

# *Asia-Pacific Journal for Arts Education*

## **Special Issue** ***Current Issues, Trends & Practices in Drama/Theatre Education: Perspectives from the Asia Pacific and Beyond***

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<http://www.ied.edu.hk/cca/apjae/apjae.htm>

ISSN 1683-6995

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Volume 11 Number 6

December 2012

### **Perspectives on Drama Teacher Education in Australia**

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### **Abstract**

Drama education in Australian schools is healthy with all states and territories offering opportunities to engage with drama from the early years through to senior secondary level where, by studying drama, students can gain credit towards university entrance. Across the six states and two territories students are voting with their feet by opting into drama. The Australian Curriculum The Arts, currently under development, is likely to provide an entitlement to drama within the arts for all students in Years Foundation to Six and curriculum options for students in Years 7 to 12.

Drama Australia (originally the National Association for Drama in Education, NADIE) provides leadership for several thousand members. The Drama Australia website ([www.dramaaustralia.org.au](http://www.dramaaustralia.org.au)) reports healthy levels of research activity amongst Australian drama/theatre educators. To fill out this portrait, this article explores perspectives on drama

teacher education. The first part sets the scene by over viewing current provision (in so far as this can be determined). The second part sketches in three examples of drama teacher education as indicators of the wider perspective on drama teacher training in Australia. The third section considers these examples in light of the broader implications for drama teacher education in Australia in the foreseeable future.

## **PART 1 – SETTING THE SCENE**

A definitive history of drama teacher education/training (or drama as part of teaching training more broadly) in Australia is still to be written. Scanning Drama Australia/NADIE Journals and conference proceedings finds relatively little attention to drama teacher education. In 2002 and 2003, drama teacher education forums were run in conjunction with Drama Australia conferences but have not been run since. However there has been some research in this area. For instance, *The State of Our Arts New South Wales Perspectives on Educational Drama* (Hatton & Anderson, 2004) and in some unpublished theses.

John O'Toole (2011) usefully summarised the dilemmas of drama teacher education through the experience of Emma, a fourth year pre-service Early Childhood student. Emma lacked prior experience in drama in her own school education; her course had provided limited learning in drama; in her practicum in school she found her supervising teacher had a lack of experience in drama and a reluctance to engage with it; accompanying this reluctance were misunderstandings about the nature of dramatic play in early childhood, a focus on formal performance and a relentless, narrowing focus on literacy. Drawing on his extensive background in drama teacher education, O'Toole outlined what teachers need to teach drama, noting that needs differ according to teachers and their context. His suggestions for drama teacher education built from understanding the shaping of dramatic play and understanding the relationships of drama to all the arts, creativity and play. For primary teachers he included process drama, playmaking, and student-centred performance work and the use of drama pedagogy across the curriculum. Secondary drama teachers build on these foundations,

knowledge and skill in making formal performance and theatre in multiple styles. They teach acting and production skills, teach drama/theatre history, genre and background.

O'Toole also posed significant questions about deficits in pre-service and in-service drama exacerbated by fundamental changes in teacher education programs themselves. He further contrasted the gap between the apparent success of drama education in Australian schools with the dilemmas and questions posed about drama teacher education.

In 2010 Ewing (quoting Gibson and Anderson, 2009), amplified O'Toole's assessment of the situation observing "a general lack of arts education and learning in many contemporary pre-service teacher education programs, particularly for early childhood and primary teachers and those not preparing to teach specific secondary arts subjects" (p. 35). She argued the need for "learning in, through and about the Arts [as] a priority for both pre-service courses and ongoing professional learning for in-service teachers." (p. 55).

It is not easy to provide an overview of where specific drama teacher education is included in courses provided in Australia because it is difficult to find a consolidated list. In part this reflects the divided nature of Australian education where the six states and two territories have individual responsibility for teacher education and universities more generally. In theory, drama teacher education should be part of all primary teacher education courses, as all Australian state/territory curriculum documents include the art form within the arts learning area. However anecdotal evidence suggests this may not always occur and that provision varies significantly from one institution to another.

The following table has been developed through surveying notoriously difficult university websites and other sources; there may be unintended gaps.

**Table 1. Australian Universities with Drama Teacher Education** (Primary source: <http://www.degreesoverseas.com/degree-programs/degree-programs-in-australia/education-and-teaching-degrees/>)

State	University	Primary/Early Childhood	Secondary
<b>New South Wales</b>	Charles Sturt University	√	√
	Southern Cross University		√
	University of Newcastle	√	√
	University of Wollongong	√	√
<b>Queensland</b>	Central Queensland University	√	√
	Griffith University	√	√
	James Cook University	√	√
	Queensland University of Technology	√	√
	University of Queensland	√	√
<b>South Australia</b>	University of South Australia	√	
<b>Victoria</b>	La Trobe University	√	√
	Monash University	√	√
	University of Melbourne	√	√
<b>Western Australia</b>	Edith Cowan University	√	√
	Murdoch University	√	√

The nature and content of Australian drama teacher education can also be inferred from published texts, including those about drama pedagogy and curriculum as well as from widely used student textbooks and teaching resources. For example *Education in the Arts Teaching and Learning in the Contemporary Curriculum* (Sinclair, Jeanneret, & O'Toole, 2009) locates drama in Australia schools within the arts as a curriculum area. The chapter by Sinclair and Donelan (p. 65) highlights imagination and active engagement with human experience through enactment, collaboration and manipulation and understanding of forms, styles and purposes of drama. Connections are also made to dramatic play. Acknowledgment is made of the seminal influences of United Kingdom and Canadian practitioners (e.g. Heathcote, Bolton, Neelands; Morgan, Saxton, Miller) in particular the use of role and strategies for building role. Throughout, the book examples model effective practice by experienced drama (and other

arts) educators as well as those of generalist primary teachers who use the arts in their teaching. The book also includes exemplars of how to plan, construct and implement drama in primary schools. Significantly the text has been written with pre-service teachers and generalist primary teachers being its perceived audience.

