



Equity and Diversity Guidelines for Drama Education

Drama Australia – The National Association for Drama Education

DISCLAIMER

This document has been prepared for the member associations of Drama Australia and, in turn, their members. While reasonable checks have been made to ensure its accuracy, no responsibility can be accepted for errors and omissions however caused. No responsibility for any loss occasioned to any group or individual acting or refraining from action as a result of material in this document is accepted by Drama Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the creation of this guidelines document, Drama Australia wishes to thank and acknowledge the following people for their outstanding vision and contribution towards its development:

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Preamble

According to the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, Australian schools must:

provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location.

(Australian Government, 2008, p. 7)

As the peak national organisation for drama/theatre educators, Drama Australia seeks to affirm its commitment to diversity and the notions of equality, equity and access as these are manifested in Australian society. This is the third document of this kind that has been produced by Drama Australia. Previous versions include *Gender Equity Policy and Guidelines* (Sue Davis for NADIE, 1998) and *Drama Australia, Equity and Diversity Guidelines* (Drama Australia, 2005). There is also a companion document: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guidelines for drama/theatre education* (Drama Australia, 2007).

As an association, Drama Australia believes that appreciation of diversity is important in order to understand and provide for the particular needs of individuals. For Drama Australia it is important that it, and its member associations, reflect on the ways in which *gender* (including *gender identity*), *sexualities*, *disability*, *socio-economic status (SES)* and *cultural and linguistic issues and perspectives* impact on drama education. This document seeks to support teachers and students involved in educational drama in Australia in these areas of diversity. It seeks to engage with contemporary thought and practice, develop understanding and awareness and offer advice to educators on ways to address these issues.

Drama Australia is supported in its activities by people who volunteer their expertise, knowledge and services. The individuals listed did not receive financial remuneration for writing the content of this policy. Their contributions are given in the belief that drama in education is a positive force for effecting change and challenging inscribed notions.

Guiding Principles

The Drama Australia Equity and Diversity Guidelines are guided by the terms of liberatory politics which underpin drama pedagogy and practice. The key terms used as frames of reference throughout these guidelines are notions of:

- **Equity** – Principles of fairness, social justice and respect for individuals and their contexts underpin the various practices and processes of drama in education.
- **Inclusiveness** – The notion of inclusiveness in drama involves more than providing access. In order to be included it is important that participants also feel recognised and valued within the full range of drama experiences.
- **Pluralism** – A philosophy that acknowledges difference, multiple perspectives, multiple truths and identity locations. Drama processes and products are often multi-vocal and collaborative endeavours.
- **Diversity** – Diversity of participants in a group enriches all those involved and enables an exchange of ideas, perspectives and stories to fuel the artistic process in drama; this is highly valued in the world of the arts.
- **Empowerment** – Empowerment of individuals involves freedom from constraint and the freedom to develop towards one's human potential. In drama education 'empowerment' can happen at various levels: the personal, cultural, communal and social/political (Neelands, 1996, p. 29) through a variety of processes.

As drama educators we are committed to the rights of individuals to learn and imagine new possibilities about themselves, others and their communities through their experiences in drama/theatre. In complex contemporary educational settings within our country, drama teachers need to not only be aware of, but critically engage with, issues of identity, equity and diversity within their daily practices. This will ensure that participants' perspectives and voices have a valued place within the drama classroom and, in turn, that drama processes work to enhance, extend and enrich the ongoing stories of participants' lives. Drama, with its foundations in play, story and performance, offers an important and powerful site for *imagination, analysis and representation*, where identities and perceptions about individual and cultural identities can be challenged and re-interpreted within the art form.

Drama Australia is committed to upholding the rights of individuals to learn freely and experiment in drama modes and contexts without prejudice, constraint or ridicule. As a collaborative art form, drama enables participants to communicate, create and question; to open up issues, themes, characters or stories so that, as Gallagher (2000) points out, as participants we can 'see anew, understand ourselves more fully, expand our thinking, and understand how that thinking has been shaped by our social positions. It is an opening-up process that must, at all costs, leave open the possibilities of alternative ways to see or hear or live the story' (pp. 82–83).

Drama Australia encourages its members to continue to engage in the dialogue of these guidelines, so that new approaches and insights can be generated about what equity and diversity really means in our practice.

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Writers' Biographies

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JO RAPHAEL is lecturer in drama education in the School of Education at Deakin University. Jo's teaching background includes schools, institutions and community contexts including those for people with disability and disadvantage. She is artistic director of Fusion Theatre, an inclusive theatre company with two ensembles made up of actors with and without disability, who work alongside professional artists and directors to make original theatre. Jo's PhD study, *The Disruptive Aesthetic Space* (2013), focused on drama as a transformative pedagogy for challenging pre-service teachers into new ways of thinking about students with disability. Her areas of research and publication include drama pedagogy, applied drama and theatre, and inclusive education. Jo has received awards for teaching excellence and service to her profession. She is currently Director of International Liaison on the Board of Drama Australia.

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Drama Australia would also like to thank **Sandra Gattenhof** and **Mark Bailey** who coordinated the 2005 guidelines document.

Drama and Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD)

CAROL CARTER

Guiding Principles for Drama and Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD)

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Honouring and respecting* cultural and linguistic diversity in educational settings.
- *Developing and using* drama curriculum and processes that are responsive to diverse needs.
- *Embracing* the possibilities of rich, unique cultural and linguistic human and environmental resources.
- *Establishing* drama classroom practices that reflect and value diverse dramatic conventions and characteristics of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- *Providing* opportunities for students to utilise their linguistic and cultural capital and funds of knowledge in creating and responding to drama processes and products.
- *Encouraging* students to explore and express cultural identities and multiple perspectives in drama.

Guidelines for Drama and Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD)

Drama Australia encourages its members to:

- *Create and maintain* dialogical spaces where critical, cultural conversations take place within safe, non-threatening drama contexts.
- *Acquire knowledge and understanding* about the cultural and language backgrounds and beliefs of the children, families and communities in educational settings in which they work.
- *Share knowledge and understanding* about the drama educators' own cultural and language backgrounds and beliefs.
- *Foster* cultural interaction that is grounded in reciprocal respect, empathy and sensitivity towards others people's practices and beliefs.
- *Seek out, use and share* culturally and linguistically responsive learning and teaching resources, for example: plays, videos, books, performances, etc., which include the perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- *View* diverse cultures and languages as rich resources for expanding your understanding of diverse worldviews and ways of knowing.
- *Establish* educational environments that promote inclusivity, trust, responsibility, empathy, positive interactions and an anti-bias ethos.
- *Consider* locally based cultural knowledge sources and resources and *collect* local resources, such as documented and undocumented stories.
- *Interrogate* cultural and linguistic stereotypes and taken-for-granted assumptions.
- *Identify* opportunities for enriching and strengthening the drama skills and knowledge children bring from diverse cultural backgrounds.

- *Ensure* the use of diverse verbal and non-verbal, and multilingual and multimodal, ways of expression; and ‘reading’ the world.
- *Include* drama activities that celebrate and honour cultural and language diversity.
- *Refer* to texts and resources to keep up-to-date and *use* information that reflects a dynamic, changing cultural landscape.
- *Ensure* that the voices of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are heard and that they are active agents of their own learning.
- *Continuously reflect* on and evaluate your own teaching practice and teaching and learning materials.
- *Participate* in drama communities of practice that support intercultural understanding in learning and teaching.

Discussion and Guidelines into Practice

Introduction

Drama Australia is committed to embracing diversity and the practice of cultural and linguistic inclusivity to support fairness, equity, access, choice, human rights and social justice. The Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) guidelines have been developed to assist all teachers and practitioners within the fields of drama education. This includes education that takes place prior to school, at school, and in post-secondary and informal educational settings. The aim of this guideline statement is to promote mutual respect and the freedom of all Australians to maintain, celebrate and access home and additional languages and diverse cultural identities within a socially cohesive framework of inclusivity.

As Donelan states, ‘Successive waves of migration have created modern Australia – one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries in the world’ (2009, p. 23). This diversity presents challenges and opportunities and renders it vital for Drama Australia, and its member associations, to reflect on the ways in which issues relating to CALD impact on drama processes and forms. The presence of young people from a wealth of cultural backgrounds presents a unique and empowering opportunity for engaging in drama processes within culturally and linguistically rich educational environments. The knowledge that drama and theatre education includes cultural and pedagogical dimensions (Østern 2006, p. 13) is a further reason for critical reflection of drama processes.

Considerations around CALD permeate national curriculum frameworks and curriculum documents. For example, the *Early Years Learning Framework* (AGDEEWR, 2009) focuses on cultural competencies to support children’s senses of ‘belonging, being and becoming’; has as one of its Practice Principles ‘respect for diversity’; and talks about the fundamental importance of cultural identity. Considerations around CALD issues are also exemplified in the drama rationale of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2014) that states: ‘Students develop a sense of inquiry and empathy by exploring the diversity of drama in the contemporary world and in other times, traditions, places and cultures’.

Understanding cultural diversity

The term ‘culture’ has been called illusive; there exists a very wide range of connotations and uses for it, from unhelpfully wide ones to narrowly constricted ones (Carter, 2012). Barrera, Kramer and Macpherson (2012) refer to over 150 definitions of ‘culture’ listed within research on early childhood education alone. Definitions of ‘culture’ are context-dependent and located within a universe of cultural and linguistic contexts in which human beings must ‘nest’ in time and space (Plummer, 2008, p. 486). This understanding is especially important in view of culture as an ever-changing, human-made phenomenon that is dynamic, changing and flexible. In this document, culture is defined as ‘the shared behaviour and symbolic meaning systems of a group of people’ (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 223). It is the cumulative learning as well as ways of knowing and modes of knowledge production that provide its group members with ‘a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and of what they should be doing.’ (Barrera et al., 2012, p. 8).

