School Plays in Secondary Schools: An Exploration of Student and Teacher Perspectives

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the perceptions of students and teachers involved in school plays in secondary schools. The main aims of the study were to investigate teachers' and students' motivation to participate and to explore their perceptions regarding the potential benefits, challenges and positive and negative impacts of involvement in this activity. Given the limited amount of research investigating this area, literature relating to the arts in education, drama and theatre in education, youth theatre groups and extra-curricular activities have been included in the rationale for studying this area. The study employed a two-phase mixed methodology design, which involved an initial phase of questionnaires completed by students and teachers. This was followed by focus groups with the students and semi-structured interviews with the teachers involved. Results indicate that intrinsic enjoyment of the activity was one of the key motivators for student participants. A number of perceived positive impacts and benefits in relation to the students' personal and social development were identified, along with a number of perceived challenges and negative impacts in relation to the process. The findings are discussed in relation to relevant psychological theories and the practical implications for the field of Educational Psychology.

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Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ECAs	Extra-Curricular Activities
ECA	Extra-Curricular Activity
MoE	Mantle of the expert
EP	Educational Psychologist
CoP	Community of Practice
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
RT	Role Theory
ToM	Theory of Mind

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 An amplification of the title

The current research explores the phenomenon of the school play in secondary schools. The central focus is on student and teacher perspectives regarding the potential positive and negative impacts of involvement in the school play and the motivators behind students' and teachers' involvement. The purpose of gaining an understanding of these perspectives is to investigate how the school play is currently used in secondary schools and what kind of an impact it may have on those involved. The position of this thesis is that gaining an understanding of the perceived impacts of school plays will be useful for schools and the field of educational psychology due to previous research in related fields. The argument will be elaborated on in the following sections of this chapter and in the literature review of this thesis.

Extra-curricular activities (ECAs) such as the school play have been a longstanding part of the education system in the United Kingdom and can often be found in school prospectuses as a way of promoting a school as having a positive and varied learning environment. However, Pitts (2008) made the following observation that "...despite the fact that extra-curricular arts activity is a widespread feature of British secondary (high) schools and colleges, there has been little discussion of its purpose or systematic investigation of its qualitative impact"(p.4). Pitts' (2008) research focuses on musical ECAs and the impact on students' attitudes towards music and musical identity. The current research investigates the wider impact that the school play may have on young people's learning and development. Given that so little is known about the impact of school plays on those involved, the aims of this thesis are deliberately broad as focusing on a specific question could lead to valuable information being missed.

1.2 The theoretical significance of this research

Whilst school plays in secondary schools have not received a great deal of attention from researchers in psychology and education, it is argued that they can be included within the "arts in education" category. This argument is based on the understanding that the activities included in the school play (e.g. music, drama and dance) correspond with three of the four core categories of "arts in education" defined by Fleming (2010) as music, drama, dance and visual arts/visual design. A more in-depth definition of what is meant by the "arts in education" is included in the literature review. The uses and impacts of the arts in education is a topic of great interest to educationalists and psychologists as there is growing support for the notion that involvement in the arts can have a positive impact on young people's learning and emotional and social development (e.g. Boyd, 2008;

Bresler, 2007; Catterall, 2009; Fleming 2010; Harland, Kinder, Lord, Stoot, Schagen, & Haynes, with Cusworth, White & Paola, 2000; Robinson, 1982). This research has led to the development of arts-based curricula, which have been evaluated to be successful in raising attainment and engagement in the young people who are involved (Das, Dewhurst & Gray, 2011; Smithrim & Upitis 2005).

The theoretical significance of this thesis is also based on previous research into the field of drama and theatre in education. A full description of these concepts is provided in the literature review and a critical exploration of the studies most relevant to the current research has been included. Furthermore, there is a strong quantitative research base in North America linking ECA involvement with positive adolescent development in the following areas: increased academic aspirations and achievements (Darling 2005; Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003); higher social and academic self concept and sense of self worth (Blomfield & Barber, 2009); maintaining existing, and developing new, friendships (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2011); and lower risk-taking behaviours such as drug abuse, truancy and drinking alcohol (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Darling, 2005; Denault, Poulin, & Pedersen, 2009). This demonstration of the potential positive impacts of ECA involvement led to one of the aims of the current research, which is to investigate students' motivation to take part in the school play, as this knowledge could be used to engage more students in this kind of activity.

When exploring potential motivations for involvement in the school play in chapter two it is recognised that a number of different psychological theories could be drawn upon. However, the decision was made to focus on McLean's (2009) motivational framework and the justification of this decision is provided within the literature review. The above studies also provide part of the rationale for investigating the perceived positive impacts of the school play in that the research indicates that taking part in ECAs can have a positive impact on the young people involved. The current research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the areas in which a school play might be beneficial to those involved by taking a qualitative approach as recommended by Pitts (2008).

The research into ECAs provides little evidence of any negative impacts aside from the proposal of the "over-scheduling hypothesis" (Mahoney, Harris, & Eccles, 2006), which suggests that young people can become stressed and fatigued by participating in too many ECAs. Also, Hampshire and Matthijsse's (2010) evaluation of after school singing groups suggested that involvement in the groups could negatively impact on prior friendships. Despite the lack of previous research investigating negative impacts of ECAs it is argued that seeking to understand any negative impacts or challenges that may occur as a result of involvement in the school play is important. This argument is based on the belief that a lack of awareness of any negative impacts could lead to

unintentional detrimental effects on the young people involved. Further support for the theoretical significance of this topic is based in research carried out into youth theatre groups (e.g. James, 2005; Hughes & Wilson, 2004) and a limited number of studies exploring school productions (e.g. Ogden, 2008; Pitts, 2007). These studies also suggest that there may be potential benefits for young people involved in the performing arts.

1.3 Relevance of this topic to psychology, education and the role of the educational psychologist

Frederickson and Miller (2008) provide a description of the role of educational psychology services as "the promotion of learning, attainment and the healthy emotional development of young people aged 0-19, through the application of psychology" (p.3). The rationale for the relevance of the current research to the field of educational psychology is based within this definition. Whilst there has been little research into school productions, learning more about this area of school life may contribute to the current understanding of how to promote the learning, attainment and healthy emotional development within a school setting. This argument is based on previous research into the benefits of the arts in education, ECAs, Drama and Theatre in education, youth theatre groups and some limited studies investigating school plays. The research base is explored in depth in the literature review and is briefly examined in the following paragraph.

The research reviewed in chapter two indicates potential links between involvement in activities related to the school play and adolescent development in the following areas: emotional awareness (Larson and Brown, 2007), social and communication skills (Harland et al., 2000; Hughes and Wilson, 2004; James, 2005), self concept (Blomfield & Barber, 2009; Catterall, Chapleau and Iwanaga, 2002; Wright, 2006) and relationship development (Pitts, 2007; Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2011). There is also research which suggests that taking part in performing activities can be an empowering experience for young people (Gonzalez, 1999; Miles,2003) and that they can provide informal learning opportunities (Burton, 2002; James, 2005). The areas listed above are closely linked to the field of educational psychology, in that part of the educational psychologist's (EP's) role is to help young people in their social emotional development and learning. Thus new information that can add to these areas of research has clear implications for professionals working with young people. The listed areas also link to a wider theoretical base within educational and child psychology including: theories related to the need to belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Dreikurs, 1953; and Maslow, 1954); Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory of flow; theories related to motivation (McLean, 2009); theories relating to social development and acting (Goldstein and Winner, 2010); and ideas related to learning through a community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998). New knowledge in these

areas could provide further avenues for future research that may help support adolescents in their emotional and social development and learning.

Cameron (2006) asserts that one of the unique contributions of the EP is "Adopting a psychological perspective" (p.289). He also argues that the EP's understanding of the school and its context is a key part of the role. As school plays are used frequently within schools, having a better understanding of both teachers' and students' perspectives of their impact on those involved will be a useful addition to the EP's knowledge base surrounding school environments. It is envisaged that the findings of the current research will be useful in the field of education, particularly for those teachers who are involved in the organisation of school plays. For example, by gathering students' perspectives of the school play, this research aims to understand what aspects of the process were important and valuable to those involved. These findings could inform teachers' practice in the way that they think about organising a school production. Furthermore, findings regarding potential challenges and negative impacts of the school play will also be valuable information for schools, as increasing awareness of any negative impacts found will be instrumental in reducing the occurrence of such impacts. Further, it is argued that the manner in which a school may approach engagement in the school play relates to the context of the school and pupil treatment, which is in turn central to the EP role as argued above.

1.4 An outline of this research

This thesis is organised into six chapters, an overview of each chapter following this introduction is outlined in this section. Chapter two provides an exploration of the literature in the areas related to the school play, beginning by exploring the broader concept of the arts in education, and research in this field. The review then focuses on the research in the fields of drama and theatre in education, followed by an exploration of the research investigating the impacts of ECAs and youth theatre groups. The research review concludes with the limited research focusing on school plays. This is followed by an exploration of theoretical perspectives that have influenced the current research, including the theory of flow, sense of belonging, theories of motivation, learning through drama, and theories related to acting and social and emotional development. The chapter ends with a description of the three research questions to be explored in this study.

Chapter three outlines the method adopted for the current research and justifies the research paradigm chosen and each research strategy utilised. The decision to employ a mixed methodology approach is defended in the context of the aims of the research, and the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research are discussed. The main research tools are described

and the decision to use these tools is explained. The details of sampling procedures, participants and ethical considerations are also included within this chapter. Finally, the methods of data analysis employed are described and justified.

Chapter four presents the research findings from each phase of data collection. This includes both quantitative and qualitative data relating to the research questions. These findings are discussed in detail in chapter five and links are made with previous research and psychological theory in this area. Strengths and limitations of the study are also discussed within chapter five. Conclusions are drawn within chapter six and opportunities for future research are discussed. The implications for EPs and their practice are discussed along with the ramifications for professionals in education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter critically reviews the findings of previous literature related to this project. The literature search identified that there is currently little research focusing directly on school plays in secondary schools. Therefore, the broader literature base surrounding the topics of "the arts in education", "theatre and drama in education", "ECAs" and "youth theatre" have been explored, along with the limited number of studies focusing on school plays. The following section of this chapter outlines the rationale for including and excluding research relating to these topics. Descriptions of the key sources used in the literature search are included in section 2.3, which is followed by definitions of key terms. Section 2.5 provides a critical review of the research literature. This is followed by an outline of the theoretical literature which guided the areas of study investigated here. Section 2.7 of this chapter summarises the way in which the literature review led to the research questions, and ends with the questions that this research aims to explore.

2.2 Foundations for excluding and including literature

Each of the reviewed areas have been widely researched and written about as is highlighted by the following references. "Arts in Education" (e.g. Bresler, 2007; Eisner, 1999; Fleming, 2010; Harland, Kinder, Lord, Stoot, Schagen, and Haynes, with Cusworth, White, and Paola, 2000; Kinder & Harland, 2004; Robinson, 1982; Winner & Hetland, 2000), "Drama and Theatre in Education" (e.g. Anderson & Donelan, 2009; Cooper, 2004; Conrad, 2004; Burton, 2010; DICE, 2010; Hornbrook, 1991; Jackson,1993; Nicholson, 2005; Somers, 1996; Wagner, 1976; Way, 1967; Zwerling, 2008), "Youth Theatre" (e.g. Hughes & Wilson, 2004; James, 2005; Mayall, 2007), "ECAs" (e.g. Busseri, Rose-Krasnor, Willoughby, & Chalmers, 2006; Darling 2005; Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Shernoff, 2010). Notably, not all of the research exploring the broader topics listed above is relevant to school plays. However, studies which have been identified as relevant were included in this review, based on two main criteria. The first criterion was whether the phenomenon or activity that the research investigated had aspects that were related or similar to a school play. The second criterion was whether the research explored or investigated impacts or effects of the aforementioned activity.

Whilst the current research focuses on school plays within secondary schools, some of the research referred to in this review will involve younger children. It was thought pertinent to include such research as the findings may also be applicable to older students. Literature based in Europe, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United States of America (USA) will also be included in this review. The similarities in the cultural paradigms of these geographical areas were thought to be sufficient to include such research as relevant, despite the current research being UK based.

2.3 Description of the key sources and literature search completed

A search of the literature focusing on the potential positive and negative impacts of school plays, performing arts, youth theatre groups, ECAs, the arts in education and theatre and drama in education was conducted using a number of electronic databases. The main databases used included PsychArticles, PsycINFO and Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC). Key word searches included "school play", "school production", "arts in education" "theatre and education", "drama and education", "youth theatre", "extra-curricular activities" "performing arts and young people", "performing arts and schools", these key words were also searched alongside the words "positive impacts", "negative impacts", "benefits", "challenges" and "motivations".

The following Internet academic search engines were also utilised; Google scholar, Scirus and Base. These searches were limited to peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, abstracts and articles. The Cardiff University library catalogue was searched in order to identify books and journals related to this topic using the key words outlined above. The search included studies carried out at any point in history and were carefully examined as to whether the content was still relevant in comparison with the more recent literature. The search strategy included studies that were published to the present day. In order to exhaust the literature in this area, reference lists of key articles were also scrutinised. Further relevant articles were obtained using the "cited in" function available within search engines and electronic databases.

2.4 Definitions of key terms

The research literature reviewed includes a number of broad but related areas of research. This section provides definitions of each area.

The arts in education: Ewing (2010) asserts that it is important that the "arts in education" is not confused with "education in the arts" and "arts education", which refer to teaching and learning about the arts. In contrast, the "arts in education" refers to the learning that can take place through

the arts and this is the accepted definition for the current research. The literature indicates that there are four core categories included within the arts in education, which are: drama, dance, music and visual arts/visual design (Fleming, 2010).

Drama and theatre in education: This topic is broad and thus a concise definition of "drama and theatre in education" has not been identified. A multiplicity of approaches are included within this area such as process drama (Taylor & Warner, 2006), Applied theatre (Nicholson, 2005) and Theatre of the oppressed (Boal, 1979). Unfortunately, there is not the scope in the current research to explore each different approach. Furthermore, it is noted by Sant (2011) that definitions in this area are constantly evolving due to new methods and approaches being incorporated into this field. However, the key assumption underlying drama and theatre in education appears to be that personal development and learning can take place through involvement in both drama and theatre. Thus there are a number of research studies which were felt relevant to the current research.

Youth theatre: The definition regarding this topic is as follows **"**The term 'youth theatre' describes a wide variety of organizations that engage young people in theatre-related activities in their own time."(Hughes & Wilson, 2004, p.57). There is an overlap between aspects of youth theatre and drama and theatre in education in that both seek to promote the personal and social emotional development of young people through the use of theatre and drama. However, the main difference appears to be that youth theatre is held in a community setting whereas drama and theatre in education takes place in schools.

Extra-curricular activities (ECAs): Darling, Caldwell and Smith (2005) suggest a number of examples of school based ECAs such as sports teams, performing groups such as choirs or school plays and debating teams. The following quote provides the definition to be used within this literature review. **"**School-based extracurricular activities provide adolescents with a highly structured leisure environment, in which adolescents can exert control and express their identity through choice of activity and actions..." (Darling, 2005, p.493).

2.5 Research literature

2.5.1 The arts in education research literature

As noted previously, the arts in education is an area that has received a great deal of research interest, particularly with regard to the impact the arts can have on the learning and personal

development of young people (Boyes & Reid, 2005; Bresler, 2007; Catterall, 2009; Deasy, 2002; Ewing, 2010; Fiske, 1999). However, recent reports in the media describe government cuts in the funding of educational arts programmes and plans to focus the British core curricula on more "traditional" subjects (Murray, 2010; Thorpe, 2011). This suggests that the current position of the arts in education may be under threat. This development is interesting when viewed in light of Robinson's (2001) argument that the arts in education have historically been undervalued within Western education systems. He highlights that the sciences are generally given higher status and placed at the centre of the education system, whilst the arts are often regarded as subjects of lower academic status and thus are placed at the periphery of the system. Robinson (2001) also claimed that the lack of value placed on the arts in education is related to a diminished ability to think creatively and be imaginative in adulthood. The place of the arts in education, whilst being a focus of debate, has been researched only limitedly to date. Relevant research relating to the impacts of the arts in education on young people will now be explored.

Harland et al. (2000) carried out research into the effects and effectiveness of the arts in education in the UK. Whilst the study is not recent, its wide ranging research design qualifies its inclusion within this review. This large-scale study employed a wide range of data collection including: case studies of five secondary schools in the UK which involved interviews focusing on the perceived effects of the arts in education with staff and students, observations of arts classes, comparisons of overall GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) performance with level of involvement in the arts of 27,607 students from 152 schools, and questionnaires with 2,269 year 11 students in 22 schools. The data collected indicated that students involved in the arts believed there was a range of positive effects of the arts in education, which were as follows.

- Immediate intrinsic effects such as enjoyment.
- Arts knowledge and skills.
- Knowledge of the social and cultural domains.
- Creativity and thinking skills.
- Communication and expressive skills.
- Personal and social development.

However, the data comparing GCSE results with arts involvement did not support the hypothesis that involvement in the arts could have a positive impact on academic attainments. Despite this finding, Harland et al. (2000) concluded that the arts in education should have equal status with

other subjects. Harland et al.'s findings are relevant to the current study in that many of the aspects of the arts in education are included in the school play (i.e. music, drama and dance).

In a recent review of the international research investigating the impact of the arts in education on learning Ewing (2010) notes that:

> It is now widely documented in the United States of America, Canada and Europe, including the United Kingdom, that those students whose learning is embedded in the Arts (often called 'high arts students' in the American literature) achieve better grades and overall test scores, are less likely to leave school early, rarely report boredom and have a more positive self concept than those students who are deprived of arts experiences.(p.13)

The key studies which support Ewing's assertion are as follows. Fiske (1999) carried out a meta-analysis of research studies investigating the benefits of the arts in education and concluded that the arts had a number of positive impacts including: engaging disengaged students; connecting students to each other and the world around them; challenging successful students; and transforming the learning environment. In addition to this research, Deasy (2002) compiled an abridgement of 62 studies, including Harland et al.'s (2000) research. The studies reviewed in Deasy's (2002) research explored the relationship between the arts in education and the development of students' academic and social skills. Ewing (2010) noted that the main findings of Deasy's review identified a number of positive effects of arts in education programs. These were as follows: increased higher order thinking skills and capacities; positive achievements in maths, reading and language development; increased motivation to learn; and improvements in social behaviours.

Whilst Ewing (2010) does provide support for his argument with the literature outlined above and a number of other research studies, it is also noted that there are many caveats in the studies explored. For example, much of the research is correlational evidence and, therefore, it cannot be definitively argued that the arts in education caused the benefits outlined. Furthermore, very few of the studies included an experimental design using control groups. However, it has been previously argued by Eisner (1999) that the positivist research paradigm is not well suited to the complex and unpredictable nature of the arts in education.

In conclusion of this section of the literature review, previous research into the impacts of the arts in education suggests there may be benefits to participating in arts-based activities within education. The impacts of these findings on the current research will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

2.5.2 Drama and theatre in education research literature

As noted in the definitions section, this topic is broad and covers a number of different pedagogical strategies. There is not the scope in the current research to explore each different approach, and, therefore, this section focuses mainly on one large-scale study which encompasses a number of different types of drama and theatre in education, and thus applies to the broad definition utilised in this research. This is followed by some smaller-scale studies that have been identified as relevant due to their focus on the impacts of drama and performing on young people.

The Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competencies in Education Consortium (DICE) (2010) investigated the effects of theatre and drama in education on five of the eight "Lisbon Key Competences". The competences are described below:

> Competences are defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. (European Parliament, 2006, para, 34).

A full description of the specific competences measured in this research is available in the report written regarding the findings (DICE, 2010). This large scale piece of research obtained questionnaire data from 4,475 students aged 13-16 from 12 different countries. The study covered 111 different types of educational theatre and drama programmes and the data were collected from students, teachers, theatre and drama programme leaders, independent observers, external assessors and key theatre and drama experts. The data gathered were compared with a control group of students that were not participating in any theatre or drama programmes. Analysis of the data indicated that those students involved in theatre and drama showed strengths in a number of areas in comparison with the control group. The strengths were as follows.

1. Being assessed more highly by their teachers in all aspects.
2. Feeling more confident in reading and understanding tasks.
3. Feeling more confident in communication.
4. Feeling that they are creative.
5. More likely to enjoy going to school.

6. More likely to enjoy school activities.

7. Problem solving.

8. Coping with stress.

9. More tolerant towards both minorities and foreigners.

10. More active citizens.

11. Showing more interest in voting at any level.

12. Showing more interest in participating in public issues.

13. Empathy.

14. Ability to change their perspective.

15. Innovation and entrepreneurship.

16. More dedicated towards their future and have more plans.

17. More willing to participate in any genre of arts and culture, and not just performing arts, but also writing, making music, films, handicrafts, and attending all sorts of arts and cultural activities.

18. Spending more time in school, more time reading, doing housework, playing, talking and spending more time with family members. Spending less time watching TV or playing computer games.

19. More likely to do more for their families, are more likely to have a part-time job and spend more time being creative either alone or in a group. They more frequently go to the theatre, exhibitions and museums, and the cinema, and go hiking and biking more often.

20. More likely to be a central character in the class.

21. Sense of humour.

22. Feeling better at home.

These research findings demonstrate the broad and extensive range of areas on which drama and theatre in education have an impact. However, it should also be noted that at the time the initial report was published the authors acknowledged that the volume of data collected would take years to analyse. Therefore, the findings presented in the report referenced in this review are indeed preliminary and should be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, the findings from the DICE consortium have yet to be published in a peer-reviewed journal. However, the broad range of impacts of involvement in drama and theatre in education found by the DICE (2010) research has implications for the current research in that the potential impacts of the school play may be equally diverse and varied.

On a smaller scale, Wright (2006) has carried out a study which also supports the use of drama as a means of promoting the personal development of young people. The study aimed to determine whether a drama intervention could have a positive impact on the vocabulary, role-taking ability, self discrepancy and self concept of young people. One hundred and twenty three students (72 boys and 68 girls with a mean age of 11.5) participated in the study. The students' vocabulary, role taking ability, self discrepancy and self concept were measured before and after they took part in a dramatic intervention. The results indicated significant growth in students' role taking ability and vocabulary and an improvement in their self concept following the intervention. Whilst this study demonstrates the positive impact that drama can have on young people, it is important to note that larger scale research would be needed in order to demonstrate generalisability of the findings. It should also be noted that whilst they did find improvements in young people's self concept, this finding did not have statistical significance.

In another study investigating the broader impacts of performing arts, Miles (2003) evaluated three educational performing arts training programmes in Germany, the UK and Portugal. Miles' (2003) research was based on the notion that training in performing arts could provide a number of benefits for those involved, including empowerment through informal learning opportunities. The research carried out by Miles (2003) employed a multi-method case study approach including interviews with the programme leaders, observations of sessions, analysis of course literature, focus groups and analysis of a tape recording of a theatrical performance. The performing arts programmes were aimed at unemployed young people and, therefore, participants ranged in age from 15 to 21 years. Miles (2003) reported a number of "secondary learning effects", including: negotiation skills, team work, self discipline, time keeping, communication skills, self confidence and self belief. On the basis of his research, Miles (2003) argues that drama and performance provide young people with a highly effective arena for self development.

2.5.3 Youth theatre research literature

Whilst the research base focusing on youth theatre is not as substantial in volume as the studies investigating drama and theatre in education, there are some interesting studies in this area, relevant to this project (Burton, 2002; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; James, 2005). Some youth theatre programmes are aimed at a specific population or at analysing the effects that specific theatre interventions can have on certain issues, such as James (2005). However, many of the findings from this research are applicable to the current research in that they provide links between involvement

in a project culminating in a theatrical performance and developmental benefits for the young people involved.

For example, in James' (2005) evaluation of "Actup", which is a youth theatre programme provided for young people experiencing social exclusion. James (2005) reported that involvement in a theatre production provided many informal learning opportunities for the young people involved. James (2005) listed a number of areas in which students made progress including: developing social skills and awareness; participation in group activities; teamwork; and language development and communication skills. On the basis of these findings, James (2005) has argued that through participating in theatrical productions"...young people can find a level of involvement likely to go way beyond what is found in formal sitting and listening scenarios." (p.10). James' (2005) research utilised a three phase case study methodology which involved structured observations of the youth theatre group sessions and unstructured interviews with participants. Photographs were taken to provide a visual record of the process. It is noted that the case study methodology employed by this research means that the findings are not generalisable to other settings. However, as with previous research, the findings do raise questions regarding the width of potential impacts that the school play may have.

In another study, Burton (2002) carried out some research with two youth theatre groups that put on theatre productions with young people. The study used ethnographic methods with the initial aim of investigating the types of learning experiences adolescents participating in youth theatre could have. However, as the study developed the author notes that the impacts of the theatre groups were more complex than just informal learning opportunities. An ethnographic method involves the researcher becoming involved in the subject that he or she is researching (Wolcott, 1997). The researcher gathered data through observations of the rehearsals and performances of each youth theatre group, interviewed participants and also took an active role by participating in each theatre group.

Burton's (2002) research suggests that there are a number of benefits for young people that are involved in a theatre production. Burton analysed the ethnographic observations and interviews and reported the following themes.

- "Personal fulfilment"- This referred to the views of participants that involvement in the group enhanced their own enjoyment of life.

- "Interconnectedness"- This theme refers to the observation that the project allowed those involved to develop relationships and work within a framework of intense friendships. This related more towards the females involved in the production.
- "Enhancement of individual levels of maturity"- Working within the youth theatre group enabled the young people involved to develop their sense of individual identity and to develop a greater sense of autonomy, self awareness and competence.

On the basis of the above themes Burton argues that youth theatre can be used as a creator of consciousness in the transition to adulthood. However, it should be noted that although Burton's (2002) research is encouragingly positive with regard to the use of theatre and plays with young people, ethnographic research has previously been regarded as somewhat controversial and criticised on a number of levels. For example, it has been argued that the researcher puts him/herself at risk of being biased towards particular findings by becoming embedded in the project s/he is researching (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Furthermore, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) discussed issues of reliability and validity within ethnographic research. They argue that the difficulties in replicating findings from this form of research have serious implications for the reliability of the results. They also argue that it is difficult to determine the extent to which conclusions from ethnographic research effectively represent or measure the human experiences that occur. However, despite these limitations, which are taken from the positivist perspective (further discussed in chapter three), the findings presented by Burton (2002) provide an interesting perspective on the potential value of the use of youth theatre.

The most comprehensive study investigating the impact of youth theatre on young people's personal and emotional development is provided by Hughes and Wilson (2004). This study investigated staff and participants' experiences of youth theatre through the use of questionnaires, interviews and participatory research workshops. During the course of the study the researchers reviewed over 700 youth theatres across England and met with over 300 young people participating in youth theatre. In summary of the findings Hughes and Wilson (2004) note that their results indicate that youth theatre can have a positive impact on young people in the following ways.

- Improved confidence.
- Improved performance skills.
- More friends/ improved ability to make friends.
- Improved ability to be by themselves.

- Greater open mindedness.

- Ability to understand and work with other people.

- Improved ability to express themselves.

- Increased happiness.

- Diversion from getting into trouble.

- Increased ability to deal with difficult/negative experiences.

In their discussion of the findings, Hughes and Wilson (2004) state that psychological theories such as Role Theory (RT) could provide a framework towards understanding the significance of performance in young people's development, both personally and socially. According to Landy (2000), RT was developed by a number of psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists, including William James, Charles Cooley and George Hebert Mead. Landy (2000) reports that RT is based on the belief that the ability to take on the role of another is directly related to developing competence in social skills, in that it increases the ability to understand and relate to the needs of others. Hughes and Wilson (2004) also argue that by participating in youth theatre and taking on different roles young people can learn to be more reflexive and develop a better sense of self. However, there are limitations to this research. For example, the findings are based on the reports of those that are already taking part in and are passionate about youth theatre. In addition, the study does not investigate the impact over any length of time or compare the young peoples' development to a control group. Despite these limitations, the study does provide interesting theories as to the possible impacts of youth theatre.

The research reviewed thus far within the broad categories of the "arts in education", "theatre and drama in education" and "youth theatre" demonstrates that there has been little focus on potential negative impacts of involvement in this kind of activity. One could argue that this is unsurprising given that researchers in this field are more likely to be focused on potential benefits due to the belief they hold in the above areas as educative tools. However, as argued in the introduction, the potential for negative impacts of involvement in the above areas should also be researched, as failing to understand this area could lead to potential detrimental effects. For example, it is possible that a negative experience in a school production may have a negative impact on a young person's confidence. However, such postulations are at present speculative as there is no research in this area.

2.5.4 Extra-curricular activities research literature.

The school play also fits within the broad category of school based ECAs. There is a growing research base that has been carried out, internationally and largely in North America which explores the impacts of ECAs on young people (e.g. Busseri, Rose-Krasnor, Willoughby, & Chalmers, 2006; Darling 2005; Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, & Ball, 2012; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Shernoff, 2010).When discussing the broader impact of ECAs Dawes and Larson (2011) have argued that "Organized youth programs, including community programs and school-based extracurricular activities, are contexts that can provide important developmental benefits for adolescents" (p.259). In support of the above argument, Farb and Matjasko (2012) provide a review of research investigating the relationship between involvement in ECAs and adolescent development.

The research base investigating this area has found links between participation in ECAs and the following areas of development: increased academic aspirations and achievements (Darling, 2005; Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003); higher academic and social self concept and sense of self worth (Blomfield & Barber, 2009); maintaining existing, and developing new friendships (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2011); and lower risk taking behaviours such as drug abuse, truancy and drinking alcohol (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Darling, 2005; Denault, Poulin, & Pedersen, 2009). Whilst many of these studies are focused on ECAs as a broad topic there are also studies which separate the ECAs into categories (e.g. sports and performing arts). These studies will be explored in more detail with a focus on those categories that are more relevant to the school play such as drama and performing arts.

Denault, Poulin and Pedersen (2009) completed a longitudinal study which investigated the relationship between participation in a number of different ECAs (e.g. sports clubs, performance and fine arts, academic clubs) and adolescent adjustment indicators, which they described as alcohol use, depressive symptoms and school grades. The most relevant category to the current research is performance and fine arts activities. Denault, Poulin and Pedersen (2009) found that smaller amounts of alcohol use in grades 9 and 10 (14-16 year olds) was predicted by a greater amount of hours spent in performance and fine arts activities in 8th Grade (13-14 year olds). They also found a negative correlation between participation in this type of ECA and depressive symptoms. In other words, those involved in performance and fine arts were less likely to be displaying depressive symptoms. This suggests that involvement in performance and fine arts may be having a positive impact on students' well being. However, it may also be the case that those students choosing to be

involved in that type of ECA may be less likely to become depressed and drink alcohol, as the results are not directional.

Eccles and Barber (1999) carried out research investigating adolescent participation in ECAs and identified five broad categories of activities which they termed as: prosocial, sports teams, performing arts, school involvement and academic clubs. They identified that females were more likely to be involved in prosocial and performing arts activities. Eccles and Barber (1999) also looked at the relationship between ECA involvement and a number of behavioural and psychological outcomes. They aimed to identify whether any of the categories of ECA were more likely to have benefits or be related to an increase in risky behaviours such as drinking alcohol and truancy. The researchers found that adolescents that were involved in performing arts had lower levels of engagement in the risky behaviours described above. They also found that those involved in performing arts were more likely to state that they enjoyed school. However, it is noted that the evidence is correlational and not directional; therefore, it cannot be argued that performing arts engagement leads to less risky behaviours and greater enjoyment of school. However, the research does suggest that a link between these activities is possible.

A review of research literature investigating the impact of participation in non curricular performing arts activities on adolescent health and behaviour is provided by Daykin, Orme, Evans, Salmone, McEachran and Brain (2008). The review identified four key areas on which participation in performing arts appears to impact. Three of the key areas were related to knowledge in health and, therefore, are not relevant to the current research. However, one of the key areas identified was that engagement in performing arts had a positive impact on peer interaction, social skills and empowerment. Additionally, Daykin et al. (2008) note that the strongest research evidence was found within research investigating the impact of drama and performing arts on peer interaction and social skills.

Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest and Price (2011) carried out research in which they divided school based ECAs into "sports" and "arts" in order to investigate whether the type of activity impacted differently on the way friendships developed. They found that, in comparison to participants not involved in any ECAs, the probability of friendships developing between two students were 1.8 times higher if they participated in the same sport and 2.3 times higher if they participated in the same arts activity. This finding has implications for the current research in that it is possible that involvement in a school play may also have positive impacts on friendship developments.

The research reviewed so far in this section appears to support the notion that participating in art and performance-based ECAs can have a positive impact on adolescents' development. However, as noted above, the evidence is mainly correlational. This poses an important question as to why these young people choose to become involved in this area and what is motivating them to engage in this type of ECA. If there are benefits to be gained from involvement in a school play, understanding why young people choose to participate will be useful information in that it may provide ideas as to how to engage a wider range of young people in ECAs.

