

Does Role-Play Affect Engagement Within a Key Stage Three Classroom?

	Target	What I have done in this assignment
Target 1	Develop reflection and synthesis of literature	Reviewed previous advice from UWTSD on Moodle for academic writing advice and how to synthesise an opinion using existing research
Target 2	Proof-read work, being mindful of academic and coherent writing style	Setting time aside toward the end of the assignment to read over and correct mistakes

Word Count
5675

Introduction

The Drama classroom can differ quite greatly to that of another Secondary subject environment, perhaps with the exception of a Physical Education setting, it is an entirely different atmosphere to other secondary subjects; it is quite common for a learner not to sit at a desk or write notes for the duration of the lesson. It's also not uncommon for learners, especially at lower Key Stages, to not even use a chair, and to instead sit on the floor for the instructional phases in a Drama classroom. What is common, is regular role-play and collaboration style activities.

Whilst peer assessment and group work are encouraged in other Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE), the sheer amount of collaborative work learners are expected to do in Drama is quite different; the majority of work produced within a Key Stage 3 (KS3) lesson involves collaboration through role-play activities (Smith & MacGregor, 1992; Blatner, 1995; Panitz, 1996; LeJeune, 2003).

Research Context

There appears to be significant evidence identifying the benefits of role-play and collaboration within the Drama classroom (Kottler, 1994; Cage, 1997, Bair, 2000). However, educationalists note that previously it's has rarely been used in other subject areas (Ladousse, 1987).

The curriculum reform is pushing for collaboration within all classrooms, not just Expressive Arts subjects; the twelfth pedagogical principle states that "good teaching and learning encourages collaboration" (Successful Futures p.70). It therefore seems strange that role-play has not been identified earlier as a necessary and effective tool that should be incorporated within all AoLEs.

In a discussion with a History PGCE teacher, we acknowledged that we both regularly use role-play within our classrooms in the hopes to promote collaborative learning environments and practicing "good teaching" (Successful Futures, 2015).

This discussion led us to consider, does evidence suggest that role-play is an effective engagement tool when used across different subjects areas, and not just within the Expressive Arts?

Literature Review

There seems to be ample literature in support of using role-play within the Drama classroom. Blatner (1995) suggests the skills learned in Drama through role-play allows learners to shift their frames of reference and imaginatively explore problems, whilst Kottler assimilates role-play to Drama to a science; role-play is the laboratory, where learner's ideas become the "scientific equipment" (1994, p. 273).

In an more general educational context, role-play is recognised to aid learner development, encouraging pupils to adapt to a changing world by providing skills that are difficult to teach via direct instruction teaching methods such improvisation, self-awareness, communication, initiative, teamwork (Blatner, 2002) as well as problem-solving skills (Cage, 1997).

So if role-play can develop essential skills that learners require to succeed across all subject areas, not just within a Drama classroom (Dallman-Jones, 1994), does role-play have a place within other AoLEs?

The evidence of role-play as a success learning tool continues to be identified across other subject areas too. In a Biology learning environment, co-operative learning was found more effective than direct, lecture style instruction. Learners also demonstrated a higher ability to perform independence research, the ability to acquire knowledge, and the ability to work with others more effectively, as well as have a higher level of student satisfaction (Miller & Groccia, 1997).

Learners with anxiety toward factual and figure-based subjects, such as Mathematics and Sciences, can also benefit from the more human element proposed by role-play scenarios (Dallman-Jones, 1994).

Even in a Further Education context, Accounting students that had completed a curriculum involving role-play had a much easier time acquiring jobs opposed to those from a traditional curriculum background (Cage, 1997).

Whilst suggestions have been made for the benefits of the use of Drama across these subjects, are there suggestions that role-play can positively impact learners in a History classroom?

Previous research suggests so. Barlow & Isenberg (1967) state that younger learners in History lessons have previously been overwhelmed by the adult content of the course and introducing elements of Drama can make the course more

engaging (Barlow & Isenberg, 1967). They continue to note that there is a natural link between the two subjects, as both AoLEs revolve around stories about “human beings like [the learners]” (Barlow & Isenberg, 1967 p.303).

Whilst this suggestion is dated, more recent studies seems to agree with the points made almost 40 years previous, supporting the suggestion that using Drama in Humanities classrooms benefited learners. History and Politics learners that had been instructed in a role-play heavy curriculum achieved higher in standard assessment than those who were traditionally instructed (McCarthy & Anderson, 2002).

So, whilst evidence suggests using role-play across different learning environments is beneficial for learning and real-world application, the direct effect role-play has on engagement seems somewhat undecided.

Auken (2013) suggests that learning and engagement go hand-in-hand, whilst Kuh *et al* (2010) stated that engagement can effectively be facilitated through collaborative learning tools, but not always. Role-play and other high impact practices may not always engage all learners (Auken, 2013) and can even be “counterproductive for weak and/or unprepared students” (Stevens, 2015).

Unlike some subject areas such as Mathematics, KS3 Drama does not commonly differentiate their classes based on previous attainment within the subject or ability. Generally until KS4, learners will attend Drama in their form classes, which provides for a mixed ability environment, much the same can be said for History. Whilst initially it would be easy to assume that mixed ability settings can encourage varied engagement results, others argue that “when young people are working together in unstreamed groups of all but the lowest ability it is often found that the [learner] most ready to give a lead in a dramatic situation is from the less able of the group” (Hargreaves, 2012 p.153)

It should also be noted that the evidence above not only relates to varying subjects, but also relates to varying ages of learners from Primary to University level.

