The Practice and Pedagogies of Imaginary Communities: A
Dramatic Story-Making Process in the Primary School Classroom

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Abstract

This research is driven by a new model of dramatic story-making practice developed in English primary schools between 2010 and 2020. Imaginary Communities (IC) is a particularly open-ended and collaborative practice and pedagogy that supports learning within the school’s curriculum. This thesis is informed by, and contributes to, the field of drama education and argues for a revived commitment to trusting children as capable, instinctive playmakers.

Creating a dramatic narrative with children from the very start of the process, and remaining committed to co-creation, can seem difficult for teachers who lack the relevant training or experience. This, coupled with the pressure to meet various pre-determined, age-related learning objectives, makes an open-ended practice seem out of reach. My research breaks down the IC artistic model, sharing it through five manageable stages of practice. It argues for a new way of thinking about pedagogy as a way of being in the classroom, suggesting that teachers and children can be equal playmakers when using IC. The thesis makes a case for practice-based research that communicates new models in accessible and manageable formats.

The thesis is founded on reflective practice arising from a ten-year process of developing, embedding, and evaluating IC in over fifty schools in the North of England. It includes a practical submission, providing a direct encounter with creative practice, and a written submission, offering a theoretically informed analysis of the IC approach. Using collaborative reflective practice, a detailed analysis of the work with teachers at two primary schools clarifies how they can use such an open-ended practice whilst still meeting formal learning objectives. The children’s reflections are theorised to offer further pedagogical possibilities about a new culture of friendship in the classroom. The collective insights position IC as a form of critical pedagogy in schools, supporting teachers and children to re-think classroom practices driven by performative agendas.
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Imaginary Communities Animation

This thesis introduces and examines a new model of dramatic story-making called Imaginary Communities. The artistic process is used with teachers and children in schools and is depicted in the following animation (also submitted on the USB stick in the box file).

IC Animation: Five Stages of Practice

I invite the readers to watch the animation as a preface to the thesis.
**Introduction**

In 2010 I had the privilege of working with a group of six teachers, from five local schools in Rotherham, UK, on a project that aimed to create a dramatic approach to learning. I worked across the schools in the role of ‘Artist in Residence’, and by the end of the academic year we had created a dramatic process that we called *Imaginary Communities* (IC).

It was a year of intense reflective practice, including the weekly sharing of teacher and artist reflections, regular group discussions, practical sharing sessions, ideas trialled, and ideas scrapped. Eventually, we ended up with a loose collective understanding of how we did IC. Over the next couple of years, I continued working with the schools and with the theatre company Chol\(^1\) to further develop the approach (see Appendix One: IC Timeline). Looking back on those initial years, I realise I was working as a reflective practitioner in the ‘day-to-day’ sense described by Jonothan Neelands. I was working at the ‘informal’ end of the research continuum, supporting understanding and practice ‘for and with local colleagues’ (2006, p.34). My commitment to reflecting ‘with and for’ the teachers and children in the schools generated learning and interest in what this new dramatic process could offer. The practice developed with energy and pace, and so too did the interest from other schools, other teachers, funders, and university partners. I felt confident that we were creating an approach to teaching and learning that warranted more formal research, in order to understand it and share its significance with others.

To do this, I wanted to work at the more formal end of Neelands’ reflective practitioner research continuum – working and researching with and for local colleagues, but also for audiences beyond my immediate context, in what he calls ‘research for academic purposes’ (2006, p.34). I believed that my perspective as a reflective practitioner – and the dialogic relationship I had established with teachers and children by working alongside them in the classroom – offered me a valuable research perspective. With the

\(^1\) Chol is a professional arts charity dedicated to creative opportunities for children and young people (CYP). Chol co-creates stories in everyday community and educational spaces with CYP from early years to early career. I joined the Chol team in 2012 (see Appendix One, IC Timeline, for further context).
right methodology, I could learn more about how this new model of practice works in school contexts from the perspectives of the children, the teachers, and myself, and begin to understand its wider significance.

This thesis offers a practical and theoretical contribution to the field of drama education within the primary school context, which caters for children aged seven to eleven years in the UK. IC is presented here as a new model of practice, and I explore the wider possibilities and significance of this particularly open-ended and collaborative process. IC is a dramatic story-making process, driven by the children’s and teachers’ ideas and contributions from the very start. The primary artistic objective is to enable every participant to co-create an imaginary narrative, taking on their own unique character and working in and out of role to explore their ideas through setting, characters, and plot. Each child, along with their teacher, is positioned as a capable playmaker, and, in line with the core historical values of drama in education, is directly involved in creating the IC process. IC is therefore a pedagogy in tune with the philosophy of feminist educator Maxine Greene, whereby learners of all ages are deemed ‘capable of imagining, of choosing, and of acting from their own vantage points on perceived possibility’ (Greene, 1996, p.41).

In my theoretical reflection on IC, I draw on ideas from both educational and dramatic practice-based research that share a similar ‘image of the child’ (Edwards, 2012, p.150). The research reflects an ‘intrinsically social view of children – as protagonists with unique personal, historical, and cultural identities’ (Edwards, 2012, p.150). The dramatic story-making process explores ways in which each child can contribute ideas and collaborate from their own vantage points. The research re-considers the earlier body of work by Peter Slade – particularly his respect and trust in children’s artistry and their ability to create meaningful drama – which he first shared in Child Drama (1954). Driven by the same commitment to following children’s ideas, the research also considers the work of Loris Malaguzzi and the early years centres in the Italian region of Reggio Emilia, and articulates the value of such research for drama education and story-making practices with older children.
The research is embedded in the everyday experience of teachers and artists working together in schools in core curriculum time. This ensures that the research responds to the challenges that teachers face when aiming to use drama in schools within the current educational climate. The challenge is significant, arguably to the extent that teachers, practitioners, and researchers are ‘faced with the imminent demise of our discipline within formal state education’ (Prentki and Stinson, 2016). IC seeks to offer teachers and children a way to bring dramatic story-making into their classrooms despite the fact that drama continues to be pushed to the margins of curriculums on a national level. The research explores how teachers can prioritise drama whilst continuously negotiating multiple pressures in response to a national, overarching culture of performance, which prioritises continuous assessment, monitoring, and examination in a small number of subject areas (Ball et al, 2012, p.514). IC seeks to act as a pedagogical force to aid teachers in their ongoing local disruption of an oppressive overarching performance culture in which they are held to account by the systems and policies of standards (Ball et al, 2012, p.514). The themes of the final two chapters in this thesis are driven by the reflections of teachers and children and mirror these broader themes of how drama can enable educational disruption and wider social learning amongst children in schools.

My research argues that particularly open-ended and collaborative drama practices and research processes can act as a form of critical pedagogy. Discovering multiple ways for all members of the class to contribute and take part in the IC process heightens what Greene calls a ‘sense of agency’ in the children and teachers involved (1996, p.48). As the teachers, children, and I actively imagine, create, and take part in our own Imaginary Community, we are also invited to re-imagine, and act upon, new possibilities within our classroom spaces. Greene suggests that ‘it may be the recovery of imagination that lessens the social paralysis we see around us and restores the sense that something can be done’ (Greene, 1995, p.35). IC supports teachers to practise the act of creating and imagining new possibilities in the classroom in core curriculum time.

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2 English state schools have a statutory National Curriculum which they must follow. As outlined in much more detail in Chapter Four, teachers are pressured to meet a range of formal learning objectives driven by the curriculum and assessment demands.
The teachers in my research demonstrate how the artistic process itself, and the research model, created possibilities for change from within their own classrooms. Together the teachers and I discovered new possibilities through the IC process and began to critically reflect on our own practice and pedagogies. The final two chapters in this thesis are driven by the teachers’ and children’s critical reflections and the new possibilities that we discovered. One of the teachers describes new ways of approaching and thinking about the performative use of formal learning objectives and outcomes, and this has become the focus of Chapter Four. The children discovered new ways of being together and reflected on friendship-making in the classroom during IC. This drives the analysis of the final chapter in this thesis.

This thesis aims to make sense of IC, creating a platform for sharing it with a broader group of teachers and drama educators who will be able to evaluate the practice and make further use of it. By following the teachers’ and children’s interests and critical reflections, the research presents findings that will be relevant to other teachers and professionals working in primary schools. It calls for a revived commitment to practice-led research, which is driven by the explicit aim to make new models of practice accessible and manageable for professionals. It responds to a history of practice-led, drama education research that grapples with this challenge.

I intend to de-mystify IC’s open-ended and collaborative practice through the articulation of manageable stages of practice, theorised in Chapter Two and translated into practice in Chapter Three. I propose five stages of practice – Idea Generation, Dramatic Setting, Characters, Shared Starting Point, and Equal Playmaker Strategies – as a way to share the artistic process of IC. Alongside this, I consider a new way of being as a way of sharing the artistic pedagogy of IC – through the idea of working as an equal playmaker. This research challenges the notion that teachers require years of experience and in-depth knowledge of drama education to use open-ended forms of drama in their classroom.
Research Context

The research contributes to a history of work by practitioner and teacher researchers working from the 1950s through to the time of writing³. There is a history of practitioners sharing and theorising new practice through physical demonstrations and written analyses of their own practice. The willingness of practitioners and researchers to share their own practice and disseminate widely through written narrative, public demonstrations, and – notably by Dorothy Heathcote – through film, has enabled drama education practices to be theorised and shared worldwide. In the introduction to Creating Democratic Citizenship Through Drama Education, O’Connor introduces Neelands’ work by describing it as

... part of a rich drama education tradition that honours theory rooted in classroom practice. Like Peter Slade, Brian Way, Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, Neelands has always been prepared to use his practice to inform his theory and vice-versa, and has been remarkably generous in sharing his practice, warts and all (O’Connor, 2010, p.3).

The body of work presented in this thesis is similarly ‘rooted in classroom practice’, underpinned by a strong aim to make these new drama methods accessible to teachers and demonstrate the potential of their practice within, and beyond, a school’s curriculum.

In a chapter entitled ‘Drama as Pedagogy’, John O’Toole also discusses how key practitioners have shared practices and describes how 'Hurricane Heathcote ... generously demonstrated' her drama-based approach to learning in the classroom (2009, p.103). The terminology he uses over the next two pages repeatedly suggests that there was a clear pragmatic aim of using this approach to research. He describes several other practitioner-researchers and 'teacher-writers' who shared Heathcote’s and their own practice and committed to making them accessible to ‘ordinary’ teachers. He describes

³ Although earlier examples are also referenced in Chapter One, e.g. Harriet Finlay-Johnson at the turn of the twentieth century, the DiE movement appears to mark an explicit commitment to researching and sharing practice with other teachers.
Cecily O'Neill's contribution as 'justifiably lauded' and her practice as 'easily manageable', using the phrase 'recipe book' when referring to two of her early books. Neelands' contribution is described as 'articulate' and 'very accessible'. O'Toole goes on to suggest that Neelands 'also stuck to the task of persuading the orthodox schools’ systems to accept drama' (2009, p.104). This early sharing of practice and research seems to be driven by a desire to persuade, inform, and disseminate; it is driven at least partly by a sense of advocacy.

Peter O'Connor considers how research in drama education and applied theatre has changed over the last 20 years and describes how ‘the travelling master class teachers of Dorothy Heathcote, Augusto Boal, Cecily O’Neill, Jonothan Neelands (...) seem to be of a different time’ (2015, p.370). O’Connor includes himself in this list and suggests that they were putting forward their own practice to share their ‘ideas and emerging theories through demonstration, through embodied engagement in the works’ (2015, p.370). O’Connor celebrates the overriding changes that have led to this kind of work diminishing, describing his early work as being ‘largely pre-theoretical and uncritical’ (2015, p.369). He describes this work as ‘advocacy’, even suggesting that it ‘masqueraded as research’ (2015, p.370). Philip Taylor also comments on earlier written accounts that use descriptive prose to share and analyse practice, including work by Slade (1954), Wagner (1979), Booth (1994), Winston (1998), Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998), as well as his own work (1998), suggesting that they ‘all privilege the authoritative narrator who endeavours to interpret a lived event and draw conclusions about that event’ (2006, p.6). Taylor acknowledges the recent critique of the ‘qualitative mind’ and suggests that the post-modern discourse raises questions about 'authenticity, trustworthiness and power and privilege’, which are particularly problematic for approaches that have an advocative quality. Critical social theories have led to wider methodologies being explored in the field, resulting in ‘multi-textual approaches in research design’ reflecting ‘pluralistic’ viewpoints and knowledges (Taylor, 2006, p.12).

More recent qualitative approaches to research, challenged and informed by critical social theories, make the ‘master classes’ described by O’Connor seem rather naïve and outdated. Yet the disappearance of new models of practice being researched and shared
seems notable: ‘if 20 years ago many of us were pre-theory we seem to have become almost post-practice’ (O’Connor, 2015, p.370). Developments in research and practice, challenging the grand narratives and authoritative single voices, reflect important changes that are very much needed if critical social practice is to be achieved. But the embrace of critical research paradigms risks the loss of the vital role played by earlier research in Drama Education, which supported direct and impactful conversations between practitioners and the sharing of practice.

This leads to two important considerations for my research. Firstly, how do practitioners in my position wanting to use research to make sense of new models of drama education balance critique with the pragmatic aims of the research? Secondly, what does it mean in relation to the dissemination of new practice and research with teachers? When reminiscing about this ‘rich tradition’, O’Connor is referring to Neelands’ early work where he was ‘trying to make personal and professional sense’ of the practice he was developing at the time (2010, p.3). O’Connor is discussing the opening of Neelands’ first book, *Making Sense of Drama*, published in 1984. It is a story of his practice shared through a transcript of a sample lesson, *Beowulf*. He uses reflective prose to explain choices, raise questions, and offer some context to the practice. Although we can now interpret this style of research – relying on descriptive prose and single-voiced reflections – as ‘largely pre-theoretical’, the methods were particularly significant for Neelands to make sense of his early work and also share his findings in a style that professionals could understand and engage with. Neelands developed new models of practice through this style of research, which quickly became distinct from other drama education practices such as those of Heathcote and Bolton. Neelands arguably achieved this through these practice-based reflective practitioner models of research.

At the commencement of this research and throughout, I was concerned that new practice, theorised and shared in a manageable and accessible way, was being marginalised. Like many of my drama practitioner contemporaries interested in practice-based research, I found myself reaching for established models and accompanying theory used in classrooms that were developed and researched during the latter half of the twentieth century. This is due to a lack of new, clearly articulated, well theorised models
of classroom practice being researched in the twenty-first century. Terms such as ‘process drama’ (O’Neill, 1995), ‘mantle of the expert’ (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995), and ‘the conventions approach’ (Neelands and Goode, 1990) are widely understood in the field of drama education. They undoubtedly offer a rich body of practice and accompanying pedagogies, which are now readily accessible for practitioners and researchers beginning work in education. However, as O’Connor suggests, it seems to be ‘sadly ... a tradition that is dying’. New models of practice are not being researched and shared in a way that makes them accessible to others. O’Connor muses that ‘drama in education academics are no longer expected to have practice to share’ because ‘universities value theorised accounts of practice over practice itself’ (2015, p.370). In fact, he suggests that ‘Increasingly, academics in drama education have come through a more traditionally academic route of study. Some PhDs in drama education are now completed by people who have barely worked in classrooms’ (2010, p.4). I suggest that this move away from research that demonstrates and shares new practice and pedagogy with and for teachers is creating a problematic gap in drama education research.

One of the starting points of this thesis, then, is an insistence on the importance of sustaining research that aims to develop the ‘recipe books’, by researching new models of drama education with teachers and children in classrooms. My research explores how the sole voice of the researcher and the idea of sharing practice as a ‘master teacher’ is problematic, but it seeks to revive and re-value in-depth inquiry into new models of practice. I aim to retain the essence of the earlier work, where research is driven by practice and is carried out and shared in ways that make the practice and accompanying pedagogy accessible to others. However, my research does not shy away from theorising practice and is informed by more critically reflective methods in an attempt to shift the power away from the authoritative sole voice of the practitioner.

Kathleen Gallagher is an example of a practitioner-researcher who has used reflective practitioner methodologies but is working with a more critical, feminist lens. In her early work, Drama in the Lives of Girls (2000), she suggests that ‘it is indisputable that teachers in their multitude of roles in schools and in children’s lives have access to worlds unknown to the ‘outsider’’ (Gallagher, 2000, p.15). She continues to challenge the
reflective practitioner approach to include multiple voices, highlighting the need to negotiate the role and disrupt the sole voice of researcher by those of young people and teachers. The research presented here certainly continues this reflective practitioner tradition, whilst, like Gallagher, bringing in the voices of children and their teachers and actively inviting them to use the process as critical action research.

In rejecting the concept of ‘master teacher’, I am rejecting the practice-based model of training and sharing practice and pedagogy with teachers through ‘master teacher’ demonstrations. Again, the way this sharing takes place needs to be reconsidered but the practical sharing itself remains important. Neelands describes the intent of his practical demonstrations in his early work and explains that ‘going into school and putting your practice on the line every day of the week’, was important because ‘people wouldn’t touch drama unless you could show them how it worked with their kids’ (2010, p.3). As drama continues to be marginalised in school curriculums (Prentki and Stinson, 2016), teachers in the UK, as well as elsewhere, are not being provided with training, space, and time to develop drama education practices. The need for a range of practice-based approaches to sharing new research-based pedagogy and models of practice, seems to me, more important than ever. This leads me to consider how best to share and articulate practices, and how to train others in a practice-based approach, as explored in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. The practical submission in Chapter Three articulates and demonstrates practical workshops that share this research-based pedagogy whilst avoiding the focus on the ‘master teacher’.

**Collaborative Reflective Practice**

Introducing an article in the journal *Young Children*, the editor describes how Loris Malaguzzi ‘developed his theory and philosophy of early childhood education from direct practice in schools [...] over a 30-year period’. He goes on to quote Lilian Katz, who suggests that practice ‘may even be ahead of theory development’ (Malaguzzi & Gandini, 1993, p.9). The editor compares Malaguzzi’s work to other major philosophers and theoreticians who influenced him, such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who unlike
Malaguzzi, ‘did not provide direct guidance about how to implement their theories in schools’ (1993, p.9). This extended example of practice-led research is particularly relevant to Imaginary Communities and to the work of other practitioners and organisations who are dedicated to developing and understanding research-based pedagogy in schools. The value of work that is driven by a collaborative reflective approach is more than the theoretical account of the practice alone. It speaks directly to others who are interested in implementing the approaches within their own day-to-day environments. In other words, to ensure the research-based pedagogy is manageable it must be developed within school classrooms, and therefore negotiate the challenges that teachers and schools face when attempting to prioritise drama education methods. The methodology developed for this research builds on Malaguzzi’s dedication to understanding pedagogy from practice, in everyday educational contexts.

The first aim of the research is to make sense of IC and discover a way of sharing the practice and emerging theory with others. This is driven by what Winston describes as etic issues, ‘those questions that we consider before embarking on the research, questions we consider of interest because of existing theory, previous research or our own informed experience’ (2006, p.50). I started out with three questions driven by etic issues:

1. In which ways does IC draw upon, revive, or in some cases depart from the traditions and discourses in the histories of drama education?
2. What is the core artistic practice and pedagogy of IC?
3. How can it be broken down and shared with teachers and professionals?

The second aim of the research is to understand the pedagogical implications of the approach. This required a more open research process and is therefore driven by ‘emic issues [...] that emerge from within, during the research process itself’ (Winston, 2006, p.50). The openness of this part of the research mirrors the practice itself – IC aims to value the contribution of the participants and does not pre-plan the narrative or the drama in any way. The research remains open to interpretation through the process, and
this encourages the consideration of emic issues. The questions that emerged through the process were:

4. How can teachers continue to work as equal playmakers, while still meeting a range of pre-determined formal learning objectives and producing outcomes?
5. How do the children generate new friendships in the classroom when taking part in IC?
6. How can teachers use IC to value and develop a pedagogy of friendship within their teaching practice?

I consider the majority of the research methodologies selected as part of what I call collaborative reflective practice, which I detail in this section. Another element important to the research is the presentation of practice as research situated at the core of the thesis in Chapter Three. This is a practical response to questions two and three. The practical submission enables me to further meet the aim of sharing manageable practice. I use five practical workshops to demonstrate how the five stages of IC practice are shared through the participants’ experience of working as Equal Playmakers, rather than via demonstration as a ‘master teacher’.

The main body of the research was conducted through practice-led research. This involved two teachers and their classes of children in a form of critical action research, which led to two detailed case studies. I refer to this approach as collaborative reflective practice. I have included a short, focused methodology section at the start of each chapter to re-cap and offer more detail as to how I reached the findings in that chapter. In order to focus my research and develop the case studies, I selected two primary school classrooms that I was already going to be working in through my work as a practitioner and Director at Chol. This approach enabled me to bracket off specific moments of practice, within a set time period, to focus my questioning and analysis. By isolating these set moments of practice, I was able to establish clarity around the data collected, carefully consider the ethics involved in the research, and develop a more systemised, rigorous approach to analysis. In other words, I was able to move beyond my day-to-day role as a reflective practitioner and work at the more formal end of Neelands’ research continuum, as a reflective practitioner researcher (2006, p.34).
Although this approach allowed me to develop and apply a separate set of clear methods, my role within the research remains a particularly complex one. IC is now one of Chol’s core artistic programmes and, at the time of writing, is being delivered in 24 partner schools across England. I am a Director at the company and this thesis presents a body of formal reflective practitioner research, driven by my own practice within this developing programme of IC. I cannot for the purpose of this research simply detach my position as a researcher from the other roles I take within the work as a reflective practitioner, a trainer, an educator, and a company member of Chol. My role as a researcher requires a much greater level of criticality and academic rigour than when I am in my day-to-day reflective practitioner mode. However, my roles as trainer, teacher, and company member inhibit any attempt at an objective study. I have personally driven the practice and pedagogic enquiry into Imaginary Communities throughout the last ten years – firstly as lead artist on the Creative Partnerships programme and then as lead artist and manager of the IC programme at Chol (see Appendix One: IC Timeline). This long-term investment in and relationship with the model of practice complicates my position as researcher.

The pragmatic, political, and at times advocative aims and ambitions that drive my professional work directly inform the aims, questions, and methodologies within my research. As a trainer, I want the research to enable other teachers and practitioners to feel confident about using playful, collaborative, story-making practices. As a drama educator, I am interested in using drama in core curriculum time in schools. This role drives my interest in working alongside teachers to negotiate the systematic pressures of performativity and actively seek local educational disruption. As a company member and Director of Chol, I want to develop leading practice and boost Chol’s visibility and reputation within the field. My role as reflective practitioner informs my relentless desire to understand how practice works and push boundaries to develop new understanding and, ultimately, better practice.
The overarching aims of this study – to understand and articulate the practice and pedagogy of IC and to develop and share IC as manageable pedagogy – are very much informed by my position in these multiple roles.

As part of Chol’s planned programme of IC, I was going to be working in two schools. After initial conversations, the teachers and senior leadership in both schools agreed to take part in my research. Following Chol’s ‘Artist in Residence’ model I worked in two classrooms in each school, but for the purposes of the research, only one teacher and their class of children was selected from each. There are two main reasons for choosing to focus on two case studies in total, rather than four. Firstly, there is the practical consideration of time. One of the biggest challenges I face when working alongside teachers in school is finding enough time in the school day to plan and reflect with them. The research methods that I planned to use would take up more time than I would usually ask of a teacher and the children in my day-to-day reflective practice, therefore trying to add the additional research elements into two classroom experiences in one school would become unmanageable. The second reason relates to the way I planned to analyse and present the findings. I wanted to use the children’s and teachers’ IC narratives as a key part of the data analysis and presentation of findings. The narratives themselves help make sense of the practice, both for me during the analysis and as a way to present the findings in the written thesis. I want the reader to get to know the children’s and teachers’ stories, remember their characters, and be intrigued by the twists and turns that their stories take. Holding two narratives in mind felt like a more efficient and accessible way to communicate the research findings to the reader.

I worked in each classroom for a school term (approximately 12 weeks). I worked with Carly and her Year 6 class from September 2015 to December 2015, and with Sarah and her Year 4 class from January 2016 to April 2016. I also carried out some follow-up visits to Carly’s class between January 2016 and April 2016. I introduce the teachers, schools, and children in more detail at the start of Chapter Two (See pp.56-57). I visited the schools approximately one day a week during the term of delivery. I worked alongside the teacher and the children in the classroom, sharing and practically exploring the
application of the IC process through the five stages of practice outlined in Chapter Two. The work took place in a morning during literacy time\(^4\), and sessions generally lasted for one to two hours. On some occasions in Carly’s class, we continued working into topic time in the afternoon. The data I collected whilst in school is as follows:

- **Written Reflections**: Each week, the teacher and I spent time discussing what happened during the sessions and I made informal notes as we spoke. I then turned these into written reflections that were saved in a virtual learning environment (VLE) that we both had secure access to.

- **Lesson Plans**: After the weekly reflections, the teacher and I spent time planning the next sessions. These plans predominantly focused on a plan for the next session together the following week, but we also discussed ideas linked to literacy as both teachers continued delivering literacy lessons related to their IC during the time in between my visits. I wrote up these plans and saved them in the VLE.

- **Recorded Interviews**: I recorded weekly interviews with Carly and a group of five children in her class. Due to time restriction in Sarah’s class, I only recorded interviews on three occasions with Sarah and three children in her class. The interviews were semi-structured, and the children’s interviews generally lasted between five and ten minutes with each child. The teacher interviews were longer.