In some UK-based research, Hampshire and Matthijsse (2010) carried out an evaluation of a government-funded project called "Sing Up". The research focused on the use of the "Sing Up" project to set up singing groups in three primary schools in Northern England. The research investigates the impact of this project on participants' social and emotional well being. The research took place over an 18-month period and involved the researchers observing and participating in all rehearsals and performances. In addition to this a questionnaire survey, designed to measure key components of the children's social and emotional well being, was completed by participants on three different occasions: baseline, 8 months later and 16 months later.

The results indicated a number of positive aspects of the experience of "Sing Up" for the young people involved, including: making new friends; a sense of social inclusion; growth in confidence; and aspirations, engagement and enjoyment. However, the research also identified negative effects and aspects of the process, including: loss of previous friendships due to negative perceptions of the group; clashes with other ECAs; high turner over of participants; and a lack of male participants. Hampshire and Matthijsse (2010) concluded that, whilst their research demonstrates that involvement in arts-based ECAs can improve young people's emotional and social well being, there is also a danger of such projects posing a risk to young people's well being. For example, some participants lost friendships and connections as a result of their involvement in the group due to their peers' negative perceptions.

In terms of other potential negative impacts of ECAs, Mahoney, Harris and Eccles (2006) have argued that participating in too many ECAs can have a detrimental effect on a young person. They termed this the "over-scheduling hypothesis" and argue that a fuller schedule of ECAs can create an atmosphere of pressure, hurry and stress in a young person's life. Fredricks' (2012) research tested the hypothesis in North America by comparing breadth and intensity of ECA involvement (e.g. number of ECAs children were involved in, and amount of time they spent in ECAs) with the

academic adjustment of students over a two year period. They found that higher intensity and breadth of involvement in ECAs was linked with a decline in academic adjustment. However, they also reported that the levels of breadth and intensity needed to be particularly high before there was a notable decline in academic adjustment. Therefore, Fredricks (2012) concludes in general that ECAs should still be associated with the positive impacts and benefits they provide.

2.5.5 Research studies focusing on school plays

As noted in the introduction, there are few studies which directly explore the impact of school plays on participants and their motivations to participate. These studies will be critically reviewed in this section. An unpublished thesis by Ogden (2008) explored the life-long impact of involvement in elementary school musical theatre productions. This research involved questionnaires and interviews with adults focusing on their memories of participating in a school play. Ogden (2008) identified five key themes from the data which were as follows.

- Core feelings and bodily awareness: Many of the participants discussed memories related to the emotions and physical sensations that performing evoked in them. Often these were in response to the audience reactions.
- Influence of time and space: This theme alludes to the notion that the school play was undervalued in that there was often not adequate time or space provided for participants.
- Gender roles: Participants discussed the appeal of the school production being more towards females than males.
- Community: Participants described a sense of belonging that they gained through their involvement in the production.
- Valuing the arts as adults: This referred to the participants' beliefs that their involvement in the school production was part of what helped them appreciate and value the arts as adults.

Ogden (2008) concluded her research with the argument that her findings demonstrate that involvement in school plays is a part of school life that is highly valuable. Ogden (2008) further argues that school productions should be made part of the core curricula due to positive impacts identified. Whilst this research is extremely positive regarding potential impacts of the school play it is recognised that as an unpublished thesis the findings hold less weight than those of an article in a peer reviewed journal. Furthermore, there are a number of limitations to the research. For example elementary school age in Canada (where the study took place) is 5-12 years, and the adults that took part in the study were aged between 20 and 80 years. Therefore, the memories that participants discussed in the research may have been inaccurate. Research into the link between memory and

emotion has suggested that stronger emotions can create stronger memories of certain situations (Brown & Kulik, 1977; Buchanan & Adolphs, 2002; Christianson & Safer, 1996). It is possible that the memories that adults reported were biased because they were likely to relate to mainly highly emotional states. However, Ogden's findings could be built upon by gathering perspectives that are from people who have either experienced the school play recently, or are still involved. In such circumstances subjects would be able to remember their experiences more accurately.

It has been argued that performing in a theatre production can be an empowering experience for those involved (Daykin, 2008; Miles, 2003; Wilson, 2004). In a study investigating student empowerment in the context of a school play Gonzalez (1999) evaluated the use of democratic pedagogy to the directing of the school play. She suggests that when students are more involved in the decision making process of the play they are more likely to take ownership and become more committed to the process. In her research Gonzalez uses "democratic directing" (p.4) in a school play in order to investigate whether it is possible to empower the young people involved in the play.

The research was based on a hypothesis that deviation from traditional rehearsal methods (e.g. the teachers in role of sole decision makers with students as passive workers) would enable students to be liberated and show more growth. Gonzalez (1999) argues that teachers who organise school productions are often judged by the quality of the performance as opposed to factors such as the personal growth and changed perceptions of individual students. In some related research Lang (2002) explored teachers' experiences of collaboratively creating a play with adolescent students. The study involved a questionnaire which was sent to teachers and was then followed up by interviews with volunteers from the questionnaire sample. Lang's analysis of the teacher interviews identified four main benefits that were highlighted by teachers as effects that collaboratively creating a play could have.

1. Self: This benefit was based on the suggestion that the young people involved were able to grow in terms of their emotional and cognitive learning.

2. Community: Teachers suggested that the collaborative creation of the play helped students to improve their social skills and also acquire an understanding of the value of cooperation and support.

3. Art: This benefit is based on teachers' beliefs that the experience allowed young people to practice and refine theatre arts skills.

4. Knowledge: Teachers felt that their students' knowledge was extended through meaningful learning opportunities.

Whilst Lang's (2002) findings are interesting it is important to note that there are a number of flaws within this research. For example, the study has not triangulated the findings by seeking the views of the students involved. Also the sample of teachers that completed the questionnaire was very limited. However, despite these limitations this research does suggest that there are benefits to participating in a school play, particularly if the process of creation is more collaborative. The issues raised by Gonzalez's (1999) and Lang's (2002) research are related to Roger Hart's (1992) "Ladder of Participation" which outlines eight levels of participation using the metaphor of a ladder. Hart argues that children are likely to be more motivated and engaged when they are given more control and ownership over decision making in a project. Also in relation to Gonzalez's and Lang's research Woodson (2004) has argued that there is an opportunity for schools to use theatre programmes as a method of empowering students, by actively engaging them in the creative process, stating that "An ownership of the process gives students the opportunity to be empowered creative active agents rather than passive recipients. Theatre should not be something we do to students or even for students, but with them" (p.27).There is also a growing research base supporting the notion that giving children and young people more choice and autonomy within the classroom can have an impact on their engagement and motivation within school (Patall, Cooper & Wynn, 2010; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon & Barch, 2004; Watkins 2005).

A UK-based piece of research focusing on a school play is provided by Pitts (2007). This research involved an exploration of school students' experiences of participating in a school production of the musical "Anything Goes". Pitts' (2007) research employed a case study method and used questionnaires and audio diaries to gather perspectives of both those involved and those not involved in the school play. The research focused on one school and aimed to explore young people's musical development. Despite the focus on musical development, Pitts (2007) research identified a number of broader positive impacts that the school play had on those involved. These included effects on friendship groups, better relationships with the teachers involved, increased empathy for the teacher's role and increased maturity.

The finding that students had a better relationship with the teacher involved is interesting when viewed in light of Pianta's (1999) argument that student-teacher relationships have an essential role to play in forming and shaping the pathways of young people in schools. Since Pianta's writings in

1999 there have been a number of research studies linking positive child and adolescent development with positive teacher-student relationships (e.g. Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Hughes, Cavell & Willson, 2001; Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011).

Pitts' (2007) research also investigated the motivations behind those participating and those not participating. The findings indicated that the previous experience in school plays and the opportunity to develop skills and perform had the strongest influence on participants' decisions to take part. Also, students stated that they auditioned because a friend was doing so. Literature investigating the impact of peer influence on behaviour during adolescence suggests that peer influence is a common motivator during this life period (Barry & Wentzel, 2006; Ellis & Zarbatany, 2007; Farrell & White, 1998; Shope, Raghunathan & Patil, 2003). Of those who did not participate in the production, the most popular reasons were that they missed the auditions or had a lack of interest, time, confidence or perceived skill. There was also a minority of participants who had been unsuccessful in their auditions and it was suggested by Pitts (2007) that there were feelings of exclusion on the part of these pupils. Pitts (2007) gathered the findings related to students' motivations to become involved in the play by using a closed question on a questionnaire. It is possible that this may have both influenced and limited the answers given and, therefore, future research using open ended questions on a questionnaire would add to these findings.

Pitts (2007) also explored students' perceptions of the way in which the school play impacted on the school as a community. The findings demonstrated that generally those involved and those not involved in the school play were positive in their perceptions of the play's impact. However, there were also views from non-participants that the school play had in fact had a damaging effect on the friendships they had with play participants. This finding was attributed to the time-consuming nature of rehearsals. Whilst Pitts' (2007) findings are very interesting there are also limitations to be discussed. For example, the research took place within an all-female independent school, which is an unusual population. Furthermore, the case study approach taken by Pitts (2007) also limits the generalisability of this research.

Larson and Brown (2007) carried out some research which involved interviewing adolescents about their experiences of a high school theatre production in America. This study focused on how it could impact on young people's emotional development. The researchers completed interviews every two weeks throughout the rehearsal period with ten of the actors involved in the school play, seventy-three interviews were held. They also obtained data through observations of rehearsals and interviews with participants' parents and two adult leaders of the production. Larson and Brown

(2007) found that young people reported that by experiencing emotions within the setting (theatre production), they learnt concepts, strategies and tools for managing emotional episodes. They named three areas in which they found adolescents reported they had improved: (a) gaining abstract emotional knowledge, (b) learning to manage negative emotions, and (c) learning to manage positive emotions. Based on their findings, Larson and Brown (2007) argue that the school play is a "particularly rich microcosm for emotional experiences and development."(p.1084)

Larson and Brown (2007) also looked at the impact of interpersonal relations on the theatre process. They found that ongoing negative interpersonal interactions appeared to obstruct the theatre production process, and that positive interpersonal interactions tended to advance the process. This finding suggests that the relationships built between all those involved in the school play impact on progress in the production and advocate a need for positive relationships to be built. However, in contrast to this argument, Beare (2009) has claimed that conflict is needed in the process of creating a theatre production because tension in rehearsals can lead to exciting new performances or technical discoveries. He asserts that a balance needs to be met between maintaining a positive mind-set within the group and ensuring that there are tensions and difficulties in the group which inform their learning.

In conclusion to this section of the literature review it is clear that previous research related to school plays suggests that there may well be a variety of positive and negative impacts related to the involvement in the school play. Furthermore, Pitts' (2007) research has raised some interesting findings regarding potential motivations for young people involved in the school play. The following section will review the theoretical literature related to this study.

2.6 Theoretical perspectives

This section of the literature review provides an outline of the psychological theories that guided the research process of the thesis and have, along with the research reviewed, led to the research questions that this project seeks to explore.

2.6.1 Flow and performing arts

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) developed the theory of flow, which is a psychological state that occurs when a person becomes engaged in a task in which his/her level of skill is congruent to the challenge presented. This congruence between skill level and challenge results in the individual becoming so absorbed by the task that other worries and concerns are forgotten (Carr, 2004). Flow is argued to make activities more enjoyable and, furthermore,"...it builds the self confidence that allows us to

develop skills and make significant contributions to humankind" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 42). Trayes, Harre and Overall (2012) have argued that the psychological state of flow is likely to be a significant motivator for young people involved in performing arts activities. This theory is supported by an American study by Martin and Cutler (2002), which explored the flow experiences of forty student theatre actors using a flow state scale. They found that those students who described a satisfying on stage experience also reported experiencing flow. There is an increasing research base which supports the notion that involvement in other related activities such as music and dance can result in the participants experiencing flow (e.g. Byrne, Macdonald & Carlton, 2003; Custodero, 2002; Hefferon & Ollis, 2006; Sheridan & Byrne, 2002).

Trayes, Harre and Overall (2012) carried out a research study which investigated a number of psychological experiences that they hypothesised secondary school students in New Zealand would experience through involvement in a performing arts team which was entered in a competition called "Stage Challenge". Flow was one of the psychological states they investigated, participants rated themselves on a Likert scale which aimed to measure flow experiences at different points throughout their preparation for and involvement in "Stage Challenge". The findings indicated that participants were rating themselves as experiencing flow at a higher than average level during practice periods which then increased during dress rehearsals and performances. Trayes, Harre and Overall (2012) note that this finding supports the previous research, suggesting that participating in music and dance and performance activities can result in flow. This finding has implications for the current research in that it is likely experiencing flow may be one of the motivators and positive impacts for the students involved.

2.6.2 Sense of belonging and school plays

Darling, Caldwell and Smith (2005) have referred to the potential of ECAs in schools to build a community and argue that children involved can gain a sense of belonging to that community through their involvement in ECAs. Psychologists such as Dreikurs (1953), Maslow (1954) and Baumeister and Leary (1995) have long argued that humans have a psychological need to belong and feel part of a group. This is often referred to in literature as a "sense of belonging". In relation to education there is growing support for the notion that young people's sense of belonging within school is related to their well being, school engagement and academic attainments (Anderman, 2003; Cemalcilar, 2010; Goodenow, 1993a; Newman & Newman, 2001).

Whilst there is currently no published research evidence supporting the notion that involvement in a school play positively impacts on a young person's sense of belonging, the studies reviewed above investigating the impact of related areas provide support for this argument. For example, one of the key findings of Burton's (2002) research was the sense of "interconnectedness" that young people developed as a result of their involvement in a youth theatre production. Furthermore, Trayes, Harre and Overall (2012) found that adolescents who took part in a group which competed in a performing arts competition reported that the rehearsals and performance created a sense of "togetherness" for those who took part. Also, Ogden's (2008) research investigating adults' memories of their involvement in school musical theatre suggests that a sense of community and belonging was a strongly remembered part of their involvement. Therefore, it is possible that creating a "sense of belonging" in young people's lives may well be a positive impact from involvement in the school play.

2.6.3 Motivation and school plays

One of the aims of the current research is to explore the reasons people choose to become involved in the school play. There are a vast number of psychological theories which provide possible explanations for people's behaviour (e.g. Choice Theory, Glasser, 1998; Theory of Planned Behaviour, Ajzen, 1991; Attribution theory, Weiner, 1985; Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Maslow, 1954). Furthermore, the two theories described above can also be used as a way of explaining what motivates people to behave in certain ways. Some recent work on motivation is provided by McLean (2009) through the development of a model of motivation. This model aims to help teachers understand motivation within the classroom setting and provides some core principles as to the motivational needs of young learners. McLean (2009) argues that there are three key needs which schools should nurture in order to engage young people in their education. These needs are described by McLean (2009) as the 3As and are as follows.

Affiliation: This need is related to the sense of belonging theory described above in that it refers to a need to feel valued and understood within a group in order to develop a sense of security. McLean notes that for learners in schools affiliation also relates to a feeling of allegiance to the goals and values of a school as well as good relationships with peers and teachers.

Agency: This need refers to feelings of confidence and self belief. McLean notes that agency is the opposite of the feeling of hopelessness that leads to apathy. He argues that a high sense of agency relates strongly to pupils' feeling of competence, which thus impacts on their willingness to complete a task.

Autonomy: This refers to a person's need to feel trusted to make decisions regarding his/her own learning and to be self determining in terms of behaviour. McLean notes that when a person feels trusted this generates attitudes that mean he/she is keen to contribute.

This model of motivation is argued to be particularly relevant to the current research in that it focuses on motivation within a school setting. Furthermore, with regard to previous research discussed above, it is suggested that involvement in a school play may contribute to meeting a young person's 3As. Therefore, when investigating motivations underlying pupils' desire to take part in a school production, this model will be utilised.

2.6.4 Learning through drama

In his book entitled "Psychology for Performing Artists" Wilson (2004) has argued that the origins of the desire to perform may well be evolutionary. Using the example that monkeys can be seen to role play in pretend/play fights, Wilson (2004) asserts that this is a risk-free way of learning for animals. He goes on to suggest that humans also have a need to act out situations as a practice run before engaging in an activity. The idea that acting and drama can be used as a way of helping people learn and develop is by no means a new one. Dorothy Heathcote has been described as a pioneer in the field of drama in education and was an advocate for the use of drama in helping young people learn and develop personally (Wagner, 1976). Heathcote's approach to learning through drama is described as the "Mantle of the Expert" (MoE) approach (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. 16). The MoE approach proposes that by putting children in the role of expert, they are empowered to learn and take a more proactive approach to their own education.

The MoE approach has been adopted as a whole school approach in schools across the UK (Sayers, 2011). Whilst it can be argued that this is not a recent theory, Eriksson (2011) has put forward an argument as to why Heathcote's ideas should be revisited in the present education system. Eriksson (2011) notes that, as a pedagogy it encourages children and young people to think critically about subjects and, furthermore, involves all students in a collaborative process of investigation. The MoE approach has been included as relevant to this literature review because it is based on the argument that learning can be facilitated by getting young people to take on a role and behave as though they are in a real life situation. It is argued that school plays also require young people to take on different roles and that they are also taking part in an activity that mirrors a real working life situation. Therefore, based on the MoE approach, it is likely that there are learning opportunities for young people participating in the school play. The MoE approach has also been linked with Lave and

Wenger's (1991) Community of Practice Theory (Sayers, 2011), and, therefore, this theory will also be discussed in relation to the school play.

2.6.5 Communities of practice and the school play

Lave and Wenger (1991) originally proposed a theory known as "situated learning" which suggests that learning occurs within a "community of practice". The argument is based on the notion that communities of practice are created by a group of people who engage in a collaborative process of learning with a shared goal and aims. Wenger (2006) outlines three key factors needed in order for a community to be defined as a community of practice, which are as follows.

1. The domain: This is referred to as the identity of the group, which is defined by the shared common interest of members of the group.

2. The community: Members of the group help each other and share information whilst pursuing their interest in the domain. They develop relationships that allow them to learn from each other. Interaction and learning together is an essential part of the community of practice.

3. The practice: Rather than being merely a group of people with a common interest (such as people who like a particular genre of films), members of a community of practice are practitioners. In this context the term practitioners refers to the development of a shared collection of resources (e.g. experiences, skills, stories etc.)

Wenger (2006) points out that the above three factors allow for, but do not insist on, learning being intentional, and goes on to write that the learning that occurs can be an incidental outcome of the group members' interactions. In other words, communities of practice are formed of groups of people that share a passion for a particular topic or activity. These descriptions of a community of practice appear to have many of the factors that are likely to be involved in the process of organising a school play, and, therefore, it will be interesting to see whether the communities of practice theory can be applied to a school play situation.

2.6.6 Acting, drama and social skills development

Jindal-Snape and Vettraino (2007) carried out a review of research literature investigating the potential impact of drama on the social skills of young people with special educational needs (SEN). Following a critical discussion of the literature they suggest that there is potential for the use of drama techniques in this area. However, they also note that there were a number of flaws in the studies reviewed and thus more research is needed in this area. Since Jindal-Snape and Vettraino's (2007) review it has been suggested by other researchers that learning to act may increase an individual's social cognitions (e.g. Goldstein, 2009; Goldstein & Winner, 2010; Goldstein & Winner, 2012). However, it is also noted that there appears to have been little research into this area despite the observation made by Goldstein and Winner (2010) that "Both acting and psychology, at their cores, seek to understand what it means to be human." (p.244).

Goldstein and Winner (2010) discuss three areas of social cognition on which acting may have an impact. The first of these three areas is "theory of Mind" (ToM) which, in the context of this research, is understood to be the ability to identify and understand another person's inner state by reading that person's use of non-verbal signals, such as body language and facial expressions (Wellman, 1990). Goldstein and Winner (2010) suggest that the need for an actor to understand the underlying mental state of the character he/she is playing (e.g. his/her intentions, desires, motivations, emotions, and beliefs) is similar to the process of developing ToM. The second area of social cognition discussed is "empathy". Goldstein and Winner (2010) suggest that, in learning to feel what their characters are feeling, actors can become more empathic. Finally Goldstein and Winner (2010) propose that "emotion regulation" is the third form of social cognition that can be increased by learning to act. The reasoning behind this theory is that actors need to learn to control their own emotions in order to represent those emotions of the characters they are portraying. The beginnings of support for this theory is emerging through research carried out by these authors (e.g. Goldstein, 2011; Goldstein & Winner, 2012). However, it is important to note that the argument that acting can improve a person's social skills and cognitions is still very much at the theoretical stage.

2.7 Research questions

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the amount of research available which focuses on school plays in secondary schools is limited. However, as has been highlighted in this review there is a vast amount of research focusing on youth activities that are related to the school play. Therefore, many of the research studies considered in this review investigate a wide variety of impacts and effects of involvement in the arts, drama, music, dance and performing on young people.

The collective findings from this review have impacted on the aims of the current study in the following ways. The broad range of potential impacts found within both Harland et al.'s (2000) and the DICE (2010) research have influenced the decision to choose research questions that are broad as it is argued that the impacts of the school play may also be wide ranging. The research investigating the arts in education influenced the current research project in two ways. Firstly, the impacts that have been found in the research studies outlined will influence the questions asked in the data collection phase of the current research, particularly when investigating potential positive impacts. Secondly, the research design has also been influenced by the finding that the positivist research paradigm may not be an appropriate way to explore the impacts of the arts in education.

The current research will also aim to investigate whether the themes evident in previous research (e.g. Burton, 2002; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Pitts, 2007) are also apparent through involvement in the school play. Furthermore, the current lack of evidence of negative impacts of ECAs has influenced current research in that it aims to understand whether teachers and students involved in a school production perceive any negative impacts. It is envisaged that the current research can add to the findings of previous studies focusing on school plays by adopting a mixed methods approach that takes place in a number of different schools. Finally, the theoretical literature reviewed will be utilised as potential ways of explaining the perceived impacts and motivations that are identified throughout this research project.

As a result of the findings of this review the current project broadly aims to gain a better understanding of motivations underlying participants' desire to become involved in a school production and also the perceived benefits, positive and negative impacts and challenges of the school play in secondary schools on those involved. Specifically, it will investigate the following research questions:

1. Why do teachers and students decide to become involved in a school play?

2. What do students and teachers believe are the benefits and positive impacts of participating in a school play in terms of what there is to learn and gain from involvement in this activity?

3. What do teachers and students believe are the challenges and negative impacts involved in taking part in the school play?

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter outlines the methods utilised in the current project and will begin by outlining the epistemological position of this research. Decisions made with regard to the research paradigm will be justified and each part of the methodology will be evaluated in terms of strengths and weaknesses. The third section will outline the plan for the research, including details about the procedure, and an explanation will be given as to how the sample population was identified. The tools constructed for the purposes of this research will be described and discussed. This includes questionnaires, focus group schedules and interview schedules. Section four of this chapter gives the reader the context in which the research took place. The fifth section includes a description of the ethical issues relevant to this research in terms of how they were identified and addressed. Finally, the chosen methods of analysis will be described and the decision to use them will be justified.

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1 Epistemological position

Epistemology is defined by Burr (2003) as "the study of the nature of knowledge and how we come to know the world of things" (p.92). Every piece of research carried out is underpinned by an epistemological position (Brown & Dowling, 1998). Carter and Little (2007) state that the decisions a researcher makes about the epistemological position of his/her research are extremely important as they influence the choice of methodology and, consequently, the research methods utilised. As Willig (2001) notes, it is important that research methods used are in concordance with the underlying objectives of the research. There is a need for the epistemological position of the current research to be outlined and justified. Crotty (1998) proposes that three of the main epistemological positions can be referred to as constructionism, objectivism and subjectivism. Constructionism is based on the belief that experiences, meanings, events and realities are the effects of the various discourses within the society in which the participants live. Objectivism maintains that reality exists independently from discourse and consciousness and that it is possible to gain objective knowledge and understanding of phenomena via a logical and reductionist process. Finally subjectivism takes the opposite viewpoint to objectivism and suggests that objective reality does not exist and that knowledge is a matter of opinion (Crotty, 1998).

The current research was conducted from a social constructionist perspective which asserts that meaning and experience are socially reproduced (Burr, 2003). In the past it has been argued that research based within the constructionist paradigm should be based in purely qualitative research

methods (Crotty, 1998). A more extreme position suggests that discourse analysis is the only research method that can be used within a social constructionist framework (Burr, 2003). However, when discussing this argument, Burr (2003) states that "social constructionists may validly use other qualitative or even quantitative methods in their research" (p.150). Burr (2003) expands on this argument by noting that it is not empirical methods such as experiments that are incompatible with social constructionism, but the conclusions made regarding universal truths as a result of such research.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) have also suggested that research methods can be used more flexibly within epistemological paradigms; "differences in epistemological beliefs (such as a difference in beliefs about the appropriate logic of justification) should not prevent a qualitative researcher from utilizing data collection methods more typically associated with quantitative research, and vice versa." (p.15). Taking the above arguments into consideration, the current research is investigating the school play from a constructionist perspective but has employed methods which gather both quantitative and qualitative data within a mixed methods approach. The rationale for choosing this method will be outlined by exploring the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research.

3.2.2 Strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research designs

3.2.2a Quantitative Research

Quantitative research originally stems from the natural sciences and was developed to study the phenomena within this area (Cresswell, 2008). Although this form of research has now evolved and is used within the social sciences, it is still underpinned by the traditional scientific approach to research (Cresswell, 2008). This approach is also known as positivism, which refers to a way of viewing the world as a measurable and quantifiable place in which science can provide the clearest source of knowledge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Advocators of the positivist paradigm believe in using a deductive process to explore cause and effect relationships. There are three levels of quantitative research. These are descriptive, correlational, and causal (Walker, 2005). The quantitative data used in this research are descriptive and will be described in more detail in the data analysis section of this chapter.

Some of the benefits of using quantitative research are as follows. The data collection process can be very quick, it is ideal for gathering perspectives from large groups of people and the analysis is less time consuming than qualitative research. However, it is noted that positivism can be unsuccessful in exploring human behaviour. One of the arguments put forward to support this view

is that human nature is a highly complex phenomenon and reducing that complexity down to a cause and effect paradigm is not possible (Cresswell, 2008). Further criticisms of quantitative research are as follows: it has been suggested that the focus on hypothesis testing can mean that the researcher will miss out on important aspects of the research process and the opportunity to generate hypotheses and theories; the theories used by the researcher may not match the participants understanding of the research topic; and numerical data can be very reductive and may give an inaccurate picture of people's opinions (Yardley, 2008).

3.2.2b Qualitative Research

The types of research problems investigated by qualitative research are described by Cresswell (2008) in the following quotation:

> *Qualitative* research tends to address research problems requiring:
>
> - An exploration in which little is known about the problem
>
> - A detailed understanding of a certain phenomenon [*sic*](pp.51)

As shown in this quotation, the purpose of qualitative research is generally more open ended than quantitative. Smith (2008) has described the process of qualitative research as exploring and interpreting the experiences and perceptions of participants. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) have argued that qualitative data can provide the researcher with a rich source of information. They note that this rich data can offer the researcher specific details that may be missed through the quantitative approach. Other strengths are reported by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), who have noted that the data gathered are useful for describing people's personal experiences of phenomena, which is one of the aims of the current research.

The qualitative method of data gathering and analysis has also been criticised. For example, Cresswell (2008) has noted that qualitative research can be more difficult for researchers and readers of the results to interpret in comparison with quantitative research. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) note that it generally takes a lot longer to collect the data and then analyse them in comparison with quantitative research. A further criticism of use of qualitative interviews and focus groups is the possibility that results could be influenced easily by the researcher's behaviour and personal biases (Carter & Little, 2007).

3.2.3 The mixed methods approach

The current research employed a mixed methods approach to investigate the research questions outlined in the literature review. This approach is described in the following quotation: "Mixed methods research means adopting a research strategy employing more than one type of research *method*. The methods may be a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, a mix of quantitative methods or a mix of qualitative methods." (Brannen, 2005 p.2). One of the central tenets of the argument supporting mixed methods research is that combining of both quantitative and qualitative methods provides a better understanding of problems in relation to research questions than the use of either method by itself (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

The combination of both quantitative and qualitative research is an interesting development, as historically advocators for qualitative and quantitative research have argued against the value of the opposing forms of research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, Cresswell (2008) draws attention to the fact that there are many similarities in qualitative and quantitative research. For example, both qualitative and quantitative researchers use scientific observations to address and explore research questions. Cresswell (2008) also notes that, regardless of the paradigmatic position, all social science research involves an effort to present defensible assertions about humans, or groups of humans, and the world in which they live. In addition, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) note that both qualitative and quantitative researchers include precautions in their research in order to avoid bias and other sources of invalidity that may be present in every research study.

Those who advocate a mixed methods approach to research suggest that there are a number of benefits to mixing both qualitative and quantitative research. Some examples of these benefits are as follows: the strengths of an additional research method can be used to counteract and minimise the weakness of another method; a wider and more comprehensive range of research questions can be explored because the researcher is not limited to one approach; and finally it is argued that using mixed methods can offer stronger support for research conclusions via the combination and convergence of findings (Brannen, 2005; Cresswell, 2008; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The decision made to use a mixed methods approach was based on the above noted advantages. However, as the current research is more exploratory in its nature, a greater emphasis and focus is weighted on the qualitative data gathered for this project.

3.2.4 Validity in the mixed methods approach

Dellinger and Leech (2007) note definitions of validity in research have evolved over the years and argue that it can mean something quite different when used in either quantitative or qualitative research. Dellinger and Leech (2007) provide a framework that can be used in order to promote the

validity of mixed methods research. They note that traditional methods of ensuring validity in both quantitative and qualitative research may not necessarily apply in mixed methods research. Therefore, the researcher needs to be careful in the choices that s/he makes regarding the methods s/he uses.

For example, in the current research, greater weight is placed on the qualitative findings of this study and, therefore, procedures relating to the validity of qualitative research are more relevant to this research. Yardley (2008) outlines a number of methods that can be used to increase the validity of qualitative research and, where possible, these methods were employed. For example, Yardley (2008) notes that using triangulation through the corroboration of different groups of people's perspectives on the same topic can add validity to themes identified in the data. Both teacher and student perspectives were gathered as part of this research. Yardley (2008) also notes that researchers can compare the coding of their data. For the purposes of the current research an outsider from the process was asked to code two of the transcripts in order to determine whether the themes identified were similar and thus more valid.

3.2.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is defined by Cresswell (2008) as "...the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews.)"(p.266). Triangulation can be used through a mixed methods design in order to improve the validity and facilitate the clarity of the results. This is achieved by comparing the results found using one method with the results found using another (Golafshani, 2003).The current research utilised triangulation, by using a mixed methods design, in order to increase the validity and clarity of the results. The data collection began with the distribution of questionnaires, followed by focus groups with pupils involved in the school play and interviews with the teachers. The data collected were both quantitative and qualitative in that there were closed and open questions in the questionnaires, and the focus groups and interviews were analysed qualitatively. Triangulation was also achieved by gathering multiple perspectives as noted above (e.g. from both the teachers and the students involved in the school play).

3.3 Research plan

3.3.1 Process of data collection

The data collection was conducted in two phases.

Phase one:

The first phase of data collection involved the distribution of semi-structured questionnaires to students and staff involved in school plays. The questionnaires for the teachers (see appendix B) aimed to find out why teachers put on a school production, what they felt children gained from the experience and what they saw as the positive impacts, benefits, and negative impacts and challenges of the experience. The questionnaires for students aimed to elicit answers to the same questions outlined previously but were adapted in order to gain the students' perspective (see appendix C). The information gathered from the open questions on questionnaires was analysed using content analysis and the information collected from closed questions was analysed quantitatively. The findings from this phase informed phase two of data collection.

Phase two:

The second phase of data collection involved semi-structured interviews with the teachers and focus groups with students involved in the school play (see appendices D&E for an outline of the interview schedules used). A semi-structured approach was chosen for both the interviews and focus groups as it enabled initial questions to be adapted in response to issues that emerged throughout the process of the interview or focus group (Cresswell, 2008; Litosseliti, 2003). With the consent of all participants, interviews and focus groups were recorded, then transcribed and screened for themes using thematic analysis.

3.3.2 Phase 1: Questionnaire phase

3.3.2a Questionnaire Design

The questionnaires used in this research were designed specifically for this study with a separate version for both teachers and students involved in the school play (see appendices B&C). Both questionnaires consisted of predominantly open ended questions and a final closed question. The closed question on the teacher questionnaire was worded as follows: "To what extent do you believe that participating in a school production impacts on students in the below areas? Please mark with a – for a negative impact and a + for a positive impact" On the student questionnaire the same question was used and the word "student" was changed for "yourself".

Participants were given the options of "not at all", "somewhat", "quite a bit" and "considerable" and as shown in the question example they were asked to indicate whether this impact was positive or negative by using the plus or minus symbol. The types of areas about which participants were asked were developed from analysis of the literature review, and examples of which are "self confidence"

and "ability to work as part of a team." A full list of the 23 areas can be found in appendices B and C. The full scale was a 7-point scale with "considerable negative" impact at the lowest end of the scale "no impact" in the middle and "considerable positive impact" at the top end of the scale. This type of scaling is defined as a Likert scale (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007).