Therefore the question arises, when focusing on a particular aged learner, will results vary and demonstrate different information regarding the effects of role-play activities on engagement?

It was this question that inspired us to begin our research, and to see what we would be able to observe across two different AoLEs when using role-play and measuring engagement within our lessons.

My research partner and I are currently on placement at different schools (that for the purposes of this anonymity, will remain unnamed throughout our research; BERA,2018). As we are also teaching across two different AoLEs, it therefore seems imperative to keep as much the same as we possibly can in the interest of fairness.

Therefore, based on the above suggestions, we will tailor our question and narrow our field of focus; Does role-play impact engagement in a key stage 3 classroom?

With researchers even identifying that role-play can positively affects in KS2 classrooms, even when learners face challenges such as EAL (Grant & Mistry, 2008), we are hoping to be able to explore further if similar evidence will be found in a KS3 environment.

Study Design

With international results showing countries such as Japan significantly outperforming Wales in educational standardised tests (PISA, 2018), it made sense to research what methods of educational research are working so effectively for these countries and conduct our own in a similar vain.

The design of our research is therefore based strongly on Lesson Study (Dudley, 2011). Within our research we will work together as a pair to plan our lessons, be reflective in our findings and collaborative in the hopes of answering our research question and developing stronger pedagogy to take forward into our teaching careers (McKinsey, 2007; Dudley, 2014).

Following the method proposed by Dudley, we will perform a case study (2014) and observe engagement of 3 case pupils in each classroom (History and Drama) whilst using an adapted Leuven Scale (Laevers, 2003) to monitor engement. This quantitative data will be collected by non-participant observations during the lesson, whilst qualitative data will be collected in a focus group interview post-lesson (Creswell, 2012).

My partner and I will then work together to discuss our findings based on a reflective model that we devised from Brookfield (1998, 2005).

In order to conduct comparable research, both my partner and I selected two very similarly structured classes; each consisted of 28 Year 7 learners that are not differentiated based on previous attainment or ability within our subjects, with no known ALN.

However, with that being said, a difficulty that remains is that we are observing two different classes, in two different schools, with different learners that have all experienced different previous learning experiences. In order to combat our differences, we have ensured that the learners that will form the focus group panel have similar previous attainment and engagement levels within our subjects; one learner has high engagement, one has medium-high engagement, and one has medium-low engagement.

Ideally, were we to be on placement at the same school, we would have observed the same class and same learners across both subjects, however as this is not possible, we have done all that we can in order to create as many similarities as possible that will act as our controls. We also selected lessons that fell at the second lesson of the day, meaning our focus group interviews both occurred during the learner's break times. Whilst there is the potential negative of the interview not being completely truthful as learners may want to rush through in order to get to break, there is also the benefit that learners won't benefit from missing their following lesson, which could also persuade learners to give dishonest responses as they may wish to remain within the study for longer, whilst providing inaccurate feedback.

Our method for devising our lessons would be simple. Learners would be presented with 2 tasks that did not involve role-play and one task that did involve role-play, with questioning in between tasks to ensure that any dip in engagement was not due to a lack of learner understanding.

In both studies, the learners being observed were not aware that they would be selected for the focus group until the end of the lesson, to as not encourage a difference in their natural behaviour, so all learners were asked at the beginning of the lesson to identify themselves if they did not want to, or were unable to remain behind at break to form our focus group.

The History lesson was conducted first, with the learning objective of being "identify the key features of a medieval town" (See History Lesson Plan in Appendices).

The two non-role-play tasks of this lesson were writing tasks; the starter task involved learners drawing around their hand to identify five features from a photo of a medieval town, whilst the second task involved learners imagining that they were stood in the town whilst they identified one sense that they may be experience (eg. - what could they hear, see, taste, smell and touch). Learners then engaged in questioning to ascertain their understanding, before moving onto the role-play task.

The first role-play involved learners being given a sheet of paper describing a character from the medieval town, which they then had to introduce to their peers whilst they circulated the room. The aim of the task was for learners to encounter as many other characters from the town as possible. This presented the opportunity for some learners to really develop their role-play, considering their vocal expression, body language and fully developing their performance of their assigned character. It was immediately clear to see that engagement was at its highest at this point within the lesson for our three observed learners.

This task was followed by further questioning to check learner knowledge, before moving onto the plenary. Learners then had to position themselves in the room based on whether or not they wanted to live in the town. The plenary came alongside questioning their decision and justification for their choice.

The Drama lesson was conducted second, with the lesson objective being “develop your performance conventions using the story of Gelert from Welsh Mythology”.

The structure was very similar to that of the History lesson; two non-role play tasks, followed by a longer role-play task, with questioning in between so as to check learner understanding (see Drama Lesson Plan in appendices).

The first non-role-play task was a class discussion on mythology, activating learner’s prior knowledge of what mythology was, and whether or not they were aware of any Welsh legends and tales. They were also provided image prompts of the Welsh folktale of Gelert the dog, which they had to use to identify the story.

The second non role-play task came in the form of group work, where learners sat in smaller, pre-assigned groups and had to read their condensed section of the story of Gelert and discuss their thoughts.

The class was then questioned on their knowledge of Gelert and their sections, before moving into the role-play task.