The strengths of drama processes and practices are their potential for exploring dramatic situations and settings for promoting intercultural understanding. The term 'intercultural' refers to cultural interaction that is grounded in reciprocal respect (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997). Intercultural understanding requires sharing and negotiating within a range of situations and settings. It involves the ability to 'know and understand 'your' culture, 'another's' culture and have skill in working between your own and another's culture' (Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005, p. 25). Cognitive understanding of diverse cultures is insufficient. 'Deep exploration of our personal and cultural values and the experiential development of respect, and compassion for the rights of others, translated into positive action' is crucial (de Leo, 2010). While cultural similarities and differences are both important aspects of intercultural understanding, Barna (1997) argues that assuming similarity is a central cause for a lack of intercultural understanding. Difficulties in communicating with people within intercultural encounters will be experienced if we are unaware of, or trivialise, differences.

Understanding linguistic diversity

Language diversity can be defined as the range of language and dialectal varieties used by humans to communicate. Twenty-first-century language education requires dynamic and diverse skills and techniques to encourage 'uses of multiple languages as citizens cross borders either physical or virtually', as well as engaging in code-switching and 'hybrid language practices' (Garcia, 2009, p. 55). Linguistic diversity is strongly embedded within cultural diversity because different ethnic identities are often rooted in their specific languages (Lo Bianco Report, 1987). Australia was one of the first countries to launch a National Policy on Languages in 1987. Since then, language policy has seen 'constant shifts and realignments' (Djite, 2010) in relation to language and identity, prevailing ideologies and market-driven rationales.

A national statement for languages education in Australian schools: national plan for languages education in Australian schools, 2005–2008 (MCEETYA, 2005) emphasises the need for inter-cultural language learning within an ever increasing global community that brings with it an increasing need to understand the world from diverse perspectives. It is argued in this statement that inter-cultural language learning and the acquisition of additional languages will contribute to multi-perspectival world views.

Relationships between drama and CALD

Drama, along with all the arts, shapes cultural and linguistic symbols, artefacts, traditions and metaphors. In turn, drama is shaped and re-shaped by cultural and linguistic traditions, symbols and understandings (ACARA, 2011; Roy, Baker & Hamilton, 2012; Caldwell & Vaughan, 2012). Participants identify, explore and express a multiplicity of diverse viewpoints and perspectives and 'new ways of being' through authentic engagement in collaborative, communal drama processes and the negotiation and re-negotiation of different identities in role (Anderson, 2012; Nicholson 2005; O'Toole & Dunne, 2015). The arts, including drama, have long been identified as having substantial ability 'to open up cross-cultural communication and intercultural understanding' (Donelan, 2009, p. 23). Drama, while able to take on various shapes and forms, is always 'tuned into the social and cultural mores of its times and contexts' (O'Toole, Stinson & Moore, 2009, p. 197).

Drama participation can lead to traditional, cultural and linguistic expressions that are creative, non-static, evolving 'living traditions', reinterpreted or fused with contemporary creative forms and ideas. In drama education, meaning-making is embedded in action and involves the body in knowledge processes (Osmond, 2007). Embodied knowledge supports additional language acquisition and cross-cultural and linguistic verbal and non-verbal communication. Embodied knowledge expands and enriches networks of meaning and frames the learning process within ways that make more sense and extends understanding for students from CALD backgrounds.

Storytelling, as a dramatic form, has particular potential for exploring intercultural dimensions within drama classes. Oral narratives drawn from diverse cultural identities and perspectives involve knowledge sharing and preserving, framing meaning-making and enriching cultures with inter-textual significance. This is particularly so when stories created by drama participants are traditional, autobiographical in nature, or influenced by cultural and familial roots. Drama also provides motivation and dramatic settings

for practising diverse languages in real-life contexts. Within shared, co-constructed dramatic spaces, as ‘seed beds of cultural creativity’ (Nicholson, 2005, p. 129), socio-cultural groups and linguistically diverse groups encounter each other. In this encounter they interact, provoke dialogue, debate, move between and across cultural borders and boundaries and engage in ‘a process of negotiation and translation between different discourses’ (Zhang, 2008, p. 16).

Drama practitioners need to be consistently reflexive in order to generate authentic cultural experiences. Care needs to be taken that we do not engage in tokenistic, cultural tourism in drama classes where the ‘other’ is seen as exotic or is on show performing what McMahon (2003) refers to as ‘stomp, chomp and dress up activities’. We need to ensure that drama experiences are structured to lead students past the visible ‘outer layer of culture’ to the invisible and core layers of culture, to the ‘essence of people’s innermost beliefs’ (Solomon & Schell, 2009, p. 65; Barrera, Kramer & Macpherson 2012, p. 9).

Reflections on diversity and drama

The following quotes are provided to give drama educators further food for thought and to deepen and extend reflection and critical understanding in relation to drama and cultural and linguistic diversity. They are arranged in chronological order from 1989 to 2014.

1989: Narratives reflect a diversity of traditions

If drama teachers are to be serious egalitarians then they must give their pupils access to the narratives of this historical consciousness, for these stories are the key to understanding, articulating and eventually determining circumstances and material and moral lives ... In a culture itself composed of ‘multi-cultures’ these narratives will themselves reflect and celebrate a diversity of ethnic traditions within the context of society as a whole. (Hornbrook, 1989, p. 107)

1998: Many melodies making up a diverse symphony

Ours is a nation of immigrants and indigenous peoples. A new world with an ancient past. A grand symphony with many melodies ... It can all be embraced, both the past and present, the ancient and the new. To do this, we need to share our stories and narratives, our aspirations and dreams, our histories with all their shades of light and dark, and the many melodies that make up this diverse symphony of ours. (Zable, 1998, p. 24)

1999: An intercultural performing arts project provides powerful opportunities

In spite of the difficulties, the resistances and the challenges, it seems that an intercultural performing arts project in a school setting can provide powerful opportunities for participants to engage with, learn about and transform cultural values, meanings and artistic practices ... an intercultural arts curriculum requires an educational and aesthetic framework that builds cultural links and respects diversity. In order to begin to build an intercultural aesthetic, students need experiences that encourage them to explore, create, express and interpret culturally specific and trans-cultural symbols, metaphors and stories. (Donelan, 1999, p. 78)

2000: Toward culturally ‘response-able’ teaching

It is time for those of us who work with young people to acknowledge and overcome our own discomfort about discussing race and work toward productive ways to act responsibly because of and despite it. This means not only recognizing own racial and ethnic identities but also the racial and ethnic identities of the young people we serve. (Grady, 2000, p. 32)

2008: The arts as key and focus

Our ancestors knew the arts were synonymous with survival ... We designed pageants to dramatize the passing of seasons and other more temporal events. Daily life communications, and ritual were circumscribed and delineated in a range of artistic expression ... We created theatre that proposed solutions to our woes. We drew pictures of our kings and queens and also cave drawings to tell the history of the day ... were we informing future generations in a way that language will never do alone? In short, the performing and visual arts have been the focus of our recorded existence. I believe the arts are key to how we educate ourselves. (Nathan, 2008, p. 177)

2009: Drama as a space for cultural understanding

They have struggled to find a common culture in the classroom, in the playground, in the local streets. And drama has been a part of this struggling towards a culture which transcends historical hatred and the fear of the other. A common culture which stands against persecution and prejudice and segregation. This is drama as a process of healing and being together. In this school drama has provided a powerful integrative force for bringing unfamiliar knowledge into knowing engagement ... A way of modelling how through collective artistry, negotiation, contracting of behaviour and skillful leading, the ensemble in the classroom might be a model of how to live in the world. (Neelands, 2009, p. 4)

2011: Drama as social change

But culture is a dialogue between aspirations and sedimented traditions. And in our commendable zeal for the latter at the cost of the former, we have allowed unnecessary, harmful and artificial opposition to emerge between culture and development. (Appadurai, quoted in Gould & Marsh, 2004, p. 17). Arjun Appadurai's insight reveals one of the core reasons for employing drama processes in relation to social change – they enable a dialogue to be enacted between imagination and lived reality. Theatre might be described as the encounter between aspiration and tradition – the expression of a desire for something better, something more just, that has to take account of the actualities of existence if that expression is ever to become more than words and rituals. (Prentki, 2011, p. 45)

2011: Imagining possibilities versus prescription

Drama practitioners also need to be critically aware of the messages they may be giving children and pursue a practice that encourages children to be critical thinkers, creative and to imagine possibilities – rather than locking them into roles that are prescribed by others. As Chris stated: Who cares what other people think of your culture as long as you know what you believe in you do or whatever ... the drama ... like it taught us how to get along with other people as well and dig in deep and really think what your culture is and what you believe in. (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 102)

2012: Collaborative understanding

[Mathew Clausen's] most recent research saw him examining Indigenous Australian playtexts with a predominantly monocultural (Anglo Saxon) group of students ... The success of this performance task for these students was made possible through a foundation of prior learning experiences that encouraged an engagement with culturally unfamiliar experiences that resonated with the participants in both intellectual and emotional ways. The richness of the learning activities created a space where students could reflect on their own cultural identity ... (Anderson, 2012, p. 71 & 73)