Whilst Likert scales provide a construct for participants to indicate the strength of their opinions on different subjects, it is also noted that it is possible that identical scores from different people may have different meanings. Thus if participants have given the same score for a particular item this does not mean that they share exactly the same attitude to that item (Robson, 2007). The open-ended questions, however, enabled participants to give answers that gave more explanations for their attitudes and perceptions and thus provide richer data.

3.3.2b Piloting the questionnaires

Due to the small population size of participants, both in teachers and students who are involved in school plays, a small sample was used to pilot the questionnaire. Cresswell (2008) noted that one of the main purposes of piloting is to identify any confusing language or aspects of the questionnaire that may be difficult to understand. Participants that agreed to be involved in the pilot were asked to pay particular attention to the wording of the questionnaire. One teacher was asked to read and complete the teacher questionnaire and a group of five students including male and female representatives from Key Stage three and four were asked to complete the student questionnaire. The pilot was timed in order to provide information for future participants regarding expected amount of time needed for completion of the questionnaire.

Following completion of the questionnaire, the participants provided feedback which informed a revision of the language used within the questionnaire (e.g. adding definitions of some words) and changes to the scaling used (i.e. the original scaling on the questionnaire did not allow participants to state if they felt there had been a negative impact). The pilot version of the questionnaire was also discussed with the thesis research supervisor and the decision was made to ensure that the researcher would be present at completion of all student questionnaires in order to ensure that any questions or difficulties the students may have had could be answered.

3.3.3 Phase 2: Interview and focus group phase

3.3.3a Interview design

Semi-structured interviews were designed specifically for the purposes of this research and used with teachers involved in the organisation of the school play. The decision to use this method was

based on the aim to capture as much information as possible regarding the teachers' perceptions of the school play. The interview questions were based on information gained from the questionnaire phase of the research and the findings of research discussed in the literature review of this thesis.

3.3.3b Focus group design

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) have advocated the use of group interviews when conducting research with children. They suggest that the information gathered using this form of data collection can be richer in that it encourages interaction between the group members as opposed to a simple response to an adult's question. Furthermore, they discuss the power dynamic between the child and interviewer and note that children have little power or status in comparison with adults. Therefore, using a group interview format may reduce intimidation a young person may feel when being interviewed one-to-one (Christensen & James, 2008). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that working with children in a group can enable them to challenge each other in a way that they may not if working with an adult. Litosseliti (2003) also highlights a number of advantages to using focus groups, including the more natural environment in comparison with the interview setting and the capacity to obtain multiple views about a phenomenon.

There are a number of practical disadvantages to holding focus groups. For example, it can be very difficult to get groups of different people together (Litosseliti, 2003). It is also noted that leading a focus group can be a difficult skill to master and the following transcription and analysis of the data can be time consuming (Smith, 2003). In order to ensure that the data gathered were of a high standard a number of guidebooks were consulted as part of the preparation for the focus group sessions (Barbour, 2007; Litosseliti, 2003; Smith, 2008; Wilkinson, 2008). The key research skills that were focused on whilst planning and running the focus groups were as follows: ensuring that a focus group schedule was prepared before running the group; establishing rapport and remaining sensitive to non-verbal cues from participants; ensuring that quieter members had a chance to speak; and that the most talkative members did not take over the session.

3.3.3c Interview and focus group piloting procedures

Cresswell (2008) recommends piloting interviews in order to ensure that questions make sense to participants and are focused on the topic the research is investigating. The interview was discussed with a teacher who had completed the questionnaire and, following the pilot, the interviewee gave feedback as to any changes needed. Following the pilot, adjustments were made to the content of the interview schedule. Similarly, a small group of pupils were asked to participate in a focus group in order to ascertain whether the questions were pitched at an appropriate level. The focus group

involved male and female participants from Key Stages 3 and 4 and adjustments were made to the questions asked following the feedback given. As with the questionnaires, the focus group and teacher interview pilots were timed.

3.3.4 Participants

Within the schools included in this study, secondary school pupils of all ages and year groups who had participated in the school play were invited to participate in the current research. Young people attending secondary school are aged between 11 and 16 (this goes up to 18 if the school has a sixth form). The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that the developmental period termed "adolescence" occurs between the ages of ten and nineteen years. Thus the current research is focused on an age range that is referred to as adolescence. One influencing factor in focusing on adolescent pupils was that, from the perspective of developmental psychology, adolescence can be a time when young people are developing their own identities and going through various life changes and stressors (e.g. puberty, personal development, exams etc.) (Cowie, Smith and Blades, 2003; Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Therefore, researching the school play within the context of the adolescence life period was considered an interesting one in which to complete the research.

3.3.4a Teacher sample

Participants for the teacher questionnaires were obtained via e-mail and telephone contact with secondary schools in the south west of England. Seventy two schools were approached in the initial attempts to gain access to participants. Initially the teachers responsible for the school play were asked if they would be interested in becoming involved. If they agreed, gate keeper consent was obtained through a letter sent to the head teacher by e-mail describing the aims and purposes of the study (see appendix A). If consent was obtained then the teacher questionnaires were sent by e-mail, or delivered by hand to the school. Thirteen teachers returned the teacher questionnaire from nine of the schools contacted. On receipt of the questionnaire a debriefing form was given to participants (see appendix H). All teacher participants were given the option of taking part in the interview phase and also of including their pupils in the student aspect of the research. Seven of the teachers who had returned the questionnaire agreed to be interviewed, one of these teachers participated in the pilot and a further three teacher colleagues of those who had completed the questionnaires also agreed to be interviewed, resulting in a sample of nine teachers taking part in the interview phase, two of which were male and seven were female.

3.3.4b Student sample

A sample of 91 students completed the questionnaire (taken from six different secondary schools). This sample was obtained through the teachers who had agreed to be part of the study. Letters were sent home to the parents of children involved in the play in order give parents the opportunity to withdraw on their child's behalf from the study (see appendix I). The researcher was present when questionnaires were being completed in order that any questions or queries regarding how to complete the questionnaire could be answered immediately.

Table 1: Gender, year group and age of student questionnaire participants:

Gender	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Total
	11- 12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-18	17-18	
Male	3	6	6	4	4	1	4	28
Female	11	8	19	8	13	0	4	63
Total	14	14	25	12	17	1	8	91

The above table displays the age, year group and gender of the students who completed questionnaires. Gender and age were not questions asked on the teacher questionnaire as they were not thought relevant to the research. Following completion of the questionnaire, participants were given a debriefing form (see appendix H) and informed that the researcher would be returning to hold focus groups and they could volunteer to do this by speaking to their teacher. Letters were also sent home to parents in order that they could ask for their child to be withdrawn from the focus groups if they so wished (see appendix J).

Table 2: Age and gender of the pupils who took part in the focus groups

The table below displays the age and gender of the pupils who took part in the seven focus groups across five different schools. The focus groups are ordered in the sequence they were carried out. FG1 was the first focus group to be completed and FG7 was the last.

Focus groups	Male	Female	Year Group	Age range	Total Pupils
FG 1 School H	3	3	7-8	11 - 13	6
FG 2 School SB	4	7	8-9	12 – 14	11

FG 3 School A	6	3	10-13	15 - 18	9
FG 4 School H	1	2	10	15	3
FG 5 School C	3	9	7-10	11 -15	12
FG 6 School C	2	3	12-13	17-18	5
FG 7 School P	6	3	9-10	13 -15	9
Totals	*25*	*30*	*7-13*	*11 -18*	*55*

3.4 Context of the research

Whilst the teacher questionnaire sample was derived from nine secondary schools in the south west of England, the pupil questionnaires, teacher interviews and pupil focus groups were held within seven mainstream secondary schools. Five schools were located in the same local authority and two were located in a neighbouring local authority, all within the south west of England. The schools will be referred to as school A, school W, school H, school SB, school B, school C and school P. Information regarding the context of the seven schools involved in both teacher and student aspects of the research is given below. Please refer to appendix N in order to view a table which clarifies the different stages of the research that all nine schools were involved in.

School A:

- Two female teachers participated in the interview and questionnaire section of this research. Students were not able to participate in the questionnaire aspect of the research due to the timing of the questionnaires being released. However, nine students took part in a focus group held later in the year.

- The teachers responsible for organising the play had both been teaching for 18 years and the play focused on in the current research was estimated by one teacher as the 25th play she had organised and the other as the 18th. The teachers stated that school plays had been a part of the school culture for fifteen years and that there were generally between 60 and 70 children involved in each production.

- The school play discussed in the current research was a musical and the auditions for this production were held in the summer term (July 2010), with the performance being held in February 2011.

School W:

- One male and one female teacher participated in the questionnaire section of this research and the male teacher participated in the interview phase. Seventeen students completed the student questionnaire but no students were available to take part in the student focus groups due to the time of year that the focus groups were held.

- The teacher responsible for organising the play had been teaching for three years and the play focused on in the current research was the first play he had organised. This play was the first one the school had performed in seven years and there were 90 children involved in total.

- The school play discussed in the current research was a musical. The auditions for this production were held in the summer term (July 2010) with the performance being held in November 2011.

School H:

- One teacher took part in the questionnaire and interview phase of this research and 14 students completed questionnaires. Two student focus groups were held in this school.

- The teacher responsible for organising the play had been teaching for 11 years and the play focused on in the current research was the 15th play she had organised. The teacher stated that generally there were 60 children involved in each play. School plays had been a part of the school culture for the last eight years. However, previously to that the school did not run productions for six years and the teacher interviewed attributed this to the prevalence of behavioural issues within the school at that time.

- The school play discussed in this research was a musical. The auditions for this production were held in September 2010 with the performance held in January 2011

School SB:

- One teacher took part in the questionnaire and interview phase of this research and 26 students completed the questionnaire. Eleven Students took part in a focus group.

- The teacher responsible for organising the play had been teaching for three years and the play focused on in the current research was the second play she had organised. The school had a tradition of running yearly plays until 2006 when the teacher who used to organise them left. School plays then became a tradition again in 2009 when the teacher being

interviewed joined the school. This year's production involved 90 pupils and the previous play had involved 50.

- The school play discussed in this research was a musical. Auditions were held in December 2009 and the play was performed in July 2010.

School B:

- One teacher took part in the questionnaire phase of this research and 24 students completed the questionnaire. The teacher in this school took part in the pilot of the interview and a small group of pupils were involved in the piloting of the focus group. Therefore, this school did not take part in phase two of the research.

- The teacher responsible for organising the play had been teaching for eight years and the play focused on in the current research was the 15th play she had organised. The teacher stated that school plays had been a part of the school culture since she had started teaching there eight years ago and that each production involved around 60 pupils.

- The school play discussed in this research was a musical. Auditions were held in September 2010 and the play was performed in February 2011.

School C:

- One teacher took part in the questionnaire phase of this research and ten students completed the questionnaire. Three teachers took part in the interview phase, one male and two female. They had been teaching for eight, six and 40 years. Two student focus groups were held in this school.

- The teacher responsible for organising the play had been teaching for eight years and the play focused on in the current research was the 15th play he had organised. The teacher informed the researcher that the school plays had been a part of the school culture for a very long time and that in 1957 the school had been burnt down due to an accident related to the school play.

- The school play discussed in this research was a Shakespeare production. Auditions were held in November 2010 and the play was performed in July 2011.

School P:

- One teacher took part in the questionnaire phase of this research. Another teacher and a small group of students were involved in the pilot phase of the questionnaire and, therefore, were not included in phase one of the research. One teacher took part in the interview phase of the research and nine students took part in a focus group.

- The teacher responsible for organising the play had been teaching for three years and the play focused on in the current research was the third play she had organised. The teacher stated that the school plays had been a part of the school culture for over ten years.

- The school play discussed in this research was a musical. Auditions were held in December 2010 and the play was performed in May 2011.

3.5 Ethical issues

The design of the current research project received ethical approval from Cardiff University before any data collection took place (see appendix K). The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics (2009) outlines a number of ethical considerations, which were taken into account throughout the process of planning and executing the research. Below is a summary of these considerations.

3.5.1 Respect

- General standard of respect: All participants involved in the study were treated with respect and sensitivity. Selection for participation was unbiased towards any individual or cultural role. Attempts were made to create an atmosphere of trust and respect during data collection to give participants a sense of personal safety.

- The knowledge and experience of participants was respected and all participants were allowed to give their views equally.

- Privacy and Confidentiality: Participants were not required to write their names on questionnaires, ensuring anonymity of data gathered. The completed questionnaires were stored in a locked cupboard and will be destroyed six months after the deadline of the thesis. Audio recordings of focus groups and interviews were made with the permission of all participants; these recordings were transcribed and the audio file was destroyed. Participants were made aware that the answers they gave in interviews and focus groups would be recorded confidentially and then made anonymous when transcribed within a week of holding the focus group.

- Appropriate supervision was sought from the thesis supervisor at all stages of the research. Participants were made aware that if they disclosed information which could not be kept confidential (for example something that may affect the safety or welfare of themselves or others), the thesis supervisor would be made aware of this and asked to give advice as to next steps of action.

- Informed consent: Participants completing questionnaires were given a letter describing the purposes of the research and their willingness to complete the questionnaire was taken as informed consent (see appendices B and C). Those participants taking part in focus groups and interviews were given a written consent form to sign and return to the researcher (see appendices F and G). The signed forms were stored in a locked cupboard and will be destroyed six months following the deadline date of the thesis. Parents of children asked to participate were also sent letters to inform them that they could withdraw their child from the study if they wished (see appendices I and J).

- Self Determination: Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any point both verbally and in writing (see appendices F and G). Participants were also informed that if they wanted to withdraw, any data by which they might be personally identified, including recordings, would be destroyed.

3.5.2 Competence

- Awareness of professional guidelines: The BPS Code of Ethics (2009) and the Health Professions Council (HPC) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2008) were read and taken into account throughout the research process.

- Ethical decision making: It was recognised that unexpected ethical dilemmas could have occurred throughout the course of the research. An action plan was in place in case this did occur and this was always to discuss issues of concern with the thesis supervisor and to follow his advice as to next steps.

- Recognising limits of competence: If, for example, participants had disclosed information that was above the researcher's level of competence, this information would have been passed on to the research supervisor.

3.5.3 Responsibility

- General responsibility: It was ensured that the environments in which the focus groups and interviews were held were safe in order to minimise any potential risks to participants or the researcher.

- Protection of research participants: As outlined above participants gave informed consent and were debriefed (see appendix H). If any participant had asked for advice concerning psychological or other issues, caution would have been exercised, and if the situation appeared to warrant it the researcher would have offered to make a referral to the appropriate service.

- In the interests of minimising the amount of disruption to the school day, the researcher remained flexible in agreeing to come to the schools at a time most suitable for them. The schools' priorities were held in higher importance than those of the research. The data collection for this research was held entirely in schools.

3.5.4 Integrity

- Honesty and accuracy: The data collected were recorded as accurately as possible. In the case of interviews and focus groups, this was aided by the use of an audio recorder with the permission of participants. If a participant gave an answer that was in any way ambiguous or unclear s/he was asked to clarify in order to ensure that his/her response could be fully understood.

3.6 Methods of data analysis

As both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered in the process of this research, different methods were used to analyse each data type as recommended in the literature (Cresswell, 2008; Smith, 2008). The open ended questions on the questionnaires were analysed using content analysis. The closed questions were entered into SPSS and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Transcripts from the interviews and focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6.1 Content analysis

The open-ended questions on the questionnaires were explored using content analysis. A text book on the subject by Krippendorff (2004) was used to guide this process, which involved coding the participants' open-ended answers into closed categories. The answers given by participants were read through and the data were then coded in terms of the general categories that could be

identified from the text. Lists were created for the topics within the general categories and frequencies were recorded which represented the number of times a topic was mentioned by different participants. The grouped data were then reanalysed and grouped again in the main categories identified throughout the process.

Using the method of content analysis made it possible to convert the qualitative data into a quantitative form. This was achieved by counting the number of responses in each category and then presenting the percentage of respondents that mentioned this category in a table. Whilst this is a useful way of viewing the data in numerical form, Smith (2008) has criticised content analysis, pointing out that much of the detail, which is one of the benefits of qualitative data, can be lost through this method of analysis. However, for the purposes of this research, it was decided an appropriate method for phase one of analysis.

3.6.2 Quantitative analysis

The final question in both the student and teacher questionnaires allowed for quantitative analysis of participants' answers. In the teacher questionnaire the question was: "To what extent do you believe that participating in a school production impacts on students in the below areas. Please mark with a – for a negative impact and a + for a positive impact". The question was the same in the student questionnaire except that the wording was changed to "yourself" from "students".

A number of factors were listed below the question (e.g. self confidence, ability to work as part of a team). Please see the final question in appendices B and C for a full list of the factors. The responses on the questionnaires were entered into SPSS. The descriptive results which were relevant to the main research questions are reported in the results section of this report and the remaining results from the closed question are presented in a table in appendix L of this research.

Independent-samples t-tests were also utilised to compare the means of the male and female responses and also the older and younger pupils in order to ascertain whether there was a difference between the responses given in these groups.

3.6.3 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis has been referred to as one of the most common methods of qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, there are few detailed accounts of how to carry out the process of thematic analysis (Howitt & Cramer, 2005). One of the advantages of the thematic analysis technique is that it is a method that can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches as it is free from attachment to any particular theory or epistemology (Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis involves identifying themes within data. Whilst the initial identification of superficial themes can be fairly simple, Braun and Clarke (2006) note that the full process of thematic analysis is lengthy and time consuming and have written a step-by-step guide which provides clear guidelines for those using this research tool.

3.6.4 Semantic and latent themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) have noted that themes can be identified at a latent or semantic level and have pointed out the need for the researcher to make a decision regarding the level at which she/he will identify themes. They refer to the semantic as the "explicit" level. At this level the researcher should not be searching for anything more than that which the participant has said, and, therefore, he/she is organising the data into patterns looking purely at the semantic content. Conversely, the latent level of thematic analysis looks beyond the semantic content and aims to identify and explore the underlying ideas and assumptions behind what each participant has said. A semantic approach relates to more specific areas of interest and works best if the researcher has research questions and areas of interest. Therefore, the present research has applied a semantic approach to identify themes.

3.6.5 The six stages of thematic analysis process

The current research employed the six phase guidelines provided by Braun and Clarkes (2006) in order to ensure that the data analysis was of high quality. The contents of the six phases are described in detail below:

Stage 1: Becoming familiar with data:

As recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), immersion in the data was achieved via reading and rereading the transcripts that were typed from the audio recordings. At this stage, notes were also taken recording initial ideas that would later be developed into themes.

Stage 2: Developing initial codes:

Braun and Clarke (2006) have described the process in this phase as "organising your data into meaningful groups" (p.88). They note that the coding process depends on whether the themes are "data driven" (meaning that themes will depend purely on the data) or "theory driven" (meaning that the researcher is analysing the data with certain questions in mind). The current research was theory driven in that it approached the data with the research questions in mind. This phase involved coding for as many potential themes or patterns as possible, which were then narrowed down into more specific themes. The entire data set was worked through systematically and full and equal attention was given to each transcript. Some quotes were coded a number of times for different themes as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The computer software N-vivo 8 was used to organise the data into a large variety of codes. Training sessions in N-vivo 8 were attended by the researcher and explanatory literature was utilised (Lewins & Silver, 2007). One of the benefits of the use of software is that it can shorten the lengthy process of analysis by providing ready access to the coded sections of data in a logical format. The researcher is able to concentrate on conceptual issues as opposed to being preoccupied with concerns about the storage and retrieval of information. This also minimises the risk of human error when retrieving quotes for certain themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Stage 3: Searching for and identifying themes:

Phase three involved re-focusing the list of codes into broader themes. Each code was written onto a separate piece of paper and then organised into separate piles representing possible themes in relation to the three research questions. This information was then entered into tables to give a visual representation in order to identify themes in relation to the research question. This process was initially administered separately for the student focus groups and the teacher interviews and then the groups were combined together for research questions 2 and 3. This phase resulted in a collection of candidate (overarching) themes and sub-themes.

Stage 4: Reviewing and revising themes:

This phase involved refinement of the themes. The data extracts within the themes were closely examined in order to ensure that they came together in a coherent way to form a theme. When data extracts did not fit within the theme in which they had been allocated, the theme was then re-analysed and either a new theme was created or the initial theme was redrafted. The themes and sub-themes that had been identified thus far were then compared with the entire data set in order to ascertain whether the themes represented the data set as a whole. At this stage the visual aid of thematic maps was used in order to clarify the themes and organise them in a coherent way.

Stage 5: Naming and clarifying the themes:

This phase involved returning to scrutinise the data in order to define and review the themes found, and to generate a clear understanding and name for each theme. The thematic maps created in the previous phase were used in order to ensure the relations between the themes corresponded to the data.

Stage 6: Producing and finalising the report:

Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to this phase as the final opportunity for analysis. The themes found were written up in prose form in the results section of this thesis. The main message in each theme was described and extracts from the data set were selected as examples which illustrated each theme. Thematic maps were used in the report of the themes to show how the themes linked together. Finally, the set of transcripts was reread with the identified themes in mind and any extracts which appeared to contradict the themes identified were highlighted and also reported within the results section, in order to ensure that the overview given was complete.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative findings of the current research. Questionnaires were returned by 91 students and 13 teachers. Nine teachers participated in the interview phase and 55 students participated in the student focus groups. Data relating to each research question are organised in the same style and begin with the initial content analysis data that are related to the question. In each case the content analysis tables are followed by a thematic map, underneath which, detailed descriptions of each theme are provided. In addition illustrative quotations from the transcripts are also provided beneath each theme. Quantitative data from the closed questions are reported in relation to the themes identified from thematic analysis where appropriate. The full results of the answers to closed question 8 on the teacher questionnaire and 12 on the student questionnaire can be found in appendix L. To ensure ease of readability and continuity throughout this chapter the illustrative quotations are indented within text and are presented in consistent style which is in italics with double quotation marks.

4.2. Research question 1: Why do teachers and students decide to become involved in a school play?

Table 3: Content analysis of question 5 on the student questionnaire: "What made you want to be involved in the school play?"

Table three presents the qualitative and quantitative findings from the content analysis of the responses participants gave to question 5. The percentage of participants who gave answers that could be included in the category identified is displayed quantitatively on the left-hand side. The right column displays the qualitative data through quotations from the raw data. Questionnaires were returned by 91 students.

Category (percentage of respondents)	Exemplar quotations of student responses
Enjoyment (67%)	*"I've always loved acting and singing and I've been waiting for four years for the school to do a musical; they're so much fun" (Year-11-Female-aged-15)* *"Because I love acting" (Year-9-Male-aged-13)*
Past experiences (18	*"I've been in other school plays and enjoyed it" (Year-11-Female-aged-15)*

%)	*"I have been involved in it since year 7" (Year-8-Female-aged-12)*
Influence of friends and siblings (14%)	*"My older brother did school plays and it looked fun so I got involved in year 8" (Year-9-Female-aged-14)* *"I was persuaded by friends" (Year-8-Male-aged-13)"*
Increasing confidence (10%)	*"I wanted to improve my confidence and as soon as it improved I started to do it for fun" (Year-9-Female-aged-13)* *"To boost/gain confidence" (Year-10-Male-aged-15)*
Future plans (10%)	*"I have future plans to become a drama teacher" (Year-13-Female-aged-18)* *" I wish that I will be an actor" (Year-7-Male-aged-11)*

Table 4: Content analysis of question 8 on the teacher questionnaire: "What made you want to organise or be involved in the organisation of the school play?"

Table four presents the qualitative and quantitative findings from the content analysis of the responses participants gave to question 8. The percentage of participants who gave answers that could be included in the category identified is displayed quantitatively on the left hand-side. The right column displays the qualitative data through quotations from the raw data. Questionnaires were returned by 13 teachers.

Category (percentage & number of respondents)	Exemplar quotations of teacher responses
Beneficial for students (38% = 5 teachers)	"It is the major enrichment event of the school calendar and the event that students remember long after they have left the school." "Benefits to pupils, satisfaction to me, camaraderie with other staff"
Appreciation of theatre/ production process (31% = 4 teachers)	"I enjoy production, being part of the creative process" "The school production in this school is always a musical. I heard they were performing one of my favourites, went along to a rehearsal and that was that."
Part of the job role (31% = 4 teachers)	"It was a specified part of my contract as a drama teacher." "Being Head of drama at the school means that it is a fairly standard requirement to take on the active role of organising the school production.
Promoting drama as a subject (15% = 2 teachers)	"To promote my subject around school" "It keeps our subject in the spotlight in difficult times and ensures that students are enthused by drama and pick it up at GCSE and A level as a result of their involvement"

Figure 1: Thematic map demonstrating themes identified in relation to research question 1: Why do teachers and students decide to become involved in a school play?
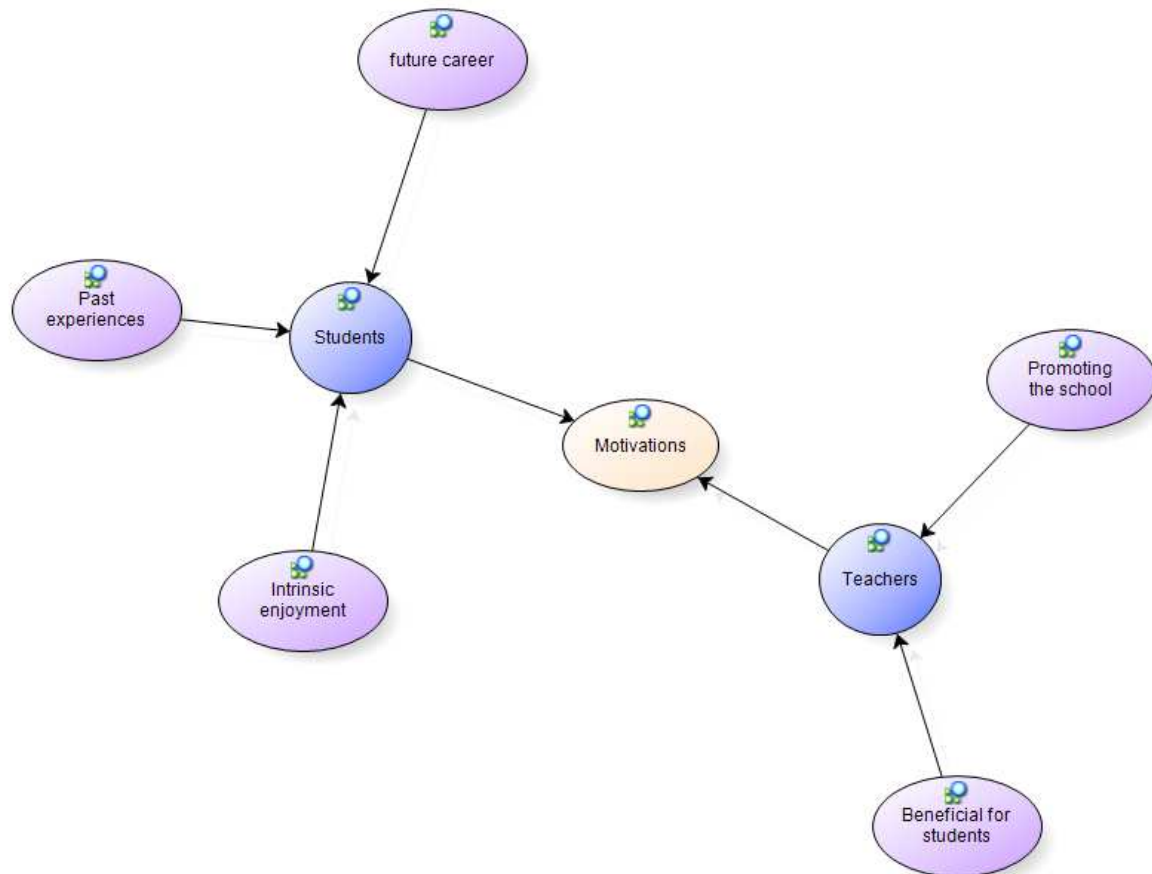
4.2.1. Motivations

The above thematic map demonstrates the themes identified from teacher and student interviews in relation to their motivation to become involved in the school production.

4.2.2. Student motivations

Three themes were identified in relation to the students' motivation to become involved in the school production. These were "Intrinsic enjoyment", "Past experiences" and "Future career"

4.2.2.a. Intrinsic enjoyment.

The most frequent theme identified within the student focus groups was "Intrinsic enjoyment". This theme relates to the students' admissions that the key factor that motivated them to become involved in a school production was enjoyment.

"It's cos it's what I really, really enjoy and I'm just happy when I do it" (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-2-School-SB)

"...like once you are on stage the thrill of performing, like, takes over and the adrenaline starts running and it's really fun" (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

For some of the students this enjoyment appeared to relate to an element of escapism.

"...when you're, like, on stage and then, like, the lights, like, flash in your face and you can't see anything else but you know that, I don't know, it just feels like you're in your own little bubble" (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-7-School-P)

This theme also supports the findings from the content analysis of the questionnaires in which 67% of the students indentified enjoyment as their motivation for involvement.

4.2.2.b. Past experiences

In support of the theme identified through content analysis. "Past experiences" were also identified within the focus groups as a reason for students' involvement.

"I've done um drama a lot in the past and I've been at the play house and I've performed quite a lot and I know that's what I like doing" (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-6-School-C)

"I wanted to be involved because I did a school play in year 6 and that inspired me to keep going in drama and performing arts and stuff." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-1-School-H)

Many students also noted that being part of a drama club previously had been their reason for involvement in the school play

"I really like Drama Club and I wanted to be a part of the play." (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-2-School-SB)

4.2.2.c. Future career

The second theme identified was also related to the original questionnaire data in that many of the students referred to future career plans as part of their reason for involvement in the school play.

"It's made me realise maybe what I want to do in the future" (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

> *"...if you wanna take on acting and you wanna go further with it, like, doing something as little as the school play could help you"* (Female-pupil-Focus-Group-7-School-P)

Most of the pupils who discussed future careers talked about careers in acting or drama. However, one pupil also talked about applying the knowledge in a future career in a school.

> *"I've gained so much more knowledge on it and now, maybe later on in life I'll think to myself maybe I can go in and help, help schools myself"* (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

4.2.3. Teacher motivations

Two themes were identified in relation to the teachers' motivation to become involved in the school production. These were "Beneficial for students" and "Promoting the school"

4.2.3.a. Beneficial for students

A further theme identified through thematic analysis, which also supports the content analysis from the questionnaires, was the finding that many of the teachers were motivated to organise school plays because they felt it was beneficial to the pupils.

> *"...I know it sounds cliché but it's just for the kids, you know. It's for, what, the experience they get"* (Teacher-Interview-6-School-C.)

It was apparent that teachers felt that the benefits were wide ranging. When discussing the reasons they became involved two teachers made the following comments.

> *"...it's just my favourite part of the job really (**2ndTeacher: Yeah**). I know it sounds awful cos I moan about it but I'd like to do that and not teach. (**2nd Teacher: But I think it is, teaching is actually just a long joined up project of what we do.**) Yeah I mean we're not training kids to be actors in our normal lesson, but the skills involved (**Interviewer: Mm**) getting on with people (**Interviewer: Yeah**) and sheer hard work, repetition..."* (Teacher-Interview-2- School A.)

As can be seen from the above quote the benefits identified by the teachers involved in this research were broad. This finding is also related to the findings related to research question 2. Therefore, the benefits identified by the teachers and students in relation to the school play are explored in more detail in the themes under research question 2.

4.2.3.b. Promoting the school

Whilst the questionnaire data identified the role that the school play had of promoting the subject of drama within the school, the interview data offered a development on that theme in that teachers felt that the play could also promote the school within the community. This was one of their motivations to organise the play.

> *"...it's a great it's a great platform for the school in showing what the kids can do. For example with (name of play) we were asked by the Mayor to take a section of that to the town hall for a Mayor making ceremony"* (Teacher-Interview-7-School-P)

The notion that the school play could also promote the school to parents of prospective students was also introduced.

> *"...people come and they love it **(Interviewer: Yeah)** because it's their children and even people who haven't got children in the production – people love being entertained so it's what they call win-win **(Interviewer: Yes) (2ndTeacher: Do you know I had a year six parent here and she just went on about how, how good she thought it was)**"* (Teacher-Interview-2-School A.)

4.3. Research question 2: What do students and teachers believe are the benefits and positive impacts of participating in a school play in terms of what there is to learn and gain from involvement in this activity?

Table 5: Content analysis of question 9 on the teacher questionnaire: "What do you believe are the main benefits for students and staff that are involved in the school play?"

Table five presents the qualitative and quantitative findings from the content analysis of the responses participants gave to question 9 on the teacher questionnaire. The percentage of participants who gave answers that could be included in each category identified is displayed quantitatively on the left-hand side. The right column displays the qualitative data through illustrative quotations. Questionnaires were returned by 13 teachers.