The role-play task asked learners to create 3 freeze-frames depicting their section of the story. This task was then further developed; learners revisited their freeze-frames and include 2 further performance conventions: Motif and Soundscape.

Each group performed back to the class at different points throughout the lesson to demonstrate good modelling and understanding, demonstrating high levels of engagement at these points. This also ensured that engagement was high throughout the lesson as learners were continually performing and rehearsing their devised pieces.

The plenary of the lesson came in the form of a seated discussion of how they felt they had performed today, and to peer assess the rest of the learners within the classroom.

In both lessons, the learning objectives appeared to have been met; all observed learners took part in the required tasks and were able to justify their decisions based on questioning they received throughout the lesson.

Ethical Considerations

Of course, when undertaking research in any school environment, anonymity of the learner and the school is key, which is why for the purposes of our research, the schools will not be identified nor will the learners by their names (BERA 2018).

During our focus group interview, we chose to voice record our three learners in order to work from an accurate transcript to work from during our reflections. The audio was recorded and stored onto a password protected, encrypted device, and as soon as the audio was transcribed it was permanently deleted so as to protect the participant's right to anonymity (BERA, 2018 p.21)

Parents and guardians of the learners were also provided with informational sheets in December, several months before the research was to take place. These were designed as an opt-out system, so guardians could sign and could return to the school to decline consent for their child's participation, which also meant that we as researchers were not continually chasing learners for permission slips.

The children themselves were also verbally briefed before the focus group questioning began, and were provided with informational forms to sign, in order to provide their own assent for their participation (BERA, 2018 p.9). Learners were also aware that at any point, they had the right to withdraw from the experiment, even if assent and parental consent was provided (BERA, 2018 p.18).

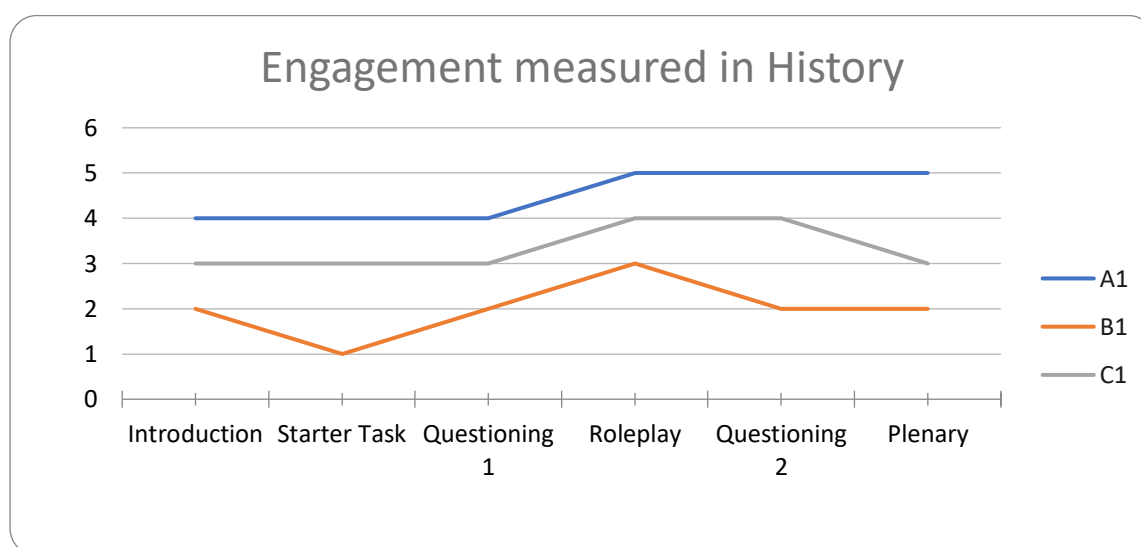
Please see the Appendices for copies of parental information, consent and assent forms (please note, unsigned versions have been attached in order to continue to preserve the learner's right to anonymity).

History Lesson Study Result

The aim of the lesson was for learners to interact with the photo of the medieval town provided in order to identify its key features. Engagement was noted throughout the lesson as steady, however engagement notably grew during the role-play activity.

The three observed participants can be identified based on their previous engagement and attainment within History; Participant A1 is a high engagement learner, child B1 is a medium-low engagement learner, and learner C1 is a medium-high engagement learner.

Figure 1 depicts a graph of the observed engagement during the History lesson.



KEY	
	Engagement increased during roleplay task
	Engagement stayed the same during roleplay task
	Engagement decreased during roleplay task
X0	Case Pupil
1	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - Extremely Low
2	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - Low
3	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - Moderate
4	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - High
5	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - Extremely High

Figure 2 identifies their observed engagement using the adapted Leuven's Scale (Laevers, 2003)

	A1	B1	C1
Introduction	4	2	3
Starter Task	4	1	3
Questioning 1	4	2	3
Roleplay	5	3	4
Questioning 2	5	2	4
Plenary	5	2	3

As shown above, it was noted that engagement increased in all learners during the role-play tasks, which corresponds with what has previously been identified in studies involving role-play (Hargreaves, 2012; Auken, 2013).

It should be noted that Learner B1 experienced a dip in engagement during the starter tasks. This seemed to correlate directly with the weather changing to heavy hail, causing a distraction to all learners, where the lesson was momentarily paused. Sommer (1977) notes how even the tiniest of differences in environment can derail engagement. Whilst quite a dated observation, it is fair to acknowledge that things haven't changed in the classrooms of today; distractions can just as easily derail learning and therefore, engagement. What was noted, was that Learners A1 and C1, who both had previous high attainment and engagement within the subject, recovered a lot faster than the lower engagement learner, who

had to be addressed by name before regaining focus and engagement with the task.