2014: Transformative strategies

A strategy that can be highly transformative in nature is to juxtapose this sense of comfort and familiarity with what is seen to be ambiguous, diverse and contradictory ... Rather than predominantly surface, decontextualised and disjointed understanding, the type of understanding acquired through dilemmas and conversations is based on continuous 'redefining and deepening, seeing things from new angles, making fresh connections' (Gadamer as cited in Hulme, Cracknell & Owens, 2009, p. 540) ... A way of providing opportunities and challenges for students resulting in critical conversations and transformative learning is to create 'open', imaginary drama spaces that are not linked to any specific knowledge base or particular socio-cultural domain ... setting up of a new society for future inhabitants ... to explore identities and values and for the students to develop an understanding of the values and beliefs that would inform different aspects of the new society ... The students negotiated personal and cultural differences within the 'collective vision' of a 'new' society ... Problem solving within imagined, dramatic forms enables us to bring different worlds and cultural domains into the classroom and provides 'opportunities for productive metacognitive reflection' that evolves from dramatic contexts (Caterall, 2003). It creates spaces to problem solve within a safe 'no-penalty area' where multiple perspectives are encouraged. Problem solving in fictional contexts provides opportunities for exploring symbiotic relationships in moving between the 'as if' imagined world and the 'as is' everyday classroom world, between theory and practice and between the thought and feeling domains. (Carter & Lancaster, 2014, p. 10)

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Drama and Socio-economic Status (SES)

KELLY FREEBODY

Guiding Principles for Drama and Socio-economic Status (SES)

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Acknowledging* the diverse material and educational resources to which students in differing socio-economic circumstances do or should have access.
- *Ensuring* processes used in drama are inclusive, offering access and opportunity for individuals, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, to achieve their full potential in drama.
- *Recognising and valuing* the knowledge and experiences of students from diverse backgrounds and circumstances in the drama classroom.
- *Encouraging* the use of curriculum materials, drama texts and discussions that represent diverse socio-economic circumstances.
- *Ensuring* the representation of diverse socio-economic circumstances does not align with deficit models of social stratification.
- *Advocating* the use of drama in education as a means for promoting awareness of issues that may oppress or disadvantage those in low socio-economic circumstances.

Guidelines for Drama and Socio-economic Status (SES)

Drama Australia encourages its members to:

- *Use* drama – process drama, text-based drama, devised performance and classroom discussion – to actively explore notions of privilege, disadvantage and poverty in Australian society.
- *Develop* critical conversations about the representation of class, privilege and disadvantage in drama, theatre, popular culture and the media.
- *Critically analyse* teaching strategies and approaches to examine expectations of, and opportunities for, students from differing socio-economic backgrounds.
- *Engage* with research and literature that explores the effects and influences of socio-economic circumstances on school achievement generally and participation/achievement in drama specifically. Use this knowledge to ensure the drama classroom is an equitable place for students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.
- *Adopt* a ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll et al., 1992) approach that connects and makes significant home and community knowledge in the classroom.
- *Collect* school and individual data on the socio-economic circumstances of students and the school community; find out about funding opportunities available to students to enable participation in school generally and drama specifically.
- *Celebrate* diversity through a recognition of difference, respect for diverse backgrounds, and representation (through characters, texts, authors) of people from a range of socio-economic circumstances.

- *Encourage* students from diverse socio-economic circumstances to develop skills and leadership in all aspects of drama and theatre-making.
- *Provide* strong drama role models and mentors from the school, local and broader community; role models who have experienced success in the drama and/or arts field despite any socio-economic challenges they may have faced.
- *Engage and motivate* students in drama education through engaging messages regarding knowledge (connected and relevant), ability (feeling capable), control (the classroom as a shared space), place (feeling ownership and pride in their community) and voice (valuing and sharing classroom roles) (e.g. NSW DET, 2006).
- *Enable* students to tell their stories through the drama medium by promoting strong drama work that allow students to feel pride in their abilities and their personal stories.
- *Ask* questions about students, their lives, their ambitions and circumstances. Use their answers to assist and direct planning in the drama classroom, including devised and text-based drama work.

Discussion and Guidelines into Practice

Introduction

Drama Australia acknowledges that contemporary research has found a student's socio-economic status (SES) to be a key indicator of educational success in Australia (Putnam & Gill, 2011). In 1990, the DEET report *A fair chance for all* (DEET, 1990) identified people from low SES backgrounds as one of the six groups (along with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women in non-traditional areas, people from rural and isolated areas, people with a disability, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds) most disadvantaged in terms of school completion, school results and access to higher education in Australia.

The inclusion of SES as an issue of both equity and diversity in these Drama Australia guidelines pertains to the effect that a young person's SES has on their ability to access and succeed in drama education (and education generally). It also acknowledges that SES carries with it cultures, identities and lifestyle differences (Devine & Savage, 2005) that contribute to the diversity of Australian students. It further acknowledges that diversity in schools, and society more generally, is an important component of drama/theatre making. Drama offers a unique opportunity for multiple perspectives and voices to share experiences through art-making.

Understanding SES and related terminology

This document is concerned with notions of *social class, economic stratification and social justice*. In order to address these notions, it employs the term 'socio-economic status' as used by Australian federal and state governments (COAG, 2009) and the American Psychological Association (2015) to refer not only to economic structures, but also to attributions conventionally associated with categories within economic, social and cultural stratification. That is, these guidelines use the compound term socio-economic, to acknowledge the complex relationship between social, cultural, and economic conditions in which people live in contemporary societies such as Australia. In this regard, class is not taken to be purely a function of economic circumstances or social practices independently of one another, but rather a more open-textured concept relating to the interaction of these circumstances and practices (e.g. Connell, 1977). Debates concerning social justice tend to centre on two distinct approaches (Fraser & Honneth, 2003):

- 'redistributive approach', which characterises social justice as essentially the provision of material equity across the society; or
- 'recognition approach' (sometimes termed identity politics), which sees social justice as achieved through the recognition of the rights of identifiable groups (e.g. Indigenous Australian, Disability, Gender groups). SES in this framework is considered to be one categorisation among these identifiable groups (Devine & Savage, 2005).

Therefore, SES can be considered an identifiable factor; that is, as a personal attribute – who a person is and how they live (the recognition approach), or as a contextual factor – a situation a person is in (the redistributive approach). This is an important distinction and Drama Australia acknowledges both approaches as affecting the participation of students in drama.

Attention to both approaches outlined above also allows teachers to understand that SES and income are separate constructs and, although they have a relationship to one another, that relationship is not fixed or definitive. Income is tangible, whereas SES is taken to refer to *cultural, social, political and personal variables* (Saunders, 2005). Definitions of SES go beyond issues of financial security and access to specific material assets. It is also the case that clear lines are not easy to draw between SES structures and other socio-cultural categories such as race and gender. These are overlapping and interacting locations that have important repercussions in daily social life in and out of the classroom.

Most Australians live lives that are linked with SES in complex ways and that are difficult to express through specific definitions. In Australia, life expectancy, economic growth and home ownership statistics are above OECD average (Australia Fair, 2007), resulting in less extreme scales of SES than in many other countries, particularly developing nations. However, these statistics reveal that many Australians are living on less than half of the national average income and one in ten Australians are living below the poverty line (Australia Fair, 2007, p. 12). Vinson (2007) identified areas of concentrated social disadvantage in Australia based on indicators such as income, early school leaving, confirmed child maltreatment, and limited internet access. Vinson found that there were concentrated areas of disadvantage in every state and territory in Australia, and that, 'in general, 1.7% of the geographic counting units in each jurisdiction account for seven times their share of the top ranking positions across all of the indicators' (2007, p. xi). This demonstrates that although not easily defined with regards to reporting in research or the media, unequal distributions of wealth and social advantage are prominent in Australian society. Beyond drama teachers being aware of, and proactive in, the ways they organise their classrooms and pedagogy to ensure equity and access, as a subject concerned with understanding human contexts, drama offers a unique opportunity for teachers and students to explore the complex place of SES in Australian society.

Drama education and SES

There has long been an assumed connection between drama work and social justice (Freebody & Finneran, 2013; Grady, 2003). Social change, social inclusion and improving the lives of participants are often strong foci in drama education and theatre in education work. In part, this is related to historical connections between theatre and democracy (e.g. Neelands, 2009); drama and critical pedagogy, through the adoption of approaches used by Boal (1979); applied theatre practice in institutions such as prisons, health, and community centres (e.g. Balfour, 2004); and theatre for development work commonly undertaken in economically developing nations (e.g. Cahill, 2010). However, aside from this strong and assumed connection between drama and social justice, specific attention to the nuanced and complex ways in which SES influences drama in Australian schools is relatively under-researched and under-theorised.

Despite little research focusing on the effects of SES on drama education, much research has been done exploring the relationship between socio-economic status and schooling more generally. This research field is vast and involves work focusing on the benefits and challenges of equity funding and equity programs (Teese & Lamb, 2005); investigations of classroom practices to engage and motivate students from low SES backgrounds (NSW DEC, 2006); and a strong focus on home-school-community links in disadvantaged areas (e.g. Moll et al., 1992; Anyon, 2005; Freebody, Freebody & Maney, 2011). In many ways findings from research in this field can be useful for drama teachers as they engage with an increasingly diverse student population. Research from the US exploring home-school relationships in poverty areas has recommended that teachers and schools draw on students' 'funds of knowledge' in order to make learning relevant (Moll et al., 1992). This approach acknowledges that students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have important skills and knowledge that are often under-valued by the broadly middle-class institution of education. This under-valuing not only inhibits success, but also can lead to alienation and disengagement. Attention to the need to engage and

motivate students from low SES backgrounds has also been a focus on Australian research – the Fair Go project – which found that in order for students to feel that ‘school is for me’ they need to not only be engaged in interesting and relevant classwork, but be given more broadly and powerfully ‘engaging messages’ (NSW DET, 2006, p. 10) about their place in school. The research team found that these engaging messages are centred on knowledge, place, voice, control and ability (NSW DET, 2006). Research studies such as these are of use to drama teachers and can assist as they plan work with young people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. It gives insights into productive pedagogies for teaching students from a range of backgrounds and, importantly, encourages teachers to critically reflect on the particular kinds of knowledge and skills that are valued in their classroom.

