose of terrors at times – well-controlled times, with a warm fire and all the lights on all the way upstairs to bed. But as we have already noted, the choice to take a deliberate dose probably needs to be nicely balanced against the incredibility of the tale. If ghost or horror stories and films press too hard against the limits of the conventions, then the imaginative experience begins to get out of hand and ‘become too real’. (1981, p. 280)

In the same spirit, Taub and Servaty recommend that educators should help children develop an understanding of what is real and what is imaginary, and to reinforce an awareness that the horror content is not real (2003, p. 68). In my effort to reinforce

this awareness, I allowed children to see the *Yallery Brown* mask that had made them gasp, out of context (Video 29/1/11). I explained that the mask had been made by English primary school students who had also worked with the *Yallery Brown* story. They seemed to be very interested in it and the youngest ones in the group wanted to touch it. I interpreted this as an attempt to familiarise themselves with the mask and to overcome their fear of it. The older ones offered their comments while observing it:

Andrew (aged 9): *He looks angry!*

Sotia (aged 11): *He looks very old because of his colours.*

Jack (aged 9): *He must be old because he's got long hair.*

Sally (aged 9): *He's old because he's got wrinkles.*

(Video 29/1/11)

### 5.2.7.3 Allowing them to control the pace and content of the story

Another pedagogical approach that I used to help my students master the dark images was to allow them to control the pace of the story through their own interpretations of events. This was evident in the setting up of the scene of Tom hearing the cry and, having read the warning sign engraved on the stone, was debating whether he should lift it (Video 15/1/11). The children performed the scene in a Story Whoosh game. In the critical moments of the atmosphere becoming edgy, they used humour as a way of 'taking the edge of horror', to use Tatar's expression (2009, p. 84). Dina crept under the stone as Yallery Brown in a mischievous way.

The boys made comic sounds of the wind blowing and of thunders breaking in the night. These made the rest burst into laughter. In this way, the atmosphere in the lesson shifted from serious and frightening, to rumbustious activity and laughter (Winston and Tandy 1998, p. 22).

Another example of the participants imaginatively transforming the material in order to feel comfortable with it was through their improvisations on the effects of Tom accepting Yallery Brown's help (Workshop 29/1/11). While this composes a dark image in the tale, their version of events was very humorous. The following extract and picture describe the presentation of a group of 12 and 13-year-olds:

Tom makes a wish that he married his beloved Greta. Curtains in the background start moving and Yallery Brown's song echoes in the room. Time is fast-forwarded and we witness a scene of a traditional Cypriot wedding where an anxious Tom is waiting for his beautiful bride. As soon as he lifts the veil, he realises that Greta had paid the price for his wish-making; she is no longer a pretty young woman, but an old lady with a wrinkled face and yellow hair. The performers are smiling and the audience is laughing; both parties have enjoyed the performance.

(Video 29/1/11)





*Figure 13: Scene from the older children's group's presentation. Tom is shocked to find that his beautiful bride turned into an old woman overnight (Workshop 29/1/11).*

The pedagogy of giving students the space to alternate the content in order to feel comfortable with it, is one that is noted by Holland (2003) in her study of boys' play in English nursery schools. In talking about war, weapon and superhero play, she writes:

We have a choice, therefore, of either insisting that the children leave such material at the nursery door, thus withholding support in helping them to deal with such material, or working with children to help them process and imaginatively transform such material. (2003, p. 33)

#### 5.2.7.4 Limitations of the pedagogy

Despite my best efforts in following the pedagogical principles described above, there were times that my pedagogy failed to protect children from the displeasure of anxiety.

As discussed in the Results chapter (Section 4.3.3), listening to children's voice is an important aspect of their well-being (Rawls 1972, Layard *et al.* 2009, Rees *et al.* 2012). The majority of the YT2 members felt strongly about working with a horror story. Indeed, taking their request into consideration resulted in them enjoying the material with which they worked in the drama workshops. However, when I revisited the video of the pilot project (9/10/10) during the stage of my data analysis, I could see that there were a few girls who had remained silent while the rest expressed their eagerness to work with this genre. Among them were Annie and Ioanna. Going back to the Rinaldi's argument that silence is a form of voice, I realised that the girls keeping silent was their way of expressing their discomfort regarding horror genre (2005, pp. 17, 20).

In the third workshop (29/1/11), I asked children whether they had felt frightened in the previous episode, when Michaela and I had performed in the scene of Yallery Brown giving the sweets to Tom. This is how they responded:

The youngest children in the group, Dina and Nasia (aged 8), raised their hands to show that they had gotten scared. In my effort to prevent this from happening again, I asked them to join the younger children's group where we worked with stories more suitable for their age. I then turned to Annie, who had initially expressed her concerns, to ask her whether she had gotten scared as well. I

mistakenly put her on the spot, which made her feel uncomfortable. She mumbled a soft ‘No’ and then said:

*‘But Miss, can we please have a comic story next time?’*

Dina agreed. Having realised that this was an indirect way of Annie telling me that she had indeed experienced discomfort, I replied in a comforting tone:

*‘Yes, I promise that the next story is going to be a comic one.’*

While Annie and Dina cheered, the boys did not seem very happy about this. Jack, aged 9, said:

*‘What does this mean? Will the comic story be scary at least?’*

(Video 29/1/11)

This once again invites a discussion on the role of gender and the choice of stories, which I will engage in later (Section 5.2.8). For now, it is suffice to say that, despite my pedagogical attempts, Annie and Dina had experienced some unpleasant emotions born out of horror fiction. In her interview after the *Yallery Brown* workshops were concluded, Annie confirmed this:

*‘I don’t like scary stories. I prefer funny ones.’*

(Interview 19/2/11)

Taking their request into consideration, the story to follow, the *Sweetest Fig* was a comic one (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the story).

In the questionnaire distributed to the YT2 members after the series of the *Yallery Brown* workshops were concluded, they were asked whether scary stories had bothered them and would therefore prefer to have stories that are not scary (see Appendix 5, Student Questionnaire 2). The results were as follow:

<i>Question 10: Scary stories bother me and I would rather have stories that are not scary.</i>			
<b>Response</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
Strongly agree	0	2	2
Agree	0	0	0
Neither agree or disagree	0	2	2
Disagree	1	2	3
Strongly disagree	6	8	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>

*Figure 14: Questionnaire responses regarding scary stories (19/2/11)*

The majority of children (17 out of 21) reported to not have been bothered by the *Yallery Brown* story. Evidently, my pedagogy in protecting them from experiencing the uneasiness of horror fiction was successful with most of them. As I have already mentioned, it was the youngest children in the group that my pedagogy did not sufficiently protect from these feelings. Going back to the limitations discussed in the Results chapter (Section 4.8), this is an example of how drama cannot have a single effect upon children (Winston 1996, p. 195). I could not expect a homogenous

negative response from my students to the question above, because they come from different backgrounds and have different personalities, interests and needs.

My efforts in helping children to distinguish between the real and the imaginary appeared to not be as successful with the boys of the group. Buzzing with enthusiasm and eagerness, they reported:

Panos (aged 9): *Miss, sometimes, when I remember the story, I feel that (Yallery Brown) is behind me! I hear his song in my head all the time!*

Jack (aged 9): *Miss, once, as I was passing by my dad's workplace, I felt someone touching me on my back, but when I turned around there was no one there!*

(Video 5/2/11)

Their responses reveal that they had vividly experienced the story, and that they had become immersed in the fictional world that drama had created for them. The imaginary events of the story followed them outside the drama space, and from this they derived the sense of aliveness described by Tatar, or the sense of *illinx* described by Winston:

When a story is told well, we do, indeed, abandon ourselves to it, allowing ourselves willingly to lose our sense of equilibrium and be swept along by the storyteller's language and the events they relate. Good stories can embody the playful spirit of *illinx* as they deliberately create worlds in which the balance of ordinary life is disrupted and turned upside down before being satisfactorily restored at the conclusion. This sensation, so loved by children in its physical

manifestation, has its psychic twin in the very real sensations we experience when captivated by a good story. (2013, italics in original)

*Illinx* is a concept introduced by the French theorist Caillois to describe the state in which play produces sensation of dizziness or vertigo, as is the case with the helter skelter or skiing (Winston 2013).

Key to the children's accessibility in these imaginary worlds is the storytelling skill of the teacher. Cook highlights the nature of this skill by finding analogies for it in the cultural forms of play (2000, cited in Winston 2013). He argues that the storyteller and the other key figures he identifies in the forms of play – the referee and the magician – have a power that 'rests upon special skills and knowledge rather than coercion' and an authority that 'is accepted voluntarily by the manager or facilitator' (Cook 2000, p. 201). These same figures are, in his view, the pedagogical models the modern teacher should aspire to (2000, p. 201). All three figures, I believe, were in evidence during the teaching of the *Yallery Brown* story.

### **5.2.8 Gender and horror fiction**

Even though my thesis is not primarily concerned with the issue of gender, it is one that I cannot ignore when it comes to the responses to the *Yallery Brown* story both by the children and the adults. Data from observation, interviews and the questionnaire revealed that boys and girls had equally derived pleasure in engaging with horror fiction. However, a few incidents indicated that it was the boys who most actively sought to experience the thrill of horror. I have already presented how they insisted, not only on working with a horror story, but also on being offered a scarier version of it. The fact that they wanted to share their *Yallery Brown* and

*Monster House* improvisations with their classmates is indicative of the kind of pleasure they derive from horror fiction. Besides, when I asked children for ideas on how we should warn people that an evil creature is trapped under the stone, the boys quite excitedly suggested that we used ‘*blood*’, ‘*skulls*’, ‘*bones*’ and ‘*lightning*’ (Workshop 22/1/11).

These incidents, along with the fact that the negative responses to the story came from mothers and a female teacher, inevitably lead to a discussion on gender role behaviour. It is important to note that I will not be discussing gender in terms of *polarities*, but in terms of *tendencies*.

There is a well-worn debate on whether gender role behaviour arises from *nature* or *nurture*. Scientific theories attribute the boys’ interest shown in horror fiction and boisterous play to the role of hormones (nature). For example, Biddulph makes a connection between the aggressive behaviour of boys and the testosterone surge they experience at the age of four (1997, cited in Holland 2003, p. 18). His view has been challenged by other scientific writers who assert that testosterone does not lead to aggressive behaviour, but is found in high levels after an aggressive encounter (Rose *et al.* 1972; Travis and Wade 1984, both cited in Head 1999, cited in Holland 2003, p. 18). Whatever the case may be, these scientific debates reveal that no simple conclusions can be drawn regarding the role of nature in gender role behaviour.

Contrary to the scientific argument laid above, there are those who believe that gender role behaviour is socially acquired (nurture) (Holland 2003, p. 18). Kohlberg argues that as soon as children realise that their sex is biologically determined, they begin to interact with the information available to them as to what it means to be a male or a female (1966, cited in Holland 2003, p. 18). The sources of information

include family, peers and media, among others, and promote stereotyped models of behaviour and appearance in relation to gender identity (Holland 2003, p. 19). Advertisements, for example, encourage particular play styles for children; for boys, lively, noisy and physical play that is promoted through toys such as weapons; for girls, a more passive type of play that includes dolls and play houses (2003, p. 24).

The feminist philosopher Butler seems to agree with Kohlberg in that gender identities are not expressions of our inner nature, but are rather performed within a matrix of social relations (2004a, cited in Lawler 2008, p. 114). She explains that when a baby is born, the expression of the sex of the child positions her on one side or the other of a gendered divide. From that moment on, Butler describes, the baby is either ‘girled’ or ‘boyed’. Therefore, the child’s sex or gender is not inherent in her body, but is socially performed as soon as she comes into the world (2004a, cited in Lawler 2008, p. 115). As the child grows, the family, school and the media environment, direct her towards doing things that suit her ‘girled’ or ‘boyed’ identity. This is what the French Marxist philosopher Althusser calls *interpellation*; a process in which social rules govern social formation, such as sexed identity and sexed behaviour (cited in Lawler 2008, p. 115).

Whereas it is not my intention to side with one aspect or the other in the nature/nurture debate, the arguments of Kohlberg and Butler are important in explaining the preference of the boys for horror stories. If we take their theories to be valid, this means that the boys had been engendered into liking these elements. Holland advises practitioners to challenge these gender stereotypes in order to give freedom to children’s growing sense of self (2003, p. 21). Her advice comes useful in the case of a 12-year-old boy who did not share the enthusiasm of the rest in



working with horror fiction. He generally did not fit the social stereotype of boisterous boyish behaviour; he was gentler and calmer by nature. He confided in me:

*'I like scary stories, but I would have liked for us to work on a melodramatic story as well.'*

(Informal conversation 2/4/11)

The concerns expressed by both the mothers and the teacher regarding the choice of story lead to a discussion on the feminisation of education. Feminisation as a term is used to describe a process of change whereby the numbers of women in a field are seen to be increasing in relation to those of men (Leathwood and Read 2009, p. 10). Apart from this concern with numbers, feminisation is also used to signify the cultural change or transformation according to 'feminine' values, concerns and practices. Emphasis on co-operation, care, negotiation and feminine aesthetics are usually indicators of the greater numbers and/or influence of women in a field (Leathwood and Read 2009, p. 10).

When feminisation prevails in primary education contexts, which is the field that my thesis is concerned with, the learning processes and pedagogies are permeated by the female teachers' values (Leathwood and Read 2009, pp. 13, 22). Research exists to suggest that the feminisation of the primary years settings disadvantages boys (Gurian 2001; Mahoney 2001; Skelton 2002 all cited in Browne 2004, p. 124). It conveys the risks of alienating and/or disadvantaging boys, and indeed of feminising them (Leathwood and Read 2009, p. 13). Excluding horror stories from the school

stories agenda as a result of the feminisation of education might therefore pose a danger of offering boys stories that do not appeal to their imaginations. Imagination is an important element of well-being; this is confirmed by Nussbaum (1995) who included it in her list of the *Central Human Capabilities*. Hence, if stories used in school contexts do not arouse boys' imagination, the chances of them making a positive contribution to their well-being are not significant.

An article in a UK tabloid illustrates the widespread concern of boys losing interest in an education that is feminised:

We have challenged the 1950s patriarchy and rightly said that this is not a man's world. But we have thrown the boy out with the bath water .... (Boys) have found the skills have been feminized. What seems to have been beaten out of them is any enthusiasm for anything.  
(Sewell cited in Clark 2006, p. 4 cited in Leathwood and Read 2009, p. 14)

In Cyprus, school teaching is female-dominated, with a percentage of 70% being women teachers (Cyprus Statistical Service 2001, cited in Palmyri 2006, p. 949). Based on the discussion above regarding horror fiction appealing more to boys than to girls, and taking the feminisation of Cypriot schools into consideration, it is easy to understand why such story can be seen as inappropriate for school contexts, and also why boys were so eager to engage with horror fiction.

However, being a female teacher myself, I have found and argued that the *Yallery Brown* horror story choice was not harmful for my students; on the contrary, it was actually beneficial for their well-being. It offered them a thrill of fear, a pleasure in the deliberation from the technical controls a classroom imposed, and a gateway for the release of their unconscious fantasies. Additionally, it provided them with the tools of mastering and overcoming fear. These are significant points for teachers to

take into consideration, as they might change the dominant perspective on the agenda of stories in schools; especially an agenda that focuses on the personal, emotional and social growth of children.

### 5.2.9 Summary

The idea of using a horror story as a basis for drama work that has the well-being at heart, might understandably strike teachers as odd. Responses from the teachers and parents in my project reveal that the horror content is considered to be inappropriate for use in school or similar contexts. In this subchapter, I have argued that the horror content is exactly what children most enjoy and has the potential to contribute to aspects of their well-being. It offers them a sense of **pleasure** and **aliveness** (Ehrenreich 2007), a **release from school pressures and tyrannies** (Bjorklund 2007), and a **getaway for their unconscious fantasies** through the stimulation of their **imaginations** (Bettelheim 1978). However, in order to protect them from the displeasure of horror fiction, it is necessary to employ certain pedagogic principles, such as respecting their right to not engage with it, helping them distinguish the real from the fictional events, and giving them the opportunity to process and imaginatively transform the material in order to feel comfortable with it.

### **5.3. *Play and well-being***

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

The second subchapter of the Discussion examines the subject of play in drama and its role in the enhancement of children's well-being. There are two aspects of play that I will be concentrating on: Boisterous play and free socio-dramatic play. I will present data from my research project regarding these two aspects, and I will employ philosophical theories to illustrate how they helped my students develop on a personal, social and emotional level.

This subchapter is divided into four parts. The first part looks at boisterous play. Taking the teacher's reaction discussed in the previous subchapter as a starting point, I will give possible explanations as to why this play is often perceived by adults to be a dangerous territory. I will then argue against this perception by providing examples of such play from my own research, and by explaining how it helped the participants flourish. The second part focuses on free socio-dramatic play. I will describe the play in which the younger children of the Youth Theatre engaged, and I will explain how it enhanced different aspects of their well-being, with a particular focus on self-transcendence. The third part examines the issue of gender in relation to boisterous play, as this came to the surface in the episodes offered here. The fourth part looks at the pedagogy I used in order to protect children from the risks of boisterous play, and the one I used in order to incorporate the outcomes of the socio-dramatic play in the overall drama plan.

### 5.3.2 Boisterous play

#### 5.3.2.1 Adult scepticisms over boisterous play

Catherine Garvey translates boisterous play in terms of aggressive, energetic, physically demanding play that often involves themes such as fighting and killing (1990, cited in Fletcher 2004, pp. 83, 84). It is important to distinguish between this kind of play and *transgressive* play, which is defined by Winston as one that challenges ‘the boundaries of what is and what is not permissible’ (2005, p. 313). In school contexts, boisterous play is often perceived to be transgressive, in the sense that it interrupts class order and discipline, and is therefore inappropriate. However, as I will argue later on (in Section 5.3.5), boisterous play in drama should not necessarily be perceived as transgressive, provided it is bound by rules and supported by a strong fictional frame. Both of these definitions, boisterous and transgressive play, will be used throughout the subchapter.

The play in the boys’ *Yallery Brown* presentation discussed in the previous subchapter (Section 5.2.4) can be seen as *boisterous*. The scene focused on how Tom, tired of being followed by the creature, picks a fight and attempts to throw a chair at his stalker (Workshop 12/2/11). Because their play challenged the boundaries of what was considered appropriate in the classroom, it was viewed as *transgressive* play.



*Figure 15: The boys' presentation of Tom (played by Panos) picking up a fight with Yallery Brown and attempting to throw a chair at him (Workshop 12/2/11). The picture comes from the presentation which the boys gave in one of the Youth Theatre workshops, and which they later repeated in their school class.*

The teacher's anxiety over the performance is indicative of general adult scepticism over boisterous play. I believe that there are two sources for this: Firstly, the romantic visions of play derived from the philosophies of Rousseau and Fröebel that have had a profound influence on primary teachers' ideological values; and secondly, the feminisation of Cypriot primary education that promotes values antithetical to this kind of play.

As discussed in the Results chapter (Section 4.3.1), Rousseau and Fröebel initiated a romantic stream of thinking about childhood. They saw play in terms of its contribution to children's growth and development. Rousseau rejected the idea of original sin and argued in favour of innate human goodness (Rousseau 1976/2007, cited in Grieshaber and McArdle 2010, p. 3). He therefore considered children to be

naturally good and innocent, and saw play as an expression of their purity (Rousseau 1976/2007, cited in Grieshaber and McArdle 2010, p. 3). Fröebel proposed that play ‘holds the sources of all that is good’ (1900, pp. 54-55, cited in Grieshaber and McArdle 2010, p. 5). In his eyes, it is the perfect medium for the release of the children’s inner powers of goodness (Weber 1984, p. 37, cited in Grieshaber and McArdle 2010, p. 4). Evidently, both philosophers viewed play as a manifestation of children’s goodness and as a medium for the unfolding of their natural kindness.

The romantic visions of Rousseau and Fröebel still influence early years discourse and, in extension, the forms of play encouraged and discouraged in school settings. Two pieces of research on primary school play provide excellent examples of this attitude.

Grugeon’s research (2001) focuses on the singing games of girls in lower school playgrounds. She conducted her research in a lower school with students aged 5 to 9. She makes her argument in reference to the 1997 Spice Girls’ hit song *Wannabe* that became absorbed and gradually adapted in English playground culture (2001, pp. 99-100). In the Bedford school where she conducted her research, she recorded a group of 9-year-old girls singing their version of the song and copying the Spice Girls’ dancing routines as part of their playing routine (2001, p. 99). The teachers of the school had banned any play reference to the Spice Girls because their singing and dancing routines were thought to be ‘explicitly sexual and provocative’ and ‘aggressively loud’, while the content of that particular song was seen as ‘unashamedly explicit and provocative’ (2001, pp. 99-100). The subversive play in which these girls became absorbed contrasted with the teachers’ ideological values that positioned play as an expression of children’s innocence.

Another example of the romantic stream of thinking influencing the forms of play allowed in primary schools comes from Holland's research on superhero, war and weapon play (2003). In her study on boys' play in English nursery schools, she found that teachers were dismissive of such boisterous play because of their fears of it leading to 'disruptive behaviour and real fighting' (2003, pp. 15, 27). These fears gave birth to a zero tolerance policy that has been operating in early years' settings and primary schools in England for thirty years (2003, p. xii). As part of this approach, any play including toy weapons, scenarios associated with superhero, war or play-fighting is banned in school grounds. In extreme cases, the ban has been extended to include other forms of noisy, physically active play (2003, p. xii).

In her interview, the previous Youth Theatre teacher described her experience in a Cypriot school where football and basketball were banned during the break, because they were seen as boisterous and as encouraging violent behaviour:

*'Last year I taught in different schools. In one of them, games such as basketball and football were not allowed during break time. This was because when the students were given the permission to play such games, they often ended up fighting with each other. When they went back to class, they would still argue over the games of football and basketball they had played during the break. The school didn't want any of that. So these games were not allowed.'*

(Interview 7/10/10)

The subversive play of the girls in Grugeon's research, and the boisterous, conflict-provoking play of students in the examples by Holland and the Cypriot teacher, all



met the resistance of teachers. I am arguing that one of the reasons for this resistance was because such activities contradicted the idea of play as an expression of children's purity and innocence, which Rousseau and Fröebel felt strongly about.

Another source for teachers' scepticism over boisterous play is the feminisation of Cypriot education. As discussed in the previous subchapter (Section 5.2.8), the increase of female teachers in schools has led to an emphasis being placed on values such as caring, empathy and sensitivity (Leathwood and Read 2009, pp. 13, 22). Because primary school teaching in Cyprus is female-dominated, the forms of play encouraged respond to the stereotypes of female play; 'sedentary', 'passive' and quiet play (Holland 2003, p. 24). This then explains why practitioners in schools tend to correct or even punish the boisterous play of boys, while praising the noise-free, discreet play of girls (2003, pp. 15-16). This praising and punishing can be seen as ways of achieving the form of soft discipline that Foucault talked about (1977). In presenting passive play as the desirable mode of play behaviour, children are disciplined accordingly and are turned into 'docile bodies' (1977). However, as I will argue later on in this subchapter, the latter often find ways of resisting this disciplinary agenda.

The teacher's disapproval of the boys' performance serves as a reminder of how drama has traditionally been regarded with some mistrust because it has been associated with behaviour which was not deemed as morally acceptable. The claims on the immorality of the content of drama can be traced back to seventeenth century Puritanism, and have strong connections with the writings of Collier (cited in Self and Collier 2000). In his famous 1698 publication *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, Collier advocated that drama is the single

source of all human filth, a place of the flesh where the most violent of all human attitudes are celebrated (Self and Collier 2000, pp. 164-166). He suggested that drama had failed to fulfil its purpose of recommending virtue and of discountenancing vice, and saw the playwrights of his time as advocates of immorality because they did not present the virtuous triumphing or succeeding in the end (2000, p. 37). He ultimately argued in favour of the closure of all playhouses and encouraged the public not to visit them, advocating that the stage would act as an illness that would infect good families and lead to family breakdown and poverty (2000, p. 43). Despite being largely criticised for his views, Collier lived to see the reward of his labour in the reformation of theatre (Johnson 1779-81, cited in Self and Collier 2000, p. 166). More tellingly, he helped in the creating of an atmosphere where censorship was thought of as acceptable (Self and Collier 2000, p. 165).

This piece of English stage history is relevant here. Like Collier, the teacher saw the boys' drama as a medium of celebrating violence and vice. In her effort to prevent this play from leading to or encouraging disruptive behaviour, she forbade further drama presentations in her class (Interview with children 12/3/11). This attitude is representative of a general tendency that exists among Cypriot teachers; the avoidance of the use of drama in their classrooms because, like Collier, they associate it with the risk of transgressive, border-crossing behaviour:

*'(...) the more difficult the class, the more the teacher avoids using drama. This is because children tend to create a great fuss when doing drama.'*

(Interview with teacher 18/5/11)

Contrary to the fears regarding boisterous play, I will now argue that it is exactly this that children most enjoy because it offers them a thrill from indulging into forms of expression that are not usually allowed in classrooms. I will also argue that it can offer them rewards concerning their well-being. To support my arguments, I will offer further examples of such play from my research, and will then support this evidence by drawing on the theories of Bakhtin, Ehrenreich and Schechner, among others.

### **5.3.2.2 How boisterous play contributed to the well-being of children**

The *Yallery Brown* story and drama scheme provided much space for the participants to be involved in boisterous play and to derive pleasure from it. Shortly after the series of *Yallery Brown* workshops were over, 9-year-old Panos reported:

*'I like it when we play and I get to act so crazy.'*

(Interview 19/2/11)

Panos's 'craziness' is evident in *Figure 16* (p. 234), where he can be seen in role as Tom lifting the chair in the air so as to scare the creature away. The boys participating in the presentation can be seen smiling and enjoying the play.