Clearly in this environment, for all of the learners that were observed, role-play increased levels of engagement. During the interview, I was interested to gain an understanding of the participant's enjoyment of role-play, a task they regularly meet in Drama, and their enjoyment of the subject Drama in general.

Figure 3 identifies a part of the transcript from the focus group interview. For the purposes of anonymity (BERA, 2018) the History teacher is identified as Observer 1, and I am identified as Observer 2.

**Observer 1: Okay. Right, do you enjoy general role-play style activities?
Do you love going to drama, things like that, Child A1?**

Child A1: Yes!

Observer 1: Yes, shall we put capitals down for your answer, too?

Observer 2: (laughs)

Observer 1: What makes you enjoy them?

**Child A1: I just enjoy getting practical with it, I don't actually enjoy
drama when it's like, let's learn about, if I'm honest, Dionysus or, like, I
wanna be –**

**Observer 1: Careful, I studied it at degree, Child A1 (laughs). So you love
doing practical stuff, and you like getting up and about. Awesome. Child
B1?**

**Child B1: I don't think it's as fun when you're just sitting down and
writing stuff**

Observer 1: Okay, so would you want to do it more regularly?

Child B1: Yeah

**Observer 1: Okay. Do you actually like going up and talking to people
then?**

Child B1: I think it's a good idea.

Observer 1: Okay. Child C1?

Child C1: Um, I really like it 'cause I'm a very drama person, I like, do loads of shows and plays and stuff, so like, going into like a character or playing a character is like really enjoyable and history is my favourite subject, so it's like two things that I love at the same time

Coincidentally, all three of the participants, particularly the highly engaged learners (A1 and C1) identified themselves as learners that really enjoyed Drama, which would also lend itself to high levels of engagement raised holistically within this lesson.

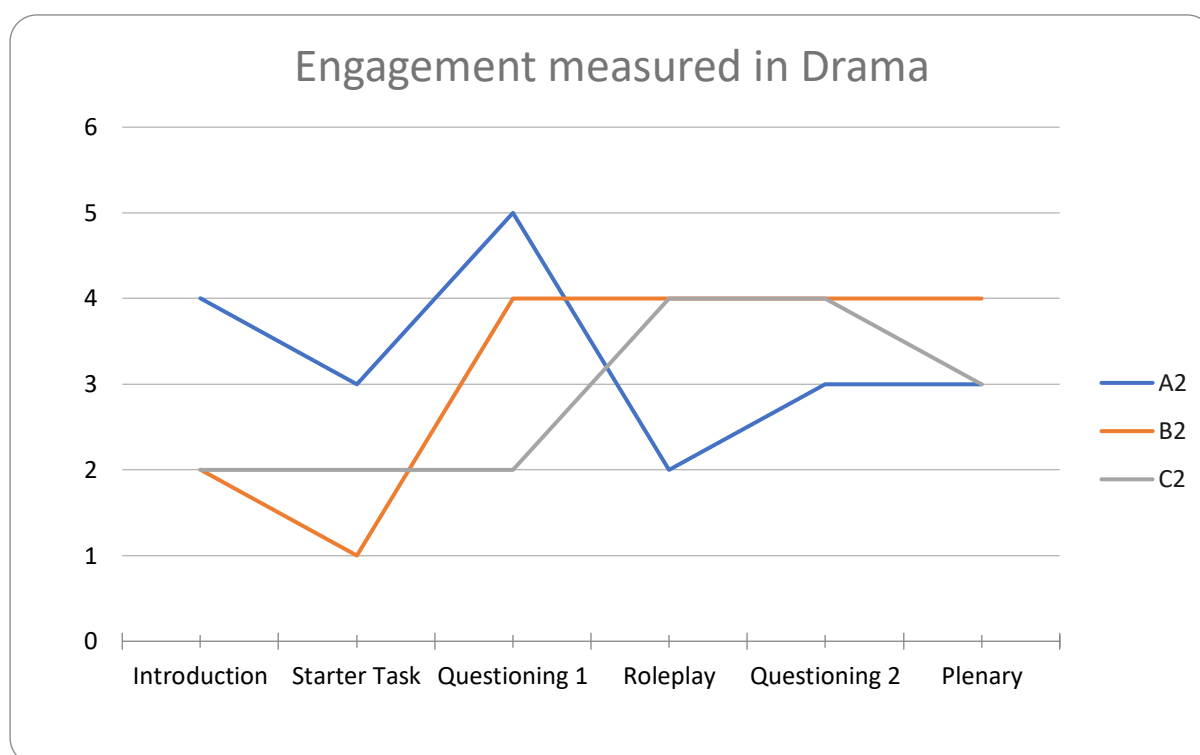
Ladousse (1987) suggests that often, teachers using role-play activities across other subject areas are not Drama experts, and so are not able to confidently produce meaningful results from such devices. Whilst the role-play task that was devised for the History task may not be conducted in exactly the same way as it would within a Drama classroom, my research partner does regularly and naturally use role-play within his pedagogy and has a genuine interest in developing the use of role-play skills within his learners. Therefore, the delivery of the instruction was very slick, even if he is not quite the Drama expert that Ladousse mentions. In this case, the observed learners responded well to delivery and were able to embrace the task, even if the entire class did not engage as strongly.