Drama is a unique subject in that it encourages students, through embodied pedagogies, to develop empathy and understanding for those living in circumstances different to their own (Donelan, 2002). When students in drama take on a role, either in text-based or devised drama, it can be a process of discovery, starting from simplified understandings of roles, contexts and events and as participants learn more about a situation, explore and discover their characters, their representations should gradually become more complex (O’Neill, 1995). This process of discovery allows students in drama to move beyond stereotyped understandings of the society in which they live. Through drama work, students can critically reflect on the ways in which the ‘redistributive’ (unequal distribution of resources) and ‘recognition’ (social and cultural ways of knowing and living associated with different social classes) approaches to understanding SES intersect in complex ways in Australian society.

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Drama and Diversity of Ability

JO RAPHAEL

Guiding Principles for Drama and Diversity of Ability

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Acknowledging* that every student can learn and that the needs of every student are important.
- *Recognising* that a diversity of ability in drama enriches all participants.
- *Ensuring* processes used in drama are inclusive, offering access and opportunity for individuals of all abilities to achieve their full potential in drama.
- *Recognising* the barriers to participation in the arts for people with disability and advocating and facilitating opportunities for participation in drama and theatre experiences.
- *Advocating* the use of drama in education as a means for promoting awareness and understanding of disability and in providing opportunities for participants to work inclusively.
- *Encouraging* the creation and use of curriculum materials, drama resources and performances that represent disability.
- *Identifying, supporting and promoting* excellent models of inclusive practice in drama and theatre education.

Guidelines for Drama and Diversity of Ability

Drama Australia encourages its members to:

- *Adopt* an inclusive approach to drama that encourages, facilitates and supports access for individuals of all abilities.
- *Recognise and seek to remove* barriers to participation in drama activities for people with disability (including physical, attitudinal and financial barriers) and facilitate involvement in drama.
- *Ensure* drama classrooms and workshops are places in which diversity of ability is acknowledged, respected and valued.
- *Work with* a 'can do' approach that considers the strengths of individuals and what they can do rather than focusing on limitations and what they cannot do.
- *Maintain* high expectations of students by focusing on the possibilities for learning and development.
- *Seek* information about individuals' various differences in ability in drama classes so that their needs are understood and provision can be made.
- *Remember* to consult a student with disability because nobody understands their particular needs in the same way that they do.
- *Plan and provide* drama education experiences that will stretch all participants so that each student can fulfil their potential.
- *Design* assessment tasks that allow all students to demonstrate their learning.
- *Use and insist on* an attitude of respect and appropriate language/terminology when discussing and referring to disability.
- *Challenge* stereotypes or derogatory depictions and representations of disability.

- *Provide* opportunities for integration and collaboration between people with and without disability in drama activities in order to break down barriers, increase awareness and understanding, and build positive relationships.
- *Seek out and provide* experiences of artworks by individuals with disability, especially performers and theatre companies that involve people with disability.
- *Provide* opportunities for people with disability to create and present drama and theatre to promote greater visibility and a voice in the broader community for people with disability.
- *Provide* opportunities for students with disabilities to attend accessible performances supporting theatres that provide physical access, audio description, open captioning and ‘relaxed’ performances for audience members with different needs.
- *Engage* with literature and other resources, including human resources, to increase awareness and understanding of current thought and practice in the areas of drama, theatre, disability and inclusive education.

Discussion and Guidelines into Practice

Introduction

These equity and diversity guidelines reflect the educational aspirations listed in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Australian Government, 2008). These goals acknowledge that all schools must provide access free of discrimination, reduce the effect of disadvantage, engender a respect for diversity, hold and encourage high expectations of students, enable students to explore and build on their gifts and talents and strive to fulfil the unique capabilities of each young Australian. These guidelines outline Drama Australia’s commitment to encouraging drama education practices that are inclusive of people of all abilities with the understanding that good inclusive practice is likely to be good for all, not just those considered to have special educational needs.

As an art form, drama thrives on diversity among participants working together in drama and theatre processes. This diversity includes those with impairments such as visual, hearing and cognitive impairments, who bring different ways of relating in and understanding the world. This document seeks to assist those involved in educational drama and theatre for young people and adults in regard to diversity of ability among participants. It reflects on the social construction of disability and offers consideration of definitions of disability and associated terms. It also includes consideration of issues to do with understanding and awareness of individual need, as well as the provision of access and opportunities in drama for people with disability.

Disability rights

In preparing these guidelines, Drama Australia acknowledges the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA) passed in 1992. The DDA applies throughout Australia and provides protection against discrimination based on disability. The DDA seeks to ensure and encourage acceptance of the view that people with disability have the same rights before the law as the rest of the community. The Disability Standards for Education (Australian Government, 2005) extend from the DDA by outlining the responsibilities of education providers to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as all other students. Acknowledging these standards in the paper ‘The Shape of the Australian Curriculum’, ACARA (2011) further articulates the rights of students with disability to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning experiences across the curriculum that will allow them to achieve. The Australian curriculum is based on the assumptions that ‘each student can learn and the needs of every student are important’ (p. 10).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2012) an estimated 19% of the Australian population has a disability. In these guidelines Drama Australia adopts the broad definition of disability used by the ABS and the DDA, which includes physical, intellectual, sensory and psychiatric disability. Disability can

also include physical disfigurement, neurological, and learning disability, and presence of disease causing organisms in the body such as the HIV virus. The definition also encompasses a disability that presently exists, previously existed but no longer exists or may, due to a known circumstance, exist in the future. The DDA also includes discrimination that may occur as a result of being a carer or associate of a person with a disability. It is important to not assume that one individual with a disability has the same experiences as another person with a disability; each one is unique and often in ways that are not necessarily visible or obvious.

Understanding disability and related terminology

In an effort to create some shared understandings of terms, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines the terms 'disability', 'impairment' and 'handicap'. A disability is 'any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered usual for a human being'. Impairment is the 'loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or functions'. A handicap is 'a disadvantage for an individual resulting from impairment or disability that limits or prevents fulfilment of a role that is normal for that individual' (WHO in Ashman & Elkins, 1998). It is useful to have an understanding of these distinctions although they tend to reflect a medical model defining disability in terms of diagnostic categories. There is a risk involved in applying labels when the label ('blind', 'deaf', 'physically impaired', 'autistic' etc.) becomes the defining feature of the person rather than that person being viewed as a complex, multi-faceted, fully human person' (Christensen, 1996, p. 65).

The commonly accepted way of referring to people with disability in Australia is the 'people first' approach. It is considered more appropriate to say 'people with disability' rather than 'disabled people'. Similarly, it more appropriate to say 'student with autism' rather than 'autistic student'. The emphasis is on the individual, as a person first, and not on the disability. People with disability are people first and foremost and should not be defined by their disability. When discussing disability it is better to avoid referring to people who do not have a disability as 'normal' rather they are 'non-disabled' (Walsh & London, 1995).

Inclusive drama education

An inclusive education is one that provides opportunity for all individuals, regardless of difference, to have equal access; and the ability to actively participate and thrive in their education. One of the drivers for global movement towards inclusive education was the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) that proclaimed that 'regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all' (p. ix). In inclusive schools, equal educational opportunity is provided to all students and teaching and learning experiences are designed to meet the unique individual learning needs of students.

Inclusive education is commonly concerned with the inclusion of students with disability or special learning needs into regular classrooms. In past decades this was often referred to as integration. There is a movement away from the notion of integration, which puts the emphasis on the student, who is somehow different, being fitted in to a mainstream institution. The alternative notion of inclusive education in which education institutions adopt an inclusive orientation, suggests such institutions are open and welcoming to all, irrespective of individual differences (Hyde, 2010).

Inclusive education has allowed a movement away from a medical model of disability that sees a student's disability as deficit, or a problem that needs to be dealt with. In the medical or 'individual' model, individual students are diagnosed and labelled as having 'special educational needs' or a 'learning disability', often more specifically identified, and requiring certain learning interventions. While this model tends to be more prevalent in special education settings, it sometimes persists in inclusive mainstream settings. For example, students diagnosed with special educational needs are sometimes withdrawn from regular classes or taught separately from the class in order to participate in learning interventions. If drama is seen as a low priority for students with special educational needs then they might at times be withdrawn from drama classes. Such action would disregard the possibility that the drama experience might be able to provide a child with their best opportunity to learn and excel.

An inclusive approach to teaching students with special educational needs is more aligned to the social model of disability. This model shifts the ‘problem’ of disability from the individual to being a ‘problem’ of a disabling society. In the case of education, the problem is no longer with the individual student; rather, the problem is in the school’s failure to attend to the removal of barriers that exclude students with disability. Drama educators need to recognise the barriers that can block a student’s ability to participate in drama. Such barriers to participation might include inaccessible environments, inflexible systems, inadequate support, and negative attitudes of students and even educators. An inclusive approach to drama education will seek to find ways to ensure that all students learning needs are met within the class and ensure that each student can make their unique contribution.

Within the arts an additional model of disability has been proposed. The affirmative model described by Swain and French (2000, 2010) has emerged from the disability arts movement in the UK and is essentially a non-tragic view of disability that shifts the focus towards ‘disability as a positive, personal and collective identity, and disabled people leading fulfilled and satisfied lives’ (2000, p. 571). In the affirmative model, drama can be seen as a means by which people with disability can express and present themselves as individuals who are able to make unique artistic contributions to their community. Drama Australia encourages drama educators to adopt an affirmative approach, one that requires a positive pedagogy with a focus on what students with disability can do rather than what they cannot do.