- **Thick Descriptions**: On occasion, I spent time after the session writing up descriptions of a specific moment. This was sometimes a moment that the teacher and I reflected on as interesting, or a moment that the children had discussed during their interviews.

- **Children’s Writing**: On occasion, I also took photos of children’s written work that they completed as part of the IC process.

These sets of data were gathered whilst working collaboratively as a reflective practitioner with the two teachers and the children in the classes. My intention was to

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\(^4\) The two schools both taught lessons segregated by curriculum areas. It is typical in primary schools in England for literacy and numeracy to be taught in a morning through two separate lessons.
create a dialogic and pluralistic approach to gathering this data. Considering Donald Schön’s three concepts of reflective practice – ‘knowing-in-action’, ‘reflection-on-action’ and ‘reflection-in-action’ (1987) – Neelands adds a fourth concept of ‘reflexivity-in-practice’ (2006, p.19). Drawing on the work of Freire (1998), Neelands suggests that reflexivity-in-practice ‘stresses an active commitment to articulating and making visible the essential dialectic within teaching and learning processes.’ It ‘presupposes ... that there are systematic opportunities for dialogue about the processes and interpretations of teaching and learning between teachers, learners and others involved’ (2006, p.19). The model of practice itself opens up ‘systematic opportunities for dialogue’ through the equal playmaker strategies, but the research process is also designed to support this.

Planning and reflecting alongside the teacher, for example, creates space for dialogue and for questioning possibilities together. It offers teachers a temporary break from the pressure to perform and deliver outcomes, which Cagliari et al. describe as the ‘impossible and inhuman relations teachers have when they are left alone to experience problems’ (Cagliari et al, 2016, p.223). The practice developed in the early years centres in Reggio Emilia promotes the value of two teachers always working together to question and challenge, reflecting together through careful documentation, and shared reflections, as a form of critical reflexive practice. During the interviews, both the children and the teachers are offered space to reflect on what took place within the drama sessions, share their interpretations and the significance from their perspective, and reflect upon further possibilities available to them in the classroom. These ideas fed directly back into the practice each week. The reflections, and actions taken by the teachers and children during my research, are taken seriously and guide the research focus in the final two chapters.

The lesson plans and weekly reflections between the teachers and I proved valuable when answering the etic questions, particularly questions two and three. I used this data to distinguish and make explicit the five stages of IC practice presented in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. The interviews with the children and teachers became one of the most valuable sets of data when approaching the ‘emic issues’ and developing the questions and focus for questions four to six. The interviews were fully transcribed and
coded to highlight early possible themes. The coding process involved repeated cycles of returning to the data and coding the teachers’ and children’s words. As themes were identified and traced through the interview transcripts, I simultaneously began a process of reading additional literature and referring to the other forms of data I collected. Identifying the themes and establishing the questions took time and the final two chapters went through many early iterations before I settled upon the framing and questions. Further details of the coding process are included at the start of Chapter Four (See pp.83-84) and Chapter Five (See p.113).

As agreed with the teachers and the children involved in the research, I have anonymised the names of individuals and do not include the names of the schools within the thesis. I received ethical approval from the University of Manchester’s Research Ethics Committee before starting my delivery in schools. This involved careful consideration around consent and appropriate communication with teachers, children, parents, and senior leaders at both schools. All participants in the research were given a project information sheet detailing what the project involved, what taking part in the research meant, and what would be expected of the children and teachers if they agreed to take part. I also shared this verbally with all participants and allowed time for questions. I required signed consent from the parents or guardians of the children. In addition, I gained verbal consent from the children and I only included children in the research for whom I received both levels of consent. I also met with the head teachers and the lead teachers at both schools, discussed the aims and details of the research, and gained their written consent.

The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One identifies significant themes and discourses relating to the practice and pedagogy of IC within the histories of progressive education and drama in education (DiE). I adopt a genealogical lens intended to disrupt the linear history of drama education that is told through a series of influential and inspirational individuals and their associated practice and theory. In the first half of the chapter I explore three key
principles of IC that might trace their roots to discourses on progressive education: manageable pedagogy, play, and child-led learning. I consider where IC draws upon and builds on ideas relating to these principles from across the twentieth century and where it departs from others. I apply the ideas in the following chapters to make sense of IC as an art form and pedagogy. In the second part of the chapter I explore how IC connects to three significant strands of debate within the histories of DiE and process drama. I consider how IC attempts to resist unhelpful dichotomies that concern its dramatic form, purpose, and political framing.

Chapter Two explores and presents IC as an art form and a pedagogy. In an attempt to make the pedagogy manageable for ordinary teachers, the research is broken down into five key stages of practice. I use Chapter Two to articulate each stage, offering some examples of drama strategies that can be used, and then begin to theorise the artistic pedagogy through the idea of working as what I call an ‘equal playmaker’. I propose that by working through the stages of Idea Generation, Dramatic Setting, Characters, Shared Starting Points, and Equal Playmaker Strategies, the teacher and children can practise and begin to adopt an equal-playmaker way of being. I identify certain attitudes and behaviours adopted by the teachers when working as equal playmakers – trusting in the children’s ability to play, create, and offer a meaningful contribution; actively seeking and offering a variety of ways in which the children can contribute ideas; and being willing to play, create, and contribute alongside the children as an ‘equal’ in the creative process. I argue that teachers can practise and adopt these ways of being through the five stages of practice as a way of de-mystifying such open-ended and collaborative practice.

I situate the submission of practice at the core of the thesis in Chapter Three. I present the practice through a combination of film, animation, electronic and hard copies of documents, a sample of fabrics, and hard copies of books about IC. The main body of practice within this chapter is made up of five workshops, which were designed and delivered to practically explore IC as manageable practice and pedagogy as part of a BA Module at The University of Manchester. Each workshop practically guides participants through each of the five stages of practice and invites them to experience and practise working as equal playmakers. These workshops move beyond the participants watching
and analysing what I am demonstrating as ‘master teacher’, and instead focus on the defined stages of practice and a consideration of their own participation as equal playmakers. The focus of the practical research on manageable practice aligns it with Chapter Two, hence its positioning in the thesis.

The final two chapters were driven by themes developed during the research process. I used the children’s and teachers’ critical reflections to identify these themes. Carly, one of the teachers in my research, critically reflects on her previous use of learning objectives and the extent to which they can instigate overtly teacher-led practice. Chapter Four explores how Carly and her children discover new ways of engaging with formal objectives and outcomes and suggests that they are ‘de-centred’ through the IC process. The children and teacher are able to prioritise the co-creation of the narrative and dramatic experience, whilst also using the formal objectives and outcomes to bring meaning to their imaginary world. The formal literacy outcomes are achieved, but the performative agenda (explored in the chapter) is disrupted. This chapter is an example of IC as critical pedagogy.

Chapter five develops and presents an alternative pedagogy relating to personal and social agendas that are important to the children. The children’s reflections and stories about friendship drive this final chapter. Their insights suggest that the IC process creates opportunities for new friendships to develop within the children’s literacy lessons. The children reflect on the ways in which they have been able to find out about things they have in common, spend more time together, understand each other’s likes and dislikes, and help each other when taking part in IC. Three key features of the IC process – new social groupings, acting through free play and re-play, and teacher-in-role – offer teachers and children a way to support the development of new friendships in the classroom through a pedagogy of friendship.
Chapter One: Histories of Drama in Education (DiE)

The aim of this chapter is not to create a single history of DiE, but to understand how critical thinkers in the field describe and understand multiple histories. I do not expect (nor intend) to pin down the core ideas, aesthetics, and purposes of DiE. Rather, I excavate the narratives offered in the key texts to trace the roots of IC as an artistic process, a pedagogy, and a political practice in schools. I want to understand how IC relates to past practices and ideas, in what ways it draws upon or revives certain traditions and discourses from the histories of DiE, and where in some cases it might depart from others. Highlighting themes and discourses that are significant to IC and reflecting on how IC relates to these creates a useful focus for analysing IC in the following chapters. The histories of drama education offered by Anthony Jackson (2007) and Helen Nicholson (2011) are described as 'genealogies', with Jackson suggesting that we create these histories in the 'belief that we need to locate present practice within a longer tradition or series of cultural practice' (2007, p.10). Jackson refers to Foucault's understanding of genealogy and suggests that his own study is closer in Foucault's terms to the notion of 'genealogy' than 'history' (2007, p.11). Similarly, this chapter takes a genealogical approach to the literature to locate IC within genealogies of practice and in relation to particular discourses on DiE.

A genealogical approach is reflexively aware that an account of the past is always selective and is constructed through discourse. According to Foucault, ‘the historian must invoke objectivity, the accuracy of facts, and the permanence of the past’ (1971, p.91), whereas genealogy ‘refuses the certainty of absolutes’ (1971, p.87). This study does not therefore attempt to create a definitive history of DiE. Rather, it uses an awareness of genealogy to rummage through the 'histories' offered recently in the field to help establish a critical framing of the practice, pedagogy, and political purpose of IC considered in the wider portfolio. My approach avoids the temptation to consider and present the events, practices, and ideas of DiE as a ‘linear development’ (Foucault, 1971, p.76). It does not ‘trace a gradual curve of (...) evolution’ where each iteration of drama education evolves its ideas and practices from one time period to the next (Foucault, 1971, p.76). Although IC is certainly informed by the rich histories of DiE, I do not align
the practice and pedagogy with any one approach to drama education. In fact, the collaborative and responsive nature in which the practice and pedagogy of IC has been developed renders any attempt to pin the practice down to one approach useless. IC does not neatly build on from the most recent iterations of research-informed pedagogy in any clear developmental way.

IC began as practice and, although it was informed by my own understanding of research-based pedagogy, its development was a collaborative pursuit informed by the ideas, pedagogies, and practices of many teachers involved, as well as the insights and responses of the children. A review of literature that ‘distinguishes, separates, and disperses’ enables me to reach for certain ideas and practices that may have been rejected by more recent discourses (Foucault, 1971, p.87). I use this genealogical approach to disrupt the linearity of a history of individuals and open up certain ideas and practices that are useful for my own research. It challenges the idea that with each master teacher comes a new, more advanced or developed model of drama education. For instance, the research revives some of the ideas put forward by Peter Slade in the middle of the twentieth century, valuing the role of children’s play and self-expression within group playmaking. In several chapters of this thesis, Slade’s research has proved particularly useful when analysing IC practice. Although I did not set out to research Slade’s work extensively, this chapter and the wider research suggest that there may be value in reconsidering Slade’s therapeutic understanding of drama in the classroom.

Nicholson celebrates ‘research that documents new practices, building respectfully on the past, but also moving the creative energy on from practices developed in the mid-twentieth century that have become orthodoxies’ (Nicholson, 2018, p.482). In this vein, my thesis documents IC as a new model of practice and in this chapter I consider how the research builds respectfully from the past and how it articulates with certain discourses or traditions. I carried out a detailed analysis of five key texts by Nicholson (2011), Jackson (2007), Neelands (2010), Winston (2010), and O’Toole, Stinson, M. and Moore, T, (2009), to open up and examine the dominant histories in the field of drama education. These sources were particularly influential in my own practice and pedagogy during the first few years of my professional practice in schools. The five texts present discourses
that I engaged with whilst developing the IC approach in 2010-2011. They were published around this time and offer useful historical overviews of relevant practice, discourses, and debates. They enable me to reflect on how IC contributes to discourses on drama education and process drama.

Nicholson’s book *Theatre, Education and Performance* (2011) is broken down into two parts. The first part of the book is described as a ‘critical genealogy of theatre education’ (2011, p.10), exploring practices and key ideas from the twentieth century that Nicholson deems relevant and useful to consider in relation to the future of theatre education. This book, along with Jackson’s *Theatre, Education and the Making of Meanings* (2007), has been selected partly due to the extensive examination of recent histories (twentieth century) but also because of the genealogical approach. These texts explore key important debates and highlight orthodoxies that are relevant to the critical consideration of IC. The third book selected is *Creating Democratic Citizenship Through Drama Education* (2010), which comprises a selection Neelands’ writings from 1984 through to 2010. These writings are particularly useful because they offer Neelands’ perspective as a ‘teacher-writer’ at different times from within the histories. The book is edited by Peter O’Connor and includes a short introduction to each of the three sections. O’Connor’s additions offer useful context to the writings and make connections between Neelands’ research and other practices and ideas. Winston’s book *Beauty and Education* (2010) provides an interesting alternative history of education through the lens of beauty. It offers a useful critical analysis of schooling and a detailed argument advocating for the experience of beauty in education. The final text, *Drama and the Curriculum: A Giant at the Door* (O’Toole et al, 2009), offers a focused analysis of drama education taking place in schools. The book includes a chapter entitled ‘Drama as Pedagogy’ and O’Toole describes the search for ‘manageable pedagogy’ within the histories, which is a key concern driving my research.

The chapter is broken down into two main sections. In the first, I explore the interconnected histories of progressive education and DiE throughout the twentieth century. The histories of DiE are often traced via a small group of influential individuals from the turn of the twentieth century through to the culmination of the DiE ‘movement’
in the 1960s and 1970s. The genealogical approach of this chapter does not offer a single linear progression or propose a cumulative advance in practice. Rather than tracing and presenting the histories via a chronological timeline of these inspirational individuals or ‘master teachers’, the chapter begins with a short exploration of three key principles of IC that might trace their roots to discourses on progressive education: manageable pedagogy, play, and child-led learning. The second part of this chapter explores how IC connects to three significant strands of debate within the histories of DiE and process drama. Here, I show how IC attempts to resist unhelpful dichotomies that concern the dramatic form, the purpose, and its political framing.

The historical analysis focuses on drama education – predominantly in the UK context – over the last century. This geographical focus partly reflects the histories told in the key texts, particularly the emergence of the DiE movement in the UK in 1960s. The global influence of the DiE movement in the UK is significant and, within the confines of this thesis, the focus enables me to present IC as a practice that builds on certain traditions, practices, and pedagogies that are relevant to the two classrooms in my research. However, the predominant focus on the UK does limit the scope of this chapter. Part of the aim of this genealogy is to disrupt accepted truths, re-think accepted orthodoxies, and resist the sense of linear or cumulative advances in practice. A more focused study of drama and education histories globally would offer alternative insights and create additional rich theoretical interpretations of the practice. The growth in research internationally throughout the twentieth century and in more recent years is significant, and although the DiE movement in the UK has undoubtedly influenced international practice and research, the relationship is certainly symbiotic. Practice in the UK has learned from and continues to be influenced by drama research across the globe. Practice and research by David Booth (1994), Kathleen Gallagher (2007), John O’Toole (2009), and Michael Anderson (2012), for example, are all particularly relevant to current developments in the field and relevant to IC. A wider review of literature that includes international research would offer useful insights for IC’s practice in the twenty-first century.
Genealogies of DiE and Progressive Education

Histories of drama in education and process drama are traced via genealogical networks of inspirational and influential individuals operating within, but sometimes against, the currents of a broader political context. Central to this history is the DiE 'movement' of the 1960s and 1970s, which is defined as the work of Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, and later, Cecily O'Neill. The histories also identify earlier significant individuals in relation to drama practices being used in school. They specifically refer to teachers working at the turn of the twentieth century such as Harriet Finlay-Johnson and Henry Caldwell-Cook, and pioneers working in the early to mid-twentieth century such as Way and Slade.

The history of drama in education is often told as the history of these individuals. The histories do acknowledge, however, the significance of broader movements in progressive and conservative education as context and inspiration for drama education practice. They also acknowledge wider influences of change linked to assumed 'truths' about childhood, schooling, or education at different moments of history. These references to wider influences are important as they help to disrupt the idea that change occurred purely through the isolated actions of the individual teachers and practitioners described. Foucault's perspective calls for the genealogy to identify 'ruptures' (Nicholson, 2011, p.10) in history that enabled individuals to act, rather than the idea that either individuals or groups of people associated with DiE are acting in isolation. Nicholson describes the work of Finlay-Johnson as 'a practical example of the radical reforms that were necessary to make schooling interactive and child-centred' (2011, p.46), but also identifies various 'breaks' and 'ruptures' that enabled these changes to happen. The 'newly professionalized discipline of education in the early twentieth century' and the developing 'social imaginary of childhood' as 'pastoral simplicity' link directly to Finlay-Johnson's ideas about nature being at the heart of learning (2011, pp.38-39). Similarly, progressive education, linked strongly with Dewey, has been carefully positioned against 'breaks' in thinking about childhood, psychology, and the economic demands of industry.
Histories such as those by Nicholson, Jackson, and O’Toole all acknowledge the movement of Progressive Education as an important foundation for the emergence of DiE practices, creating more fertile ground for the new approaches, practices, and philosophies to flourish. Concepts such as child-led learning and learning through experience promoted within the progressive education movement feature throughout the histories of DiE and are key to understanding the practice and pedagogy of IC. Tracing these concepts through the histories also highlights substantial opposition to progressive education, and in turn drama practices that promote and embrace these features. Tracing the histories of progressive education offers context and insight into the ongoing challenges and opposition that teachers and I continued to face when using IC during my research.

Both Nicholson and Jackson describe the work of John Dewey as particularly influential in developing theories of child-centred learning environments, whereby children 'learn best by doing' (Nicholson, 2009, p.17). Jackson quotes from a lecture delivered as early as 1899, where Dewey predicted a shift in education towards a child-centred approach (2007, p.38). Dewey pre-empted the debates and criticisms of progressive education in his publication *Experience & Education* (originally published in 1938). He acknowledges the human tendency to create ‘extreme opposites’ in educational philosophy and explores how this has manifested itself in a 'Traditional vs. Progressive Education' debate (Dewey, 1938, p.17). He explains that the extreme 'either/or debate' understands the role of the teacher within 'traditional education', as an agent through which external static bodies of information 'are communicated and rules of conduct enforced' (1938, p.18). Dewey did not call for the opposite of this, which is what many of the critics of progressive education argued against. Rather, Dewey suggests that 'when external authority is rejected, it does not follow, except on the extreme Either-Or philosophy, that the knowledge and skill of the mature person has no directive value' (1938, p.21). Rather, he calls for a more effective source of authority, which relies on 'personal experience'.

Dewey is beginning to mark out ideas that position the ‘experience’ as the learning tool that engages, controls, and educates, rather than the authoritative role of the teacher. Dewey’s thinking is closely connected with more recent 'constructivist' theories of
knowledge (Jackson, 2007; Winston 2010). These theories, like Dewey’s earlier work, re-conceptualise knowledge acquisition and suggest that the learner constructs knowledge through engaging in an experience. Jackson suggests that these theories gained ground in the 1990s but draw heavily on theories developed throughout the twentieth century, including those of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky.

The approaches offered an alternative to didactic teaching methods, which rely on the belief that knowledge exists as an external set of facts that the teacher can select and impart to children. Jackson explains that progressive education evidenced a significant move from this ‘positivist, ‘transmission’ model of education’, which was dominant in the early twentieth century but was ‘largely inherited from the social impact of the Industrial Revolution’ and had been developed to meet the needs of nineteenth-century capitalism (2007, p.38). The alternative methods put forward in progressive education can at least be partly understood as being developed in response to new concerns about education emerging in the twentieth century.

Nicholson describes a link between experiential education, the arts, and play, and argues that ‘this attitude to learning prompted a revolution in educational thinking in which the arts had a central role’ (2009, p.14). Both Jackson and Nicholson acknowledge the 1960s and 1970s as the time when progressive education and DiE became known. They also see historical roots developing much earlier in the twentieth century. Nicholson references the work of Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) and Piaget (1859-1952) as influential to the movement. The influence of theories of play offered by Piaget and Froebel, as well as the liberal and social understanding of childhood and education existing outside of the industrial environment, began to open up a space for drama and theatre. These ideas required a ‘workable pedagogy’, and Nicholson suggests that they created an environment where theatre and drama could become ‘increasingly firmly integrated into the practice of education.’ (2011, p.40).

As the support for progressive education and DiE grew, so too did oppositional criticism. Tomlinson suggests that right-wing conservatives regarded the 1960s 'as a period of liberal anarchism when traditions were wantonly destroyed and educational standards
lowered’ (2005, p.21). Tomlinson goes on to acknowledge that the criticisms of progressive education in the 1960s have continued throughout the rest of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, yet critics do not acknowledge that the didactic teaching of the 1940s and 1950s produced much failure and demotivation (2005, p.22). Nicholson describes the rise of the political Right in the UK when Margaret Thatcher was elected in 1979, stating that the conservative education agendas were ‘incompatible with progressive pedagogies’ (2011, p.72). Nicholson describes a call to return to traditional teaching methods (2009, p.36), suggesting that progressive, child-centred education was seen as a failure by many conservatives. The demand for a ‘return to the basics’ called for ‘a metrical approach to assessment and constant and rigorous testing, an authoritative, centralised ‘National’ curriculum and ‘standards’ applied from the top down’ (O’Toole et al., 2009, p.58). This led to an attack on ‘all of the ‘progressive’ forces of ‘child-centred’, ‘process-driven’, ‘experiential’, ‘negotiated’, and ‘democratic’ curriculum’ (2009, p.58). As O’Toole comments, the rise of the new Conservative government, under Thatcher, cemented this attack and ‘drama suffered like any marginal citizens caught up in other people’s battles, and entered a period of turmoil’ (2009, p.58).

Within education policy in England, the (often crude) characterisation of progressive vs conservative education and consequent policy responses to them continued in the same vein from this point. While this history stops with the introduction of the National Curriculum, curriculum policy has simply provided another battleground for the same battles to be fought. Drama practices in schools continue to operate as marginal citizens. IC was initially developed in 2010, the same year in which the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government came into power. Multiple changes in educational policy have taken place during the preceding years – including a new National Curriculum, new expectations around assessment and progress, and changes to national examinations. National policies and systems, which prioritise continuous assessment and examination in a small number of subject areas, continue to create major challenges for teachers and drama practitioners wanting to develop and prioritise drama education in schools.

Despite this ongoing turbulent environment, IC is shared with teachers and schools as a cross-curricular pedagogy. Concepts such as child-centred learning and learning through
play and experience, which faced significant oppositional criticism throughout the histories, remain integral to the practice and pedagogy of IC. This thesis attempts, as practice-based research has before, to understand how teachers, schools, and practitioners can embrace ideas and practices from the progressive education movement within these challenging environments. Understanding how IC can negotiate multiple pressures is a significant part of developing and sharing IC as manageable pedagogy. I now explore how these concepts are approached in the more focused histories of DiE and identify three themes that underpin IC as pedagogy and that, in turn, provide the critical grounds for my reflection on the significance of IC in relation to this genealogy of practice. I position my practice and research in relation to the themes of manageable pedagogy, play, and child-led learning.

Manageable Pedagogy, Play, and Child-led Learning

These themes are described in the histories via the work of influential individuals or ‘master teachers’. Rather than tracing and presenting these histories via a chronological timeline of these individuals, I analyse the three themes by considering where IC draws upon certain traditions and departs from others from across the time periods and in relation to the different practices and practitioners described.

A substantial area of Dorothy Heathcote’s work focused on developing teaching practice and sharing this widely with educators. Heathcote’s commitment to making her practice manageable and accessible was taken on by other teacher-writers such as Neelands himself, as well as in the dedicated work of O’Neill. Slade’s direct influence on teachers in schools, however, is questioned by O’Toole because ‘although he spent many years as a drama advisor, and then head of a team of drama advisors, neither his book nor his practice have ever fitted comfortably into conventional school curricular’ (O’Toole et al, 2009, p.74). O’Toole explains that Slade worked developmentally, rather than through the lens of the formal curriculum and educational systems. A frustration to Slade’s many followers, his approach was ‘entirely unsystematised’ (O’Toole et al, 2009, p.75). This left many educators working in ‘entirely systematised’ schools with a challenge that they
could not overcome (O’Toole et al, 2009, p.75). Slade describes his approach to ‘Adult Training’ in the final chapter of his more recent book *Child Play: Its Importance for Human Development* (1995). Slade begins from the premise that ‘the most important thing here is the ability to find, or re-find, the child inside oneself’ (1995, p.316). The training he describes involves teachers or other professionals being taken through a series of playful activities to re-discover their inner child and to experience what it is like to take part in the activities. However, while these exercises may be worthwhile in developing a play-based pedagogy, the lack of a clear framework to connect these experiences to teaching and learning is problematic for busy teachers working under multiple pressures to measure progress. IC attempts to systematise principles for playful pedagogy in what I call manageable pedagogy.

Significant to the developing discourse of DiE are the ideas put forward about the place of children’s play in education. Finlay-Johnson advocates that, as the children get older, play should continue to be used in education. But instead of letting the teacher conduct the play, ‘the play must be the child’s own’ (1912, p.7). O’Toole suggests that ‘she anticipated Slade in identifying the roots of the activity in children’s own play, games and dramatic instincts’ (O’Toole et al, 2009, p.99). At the core of Slade’s *Child Drama* is play – the ‘child’s way of thinking, proving, relaxing, working, remembering, daring, testing, creating and absorbing’ (Slade, 1971, p.1). The histories suggest that his ideas inspired the use of improvised drama in the classroom. Heathcote, however, clearly states that she ‘is not writing of the improvisation used by children in their own play, or of the improvisation used in class when the teacher takes up the position of onlooker’ (1967, p.45). Rather, she is concerned ‘solely with the use of improvisation to aid a learning/teaching situation’ (1967, p.45). Although Heathcote does acknowledge that ‘many child drama elements will be present’ (1967, p.45), the improvisation is not set up for therapeutic or broader developmental aims, which has perhaps become associated with earlier progressive education and Slade’s practice.