A scoping of other recently published Australian texts provides an indication of the range of writing about the provision of drama in both primary and secondary schools in Australia. With the current interest in the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* which is to be implemented in the next few years, some texts are being written through this perspective (Russell-Bowie, 2012) as pre-service and practising drama teachers come to terms with how this national curriculum will impact on their pedagogy. There are texts which look at drama within a discussion of the broader Arts curriculum currently operating in the states and territories (Dinham, 2011). Others, which are often cited in pre-service teacher training courses, look at the links between drama and other curriculum areas (especially in primary schools) such as *Beyond the Script: Take Two: Drama in the Classroom* (Ewing & Simons, 2004). This text moves from an introduction to process drama to exploring techniques and types of drama, the use of drama in literacy. Similarly, *Pretending to Learn: Helping Children Learn Through Drama* (O'Toole and Dunne, 2002) provides accessible plans for teaching drama for a wide range of primary age groups utilising a range of resources and based on clearly theorised underpinnings. *Drama, Learning Connections in Primary Schools* (Poston-Anderson, 2008) contains curriculum planning ideas with substantial accompanying theoretical underpinning.

Some recently published books give a useful historical account of the development of drama and theatre education and provide valuable insights into the state of drama/theatre education in Australian schools. By inference they also suggest what is needed in teacher training to fulfil the potential of what a drama curriculum can offer. For example, *Drama and*

*Curriculum The Giant at the Door* (O'Toole, Stinson, & Moore, 2009) provides an extensive overview of the development of drama education with a particular emphasis on Australia. The recently published *MasterClass in Drama Education Transforming Teaching and Learning* (Anderson, 2012), whilst providing a broader international perspective on drama teacher education, reflects current approaches to drama teacher education.

By default some perspective on drama teacher education can be read between the lines of popularly used student textbooks used in schools. For example, the texts of Bruce Burton such as *Living Drama* (2011) provide both a drama and theatre history perspective; *Navigating Senior Drama* (Baines & O'Brien, 2006) focuses on making, presenting and critiquing drama; *Dramawise* (Haseman & O'Toole, 1986) laid the foundation of the elements of drama widely used in Australian schools; *Dramatexts* (Yaxley et al., 2009) focuses on contemporary creative practice; texts such as *Acting Smart* (Bailey, Bird, & Sallis, 2012) help students navigate their way through preparation for the Victorian Drama and Theatre Studies written examinations. While being promoted as student textbooks these are, in practice, used by teachers to construct their senior school curriculum.

A brief survey such as this provides a snapshot of some approaches and ways to determine the state of drama teacher education but also reflects gaps in current knowledge of the field.

## **PART 2 – STORIES FROM THE FIELD**

In this section we share three examples of drama teacher education. In telling these stories we have tried to capture directly voices of unit coordinators, their contexts and issues. We report them as examples of practice. There are two stories about primary teacher education and one about secondary. These stories highlight how drama teacher education is situated in specific contexts. While there are clear similarities, there are also distinctive features arising from

differing circumstances that are in some ways indicative of the range of drama teacher training in Australia.

**DRAMA AS PART OF PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE (RICHARD SALLIS)**

*Context and background*

The University of Melbourne has trained pre-service primary school teachers in drama education for well over the past 30 years. However, in that time the faculty of education (now called the Melbourne Graduate School of Education [MGSE]) like the wider university, has undergone substantial philosophical and structural changes. Perhaps the biggest change in recent times has been the introduction of the ‘Melbourne Model’ (2008) where all undergraduate students at the university undertake a generalist degree in areas such as the sciences, humanities and commerce and then specialise in a chosen field (e.g. medicine, teaching, engineering).

Due to this model, the pre-service teachers in the MGSE all come with a prior undergraduate degree (whether completed at the University of Melbourne or elsewhere) and enrol in a Masters of Teaching in either primary or secondary teaching. The Arts Education group in the MGSE trains teachers in drama, music, media studies and the visual arts. Like in most universities in Australia, students who are training to be secondary school teachers are required to have two teaching methods (a common combination at the university is Drama and English). As part of their two-year course, pre-service primary teachers attend classes in drama, music and the visual arts.

Specialist drama teachers in primary schools are rare in Australia; it is more common for generalist primary teachers to teach drama and/or the arts in primary schools. Interestingly, even though the students are learning to teach drama within the paradigm of a generalist

primary teaching degree, many of them come to the course with some experience in drama. When asked, the students recount taking part in plays in primary school and experiencing drama as a core subject in the junior years of secondary school and an elective in the later years. A small, but increasing number, can also recall instances of Teacher in Role, dramatic play, Mantle of the Expert and process drama in which they were involved as primary school students.

At the University of Melbourne the Primary teaching training course spans thirty-six hours in total for Drama, Music and Visual Arts, that is 12 hours for each of the arts areas. The Arts staff has pragmatically devised a course which aims to get the most out of the time allocation for the learning area. Significantly, the philosophy of the staff in the three arts areas is consistent in regard to the content of the course and the manner in which the classes are taught. The staff members are firm believers in the concept that if pre-service primary teachers have a rewarding (and fun) time in the classes during their training they are more likely to want to teach the Arts in primary schools once they graduate. From feedback it appears that the students welcome this approach and they are graduating from the course with not only subject knowledge but with an interest in teaching the Arts.