Category (percentage & number of respondents)	Exemplar quotations of teacher responses
Developing Relationships (85% = 11 teachers)	*"The main one for me is watching the camaraderie that evolves. It is like one big family in the musical rehearsals."* *"Breaking down barriers between age ranges staff and student relationships (seeing each other outside of a classroom environment)"*
Increasing Confidence (54% = 7 teachers)	*"The pupils gain so much from it in terms of confidence"* *"It gives confidence to some pupils who wouldn't normally get up on stage"*
Developing Teamwork skills (38% = 5 teachers)	*"It gives the students a unifying experience which helps them develop so many skills"* *"Team work, working with different age groups, seeing something through to the end"*
Developing Social skills (15% = 2 teachers)	*"Helps them develop so many skills – like confidence, social interaction,"* *"Social skills and team work ability."*

Table 6: Content analysis of question 6 on the student questionnaire: "What do you believe are the main benefits for students and staff that are involved in the school play?"

Table six presents the qualitative and quantitative findings from the content analysis of the responses participants gave to question 6 on the student questionnaire. The percentage of participants who gave answers that could be included within the specific category identified is displayed quantitatively on the left hand side. The right column displays the qualitative data through illustrative quotations from the raw data. Questionnaires were returned by 91 students.

Category (percentage of respondents)	Exemplar quotations of student responses
Developing relationships (68%)	*"You make new friends and that becomes special to you as you have something in common as a big part of your life" (Year-12-Male-aged-16)* *"It helps adults see the children in a better light, rather than in everyday school life" (Year-10-female-aged-14)*
Increasing confidence (48%)	*"You get used to talking in front of lots of pupils. It helps you if you are not very confident"(Year-7-Female-aged-12)* *"It's better for a student's confidence" (Year-9-Male-aged-13)*
Enjoying the experience (32%)	*"I enjoy being on stage and meeting new people" (Year-8-Male-aged-13)* *"We get to take part in something fun" (Year-9-Female aged-14)*
Developing teamwork skills (26%)	*"Working together towards something"(Year-8-Female-aged-13)* *"Bringing everyone together and to help everyone work as a team" (Year-7-Female-aged-12)*
Developing acting skills (18%)	*"Benefit from acting experience" (Year-8-Female-aged-12)* *"If I am ever offered a part in a main play outside of school it would be good practice" (Year-9-Male-aged-14)*
Developing Social skills (11%)	*"Communication skills" (Year-13-Male-aged-18)* *"Makes people able to read each other better whilst having fun in the process" (Year-11-female-aged-16)*
Sense of achievement (10%)	*"Sense of achievement after successfully performing the play" (Year-10-Male-aged-15)* *"A sense of achievement as staff and students work together to make something*

	great" (Year-8-Male-aged-13)

Figure 2: Thematic map demonstrating themes relating to research question 2: What do students and teachers believe are the benefits and positive impacts of participating in a school play in terms of what there is to learn and gain from involvement in this activity?
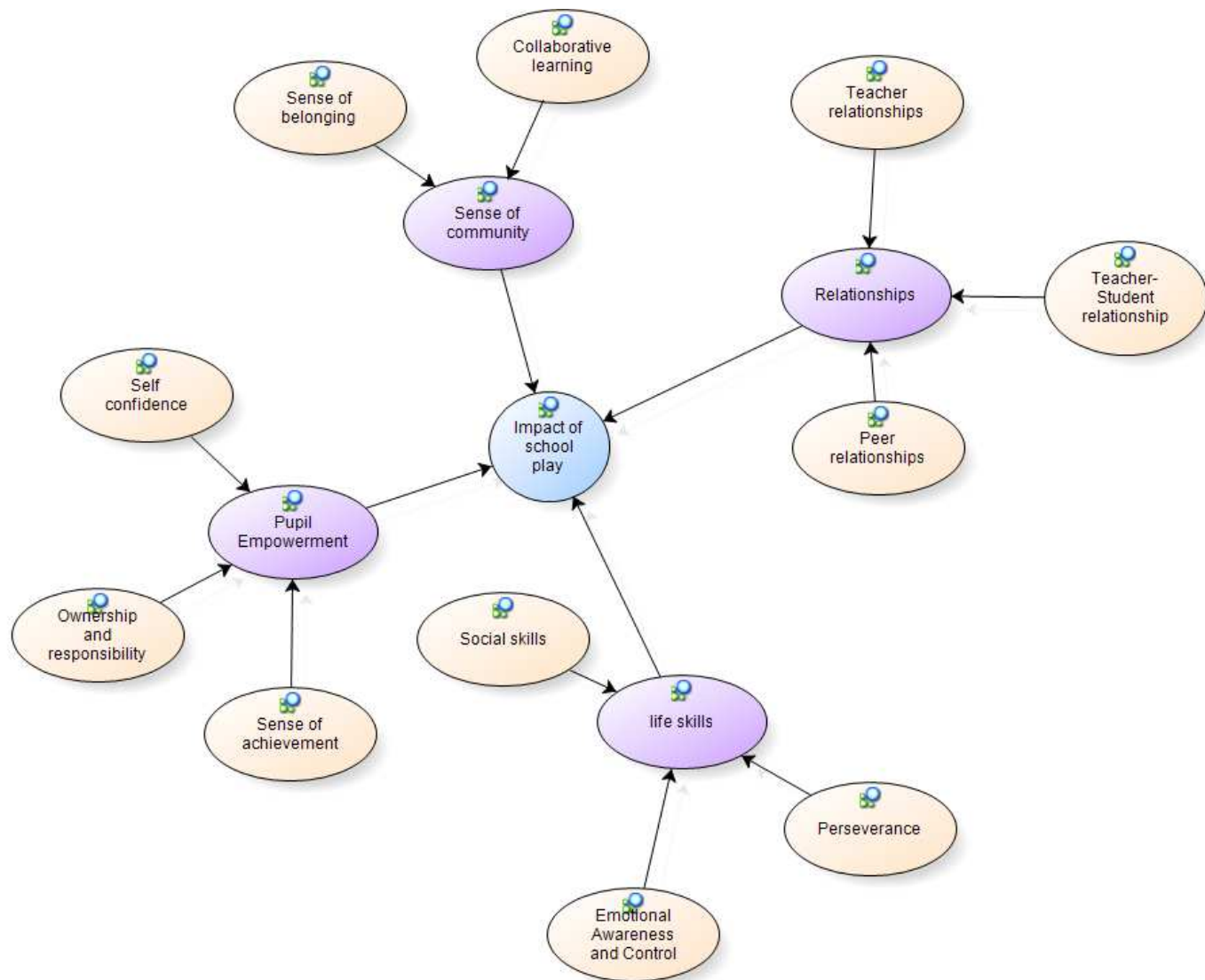
4.3.1. Sense of community

"Sense of community" was identified as an overarching theme within the thematic analysis. It was evident that participants perceived the school play as providing a strong sense of community for those involved. Within this theme two sub-themes were identified.

4.3.1a Sense of belonging

This sub-theme captures the "sense of belonging" that was often referred to in the interviews and focus groups. It is also supported by data from the final closed question on teacher and student questionnaires. Participants were asked whether they believed the school play had impacted at all on the student "sense of belonging" in a positive or negative way. All of the teachers answered that they believed it had a "considerable positive impact" and 99% of the students answered that it had an overall positive impact. Many of the students referred to this as feeling similar to being part of a family, as is illustrated in the below quotations.

> *"...when you're working with a group of people, like, this group of people you, like, you feel, like, really proud of yourself, like, I don't know, like, it sounds really, really cheesy but it's almost like...a second family in a sense, like, cos you're all just, like, you all just like work together."* (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

> *"...everyone becomes so close and it's like a family and everyone gets really excited before and it all kind of feels like unified and that's the thing that I like the most definitely about it."* (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-6-School-C)

Another pupil saw the sense of belonging as being wider than just within the play and commented on the way the play made her feel more at home within the school in general.

> *"...participating in something as big as a school play umm it's made me feel more at home, it's made me feel more part of the school because obviously the main reason is cos I've met new people but being involved in something, like, really big and really something that seems really important, it's made me feel more part of the group, and school community."* (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

One teacher also reflected on the way in which the "family feel" could encourage the students involved to include younger children and those children who were different from themselves.

"(name) as well she said that she's noticed around the school that the younger kids kind of (Interviewer: Mmhm) almost like she talks to them quite a lot more than other people in her year group would, cos I think it's, it is a bit more of a family feel to it and some were really, really quiet girls who have got umm who are on the SEN register(Interviewer: right) who are super quiet and sort of...it's kind of sometimes kids on the outskirts that tend to sort of be accepted into the group which is quite nice." (Teacher-Interview-7-School-P)

The inclusion of all different pupils from all parts of the schools was also identified in the thematic analysis of the student focus groups.

"I love the way that even though we come from different year groups and different like parts of the school we all come together to do this one thing so we all have one key role" (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

Furthermore, students and teachers noted that one of the factors in creating the sense of belonging was having a shared interest and goal.

"it's just a really good feeling to know that everybody else is in the same boat that you are (Interviewer: Yeah) performing the same play that you are and it's just really, like, interesting to meet all the other people that, like, do the same thing that you do." (Male-pupil-Focus-Group-7-School-P)

"...there is that bond created umm I think more so than with maybe other extra-curricular activities, you really see this kind of ...it's nice that kind of euphoric group atmosphere that you only really get from putting on a performance and they all felt it and they're gonna have that forever that they all shared that experience." (Teacher-Interview-4 School-W)

4.3.1b Collaborative Learning

Thematic analysis of the teacher and student transcripts revealed that, in addition to the sense of belonging gained through the sense of community provided by the school play, participants reported that the school play provided students with opportunities to learn collaboratively.

"...you have to like collaborate and work together cos otherwise it won't get done and even if you don't make friends you get to know people better and, like, meet new people so you have more people you can go up and ask questions to, to find out what you have got to do or find out new stuff." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

The above quotation illustrates how one pupil found the process helpful in learning what questions to ask and of whom to ask them. The opportunities for students to learn from each other and support one another was evident in both teacher and student scripts.

*"...I think for us older ones that always give the younger ones encouragement which I think we're all really good at **(Interviewer: Mmhm)** is, you know, when someone comes off the stage after doing their, you know, umm, rehearsal we were saying, you know, well done you're doing really well **(Interviewer: Mmhm)** and (teachers name) might say to us "Can you work with someone? Can you be one to one with someone?" **...**so I think working with individual people helps us really well as well."* (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

"...a couple of our year sevens have been completely taken under the wing by some of our, like, year nine girls. Erm, er, that kind of thing I think helps" (Teacher-Interview-1-School-SB)

It was also noted by one teacher that the mentoring did not necessarily mean older students towards younger students.

"...(name) is in year 8 and (name) is in year ten and you'd have the year 8 pupil giving the year 10 directions and say no (name) I think you need to do it this way..." (Teacher-Interview-7 School-P)

However, the data in general suggests that it was more likely to be older pupils giving advice and help to the younger ones. Many teachers comment on the level of support that pupils gave to each other.

*"...they become tremendously supportive **(Interviewer: Mhm)** tremendously supportive, you know? ...And the thing is, there's no sense that anybody's going to laugh at them, however poor their singing goes...people are always supportive, they, and one, we had one, ...one of the boys lost it on stage and just stormed off...then at the end he came back on to sing and he sang a duet with (name) **(Interviewer: Right)** and (name) started off the duet with him and then, as he could see the boy was getting his confidence back, he just bowed out and that was just a gracious gesture..."* (Teacher-Interview-2 School-A)

Many of the comments pupils made suggested there was an atmosphere of mutual respect between peers taking part in the school play which appeared to enable them to learn from each other and take on each other's praise and criticism.

"...when you're a bit younger, like learning from, like being involved in, like watching people that are more involved in it and then slowly, like, working your way up and then having

(Interviewer: Mmhm) like the experience yourself and then having, knowing that people younger than you will look up to you and learn from you. It's nice." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-3 School-A)

"...the best thing about being involved in the school play is like just seeing all the ways of how people act and the different ways they can change characters really." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

The Collaborative learning theme also links very much with the concept of working as part of a team. In an earlier stage of analysis "teamwork" was included as a separate theme under the overarching theme of "life skills" described later on in this chapter. However, it was decided that the similarities in the two themes led to the obvious merging of the two as is demonstrated by the two quotes below which were originally in the "teamwork" theme.

"...like you all work together and you all sort of like help each other, like, you always say, you know, you always, like, you know, uhm, praise each other and stuff and it's just nice, you know, working with such group, a good group, group of people." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

This was also reflected in comments made by teachers.

*"I was just going to say getting used to being a team ...they do look out for each other **(interviewer: Mmm)** you know and they know their own umm strengths and weaknesses I suppose so that they each help each other..."* (Teacher-Interview-6 School-C)

An increase in the ability to work as a team was one of the benefits identified in the open ended questionnaire as is shown in tables 4 and 5. Furthermore quantitative data from the closed question on the questionnaire supports this finding as is shown in the below graph:
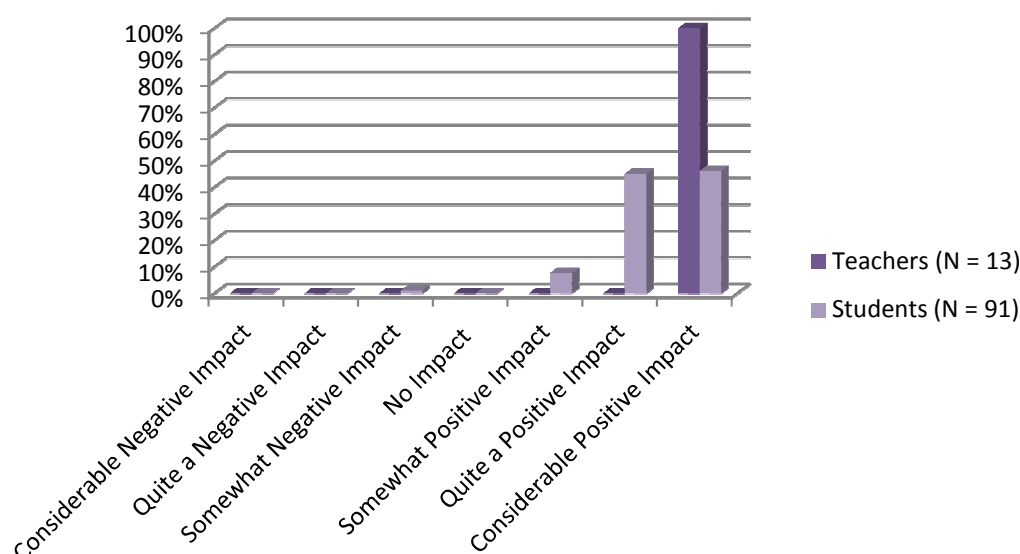
The above graph shows responses to one part of the final question on the teacher and student questionnaires *"To what extent do you believe that taking part in a school production impacts on 'ability to work as part of a team' in yourself/the students?"* Responses indicated the following.

- 100% (13) of the teacher participants felt that participation in the school play had a considerable positive impact on students' ability to work as part of a team.

- 100% of student participants felt that involvement in the school play had a positive impact on their ability to work as part of a team to varying degrees.

4.3.2. Relationships

The content analysis of the questionnaires revealed that 85% (11) of the teachers and 68% of students identified "developing relationships" as one of the main benefits of involvement in the school play. Thematic analysis of the interviews and focus groups has supported this finding in that "relationships" has been identified as one of the overarching themes when investigating perceived impacts of the school play. Furthermore, this theme includes three sub-themes.

4.3.2a Teacher-student relationships

It was evident from the thematic analysis of both teacher and student transcripts that involvement in the school plays could impact on the relationships between teachers and students in a positive way.

"...the students see a different side of you and you see a different side of them (Interviewer: Yeah) so often you're able to kind of get out of things out of them in a lesson that perhaps another teacher wouldn't be able to because they wouldn't know it's in there." (Teacher-Interview-5-School-C)

"...you see the teachers in a different way and if they're, like, involved in the play you kind of, umm, see them as they are out of lessons so it's kind of a different personality to them and, er, also kind of, er, how the teachers would see you, like, they wouldn't just see you as what you are in the lessons, they kind of see another side to you, like, what you're actually, like, good at and, like, what else you can do." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-7-School-P)

It appeared that the less formal atmosphere of the school play was one of the factors that helped students and teachers build up relationships as is demonstrated in the student's comment about the impact of the school play on his relationship with one of the teachers.

"...it's made me build up, like, a good rapport with her and, like, now if we're in lessons or not we have, like a laugh and a joke and we take the mick out of her accent cos she's from up in Yorkshire and then she takes the mick back out on mine. It, it, it's a different, it's not just she teaches, she sits there and teaches us now, or she sits then and directs us, she, it's like a conversation and it lets, it lets it flow like that if you know what I mean. So it's let, it's made us build up a good relationship." (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

For some of the students the supportive nature of the teachers involved in the school play also appeared to be a factor influencing the relationship between students and staff.

"Just like the reassurance from (name and name) (Interviewer: really?) Yeah, you know, they tell you that you can do it and that they know your potential and they tell you, so you work harder towards their expectations." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-4-School-H)

It was also apparent that the impact on student-teacher relationships had potential to be wider than being simply between those teachers and students who had been involved in the play. This effect was also noted by older students as a progressive impact throughout their years being involved in school plays.

"...throughout school and stuff there have been many teachers that, without knowing who I am personally have had a very, very strong opinion on me...whereas when they have come and seen a few plays since or whatever and they then see you for who you really are and not for what they make you out to be." (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

The impact of the school play on teacher-student relationships is also supported in the quantitative data as shown in the below graph:

Graph 2: Quantitative data showing teacher and student perceptions of the impact of the school play on teacher-student relationships.
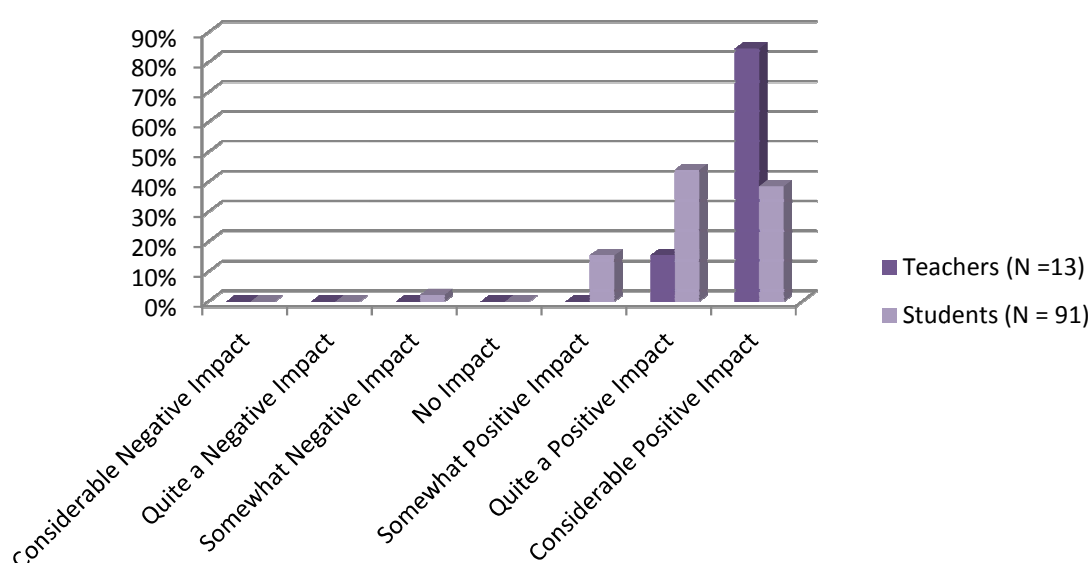
The above graph depicts responses to the one part of the final question on the teacher and student questionnaires *"To what extent do you believe that taking part in a school production impacts on teacher-student relationships?"* Responses indicated the following.

- All of the teachers felt that the school play had a positive impact on teacher-student relationships. With 85% stating that this was a "Considerable" positive impact.

- 98% of the student participants felt that the school play had a positive impact on their relationships with teachers to varying degrees.

- Two of the students (2%) felt that participating in the school play had a somewhat negative impact on their relationships with teachers.

4.3.2b Teacher relationships

Thematic analysis of the teacher interviews revealed that there was a strong theme regarding the impact of the school play on teacher relationships within schools. In many of the schools it was apparent that the school play had a positive impact on teacher relationships across the school.

> *"...it was the first time that something had kind of united all of the departments. So we had, like, Art doing all the set for us, we had Science doing the lights and backstage and Food Tech doing the, like, make-up – one of the Food Tech teachers did the make-up for us – and just like everyone got involved. Erm, and it was the first time that we kind of like got that relationship going with everyone."* (Teacher-Interview-1-School-SB)

> *"...and then as staff, you know, you actually, you get to know people you didn't know before and so on and develop friendships with them (Interviewer: Ahum). Erm, I think it's just there's just something about that 'thrown in the deep end' kind of thing that makes people bond."* (Teacher-Interview-5-School-C)

However, it was also noted in other schools that there was a lack of involvement from members of staff as shown in the quote below.

> *"...it's quite weird at this school the school as a whole don't seem to get behind it as much as I wish they would... there's some really lovely young teachers that always help out but I think a lot of the older staff, even if people in their form are in it, don't seem to bother and that's a bit, that's quite frustrating"* (Teacher-Interview-7 School-P)

The above quotation demonstrates that the impact the school play can have upon teacher relationships seems to depend on the attitude of the teaching staff towards the value of the play.

4.3.2c Peer Relationships

This sub-theme refers to the relationships that students built with each other throughout the process of the school play. This led to changes in their perceptions of each other and to relationships developing across year groups.

> *"...it was good because seeing as we were in Year 7 we didn't know many of the older years and it gave us the chance to interact with people older than us."* (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-6-School-C)

> *"I mean because I've been in school plays, coming into them, umm, makes you open your eyes ....you can get on with other people that you wouldn't usually hang around with and*

umm just because they're different doesn't mean they're any less umm, I don't wanna be rude, but any less cooler than you." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-6-School-C)

The above student's comments were also reflected in teacher interviews as is illustrated in the quotation below.

*"...we've seen friendships develop haven't we? People who wouldn't, you'd never put together for two seconds...like we've got a couple of boys who are very intelligent boys, very intelligent boys but would never normally come across or mix with the, like, really popular girls and stuff **(Interviewer: Mhm)** but that's happened."* (Teacher-Interview-5-School-C)

4.3.3. Life skills

The overarching theme of "life skills" was identified from the thematic analysis of the transcripts. This theme relates to the impact of the school play on the development of generalisable and transferable skills. This theme has been split into three sub-themes, which will each be discussed in turn.

4.3.3a Social skills

In the open-ended question of the questionnaires, where participants were asked to identify the benefits of participating in the school play, 15% (2) of the teachers and 11% of students highlighted the development of students' social skills through involvement in the school play. Thematic analysis revealed the sub-theme "social skills" in both teacher and pupil transcripts. For many of the students this was related to an increase in confidence.

"...it helps to develop your overall people skills cos during the play you have to talk to people that you wouldn't really usually talk to, like people have said and I think that can help you relate to like to the outside world..." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

"...I'm a much more, like, confident and a social person now because you meet so many new people during the play that you just, you're not afraid of meeting new people after that..." (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-7-School-P)

Teachers also noted that the need to "get on" with people was an essential part of the school play process.

*"...the fact that they have to get on with a range of people and do work through this and be supportive..." (*Teacher-Interview-2-School-A)

"They don't, they don't pick who they work with, you know, we're pairing them up, we're grouping them up (Interviewer: Yeah) so, so they have to make that work."(Teacher-Interview-5 School-C)

It was also noted by the teachers that this was a skill that was transferable to other lessons and also could be helpful in preparing students for professional life.

"...I mean we're not training kids to be actors in our normal lessons but the skills involved (Interviewer: Mm) getting on with people..." (Teacher-Interview-2-School-A)

"...social skills as well it's really nice to see them forging these, these links with friends, making friends and behaving professionally around each other and their peer group..." (Teacher-Interview-4 School-W)

5.3.3b Emotional awareness and control

Thematic analysis revealed that many of the students and staff interviewed believed that involvement in a school play could help students develop their understanding of their own and other's emotions and, furthermore, increase their ability to express and control these emotions.

"...it's made me think about how other people must be feeling at the same time as I am (Interviewer: Yeah) cos we must all be feeling the same on, like, performance night cos it's all, like, all stress levels and everything. So it's kind of made me feel, like, empathy in a way for other people..." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

As well as finding the school production helpful in terms of understanding other's emotions, students also referred to the notion that it helped them to manage and express their own feelings.

"it's just like a thing to get away to, (Interviewer: Mmmhm) to express yourself after school, so maybe if you had, like, an angry part and, like, you felt angry it's just like a way of expressing your feelings into your acting" (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-4-School-H)

"I think I'm a lot better at looking stupid in front of people now. Like, if I do something really embarrassing, which is quite often, I kind of know how to bring it back and instead of just standing there going bright red." (Female-pupil-Focus-Group-2-School-SB)

The teachers also commented on emotional awareness in terms of students' ability to control their

own emotions.

> *"...You know we have a boy in our cast who has autism **(Interviewer: Yes)** and he's been on an extraordinary journey **(Interviewer: Mhm),** erm, emotionally through school, he's grown so much, he never used to be able to hold his temper... he's often one of the ones that you can kind of go 'Isn't it great to see, like, how far he's come'"* (Teacher-Interview-5-School-C)

> *"I think that ability to tap into one's emotions and control one's emotions is also really important because obviously you have a, you know, you have an element of fear when you're performing or sometimes nervousness which makes you giggle and you have to be able to control that, otherwise you're not acting..."* (Teacher-Interview-3-School-H)

The theme of emotional awareness and control is also supported by quantitative data from the closed questions on the questionnaires. For example, when asked whether the school play impacted positively, negatively or not at all on their awareness of their own emotions, 94% of students felt that it had a positive impact and 100% (13) of the teachers also thought the impact was positive. When asked the same question regarding their awareness of other's emotions, 92% of students answered that they believed there was a positive impact and 92% (12) of the teachers felt that the play could have a positive impact on this area (please see appendix L for the full results table).

4.3.3c Perseverance

Many of the students indicated that their ability to overcome challenges and to persevere when times were hard had increased as a result of being involved in the school play. Teachers' comments also reflected this.

> *"I've learned that I'm willing to commit for a whole year to something, which is quite surprising. I usually give up on things half way through so it's been really rewarding **(laughter)** yeah, it's been rewarding to see the effort that I've put in come out in a performance..."* (Male-pupil-Focus-Group-5 School-C)

> *"I learned that if I can put my mind to something I can do it, like, cos I used to be really, like, unconfident, I used to put myself down all the time, I can't do it but then I did it and I felt good and it's, yeah. It's amazing"* (Female-pupil-Focus-Group-1-School-C)

Many of the teachers reflected that having to persevere with a task that was difficult and having a feeling of success at the end also helped students learn the value of hard work.

*"I think the fact that they actually see projects through from a very chaotic beginning, through sheer hard work, frustration, they get through that (**2nd Teacher: Yeah**) And they actually can see it, you know, they shape it towards its final successful conclusion."* (Teacher-Interview-2-School-A)

Furthermore, students also reflected on how they felt more able to manage difficult situations as they had had to do so throughout the process of the school play.

*"...that reacting if you, if you can react quickly to something that if it goes wrong (**Interviewer: yeah**) then it's like, yeah, I fixed that, I did that, and that's my favourite thing."* (Male-pupil-Focus-Group-6-School-C)

The notion of it being acceptable to make mistakes and also learning from mistakes was a concept that was noticeable within the student focus groups.

"...you kind of get used to the feeling that even if you do do something wrong there's people who will help you and support you and so in a way that's made me feel, like, braver in a way so that when on stage I feel like I handle it and even if I do it wrong people won't hate me for it..." (Female-pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

The theme of perseverance is also supported by quantitative data from the questionnaires, as is shown in the below graph.

Graph 3: Quantitative data showing teacher and student perceptions of the impact of the school play on students' perseverance (ability to stick with difficult tasks)
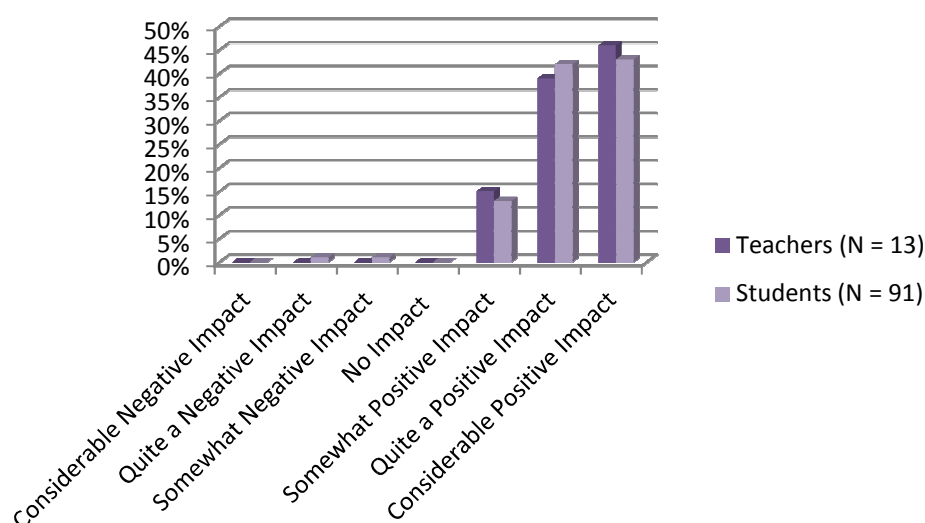
The above graph depicts responses to the one part of the final question on the teacher and student questionnaires *"To what extent do you believe that taking part in a school production impacts on students' perseverance (ability to stick with difficult tasks)?"* Responses indicated the following.

- All of the teachers felt that the school play had a positive impact on students' ability to persevere and stick with difficult tasks to various degrees.

- 98% of the student participants felt that that the school play had a positive impact on their ability to stick with difficult tasks.

- Two of the students (2%) felt that participating in the school play had a somewhat negative impact on their ability to stick with difficult tasks.

4.3.4. Pupil empowerment

One of the perceived impacts of the school play identified was the sense of empowerment for the pupils. This theme has been split into three sub-themes which describe the ways in which the pupils could gain a sense of empowerment through their involvement in the school play.

4.3.4a Self confidence

Content analysis of the open ended questions on the questionnaires revealed 54% (7) of the teachers and 48% of students made comments related to the category "increased confidence" when describing the benefits of involvement in the school play. Thematic analysis of the transcripts

supports these findings as there was a strong theme in relation to confidence from the perspective of students and teachers.

> *"... you gain loads of confidence and you also gain like self belief... like belief in yourself that you can act and that you can stand up on stage in front of lots of people and actually perform to the best of your abilities."* (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

> *"...just being confident enough just to stand up there in front of that many people, like, the spotlight completely on you, like, the amount of pressure that you have is actually like people underestimate how much pressure it really is but that's* **(Interviewer: Mmm)** *one thing I'll always have, like, now cos I feel really confident when I'm in that situation."* (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

One of the teachers interviewed also made the comment that it was not necessarily the performing which impacted on the students' confidence and discussed the impact on other members of the school play team.

> *"...somebody operates the follow spot and somebody changes the scenery and does various things, to be part of something* **(Interviewer: Mm)** *boosts their confidence... it's seeing something through that is praised, is worthwhile, that gives, you know, two hours of, umm, enjoyment to a paying audience* **(Interviewer: Mm).** *I think that's confidence boosting in itself really* **(Interviewer: Yeah)** *to be part of that."* (Teacher-Interview-2-School-A)

Some of the students in one of the focus groups talked about how the increase in confidence gave them the strength to be more independent in terms of the choices they made.

> *"...the ability to do things that I feel I want to do, not what people want me to do."* (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-1-School-H)

> *"...if you can get up and do stuff in front of other people you don't know you should be able to stand up to your friends and your family and stuff."* (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-1-School-H)

Furthermore, many of the teachers noted that part of the reward of putting on a school play was watching the students grow in confidence.

> *"I find they get a lot, they do get a lot more confident, especially the quieter ones... the lead, she had never been involved with any of the school productions...she's really quiet and shy and so many teachers where just like "you've given her the lead?" and I'm like, have you not*

heard her sing? She's amazing and she really has come on a lot..." (Teacher-Interview-7-School-P)

This theme is also supported by quantitative data as is shown in the below graph.

Graph 4: Quantitative data showing teacher and student perceptions of the impact of the school play on students' self confidence.
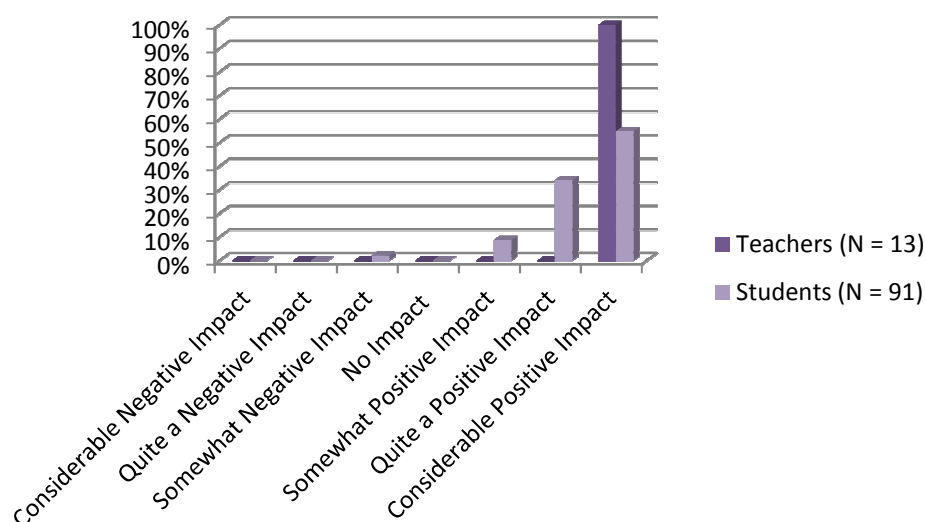
The above graph depicts responses to the one part of the final question on the teacher and student questionnaires *"To what extent do you believe that taking part in a school production impacts on students' self confidence?"* Responses indicated the following.

