

I am fortunate that I also have access to about 60 schools in Victoria through my job as a Drama Method lecturer at Melbourne University's Institute of Education. I visit all my third and fourth year B.Ed students during their school experience rounds. This provides me with insights into the philosophy and style of many drama teachers in Victoria and the Drama programmes in many different schools. Although this is helpful I am wary of claiming that it gives me a full understanding. It strikes me that what any of us **really** know about the teaching and learning in someone else's classroom is equivalent to what we **really** know about someone else's marriage. As close colleagues or friends we gain an impression of the quality of the interaction between teacher and students or husband and wife but it is only part of an extremely complex whole truth. No matter how observant we are, we are outsiders liable to be shocked by an announcement of marital rifts or resignation from the school. We thought they were going so well . . . !

So I offer the following as my attempt to present the current national position of drama. Others may care to add to it, disagree with it and rework it using information they have available to them. It has been a task that helped me clarify what I believe are the important themes, the differences between us and the uniting factors, the challenges for the future of NADIE and of drama in our schools.

If you look at a recently published national Curriculum document like **Mapping the Australian Curriculum** prepared for all the Education Ministers across Australia, the word 'Drama' appears infrequently. I think it is mentioned only four times: as the 19th most commonly studied subject in Years 11 and 12 in Queensland.; and as the 20th most common in the Northern Territory; as one of the most common optional subjects at Years 7-10 in Tasmania; and finally in the section on The Most Common Range of subjects in the Primary Curriculum it says: "the six learning areas that are common to all systems are English Language, Maths, Social Studies, Science, Health (Physical Education and Personal Development) and the Arts bracket (including Music, Art Craft and Drama)."

This quote is significant. The reason why, at first glance, Drama seems not to occupy a place of any significance in the national curriculum of schools is because of the way the Curriculum is now organized and described. In fact the position of drama in schools in Australia is, in the main, far stronger than the rhetoric in such documents suggests.

According to Commonwealth and State educational policy there is now a definite trend towards an alignment of Drama with the Arts (rather than with English or even as an organizational unit on its own). The definition and interpretation in Curriculum terms of the Arts is still a contentious issue in some States but in most States it has been resolved to improve Drama's position and status in schools.

Most States have now developed six to eight common learning areas which are required to be offered to form a "balanced" curriculum for students from their first year of school to at least Year 7 and in some States to Year 10. The Arts is one of these mandatory areas (cited as a priority curriculum area in NSW, Queensland and Tasmania in Primary Curriculum).

All States, with the exception of NSW, have been developing over the last 7 years Arts Curriculum Frameworks and/or Guidelines to assist teachers implementing the Arts curriculum.

This policy has affected the way schools are being organised. In Western Australia and ACT senior colleges have established strong faculties of Performing Arts; the increased resourcing for the Performing Arts and the often spectacular improvement in facilities has worked to Drama's advantage. In Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory schools are increasingly forming Visual and Performing Arts faculties to strengthen their organizational base and in order to share resources and staffing.

In Victoria, the division of the curriculum into nine Frameworks areas all designated as essential for the education of Victorian students up to Year 10 has moved the Arts from a marginal place in the curriculum to a central place. As with other States, the Victorian Arts Framework is organized around a Core Arts Statement and then an individual statement for each of the six Arts Areas: Music, Media, Graphic Communication, Dance and Drama. This means that the traditionally less prominent Arts areas such as Drama are now on an equal footing with Visual Arts and Music. This is also the case with the new Victorian Certificate of Education (commencing 1991). It is quite clear that the effect of both Frameworks and the VCE with its requirement that all Year 11 and 12 students must undertake units chosen from "the Arts", will lead to increased participation by students in the Arts. Consequently an expansion of Drama programmes at all levels of schooling will occur in Victoria.

State differences are reflected in the way that the objectives and the process of learning in the arts are described. I believe that in SA, WA, Tasmania and ACT, Drama is one of the core Arts areas in their Arts Curriculum Statements. So Drama has benefitted in many States from the upgrading of the Arts in Education and in the requirement (taken from the Victorian Arts Framework) that:

Schools must now devote a considerable proportion of their time and resources to the arts at all levels; the goal being to enable students to experience a broad range of arts experiences in a regular, planned and coordinated way.