However, at the present time the Arts remain on the fringes of many Australian primary schools. Mindful of the current realities graduates face in regard to teaching the Arts in primary schools, the Arts staff train students to both teach the Arts as a discreet aspect of the curriculum as well as showing them how to teach *other*\_subject areas and curriculum content *through* the Arts. In 2009 under the leadership of John O'Toole, Neryl Jeanneret and Christine Sinclair, the Arts staff published *Education in the Arts: Teaching and Learning in the Contemporary Curriculum* (now in a second edition, called *Education in the Arts* (2012)) with amongst others, their own students as a perceived readership. The chapter on teaching other curriculum content through the arts by Brown, Macintyre and Sallis (2012) notes that



this pedagogical approach is ‘planned and responsive, encouraging student-directed and co-constructed learning across the curriculum’ (2012, p. 211). In the Drama area of the course at this University as well as engaging in arts-rich activities, the pre-service teachers participate in tasks which demonstrate how teaching drama can incorporate other arts areas and be a method with which to teach curriculum content from outside of the Arts domain.

### ***Overview and description***

The 36-hour Arts (Drama, Music and Visual Arts) program is taught over nine consecutive weeks in Semester Two of the four-semester course; by contrast Secondary drama teacher trainees at the University receive 72 hours of specialised tuition. The timing of when this learning occurs is a key consideration. By the time the pre-service primary teachers come to the Arts program they have had many weeks of teaching experience but still have more time in schools to continue to put into practice what they are learning at the University. Mindful of this, students are encouraged to try out what they have experienced in the Drama classes with their own (primary school) students and engage in reflective practice.

In the article *The Thought of Doing Drama Scares Me to Death*, Peter Wright (1999) discusses the findings of his study of pre-service teacher education students doing drama. He notes the anxieties that university students can feel when working in drama. Significantly Wright reports that many trainee teachers feel secure working in groups compared to working alone in drama. When planning and teaching the Drama curriculum, the lecturers are mindful that if pre-service teachers feel uncomfortable when taking part in the classes, there is more likelihood they will be less willing to try out what they have learnt with their own students. By association if they feel at ease as students when doing drama and can see its potential they may be more willing to teach the subject area when they graduate. To this end the drama program demonstrates ways to engage students in drama and looks at how the ‘dynamics’ of

the Drama classroom can enhance participation and engagement. The Arts lecturers model how to engage primary students in and through drama and the student teachers are similarly engaged. Whilst modelling for the student teachers how they can enhance the engagement of primary students in drama, at the same time this approach fosters *their own* enjoyment for, and participation in the subject.

Throughout the course, students predominantly work in small groups and share their work with the other group members or take part in short, informal presentations. Dramatic play is a key focus in the first few weeks based in part on the units of work from *Drama and Traditional Story for the Early Years* by Toye and Prendiville (2000). Students explore process drama techniques and conventions. Significantly the pretexts for these activities are often stories and literature that are closely linked to those used in the early years in primary schools (for example fairytales, folk tales and picture books). This approach signals that drama draws on, and enhances the learning of, literary texts in the primary years and that there is more of an emphasis on exploration and process rather than performing to an audience. Alongside these activities we study the concept of drama literacy (Pascoe, 2003) and ways of using drama to enhance literacy skills (Sinclair et al., 2012).

In the course, the drama lecturers often work in the mode of Teaching in Role (TiR). When working in role with the pre-service teachers the lecturers tread a fine line between engaging them whilst demonstrating how *they* can use this technique in their own classrooms and any such approaches, need to be grounded in the reality of the world of the generalist primary teacher.

As the course progresses, students begin to work with text, characters and roles. This culminates in the students staging a short play they have written based on a picture book; drama (and other arts) activities based on picture books that are common in Australian

primary schools. The performances integrate live action with multimedia and ICT to reflect how many such plays are produced in contemporary primary schools in this country.

A key assessment task associated with the course is the development of an arts-rich unit of work that the students construct and teach in their practicum school and then evaluate its implementation. This task has had unexpected spinoffs with the students having the confidence to re-teach the unit in the early years of their teaching career.

### *Discussion*

The outcome of the current Primary teaching Drama course at the University of Melbourne is a double-edged sword. From internal research conducted at the University (Watkins, Macintyre, & Grant, 2012) along with post-subject surveying, it appears that overwhelmingly the students leave the course expressing a desire and a confidence to 'try out' the Arts with their primary school students. However, it is a concern that the enthusiasm that has been fostered and engendered for drama and the other arts areas may be short-lived when the students graduate from the course. Sadly, it appears that many of the graduates, once they begin their teaching career, become disillusioned when faced with a lack of respect for, and integration of, the Arts in their primary school. In many instances, our graduates are told there is: 'no time for drama' (nor for the Arts more broadly) in the 'crowded' primary curriculum. However, with the Arts about to become a core aspect of learning in primary schools once the Australia Curriculum: The Arts is implemented, time will tell whether this attitude changes, or indeed is required to change.

The second example of primary drama teacher education details different circumstances but a shared sense of purpose.

**PRIMARY ARTS TEACHER EDUCATION (INCLUDING DRAMA) AT MURDOCH  
UNIVERSITY (ROBIN PASCOE)**

***Context and background***

Murdoch University has a range of courses for the primary years of schooling – including four year Bachelor of Education courses for Early Childhood, Primary K-7 and Primary K-10 as well as one and two year Post–Graduate Diplomas of Education.

The concept of primary school is undergoing transition under the influence of moves towards a National Curriculum (e.g. the transition point from primary schooling to secondary in Western Australia is moving in 2015 from the end of Year 7 to the end of Year 6, bringing the school system in line with other states).