Another example of such 'crazy' play, and one of the most enjoyable activities for children, was one in which they took on the role of Tom's co-workers fighting among themselves (Workshop 5/2/11). The following extract describes what happened:

The children are in groups performing their stylised routines as workers in the factory. The assistant teacher narrates: *'As soon as Tom took a sweet, the workers began to fight among themselves!'* Both boys and girls embark on a kind of fighting that is naturalistic, yet playful. They raise their voices, push each other, jump on each other and, in the case of two boys, drag each other across the floor. Throughout the activity, they are smiling, laughing and seem to be genuinely enjoying the play-fighting. However, they manage their play well and do not hurt each other; the pushing is gentle and the fighting looks more like teasing. I come in as their boss, clap my hands a few times and say in a loud voice: *"Everybody sit on the floor now! Sit on the floor now, or else I'm going to sack all of you!"* However, the children are so excited, that they keep play-fighting and teasing each other for another minute or so. The teacher assistant steps in and narrates: *'Then all the workers became silent.'* They eventually sit on the floor, still buzzing with excitement.

(Video 5/2/11)



*Figure 16: The children play-fighting as workers. The pair of boys dragging one another across the floor can be seen in the centre of the picture (Yallery Brown Workshop 5/2/11).*

Two other examples of boisterous play come from the *Fairy Ointment* workshops and focus on the activities of 9-year-old boys (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the story). In one workshop (2/4/11), the participants were asked to present scenes in which the fairy ointment on Dame Goody's eyelids was wearing out. This enabled her to see the true colours of the fairy family. The boys incorporated a song in their presentation described below:

Dame Goody enters the house. The fairy family is treating her kindly. When they leave the room, Dame Goody looks at the portrait of the family hanging on the wall. They all look happy and loving in it. Suddenly her vision goes blurred. When she looks at the painting again, the members of the family transform into evil creatures, screaming in high-pitch voices and singing:

*'Leave now, now is the time,*

*so that the devil won't grab you while you are walking uphill.*

*The fairy ointment is wearing out from the eyelids.*

*One-two-three; what you're gonna do?*

*Four-five-six; what you're gonna take?*

*Hurry, or else you're gonna die!*

*Remember to strike your eyelids with the fairy ointment before you come back,*

*so that you can't see us while you are dying!'*

Terrified, Dame Goody rushes out. When she comes back, she remembers to stroke her eyelids with the fairy ointment. The family treat her kindly again, but they suddenly attack her and kill her.

*'Now that you're dead, what you're gonna do?*

*The devil will grab you, what you're gonna take?'*

(Video 2/4/11)

The boisterous elements of the presentation lie within the hostile slung language (*'The devil will take you'*), the verbal threats and insults, the screaming, the physical attack and the killing. In the video (2/4/11), the boys can be seen being focused on their roles and taking their performance seriously, while smiling at times and clearly enjoying the play.



*Figure 17: The boys in role of the fairy family transforming into evil creatures, screaming in high-pitch voices and scaring Dame Goody off (Fairy Ointment Workshop 2/4/11).*

In another *Fairy Ointment* workshop (16/4/11), the students were asked to work on improvisations that would depict scenes from the market Dame Goody visited after her meeting with the fairy family. They enjoyed working on and presenting scenes in which the market sellers were competitive towards one another, shouted at each other and engaged in playful images of violence. The boys appeared to be the most passionate about the presentation:

*'Children enjoyed rehearsing for this improvisation. The boys really put their heart into it. They shouted so much during rehearsals and put so much energy in the scene, that they were exhausted by the time they had to present. One of them even complained to have a headache from all the tension.'*

(Journal 16/4/11)

Paradoxically, getting a headache cannot be seen as a positive effect of the dramatic play for that boy's well-being. It goes to show, however, how much passion and energy he had invested in the play, and how appealing it had been for him.



*Figure 18: The boys after the rehearsal and before the presentation, exhausted from all the fighting and shouting – but still smiling (Fairy Ointment Workshop 16/4/11).*

Their actual presentation of the market sellers fighting was intense, to say the least:

The boys in role as the market sellers start off with much shouting and using the language of insult. There are strong hand gestures and pushing, verbal threats and insults. Even the shoppers join in the conflict; one of them pretends to be struggling a seller, while the other hits the sellers with two pillows. At one point, one of the sellers leaves his bench so as to attack his competitors. This turns into a pillow fight.

(Video 16/4/11)





*Figure 19: The boys' presentation of the market sellers and shoppers fighting and shouting (Fairy Ointment Workshop 16/4/11).*

Judging from the levels of enthusiasm and commitment that the boys exhibited in delivering convincing conflict scenes, it could be argued that they very much enjoyed engaging in boisterous play. This stimulates a discussion on gender in relation to such play, to which I will return later in this subchapter (Section 5.3.4).

The question that naturally rises is why children enjoyed the play to this degree. Drawing on different theories, I will argue that there are three reasons for this. Firstly, because boisterous play involves a pleasurable sense of anxiety, risk and danger. Secondly, because the play allows for a playing with the boundaries of permissible behaviour. Thirdly, because it allows the release of unsettling emotions and accumulated energy.

Different theorists have attempted to explain why playful activities, while encompassing a sense of danger and posing a threat to our physical integrity, result in the experiencing of such pleasure (Bjorklund 2007, p. 144). Going back to the Literature Review, the work of Winnicott has revealed that the reason why children enjoy play so much is because of the interplay between the objective and subjective experience that exists in their minds (1971, p. 52). Linger between the real and imaginative world through play is exciting enough as it is, but when the imaginative world contains thrilling images of violence, this leads to an even higher degree of pleasurable anxiety (1971, p. 52).

The French theorist of play, Caillois believed that it is exactly these senses of danger and of risk that make play so sensually pleasurable (cited in Cook 2000, p. 114). This is mostly evident in activities such as children's playing on swings and merry-go-round toys (2000, p. 114). Whereas these activities involve a degree of physical risk, they produce agreeable feelings of dizziness and vertigo, of momentarily losing the body's stability, of escaping the tyranny of perception, and of overcoming awareness (2000, p. 114). These feelings describe Caillois's concept of *illinx*, which is one of the four fundamental tendencies involved in play.

Schechner uses the concept of *dark play* to describe a similar kind of play; one that 'subverts order, dissolves frames, breaks its own rules, so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed', and also one in which 'the end is not integration but disruption, deceit, excess, and gratification' (1993, p. 36). Whereas Schechner does not see dark play as necessarily being synonymous with overtly boisterous or violent play, he does admit that it often involves a high degree of physical *risk* (1993, pp. 36, 38). His theory of dark play is useful in two ways: Firstly, in further explaining

the adult scepticisms over boisterous play, and secondly, in explaining why children – and especially boys – seem to derive such enjoyment from it.

Schechner makes an interesting point about dark play; only *some* of those involved know that they are part of it (1993, p. 38). The participant players engage in the play, while the non-playing participants are performers on the playing, but are unaware of their role. The latter appear to be anxious over such play because they can see the high level of physical risk that the players are putting themselves in (1993, p. 38). Nonetheless, their reaction is ‘a big part of what gives play its kick’; the non-participants’ anxiety is what makes the play all the more thrilling for the players (1993, p. 38). In the case of the boys presenting their *Yallery Brown* scene in class, the participant players were the boys engaging in boisterous play, while the anxious teacher can be seen as the non-participant player who may well have been worrying about the physical risks for her students, as well as the threats that such play posed to her own authority.

In accordance with the theories of Bakhtin (1968) and Ehrenreich (2007) about people deriving pleasure from the temporary loosening of everyday rules during the Carnival, Schechner explains that dark play offers further ‘**thrill**’ and ‘**gratification**’ through allowing the participants to play out selves that cannot be displayed, in the family, at work or in public (1993, p. 38). Dark play, Schechner writes, is like ‘playing with fire, going in over one’s head, inverting accepted procedures and hierarchies’ (1993, p. 26). As was the case with the students working with images of horror, engaging in such ‘improper’ play gave them the opportunity to escape from conventional morality and to enjoy forms of expression that are not normally

allowed in school grounds (Winston 1998, pp. 30-31). This point was raised by a drama practitioner:

*'Children today receive a form of military discipline. Everything is standardised; their handwriting, their textbooks. We don't allow to our children much freedom. When we do give them this freedom, there is chaos; they go overboard.'*

(Interview 29/9/11)

Martin (2011) claims that play becomes even more enjoyable for children when it is seen as a 'forbidden fruit'. To illustrate this, she uses an example from her research which focused on the development of gender identities through play (2011, p. 101). In the London school where she was based, the staff discouraged 'battle play' (2011, p. 101). Martin observed that this disapproval made the activity all the more exciting for boys, who hid away and engaged in passionate battle play. This was because 'they enjoyed evading the watchful eye of the lunchtime supervisors and teachers' (2011, p. 101).

Many critics of different psychological orientations have argued that involvement with boisterous play has possible psychological benefits for children. Focusing on tales which have images of violence and aggression at their heart, these critics claim that the tales find their sources in 'profound instinctual developments in the human psyche' (Zipes 1999, p. 77). Bettelheim (1978) is among these critics. While reflecting on the psychoanalytical theories of Freud, he makes a case on why youngsters should be allowed to explore fairy tales with images of violence and aggression (1978, p. 7). He explains that the unconscious is a strong factor in

influencing human behaviour. Fairy tales that provide the space for boisterous play allow for the child's unconscious material, such as 'formless, nameless anxieties' and 'chaotic, angry and even violent fantasies', to be permitted to come into awareness and worked out through imagination. Therefore, the potential of the unconscious to cause harm is reduced and its forces can even serve positive purposes by contributing to **emotional development** (1978, p. 7). In this way, the child can look into greater existential mysteries that, if left abstract and uncharted, can be far more disturbing than the images in the fairy tales (1978, p. 7). Tatar agrees with this theory, suggesting that the violence found in stories serves as an **antidote to violence** in real life (2009, p. 87).

Bettelheim's argument about **emotional reliance** built through tales has been taken by contemporary theorists and has been adjusted to superhero stories (Browne 2004, p. 80). For instance, Boyd has claimed that 'superhero play offers a sense of power to children in a world dominated by adults' and also allows children to work through fears regarding their own safety (1997, p. 25, cited in Browne 2004, p. 80).

In the Results chapter (Section 4.3.1), we saw how Groos highlighted the cathartic function of boisterous play for children by claiming that it allows them to release emotions that have been accumulating in everyday life (1908, cited in Patrick, cited in Ellis 1973, p. 55). This release then leads to safeguarding their individuality and to reducing the chances of these emotions causing them damage (1908, cited in Patrick, cited in Ellis 1973, p. 55).

The cathartic effects of boisterous play were particularly evident in the case of the boys presenting their market scene (Workshop 16/4/11). Through the fighting, shouting and the language of insults they quite happily used, they were able to

release their accumulated energy; this was manifested in their exhaustion after the rehearsal. Whether they had released any negative feelings I cannot be sure of, as I do not have such data available. However, based on the overall evidence, I did note one important positive effect of this performance; the social acceptance of a boy in the group who was usually treated as an outcast. Two months prior to the workshop, this boy had confided in me:

Andrew (aged 9): *Sometimes in school, I fight with these boys. If we fight on a Friday, they won't hang out with me at the Youth Theatre the following day. Once, I had fought with one of them, Jack. The following day I tried to get into the group of boys and Jack sent me away saying: 'Go away! We don't want you here!'*

(Interview 12/3/11)

While working for the market scene presentation, Andrew seemed to be well integrated into the group:

Andrew walks in role as shopper. He is holding the hand of another shopper. A boy in role as the market seller goes up to him and tells him: *'I am sorry! I am sorry (for all the fighting!)*. The boys seem to be taking Andrew into consideration and to be interacting with him on stage.

(Video 16/4/11)

I am returning to the work of Holland (2003) regarding the relaxing of the zero tolerance policy on violent and boisterous play in early years settings, as it is

important to discuss here. As part of her action research project, children were allowed to construct weapons, enact superhero and conflict scenarios and to generally indulge in the kind of boisterous play that teachers usually forbid (2003, p. 48). She found that the legitimising of this play was beneficial for particular children. Among the positive outcomes, Holland counts **frequent laughter and smiling, enhanced well-being, raised self-esteem, greater self-confidence, high level of risk-taking and reduction of social exclusion** (2003, pp. 56-58). Contradictory to traditional views and similar to the arguments by Bettelheim, Tatar and Groos, the study found that when children were let free to engage in war, weapon and superhero play, it could actually help them *overcome aggressive behaviour* (2003, p. 37).

In his book *Killing Monsters: Why Children Need Fantasy, Super Heroes, and Make Believe Violence* (2002), Jones argues in favour of such play on the basis of its contribution to children's **overcoming of anxieties**, encouragement of **self-confidence** and **risk-taking**, and enhancement of **social skills** (cited in Browne 2004, p. 79). His argument is an important one because he makes specific reference to pretend-violent play:

Wrestling, roughhousing, make-believe violence acted out with the whole body smash anxieties and wrestle fears to the floor. Pretended savagery lifts kids out of shyness and knocks down barriers to closeness. Games involving chasing, pillow fighting, squirt guns, and mock combat help children learn how to judge dangers and take appropriate risks. Jumping willingly into those pretend dangers and coming out unhurt helps kids distinguish fantasy from reality. (2002, pp. 67-68, cited in Browne 2004, p. 79)

In this section, I have provided a few examples of boisterous play in which the older children of the Youth Theatre were involved, and explained why it appealed to them.

I will now turn to another aspect of play that the younger children of the Youth Theatre engaged in; *free socio-dramatic play*. I will describe the play and discuss how it contributed to their personal, emotional and social flourishing. I will particularly focus on how it helped them towards a temporary deliberation from the tyranny of the self. As I will discuss, this comes in contrast with the SEAL and SEE practices that encourage a detrimental tendency for self-obsession.

### **5.3.3 Free socio-dramatic play**

#### **5.3.3.1 How the dramatic play contributed to the well-being of children, and particularly to self-liberation**

The term *socio-dramatic* play was introduced by the Israeli psychologist Smilansky to refer to pretend play in which the child is enacting a role, and which is social (*solitary* dramatic play is uncommon) (1968, cited in Smith 2010, p. 158). Smilansky used other criteria to define socio-dramatic play, one of the most important being the sustained narrative sequence lasting at least ten minutes (1968, cited in Smith 2010, p. 158). Hence, there is a strong element of *imagination* in it.

The play of the YT1 participants that I will look at in this section fits this definition readily. Nonetheless, there is another aspect of this play that I believe was important in the flourishing of children; *freedom*. According to Garvey, free play is one that encompasses ‘voluntary, active, pleasurable, freely chosen, spontaneous play’ (1990, cited in Martin 2011, p. xviii). I am using the term *free play* to describe one of loose structure, whereby I allowed the students to manage their own play and to take it in the direction they wanted.

The free socio-dramatic play took place in one of *The Boat* workshops (Workshop 19/3/11) (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the story). The participants were in role



as the villagers who had offered to help the old man after he had lost everything in the flood. Whereas I had planned for a different activity, they proposed that I divided them into two groups so as to build the shelter and the boat for the old man. I believe that there are two reasons behind this suggestion of theirs. Firstly, they had a similar pleasurable experience in one of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* workshops (22/1/11) whereby they made presents for the Troll to bribe him into letting the goats cross the bridge. Secondly, *The Boat* drama workshops had provided a strong fictional context for the children and offered them powerful experiences that, although imaginary, yielded real emotions of ‘compassion’ towards the old man and his animals (Neelands 2011, p. 11).

The idea of children developing sympathy towards the central character takes us back to the Literature Review (Section 2.4.3) and the notion of *empirical understanding*. As I have discussed, the SEAL practices have been criticised by Suissa on the basis that they encourage students to adopt a ‘pre-packaged list of techniques’ in order to achieve well-being (2008, p. 582). Suissa supports that SEAL advises them to follow certain steps such as to ‘avoid conflict’ or to ‘care for others’ in order to help them grow personally, socially and emotionally (2008, pp. 579, 582). Nevertheless, these pieces of advice hold little weight for students, unless they develop some *empirical understanding* of what it means to care for others or what the effects of engaging into a conflict are (2008, p. 582). The example from the drama workshop above serves as evidence that drama, unlike SEAL practices, provides opportunities for students to acquire such understanding and to realise these meanings through experiences that, even though are imaginary, are powerful enough to stimulate genuine emotions. In this case, because the children had witnessed the

hardships of the old man through the dramatic activities, they empathised and sympathised with him. They cared for him and helped him because they *wanted to*, because the imaginary events in drama had generated real emotions of empathy and compassion within them; not because they were merely following a ‘step’ or a guideline from their textbooks, which is what can be said of the methods of SEAL and SEE.

The YT1 members engaged in the play with minimal intervention from the teacher assistant and myself. The events were vividly recorded in my journal:

*‘The dramatic play turned out to be completely different from what I had planned. The children took the drama in the direction they wanted. I decided not to stick to my agenda, but to let them enjoy it. They really did. There was chaos around, but in the good sense. Children socialised among them, worked well together, told each other what needed to be done and went for it. What was impressive was their perfect synchronisation. They delegated the chores among them so that everyone had something to do, and then reported back to each other. The shy ones thrived in this activity; they did not feel like they were being watched. I just lay back and enjoyed the play that lasted for about 8 minutes.’*

(Journal 19/3/11)

In the video (19/3/11), children can be seen running around in excitement in order to fetch the imaginary resources.

The Boat Group did not focus on the building of the boat as such, but took other related initiatives that aimed towards helping the old man. For example, they built the furniture to go inside the boat and prepared the food:

Steven (aged 9): *Fried potatoes! Jacket potatoes! Steamy potatoes!*

A girl from the group informed me what her contribution would be:

Linda (aged 7): *Miss, if the animals get sick (in the boat), I will be there to treat them. And since the doctor is away, if the old man gets sick, I will treat him as well.*

(Video 19/3/11)

For the shyest girl in the group, 6-year-old Gina, this was a very important moment. She did not usually participate in the drama activities and did not socialise with her peers. It is interesting to note two episodes that had taken place earlier that day, and that are indicative of her lack of popularity within the group. Firstly, she had brought stickers to give out to the other children. I interpreted this as an effort on her behalf to make friends. Secondly, in the group interview conducted prior to the dramatic play, she appeared to be so shy, that she did not speak a single word. As I mentioned in the Research Methodology chapter, this caused the frustration of 7-year-old Valerie:

Valerie: (while waiting for Gina to respond) *Oh, come on already!*

Nandia: *No, Valerie, let her respond in her own time.*

Valerie: *But she doesn't know what to say!*

(Interview 19/3/11)

Gina remained silent, obviously feeling uncomfortable. I tried to comfort her by telling her that we could have a one-on-one interview another day.

However, in the dramatic activity of building the boat, Gina flourished on a personal and social level. The following extract describes her behaviour:

Gina is pacing up and down the stage in excitement. A 6-year-old girl, Chryso, asks her to prepare the table where the food for the old man would be served on. She grabs a piece of cloth and starts wiping the table. The girls then call her backstage to help them prepare the food. They ask her to bring over the imaginary ingredients. *'The food! Quickly!'* one of them says. She does as she is told. I go up to them to ask them what they are doing. I find Gina with two girls and one boy, all aged 6. *'We are cooking! We are putting lettuce to garnish the meat!'* Chryso informs me. Gina is smiling. She turns to the girls and asks them: *'How about onions? Have you put any onions in?'* *'Oh, that's right! Onions!'* Chryso responds to her suggestion.

(Video 19/3/11)



*Figure 20: The Food Making group, which was part of the Boat Building group. Gina, in the pink sweater, is smiling while interacting with the other children (The Boat Workshop 19/3/11).*

The Shelter Group had the guidance of the teacher assistant, Michaela. Their work was more task-oriented and more structured than that of the Boat Group. However, a sense of freedom was still pertinent to it, as it was shaped according to the students' decisions. Michaela encouraged them to contribute their individual ideas and then prompted the rest of the group to follow them.

Peter exclaims: *'Let's stir the mixture!'* Michaela takes his idea in and encourages the rest of the children to stir the mixture as well. Debbie suggests they should put their gloves on so as not to get dirty. *'Yes! Gloves!'* Michaela says quite excitedly. She pretends to put on her gloves and the children imitate her. *'Do you think the mixture is good enough, or does it need a bit more water?'* *'More water!'* Valerie replies. *'Ok, let's!'* They pour water, they stir a bit more.

Suddenly, Valerie says: *'We also need twigs!'* *'Twigs you say? Ok, let's get them, quickly!'* They spread about the room to collect twigs. *'We need little twigs, right?'* Michaella asks them. *'No, big ones too!'* Valerie replies. *'Fair enough'*, Michaella says. *'How about we mix everything together now?'*

(Video 19/3/11)

The dramatic play proved to be particularly beneficial for a boy in the Shelter Group, 6-year-old Peter. He faced multiple health problems and came from a family that had experienced domestic violence and the recent separation of the parents (Interview with Peter's mother 28/2/11). Peter had exhibited behavioural problems in the Youth Theatre, which often resulted in me having to stop the action and to refer back to the drama contract (Workshop 19/2/11). He had difficulties socialising with the other children, as he often fought with them, teased them and, in one case, even pulled down the trousers of another boy while playing (Workshop 19/2/11). In this particular workshop, however, he displayed great levels of enthusiasm, managed to stay focused in the activity and, for the most part, was able to work well together with the rest towards the common goal of building the boat.

Angelos, a boy from the Boat Group, brings some food over to the Shelter Group. Michaella suggests they took a break so that they had their (imaginary) lunch. But Peter is eager to go back to work. He asks: *'Have we finished eating yet? Let's get on with our work already!'* He seems to be enjoying the play.

(Video 19/3/11)



*Figure 21: The Shelter group. Children are using imaginary and non-imaginary resources (e.g. table and chairs). Peter can be seen in the picture interacting with the girls (The Boat Workshop 19/3/11).*

Nevertheless, Peter still exhibited signs of antisocial behaviour during the activity.

The teacher assistant later reported:

*‘Children liked the drama. I could see that as they were building the shelter. Peter was acting like a leader. He was acting all snobbish with all of us. It was like he was telling us: “I can make it on my own. I don’t really care if you are here or not.”*

*(Informal conversation 19/3/11)*

This takes us back to the limitations of the contribution of drama to the well-being of children, as presented in the Literature Review (Section 2.5.4). The emotions and behaviour of children are influenced by different factors, some of which are so

powerful that they can overwrite the contribution of their one-hour-per-week drama experience. In the case of Peter, his difficult behaviour was influenced by his health condition and his family situation. Despite this limitation, his progress was notable; he stayed focused on the work and engaged in negotiations with the other members regarding the tasks and the resources needed.

Through this activity, the students flourished on a personal, social and emotional level. They derived much **pleasure**, **socialised** and worked well with others, **overcame their shyness**, contributed their ideas with **self-confidence**, and used their **voice** to shape the dramatic experience. This dramatic play is a good example of one in which children forgot about themselves, their shyness and their worries, and just enjoyed the experience. It is this sense of **self-forgetfulness** as a route to the enhancement of their well-being that I would like to focus on. The theories of Ehrenreich and Murdoch, glimpses of which were offered in the Literature Review (Section 2.2.4.1) and in the Results chapter (Section 4.3.2) respectively, are helpful in explaining how children, by engaging in the dramatic play, experienced a healthy shift of focus from the self.

Ehrenreich associates the modern tendency of self-preoccupation with the *discovery of the inner self* and the *rise of subjectivity* that occurred in the seventeenth century, as a result of the decline in opportunities for pleasure and communal festivities (2007, p. 137, italics in original). She describes this obsession as a mutation of the human nature:

(...) an intensification, and a fairly drastic one, of the universal human capacity to face the world as an autonomous “I,” separate from, and largely distrustful of, “them” (2007, p. 137, italics in original).



The shifting of attention to the inner self did not necessarily make the individual happier. On the contrary, it brought about the ‘horror of individual existence’, as Nietzsche put it, and transformed her into ‘a kind of walled fortress, carefully defended from everyone else’ (Ehrenreich 2007, pp. 137-138, 152).

Ehrenreich’s theory about the birth and the consequences of self-obsession is useful here for two reasons: Firstly, in understanding why it is detrimental for children’s well-being, and secondly, in highlighting the need for encouraging children to free themselves from the burden of the self. Ehrenreich sees a possibility of revival in the *arts* which she believes can encourage a sense of *self-loss*:

(...) a release, however temporary, from the prison of the self, or at least from the anxious business of evaluating how one stands in the group or in the eyes of an ever-critical God.  
(2007, p. 152)

In the case of Gina, how she was perceived by others in the group was a reason for her feeling uneasy. Offering stickers to her peers prior to the dramatic play was an attempt on her behalf, I believe, to bridge the gap and to overcome this uneasiness. Through the dramatic activity of making the food, she played alongside her peers and was relieved by the unsettling thoughts of whether she was socially accepted.

Murdoch argues that we are ‘anxiety-ridden’, self-preoccupied animals, and that our self-preoccupation prevents us from seeing the outer world (1970, p. 84). She sees *beauty* as a means of liberation from this self-preoccupation, because it offers an occasion for *unselfing*. She argues that by concentrating on the beauty that is found in *nature* and the *arts*, we ‘clear our minds of selfish care’ and we derive a ‘self-forgetful pleasure’ (1970, pp. 84-85). Based on this theory, it can be claimed that the children became so absorbed in the dramatic play and the beauty of the dramatic

world that they had created that, for that period at least, they stopped being self-conscious, shy or worried.

Murdoch's argument raises consideration on the relationship between *play* and *beauty*. The connection between the two is successfully drawn by the German philosopher Schiller (1967, cited in Winston 2010, p. 73). In his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, he proposed that humanity is driven by two forces; *sense* and *reason*. For Schiller, a happy life for the individual and for society lies in the healthy balance between these two antithetical drives (1967, cited in Winston 2010, p. 73). The balance is achieved by a third drive; that of *play* (1967, cited in Winston 2010, p. 74). Play prevents sense and reason from gaining superiority over one another, and therefore ensures that they co-exist in harmony. Schiller believes that the highest expression of play is *beauty*, and particularly *aesthetic necessity*; a quality that is found in all good works of art. To help us understand this concept, Winston offers the example of a beautiful melody characterised by aesthetic necessity: 'the passage from one note to the next seems logical, effortless, as though there were no other satisfactory alternative' (1967, cited in Winston 2010, p. 74).