In Queensland, however, where the P-10 Arts Framework is being written this year, the debate rages as to whether Drama should be regarded as an optional or essential area. Brad Haseman, drama lecturer at Brisbane CAE reports that Visual Arts and Music are lobbying hard to be the only compulsory Arts subjects. To strengthen the position of Drama in this debate, he believes that the Queensland drama community needs to emphasise the expressive and aesthetic aspects of Drama. In order to counter the hierarchical view of "traditional" Arts subjects being the most important he believes that Drama must be seen as a specialist arts medium — a discipline in its own right. He believes that the dangers of stressing the methodological aspects of Drama and its application across the curriculum are that it could allow drama in education to be subsumed or marginalised in the school curriculum.

It is a central dilemma for us and it is the sort of pragmatic point of view that I am now hearing frequently; that in order to consolidate and protect Drama's position in the curriculum of schools we need to address ourselves to the notion of progression and development in drama: that we need to be able to define the skills appropriate for students doing drama in Primary schools, not just in the senior years; that we need to train Drama specialists who are able to develop and implement programmes with clearly articulated objectives, that relate to perceived essential skills — the sort of skills that schools now regard as priorities.

It seems clear to me that the way we articulate drama plays a crucial role in the status of Drama at primary level. I agree with Brad's observation that in States where drama is strongest in the Primary curriculum, i.e., Tasmania and South Australia, it has a strong tradition as an aesthetic and expressive activity in its own right. Here in Tasmania, where although drama has developed great sophistication and wide application as a teaching and learning methodology, I believe the historical roots go back to the 40's when it was valued as a basic and valued curriculum area.

In South Australia, a recent Survey of schools from Year 1 to Year 7 found that one-third of teachers taught Drama as a specialist area and one-half indicated that they used Drama as a methodology for teaching other subjects. 95 per cent of Primary teachers considered Drama to have a very important or reasonably important place in the curriculum. Their reasons for this reflect the way Drama is seen in South Australia. They include: the opportunities drama provides for self-expression, the development of student confidence and self-esteem, Drama's crucial role in the development of communication skills and the student-involving teaching-learning model typically used in Drama. Although South Australian teachers identified areas of weakness like the need for more adequate advisory services for both specialist and generalist drama teachers, the general impression is one of growth and support for drama programmes in schools there. Heather Smigiel, Drama Project Officer for the State, believes that Drama is seen as having a significant and ongoing role in the concept of the "inclusive curriculum" as well as in the focus on social justice issues in South Australia. I believe that it is significant that in South Australia since the 1970's curriculum documents have defined the core skills and objectives of drama programmes at each level of schooling.

Although a compulsory part of English in Western Australia, in other States Primary Drama occurs in a patchy, ad hoc and inconsistent way. It has existed too often as an afterthought in language arts programmes or as a way to spice up the normal programmes. However I feel assured that as the new Arts Frameworks are implemented Drama benefits. There are many examples to support this already. Principals of schools feel under pressure to expand the range of Arts teaching, to support the appointment of Arts and Drama specialists in Primary schools, to give greater emphasis to Performing and Expressive Arts units of work and to commit their schools to involvement in community-based Arts projects.

An example of this comes from a rural area of South Australia — Murray Bridge. Wendy Danforth, a classroom teacher and Drama specialist, finds it difficult to encourage other teachers in the area's primary schools to fit drama consistently into their "crowded" curriculum. However each year the Come Out Festival, the State-wide Youth Arts Festival, results in every child in the area becoming involved in each of the Arts Areas, including Drama, in extended and integrated projects with classroom teachers being supported by arts specialist teachers.