Slade acknowledges two important aspects of play, which he differentiates as ‘personal’ and ‘projected’ (1995, p.2-3). Both types of play provide important opportunities for children’s outflow, which Slade argues is essential for children’s learning and
development. In personal play, ‘the whole person is used’ and it involves the child getting up and moving, taking ‘physical, emotional, or spiritual responsibility for the action’ (1995, p.3). Projected play is when children project their ideas ‘into, onto or around objects outside of them’ (1995, p.2). According to Slade, there is a risk in schooling of too much In-flow without enough supported Out-flow, which he describes as ‘the old bashing-in again’ (1995, p.11). IC combines personal play and projected play and works backwards and forwards between them. Importantly, IC also repositions both children and teachers as equal playmakers (explained in more detail in Chapter Two).

The idea that drama, as a teaching medium, repositions teacher and students in relation to each other seems to be recycled and reconsidered throughout the histories, and there are again nuanced differences between the theories. Finlay-Johnson describes the teacher as 'being a companion to and fellow worker with the pupils', explaining that this 'had a strong moral hold on them and shared in the citizen’s right of holding an opinion, being heard, therefore, not as "absolute monarch," but on the same grounds as the children themselves' (1912, p.10). Slade also calls for the role of the teacher to be re-considered and suggests that the 'adult’s part in the Drama of the Child is a very special though not a dominating one' (1954, p.52). To further explain the role of the teacher, he suggests that 'the task at this age [seven to eleven years] is to build a strong bond of trust and friendship' (1954, p.141). Slade suggests that children from the age of seven develop ‘a new interest in serious things’ and that it ‘is through the adult that the child satisfies its desire for deeper knowledge’ (1995, p.69). The important ‘bond of friendship’ that Slade suggests supports children’s learning is developed through the exchange of ‘frank and trusting confidences’ (1995, p.69). Although ideas about developing ‘trust and friendship’ appear similar to those of working as a ‘companion’, Slade doesn’t necessarily align his thinking with the idea of functioning as a ‘fellow worker’. The adult is not required to model positive engagement in play or even play with the child necessarily, but the adult should allow ‘frequent periods of uninterrupted play’ (1954, p.53). The adult can support the natural ‘In-flow and Out-flow’ of experience and knowledge by observing the children and answering their questions with patience (1954, p.54).
For Heathcote, the teacher or leader’s role in the learning process must be genuine but it is not the same as that of the pupils. The teacher should self-identify as a member of a team but they must also acknowledge that they are ‘older, more experienced, as a rule, able to keep the team together, work them to capacity, forwarding their projects efficiently, using their strengths and helping them overcome their weaknesses’ (1967, p.44). A significant focus of Heathcote’s work is sharing how the teacher can actively support and guide the children’s learning through her use of ‘teacher in role’ within the drama. In IC, the adult uses the teacher-in-role function slightly differently to Heathcote – enabling the teacher to engage with and contribute to the drama as an equal playmaker, offering their own interests and ideas in a similar way to the children. In this way, IC draws on the earlier theories by Finlay-Johnson and her approach to working alongside children as a ‘fellow worker’ in the construction of the imaginary world and setting up the drama. IC does, however, require the teacher to work differently to the children outside of the drama. The teacher has more control over the way the drama connects with curriculum targets or wider learning aims and objectives, therefore also aligning with some of Heathcote’s ideas about the role of the adult. This inherent contradiction in the concept of teachers and children working as equal playmakers in IC is explained in Chapter Two (see p.53).

All the ideas about the role of the teacher disrupt, to some extent, the traditional, more didactic teacher-led approach to learning. Heathcote, for instance, values the children’s contributions from their own position of human experience, arguing that ‘all bring relevant experiences of being human, facing specific encounters in now – immediate time’ (2010, p.25). Johnson, on the other hand, values the children’s own artistry and gives them control over their own play, valuing this over ‘a finished product pleasing to the more cultivated mind of an adult’ (1912, p.7). Within Slade’s work, Jackson acknowledges ‘an undeniable, strongly persuasive and – even today – still astonishing commitment to trusting the child: acknowledging that often the child will know best what is right for him or her’ (1990, p.157). O’Toole also describes Slade’s ‘lasting achievement [...] to get adults to recognise and respect the potential artistry of children, and their ability, both individually and in group planning, to manage artistic form’ (2009, p.76).
IC as a practice and pedagogy draws upon certain ideas and traditions within these themes and departs from others. The priority of creating manageable pedagogy, embraced by Heathcote and O’Neill, is particularly important in relation to IC and this research. Developing and researching my practice with teachers, in the classroom context, ensures that the practice is applicable and accessible rather than leaving teachers frustrated as perhaps some of Slade’s earlier work did. However, Slade’s training for adults does highlight the value of teachers experiencing the play-making process themselves, which is an important aspect in the practical training of IC as manageable pedagogy. Elements of both Heathcote’s and Slade’s use of play are relevant to different aspects of IC and are helpful in understanding how some of the Equal Playmaker Strategies (described throughout Chapter Two) can be used to support children’s learning. My understanding about the role of the teacher in IC draws on the earlier theories by Finlay-Johnson and her approach to working alongside children as a ‘fellow worker’, as explored in Chapter Two (see pp.61-62). IC’s overall priority of creating and experiencing a dramatic story-making process, led by the interests of the group, encapsulates the essence of Slade’s Child Drama and, as a result, his ideas and theories have proved useful throughout the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Informed by these themes, I now explore how IC relates to three significant strands of debate within the histories. I question how my practice and research attempts to resist unhelpful dichotomies that concern the dramatic form, the purpose, and the political framing of IC.

**Process Drama as Form**

Certain dramatic traditions and forms are closely associated with DiE and process drama. Neelands suggests that they are heavily based on improvisation, dramatic playing, and more 'naturalist' or 'realist' styles of theatre (2000, p.101). Improvisation and play have been referenced as key approaches used in the classroom from the early twentieth century by Finlay-Johnson, through to Slade, and understood as key to Heathcote’s practice. Improvised drama and other techniques that embody play appear to dominate
the emerging discourse, underpinned by pedagogical ideas about learning through doing and experience.

Neelands criticises these dramatic forms as potentially limiting. Although Neelands does acknowledge the great influence that Heathcote has had on his work, he suggests that he was interested in 'a much wider set of conventions, that did not assume the Stanislavskian 'living through' mode associated with DiE and Process Drama traditions' (2010, p.xviii). The association of Stanislavski with DiE is unpacked further by Neelands in the article 'In the Hands of Living People', where he critiques the idea of 'process' in 'process drama' (2000). He turns to O'Neill's definition of process drama to begin to understand how the term is imagined and reiterates that O'Neill 'accepts that process drama is almost synonymous with drama in education' (2000, p.101). Neelands then argues that in both there is a shared sense that 'working in the dramatic playing and representational mode of theatre, is 'better than' and 'more authentic' than working in a performance and presentational mode' (2000, p.101). Neelands suggests here that both DiE and process drama use the representational modes, which 'includes 'realist' or 'naturalist' styles of theatre in which the actors appear to be actually inhabiting the drama world represented on stage' (2000, p.101). He compares this to 'presentational' theatre where there is no illusion of reality and suggests that this type of theatre is 'closely associated with Brecht and Brechtian styles of theatre’ (2000, p.101). Neelands explains that he was interested in taking 'a more Brechtian or epic realist approach to drama, to use conventions to puncture the illusion of ‘reality’ in process drama’ (2010, p.xviii).

Neelands’ argument can be broken down into two implied suggestions. Firstly, that DiE and process drama are limited to 'realist' forms of theatre, and secondly that these theatre forms, when used alone, are limiting and restrictive as a drama approach to education. Neelands argues that DiE, understood as O'Neill's process drama and Heathcote's practice, is restricted to using representational or realist modes, which create a 'psychological and private mode of learning' (2000, p.102). This is problematic for any other practice that identifies itself as DiE and may include, similarly to Neelands’ own research, both representational and presentational forms. It may also be too simplistic to
limit process and DiE, as described by O’Neill and Heathcote, to these particular ideas of representation. O’Neill suggests that the 'evolution of process drama reflects developments in contemporary theatre' and that it does not restrict itself to particular forms (1995, p.xvii). O’Toole also suggests that O’Neill brings in ‘more distanced techniques and theatre forms’ (2009, p.104).

Heathcote too describes her own practice in wider terms than Stanislavskian 'living through'. Although Heathcote acknowledges the power and learning potential of working within an improvised frame, the key to her practice is the necessity to 'pause in it, distort it differently, bring new things into focus' (Heathcote and Fiala, 1980, p.52). In the article *Preparing Teachers to Use Drama*, Heathcote and Fiala suggest that 'Brecht’s dramatic theory is particularly useful in helping us to see how the teacher’s craftsmanship is like the playwright’s craftsmanship' (1980, p.52), and they consider the use of techniques associated with Brecht’s Epic Theatre. In fact, in describing Heathcote’s approach they declare that Heathcote 'stands apart from the majority of drama practitioners who ally their educational ideas with Stanislavskian theatrical ideas' (1980, p.37). Heathcote does not perceive her practice as being limited to a framework aligned to one or another dramatic form and politics of representation.

Neelands’ second implied criticism suggests that his association of DiE with Stanislavski’s 'living-through' methods is limiting or restrictive. The limitations highlighted by Neelands echo some of the opinions that Sheila Stowell challenges in the article ‘Rehabilitating Realism’ (1992). Although 'realism' applied to drama in education is very different in practice from plays performed in a realist approach, Neelands’ opposition to the 'Stanislavskian living-through mode' resembles the perspectives challenged in the article. Stowell identifies a view that she believes a number of feminist theatre critics have established – a view that positions realism as conservative or, at the very least, in opposition to Brecht’s Marxist ideas. She explains that ‘from the perspective of Brechtian orthodoxy, the theatre of illusionism is that which shows the structure of society represented on stage as incapable of change by society’ (1992, p.83). Neelands’ argument undoubtedly sounds familiar when he states that in process drama 'we can be
denied any social space, outside of the bounds of the drama world, in which to comment and reflect from within our own parameters of existence and difference' (2000, p.102).

O’Toole, however, explains that ‘naturalism works entirely differently on stage (where it is a highly artificial convention) from process drama’ (2009b, p.484-485). He explains that ‘the central driver of process drama’ is ‘lived through emphatic role play’, which ‘is the natural descendant of children’s dramatic play’ (O’Toole, 2009b, p.484-485). O’Toole describes how this kind of children’s participation is ‘aesthetically framed’, suggesting that ‘the best companies have always been clever enough artists and educators (and well-enough schooled in Brechtian theatre techniques) to disrupt the flow of naturalistic role-play, sometimes with coups de theatre, sometimes with changes of framing’ (2009b, p.485). This framing challenges the idea put forward by Neelands that these ‘naturalistic’ practices are limiting.

Stowell’s counter-argument challenges the idea that realism is essentially more ‘illusionistic’ than other forms of drama (1992, p.84). Stowell asserts that ‘the converting imagination is a potent and active force in creating significance – in realist, no less than in expressionist, epic, symbolist, or absurdist theatre’ (1992, p.83). This argument begins to break down simple equations between ideologies and particular theatre forms. The use of realism can often throw into perspective a great range of ideas from various political standpoints.

It seems that DiE and process drama use a wider variety of theatre forms than the ‘naturalistic’, ‘improvisatory’, or ‘lived-through’ practices they may have become associated with. Like DiE and process drama, the teachers, children, and practitioners using IC as a dramatic story-making process sometimes use improvisation and play-based activities and strategies. The group often sets up situations where characters role-play ideas developed by the group or improvise short scenes using a technique that I call free play and re-play (see pp.72-75). These improvisations may sometimes resemble naturalistic situations, where the children’s play is situated in a naturalistic scene. The framing of teachers and children as equal playmakers in IC, however, means that the children construct their drama from the very start of the process and are offered a range
of conventions from which they can do this. The aim is to share the playmaking role using strategies that position the children and teacher, at times, within ‘lived-through’ scenarios, but the children also work out of role throughout the majority of the process, trialling and selecting actions, plots, and sub-plots as equal playmakers. In addition, the openness of the IC approach and the freedom that the children are given more often results in narratives and scenes framed within fantasy or mythic scenarios. These are often influenced by various forms of popular culture – settings and characters are inspired by online games, animations, TV, and film, and we often find ourselves reflecting on and questioning the world around us through metaphor rather than naturalistic role-plays.

Debates about dramatic and theatrical form are also influenced by questions about the purpose of drama in the classroom. The inherent pedagogic drive of DiE and Process Drama described in the genealogies means that drama is always being used in the classroom for a reason – there is a functional element to its use. Decisions made when planning, including selecting certain exercises over others, and considering the value of different forms and traditions, are driven by certain ideas or beliefs about the purpose of drama in schools.

**Purpose of Drama in Education**

An attempt to highlight and understand some of the more pertinent ‘purposes’ or ‘functions’ of DiE practices leads to stories of division and conflict throughout the histories offered in the key texts. Healthy debates and discussion about how drama can and should be used in education can and do drive welcomed critical research and conversations in the field. However, particularly in the UK context, it seems that healthy debate turned into ‘civil war’ (O’Toole et al, 2009) in the latter part of the twentieth century and this has had a lasting impact on the field. O’Toole describes how these debates or ‘battles’ raged between two sides – ‘on the one hand the notion of drama as art form ... and on the other the concept of drama as a medium for ... learning’ (2009,
One of the most public and potentially damaging battles within the civil war relates to the criticisms launched by David Hornbrook.

The Hornbrook-led public critique focused specifically on the DiE movement. This criticism centres around the distinction between drama for learning across the curriculum and/or child development, and teaching ‘theatre’ to children as an art form. Hornbrook argued that DiE practices based on improvisation and dramatic play restricted young people from learning about theatre as an art form (Nicholson, 2009, p.39; Jackson, 2007, p.44). Neelands offers a strong defence against Hornbrook’s claims in an article published in 1994, and the tone of the article illuminates the passionate response that Hornbrook’s criticisms provoked at the time. Although Neelands’ description of his own practice suggests he sees improvisation alone as limiting, his defence in this article emphasises his respect for such practices. He argues that improvisation is not in opposition to Euro-American theatre forms, rather that it exists on a complementary but different plane of aesthetic experience (1994, p.94). He uses a post-structuralist perspective to critique Hornbrook’s argument about what ‘high art’ is.

In addition, a review of Hornbrook’s *Education and Dramatic Art*, written by Geoff Gillham in 1991 for the SCYPT journal, reaffirms the opposition that this generated. The review opens as follows: ‘This book is intellectually dishonest. Its purpose is to rubbish all the developments in drama teaching and drama in education from the 1950s to the present day, with a view to establishing theatre skills as the subject matter of the drama lesson. Its principle targets are Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote’ (1991, p.43). Hornbrook’s arguments, and the heated responses they aroused, undoubtedly created divisions within the field about the purpose of drama in schools.

Despite Neelands’ defence against Hornbrook’s criticisms, the ever-troubling distinction between art form and pedagogy still remains present in some of Neelands’ publications. Neelands describes how Heathcote, in the article *Signs and Portents* (1989), declares her position as an educator rather than a drama practitioner (2010, p.xviii). Neelands responds to Heathcote’s declaration by clarifying his own position – as a ‘drama and theatre educator’ (2010, p.xix). Neelands clarifies this nuanced difference in the article *In
memory of Dorothy Heathcote (2011). Neelands says that the article Signs and Portents 'explains Dorothy as it also explains me. But in that article, she made it clear that it was high-quality teaching and learning that she was interested in rather than 'better dramatics'. I realised that I was very concerned about both and took a theatre education path' (2011, p.23).

Neelands is choosing to clarify a distinction between Heathcote's work and his own. He ultimately acknowledges that both are about high-quality teaching and learning, but by stating that his work is also about art form, he implies that Heathcote’s is not. Neelands has clearly remained dedicated to both. In 1992, he wrote a short book entitled Learning Through Imagined Experience, which explores the potential of using drama as a tool to teach English in Key Stage 2 and 3. Neelands also advocated the use of the 'conventions approach', arguing that this offers a wider range of 'means' to students than process drama. Neelands does acknowledge that the conventions approach incorporates the use of drama across the curriculum similarly to DiE, 'but it also makes drama itself a subject for practical study by students' (2000, p.103). Neelands’ later research explores the use of 'ensemble' as a link between drama in education and professional theatre (2009). He stresses the importance of 'the integration and blurring of the boundaries between personal and social learning and academic learning' (2009, p.177). Neelands’ commitment to multiple purposes, including academic, personal, and social learning – as well as art form – is perhaps more explicitly documented than that of Heathcote’s. However, I would suggest that her work is also driven by multiple purposes that go beyond her declaration in Signs and Portents.

Firstly, Heathcote's declaration at the end of Signs and Portents is immediately followed by the explanation that she believes it is 'The Sign' that all teachers must learn how to exploit to achieve better learning, and that 'theatre is the art form which is totally based in SIGN' (1982, p.29). Heathcote also describes the aims of her work more broadly in other sources than her declaration in Signs and Portents suggests. Although she admits her primary ‘purpose’ remains the same – ‘to harness drama in a way that will most challenge children to learn’ – she explains that ‘the activity will vary as the child matures’ (1973, p.83). The children move through the play-based experience, to then learning the
Some of the histories describe DiE as being more explicitly about learning over art form and in particular more about a commitment to curriculum or academic learning than about more socially and politically driven learning. O’Toole describes four paradigms of purpose – linguistic/communicative, expressive/developmental, social/pedagogical, and aesthetic/cognitive (2009) – but explains that these distinctions got caught up for a while in the ‘civil war’, ceasing to be ‘useful distinctions’ and taking on ‘the appearance of barricades’ (2009, p.117). Most forms of DiE, can and very often do, embrace a wider understanding about what kinds of ‘learning’ drives the drama. Acknowledging this is a helpful move away from the more polarised debates of the nineties.

Although Hornbrook’s influence diminished during the 1990s, O’Toole suggests that ‘there are still some distinguished practitioners who cannot bring themselves to use the phrase ‘process drama’, even though the genre, and the concept of drama as a learning medium that it represents, are major parts of their normal practice’ (2009, p.124). This is potentially the reason why the term DiE has been replaced by phrases such as 'Theatre Education' (Nicholson, 2009, p.47) and 'Drama Education' (Neelands, 2000, p.107). The dropping of the ‘in’ seems at least in part to be an attempt to imply ‘a broader range of traditions' (Neelands, 2000, p.107) and to ‘erode tensions’ in the field (Nicholson, 2009, p.47). This perhaps represents endeavours to leave the civil war in the past and start afresh with terms that do not hold onto the troubling battles that took place.
IC embraces the use of drama for learning, including Heathcote’s drive to use drama to develop new and better approaches to teaching and learning. This includes using IC to meet learning objectives and outcomes connected to the National Curriculum and national examinations, explored in detail in Chapter Four. However, the IC approach does not restrict itself to this kind of learning. In Chapter Two, for example, I consider how children and teachers are positioned as equal playmakers, which involves them developing and practising the art of imagining, creating, and presenting narrative through drama and other play-based strategies. In this way, IC offers children a space within their school day to actively learn about drama and story-making by experiencing it as equal playmakers. In Chapter Five, I consider the social function of IC and question how the equal-playmaker strategies explored in Chapter Two create new opportunities for friendship-making in the classroom. IC resists the either/or debates by acknowledging multiple functions that drive the practice.

**Conformant vs Radical Politics**

Another reason to blur and disrupt distinctions made about certain terms is that ‘DiE’ is associated with particular kinds of politics in the histories. This final section of the chapter aims to erode any tensions caused by yet another unhelpful binary between conformant and radical politics. Nicholson describes DiE and TiE as ‘parallel and inter-related educational movements’ in the 1960s (2009, p.13). Yet there are clear distinctions between how Nicholson refers to both forms of educational theatre. Nicholson describes DiE as 'an introduction of drama into the daily working practice of schools, which developed from and added to merging alternative educational pedagogies' (2009, p.14). Nicholson distinguishes TiE as a 'theatrical pedagogy' (2009, p.19). Jackson describes DiE as being from 'within the school sector', whereas TiE is 'rooted in, and an extension of, theatre practice' (2007, p.134).

These descriptions seem to reinforce the idea that DiE is about drama for learning whereas TiE is a more explicit sharing of theatre as an art form. It is perhaps obvious that TiE looks and feels more like a distinct art form, resembling a production or theatre piece
that people outside of the field would recognise as ‘theatre’. Compare this, for example, to a whole class gathering around an imagined door, trying to convince the teacher in role as a giant to open it up. However, O’Toole does suggest that many educators were clearly articulating and demonstrating process drama as an art form. This is in fact one of the positive effects, according to O’Toole, of the Hornbrook attack, ‘that it stung into more energetic action ... a body of practitioners and writers’ who ‘started to pay much more conscious attention to the art-form in the process’ (2009a, p.124).

Nicholson defends TIE companies for accepting local government funding, explaining that although it was the case, ‘actor-teachers did not consider themselves to be instruments of civic authority' (2011, p.66). In fact, she argues that 'on the contrary they built on traditions of the WTM and Brecht’s anti-illusionist theatre' and that they saw themselves as 'part of the spirit of rebellion and anti-authoritarianism' (2011, p.66). Nicholson notes that David Pammenter, who worked at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, argued that TIE should remain the responsibility of theatres and not schools to 'achieve political independence and artistic freedom' (2011, p.67).

The suggestion that theatres are more politically independent than schools is a matter for debate. Jackson highlights one possible explanation for this claim, suggesting that 'one reason why many educationalists have embraced the opportunities for 'informal' education at cultural institutions outside schools [...] is that active-learning practices are more manageable and more acceptable, less constrained by national curriculum demands in those rigidly organised environments' (2007, p.43). The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 is undoubtedly significant to DiE. In this sense, Nicholson suggests that the 'increasingly prescriptive curriculum meant that there was less flexibility' for these practices to flourish (2009, p.39).

There appears to be an understanding that, because DiE often operates within the mainstream education environment, in collaboration with teachers and a National Curriculum, it is forced to conform to demands made by the school system above and beyond artistic or other personal or social aims. Whereas actor-teachers in the TiE movement are described as being driven by ‘the spirit of rebellion’, Nicholson seems to
imply that teachers and artists using DiE are perhaps closer to 'instruments of civic authority' (2011, p.66). The references to Pammenter and the actor-teachers associated with TIE are positioned as politically independent. This appears in stark contrast to the descriptions of DiE, which include Heathcote's declaration as an 'educator' and the earlier work developed by teachers themselves, such as Finlay-Johnson inside mainstream education.

It is curious that DiE appears to be understood as less political or 'more committed to social reform,' as the histories have clearly traced the philosophical underpinnings to the work of Dewey and the development of progressive education, which is far from apolitical. Also, Nicholson does suggest that Finlay-Johnson's work 'serves as a practical example of the radical reforms that were necessary to make schooling interactive and child-centred' (2011, p.46). I doubt that Heathcote or Finlay-Johnson would have considered their practice to be particularly conformant, and in fact Finlay-Johnson 'came to the conclusion that there was a great need for radical change' (1912, p.4).

Developing practice in schools with teachers over a hundred years later, Chol’s work can be seen as a radically alternative practice and pedagogy. IC promotes a dramatic story-making practice that prioritises collaborative playmaking experiences within an education system that is heavily focused on measuring, evidencing, and examining children’s progress against tightly defined, prescribed measures. Using IC in the classroom creates a space to challenge assessment-led pedagogies (as explored in Chapter Four), positioning IC as a practice searching for radical change in the spirit of Finlay-Johnson.

Dropping the term ‘DiE’ or ‘Process Drama’ is perhaps an attempt to move away from historical political distinctions. Judith Ackroyd, however, suggests that it is not just the term that has disappeared but that there is actually less research of drama practice in schools within the drama academy. She quotes Nicholson (2005) as describing applied theatre as the 'most democratic of theatre practices’, yet suggests that there is a 'lacuna between rhetoric and practice' (2007, p.9) and that the term is being used to favour certain types of theatre practices. Ackroyd highlights key political influences identified by Nicholson as 'Marxist, Freire and progressive educational practices' (2007, p.9). Ackroyd
suggests that the applied theatre discourse, which she felt originally included DiE practices, 'now delineates a restricted and exclusive type of radical practice, enshrined in an evangelical frame' (2007, p.1).

Ackroyd claims that 'there is an increased tendency to locate the origins of applied theatre in particular radical or avant-garde movements' (2007, p.6), as opposed to DiE, which appears to be identified with reform or accommodating practices. The intentions of DiE can be tied up with 'the specific curricula or school’s context' and may include aims to 'encourage writing in role for literacy development' or 'investigate historical phenomena'(2007, p.9). Ackroyd argues that these aims, compared to 'community transformation and touching people's lives', can appear frail (2007, p.9). According to Ackroyd, the omission of Drama in Education from the Applied Theatre field hinders academic research in this area, and she suggests that 'the places for focused academic debate on drama education are being usurped' (2007, p.10). Ackroyd implies then that the 'grander' applied theatre practice has led to less research of drama in education practice within the drama academy (2007, pp.4-5). Bowell and Heap also support Ackroyd's claims and agree that 'the diminution of the appearance of drama in education within the discourse of the academy [...] does indeed seem to be a cause for concern' (2010, p.581).