Stinson and O’Connor (2012) suggest three positive underlying principles on which arts education for students with special educational needs should be based:

- A child’s *disability* is only one part of his/her learning profile. Consideration must be given to the abilities, interests and contributions each child brings to any learning experience. It is more important to build on the strengths of students than to focus on their *disability*.
- Children with special educational needs must be stretched in the arts too.
- Arts education with special needs students aims for autonomy, where students may initiate and independently (or with support) create and share works of their own. (Stinson & O’Connor, 2012, p. 178)

Every class is made up of individual students who each have a range of abilities and preferred ways of learning. Most classes will include students who have special educational needs, while some of these students will have been diagnosed and labelled, there will be others without any formal diagnosis. This is why an inclusive approach to drama education is so important. An inclusive approach works towards providing opportunities for all students to participate and achieve their potential in drama and celebrates the uniqueness of each student’s contribution. Insights into individual students are gained through speaking to family members and other members of staff, but the best way to get to know a student and their particular interests and learning needs will be by talking directly to them. Ideas for drama activities that are inclusive of a range of abilities and that allow participants to reach their potential can be found in some of the recommended resources for teachers provided below.

Drama Australia encourages drama educators to strive towards fully inclusive approaches to teaching drama on the understanding that good inclusive practice is likely to be good for all students, not just those considered to have special educational needs.

Drama as art and drama as therapy

Drama Australia is committed to ensuring that people with a disability are provided the opportunity to participate in the art of drama/theatre in education and in life on an equal basis to the rest of the community. Drama Australia recognises that drama is sometimes used as therapy for individuals or groups within certain areas of individual need. Drama approaches specifically focussed on the therapeutic aspects of drama include Drama Therapy (sometimes written as dramatherapy) and Psychodrama. These approaches require specialised skills and should be practiced only by those with specific training in these areas.

In her book *Introduction to Dramatherapy* (1998) Jennings describes dramatherapy as ‘the application of theatre art in clinical, remedial and community settings with people who are troubled or unwell’ (p. 12). She goes on to explain that whereas ‘theatre art could be termed preventative in relation to mental health, dramatherapy is curative’ (p. 12). Jennings outlines some specific aims of dramatherapy including

'enabling communication, stimulating new thinking, providing means of resolution, developing new skills, transforming unhelpful experiences, looking at choices, enacting new journeys, understanding gender issues, exploring politics and so on' (1998, p. 33).

Psychodrama is a dramatic art form that involves participants acting through problems rather than merely talking them through. Pioneered by psychiatrist Jacob Moreno, psychodrama is said to produce a healing, cathartic effect that has the power to liberate individuals from their difficulties and can serve as a form of psychotherapy (Nolte, 2000). Psychodrama sessions involve certain protocols and processes and should be led by a practitioner who is highly skilled in that field. Psychodrama tends to focus on an individual within the group, while dramatherapy more often involves group process and interaction.

The notion of drama as therapy can be limiting in relation to disability if it prevents people with disability from having their work taken seriously or if there is a perception that less needs be expected of them. Involvement in drama by people with disability should not be considered therapy just because they have a disability. People do not have to have a disability in order to experience therapeutic benefits from drama activity. Drama, as an art form, provides an important means of expression and communication and an opportunity to develop deeper sensitivity to, and understanding of, life experiences. Creating drama is central to humanity because as Kempe (1996) suggests, aesthetic activity proves we are alive and is a manifestation of our humanity. Many drama educators are aware that participation in drama activity can offer all participants positive experiences that lead to increased wellbeing and personal development. Drama can be seen to be therapeutic when it offers individuals, among other things, a sense of competence, self-worth and belonging.

While drama therapists tend to look at the disability with the aim of helping or healing specific problems, the drama educator looks at the ability of each individual and fosters that ability by teaching and developing skills, and providing opportunities for exploring drama as an art form in an inclusive environment. All students have the right to experience high quality learning in drama and theatre, including the full range of content and processes that the drama curriculum encompasses. Landy and Montgomery (2012) argue for more open dialogue between the fields of applied drama/theatre and drama therapy, explaining that both have an aim to help individuals and groups move toward change. Drama educators working with students with disability may find the literature available in the area of drama therapy useful in informing their practice even though they do not consider their work to be drama therapy or themselves as therapists (see for example, Crimmens, 2006; Chasen, 2011; Jones, 2007, 2010).

Disability as possibility

The creative case for diversity has often been made because of the ways that diversity and creativity are inherently linked (Arts Council England, 2014). Drama is accessible to all abilities and drama classes should be spaces in which diversity of ability can be celebrated. In good inclusive drama classrooms, diversity of ability will be seen as possibility. Teachers and students will respect the contributions of individuals who each bring unique perspectives and ways of being in the world. Drama teachers can create opportunities for mixed ability group work and collaborations in which all students can learn from each other. Drama is a social art form providing opportunities for developing interpersonal skills and an inclusive drama classroom can become the rehearsal space for a more inclusive society.

Educators should be prepared to critically analyse the ways that disability is constructed and that people with disability are portrayed in society, the media, in plays and theatre works. Drama educators need to be mindful of the ways that disability is talked about and regarded in students' own drama work. Drama educators should also recognise that drama and theatre can provide powerful ways of challenging assumptions and stereotypes, developing awareness and deeper understandings about disability, as well as presenting positive notions of disability as possibility.

Performing artists with disability offer audiences important perspectives. Individual artists with disability and companies such as Back to Back Theatre, Restless Dance Co, Australian Theatre of the Deaf and No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability are making powerful impacts on the Australian arts scene. Students of drama and theatre need to be aware of artists and companies such as these and, where possible, opportunities should be provided for students to experience art works created by artists with disability.

Drama Australia advocates a positive and inclusive approach to drama education that builds on strengths and abilities. The emphasis should be placed on what students with disability can do, not on what they cannot do, and on seeing the possibilities for learning rather than the disability of the student. An approach to drama that builds on the strengths of an individual, rather than focusing on problems, is one that will have benefits for all participants in drama education.

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Theatre Companies (sample)

Australian Theatre of the Deaf

Back to Back Theatre

No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability

Rawcus Theatre

Restless Dance Theatre

Weave Movement Theatre

Disability Arts Organisations in Australia

Arts Access Australia

Arts Access Australia is the national peak body of State and Territory arts and disability organisations.
Website: www.artsaccessaustralia.org

Arts Access Victoria

Website: <http://artsaccess.com.au/>

Accessible Arts, New South Wales

Website: www.aarts.net.au

Access Arts, Queensland

Website: www.accessarts.org.au

Disability & Arts Transition Team (DATT), South Australia

Website: www.cansa.net.au

Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts, Australia, Western Australia

Website: www.dadaawa.org.au

Arts Access, Darwin, Northern Territory

Website: <http://www.darwincommunityarts.org.au/aad>

Arts Access, Central Australia

Website: <http://www.artsaccessaustralia.org/resources/organisations/other-organisations/northern-territory/189-arts-access-central-australia>

Drama and Gender

CHRISTINE HATTON

Guiding Principles for Drama and Gender

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Valuing* the contribution of women as well as men to the development of drama education and to drama history.
- *Advocating* the use of drama in education and theatre as a means for exploring and interrogating the ways gender is constructed, represented and performed in a range of contexts and societies.
- *Ensuring* language and processes utilised in drama are non-sexist and inclusive.
- *Gathering and monitoring* data about gendered participation in arts education and the arts industry.
- *Encouraging* the creation and use of curriculum materials and drama resources that represent and critique a broad range of gender roles and issues.
- *Recognising, supporting and disseminating* work in drama education that explores relevant gender issues.

Guidelines for Drama and Gender

Drama Australia encourages its members to:

- *Adopt* inclusive, gender-aware practices in drama teaching and assessment.
- *Challenge* restrictive representations, views or behaviours that are inequitable, sexist, homophobic or transphobic inside drama work or outside it.
- *Use* process drama, devised performance and text-based drama to explore the means by which gender is constructed and performed in drama and in cultural contexts.
- *Interrogate* gender stereotypes and gendered power dynamics within drama scripts, performances and student work.
- *Challenge* roles and representations in drama works that reflect restrictive gender codes that exist in popular culture.
- *Analyse* gender roles in plays from different eras and cultures and the social discourses that underpin playwrights' or directors' intentions.
- *Offer* examples of texts, roles and performances that present alternative and positive representations of femininities and masculinities so that students learn about gendered performance as they reflect upon and deconstruct drama, and discuss which are more highly valued and why.
- *Experiment* with cross-gender roles to interrogate ways in which gender can be performed and represented.
- *Use and encourage* students to use non-sexist gender inclusive language.
- *Provide* opportunities for students to work in single-sex groups at times for support and/or for more focused gendered perspectives to enhance the dramatic processes or performances.
- *Encourage* female students and teachers, as well as males, to develop skills and leadership in design and technical areas (i.e. lighting and sound, directing, use of technologies).
- *Ensure* that the scripts selected provide strong learning opportunities and roles for girls as well as boys.

- *Explore* issues such as sexual harassment, domestic violence and sexual assault, masculinity and violence, anorexia and body image, sexualities and homophobia.
- *Analyse* the amount of time and attention spent, by gender, with students in classrooms.
- *Collect* school data on gender equity and gendered participation rates in the arts and drama in order to examine the way the arts are valued in the school culture (i.e. through number of awards, assembly items, school events).
- *Collect* data about achievement levels, by gender, and explore reasons for any gender differences (e.g. through student interview, analysis of school culture and results).
- *Conduct* a gender analysis of drama resources (plays by women/men, male/female roles in plays, gender breakdown of jobs in theatre programs).
- *Assist* in developing students' sense of gender esteem as they create and perform in drama.
- *Provide* strong drama role models and mentors (from within or outside the school environment) who have successfully eluded gender traps in drama, performance or the arts generally.