It is only in NSW that official rhetoric about the importance of Arts Education has been used to rationalise severe cutbacks in support for drama in schools. In spite of vigorous lobbying by EDA, last year's decision to eliminate the position of the K-12 Drama Curriculum Consultant has not been reversed; nor has there been a change in the Government decision not to release the Primary Drama syllabus this year. In the reply to a letter I wrote as NADIE President to the NSW Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, the Minister was at pains to point out that the Creative and Practical Arts are one

of the six major learning areas in the Primary Curriculum. In an amazing piece of political logic he asserted that we should see the decision not to implement the Primary Drama Syllabus but to redraft it into a new Arts syllabus and the reallocation of the Drama consultant's position "to meet other priorities" as clear evidence of NSW's support for the Arts and for the Drama. After careful planning seven years ago and an enormous amount of work in developing and trialling the Syllabus, NSW would have been an exemplary model of Primary Drama. Each school would have been supported to develop a drama policy and to add Drama to their curriculum alongside Music and Visual Arts. All students by 1991 would have had the opportunity as a regular part of their schooling "to learn social, interpersonal, cognitive and Drama skills and processes". Instead, NSW Drama in Primary Schools is in a bleak position indeed.

In Secondary Schools the national profile for drama in education is one of **expansion** and **consolidation** of existing programmes. One of the most significant themes seems to me to be the effect of Years 11 and 12 accredited courses on the status of drama at junior and middle secondary levels.

This is exemplified by Queensland where the phenomenal growth of Drama in schools of the last ten years continues. Teachers attribute this to the strength of Years 11 and 12 Drama and Theatre Courses accredited by the Board of Secondary Studies. (In 1992 a common Drama Syllabus for Years 11 and 12 commences.) Drama is the second most popular Senior Arts subject, with 11,000 students studying it compared to 14,000 studying Visual Arts and 3,000 Music. I find it fascinating that in a State in many ways so educationally conservative (e.g. in both the Primary and Secondary curriculum, religious instruction and Bible Readings are mandatory), Queensland has a tradition of school-based assessment. States in which external exam-based assessment has a strong hold, like NSW and Victoria, have a difficult time gaining acceptance for assessment modes and structures appropriate to Drama.

An example from Northern Queensland illustrates the widespread acceptance of Drama for Senior students. Vicki Edwards arrived at Townsville High School five years ago. There was no Drama at the school but Vicki has managed, with the strong support from parents and a Principal who advocates Performing Arts as a valuable curriculum area, to build a strong Senior Drama programme. She now has 36 students in Year 11 and 30 students in Year 12 doing the accredited Theatre course. A music block has been converted into her teaching space and the Civic Theatre across the road is used for performances. She has just run a Drama Camp for 70 students on Magnetic Island. As in many Queensland schools the strength of Drama at Senior levels influences Drama's status at Junior levels. At Townsville High School Drama and Performing Arts subjects will commence at Year 8 next year.

However in Queensland the boom in school Drama has not been matched by teacher training. Brad Haseman reports that most teachers teaching Drama in Queensland schools are still not formally trained. In spite of QADIE's identification of the problem of the lack of specialist training, there is still no Post Graduate Diploma in Drama in Education. At least at Brisbane CAE a four year B.Ed. for students majoring in Drama will commence next year to supplement the three year Diploma.

This position contrasts with Victoria, where Ministry Regulations now require all tagged drama positions to be held by trained Drama specialists i.e., either with an undergraduate degree majoring in Drama or with Graduate Diploma in Drama in Education Qualifications.

Drama holds a strong position in the Senior Secondary curriculum in South Australia, Northern Territory, Western Australia, ACT and, of course, Tasmania.

In South Australia over 1,000 students do Year 12 Drama either as a publically examined subject or as a school assessed subject. 86 per cent of schools in that State offer Drama from Years 8-11. Tasmania has the proud record of every secondary school offering Drama. 288 students study it at Years 11 and 12. Similarly in the Northern Territory where the drama teachers have all been trained in other States, all Secondary Schools have Drama programmes. Teachers there believe that the use of the South Australian accredited courses at Year 12, although difficult in terms of vast geographical distances, does account for the growth and support for Drama in their secondary schools. Julie Quacinella, who teaches at Darwin High School, values the close network of Drama teachers in Darwin. Recently all Years 11 and 12 students in Darwin participated in a joint production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in cooperation with Darwin Theatre Company. There are also cooperative arrangements between schools to enable TIE groups working with Senior students to take student-devised theatre to outback bush schools.