The primary courses are popular. Over 40% of the students enrol through mature age entry and lower socio-economic circumstances pathways. Over 30% of students study through distance and technology supported modes. All courses are for generalist primary classroom teachers; no specialist arts teacher courses are offered.

***Overview and Description***

All students enrolled in primary teaching courses complete a unit in Teaching the Arts in Primary Schools. For Bachelor of Education students this unit is located in the second year of the four year course and directly linked to a School Experience unit (practicum) which is completed during the arts pedagogy unit. Graduate Diploma of Education students complete a shortened version of the unit. All students whether they are studying on campus or through distance modes are required to learn in embodied ways with external students completing on campus practically based intensives.

All five art forms identified in the Australian Curriculum: the Arts (drama, music, media, dance and visual arts) are included in the unit, which does make for a packed learning

experience in 11 weeks. In designing the course, decisions were taken about ensuring that all five arts forms were modelled and included, reflecting recognition of the role of generalist primary classroom teachers who will need to include all five of the art forms in their programs in schools.

2012 is the second time this approach is offered. In overview, the course elements are:

- Students begin by completing the first part of an *art barometer* in which they outline and reflect on their current knowledge about the arts and about teaching the arts. The concluding activity of the unit is to complete this barometer drawing on their reflections of their changed understanding and articulating their arts teaching approach.

- Students complete ten three hour workshops focused around each of the arts forms as well as integrated approaches to the arts – for example, the opening workshop is based on making and animating paper masks; students draw on visual arts in making their 3D masks but also movement, dance and drama in bringing them to life. These workshops also address issues of assessment, planning and teaching. Particular attention is focused on developing attitudes and values of the students as future teachers, e.g. moving beyond cookie cutter activities to focus on underlying concepts of the arts curriculum. Principles of teaching drama are explicitly addressed in the unit within the limited available time. There is a focus on introducing improvised and process drama, the elements of drama, scripted drama. Connections are made to current state and future national curriculum documents.

- During their workshops, students develop a digital learning object that they are required to use in their School Experience (practicum). This resource is to model the principles of arts pedagogy outlined in the unit. They draw on their knowledge and understanding of technology in education as well as their arts and Arts education conceptual knowledge.

- Following School Experience, students make a short presentation to their peers about the effectiveness and impact of their learning object in their classrooms.

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### *Discussion*

This unit is intensive and packed. Covering five art forms in 11 weeks (22 contact hours), particularly when students have identified gaps in their own arts knowledge is challenging. Teaching about the arts in the unit is necessarily targeted and based on the concept of providing students *enough to get started*. In other words, the unit is an introduction and springboard to lifelong professional learning in teaching the Arts.

One of the recent disappointments for Arts education (and drama) at Murdoch University resulted from the decision by the School of Education to restructure its courses. Prior to 2011, all students in primary courses studied two arts focused units. The first, *Learning through the Arts*, was designed to address the identified gaps in students' knowledge about the arts. This unit focused on creativity, imagination, play, story, design, and symbol and metaphor and *students own experiences* in the arts. The second unit designed to follow the first, focused on arts pedagogy. This pattern was based on the simple observation that you cannot teach what you do not know. It is important to note that similar deficits in students in mathematics, science and technology continue to be addressed through compulsory introductory content courses. In 2011 surveys of student knowledge in the arts showed continuing gaps.

This localised example is indicative of the precarious position of many Arts education teacher education courses across the country, which in recent times have experienced a reduction in contact hours.

The third example provides one perspective on Australian secondary drama teacher education but many of its elements are applicable to the delivery of teacher education more broadly.

## **SECONDARY DRAMA TEACHER EDUCATION AT MURDOCH UNIVERSITY**

**(ROBIN PASCOE)**

### ***Context and background***

In 2001 the Chair of Initial Teacher Education at Murdoch University approached me to write and subsequently teach secondary drama teacher education. The School of Education had identified a growth opportunity following the introduction of senior secondary drama for tertiary entrance. Along with synergies with the Theatre and Drama courses offered in the School of Social Science and Humanities, the School of Education saw a niche for drama teacher education.

This was a green-fields opportunity to try something new and to address gaps in what was currently offered.

In my roles within the curriculum in the Department of Education I had been quietly critical of what I saw emerging amongst graduates and drama teachers. I was also conscious of a need for greater consultation and connection with exemplary drama teachers.

I was coming to drama teacher education in universities relatively late in my career even though I had some incidental input as a guest lecturer. I had spent considerable time in working with teachers already in schools through my various curriculum roles and as change agent for curriculum. I brought to the task a blend of experience and opinion but placed high priority on consultation with teachers at a range of career points, a practice that has continued through the ongoing development of the drama education course at Murdoch University.

The major source of drama teacher education was, and continues to be, Edith Cowan University (ECU) and before that the Western Australian College of Education (WACAE), ECU's predecessor. In fact, I was in the first intake of Speech and Drama Majors in my final year of teacher training. In my role with the Department of Education I had been a consultant on reviews of the drama teacher education courses at ECU/WACAE.

The clear message from the consultation that I undertook for Murdoch University was: be focused on the art form; build knowledge about drama rather than a succession of unrelated games and activities.

One of the other realities I recognised early in the development process was that designing a drama education course was constrained by existing limits and of other secondary schooling courses as well as the general boundaries of all teacher education courses. Students taking drama as a major teaching area studied concurrently with those taking it as a minor. School Experience/practicum interrupted the flow of the program differently for these two cohorts of students. The curriculum unit under development needed to flow on from the other drama and theatre units being studied. There was a limited schedule of ten teaching weeks for minor students and 14 weeks for major students. In short, the course design needed to be nimble, flexible and selective. But the green-fields opportunity also meant that there was scope for innovation. The moves within the University towards use of technology and flexible teaching modes also meant that external versions of the course could be developed.