As we saw in the Results chapter (Section 4.7.2), the theory of O'Neill (2006) highlights the contribution of *drama* in particular to self-liberation. She believes that its educational value lies in its capacity to promote tendencies of *self-transcendence*, which is a term she uses to describe the shift of one's interest, attention, and emotion to a time and location other than the self (2006, p. 81). To explain the concept of self-transcendence, she quotes Koestler in his theory regarding the human need to 'transcend the narrow confines of our personal identity and participate in other forms of existence' (1975, cited in O'Neill 2006, p. 81). Koestler claims that the act of

illusion has an intrinsic value that derives from the ‘transfer of our attention to a plane remote from self-interest’ (1975, cited in O'Neill 2006, p. 81). This act of illusion lies at the heart of drama.

It could be argued that drama has the potential to encourage deliberation from self-obsession in two ways. Firstly, when playing another character in drama, the personal identity is suspended and the individual is encouraged to focus on the fictional character rather than herself (Winston and Tandy 1998, p. viii). Neelands explains that, in building a character, we build a fictional identity which is both different from and the same as oneself (1998, p. 38). When entering a role, ‘we project an external image of another person but in doing so we bring something of ourselves to the character’ (1998, p. 38). This idea finds its origins in Freud’s theoretical concept of *projective identification*; a process whereby we project parts of the self onto objects of the external world (in this case, the role) in a phantasised way, and we then identify with them (Frosh 1987, pp. 121-122).

Browne adds to the theories above by claiming that, when children go into imaginative role play or dramatic storying, they can explore who they are, who they would like to be and how they would like to be perceived and positioned by others (2004, p. 83). This was true in the case of Peter. The fact that his father was in the construction business and that he himself had spent much time at his father’s workplace, might well explain why he became so immersed in his role (Journal 19/3/11). His interest in the construction business was the personal trait he had brought in playing the character. Perhaps bringing his relevant knowledge and skills into the dramatic play might have served as a reinforcement of the bond between his father and himself. The reinforcement of this bond was much needed at that point,

because his parents' separation meant that he did not get to see his father as often (Interview with his mother 26/3/11). What is more, the role of the head-builder in the Boat Group that he had assigned to himself can be interpreted as an attempt to establish his authority over his peers who did not often seek his company.

Another way in which drama encourages self-transcendence is through its social and communal nature (Winston and Tandy 1998, p. viii). Bolton explains that, because drama is a *social* and not a *solitary* experience, it is never about oneself, but always has to do with something *outside oneself* (1984, cited in O'Neill 2006, p. 81). It requires that the participant interacts and work with others 'towards a shared experience in which the communal goal is placed before individual interests' (Neelands 1998, pp. 37-38). Consequently, the participant's attention shifts from herself to the social whole, as well as to the task or goal set for the group to reach. In the case of the YT1 children, the goals placed before them, namely the building of the boat and the shelter, called for a strong spirit of co-operation. They needed to work together, to watch and listen to each other, and to build on each other's ideas. In doing so, they achieved a shift from the autonomous '*I*' to the communal '*we*', and derived much pleasure from their socialising.

The president of the organisation funding the Youth Theatre acknowledged the potential of drama in encouraging self-forgetfulness through its social nature:

*'One of the reasons why we have so many children in the Youth Theatre with divorced parents, might be because these parents want to offer their children the opportunity to socialise with others so as not to spend their days in melancholia. This is the way it should be; children undertaking arts activities so as to get their mind off things and not to think about their family problems.'*

(Interview 19/7/11)

As discussed in the Literature Review (Section 2.4.3), the practices used in the teaching of SEAL and SEE favour an approach that is much concerned with children looking inwards and finding ways for themselves to be happier. For example, in the SEE lesson that I observed (28/9/11), the students were asked to reflect on their experiences of bullying or being bullied, and on the feelings emerging from these experiences. The approach of SEAL and SEE reflects a dominant tendency that exists in the current educational system and that encourages students to look within themselves so as to find ways to become 'better learners' and 'better' all round. It could be argued that this system promotes a *psychological* rather than a *social* route towards achieving emotional and educational flourishing; one that focuses on the inner self rather than on activities and relationships that exist outside the self and that encourage immersion in positive social feelings.

The self-focus approach runs through the curriculum guidelines set for SEE (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012). Among the ten thematic units that SEE is reported to include, are the following:

- *Acknowledging, expressing and managing of our feelings*: ‘This unit includes the acknowledging, acceptance, expressing and managing of our feelings.’
- *Self-awareness and self-confidence*: ‘In this unit, we will explore issues of our self-image and the opinion or value we hold for ourselves. Particular emphasis is placed on how important it is for us to acknowledge positive qualities in ourselves.’
- *Dealing with stressful situations*: ‘This unit presents issues relating to what is causing us stress (...) and ways to deal with it.’
- *Conflict resolution*: ‘This unit refers to what psychological needs and emotions of ours lead to us having conflicts, how we react to conflicts and what are the consequences of our reactions (...)’
- *Being different*: ‘This unit refers to us realising and accepting that we are different to others (...) and how natural that is.’
- *Learning process*: ‘This unit presents what skills help the children become more effective learners in the school context (...)’. (The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Website 2012).

As Ehrenreich has stressed, there is a danger with excessive or exclusive focus on the self. Craig’s critique of emotional health programmes discussed in the Literature Review (Section 2.4.3) is useful here. She calls upon evidence to suggest that an exaggerated focus on the self and the self-esteem of the child leads to ‘unhealthy materialism and individualism and so undermines, rather than contributes to well-being’ (Crocker and Park, 2004, cited in Craig, 2009, p. 6, cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 4).

Ultimately, the approach of constantly looking inwards largely promoted by the approaches of SEAL and SEE, might not be what children need in order to feel good. Thompson's account of an incident in tsunami-stricken Sri-Lanka in February 2005 serves as an excellent argument for this (2009, p. 49). The incident occurred during a British arts organisation drama project with children from a tsunami-displaced people's camp. A dramatherapist, after having played some games with children, asked them to share their stories about the day that the tsunami hit. One of the children reportedly started crying and left the group. The dramatherapist later complained that the children were 'not prepared to tell their stories' and that 'all that they wanted to do is play' (2009, p. 49). Evidently, what made children experience relief from the tragic events was, not talking about their experiences, but simply *playing*. It was their way of escaping the tyrannies of their reality, of leaving their concerns behind if only for a while, and just enjoying the play. This was the case, I claim, for the Youth Theatre children as well. Thompson advises to look for alternatives to the rhetoric of such trauma relief programmes; 'programmes that forget that *telling is not always the best solution to people's suffering*' (2009, p. 76). The alternative he proposes is the approach of *affect* through applied theatre:

The approach I am advocating seeks to move beyond the binary of speech or silence – to respect instead practices that could simultaneously contain silences, speech, movements and stillness: that could express a desire to forget through dance as much as grieve through song.  
(Thompson 2009, p. 76)

As my data has revealed, drama can serve as this approach. Without demanding from children to share their personal stories, it offers them a getaway from their concerns, worries and the unhealthy self-obsessiveness encouraged by current schooling practices, and an opportunity to become immersed in the play and its social nature.

This point is best summarised by the responses of two girls, 13-year-old Phanie and 12-year-old Natalie. In explaining why they left another Youth Theatre to join ours, they said:

Phanie: *In that group, all we got to do is talk. In this group, we get to work in groups, we have more fun. (I have most fun) when we get in groups, work on our improvisations and present what we like.*

Natalie: *The activities in this group are nicer. (I have most fun) when we play games, and when we work in our friendship groups.*

(Interview 2/4/11)

This strength of drama contradicts the SEE practices, as discussed in the Results chapter (Section 4.5.2). It is worth revisiting some key points from my data here in order to make this argument. In her interview, a teacher articulated her concern regarding the psychologist's role that SEE attributes to practitioners (Interview 16/6/11). She explained that SEE deals with sensitive issues that prompt children to share their personal, sometimes unpleasant, experiences (Interview 16/6/11). Another mentioned that, in the training he had received, teachers were advised to respond to confessions of their students about delicate situations with empty phrases such as '*I can understand*' or '*I can empathise*' (Interview 16/6/11). In the SEE lesson that I observed (28/9/11), students were indeed encouraged to talk about their personal experiences on bullying. It could be argued that, in this way, a focus on the self was generated. However, the teacher did not respond with any empty phrases. Instead, she advised the students on how to respond to situations of bullying; just



like a psychologist would do, or even the dramatherapist in the example of Thompson above.

Another significant point to make is the capacity of drama to create imaginary spaces in order for the play to develop. The significance of this argument lies in the fact that the architectural guidelines for Cypriot schools do not allow for the building of playgrounds. As I mentioned in the Results chapter (Section 4.5.5), children long for these playgrounds. This came to the surface through their interviews, as well as through the incident of the Primary School children asking the Minister to grant his permission for the rebuilding of their lost playground (Interview with the previous head teacher 13/10/10).

Drama offers the potential of offering an alternative to these playgrounds, by encouraging children to create imaginative play spaces. It suspends the normal rules of space and allows for transformations that respond to the dramatic context (Winston and Tandy 1998, pp. vii-viii). In the activity described above (Section 5.3.3.1), the children appropriated the play space and turned it into a construction site, where they built the boat and the shelter, a cookery where they prepared the food, and a doctor's office where they would treat the old man and his animals (Workshop 19/3/11). Even though the play space did not contain any objects that responded to these sites, the participants were very much convinced in their imaginations that the objects were there and that they themselves were indeed in these sites. This was evident in the seriousness with which they took their roles and tasks and in which they responded to each other (Video 19/3/11). The success of their play lies in their willingness to 'make-believe' with regard to the objects, actions and situations, to 'share their make-believe with others by working together,

and to maintain and extend their make-believe through appropriate action, role and language' (O'Neill and Lambert 1982, pp. 11-12 ).

In this section, I have described the free socio-dramatic play in which the younger children of the Youth Theatre became immersed, and explained how it helped them flourish. I will now focus on the issue of *gender*, as it is one that came to the surface when children engaged in boisterous play.

### **5.3.4 Play and gender**

#### **5.3.4.1 Boisterous play and gender**

The issue of gender permeates the data on *boisterous play* presented above. We have seen how the boys of the Youth Theatre derived pleasure from intense physical play, as well as from play of the language of insult. However, this is not to say that girls enjoyed this kind of play any less. The difference lies in the boys appearing to be more passionate for such play and actively seeking to engage with it, while the girls did not take such initiatives. The forms of play they engaged in were milder and less boisterous. For example, when the boys presented the scene of Dame Goody's killing combined with a song of insults, the majority of the girls presented scenes in which the fairy family simply kicked Dame Goody out shouting '*Go away!*' (Video 2/4/11). In their market scene presentation, a group of 8 and 9-year-old girls used gentle facial expressions, low voices and mild verbal insults, such as '*The flowers you are selling are full of bees!*' (Video 16/4/11). In the video, I can be heard encouraging the girls to get '*meaner*' and '*more boisterous*' in their roles as the market sellers fighting (Video 16/4/11). Even then, they appeared hesitant to do so.

In this section, I will attempt to give an explanation as to why boys tend to engage more readily with this kind of play compared to girls. I will then argue in favour of

challenging this gender stereotyping in order to allow girls to experience the thrill that boisterous play can generate.

Many of the issues discussed in the previous subchapter with regard to gender and attraction to horror fiction (Section 5.2.8) are relevant here. The nature/nurture debate is one of them. We saw how no simple conclusions can be drawn regarding the role of nature and nurture in gender role behaviour. Whereas some attribute the aggressive behaviour of boys to the testosterone surge they experience (nature) (Biddulph 1997, cited in Holland 2003, p. 18), there are others who believe this behaviour to be socially acquired and imposed on them through family, peers and the media (nurture) (Butler 2004a, cited in Lawler 2008, p. 114). With regard to the styles of play, Holland argues that boys receive strong messages into their ideal self files about ‘active and noisy play’, while girls receive messages about ‘sedentary, passive and stereotyped domestic play’ (2003, p. 24).

If we take the theories on gender role behaviour being socially acquired to be valid, then a problem arises. Promoting certain stereotypes regarding gender behaviour in play results in the limiting of individual children’s choices at a very early age (Martin 2011, pp. xiii, xv). It suggests that identity is *fixed* and *coherent*, and it leads to children engaging in certain activities but not in others, because these activities are considered to respond to the opposite sex (Martin 2011, pp. xiii, xv). Statements such as ‘boys don’t play with dolls’ and ‘girls can’t play firemen’ are indicative of this social imposition of gender stereotypes in play (Holland 2003, p. 19).

These attitudes can again be interpreted as modes of soft discipline that Foucault has theorised. According to Paechter, in societies of practice of masculinity and femininity, members ‘exert a disciplinary gaze’ on one another, therefore

encouraging conformity to the gender norms of the group (2007, pp. 20-21). Children conform to what they think as a 'gender-appropriate' behaviour and dismiss 'gender inappropriate' behaviour in others, in order to maintain a stable gender identity (Marcus and Overton 1978; Meyer 1980, cited in Browne 2004, pp. 70-71).

The theories of gender stereotypes and fixed identities are useful in providing a possible explanation as to why the girls were reluctant in engaging in boisterous play. As they were growing up, they were disciplined into behaving according to specific gender identities and stereotyped models of play. Having absorbed these, it must have been difficult for the girls to overcome them and to adopt behaviour that seemed 'right' and 'natural' for boys but not for themselves (Browne 2004, p. 92). Another reason for their reluctance might have been the soft discipline that they had received through the school culture and that resulted in them learning to play 'quietly' and 'nicely' (Paechter 2007, pp. 98-99).

Many different theorists have argued against identity being fixed and unchanging. The theories of Sen, Browne and Holland are worth visiting in support of my argument about challenging such a unitary perception of gender identity.

In his book *Identity and Violence* (2006), Sen argues that identity being monolithically defined is a 'solitarist' approach to identity; one that views human beings as members of exactly one group, and leads to the 'misunderstanding of nearly everyone in the world' (2006, p. xii). He explains that every individual belongs to a variety of groups, each of which gives her a particular identity (2006, p. xiii). Therefore, she has 'inescapably plural identities' (2006, p. xiii). Sen sees the violent conflicts among different nations and religions occurring because of 'the cultivation of a sense of inevitability about some allegedly unique – often belligerent

– identity that we are supposed to have and which apparently makes extensive demands on us (...)’ (2006, p. xiii). He finds a possibility for revival in the realisation of our *multifaceted* identity:

The hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies to a great extent in a clearer understanding of the pluralities of human identity, and in the appreciation that they cut across each other and work against a sharp separation along one single hardened line of impenetrable division. (2006, p. xiv)

Sen’s theory about a solitarist approach to identity resulting in violence can be used to explain why we so often see primary school boys and girls in conflict. According to Thorne, when drawing a dichotomous line of difference between the two, we encourage a ‘psychological splitting’ (1993, p. 161). Girls comply with gender stereotypes by presenting themselves as well-behaved, and project anger towards boys whom they perceive as ‘naughty’ (1993, pp. 161-162). Boys, in turn, having absorbed stereotypes of male invulnerability and independence, taunt girls as ‘crybabies’ and ‘tattletales’ (1993, p. 162).

The gender division was evident in my research, where children usually sought to form groups of the same sex:

Annie (aged 11): *I feel uncomfortable if I get into a group with all boys and no girls.*

(Interview 19/2/11)

There were moments, however, when children managed to overcome the gender division. This was especially the case when boys and girls worked well together for

their improvisations. The following suggestion coming from one of the boys, is a good example of them putting aside their gender differences:

Panos (aged 9): *Miss, every group should have at least one boy and one girl.*

(Video 29/1/11)

In the spirit of challenging gendered identities, Browne (2004) focuses on the plurality of selves which we bear and which make it possible for us to adjust to different social situations:

(...) our understanding of who we are, our identity, is composed of a variety of 'selves'. In other words, each of us does not have a single, unified identity but instead we each have a range of identities, we have *multiple* identities. This multiplicity of identities enables us to adopt a variety of positions and roles in the various social contexts in which we find ourselves every day. (2004, pp. 60-61)

As part of the agenda of disrupting gender divisions, Browne further advises educators to enable children to have access to a wider range of discourse (2004, p. 76). A way to do this, is to encourage them to take on roles and positions that do not comply with accepted models of 'femininity' or 'masculinity' (2004, p. 76). This is an approach I used in presenting the main character of the *Sweetest Fig* story, Bibot (Workshop 19/2/11). In taking his role, I presented him as a French man who loved hygiene, took much care of his physical appearance and had an interest for haute couture. In the improvisations later on, children depicted the character along the same lines. One group presented Bibot looking in the mirror and agonising over getting a

pimple. It can be claimed that this behaviour does not respond to the social stereotypes of masculinity.



*Figure 22: The group's improvisation in which they depict Bibot (played by the girl in the pink sweater) looking in the mirror and agonising over a pimple. The boy seen on his knees is in role of Bibot's dog (The Sweetest Fig Workshop 19/2/11).*

Holland (2003) also advises teachers to challenge stereotyped models of gender behaviour. She tells the story of how, as part of her research project, practitioners managed to do so by offering boys positive affirmation for interests they perceived as male (2003, p. 20). This resulted in them feeling comfortable in engaging in role-playing that involved dressing up in feminine clothing (2003, p. 20). She sees this as an expression of border-crossing behaviour, and quotes Pahl in her observations concerning the relaxing of a similar policy:

Boys frequently took on “female” identities as if this were the norm. It was as if, because they had a comfortable male role model, the boys could explore identity without inhibition. (1999, p. 94, cited in Holland 2003, p. 20)

In my early work with the children, I encouraged them to take on roles of the opposite sex as part of the *Story Whoosh* activity (Workshop 9/10/10). Children adopted this approach in their improvisations and some of them were very successful in delivering roles of the opposite sex. In the second *Sweetest Fig* workshop (26/2/11), 9-year-old Andrew took the role of Bibot’s very feminine secretary. He seemed comfortable in assuming this identity:

The secretary comes in swinging her hips and chewing a gum. As soon as she sees Bibot, she says ‘*Hiiii!*’ in a carefree way. She sits down, crosses her legs and starts reading a magazine, without paying much attention to Bibot’s directions. As soon as Bibot realises that, he yells at her and takes her magazine away. The secretary acts like she does not understand what all the fuss is about.

(Video 26/2/11)





*Figure 23: The children's improvisation where Andrew (seen sitting down with legs crossed) is in role as the secretary. Louis (seen standing), in role as Bibot, is taking her magazine away. Nasia (seen lying down) is in role as Bibot's dog sleeping (The Sweetest Fig Workshop 26/2/11).*

The girls participating in Holland's projects also engaged in some gender-crossing behaviour (2003, p. 126). In settings in which superhero, war and weapon play were allowed, the participation of girls 'proliferated' (2003, p. 126). Playing with such scenarios was entertaining for them and 'increased the range of possibilities of what it might mean to be a girl' (2003, p. 126).

This example by Holland is an important one in reinforcing my argument that, by challenging gender stereotypes, both boys *and* girls can experience the joys of boisterous play. This was certainly the case when the Youth Theatre participants were encouraged to engage in play fighting as Tom's co-workers in the *Yallery Brown* workshop (5/2/11). Girls fought like boys did; and the more boisterous the play, the bigger the grins on their faces.

The abandonment of gender stereotypes can offer children wider rewards which can contribute to their future success. Paechter makes a strong case for this in her book *Being Boys, Being Girls* (2007). She argues that, when schools overcome the idea of strongly oppositional gender communities, students can take full part in the learning world of the classroom (2007, p. 90). To help us understand this, she offers the example of curriculum subjects that are strongly labelled as *masculine* or *feminine* (2007, p. 129). The gender stereotyping of subjects and subject content restricts their future possibilities for professional success:

(...) young women overwhelmingly opt for pathways that lead to poorly paid jobs with little possibility for advancement or the development of their skills, in contrast to young men, who tend to favour those courses leading to recognized trade qualifications with the potential for self-employment and good rates of pay. (Equal Opportunities Commission 2002, cited in Paechter 2007, p. 129)

Paechter concludes that differentiated communities of practice of masculinity and femininity matter tremendously to young people's futures, as they can prepare them for success in the wider community (2007, p. 150). They equip them with 'the skills and dispositions that will stand them in good stead if they wish later to enter corporate society' (2007, p. 150).

### **5.3.5 Pedagogy on play**

Even though boisterous play can serve as a route to enhancing children's well-being, it needs to be well controlled. As Schechner (1993) warns us, it often involves risks for the physical and emotional security of the participants, and it is exactly these elements that children need to be protected from. There are four key points in the pedagogy I used regarding boisterous play: The establishment of the drama contract that set boundaries and regulated children's behaviour; the providing of a strong

fictional frame; teaching children the skills of representation of violence in naturalistic and stylised forms; and halting the play whenever I felt it ran the risk of becoming physically and emotionally dangerous. With regard to free, socio-dramatic play, my pedagogy consisted in incorporating children's suggestions generated through their play into the overall drama plan. I will examine these one by one.

#### **5.3.5.1 Establishing a drama contract**

The drama contract, composed by both children and myself at the beginning of the fieldwork (Preparatory Workshop 8/1/11), set some boundaries that were useful in controlling the play. Two of its rules are most relevant here: *'Respect each other'* and *'Safety comes first'*. Children embodied them in their activities and adjusted their play-fighting according to them. An example of this comes from the boys' market presentation, where they used pillows in their fight as sellers and buyers (*Fairy Ointment* workshop 16/4/11) (see *Figure 20*, p. 260). The pillows prevented them from hurting each other and from causing physical injuries. In this way, they managed to sustain and enjoy the play (Holland 2003, p. 28).

Holland gives an account of a similar incident in her research, whereby children enjoyed the boisterous play, but in the same time showed sensitivity and control in doing so in order to keep the play going and to avoid getting hurt (2003, p. 28). A boy and a girl decided to have a sword fight. Before starting, they agreed that they would allow some distance between them and that they would be careful not to hit each other. When one of them received a gentle knock, they decided to move further apart to prevent this from happening again. They play continued for 10-15 minutes and involved much laughter and no physical injuries (2003, p. 28).

The drama contract operates within a frame which resembles to the one described by Holland. The Youth Theatre members had their say in the synthesis of its rules. We revisited the drama contract and negotiated further rules when we felt that there was some kind of risk involved. For example, when 6-year-old Chryso slipped and hurt herself while being chased by the Troll, we added a new rule: *'We should move carefully around space'* (The Three Billy Goats Gruff Workshop 15/1/11). In this way, all of us could enjoy the drama without similar incidents taking place.

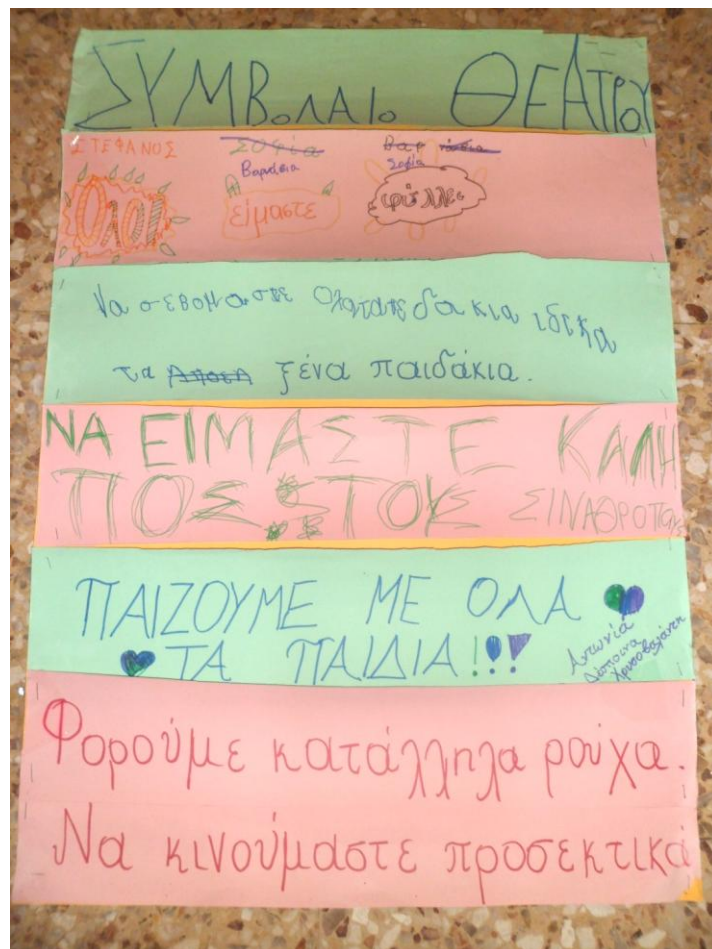


Figure 24: The YT1 drama contract (Preparatory Workshop 8/1/11). The rules are (from head to bottom): 'We are all friends'; 'We should respect all children and especially those coming from foreign countries'; 'We should be kind to others'; 'We should play with all the children'; 'We should wear suitable clothes'; 'We should move carefully around space'. The final rule was added when 6-year-old Chryso fell and hurt herself while playing (Workshop 15/1/11).