In a discussion over our reflections of the lesson (Brookfield 1998, 2005) we both noted that the engagement of the learners may have increased higher than was observed if some learners were to be spotlighted to perform back for the rest of the class, providing good modelling and demoing to lower engagement learners.

Drama Lesson Study Result 1404

Interestingly, the results in the Drama lesson seemed to vary to those compared to the History lesson.

Figure 4 below identifies the measure of engagement of the 3 participants in the Drama lesson.



KEY	
	Engagement increased during roleplay task
	Engagement stayed the same during roleplay task
	Engagement decreased during roleplay task
X0	Case Pupil
1	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - Extremely Low
2	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - Low
3	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - Moderate
4	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - High
5	Leuven Scale (SL adaptation) - Extremely High

Figure 5 below identifies learner's engagement based on the adapted Leuven's Scale (Laevers, 2003). Learner A2 is a high previously recognised engagement individual, learner B2 is a high-medium engagement, and C2 a previously medium-low engagement learner.

	A2	B2	C2
Introduction	4	2	2
Starter Task	3	1	2
Questioning 1	5	4	2
Roleplay	2	4	4
Questioning 2	3	4	4
Plenary	3	4	3

Contrasting to that of the History lesson, the observer noted that not all learners experienced increased engagement during the role-play tasks. A1, a usually consistently high engagement learner, appeared to dip in engagement during the role-play, whilst B2 did not increase but maintained engagement. C2, a previously lower engagement individual was the only observed learner to have their engagement raised during the role-play task.

There could be several explanations for this observation. Firstly, learners A2 and B2 are high engagement individuals during questioning tasks; during the focus study interview, A2 stated, "I don't know why but I just like to put my hand up a lot and answer questions" (See Transcript of Drama Lesson in Appendices).

These learners raise their hands often to provide answers and feedback to the rest of the class, where learner C2 rarely does this unless they are directly questioned.

It could be that the observer noted less engagement during the role-play activity, as they were maintaining their performance roles. As the role-play task required performance via freeze-frame, Motif and Soundscape, vocal expression and movement should be controlled and limited. At times such as when rehearsing their freeze-frames, learners will be expected not to move or make noise. It could be that a teacher without a Drama background may observe this disciplined performance

within the classroom and wrongly assume there is a lack of engagement, when in fact the learner is completely on task.

When learners were later questioned as to their enjoyment of the tasks, A2 and B2 provided the following response:

Figure 6 portrays a part of the transcript during the focus group interviews that followed the Drama lesson, where learners discuss their thoughts on role-play.

Observer 2: Okay. So, that sort of activity, where we get you up and moving, we call that role-play. Do you like role-play, as a rule of thumb?

Child B2 & Child A2: Yeah

Child C2: Yeah

Observer 2: When you come to Drama then, and I'm telling you we'll be doing some acting today and some role-play, are you happy to hear that?

Child A2: Yeah, I like it, I was um, when I was younger, I used to like, role-play just by myself and stuff

Observer 2: Okay

Observer 1: So, if you went into another lesson, let's say History, for example, that I teach, and you're allowed to act out some sort of activity—

Child A2: Oh yeah, that's cool

Child B2: We did like, we did like, for the Eisteddfod, we had to do a play about our own fairy tale and with -

Child A2: - uh me and Child B2's, we got into the like almost last round, but we didn't make it to the final

Observer 2: Oh amazing, so you two did really well in the Eisteddfod based on the role-play that you did in other subjects?

Child B2 & Child A2: Yeah

Learners happily demonstrate enthusiasm for the idea of role-play within Drama but seemingly display more enthusiasm for the concept of role-play within other subject areas, such as Welsh and History. Perhaps again, this ties in with the learner's expectation of their learning environment; they expect to experience role-

play within Drama, but when it appears across other subject areas, it comes as a pleasant surprise and learners are more engaged with a change in expectation (Sommer, 1977).

During later questioning, learner A2 identified pre-conceptions regarding the content of the lesson.

Figure 7 depicts learner's thoughts on the current Drama topic, Welsh Culture

Child A2: Uh, I'm not, like, I only moved here like a year ago, and I'm not the biggest fan of Welsh, like when, uh, I just find it quite boring

Observer 2: that's fine

Child A2: I love, I love Spanish, but I don't know, just not Welsh

Observer 2: What about learning about the history of Wales, rather than the language, so today what we did about Gelert, was that interesting?

Child A2: Uh, kind of.

Observer 2: Okay, kind of, not your favourite. Give it a mark out of ten?

Child A2: Uh, eight.

Observer 2: Eight out of ten? That's quite high. What about you Child B2?

Child B2: Um, I feel a bit more immersed in Welsh history now

Observer 2: Did you enjoy it; would you be happy to carry on learning about it?

Child B2: I enjoyed it, yeah.

Observer 2: What would you score it out of ten?

Child B2: Uh, eight, like Child A2

Observer 2: What about you Child C2?

Child C2: Um, I think It was nice to learn the history of Wales, so I'd give it an eight as well.

While an eight seems quite high when rating their enjoyment within the subject, A2 identifies that they do not enjoy Welsh lessons. Perhaps this learner

already held personal pre-conceptions of the lesson based on their previous experiences of learning Welsh in school, and this has impacted their attitude to learning of the history of Wales, too. This explanation, combined with their very recent move to Wales, could also help to explain why the observer noted lower engagement from this learner; they have less confidence within this particular topic and it has affected their learning.