#### *Overview of Drama Teacher Education for Secondary Teachers*

In seeking to provide coherence, two organising metaphors emerged as I planned the course within the given constraints.

1. This course is an induction to a guild of drama educators; it is about joining a group of teachers who share a common passion for drama and young people; through sharing



membership of this group of drama educators we sustain a career long commitment and focus; we contribute and participate in our guild of drama educators.

2. This course is designed to build a portfolio of resources to sustain the graduate teachers in the opening years of their career. That portfolio is intended to be the foundation for an ongoing, developing resource pool to support their teaching and continuing learning in drama and drama education. Drama teacher education then is not completed in this course but is lifelong, ongoing and career wide.

The constraints of time also drove a need for a highly selective – yet generative – approach to the course content. Shulman’s (1986) concepts of overlapping content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, provided a useful shaping influence. With each year of teaching the course since 2002 I have refined but remained focused on this principle.

The course interweaves two tightly inter-related perspectives about learning and teaching drama:

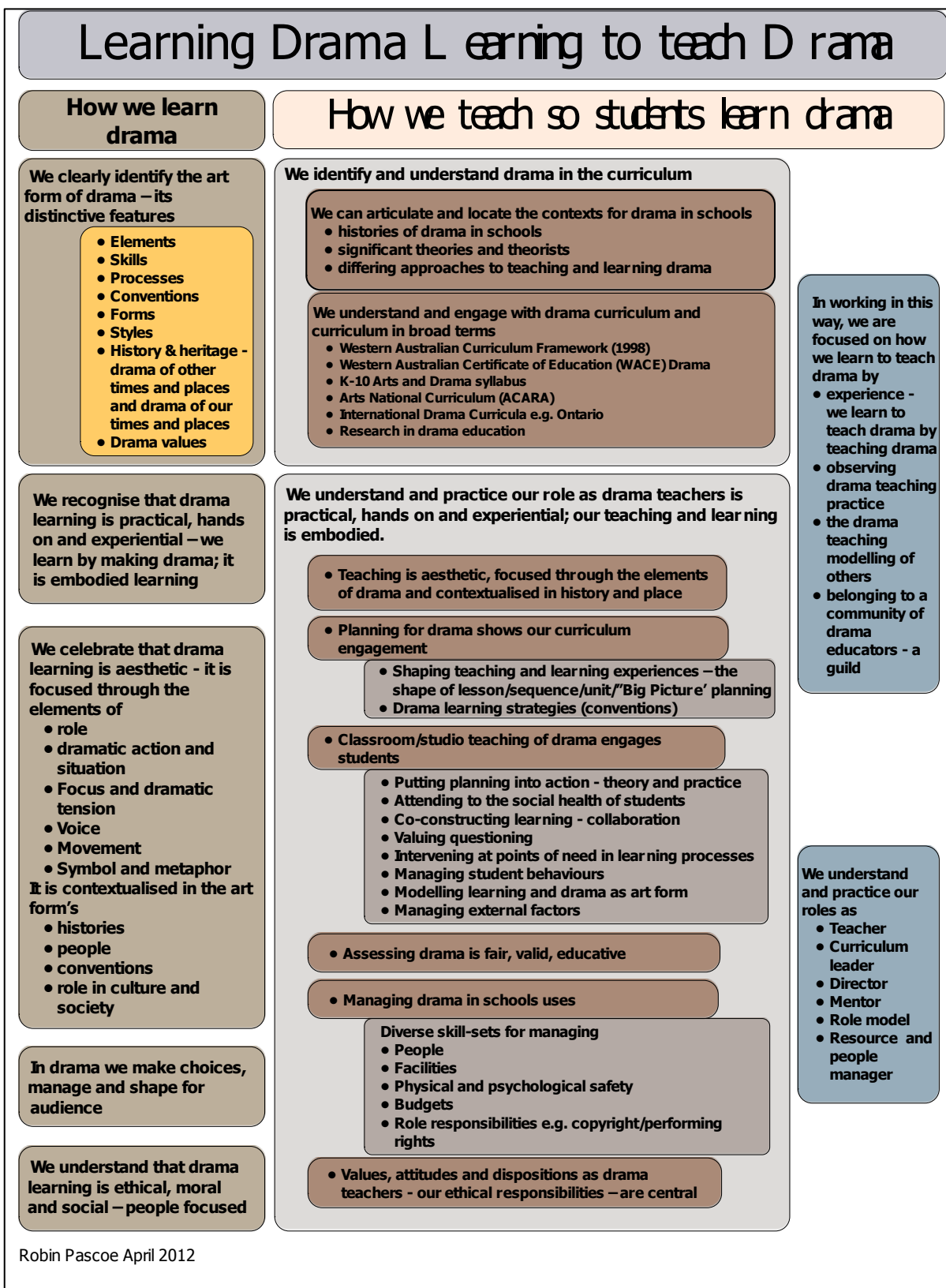
- How we learn drama (content knowledge);
- How we teach so students learn drama (pedagogical content knowledge).