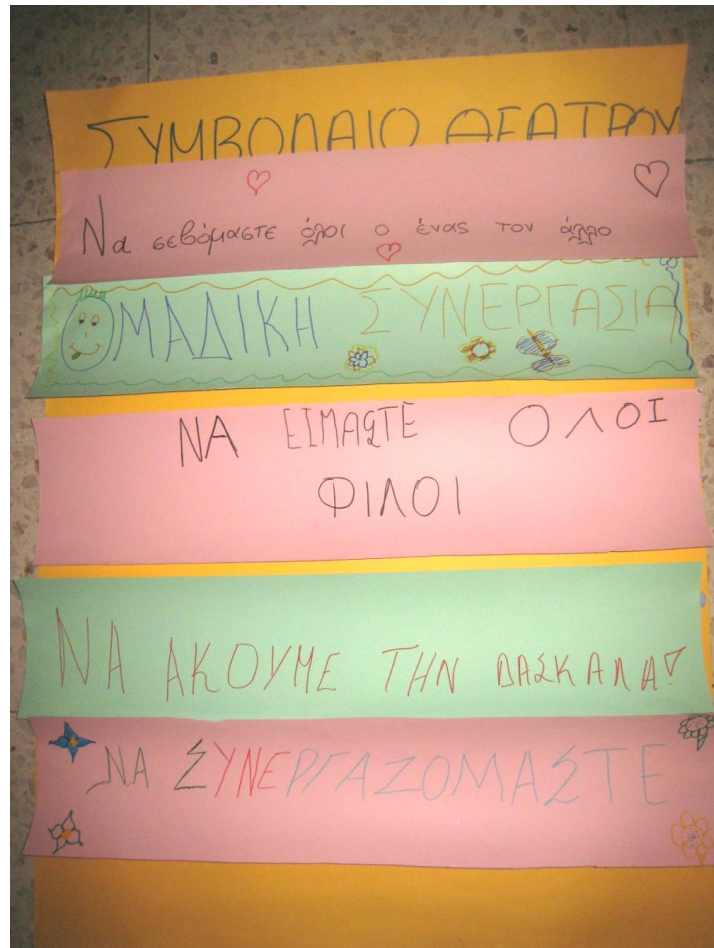


Figure 25: The YT2 drama contract (Preparatory Workshop 8/1/11). The rules are (from head to bottom): 'We should respect each other'; 'Team work'; 'We are all friends'; 'We should listen to the teacher'; 'We should work together'. Other rules were added to it as the fieldwork progressed.

The establishment of the drama contract was important in regulating the general behaviour of the participants. It offered them a sense of safety because they knew what was allowed, what was not allowed, and what to expect (Neelands and O'Connor 2010, p. 11). Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that the rules of the drama contract were different to those usually found in a school classroom. To start with, they were not imposed by the teacher, but were negotiated and agreed upon among the participants. Moreover, the rules were looser than those applying in school contexts. This was a necessary requirement in making room for boisterous play which my students could enjoy. It is because the rules of the classroom are

tighter than those of a drama contract, that this kind of play was seen as transgressive in the classroom but not in our Youth Theatre. In a drama environment, children are given the opportunity to engage with ‘border-crossing’ play; this is nevertheless *controlled* because they are still working within the contract. They are called upon to comply with its rules so as to be able to sustain the drama and to enjoy it for its own sake.

### 5.3.5.2 Providing a strong fictional frame

Winston agrees that creating playful images of violence involve risks, and suggests that it should be well managed (2005, p. 314). In referring to dark language games (such as insults and curses) which might be hurtful for those subjected to them, he writes:

The key to harnessing their (i.e. the games’) playful energy and making them safe is for the teacher to ensure that the fictional frame is very strong; and that the play is firmly within the rule-bound territory of *ludus*. In other words, to frame it clearly as a game (...). (Winston 2013)

Ludus is a term introduced by the French theorist Caillois. It is one of the categories he classifies play into. Ludus is defined as ‘play in more structured forms, such as games of chess and football, where there are detailed sets of rules’ (Winston 2013).

In the case of children engaging in playful images of violence as toy factory workers (Yallery Brown Workshop 5/2/11), the fictional frame was established by the teacher assistant’s narration: ‘*As soon as Tom took a sweet, the workers began to fight among them!*’. This set out that from that point on, participants would not be themselves, but would assume the role as the workers. Therefore, any fighting would be performed in role. Besides, early on in the fieldwork, we had established that events happening in drama are imaginary (Yallery Brown Workshop 29/1/11). These

points provided the frame within which children managed their play so as not to harm themselves or others. The fact that they took pleasure in the play without causing any injuries serves as evidence that the pedagogy of setting this frame was successful.

### 5.3.5.3 Teaching the skills of representation of violence

The approach of Somers (1994) is useful in making sure that boisterous play is not the precursor of actual violence or injuries. He advises on how to teach students to handle the representation of violence in both naturalistic and stylised forms. Apart from protecting children from being hurt during uncontrolled fights, the usefulness of this teaching lies in them acquiring **self-discipline** (1994, p. 34). Somers acknowledges the fact that children will want to represent violence in a naturalistic form because they will want to replicate the kind of violence they witness on TV, and also because of the *thrill* this kind of play gives (1994, p. 34). However, he reassures us that they can be convinced in using a stylised form of play when they are presented with the argument that, an unstructured naturalistic fight, apart from the possibility of leading into an injury, will look completely *unconvincing* on stage (1994, p. 34).

In line with Somers's approach, I attempted to guide the boys towards delivering a convincing conflict scene as market sellers (*Fairy Ointment* workshop 16/4/11). The boys had rehearsed their scene in the group. In offering them feedback before the presentation, I suggested that they should not shout altogether, as this would prevent the audience from understanding what they were arguing about (Journal 16/4/11). Together, we came up with the order in which they would say their lines and choreographed some hand gestures to go with them. They appeared to be very

willing to incorporate my suggestions into their performance. The context in which I was teaching is important to take into consideration when interpreting their willingness. In the Youth Theatre, children participated voluntarily because they were passionate about drama and because, as few had expressed in their interviews, had aspirations of becoming professional actors and actresses (Interviews 19/2/11 and 19/3/11). Because they wanted for their play to look convincing on stage, they were willing to conform to the rules of a stylised form of violence, rather than engaging in realistic or naturalistic fighting.

#### 5.3.5.4 Halting the play

Another pedagogical approach I used to protect the children from the risks of boisterous play was to halt it when I felt it was entering a dangerous territory. Here, I am reminded of Cook's pedagogical models, derived from cultural forms of play (2000, p. 201). Among the three key figures he identifies— the *storyteller*, the *magician* and the *referee* – it is the third one that seems most relevant here. I acted as the referee halting the boisterous play of children in role as factory workers, when I felt that it was getting too risky (*Yallery Brown* workshop 5/2/11).

I believe that it is important that the halting of play is performed without the play losing the fictional frame. The importance of maintaining the fictional frame lies in the fact that children are more likely to **discipline themselves** in pausing the play within the dramatic context, because they want drama to work and for them to enjoy it.



### 5.3.5.5 Incorporating the results of play into the overall plan

With regard to the pedagogy on *free socio-dramatic play*, Winston's advice is useful:

(...) teachers who open up stories and invite children to contribute ideas must be willing to incorporate them skilfully into their overall plan without abandoning the story in their head. There are times, then, when enjoyment of the game of drama, for both children and teachers, lies in the willingness to take a risk, to surrender to chance and trust that any randomness that results can be used artistically to enrich the experience.

In taking a risk and letting children manage their own play, both children as performers, and myself as audience, enjoyed it. The results of the activity were artistically embodied in the role-play that followed, in which children as villagers made their offerings to the old man (Workshop 19/3/11). They derived much enjoyment from the activity, and this was evident in the excitement in which they announced their offerings:

Peter (aged 6): *We have built a house for you. All of those who helped build the house raise your hands!*

Valerie (aged 7): *We have built a house for your animals as well! Also, a couch and TV for the house. We have brought a new cane for you.*

Angelos (aged 6): *We have built a very safe boat for you and your animals in case we have another flood in the future. It's an ark!*

Linda (aged 7): *We will give you a bravery award.*

Daphnie (aged 7): *We have made clothes for you.*

Steven (aged 9): *We have prepared ten big bags of food for you! We have also*

*brought you 100 kg of manoeuvre. And the best part for last: I have built a plane for you in case the ark sinks during the flood. In the plane there is storage room for your food bags and for your animals as well.*

(Video 19/3/11)

This example invites a discussion on how giving children's *voice* a central place in drama significantly contributes to their well-being. It is this subject that the following subchapter deals with.

### 5.3.6 Summary

In this subchapter I have argued in favour of allowing children to engage in boisterous play and loosely-structured dramatic play because they have the potential to contribute to their personal, social and emotional flourishing. Using evidence from my research, I have illustrated how *boisterous play* offered children **thrill** and **gratification**, gave them the opportunity to engage in **forms of expression** that they do not usually enjoy in school, and allowed for the **release of unsettling emotions** and **accumulated energy**. I have also illustrated the positive effects of a loosely-structured, socio-dramatic play: the **pleasure** children derived from it, the enhancement of their **co-operation skills**, the **self-confidence** with which they contributed their ideas and **the use of their voice** in shaping the dramatic experience. I focused, however, on one particular aspect of their well-being; the **shift of focus from themselves** to the dramatic play and to the social whole. Teachers might understandably find the territories of boisterous play and loosely-structured play to be unsafe, because these forms of play might lead to disruptive behaviour, cause

physical harm, and threaten teacher authority. However, when skilful pedagogy is employed, such risks can be avoided. The pedagogy I am proposing entails the principles of establishing a drama contract, providing a strong fictional frame, teaching the skills of dramatic representation of violence, halting the play when it crosses the boundaries without losing the fictional frame, and lastly, incorporating the random results of children's loosely-structured play into the artistic experience.

## 5.4 *Children's voice and well-being*

### 5.4.1 Introduction

The third subchapter of my Discussion focuses on the subject of children's voice in relation to their well-being. As we have seen in the Results chapter (Section 4.3.3), the concept of children's voice arose from the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child. The Convention equates voice with children's expression of thoughts, views and feelings, and emphasises their right to have these listened to and taken into consideration in decisions affecting them (Haynes 2009, p. 33).

There are two aspects I will look into: Children's voice *in role* and children's voice *out of role*. With regard to the first component, I will discuss how, by using drama conventions as research tools, I gathered my students' views on the issue of well-being; what they believe contributes to it and how it is related to the artistic/dramatic experience. Regarding the second component, I will examine whether there is any evidence to show that, by allowing my students to shape the final performance through their ideas and views, they developed on a personal, social and emotional level.

It is important to note that, unlike other subchapters of the Discussion, this does not feature separate sections on *pedagogy* or *gender*. The pedagogy I used in encouraging the children to use their voice runs through the chapter. As far as gender is concerned, the data did not point to any significant differences between boys' and girls' voice within the Mantle of the Expert drama schemes (voice *in role*) or the process of working towards the performance (voice *out of role*).

## 5.4.2 Children's voice in role

### 5.4.2.1 The Mantle of the Expert drama schemes

In my effort to gather children's perspectives on the topic of well-being, I composed two drama schemes which made extensive use of Heathcote's *Mantle of the Expert*. As I mentioned in the Research Methodology chapter (Section 3.4.6), the drama schemes employed *hot-seating*, *still images* and *writing in role* as research tools in order to yield the participants' responses.

For the younger children's group (YT1), the drama workshop was based on Rosen's *My Sad Book* (Workshop 30/6/11). For the older children's group (YT2), the drama workshop was based on Tan's *The Red Tree* (Workshop 28/5/11) (see Appendix 3 for the detailed drama scheme). In order to help them understand the central theme of the workshops, I used the term *happiness* (*ευτυχία* in Greek) as a synonym for well-being. The word *ευτυχία* in Greek is often taken as synonym for joy. The most accurate translation for happiness can be given through the Ancient Greek word *ευδαιμονία* which Aristotle uses extensively in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, *ευδαιμονία* is rarely used in Modern Greek and therefore children would have difficulties understanding its meaning.

There are four key questions on which the drama schemes were based:

- a. *What makes children unhappy?*
- b. *What can serve as a remedy for their unhappiness?*
- c. *Can drama and the arts make children happy? If so, how?*
- d. *What should a drama lesson consist of in order to make children happy?*

As there is not enough space to refer to both drama schemes, I have chosen to focus on *The Red Tree*. The drama scheme and the story were interesting in themselves,

and as such they provoked some reactions from the children that are worth offering in this subchapter.

In *The Red Tree* the narrative is largely given through a series of painted images. Shaun Tan uses metaphor in the images to describe the feelings of unhappiness of a red-haired girl:

At the beginning she awakes to find blackened leaves falling from her bedroom ceiling, threatening to quietly overwhelm her. She wanders down a street, overshadowed by a huge fish that floats above her. She imagines herself trapped in a bottle washed up on a forgotten shore, or lost in a strange landscape. She's caught in a tiny boat between towering ships about to collide, then suddenly she's on stage before a mysterious audience, not knowing what to do. Just as all hope seems lost, the girl returns to her bedroom and finds a tiny red seedling growing in the middle of the floor. It quickly grows into a vivid red tree that fills her room with warm light. (Tan Website 2013).



Figure 26: Illustration 'Darkness comes over you' from Tan's *The Red Tree*. Oil and acrylic on paper (Tan Website 2013).



Figure 27: Illustration 'Nobody understands' from Tan's 'The Red Tree'. Oil, acrylic and wax pencil on paper (Tan Website 2013).



Figure 28: Illustration 'Self Portrait' from Tan's 'The Red Tree'. Oil, acrylic, pencil and collage on paper (Tan Website 2013).



What Tan hopes to achieve through these illustrations is to encourage the reader to identify with the nameless girl who ‘passes helplessly through many dark moments, yet ultimately finds something hopeful at the end of her journey’ (Tan Website 2013). I felt that the story suited my research purposes particularly well because it dealt explicitly with the notions of happiness and unhappiness.

The workshop began by telling the children a story about Laura, a red-haired girl who was found wandering in the city streets. She did not speak a word, but only drew pictures of herself. I assigned children the role of child psychologists who were to meet the girl and attempt to help her revive from her unhappiness. As the workshop progressed, they worked in groups to fill in a medical report for the girl. Each group were also given a drawing from the book and were informed that it was created by the girl.



*Figure 29: Group 3 completing their medical report (Workshop 28/5/11).*





Figure 30: Group 5 with their completed medical report and drawing from the book (Workshop 28/5/11).



Figure 31: Group 2 with their completed medical report and drawing from the book (Workshop 28/5/11).

In the following activity, the child psychologists met the girl in person. The teacher assistant, Michaela, assumed the role of Laura, while I acted as the mediator. The two of us had discussed in advance that, in her presentation, she would highlight the following points as explanations for the girl's unhappiness:

- *Loneliness*, which links to the theoretical idea of children's well-being under threat due to lack of sociability.
- *Her opinions not taken into consideration*, which links to the theoretical idea of children's well-being under threat due to not being given the space to articulate their voice or have this listened to by adults.

In the previous chapters, I discussed how these two ideas, namely loneliness which is equivalent to lack of sociability, and a child feeling that her voice is not taken into consideration, can pose a threat to her well-being (Sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.6 respectively).

Michaela was very convincing in her role, acting shy and introverted, and hesitating to share her thoughts (Video 28/5/11). She presented Laura as feeling sad and lonely because her parents' job meant that she had to constantly move around places. As a result, she could never maintain any friendships.

Some interesting questions and answers came up in the *hot-seating*. This revealed that children had understood the reasons for Laura's unhappiness:

Panos (aged 9): *Why won't you talk to us?*

Laura: *I'm tired of talking and not being listened to.*

Nicole (aged 9): *Why do you draw yourself so small compared to the other objects?*

Laura: *Because this is how I feel. I am so small and the world is big; so big that I can't do anything to change it.*

Ellie (aged 12): *What do the monsters in the drawings represent?*

Laura: *They represent all the negative thoughts and all the people who do not understand how I feel. These people are like monsters who want to destroy me. They might not want to destroy me, but this is what they are doing.*

Dina (aged 8): *I think I understand why you feel like this. Because you move around all the time and you feel that parents don't care about what you feel.*

(Video 28/5/11)

The children were then asked to respond to the following questions in the form of diagnosis in their medical reports:

**a. How do you think the girl is feeling? Why do you think she is feeling that way?**

Group 1: *Depressed. Lonely. She sees that no one cares for her.*

Group 2: *She feels lonely and sad because she doesn't have any friends.*

Group 3: *She feels lonely and afraid.*

Group 4: *No one is paying attention to her. She is all alone in the world.*

Group 5: *The patient feels like her life is like a game that depends on luck.*

(Medical reports 28/5/11)

Their responses, which originated from the agenda of the teacher in role, suggest that the reasons for the girl's unhappiness are *loneliness* (Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4), *not being listened to* (Groups 1 and 4) and *not being given the right to express her opinions* regarding her own life as others decide for her fate (Group 5).

The child psychologists were then asked to suggest some sort of relief for the girl:

**b. What could make the girl happy again?**

Group 1: *She should buy a pet that will keep her company.*

Group 2: *a) We should talk to her parents to ask them to consider staying in one place. b) We should find her friends who can move around with her, or friends whose parents are also doctors. c) We should persuade her parents to let her talk to them and share her feelings.*

Group 3: *Our suggestion is that we should talk to her parents. Her father should build his own doctor's office (so as not to move around). Her mother should have or adopt another child so as for the girl not to feel lonely.*

Group 4: *Someone paying attention to her, and her parents talking to her.*

Group 5: *We can talk to her parents and ask them to stay in one place.*

(Medical reports 28/5/11)

The children's responses reveal that the remedy for Laura's unhappiness lies in the *companionship* of either a pet (Group 1), friends (Group 2) or a sibling (Group 3). Her parents staying in one place (suggested by Groups 2, 3 and 5) would ensure that the girl kept her friends. In their view, happiness for the girl also lay in her *being*

*given the space to articulate her voice and express her feelings (Group 2), and in her being taken into consideration (Group 4).*

In the activity that followed, the children were asked to present key scenes from the girl's life through the conventions of *still image* and *thought-tracking*. Each group presented their image, while the rest acted as the audience who were invited to give their interpretations of it.

Group 1 presented a scene of Laura's family life:



*Figure 32: Still image by Group 1. Laura is ignored by her father (Workshop 28/5/11).*

In the centre of the picture, we can see the girl's father performing an examination on one of his patients. The person holding the tray is his assistant. Laura, played by the boy in the white shirt, has her back turned on him. In the *thought-tracking* activity, they used the following lines:



Father: *Leave me alone, Laura, I'm working!*

Laura: *They never listen to me.*

(Video 28/5/11)

The image reveals that central to Laura's unhappiness is the fact that she is not being listened or paid attention to by her parents.

In their image, Group 2 used symbolism:



Figure 33: Still image by Group 2. Laura expresses her feelings through her drawings and tries to communicate these to her parents (Workshop 28/5/11).

When I touched the shoulder of the girl playing Laura, she said nothing; she just turned her head away in shyness.

Participants acting as the audience interpreted Laura's action of hiding behind her drawing as her using art as a way of expressing her feelings, rather than talking about them (Video 28/5/11). They also explained that, at that exact moment, she might have been showing her drawing to her parents in an attempt to gain their attention. The creatures lingering over her head represented the monsters shown in the illustration. These, according to the audience, were the people who did not understand Laura and who decided her life for her.

Group 3 presented a scene of Laura's life at school:



*Figure 34: Still Image by Group 3. A child approaches Laura to become her friend (Workshop 28/5/11).*

While the other children are playing, Laura is at the back sitting all alone. A girl approaches her to make friends with her:

Girl: *Hi! How are you?*

Laura: *(sighs)*

(Video 28/5/11)

This group saw a remedy for Laura's unhappiness in her making new friends.

Group 4 shared a presentation of Laura saying goodbye to her friends, as she is forced to move to a new place once again:



*Figure 35: Still image by Group 4. Laura says goodbye to her friends (Workshop 28/5/11).*



Girl 1: *Goodbye, Laura!*

Girl 2: *Goodbye! We'll miss you!*

Girl 3: *Oh no, why do you have to go?*

Laura: *Goodbye...*

(Video 28/5/11)

The image of Group 5 depicted Laura using art as a getaway from her unhappiness:



Figure 36: Still image by Group 5. Laura finds a refuge in art (Workshop 28/5/11).

Laura: *All I can do is draw.*

(Video 28/5/11)

One particularly interesting interpretation of the image above came from 9-year-old George, who thought that the actresses lingering over Laura's head formed the bed which she used to hide away from the world and to do what she loved best: draw (Video 28/5/11).

In the second meeting with the child psychologists, Laura informed them that her parents had decided that she needed to meet with other children. She chose to join a Youth Theatre. The participants were asked to give ideas on the following based on their experiences in our Youth Theatre:

**c. What stories and activities can make the girl happy in drama?**

Group 1: *Funny stories and improvisations.*

Group 2: *Funny stories and stories with a sense of optimism. Also, games and improvisations.*

Group 3: *Comic stories and games.*

Group 4: *Funny stories, and making friends.*

Group 5: *Games.*

(Medical reports 8/5/11)

It is interesting to compare these answers with those that the students had given out of role (in their interviews and questionnaires) regarding what makes *them* happy in drama (Interviews 19/2/11, 12/3/11, 19/3/11, 2/4/11, 7/5/11 and Questionnaires 19/2/11, 26/2/11, 11/6/11). The responses were generally very similar, with funny

stories, improvisations and games being some of the main foci. These responses have been offered in the previous Discussion subchapters.

**d. How should the other children in the Youth Theatre treat the girl so as for her to be happy?**

Group 1: *They should accept her and treat her as their friend.*

Group 2: *They should be friendly with her and treat her with love.*

Group 3: *They should talk to her, treat her well and be friends with her.*

Group 4: *They should help her create nice improvisations.*

Group 5: *They should help her.*

(Medical reports 28/5/11)

The responses of Groups 1, 2, 3 and 5 reveal the influence of the drama contract rule ‘*We are all friends in drama*’ to the children’s views. From this, it can be inferred that for children, happiness can be achieved through *receiving kindness, friendship, love and help* from others. The response of Group 4 reveals that happiness can be attained through producing dramatic pieces of good quality. The issue of quality in relation to student well-being will be discussed towards the end of this subchapter.

**e. How can she work well in a group?**

Group 1: *She should express her desires and ideas.*

Group 2: *She should express her opinions.*

Group 3: *She should feel comfortable around other children.*

Group 4: *She should express her opinions and listen to the ideas of others.*

Group 5: *All the members of the group should express their ideas.*

(Medical reports 28/5/11)

For my students, key factors for successful group work in drama are *one being given the space to express her opinions, being listened to by others and listening to the ideas of others.*

In this section, I have offered the views of the children (in role) on the issue of well-being and how it relates to the artistic/dramatic experience. In the following section, I will explain how I used their responses and why I consider them to be important in my research.

#### **5.4.2.2 How was the process of gathering the children's views on well-being important to my research?**

Providing the space for my students to express their views on well-being led to gathering *authentic* data for my research. As Alexander *et al.* maintain, 'children are expert witnesses' on what contributes to their well-being and what does not (2010, p. 143). As I mentioned in the Research Methodology chapter (Section 3.4.4.3), when it comes to research, the most suitable people to provide information on children's perspectives, actions and attitudes are children themselves (Scott 2008, p. 88). Browne agrees:

Listening to what children have to say provides an insight into what concerns children, how they are making sense of the world and how they are situating themselves and others. (2004, p. 60)

Boylan and Dalrymple (2009) have extended this argument even further. They argue that listening to children's voices not only leads to gaining an informed picture of their concerns, but also results in a shift of power in adult-child relations:

By listening to children and young people, we can gain the information we need for a fuller understanding of the issues that affect their lives. By dealing with voices we are affecting power relations. To listen to people is to empower them. (2009, p. 75)

It is important to note that the participants gave these responses *in role as* child psychologists. Being in role, I felt, would offer them a sense of security, and would make them feel confident in expressing their opinions on a sensitive topic such as that of well-being (Winston 2004, p. 50). In this vein, Fleming has referred to 'the safety of the mask':

The fact that pupils have been asked to adopt a point of view rather than present their own opinions provides greater security. Freed from ownership of the opinions they will express, they can 'play' with the ideas in a creative and exploratory way (...). (...) if sensitively handled, the drama can (...) serve as a form of protection in which social roles and ideas can be explored through the safety of the 'mask'. (2011, p. 35)

At this point it is worth revisiting the key questions on which *The Red Tree* drama scheme was based:

- a. *What makes children unhappy?*
- b. *What can serve as a remedy for their unhappiness?*
- c. *Can drama and the arts make children happy? If so, how?*
- d. *What should a drama lesson consist of in order to make children happy?*

The response to question A was offered to the children through the *teacher in role* activity:

- a. What makes children unhappy are *loneliness, feeling that they are not listened to, not being given the space to express their opinions and not having any control over their own lives.*

What follows is a summary of the key issues arising from the children's responses, in relation to the questions above:

- b. Remedy for this unhappiness can be found in *friendship and sociability, in being given the space to talk about their feelings, in feeling that they are taken into consideration, and in their involvement with the arts* (this idea was suggested by the still image of Group 5).
- c. The arts contribute to children's happiness because they give them the opportunity to *express their feelings and ideas* and because they provide a *haven from everyday pressures.*
- d. An ideal drama lesson includes *funny stories, improvisations and games.* In order for children to be happy in drama they need to receive *kindness, friendship, love and help* from others, and also to create dramatic products of *good quality.* In order for group work to be successful, children need to be

*given the space to express their opinions, to feel that these have been taken into consideration, and to listen to those of others.*

These responses served as data that guided me in my Results and Discussion chapters. The children's own suggestions regarding the ideal drama lesson were particularly useful as I took these into consideration when designing the remaining workshops.

My approach to providing my students with the space to express what contributes to their well-being through drama, and taking their ideas into consideration, is contradictory to the SEAL practices, as outlined in the Literature Review (Section 2.4.3). In offering their critical view on SEAL, Watson *et al.* point to the absence of children's voice in educational policies regarding their well-being (2012, p. 34). They further suggest that such programmes addressing the well-being of children are tailored according to the views of those in positions of authority (2012, p. 34). They conclude that this leads to 'denigrating the right of children to speak about their wellbeing (sic), or to vocalize on matters that concern them and children collectively' (2012, p. 34). Alexander *et al.* also point to the absence of children's voices in discourses that affect them and the replacement of these voices with the adults' misplaced assumptions as to what children think (2010, p. 56).