Child C2 appeared to be the only child happy to engage with the Welsh Culture topic, which could explain their rise in engagement during the role-play task.

Perhaps discrepancies in results can be down to the observers having different ideas of how engagement presents itself in the classroom. Observer 1 has never experienced a drama classroom before, and whilst they use role-play regularly within their History lessons, an environment without desks and a set seating plan can prove challenging when observing particular individuals. What can often be seen as “messing around” in another lesson, can actually prove to be a vital part of the Drama rehearsal process when preparing for a performance, and so perhaps Observer 1 has deemed learners to appear off-task and disengaged when actually they were problem-solving or discussing their plans for group work.

The very definition of engagement can also differ from person to person, and observer to observer;

Previous studies note that engaging was said to be present if observers felt learners were “on task” (Brophy 1983; Natriello 1984).

Some researchers identify engagement as present if they can see that learners are portraying a sense of belonging within the environment, enjoyment, and attachment. (Connell 1990; Finn 1989).

With these two definitions in mind, it is possible that if Observer 1 felt that learners were “off-task” during the rehearsal process, that the definition of engagement suggested by Brophy (1983) and Natriello (1984) would not be satisfied. However, were Observer 1 to acknowledge learner’s professed sense of enjoyment in the role-play task, as they supported stated verbally in the interview, then engagement would have been satisfied and could be argued was present by the definitions provided by Connell (1990) and Finn (1989).

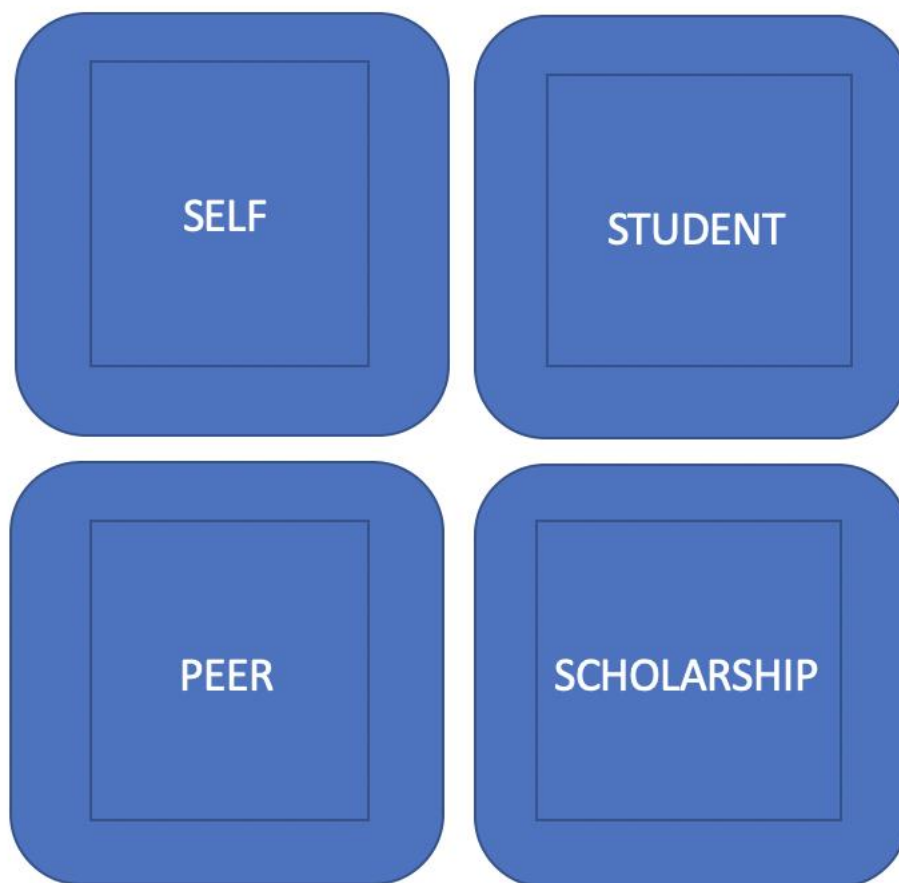
In reality, all three of the observed learners participated at different times throughout the lesson. All involved themselves in questioning, all performed at least once for the class, and none required any serious behaviour management from

myself during the lesson. With this in mind, the learning objectives that were set were successfully achieved by all three participants.

Ideally, in order to fully analyse these learner's engagement to role-play tasks, it would be nice to observe them again whilst covering a different topic other than Welsh Culture to see how results may differ.

Discussion of Research Findings

Figure 8 displays the model of reflective practise that we devised based on Brookfield (1998, 2005), this model proposes four lenses that can be utilised in a process of critical reflection.



Our devised model of reflection requires consideration of the following steps:

1. Self-reflection; we reflect on our experiences as learners.

With 2022 Curriculum (Donaldson, 2015) encouraging teachers to be reflective of their pedagogy to have their learner's interest at heart, this experience has been successful. It has also allowed me to be reflective of my pedagogy (Successful Futures, 2015) based on the observations of my partner, which I previously may not have had the opportunity to do.

2. Student reflection; reflecting on our pupils' experience.

All learners across both lessons showed some level of engagement to role-play activities. So long as the task is followed by questioning, all learners were able to demonstrate engagement and all learners satisfied their learning objectives, proving they gained knowledge throughout the questioning stages of the lessons.