- All of the teachers felt that the school play had a considerable positive impact on students' confidence.

- 98% of the student participants felt that the school play had a positive impact on their confidence to varying degrees.

- Two of the students (2%) felt that participating in the school play had a somewhat negative impact on confidence.

4.3.4b Ownership and Responsibility

The theme "ownership and responsibility" relates to the finding that some of the students had a level of involvement in the play that required a greater level of responsibility, which in turn appeared to give these pupils a greater sense of ownership of the process and final product. For

example, when asked to describe an experience that was particularly memorable and important to them one student stated.

> *"...as we've got older it's getting, directors have given us opportunities to direct bits and that gives us an extra incentive to kind of make it our own and have our own input in it and give us, they might even give us, like, a scene or a certain amount of pages and then always turn to us and go "and what do you think of that from an audience perspective", so that kind of side of it is, is one that is a different kind of experience."* (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

Another student described the responsibilities she took on during performance nights which seemed to evoke feelings of competence.

> *"...on a performance night and you gotta go round and make sure everyone's got their costumes maybe or something it makes you feel good knowing that you're making a difference to the whole and helping out... it's now got to the point where we know we gotta make sure everything is okay and we just go round anyway. **(Interviewer: Yeah)** Even if we are not asked."* (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-4-School-H)

The opportunity for additional responsibilities and ownership varied between schools. However, in all of the teacher interviews it was apparent that the teachers gave some level of responsibility for certain areas of the production.

> *"...what I really enjoyed about this one was sort of giving the pupils a bit more ownership...I gave the pupils a lot more "right, off you go, work on that and come back and let's see what you've got" so they could sort of coach and mentor each other"* (Teacher-Interview-7-School-P)

> *"...the year 9s we give quite a lot of responsibility too as well so, erm, last year some of the year 9s actually choreographed their own dance for one of their scenes and the year 9s taught it to all the other, like, year 8 and year 7s as well."* (Teacher-Interview-1-School-SB)

As the above quotation shows, it did appear that additional responsibilities were generally given to older members of the group.

4.3.4c Sense of Achievement

The sub-theme "sense of achievement" relates to students' reports of feelings of success and achievement as a result of the school play. Thematic analysis revealed many of the students felt this way, particularly on the performance nights.

"I think the best bit for me was just after it had finished and just sort of buzzing with all the adrenaline and stuff and then I was waiting outside and by the car park and as people were going past they were rolling down their windows and going, 'Well done, you were amazing'" (Male-pupil-Focus-Group-7-School-P)

"I think the end achievement is, like, you feel the sense of pride afterwards, cos you've learnt all the lines and gone to the rehearsals, kind of slaved over the play, it's kind of finished so that's good." (Female-pupil-Focus-Group-2-School-SB)

For some pupils the sense of achievement was also related to having changed other people's perceptions of them.

"...when they (teachers) come over to you and they, you, you've never spoken to them before and, like (name) said, and they say, you know, "Well done," you know, "I'd never, I'd never realised you were involved in the plays but I have to say hats off to you, you done really really well". You think, right, that's another, you know, more dust off the shoulder again." (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

The teacher interviews also supported this theme as many of the teachers discussed the sense of achievement that pupils gain from their involvement in the play.

"It's always the last night when everyone's kind of clapping and they're on the stage and they're just so proud of what they've done" (Teacher-Interview-5-School-C)

"I think once you're up there and you are getting laughs and you're getting a massive round of applause and the end comes and everyone's going, "That's wicked", and then for a week afterwards everyone's going, you know, "that was amazing"" (Teacher-Interview-3-School-H)

4.3.5. Independent samples t-tests

When exploring the students' perceptions of the impact of the school play it was recognised that the age and gender of participants may influence their perceptions. In order to explore whether there were significant differences between the genders and older and younger pupils independent-samples t-tests were conducted. An independent-samples t-test was used to compare the mean scores for each of the 23 areas that were listed in the final question on the questionnaire (see appendices B and C for the full list). The mean scores were compared for the following groups:

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- Males (N= 28) and Females (N =63)
- Year groups 7 -9 (aged 11-14 – pre exams N= 53)Year groups 10 -13 (aged 14-18 exam period N = 38)

A significant difference was found in just one of the 23 areas when comparing mean scores for males and females (See Appendix N for full SPSS output). The one area in which there was a significant difference between males and females was "perseverance", which is described in the questionnaire as "the ability to stick with difficult tasks". On average, female participants were more likely to state that being involved in the school play had a greater positive impact on their "perseverance" (M = 5.37, SE =.09) than males (M = 4.89, SE = .23). This difference was statistically significant t (89) = -2.39, p < .05. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -.47, 95% *CI:* .86 to -.08) was moderate (eta squared = -.069). Guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988) were used to interpret the value of -.069 as moderate.

Between the two age groups noted above (years 7-9 and years 10-13) there was only one area in which there was a significant difference. This area was "imagination". On average, the younger pre-exam participants (years 7-9) were more likely to state that being involved in the school play had a greater positive impact on their "imagination" (M = 5.13, SE =.15) than the older participants (years 10-13) (M = 5.49, SE = .09). This difference was statistically significant t (89) = -2.41, p < .05. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -.36, 95% *CI:* -.65 to -.06) was moderate (eta squared = -.07). Guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988) were used to interpret the value of -.07 as moderate. However, the amount of t-tests completed does increase the risk of a type one error (Pallant, 2010). Therefore, these results should be interpreted with caution.

4.4. Research question 3: What do teachers and students believe are the challenges and negative impacts involved in taking part in the school play?

Table 7: Content analysis of question 7 on the student questionnaire: "What do you believe are the main difficulties and challenges for students and staff that are involved in the school play?"

Table seven presents the qualitative and quantitative findings from the content analysis of the responses participants gave to question 7 on the student questionnaire. The percentage of participants who were identified as expressing agreement with the specific category is displayed quantitatively on the left hand side. The right column displays the qualitative data through illustrative quotations. Questionnaires were returned by 91 students.

Category (percentage of respondents)	Exemplar quotations of student responses
Learning lines (40%)	"The main difficulties I think is learning lines" (Year-10-female-aged-14) "It can be hard to learn your lines" (Year-9-Male-aged-14)
Organisational issues (36%)	"Getting everybody together was rather difficult and then being able to do scenes with not enough people or the wrong people" (Year-12-Male-aged-16) "Some people were not turning up so groups couldn't practice together so other students had more to remember" (Year-7-Female-aged-12) "Finding the right costumes to suit your role" (Year-8-Female-aged-12)
Time Consuming (24%)	"Working on weekends means you don't really have time to see mates" (Year-9-Female-aged-14) "It's very time consuming and requires a huge amount of work and commitment" (Year-11-Female-aged-15)
Conflict (23%)	"Tensions did run high from time to time between students and staff if things didn't run to plan e.g. lines weren't learnt or dances weren't working. Communication was the main thing to focus on at this point as this was what was needed to ensure that problems were solved" (Year-11-Female-aged-16) "Students may fall out with each other or staff" (Year-11-Female-aged-15)
Concerns about own and others competence and confidence	"Students who don't know how to sing or dance" (Year-13-Male-aged-18) "Learning to dance with no other dancing experience" (Year-10-Female-aged-15) "Keeping a reputation, embarrassment" (Year-8-Male-aged-13)

Category (percentage & number of respondents)	
(21%)	
Stage fright/ nerves (14%)	*"Stage fright. I had stage fright on the last day cos I thought I would ruin it" (Year-7-Male-aged-11)* *"Getting over insecurities, nerves and pressure." (Year-11-Female-aged-16)*
Stress (12%)	*"Stress from learning lines" (Year-10-Male-aged-15)* *"Pressure and stress" (Year-12-Male-aged-17)*

Table 8: Content analysis of question 10 on the teacher questionnaire: "What do you believe are the main difficulties and challenges for students and staff that are involved in the school play?"

Table eight presents the qualitative and quantitative findings from the content analysis of the responses participants gave to question 10 on the teacher questionnaire. The percentage of participants who were identified as expressing agreement with the specific category is displayed quantitatively on the left hand side. The right column displays the qualitative data through illustrative quotes. Questionnaires were returned by 13 teachers.

Category (percentage & number of respondents)	Exemplar quotes of teacher responses
Time constraints (77% =10 teachers)	*"It is usually a question of time management."* *"Time, finding shared time where we were all available."*
Clashes with other subjects (31% = 4 teachers)	*"These days, we face an eternal battle with staff who are not involved in the production who need our students for after school classes, especially in the core subjects."* *"We also sometimes have members of our cast who clash with commitments"*
Financial constraints (31%= 4 teachers)	*"Money. Many of the plays that we have done in the past barely break-even after costs such as the licence, costume, props, set etc have been taken in to account."* *"Also, budgets are a main challenge"*
Commitment from students	*"Students: Boredom of repetition at same rehearsals."* *"...Often when we have a whole cast rehearsal quite a few people are missing*

and staff (23% = 3 teachers)	*which means we have to go over stuff again."*
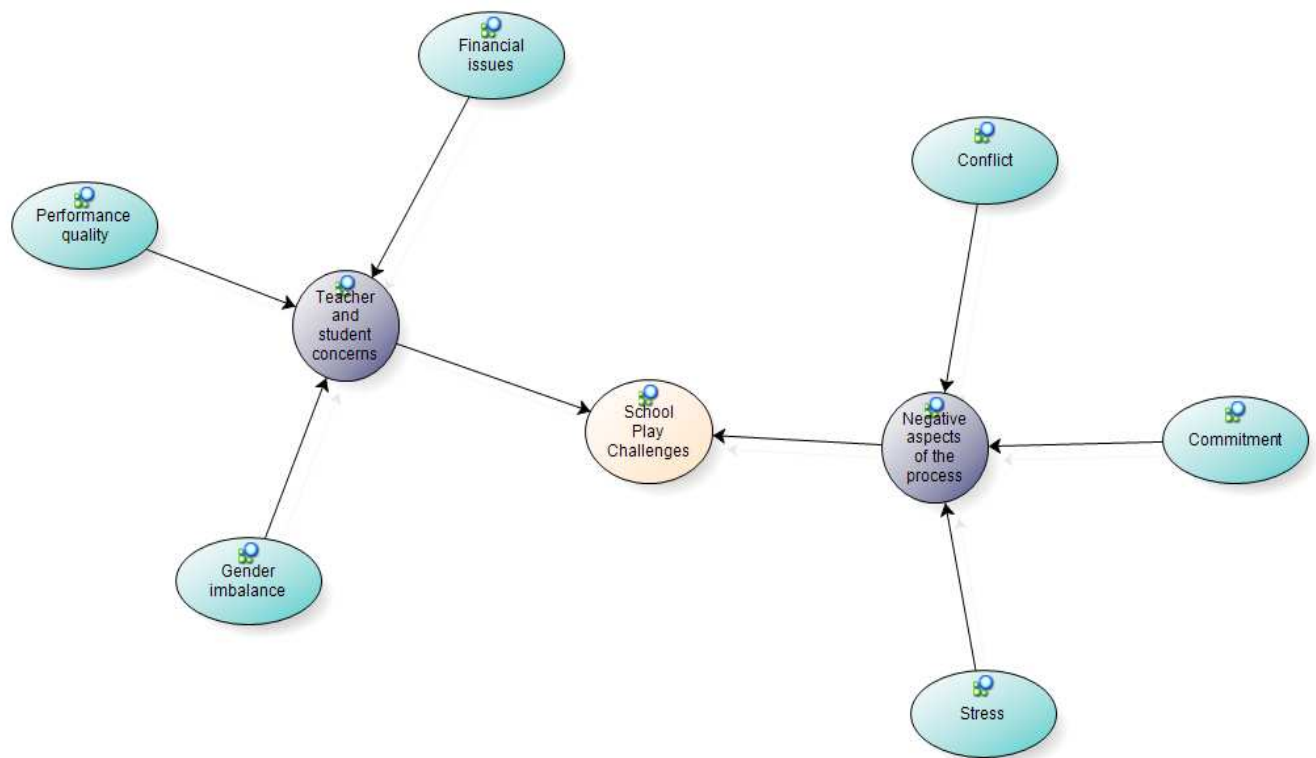
4.4.1. Negative aspects of the process

The over arching theme of "Negative aspects of the process" was identified through thematic analysis and refers to the key areas that were identified as difficult throughout the process for both students and staff. The three sub-themes shown in the thematic map above are presented below together with findings from the questionnaires.

4.4.1a Stress

Both teachers and students noted that at times being involved in the school play could be a stressful experience. Whilst this was not identified as a theme in the teacher questionnaires, content analysis of the student questionnaires revealed that 12% of student participants referred to "stress" as one of the challenges of the school play process. Thematic analysis of the teacher interviews and focus groups suggest that the stress experienced was often related to feelings of pressure.

> *"...it does get really stressful...and you feel very much like, I think, (pause) without meaning to, I think that you put a lot of pressure on yourself..."* (Teacher-Interview-7-School-P)

"...it was, you know, a lot of stress, like, I put a lot of stress on myself and found myself sort of breaking down a few times, like in rehearsals or, like, on my own or something..." (Female-pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

Furthermore, both staff and students noted the rise in stress levels as performance dates became imminent.

"I think towards the end I think obviously where it's come closer towards the actual night and obviously we've all been a bit, like, angry and stuff and more stressed and stuff like that" (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

"...it's times like this, like in the last two weeks since we've come back after half term, obviously this is the last term now and we're in the lead-up to this year's one, that you just kind of like find of teaching gets in the way..." (Teacher-Interview-1-School-SB)

It was also noted that stress within the production could be caused by lack of time, concerns about quality of the production and conflict within the production. As these are separate themes this will be discussed under those headings.

4.4.1b Commitment

The sub-theme "commitment" relates to both teacher and pupil admissions that staying committed to the process was a challenge for many of the students who agreed to take part. This sub-theme reflects findings from the open question on the questionnaires. 23% (3) of the teachers highlighted issues relating to commitment and 36% of students referred to organisational issues as a challenge, which included attending rehearsals and students "dropping out". Some teachers expressed frustration at the level of commitment shown by some students.

"...one of the key things I think, and the most important thing, is very boring, but is that element of, umm, commitment, because there are a lot of teenagers who are very flaky." (Teacher-Interview-3 School-H)

Some of the students also highlighted commitment of other pupils as a source of their own frustration.

"What I find the most annoying thing is when people sign up for this, for the play willingly, and then they don't come to rehearsals, they, they don't bother to show up or, you know, decide to quit and it puts pressure on everyone else to try and fill in those places" (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

There were also students who admitted to finding the commitment side of the process difficult, in particular attending rehearsals.

"...there were times when I'm thinking, "for God's sake", you know, and things aren't going right and we're going over and over again and obviously you do need rehearsals but there is a point where you are just thinking, "I could jump out the window right now"..." (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

When students gave reasons for a lack of commitment it was apparent that there were parts of school play processes that could be repetitive and thus it was difficult for students to maintain their interest.

"...we kind of lost a lot of people on the way cos they were getting bored just sat around." (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

The teachers interviewed also identified this as an issue, when discussing student motivation within the school play.

"...when they've got to continue doing the same scene and learning the lines and then go over it again it's "oh I'm bored of this"..." (Teacher-Interview-3-School-H)

One teacher reflected back on her own childhood experience of being in the school play and suggested that in continuing on through the "boredom" of the rehearsals students show increased "staying power".

*"I remember sitting in a rehearsal for two hours to go woo-hoo woo-hoo woo on stage **...**and you take 45 minutes to get your scene and you're sat there and it's boring and unfortunately you have to put up with that boring bit (**interviewer: yeah**) to, to do the well to enjoy the*

show (pause) and that shows a bit of staying power doesn't it? "(Teacher-Interview-6-School-C)

This finding was also reflected by a pupil in the same school.

"...I think I have gotten more patient as it has gone along because you do have to sit and watch them do the same scene over and over again..." (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

4.4.1c Conflict

Content analysis of the student questionnaires revealed that 23% of students reported issues relating to conflict as a challenging part of the school production. This was explored in the interviews and focus groups held. It was evident that one of the sources of conflict between students in the school play stemmed from competition regarding roles.

"I think people might have been jealous with each other. They were just like thinking that they deserved their parts and they weren't doing it right." (Male-pupil-Focus-Group-2-School-SB)

This was also noticed by the teachers involved in organising the school play.

"...when you get down to the auditions, like, you're putting friends against each other basically so I think the competition is a bit of an issue and just things like we did have this year, erm, somebody come to us and say, like, 'I'm not happy with the part I got', because naturally they would have liked to be the main part..." (Teacher-Interview-1-School-SB)

Furthermore, the potential for conflict between teaching staff and different departments was also identified.

"I'd love to say that I don't think there was any conflict but I think that there probably was, umm, certainly between staff and departments there was this kind of overriding feeling that it was an up-hill struggle to do it, umm on the behalf of the department" (Teacher-Interview-4-School-W)

One of the students in a focus group also noticed conflict between staff and drew attention to the impact that could have on the students.

> "I think the production staff sometimes have a bit of conflict with each other **(General laughter)**. Umm **(Interviewer: Right)** which obviously does have a knock on effect on us cos we're thinking, "Oh, you know, we're rehearsing in the hall on the stage and they're having a bit of a domestic"..." (Focus-Group-3-School-A)

It was also noted that lack of commitment from students and staff was a source of conflict and frustration throughout the process of rehearsing for the play, as is shown in the theme of commitment above.

4.4.2. Teacher and student concerns

"Teacher and student concerns" was identified as an overarching theme within the thematic analysis. Within this theme three sub-themes were identified: "performance quality", "financial issues" and "gender imbalance".

4.4.2a Performance quality

Many of the pupils in the focus groups alluded to feelings of concern as to how the play would go and the pressure they felt to put on a good performance.

> "I felt like all the mixed emotions you get of, umm, just being proud but also worried about how the play's going to go" (Focus-Group-5-School-C)

> "you wanna try and, like, make yourself, like, like, the best, like, a good character but, like, for everyone else as, and for, like, the performance." (Focus-Group-7-School-P)

In some of the teacher interviews it appeared that a dilemma was present between creating a quality, professional performance and creating an experience that was both enjoyable and focused on the development of the young people involved. In one school, a teacher discussed giving the students more ownership and freedom in terms of directing and decisions about the play, at the cost of the professionalism of the performance.

> "...it's not our show, it's their show **(2nd Teacher: Yes) (Interviewer: yeah)** and so that's why there's slight differences, it's not like a professional show. I shouldn't say that but I do. It's a

school show. So at the end of the day (Interviewer: Mmm) the things they get from it are more important." (Teacher-Interview-5-School-C)

The same teacher referred to pressures within the school to produce a "good" show.

"...even though senior management might be breathing down our neck (Laughter) to say they want a good show. (Interviewer: Yeah). And we're saying: 'You're not going to get a good show but your kids are going to have a great time.'" (Teacher-Interview-5-School-C)

In contrast to this perspective a teacher in another school noted that whilst giving students more ownership in terms of participation in discussions regarding rehearsals she felt that there was not enough time for this kind of freedom.

"...they don't discuss rehearsals with me cos there's not time, umm, as lovely as that autonomy would be for them, there just isn't physically the time for me to be "so guys what do you want to do?", (Interviewer: yeah) umm, so I am very prescriptive with all of that." (Teacher-Interview-3-School-H)

However, when discussing allocation of roles, the same teacher reported placing higher value on hard work and commitment over talent, thus valuing the experiences and lessons learnt by the children involved, over the quality of the performance.

"...if there's somebody I know flakes out on me, they won't get (the role) ...so if it's a choice between, "Oh this persons incredibly talented, this persons okay, but this person I know will commit to me 100%", they'll get it (Interviewer: yeah, okay) because it's not just me they're letting down, they let down the entire cast." (Teacher-Interview-3-School-H)

4.4.2b Financial Issues

Thematic analysis revealed the recurrent sub-theme "financial issues". In the open-ended question of the teacher questionnaire, 31% (4) of the teachers reported that financial concerns were one of the challenges of the school play process. Confirming findings from the questionnaire, thematic analysis of teacher interviews revealed that budgeting and financial issues were a concern for all of the schools involved in this phase of the research.

"...we went into our first meeting with the Head and asked her for 2,000 pounds and she gave us 1,000 pounds! So just having a grand to do the whole school play, and we had no, like we haven't got a costume store at all..." (Teacher-Interview-1 School-SB)

*"The worst thing is actually trying to get it done within a school scenario **(interviewer: Okay)** so if it had been outside of school I kind of would have had control over the budget...there are so many constraints with putting things through the school budget."* (Teacher-Interview-4 School-W)

"...we've got a very small budget and we have to sell tickets in order to have a budget for the next year." (Teacher-interview-2 School-A)

This was far more of a teacher concern than a student concern. However, there was one student who noted the impact of finances on the school play.

"...with the resources we have in terms of productions and the kind of money that we get we, we didn't, we couldn't have done anything better than what we did, you know, we don't get a lot of money to get professional sets and, you know, we got the lights in the hall and they're wicked, you know, we do, we do get, like, big props and we do buy those in and we also have to buy the scripts but we couldn't have done much else, you know, you talk about other schools and they get, they can hire out the (names local theatre) if they want, you know, they've probably, they've probably got that money..." (Male-pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

4.4.2c Gender imbalance

The response rate on the student questionnaires indicated a gender imbalance in the amounts of students involved in the school play, with 31% of participants being male and 69% female. This suggests that there are more girls than boys involved in the school play. This was investigated further in the interviews and focus groups held and "gender imbalance" has been identified as one of the sub-themes within the "teacher and student concerns". A number of different suggestions were given as to why the gender imbalance occurred. One student hypothesised that the lack of male involvement may be related to allocation of main parts.

*"...there has been only a few boys but, umm, it would be nice if a few more would actually come along **(Interviewer: Yeah)** I'm not saying it's, you know, a lot of the main parts were*

given to girls and there's no problem with that but it, it just shows that there's not very much effort in the boy area and even if the boys haven't been given main parts you know you it would just be nice to see a few more in the chorus as opposed to just sort of not caring at all." (Male-pupil-Focus-Group-5-School-C)

Another student suggested that the lack of boys within their school production may be related to concerns regarding image and status within the school.

"I think it's more, not that it's more appealing to girls, but I think boys are a bit more cautious to get involved a lot, what their friends are going to say, you know, they might be captain of the football side, they don't think it's right for them and they don't think it fits with their status in school" (Male-pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

In the teacher interview within the same school teachers also referred to the image of the school production within that school.

"...I think there's still an element with some of the, the younger kids that they think being in, erm, a production is a bit (pause) *embarrassing and maybe, er, you know, (2nd Teacher: To use an old fashioned word, a bit sissy.) I was going to say that..."* (Teacher-Interview-2 School-A)

A teacher in another school referred to the teasing of a male pupil who was in the school play and also on the football team.

"I know, our main, our lead is called (pupil's name) and he's on the football team and cos a few times he came to our rehearsals instead of playing a football match they started calling him Alice." (Teacher-Interview-1-School-SB)

The above quotation seems to demonstrate that there may well be perceptions of the school play as a more feminine activity and this may influence the number of boys who decide to become involved. It appears that the gender imbalance may be related to how the school play is perceived by students in the school. A teacher from another school noted that their play had relatively larger numbers of boys involved and he attributed this to the way drama and singing were perceived within the school.

*"I mean, our school's lucky, we've got a very strong male voice choir...I think the (names choir) as they're called, just gave that kind of, it's alright to perform, it's alright to go along to a singing class, so there's a group of, you know, 20 of them in the boys' choir, umm, who were used to singing in front of people and so there's also a very kind of strong, the choirs are well thought of **(interviewer: mmm)** so people want to join the choir, people want to be involved."* (Teacher-Interview-4-School-W)

Summary of Results:

In relation to the first research question a number of different reasons behind participants' decisions to take part in the school play have been identified through the content analysis of student and teacher questionnaires. The findings were developed further through thematic analysis of the interviews and focus groups. Three main themes were identified in relation to student motivations and two in relation to teacher motivations. Content analysis was used to analyse questionnaire questions relating to research question 2 and thematic analysis of phase 2 of the data collection revealed four main themes with 11 sub-themes. Finally, a number of key challenges, difficulties and negative impacts associated with the school production were first identified through content analysis of the questionnaires. Further themes in relation to research question 3 were also identified through thematic analysis of the interviews and focus groups. These findings were grouped under two main themes and six sub-themes. These findings will be discussed in more detail in Chapter five.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the results outlined in chapter four in relation to the research and theories identified in the literature review. The results relating to each research question will be discussed in turn and comparisons will be made between teacher and student responses where appropriate. Finally, this chapter considers the strengths and limitations of the current research, including criticisms of both qualitative and quantitative methods and of the sample used in this study.

5.2. Research question 1. Why do teachers and students decide to become involved in a school play?

The reasons underlying both teachers' and students' decision to participate in the school play were explored initially through the questionnaire and then further through interviews and focus groups. The key themes identified will be discussed.

5.2.1. Student motivations

The content analysis of the student questionnaire revealed five key themes in relation to student motivations to participate in the school play. These were **"Enjoyment"**(67%), **"Past experiences"**(18%), **"Influence of friends and siblings"**(14%), **"Future plans"** (10%) and **"Increasing confidence"**(10%). Three of these themes were also identified within the thematic analysis of the focus groups. The themes **"Influence of friends and siblings"** and **"Increasing confidence"** were not identified within the focus groups as motivators and, therefore, are not as valid as the three themes discussed in the next three sections. However, the finding that students reported that they were influenced by their friends does relate to Pitts' (2007) research, which found that friendship groups influenced participants' decision to become involved in the school production. Furthermore, this finding also corresponds to previous research suggesting that adolescents are likely to be influenced by their peers, as is noted in the literature review (Barry & Wentzel, 2006; Ellis & Zarbatany,2007; Farrell & White, 1998; Shope, Raghunathan, & Patil, 2003).

5.2.1a Intrinsic enjoyment

The content analysis of the student questionnaires and thematic analysis of the focus groups revealed that the motivation most commonly suggested by students was **"Intrinsic enjoyment".** In many cases this was related to enjoyment of the acting, singing and dancing which is involved in the school play. However, there were also students who reported enjoying the social aspect of the play.

Pitts' (2007) case study research also demonstrated that a key motivator for young people to become involved in a school musical was enjoyment of performing and entertaining others.

This finding also relates to Harland et al.'s (2000) research, which identified the immediate and intrinsic effect of enjoyment as one of the effects of the arts in education. At a broader level, Mahoney, Harris, and Eccles (2006) found that the primary motivation for children who participated in organised ECA was intrinsic (e.g. enjoyment and excitement). Mahoney, Harris and Eccles (2006) also noted that pressure from adults was rarely given as reasons for involvement in extra-curricular activities and this was also the case in the current research.

The finding that pupils involved in the school play were motivated by the intrinsic enjoyment they gained from the experience also supports the theory that the children may be experiencing the psychological state of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This is best demonstrated by one student's description of her feelings whilst involved in the school play *"...sort of you get really pumped up and, you know, the adrenaline's going and it just makes you feel so good about yourself, like, it just, it just, you just forget about everything that's, like, bad or whatever and you just think, I'm, like, having the time of my life with great people."* (Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-3-School-A)

5.2.1b Past experiences

Many of the pupils in both the questionnaires and focus groups suggested that their main reason for becoming involved in the school play was that they had participated before and enjoyed it. This finding could imply that the school play appeals mainly to a certain type of student who repeatedly becomes involved. Therefore, investigation of ways of increasing the appeal of the school play to other students is an area of interest that could be explored in future research. Whilst it could be argued that the **"Intrinsic enjoyment"** noted above may not be present in those students choosing not to participate, it could equally be argued adolescence is a time when young people are developing their own identities and going through various life changes (Cowie, Smith and Blades, 2003; Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Therefore, the encouragement of participation in new experiences such as the school play would be appropriate.

5.2.1c Future plans

Ten percent of students' responses on the questionnaires indicated a desire for a career within the acting field and one pupil expressed an ambition to become a drama teacher. This theme was also present within the focus groups. This finding links with Hughes and Wilson's (2004) finding that 80% of the youth theatre participants indicated that they had got involved as a result of an interest in acting. However, with only 10% of the questionnaire participants of this research stating future

career as a reason for their involvement in the play it is not argued to be one of the core reasons that young people become involved.

5.2.2. Teacher motivations

The content analysis revealed four main categories that the teachers gave as reasons for their involvement which were as follows, **"Beneficial for students"**, (38% = 5 teachers) **"Appreciation of theatre/ production process"**, (31% = 4 teachers) **"Part of job role"**, (31% = 4 teachers) and **"Promoting Drama as a subject"** (15% = 2 teachers). Thematic analysis of the teacher interviews supported the theme that teachers were motivated by the benefits for the students. A further theme was also identified as **"Promoting the school".** These two themes will now be discussed.

5.2.2a Beneficial for students

The most popular reason for teachers to become involved in organising a school play was that they believed it was beneficial for the students involved. This was evident in both the questionnaire responses and the interviews. This was reflected by teachers in more general terms "*For the students, this is an undeniably brilliant experience"* (Questionnaire-response) and also in terms of the specific benefits that teachers believed could result from involvement in the school play "*…fun, confidence building for students, enthusing students.*" (Questionnaire-response).These findings support research completed by Lang (2002) who investigated teachers' perspectives of the collective creation of a play between teachers and students. Lang (2002) found that teachers noted a number of benefits for the pupils involved in the creation of the play, including opportunities to grow in self-confidence, and in their knowledge and understanding of social situations. The specific benefits identified in the current research are explored in the themes relating to research question two.

5.2.2b Promoting the school

Whilst this theme was not apparent within the teacher questionnaires as a motivation for teacher involvement, a number of the teachers described the potential for the school play to promote the school to the outside community. Although this was always described as a positive effect by those teachers involved, it is important to note that there is a danger of school plays being judged on the quality of performance as opposed to the quality of experience for the young people involved (Gonzalez, 1999). This idea is explored further under the theme heading **"Performance quality"**

5.3 Research question 2: What do students and teachers believe are the benefits and positive impacts of participating in a school play in terms of what there is to learn and gain from involvement in this activity?

In order to answer the above question, content analysis was carried out on open questions from the teacher and student questionnaires, this helped to guide questions asked in the interviews and focus groups, which were then analysed using thematic analysis. A discussion of the findings is now provided.

Findings from content analysis of open questions on questionnaires

Through content analysis of questionnaire responses, four categories were identified within the teacher responses and seven categories were identified in the student responses. The teachers and students appeared to be in agreement on many of the perceived benefits of involvement in the school play. For example, the categories of **"Developing relationships"** and **"Increasing confidence"** were found to be the highest suggested benefits by both teachers and students. The most popular perceived benefit was **"Developing relationships",** with 85% (11) of teacher and 68% of student participants stating that this was one of the benefits of the school play. The second most popular perceived benefit was **"Increasing confidence".** Fifty four percent (7) of the teachers and 48% of students made comments related to this category. Other categories that were identified in the analysis of both students' and teachers' questionnaire responses were **"Developing teamwork skills"** (26% of student responses and 38% (5) of teacher responses) and **"Developing social skills"** (11% of student responses and 15% (2) of the teacher responses). These categories have also been developed further through the thematic analysis of teacher interviews and pupil focus groups and therefore, will be discussed further under the headings of the overarching themes identified.

The three other benefits identified within the student questionnaires were **"Enjoying the experience"**(32%), **"Developing acting skills"** (18%) and **"Sense of achievement"** (10%). The finding that students identified **"Enjoying the experience"** as one of the benefits of participation in the school play reflects previous research in this area, which highlights participants' enjoyment as one of the effects of involvement in this kind of activity (Hampshire and Matthijsse, 2010; Harland et al., 2000; Hughes & Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, the finding that students identified **"Developing acting skills"** as one of the benefits of their involvement in the school play reflects the findings of Pitts (2007) and Hughes and Wilson (2004) who also found that young people involved in a school play and youth theatre productions reported that they benefited from developing their acting skills. Finally, the category **"Sense of achievement"** has also been further explored and identified as a theme within the teacher and student transcripts. Therefore, the research and theory related to this

finding will be further explored under the heading of **"Sense of achievement"** further on in this chapter.

Findings from the thematic analysis:

The process of thematic analysis was carried out on the teacher interviews and student focus groups in relation to question 2. This resulted in the identification of four overarching themes, which will each be discussed in turn in relation to previous research and psychological theory.