Discussion and Guidelines into Practice

Introduction

As a national educational organisation it is important that Drama Australia, and its member associations, reflect on the ways in which gender issues impact drama education and students' post school options. It is important for drama associations and teachers to attend to issues of gender, equity and diversity to ensure that all students have access to, and are enriched by, their experiences in drama and the arts. Drama education is a field in which women and girls dominate numerically – both in teacher numbers and student participation rates. However, conversely, male history, knowledge, language and interests have been more likely to be used and represented in drama curriculum materials and resources. In general terms, there is strong male participation in the arts industry and arts bureaucracies in Australia, despite the dominant numbers of girls in western drama classrooms. Many of the girls who study drama in Australian schools do not go on to a career in the theatre. A recent report from the Australia Council for the Arts (2012) entitled *Women in Theatre* has highlighted the significant gender disparities and barriers to women's participation in the Australian theatre industry. Drama educators can address issues of gender and access to support both girls and boys in their drama studies and help them consider further study and potential careers in drama and theatre.

Understanding gender

Gender is a social category or system that divides humans into two categories: male or female ... [this] system organises virtually every realm of our lives (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003). Gender informs social relations, the ways in which human society deals with bodies, impacting individual lives and collective social processes (Connell, 2002, p. 10). The constructed binary categories of 'male' and 'female' are defined by each other. In Western societies the masculine gender is privileged and normalised in terms of power relations and regimes of value. This system ascribes meanings, agency and power to bodies, behaviours and roles in different ways. Gender is one of various 'identity locations' (Grady, 2000) that shape us as individuals and is in a dynamic relation to other locations such as social class, ethnicity, language, sexualities and abilities. Gender informs our self-concept, our behaviours and our interactions with others in daily life and in artistic production.

In a collaborative performing art such as drama, gender is embedded and at work in every aspect of learning. In both drama and everyday life, gender patterns and signs are constructed, shaped, performed and read in terms of cultural norms and discourses. Because gender is socially constructed, it is important to understand how social discourses, power and knowledge impact the ways in which different genders are constructed and performed. Biological sex differences do not adequately explain differences in gender identity or justify the social and political inequalities that have existed over time.

The experience of gender and related disadvantage and discrimination does not occur in isolation, and intersecting features such as race, ethnicity, ability/disability, social class and material circumstances impact on the experience and performances of gender.

Because gender is a social construct, it is therefore not fixed but it can and does change. The construction of gender varies in different cultures, historical periods and social groups. Individuals perform and transgress gender norms across a spectrum of alignments and representations. There is no single way of being male or female, although certain dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity tend to be more highly valued than others within their cultural contexts. Gender and sexual diversity are apparent across cultures all over the world. Individuals can identify as transgender, where they self-identify in ways different to their assigned sex at birth, and some can be intersex, where they have features that are both male and female. (Note: the Drama and Sexualities Guidelines should be considered in conjunction with this document). Gender as a social construct can also be seen as performative (Butler, 1999), where social roles, codes and signs are repeated to conform or resist dominant cultural norms. Education has an important role in challenging, questioning and broadening gender roles and students' understandings of them. Drama education can have a critical impact in strengthening students' self and other awareness, where lessons learned from collaborative creation and performance can be transferred to everyday life.

The Australian policy context of gender in education

Within Australia, research and policy has clearly identified some of the ways in which girls and boys are subject to different expectations and outcomes from education based on their gender. Early policy on gender in education directly addressed girls' education and inequities relating to curriculum, sexual harassment and post-school pathways. The first national policy that aimed to address the different outcomes for girls was endorsed in *The National Policy for the Education of Girls* (1987). This policy focused on raising awareness of girls' educational issues and strengthening access to participation, support and resources. The *National Policy* was reviewed and built upon through the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97*. In 1997 the MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce and Reference Group released *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*. This framework focused on issues of gender construction; curriculum, teaching and learning; violence and school culture; and post-school pathways. This document represented a shift away from girls' issues to a broader concern with gender equity for both girls and boys. Policy discourse and action came to focus on the social construction of gender and since then interest has taken a 'boy turn'. Ailwood and Lingard (2001) refer to this framework as the endgame for specific national policies on girls' education (p. 9). In a general sense, there has been a retreat from national policy-making in relation to equity issues, where further action and provision were devolved to the state authorities.

Since the release of the framework, two other federally supported documents were released which are relevant to the Australian gender policy context. The first was a commissioned research report: *Factors influencing the educational performances of males and females in school and their initial destinations after leaving school* (Collins, Kenway & McLeod, 2000). The second was a federal inquiry *Boys: Getting it Right* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). These documents generated interest and debate around questions of 'which boys/which girls are disadvantaged?' and also new concerns about essentialised notions of 'failing boys'. Attention has shifted away from problematic and complex issues of gender equity, structural inequalities and gender justice to more socially appealing ideas of boys as victims of schooling (Lingard, 2003; Keddie, 2009) and a growing interest in recuperative masculinity politics. Numerous writers and experts rightly question the development of a 'competing victim syndrome' (Cox, 1995) in discussions of gender in education and the way it limits effective action regarding complex gender issues and equity provision in schools (Keddie & Mills, 2007). There is a need for educators to address the needs and experiences of both boys and girls and continue to interrogate the way gender impacts learning, schooling and achievement.

Gender in the drama classroom

Performance and art-making are acts of cultural production. Drama-in-education as a powerful pedagogy is well poised to highlight social issues and practices, challenge assumptions, understand difference

and promote positive self and other understandings. Through the core collaborative practices in drama of symbolic representation, enactment and reflection, students can be encouraged to imagine possibilities and stage alternative representations in the safety of the dramatic process. Drama learning experiences encourage students to make meanings from complex human interactions, stories and performances. The understandings generated in drama are often useful for students beyond the learning episode itself and feed into their everyday lives. The art form of drama and its pedagogy offer a safe performative space for re-authoring, re-thinking and rehearsing identities, roles and ideas. In this way drama can be used to interrogate gender construction and relations.

The drama educator is instrumental in encouraging learning about the way gendered identities are staged, revised and interpreted in dramatic forms and individual lives as well as in wider society. Drama learning is embodied and therefore students work directly with selves and socially constructed ideas of gender symbolism. In drama the roles, movements and storylines we use are deeply informed by the accepted gendered symbolism of the times and student work plays with the gender representations, power relations and stereotypes in every task, sometimes unknowingly. It is therefore imperative that teachers guide students to critically appraise the ways in which gender operates within their drama works. Teachers' personal histories and perceptions of gender inform the way they interpret gender in the classroom (Goodson, 1991, p. 144). The educator's choice of language, strategies and texts all influence the way gender is framed, enacted and analysed in the drama experience. A gender-aware drama educator needs to understand the ways in which gender is constructed, performed and resisted in drama, education, individual lives, as well as in social discourses.

Girls and drama

Women's voices, stories and dramas have been excluded and undermined throughout history. This is reflected in the under-representation of women in literature and theatre history. The male gaze still effects the ways in which women are represented and perceived on stage, in film, media, and online as well as in society. School drama curriculum materials often focus on masculine theatrical traditions, playwrights, directors and actors. This dominant male view of dramatic art can suggest to girls that their ideas, stories and experiences have no relevance in drama. Paradoxically girls feature in large numbers in drama classrooms at secondary levels, where they can play with dominant discourses in performative ways, generating new understandings and ideas about power and identity.

Popular culture and the limitations of gender stereotypes present many challenges for educators wanting to raise girls' gender esteem and foster identity development. Maxine Greene (1995) reminds us to notice 'the young girls who have hesitated (out of embarrassment, out of lack of confidence) to consult their own ways of knowing' (p. 191). Researchers from various fields have investigated girls' experiences of education and the ways in which cultural discourses effect and disrupt girls' development and relationships (Gilligan, 1995; Walkerdine, 2001; Gilbert, 1991; Hey, 1997; Pipher, 1995). It is important for drama educators to recognise and use dramatic processes to support the development of voice and agency for girls as individuals and as dramatic artists. In a classroom context it is important to provide challenging texts, roles and processes that invite girls to voice their views, make and analyse their creative decisions and tell their stories (Hatton, 2013). Drama educators should recognise the significant work of feminist playwrights over the past few decades in raising issues about gender and in working towards representing the full range of women's experiences. The works of feminist playwrights offer challenging texts for dramatic investigation for both girls and boys.

Boys and drama

There is a growing concern in education about boys' under-achievement with literacy issues. This features strongly in educational debates as well as the gender strategies of individual schools and systems. Educators need to be aware of how the construction of gender influences male participation and achievement in arts and cultural pursuits, where they are not as highly valued as participation and achievement in other fields, such as sport.

White male experience has been traditionally universalised and has supported oppressive patriarchal structures throughout literature, theatre and history. Peter Middleton (1992) argues that because of this

there is a lack of critical awareness and self-understanding for men of their own position in relation to others. He believes male identities are in part defined by a sense of unease, displacement and lack of certainty (cited in Nicholson, 1999). Gender-aware drama educators need to recognise the way theatre, knowledge and society has been fashioned through the lens of a dominant white male view. In terms of dramatic processes, drama educators need to raise boys' awareness of gender issues and codes, offer positive learning experiences inclusive of a range of masculinities that challenge boys to imagine possibilities in the way they analyse, create and perform in drama.