3. Peer reflection; reflecting on our colleague's experience.

It was interesting to receive a perspective from a teacher that doesn't ordinarily teach within a Drama classroom. Likewise, it was interesting to provide feedback to my colleague who operates in a far more rigorously structured environment to myself

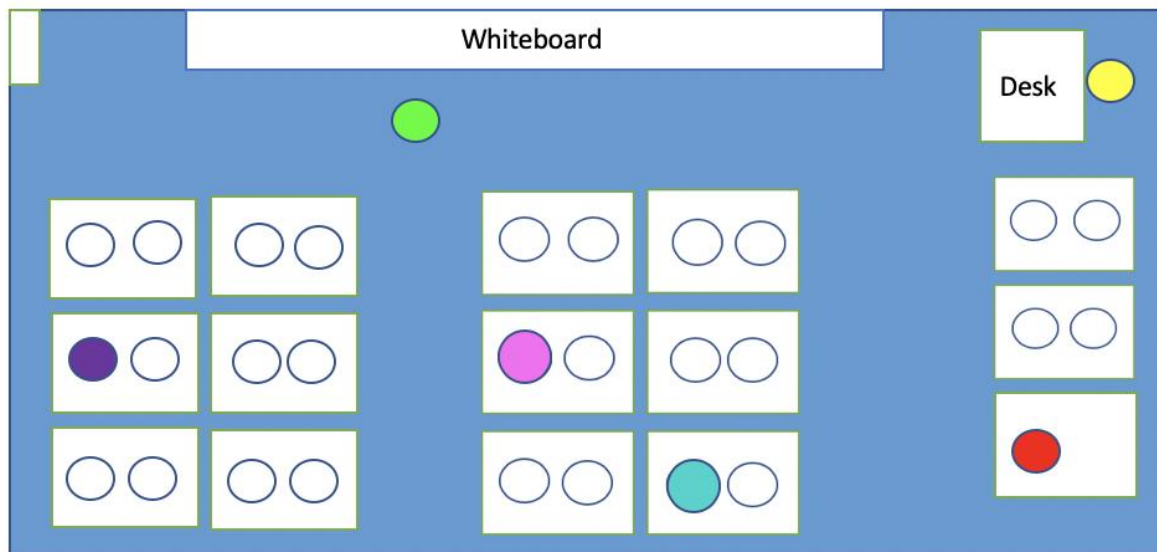
4. Scholarship reflection; addressing academic reading within our reflections.

With academic considerations, it is necessary to consider what other elements may be to blame for examples of high or low engagement within our classroom, rather than basing our results entirely from our observations of only 3 individuals.

Effective researchers would continue to look at other learners within their classrooms and develop research that incorporates all and promotes higher engagement. There are very many reasons that can alter and account for differing levels of engagement, and one interesting point will be considered further.

In the History lesson, the teacher provided a structured seating plan that was displayed on the board as learners entered the room, which has remained the same since they began teaching that class.

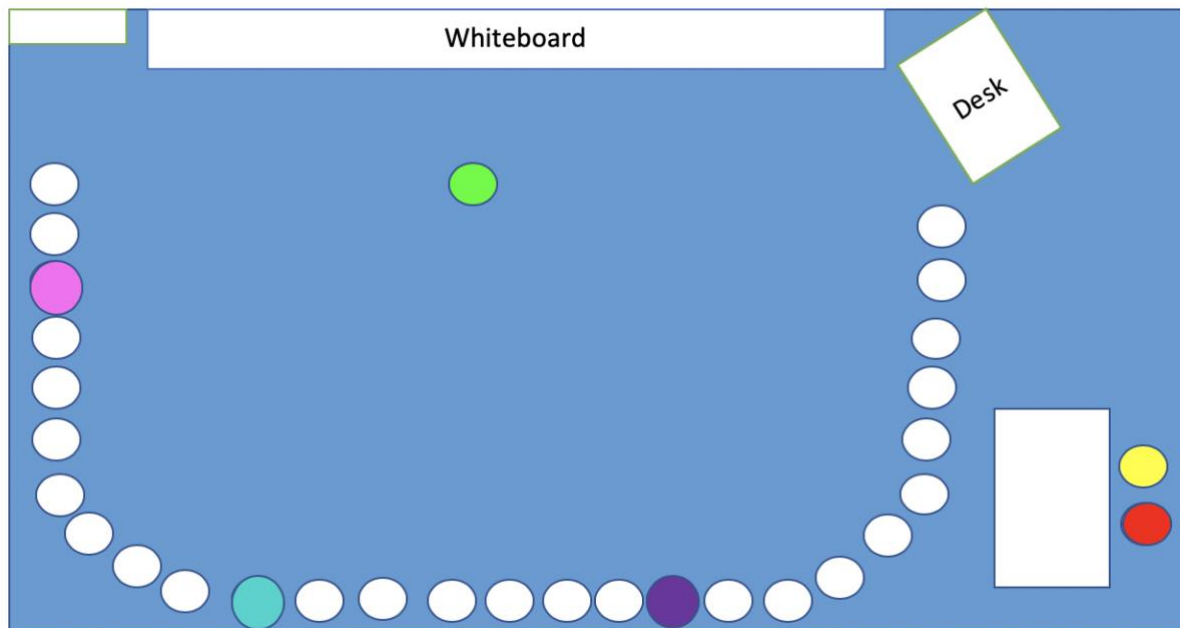
Figure 9 depicts the seating arrangements of the History lesson.