In the concluding paragraphs of her article, Ackroyd highlights the significance of the journal *Research in Drama Education* (RiDE) releasing a special edition on 'drama in education'. As Ackroyd points out, the fact that it is a ‘special’ edition suggests that the journal is no longer focused on this type of practice. RiDE published a special edition 'Drama for School Education' in 2009 and the aims were put forward in the editorial: it hoped to 'stimulate researchers to uncover more evidence to support its rightful place in schools' (Anderson & Donelan, 2009, p.167). Although the edition does acknowledge 'the growth and maintenance' of research structures in the field, it also recognises the need to stimulate more research. Also, one of the 'structures' highlighted is RiDE itself, and as Ackroyd pointed out, the fact that this is a special edition on drama in education shows that this 'structure' may no longer be committed to this type of research.
Although the 2009 and 2016 special editions both include practice and research that sit within the traditions of drama in education, Ackroyd’s article suggests that the drama academy may not value practices such as IC as much as other ‘grander’ applied theatre practice. My research calls for a continued commitment to drama-led, progressive pedagogies in schools and an understanding and recognition of the political significance of such work in the current political climate.

This chapter has laid out a genealogical discussion of practice and pedagogy relating to DiE and process drama throughout the last century. I consider histories of progressive education and influential individuals within the wider political and social contexts, as well as disrupt the idea of a linear trajectory of progress or advancement in drama education. Instead, this chapter – and indeed the rest of this thesis – reaches for ideas and theories throughout the histories to help make sense of IC’s practice, pedagogy, and political position within the context of drama in schools in early twenty-first century. Within the ongoing climate of accountability, for example, there continues to be challenges for child-led learning. In Chapter Four, I consider how the current pressures of performativity (Ball, 2003; Ball et al, 2012) can lead to more didactic teaching practices in schools, drawing on ideas from the histories of progressive education to further understand how the teachers in my research use IC to negotiate these challenges and embrace child-led experiences in the classroom. Agreeing to meet curriculum-driven and/or assessment-driven objectives, whilst still aiming to work collaboratively as equal playmakers, creates a difficult negotiation, yet the analysis in Chapter Four resists the discourse of IC being simply regarded as an accommodating or conformant practice.
Chapter Two: Training Teachers to Be ‘Equal Playmakers’ Through Five Stages of IC Practice

One of the key driving forces in the field of Drama Education is to share the artistic practice and underlying pedagogies with non-specialist teachers. O’Toole, in the chapter ‘Drama as Pedagogy’, describes how ‘teacher-writers’ strive to develop and share ‘manageable pedagogy’ with ‘ordinary teachers’ (2009, p.104). The drive behind the teacher-writers’ work is to lay out or break down the practice and pedagogy into a more systemised or structured written account, which teachers and practitioners can read and re-apply practically in their own classrooms. Useful examples of this work are Pamela Bowell and Brian Heap’s two recent books Planning Process Drama (2013) and Putting Process Drama into Action (2017). They commit, as other teacher-writers have before them (O’Neill, 1995; Neelands & Goode, 1990; Bolton, 1979 and 1984), to teasing out and clarifying what they believe are the important ‘principles’ of process drama. Through these texts they tackle the inherent challenge of turning a particularly responsive practice, which takes place live in the unpredictable nature of the classroom, into ‘manageable pedagogy’. Their books strike a careful balance between over-prescription, which would restrict the responsiveness required by such practice, and providing dangerously little structure or system for a non-specialist teacher to grasp onto.

Another approach used to share drama education is to demonstrate it through film or live practice, but this too has its challenges. Historically, this has run the risk of the work being perceived as that of the ‘master teacher’, rather than being made accessible to teachers who have little experience. Heathcote, for instance, is well known for sharing her practice widely through film, yet her practice was ‘so uncompromising, so innovative and so clearly the work of a master teacher’ that O’Toole suggests it could be ‘off-putting to ‘ordinary’ teachers’ (2009, p.103). This is indeed one of the reasons that led practitioner-researchers to break down drama pedagogy into a more manageable form through written accounts.

These challenges and opportunities are at the heart of my own practice and research, particularly in this chapter and the following chapter (presented as a practical
submission). IC has been developed practically in classrooms, alongside teachers and children, and prior to this research I continued to share the process with teachers and children practically, often intuitively, inviting the children and teachers to learn through experiencing an extended process. In this chapter, I break down the wider IC artistic process into a more manageable form. Bowell and Heap navigate this challenge by identifying six core principles of planning, giving teachers something tangible to work through, and simultaneously offering classroom-based examples to demonstrate ways that these principles can be applied in different situations (2013). Their approach informs my decision to clarify and share the artistic practice of IC through five clear stages, using examples from my own practice-based research conducted in two primary school classrooms.

When guiding the teachers through these stages, however, it became clear that creating manageable pedagogy involves more than a teacher going through the motions – simply lining up and planning a series of dramatic and play-based activities. It can require the teacher to accept and develop new attitudes, beliefs, and confidences that enable her to apply the responsive pedagogy. This consideration is particularly significant for drama education practices that, like IC, are particularly collaborative and open-ended; undergoing all the planning and development of the drama with the children from the first session.

A defining feature of the IC process is the openness and trust in the participants to create their own dramatic narrative and experience from scratch. This sets the approach apart from other forms of process drama, where the teacher carefully plans and sets up the introduction of the drama herself, before inviting the children in to co-create (Bowell and Heap, 2013 and 2017; O’Neill, 1995). It is important to carefully consider these features when training teachers, because sharing such an open-ended process as manageable pedagogy can be particularly challenging. In fact, O’Toole suggests that a teacher must be ‘bold and experienced’ if they are to ‘work from the children’s ideas to structure a drama that is both enjoyable for them … and a valid learning experience within the formal curriculum’ (2009, p105). This implies that this more collaborative process, which involves structuring the drama from the children’s ideas, cannot be achieved effectively
by ‘non-specialist’ teachers who do not have previous experience and confidence in using drama for learning in this way. I use this chapter and my practice-based submission to challenge this notion. I argue that teachers can use the five stages to practise and adopt a new *way of being* in the classroom – they can work as equal playmakers.

The concept of equal playmakers describes a way of being that enables children and teachers to work together in a more collaborative and open-ended way. The aim is for each participant in the classroom to be given an equal opportunity to speak, act, share, play, imagine, and ultimately create a new narrative and drama together. The concept of equal playmakers has emerged through my research as a reflective practitioner and is now a term used by teachers, children, and colleagues at Chol to help us reflect more critically and explicitly on a way of being when using IC in the classroom. Prior to this research, I reached for a variety of concepts to help me describe, challenge, and critically reflect on pedagogy and way of facilitating IC. I used concepts such as being ‘child-led’, ‘collaborative’, ‘reflexive’, and working as ‘co-creators’. McDonagh and Finneran explore the idea of ‘co-creation in drama’ through a phenomenological research project with teachers, and through this they understand co-creation as ‘an ontological attitude’, rather than a ‘specific set of pedagogical practices’ (2017, p.171). In this sense, one of the teachers in their study fittingly describes co-creating as a ‘way of thinking and being with the students’ (p.176). Similarly, I approach the concept of equal playmakers as a way of being with the children.

The research aims to understand the art form and the pedagogy in a manageable way for teachers and other practitioners. The five stages of IC are a way to understand and share the *dramatic art form*. The equal playmaker way of being supports the understanding and the articulation of the *artistic pedagogy*. Key to this research is my argument that taking part in the five stages of IC practice – and experiencing the artistic process – enables teachers and children to practise and reflect on an equal playmaker way of being, which is the embodiment of the artistic pedagogy. There are multiple ways to consider pedagogy in relation to IC in schools. In this chapter, and the next practice-based chapter, I articulate the artistic pedagogy. By this, I mean the theoretical considerations that inform the way the children and teacher experience the artistic process. As the term
suggests, when the practice is put into action and the teacher adopts the equal playmaker way of being, she aims to give every participant, including herself, an equal opportunity to create the shared play.

There is an inherent contradiction in the concept of ‘equal playmaker’. The aim is for all participants, including the teacher, to be able to work as equal playmakers and co-create the imaginary world, characters, and plot, but this does not mean the teacher abandons responsibility for setting up and guiding focused learning opportunities. The equal-playmaker approach refers to the teacher’s role in ensuring that all members of the group can make significant contributions to the content of the play, the drama, and the emerging narrative. She must ensure that all children are carefully supported to contribute in a variety of ways and that she also makes space to share her own ideas and interests. The teacher is still able to connect the story-making process with curriculum-based and wider social learning objectives, however, as explored in detail in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. It is her role to nurture these opportunities and connect the content of the drama (developed by all members of the group) with learning experiences (developed and set up by the teacher).

Through the articulation of the five stages and the theorisation of the artistic pedagogy, I suggest that the equal playmaker way of being involves the teachers:

- trusting in the children’s ability to play, create, and offer a meaningful contribution.
- actively seeking and offering a variety of ways in which the children can contribute ideas.
- being willing to play, create, and contribute alongside the children as an ‘equal’ in the creative process.

The pedagogical intention is to offer every child an opportunity to be a playmaker and work together with others as artists. By following the five stages and beginning to adopt the equal playmaker way of being, teachers and children get to take part in a relatively
rare opportunity to experience being playmakers and create their own drama within core curriculum time.

I suggest that such open-ended and collaborative practices are not restricted to the ‘experienced’ and ‘bold teacher’ (O'Toole, 2009a, p.105), and share how the five stages of IC practice can de-mystify this kind of pedagogy.

**Methodology**

The clarification of the five stages initially began to take shape through my day-to-day reflective practice, which can be considered the ‘informal end’ of Neelands’ research continuum (2006). Working with teachers, children, and other practitioners, we began to clarify the artistic process and played with different ways of talking about it and different ways of breaking it down into more manageable practice. Alongside colleagues at Chol, I trialled sharing the first three stages – which I named Idea Generation, Dramatic Setting and Characters – through practical training sessions with teachers after school, and in the classroom when working alongside them. We found some clarity through this practical process of trial and error, but the final two stages remained difficult to articulate and difficult to distil. I proposed the terms shared starting points and equal playmaker strategies for the last two stages and started to discuss these categorisations in more detail when reflecting with colleagues and teachers. I shared IC through these five emerging stages in the two classrooms in my research. This created a focused space and time to reflect on what the five artistic stages involve, what the artistic pedagogy driving the process is, and how this is reflected in the way the teachers and I deliver the practice (as equal playmakers).

The research has moved from practice (through my informal and formal reflective practice research), to writing and theorisation (the presentation of this research in this chapter), and back into practice (represented in the next practice-based chapter submitted as part of this thesis). The research processes involved in this cycle can be understood as critical action research. Although there are formal methodological
boundaries established through the two case studies in my research, it feeds into and responds to my wider, ongoing reflective practice, which drives me ‘to continuously and persistently scrutinise practice on a daily basis across a professional life-time’ (Neelands, 2006, p.17). I strive to use formal academic research, now and in the future, to inform, critically challenge, and create change in the work that myself and my company carries out with schools and communities. To do this, I will continuously move between the informal and formal end of the research continuum, yet I argue that the critical reflection and learning are valid from both and will therefore feed into one another.

In perceiving my work as an ‘action orientated, critically reflective and reflexive mode of practice’, I continuously (whether working at the formal or informal end of the continuum) strive to carry out my practice and research dialogically and with ‘the expectation that change is possible’ (Neelands, 2006, p.32). I discover the possibilities for change and action with others, in this case teachers and children, and in the context with which they work, in this case the classroom. I present this critical, action-orientated, and dialogical research approach more obviously in the final two chapters of this thesis, where I explore a curriculum-related pedagogy and a pedagogy of friendship. Both of these themes emerged through the research and I frame and present them in the final chapters through the critical reflections and the voices of the teachers and children. In this chapter I present the artistic pedagogy, however, from my own perspective as reflective practitioner researcher and use some of the practices associated with the ‘qualitative mind’, critiqued in my introduction. I rely, for instance, on the use of narrative prose, and to a certain extent my own ‘authoritative’ voice, to present the five stages of practice and reflect on the artistic pedagogy through the equal playmaker way of being. Although the findings in this chapter initially emerged from dialogical, action-orientated practice, I am aware that I have taken a more authoritative position during the writing process.

Writing up this chapter was an important part of the research process, although the findings are based on the practice, the more detailed clarification of the stages and the pedagogy took shape through the writing itself. I found that the use of narrative prose to understand and present the stories of practice was a very effective way of breaking down
the artistic process into manageable practice and pedagogy. Although these methods were particularly useful in establishing the clarity needed, on reflection I would feel more comfortable with an additional layer of dialogue with the two teachers during this writing process. At the start of the research I did not make an agreement with the two teachers to share the chapters and invite feedback. It is undoubtedly a consideration that I would prioritise when setting up formal research in the future.

The framing of the IC process and the research as critical pedagogy presupposes that each teacher can discover and adopt their own equal playmaker mode of being when taking part in IC. It will, and certainly from my experience does, look and feel slightly different to each classroom community because it works from, and simultaneously challenges, the locality of the situation. It is responsive to the space, time, and community in which the artistic practice is being shared. Although the equal playmaker way of being will ultimately be unique for each teacher, the identification of key behaviours is crucial in presenting pedagogy in a manageable format. I consider each of the five stages of IC in turn, sharing descriptions of the strategies used in one of the classrooms and articulating the associated artistic pedagogy through the teacher’s equal playmaker way of being.

The research took place in two classrooms in two different primary schools in Yorkshire, England. The first teacher, Carly, was a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) and went straight into teaching a Year 6 (aged ten-eleven years) class. The school is in a geographical area ranked 2 in the indices of multiple deprivation (1 being the most deprived areas and 10 being least deprived). Almost 50% of the children receive free school meals compared to the 24.9% national average. The school is part of a small academy made up of three schools (at the time of writing). Carly did not have any experience of using drama for learning during her training and had not previously worked alongside an artist practitioner in the classroom.

The second teacher, Sarah, was one of the initial teachers involved in developing Imaginary Communities in 2010-2011 (see Appendix One: IC Timeline) and has continued to use elements of IC in her practice over the last several years. We therefore knew each other before embarking on this research and have experience of planning, delivering, and
reflecting together. Sarah has been teaching for approximately fifteen years and has worked in two schools in the North of England during this time. Both schools are in areas with relatively high levels of deprivation, within geographical areas ranked 2 in the indices of multiple deprivation. Her current school, where I undertook my research, is part of an academy trust made up of 46 schools (at the time of writing) across the North of England. 45% of children in the school receive free school meals.

I worked with each teacher and their class for a full term, spending a minimum of one day a week with the teacher and the children. We planned for our IC session to take place in the morning during the children’s timetabled literacy period. During the IC sessions, the teacher and I would co-facilitate a session that we had planned together the week before. Because Sarah and I had worked together previously, she was much more confident in leading some of the activities, therefore we co-facilitated the sessions more equally between us. In Carly’s class, I started by leading most of the drama and story-making activities and Carly began to increasingly co-facilitate the sessions as the term progressed. Both teachers continued using their IC to support literacy learning on the days that I wasn’t in school, which was something we had planned together. Sarah continued with a combination of practical drama-based work and more focused writing, whereas Carly used more writing activities since she was initially less confident with the drama approaches. Carly began to lead some of the drama activities towards the end of our first term together and had a go at some drama activities in between my visits.

I shared the five stages of IC with the teachers and children by helping to select and deliver a series of equal-playmaker activities to support our exploration of each stage and to experience working as equal playmakers. The documentation of lesson plans, the exercises we used, our weekly reflections on this process, and the children’s interviews all supported my further understanding of the stages, as well as the equal-playmaker pedagogy and way of being, which is detailed in this chapter.
Five Stages of IC

An Imaginary Community is created by the collective; everyone in the class contributes to the development of the narrative and creates their own fictitious role within it. In brief, the driving aim of the IC artistic practice and pedagogy is to enable a group of children and their teacher to collectively create and take part in a new dramatic process. Other pedagogical aims, which relate to the school’s curriculum and personal and social agendas, are achieved through, and as a result of, the co-created community (explored in chapters four and five). The teacher does not pre-plan the dramatic setting, the characters, and the events that unfold as the IC is co-created. The teacher and children are required to work together from the very start of the planning process to discover a drama that is unique to the particular group.

The five stages – Idea Generation, Dramatic Setting, Characters, Shared Starting Point, and Equal Playmaker Strategies – can, at least to begin with, be seen as chronological steps. Once a teacher becomes more confident with the artistic process and the equal playmaker way of being, they will see how some of these stages can, and do, switch order in a much more fluid way. For example, if taken chronologically, the stages suggest that a group create a ‘dramatic setting’ prior to creating ‘characters’, which is certainly a simple way to share IC. However, the creation of one or more characters may appear through the process of creating the dramatic setting, or even beforehand – children often create a key character at the very start during Idea Generation and it remains throughout the process.

Stage One: Idea Generation

From the very start of the process, the artist and teacher are responsible for establishing a culture in the classroom whereby every child and adult is encouraged to generate and offer ideas. Practically, this stage involves selecting exercises and games that support the generation of ideas in different ways, encouraging all members to take part and begin to see their contribution accepted by the group. I share Sarah and her children’s IC to guide
the reader through the practice and pedagogy of Idea Generation and the following four stages.

When I joined Sarah’s class, they were working around a topic – magic schools – that many of the children found exciting. This topic was inspired by the Harry Potter books and films. Imaginary Communities can connect to a topic, theme, or concept that the children are looking at in school, so this became a starting point for our community. Sarah and I explained that we would be creating a new drama together and that every single person in the room would be helping to build a new imaginary world. I reiterated that Sarah and I currently knew very little about where the drama was set, and absolutely nothing about which characters would be in it or what would happen. The only thing we did know was that there was a magic school in our drama, and no other magic school in the whole world would be like ours.

From the very first instructions, we are trying to introduce a new culture in the classroom, explaining that the teacher does not know any more about the dramatic adventure they are about to go on than the children do. The theme of the drama can be, and sometimes is, decided by the participants during the first session. However, teachers often find it easier to make cross-curricular links during the process if it can be inspired by the class topic. We used the idea of magic school as inspiration in Sarah’s class but purposefully reiterated the open-ended possibilities.

Establishing a space where children can genuinely lead and create alongside their teacher can be difficult, because it is often contrary to the lived experience of the children and teacher in school. Martlew et al consider some of the challenges that teachers face when attempting to move towards ‘active learning’ or a play-based curriculum that offers children more choice in the primary school classroom. They look at features of active learning, found more often in Early Years practice, and suggest that an approach that ‘follow[s] children’s interests and build[s] upon prior knowledge’ can present ‘difficulties for those teachers who are used to a more rigid curricular structure and who have concerns over accountability and attainment targets’ (2011, p.80). In classroom contexts driven by accountability, teachers may find the idea of following children’s ideas and interests daunting. In addition to the challenge of accountability, they also note the lower ratio of adults to children, and the average ratio in their study (in Scotland) was one
adult to 25 children compared to one to ten in the nursery school environment. The teachers in their study found it difficult to make learning as responsive to the children’s needs because of these factors.

It is currently rare, then, that children have this much control over the learning process in the classroom. Trusting that we will all contribute and create something meaningful is often a concept beyond the teachers and children’s experience of school. From the very first session we are trying to show the children, through the activities and their teacher’s way of being, that their ideas will genuinely lead the dramatic process during IC.

Each of the five stages relies on a combination of strategies and drama activities. There are multiple strategies available for the teacher and children to use in each stage, and the Equal Playmaker Strategies Document (see pp.172-181) lists all the strategies described in this chapter and more. I share at least one of the activities we used in the classroom for each stage in this chapter, to help articulate the practice and begin to theorise the pedagogy. To demonstrate how Sarah, the children, and I began to share ideas and establish a space where all of our contributions are valued, I describe a game used regularly as part of the Idea Generation stage.

‘In our IC there is...’

In a circle, we started with the sentence ‘In our magic school there is...’, always with an emphasis on ‘our’. This gives the group permission to include any ideas they want to at this stage. We performed this line as a chorus before inviting a member of the group to share an idea about what might be in our magic school. Sarah and her class offered ideas, which included ‘a football field with magic players’, ‘a secret scary door’, and ‘a vampire library’. After every idea, the group helped to create a short sentence to perform collectively with an action and sound. Every new idea became part of the sequence and was remembered in order by the group. By the end of this game, Sarah’s class had 26 potential ideas for locations, people, and things in the school. No one was forced to have an idea, and everyone had the chance to co-create an idea with the group if they didn’t want to share one on their own straight away.

The teacher can physically demonstrate her willingness to trust the children to offer a meaningful contribution to the drama. The teacher and the group are encouraged to celebrate and accept ideas, shifting into the realm of play and establishing a more
responsive and collaborative culture. Some children offered an idea that we had already discussed together, such as ‘somewhere where the vampires hide’. Another child remained closer to her reality of school suggesting, ‘a dinner hall’. Some children shared ideas inspired by their own cultural references, one boy created the ‘Ancient Sapphire Ice Monster’s lair’, which I later discovered is a character from a computer game. At times, Sarah or I asked additional questions to encourage the children to elaborate on their idea. For instance, we asked ‘is there anything different about the dinner hall in our magic school?’ to then discover that it actually served blood and eyeballs! At other times, the school office was simply a school office. The aim is for the teacher and the rest of the group to receive all ideas with interest.

The group physically and verbally accept the ideas offered, by agreeing on, and performing, each idea together through a sentence, actions, and sounds. The individual ideas become collectively important – recognised through the shared performance and respected by peers and the teacher. Describing Heathcote’s practice, Wagner explains the importance of the teacher accepting the children’s ideas and using them in the drama, because ‘if they see their own ideas take shape they are more ready to participate’ (Wagner, 1979, p.20). All the exercises used in this first stage allow the teacher to practise accepting and responding to the children’s ideas with interest. They do this within the safety of short games or exercises, often with fixed boundaries. This offers the teacher and the children a safe way to practise accepting multiple ideas, there is no pressure to apply all of them to the drama at this stage, just receive them with interest. On a practical level, this exercise creates a space for both the teacher and the children to practice contributing ideas more equally in a relatively low-stakes situation, supporting a manageable move towards working as equal playmakers.

The teacher offers her ideas in the same way as the children in these early exercises. The teacher’s role is not about stepping back from the idea generation and handing it over to the children (Slade, 1971, p.39). It is also about contributing her own ideas as an equal playmaker alongside the children. Although the teacher is looking for additional learning opportunities (as I explain in detail in Chapter Four), she is also contributing ideas that she is interested in, showing her willingness to create with the children. Sarah is taking
part as a ‘fellow worker’ during the exercise, and is sharing ‘the citizen’s right of holding an opinion, being heard’ (Finlay-Johnson, 1912, p.10). As Martlew et al’s study suggests (and as Chapter Four explores further), working in this way can be difficult within the current pressures of accountability. The practice resonates with Finlay-Johnson’s pedagogical philosophies as the teacher works ‘on the same grounds as the children themselves’ (Finlay-Johnson, 1912, p.10). This becomes more explicit in later stages, but it is important to begin establishing this approach from the very beginning.

**Stage Two: Dramatic Setting**

Once the teachers and children have spent some time generating initial ideas and beginning to experience a more collaborative way of working, they move onto the next stage, establishing the initial setting for the drama. The imagined location varies in scale and size depending on the theme and the group’s vision. For instance, the group may create a small secret room, an entire castle, or a whole fairy-tale land. In our case, the children decided to create the magic school and the grounds in which the school is situated. The teacher and the group still receive ideas with openness and a sense of acceptance, but they now must work together to decide exactly what is included in the magic school. O’Neill and Lambert explain that the ‘meaning of drama is built up from the contributions of individuals, and, if the work is to develop, these contributions must be monitored, understood, accepted and responded to by the rest of the group’ (1982, p.13). The aim is for each individual to contribute to the building of a shared dramatic setting, and for the group to help shape and accept the ideas. To do this we use a range of mapping strategies, which gradually build a picture of an imaginary location through the ideas of everyone in the class.

**Mapping with drawings**

With the group sitting in a circle on the classroom floor, I placed some small pieces of paper in the centre of the room along with pencil crayons and felt-tips. Everyone in the class drew a location or object that they would like in our magic school. This was a quick exercise, not focusing on the artistic quality or skill of the drawing (although this can become a cross-curricular activity if desired by the children and teacher). We gave everyone five minutes to draw or sketch their picture, then we laid them out in the centre of the circle to create our own gallery. We looked at each other’s pictures
and asked questions. We then imagined that the floor of the classroom was a giant map of the school and decided where each picture should be placed, discussing how it related to the rest of the setting and if anything needed to be added or altered to fit the developing context. The children mapped out the head teacher’s office in the centre of the floor, the magical playing fields around the north of the school, the dolphin training pool to the east, various magical classrooms in the centre, the main entrance to the south, and the gruesome canteen to the north-west. Through a group discussion, we named our school *The Magical Mayhem School of Magic*.

Through this first mapping activity, every child and the teacher offered at least one contribution to the dramatic setting. The children immediately see their idea accepted by the group and incorporated into the shared dramatic setting through the giant map on the floor. Through this activity, the teacher can pro-actively encourage student *autonomy*. Martlew et al’s study found that children had ‘little opportunity for autonomy’, as teachers often ‘Managed behaviour and transitions; explained the class schedule; directed children’s actions; instructed; praised; led discussions; scaffolded children’s thinking and actions and asked questions’ (2011, p.78). We are trying to find space for the children to make significant decisions and genuinely lead the drama within a school culture that can become over-managed. This is a result of the pressure to meet prescribed targets within a culture of ‘performativity’ (Ball, 2003; Ball et al., 2012). I consider the challenge of performativity in more detail in Chapter Four, but for now, I acknowledge this context to understand how children’s autonomy is often restricted.