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Drama and Sexualities

RICHARD SALLIS

Guiding Principles for Drama and Sexualities

Drama Australia and its member associations are committed to:

- *Countering* biases, stereotyping, prejudices and normative assumptions in relation to the sexualities and gender identity in drama teaching and learning.
- *Contesting* behaviours in drama that perpetuate heterosexism and heteroprivilegism.
- *Encouraging* the use of inclusive discourse in relation to sexualities and gender identities that are not based on traditional or power-related cultural stereotypes.
- *Encouraging* the use of inclusive strategies for drama teaching that allow for and respect difference in relation to sexualities and gender identities.
- *Ensuring* that drama courses are free from content that limits the inclusiveness of sexualities and gender identities.

Guidelines for Drama and Sexualities

Drama Australia encourages its members to:

- *Foster and provide* a safe and supportive drama classroom environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students and staff.
- *Counter* biases, stereotyping, prejudices and normative assumptions in relation to sexualities and gender identities both in and out of the classroom, and in the general school community.
- *Contest* behaviours in drama and in the wider school community that perpetuate heteroprivilegism (where heterosexuality is privileged at the expense of non-heterosexual sexualities).
- *Contest* behaviours in drama and in the wider school community that perpetuate heterosexism (attitudes, biases and discrimination based on the favouring of opposite-sex attractions or the presumption that other people are heterosexual).
- *Encourage and model* the use of inclusive discourse in relation to sexualities and gender identities that is not based on traditional, hegemonic or power-related normative stereotypes.
- *Encourage* the use of gender-neutral pronouns; for example, using 'ze' (pronounced zee) instead of she/he.
- *Implement* inclusive strategies for drama teaching that allow for and respect difference in relation to sexualities and gender identities.
- *Ensure* that drama courses and related materials are free from content that limits the inclusiveness and expression of sexualities and gender identities.
- *Endeavour to foster* a whole-school approach to changing attitudes and behaviours associated with sexualities and gender identities.

Discussion and Guidelines into Practice

Introduction

Schools are sites of sexuality (Epstein, 1997). In the past decade, issues pertaining to sexualities and schooling have risen in prominence in Australia in accordance with a growing social awareness of the diversity of sexualities that exist in Australian society. Given the available published research on this aspect of the development of young people, it is important that national educational organisations such as Drama Australia formulate policy statements and guidelines in regard to sexualities. A revised version of Drama Australia's sexualities guidelines (first published in 2005) is provided below. Much has happened in the ten years since Drama Australia first published its guidelines, both in schooling and the wider Australian society and this is reflected in the presentation of this document.

While this section of the guidelines is referred to as the 'sexualities' statement, its focus goes beyond people with lesbian, gay or bisexual orientation to include those who self-identify as being transgender or intersex. It is recommended that this section of the Drama Australia guidelines be read in conjunction with that on 'gender'. As it is now widely understood, issues surrounding gender and sexuality and young people, while not the same are closely interrelated (Connell, 2002).

This policy statement is centred on two aspects of sexualities and gender identities:

- Providing a safe and supportive drama teaching and learning environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students and staff.
- Addressing behaviours that seek to limit or constrain the definition of sexualities and gender identity in drama teaching and learning.

Why are these guidelines needed?

Almost twenty years ago in his article on sexuality in the drama classroom, Australian educator and academic Ray Misson (1996) asserted that it is important that drama educators begin to include acknowledgement of gay people in their classroom teaching and more broadly in their work and yet 'this is still one of the great challenges for drama educators' (Sallis, 2015, p. 2).

In 2015, Beyondblue, a national organisation tackling anxiety and depression in Australia, conducted research into the attitudes of young men aged 14 to 17 towards LGBTI people. Of the 300 young male respondents, 40% reported feeling anxious and uncomfortable in the presence of same-sex attracted young people. Also, 27% of the interviewees considered that it was acceptable to use 'homo' or 'dyke' as a derogatory term and 21% generally found it difficult to treat LGBTI people in the same way as straight people. The writers of the report described these statistics as being particularly concerning given that LGBTI young people are up to six times more likely to be suffering from anxiety and stress compared with their straight peers (2015).

In 2010 the third national (Australian) report on the sexuality, health and wellbeing of same-sex attracted and gender questioning young people found that 79% had been either physically or verbally abused and that 80% of this abuse had taken place in schools (Hiller et al., 2010). It is also well documented that for transgender or intersex students this process can also be a particularly difficult and sensitive time (2011). The researchers found that most of this abuse is linked to homophobia (and in a smaller number of instances transphobia). It is somewhat alarming that the authors stated that these figures have effectively remained unchanged between the first survey conducted in 1998 and again in 2005. However, on a more positive note the authors acknowledge that in 2010 over three times as many young people took part in their research as compared with the numbers in 1998. This, they surmise, is because more young people are 'encouraged by greater visibility of gay people and because there are more supports' (2010, p. 3).

While sexuality differs from gender, issues surrounding them can be interrelated. Where young people in schools may experiment with aspects of their developing gender identity, so too do they explore facets of their sexuality.

This can be a volatile aspect of development for many young people and is something that should be treated with sensitivity, especially because sexuality can challenge values and moral attitudes of parents, teachers and other students. The National Youth Mental Health Foundation has found that 78% of lesbian, gay and bisexual students have suffered abuse while at school (2011).

Sexuality, discrimination and the law

There are Commonwealth laws that ensure that LGBTI staff and students can teach and learn in a safe and supportive environment. Of particular relevance are the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (amended, 2013) and the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*. These laws help to protect individuals against victimisation based on, among other things, their sexuality orientation and gender identity.

Terminology and understandings of sexualities and gender identities

In the field of sexualities and gender identity it is important to understand the meanings of key terms and concepts. It is also worth noting that in this area such terms change and are modified over time.

Sexuality is ‘the inclination to be attracted sexually either to people of the opposite sex or of one’s own sex or both’ (Misson, 1996, p. 13). According to ReachOut, sexuality includes ‘feelings or attraction to other people ... sexual preferences’ (2015).

In contemporary society sexuality is seen as being a matter of identity (Misson, 1996). Sexuality is not sex (although acts of intimacy between consenting people of legal age may be an expression of their sexuality). Sexuality is more linked to love than to a physical/genital act of sexual expression. However, many schools tend to shy away from discussing sexuality in the lives of young people in any depth or relevance (Davis, 1999). This is partly due to misunderstandings and misconceptions.

Sexual orientation is ‘an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectionate attraction to individuals of a particular gender’ (Fordham, 1998, p. 14). According to the American Psychological Association (APA), sexual orientation refers to ‘the sex of those to whom one is sexually and romantically attracted. Categories of sexual orientation typically have included attraction to members of one’s own sex (gay men or lesbians), attraction to members of the other sex (heterosexuals), and attraction to members of both sexes (bisexuals)’ (2011).

Transgender

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines transgender as ‘an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or gender expression does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth (2011).

Intersex

Intersex ‘is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside’ (Intersex Society of North America [ISNA], 2015).

Heterocentric

The assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and that everyone is heterosexual (Dyson et al., 2003).

Heterosexism

Attitudes, biases and discrimination based on the favouring of opposite-sex attractions or the presumption that other people are heterosexual (Sallis, 2015).

Heteroprivilegism

Where heterosexuality is privileged or favoured at the expense of non-heterosexual sexualities (Sallis, 2015).

Discourses that ‘privilege’ heterosexuality and ‘simultaneously seek to limit the expansion of non-heterosexual sexualities – in subtle and in obvious ways’ (Crowhurst, 2002, p. 25).

Homophobia

The fear and hatred of lesbians and gay men and of their sexual desires and practices that often leads to discriminatory behaviour or abuse (Hillier et al., 2010, p. 9).

Transphobia

A fear and hatred of people who are transgender that often leads to discriminatory behaviour or abuse (Hillier et al., 2010, p. 10).

Sexualities and drama education

Drama Australia advocates that as an organisation its members are proactive in the consideration of ways in which issues pertaining to sexuality and gender identity impact on drama teaching and learning for teachers and their students.

Young people are staying at school longer (Dwyer & Wyn, 1998; White & Wyn, 2008). As such, schools are a significant part of their complex lives, which may also include part-time work, relationships and in some instances issues of housing and parenthood. Increasingly young people are now open to more diverse ways of living and are exposed to more choices about how to live their lives. However, as Crowhurst asserts, an awareness of their sexuality is something that is with young people 'all of the time' and is not only associated with sexual contact (2009, p. 10).

Contemporary thinking in education acknowledges that just as it is accepted that young people have a gender identity, so too do they have a sexual one. In similar ways to gender construction, sexualities are 'negotiated, repressed, disciplined, formed and shaped' (Wyn, 1999, p. 1). This has already led to the imperative that schools accept that issues of sexual identity should be included in any 'whole of school' approach to student welfare (Wyn, 1999, p. 1). However, just as in the wider society, when it comes to young people's development and identity, issues of sexuality and gender identity are not always included in discussion and debate. Young people in particular can be disenfranchised because of the attitude of some adults, including educators, that they should not openly display their sexuality (whether straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual). This is despite almost one in ten Year 10–12 students in Australia self-identifying as being same-sex attracted (Smith et al., 2009).

Understanding sexualities in schooling

Since the late 1970s, educational research into sexualities (especially in regard to issues of same-sex attractiveness) has slowly moved from quantitative to qualitative methodologies. The significance of this is that the more recent qualitative research has uncovered *how* people of all ages live their lives (Gamson, 2000). *Qualities* pertaining to human sexuality have been studied rather than *quantities* (what it is *like* rather than how much and how many). For example Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1978) brought to attention the need for more research on the social construction of sexualities.