5.3.1. Sense of community

The theme **"Sense of community"** referred to the way in which the school play was perceived to facilitate a sense of community amongst the teaching staff and students involved. Within this theme there were two sub-themes: **"Sense of belonging"** and **"Collaborative Learning"**.

5.3.1a Sense of belonging

The sub-theme **"sense of belonging"** referred to the students' and teachers' beliefs that being in the school play helped participants to feel part of a group. Many teachers and students referred to a "family feel". Quantitative analysis of the closed questions on the questionnaires also indicated that involvement in a school play could have a positive impact on a young person's sense of belonging. As noted in the literature review, there are a number of psychologists who have advocated the importance of meeting the human need to belong to a group which is achieved through a sense of belonging (e.g. Dreikurs, 1953; Maslow, 1954; and Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This theme also relates to McLean's (2009) work regarding motivation in that it appears that involvement in a school play may help to meet a student's affiliation need through both feeling an affiliation to the people within the group and, furthermore, feeling affiliation with the core values and goals of the group, as is demonstrated in the following quote *"... just being with people that enjoy the same thing as you, not just doing it for the sake of it, doing it because other people are doing it as well."*(Female-Pupil-Focus-Group-1 School-H).

This finding also relates to a number of research studies identified in the literature review. For example, Burton's (2002) research identified a theme he named "interconnectedness" within the data gathered for his research investigating the impact of youth theatre on young people. Interestingly, Burton noted that the theme "interconnectedness" applied more to the female members of the group than the males. Burton (2002) found that female members were more likely to take opportunities to develop a close network of friendships. However, this finding does not apply

to the current research. An independent samples t-test was used to compare the male and female mean scores in relation to their perception of the school play's impact on their sense of belonging (see appendix N), and no significant difference was found. The theme of **"sense of belonging"** also relates to the theme of "community", which Ogden (2008) identified in a study investigating the lifelong impact of musical theatre in elementary school. Ogden's (2008) finding that adults can still remember this aspect of the school play suggests that this is a powerful aspect of taking part in a school production. Another piece of research which relates to this finding is Trayes, Harre and Overall's (2012) research, which found that participants in an adolescent competitive performing arts group, reported a sense of "togetherness" within their groups.

5.3.1b Collaborative learning

The sub-theme **"Collaborative learning"** referred to perceived impact of the school play on students' ability to learn together and from each other. This was observed by both teachers and students in the interviews and focus groups. A number of teachers referred to the mentoring that took place and described the way in which pupils would help each other and learn from each other throughout the process. It was also apparent in the data that students' attitudes towards each other seemed to be one of respect in that they were able to acknowledge hard work completed by others. For example, two students described what happened when one pupil dropped out of the play *"...the fairy dropped out, which was (name), and then we had (name) who had to learn her lines and her song in a week and that was, she found it hard but she still did it because she had to do it **(Male Pupil: She did really well) (agreement from the group)**"* (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-1-School-H).

The finding that students and teachers reported that students were learning from each other throughout the school play process supports the theory that the school play could be viewed as a "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger 2006). As noted in the literature review, a "community of practice" is defined by three factors, which are as follows.

- The identity of the group which is defined by the shared common interest that members of the group have.

- Members of the group help each other and share information whilst pursuing their interest in the domain.

- Members of the group develop a shared collection of resources.

The **"Collaborative learning"** theme supports the notion that the school play can be viewed as a "community of practice", in that it refers to pupils' and teachers' admissions that students learnt

from each other via their shared interest in the school play and through sharing the skills that they had developed through their involvement. Furthermore, Dorothy Heathcote's "Mantle of the Expert" (MoE) approach (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) is also related to the sub-theme of "Collaborative learning" in that Heathcote argues that drama can be used as a way of engaging children and young people in a collaborative learning process. The argument is not that school plays use an MoE approach but that ideas from the approach seem applicable given the findings. This theme also relates to the research studies in the areas of youth theatre and drama and theatre in education which identified the potential of involvement in similar activities to have a positive impact on a young persons' ability to work as part of a team (e.g. Miles, 2003; James, 2005).

5.3.2. Relationships

The notion that school plays may have the capacity to enable the development of relationships was initially identified through data from the open ended questions on the questionnaires. Further exploration of this through the interviews and focus groups led to the overarching theme of relationships, which has been split into three sub-themes: **"Teacher-student relationships"**, **"Peer relationships"** and **"Teacher relationships."**

5.3.2a Teacher-student relationships

The impact of the school play on **"Teacher-student relationships"** was perceived to be positive for the majority of cases in both teacher interviews and student focus groups. However, there was one teacher who noted that the impact may not always be for the better *"...sometimes it changes in not in a positive way, sometimes they get a little bit arrogant and a little bit too familiar with me sometimes…"* Conversely, the same teacher goes on to say *"…it's never that negative a thing because they they stop quite quickly, umm, but generally it's positive, generally they just seem happier…"* (Teacher-Interview-3: School-H). The impact of the school play on teacher-student relationships was a strong theme throughout both the teacher interviews and the student focus groups, and it appeared that both students and teachers felt that being involved in a school play helped them to develop a better relationship.

As noted in the literature review, the value of positive **"teacher-student relationships"** in terms of young peoples' emotional development, achievement and engagement in school has been well documented in a number of research studies (e.g. Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Hughes, Cavell, & Willson, 2001; Klem, & Connell, 2004; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Murray,& Murray, 2004; Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011). Furthermore, this finding relates to the concept of affiliation put forward by McLean (2009). In his book entitled "Motivating Every Learner" he argues the following case: "Affiliation to

teachers is particularly critical. Pupils who feel appreciated and supported by their teachers feel positive about school, and this feeling is not just a by product but a core ingredient of their engagement"(p.18).

When speculating as to why a school play may promote positive relationships between students and staff it is argued that one possible reason could be a change in attitude due to the environment being less about formalised learning. It appeared from the comments made by both teachers and students that both parties had enjoyed working towards a shared goal collaboratively. Furthermore it could also be that the shared interest and passion for performing arts is another basis for the positive relationship to form. However, at this stage these arguments are speculative and further research would need to be carried out in order to clarify whether this is the case.

5.3.2b Teacher relationships

The finding that the teachers perceived the school play as impacting on relationships between teachers was an unexpected outcome of the current research. The previous research into school plays and extra-curricular activities in this literature review has not identified an impact on teacher relationships as a finding. This theme was much stronger in the teacher interviews than student focus groups. Whilst some students did discuss the impact of the play on teacher relationships this was not a common occurrence. The teachers in Schools A, C and SB described times when the school play had brought members of staff from different departments together. This demonstrates the wider impact that the production could have across the school.

However, as noted in the results there was also the potential for the play to have a negative impact on teacher relationships. One of the teachers noted that the lack of support from other staff members was an issue. Furthermore, one of the comments in the questionnaire data stated that the school play could be a potential source of conflict between staff members *"These days, we face an eternal battle with staff who are not involved in the production who need our students for after school classes, especially in the core subjects."* (questionnaire-response). This issue is discussed more under the theme heading of **"Conflict"**. However, from a speculative point of view, it is possible that the school play may be a cause of in-group/out-group feelings for teachers. Future research including both teachers involved in a school play and those not involved may present some interesting findings in relation to this hypothesis.

5.3.2c Peer relationships

This theme refers to students' and teachers' indications that the school play had also had a positive impact on the relationships between peers. It was noted that this spread across year groups and students of varying abilities. However, it also should be noted that there were opportunities, highlighted by staff and students, for the school play to have a negative impact on student relationships; for example, as a result of jealousy over roles. This will be explored further in the discussion of findings related to research question 3. Friendships made throughout the process of the school play may seem an unsurprising impact of the school play. However, it is interesting that these friendships seemed to cross the boundaries of age and abilities and therefore, encourage a more inclusive group and opportunities for collaborative learning, as discussed above.

As noted in the literature, review studies investigating the links between involvement in ECAs and friendships have also identified the positive impact that such activities can have on peer relations and friendships (e.g. Eccles & Barber, 1999; Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest & Price, 2011). In contrast to the notion that a school play could facilitate relationship development, Larson and Brown (2007) have argued that working together towards a shared goal such as a school production adds higher levels of demand in terms of the skills and emotional knowledge needed to navigate towards such a goal. However, it could equally be argued that the shared goal is what would bring pupils together, as Pitts (2007) noted that pupils involved in the school production in her research seemed to have a sense of their involvement in something that was greater than their individual contribution.

Pitts' (2007) research also suggested that it was the younger students who appreciated the opportunities to make friends with older pupils more. However, the qualitative data from the current research suggests that the cross generational friendships appealed to both older and younger students. Many of the older students commented on the "mentoring" role that they took on when working with the younger students and this was also noticed by the teachers. Furthermore, the younger students appeared to enjoy the opportunity to develop friendships with those older pupils in the school, as one quotation from a younger pupil demonstrates. *"...cos usually you don't really hang out with people who are older than you (pause) and then with that it didn't really matter, you just hung out with anybody cos they were cool."* (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-2-School-SB). This theme also relates again to the affiliation need (McLean, 2009) discussed in the literature review and provides more support for the argument that involvement in a school play can help meet that need.

5.3.3. Life skills

The life skills theme encapsulated three main areas which will each be discussed in turn. This overarching theme originally had the potential to be much broader and in the initial stages of thematic analysis a number of other skills were identified. However, the three key life skills described below were identified as the most significant within the data.

5.3.3a Social skills

The initial data from the open-ended question on the questionnaires identified the development of social skills as a potential benefit of involvement in the school play. This was explored further within the focus groups and interviews and it was evident that many of the teachers and students involved in this phase of the research believed involvement in the school play had a positive impact on the social skills of those involved. This finding supports previous research into youth theatre groups, which has also suggested that taking part in a production may have a positive impact on young people's ability to interact and socialise (Hughes and Wilson, 2004; James, 2005). Also, research investigating effects of extra-curricular performing arts activities has indicated that an increase in social skills could be one of the effects of participation in such activities (Daykin et al., 2008; Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest & Price, 2011). Finally, the DICE (2010) research, which compared students who were involved in drama and theatre in education activities with those who were not involved also identified that "Feeling more confident in communication" was a strength area for those that were involved.

This theme also corresponds to the conclusions made by Jindal-Snape and Vettraino (2007), following their review of literature focusing on the use of drama to improve social skills in children with special educational needs. Jindal-Snape and Vettraino (2007) suggest that there is potential for drama to be used in this way. However, they also noted that there is a need for further research in this area due to the flaws found in the previous studies reviewed. Whilst it is not argued that the current research in any way confirms the argument that drama or acting training is a way of increasing young people's social skills, this finding does add further weight to the possibility that this may be a useful tool in this area.

5.3.3b Emotional awareness and control

Research by Larson and Brown (2007) suggests that a school play may be a useful setting for the emotional development of adolescents. In addition, Goldstein and Winner (2010) have also argued that learning to act could impact on a person's social cognitions. The specific cognitions that Goldstein and Winner (2010) identified were "theory of mind", "empathy" and "emotion

regulation". As noted in chapter two there is currently little evidence to support the theory, other than the preliminary findings of initial studies carried out by the authors (e.g. Goldstein, 2011; Goldstein & Winner, 2012). However, Goldstein and Winner (2012) argue that this is an area that should be investigated further given the strong theoretical reasoning behind the hypothesis that social cognitions could be improved by learning to act.

Thematic analysis of interviews revealed that some of the student and teacher participants believed that taking part in the play had impacted positively on students' ability to recognise and control emotions within themselves, and also to feel empathy and to understand others' emotions. This theme is also supported by the quantitative data, as is noted in chapter four. Some teachers suggested that this was related to learning to act, as is argued by Goldstein and Winner (2010), *"I'm thinking about, um, an emotional response to the character (interviewer: Yeah), umm which can be quite adult as well and umm that's a good thing to see (interviewer: Mmm) and so they do put themselves, I mean, the classic thing with drama is, you know, "oh this bit's the angry bit so I'm just going to scream and shout", whereas actually they'll get into other scenes where there's more complicated character interaction and they, they, I do feel they develop towards that."* (Teacher-Interview-6-School-C)

It was also felt by some that the situations that the school play provided were what provoked this sort of emotional development in the young people involved. For example, as was noted in the results, one student related feeling embarrassed in the play to feeling embarrassed in real life and stated that she felt better able to cope with this as a result of that experience. It is argued that this theme provides support for the notion that the school play may well be a good setting to promote healthy emotional development, as is suggested by Larson and Brown (2007). However, in order to clarify whether this is the case, a far more in-depth piece of research would need to be completed.

5.3.3c Perseverance

The theme of perseverance was strong throughout both the teacher interviews and student focus groups. This theme is also supported by quantitative data as shown in the results section. The ways in which students learned to overcome difficulties through their participation in the school production is demonstrated in the quotations in the results. One pupil also related this to the notion of "self control", as is shown in the following quote:

*"I kind of gained self control, like, sometimes if I didn't get something right, I'd go off on one and just go absolutely mental so, **(laughter)** and, like, but then I learnt that by being in a musical you can't, you can't do that, you got to be dedicated to it so you 'ave to, if you go wrong you 'ave to try and try again otherwise you're not gonna get it perfect. Normally I would walk away from something **(Interviewer: Yeah)** and just think, 'I can't do it', cos at one point I thought, 'No, I can't do this', but then I thought, 'I'm too far into it, I've got to do it, I'm going to do it', so, like, **(Interviewer: Yeah)** I've gained self control in myself."* (female-pupil-Focus-group-7-School-P)

The quotation above appears to demonstrate a change in attitude that this young person went through as a result of her participation in the school play. The notion that involvement in a school play could contribute to changes in attitudes has been raised previously in an argument put forward by Eisner (1999) when discussing the impact of the arts in education: "Perhaps it is not skills at all that arts courses develop; perhaps it is the promotion of certain attitudes, attitudes that promote risk taking and hard work." (p.152). The finding that both students and staff felt that the school play helped those involved learn to manage and overcome challenges and difficulties by persevering relates to research carried out by Hughes and Wilson (2004) who found that young people involved in youth theatre groups also reported that they felt the experience helped them to increase their ability to deal with difficult and negative experiences.

5.3.4. Pupil empowerment

The overarching theme of pupil empowerment refers to the different ways in which students' discussions indicated the empowering impact of the school play, and is split into three separate themes, which will each be discussed in turn.

5.3.4a Self confidence

This theme was identified within the data from the student focus groups and teacher interviews. It is also supported by the quantitative data from the questionnaire, which suggests that the majority of students and teachers in the current research believed that involvement in a school play can have a positive impact on a young person's self confidence 100% (13) of the teachers and 98% of students). Furthermore, "increasing confidence" was the second highest suggested benefit by both teachers and students in response to the open question, "What do you believe the benefits are for students and staff participating in the school play?" It was evident from the focus groups that the students felt that the improved confidence was something that applied in their everyday lives, with some

students giving examples as to how they felt more able to stand by their own decisions and also approach people they did not already know.

The notion that a young person's confidence can be improved by taking part in an arts related activity has been suggested by arts in education research (Harland, 2000) and research investigating participation in youth theatre groups (Hughes and Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, Hampshire and Matthijsse's (2010) research into the singing groups noted that a growth in the confidence of the young people involved in the groups was one part of the impact that the intervention had. McLean's (2009) suggestion that, in order to feel motivated to learn, young people need to have a sense of agency is also related to this theme. It can be argued that by participating in a school play students were able to feel more confident in their own abilities, which thus led to a desire to take part in other school plays due to the increased agency experienced.

5.3.4b Ownership and responsibility

Research by Gonzalez (1999) and Lang (2002) has explored the potential of the school play to be an empowering experience for the young people involved by giving them more ownership of the organisation and development of the play. Whilst the collaborative method described by Gonzalez (1999) and Lang (2002) is not the traditional method of producing a school play, the theme of "**Ownership and responsibility**" relates to the way in which students in the school plays in the current research seemed to benefit from being given additional responsibilities, and thus more ownership of the production. In each of the interviews held the teachers were able to give examples of the ways in which pupils had taken on ownership of specific areas of the play.

Examples of the ways in which students had freedom to make their own choices and have their own responsibilities within school plays in this research are as follows: taking on part of the directing, mentoring younger pupils, discussing rehearsals and choreographing dances. This theme also relates to McLean's (2009) argument relating to the need for autonomy, which is a need to feel trusted to make decisions and also to be self determining in terms of one's behaviour. Whilst this theme does not suggest that the school play led to autonomy for all the pupils on all occasions, it is argued that there were some occasions in which this occurred. Furthermore, it also appeared that this was a particularly valuable experience for those involved, as is shown by the quotations in the results section. However, it was also evident that opportunities for ownership and responsibility within the school play were focused more towards the older students.

5.3.4c Sense of Achievement

The sense of achievement that pupils gained through their involvement in the school play was evident in the data gathered from the questionnaires and the focus groups held. Furthermore, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, a sense of achievement was one of the motivations underlying some students' desire to participate in a school play. The teachers also commented on the sense of achievement as one of the main benefits for the students. As noted above, this finding seems to be highly linked to the increase in self confidence that was described by participants. Many of the participants described their improvement in confidence alongside the experience of the sense of achievement. It appeared that the sense of achievement also led to increased levels of self worth based on comments made by students *"...it boosts your confidence up so much, that you're, like, I can sing, I can do this and then it makes you confident throughout the rest of the play. Because it's, like, if you can do one thing you can obviously do another thing..."* (Female-Pupil: Focus-Group-3 School-A). This supports the quantitative findings of Blomfield and Barber (2009), who found that pupils who participated in ECAs had a higher social and academic self-concept, and general self-worth, compared with those who did not participate in any ECAs.

This finding also relates to the learner need termed as "Agency" by McLean (2009), in that students were able to experience completing a task that had highly tangible rewards in terms of audience response, which then led to feelings of competence and success. McLean (2009) argues that this is a highly important and valuable experience for young learners. Surprisingly, a sense of achievement was not highlighted as a key aspect of the school play in the case study research carried out by Pitts (2007). However, Hughes and Wilson's (2004) research exploring the impact of youth theatre on young people's social and emotional development concluded that young people's confidence developed through participation in successful rehearsals and performances. The discussions students had around the sense of achievement they felt relate strongly to the notion of "Flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), as is noted previously in this discussion.

5.3.5. Independent samples t-tests

Independent-samples t-tests were completed in order to identify whether there were any differences between the perceptions of male and female participants, and also between the older and younger participants. As noted in the results section, the tests found only one area of difference between male and female participants and one area of difference between the two age groups (years 7-9 were compared with years 10-13). The results suggested that females were more likely than males to state that they felt being involved in the school play had a positive impact on their "perseverance" (ability to stick with difficult tasks). The age group t-test suggested that the younger

pupils were more likely than the older pupils to state that the school play had a positive impact on their "imagination". These findings provoke further questions as to why the differences between groups should be in these areas. For example, in light of Robinson's (2001) argument that education can have a damaging effect on the imagination and creativity of young people, the findings may suggest that, the older pupils get, the less they believe in the value of imagination. However, this argument is purely speculative and further research would need to be completed in order to investigate its veracity.

Furthermore, there is also a strong possibility that the differences found in the two areas may be a result of the amount of t-tests completed as opposed to there being a genuine difference between the groups. Whilst the differences found between males and females and the two separate age groups are interesting, it is important to interpret the findings with caution. Given the quantity of t-tests completed, the possibility of a type one error is increased. A type one error occurs when it is thought that there is a difference between groups when in fact there is not (Pallant, 2010). In order to ascertain whether there is truly a difference between these groups a larger sample size would need to be obtained.

5.4 Research question 3. What do teachers and students believe are the challenges and negative impacts involved in taking part in the school play?

Content analysis was carried out on the open ended questions which led to some initial themes which are described in the results chapter. These findings were then explored further through the process of thematic analysis, which was carried out on the teacher interviews and student focus groups in relation to question 3. This resulted in the identification of two overarching themes which will each be discussed in turn in relation to previous research, and the sub-themes within these themes will also be discussed.

5.4.1. Negative aspects of the process

This theme highlights the negative aspects of the process for both students and staff and is split into three sub-themes, which will now be discussed.

5.4.1a Stress

One of the negative aspects of the process highlighted by both teachers and students involved in the school production was that it could be a stressful experience, the content analysis of student questionnaires identified that 12% of students felt that participating in the play was stressful and

this was further supported by information gathered through the interviews and focus groups. For the most part stress appeared to be related to the build up to performance nights. This finding is also reflected in the case study research completed by Pitts (2007), which identified that both pupils and teachers were more stressed in the weeks leading up to performance nights. Interestingly, one of the 22 strengths areas identified in the DICE (2010) research was "ability to cope with stress". Thus it is possible that enduring the stressful experiences involved in performing in a school production may in fact result in an increased ability to manage stressful situations. However, this would need to be investigated through further research in order to establish whether this could be an outcome of the school play.

In terms of what may have been causing the stress, the content analysis of the open ended questions on the student questionnaire revealed that learning lines was the most widely recognised challenge by the students, in that 40% of students identified this as an issue. One of the pupils also identified this as a potential source of stress and conflict between participants *"the main source of conflict in my opinion would be us getting really stressed about it when we're trying to do our little performance to ourselves to try and get all our lines into our head and then the lines get forgotten. Then stress comes in and the whole performance just stops"* (Male-Pupil-Focus-Group-1-School-H). The potential for the school play as a stressful experience is an important finding as it is possible that this may have a detrimental effect on those involved. Furthermore, knowing what causes the stress is also helpful in that it can provide ideas as to how to reduce this aspect of the school play. However, it could also be argued that by experiencing stress through the school play, young people are increasing their resilience and thus their ability to manage stress and that, therefore, this is in fact a positive aspect of the experience. However, at the present time this position is merely theoretical and, therefore, will require further research.

5.4.1b Commitment

Results from the qualitative analysis of the interviews and focus groups suggested that there were times when teachers and students felt frustrated by a lack of commitment both from student and staff participants in the school play. For students this was mainly related to lines not being learnt in time, lack of attendance at rehearsals, and decisions to "drop out" of the play. Many of the students commented that a reason for lack of commitment may be boredom, and this was also observed by teachers involved in the process. Pitts' (2007) exploration of the audio diaries in her research also identified the potential for the repetitive rehearsals to become boring and monotonous, particularly for chorus members who may spend more time watching scenes than being involved. As noted

above, a lack of commitment from others did appear to cause stress for participants, in that it created extra pressure for those still involved.

The finding that there was a lack of commitment from teachers refers more to a lack of support being offered. One teacher discussed the lack of support from the staff in her school and mentioned an occasion when she had been let down by a staff member: "*I actually get little help from anywhere else, there is no tech person that supports me, there is a couple of people that help with props if I ask them but they're often, as happened last time they will say 'oh I didn't have time to do that' and you're like 'any chance you could have told me that a few weeks ago'".* She also compared this to her experiences working in another school *"when I was at (name) there was a team of us. It was a massive team of us and it was brilliant* cos *you delegate this and that and the other"* (Teacher-Interview-3 School-H). When taking into account the earlier finding that the school play in fact has the potential to improve teachers' relationships, this teacher's comments highlight the possibility that the school play could also potentially have damaging effects on staff relations. Furthermore, as suggested previously it appears that the impact of the school play on teacher relations may depend upon the school's attitude towards the play and how valued it is by members of staff as well as the students.

The lack of commitment was often related to the amount of time needed for participation and it was noted that many of the students were frustrated by the amount of time they spent working on the play. This finding can be examined in relation to the over-scheduling hypothesis discussed by Mahoney, Harris and Eccles (2006). This hypothesis is based on the notion that participating in too many organised ECAs can have a detrimental effect on a young person. The argument underlying this hypothesis is that it can create an atmosphere of stress, hurry and pressure within a young person's life. Fredricks' (2012) research, which tested the hypothesis in North America, concluded that although involvement in ECAs is generally associated with benefits in education, there is a level at which greater involvement is not associated with greater benefits. In the current research, one of the teachers observed that the children who were involved in the school play were also involved in many other extracurricular activities *"…our kids are so committed to a lot of things, not just drama. So, for example, at the moment we've got, our Thursday nights are the nights that we rehearse and they've got a rounders match tomorrow…"*(Teacher-Interview-1School-SB).

The finding that students were at times frustrated by the length of time they had to spend on rehearsals in preparation for the school play also corresponds to Hampshire and Matthijsse's (2010)

evaluative research of the "Sing Up" project, which found that participants described difficulties in finding the time to participate. In addition to this, Pitts' (2007) case study of a school production also identified the relief that some of the participants felt at having more free time once the production was complete. It was also noted by some participants in the current research that the amount of time spent in rehearsals led to detrimental effects on their friendships with those pupils who were not involved in the school play. Pitts (2007) also found that a third of the participants in the school play in her research commented on this as an issue.

5.4.1c Conflict

Conflict was originally identified through the questionnaire data gathered and was thus explored further within the interviews and focus groups. It was noted that conflict could arise in relation to various aspects of the school play and this theme links in with the above themes of **"commitment"** and **"stress"**, as this appeared to impact on levels of conflict between students and indeed between staff, as was highlighted in the results section. However, there was also a degree of jealousy between pupils regarding lead roles, as was noted by some students in the focus groups, and also through the observations of the teachers. This sense of competition was also related to the audition process and the perceived fairness of this process.

In one school, students had been particularly upset about the way in which the part allocation had been managed: "*I remember them reading down a list and saying, "You're not needed,"* **(Interviewer: Ah),** *and with, like, a couple of people, they were just kicked out.* **(2nd pupil: They cried), (Interviewer: Yeah).** *Some cried.*" (Male-pupil-School-SB-Focus-group-2).This finding suggests that there is a potential for feelings of rejection and exclusion that could emerge as a result of the school play. This was also one of the findings of Pitts' (2007) research, which identified that some of the non-participants in the school play had felt rejected when they had not been given a role. This raises ethical questions with regard to inclusion, in that there does appear to be a potential for young people involved in the school play to be rejected due to not having the correct skills. It is noted there were differences between school policies regarding how many people to include in the school play within the schools that participated in this research.

A key piece of research in relation to this theme is Larson and Brown's (2007) research, which focused on emotional development of adolescents in a school production setting. They noted that when students did not get the roles they had auditioned for they were encouraged by their teacher to explore their feelings of disappointment, express them, and then focus on the production in the role that they had been allocated. Larson and Brown argued (2007) that managing disappointment

and interpersonal relations is a key skill for adolescents to learn, and that not attaining the part or role they desired and also managing disagreements was an important learning curve for young people.

5.4.2. Teacher and student concerns

This theme refers to the main concerns that students and staff had in relation to the school play. There are three sub-themes, which will each be discussed in turn.

5.4.2a Performance quality

The quality of the final performance was a concern for both students and staff involved and this is another theme that also has links with the stress theme discussed previously. For some of the teachers it appeared there was a dilemma between creating a high quality production balanced with facilitating an enjoyable experience for the students, as has been demonstrated in the quotations in the results section. It appeared that there were concerns regarding possible damage to a school's reputation as a result of a bad quality performance. The finding that teachers had concerns about the quality of the performance relates very much to Gonzalez's (1999) argument, which suggests that teachers who organise school plays are often judged by the quality of the performance as opposed to factors such as the personal growth and changed perceptions of individual students.

However, whilst some teachers struggled with the dilemma of producing a quality performance versus ensuring the enjoyment of those pupils involved, there were also teachers who stated that giving a quality performance was important for the students' own reputation within the community. *"...it's a great, it's a great platform for the school in showing what the kids can do. For example, with (name of play) we were asked by the Mayor to take a section of that to the town hall for a Mayor making ceremony, and it's just things like that."* (Teacher-Interview-7-School-P). However, in another school one of the students in the focus group also noted that concerns about impact on the school's reputation added to teachers' stress levels *"...now I know that the teachers can get a lot more stressed than they put out because when some, (pause), normally during lessons they don't really mind but if during, like, plays and that kind of thing it's a lot more, if it goes badly (Interviewer: Ahum) then it's not very good for reputation, that kind of thing, so they can a lot more stressed"* (Male-pupil-School-SB-Focus-group-2). This finding demonstrates a potential danger for school plays to be used as a way of selling a school's strengths as opposed to being focused on the benefits for those pupils involved. However, a counter argument to this would be that the school communities at large may benefit from a positive reputation, which in turn may increase positive affiliation.

5.4.2b Financial Issues

As noted in the results section, the responses to the open ended question 10 on the teacher questionnaire indicated that 31% (4) of the teachers who completed the questionnaire identified "financial constraints" as an issue. This finding is supported by the interview data. In all seven of the teacher interviews, financial issues were discussed as a challenge within the school play process. Many of the teachers felt that the budget allocated was too small for the task at hand and some noted that ticket sales were essential in order to meet costs. The notion that there may be pressure to sell tickets links to the above theme in that it could mean that the quality of a performance may end up being valued as more important than the quality of experience and developmental benefits for the young people involved. This finding has not been highlighted by any of the previous research into school plays (e.g. Larson and Brown, 2007; Ogden, 2008; Pitts, 2007). However, it could be argued that the apparent lack of financial support for the school play identified within this research provides support for Robinson's (2001) argument that the arts are undervalued within the UK education system.

5.4.2c Gender imbalance

Questionnaire data indicated that there were fewer males than females involved in the school play. This finding supports Eccles and Barber's (1999) research into participation in ECAs, which identified that females were more likely to be involved in ECAs such as performing arts. Furthermore, in Hampshire and Matthijsse's (2010) discussion they note the difficulty of attracting and retaining boys to the "Sing Up" project and noted that they regarded this as "part of a wider pattern of non-participation in 'arts' activities by boys" (p.5). Thus the findings that there were fewer boys than girls involved supports previous findings in this arena.

The gender imbalance was discussed within the focus groups and interviews and has been identified as a theme under the overarching heading of "**teacher and student concerns",** as for some participants the lack of male participation was a concern. Many of the reasons suggested for the lack of male participants were related to whole school perceptions of the "school play". For example, as is shown in the results section, one school had a male choir which was particularly well thought of and, therefore, this was attributed to a higher number of males volunteering to be involved in the school play in this particular school. In other schools, pupils made suggestions that the lack of male interest was due to the school play being perceived as a less masculine activity. Furthermore, a teacher suggested that girls may be more attracted to the school play as they saw it as being related to status and poise. Whilst these findings do not offer a definitive reason as to why there are fewer males than females involved in the school play, they do propose further avenues for exploration for

future researchers. It is argued that this would be an important area to investigate further, due to the range of potential benefits for students involved in the school play that have been highlighted by this research and previous research in related areas.

5.5 Strengths of the current research

One of the main strengths of the current research is the information gathered regarding participants' motivations to take part in the school play, and students' and teachers' perspectives in relation to what was challenging and what was valuable in terms of what students can learn and gain from participation. The literature review in chapter two suggests that there is a lack of evaluative research in the United Kingdom and, significantly, a lack of research evidence relating to the views and experiences of both students and teachers who have taken part in a school production in a mainstream setting. Given the increasing research base relating to developmental benefits of ECAs, and youth performance activities described in the literature review, it is argued that this is an important area for psychologists and educationalists to investigate.

Whilst research studies exist relating to the areas of youth theatre groups, drama and theatre in education, these studies often focused on interventions which were targeted at certain populations (e.g. children termed "at risk", Conrad, 2004; children at risk of exclusion, James, 2005) or at investigating the impact of theatre and performance on specific attributes or behaviours (e.g. emotional regulation, Larson & Brown, 2007; personal and social development, Hughes & Wilson, 2004). Despite an extensive search only two studies were found which focused directly on students' experiences of a school production (Ogden, 2008; Pitts, 2007). Whilst these studies provided valuable information regarding children's perspectives of the school production it is felt that the current research expands this further. For example, in Ogden's (2008) research the participants were recalling memories of the past, whereas the current research uses participants who had recently been involved in their school production. Furthermore, this study expands on Pitts (2007) research by obtaining a sample from nine different mixed gender state schools (Pitts', 2007 study was a focused case study of a private all girls school).

Furthermore, whilst Pitts' (2007) research does gather perspectives from the students involved regarding the benefits they gained from the process, the focus of Pitts' research (2007) was on the musical benefits for those involved. The current research aimed to explore the ways in which the school play could be used to help young people learn and develop personally. It is felt that the current study's findings have implications which may contribute to the existing knowledge in the area of school productions and to a fuller understanding of the importance and additional benefits

of extra-curricular activities in young peoples' education. Another strength of the current research is the mixed methods approach that was utilised, as the findings are supported by both quantitative and qualitative data.

5.6 Limitations of the current research

The limitations of the current research will be discussed in terms of the criticisms of both the qualitative and quantitative methods used. This is followed by a critique of the sample used in this research.