Sarah is able to demonstrate her commitment to sharing the decision-making with the children, inviting every child to share their picture and place it somewhere on our developing map. The teacher has no more say than the children about what is offered, and where they are placed. McDonagh and Finneran highlight the importance of teacher commitment in their study of co-creation. They suggest that a ‘commitment to a sharing relationship’, where the teacher shares power with the children, offers ‘more opportunities for student autonomy’ (2017, P.176). Each time an activity such as this is used, it demonstrates the teachers’ commitment and allows all members of the group to practise this ‘sharing relationship’.
We purposefully offer a range of different mapping activities. For example, the group can physically create the space using their bodies, they may use collage or modelling, and often we use a large box of fabrics and objects to transform the space. Previously, we have even used large-scale den-making and animation. By using different approaches when building the setting, we ensure each child is offered a multitude of ways to develop their autonomy and to begin to work as equal playmakers. One way to consider this is through the ‘image of the child’. Loris Malaguzzi, one of the leading educationalists involved in setting up the Reggio Emilia school system in northern Italy, argued that any consideration about pedagogy must start by explicitly articulating the ‘image of the child’. His practice and theory are founded on the image of the ‘rich child’, who is ‘competent and determined from birth to make meaning of the world’ (Moss, 2016, p.171). Rich children are seen as ‘protagonists’ and Malaguzzi suggests they are born with a ‘hundred languages’, a multitude of different ways of ‘expressing themselves and relating to the world’ (2016, p.171). We start from the belief that every child in the class has something important to contribute, we are interested in what that is, and we want to offer all of the children (and ourselves) a range of languages in which we can contribute. Another mapping strategy in the Dramatic Setting stage uses fabrics. This is an active, open-ended task that invites the children to continue to either build on their previous ideas (shared through the drawing activity) or to offer new ideas.

Using fabrics for exploring and building the world has become an important exercise in the Dramatic Setting stage. Each IC artist working in schools is given a collection of fabrics that vary in colour and texture. The fabrics are purposefully non-prescriptive, meaning we don’t offer anything that resembles costume or set relating to the theme. Slade explains that, ‘from a creative point of view, pieces of attractive stuff are better than ready-made garments’ (1954, p.64). We want the children to be able to use the fabrics as another language with which they can express their own ideas. After mapping the drawings, the children are invited to build their set. They are given the freedom to use the fabrics, along with other classroom materials such as chairs, tables, pens, and paper, in any way they want. Carly, the other teacher in my research, comments on how the fabrics helped particular children to share ideas. These children, who she describes as usually ‘just sit(ting) there and looking confused’, found that the fabrics helped them
through the next stages and gave them ideas for characters (Carly, 16th September 2015). Carly’s class in particular used the fabrics throughout all five stages, sometimes re-creating their initial set and sometimes creating a new location.

Before moving on to create their characters in the next stage, the children and teacher may choose to follow up their mapping activities with strategies aimed at exploring their setting further. For example, the Equal Playmaker Strategies Document includes exercises that can be used to bring the world to life and establish atmosphere using bodies and sounds. Once the teacher feels confident that all children have contributed in some way to the imaginary setting, they can move onto the third stage.

**Stage Three: Characters**

One of the most distinctive features of Imaginary Communities is the way it uses character and role. Every participant in the classroom – including the children, teacher, teaching assistants, support workers, and the artist – creates their own individual character within the same shared drama. This aspect of character and role differentiates IC from other forms of process drama, and clarifies how the teacher and children adopt the equal playmaker way of being through their own unique character. We use a range of strategies to develop characters and their connection to the world, but often start with the same exercise of *meet the characters*. This involves children taking a frozen position somewhere in our mapped-out dramatic setting.

**Meet the characters …**

As a group, we recalled where the different areas of the magic school and grounds were, and the children re-set the room using the fabrics. We then carefully sat around the edges and spent a few minutes discussing who we thought we might meet in the school. Sarah asked if anyone had an idea for a character and wanted to step into a frozen position somewhere on the map. One of the children eagerly moved to the centre of the room and assumed a frozen position, frowning with stern eyes. She placed both hands under her chin, palms down and flat with fingertips touching. The rest of the group then discussed who this character could be. Due to the location, her position, and previous discussions, the group were confident that she had taken on the role of the ‘head’ teacher and her hands represented her decapitated head. Reading her facial expression, the group discussed whether she was a mean head
teacher or might just be mad about something. Next, I invited her to tell us a bit more about who she was, by either coming to life as her character for a few moments or simply telling us about her character. The head teacher spoke about her job in the school, and how she had worked there for a very long time. Next, I invited the rest of the class to ask three questions to find out as much as possible about her character and what was happening in the rest of the school.

As the next member of the group is invited up to take their position, the children often build on from the previous characters and the developing ideas. Sarah and I can help the children make these connections by asking questions ourselves, i.e. ‘What do you think about the head teacher here at the Magical Mayhem School of Magic?’ This additional questioning to connect the characters is often needed in Lower Key Stage 2 (seven to nine years). Some of the other characters developed in this session were not as immediately obvious and, after the participant had taken their frozen position in one of the locations, the group spent a little more time discussing who they thought the character could be before inviting the character to come to life. This can be very useful for the child taking on the role, as it helps them to process, and sometimes develop, their initial ideas. It is also very important for the rest of the group, who are naturally recap-ing, imagining, and already starting to develop possible plotlines as new characters are introduced. The participant has the chance to listen to other ideas and perspectives before deciding and articulating who they are. All members of the group can see they are responsible for creating a shared community – they decide how their character connects and can help others make connections too. The teacher does not need to take on this responsibility alone, instead helping the children to make their own connections to the setting, the other characters, and any emerging narratives. In this sense, the role of equal playmaker is, in and of itself, part of the manageable pedagogy.

This stage helps clarify the equal playmaker way of being – the characters demonstrate more explicitly the equal opportunity to participate and contribute to IC. Not only do all participants have the freedom to create their own character, they also see their teacher create a character, and join in the play and the drama, in the same way as them. During an interview with Sebastian, one of the children in Carly’s class, he describes how ‘teachers don’t usually act and make up characters and do exactly what the children do’, and for him ‘it’s exciting [because] I don’t know what the teacher is going to make up
because she can make up what she wants, and I can make up what I want’ (7th October, 2015). His reflections suggest that this is a new way of working with his teacher. Carly is involved in the playmaking in exactly the same way as he is, and he feels this gives them both permission to ‘make up what they want’.

A teacher in McDonagh and Finneran’s study describes part of the ‘sharing relationship’ as the teacher being prepared to ‘muck in’. During this stage, the teacher is asked to step into role as a character and begin to work in a space where she ‘mucks in’, by creating a character and making ‘up what she wants’. The teacher is taking a creative risk, much like the children are. Sarah is asked to create a character she is interested in – not one that is pre-planned in relation to a curricular or other motive. McDonagh and Finneran suggest that the teacher’s willingness to ‘muck in’ and ‘take risks’ shows she is also willing to ‘let go of some of her explicit signs of power, in order to encourage more student autonomy and realise collaboration’ (2017, p.176).

**Stage Four: Shared Starting Point**

Having created a dramatic setting and a class full of characters, the fourth stage is now about identifying a relevant starting point for our drama. This can be broken down into two elements. Firstly, identifying a point of conflict, or an area of tension, that will engage all the characters in the community. Secondly, setting up an activity or exercise that will establish this tension and bring the drama to life. Creating a starting point that is meaningful to up to thirty different characters can seem daunting at first, but it is important that the teacher trusts the children’s ability to connect to the drama, allowing both herself and the group to feel excited about the endless possibilities. The teacher does not suddenly become solely responsible for setting up the starting point – it is still important to allow the children to be involved. In other words, the teacher and children continue to work together as playwrights, discovering the dramatic tension in their Imaginary Community.
Bowell and Heap introduce the idea of dramatic tension by explaining that it fuels the ‘imperative for action’ in process drama (2013, p.53). For IC, this means that the characters are given a reason to act and respond to the dramatic situation, which has been framed through the shared starting point. Sometimes, ideas about tension or conflict will have already emerged through the first three stages and will be blindingly obvious by the time the characters are developed. For instance, as the characters came to life during stage three, we might have discovered that several children have gone missing from the school, and now some of the characters are plotting against the evil head teacher who is suspected of foul play. These kinds of plotlines often begin to emerge during the first three stages, as children tend to create their character in action and in response to the action of others. In other words, their frozen images tend to be of a character doing something rather than a portrait-style pose of a character facing a camera. These actions can also be linked to ideas that have been discussed and shared during the previous two stages. These kinds of ideas often build into a ready-made idea for the initial dramatic tension. Other times, however, there is no obvious tension, or at least not one that could engage all of the characters, and so some additional strategies may be useful to pull ideas together. This was the case in Sarah’s class, and we chose to use objects and a story circle to establish the tension (see Equal Playmaker Strategies Document, pp.172-181).

**Objects and story circle**

I introduced a collection of small objects, including metal and wooden charms and keepsakes. As with the use of fabrics, these were purposefully selected as they have no obvious purpose. They are not ‘props’, such as wands or written spells, but rather items that can be interpreted in lots of different ways. We spent some time in a circle passing them around, feeling them, looking closely at them, and sharing ideas verbally. Several children were inspired by two small charms that looked like a pair of hands, with a small, diamond-style gem laid into the open palm of each. We removed the other objects and placed these two hands in the centre of the circle. I then led a story circle inspired by the hands. I began a story, using the ideas discussed so far, and then paused at key moments for members of the group to fill in important details in the story.

Our back story starts three hundred years ago with a powerful sorceress casting a spell to defeat an evil unicorn army. The spell required the sorceress, Bloodbones, to sacrifice
her own hands in order to remove the evil from the unicorns’ hearts. The story ended in the present day with the sorceress now working as the head teacher at The Magical Mayhem School of Magic, discovering that her ancient spell is weakening and that evil is returning. This back story established a dilemma faced by all the characters in the school – the threat of the evil unicorns and their ancient grudge with the head teacher, Bloodbones.

Using a short role play, led by myself in role as the mysterious hands, Sarah and I used the emerging tension to bring the drama to life.

**Teacher in role**

After a short class discussion, we decided that the hands would appear as a vision in the grand entrance to the school, and so the children all got into position as if they were just entering the school in the morning. We started in a freeze frame and I asked permission to become the hands. I gave the instruction that when the hands start to speak, the rest of the group would come to life and respond as their characters. I climbed on top of a table at the other side of the room and lifted my hands high in front of me. I began to speak: ‘For the safety of all humanity, we cannot reveal our true location. We are simply a vision…’. At first, most of the children just stood and listened, appearing to relax out of the freeze frame and out of character. Sarah began to react by putting her hand to her face and looking shocked, then glancing around to the other characters. This seemed to inspire more of the characters to come to life – the head teacher and her adopted daughter began to react in the corner by pointing towards the floating hands and gasping. (Artist reflections, 19th February 2016)

The children helped set up the role play with the teacher, almost as co-directors, before launching into action and allowing each character to receive the vital information from the hands. The hands message warned the characters that the unicorn army was gathering and becoming stronger, and that only Bloodbones, her colleagues, and the pupils at the school had the power to do something about it. Here, the dramatic tension is established and each character has been introduced to the dilemma. The information, given by the hands, was familiar to the children because the message was written using their ideas, from the object and story circle activities in the last lesson.
The dilemma is not in any way derived by the teacher in response to a desired learning objective or curriculum area (although it could be, as I consider in Chapter Four). Rather, it is a dilemma and role play driven by the children’s and teacher’s ideas and interests. Neither is it based on an adult perception of what an engaging and significant dilemma in a narrative or story might be. Teachers may waver at this stage, partly because of their own expectations around how a successful dramatic or theatrical event should unfold. As long as the children continue to be offered multiple opportunities to contribute to, and to shape their play, and the teacher remains attentive to their interests, the narrative will remain engaging. As Finlay-Johnson asserted, a ‘product pleasing to the more cultivated mind of an adult’ risks being ‘uninteresting to a child’ (Finlay-Johnson, 1912, p.7).

The children are working more confidently as equal playmakers, understanding that the IC is theirs and that they hold the responsibility for its success. The children and the teacher have started to develop a plot line, taking responsibility for connecting their character to the shared story. Some characters’ connection to the dilemma and emerging shared starting point is more immediately obvious. For example, the head teacher, Bloodbones, is the powerful sorceress who saved the world three hundred years ago. Evelyn, whose character is Bloodbones, is therefore directly connected to the back story. It is important that the other children, whose characters are not yet as obviously connected to the starting point, find ways to connect and respond. The shared starting point created an opportunity for all characters to engage with the dilemma – all are at risk of the unicorns and all are connected in some way to the head teacher and sorceress, Bloodbones. Several of the children enjoyed deepening their connection, such as Amelia, who further developed her own character’s back story in connection to the shared story we established in the story circle. Amelia described her character’s connection in an interview, stating that ‘my character is called Lily Jane Garsford, and not long after Mrs Bloodbones sacrificed (her hands) she found me and adopted me, so I’m like her daughter in a way, and I can speak to unicorns and everything, and my great-great grandpa was the King of Demons, it’s complicated’ (Amelia, 26th Feb).

It is, as Amelia says, often very complicated. Up to thirty characters in a class are all negotiating their way into the shared narrative, developing personal back stories and sub-
plots. Here, Amelia added her character, Lily, into the back story, explaining that Bloodbones found her after she had sacrificed her hands and adopted her. Children understand that the drama and the narrative is being created, developed, and adapted in the moment through their own interactions and ideas. This establishes an open, flexible space that can hold thirty characters and numerous sub-plots and character histories. The equal playmakers understand how the story is being developed, and this gives the Imaginary Community permission to contain a whole range of ideas and possibilities. This is not to say that it will always be straightforward. Sometimes, the group may bring to the forefront some ideas over others, and the children must collectively negotiate this. But creating the whole process together establishes a more flexible boundary in which to hold the ideas.

This trust in, and commitment to, using the children’s ideas as the drama develops is evident in Heathcote’s practice. In the film *Three Looms Waiting* (Taylor, 2008), Heathcote starts by asking a group of boys what they want to make a play about. She explains in the film that ‘I don’t go in with definite ideas of what is going to happen because I think I must use their ideas and I want them to see their ideas coming into this marvellous action’. It is the children’s ideas and interests that ‘are the paste that holds the drama together’, because as Wagner explains, ‘Heathcote can and frequently does guarantee to students that the drama will be interesting, because she knows that if she does what they want to do, it will be’ (1979, p.21). The teacher does not have to worry about creating and setting up a drama that the children will find engaging. The magic school, the characters, and the developing narrative are all ideas created by the group.

**Stage Five: Equal Playmaker Strategies**

The Imaginary Community is now established, and all participants have brought the initial action to life through the shared starting point. The children and teacher can now explore their story in any direction they choose by using a range of equal playmaker strategies. Several of the strategies have already been introduced in stages one to four, and I describe many more in the Equal Playmaker Strategies Document (see pp.172-181).
This is by no means an exhaustive list, and there are many valuable resources that describe drama strategies and improvisation games to further develop the IC. For example, Neelands and Goode’s *Structuring Drama* (1990) is full of applicable conventions. These conventions, however, should be used in a way that continues to position children and teachers as equal playmakers. When considering what strategy or convention to use, the teacher can ask ‘is this strategy inviting the children to imagine, create, and make decisions about the shared drama?’, or, ‘am I controlling what happens in the drama through this strategy?’ A particular convention, game, or strategy might need some slight adaptation to fit the equal playmaker way of being. I share a couple of examples to explain this more clearly, starting with two techniques that are very important to the IC process – ‘free play’ and ‘re-play’ – and then I consider the well-known strategy of ‘teacher-in-role’.

**Free play and re-play**

After the shared starting point, in which Bloodbones’ hands appeared in a vision, we discussed the kinds of actions our characters might now consider taking. I invited everyone to get into a frozen position and show what their characters were doing after the hands appeared. I allowed a couple of minutes for everyone to get into this position, encouraging the children to talk to each other about where their character was standing and what they might be doing, so that ideas would continue to develop collaboratively. Once in a frozen position, I momentarily broke out of my own character’s frozen image to explain the next part of the task: ‘So, as we have agreed, 30 minutes have now passed since the hands appeared. The students and staff members at the Magical Mayhem School of Magic have started to recover from the shock and are beginning to make plans. I am now going to bring our drama to life for a few moments’.

Re-capping and building on the ideas that the group had spoken about, I moved around the space repeating back to the children some of the ways in which their ideas could play out, helping them to prepare for their free-play experience: ‘Bloodbones, her step-daughter, and their closest allies may be meeting in her office making plans – I wonder what ideas they will come up with?’ ‘The vampires and the librarian may be searching for the most powerful and relevant spells in the library – I wonder what they might find and what they might do with them?’ After this, I got back into my own position in the library and gave the final instruction of ‘3, 2, 1, action’.

We improvised freely, exploring what actions our characters took in response to the hands. My character was in the library with a few others, and so we started looking through books, which was a suggestion discussed previously and one that I had recapped in the setup. One of the children, however, exclaimed that he had found a
secret message and a map in a book that would lead us to a code needed by Bloodbones. A few of us set off on a journey, down a trapdoor, and through underground tunnels, in search of the code.

During this free-play time, neither the children nor I had a concern about staging, audience, volume etc. We simply played ideas out in role. Some groups of children seem to become absorbed and remain in role throughout this short time. Others slip in and out of directing and playing, stopping the action to say ‘wait I have an idea we should try this!’ My group, perhaps because I chose to remain in role, stayed in character throughout the short time given. This kind of engagement within the activity once again echoes Slade’s *Child Drama*, but more specifically his concept of ‘personal play’. A kind of free play that ‘is obvious drama’, where the child ‘takes upon himself the responsibility of playing a role’ (1971, p.3-4) and the children are free-playing in role with others around them in the Imaginary Community. We gave a few minutes to Sarah’s class, as most of the children seemed comfortable and absorbed in the action to some extent. In other situations, however, we have started with only ten or twenty seconds of free play and built up the amount of time as the children and teacher become more comfortable with it.

When describing the act of ‘polishing improvisations’, Slade suggests that the teacher should always allow the children to play freely first and then shape and discuss afterwards (1971, p.38). This is the intention of free play and re-play. After free play, the children are given the opportunity to select and structure their ideas and share them with the group. This is an important part of the process because it allows us to continue to create a whole group-shared drama, rather than falling into a multitude of segregated narratives. Through the re-play, we can decide which elements and ideas become part of the collective narrative. The strategy generates lots of new ideas through the free play, where there are no wrong ideas, and then we can watch each other’s and negotiate how these might fit with the narrative. Slade suggests that allowing free play first is important so that ‘their enthusiasm is not dampened’ (1971, p.38). My group re-played our characters gathering around the map in the library and following the map to find the code; another group re-played Bloodbones looking anxious in her office, as some of her
close friends and colleagues in the school went in search of her hands; and another began to form an army that could protect the school.

Free play and re-play are framed as equal playmaker strategies, and therefore, their main aim is to enable the children and teacher to create the next stages of the drama collaboratively. The strategy is not about shaping short theatrical scenes as such. Although we are now asking the children to share back some of their ideas through performance, we avoid making a set stage of any shape or design. Rather, we ask each group where the audience is best situated and we move around the space watching each re-play. We encourage the group to ask questions to clarify some of the action we have seen and discuss how the ideas might be useful for our story. In Slade’s *Child Drama*, he does ‘not stop actors turning their backs’ because ‘we are not in the theatre’ (1995, p.120). The kind of drama we are creating, as playmakers in IC, is not the same as shaping a play to present to an external audience in a theatre. Even though we are now shaping scenes, and sharing them with each other, we do not need to go through a full rehearsal and performance process as is expected in the professional theatre. The exercise is about allowing ideas to be generated through the children’s play and the children being interested in and valuing the contributions that they each make. Will, one of the children in Carly’s class, describes how ‘people get to play their characters and we get to find out more about them. They are using their imagination to create something, and we are eager to find out what because it is part of our Imaginary Community. We are using loads of imagination and creating a story’ (18th November, 2015). Will understands that acting in free play and re-play is about generating ideas to create a story together and he is ‘eager’ to discover more about other people’s ideas.

This technique features regularly in IC as it really supports the equal playmaker way of being – the teacher and children all contribute ideas through their personal play. Similar ideas may be repeated by different groups, ideas can sometimes clash, and often an idea in one group helps to make sense of events in others. The group must work together to negotiate how the different ideas work together. Many other drama strategies, typically used within drama education approaches, can be used to continue developing the drama
at this stage. The aim is to ensure that the children and teacher can use these strategies to remain in control of the play and the narrative.

One way in which we use teacher-in-role was shared in Stage Three, where the teacher developed their own unique character in the same way and at the same time as the children. The teacher’s role can then be used alongside children in free play and re-play, and other equal playmaker strategies. The teacher-in-role strategy can also be used to introduce new characters to the drama as the narrative develops. Rather than the teacher deciding upon and introducing a new character by stepping into role, perhaps by using a sign, such as a particular item of clothing or a prop, new characters in IC are created together with the children. We often use the technique of ‘role on the wall’ (see Equal Playmaker Strategies Document, pp.172-181) to develop the new character together, before asking permission to step into the role or inviting a child to step into the role. Considering the Magical Mayhem School of Magic, the group could have, for example, wanted to meet with the leader of the evil unicorns. The group would create the character together, writing down everything we know about the unicorn leader on the outside of the drawn silhouette. We would then write down some of the feelings and thoughts that the unicorn might have when she approaches the meeting on the inside of the silhouette. The group can play around with how the unicorn might speak, move, and hold herself, giving the teacher or child lots of advice before she eventually steps into role.

The equal playmakers continue to use the strategies to explore their narrative and, as Chapter Four explains, connect to the formal learning objectives. We discuss ideas about how we can best bring the IC experience to an end because children and teachers often invest emotionally in their own character and the shared narrative. Sarah’s class brought their IC process to an end through a whole-group dramatic role play. Bloodbones, this time with the support of the members of the Magical Mayhem School of Magic (and a whole variety of codes, relics, and ancient re-discovered hands), cast a last-minute spell that not only stopped the evil unicorns but saved Petruvius – one of the characters from the school who had been overcome by darkness and evil during the unicorn attack.
The five stages outlined in this chapter aim to replace the function of the ‘master teacher’ in sharing and training drama in education. Sharing IC through clearly defined stages, and articulating pedagogy as a way of being, removes the need to try and emulate a master teacher’s practice and pedagogy. Primary teachers, who have very little training in using drama in the classroom and very little experience of using such open-ended collaborative methods, can use IC through these manageable stages of practice. Teachers can practice and adopt the equal playmaker way of being, creating drama from the children’s ideas and challenging O’Toole’s implied assertion that the teacher must be ‘bold and experienced’ to do this successfully (O’Toole, 2009a, p.105).

IC draws on Slade’s trust in children’s ability to create and manage artistic form and his understanding of drama as connected to children’s play. The teacher is able to practise trusting in the children’s ideas and contributions and this immediately establishes a more manageable pedagogy. In this respect, IC is more manageable than some other approaches to classroom drama, where the onus is on the teacher’s skill to construct and manipulate engaging and effective dramatic dilemma through role and plot. When children are trusted to create the drama with their teacher, they create their own buy-in. The children and teacher become invested in a world that is crafted from their own imagination, offering the group the freedom to follow intrigue and multiple interests.

Finally, articulating a way of being that can be practised, moulded, and adopted by each teacher also re-enforces the dialogic and collaborative relationship between the drama practitioner and the school. The move from master teacher towards dialogic, action-orientated, reflective practice rethinks the role of the artist in the tradition of practice-led drama research. As Kuppers and Robertson suggest, ‘artists lose their specialist status, and become companions in a collaborative search for an expressive relation to the world’ (2007, p.2). The artists and teachers are already applying the learning gained from this element of the research in schools across England. Chol are sharing Imaginary Communities as a dramatic story-making process through collaborative partnerships between teachers, children, and artists.
Chapter Three: A Practical Submission of IC

The practice-based submission is situated here, at the core of the thesis. This chapter comprises ten practical elements listed below, with a brief description of what they are, their contribution to the practice, and where to access them. Elements one to six are provided to offer some context around the development of IC over the last decade. They introduce the audience to IC through an animation, two short films, and a children’s book of short stories. The animation (also presented at the start of the thesis) illustrates the five stages of practice and Chol’s continuing commitment to sharing the practice and research. Chol predominantly uses the two films to promote IC and I present them here to offer context and support the wider research in the thesis, rather than as the research itself. Seeing and hearing from teachers and children involved in IC – and meeting a whole host of characters in the children’s book – offers a flavour of the practice in action and hopefully breathes life into the narrative used throughout the thesis. I have selected these elements predominantly as contextualisation to support the reader’s understanding of IC as a theoretical account (see Chapter Two) and as a presentation of practice-based research.

Elements seven to ten make up the main body of the practical submission. These elements share IC being taught as a module to BA students at the University of Manchester. The practical submission of the BA Module is the main element of the practice as research submission. The carefully structured practical sessions developed for the BA Module offer an exemplar of my practice as manageable pedagogy. The students are guided through five practical sessions, engaging directly in a series of equal playmaker strategies. These workshops move beyond the participants watching and analysing what I
am demonstrating as ‘master teacher’, and instead focus on the five defined stages of practice and a consideration of their own participation as equal playmakers. The five practical sessions developed for the BA Module are (at the time of writing) the most concise and clearly defined practical sharing of IC as manageable pedagogy. The examiners visited one of these sessions to see the practice being shared with the BA students.