Same-sex attracted youth and schooling

While sexuality pertains to all sexual orientations, it is perhaps same-sex attracted youth who are most at risk from bullying and other forms of victimisation (as are transgender and intersex students). Young people in schools whose sexuality is, or is *perceived to be*, non-heterosexual/non-normative are particularly subject to bullying (Dyson et al., 2003). While some researchers (McDonald, 2000; Sallis, 2010, 2015) have found that the drama class can be a place within schools where LGBTI students can feel accepted, Sallis acknowledges that while the drama class can be a 'safe' and 'attractive' place for these students 'there is still much work to be done to counter hegemonic heterosexist attitudes that exist within the wider community of many schools' (2015, p. 13).

Homophobia

Crowhurst describes homophobia as being 'conscious or deliberate actions that target or position people which are same-sex attracted (or who are assumed to be), in limiting, in discriminatory or in violent ways' (2002, p. 25). He also uses the term to refer to 'limiting social practices that target same-sex attracted people as a category or type' (Crowhurst, 2002, p. 25). With specific reference to drama education Grady (2000) cites a number of reasons for the homophobia that occurs in schools.

She notes that those who exhibit homophobia in schools do so ‘out of a fear of those who are “different”, [they have] strongly held religious beliefs, hatred of gay people taught during childhood, revulsion of the act of same-sex activity, a low self esteem which is manifest in the need to hate others’ (2000).

Heterocentric and heterosexist discourse

Heterocentric discourse in schools; that is, discourse that excludes those who are not heterosexual (or presumes that all those involved in the conversation are heterosexual by default) can be harmful to non-heterosexual people or to those who self-identify as being transgender or intersex because they may feel excluded and devalued. Heterocentric discourse may not be deliberate and can occur in subtle ways. Crowhurst asserts that *often* it is what is *not said* that is just as significant as what *is* said (2002, p. 26). This type of discourse is not limited to students. For example, it may occur in the staffroom when staff members discuss their social lives (asking ‘What did you do at the weekend?’). It may also be present within curriculum materials and associated pedagogy. Consider this example: a drama teacher sets up an activity about a couple in a relationship who are buying a house. The teacher asks the students, ‘I wonder why she and he have decided to buy this particular house?’. The question the teacher has posed implicitly suggests that the norm for *de facto* couples buying houses is one comprised of a male and female. In this instance the teacher could have asked the students to instead consider why ‘the couple’ or ‘partners’ (rather than specifying ‘she and ‘he’) were buying the house. As Misson points out, in regard to sexualities, work in drama can be counterproductive if ‘students are led into or confirmed in patterns of thought and feeling that are not liberating but constricting to either themselves or others’ (1996, p. 12).

Heterosexist discourse can take place in any school and can be more damaging than heterocentric discourses. It may be more prevalent in schools that are founded on a particular ideology (such as some denominational schools). Here what is perpetuated is ‘a hierarchy of sexualities where heterosexuality within marriage is positioned as the only acceptable or fully realised expression of sexuality’ (Crowhurst, 2002, p. 27, citing Epstein & Johnson, 1994, pp. 212–3 and Marr, 1999).

Such attitudes can lead to a culture where students may feel it is acceptable to make jibes and derogatory comments against non-heterosexual members of their school and the wider community. Here is an example: a drama teacher is running a play rehearsal after school. They ask a group of students to engage in some stage business. One of the students, thinking that what is being asked of them is embarrassing, uses a colloquial term and says, ‘That’s gay’. What is the teacher to do? He or she has several options: ignore the comment and keep going with the rehearsal; remonstrate with the student; tell the student that the use of the term in this way is homophobic and/or offensive; explain to the student why the comment is homophobic and/or offensive; set or re-set the ‘rules’ of the rehearsals to exclude such comments and explain why; decide that their school needs to address this behaviour as a whole community; engage in a combination of the above. Drama Australia believes that teachers should make their own decisions in this regard but that they should not let such moments pass without action.

While such student behaviour should not go unchecked, research suggests that more needs be done than to just label the behaviour for what it is (Beyondblue, 2015). If a drama teacher is aware that such discourse is used they can endeavour to ‘unpack the obvious and subtle structural factors that support and enable such comments to be generated in the first place’ (Crowhurst 2002, pp. 26–27). This does not necessarily need to occur in the moment, but should not be left unaddressed.

The drama teacher in a school where heterosexism pervades may find it difficult to openly counter or turn around such discourse. Teachers who wish to be more inclusive in relation to sexualities in their curriculum planning and execution may find that to do so would place them at odds with the ideology of the school. This can place the individual teacher in an ethical dilemma of conscience over educational pragmatism. Drama educators may need to take into consideration their own school context in this regard. For example, Ollis et al. (2000) recommend that it is best to avoid ‘debating religious arguments. If a person has strongly held views it may be more productive to discuss sexuality issues in terms of how the person is feeling rather than debating ideas’ (p. 7).

However, irrespective of the context of the school, there are still actions that may be implemented by

- ensuring that where possible material for use in the drama class and for school productions does not actively promote heteroprivilegism, heterocentric and heterosexist perspectives and/or that this is tempered in some way
- providing opportunities in drama for the inclusion of characters and ideas that are not heteronormative
- checking and labelling heterosexist behaviour from students and/or heterosexist content in performance work
- including activities in the drama class that promote self-esteem and positive self-image.

Countering heteroprivilegism

Allowing students to behave in heteroprivilegism ways that go unchecked should be arrested. Kehily and Nayak (1997) have found in their research that students (especially boys) will use humour and humiliation to reinforce hegemonic gender/sexuality stereotypes. Drama teachers may find that at times their students portray stereotypical depictions of gender types, same-sex attracted people and/or people exhibiting a range of sexualities. It is a commonly accepted educational principle that stereotypical depictions of people based on ethnicity, gender and ability are no longer deemed to be acceptable. Drama Australia advocates that stereotypical depictions in drama of people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity is not acceptable, especially where such behaviour is deemed to be heteroprivilegism in nature. Stereotypical depictions of sexuality and gender identity are unacceptable because they can strengthen public misconceptions, beliefs and prejudices and this can leave some students and teachers feeling excluded or devalued.

Drama Australia advocates that drama teachers engender a safe and supportive environment for LGBTI youth. This will be achieved by an ongoing process of countering heteroprivilegism. While ideally this should be part of a *whole-school approach*, the drama curriculum classroom (its program and associated co-curricula drama/theatre activities) should be one site at the school where students can feel protected from heteroprivilegism discourse. In particular, the drama teacher should be a positive role model who demonstrates ways of being proactive in positively affecting change in this regard. Books that provide advice, such as Sharon Grady's *Drama and Diversity* (2000), can be helpful. Grady's work provides useful information on ways of countering discrimination in drama and includes lesson plan ideas for activities based on a range of social topics, including sexualities.

Making assumptions about the sexuality and gender identity of students and teachers

Sexuality is a most complex construct and discourses related to it are similarly full of ambivalences and biases. Teachers should make their students aware of the preconceptions and assumptions they make in regard to sexualities and gender identities and on what they are based. Sometimes teachers themselves can mistakenly assume that those in their class who exhibit heterocentric and heterosexist behaviours identify as being heterosexual. According to Crowhurst 'homophobic values can be accessed by young people who identify as same-sex attracted as well as by those who identify as straight' (2002, p. 26). Research has found that some same-sex attracted young people publicly make derogatory comments about lesbians and gays to deflect attention away from him or herself (Crowhurst, 2002, pp. 26–7). It is recommended that any discussion about homophobia to any student in any context should be done so with sensitivity and without preconceptions or assumptions.

There is a tendency for students to speculate on the sexuality of their teachers, and it seems particularly their drama teachers (McDonald, 2000; Sallis, 2015). In 2002 Swedberg, Chapman and Sykes (2002) wrote of their staging of a piece of performed research entitled *Wearing the secret out: A Drama performance about homophobia and homoeroticism in Physical Education*. It was based on interviews with eight North American Physical Education teachers who identified their sexual orientation as being lesbian or gay. In the research that informed the play, it was found that in schools there is a likely to be a range of sexualities among the staff as well as the students. The important message here is that programs for schools regarding LGBTI people should take into consideration LGBTI *teachers* and well as students.

Are you gay, sir? is the title of an article by Michael Crowhurst (1999) where he discusses the circumstances that led to him coming out as gay to his students in a Melbourne (Australia) secondary school. His account brings up a number of relevant issues for LGBTI teachers, including those who teach drama. LGBTI teachers can experience similar difficulties experienced by LGBTI students where the hegemony of a school is largely heterosexist. As White and Wyn point out, the fact that a thirteen-year-old student in Michael's class felt it was acceptable to ask this question of him epitomises 'the power that accrues, automatically, to those who conform to the norm' (2008, p. 45). Michael notes the implicit power relation in the question where 'sir' is 'invested with the idea of power' as is the intention behind the question (1999, p. 98).

Drama Australia advocates that its members are sensitive to the particular needs of LGBTI teachers and this includes their decision whether or not to disclose their sexuality or gender identity to members of their community. As Ollis et al. (2000) assert in regard to gay and lesbian teachers, it is an 'individual decision ... to choose to disclose their sexuality to staff or students and in what context they talk about their lives'. They also advise that straight staff at a school can help to contest stereotypes surrounding sexualities by 'not disclosing their sexuality to students or constantly talking about husbands, wives and children' (Ollis et al., 2000, p. 18).

Conclusion

Drama Australia advocates that drama teachers not only address issues pertaining to gender identity and sexualities as they arise in their classrooms but also are proactive in implementing policies and procedures as appropriate for the context of their particular educational environment that help to break down the assumptions, preconceptions and prejudices associated with sexualities and gender identity amongst staff and students.

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