5.6.1. Criticisms of qualitative methods

One criticism of qualitative methods of research that could apply to the current research is the argument that the questions used in the interviews and focus groups may have influenced the answers participants gave. Therefore, the particular experiences they recalled in their discussions may have been biased by the questions asked (McParland & Whyte, 2008). However, efforts were made to ensure that questions asked in the focus groups and interviews were more open in order to give participants the opportunity to talk about particular aspects that were important to them. Furthermore, participants were always asked at the end of each focus group and interview whether there were any issues they felt should be discussed or they would have thought the researcher should have asked about. In order to decrease further the chances of research questions impacting on participant responses, future research could use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as the method of analysis, since it is more participant driven and, therefore, the questions used in interviews would have less of an impact on the outcomes and findings (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

As noted in chapter three, Yardley (2008) outlines a number of ways in which qualitative researchers can increase the validity of their findings. One method which could have been applied to increase the validity of this research is 'Member Checking' (Burr, 2003 p. 159). This involves taking the themes identified from the analysis back to participants and asking them about the accuracy of the report in relation to their views. However, time constraints surrounding this research project did not allow for this as a possibility. Attempts were made to increase the validity of the findings by asking an outsider from the process to code two of the transcripts as recommended by Yardley (2008). The researcher and volunteer met in order to determine whether the themes identified were similar and thus more valid (Yardley, 2008). Throughout the meetings there were a number of areas in which both the researcher and volunteer agreed, which adds to the validity of the findings of the current research. There were also discrepancies in the themes identified by each party and, therefore, this conflict was overcome by debating the relevance and quality of the theme until either the theme was changed or the two parties agreed that the theme should remain.

5.6.2. Criticisms of quantitative methods

Questionnaires have been criticised as a methodology for being inflexible (Howitt & Cramer, 2005). In relation to the current research the numerical data provided by the closed questions on the questionnaires was reductive, in that participants were unable to elaborate on any answers they gave. Therefore, the numbers generated by combining all participants' answers may not necessarily be giving an accurate picture of their opinions and views (Yardley, 2008). One of the main criticisms of the quantitative results of this study is that the samples used in both teacher and student questionnaires were small (91 in the student sample and 13 in the teacher sample). This impacts on the generalisability of the questionnaire findings (Cresswell, 2008). However, it should be noted that the aims of this research were directed more towards gaining an increased understanding of the school play phenomenon and the potential impacts on young people's personal development and learning, as opposed to producing findings that would be generalisable.

Another issue with the quantitative data is similar to that in Pitts' (2007) research, which is that questionnaires were completed on school grounds. Whilst this increased the response rate and allowed for increased clarity of the aims of the questionnaire, it is also possible that participants may have been influenced by the same "classroom mentality" discussed by Pitts (2007), in which there may be influences pushing participants to answer in a way that they believed the teacher or researcher would perceive as 'correct'. However, the researcher did take measures to minimise this possibility by explaining to participants that honest and open answers were needed and there was no right or wrong answer in this situation.

Questionnaire design:

Whilst pilots were completed, it is felt that the sample used was too small and, therefore, this impacted on the quality of the revisions made to the first draft of the questionnaire. A number of changes would be made to the questionnaire if this research were to be completed again. These are as follows.

- The scale used for participants' responses on the final question of both teacher and student questionnaires would be adapted to make the question more accessible to the readers.
- The wording used for response options in the final question of the questionnaire would be changed as terms such as "somewhat" and "quite a bit" were considered to be rather vague when analysing the data.
- Originally the gender of teachers was not thought relevant to the research and was not included as a question on the questionnaire. Given gender imbalance in student participants

it would be interesting to know more about the gender of teachers who organise the school play as this may have an impact on the genders wishing to participate.

5.6.3. Criticisms of the sample

As Kumar (1999) notes, personality can influence the response rate to questionnaires (i.e. not all the people who are given a questionnaire will complete and return it). Therefore, self-selecting bias can impact on the reliability of the findings of questionnaires used in research. Attempts were made to overcome this issue by having the researcher present at the completion of the students' questionnaire. This increased the number of questionnaires completed and helped to reduce bias in terms of those people who would take the time to return the questionnaire, as it reduced any effort needed to either post or e-mail questionnaires back to the researcher. There were difficulties in using the same approach when gathering teacher responses to questionnaires as, whilst there are a high number of students involved in a school play, there are generally only one or two staff members involved in the organisation. In order to obtain the same number of teacher respondents by having the researcher present at the completion of all questionnaires over 40 schools would have to have been visited.

Schools were e-mailed and contacted on the phone to gather volunteers to be participants in this research. It is noted that a teacher who has had a bad experience organising a school play is unlikely to want to participate in this research. Therefore, it is likely that those schools that chose to be involved in the research may have been very successful in their productions. Additionally, the pupils who agreed to take part in this research were also likely to have had positive experiences. This self-selection may account for the positive response regarding the benefits of school plays and the less full response regarding negative aspects and challenges.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

The current research has provided an insight into the perceptions of both students and teachers in relation to their involvement in school plays. This chapter will outline conclusions that have arisen from the current research. The areas identified for further research will be discussed. Finally, the implications of these findings will be explored, with a particular focus on the fields of psychology and education and the practice of educational psychology.

6.2 Conclusions

6.2.1 Conclusions relating to research question 1. Why do teachers and students decide to become involved in a school play?

Teachers reported that the benefits for the students were the main motivators for their involvement in the school play. Additionally, promoting the school in the community, appreciation of theatre, promoting their subject and the play being part of their job role were also motivators for teachers. The main motivator for students to become involved was the intrinsic enjoyment that they gained. Additionally, students reported that they were also motivated to participate by the following factors: having had past experiences in the school play, the influence of friends and siblings, the belief that involvement may improve their confidence and their future career plans.

Understanding why students choose to become involved in a school play is important, particularly in reference to the research into ECAs, which suggests that there are a number of benefits to be gained from such participation (Blomfield & Barber, 2009; Darling, Caldwell & Smith, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney, Cairns & Farmer, 2003). The finding that young people rated the enjoyment of the experience as the strongest motivator for their involvement suggests that a need to be intrinsically motivated is a key factor influencing participation in this kind of activity. Therefore, as noted in the discussion, attempting to widen the appeal to students who have previously not shown interest in school plays may be unsuccessful. However, the opposing argument would be that at a changeable time during development, such as adolescence, (Cowie, Smith and Blades, 2003; Shaffer & Kipp, 2007), promoting new experiences may indeed be a helpful way to support a young persons' development.

6.2.2. Conclusions in relation to research question 2: What do students and teachers believe are the benefits and positive impacts of participating in a school play in terms of what there is to learn and gain from involvement in this activity?

One key finding in this area was the perceived impact of the play on the relationships in schools, in particular teacher-student relationships. Many of the teachers and students made comments regarding changes in their attitudes towards each other. One suggestion as to why the school play could influence relationships in this way is that it provides a different way of working from what is traditionally adopted in schools. However, whilst this idea is based on information taken from the data for this project, it is clear that this would need more investigation through further research. Positive impacts on teacher relationships were also identified by teachers involved, suggesting the potential for a wider level of impact on the school community. Finally, the positive impact on peer relationships was also reported by both student and staff participants.

The relationships developed within the school play appeared to help develop the sense of community that teachers and students identified. Within the "Sense of community" theme the themes "Sense of belonging" and "Collaborative learning" were identified. A number of students recalled situations when they were either teaching or learning from each other and this was also observed by teachers. On the basis of this finding it is argued that a project such as the school play may be an ideal setting to promote collaborative learning between pupils.

Another perceived positive impact of the school play that this research identified was "Pupil empowerment". Within this theme there were three sub-themes of "Sense of achievement", "Self confidence" and "Ownership and responsibility". It was noted that many of the students enjoyed the opportunity to have responsibilities within the school play. As noted in the discussion, these opportunities were available at various levels in the schools involved in this research. It was also noted that one teacher felt there was not enough time to allow that level of autonomy for the students. However, the finding that students highlighted this as a particularly memorable experience is useful information as it adds to the understanding of what makes ECAs such as the school play a positive experience for those involved. Furthermore, this finding suggests that there may be opportunities for informal learning in the school play and that it could be viewed as a "Community of Practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

The thematic analysis and questionnaire data in relation to this question also identified that students and teachers perceived a number of "Life skills" that they felt students had developed throughout their participation in the play. These included "Perseverance", "Emotional awareness and control"

and "Social skills". This finding suggests that there are numerous ways in which the school play could be used to help young people in their personal development. However, it is important to note that factors such as the way in which the school play is approached and the way in which it is perceived by the school community are likely to have an impact on whether it is possible to use the school play in this way.

6.2.3. Conclusions relating to research question 3. What do teachers and students believe are the challenges and negative impacts involved in taking part in the school play?

Both teachers and students reported that they had experienced stress whilst participating in the school play. Within the theme of "Stress" it was identified that the weeks leading up to performances were particularly stressful for those involved. Furthermore, it was noted that the time available and the commitment from participants was also an area that impacted on the stress levels of those participating. These findings also linked with the theme of "Conflict", in that the lack of commitment from others and stress were reported causes of conflict throughout the process. This suggests that whilst there are many potential positive impacts related to participation in a school play, there are also challenges for those involved, which would need to be monitored and minimised in order to avoid negative impacts.

One of the key findings in the area of teacher and pupil concerns was the dilemma that was present between creating a quality performance and creating a quality experience for the young people involved. A number of students discussed the need to perform in a "quality production". It was clear that some teachers felt the need to be more directive when working with the young people in order to ensure that standards were met. This came at the cost of giving ownership to the students which, as noted previously, was an empowering experience for students. Another key finding in the area of teacher and student concerns was the gender imbalance that was present. It was suggested by participants that a lack of male interest may have been related to perceptions of the play at a whole school level and that being in a school play may not fit well with a "male" image. Whilst these findings are preliminary they do provoke further questions regarding the participation of males in the school play and also the way in which the production may be perceived by the school as a whole. One further issue identified through this research, which related more towards teacher concerns, was the financial concerns raised. Many teachers felt that budgets were not big enough, which, in relation to Robinson's (2001) argument suggests that this particular ECA may be undervalued by budget holders.

6.2.4. Summary of Conclusions.

In conclusion of this section, the findings of the current study suggest that there is a need for the significance of ECA participation to be recognised more widely in terms of the potential benefits for those involved. For example, the current research suggests that school plays may help to promote a sense of belonging through the relationships built, develop specific skills such as social skills, emotional awareness and perseverance, enhance the three learner needs identified by McLean (2009), and provide opportunities for collaborative learning and experiences that are empowering for the students involved. With the potential benefits and areas for development for the young people involved it is argued that further research in this area would be valuable.

6.3 Future research

As this research has been explorative it has produced a number of questions that would be interesting for future researchers to investigate. One way in which this research could be extended would be to investigate the perspectives of those students who were not in the play in order to gather an understanding of the impact of the play on the school as a whole. It would also be interesting to carry out research which focuses on testing hypotheses in relation to the school play. For example, it would be interesting to develop a study which compares the degree to which students who are involved in the school play feel that they belong, with those who are not involved in the school play. One way of achieving this could be to use Goodenow's (1993b) Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) Scale to measure the sense of school membership of both children who participate in the school play and those who are not involved in the school play. The experimental hypothesis in this case would be that those involved in the school play would be likely to feel a stronger sense of belonging within school. This hypothesis is based on the perspectives gathered in the current research and findings of previous research in similar areas (e.g. Ogden, 2008; Pitts, 2007).

The current research was focused on those participating in the performing aspects of the school play. However, as the research progressed it became apparent that there were many roles for students to play in the process such as lighting technician, photographer, makeup artist, stage crew etc. It would be interesting to gather the perspectives of those involved in this aspect of the school production as there may be different types of benefits or challenges for those young people that have not been identified in this research. Additionally, research which investigates the perceptions of the parents of the students who took part in the school play would also be an interesting way of developing this research further. Furthermore, research that focuses on school plays in primary

schools would be interesting in terms of potential positive and negative impacts and the motivations of those involved.

6.4 Practical implications for the fields of psychology and education and the practice of educational psychology.

One contribution that this research could make to the field of education is through the practical application of the findings by teachers that are involved in school plays. For example, this research has identified that students involved in the play particularly valued the times that they were given more ownership through the responsibilities they were given. Teachers could use this information when organising the school play and aim to incorporate a higher level of participation for students. Furthermore, there are also findings that are interesting for schools at a wider level. For example, the finding that the students enjoyed and seemed to benefit from working with different age groups suggests that there may need to be more opportunities of this sort, as it was noted by some teachers and students that this was a rare opportunity. The findings in relation to potential negative impacts are also useful information for teachers in this area. For example, one concern related to management of the audition process in schools. Some students felt that it had been unfair and others were reportedly particularly upset by the way in which they were told the news that they were not needed in the play. This information could be used by schools to reflect on the way in which role allocation is managed.

In relation to the field of psychology it is argued that this research contributes new knowledge with regard to a number of psychological theories in relation to involvement in the school play. For example, the finding that students reported that they developed a sense of belonging within the school play suggests that a collaborative project such as a play may be a useful way of promoting positive relationships at a number of levels. In relation to the theory of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), many of the students also described a number of experiences which appeared to relate strongly to Flow, particularly when performing. As experiencing Flow is reported to increase one's confidence and self belief (Carr, 2004), it is argued that understanding more about situations in which Flow is experienced is an important area to investigate. Furthermore, the findings of this research have been discussed in relation to McLean's (2009) model of motivation, and it has been noted that there are aspects of the play that may help to meet the learner needs of affiliation, agency and autonomy. It is also proposed that school plays could be viewed as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), based on the experiences described by those students involved. Finally, as noted in the literature review, Goldstein and Winner's (2010) theory that learning to act can help

develop social cognitions is still in its infancy. However, despite this, the theme relating to students' perceived development of their social skills and emotional awareness and control suggests that this may be an area that warrants further investigation and research.

There is also scope for the findings of the current research to make contributions to the field of educational psychology in a number of different ways. As is noted by Fredrickson and Miller (2008), the capacity for research within the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) is an area that has developed over time and continues to increase as a valued part of the EP role. Therefore, it is argued that EPs could use this research as a starting point for further research within the services and schools in which they are employed. Whilst this research focuses on one aspect of school life it is argued that some of the findings of this research could be usefully applied by psychologists in their work with schools that focuses on the school as an organisation. When discussing the findings related to perceived benefits of the school play, it was apparent that both students and teachers valued the opportunity to develop relationships between students and staff, staff and other staff and students and their peers. EPs are well placed to raise awareness of this finding.

One of the tentative suggestions of this research is that it is possible that the school play could promote positive development of the young people involved in a number of areas (e.g. developing social skills, collaborative learning, and perseverance). By knowing what a school provides in terms of ECAs, an EP could use the findings of the current research to investigate whether there is scope for the school play to be beneficial for those students who may need help in these areas. It is not argued that EPs should start recommending that a child having social difficulties, for example, should be volunteered to join in the school play. However, it is part of the EP's role to gather an understanding of the children's views of the world in terms of their values and core beliefs (Beaver, 2003). Therefore, as part of an investigative process it is possible to consider whether involvement in a school play may provide benefits for a young person with special or additional educational needs. It is important to clarify that the research carried out here is not strong enough to suggest that involvement in a school play should be recommended as a resource for the use of EPs. However, the research does raise the prospect of a school play as a possible way of providing developmental benefits for young people, which is a key area of interest of the role of the EP.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Gate keeper letter

Dear Head Teacher,

I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at Cardiff University. I would like to carry out some research investigating teacher and student perceptions of the school play/theatre production. The aim of the research is to explore both teacher and pupil perspectives and views regarding the school play. I am interested in the impact the school play has on young people and in exploring what motivates teachers and pupils to become involved, and what they believe the benefits and challenges are from participating in this activity.

The study involves two phases, which are as follows:

Phase 1 Questionnaires: I have designed a questionnaire for both the students and staff involved in the school production, which should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Phase 2 Focus groups and interviews: Following analysis of the questionnaire data gathered I would like to hold focus groups with the pupils involved and interviews with the teachers, which should take no longer than 60 minutes to complete.

If you feel it is possible for your school to participate in the above research at any level I would greatly value the opportunity to work with your staff and students. In order to ensure parents have the option of withdrawing their child from the study I will send letters to the homes of the pupils involved in the school play, describing the research and its aims. I have a full CRB check and extensive experience and training in working with children and young people. If you have any queries regarding this study then please do not hesitate to contact me using the details provided.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Brewer

Email address: brewersl@cardiff.ac.uk

Contact number: 07791685747

Sally Brewer

c/o Karen Alaway

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School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Teacher Questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for participating in this piece of research. I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at Cardiff University and I am carrying out this research as part of a doctoral thesis.

The aim of the research is to find out both teacher and pupil perspectives and views regarding the school play. I am interested in the impact the school play can have on the young people involved and what the benefits and challenges are of running a school production.

By completing and returning this questionnaire you are consenting to be a participant in this research and you have the right to withdraw at any point without giving reason. This questionnaire will require no more than 30 minutes of your time and I value the opinions that you give in completing this questionnaire. You have the right to withdraw at any point without giving reason up until you hand in your questionnaire. The information that you provide will be kept until the examination of the thesis in June 2012; after this time it will be deleted/destroyed.

 All questionnaires are anonymous so you do not need to include your name or the name of your school. Following completion of this questionnaire you will receive a debriefing form which outlines the aims of the study and research questions, and will contain a list of references if you are interested in reading more about this topic.

Many Thanks

Sally Brewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Email address: brewersl@cardiff.ac.uk

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Teacher Questionnaire

1 What is the name of the production your school performed this year?

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2. If it was your decision to use the above named production please give any reasons you may have for choosing this production below. If it was not your decision please state why you believe this production was chosen.

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3. How many years have you been teaching?

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4. How many school plays have you been involved in organising?

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5. Which year groups were in this school production?

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6. How many pupils were involved in this year's production?

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7. How are roles and parts allocated to pupils?

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8. What made you want to organise or be involved in the organisation of the school play?

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9. What do you believe are the main benefits for students and staff that are involved in the school play?

10. What do you believe are the main difficulties and challenges for students and staff that are involved in the school play?

11. The following principles of effective youth theatres have been identified by Hughes and Wilson (2004) as key principles of good practice in running theatre productions involving young people. They suggest that these key principles help facilitate the positive impacts that youth theatre can have. Please read the following statements, thinking about your own practice when involved in a school play. When you have read the statements, please tick the box to indicate the amount of importance you would give to each principle.

(1= Not at all important 2= Not very important 3 = Important 4 = Very important).

If you think there are other important factors which have been overlooked, please include them in the blank grid at the bottom and rank them accordingly.

Effective School Plays

Rating	1	2	3	4
Include all young people regardless of ability or background.				
Are characterised by an informal yet disciplined process that involves high expectations of young people.				
Provide opportunities for young people to take risks in safe contexts.				
Provide opportunities for young people to take part in performance				
Provide opportunities to take responsibilities necessary to maintain the organisation				
Involve a sense of urgency, commitment to work hard and to work to real deadlines.				

12. To what extent do you believe that participating in a school production impacts on students in the below areas **Please mark with a – for a negative impact and + for a positive impact**

Rating	Not at all + or -	Somewhat + or -	Quite a bit + or -	Considerable + or -
Self confidence (how secure they feel in their own abilities)				

Sense of community or belonging (feeling part of a group)				
Ability to work as part of a team				
Motivation in school work generally				
Motivation in participation in the play				
Engagement in school (how involved they are in all aspects of school life)				
Confidence in oral communication				
Confidence in written communication				
Creativity				
Enjoyment of school				
Ability to empathise (feel what others are feeling)				
Awareness of their own emotions				
Awareness of other people's emotions				
Ability to regulate their emotions (for example managing their own anger)				
Ability to solve problems				
Rating	**Not at all** **+ or -**	**Somewhat** **+ or -**	**Quite a bit** **+ or -**	**Considerable** **+ or -**
Peer relationships (friendship groups)				
Teacher –student relationships				
Willingness to take risks				
Imagination				
Attitude to school staff				

Perseverance (Ability to stick with difficult tasks)				
Resourcefulness (Ability to use a range of techniques to learn new skills)				
How reflective they are (whether they think about their own strengths and weaknesses in different situations)				

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your participation in this research is greatly valued. If you have any other comments please include them in the box below

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Student Questionnaire

Dear Student,

Thank you for taking part in this research. I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at Cardiff University and I am carrying out this research as part of a doctoral thesis.

The aim of the research is to find out about teachers' and pupils' ideas and opinions about the school play. I am interested in the impact the school play can have on the people involved and what benefits and challenges people meet when involved in a school play.

By completing and returning this questionnaire you are consenting to be a participant in this research and you have the right to withdraw at any point without giving reason. This questionnaire will require no more than 30 minutes of your time. I value the opinions that you give in completing this questionnaire. You have the right to withdraw at any point without giving reason up until you hand in your questionnaire. The information that you provide will be kept until the examination of the thesis in June 2012; after this time it will be deleted/destroyed.

All questionnaires are anonymous so you do not need to include your name or the name of your school. Following completion of this questionnaire you will receive a debriefing form which outlines the aims of the study and research questions, and will contain a list of references if you are interested in reading more about this topic.

Many Thanks

Sally Brewer (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

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Student Questionnaire

1. Which year group are you in? (Please circle)

7	8	9	10	11	12	13

2. How old are you?

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

3. Are you male or female? (Please circle)

Male	Female

4. Please describe your role in the school play (e.g. main part, chorus, understudy, lighting, props etc)

5. What made you want to be involved in the school play?

6. What do you believe are the main benefits for students and staff that are involved in the school play?

7. What do you believe are the main difficulties and challenges for students and staff that are involved in the school play?

8. To what extent do you believe that taking part in a school production impacts on the following areas in yourself?

Please mark with – mark for negative impact and a + mark for a positive impact

Rating	Not at all + or -	Somewhat + or -	Quite a bit + or -	Considerable + or -
Self confidence (how secure you feel in your own abilities)				
Sense of community or belonging (feeling part of a group)				
Ability to work as part of a team				
Motivation in school work generally				

Motivation in participation in the play				
Engagement in school (how involved you are in all aspects of school life)				
Confidence in verbal communication				
Confidence in written communication				
Creativity				
Enjoyment of school				
Ability to empathise (feel what others are feeling)				
Awareness of your own emotions				
Awareness of other people's emotions				
Ability to regulate your emotions (for example managing your own anger)				
Ability to solve problems				
Rating	**Not at all** + or -	**Somewhat** + or -	**Quite a bit** + or -	**Considerable** + or -
Peer relationships (friendship groups)				
Teacher–student relationships				
Willingness to take risks				
Imagination				
Attitude to school staff				
Perseverance (ability to stick with difficult tasks)				
Resourcefulness (ability to use a range of techniques to learn new skills)				
How reflective you are (whether you think about your own strengths and				

weaknesses in different situations)				

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your participation in this research is greatly valued. If you have any other comments please include them in the box below

Appendix D: Teacher interview

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Class teacher interview

Demographic Information:

How many years teaching?

How many school plays organised?

How many years has the school used school plays for?

What is the time period for putting on a play e.g. from auditions through to performance.

1. What was the name of your school production? And was there anything that influenced your decision to choose this particular play?

2. Having organised or taken part in organising a school play, what experiences stand out in your memory as being important?

3. What is the best thing about organising the school play?

4. What is the worst thing about organising the school play?

5. What motivates you to be involved in the organisation of a school play?

6. What skills are important for a teacher to have in order to run a school play?

7. Were the children ever involved in the organisation of the play, for example in terms of directing or discussing rehearsals?

8. What skills do you think children gain from the school play?

9. Do you believe the skills they learn can be used in other situations?

10. What challenges have you encountered in the set up and running of the school play?

11. What have you found to be the most effective technique for selecting students for parts?

12. Do you notice any changes in children involved in the school play?

13. Conflict came up as one of the themes of challenges throughout the school play process. What were the main sources of conflict in your opinion?

14. Has organising the school play changed the way you worked with pupils in your everyday work at all?

15. Would you recommend organising a school production? And if you were to give advice to another teacher on how to run a school play what would you say?

16. Developing relationships and friendships came up as a theme from the questionnaire data, in terms of reasons for being involved in the school play. How do you think the play helped them to do this?

17. Developing Confidence also came up as a theme from the questionnaire data, in terms of reasons for being involved in the school play. How do you think the play helped them to do this?

18. Thank you for taking part in this research. Is there anything you feel I should have asked or would like to talk about?

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Pupil Focus group

1. What part do you play in the school production? (each person to answer individually)

2. What made you want to be involved in the school play?

3. Having taken part in the school play, what experiences stand out in your memory as being important?

4. What is the best thing about being involved in the school play?

5. What is the worst thing about being involved in the school play?

6. How do your friends feel about you being in a school play?

7. How do you feel about your own performance? And about the performance of the group?

8. From the questionnaires, a large percentage of the respondents indicated that participating in play helped them develop relationships and make new friends. How does this response relate to your experience?

9. What, if anything, did you learn about yourself from being in the school play?

10. What do you think you have gained from being involved in the play?

11. Are you happy about the way the play ended up or would you change anything?

12. Conflict/arguments came up in the questionnaire data as one of the themes of challenges throughout the school play process. What were the main sources of conflict in your opinion?

13. Do you think being in the school play has changed the way you see your teachers or how they see you?

14. What would need to happen to make the school play a better experience in your opinion?

15. Many respondents on the questionnaire wrote that they enjoyed the experience of being in a play. What in particular was enjoyable for you?

16. From the questionnaires, a large percentage of the respondents indicated that participating in the play helped them develop confidence. Was this the case for you, and if so, how do you think being in the play can help you to be more confident?

17. What did you find was the biggest challenge for you when taking part in the school play?

18. Are there any specific skills you gained from being in the school play? And if so, are they skills that you could use in everyday life?

19. When there were challenging times in the play rehearsals, what motivated you to keep coming to rehearsals?

20. Do you feel that being a part of the school play has changed you in any way?

21. Thank you for taking part in this study. Is there anything anyone feels I should have asked or would like to talk about?

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Student Focus Group Consent Form

Please could you read the statements below and, if you are happy to take part in this study, print and sign your name at the bottom of the page.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve participating in a focus group which will involve talking about the school play. This will require no more than 60 minutes of my time. I understand that participation in this research is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason until the point the data is collected.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss any concerns with the researcher. I understand that the information provided by me will be held totally anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually. The information that I provide will be kept until the examination of the thesis in June 2012, and after this time it will be deleted/destroyed.

I understand that this focus group will be recorded by a digital voice recorder and then transcribed. Information will be recorded confidentially and then made anonymous when transcribed within a week of holding the focus group.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with a debriefing form, which will give me additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study carried out by Sally Brewer, currently attending School of Psychology, Cardiff University, with the supervision of Dr Simon Claridge.

Signed:

Date:

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Appendix G: Teacher interview consent form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Teacher Interview Consent Form

Please could you read the statements below and, if you are happy to take part in this study, please print and sign your name at the bottom of the page.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve participating in an interview, which will involve talking about the school play. This will require no more than one hour of my time. I understand that participation in this research is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason until the point the data is collected.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss any concerns with the researcher. I understand that the information provided by me will be held totally anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually. The information that I provide will be kept until the examination of the thesis in June 2012, and after this time it will be deleted/destroyed.

I understand that this interview will be recorded by a digital voice recorder and then transcribed. Information will be recorded confidentially and then made anonymous when transcribed within a week of holding the interview.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with a debriefing form which will give me additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study carried out by Sally Brewer, currently attending School of Psychology, Cardiff University, with the supervision of Dr Simon Claridge.

Signed:

Date:

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Appendix H: Debriefing form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Debriefing

Thank you for participating in this study. Your time and opinions are much appreciated. The current research aims to gather the views of both students and teachers regarding the impact of the school play. Specifically, this research will investigate the following questions.

1. Why do teachers become involved in a school play and what are they hoping students will gain from being involved?

2. Why do students take part in the school play and what are they hoping to gain from their involvement?

3. What impact do teachers and students see the school play having on themselves and across the school including what they feel they have gained and learned from the experience?

4. What are the challenges of being involved in a school production for both students and staff?

5. If students do feel they have gained skills from being involved in the school play are these skills transferable to other areas of the curriculum and their lives in general?

As a participant, you will have been involved in one or more of the following activities: completed a questionnaire, taken part in a focus group or been interviewed. The information taken from focus groups and questionnaires will be recorded confidentially and within two weeks be transcribed, ensuring that all participants are kept anonymous. The questionnaires do not require any names or contact details and, therefore, will be stored anonymously. Raw data will be destroyed following the deadline of the project.

If you would like to do some further reading in this area, the following references may be of interest to you.

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If you have any further questions please contact myself or my supervisor

Sally Brewer   Dr Simon Claridge

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Appendix I: Questionnaire parental consent

Dear parent/carer,

I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at Cardiff University. As part of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology I am carrying out some research investigating teacher and student perceptions of the school play/theatre production. I am interested in the impact the school play has on young people and in exploring what motivates teachers and pupils to become involved and what can be gained from being in a school play.

I plan to distribute questionnaires about the school play to both staff and students involved in the play if they consent to participate. The questionnaires should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw permission for your child to take part at any time without giving a reason. If you would prefer for your child not to be involved in this research please contact me on the details provided below, or alternatively you can contact me through the school, and your child will not be given a questionnaire. I plan to begin distributing questionnaires in two weeks' time. If I do not hear from you before this time I will assume that you are in agreement with your child participating in this research.

If you do agree to your child participating in this research, the information provided by your child will be held totally anonymously. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to discuss them with me or my supervisor, our contact details can be found below. The information provided will be kept until examination of the thesis in June 2012, and after this time it will be deleted/destroyed. At the end of the study your child will be provided with a debriefing form, giving additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study. After completing the questionnaire it is possible that your child may be invited to participate in the second part of the research project, which involves a focus group. I will be distributing further letters regarding this nearer the time, which will again give parents the option to withdraw from the study on behalf of their child.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Brewer

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Email address: brewersl@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix J: Focus group parental consent

Dear parent/carer,

I am a trainee educational psychologist studying at Cardiff University. As part of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology I am carrying out some research investigating teacher and student perceptions of the school play/theatre production. I am interested in the impact the school play has on young people and in exploring what motivates teachers and pupils to become involved, and what they gain from involvement.

I plan to run focus groups with students who have been involved in the school play. The focus groups should take no longer than 60 minutes to complete and your child would not be asked to participate in more than one focus group. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw permission for your child to take part at any time without giving a reason. If you would prefer for your child not to be involved in this research please contact me on the details provided below, or alternatively contact the school, and your child will not take part in any focus groups. I plan to hold focus groups throughout the months of June and July. If I do not hear from you before June I will assume that you are in agreement with your child participating in this research.

If you do agree to your child participating in this research the information provided by your child will be held totally anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to you or your child individually. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to discuss them with me or my supervisor. Our contact details can be found below. The information provided will be kept until examination of the thesis in June 2012, and after this time it will be deleted/destroyed. At the end of the study your child will be provided with a debriefing form, giving additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

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Trainee Educational Psychologist

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Appendix K: Thesis proposal

1. Title of project:

The school play: An exploration of teacher and pupil views as to what there is to be gained from being involved in a school production and what the challenges may be.

2. Purpose of project and its academic rationale:

Anderson and Donelan (2009) have stated that although the funding of arts research has grown in the last decade in the UK, gate keepers in education currently perceive drama and theatre as a subject that is "...either too soft or too subversive or both" (p.166). On this basis Anderson and Donelan (2009) argue that there is a need for more research to provide evidence that drama and theatre can be used as a powerful and engaging learning tool within education.

The current project aims to gain a better understanding of the use of the school play in secondary schools. Specifically, it will investigate the following research questions:

1. Why do teachers become involved in a school play and what are they hoping students will gain from being involved?
2. Why do students take part in the school play and what are they hoping to gain from their involvement?
3. What impact do teachers and students see the school play having on themselves and across the school, including what they feel they have gained and learned from the experience?
4. What are the challenges of being involved in a school production for both students and staff?
5. If students do feel they have gained skills from being involved in the school play are these skills transferable to other areas of the curriculum and their lives in general?

In preliminary investigations for this research 22 secondary schools were contacted and asked whether they would be running a school production this academic year. Twenty of the schools stated that they would be. This suggests that school plays in secondary schools are a common phenomenon. However, despite the number of schools that perform a school play every year, there appears to be very few studies that focus on the phenomenon and what the benefits and challenges are of being involved in the school play.

An unpublished Masters thesis by Ogden (2008) explores the life-long impact of involvement in a school musical theatre production. This research involved interviewing adults about their memories of participating in a school play. Ogden's (2008) research describes a number of ways in which adults felt they had benefited from being involved in the school theatre production. For example, one of the themes identified was the sense of community and belonging that came from participating in the school play. The current research could add to Ogden's findings by gathering perspectives that are from people that have either experienced the school play recently, or are still involved. Therefore, they will be able to remember the benefits and challenges of being involved in a school play more accurately.

There is a vast amount of research and publications focusing on drama and youth theatre interventions that are either brought into schools or take place within the community (Cooper, 2004; Gervais, 2006; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; James, 2005; Miles, 2003). Whilst these programmes are often aimed at a specific population or at analysing the effects that specific theatre interventions can have on certain issues (O'Toole & Burton, 2005; Rutten, Biesta, Dekovi, Stams, Schuengel, & Verweel 2010) some of the findings from this research may be applicable to the current research.