The written documents are included at the end of the thesis, the physical elements of the submission are in the box file, and the video footage can be accessed via the weblinks embedded in the text or on the USB stick, which is also provided in the box file.

1. **IC Animation: Five Stages of Practice** (approx. 3mins)
   *Also submitted on the USB stick in the box file*

   Inspired by the research presented in Chapter Two, this animation has been created to introduce the five stages of IC to teachers and children who have not used the process before. It is presented here as an illustration of the IC practice and an example of how my research has shaped the way Chol communicates the practice to others.

2. **Sample of fabrics**
   *Submitted within the box file*

   This is a small sample of the kinds of fabrics used to build the dramatic setting. All IC practitioners are provided with a large selection of fabrics, ranging in size, colour, and texture.

3. **Short film clip of students discussing their first experience of IC** (approx. 3mins)
   *Also submitted on the USB stick in the box file*

   This video captures the reactions from a group of students at a Middle School in Brooklyn, New York, after experiencing IC for the first time. The young people reflect on some of the core ideas about working as equal playmakers, presented in Chapter Two. This short
film offers the audience an opportunity to see an Imaginary Communities session in action in a school. At the time of writing Chol share this video, alongside the following video of teachers, on their website to promote IC and it is included here to offer additional context.

4. **Short film clip of teachers discussing their experience of IC in school** *(approx. 3mins)*
   *(Also submitted on the USB stick in the box file)*

This video offers insights from the perspectives of four teachers who have all worked with an IC practitioner from Chol at some point from 2010–2019. The teachers’ reflections are useful to present IC as an educational pedagogy and practice.

5. **Professor Abdullah’s Metal Metropolis and Other Imaginary Communities**
   *(Hard copy of the book submitted in the box file)*

This is a book of short stories, created by 55 children, from five different groups, who all took part in IC. Every child’s character is represented in the book either in the written stories or through the illustrations. The book offers a chance to meet some other IC characters and read their stories.

6. **First IC handbook written and produced in 2011**
   *(Hard copy of the book submitted in the box file)*

This book represents my early attempt to share IC as manageable practice with teachers. The first handbook is a useful document to evidence how my understanding of IC through manageable pedagogy has developed since 2011. Chol are developing new resources in 2020.

7. **BA Drama in Education Module session plans with weblinks to filmed sessions**
8. Equal Playmaker Strategies Document

(Included in the practical submission at the end of the thesis)

I created the Equal Playmaker Strategies Document to complement the articulation of the five stages. In Chapter Two I shared at least one strategy for each stage and, as you can see in the session plans, the students experienced several strategies each week in the practical workshops. I have documented all of these, plus additional playmaker strategies, in this document.

9. Live visit: week three, 11th February 2019

(A weblink to a short video clip from this week is included in week three’s session plan and on the USB stick submitted within the box file)

The examiners attended week three of the module and observed/joined in with the practical workshop. This workshop guided the students through the third stage, Characters.

10. BA Drama in Education Module Handbook

(Hard copy submitted in the box file)

The BA Drama in Education Module Handbook offers an overview of how the practical sessions that I have designed and delivered fit within the wider module, developed and delivered with my PhD supervisor Simon Parry.

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5 The module was delivered from September–December 2017, and January–April 2019, and will be delivered again from January–April 2020. By April 2020, 44 students will have completed the module and learnt the methodology.
Chapter Four: The Performative Use of Learning Objectives and Outcomes

The previous two chapters detail how a teacher can begin, through the five stages of IC practice, to work as an equal playmaker with the children in her class. I argued that the teacher and children can practice and adopt this way of being, enabling them to genuinely co-create a narrative and dramatic experience. This chapter focuses on the additional challenge teachers face when attempting to work as equal playmakers – feeling pressured to meet a series of formal learning objectives and produce learning outcomes that are, due to a growing culture of ‘performativity’ (Ball, 2003, 2012), pre-determined and reduced to what can be measured and documented for evidence. In both case studies, my research took place during literacy time with an explicit commitment to work with the literacy curriculum and support the children to meet, what I go on to describe as, formal literacy objectives and outcomes. A detailed analysis of how the teachers and I used the IC process to connect with the formal literacy objectives and outcomes suggests that IC does not reject the use of them per se, but rather has a particular way of intervening in their performative use. Examples from my practice in the two schools, with teachers Carly and Sarah (introduced in Chapter Two, see pp.56-57), are explored to further understand how the IC practice and pedagogy can resist and disturb the performative use of learning objectives and outcomes in the classroom. This chapter argues that the formal objectives and outcomes are de-centred, enabling the teachers, the children, and I to retain the co-creation of the shared drama as a primary aim during the IC process.

Carly’s critical reflections about her use of learning objectives drive the focus of this chapter. Carly describes the amount of learning objectives that she ‘need[s] to meet by the end of the day, the end of the week, the end of the lesson’ (Carly, 11th November, 2015) and how much time out of her school day that this consumes. Carly’s reflections mirror broader challenges where governmental pressures placed on schools restrict teachers’ ability to develop and prioritise creative approaches in the classroom. The overarching systems and mechanisms of the culture of performance (Ball et al, 2012, p.514) play out in reality through multiple day-to-day constraints, which can restrict
teachers’ and artists’ attempts to develop open-ended, collaborative learning practices at a local level. The daily – even hourly – pressure to teach towards multiple performance-driven learning objectives impacts the way Carly teaches in two key ways. Firstly, Carly explains that she does ‘not have time to do the extra bits’, meaning she does not have time to focus on broader social aims in her everyday teaching. Secondly, she explains that her teaching can sometimes become ‘very led as well’ and she reflects on how ‘we are always leading them towards the objective (...) we are leading them towards the answer that is actually going to be accepted as meeting the objective. It’s quite scary really.’ (Carly, 11th November, 2015). This chapter considers how Carly and I can begin to work as equal playmakers under these pressures and restrictions.

The main body of the chapter offers a close examination of how Carly and I de-centred the more rigid performance-related literacy objectives – almost moving them to one side or putting them on hold – to create a space that prioritises the co-creation of narrative and drama. This allowed us to use the formal learning outcomes – in this case written outcomes produced by the children – as another equal playmaker strategy, alongside techniques such as free play and re-play, to develop and explore the imagined narrative. The literacy objectives and outcomes are made relevant to the children and their dramatic experience, and as Carly suggests, are given purpose through the narrative, ‘there is a purpose for their writing, a purpose for their diaries, they want to tell you about their day and who they are’ (25th November, 2015). I offer another key example from Sarah’s class to demonstrate how IC similarly intervenes in the performative use of learning objectives within a second context.

Finally, I take a second example of practice from Sarah’s class to consider how formal learning objectives are approached by Sarah when using IC in comparison to another drama education approach. I contrast IC with Bowell and Heap’s two recent publications (2013; 2017), since they clearly articulate and demonstrate how their approach to process drama incorporates a range of learning objectives. This allows me to reflect on the value of de-centring the literacy objectives through IC, compared to Bowell and Heap’s approach of establishing the drama in response to the objectives. Sarah is able to retain
her equal playmaker way of being when working in and out of role, subsequently enabling the children to remain in control of the shared dramatic experience.

**Collaborative Reflective Practice**

The focus of this chapter emerged during the research process. The performative use of learning objectives and outcomes can be considered, as described in the introduction, as an ‘emic issue’ emerging ‘from within, during the research process itself’ (Winston, 2006, p.50). The focus developed from an analysis of the data collected in both schools, particularly the teacher interviews. Before carrying out the practical research, I had a series of hunches about what kinds of findings would be valuable to the teacher, to myself (and my theatre company), and the children based on my previous day-to-day reflective practice. However, I did not approach the interviews with targeted pre-prepared questions. Instead, I used a semi structured approach, asking the children and teachers to talk about their IC experience that day/week and then sharing any emerging ideas or themes coming out of the interviews and asking the children and teacher if they would like to respond to these emerging themes. The focus for this chapter emerged from an analysis of the transcribed interviews post-delivery and is heavily informed by Carly’s critical reflection on her own practice.

The initial aims of the research led to the development of a methodology that remained open to ‘emic issues’ emerging. The initial questions guiding the practical research process asked what the pedagogical implications of IC are from the perspective of the two teachers and the children involved. This chapter focuses more on the teachers’ reflections, whereas the next chapter begins with the children’s reflections and goes on to consider learning related to the personal, social, and emotional experiences in the classroom. The research methodology allowed these two foci to emerge through the process and to be honed more formally through the analysis stage.

I went through several cycles of coding across the data set before pinning down the focus and the question of this chapter. One of the initial broader themes that I identified from
the transcripts was the concept of learning relating to national or school curriculums or examinations. I discussed this with the teachers on multiple occasions. Within this more focused set of data, I then identified repeated references to the pressures or restrictions that the teachers felt they must work under. At this stage, one of the interviews with Carly stood out as particularly insightful. Carly discusses in detail the constraints that are placed on her own teaching practice by the amount of learning objectives she feels pressured to meet by the end of each lesson/day/week. This focused my search again on the use of learning objectives connected to curriculum or exam-based learning and I conducted another cycle of coding across both of the teachers’ and the children’s interviews. At this stage, I also searched for additional literature to help me analyse and understand these reflections.

The teachers’ and children’s contributions are central to this chapter and to the collaborative reflective practice methodology. In addition to the interviews, I analyse and present the children’s and teachers’ characters and their stories to understand how, through their participation in IC, they created new spaces to resist the performative use of formal learning objectives. For example, the children’s characters and the stories they performed during an improvisation of a storm in Carly’s class, reveal how Carly and I could negotiate learning outcomes in response to the children’s free play and re-play. Towards the final section of this chapter, a close analysis of Sarah’s character, the school nurse, and the way Sarah works both in and out of role, is integral to understanding the difference between IC and another from of process drama.

The practice and the analysis are designed to discover emic issues or themes that come from stories of ‘change’. The practice and research both work, as Neelands suggests, ‘in the expectation that change is possible’ (2006, p.30). This is particularly pertinent in this chapter, because Carly’s critical reflections about the use of formal learning objectives, offers a direct example of where teachers can feel like they have very little ‘control over their working lives and practices’ because of the ‘highly legislated and prescriptive field’ they are working within (Neelands, 2006, p.30). Positioning the IC practice and this research as a form of critical pedagogy asks the teachers, the children, and I to become more critically conscious of our day-to-day learning experiences. Maxine Greene argues
that ‘participatory involvement with the many forms of art does enable us, at the very least, to see more in our experience, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines, habits, and conventions have obscured’ (Greene, 1996, p.379). It was Carly’s realisation that she found her previous use of learning objectives and her reliance on ‘teacher-led’ practice ‘scary’ that helped focus this chapter. Carly also reflects on how we have adapted teaching practices and discovered new ways to approach learning objectives and outcomes through the IC stages and our equal playmaker approach. Working within the ‘highly legislated and prescribed’ conditions of a state primary school, the research does openly rely on ‘a degree of idealism implicit in the critical theory research position’ (Neelands, 2006, p.30), which supposes Carly can make some form of change and take some control.

This degree of ‘idealism’, however, is inherent in my practice and my research. The belief that change is possible drives the work that I and my company do in schools, and it is why we choose to work alongside teachers within these constraints. As I referenced in Chapter One, other practitioners and companies can avoid formal schooling and choose to work in ‘informal’ settings because ‘active-learning practices’ are ‘less constrained by National Curriculum demands in those rigidly organised environments’ (Jackson, 2007, p.43). One of the core aims of IC, however, is to work with teachers to discover ways to disrupt approaches that can, because of the pressure of performativity, become more didactic. Understanding and articulating the details of how the IC process enabled Carly and I to move towards working as equal playmakers with the children in her class – whilst still meeting some of the formal literacy requirements – offers up significant insights for my practice.

What Do I Mean by Formal Learning Objectives and Outcomes?

In England, there is a statutory National Curriculum for state schools to follow\(^6\). The National Curriculum documents are laid out as a set of ‘attainment targets’ relating to individual subject areas, through which children ‘are expected to know, apply, and

\(^6\) Free schools, academies and private schools are not required to follow the National Curriculum.
understand the matters, skills, and processes specified’ (Department for Education, 2014). The documents are geared towards assessment and monitoring. In the literacy curriculum, for example, this is broken down into age-related attainment targets, i.e. what is expected to be achieved in Year 1 (age five-six), Year 2 (age six-seven), Lower Key Stage 2 (age seven-nine), Upper Key Stage 2 (age nine-eleven), and so on. The National Curriculum is only one part of a complex system that impacts on teachers’ practice and pedagogy and, in particular, the use of learning objectives and outcomes. Cresse and Isaacs consider England’s education system in relation to ten other jurisdictions that have been rated as ‘high-performing’ by the International Instructional Systems Study (2016). England was not rated as high-performing by this study, and Cresse and Isaacs look at the similarities – but more importantly, the differences – between the education systems. They suggest that England has a particularly ‘complex’ and ‘centralised’ management system. Apart from having a National Curriculum ‘it also formally regulates the education system through two main bodies: the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)’ (2016, P.153). The regulation of schools by a complex system involving Ofsted, Ofqual, and the National Curriculum means that learning objectives and outcomes, and the way the teacher plans and delivers her work, is in response to all three of these, rather than the curriculum alone.

Cresse and Isaacs warn that the system is now examination-led rather than curriculum-led, ‘because the accountability role played by qualifications and tests leads to a teaching agenda dominated by what is required for examinations success’ (2016, p.161). In secondary schools in England this predominantly leads to teaching geared towards GCSE examinations. In primary schools, this is geared towards Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) at six to seven years and ten to eleven years of age. The ‘accountability role’ is driven (amongst other systems and technologies) by the publication of these test results in national league tables. The years between these national tests are spent evidencing progress towards them, one of the things that Ofsted monitors closely through formal inspections.
Formal Learning Objectives in the Context of My Research

Since my research in both classrooms is based within literacy time, with a specific focus on writing, there is an expectation and explicit agreement with the teachers and the schools in which we work that the artistic process will support learning linked to several formal literacy objectives and to produce outcomes. During the initial planning meeting at Carly’s school, we discussed some of the learning objectives and outcomes that the teachers were hoping we could meet through the IC project. I visited the school in the summer term to meet Carly, the Year 5/6 class teacher, and the Deputy Head, who was also a class teacher in Year 6. We had already agreed to begin working together from the start of the Autumn term, therefore we met to learn more about each other’s requirements and expectations of the project. I found out that both classes were going to be reading the novel *A Stranger Came Ashore* (set on the Shetland Islands) and that the teachers planned to use the text as the topic for the half term, meaning several areas of the curriculum would respond to it. Literacy was heavily included in this, and we agreed that we would use the context of the book, i.e. life on the Shetland Isles and folk stories, as the inspiration for our Imaginary Community.

The teachers identified a series of text types that they would usually cover during the time period and explained that these would usually be set as written outcomes. These written outcomes would be used to evidence a series of the formal literacy objectives, relating to composition skills. The other teacher was not planning on using the IC process, however both teachers were expected to teach these text types and ensure every child produces these outcomes for assessment purposes, particularly as most of the children were in Year 6 and approaching SATs. During this meeting, Carly and I agreed to work towards the same text types as the other teacher, as this would help with internal moderation and allow the teachers to work towards similar medium- and long-term planning. Although we approached the texts on slightly different timescales and in very different ways, both classes completed roughly the same text types during the term. In our class we wrote setting descriptions, diary entries, non-chronological reports, stories, letters, newspaper reports, and scripts.
Let us consider an example of the kinds of formal literacy objectives that are linked to one of the text types we covered. When writing narratives, the National Curriculum states that children should be taught to ‘describe settings, characters, and atmosphere’ and ‘integrate dialogue to convey character and advance the action’ (Department for Education, 2014). This area is also assessed as part of the written submission for the Year 6 SATs, and to be deemed as working at the ‘expected standard’, teachers must provide evidence that the children can ‘describe settings, characters, and atmosphere’ within a narrative (Standards & Testing Agency, 2018). This area of the curriculum will very likely take precedence in the objectives and outcomes being set, taught, and evidenced, due to its presence in the SAT assessment and the National Curriculum. Alongside these objectives, which relate directly to the text type i.e. using setting description, characters, and atmosphere, the teacher will also be focusing on developing additional skills required in the other ‘I can’ writing statements assessed in the Year 6 SATs. For example, for a child working at ‘expected standard’ the teacher will also need to evidence that they can ‘select vocabulary and grammatical structures that reflect what the writing requires, doing this mostly appropriately (e.g. using contracted forms in dialogues in narrative; using passive verbs to affect how information is presented; using modal verbs to suggest degrees of possibility)’ (Standards & Testing Agency, 2018). Learning objectives will be drawn directly from these documents and used by Carly and her colleague to plan lessons in which they teach narratives. The teachers are pressured to use these learning objectives and outcomes as a way to evidence progress.

**Performative Use of Learning Objectives**

‘there are so many objectives [...] that you need to meet by the end of the day, the end of the week, the end of the lesson ...’ (Carly, 11th November 2015)

Teachers at schools in England often use these learning objectives and outcomes in this way because of the pressure to evidence the children’s (and subsequently their own) ‘performance’. Ball et al describe this as a ‘performance culture’, in which a discourse of ‘standards’ has materialised (2012, p.514). They describe the policy of standards as a ‘simple but effective and very public technology of performance’ made up of ‘league
tables, national averages, comparative and progress indicators, Ofsted (…) assessments, and benchmarks’ (2012, p.514). The performance culture has a day-to-day impact on how teachers plan and teach, and I suggest that using these kinds of learning ‘objectives’ to evidence progress is a result of this culture. Learning objectives and outcomes have, as Hussey and Smith suggest, ‘been hijacked by managers of education for use as a performance indicator’ (2008, p.107). They argue that they are used to measure the performance of both the teachers and children, and that ‘consequently, they have mutated from a useful educational tool into a bureaucratic burden’ (2008, p.107).

This performative use of learning objectives and outcomes is problematic in several ways. Firstly, these formal learning objectives are used at the expense of many other objectives that the teacher may deem important. The ‘rhetoric of necessity’, which drives the performance culture in schools, enables learning connected to examination to ‘colonise a great deal of school activity and teacher-pupil interaction’ (Ball et al, 2012, p.518). Carly’s reflection articulates this: ‘When you add up all of the time you have for lessons, the time constraints and there are so many objectives and so many things that you need to meet by the end of the day, the end of the week, the end of the lesson that you don’t have time to do the extra bits’ (11th November 2015). The ‘rhetoric of necessity’ is implied by Carly’s ‘need’ to meet ‘so many objectives’. The ‘extra bits’ are about Carly getting to know the children in her class better. Activities and time spent getting to know the children are just some of the things that Carly feels unable to prioritise in her teaching practice, because of the pressure or ‘need’ to meet so many formal objectives each lesson. This rhetoric of necessity can therefore lead to teaching that is predominantly teacher-led.

Carly considers how the IC process has enabled all of the ideas to be led by the group, she explains that ‘they are making their own story’ whereas usually, ‘they think they are making up the ideas but we have already decided them and we are leading them towards the answer that is actually going to be accepted as meeting the objective. It’s quite scary really’ (Carly, 11th November 2015). This need to meet the objective leads to a style of teaching that, on reflection, Carly finds ‘scary’. When describing the letters that the children write as part of their drama, Carly reflects on her previous practice and explains
that ‘normally I would say you are going to write a letter about this, and this is what is going to happen …’ (Carly, November 2015). Carly would have controlled the content, the form, and created her own purpose for the letter. Being pressured to teach towards several narrowly defined, pre-determined learning objectives is what leads Carly to teach in a more didactic manner; telling the children what they are going to write a letter about and how they will do it. Although this is a very simplistic, one-dimensional reading of Carly’s previous practice (i.e. she will obviously make many subtle changes to the way she plans and interacts with the children inspired by many personal and professional objectives), it is clear that the assessment-driven objective and outcome took precedence over all others – resulting in heavily teacher-led activities.

To understand how Carly and I found small ways to ‘de-centre’ the formal objectives and outcomes, and begin to disrupt the overarching, nationally driven performance agenda at a very local level, I share one of Carly’s lessons as a focused example. To re-cap the narrative and offer some context, I first share a brief overview of the initial seven weeks, outlining some of the strategies used and the formal written outcomes the children produced.

**Primrose Valley**

Over the first seven weeks, Carly, the children, and myself created our small Shetland village called Primrose Valley, which included a shop near the coast, a few fishing boats, a village school, a cluster of butt and ben houses (typical of the Shetland Isles), and some large cattle sheds where the ponies and cows stayed at night. We built our village using a selection of fabric materials, and after exploring the new environment, we all found our own favourite spot. We sat down to begin writing a description, sharing snippets as we wrote, and slowly building a more in-depth picture of our new shared world. The characters we created included students in the school, a head teacher called Darrell, Bob who worked in the shop, a family of livestock farmers, and an elderly fisherman and his son who lived near the coast. We used free play to begin to discover the kinds of things our characters might experience day to day, how our characters might interact with other
people and the village surroundings, and more about our own character’s personality and past. After this we all settled down late at night and wrote about our day in our diaries, discovering more about the parts of the day that our characters loved or disliked, who we might be looking forward to seeing tomorrow, and what we are hoping for. After hot-seating some of our characters to find out more about different parts of our lives, we created giant profiles (non-chronological reports). Inspired by the novel that the children and teacher were reading each week, we decided that a great storm would hit the village. In the novel, a strange man arrives during the storm who turns out to be a selkie and a great threat. We planned on using the idea of the storm to discover a shared starting point that interested the group.

The Great Storm – A Closer Look at Objectives and Outcomes

Practising working as equal playmakers, Carly and I wanted to allow the children to explore their own ideas about what happens during our own storm, so we prepared a session where students could free-play and re-play their ideas. Carly and I discussed the possibility that something strange might happen in the storm because the children seemed to like this idea from the novel, and it gave them the opportunity to move towards supernatural ideas like in the folk story. When setting up the exercise, however, we were keen to stress that whatever happens can be completely different from the book and unique to our Imaginary Community. To help generate some ideas, we planned for small groups to create frozen images of something strange happening during the storm. To support the group to generate lots of potential ideas, we planned to look at a couple of images at a time and encourage everyone to whisper rumours about what strange things they thought they were seeing. We then planned a good amount of time to use free play and re-play to further explore the events of the storm. This ended up taking place over two sessions, as we wanted to allow enough time for all students to structure and share their re-play.

We had been weaving in the formal objectives and written outcomes throughout the sessions so far (as referenced in the snapshot above). In these two lessons, we were
preparing to meet the formal literacy outcome of writing a letter. At this stage, we simply framed our objective (relating to the curriculum and assessments) as ‘to create content and purpose for the letters the children and the teacher are going to write’. We provisionally planned for the children to write an informal letter to a friend about the strange events they witnessed during the storm. During the free play and re-play, however, this narrative – about something strange and mysterious happening – simply did not prevail. What we actually saw was a series of smaller events relating to individual characters’ personal experiences of the storm, for example:

- Tim, a particularly ‘geeky’ student in the school, had lost his schoolbooks through an open window during the storm. Tim was desperate to get them back and went out in the storm to try and retrieve them.

- The head teacher, Darrell, went out in the storm to try and mend the roof that was collapsing but unfortunately got injured in the process.

- Several members of the farming family, who looked after the horses and cows in the field, decided to risk their lives to go and herd the animals into the sheds and try and lock them in safely. The great doors to the cattle shed were broken in the storm.

- Tim’s dad, who was a fisherman, was rowing back to the shore when the storm hit. His boat capsized, he got injured, and he ended up lying passed out on the shore.

In a discussion in role after the free-play and re-play session, the group voiced concerns about the damage from the storm. Some animals were lost, boats were broken, and the school and the shop were both severely damaged. The children enjoyed adding to the drama by suggesting that the medical supplies were far too low to treat all of the injuries, and there was not enough money or supplies to re-build the school or animal sheds.

After this session, Carly and I reflected on the events from the free play and re-play and decided to alter the written outcome. Instead of an informal letter to a friend, it became
a formal letter to the mainland asking for help. We felt like this was a better match for
the imagined events that we had created and invested in as a group, rather than our
original hunch of reporting strange sightings to a friend.

In this case, Carly did not have to decide what the letter was about. We came up with an
initial hunch about how the formal literacy outcome would work within the Imaginary
Community based on the children’s interests thus far, but we were still able to adapt
again to make sure that the letter-writing process was truly responding to whatever
happened in the drama. The written task must make sense in relation to what the
children and teacher have just co-created in the drama. Objectives and outcomes
planned on hunches can be very useful for medium- and long-term planning, allowing the
teacher to roughly keep track of whether they are meeting the requirements needed for
Ofsted and for assessments. This is exactly what Carly and I did when we sat down at the
start of the term, identifying key written outcomes that both Y6 classes would engage
with over the half term. We were open to these changing or even just adapting slightly –
in this case, changing the purpose of the letter and making it formal rather than informal
was key.

Previously, Carly felt like she had very little choice or control over what formal objectives
she used, and talks about needing to meet ‘so many objectives’ (Carly, 11th November
2015). This restricted what she could do with the children because she planned exactly
what she wanted the children to write and what they will write about in order to meet all
of the assessment-related objectives. However, the belief that a co-created drama will
produce meaningful content and purpose allows teachers to de-centre the formal
objectives. The events of the drama take centre stage, so to speak, and the formal
literacy objectives and outcomes become more meaningful to the group.