In this section, I have discussed why it was essential to gather my students' *in role* responses on the issue of well-being, both for my research data basis, and for the students themselves. I will now describe the process of working towards the performance, one that encouraged the expression of the children's voice *out of role*.

### 5.4.3 Children's voice out of role: The final performance

In the first and second subchapters of the Discussion, I offered a few examples of allowing the space for my students' ideas and suggestions to shape the dramatic work. I explained how the older children's preference for a horror story led to the *Yallery Brown* and the *Fairy Ointment* workshops, and how their preference for a comic story led to the *Sweetest Fig* workshops. I have also explained how the younger children of the Youth Theatre led the dramatic play by choosing to build the boat and the shelter for the old man. I have argued that in both of these cases, giving them the opportunity to voice their ideas and incorporating these into the overall drama plan, helped them flourish in different ways. The older children enjoyed working with the horror story and some managed to overcome their fear of such material. The younger children socialised well among them, experienced a sense of achievement and self-confidence, and reached a healthy state of self-forgetfulness.

In this section, I will focus on what I believe to be the most representative example of *allowing the space for* and *listening to* children's voice in drama, namely the process in which they worked towards the final performance. I will first describe this process and will then illustrate how it contributed towards my students blossoming in different areas of their well-being: **pleasure**; **sociability** and **social skills**; **self-confidence** and **sense of achievement**; **self-discipline**; and **beauty**.

#### 5.4.3.1 Listening to the children's concerns

In their interviews, some children expressed some concerns about the upcoming final performance, as well as drama performances in general. One of these was the anxiety of having to memorise lines from a script, and the fear of forgetting them on the day of the presentation. Steven, aged 9, reported:



Steven: *In last year's performance, people said that I did well. I might do even better this year, but I am afraid.*

Nandia: *What are you afraid of?*

Steven: *Of things going wrong; of mixing up my lines and of others laughing at me.*

(Interview 19/3/11)

Andrew, aged 10, suggested that improvising lines works better than having to memorise lines from a script:

*'When my cousin comes over, we work on short improvisations. We come up with our own lines; we improvise, we don't have a script (...). We tried to use a script once, but we didn't do as well. When we improvised, we did better.'*

(Interview 19/3/11)

Louis, aged 10, and Andria, aged 8, also expressed their preference for using their own lines rather than those of a script:

Louis: *The teachers (at school) give us scripts (...).*

Nandia: *Do you like the way we are working in the Youth Theatre? Or would you prefer me giving you a script like your teachers do?*

Louis: *No, I like the way we are working in the Youth Theatre.*

*Andria: I prefer us working together in groups; you just giving us the topic of the improvisation and us coming up with the lines.*

(Interview 7/5/11)

Some of the older children shared their disappointment about the process of working towards the previous year's performance. Led by another teacher, it followed the traditional route of providing them with a script and of delegating roles. The children complained about not deciding on their own roles or auditioning for the lead ones:

*Annie (aged 11): In last year's performance, the teacher gave the lead roles to two girls, without giving the rest of us a chance to try for them. I wanted to audition for the lead role, but I was too shy to ask. I thought to myself: 'If the teacher chose them, it means that they are stronger performers than me (...).' I felt like I was nothing compared to those girls; like I didn't have the potential to do as well as them. Because I felt that those girls were more talented than me, I was left with a role that I didn't like.*

*Panos (aged 9): It's like football, where the coach gives the best positions to certain players without giving the rest a chance to try.*

*Mary (aged 11): The teacher could have given us a chance to try for the roles (...). The children with the lead roles were the only ones that could be heard because they were the only ones who had microphones. The others could not be heard; the parents said so as well (...). That wasn't fair.*

(Interview 12/3/11)

Conversely, for 9-year-old Eva the problem was that she *was* given the lead role.

This situation caused tensions in her relationships with the other children:

*‘I had the lead role in one of the performances. The other children wanted the role as well. However, the teacher gave it to me without giving them a chance to audition. They felt sad; I could see it in their faces. I had my friends coming up to me saying: “It’s not fair, why should you get the lead role?” We had some arguments. I felt uncomfortable. (...) I would prefer if she had given the lead role to another child (...). I didn’t like last year’s performance because I felt like I was the only person on stage (...).’*

(Interview 12/3/11)

Sotia suggested that a solution to such problems is to abandon the idea of lead roles altogether, and instead have roles of equal sizes:

*‘It’s not fair for some children to have more lines than others. I would prefer it if there were no lead roles in the play. I would prefer it if everyone had the same amount of lines.’*

(Interview 12/3/11)

Louis, aged 10, stressed the importance of children choosing their own roles based on their understanding of the characters:

*‘The teachers (at school) (...) delegate the roles among us. I don’t really like that. In the (Youth Theatre) improvisations, you get to choose the role you want to play, as long as the others in your group agree. If the teacher delegates the roles, you don’t get to choose your role. The teacher just gives you the role; she doesn’t help you understand the character you are playing.’*

(Interview 7/5/11)

The concerns expressed by the children invite a discussion on the absence of children’s voice in traditional approaches towards producing a performance in Cypriot schools. These approaches are often employed in the setting up of school plays. The process involves handing out scripts to students they do not choose themselves, giving them roles they do not necessarily like, and encouraging them to memorise lines from a script in the same way they are encouraged to memorise learning material for tests. Steven’s response reveals that having to memorise lines from a prepared script can produce significant anxiety for children.

In the light of the data provided by the children, I decided to find a different way of working towards the performance, one that would address their concerns. I therefore sought an approach through which:

- a. Children would not have to memorise lines from a script, but would use their own generated material.
- b. They would decide on their own roles; that is, what role they wanted to play and what the size of this role would be.

In addition, I was interested in adopting an approach that would allow for children’s voice to take centre stage; one in which they would have the main say on what they

would present and how they would present it. With the younger children, I used a more teacher-led approach, while with the older children I used one that offered them a lot of independence and room for decision-making.

#### **5.4.3.2 The younger children's performance: The King with Horse's Ears**

The first step towards putting the younger children's performance together was asking them which of the stories we had worked on throughout the year they wanted to present. The majority of the children (11 out of 12) voted in favour of *The King with Horse's Ears* (Workshop 7/5/11) (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the story). I believe that the majority chose this one because they had genuinely enjoyed working on it, but also because it was the one they had worked on more recently and therefore remembered more distinctly.

The next step was to narrate the story in a circle using the convention of *action narration* (Workshop 7/5/11). I encouraged them to act out the characters in the story and to use their own lines, which they were in a position to do because they had become familiar with the story through a series of four workshops. I set the condition that they could have different roles in every scene, as long as the King was played by a different actor in every scene (except for the narrators who chose these roles themselves and were happy about them). In this way, everyone got a chance to be the King if they wanted to. This was part of my agenda of using the *ensemble* approach, which is theorised extensively by Neelands (2009). The approach, which has democratic values at its core, entails a notion of equality among group members.

In the retelling of the story, I intentionally left gaps for the children to fill. According to Francis Prendville and Nigel Toye, creating spaces for students to input their ideas

is a good tactic for allowing them to articulate their voice and ‘express their understandings and perspective’ (2007, p. 57).

While filling the gaps, the children often built on each other’s ideas:

Nandia: *‘The King called his servants and asked them to...’? What might he ask them for? Something irrational, maybe?*

Anthi: *(He should say) ‘Servant, tell me something funny.’*

Nandia: *‘Servant, tell me something funny that is going to make me laugh.’*

Ellie (in role as the King, repeating the line): *‘Servant, tell me something funny that is going to make me laugh.’*

Nandia: *‘Then the first servant came out and said...’*

Angelos (in role as the servant): *‘Blaaaaaaaaaah!’* (senseless cry)

Steven: *I know what he should say! ‘Why did the chicken cross the road?’*

Nandia: *Why?*

Steve: *‘To get to the other side!’*

Tonia: *Miss, can I suggest a joke for him to say?*

Nandia: *(...) Go for it.*

Tonia: *There was once a barber who always told his customers scary stories. One of his clients asked him: ‘Mr Barber, why are you always telling me such scary stories?’ And the barber replied: ‘Because they make the hair on your*

*head stand, and I then can cut it more easily.'*

(Video 7/5/11)

In order to help my students remember the lines they came up with, we repeated each scene a few times before we moved on to the next one. I encouraged those who had not come out in previous scenes to do so. We gradually moved from performing in a circle, to performing on stage, where we choreographed their movement. Each child participated in approximately five scenes out of the twelve, and got to be the King in one of the scenes. This excluded the two narrators, who were present on stage throughout the play and in the same role.

The final product was largely based on their suggestions. They had contributed their ideas on the lines and the characters of the play, as well as the actual plot. For example, they decided to justify the King's need of a barber as a result of him breaking his arm while playing golf:

Narrator: *One day, King Mark was playing golf with his prince friends.*

King: *Come on, Prince of England! Show us what you've got.*

(The Prince of England hits the ball with his golf club.)

Everyone: *Wow! Well done!*

Prince of England: *Thank you!*

King: *Your turn, Prince of Germany!*

(The Prince of Germany hits the ball with his golf club.)

*Everyone: Wow! Well done!*

*Prince of Germany: Danken!*

*King: Go on, Prince of France!*

(The Prince of France hits the ball with his golf club.)

*Everyone: Wow! Well done!*

*Prince of France: Merci.*

*Prince of Germany: Your turn, King Mark!*

(The King hits the ball with his golf club but breaks his arm.)

*King: Ouch! Ouch!*

*Prince of France: A doctor! Quickly!*

(The doctor comes in and examines King Mark.)

*Doctor: I am afraid that your arm is broken. You have to keep it still until it heals.*

*King: But how am I supposed to wash and cut my hair?*

*Doctor: You should hire a barber.*

*King: You are right.*

(Performance Video 29/6/11)





*Figure 37: The children performing as King Mark and the princes playing golf (Performance 29/6/11).*

Another example of children's voice shaping the content of the play comes from the scene of the King's birthday feast. They offered their ideas on the kind of entertainers that would come to the palace to provide their services to the King, and then chose their roles based on their personal interests. The girls with a passion for dance chose to be the ballet dancers and came up with their own routine; two girls were in role as artists who drew portraits of the King; three girls chose to be the musicians playing their flutes; and a boy chose to be the palace chef who made the King's cake.



*Figure 38: The scene of King Mark's birthday feast. The characters (seen from left to right) are: The first narrator, two ballet dancers, King Mark posing for his portrait to be drawn by the artists (seen kneeling), the palace chef (holding the cake), another ballerina, three musicians holding their flutes and the second narrator (Performance 29/6/11).*

#### **5.4.3.3 The older children's performance: Yallery Brown**

When I asked the YT2 participants which of the stories we had explored throughout the year they wanted to present, the majority chose *Yallery Brown* (as I have captured the voting process on video, I cannot say exactly how many children voted for the *Yallery Brown* story). I then divided the story into five scenes:

- a. Tom's life before he meets Yallery Brown.
- b. Tom setting Yallery Brown free.
- c. The making and granting of the wishes.
- d. The price to pay for the granting of the wishes, and Tom trying to escape Yallery Brown.
- e. Tom's life six months later.

The next step was for them to form groups of their choice, and to select one of the five scenes to work on. I allowed the children to form groups of their choice because in the questionnaires, feedback slips and interviews they reported that they enjoyed working in their friendship groups more, and that they produced better quality of work. Even though I intended for them to present one more story at the final performance, one for which they would work in non-friendship groups, there was not enough time to prepare for it.

They were let free to make decisions on the *content* of their scene, the *characters* they would employ and the *lines* they would use. Each child was free to choose her own role, as long as her group agreed. Furthermore, they were asked to complete the following form, which required them to make collective decisions on the *costumes*, *props*, *settings*, *lighting* and the style of *music* they thought would best suit the mood of their scene:

Yallery Brown Performance				
Group .....				
<p>Note: Your improvisation has different acts. Every time you change place or time, then your act changes; for example: at the factory, at home, six months later and so on.</p>				
<p><b>Costumes</b></p> <p>What costume will each of you put on according to your role?</p>	<p><b>Props</b></p> <p>What props will you use for each act? Remember that a good actor only needs a few objects!</p>	<p><b>Settings</b></p> <p>What setting (i.e. large props) will you be needing for each act? For example, tables, chairs?</p>	<p><b>Lighting</b></p> <p>What kind of lighting would you like for each act? For example, intense/low/fading in or out/different colours?</p>	<p><b>Music</b></p> <p>In which acts would you like music? What kind of music? For example: Happy music? Sad music? Scary music?</p>
<p>Please underline any objects that you do not have and you would like for Miss Nandia to bring you!</p>				

Figure 39: The form that each performance group was asked to fill out (translated from Greek) (see Appendix 6 for an example of a completed performance form).

This form was initially given to them to complete at the first rehearsal workshop (7/5/11). However, I assured them that they could come back to it as the rehearsals progressed and make any changes they thought to be necessary. Each group had the opportunity of meeting the musician in which they discussed their ideas on music. This was a professional musician who had volunteered to write the music for the YT performance based on the suggestions of the participants. They also held meetings with me to discuss their needs in lighting, costumes, props and scenery. I also encouraged them to write their lines down so as for them to be consistent in their rehearsals (see Appendix 6 for an example of a performance script written by the children).



*Figure 40: The performance of Group 1 (Act 1). Tom is waking up to go to work. Note the children's choices on the costumes and props, and lighting (bright light to show that it is morning).*





Figure 41: The performance of Group 1 (Act 2). At the toy factory, Tom leaves a rose on the work bench of his beloved Greta. The poster at the back reads 'Toy Factory'. The lights are dimmed.



Figure 42: The performance of Group 2. Tom is on the bus home. Seen from left to right: Bus driver, elderly couple asking for directions for 'bouzoukia', and Tom waiting for the bus to move again. Bouzoukia' (Greek: μπουζούκια) is a place of evening entertainment for Greeks, where folk music is played and danced to. Note children's choices of costumes and props.

In the directing of the scene, my role was limited to that of the advisor, giving my students practical suggestions as to how they would best communicate their meaning to the audience (Nutbrown 1996, p. 55, cited in Watson, Emery *et al.* 2012, p. 112). For example, I offered them simple guidelines regarding the use of voice and gesture, effective projection and sense of timing (Bolton 1998, p. 74). I also offered them suggestions on the plot and the lines used in their presentations, in order to achieve cohesion between the five scenes. Taylor and Warner argue in favour of a degree of teacher intervention in the creative process of children:

(...) left to themselves with freedom to create, children create what they already know. Without the teacher to challenge and extend their ideas, it is difficult for children to achieve new insights through drama. (2006, p. 51)

In this section, I described the process in which the younger and the older children worked towards delivering the final performance. In the following section, I will discuss how this process, which had children's voice at heart, contributed to their personal, social and emotional flourishing.

#### **5.4.3.4 How did the encouragement of children's voice contribute to their well-being?**

Revisiting the Results chapter (Section 4.3.3), we see how the relationship between voice and well-being is one that is depicted in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The Convention has set out an important route through which the well-being of children can be achieved. Article 12 of the Convention reflects their right to be heard, while Article 13 refers to their right for freedom of expression (UN 1990, cited in Watson *et al.* 2012, p. 111). Any violation of these rights is seen as a threat to the well-being of children.

The concept of children's voice is currently given much emphasis in the educational circles of UK and Cyprus. It is often associated with the idea of *dialogic teaching* introduced by Alexander (2005, cited in Prendiville and Toye 2007, p. 33). The extensive work of Alexander and his colleagues pointed to the lack of authentic dialogue in English classrooms which they saw as essential in the promotion of true learning (2000/2005, cited in Prendiville and Toye 2007, p. 33). They highlighted the importance of student talk in the classroom and presented dialogic teaching to be the most powerful form of teaching (2005, pp. 26-27, cited in Prendiville and Toye 2007, p. 43).

As I have argued in the Results Chapter (Section 4.3.3), children's voice is not limited to the verbal expression of their thoughts and ideas. It can be communicated through various means, such as symbols, codes and silence (Clark *et al.* 2003, cited in Haynes 2009, Rinaldi 2005). I consider the approach through which the Youth Theatre children worked for the performance to be a good example of my students articulating their voice through different artistic means.

In the following section I will argue how, by allowing the space for children to express their ideas and then embodying these ideas in the final performance, they reaped benefits in several areas of their well-being: **pleasure, social skills, self-confidence** and **sense of achievement, self-discipline, and beauty**. These aspects were theorised in the Literature Review (Section 2.2.4) and Results chapter (Section 4.3) as being vital to children's well-being. To strengthen my argument, I will offer evidence from my fieldwork which I will support with references to particular theories.

**a) *Pleasure***

The younger children enjoyed the process of working through the *action narration* convention. The atmosphere in the rehearsals was light-hearted. They mostly saw that as *play*, and often burst into rumbustious laughter during their improvising efforts:

Nandia: *'But when the time came for the King to wash his hair, he sent all the servants away.'*

Marina (in role as the King): *'It's now time for me to wash my hair.'*

Steven (in role as the servant): *'Can I stay and watch, please? I'll bring some popcorn along.'*

The children laugh their hearts out. It takes some time before they manage to focus again.

(Video 7/5/11)





*Figure 43: The children laughing with Steven's joke. Steven is seen in the centre of the circle kneeling in role as the King's servant (Workshop 7/5/11).*

The older children engaged in the rehearsals with much passion and enthusiasm:

As soon as I ask them to start working in their groups, they leave the circle in excitement and find their own space in the room. The group of 9-year-old boys are carrying benches on stage to use as part of the scenery. A group of 11-year-old girls are skipping happily as they make their way to their rehearsal space. A few others come to me, asking questions eagerly.

(Video 14/5/11)

The zeal and excitement which the children exhibited in the rehearsal process can be explained through the theory of Taylor (2000). He argues that 'students are more likely to commit when they are actively involved in initiating and shaping content

and form' (2000, p. 118). This was certainly true in the case of these children who showed more devotion to the process than they would have had if they were merely given a script and directional guidelines to follow. This was suggested in the responses of Andrew (Interview 19/3/11), and of Louis and Andria (Interview 7/5/11) offered in Section 5.4.3.1. Because they felt that the final product would largely depend on their own ideas and suggestions, they were willing to put in much energy and effort. What also acted as a motivational force for them was the problem-solving nature of the process (Prendiville and Toye 2007, p. 44). They were required to discover creative and economical ways to communicate meaning to the audience using dialogue, movement, costumes, props, lighting and music.

In the feedback slips the YT2 participants completed halfway through the rehearsal period (21/5/11), I asked them whether they had been enjoying the process of working towards the performance. They responded as follow:

*'I like/don't like the way we are working for the final performance because...'*

11 out of the 18 respondents replied that they liked it. Some interesting responses as to why they liked it are the following:

*'I like it because there are no scripts to follow.'* (Louis, aged 9)

*'I like it because every idea we use is ours; we are the ones who came up with everything.'* (Mary, aged 11)

(Feedback slips 21/5/11)

Both responses draw a connection between children's voice and the pleasure they experienced in the process. The first response reveals that the absence of a script was an important reason as to why the children enjoyed the work. O'Neill suggests that the 'immediate discipline of the script' often produces pressure for actors (1995, p. 9). The absence of the script allowed the children to enjoy the creative process. The second response suggests that they took pleasure in the work because it was largely based on their ideas. This evidence highlights the relationship between the expression of voice and the experience of pleasure. I will support this argument using the theory of Eagleton (2008) later on in this section.

Nevertheless, not all responses were positive:

7 out of 18 respondents replied that they did not like the process of working toward the performance, justifying their responses as follows:

*'I don't like it because there are different actors in every scene of the same play.'*

(Annie, aged 11)

*'I don't like it because it is not nice for each scene to be performed by a different group.'* (Sotia, aged 11)

*'I don't like it because the performance is cut up in too many pieces!'* (Natalie, aged 12)

*'I don't like it because I would rather us have one main character, like in previous performances.'* (Phanie, aged 13)

(Feedback slips 21/5/11)

What is made evident is that these children preferred the traditional ways of producing a performance which they had become familiar with through their school experiences. However, at that point of time it was difficult to make changes to the methods of working; the performance day was a few weeks away. More importantly, more than half of the children expressed that they were content with the approach.

***b) Sociability and social skills***

A group of older children are interesting to look at in terms of their social skills and self-confidence enhanced through the process of working towards the performance (see Appendix 6 for the detailed work of the group). The girls of this group appeared to be overly shy, and not very popular among their peers. The group was formed when all the other children got into groups, while the three girls were left without one (Video 7/5/11). That is when 10-year-old Louis decided to join them:

*'Today, we had the choice of getting into a group with our friends. However, since some children were left with no group, I didn't mind getting into one with them.'*

(Interview 7/5/11)

Katia, aged 9, explained that being left without a group was a reminder of her not having many friends in the Youth Theatre:

*'I sometimes feel lonely in the drama workshops. When others join their friendship groups, I feel left out.'*

(Interview 12/3/11)

This was also the case for Eva, aged 9:

Nandia: *Eva, you chose the cards 'I feel shy' and 'I have fun' (...). When in the workshops do you feel shy?*

Eva: *When you ask us to get into groups because I don't have many friends.*

Nandia: *Did you feel better today when I assigned you into groups?* (I was referring to *The Sweetest Fig Workshop 1* (19/3/11)).

Eva: *Yes (...). I think that because you assigned us into groups (...), this was the best workshop for me.*

(Interview 19/2/11)

Andria, aged 8, justified her feelings of shyness and loneliness as her being new in the group:

Andria: *I feel shy and I lonely (in the drama workshops) because I am new.*

Nandia: *How do the children treat you? Are they friendly to you?*

Andria: *They are. It is me who feels uncomfortable.*

(Interview 7/5/11)

Robinson offers an insightful explanation as to why these girls find it difficult to break the cycle of their unpopularity and socialise with others in the Youth Theatre (1980, p. 165). He finds that, underlying the dramatic group, is a network of real

social relationships. These relationships range from ‘total unfamiliarity and tentativeness with a new grouping, to long-established sets of friends and rivals with completely fixed expectations of each other in an old one’ (1980, p. 165). How the participants respond in the workshop is not only relevant to what the teacher asks them to do, but also to expectations they have of each other and their social roles in the larger group (1980, p. 165).

Andria, Katia and Eva thrived in terms of their social skills while in their small group for the performance:

*‘This group is working very well. They seem to be getting along just fine. They are focused on their work; my intervention is minimal. The girls do not appear to be as shy as before. They are contributing their ideas in the group, and these are then taken up by the rest of the group members. They generally seem to be enjoying the process.’*

(Journal 4/6/11)

It is possible that the employment of the ensemble approach contributed to the participants’ progress in matters of sociability and self-confidence. The ensemble way of working is vividly described by Streatfeild, one of the members of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Histories ensemble:

Our ever-growing trust enables us to experiment, improvise and rework on the floor with an astonishing freedom and confidence. This ensemble is a secure environment without ever being a comfort zone. All of us are continually challenging ourselves and being inspired by those

around us to reach new levels in all aspects of our work. (Cited in RSC Histories Cycle Programme Notes 2007, cited in Neelands 2009)

In their group, the girls enjoyed an atmosphere of trust and safety and this encouraged the shy ones to voice their thoughts and suggestions. Each member's ideas inspired the birth of others. In this way, the group was pushed 'towards new levels of collective social and artistic excellence' (Neelands 2009). What was key in this 'creative synergy' was the common goal of the group members; the 'solidarity of being and purpose' (Neelands 2009).

An idea as to how the rest of the children were working in their groups was given to me through their feedback slips:

'I do *perfectly well/ well enough/ not well* with my group because...'

20 out of 21 responded '*perfectly well*'. Some interesting responses justifying this are the following:

'...*because everyone gets to say what she thinks.*' (Marina, 11 years old)

'....*because everyone gets to say her ideas.*' (Praxoula, 11 years old)

'...*because we get to hear everyone's opinion.*' (Theodora, 11 years old)

'...*because I get to say what I think.*' (Phanie, 13 years old)

1 boy responded '*well enough*', but did not justify his response.

(Feedback slips 21/5/11)

What these responses suggest is that there were two important reasons as to why children worked successfully in their groups: Firstly, because they allowed the space for everyone's ideas to be expressed and secondly, because they listened to these ideas and took them into consideration. These arguments were raised by the children in their in-role responses to *The Red Tree* workshop which are offered in Section 5.4.2. It could be claimed that both in and out-of-role responses of theirs draw a connection between children's voice and the development of social skills.

In his book *The Meaning of Life* (2008), Eagleton demonstrates how the expression of individual voice can benefit the social group. He offers the example of a jazz group to demonstrate how, by allowing the space for each member to make her individual contribution, the group reaches new creative heights:

A jazz group which is improvising obviously differs from a symphony orchestra, since to a large extent each member is free to express herself as she likes. But she does so with a receptive sensitivity to the self-expressive performances of the other musicians. The complex harmony they fashion comes not from playing from a collective score, but from the free musical expression of each member acting as the basis for the free expression of the others. As each player grows more musically eloquent, the others draw inspiration from this and are spurred to greater heights. (2008, pp. 99-100)

The jazz players in Eagleton's example come together through the aesthetic pleasure of making art through improvisation. This is different from the way the children worked in their groups, where they contributed their thoughts verbally. The connection to Eagleton's example lies in the fact that, like the jazz players, children were able to voice their ideas in their groups, and in the same time were sensitive to those expressed by their colleagues. Each member's contribution encouraged the birth of new ideas in the same way the musicians draw inspiration from each other's



harmonies. Seen through this lens, it could be argued that providing the space for them to articulate their voice within the group led to the group achieving greater creativity. What the jazz players and my students ultimately share in common is the idea of a *communal goal*, which lies in the heart of the ensemble approach, as I mentioned above. Neelands expresses this idea as follows:

The production and performance of drama is (...) a form of community making. It requires a community (...) to work together towards a shared experience in which the communal goal is placed before individual interests. (2004, pp. 37-38)

For Neelands, it is the shared experience of drama, in combination with the sense of common purpose that form the basis of the social relationships constructed within a group. O'Neill adds that this feeling of togetherness and sense of common purpose can foster the energy that drives the creative process forward (1995, p. 9).