Julie teaches in "The Tank", a water tank converted into a PE/Drama complex, including a flexible performance space with lighting facilities. At Sanderson Junior High School, Michelle Davies works with the Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean students in developing exciting dance drama work.

In ACT where every Senior College runs Drama courses within their Performing Arts Faculties, the strength of Senior Drama is again cited as an important factor in the expanding Drama Curriculum in Years 7-10. Bren Weatherstone, teaching in a Canberra High School, appreciates the freedom she has to develop her Drama curriculum to suit her students. She described a recent project she conducted with her Year 9 students — with a grant of \$3,000 from the Department of Parks and Conservation they built a performance on the theme of the need to respect the environment using huge puppets constructed by the students.

In Victoria, where there is a stronger tradition of Drama from 7-10 rather than Years 11 and 12, Drama is the 14th most popular subject in Secondary schools with 17,370 students doing it in 1988. Although there is an official glut of Humanities teachers in Victoria, the employment opportunities for trained Drama teachers are excellent. All the graduates from the last two years who wanted jobs teaching Drama in Private or State High Schools are employed. And as Method Lecturer I hear frequently of vacancies for drama teachers. Many of these unfilled positions are in schools that have invested in drama facilities and want Drama as a priority area in the curriculum. We are fortunate to be still on the crest of a wave in Victoria and the new VCE will, of course, increase this demand for skilled specialist Drama in Performing Arts teachers.

The experiences of Malcolm and Jenny, B.Ed. graduates with majors in Drama and English, illustrate the fortunate position of Drama in Victoria. Both first year out teachers got jobs in the schools of their choice, the schools in which they had done their final

teaching practice. So their teaching careers **began** in schools with strong supportive Drama Departments and with well-established, highly regarded and comprehensive programmes. In contrast to my own initiation to the profession, trying to pioneer a Drama programme in isolation, their experiences are typical of many teachers beginning in Victoria in 1989.

Malcolm teaches in a large Melbourne High School with six other trained drama teachers implementing the programme from Years 7-12. The School has excellent teaching facilities including a computerized lighting system funded by the School Council who recognized the value of Drama for the students here. The Drama programme has a high profile in the school and its community; it is an extremely popular subject with students. The schoolbased curriculum has been devised to meet the needs of the students, predominantly working class and multicultural.

The introduction in 1991 of the new VCE¹ Drama is causing concern with the staff here. Teachers throughout Victoria who have been teaching successful school-developed Senior Drama Courses share the anxiety of these staff about the VCE with its move to centrally prescribed work requirements and Common Assessment tasks. They believe that its greater emphasis on written tasks will disadvantage students who excel at the practical aspects of Drama and yet have difficulties with written language.

For Jenny, teaching at a large girls' Private School, the Drama staff within the Performing Arts Faculty believe the VCE will bring a welcome upgrading of the academic credibility of Drama. A particular priority of this school is Oral Language and Communication and Jenny works as a resource teacher in this area as well as a specialist Drama teacher at each level of school.

In NSW, where there is no tradition of Senior Drama Curriculum, Drama has a lower profile in schools. In 1986 the Year 7-10 Drama Syllabus was introduced to NSW Secondary Schools. A survey last year by the Drama Syllabus Committee found that Drama is taught in about 20 per cent of schools. The major reasons that schools gave for not offering Drama were lack of facilities and lack of trained staff. Only 40 per cent of those actually teaching Drama have formal training. To counter this gloomy picture is the strength of EDA² both in its large membership (more than any other State Association) and its dynamic and hard working Council Executive. Its work in publications, advocacy and professional development is outstanding. Next year it hosts the NADIE Conference in Sydney titled "Drama — In form".

With the education systems around Australia in a great state of change — restructuring, reorganizing, reclassifying, renaming and revising and with amalgamations or amalgamation talks everywhere — what are the big issues for the future for us as Drama educators?

The NSW cutbacks have been echoed in other States where there has been a general reduction in consultancy and advisory positions in Drama. Although there is much to be gained for Drama in cooperating and working closely with other Arts areas, inservice and consultancy specifically focussed on the drama area are seen by drama teachers to be essential.