In an interview, Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio approach, explained that ‘the
teachers follow the children, not plans’ (Gandini, 2012, p.62). The Reggio early years
schools do not follow a planned curriculum or structured schemes of work as Malaguzzi
argues that this would ‘push our schools to teaching without learning’ (Gandini, 2012
p.62). This is obviously a very different context to the ‘performance culture’ experienced
by the Carly and Sarah working in state primary schools in the north of England. Although my research does not attempt to challenge the wider system and school policy, it does search for small ways in which the teacher can ‘follow the children’ and create a culture of learning where children’s ideas and imaginations can bring relevance to the literacy objectives and outcomes.

Malaguzzi suggests that ‘the teachers need only to observe and listen to the children, as they continuously suggest to us what interests them, and what they would like to explore in a deeper way’ (Gandini, 2012, p.65). This is a constant process in the Reggio preschools and nurseries, where the two class teachers carefully document the children’s words and creations and use this as inspiration to propose ideas back to the children. I suggest that Carly, when working as an equal playmaker, is particularly well positioned to discover and follow these interests through the emerging themes, ideas, and characters in the drama. We can use the children’s re-play of ideas and the following role play to offer back an opportunity to further develop their narrative through the formal literacy outcome – a written letter.

So far, I have focused on the formal literacy outcome. To better understand how this changes the way that Carly frames the formal literacy objectives, I look at an example lesson plan for writing letters on the BBC website for teachers (BBC, 2012). The learning objectives at the top of the plan are:

- To write using the conventions of formal letter writing
- To present a biased view when composing a letter of complaint

The lesson plan begins by showing the children a short, animated video clip where two characters, Melvin and Steven, learn how to write a formal and informal letter from Captain Post Funk. The task is then introduced by the teacher, who tells them they are going to write to their local circus protesting about their intention to reintroduce elephants into their performance. The rest of the lesson is a mixture of information input, research tasks into animal protection, and group work around persuasive techniques. The selected learning objectives and model plan are similar to how Carly
would have previously approached this lesson: ‘normally I would say you are going to write a letter about this, and this is what is going to happen …’. The task tells the children what they are going to write a letter about, and then a series of individual and group tasks shows them how this is going to happen.

However, during the great storm lesson, our formal literacy objective was ‘to create content and purpose’ for the letter. We spent time developing our own relevant and meaningful content through the free play and re-play. In the follow-up lesson, where we actually sat and wrote our letters, the objectives continue to be meaningful and relevant to the narrative:

- Alert people on the mainland about the disaster
- Gain help
- Ensure the letter can be posted and will be understood by whoever reads it

These objectives still require the children to find out how to structure a formal letter to an official on the mainland, in a way that will persuade others to help, and as a group we will ensure that we have laid out our letters correctly so we can post them. The written outcome allows Carly to meet the objectives, document progress, and assess the children’s work similarly to the intended outcome from the model lesson plan. The learning objectives, derived from the SAT assessment criteria, (e.g. ‘to write effectively and select language for the purpose and audience of the letter’) are made more meaningful when the letters become part of the playmaking process. The children know that Carly could not have planned this lesson without their equal playmaker input, and therefore understand that the letters are responding to and developing their ideas.

During reflections, Carly suggests that the children not only produce the formal literacy outcome, but that it is more meaningful to them: ‘they’re more engaged (…) because they actually want to write a letter to ask for money because they want their village to be repaired’ (Carly, 25th November 2015). Carly explains that they have created purpose for the written outcome before they begin to plan their writing. They are ‘more engaged when being taught about paragraphs and clauses because they know it’s connected.'
They understand why they are writing – they know the purpose and the audience’ (Carly, 25th November 2015). The writing is not seen as something separate. Instead of being a ‘bolt-on’ activity, it is another equal playmaker strategy within the playmaking process.

Therefore, the assessment-driven outcomes become part of the equal playmaker strategies. They are ready and available for the teacher and children to develop the community or the narrative, along with strategies like free play and re-play or a story circle. The written outcomes are still pre-defined, for instance we know that we will write a diary entry, a report, or a letter, but the content and purpose are responsive to the narrative and events that the equal playmakers are exploring. The written outcomes, framed as equal playmaker strategies, are particularly useful during the first three stages to support the children’s idea generation, building the dramatic setting and the characters (as shown in the seven-week overview). Once they discovered the shared starting point, the letters were used to drive the action further, in a similar way to the free play and re-play, which resulted in the letters being sent to the mainland.

Kirsty, a child in Carly’s class, seems to understand the writing as part of the playmaking process, explaining that she ‘pulls things from the acting into the writing’ and then the writing gives her ‘new ideas to put back into the acting’ (11th November 2015). The following week, Kirsty articulates this further: ‘When you go and do drama and then you write, you think about other things you could do in drama, and then next time you do drama you can go and do it and then you can think of other things to do in your writing so it links together’ (18th November 2015). Kirsty sees how the action in the drama feeds into her writing, and then the writing process feeds back into the drama. She articulates how this moves away from an overtly teacher-led experience: ‘I think I know what to write in my letter because the drama helps you, instead of Miss saying, ‘we are leaving Primrose Valley, we’ve had a storm …’ instead of just writing it from that, we have acted it’ (18th November 2015). This implies that Kirsty’s previous experience was, as Carly also described, of the teacher saying ‘this is what we are going to write a letter about …’. Carly can therefore value the equal playmaking process, accepting and encouraging the children’s engagement in the narrative and ‘de-centring’ the formal objectives and outcomes.
An example from the other classroom in my research clarifies how the formal objectives and outcomes are initially de-centred, and then re-valued and utilised as an equal playmaker strategy.

**The Magical Mayhem School of Magic**

Sarah’s class created The Magical Mayhem School of Magic, which involved a dolphin training pool, a playground with a dimension door, and a head teacher’s office in which the ‘Head’ resided with a mysterious trapdoor outside (described in Chapter Two). The children, teacher, and I developed our own characters, with some of us working as staff at the school in various roles and others becoming pupils at the school. Some were human, others were vampires or magical beings, and one child became the Ancient Sapphire Ice Monster who guarded the school. I was a very old vampire librarian.

Like my experience with Carly, Sarah identified several different written outcomes (text types) that would enable her to teach the requirements of the literacy curriculum and simultaneously evidence progress in assessment-related areas for each child. Although Sarah has a list of formal literacy outcomes in mind, none of them determine the content of the drama. They are held at a distance and de-centred until Sarah and the children want or need them in their playmaking process. One of the written outcomes achieved during the IC was story-writing, and the following analysis shows how the children and Sarah used the story-writing process as a way of further developing their own characters’ connection to the emerging shared narrative.

Working at Stage Four, ‘shared starting point’, Sarah and I decided that we would develop a back story to connect all our characters in the narrative and offer possibilities about where the drama and our learning could go next. The back story was developed using props and a story circle activity (described in Chapter Two, see pp.68-69). To re-cap briefly, the children selected two hand-shaped metal charms from a selection I brought into the classroom. Through a story circle, the following back story emerged:
Hundreds of years ago, evil had spread amongst the unicorns and they were ready to destroy all things good and peaceful in the world. The final battle between the unicorns and the humans took place and the most powerful sorcerers in the world stepped in to try and protect humankind. On top of a live volcano at the battle scene, Bloodbones the sorceress faced the evil unicorn army. She conducted a powerful spell in which she had to sacrifice her hands by throwing them into the lava to rid the evil. Evil drained from the unicorns’ hearts and peace was restored to the world. 300 years on, evil has somehow begun to spread as the power of the spell weakens. The hands have been mysteriously trying to communicate with the sorcerous Bloodbones, who is now head teacher of The Magical Mayhem School of Magic.

The children wrote their own versions of this as short stories during their literacy time with Sarah. The stories were key to each child’s understanding of what happened, and how their own characters connect to the shared narrative. The stories are told through their character’s eyes, almost like each child is their own protagonist in their story, and this further develops the playmaking process itself. One of the children’s stories demonstrates this:

‘In we go!’ shouted Mrs Bloodbones as she willingly jumped into the loud, scary volcano. As brave as Mrs Bloodbones was, her lower body and upper body burned violently, but mysteriously her head and hair was untouched. Five minutes later Mrs Bloodbones woke up on a bed with a metal plate stuck to her shoulders. ‘Oh no ... what happened.’ The camp nurse heard Mrs Bloodbones screaming and asked if anything was wrong. Calmly she explained what happened and that she was very lucky. Once Mrs Bloodbones recovered a baby was born. Mrs Bloodbones named the child Lilly-James Gathers and Mrs Bloodbones soon adopted Lilly. (Amelia’s story)

This story shows how the student, Amelia, has taken the shared story and interpreted it in a way that is meaningful to her. In her story, it wasn’t just the hands that went into the lava but Mrs Bloodbones’ whole body. This, in fact, makes more sense because in the current-day Magical Mayhem School of Magic, the head teacher is indeed just a ‘head’; she has made the back-story link more effectively. She also tells a part of the story about a baby being born and adopted by Mrs Bloodbones. The baby ‘Lilly’ is in fact Amelia’s character, and Mrs Bloodbones is her character’s adopted mother. She develops her own character’s back-story and connects further with the shared playmaking by writing this
short story. Reading these stories to each other, just like re-play, enabled the group to learn more about each other’s connection with the Imaginary Community. Sarah was able to support them in literacy time to develop their story-writing skills, meeting several formal literacy objectives linked to developing setting, characters, and/or atmosphere, driven by the curriculum and SAT assessment criteria as mentioned previously. These formal literacy objectives did not drive the narrative in any way, nor were they dependent on a particular turn of events happening.

As with Carly’s class, the formal literacy objectives and outcomes were met but arguably in a more meaningful way. In an interview, Amelia explained: ‘It feels really amazing having my own character. I have always wanted to write a book so having a character in class helps me write the book at home, Magical Mayhem School One, then Two: Magic Goes Crazy ... If you do drama you know what’s exciting for a story’ (26th February 2016). Amelia feels like her experiences in drama are helping her write an exciting story, and is subsequently inspired to have a go at writing a book at home.

**Multiple and Emergent Learning Objectives**

Before moving onto the final section of this chapter, I briefly consider how the teachers in both examples begin to place more value on *multiple* (i.e. not related to the formal literacy objectives) and *emergent* (i.e. not pre-determined at the start of the process) learning objectives.

**Multiple objectives**

Looking back at our planning and reflection notes before and after the Great Storm free play and re-play sessions, I can identify multiple objectives:

- Allow the group to create and invest in their own narrative about the storm
- Continue to develop confidence through free play and re-play
- Establish content and purpose for our letter
The first two objectives are based on co-creating the IC and working as equal playmakers – they can be considered as objectives relating to art form and personal and social learning. Carly previously felt overwhelmed by the number of formal objectives to meet, and this restricted the kinds of objectives she used during planning. In this example, we can see that other objectives influenced the planning and Carly’s delivery of the lesson.

Let us take the first objective identified as an example, ‘to allow the group to create and invest in their own narrative about the storm’. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, this can be considered the primary objective of IC. Carly and I both felt like the group were really beginning to understand and believe that they had a real chance to co-create the narrative, and as a result appeared more invested in the sessions. Carly was keen to ensure the children had the opportunity to truly create and explore the next events of drama – in this case, the storm. Carly articulates a strong preference for giving the children in her class this opportunity:

> Next door the class is all based on the novel, what happens in the novel, it’s all scripted, it’s all pre-planned, it’s written for them … and they haven’t had a chance to make anything up. They have written about the characters that exist, the setting that exists, it’s kind of already up there, whereas ours have made the setting, made the characters, made the myth, made the disaster – made everything (25th November 2015).

Carly is beginning to critically reflect upon how much autonomy the children in her class have, compared to the children next door. She criticises teaching methods that restrict the imaginative opportunity to create: ‘Do you want to write a diary about what someone else has been doing? Do you really want to write a setting description when you have already been told what it looks like?’ (Carly, 25th November 2015). This suggests that Carly feels more able to value other objectives, rather than being pressured to reach the formal outcome as efficiently as possible.

**Emergent objectives**

The first two objectives listed above were not pre-defined at the start of the project, but rather they emerged through the IC process. I suggest that they are able to develop as a result of Carly’s growing commitment to working as an equal playmaker and de-centring
the formal objectives in her planning. We didn’t discuss these particular objectives at the start of the term, but instead responded to the emergent, and sometimes unexpected, outcomes encouraged by the open-ended equal playmaker approach.

Consider the second objective, for example: ‘To continue to develop confidence through free play and re-play’. Carly reflected that some children, who often hold back their ideas in class, were sharing ideas through their performances. One child in particular – Mason – seemed to develop confidence through these activities, and during the great storm re-play he spoke in front of the rest of the class for the first time. In his interview, Mason describes how he ‘actually said something this time, it felt funny because everyone was laughing saying ‘Mason spoke’ … I liked it and want to do more of it’ (18th November 2015). Mason is one of the children who is perhaps benefiting from his role as an equal playmaker, being viewed as a ‘rich’ child (Moss, 2016, p.369), and, as described in Chapter Two (see p.64), has been offered a variety of new ways or ‘languages’ (Moss, 2016b, p.171) in which to express his ideas to the rest of the group. His character ‘Bob’ became very well-liked by the class. When a child called him by his real name during the re-play, several children all shouted out ‘no it’s Bob’, showing that the other playmakers had invested in Mason’s part of the story. This focus on developing confidence through the free play and re-play activities is something that emerged through our shared experience and reflective practice – not something that is driven by an external curriculum or assessment pressure.

**Learning Objectives and Other Forms of Process Drama**

So far, I have suggested that Carly shifted from a very teacher-led approach, influenced by the pressure to meet several formal literacy objectives and outcomes as efficiently as possible, to a more collaborative practice, which enabled the children to be involved in developing the content and purpose of their writing when taking part in IC. I argue that the IC process re-frames the writing tasks as another set of equal playmaker strategies, which can be called upon and used by the children and teacher to develop their drama. As a result, Carly, Sarah and I were able to adopt a more collaborative and responsive
pedagogy when engaging with formal objectives and outcomes, which values the children’s ideas and remains responsive to what happens in the drama. They are also able to bring in *multiple* objectives that *emerge* through the process.

In this final section of the chapter, I compare IC to Bowell and Heap’s approach to learning objectives and outcomes. I suggest that Sarah and Carly are better equipped to co-create and work as equal playmakers when using IC in core curriculum time. When working in role during IC, the teachers are free to act responsively to the children and the drama whereas the teacher’s actions in Bowell and Heap’s approach are restricted by the learning objectives that drive the drama.

In order to share their understanding of process drama with teachers and students, Bowell and Heap have written two key texts. The first book lays out six principles designed to support teachers in setting up an effective process drama in the classroom (2013). The second book supports teachers to continue reflecting, planning, and responding to the events that take place once the drama has been launched (2017). They identify three broad categories of learning that can be used to draw out relevant objectives: art form, cross-curricular, and personal and social. Through this guidance, Bowell and Heap are explicitly encouraging the teacher to think of *multiple* objectives beyond the curriculum-related objectives. However, these multiple objectives are, to a certain extent, pre-defined at the very start of the planning. Although they acknowledge that ‘there will always be unexpected outcomes’, they stress that ‘learning through process drama is not arbitrary or random’ (2013, p.15) and suggest that ‘it is essential (…) for the teacher to identify precisely what her learning objectives for the class are’ (2013, p.12). It is ‘essential’ because the teacher then uses the multiple objectives from all three categories to define a theme (principle one), decide on a context (principle two), choose roles for the children and a role for herself (principle three), and establish a frame (principle four) – all in *response* to the pre-defined objectives.

When selecting the context, they state that ‘the success of your choice will depend on your ability to tightly define exactly what you want the learning to be about’ (2013, p.25). For example, they suggest that a topic of ‘The Vikings’ is not defined tightly enough in
order to plan a process drama. Rather, it should be ‘the navigation skills of the Vikings’ or ‘Viking settlements and occupations’ (2013, p.26). To further understand the differences between this approach and IC, I continue to explore some of the work that took place in Sarah’s classroom. Rather than pre-planning a drama process in response to tightly defined objectives, as Bowell and Heap suggest, Sarah and I keep the theme open – ‘magic school’ – and let the co-creation and responsiveness drive the learning experiences.

Using the back-story as inspiration, Sarah and I set up a shared starting point (described in Chapter Two, see pp.67-71) and planned the next lesson to launch the dramatic action. In the lesson plan, we identified and wrote down the following learning objectives:

- Actively engage all pupils in improvisation and performance through their characters (free play and re-play)
- Launch action from the shared starting point
- Establish a newsworthy event

We planned a session that started with a short message from the hands being delivered to the whole school, an equal playmaker circle to discuss ideas about what might happen in response to this, and a free play and re-play activity to allow these ideas to play out. As described in Chapter Two, I stepped into the role of the hands and delivered a message to the pupils and staff at the school, and the children and teacher reacted in role. I share an extract from my artist reflections written shortly after the session:

Sarah began to react by putting her hand to her face and looking shocked, then glancing around to the other characters. This seemed to inspire more of the characters to come to life, and the head teacher and her adopted daughter began to react in the corner by pointing towards the floating hands and gasping. As I continued, Jayden placed himself in the centre of the room and then fell to the ground as if he had fainted. I paused for a moment and then continued to perform the hands speech. A few more characters began to faint in front of me and within a few seconds almost the whole class were laid on the floor. I paused again... before continuing with even more passion and desperation as the
hands pleaded for help. Sarah appeared to be fully in role as the school nurse, looking up and responding to the hands’ vision and words, but she also began to move around the room checking pulses and listening for breathing. The teachers, students, and protectors of the Magical Mayhem School of Magic remained passed out on the floor. (Artist Reflections, 26\textsuperscript{th} February)

Sarah is able to improvise and respond to the children’s actions openly in role as Nurse Frostman. The content of the drama, and the roles that the children and teacher embrace, are not restricted in any way by a pre-determined objective or outcome. She can respond moment-by-moment in character, playing alongside the children. The lesson was planned with multiple objectives in mind, yet none of them determined what should happen in the drama or how Sarah or the children should act. We had not expected the children to faint, and in the interview afterwards Sarah explained that she instinctively wanted to stop the action as she felt like they were being ‘silly’. I also felt concerned that the children would not be listening to the message, as they were very excited that they had been allowed to follow Jayden’s lead and faint. However, Sarah is an experienced equal playmaker and had the confidence to improvise in role at this moment: ‘But then I thought ‘Well, I’m the nurse, and if they have all fainted then I had better do something about it. Are they still alive?’ (26\textsuperscript{th} February, 2016). Sarah is able to prioritise an equal playmaker way of being during this activity.

Bowell and Heap discuss the importance of the teacher’s decision-making in role, and point out that she ‘needs to be mindful’ to keep the learning objectives clearly in mind as the drama unfolds in action. The teacher, once she is working in ‘now time’, must ‘constantly monitor the learning of the drama, cross-referenced with her stated learning objective’ (2017, p.64). In addition, ‘she will also need to be alert to the potential for unexpected learning outcomes and shifts in the direction of the drama’ (2017, p.64). The teacher requires confidence and skill to work in the ‘thinking on your feet’ zone (2017, p.64), where ‘balancing skills must come into play together with the ability to assess what has arisen and negotiate the best pathway through it so that the journey towards the learning objective is sustained.’ (2017, p.64).
In their example, the learning objective is ‘the uses and limitations of non-standard units of measurement’ (2017, p.63). The teacher’s ability to meet this learning objective is dependent on the drama unfolding in certain directions. Whilst working in role, the teacher must ensure her actions support the students in learning about non-standard units of measurement. Up to this point, the teacher has decided to set the drama in a picturesque village, sustained by tourism and winning an award each year. Using teacher-in-role, she has set up the idea that the judges are arriving in the next three days, and the students have been put into role as villagers. A meeting has been set up at the village hall and the teacher, in role as the Postmistress, asks if anyone has heard terrible noises coming from the mountains. Bowell and Heap explain that at this stage, the children may not have initially been interested in this idea and said ‘no’. The teacher could go with this and find another way to learn about non-standard units of measurement, but she has already spent time planning this drama and set up the giant footprints in the hall, so they suggest she could say something like ‘I’m only asking because I can’t help reading postcards... lots of them are mentioning the dreadful noise and saying that the people sending the cards are going home early’ (2017, p.66). The teacher needs to respond to the children’s improvisations, yet still needs to keep the learning objectives in mind. She wants the children, in role as villagers, to accept the terrible noises in the mountains because she wants them to feel concerned about the judges coming, losing their village award, and potentially losing their livelihoods.

When using process drama in this way, to teach a specific learning outcome such as ‘non-standard units of measurement’, the teacher’s behaviour and choice of action when working in role must be very carefully negotiated. What Sarah’s example demonstrates is an alternative use of drama and shared story-making in core curriculum time. By de-centring the formal objectives and outcomes, Sarah can use her role as school nurse to accept the unfolding events in real time, and focus on co-creating and playmaking in the classroom. Sarah didn’t choose her role in order to meet the learning objectives – she created the character, Nurse Frostman, in the same way and at the same time as the children. Sarah’s choice reflects her interests, as her nurse is in fact a time-traveller who was about to be burned alive for being a witch hundreds of years before. Sarah is able to play and use her role more freely than the teacher who was in role as the Postmistress,
and can arguably be more open to the ideas offered and the learning opportunities that arise. She is able to remain in role, and respond to the children fainting, by running around and checking pulses. The children can continue to work as equal playmakers, and they do not have to negotiate their ideas to match the drama set up by the teacher.

IC is not a process that the teacher can use to teach pre-determined, tightly defined learning objectives like Bowell and Heap’s practice. Although there may well be opportunities within the magic school to approach something such as non-standard units of measurement, this would need to be extracted by the teacher, and would be unlikely to work well with the children’s developing ideas. Worse still, it could (as I have experienced) hinder the developing equal playmaker relationship. The trust created between the children and their teacher relies on the open negotiation and co-creation of the Imaginary Community.

Although IC does not offer teachers a method that can meet all formal learning objectives, Sarah and Carly’s reflections illustrate how certain learning objectives and outcomes can be achieved whilst still working alongside the children as equal playmakers. Not only that, but the teacher’s and children’s experience show how the learning objectives and outcomes become a useful equal playmaker strategy, supporting the children’s co-created narrative and dramatic experience. Retaining the equal playmaker mode of being, even when working within the prescriptive and performative environment of the school, makes me consider Slade’s understanding of an ‘education of the whole self’. Jackson suggests that ‘skill-based learning of the kind advocated so frequently today would be for him secondary’ (1990, p.155). Slade understood drama as:

... a means of expression and growth at every stage of development from early childhood to adulthood; it closely related to our instinct for play; and yet it was also related to our aesthetic sense, our desire to imagine and create other worlds, distant from the mundane concerns of the everyday but close to our deeper wishes for excitement, love, self-fulfilment (Jackson, 1990, pp.156-157).

Encouraging and enabling this desire to imagine, create, and play within other worlds is unlikely to appear within the agenda of the curriculum, the examination board, or Ofsted,
and therefore unlikely to inform formal learning objectives. By finding ways to work with the formal demands placed on teachers, by de-centring the formal objectives for parts of the school day, children and teachers are able to create together and perhaps re-value Slade’s education of the whole self.

The culture of performativity is described as a ‘truism’ in relation to England’s education system (Braun, 2017, p.169), and therefore the importance of articulating how IC responds to the demands teachers face is valuable beyond the case studies in my research. Offering teachers and children, like Carly and her class, a process that enables play, drama, and co-creation to take centre stage, whilst still enabling the teachers to meet formal objectives and outcomes, is a key driver of Chol’s work. This is partly because child-led, play-based pedagogies are, in our experience, rare in the schools we work with in England. This comes down to the pressures to meet the formal learning objectives.

Through this research, I have been able to articulate how IC can work within the current policies relating to writing. Carly’s critical reflections during the interviews clarify some of the restrictions artists and teachers face when working within formal literacy objectives and outcomes. But, importantly, they enable me to understand some of the possibilities from a teacher’s perspective. Both Carly and the children are starting to describe positive changes to their writing when using IC; however, these findings are limited within this research. Further research could open up understanding about the kinds of writing produced by the children and teachers when objectives are de-centred, and how, for instance, the children might see themselves as authors/makers/creators.

This research has allowed me to clarify and articulate new possibilities established when using IC, and working as equal playmakers within literacy lessons in the primary classroom. This is very useful as it opens many doors: schools and teachers are keen for creative, collaborative practices that enable them to develop engagement in writing and strengthen children’s literacy skills. There is no doubt, however, that the formal learning requirements will change as curriculums and examinations respond to new policy. This
emphasises the importance of continuing a dialogic, critically reflexive praxis with teachers and children, as we use this knowledge to continue to discover new possibilities.
Chapter Five: An IC Pedagogy of Friendship

In the last chapter I explored how Carly, the class teacher, discovered a new way to work with formal learning objectives, which are driven by a culture of performativity (Ball, 2003; Ball et al, 2012). I argued that Imaginary Communities is a process that centralises and prioritises the co-creation of a narrative, the opportunity to take part in a shared dramatic experience, and collaboration as equal playmakers. In doing so, IC de-centres the formal learning objectives, disrupting the overtly teacher-led and outcome-driven pedagogy. In this chapter I explore how IC not only prioritises co-creation and the equal playmakers way of being, but also enables teachers and children to discover new social possibilities in their classroom. One of the most frequently cited themes emerging from the children’s reflections was, perhaps surprisingly, about friendship at school:

‘most of the time we’re going to do a scene with people we don’t really talk to and like they turn into our friends’ (Will, 1st March 2016).

‘we have more friends than we used to because we are in the groups, you get more friends’ (Evelyn, 4th March 2016).

‘I don’t feel like she’s a teacher, like she’s one of your friends’ (Millie, 24th February, 2016).