For example, in James's (2005) evaluation of "Actup" (a theatre programme provided for young people experiencing social exclusion), one of the key findings was that being involved in a theatre production provided many informal learning opportunities for the young people involved. James (2005) listed a number of areas in which students made progress, including developing social skills and awareness, participation in group activities, teamwork and being focused, and language development and communication skills. On the basis of these findings, James (2005) has argued that through participating in theatrical productions, "...young people can find a level of involvement likely to go way beyond what is found in formal sitting and listening scenarios".

The idea that drama and theatre can be used as a way of helping young people learn and develop is by no means a new one. Dorothy Heathcote (1988) has been described as a pioneer in the field of drama in education and suggested that drama could be used as a way of helping young people develop personally and improve social skills. Catterall, Chapleau and Iwanaga (2002) carried out a study in the USA which investigated the skills that Heathcote (1988) proposed can improve through using drama and theatre in education. They compared a group of children who where intensively involved in drama and theatre with a control group that were not involved. Their results showed

that those children involved in intensive theatre and drama showed improved language skills, self concept and empathy and tolerance and race relations.

Goldstein and Winner (2010) have also suggested that learning to act may increase an individual's social cognitions, noting that, "Both acting and psychology, at their cores, seek to understand what it means to be human." They discuss three areas of social cognition on which acting can have an impact. The first of these three areas is "Theory of mind". Goldstein and Winner (2010) suggest that the need for the actor to understand the underlying mental state of the character they are playing (for example their intentions, desires, motivations, emotions and beliefs) is similar to the process of developing "theory of mind".

The second area of social cognition discussed is "empathy". Goldstein and Winner suggest that, in learning to feel what their characters are feeling, actors can become more empathic. Finally, Goldstein and Winner state that "emotion regulation" is the third form of social cognition that can be increased by learning to act. The reasoning behind this theory is that actors need to learn to control their own emotions in order to represent those emotions of the character they are portraying. They also state that this is a new area of research and more investigation will be needed to clarify whether their hypotheses are possible. It is proposed that the current research can add to this base.

Larson and Brown (2007) carried out some research which also supports the notion that theatre can be used to help young people learn to regulate their emotions. This study involved asking adolescents about their experiences of a high school theatre production. Larson and Brown found that the reports from the young people involved highlighted that, by experiencing emotions within the setting (theatre production), they learnt concepts, strategies, and tools for managing emotional episodes. Larson and Brown also state that there is a need for further research in this area.

A further area in which the school play may impact on the children and staff and children involved is through the development of relationships between staff and students, students and their peers and teaching staff with other staff. This hypothesis is based on Mayall's (2007) commentary on an evaluation of the "Chicken Shed" theatre company. Mayall stated that one of the key areas of success in the theatre programme was the development of relationships between staff and young people.

Recent research funded by the European Union (EU) has provided further support for the use of theatre and drama in education. The Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education (DICE) Consortium (2010) investigated the effects of educational theatre and drama on five of the eight Lisbon Key Competences. The key competencies are as follows:

1. Communication in the mother tongue
2. Learning to learn
3. Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence
4. Entrepreneurship
5. Cultural expression
6. All this and more (the sixth competency has been added by researchers and is described as the universal competence of what it is to be human)

This large scale piece of research gathered questionnaires from 4,475 students aged 13-16 from 12 different countries. The study covers 111 different types of educational theatre and drama programmes and the data was collected from students, teachers, theatre and drama programme leaders, independent observers, external assessors and key theatre and drama experts. The data gathered was compared with a control group of students that were not participating in any drama or theatre programmes.

The findings of this research suggest that the impact of drama and theatre in education is very complex. In comparison with the control group, those participating in drama or theatre showed strengths in 22 different areas. Some examples of these areas are as follows: feeling more confident in communication, being better at problem solving and coping with stress, being more empathic and having concern for others, and showing more dedication towards their future. These research findings demonstrate the broad and extensive range of areas that drama and theatre in education can have an impact. The current research will aim to build on this research by investigating whether being involved in the school play can have an impact on the above listed areas.

It is proposed that the findings of the current research may be useful in the field of education in that it could inform teachers' practice in the way that they think about organising a school production, and how they involve young people in the process. Furthermore, it is suggested that the findings could also be useful in the field of educational psychology. Cameron (2006) states that one of the unique contributions of the educational psychologist is, "Adopting a psychological perspective." It is

intended that, by investigating the school play from a psychological perspective, new information may be revealed surrounding the ways in which the school play can be used.

3. Brief description of methods and measurements:

The first phase of data collection will involve the distribution of semi-structured questionnaires to students and staff involved in the school play. These questionnaires will go to secondary schools that have already completed a school play this academic year and the accounts given will, therefore, be retrospective. The questionnaires for the teachers (see appendix B) will aim to find out why teachers put on a school production and what they felt children gained from the experience. The questionnaires for students (see appendix C) will aim to find out what motivated them to become involved in the production and what they saw as the benefits and challenges of the experience.

The information gathered from these questionnaires will be analysed using content analysis and then any themes identified will be used in the next stage of data collection. The second phase of data collection will involve interviews with teachers and focus groups with pupils in order to build upon and explore further the findings from the questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews and focus group are thought to be the best way of gathering information at this stage, as it will enable initial questions to be adapted in response to important issues that could emerge throughout the process of the interview or focus group (Cresswell, 2008; Litosseliti, 2003).

All interviews and focus groups will be recorded then transcribed (with the consent of all participants) and screened for themes using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has been chosen as the best approach because it offers a comprehensible and theoretically flexible method of identifying themes and patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. Participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria.

Recruitment methods:

Participants for this study will be contacted through the school. A gatekeeper letter will be sent to the head teacher of each school (see appendix A). Access to students that are involved in the school play will be obtained via the school's drama teacher (or person in charge of running the school play). Consent will be obtained from parents, through a letter informing them that they have the right to withdraw their child from the study (see Appendix I and J) and from the students and teachers through signed consent forms (See Appendix F and G).

Number:

The number of students participating in the study will depend on the number of students involved in the school play. The information gathered in preliminary phone calls to schools suggests that on average 20-40 students participate in secondary school plays. From the 20 schools that have been contacted ten have indicated that they may be willing to be involved in this research project. When ethical consent has been obtained, these schools will be formally contacted again via the gate keeper letter (see appendix A).

The number of teachers participating will again depend on the number of staff involved in the production, and will, therefore, be known once the schools that have agreed to participate inform me how many people are involved in the organisation of the school play.

Age:

The students involved in this research will be in secondary school and, therefore, aged 11-18. Larson and Brown's (2007) discussion regarding children's emotional development when they reach adolescence influenced the decision to focus on secondary rather than primary school children.

The age of the teachers involved in this project is not relevant to the research and, therefore, will not be recorded. However, years of teaching experience will be recorded along with number of years of involvement in the school play.

Gender:

The gender of participants will depend on the number of males and females who choose to participate in a school play.

Exclusion/inclusion criteria:

The inclusion criteria for students involved in this study will be that they have been involved in or will soon be participating in a school play and the same inclusion criteria will be applied to the teachers involved in this study.

5. Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing:

A consent letter will be used that makes participants aware of the implications of participating in the study and their right to withdraw at any time (see appendices B, C, F & G). In the case of students being involved, parental permission will also be obtained by informing them that the study is taking place and giving them the option to withdraw permission for their child to be involved (see appendices I & J). Following completion of questionnaires, focus groups or interview participants will be debriefed with a handout explaining the research questions of the study (see appendix H). This

debriefing form will be attached to the questionnaires distributed and given out at focus groups and interviews.

6. A clear but concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them:

The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics (2009) outlines a number of ethical considerations which this project has taken into account. These are as follows:

Respect:

- General standard of respect: All participants involved in the study will be treated with respect and sensitivity; selection for participation will be unbiased towards any individual or cultural role. The knowledge and experience of participants will be respected and all participants allowed to give their views equally. For example, in the focus groups questions will be asked by going round each participant and gathering their views.

- Privacy and Confidentiality: Participants will not be required to write their names on questionnaires given out, ensuring anonymity of data gathered. Questionnaires will be stored in a locked cupboard and destroyed after the deadline of the thesis. Audio recordings from focus groups and interviews will be transcribed then destroyed. The focus group information will be gathered confidentially and then anonomised within two weeks of gathering the data when it is transcribed. The transcripts will also be stored in a locked cupboard, except when the thesis is examined, and destroyed six months following the deadline date of the report. The interview with the counsellor will remain anonymous and the audio recording transcribed then destroyed. The transcripts will be stored in a locked cupboard, except when the thesis is examined, and then destroyed six months following the examination of the thesis. If it occurs that a participant discloses information that cannot be kept confidential (for example something that may affect the safety or welfare of others) the research supervisor will be made aware of this and provide advice as to next steps of action. Participants will be made aware of this before taking part. Audio recordings will only be made with permission of all participants.

- Informed consent: Participants will be given a written consent form (see appendices B, C, F & G) to sign when completing questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. Parental consent will also be obtained from the parents/guardians of the students asked to participate by giving parents the option to withdraw from the study if desired (see appendices I and J)The

signed forms will be stored in a locked cupboard and destroyed following the deadline date of the thesis.

- Self Determination: Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any point both verbally and in writing (see appendices B, C, F & G). If participants do withdraw, any data by which they might be personally identified, including recordings, will be destroyed.

Competence:

- Awareness of professional guidelines: The BPS Code of Ethics (2009) and the Health Professionals Council (HPC) Standards of Conduct, Performance, and Ethics (2008) have been read and taken into account when planning this research.

- Ethical decision making: It has been recognised that unexpected ethical dilemmas could potentially occur throughout the course of the research. If and when they occur the action plan will be to discuss them with the research supervisor and follow advice as to next steps.

- Recognising limits of competence: If, for example, in the focus group people disclose information that is above the researcher's level of competence, this information will be passed on to the research supervisor, having informed those directly involved.

Responsibility:

- General responsibility: Being mindful of any potential risks to participants or the researcher. This can be achieved by ensuring that the environments the focus group and interview are held in are safe.

- Protection of research participants: As mentioned above, participants will give informed consent and be debriefed. If it should occur that any participant asks for advice concerning psychological or other issues, caution will be exercised and if the situation appears to warrant it the researcher will offer to make a referral to the appropriate service.

Integrity

- Honesty and accuracy: Data collected will be recorded as accurately as possible with the use of an audio recorder with the permission of participants.

7. Estimated start date and duration of project.

The project will start from the date ethical approval is obtained, which will hopefully be in February 2011 or soon after that. The data collection will take place from the start of the project up to July 2011. The project must be completed and handed in by January 2012 and no further data collection will take place after this time.

8. Proposed work schedule

Date	Activity
Jan 2011	Complete Ethical application and begin write up of literature review
Feb 2011	Meet with schools to obtain gatekeeper consent
March 2011	Obtain parental, student and teacher consent for questionnaires
April 2011	Questionnaires distributed to staff and pupils and begin write up of methodology
May 2011	Questionnaires returned and begin analysis of the data
June 2011	Consent sought for focus groups / interviews
July 2011	Focus groups and interview meetings completed and begin write up of the results
August 2011	Analysis of data and write up results
September 2011	Begin write up of discussion, conclusion and introduction
January 2012	Submission of draft thesis
April 2012	Completion and submission of thesis

9. Intended structure of Dissertation

Abstract: Brief overview of rationale, methodology, results and discussion.

Chapter one: Introduction

- The importance of promoting performing arts in education and how a better understanding of the school play can contribute to the literature

- Discussion of the theory applied to drama and theatre in education

- Relevance of the topic to educational psychology and the role of the educational psychologist

- Outline of the thesis

Chapter two: Literature Review

- Introduction to the Literature Review

- Definition of terms including what is meant by "school play"

- Discussion of the different areas and theories that the school play may influence

- Motivation

- Engagement

- Learning to learn

- Sense of belonging

- Social skills

- Social cognition

- Emotions

- Self efficacy

- Moral education

- Discuss the key aims of the research based on background research

Chapter three: Methodology

- Overview of methodology

- Discussion of qualitative research (strengths and weaknesses)

- Philosophical underpinnings (Relativist vs Positivist)

- Rationale for application to current research

- Review semi-structured questionnaire use

- Discuss focus group methodology

- Discuss interview methodology

- Content analysis of questionnaire data

- Thematic analysis of interview and focus group transcripts.

- Participants (inclusion / exclusion & demographic)

- Procedure

Chapter Four: Results

- Content analysis of questionnaires

- Thematic analysis of focus groups

- Thematic analysis of interviews

- Overview of full results

Chapter five: Discussion

- How do findings relate to previous research?

- What are the limitations of this research?

Chapter six: Conclusions

- What do the findings show?

- Future research directions

- Practical implications for education and educational psychology

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Appendix L: Quantitative data from closed questions

Student responses to the question "To what extent do you believe that taking part in a school production impacts on the following areas in yourself?" & Teacher responses to the question "To what extent do you believe that participating in a school production impacts on students in the below areas"

Key

S= students

T = Teachers

Areas listed	S/T	Considerable Negative Impact	Quite a Negative Impact	Somewhat Negative Impact	No Impact	Somewhat Positive Impact	Quite a Positive Impact	Considerable Positive Impact
Self Confidence	S	0	0	2 (2.2%)	0	8 (8.8%)	31 (34.1%)	50 (54.9%)
	T	0	0	0	0	0	0	13 (100%)
Sense of Belonging	S	0	0	1 (1.1%)	0	9 (9.9%)	34 (37.4%)	47 (51.6%)
	T	0	0	0	0	0	0	13 (100%)
Teamwork skills	S	0	0	1 (1.1%)	0	7 (7.7%)	41 (45.1%)	42 (46.2%)
	T	0	0	0	0	0	0	13 (100%)
Motivation in school	S	0	0	4 (4.4%)	11 (12.1%)	27 (29.7%)	34 (37.4%)	15 (16.5%)
	T	0	0	1 (7.7%)	0	4 (30.8%)	5 (38.5%)	3 (23.1%)
Motivation in Play	S	0	0	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	8 (8.8%)	27 (29.7%)	54 (59.3%)
	T	0	0	0	0	0	7 (53.8%)	6 (46.2%)
Engagement in school	S	0	0	6 (6.6%)	4 (4.4%)	14 (15.4%)	42 (46.2%)	25 (27.5%)
	T	0	0	0	0	2 (15.4)	7 53.8)	4 (30.8)

Areas listed	S/T	Considerable Negative Impact	Quite a Negative Impact	Somewhat Negative Impact	No Impact	Somewhat Positive Impact	Quite a Positive Impact	Considerable Positive Impact
Verbal Confidence	S	0	0	1 (1.1%)	0	11 (12.1%)	34 (37.4%)	45 (49.5%)
	T	0	0	0	0	2 (15.4%)	4 (30.8%)	7 (53.8%)
Written Confidence	S	0	0	2 (2.2%)	13 (14.3%)	29 (31.9%)	23 (25.3%)	24 (26.4%)
	T	0	0	0	3 (23.1%)	8 (61.5%)	2 (15.4%)	0
Creativity	S	0	0	0	3 (3.3%)	16 (17.6%)	32 (35.2%)	40 (44%)
	T	0	0	0	2 (15.4%)	0	6 (46.2%)	5 (38.5%)
Enjoyment of school	S	0	1 (1.1%)	2 (2.2%)	4 (4.4%)	20 (22%)	37 (40.7%)	27 (29.7%)
	T	0	0	0	0	0	4 (30.8%)	9 (69.2)
Empathy	S	0	0	2 (2.2%)	6 (6.6%)	21 (23.1%)	40 (44%)	22 (24.2%)
	T	0	0	0	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	8 (61.5%)	2 (15.4%)
Awareness of others emotions	S	0	0	0	7 (7.7%)	18 (19.8%)	44 (48.4%)	22 (24.2%)
	T	0	0	0	0	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (38.5%)
Awareness of own emotions	S	0	0	0	6 (6.6%)	21 (23.1%)	38 (41.8%)	26 (28.6%)
	T	0	0	0	1 (7.7%)	2 (15.4%)	7 (53.8%)	3 (23.1%)

Areas listed	S/T	Considerable Negative Impact	Quite a Negative Impact	Somewhat Negative Impact	No Impact	Somewhat Positive Impact	Quite a Positive Impact	Considerable Positive Impact
Emotion regulation	S	0	0	4 (4.4%)	5 (5.5%)	19 (20.9%)	41 (45.1%)	22 (24.2%)
	T	0	0	0	0	2 (15.4%)	7 (53.8%)	4 (30.8%)
Ability to solve problems	S	0	0	1 (1.1%)	8 (8.8%)	19 (20.9%)	45 (49.5%)	18 (19.8%)
	T	0	0	0	1 (7.7%)	3 (23.1%)	8 (61.5%)	1 (7.7%)
Peer relations	S	0	0	1 (1.1%)	2 (2.2%)	13 (14.3%)	27 (29.7%)	48 (52.7%)
	T	0	0	0	0	0	2 (15.4%)	11 (84.6%)
Student Teacher Relations	S	0	0	2 (2.2%)	0	14 (15.4%)	40 (44%)	35 (38.5%)
	T	0	0	0	0	0	2 (15.4%)	11 (84.6%)
Willingness to take risks	S	0	0	2 (2.2%)	4 (4.4%)	23 (25.3%)	32 (35.2%)	30 (33%)
	T	0	0	0	0	1 (7.7%)	4 (30.8%)	8 (61.5%)
Imagination	S	0	0	0	1 (1.1%)	10 (11%)	37 (40.7%)	43 (47.3%)
	T	0	0	0	0	2 (15.4%)	6 (46.2%)	5 (38.5%)
Attitude to school staff	S	0	0	2 (2.2%)	2 (2.2%)	14 (15.4%)	38 (41.8%)	35 (38.5%)
	T	0	0	0	0	1 (7.7%)	6 (46.2%)	6 (46.2%)

Areas listed	S/T	Considerable Negative Impact	Quite a Negative Impact	Somewhat Negative Impact	No Impact	Somewhat Positive Impact	Quite a Positive Impact	Considerable Positive Impact
Perseverance	S	0	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	0	12 (13.2%)	38 (41.8%)	39 (42.9%)
	T	0	0	0	0	2 (15.4%)	5 (38.5%)	6 (46.2%)
Resourceful ness	S	0	1 (1.1%)	2 (2.2%)	3 (3.3%)	16 (17.6%)	43 (47.3%)	26 (28.6%)
	T	0	0	0	0	3 (23.1%)	6 (46.2%)	4 (30.8%)
How reflective students are	S	0	0	3 (3.3%)	4 (4.4%)	21 (23.1%)	39 (42.9%)	24 (26.4%)
	t	0	0	0	0	4 (30.8%)	7 (53.8%)	2 (15.4%)

Appendix M: Full SPSS output data

Independent-Samples T-Test (Male and Female)

Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Confidence	male	28	5.5357	.57620	.10889
	female	63	5.3333	.91581	.11538
Sense of Belonging	male	28	5.3214	.66964	.12655
	female	63	5.4127	.79585	.10027
Teamwork	male	28	5.1429	.65060	.12295
	female	63	5.4444	.73568	.09269
Motivation work	male	28	4.7857	1.16610	.22037
	female	63	4.3651	.97222	.12249
Motivation play	male	28	5.5357	.63725	.12043
	female	63	5.4127	.85449	.10766
Engagement	male	28	4.9286	1.15241	.21778
	female	63	4.7937	1.06497	.13417
Verbal confidence	male	28	5.3929	.78595	.14853
	female	63	5.3333	.71842	.09051
Written confidence	male	28	4.5357	1.17006	.22112
	female	63	4.6190	1.06904	.13469
Creativity	male	28	5.1071	.91649	.17320
	female	63	5.2381	.81744	.10299
Enjoyment	male	28	4.7143	1.04906	.19825

	female	63	4.9524	1.02278	.12886
Empathy	male	28	4.9286	.71640	.13539
	female	63	4.7619	1.04286	.13139
Others emotions	male	28	4.9643	.79266	.14980
	female	63	4.8571	.89546	.11282
Own emotions	male	28	4.9643	.83808	.15838
	female	63	4.9048	.91077	.11475
Emotion regulation	male	28	4.7143	1.04906	.19825
	female	63	4.8254	1.00867	.12708
Problem solving	male	28	5.0357	.74447	.14069
	female	63	4.6667	.95038	.11974
Peers relations	male	28	5.1786	.81892	.15476
	female	63	5.3651	.90343	.11382
Teacher Relations	male	28	4.9286	.89974	.17003
	female	63	5.2698	.80735	.10172
Risk taking	male	28	4.9286	.76636	.14483
	female	63	4.9206	1.06713	.13445
Imagination	male	28	5.2500	.64550	.12199
	female	63	5.3810	.74981	.09447
Staff Attitude	male	28	5.1429	.89087	.16836
	female	63	5.1111	.91777	.11563
Perseverance	male	28	4.8929	1.19689	.22619
	female	63	5.3651	.67922	.08557
Resourcefulness	male	28	5.0000	1.08866	.20574
	female	63	4.9048	.94552	.11912

| Reflective | male | 28 | 4.8214 | 1.05597 | .19956 |
| | female | 63 | 4.8571 | .94795 | .11943 |

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Confidence	Equal variances assumed	3.011	.086	1.077	89	.285	.20238	.18798	-.17113	.57590
	Equal variances not assumed			1.276	78.545	.206	.20238	.15865	-.11344	.51820
Sense of belonging	Equal variances assumed	.576	.450	-.529	89	.598	-.09127	.17257	-.43416	.25162
	Equal variances not assumed			-.565	61.061	.574	-.09127	.16146	-.41412	.23158
Teamwork	Equal variances assumed	1.333	.251	-1.868	89	.065	-.30159	.16148	-.62244	.01926
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.959	58.219	.055	-.30159	.15397	-.60977	.00660
Motivation work	Equal variances assumed	.264	.609	1.790	89	.077	.42063	.23505	-.04641	.88768
	Equal variances not assumed			1.668	44.414	.102	.42063	.25213	-.08736	.92863
Motivation play	Equal variances assumed	1.580	.212	.681	89	.497	.12302	.18054	-.23572	.48175
	Equal variances not assumed			.762	68.379	.449	.12302	.16153	-.19929	.44532
Engagement	Equal variances assumed	.068	.795	.544	89	.588	.13492	.24808	-.35800	.62784
	Equal variances not assumed			.527	48.352	.600	.13492	.25580	-.37930	.64914
Verbal confidence	Equal variances assumed	.037	.849	.354	89	.724	.05952	.16798	-.27424	.39329
	Equal variances not assumed			.342	47.900	.734	.05952	.17394	-.29022	.40927
Written confidence	Equal variances assumed	.454	.502	-.333	89	.740	-.08333	.24999	-.58007	.41340

Variable		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			-.322	47.881	.749	-.08333	.25891	-60394	.43728
creativity	Equal variances assumed	.000	.999	-.679	89	.499	-.13095	.19277	-.51397	.25207
	Equal variances not assumed			-.650	46.914	.519	-.13095	.20151	-.53635	.27444
Enjoyment	Equal variances assumed	.000	.998	-1.017	89	.312	-.23810	.23413	-.70331	.22712
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.007	50.692	.319	-.23810	.23645	-.71286	.23667
Empathy	Equal variances assumed	7.868	.006	.768	89	.445	.16667	.21706	-.26463	.59796
	Equal variances not assumed			.883	73.439	.380	.16667	.18866	-.20929	.54263
Others emotions	Equal variances assumed	.957	.331	.545	89	.587	.10714	.19659	-.28348	.49777
	Equal variances not assumed			.571	58.166	.570	.10714	.18753	-.26821	.48250
Own emotions	Equal variances assumed	.410	.523	.295	89	.769	.05952	.20200	-.34184	.46088
	Equal variances not assumed			.304	56.056	.762	.05952	.19558	-.33226	.45131
Emotion regulation	Equal variances assumed	.007	.932	-.479	89	.633	-.11111	.23192	-.57193	.34971
	Equal variances not assumed			-.472	50.065	.639	-.11111	.23549	-.58408	.36186
Problem solving	Equal variances assumed	5.414	.022	1.820	89	.072	.36905	.20281	-.03394	.77203
	Equal variances not assumed			1.998	65.348	.050	.36905	.18475	.00012	.73797
Peer Relations	Equal variances assumed	.037	.848	-.935	89	.353	-.18651	.19957	-.58304	.21003
	Equal variances not assumed			-.971	56.863	.336	-.18651	.19211	-.57122	.19821
Teacher Relations	Equal variances assumed	.119	.731	-1.796	89	.076	-.34127	.18998	-.71876	.03622
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.722	47.153	.092	-.34127	.19814	-.73983	.05729
Taking risks	Equal variances assumed	3.127	.080	.035	89	.972	.00794	.22386	-.43688	.45275
	Equal variances not assumed			.040	70.716	.968	.00794	.19761	-.38612	.40199
Imagination	Equal variances assumed	1.897	.172	-.801	89	.425	-.13095	.16348	-.45578	.19388
	Equal variances not assumed			-.849	59.738	.399	-.13095	.15429	-.43960	.17770
Staff Attitude	Equal variances assumed	.471	.494	.154	89	.878	.03175	.20662	-.37880	.44229
	Equal variances not assumed			.155	53.313	.877	.03175	.20424	-.37785	.44135

Perseverance	Equal variances assumed	2.608	.110	-2.391	89	.019	-.47222	.19748	-.86461	-.07983
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.953	34.970	.059	-.47222	.24184	-.96319	.01875
Resourcefulness	Equal variances assumed	.140	.709	.423	89	.673	.09524	.22511	-.35206	.54254
	Equal variances not assumed			.401	45.892	.691	.09524	.23774	-.38333	.57381
Reflective	Equal variances assumed	.020	.888	-.160	89	.873	-.03571	.22304	-.47888	.40745
	Equal variances not assumed			-.154	47.170	.879	-.03571	.23257	-.50354	.43211

Independent-Samples T-Test (Key stage 3 pupils years 7-9 and GCSE and A level pupils years 10-11)

Group Statistics

	Key stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Confidence	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.4737	.72548	.11769
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.3396	.89751	.12328
Sense of Belonging	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.5263	.60345	.09789
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.2830	.84073	.11548
Teamwork	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.3158	.70155	.11381
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.3774	.73971	.10161
Motivation work	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.3421	1.14553	.18583
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.6038	.96754	.13290
Motivation play	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.3684	.88290	.14323
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.5094	.72384	.09943
Engagement	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.7368	1.20100	.19483
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.9057	1.00507	.13806
Verbal Confidence	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.2895	.76786	.12456
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.3962	.71628	.09839

Written confidence	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.4474	1.05772	.17159
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.6981	1.11949	.15377
Creativity	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.2105	.81067	.13151
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.1887	.87830	.12064
Enjoyment	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.8684	1.04419	.16939
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.8868	1.03144	.14168
Empathy	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.8158	.92577	.15018
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.8113	.98169	.13485
Others emotions	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.9211	.96930	.15724
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.8679	.78539	.10788
Own emotions	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.8947	.98061	.15908
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.9434	.81842	.11242
Emotion regulation	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.8684	1.09473	.17759
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.7358	.96379	.13239
Problem solving	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.7368	.94966	.15405
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.8113	.87830	.12064
Peer relations	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.3947	.88652	.14381
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.2453	.87499	.12019
Teacher Relations	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.2368	.97077	.15748
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.1132	.75091	.10314
Taking Risks	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.9211	.96930	.15724
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.9245	.99709	.13696
Imagination	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.1316	.74148	.12028
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.4906	.66860	.09184
Attitude to staff	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.9211	1.09992	.17843

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.2642	.71120	.09769
Perseverance	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.1053	.83146	.13488
	key stage 3 pupils	53	5.3019	.93201	.12802
Resourcefulness	GCSE and a level pupils	38	5.0000	.95860	.15551
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.8868	1.01262	.13909
Reflectiveness	GCSE and a level pupils	38	4.7368	1.17828	.19114
	key stage 3 pupils	53	4.9245	.80501	.11058

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Confidence	Equal variances assumed	.115	.736	.760	89	.450	.13406	.17650	-.21664	.48476
	Equal variances not assumed			.787	87.654	.434	.13406	.17044	-.20467	.47279
Sense of Belonging	Equal variances assumed	2.215	.140	1.524	89	.131	.24330	.15969	-.07400	.56059
	Equal variances not assumed			1.607	88.998	.112	.24330	.15139	-.05751	.54411
Teamwork	Equal variances assumed	.086	.770	-.400	89	.690	-.06157	.15392	-.36740	.24426
	Equal variances not assumed			-.404	82.291	.688	-.06157	.15256	-.36505	.24191
Motivation to work	Equal variances assumed	1.232	.270	-1.178	89	.242	-.26167	.22218	-.70313	.17979
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.145	71.264	.256	-.26167	.22846	-.71718	.19385
Motivation in play	Equal variances assumed	.841	.362	-.836	89	.406	-.14101	.16874	-.47630	.19428
	Equal variances not assumed			-.809	69.732	.421	-.14101	.17435	-.48877	.20675

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Engagement	Equal variances assumed	1.495	.225	-.728	89	.468	-.16882	.23187	-.62953	.29189
	Equal variances not assumed			-.707	70.787	.482	-.16882	.23878	-.64496	.30733
Verbal Confidence	Equal variances assumed	.001	.977	-.680	89	.498	-.10675	.15691	-.41853	.20502
	Equal variances not assumed			-.673	76.408	.503	-.10675	.15873	-.42287	.20937
Written Confidence	Equal variances assumed	.347	.557	-1.078	89	.284	-.25074	.23260	-.71291	.21142
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.088	82.455	.280	-.25074	.23041	-.70906	.20757
Creativity	Equal variances assumed	.507	.478	.121	89	.904	.02185	.18086	-.33751	.38121
	Equal variances not assumed			.122	83.436	.903	.02185	.17846	-.33308	.37678
Enjoyment	Equal variances assumed	.001	.978	-.083	89	.934	-.01837	.22038	-.45626	.41951
	Equal variances not assumed			-.083	79.272	.934	-.01837	.22083	-.45790	.42116
Empathy	Equal variances assumed	.078	.781	.022	89	.983	.00447	.20381	-.40051	.40944
	Equal variances not assumed			.022	82.537	.982	.00447	.20183	-.39700	.40594
Others emotions	Equal variances assumed	4.260	.042	.288	89	.774	.05313	.18421	-.31289	.41915
	Equal variances not assumed			.279	69.132	.781	.05313	.19069	-.32728	.43353
Own emotions	Equal variances assumed	4.174	.044	-.257	89	.797	-.04866	.18906	-.42433	.32701
	Equal variances not assumed			-.250	70.648	.803	-.04866	.19479	-.43709	.33977
Emotion regulation	Equal variances assumed	1.270	.263	.611	89	.543	.13257	.21687	-.29835	.56349
	Equal variances not assumed			.599	73.417	.551	.13257	.22150	-.30884	.57399
Problem solving	Equal variances assumed	.170	.681	-.386	89	.701	-.07448	.19315	-.45826	.30930
	Equal variances not assumed			-.381	75.968	.705	-.07448	.19567	-.46420	.31524
Peer relations	Equal variances assumed	.590	.444	.799	89	.426	.14945	.18701	-.22214	.52105
	Equal variances not assumed			.797	79.232	.428	.14945	.18742	-.22359	.52249
Teacher Relations	Equal variances assumed	.468	.496	.685	89	.495	.12363	.18052	-.23506	.48233
	Equal variances not assumed			.657	66.807	.514	.12363	.18825	-.25214	.49941
Taking Risks	Equal variances assumed	.069	.793	-.017	89	.987	-.00348	.20951	-.41977	.41282

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			-.017	81.188	.987	-.00348	.20853	-.41836	.41141
Imagination	Equal variances assumed	.048	.827	-2.413	89	.018	-.35899	.14876	-.65456	-.06341
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.372	74.660	.020	-.35899	.15134	-.66049	-.05749
Staff Attitude	Equal variances assumed	5.207	.025	-1.806	89	.074	-.34310	.18994	-.72051	.03431
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.687	58.751	.097	-.34310	.20342	-.75018	.06399
Perseverance	Equal variances assumed	1.324	.253	-1.037	89	.302	-.19662	.18952	-.57320	.17995
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.057	84.752	.293	-.19662	.18596	-.56638	.17314
Resourcefulness	Equal variances assumed	.015	.904	.538	89	.592	.11321	.21055	-.30515	.53157
	Equal variances not assumed			.543	82.372	.589	.11321	.20864	-.30181	.52822
Reflective	Equal variances assumed	8.582	.004	-.903	89	.369	-.18769	.20781	-.60061	.22524
	Equal variances not assumed			-.850	61.045	.399	-.18769	.22082	-.62924	.25387

Table 9: Number of schools involved and aspects of the research that each school participated in

School	Number of teacher questionnaire participants	Number of student questionnaire participants	Number of teacher interview participants	Number of student focus group participants
School A	2	0	2	9
School W	2	17	1	0
School H	1	14	1	9
School SB	1	26	1	11
School B	1	24	0	0
School C	1	10	3	17
School P	1	0	1	9
School HW	2	0	0	0
School E	2	0	0	0
Totals (9)	**13**	**91**	**9**	**55**