1. Victorian Certificate of Education — for Years 11 and 12 students.

2. Educational Drama Association — now Drama New South Wales.

As all State Associations know, the responsibility for professional development for drama teachers has increasingly been taken on by State Associations. The irony is that Workshop leaders are so often made up of overworked but generous people who really need some input themselves. Whilst Education Ministry personnel are being withdrawn from inservice and consultancy, there is a positive trend in States like Western Australia, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. State Ministries are offering support and cooperation to work in partnership with State Associations to organize and resource professional development programmes for drama teachers, e.g., with the Frameworks Inservice for Drama teachers in Victoria, the Ministry paid for the space and catering.

The other positive move, initiated federally, is to encourage cooperation between tertiary institutions and State Associations to offer inservice and professional development for teachers through short credit bearing Courses recognized for promotion purposes.

The spate of amalgamations which have just occurred or will occur very soon have definitely brought problems for tertiary Drama educators. I speak from experience having just lived through the traumas of attempting to combine two very different traditions: that of very traditional University and that of a more vocationally oriented CAE. On the other hand NADIE for many years has been rightly advocating an expansion in our research and postgraduate work in Drama in Education. I do see amalgamation leading to an expansion of Masters and post courses in Drama in Education and greater opportunities and higher profile for research in Drama and the Arts. I believe much of this research in Drama needs to be applied research of a type that supports and upgrades the quality of work done by classroom Drama teachers. Tertiary educators in drama will have an increasingly responsibility to work cooperatively with teachers in schools and to assist them in maintaining a voice and status for Drama at all levels of the education system.

To finish on a very positive note, as I reported in the NADIE Newsletter, there has been a spectacular development in cooperation between the Arts areas. In early June an inaugural meeting of the five National Arts Education Associations was held at the Australian Education Council in Melbourne. The meeting of Executive members; from Dance, Visual Arts, Media, Music and Drama, was extremely positive and has resulted in the recommendation to form a National Affiliation of Arts Educators.

I see this as an extremely significant event for NADIE. At a time when the political climate is potentially unsympathetic to the Arts, joint action and cooperation between the Arts area is a matter of urgency. The meeting agreed that a united National body would increase the strength and effectiveness of national advocacy for Arts Education at the highest political levels.

NADIE will benefit from the fact that the Arts are now being courted by the AEC (State and Federal Ministers of Education who hosted this will host subsequent meetings). They have provided us with access, information and advice about important policy decisions and significant draft documents. NADIE will now have the opportunity as part of the Affiliation to prepare collaborative responses to documents like the National Goals for Schooling and the National Curriculum Guidelines. We have been invited and encouraged by the AEC to rework these Goals to ensure a far stronger inclusion of Arts and Drama.

At this meeting it became clear that the strongest and most telling argument we can put to upgrade our status is the economic one. NADIE needs to build on the excellent work done in NSW, ACT and Western Australia in developing a sound case backed up by data to stress the importance of the Arts and Drama to the economy. I am aware that to some of us this seems a sellout of our principles. I don't believe we can be precious about this or we may find ourselves down a similar path to Educational Drama in the UK — not included in the National Curriculum at all.

We need to articulate our work in a way that uses the language and frameworks of the current political educational and economic power brokers. For instance, in the conservative Employers' Federation, whilst objecting to curriculum innovation and "soft" subjects, has identified the following qualities as being crucial skills for school leavers. These include communication and interpersonal skills, presentation skills and problem solving skills. They particularly wished young people entering the work force to be creative, innovative and assertive. Surely we can talk about our work in Drama in Education in these terms so that industry understands why Drama is such an important activity in schools.

I have left until the end the single most important factor for all drama educators in Australia — i.e., the formal and informal networks we all have available to us.

The personal resources of our immediate colleagues, in schools and colleges, our colleagues within regions, within State Associations or within NADIE are the most important and sustaining parts of our professional lives. Use your networks and expand them, let us all share with and support and advise and inspire each other.

For me, it is the NADIE network across Australia that keeps me feeling positive about my work and the future of drama in this country.