KEY

-  Child A – High engagement
-  Child B – Medium – high engagement
-  Child C – Medium-Low engagement
-  PGCE Teacher
-  Observer
-  Classroom Teacher

Figure 10 demonstrates the Drama classroom, in which learners select their own seating arrangements.



KEY

-  Child A – High engagement
-  Child B – Medium – high engagement
-  Child C – Medium-Low engagement
-  PGCE Teacher
-  Observer
-  Classroom Teacher

But does it really matter where a learner sits? Some educationists suggest that engagement begins with the seating plan, and there are arguments provided that both the arrangements used within the Drama and the History classrooms are advantageous in their own ways.

Figure 9 above depicts the layout of the History classroom during the observation. The History teacher had positioned his participants in what is described as a favourable trajectory triangle, as suggested by Marx, Fuhrer &

Hartig (1999), which implies that the observed learners were seated within the optimal triangle shape that is created by the teacher when they stand in their instructional position, in order to be engaged. This could have influenced the strong levels of engagement observed within the History observation lesson.

Contrastly, a second study suggested that there are benefits to learner's sitting in a semicircle rather than in structured rows, stating that it "could lead to equal opportunities for everyone in the class", dissuading disengagement that learners may feel if they are allowed to sit at the back of the room (Marx, Fuhrer & Hartig, 1999).

Whilst learners within the Drama environment initially had the benefit and freedom to choose their seat (Fernandes *et al*, 2011) during the initial instructional phase of the lesson, it should also be noted that for the group work, I had pre-decided the groups that learners would work in on that day, in order to ensure that there was one MAT learner in the hopes of encouraging higher engagement. In reality, the lower overall engagement to the role-play task in Drama could have been affected by the pre-determined planning of the groups, as learners could not pick and choose who they were working with (Fernandes *et al*, 2011) which unintentionally could have demotivated learners. This could also explain learner A2's fallen engagement from the initial non role-play tasks; they were demotivated at not being able to select their own working environment within the lesson, and so did not engage as strongly as has been previously witnessed within the Subject.

Some researchers however state that there is no "perfect" layout for all classroom activities, and so as long as teachers can justify their decisions, then they should be allowed to arrange the room as they see fit (Sommer, 1977).

With this in mind, further emphasis should be placed on classroom dynamic, especially within a subject that relies so heavily on collaborative work. The most effective teaching tool is knowing your learners and understanding what support each individual requires in order to achieve their best.

This knowledge of the learners can be difficult to acquire in the very limited contact hours learners have within Drama (in this current school, Year 7 learners encounter Drama once a fortnight, whilst they will encounter subjects like History four times over the course of the fortnight. In my partner's school, their learners encounter History 3 times a fortnight, so there is more opportunity for him to get to know his learners).

In another identified difference in the two classroom's layout, the position of the observer differed. With learners in the History lesson facing their observer at the front, they were likely to be more aware that they are being observed. This feeling of being watched could have influenced them to remain continually engaged throughout the lesson. In the Drama lesson, the observer sat aside the Classroom Teacher, out of sight of the majority of learners. What might seem a minor difference could have also influenced the engagement; Drama learners were able to forget they were under observation whilst the History learners did not have this ability.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Our findings from our research lead us to one statement; role-play does improve pupil engagement within a KS3 classroom, however pupils enjoy and display higher levels of engagement to role-play when learners are not expecting to encounter it.

Upon reflection of our method, whilst we developed a study based on Lesson Study method (Dudley, 2013), it must be noted that in order to obtain reliable results, our studies would have continued over a longer period of time in order to gain bountiful data. Our results were also very generalised, and entirely revolved around the observation of 3 learners per lesson. We failed to fully observe the engagement of the 25 other learners within the classroom who may have had very different responses to role-play.

Whilst the strength of our study was gaining hands-on experiences within the classroom, making our own observations and interacting with learners to gain their understanding and opinions on your teaching (Dudley, 2014), it could also be argued that our methodology for data collection was not completely reliable. Our own personal, inherent opinions of what engagement looks like would have influenced our findings, and there could be discrepancies between what my partner and I perceived to be true (Arthur, 2012).

The information provided by the learners in the focus group interviews too may not have been completely dependable. There are many factors that could have influenced their attitude to responding, such as wanting to rush to get through the questions so as to not miss all of their breaktime, their own personal preferences of the subjects, even down to their very mood on the day of the observation. In reality, anything as minor as the weather could have influenced their attitudes (Sommer, 1997) so repetition of the study would be key to gaining more accurate results.

In summary, we identified that whilst adopting high-impact learning tools such as role-play across AoLEs tends to support the majority of learners in our classrooms, the best support our learners can have is from a reflective and dedicated teacher that is aware of their needs on a personal level;

“Active, collaborative learning and other high-impact practices may not work well in all places or with all students, but in any case, instructors must hold up their end of the bargain by questioning their assumptions and adjusting their pedagogy and assessment accordingly” (Auken, 2013 p.214).

In light of that suggestion, in taking this research further, it may be more successful if the opportunity arose to observe the same class over time, whilst getting to know the learners to understand their personal wants and needs.

Ultimately, whilst there are suggestions that role-play activities can actually be detrimental to weaker and unprepared learners (Stevens, 2015), our findings correlated more with that of Hargreaves (2012) as all of the learners identified as previously having lower engagement levels responded well to and benefited from the role-play activity.

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