While they might seem two sides of the same coin, they are distinctive but connected ways of thinking and acting. These two overlapping and connected approaches are exemplified in Table 1

**Table 1. Example of the relationship between content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in the Drama Teacher Education course at Murdoch University**

<b>Learning Drama</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning drama</b>
In drama we talk about actors and audiences entering into a drama contract. Audiences willingly suspend their disbelief. They accept that the actors in the drama are taking on roles – pretending to be someone other than themselves – and believing what is enacted and played out in front of them. Together actors and audience create dramatic experiences.	In drama teaching, teacher and students engage in a drama learning contract. The teacher creates an environment and activities that students agree to participate in. This contract involves using the conventions and strategies of drama learning – the art form itself and drama as a method of learning. Together teacher/workshop leader and students work collaboratively within the frame of drama to create drama learning experiences.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the major elements of the course. These are then detailed as lecture and workshop topics (within the tightly scheduled time available). In general, learning with students moves from the practical to the theoretical – beginning with a practical example of an aspect of the unit on the floor of the drama workshop that is then used as the basis for discussion.

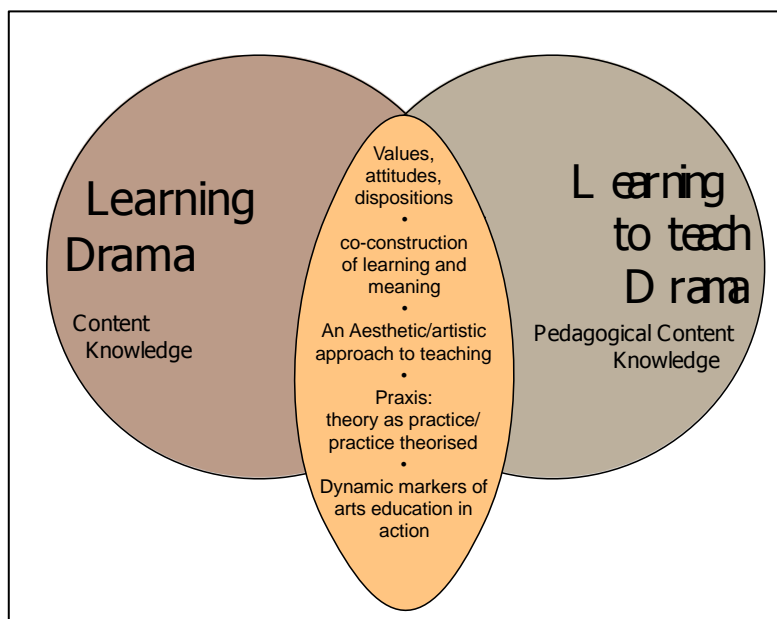


*Figure 1. Overview of elements of drama teacher education course at Murdoch University*

These and similar threads run side by side in this course - sometimes overlapping and sometimes considered on their own. Together they weave the fabric of learning and teaching drama in schools. They provide an overall shape to learning drama and learning to teach drama. They serve to remind us that we learn to teach drama by experience - we learn to teach drama by teaching drama; by observing practice and modelling of others; and, belonging to a community of drama educators.

There was one further principle established in designing and teaching this course: it is necessarily an *introduction* to teaching drama. It is limited in time and scope and constrained by resources. It is designed to be *enough to get started*. Learning to teach drama in schools is a dynamic and life long process. We continue to learn as we teach. The more we teach, the more we recognise what we have to learn.

In the overlapping space between content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, there are opportunities to address the significant issues of teacher values, attitudes and dispositions about drama and about learning and teaching drama. In particular, the role of the teacher as co-constructor of learning is focused. Further, an artistic approach to teaching drama is fostered. Praxis is crystallised through developing an understanding of drama education theory as practice and drama teaching practice as theorised action.



**Figure 2. Overview of the overlapping elements of the drama teacher education approach at Murdoch University**

There is one further noteworthy element of the course design: the assessment components model assessment in senior secondary drama. In other words, students undertake the major assessment tasks that the students they teach, complete. For example, in the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Drama course, students devise, write, rehearse and perform an original solo production; so too do the drama education students. Not only does this orient the drama education students to the requirements of the course they must teach in schools, it also allows them to empathetically experience what students must complete.

### ***Discussion***

There are limitations to this course, but the feedback on it has been positive. I want more time; I want more resources. The current course is a compromise yet I feel that it has integrity and coherence; that there is connection between theory and practice; and that students leave the course with a realistic sense of drama teaching. Within resourcing limitations this drama

teacher course moves beyond recipes, games and tricks of the trade in favour of purposeful, intentional praxis informed by theory, history and practice. This approach appears to be consistent with comparable (although not all) secondary drama teacher training courses throughout Australia.

### **Discussion of issues emerging from these case stories**

The three case stories presented resonate with O’Toole’s (2011) description of Emma’s dilemma detailed in Part 1. The three cases report time pressures on drama teacher students, educators and courses compounded by rapidly changing contexts for tertiary institutions. The Melbourne University story identifies twelve hours for drama in the primary course; there is a similarly limited time for primary students at Murdoch University that, in covering all five art forms, may provide even less time for drama. The secondary case outlines the time constraints for teachers who will take specialist drama teacher roles. The drama pedagogy unit is 50 hours of lectures/workshops in a four-year double degree. Or, to put it another way, in a course worth 96 points, this unit is 4 points – or just on 4 percent of the available learning resource. It is little wonder that the unit coordinators describe this situation as providing students with “enough to get started”. The consequences of time poor drama teacher education are discussed further in the next section.