However, not all groups were as successful in working together. A group of 11-year-old girls faced significant difficulties. Whereas they had formed a friendship group, they soon divided themselves into two cliques; Sotia, Praxoula and Theodora on the one hand, and Annie and Joanna on the other. Much whispering was going on and some angry looks were exchanged. Most importantly, the girls seemed reluctant to work together.

As soon as I realised that something was wrong, I gathered the girls around and advised them to put their differences aside in order to produce a good piece of work. I gave them the example of actors who do not always get along with their fellow actors, but act professionally nevertheless. This seemed to have an impact on them. They went back to rehearsing and produced a good artistic result. Still, they did not resolve their differences; they were cold to each other until the last day I saw them.

In the last workshop (30/6/11), I asked them what had happened:

Nandia: *Annie, what happened?*

Annie: *Sotia is angry at me because I broke a promise. I promised that I would not hang out with some girls in my school (...). But I realised that it's not right to reject those girls. So I became friends with them. Sotia and her friends got angry about this, and stopped talking to me.*

(Informal conversation 30/6/11)

The fact that the group's bond had been lost affected how they felt they had done in the final performance. This was confirmed by the critical friend:

*'I was backstage so I could see how they felt. When they finished performing they told me: "Miss, we didn't do very well."*

(Interview 29/9/11)

The lack of group bond also affected the sense of pleasure derived through the performance:

*'I had fun in the performance yesterday.'*

The three girls, Sotia, Praxoula and Theodora replied that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. The other two girls of the group, Annie and Joanna, were absent that day. When I asked them what deprived them the fun, their friend Mary explained that the mothers of their opponents gossiped about them and gave them angry looks before and during the performance.

(Post-performance, game-like questionnaire 30/6/11)

The example of this group serves as a reminder that drama is not an empty space where we can ignore social reality at the expense of artistic reality. Both Robinson and Nicholson address this theoretical point in their writings. The former writes in relation to this:

The members of the group do not forget who they are and how they normally relate to each other simply because they are asked to take on a role. The depicted world of the drama is unlikely to be revealing unless the teacher, who helps control it, has a clear understanding of the social reality on which it is based. (Robinson 1980, p. 167)

Nicholson refers to the ideal of empty space as 'the great theatrical symbol of modernist utopia' (2005, p. 125). She mentions black box theatre as one of the concrete realisations of the ideal of the empty space, and cites Wiles on the following:

(Black box theatre) is bound up with the modernist goal of transforming society, which may seem paradoxical in view of the way it cuts itself off from any contact with an implicitly corrupt and false social world outside. (2003, p. 57, cited in Nicholson 2005, p. 125)

Nicholson uses Wiles's argument to claim that, like in the case of black box theatre, in drama there cannot be 'a temporary isolation from other social practices' (2005, pp. 125-126). The dramatic space cannot be stripped from signs of social interaction, be ideologically neutral or be without cultural inscription (2005, pp. 125-126). Nicholson quotes the French cultural theorist Lefebvre on his thesis that 'space is never empty' but always actively produced through social action and interaction (2005, p. 127).

Applying the arguments of Robinson and Nicholson to the case of the Youth Theatre girls, it could be claimed that their social experiences outside the drama space influenced the way they interacted in it. When coming to rehearsals, they could not forget their differences or the ways they related to each other at school. As their teacher, I was able to gain a clear understanding of their relationship in drama because I was aware of the external factors that had influenced it and the social reality on which it was based.

### ***c) Self-confidence and sense of achievement***

For the younger children, the *action narration* convention through which we set up the performance, and which provided a platform for the use of their voice, worked to the benefit of their self-confidence. As I was narrating the story, the children were on their toes so as to claim the roles for each scene. They saw this as *play*; and as such, it provided them with a sense of *self-forgetfulness* (the connection between play and self-forgetfulness is discussed extensively in the Discussion Subchapter 2). It encouraged the shy ones, such as 6-year-old Anthie, to leave their comfort zones and to join in:

The children and I are in a circle on stage. I ask them: *'This is the first scene, children. Whoever wants to, can come out in the middle of the circle and act out as the King.'* Anthie is leaning forward, ready to jump in. *'Once upon a time, there was a King; King Mark. Let's see a wonderful King!'* Stephanie rushes in the middle of the circle and walks around proudly in role as the King. *'Whenever King Mark strolled in the streets, his subordinates bowed before him. Let's see some subordinates!'* All the children take a step forward and start bowing; all except for the shyest ones, Daphne and Anthie. Daphne stays put. Anthie hesitates for a moment but then joins in. She bows twice, and then takes her place back in the circle.

(Video 7/5/11)

Based on the theory of Neelands, Anthie's behaviour could be interpreted as the crossing of a social boundary:

The first boundary that pupils encounter is between watching and doing. Many pupils may come to drama with a strong sense of boundary between these two activities. To get up and physically participate in drama in front of one's peers is an important social boundary to cross. (...) Practical work in drama challenges the pupils to extend their physicality into more expressive and public behaviour. (Neelands 2003, p. 38)

Engaging in an expressive physical act in the presence of her peers was a sign of growth for Anthie in terms of her self-confidence. As the rehearsals progressed, her confidence evidently grew. She claimed the roles offered, including the lead role of the King, and was in position to improvise her lines. In the final performance, she

seemed comfortable on stage and well-focused on the play. Her progress was noted by her mother:

*'Anthie used to be shy. What she did in the performance was really good.'*

(Interview 10/1/11)

In their interviews, the President of the Organisation funding the Youth Theatre and the critical friend - both of whom had watched the performances - commented on the progress other children of the Youth Theatre had made in terms of their self-confidence:

*President: I could see children who are usually shy and whom I have known for years transform on stage during the workshops and during the final performance. I was thinking to myself: 'Is that really them?' I admire them for having the courage to get up on stage and to perform in front of all those people. These are children who used to be so shy, they wouldn't even say 'good morning' when they passed by me at school. In that sense, I believe that the Youth Theatre has helped children build their self-confidence and become more outgoing.*

(Interview 19/7/11)

The critical friend agreed:

Michaela: *I would have never thought that Marina from the younger children's group, for example, would be able to get up on stage and perform as the King. Mary from the older children's group, learned her lines by heart, whereas before she would say: 'I can't do this without my lines written on a piece of paper.' She usually got a small role in her group's improvisations. I don't know whether that happened because she was too shy to ask for a bigger one or because she didn't want to get in a fight with her friends. I think she liked her role in the final performance.*

(Interview 29/9/11)

Michaela's response highlights a connection between children's expression of voice and the enhancement of their self-confidence. Mary was able to learn her lines by heart because they were her own. As she was well familiar with the story, even if she forgot any of her lines, she would be in position to improvise on the spot. This reduced any fear of failure. Her choosing a big role – that of the narrator – as opposed to the small roles she usually had, is indicative of a growth in her self-confidence.

I am claiming that the approach which we used in working towards the performance and which placed emphasis on children's voice helped them flourish in terms of their self-confidence. I believe that there are three reasons why this was so. Firstly, my students realised that their ideas and opinions mattered a great deal in the shaping of the dramatic product, and this made them feel that their contribution was valid. Drawing on the theory of Rawls, when a person feels that her views are regarded and

appreciated by others, it enhances her sense of self-worth, which by extension contributes to her well-being (1972, pp. 440, 548).

Secondly, the process required children to take different responsibilities and to carry out various tasks. While in the *Mantle of the Expert* schemes they assumed certain levels of expertise *in role*, in the process of the performance production they assumed even greater levels of expertise *out of role*. In both cases, trusting them with such important tasks gave them a status that they do not often enjoy in school classrooms, and that made them feel valued. As we saw in the Results chapter (Section 4.3.3), the *Good Childhood* report emphasised that an important aspect of children's well-being is for them to be made to feel as 'infinitely precious people' by taking into consideration their thoughts and ideas (Layard *et al.* 2009, pp. 152-153). Additionally, the participants' responses in *The Red Tree* workshop highlighted that an important route to their happiness is feeling that their ideas and opinions matter, and being given the power to decide for matters that affect them.

Thirdly, the participants experienced a sense of achievement which, for John Rawls, is a direct input to a person's self-confidence and well-being (1972, p. 548). The connection between achievement, confidence and well-being was also evident in their responses to *The Red Tree* workshop. The achievement itself - the dramatic product - reflected the extent of their abilities and skills. Through the process of working with others towards the performance, they experienced 'a sense of discovery, an awareness of their own capacities, and a feeling of growing effectiveness both personally and in the drama' (Taylor and Warner 2006, p. 89).

In the example of the jazz group given above, Eagleton writes:



There is self-realization, but only through a loss of self in the music as a whole. There is achievement, but it is not a question of self-aggrandizing success. Instead the achievement – the music itself – acts as a medium of relationship among the performers. There is pleasure to be reaped from this artistry, and – since there is a free fulfilment of realization of powers – there is also happiness in the sense of flourishing.’ (Eagleton 2008, pp. 99-100)

For Eagleton, the sense of achievement rises through collective effort. Similar to the jazz players, my students expressing their ideas and listening to those of others led to a *collective achievement* – the artistic product itself. The achievement served as a means for the strengthening of the social bond within the group. The children developed an awareness of their own potential through their interactions with others. This led to a flourishing in their self-confidence. Eagleton also mentions pleasure as an outcome of the creative process, therefore providing a link between the articulation of each member’s voice within the collective artistry and their sense of pleasure. This link between voice and pleasure was depicted in my data and was discussed in the Results chapter (Section 4.5.6).

Fourthly, the performance itself offered an opportunity for the enhancement of the children’s self-worth. This was because they received the praise of the audience for their accomplishment, but also because they identified themselves with the beauty of the artistic product. Winston writes in relation to this:

For young people this (i.e. sharing their work with an audience) provides them with a chance to be looked at, admired, adulated and praised. (...) It is a chance for them not only to create something beautiful and good, but also, for that moment at least, to be *seen themselves* as beautiful and good. (2010, p. 79, italics in original)

The issue of beauty in relation to the expression of children's voice and its contribution to their well-being will be further examined towards the end of this subchapter.

#### ***d) Self-discipline***

The older children showed much discipline during the rehearsals for the final performance. Each group worked independently and autonomously and regularly reported to me for feedback. No serious problems occurred, apart from the group of girls who had fallen out and who, for a brief time, showed little interest in rehearsing.

The self-discipline that my students exhibited throughout the production process can be explained in two ways. To begin with, they were aware that much of the responsibility of producing a performance of good artistic quality lay on their shoulders. The process required them to make decisions regarding various aspects of the performance, to carry out different tasks and to engage in numerous rehearsals in order to achieve a worthwhile piece of work. Heathcote explains that, in situations where the responsibility is shared by the teacher and the students, and where the latter are given the space to voice their ideas, they develop self-discipline and become more mature:

This relationship of the teacher offering to the children his extra live experience and the children offering to the teacher their own fresh way of looking at things (...) brings with it certain instinctively felt disciplines which children will not cross. One very rarely finds children in this relationship to the teacher being rude or lacking class discipline, because each recognizes the strength of the other in the situation. (...) This attitude will encourage children towards greater maturity, greater courage in expression and carrying out of ideas and a more realistic approach to adult life. (Heathcote *et al.* 1984, p. 86)

The younger children saw the process of building the performance through *action narration* as *play*. Because this was the case, they often failed to take the rehearsals seriously. I reminded them that even though having fun was a desirable outcome, they needed to be serious at times so as to build a performance that their families and friends would be able to enjoy (Video 14/5/11). This seemed to have an effect on their behaviour, as they appeared to be more focused thereafter. It could thus be argued that another reason for their development in terms of self-discipline was because they wanted to create a piece of work that the audience of their families and friends could enjoy.

This idea takes us to Nicholson's theory of drama as gift. In her book *Applied Drama: the Gift of Theatre*, she uses the concept of giving and receiving gifts as a metaphor for drama (2005, p. 160). She draws on the work of the French theorist Derrida entitled *Given Time* (1992) to discuss the view of the act of gift-giving as an open and generous expression of desires and responsibilities (2005, p. 162). In Derrida's view, gift-giving is an act made voluntarily and unconditionally as 'an ethical alternative to self-interest' (2005, p. 162).

Following Derrida's theory, my students' performance can be seen as a gift in the sense that it reflected the *desires* of children (what they wanted to present and how they wanted to present it) as well as the various *responsibilities* they were required to take so as to deliver it. As a gift, it was offered voluntarily and unconditionally to their audience. They *wanted* to create this piece of work because they wanted to offer pleasure to their loved ones. Nevertheless, it cannot be argued that the act of offering the gift of performance was entirely stripped from self-interest, as Derrida

remarks. As I mentioned before, children wanted to be seen and admired by their significant others, and in this way feel good about themselves (Winston 2010, p. 4).

Nicholson makes a reference to Fennell's essay on the social and emotional significance of the gift (2005, pp. 163-164). Fennell argues that the gift generates emotional pleasure, not only for the recipient, but also for the donor (2005, p. 164). The act of gift-giving requires the donor to put herself in the shoes of the recipient so as to imagine what she would like to be offered. In her view, an important quality of the gift is that it allows the donor to express feelings which cannot be easily put into words (2005, p. 164).

If we perceive the children's performance as a gift, then the elements described above can be seen as pertinent to their dramatic experience. They offered the performance as a gift to the audience in order to give them pleasure and entertainment. They derived gratification in seeing that their gift pleased the audience. In order to entertain their audience, they were required to empathise with them and to think of what kind of performance they would enjoy. In the first rehearsal workshop (7/5/11) I encouraged them to think about the following:

- *Who do you want to see your performance?*
- *What do you think your audience would like to see?*
- *How would you like for your audience to feel?*

The children built their dramatic work based on these questions. The performance also acted as a gift in the sense that it served as a means for them to express their feelings and ideas through various means rather than solely through words.

### ***e) Beauty***

As I have illustrated throughout this subchapter, the process of working towards the performance gave the participants a great deal of control in shaping the dramatic product. This was especially the case with the older children, whose presentations were almost entirely based on their ideas. However, if a person with some experience in theatre-making (or even theatre-watching) saw the performance, she would be in a position to realise that the presentations were not of excellent artistic quality. This can also be made evident by merely reading their scripts (see Appendix 6 for an example of a script).

This invites a discussion on the issue of *quality* in children's theatre. Reason writes in relation to this:

Quality in theatre for children might be considered wholly or largely subjective, a matter of taste or fashion. Quality might also be applied, not insignificantly, to the physical and material standards of a production. Quality might alternatively, but more problematically, be related to the effectiveness of theatre for children at delivering various instrumental benefits (....) whether to individual children, to schools or to communities as a whole. Quality might, therefore, be related to some universalised and timeless judgement of taste reduced to the specific needs and requirements of a particular audience at a particular time. (2010, p. 35)

Whereas he admits that quality is difficult to define, Reason stands firm on his position that it should be evident in children's theatre, in the same way that it should be in any dramatic production (2010, p. 35). Stanislavski raised a similar argument. He maintained that 'it is necessary to act for children as well as for adults, only better' (cited in Goldberg 1974, p. 23, cited in Reason 2010, p. 35). This was his way of declaring that the principles of performance and the need for good artistic quality

are the same in adult and children's theatre (Goldberg 1974, p. 23, cited in Reason 2010, p. 35).

I too find it difficult to define what quality is when it comes to my students' performances. However, as their teacher I instinctively knew where the artistic weaknesses of the presentations lay and which areas I would have liked my students to develop more. I did not insist on their performance reaching levels of artistic excellence for two reasons. Firstly, time constraints did not allow for further improvements. Secondly, producing a piece of excellent artistic quality conveyed the risk of restricting the space for the expression of their voice. Given the pressure of time, it would mean that I would possibly have to ignore many of their ideas and desires, and instead implement a formula for 'high quality' theatre.

Yet, like Reason above, I also considered producing a good piece of theatre to be important. It would mean that it could be enjoyed by both the other children and the audience. Moreover, it would allow their parents to acknowledge the value of the work done in the Youth Theatre. The context in which I was working added further pressure in achieving drama of good quality. The children participated in the Youth Theatre voluntarily and had expectations of me introducing them to the making of good theatre, and of me teaching them the technical skills of acting. As mentioned before, in their interviews a few of them suggested that an important reason for joining the Youth Theatre was because they had aspirations of becoming good actors and actresses (Interviews 19/2/11 and 19/3/11).

My experience as a student has shown me that an approach that places emphasis *exclusively* on the quality of the artistic product may have detrimental effects on a young person's well-being. As a teenager, I was part of my school's theatre team

which was led by a teacher much committed to the making of high quality theatre. We were given a script that was well-worked on and we were taught the basic technical acting skills. We had professional technicians coming in to build the elaborate scenery, tailors making extravagant costumes, and experienced musicians creating complex harmonies to accompany our stage acts. It was admittedly *good theatre* in the making.

The performance was well-received by an audience of students, teachers and theatre critics, and was awarded first place in the Pancyprrian Student Games for Contemporary Theatre & Ancient Drama in 2000. It was my first experience of making theatre to such high standards. Yet by the end of it, I felt that it was as detrimental to my well-being as it was beneficial for my growth as an actress. The price to pay for the achievement was putting up with our teacher's bossy behaviour, yelling and constant pressure. It is not a hyperbole to say that some of the incidents in the rehearsals took away the joy and self-confidence derived from this accomplishment. In one instance, I remember my teacher walking across the rehearsal space fiercely to slap the lead actress in the face; that was the latter's punishment for refusing to rehearse. I remember myself standing there, watching in shock, and feeling the urge to run away from it all. I also remember myself in tears on the day of the final rehearsal, because I was forced to wear a costume I did not feel comfortable in. My co-actors and I were given little room for choice and for the expression of our individual desires.

It seemed that I was not the only one to have felt that this teacher's methods, aiming to produce an excellent piece of theatre, managed to do so at the expense of our sense of pleasure, well-being *and* love for theatre. It will suffice to point out that

many of my co-actors refused to participate in the following year's performance which was led by the same teacher.

My personal experience influenced my decision to adopt an approach that prioritised children's voice and well-being over the artistic quality of the performance. Even though I did teach them the basic technical skills of performing, I did not insist on them perfecting them and did not pressure them into rehearsing until the piece reached artistic excellence. In agreement with Winston, I considered that the beauty of the dramatic object 'is not necessarily dependent upon a high level of skills that approach perfection' (Winston 2010, p. 54). I was more concerned with the dramatic experience contributing to their well-being. Also, I wanted them to enjoy drama for its own sake rather than worrying about the outcome. This idea takes us back to the Literature Review and the discussion about the intrinsic value of the arts versus their instrumental view (Section 2.5.1).

I was happy to see that my students thought highly of the quality of their dramatic pieces:

*'I like/don't like my group's improvisation because...'*

20 out of 20 respondents replied that they liked their group's improvisation, with some justifying this as follows:

*'I like it because we come up with some nice things.'* (9-year-old girl)

*'I like it because we are the ones who came up with it.'* (11-year-old girl)



*'I like it because we have our own ideas in the improvisation and we work well together.'* (11-year-old girl)

*'I like it because we have some very nice ideas and we present them nicely.'* (12-year-old girl)

*'I like it because (our improvisation) is humorous and dramatic.'* (12-year-old girl)

(Feedback slips 21/5/11)

What shines through in their responses is that they enjoyed their improvisations precisely because they were born out of their own individual and collective ideas. Believing that what they produced was worthwhile served as a motivating force in the rehearsal process. Winston makes a relevant point while quoting Nehamas:

Nehamas (...) reminds us, in Platonic tones, that finding beauty in what we do can (...) inspire us with the love that drives us onward, that makes the rigors of practice worth the effort. (2007, pp. 105-120, cited in Winston 2010, p. 78)

Children finding **beauty** in their artistic endeavours was necessary for them to flourish in terms of their well-being. As we have seen in Section 5.4.2 of this subchapter, in *The Red Tree* workshop the participants in role of child-psychologists drew a connection between happiness and creating dramatic pieces of good quality (Medical reports 28/5/11). Also, the theory of Rawls discussed in the Literature Review (Section 2.3.3) has pointed out that a person is happy when she feels that her plan of life is rational and that it responds to her natural interests and capacities (1972, pp. 440, 548). If we extend this theory to include my students' improvisations in the plans Rawls is referring to, then the following argument can be made: Because

their improvisations reflected their interests (in scripts, costumes, music and so on) as well as their capacities (what they were able to do), and because they thought that their improvisations were worthwhile (rational), they experienced a sense of happiness (which is a term Rawls uses as a synonym for well-being).

It appeared that the audience too found aesthetic quality in the children's performance:

*'The performance was really nice. The children performed well. I could tell that they had put much effort in it and that they enjoyed performing.'*

(Interview with parent 10/1/11)

*'I was impressed with the fact that, during the performance, the audience kept very quiet. This was the first time this had ever happened. That is very important. People tend to talk while watching a performance, especially when they do not find it any interesting. I am not sure why, but the audience was very focused on the performance this year. It was a very quiet audience as oppose to the audience at school performances which is very loud. This means that the parents who came to watch the Youth Theatre performance believe in the Youth Theatre, (...) what it aims towards and what it has to offer to children.'*

(Interview with the President of the Organisation funding the Youth Theatre 19/7/11)

It is likely that the audience were in position to realise the artistic weaknesses of the performance, but did not let these affect their overall positive impression of it. Fennell's essay on the social and emotional significance of the gift discussed above

is helpful in providing a possible explanation for their positive attitudes towards the presentation. Fennell argues that the recipient of the gift acknowledges the ‘empathetic efforts’ of the donor to find a suitable gift for her, and this leads to the gift attaining sentimental value (cited in Nicholson 2005, p. 164). If we perceive the performance to be the gift and the audience to be its recipient, then it could be argued that they acknowledged the efforts the children had made in entertaining them. This, in combination with the audience’s affection towards the actors and actresses, contributed to the performance acquiring sentimental value and to potential flaws being ignored.

Even though my approach placed more importance on children’s voice rather than artistic quality, I am not suggesting that one necessarily excludes the other. On the contrary, it is possible for a teacher to achieve a balance between the two. I believe that if I had more time with the Youth Theatre children, they could have achieved a better aesthetic result *within* an approach that allowed them to shape their dramatic product using their voice. I would have challenged them more in finding ways to better communicate their meaning to the audience, and to make the performance more appealing by manipulating the various theatrical elements. Apart from helping them acquire the skills of producing good theatre, I would also have encouraged them to develop more in terms of their acting skills.

Nevertheless, what is important to note is that the children’s responses revealed that they had in fact enjoyed the process of working towards the performance. The overall evidence showed that the approach of placing emphasis on children’s voice helped them flourish in different areas of well-being. These facts signal that any progress I would like my students to make in the future in terms of making good

drama, should be sensitively managed so as not to reject their ideas and suggestions – that is, their *voice*.

When talking about the ways of fostering and nurturing my students' voices in this particular educational context, it is essential to clearly define the limits of this voice and to recognise the dangers that are inherent in limiting their voice to a non-political sense, with regard to their well-being. An example coming from the work of Winston and Tandy (2012) is helpful in illustrating this point. In their book, they explain how receiving a good education on Shakespeare can give young people a voice (2012, p. 5). They write that influential people, such as politicians, cultural commentators and business leaders, consider the ability to discuss Shakespeare, appreciate his work and quote from his plays, to be signs of a good education. When a person possesses these abilities, such powerful people are likely to think highly of her and to be prepared to listen to what she has to say. In this sense, Shakespeare education can provide young people with a *voice* and can be the platform for them to be listened to by important people.

Similarly, producing theatre of good quality could act as the means for students to be listened to by audiences beyond the confines of their families and friends. Watching a performance of high quality prompts these audiences to think highly of the performers and to hear what they have to say. In this way, children's artistic endeavours and their voice could acquire political significance.

The danger of not placing emphasis on the artistic quality of my students' performances is that the extent of their voice is limited in a political sense. Their performances were surely appreciated by the people of their immediate environment but, as I have argued, this also had to do with the sentimental value the audience

attached to the artistic pieces. Children's voice was not developed to a stage where they would be heard beyond the confines of their families and friends. In restricting their voice in this way, there is a limit to the advantages which can be obtained for the children's well-being. The need arises to educate these children further in order for them to learn to understand and produce theatre that will be deemed by others beyond their social locale as good, and that will have meaningful impact politically. This could allow them access and credibility in certain social spheres similar to the benefits inherent to an education in Shakespeare as outlined above. Therefore, teaching my students the skills of doing good theatre and enabling them to use these skills later in their lives, could contribute to them being taken into consideration and seen as worthwhile people in a wider social spectrum. This would surely have a positive impact on their well-being.

#### 5.4.4 Summary

This subchapter focused on the approaches I used to encourage children's voice *in* and *out of role*. Regarding the first component, I have argued that my students' responses on the issue of well-being provided **authentic data** for my research. I have illustrated how - contrary to the usual SEAL practices - the drama schemes provided the space for children to express their views on a matter of their immediate concern.

Regarding the second component, I have demonstrated how the approach of working towards the performance, which had children's voice at its heart, contributed towards the personal, social and emotional growth. Firstly, they experienced a sense of **pleasure**. The younger ones saw the process as play, while the older ones were motivated by its problem-solving nature and by their heavy involvement in the initiating and shaping of content and form. Secondly, they benefited in terms of their

**social skills** because, in expressing their individual ideas, they inspired those of others, and thus the group reached new creative heights. What is more, they worked together to achieve a common goal and the collective achievement reinforced their social bond. Thirdly, they flourished in terms of their **self-confidence**. For the younger ones this was because the playful nature of the process encouraged a sense of self-forgetfulness and an extension of their physicality into more expressive and public behaviour. For both the younger and the older children, their self-confidence was enhanced because they assumed roles of experts and degrees of responsibility, and because they realised that their views mattered in the shaping of the final performance. They also enjoyed **a sense of achievement** through the realisation of their capacities. Their self-worth was strengthened because they were seen and admired by the audience and received their appraisal. Fourthly, they developed **self-discipline** because they felt that the responsibility of delivering a good performance the audience could enjoy lay on their shoulders. Lastly, they saw **beauty** in their artistic products which reflected their interests and capacities. Beauty acted both as a motivating force in working towards the finished product and as a basis for the flourishing of their well-being.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### 6.1 *Summary of key findings*

My thesis has explored the contribution of drama to the various aspects of the well-being of primary school children in Cyprus. My Discussion chapter has highlighted the following key issues:

#### 6.1.1 A complex relationship

Issues relating to drama and the well-being of children are not technically straightforward. The relationship of drama and the well-being of children is multi-layered and more complex than what the immediate response to this issue might be. This relationship is not without its problematic aspects, and this is why teachers and parents can often find difficult to comprehend some of the themes that are relevant to it. In my thesis, I proposed a pedagogy that can help deal with the challenges arising from this approach.

#### 6.1.2 Choice of stories

The choice of stories which the drama workshops were based on influenced how my students flourish. In their effort to enhance children's well-being, SEAL and SEE employ didactic and moralistic stories which can be seen as means of achieving a 'soft' form of discipline. Contrary to these practices, and following my students' requests, I used a *horror story* for the basis of drama work that had their well-being at heart. Whereas responses from teachers and parents revealed a general adult scepticism towards horror fiction, I have argued it is what my students most enjoyed and what contributed to their flourishing. Their engagement with the *Yallery Brown* story offered them 'the thrill of being frightened'; a 'liberating tonic' to the tyranny of didactic stories; a release from the pressures imposed by educational and parental

authorities; a healthy release for their unconscious fantasies; and the ‘pleasure of anxiety’ that enabled them to face and master the images of terror.

*Pedagogy:* This approach conveys an important pedagogical challenge. If not carefully handled, the employment of a horror story might result in children experiencing the ‘displeasure of anxiety’. In order to protect my students from such unpleasant feelings, I tried to listen and respect their concerns about the content becoming too frightening, help them distinguish between the real and the imaginary events, and adjust the pace and the content of the story to whatever made them feel comfortable.

*Gender:* In my research, it was mostly boys who sought to experience the thrill of horror. I have discussed how, in school contexts, boys are often denied this opportunity possibly because of the feminisation of education. Nevertheless, this denial conveys the risk of offering boys stories that fail to attract them and that do little for their imagination. This is an important point to take into consideration when making decisions on the agenda of stories used in schools, especially one that addresses student well-being.

### **6.1.3 Play**

Contrary to general adult beliefs, there are benefits to be reaped from allowing children to engage in *boisterous play*. In the case of my students, it offered them a sense of thrill, it allowed them to release unsettling emotions and accumulated energy, and it provided them with an opportunity to engage in forms of expression that are frowned upon in a classroom environment. *Free socio-dramatic play* also had positive effects in the flourishing of my pupils. It offered them a sense of pleasure, it helped them develop their social skills and skills of working with others,



and it encouraged them to contribute their ideas with confidence and to use their voice to shape the dramatic events. Of particular importance was the fact that, through such play, they experienced a healthy shift of focus from themselves to the creation of the fictional world.

*Pedagogy:* Teachers tend to avoid the areas of boisterous play and loosely-structured play because they see certain dangers in them, namely the loss of control and the subsequent disruptive behaviour of students, the threat to their physical and emotional integrity, and the challenge to teacher authority. This need not be the case, however. A skilful pedagogy can prevent these dangers. The pedagogy on *boisterous play* that I have proposed, includes the following principles: Negotiating a drama contract; establishing a strong fictional frame within which play can take place; teaching the skills for stylised forms of play-fighting; and halting the play when it challenges the boundaries of what is safe and what is unsafe (without abandoning the play's fictional frame). My pedagogical suggestion for free socio-dramatic play was to incorporate the contributions of children to the overall drama plan.

*Gender:* As was the case with horror fiction, it was boys who exhibited the greatest enthusiasm in engaging with boisterous play. I have argued in favour of challenging gender stereotypes in order to also allow girls to experience the joys of (controlled) boisterous play. I have also claimed that, by disrupting gender divisions, students can gain access to a wider range of discourses. A way to achieve this within the drama work is to encourage them to assume roles and positions that do not comply with the accepted models of 'femininity' or 'masculinity'.

#### **6.1.4 Children's voice**

My project highlighted the importance of encouraging children to articulate their voices and of taking their voices into consideration, as routes for their personal, social and emotional growth. Expressing their voice *in role* on the issue of well-being was useful in providing me with *authentic data* for my research, and in shaping the dramatic work to follow according to their suggestions. Expressing their voice *out of role* - in the process of working towards the performance - had multiple advantages for their well-being. Through this process, they enjoyed a sense of pleasure and gratification, and they exercised their skills of working with and listening to others. They developed in terms of their self-confidence because they assumed levels of expertise and responsibility, they appreciated that their views mattered, they realised their potential, and they identified themselves with the aesthetic quality of the artistic product. The process also required them to exhibit self-discipline in order to deliver the various tasks and responsibilities for a successful performance. In line with Rawls's (1974) theory, the performance acted as a basis for their flourishing because it reflected their interests and capacities.

### **6.2. Limitations of research**

The theoretical exploration of the concept of well-being in the Literature Review revealed certain limitations that applied to my research project. It is worth mentioning these briefly before I move on to discuss further limitations that came to light through my analysis of data.

#### **6.2.1 Time constraints**

Because the time I spent teaching in these institutions was limited, I could not expect long-term or sustainable results regarding the contribution of drama to the well-being of my students. What is more, the nature of drama does not allow for such effects to

be gauged immediately. The responses of children revealed a positive influence of drama to their well-being *at that moment*; there is no guarantee that these effects would be endured. The case might have been different if I had the opportunity to work with them for a considerably longer period of time and on a regular basis.

### **6.2.2 Influence from various factors**

The well-being of children is shaped by many different factors, such as their economic circumstances, their cultural backgrounds and their family situations. Some of these factors are so powerful that they can overwrite the effects of the one-hour-per week contribution of drama, of course. Nevertheless, I chose to focus on what drama *could* offer to children rather than what it *could not*.

### **6.2.3 No single effect**

Drama could not have a single effect upon the group of children. This was because the participants differed among them in terms of their backgrounds, personality traits, needs and interests. Therefore, I could not expect homogenous positive responses concerning the correlation of drama to their well-being. Any evaluation of the effects of drama to their well-being had to take into consideration their individual differences with regard to the aspects mentioned above (backgrounds, personality traits, needs and interests) and others.

### **6.2.4 Participants already flourishing**

The responses of my students revealed that these were children who were already flourishing and who did not deal with any severe issues concerning their well-being. This rendered my approach one that was not concerned with ‘fixing problems’ or implementing a ‘target-driven’ plan to heal their well-being (which is what can be said of SEAL and SEE practices). I was more concerned with offering children the

pleasure of the aesthetic experience, and with examining whether they reaped any benefits in terms of their well-being *while* enjoying drama for its own sake.

During my analysis of data, further limitations arose:

### **6.2.5 Drama is not an empty space**

The social reality outside the drama space affected the way my students interacted with each other in it. Their relationships in school were often reflected in how they associated in the drama group. The positive contribution of drama to their social skills and to their skills of working with others was often overwritten by their school experiences. School experiences were more powerful than dramatic experiences due to the large amount of time children spent at school.

### **6.2.6 Limited extent of voice**

In my project, I gave weight to allowing my students the space to express their ideas and to thus shape the dramatic performance, rather than to producing a piece of work of high artistic quality. This involved the danger of limiting their voice to a non-political sense, with potential impacts on their well-being. Creating a performance of high quality would act as the medium through which they could express their views and have these listened to by people beyond their social locale. The need arises to educate my students further in order for them to acquire the skills of producing good theatre that can have meaningful political impact. It is in this way that their voice could acquire political significance. Acquiring these skills might offer them future benefits for their well-being because their high-quality artistic endeavours will act as the means for them to be listened to and respected as worthwhile and well-educated individuals.

### **6.3 Further recommendations for research**

Some of the limitations outlined above are useful in highlighting the areas in need of further research.

A central argument in my thesis was that drama can be used as an *alternative* to educational practices especially designed to address student well-being. A future prospect of my research could be the actual replacement of programmes such as SEAL and SEE with drama, in order to examine whether it can help towards the personal, social and emotional flourishing of students in a more *organic* and *natural* way.

It would be interesting to observe whether children's engagement with drama can have more sustainable effects in the various areas of their well-being when different time conditions apply. What is further required is a longitudinal study with students participating in drama workshops for an *extensive amount of time* and *on a regular basis*.

Another possibility for further research is to involve children whose well-being is judged as being under threat; for example, children who suffer from very low self-confidence or children who present a great lack of social skills. Whereas my approach was not concerned with 'fixing problems', it would be interesting to see whether an extended version of it could offer substantial help to these children.

Perhaps one of the more intriguing possibilities for additional research with regard to my project is the implementation of an approach that gives equal weight to the quality of the artistic product and the expression of children's voice. In order to maintain a balance between the two, it would be necessary to teach students the

skills of understanding and producing good theatre *while* simultaneously encouraging them to offer thoughts and ideas that will shape the performance. It is important to remember that any progress we would like students to make in terms of making good theatre should be sensitively managed, so as not to reject their views and suggestions. As I have pointed out above, creating theatre of high quality can serve as the medium through which their voice could be listened to and hence acquire political significance.

#### ***6.4 To whom this research might be useful***

The outcomes of my project, as well as the pedagogy I propose in it, can be useful for teachers and drama educators who are interested in enhancing different areas of the well-being of their students. They can use drama in the ways that I have suggested as an alternative to the practices of SEAL and SEE. Some of the ideas offered here could also interest parents. For example, the discussion on horror fiction and its potential to contribute to children's flourishing might encourage parents to re-evaluate this genre when it comes to reading stories to their youngsters. More importantly, I hope that this piece of research can be of value for the Cyprus Ministry of Education, in order for drama to be considered as an alternative educational approach towards enhancing student well-being, and for it to be generally allowed more space in the curriculum based on the rewards it can offer to students.

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## Appendix 1: Timeline of Data Collection

### I. Primary School

#### A. Observation

Drama Scheme	Date	Duration	Type of Observation
<b>Pilot Project</b>			
Workshop 1	08/10/10	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	12/10/10	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
<b>Preparatory Workshop</b>			
Workshop 1	08/02/11	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
<b>Yallery Brown</b>			
Workshop 1	11/02/11	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	15/02/11	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Workshop 3	18/02/11	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Workshop 4	22/02/11	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
<b>The Sweetest Fig</b>			
Workshop 1	25/02/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	01/03/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 3	08/03/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 4	11/03/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 5	18/03/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Fairy Ointment</b>			
Workshop 1	29/03/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	05/04/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured

<b>Revisiting the Drama Contract</b>			
Workshop 1	12/04/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Fairy Ointment</b>			
Workshop 3	15/04/11	40 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b>			
Rehearsal 1 for 'Ocean in the ER'	06/05/11	40 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 2 for 'Ocean in the ER'	13/05/11	40 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 3 for 'Ocean in the ER'	17/05/11	40 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 4 for 'Ocean in the ER'	27/05/11	40 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 5 for 'Ocean in the ER'	31/05/11	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 6 for 'Ocean in the ER'	02/06/11	40 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
<b>Final Performance 'Ocean in the ER'</b>	03/06/11	20 minutes	Indirect Non-participant Unstructured
<b>Total</b>			
23 Workshops	23 days	15 hours	

Additional Observation

Lesson	Date	Duration	Type of Observation
<b>End of Fieldwork</b>			
Social and Emotional Learning class taught to 9-year-olds	28/09/11	80 minutes	Direct & Indirect Non-participant Unstructured

**I. Primary School**  
B. Interviews

Drama Scheme	Date	Interviewee(s)	Type of Interview	Duration	Location
<b>Pilot Project</b>					
Workshop 2	12/10/10	2 children 8 and 10 years old	Semi-structured Group	12 minutes	Classroom
After Workshop 2	13/10/10	Previous Head Teacher	Semi-structured One-to-one	20 minutes	His home

<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b>					
Before Rehearsal 1 for 'Ocean in the ER'	03/05/11	2 children 8-9 years old	Semi-structured Group	5 minutes	Classroom
Before Rehearsal 1 for 'Ocean in the ER'	03/05/11	2 children 8-10 years old	Semi-structured Group	5 minutes	Classroom
Rehearsal 3 for 'Ocean in the ER'	17/05/11	2 children 8-10 years old	Semi-structured Group	9 minutes	Classroom
Rehearsal 3 for 'Ocean in the ER'	17/05/11	2 children 8-9 years old	Semi-structured Group	9 minutes	Classroom
Between Rehearsals 3 & 4 for 'Ocean in the ER'	18/05/11	Teacher of 11-year-old children	Semi-structured One-on-one	38 minutes	Classroom
Between Rehearsals 3 & 4 for 'Ocean in the ER'	24/05/11	1 child 8 years old	Semi-structured One-on-one	9 minutes	Classroom
Between Rehearsals 3 & 4 for 'Ocean in the ER'	24/05/11	Teacher A of 10-year-old children (part 1)	Semi-structured One-on-one	40 minutes	Teachers' lounge
Rehearsal 4 for 'Ocean in the ER'	27/05/11	1 child 9 years old	Semi-structured One-on-one	7 minutes	Classroom
Between Rehearsals 4 & 5 for 'Ocean in the ER'	30/05/11	Teacher of 8-year-old children	Semi-structured One-on-one	38 minutes	Classroom
<b>End of fieldwork</b>	10/06/11	Teacher A of 9-year-old children	Semi-structured One-on-one	19 minutes	Classroom
	16/06/11	SEE Teacher/ Drama Practitioner	Semi-structured One-on-one	47 minutes	His workplace
	16/06/11	Teacher B of 9-year-old children	Semi-structured One-on-one	43 minutes	Classroom
	17/06/11	Current Head Teacher	Semi-structured One-on-one	30 minutes	His office
	17/06/11	Teacher A of 10-year-old children (part 2)	Semi-structured One-on-one	13 minutes	Teachers' lounge
	06/07/11	General Co-ordinator of Health Education	Semi-structured One-on-one	15 minutes	Her workplace

	14/09/11	Programmes 1 parent of a 9-year-old child	Semi- structured One-on- one	21 minutes	Her home
	20/09/11	1 parent of 9-year-old child	Semi- structured One-on- one	11 minutes	Her workplace
	20/09/11	Teacher B of 10-year-old children	Semi- structured One-on- one	45 minutes	Classroom
	27/09/11	Previous Head Teacher	Semi- structured One-on- one	30 minutes	His home
	27/09/11	2 parents of 9-year-old child	Semi- structured Group	35 minutes	Their home
	01/10/11	SEE Teacher	Semi- structured One-on- one	29 minutes	Her home

# I. Primary School

## B. Questionnaires

Drama Scheme	Date	Respondents	Type of Questionnaire	Duration	Location
<b>Pilot Project</b>					
Workshop 2	12/10/10	Children	Semi- structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Classroom
<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b>					
Before Rehearsal 1 for 'Ocean in the ER'	02/05/11	Children	Semi- structured Game-like	10 minutes	Classroom
Rehearsal 3 for 'Ocean in the ER'	17/05/11	Children	Semi- structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Classroom
Before Rehearsal 4 for 'Ocean in the ER'	24/05/11	Children	Semi- structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Classroom



## II. Youth Theatre Group 1

### A. Observation

<b>Drama Scheme</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Type of Observation</b>
<b>Pilot Project</b>			
Workshop 1	02/10/10	60 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	09/10/10	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Preparatory Workshop</b>			
Workshop 1	08/01/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</b>			
Workshop 1	15/01/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	22/01/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 3	29/01/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 4	05/02/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>The Boat</b>			
Workshop 1	12/02/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	19/02/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 3	26/02/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 4	05/03/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 5	12/03/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 6	19/03/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>The King with Horse's Ears</b>			
Workshop 1	26/03/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	02/04/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 3	09/04/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured

Workshop 4	16/04/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b>			
Rehearsal 1 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	07/05/11	60 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 2 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	14/05/11	60 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 3 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	21/05/11	60 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 4 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	28/05/11	60 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 5 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	04/06/11	60 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 6 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	11/06/11	60 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 7 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	18/06/11	60 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 8 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	21/06/11	90 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 9 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	22/06/11	60 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 10 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	23/06/11	90 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 11 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	25/06/11	60 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 12 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	28/06/11	90 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
<b>Final Performance 'The King with Horse's Ears'</b>	29/06/11	30 minutes	Indirect Non-participant Unstructured
<b>My Sad Book</b>			
Workshop 1	30/06/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Total</b>			
31 workshops	31 days	32 hours	

## II. Youth Theatre Group 1

### B. Interviews

Drama Scheme	Date	Interviewee(s)	Type of Interview	Duration	Location
<b>Pilot Project</b>					
Between Workshops 1 & 2	07/10/10	Previous YT teacher	Semi-structured One-on-one	60 minutes	Café
<b>The Boat</b>					
Workshop 6	19/03/11	7 children 6-9 years old	Semi-structured Group	34 minutes	Classroom
<b>The King with Horse's Ears</b>					
Workshop 1	26/03/11	1 child 6 years old	Semi-structured One-on-one	15 minutes	Classroom
Workshop 1	26/03/11	1 parent of same child as above	Semi-structured One-on-one	45 minutes	Classroom
<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b>					
Rehearsal 3 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	21/05/11	1 parent of 2 children 6 and 9 years old	Semi-structured One-on-one	30 minutes	Classroom
Rehearsal 4 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	28/05/11	1 parent of 2 children 7 and 8 years old	Semi-structured One-on-one	17 minutes	Classroom
Rehearsal 4 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	28/05/11	1 parent of 3 children 7, 9, 12 years old	Semi-structured One-on-one	18 minutes	Classroom
Rehearsal 6 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	11/06/11	1 parent of an 8-year-old child	Semi-structured One-on-one	18 minutes	Classroom
<b>End of fieldwork</b>					
	19/07/11	President of YT Organisation	Semi-structured One-on-one	28 minutes	Classroom
	28/09/11	Drama practitioner A	Semi-structured One-on-one	49 minutes	Café
	29/09/11	Drama practitioner B	Semi-structured One-on-one	20 minutes	Her workplace
	29/09/11	Drama practitioner C	Semi-structured	37 minutes	Café

	29/09/11	Critical friend	One-on-one Semi-structured	37 minutes	Café
	01/10/11	1 Parent of 2 children, 6 and 9 years old	One-on-one Semi-structured One-on-one	20 minutes	Classroom

## II. Youth Theatre Group 1

### C. Questionnaires

Drama Scheme	Date	Respondents	Type of Questionnaire	Duration	Location
<b>Pilot Project</b>					
Workshop 2	09/10/10	Children	Semi-structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Drama space
<b>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</b>					
Workshop 4	05/02/11	Children	Semi-structured Game-like	10 minutes	Drama space
<b>The Boat</b>					
Workshop 2	19/02/11	Children	Semi-structured Game-like	10 minutes	Drama space
Workshop 5	12/03/11	Children	Semi-structured Game-like	10 minutes	Drama space
<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b>					
Rehearsal 4 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	28/05/11	Children	Semi-structured Game-like	10 minutes	Drama space
Rehearsal 6 for 'The King with Horse's Ears'	11/06/11	Children	Semi-structured Game-like	10 minutes	Drama space
<b>Final Performance 'The King with Horse's Ears'</b>	29/06/11	Parents	Semi-structured	10 minutes	Audience space
<b>My Sad Book</b>					
Workshop 1	30/06/11	Children	Semi-structured Game-like	10 minutes	Drama space

### III. Youth Theatre Group 2

#### A. Observation

<b>Drama Scheme</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Type of Observation</b>
<b>Pilot Project</b>			
Workshop 1	02/10/10	60 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	09/10/10	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Preparatory Workshop</b>			
Workshop 1	08/01/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Yallery Brown</b>			
Workshop 1	15/01/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	22/01/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 3	29/01/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 4	05/02/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 5	12/02/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>The Sweetest Fig</b>			
Workshop 1	19/02/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	26/02/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 3	05/03/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 4	12/03/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 5	19/03/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Fairy Ointment</b>			
Workshop 1	26/03/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
Workshop 2	02/04/11	90 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Preparatory Workshop for Final Performance</b>			

Workshop 1	09/04/11	90 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Fairy Ointment</b> Workshop 3	16/04/11	90 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b> Rehearsal 1 for 'Yallery Brown'	07/05/11	90 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 2 for 'Yallery Brown'	14/05/11	90 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>The Red Tree</b> Workshop 1	21/05/11	60 minutes	Indirect Participant Unstructured
<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b> Rehearsal 3 for 'Yallery Brown'	28/05/11	90 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 4 for 'Yallery Brown'	04/06/11	90 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 5 for 'Yallery Brown'	11/06/11	90 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 6 for 'Yallery Brown'	18/06/11	90 minutes	Direct & Indirect Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 7 for 'Yallery Brown'	21/06/11	90 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 8 for 'Yallery Brown'	22/06/11	90 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 9 for 'Yallery Brown'	23/06/11	90 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 10 for 'Yallery Brown'	25/06/11	120 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
Rehearsal 11 for 'Yallery Brown'	28/06/11	90 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured
<b>Final Performance</b> <b>'Yallery Brown'</b>	29/06/11	45 minutes	Indirect Non-participant Unstructured
<b>Final Workshop</b> Workshop 1	30/06/11	60 minutes	Direct Participant Unstructured

<b>Total</b>		
31 Workshops	31 days	38 hours, 25 min

### III. Youth Theatre Group 2

#### B. Interviews

<b>Drama Scheme</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Interviewee(s)</b>	<b>Type of Interview</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Pilot Project</b>					
Between Workshops 1 & 2	07/10/10	Previous YT teacher	Semi-structured One-on-one	60 minutes	Café
<b>The Sweetest Fig</b>					
Workshop 1	19/02/11	7 children 9-12 years old	Semi-structured Group	32 minutes	Classroom
Workshop 4	12/03/11	4 children 9-12 years old	Semi-structured Group	34 minutes	Classroom
<b>Fairy Ointment</b>					
Workshop 2	02/04/11	2 children 12-13 years old	Semi-structured Group	17 minutes	Classroom
Workshop 2	02/04/11	2 children 12-13 years old	Informal Group Conversation <sup>1</sup>	2 minutes	School yard
<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b>					
Rehearsal 1 for 'Yallery Brown'	07/05/11	2 children 8 and 10 years old	Semi-structured Group	13 minutes	Classroom
Rehearsal 3 for 'Yallery Brown'	28/05/11	1 parent of 3 children 7, 9, 12 years old	Semi-structured One-on-one	18 minutes	Classroom
Rehearsal 6 for 'Yallery Brown'	18/06/11	1 parent of a 9-year-old child	Semi-structured One-on-one	20 minutes	Classroom
<b>End of fieldwork</b>					
	19/07/11	President of YT Organisation	Semi-structured One-on-one	28 minutes	Classroom
	28/09/11	Drama practitioner A	Semi-structured One-on-one	49 minutes	Café
	29/09/11	Drama practitioner B	Semi-structured One-on-one	20 minutes	Her workplace
	29/09/11	Drama	Semi-	37	Café

<sup>1</sup> The parents of these children had not given their permission for the children to participate in research. However, the children had overheard some of the questions of the interview and expressed the desire to answer these. The interview took the form of a brief informal conversation.

		practitioner C	structured	minutes	
	29/09/11	Critical friend	One-on-one Semi-structured	37 minutes	Café
	01/10/11	1 Parent of 2 children, 6 and 9 years old	One-on-one Semi-structured	20 minutes	Classroom
	01/10/11	1 Parent of a 9-year-old child	One-on-one Semi-structured	19 minutes	Classroom
			One-on-one		

### III. Youth Theatre Group 2

#### C. Questionnaires

Drama Scheme	Date	Respondents	Type of Questionnaire	Duration	Location
<b>Pilot Project</b>					
Workshop 2	09/10/10	Children	Semi-structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Drama space
<b>The Sweetest Fig</b>					
Workshop 1	19/02/11	Children	Semi-structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Drama space
Workshop 2	26/02/11	Children	Semi-structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Drama space
<b>Fairy Ointment</b>					
Workshop 2	02/04/11	Children	Feedback slips	5 minutes	Drama space
<b>Preparatory Workshop for Final Performance</b>					
Workshop 1	09/04/11	Children	Feedback slips	5 minutes	Drama space
<b>Fairy Ointment</b>					
Workshop 3	16/04/11	Children	Feedback slips	5 minutes	Drama space
<b>The Red Tree</b>					
Workshop 1	21/05/11	Children	Semi-structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Drama space
Workshop 1	21/05/11	Children	Feedback slips	5 minutes	Drama space



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<b>Rehearsals for Final Performance</b>					
Rehearsal 5 For Yallery Brown	11/06/11	Children	Semi- structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Drama space
<b>Final Performance 'Yallery Brown'</b>	29/06/11	Parents	Semi- structured Face-to-face, paper	10 minutes	Audience space
<b>Final Workshop</b>					
Workshop 1	30/06/11	Children	Semi- structured Game-like	10 minutes	Drama space

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## Appendix 2: Examples from the Coding Process and the Document of the Categorising of Data

The following example illustrates the process of coding that my data underwent during the data analysis process. In this stage, I went through my data and ascribed codes to each piece of datum:

Sampling Unit	Context Unit	Coding Unit	Code
Interview with teacher 30/5/11, p. 6	<i>'I think that children today are very harsh to one another. The adults' behaviour reflects on the children's behaviour. Adults are cruel to one another, estranged from one another. Children are ego- centred by nature. I can see that children today only care about themselves; how to have fun and how not to get tired.'</i>	<i>'children today are very harsh to one another'</i>  <i>'children today only care about themselves'</i>	<b>Excessive individualism</b>
Observational notes from YT2 drama workshop 12/3/11, p. 1	<i>07:05 I ask children what kind of story they want for next time. Boys reply: 'A scary one!' I ask them to raise hands. 18 say scary. 5 say funny. 1 says melodramatic. When I ask again, most of them say scary and funny in the same time.</i>	<i>'Boys reply: 'A scary one!'</i> <i>'18 say scary. 5 say funny. 1 says melodramatic.'</i>	<b>Scary stories</b>

Figure 44: Example from the coding process

The following extract comes from the 30-page document I composed in which I listed the categories that my Data Analysis and Discussion chapters would deal with. For each category, I noted down the sampling units (interviews, questionnaires, observational notes etc.) where I found data that responded to the thematic category.