The three stories identify that broader constraints within their context dictate this situation. The Melbourne University story observed, “The Arts staff has pragmatically devised a course which aims to get the most out of the time allocation for the learning area”. The writer of the secondary story at Murdoch University similarly records, “One of the other realities I recognised early in the development process was that designing a drama education course was constrained by existing limits and of other secondary courses as well as the general boundaries of all teacher education courses”. The shaping contexts of teacher

education within university settings have had an impact on drama teacher education. The Murdoch University primary story noted how course restructuring had further eroded arts learning for students. O'Toole (2011), somewhat wistfully, sketches in a rise and decline for drama teacher education to the current situation where it is "stricken by the simultaneous intellectualising of teacher-education, the crowding in of new generic imperatives ... and savage cost-cutting". (p. 16). Changing circumstances for universities are considered in the following section.

One further issue hinted at in the case stories is the limited and varied prior learning in drama that students bring to their teacher education courses. In part, at Murdoch University, this is a legacy of the significant numbers of mature age entry students, but it is also a barometer on arts education in schools as indicated by teacher education students entering directly from school. Not included in the case stories, but pertinent is the data collected by the Murdoch University unit coordinator as an opening exercise with all primary teacher education students. This on line survey, completed as a course requirement in 2011, indicated significant gaps in overall knowledge and experience about the arts by an overwhelming percentage of students. Reports from students returning from School Experience/Practicum are further indicators of the magnitude of the issue. Similarly at the University of Melbourne, surveying of students beginning their primary teaching Arts course indicates that their learning experiences in primary and secondary school are influential in shaping their understanding of what drama is, its relevance in the curriculum and its pedagogical potential. It is perhaps important to note that in Australia since the 1988 Hobart Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA )) the arts have been one of eight identified areas of curriculum; in Western Australia, where Murdoch University is located, the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998) has specified outcomes for drama as part of the arts.

On a more positive note, the three cases show a willing responsiveness to changes in curriculum such as that resulting from the work of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). The story for primary teacher education at Murdoch University identified that the unit provides for “all five art forms identified in the Australian Curriculum: the Arts”. The Melbourne University story identified a focus on three of the art forms in the curriculum, their interrelationships and their potential to interconnect with other curriculum areas. The secondary story outlines a process of consultation with teachers of drama in the field and close alignment with syllabus requirements. As past experience has shown, however, the publication of a curriculum policy does not guarantee its enactment in schools – or in teacher education. The implications of the publication of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts are further discussed in the next section.

These three case stories serve as a backdrop to the next section. They exemplify most of the ongoing issues facing drama teacher education in Australian training institutions.

### **PART 3 – ISSUES IN DRAMA TEACHER EDUCATION**

This section explores more broadly three issues for Australian drama teacher education;

- Time poor and resource constrained courses in universities pressuring drama teacher education;
- Changing external contexts impacting on drama teacher education; and,
- Generational change over time.

In considering these issues it is useful to focus on broader concerns about the pace of change and accompanying uncertainty. Misson (2012) points to “a difficult historical juncture marked by uncertainty, contingency and change” (p. 27) and highlights the impact of Bauman’s (2011) concept of ‘liquid modernity’.



What makes modernity 'liquid' ... is its self-propelling, self-intensifying compulsive and obsessive 'modernisation'. As a result of which, like liquid, none of the consecutive forms of social life is able to maintain its shape for long. (p. 11)

### **1. Pressures on Australian universities**

It has been some time since the first flush of excitement about drama education saw large teaching teams for drama education such as the one at Melbourne University in the seventies and eighties. In more constrained recent times, under the broader pressures faced by universities to do more with less, there are harsh realities. For instance, currently at the University of Melbourne with the demise of the Creative Arts course, most of its trainee drama teachers have completed their undergraduate degree at other institutions. Professor Davis (14 March, 2012), Chair of Universities Australia, highlighted the implications of a demand driven university system in play since the beginning of 2012. But this is the latest in a succession of changes and shifts in direction that date from John Dawkins when he was Federal Labor Minister for Education in 1988. Shifts in funding models, priorities accompanied by increasing student load and contracting resourcing are some of the symptoms of changed circumstances. As a consequence, schools of education in the thirty-nine Australian universities find themselves under pressure, under-resourced and, perhaps, under appreciated.

### **2. Changing external contexts**

Three aspects of the changing contexts for drama teacher education are noteworthy.

- The development of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts (ACARA);
- Teacher education accreditation and standards (AITSL);
- Technology expectations of teacher education (TTF Project).

The **Australian Curriculum: The Arts** has been in development as Phase 2 of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) curriculum development project. Since late in 2009 when the first advisory group met to scope the project, there has been a sometimes-difficult process of finding consensus among five art form groups and knitting together a coherent curriculum for all young Australians in schools. The first phase was the writing of a *Shape of the Arts Curriculum* document undertaken by lead writer Professor John O'Toole and this was published in mid 2010 to support and criticism from some lobby groups (see, for example, discussion by Clausen, 2010). Following extensive national consultation with the state and territory curriculum authorities and national associations such as Drama Australia, a consultative draft of the proposed curriculum was published mid to late 2012. Following revision and endorsement by the Ministers of Education for the six states and two territories and the federal government, it is anticipated that the curriculum will be implemented by 2015. Further information can be found on the ACARA website: [www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au) .

The implications for drama teacher education are twofold. Firstly, teachers of secondary drama – and this is where there has traditionally been training for teachers who will specialise in drama – will need to come to terms with a changed expectations of drama students. If and when there is effective teaching of drama in primary schools, students entering secondary drama classes will (or should) come with a conceptual knowledge and skill base that exceeds what has normally been the case. This will necessitate a reassessment and realignment of what and how drama is taught in secondary schools.

The act of publishing a national curriculum for the arts is a significant step. Australia has been at this point before having developed National Arts Statement and Profiles before in 1994 (Hammond & Emery). But the measure of effectiveness for any curriculum statement is its implementation in schools. This is the second implication for drama teacher education.

In the case of drama in the primary years, an Arts National Curriculum, for the first time in most states, will have an expectation for an arts curriculum *entitlement* for all students rather than haphazard or serendipitous opportunities. In other words, there is an expectation of a guaranteed arts education including all five art forms to the end of the primary years (in almost all states this will be at the end of Year 6). In this context there will be a need for teacher education to prepare (or better prepare) graduating teachers to deliver drama as part of this curriculum. As major reviews of arts education in Australian schools have shown (e.g. Pascoe et al., 2005), the current standard of arts education is at best limited and generally patchy and dependent on the capacities of particular teachers. The challenge for teacher education universities will be to ensure that graduating teachers have sufficient capacity and confidence to ensure that their students receive their entitlement in arts curriculum. Most of these primary teachers – if not all – will be generalist classroom teachers rather than specialists. They will have a responsibility across all areas of the Australian Curriculum and they will complete their studies in university courses that are time poor and resource stretched. As in the University of Melbourne case study there is evidence to suggest that many graduate primary teachers begin their career teaching what they have learnt about/in the arts as part of their teacher training. If that experience is limited so too may be what they can teach to their own students.

The associated challenge is to ensure that all teachers across all years who are currently teaching in schools are equipped to teach the National Curriculum: The Arts. This will happen in a context of contraction of support services in departments of education. The body responsible for creating the Australian Curriculum has repeatedly stated that it is not within its remit to help teachers to implement the national curriculum. This responsibility lies with each State/Territory Education system.

A second issue facing drama teacher education is **changed accreditation for teacher education courses**. Alongside the development of national curriculum, the Australian Government has established the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) that has developed through consultation Teacher Standards including Graduating Teacher Standards (<http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/>). Associated with these standards is a process of accreditation for teacher education courses. (<http://www.aitsl.edu.au/teachers/accreditation-of-initial-teacher-education/initial-teacher-education-program-accreditation.html>). As this article is being written the accreditation process is beginning and Schools and Faculties of Education across Australia are working through processes to implement these new requirements. There are unanswered questions. What additional drama component will be necessary in teacher education? Is what is currently provided sufficient?

One consequence of this accreditation process and the associated standards is a need for increased content specific time. Most secondary teachers have a major and a minor teaching area with less time in their course for the minor. One of the requirements for both major and minor teaching area preparation is that equivalent time be allocated to them. In the case of major teaching area students at Murdoch University there will need to be an increase of one third; for minor students, the drama curriculum specific time will increase by two thirds.

As already outlined in this article, drama is included in the primary teacher education course as part of an arts education approach where there is a focus on the pedagogy of drama as one of five art forms. As already highlighted, teacher education in Australian universities is being squeezed. Academics are told to *teach less; research more* and *do more with less*, to *use technology more* and *deliver on line where possible*. Yet the nature of learning in the arts

and in drama is found in its embodied, physical practice. These competing tensions provide a significant conundrum for drama teacher educators.

A third changing context for drama teacher education is the **challenge of technology** for learning. In 2011 the thirty-nine teacher education tertiary institutions across Australia have worked collaboratively on Teaching Teachers for the Future (TTF) with a major focus on the effective incorporation of technology in teacher education programs. This project has been linked to the first Phase of the Australian Curriculum. The TTF project used the TPACK model (Koehler & Mishra, 2008) projects education beyond the black boxes and technical to the essential issues of student learning. The trio of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and technological knowledge underpins technological content pedagogical knowledge.

Significant supporting online documents have been produced for including technology in teaching English, Mathematics, History and Science. As the Phase Two subjects in the Australian Curriculum are implemented it is important that similar support is provided for the Arts National Curriculum.

Drama teacher educators face issues in supporting their students to adapt to the changing nature of schools. For example, what is the impact for drama teaching of all students having laptops as part of the Australian Government's program? What are the consequences of technology providing opportunities for teaching drama – for example, access to knowledge and models; capacity to interact in different spaces and outside school time frames; communication to parents and community? Answers to these questions will be wrought over the coming years.

### **3. Generational change**

The relatively short history of drama education in Australia, particularly when compared to, say, music or visual arts in schools, has relied on the leadership roles undertaken by a compact group of pioneers and leaders. While there has been a healthy encouragement of younger generations, the relentless pressing on of time has seen retirement and, to a lesser extent, deaths. For example, although still highly active, John O'Toole retired from Melbourne University in 2011. There have been similar patterns of retirement in other states. There are encouraging signs in younger drama educators such as the 2012 publication by Michael Anderson and the ongoing robust health of Drama Australia. As inevitable as generational change is, in many ways it is healthy and necessary. But it is important to acknowledge the impact of generational change. Shared knowledge can be lost and collective histories and stories fade. Drama teacher education in Australia needs to recognise that it is facing increased pressures for external validation and accreditation at a time when there is contraction of resources and leeching away of the pioneers and leaders. The need for leadership regeneration is pressing. The need for capturing the stories of pioneers is equally urgent. Significantly there needs to be time in teacher training courses to tell and listen to these stories and to learn from them.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article has been to provide a snapshot of drama teacher education in Australia in 2012. In looking back as well as looking forward we sought to highlight our dynamic context as well as unfolding prospects. Drama teacher education stands on the shoulders of giants but also needs to climb higher and travel further. The issues faced will continue to vex and challenge.

At the very least it appears that for the present the position of drama in primary and secondary schools in Australia is secure, due in part to the advent of the *Australian*

*Curriculum: The Arts*. However, its implementation will place added demands on teacher training and, as we have noted in this article, at present in some university teacher education courses there is little time to teach beyond the essentials.

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