Category	Sampling Unit
<p><i>Children's well-being under threat:</i></p> <p><b>a) Excessive individualism and competitiveness</b></p> <p><b>b) Self-esteem and self-confidence</b></p>	<p><i>Interview with head teacher 27/9/11, p. 6</i></p> <p><i>Interview with parent 28/5/11, p. 3</i></p> <p><i>Observational notes YT2 29/1/11, p. 2</i></p> <p><i>Questionnaires with YT2 and PS children 17/5/11, 21/5/11 and 28/5/11</i></p>
<p><i>Children's well-being and drama:</i></p> <p><b>a) Children liking scary stories in drama</b></p> <p><b>b) Boys attracted to boisterous play in drama</b></p>	<p><i>Observational notes from YT2 workshops 22/1/11, pp. 2,3 and 12/3/11, p. 1</i></p> <p><i>Interview with PS children 3/5/11, pp. 1,3</i></p> <p><i>Journal notes 26/3/11, p. 2</i></p> <p><i>Questionnaire with YT2 children 19/2/11</i></p> <p><i>Observational notes from YT1 workshop 22/1/11, p. 2</i></p> <p><i>Observational notes from YT2 workshops 26/3/11, p. 5 and 16/4/11, p. 3</i></p> <p><i>Interview with YT2 children 19/2/11, p. 3</i></p> <p><i>Feedback slips with YT2 children 2/4/11</i></p>

Figure 45: Example from the document of the categorising of data

## Appendix 3: *The Red Tree* Drama Scheme

**Location:** Youth Theatre

**Story:** *The Red Tree* by Shaun Tan

**YT2:** 9-13 year olds

**Lesson:** Mantle of the Expert

**Date:** 28/5/11

**Duration:** 80 minutes

### Course of work

#### 1. Warm-up: The Walk

*Time: 10 minutes*

*Resources: 'Amelie' soundtrack (happy and sad music)*

*Convention: Game*

Children find a space in the room and begin to walk as if they are in a busy city. They should be careful not to bump into other people but should move quickly about their business. Instructions are given as to how they should alter their 'walk':

- a. As if they feel like they 'belong' in the city.
- b. As if they feel like they don't belong in the city.

Ask children to choose from the two options and then to walk in their chosen role. Ask them to look around as they are walking and to try to understand who belongs in the city and who doesn't. How can they tell the difference? On a hand clap, ask children to find other people that fall into the same category as them, and to group with them without speaking. Then ask the groups to stand opposite each other and to look at the other group. Initiate a

discussion on how it feels to belong/not to belong and what the visual clues are for identifying who is who.

## **2. Introducing the story**

*Time: 5 minutes*

*Convention: Mantle of the Expert*

Introduce the story as follow: *'A red-haired girl has been found wandering in the streets of a busy city. She does not want to speak at all. The only thing she wants to do is to draw pictures of herself. We need to find out what these pictures are telling us. How does she feel like? Why does she feel like this? I have heard that you are the best **child psychologists** in the country and that is why I have called you to help this girl out. Do you have any questions before I give you her drawings to look at?'* Listen to their questions but act as if you do not to know much about the girl yourself.

## **3. Discussion in groups: What is making the girl unhappy?**

*Time: 10 minutes*

*Resources: Drawings from the book of Shaun Tan*

*Convention: Mantle of the Expert*

Children get into groups of 5. Each group is given a drawing from the book of Shaun Tan. They are then asked to think about what the picture is telling them regarding:

- a. How the girl is feeling.
- b. Why she is feeling that way.

As they are working in their groups, go from group to group and discuss with them their interpretation of events. If they give typical explanations (e.g. '*She is being abused*') argue against them (e.g. '*But she hasn't got any bruises.*') Encourage them to look deeper for an explanation.

#### **4. Hot-seating the girl**

*Time: 10 minutes*

*Resources: Scarf of the girl*

*Convention: Teacher-in-role, hot-seating*

Narrate that the girl has finally started talking but she will still not say much. The child psychologists are to talk to her about the drawings. Ask them how they are to approach her and talk to her - they are very good psychologists indeed, but she is very fragile. What might they tell her? Will they ask her any questions? Then enter the space **in role of the girl** while children act as the child psychologists. In your role as the girl, you can hint at the problems you are dealing with. Be sure you have some sort of story to tell them when you are in role.

#### **5. Mantle of the Expert: Specialists in Child Psychology**

*Time: 10 minutes*

*Resources: Medical Reports, markers*

*Convention: Mantle of the Expert*

**Generally happy:** After the girl leaves, ask the child psychologists the following:

- a. How do you think the girl is feeling? Why is she feeling that way?
- b. What could make her happy again? What does she need in order to generally feel happy?

In their groups, they list their ideas using their Medical Reports.

## **6. Still Images: The girl's past life**

*Time: 10 minutes*

*Convention: Still Image, thought-tracking*

In their groups, children work on a still image that clearly depicts a scene from the girl's past life that has led her to her current state of unhappiness. After each group presents their still image, touch the shoulders of the actors. They are then to speak a line in role.

## **7. Mantle of the Expert: Specialists in Child Psychology**

*Time: 15 minutes*

*Resources: Medical reports, markers*

*Convention: Teacher in role, Mantle of the Expert*

**Happy in a drama group:** The girl comes in again and informs the psychologists that her parents have decided that she needs to meet with other children so as to begin to have a normal childhood. When presented with the two options of either doing sports or doing drama, she chose the latter. Ask children if they think that a drama group can help her in any way, based on their experiences. Why / why not?

In their groups, they list their ideas on the following using their Medical Reports:

***Pleasure:*** What kind of drama stories and drama activities might she enjoy?

***Sociability:*** How can we help her make friends / work well with other children in the drama group? How should the rest of the children treat her so as to help her feel happy?

***Self-confidence:*** How can we help her feel good about herself in the drama group and not feel shy or uncomfortable?

Each group presents their Medical Report to the others.

## **8. Wrap up**

*Time: 10 minutes*

*Convention: Reflection*

Summary and reflection. Ask children if they have ever met a child who felt the same way as this girl. If so, why did this child feel this way? Did she manage to overcome her feelings of unhappiness? If so, how?

## **References:**

1. Neelands, J. (2008) *The Arrival Drama Scheme*, MA class notes, University of Warwick.
2. Tan, S. (2011) *The Red Tree*, A Lothian's Children's Book, Australia.

## **Note:**

The warm-up activity 'The Walk' is adapted from Neelands's drama scheme *The Arrival* (MA class notes, University of Warwick, January 2008).



## Appendix 4: Summary of Stories

### Youth Theatre Group 1

#### 1. *The Boat*, by Helen Ward and Ian Andrews

An old man lived on a hill with his animals. He kept his distances from the villagers because he thought they were inconsiderate. All the villagers feared him, except for one boy. He watched him from a distance, admiring the way he was treating his animals. One day, it began to rain heavily. It soon turned into a flood that threatened the lives of the old man and his animals. Wanting to help them, the boy rowed a boat across the water. Even though the old man hesitated to accept his help at first, he eventually loaded his animals into the boat and rowed them back to a safer shore. The villagers offered shelter, blankets and baskets for his animals. The last one to board on the boat was the old man. When he reached the shore, he thanked the boy and the villagers. He finally made peace with them.

#### 2. *The King with Horse's Ears*, by Eric Maddern and Paul Hess

King Mark had been keeping a secret from everyone: He had horse's ears. The only person who knew about his secret was his barber, who saw the ears every time he cut the King's hair. The barber was threatened that if he ever shared this secret with anyone, he would lose his head. The barber got ill from keeping the secret and went to see the doctor. The latter advised him to tell the secret to the ground, since he was not allowed to share it with anyone. Following his advice, the barber went to the middle of the forest, kneeled down and repeatedly said: '*King Mark has got horse's ears!*' He soon felt better. However, in the place where the barber had told his secret, beautiful reeds grew. The following day, a band of travelling minstrels was passing

through the forest on their way to the King's feast. The pipe player used the beautiful reeds to make pipes. At the royal banquet, the King asked the musicians to play. When the pipe player began to play, what came out was a strange tune: *'King Mark's got horse's ee-ars!'* The King was shocked and embarrassed. When the secret was finally revealed, no one laughed or mocked him, despite his expectations. He felt a great relief and had a new crown made with two special holes for his ears to poke through.

## Youth Theatre Group 2 and Primary School

### **1. *Tom Tiver, Tom Tiver met Yallery Brown*, by Joseph Jacobs**

The story is set in a nineteenth century rural farm, where a young man named Tom worked. On his way home one night, he heard a child's cry for help. When he realised that the child was trapped under a stone, he put all of his efforts into setting the child free. However, what he released was not a child, but an odd-looking creature with a brown, wrinkled face and long, yellow hair. As a reward for setting him free, Yallery Brown offered to help Tom with his chores at work. When Tom thanked him, the creature warned him to never do that again. The young man soon realised that there was a heavy price to pay for accepting Yallery Brown's help; while his chores got done, those of his co-workers got undone. As the creature was invisible to their eyes, the workers grew suspicious of Tom and complained about him to their boss. Tom eventually lost his job and confronted Yallery Brown. He thanked him for his help but asked to be left alone. The evil creature mocked and ridiculed Tom for setting him free and for thanking him while he was warned not to. Keeping his promise, Yallery Brown ceased to offer his help but followed Tom around, making the man's life difficult until the end of the latter's days.

## **2. *Mr Fox*, by Joseph Jacobs**

Lady Mary was about to marry a mysterious man named Mr Fox. A few days before the wedding, and while Mr Fox was away in business, Lady Mary decided to visit his castle for the first time. At the gateway, she saw written: *'Be bold, Be bold.'* She then went up to doorway over which she read: *'Be bold, Be bold, but Not Too Bold.'* Still, she went into the castle, and she came to the door of the gallery. There she saw written: *'Be Bold, Be Bold, But Not Too Bold, Lest That Your Heart's Blood Should Run Cold.'* Brave as she was, Lady Mary opened the door. She saw bodies and skeletons of beautiful young ladies, stained with blood. As she was making her way out of the horrible place, she saw Mr Fox coming back, dragging a young lady. Lady Mary hid behind the cask. Suddenly, Mr Fox noticed a diamond ring on his victim's finger, and cut her hand off. The hand with the ring landed on Lady Mary's lap. She finally managed to escape. The following morning, while Mr Fox and Lady Mary were having breakfast, she told him that she had had a dream, describing in detail what she had seen at the castle. When Mr Fox insisted that none of those were true, she showed him the diamond ring. Her brothers drew out their swords and cut Mr Fox into a thousand pieces.

## **3. *The Sweetest Fig*, by Chris Van Allsburg**

Monsieur Bibot was a dentist who lived in Paris. He was a self-centred person who loved his money. He lived with his dog, Marcel, whom he mistreated. One day, a poor old woman stopped by his dentistry to get her tooth extracted. She told him she was unable to pay the fee in cash. Instead, she paid him with two figs which she claimed to be magic and to have the capacity to make his dreams come true. Even though he was not happy with this arrangement, Bibot took the figs and had one as a

midnight snack. Later that night, he had a dream that he was walking Marcel around Paris in his underwear, while the Eiffel Tower had drooped over. The following day he discovered that the woman was right; his dream had come true. He then decided to learn how to hypnotise himself, so that he could control his dreams and become the richest man on Earth. However, one night, Marcel ate the remaining fig. Bibot woke up the next day underneath his bed - as the dog- while Marcel was sleeping on the bed – as a human. He realised that what Marcel had been dreaming all along was to get his revenge from his cruel master.

#### **4. *The Fairy Ointment*, by Joseph Jacobs**

Dame Goody was a nurse who took care of babies. One night, she heard a knock on her door. When she opened it, she saw a strange, squinny-eyed little man, who asked her to come to his house and take care of his baby, as his wife had been ill. Dame Goody did as she was told. When she went to his house, the mother gave her the baby. She also gave her some ointment and asked her to stroke the baby's eyelids with it as soon as he opened his eyes. Curious as she was, Dame Goody stroked her own right eyelid with the ointment when no one was looking. Suddenly, she noticed that everything around her had become more beautiful; the people, the house, the furniture. She soon realised that she had been inside the house of pixies, but did not say anything. When the mother of the baby got better, Dame Goody was paid for her services and left the house. The following day, she went to the market. There, she met the squinny-eyed little man. When she greeted him, he was surprised: '*What? Do you see me today?*' Dame Goody replied that she did. '*You see too much*', the man said, and asked her with which eye she could see him. When Dame Goody

replied that she could see him with her right eye, he realised that she had used the ointment. To punish her, he struck her in the right-eye leaving her half-blind.

Other stories

**5. *The Stubborn Child*, by the Brothers Grimm**

The story refers to a stubborn child who never did what her mother told her to do. God did not look kindly on her, and let her become ill. Doctors could not cure her, and before long she was lying on her deathbed. While the coffin was being lowered into the grave, one of her little arms emerged and reached up into the air. They pushed it back in again and covered the coffin with more soil, but it was pointless. The little arm kept reaching out of the grave. Finally, her mother stroke the little arm with a twig. After that, the arm withdrew and the child finally began to rest in peace.

## Appendix 5: Questionnaires and Feedback Slips

### Student Questionnaire 1

*Please try to answer the questions in honesty; write what you really think! Don't worry, this is not a test! There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.*

1. I am a boy..... girl.....
2. I am in grade.....

*Please read the statements below and tick the box to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Tick **one** box for each statement. Please bear in mind that the statements refer to your experience at school only.*

Statement	Strongly agree 😊😊	Agree 😊	Neither agree or disagree 😐	Disagree 😞	Strongly disagree 😞😞
<b>At school:</b>					
3. I am happy at school.					
4. I do well in school.					
5. I get sad when my classmates do better in tests than me.					
6. I feel stressed out when I am at school.					
7. I feel bored when I am at school.					
8. I act naughty when I am at school.					
9. I would like to have more time to play every day.					
10. I haven't got any friends at school.					
11. I feel lonely at school.					
12. I am kind to my classmates.					
13. My classmates are kind to me.					

Statement	Strongly agree 😊😊	Agree 😊	Neither agree or disagree 😐	Disagree 😞	Strongly disagree 😞😞
<b>At school:</b>					
14. There are children at school whom I don't really like.					
15. I often fight with other children at school.					
16. I work well with my classmates.					
17. I would rather work alone than in groups.					
18. I would rather work in groups with my friends than with children who are not my friends.					
19. I work better in groups with my friends than in groups with children who are not my friends.					
20. I always express my opinion during group work.					
21. I give all the children the opportunity to express their opinion during group work.					
22. I want other children to choose my ideas during group work.					
23. I encourage shy children to express their opinion during group work.					
24. I don't feel comfortable when I say or present something in front of other children.					

*Please write a few words on the following:*

25. What makes you happy at school? Why?

.....

.....

.....

26. What makes you sad at school? Why?

.....

.....

.....

27. If you had a magic wand, what would you do to make school a happier place?

.....

.....

.....

*Thank you for your help!*



## Student Questionnaire 2

*Please try to answer the questions in honesty; write what you really think! Don't worry, this is not a test! There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.*

3. I am a boy..... girl.....

4. I am in grade.....

*Please read the statements below and tick the box to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Tick **one** box for each statement. Please bear in mind that the statements refer to your experience at the Youth Theatre only.*

Statement	Strongly agree 😊😊	Agree 😊	Neither agree or disagree 😊	Disagree 😞	Strongly disagree 😞😞
<b>At the Youth Theatre:</b>					
3. I have fun.					
4. I feel happy.					
5. I don't feel comfortable/ I feel shy.					
6. I am bored.					
7. I act naughty.					
8. I generally do well.					
9. I feel stressed.					
10. The drama contract is not useful.					
11. I would rather have more improvisations and less drama games.					
12. Scary stories bother me and I would rather have stories that are not scary.					
13. When I leave the Youth Theatre, I feel happier than I did when I came.					

*Please write a few words on the following:*

10. I come to the Youth Theatre because:

.....

.....

.....

11. An activity that I particularly enjoy at the Youth Theatre is:

.....

.....

.....

12. An activity that I **do not** particularly enjoy at the Youth Theatre or makes me feel bored is:

.....

.....

.....

13. What Miss Nandia could do so as to make the drama workshops more enjoyable:

.....

.....

.....

*Thank you for your help!*

### Student Questionnaire 3

*Please try to answer the questions in honesty; write what you really think! Don't worry, this is not a test! There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.*

1. I am a boy..... girl.....
2. I am in grade.....

*Please read the statements below and tick the box to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Tick **one** box for each statement. Please bear in mind that the statements refer to your experience at the Youth Theatre only.*

Statement	Strongly agree 😊😊	Agree 😊	Neither agree or disagree 😊	Disagree 😞	Strongly disagree 😞😞
<b>At the Youth Theatre:</b>					
3. I would rather work with my friends.					
4. I face difficulties when working with children who are not my friends.					
5. I work better when I work with my friends.					
6. When working in groups, I express my opinion.					
7. I want to take on the lead roles in the improvisations.					
8. When working in groups, I give all the children the opportunity to express their opinion.					
9. When working in groups, my ideas usually get chosen by the other children.					
10. I encourage shy children to express their ideas during group work.					

Statement	Strongly agree 😊😊	Agree 😊	Neither agree or disagree 😐	Disagree 😞	Strongly disagree 😞😞
<b>At the Youth Theatre:</b>					
11. I haven't made any new friends since the beginning of the year.					
12. It bothers me when some children upset the whole group with their behaviour.					
13. It bothers me that there are so young or so old children in the Youth Theatre.					
14. I don't have any friends in the Youth Theatre.					
15. Some children in the Youth Theatre have made fun of me in the past.					
16. I have fought with children in the Youth Theatre in the past.					
17. There are children whom I don't really like.					
18. The other children are nice to me.					
19. I feel shy whenever I have to say or present sth in front of all the group.					
20. It bothers me when some children want to take on the lead roles in the improvisations.					

*Please write a few words on the following:*

21. I come to the Youth Theatre because:

.....

.....

.....

22. This is what Miss Nandia could do so as to make the drama workshops better:

.....

.....

.....

*Thank you for your help!*

## **Parent Questionnaire**

*Please fill out this questionnaire only if you are a parent of a child who has attended the youth theatre workshops during the school year 2010-11. If you have more than one child coming to the Youth Theatre, please fill out a separate questionnaire for each child. Feel free to write what you really think. Please do not write your name anywhere.*

1. I am a *man*..... *woman*..... (tick one box)
2. My child is a *boy*..... *girl*..... (tick one box)
3. My child is in *Group 1 (Saturday 10.00-11.00 am)*.....

*Group 2 (Saturday 11.00-12.00 am)*..... (tick one box)

*Please read the statements below and tick the box to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Tick **one** box for each statement. Please bear in mind that the statements refer to your experience at the Youth Theatre (YT) only.*

Statement	Strongly agree ☺☺	Agree ☺	Neither agree or disagree ☺	Disagree ☹	Strongly disagree ☹☹
4. It was my child's decision to come to the YT.					
5. I support my child's decision to come to the YT.					
6. My child has fun when he/she comes to the YT.					
7. My child often talks about his/her experience in the YT.					
8. I believe that his/her YT experience has helped him/her <b>become more sociable.</b>					
9. I believe that his/her YT experience has helped him/her <b>work better with others.</b>					

Statement	Strongly agree 😊😊	Agree 😊	Neither agree or disagree 😐	Disagree 😞	Strongly disagree 😞😞
10. I believe that his/her YT experience has helped my child <b>become more self-confident.</b>					
11. I believe that his/her YT experience has helped my child <b>express his/her emotions more readily.</b>					
12. I believe that his/her YT experience has helped my child <b>express his/her ideas and opinions more readily.</b>					
13. I believe that his/her YT experience has helped my child <b>develop his/her self-discipline.</b>					
14. I believe that his/her YT experience has helped my child <b>become less competitive towards others.</b>					
15. I believe that his/her YT experience has helped my child <b>become kinder towards others.</b>					
16. I believe that his/her YT experience has made my child <b>happier.</b>					

Statement	Strongly agree 😊😊	Agree 😊	Neither agree or disagree 😐	Disagree 😞	Strongly disagree 😞😞
17. My child feels comfortable around his/her drama teacher.					
18. I am satisfied with the work done in the YT.					
19. I would like for my child to have more time to play every day.					
20. I am in favour of drama being taught as a part of the school curriculum.					
21. I believe that children these days are happier than children in older times (for example, in the 1980's).					
22. Children nowadays are under too much pressure in school.					

*Please write a few words on the following:*

23. Generally speaking, what do you think makes children happy these days? What do you think makes them sad?

.....

.....

24. Do you think that children are happy in school? If not, what do you think should change so as for children to be happier in school?

.....

.....



25. Is there anything you think could be done so as to improve the work done in the Youth Theatre?

---

---

*Thank you for your help!*

### ***Student Feedback Slip 1***

What made me **happy** at the Youth Theatre today was: .....

.....

What made me **sad** at the Youth Theatre today was: .....

.....

What made me **stressed** at the Youth Theatre today was: .....

.....

What made me ..... today at the Youth Theatre today was: .....

.....

Name (optional):.....

Date: .....

### ***Student Feedback Slip 2***

Our group is doing perfect / well enough / bad because: .....

.....

Some of the problems we have to deal with are: .....

.....

I like / don't like my group's improvisation because: .....

.....

I like / don't like the way we are working for the performance this year because:

.....

Name (optional):.....

Date: .....

## Appendix 6: Example of YT2 children's work

### (Performance form and script)

The work of Group 1, summarised below, is an example of how children used their voice to shape their dramatic piece. The group consisted of four children, three girls and one boy, aged 8-10. They chose to present the scene of Tom's life before he met Yallery Brown. They completed the performance form as follows:

Yallery Brown Performance				
Group ....1..				
Scene: Tom's life before he meets Yallery Brown				
<p><i>Note: Your improvisation has different acts. Every time you change place or time, then your act changes; for example: at the factory, at home, six months later and so on.</i></p>				
<p><b>Costumes</b></p> <p>What costume will each of you put on according to your role?</p>	<p><b>Props</b></p> <p>What props will you use for each act? Remember that a good actor only needs a few objects!</p>	<p><b>Settings</b></p> <p>What setting (i.e. large props) will you be needing for each act? For example, tables, chairs?</p>	<p><b>Lighting</b></p> <p>What kind of lighting would you like for each act? For example, intense/low/fading in or out/different colours?</p>	<p><b>Music</b></p> <p>In which acts would you like music? What kind of music? For example: Happy music? Sad music? Scary music?</p>
<p>Tom's sisters Andromachi: dress Katerina: dress</p> <p>Tom's mother Evi: dress</p> <p>Tom Loizos: Old clothes</p>	<p>Act 2:</p> <p><u>Toys</u> <u>Rose</u> <u>Pillow</u> Tray Plate Glass</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 20px;">Please underline any objects that you do not have and you would like for Miss Nandia to bring you!</p>	<p><u>2 tables</u> <u>Board</u> for toy factory Bench as a bed</p>	<p>Dim lighting whenever we change act</p> <p>Act 1: Light blue lighting to show that it is morning time</p>	<p>Act 1: Sound effects to show that it is morning</p> <p>Act 2: Mystery music when Tom leaves a rose on the work bench of his beloved</p>

Figure 46: The form completed by Group 1 (translated from Greek).

In the final performance, they presented the following scene (some parts have been omitted due to space constraints):

Act 1: At Tom's house (bright light, mystery music).

Tom is asleep. His mother is cooking breakfast while his sister is sweeping the floor.

Sister 1: *Wake up, Tom! Time for breakfast.*

Tom: *Okay!*

Sister 1: *Now, Tom!*

(Knock on the door. Sister 2 comes in.)

Sister 1: *Here's your breakfast.*

Tom (to Sister 2): *Do you want some?*

Sister 2: *No.*

Tom: *OK, Let's get to work.*

End of Act 1 (dark).

Act 2: At the toy factory (bright light, cheerful music).

Sister 2 and Tom: *Sorry we are late!*

Workers: *Once again! Never mind.*

Tom: *Can I take a break?*

Sister 2: *Already?*

Tom: *Yes, already!*

(Tom goes up to Greta and leaves a rose on her work bench. Playful music.)

Greta: *Oh! A rose!* (She smells it.) *It smells horrible!* (She throws it on the floor.

Tom picks it up in disappointment and leaves.)

End of Act 2 (dark).

Act 3: At Tom's house.

Tom: *Home sweet home!* (pause) *Why didn't she like my rose?*

Mother: (to the sisters) *What's wrong with Tom? Why is he so upset?*

Sister 2: *There's a girl at work whom he likes, but she won't pay any attention to him. He tries to get her attention every day, but he always fails to do so.*

Mother: *How's work going for him?*

Sister 1: *Well, you know how he is. He wants to quit everything and to become rich.*

(Sister 1 picks up the rose and smells it.)

Sister 1: *This rose smells like my brother's socks!* (She drops it on the floor and leaves.)

End of Act 4 (dark).

(Script written by YT2 students, June 2011)