These reflections are a small sample from the interviews, in which the children talk about friendship. However, almost all of the participants interviewed discussed change relating to friendship. Carly, Millie, Kirsty, Will, Mason, and Sebastian from Carly’s class, and Sarah along with Charlotte and Evelyn from her class, share personal experiences relating to these themes. A close analysis of the children’s and the two teacher’s interviews highlights a range of insights into how new friendships can form in the classroom. The children and teachers describe a culture of friendship where it feels more possible to make friends in the classroom.

Their stories prompt a consideration of the importance of friendship and the capacity of schools and classrooms as sites to encourage friendship between children and their peers. School spaces and cultures hold great potential for supporting and developing
friendships amongst children; primary school ‘worlds’ can be seen as ‘particularly intense sites for encounter, sociality and friendship-making’ (Vincent et al, 2018, p.21). The two schools in my research are typical state primary schools in England, bringing together children of similar ages who are grouped together in classes of between 25-30 children with a teacher for at least a year. Spending approximately six hours a day with children of a similar age is now the cultural norm in England and many other countries where formal schooling is provided. As Burnett points out, ‘an enduring feature of schools is the bringing together of diverse groups of individuals who spend time together (…) over sustained periods of time’ (2016, p.568). Spending extensive periods of time with children of a similar age can offer children the chance to develop positive relationships and friendships with peers.

A study considering children’s understanding of friendship during ‘middle childhood’ (seven to twelve years) suggests that this is an age when ‘peers become increasingly important and children’s concepts of friendship become more complex, based on choice, shared interests and reciprocal, negotiated relationships rather than simple proximity’ (Rogers, 2012, p.485). Margaret Rogers carried out this study over the course of a year to elicit children’s accounts of friendship in their local neighbourhoods. The study is particularly relevant to this chapter because, similarly to the IC practice and this research process, the study positions children as ‘active agents in their own development’ and calls for more attention to be paid to children’s own understanding of friendship (p.484). Rogers found that ‘friends and friendship are experienced by children as essential to their well-being’ (p.483). Her study draws on a wide body of research, further advocating the positive impact of friendship on children’s well-being at this age. Her research suggests that friendship supports positive mental health and well-being; provides the basis for the development of social support networks; has a buffering effect in terms of mental health; helps children overcome shyness, loneliness, and anxiety; and enables children to provide each other with the social and cognitive scaffolding required to get through the many transitions and adjustments they face.

Whilst Rogers considers children’s understanding of friendship outside of formal education, the positive effects of friendship for children in school are also compelling. For
example, friendship is associated with improved attainment, positive attitudes towards school, social and emotional competency (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016), and moral development (Healy, 2011). Despite this research into the importance of friendship for children at this age, and the associated positive benefits for children at school, it seems that pedagogies of friendship are not currently a high priority in most primary schools. If any focused work around positive relationships takes place, it is likely to be contained within ‘Personal, Social, Health, and Economic’ (PSHE) Education. This is currently a non-statutory subject in the National Curriculum, often marginalised by subjects that are examined and where there is pressure for teachers to monitor progress and evidence attainment. As Braun explains, the teacher’s ‘focus on performance becomes absolute, marginalising both pastoral concerns and an interest in broader conceptions of education, which go beyond targets and exam results’ (2017, p.182). This was certainly the case for one of the teachers in my study. Carly’s reflections, presented in Chapter Four, explain how assessment-related pressures led to a heightened focus on formal learning objectives and outcomes, at the expense of other informal, yet important, objectives.

Another significant barrier to friendship-making at school is the extent to which children’s behaviour is closely monitored and their interactions and experiences with others are heavily ‘managed’ in the classroom (Martlew et al, 2011, p.78). Rogers advocates for the value of ‘autonomous informal spaces’, in which ‘children are more self-directed’ and ‘engage in autonomous play and activity’ (2012, p.485). Her study took place in an urban neighbourhood in Ireland, where the children had many more opportunities to interact with other children freely. Although the classroom is not going to provide children with the same level of autonomy as the local neighbourhood, the findings from Rogers’ study are useful to re-consider the extent to which the school manages the children’s behaviour and interactions, and the impact this has on friendship-making. Burnett points out that ‘in school, collaboration is often officially managed in fixed groups within defined spaces and times and directed to finite shared outcomes’ (2016, p.582). Where children sit, how they interact with others, when they are supposed to speak, and the way they move around the classroom all become managed behaviours, restricting how and when the children spend time together.
Using the words and stories of the children and teachers, I explore how IC interrupts some of the routines and practices that may restrict collaboration and friendship-making. Using the children and teachers’ reflections alongside practical examples from the research, I analyse how three particular features of the IC process are socially significant in generating potential new friendships:

1. Working in new social groupings
2. Acting with other children (free play and re-play)
3. Teacher in role

Through these features, the children experience the process of friendship-making differently to the ways that social groups are otherwise formed in the classroom or in the playground. They discover ways to spend time with new people, take part in extended activities together, and discover each other’s likes and dislikes. This is supported by actions taken by the teachers – opening up the physical space of the classroom, encouraging more autonomy of choice throughout the IC stages, and finally using the characters and working in role to target and support specific children who tend to isolate themselves or struggle with friendship-making.

**Collaborative Reflective Practice**

I have chosen to look at friendship, not simply to develop a narrative of advocacy, but because this story is one of the most prevalent ‘change’ stories that comes from the children and teachers in the interviews. When approaching this chapter, I identified themes that related to the personal and social aims of the practice. This is because I have considered the artistic aims in Chapter Two and the curriculum-related and assessment-based aims in Chapter Four. I hope that this final chapter contributes to a more fully rounded understanding of how IC can work in the primary school classroom as an art form and a critical pedagogy. It demonstrates how the teacher can use an artistic process
to address the formal learning objectives as well as being responsive to the personal and social needs of a group.

My research follows the same core principles as the equal playmaker pedagogy. My findings are emergent and have been developed from the specific contexts, the children, the teachers, and my own experiences in these two settings. The research is grounded in the data I collected from the two IC experiences in the two schools. I did not go into the practical research with the aim of understanding friendship – this focus developed during the collection and analysis of the data, particularly through the weekly interviews with the children and the teacher. The interviews were semi-structured, usually starting with an open invitation from myself to talk about today’s session before asking questions loosely formulated from emerging themes arising in the previous weekly discussions. I positioned the teacher and children as co-researchers and used their reflections to lead conversations. When they expressed a particular area of interest that diverted from the semi-structured questions, I followed the child’s or teachers’ interest. In some of the interviews, I specifically asked the children about their relationships within the classroom because this was identified as an emerging theme during the process. However, I did not specifically propose the idea of friendship in my questions, rather, this emerged during the coding and data analysis.

I underwent several cycles of coding, reading, and returning to my wider data before settling on the question that drives the research presented in this final chapter. One of the broader themes that came out of the first cycle of coding was that of changes in relationships. Looking more closely at this data, I identified references to relationships changing between individual children, between the teacher and the children, and in the way the wider group interacted. I spent a considerable amount of time reading a variety of literature to look for the most useful way to analyse and think about these different relationships in the classroom. Eventually, after many frustrating attempts at framing this final element of the research, I returned to the full set of data again and looked more specifically at how the children spoke about their social interactions during the interviews. It was from this cycle of coding that I identified the focus of ‘friendship’.
I identified the three features of IC by analysing the reflections offered by the children (features one and two) and the teachers (feature three). Using IC as a practice and research methodology, I have been able to identify how the children and their teachers construct their own culture and understanding of friendship. As with the previous chapter, the learning gained from this section of the research is driven by the understanding that children and teachers, through their critical consciousness, construct valid learning experiences together. The IC process – and the subsequent research process – enables the children, the two teachers, and myself to use our ‘social imagination’ as ‘critical pedagogy’ (Greene, 1996) by acting and creating together. The possibilities that the children and teachers create and reflect upon in relation to friendship are valid experiences, which I intend to understand and share through this chapter.

Schooling and Friendship

When you add up all the time you have for lessons and the time constraints and there are so many objectives and so many things that you need to meet by the end of the day, the end of the week, the end of the lesson, you don’t have time to do the extra bits. I know down [the] school they do circle time and home-sharing things and we simply don’t have time to do it, so even if they have come in and asked, we physically can’t fit it into the day so all of that kind of thing gets pushed to the side I suppose (Carly, 11th November, 2015).

Carly explains that she doesn’t make time for activities such as ‘circle time’ and ‘home-sharing’. As Carly notes, these kinds of activities tend to happen in younger years, between three and five years old, in the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS). Carter and Nutbrown consider a pedagogy of friendship in school and explain that ‘friendship is an area that tends to be neglected after the EYFS stage by researchers and teachers, perhaps because academic progress takes precedence’ (2016, p.398). These kinds of activities that are more typical further ‘down school’ can be considered as ‘proactive’ work, which can generate and support the development of friendships between children in school (Vincent et al. 2018, p.126-127). In the book Friendship and Diversity, the authors suggest that ‘work carried out with children around friendship tends to be ‘reactive’ rather than ‘proactive’ and focuses on those children whose friendship
practices are seen as problematic’ (Vincent et al, 2018, p.126-127). They found, similarly to Carly, that the teachers in their study faced ‘pressures and priorities that undercut these attempts to facilitate and support friendship’ through proactive measures. They describe the pressures of the crowded curriculum, rising work loads of teachers, and the emphasis on targets (2018, p.126-127). Mary Healy also argues that teachers should take friendship seriously, but acknowledges that ‘schools rarely take the forming, nurturing and nourishing of friendship beyond helping to deal with disputes between friends when they disrupt school life’ (2011, p.442). What this means is that children have less time proactively carved out at school to get to know each other and find out about each other’s home lives, their likes, and dislikes.

Kirsty, one of the children in Carly’s class, suggests that she ‘didn’t know a lot of people’ in her class – she explained that ‘I wasn’t new, but I didn’t know a lot of people, like what they liked to do or anything or if they had anything in common with me’ (Kirsty 24th Feb, 2016). Although Kirsty studied daily in a class alongside her peers, she did not have many opportunities to get to know them. In line with Kirsty’s experiences, Carly reflects very early on in the interviews about how she used to facilitate activities in mixed-ability groups, but finds she can’t do that anymore ‘because of the pressure of differentiation’ (Carly, 16th Sept). By differentiation, Carly means dividing the children into ability groups for literacy and numeracy, resulting in the same small group of children who are deemed similarly ‘able’ in that subject, sitting together every day. The children are often split into groups of lower, middle, and higher ability. In Friendship and Diversity, the authors suggest that this is another result of the pressures of curriculum and an emphasis on targets. They explain that the use of ‘ability groups’ obviously affects who children are able to spend time with (2018, p.126). This kind of grouping means that Kirsty is restricted in terms of who she can spend time with, as she is placed in a particular group every morning. The structure of the school day, the way the classroom is set out, who children are encouraged or allowed to work with, and the way the children act and interact in lessons are all significant factors that can contribute to how children experience friendship at school.
The teachers in my research did not explicitly trial a range of tried-and-tested ‘proactive’ exercises, such as circle time or home-sharing, yet one of the most common stories relating to personal and social learning or development through the IC process was that of new friendships forming or deepening. The rest of the chapter carefully considers the children’s and teachers’ reflections about these changes, and attempts to theorise how the IC experiences in both schools were generative of new friendships. I begin by exploring how the children form *new, small, and flexible working groups* rather than the teachers or school policies overtly managing them. I explore ideas about classroom space, spontaneity, and commitment to further understand the way children make decisions about social groupings. This leads me to consider how the children find out more about one another through their characters and their interactions when *acting together* in these new formations. Finally, I outline how the teacher’s character and work ‘in role’ can become part of a proactive pedagogy of friendship.

**IC – Generating New Friendships in the Classroom**

The children’s reflections suggest that they are learning more about how to develop a culture of friendship in their classroom. They describe how IC has given them new opportunities to make friends by finding things in common, spending time together, understanding others’ likes and dislikes, and helping each other. The children in Rogers’ study similarly describe friendships based on shared interests, spending time together, mutual liking, and the importance of taking part in shared activities (2012, p.491). It is clear that the children very much value the new culture of friendship that they are establishing – all of the children refer to it positively within their reflections.

Some of the children also see the positive impact of this new culture on their learning. Mason, Kirsty, and Millie talk about being more comfortable and confident in the classroom, which helps them engage more and put their hand up in front of the others. Millie explains that she now feels more ‘at ease’ with her peers, which makes her ‘talk better because you feel like you can do more things because you know them instead of holding back’ (Millie, 1st March, 2016). Children’s relationships with their classmates are
seen as an important factor in supporting children to become comfortable and successful when moving through school and negotiating new challenges (Ladd, 1990, p.1082). The children’s reflections show that they are forming their own understanding about how they can make new friends in their classroom, but also about how the new culture of friendships supports their learning.

**New, Small, and Flexible Groups**

The children describe how they ended up working with people who they do not usually work or play with. Several of the children directly relate this to ‘making friends’ or getting ‘closer’ to children in the class. Will suggests that people might not usually think about working with him, but ‘when we are doing a scene with people we don’t really talk to, they turn into friends – hopefully after this they will be like ‘you can work with me’” (Will 1st March, 2016). Millie also describes ‘making friends because you are working with people who you wouldn’t usually’ (25th November, 2015). Evelyn says that the IC sessions make you get ‘closer to people that you weren’t really used to’ (19th February, 2016). These reflections all suggest that the children are working in different formations or groupings, which they have not worked in before, and this has enabled children to spend time with new people. During the IC sessions, neither of the teachers managed the children’s interactions or controlled the groupings by ability. During the first three stages, the children form into flexible sub-groups, often with people who they are not used to working with or who they do not already identify as friends. Kirsty, for example, explains how she has been working with children that she doesn’t usually play with at dinner time (18th November, 2015) and Millie also describes how ‘we’ve acted with different people instead of staying with like our friends’ (1st March, 2016).

The class teacher, Carly, also notices and describes this in the interviews, explaining that children are working with new people who they wouldn’t usually ‘talk to … sit near [or] probably even acknowledge throughout the day’ (11th November, 2015). When talking about Kirsty, she explains that:
She doesn’t stick to her friendship groups at all – when you see her in class you would probably think that her friends are Maddison and Skye and sometimes Adrienne, but when you look at her in the Imaginary Communities setting she isn’t anywhere near those characters. When you look around the room they are elsewhere on the opposite side of the room (11th November, 2015).

The important aspect here is that the children consider this act of working with new people as a significant catalyst for the development of new friendships. This may seem like an obvious assertion, but I consider the children’s reflections seriously – to make new friends, you need to spend time with new people. This is also supported by the reflections of children in Rogers’ study, who understand that taking part in activities together and spending time together is an important feature of friendship-making (2012).

In Carly’s class the new groupings emerged during the first three stages of IC, ranging from as little as two up to approximately seven members. I describe these new small groupings as flexible, because they were not dictated, explicitly acknowledged, or recorded in any way by Carly, and the children were not required to stay in these groups once they formed. The children did, however, choose to remain in these groups for extended periods throughout the process. I consider three key qualities and actions that may have led to the children forming and remaining in these new groups.

The first is in relation to the management of the classroom space. Carly and Sarah both use the physical space of the classroom differently to how they do in regular class time – tables and chairs are pushed to the sides of the room and the children are given permission to use the space more freely. Evelyn acknowledges this difference in one of the interviews, describing how ‘it feels more spaced out, you can’t normally go to the other side of the class’ (19th February, 2016). Evelyn describes how she is ‘working with people in a different way because you get to use all of the classroom and get to experience lots of different people’ (19th February, 2016). This certainly implies that ‘experiencing different people’ is something that doesn’t usually happen in the

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7 Although the groups ranged from two to seven in this example, children do sometimes create an isolated space where they begin by choosing to work alone. When this happens, their choice is respected, yet the teacher, and often the group, find ways to support the child’s character to remain deeply involved with the shared narrative.
classroom, and Evelyn feels that the different use of the physical space is important. During these initial stages, the adults in the room have less control over the children’s movement, interactions, and behaviour. Although the classroom is still a formal setting, controlled in many ways by adults and school systems, the space temporarily encourages more autonomous movement and choice – allowing the children’s actions and decisions to be ‘more self-directed’ and supporting the children to take part in ‘autonomous play and activity with peers’ (Rogers, 2012, p.485).

Secondly, Carly and I encouraged the children to make spontaneous decisions and actions. These are decisions made without pre-planning and without direction or force by someone else. Slade describes spontaneity as always ‘voluntary’ but not always ‘unconstrained’, and in fact says that spontaneity is nearly always inspired or instigated by something (1968, p.1-2). In other words, spontaneous actions or decisions might appear to happen ‘out of the blue’ but they are generally sparked by something or someone else. I consider how Carly and I encouraged the children to make more spontaneous decisions, which resulted in them working in different physical spaces in the classroom. These more spontaneous decisions and actions disrupt previous classroom structures, particularly patterns of behaviour relating to social groupings.

Finally, I consider how the children’s commitment to the activities – and eventually to the developing imaginary world that we’re creating – encourages the children to form and remain working in new social groups. Wagner describes how Heathcote encourages child-led decisions during the drama and this directly results in increased commitment from the group (Wagner, 1979, p.21). In the examples below, we see how the children are encouraged to make a range of decisions and offer ideas when contributing to the dramatic setting and characters. The openness of the space, the variety of exercises, and the encouragement of spontaneity result in the children making multiple small decisions, which in turn lead to a growing sense of commitment. The children’s commitment to the dramatic setting and their characters eventually results in a commitment to working and spending time in new social groups.
Several small flexible groups formed in Carly’s class when we created Primrose Valley. I name the small flexible groups by the imaginary location in which they developed. The farm group was made up of six children plus Carly, the boat group was made up of two children, and the shop group was made up of three children. Each of these groups included children who had not previously worked together in ability groups or through prior friendships. Carly, for instance, describes how the two boys in the boat group are from the lowest and the highest ability groups and don’t usually spend time together (16th September, 2015). I offer a brief overview of how the farm group came to work together and then consider in more detail how the ideas of spontaneity and commitment supported this new group formation.

The farm group

Within the mapping exercise (described in Chapter Two), a selection of children’s drawings of fields, animals, and houses began to take shape in one corner of the room and we referred to this as the farm. Several of the children who ended up in the farm group had placed their picture here during the mapping exercise. More children began to work in this area when using the fabrics and classroom materials to build the dramatic setting. Some children used tables to build a barn where the animals were kept overnight, and laid out large pieces of fabric representing the fields. Other children built a butt and ben house out of fabrics and other classroom objects such as chairs and tables. The children started to role-play in the space that had become the house, some pretending to cook, others laying down pretending to sleep in the beds they had made from chairs pushed together. This became the farmer’s family house. When we moved onto Stage Three and began creating our characters, several of the children and Carly (who also happened to be part of building this area in the previous session) decided to connect their own characters to the farm. This group of six children and Carly became a family, working out who was who and what they did on the farm.

Carly and I encouraged the children to make spontaneous decisions by offering a selection of fabrics in different colours, textures, sizes, and patterns. We gave the children permission to use the fabrics freely alongside classroom objects and materials. We purposefully selected fabrics that were non-suggestive (i.e. they do not signify one clear idea) rather than using ready-made props, sets, or costumes. As explained in Chapter Two, Slade suggests that ‘pieces of attractive stuff are better than ready-made garments’ (1958, p.64). We gave the children only five minutes to build the village, which encouraged them to make decisions quickly and in the moment, rather than over-thinking.
or pre-planning. In the case of the farm, some children worked in the area because they had seen a large piece of fabric that could represent the fields where the animals grazed, and some were excited by the idea of building a house and beds. Some children worked on building the farm throughout the whole five minutes, while others were drawn towards it as the house and beds appeared. The children started role-playing within it, bringing over extra fabrics and materials to make pillowcases, sheets, pots, and pans.

We are immediately using the physical space of the classroom in new ways, inspired by spontaneity rather than routine or pre-planned decisions and actions. As a result, the children are starting to work in new spatial and group formations rather than in current friendships, habitual working groups, or groups differentiated by ability. The children committed to working in these new groups during the second and third stages of IC. I suggest that the children first developed a sense of commitment to the imaginary setting and their character, which eventually led them to commit to working with new people in the classroom.

These initial stages create a space that can hold lots of potential ideas and accept lots of different decisions made by the children. It is the acceptance of these multiple decisions that is important. As referenced above, Wagner considers ‘commitment’ in Heathcote’s practice, explaining that Heathcote continually asks the group to make decisions and suggests that each student-led decision ‘brings with it a commitment’ (1979, p.21). As Heathcote accepts the student-led decisions, the children begin to commit more to the drama. In the first instance, the children need only commit to an image, a material, or an area they have created in IC. The commitment is small with relatively low stakes. For example, the children initially committed to the picture they placed in the farm area, a piece of fabric they used to build a bed, or an idea they started to play out in the farmhouse.

During Stage Three, the children’s commitment to their character is often more explicit than the smaller, lower-stakes commitments made in the first two stages. As the children create their own character, they begin to develop further connections to the location and the other characters who exist there. Carly describes how she and the group of six
children ‘built one physical house’, then they ended up working together because when it
came to creating their characters they ‘connected through family’ (16th September,
2015).

The children and Carly in the farm group moved through a process of spontaneous
decision-making within the open, cleared space of the classroom, which disrupted the
usual working patterns and groupings. The children were encouraged to make multiple
decisions, gradually building a sense of commitment to the developing drama until they
created their character and connected to a physical area and the other characters in that
part of the dramatic setting. Through these connections, the children committed to
working with new people in the class. This process can be seen in the other small flexible
groups identified in Carly’s class:

The boat group

Two children – Daniel and Kieran – worked on building the beach area when we first
introduced the fabrics. These two children did not often work together as they were
not established friends and were in different ability sets. They built the cliffs by lining
up a row of chairs and covering them with brown material, before using a large piece
of yellow fabric to represent the sand and then several pieces of blue and white
materials to represent the sea. The children continued to build a boat together on
the shore using two chairs facing each other and some fabric. The boat had just
enough space for two children to be able to sit inside of it. Both children remained
close to that area of the setting after they had created the idea. When moving on to
create characters, Daniel and Kieran both became fishermen and, as the story
developed, they became father and son and spent time together in free play and re-
play.

The shop group

Three boys worked together to create a covered shelter made from a large piece of
material that formed a roof and covered the sides using the edge of one table and
several chairs. They added another table to the front of the den, which became a
shop front and also a shop counter at times. The three boys had created a cosy,
intimate space and became protective over it as they huddled inside. When we
moved onto Stage Three, the boys all created characters that were linked to the shop.
These children went on to spend more time together during the school term.

Although it is impossible to know exactly what influenced each child’s decision from the
data I collected, I can show through these examples that the children commit, without
any pressure from Carly or me, to working in new groupings. It seems that this commitment surpasses the children’s desire to work in groups based on established friendships or habitual working groups. In terms of friendship-making, the children now have a chance to spend time with new children.

Millie talks specifically about how working in ‘different groups’ allows her to make new friends and that the groups change with each topic: ‘So when we are starting a new topic, we don’t stay with the same people, we interact with other people’ (24th February, 2016). I recorded this interview two months into Millie’s second IC experience, where she had created a new character. Her reflections imply that this second time she is anticipating the opportunity to make friends through the new small groups that form. She describes how ‘you will want to work with them because you don’t know them that much and when you start acting with them you get to know them better’ (24th February, 2016). This time around, Millie already understands that the process of building a new world and creating a character is offering new possibilities for friendship-making.

So far, the analysis has considered how the new small flexible groupings form, and how this sets up the possibility for new friendships to develop. The next section goes on to consider the kinds of interactions the children have when acting together in these new groups, and how this informs the development of their personal relationships.

**Acting (free play and re-play)**

Kirsty talks about friendship repeatedly throughout the interviews, and specifically about getting to know other children better and making closer friends when she is ‘acting’ with them. Looking back over the plans, reflections, and interviews to see what happened during those sessions, I discovered that Kirsty is talking predominantly about the use of free play and re-play. This, as explained in Chapter Two (see pp.72-75), is a time when the whole class improvise freely, followed by mini structured performances in smaller groups to share their contribution to the action. The children often free play and re-play in the small flexible groups described in the last section. During an interview just over
two months into the IC project, Kirsty talks about how ‘acting’ during the sessions has started to change her relationship with the other children in the class:

It’s made a lot of difference to me because I have always been one of those girls who don’t have much friends but when you act with people you get to see a fun side of them and you get to work together, so me working with Will and Bethany and things, it’s just getting a bit closer friends so you get to know a bit more about them and act and stuff and know a bit more about what they like (11th November, 2015).

Kirsty mentions several ways in which she feels able to start making friends when acting with others. Firstly, she describes getting to see a ‘fun side’ of the other children. She also acknowledges the basic fact that she gets to ‘work together’ with other children in the class, referring to Will and Bethany in particular. Carly explains that Kirsty is ‘low-ability’ in literacy and numeracy and that she usually sets the children in ability groups. This means that Kirsty is used to working with the same small group of children most days. Finally, Kirsty describes how she is getting closer friends by acting with children, getting to know ‘what they like, what type of things they would do in a story or play’ (18th November, 2015).

Affirming Kirsty’s experiences, Carter and Nutbrown explain that getting to know more about what other children like, and like doing, is an important process in friendship-making: ‘When children talk about home interests in school, this enables them to make connections with peers and establish friendships through shared pleasures’ (Bath in Carter & Nutbrown, 2016, p.409). Healy also reflects on the importance of time being made at school for children to learn more about each other’s character and more about what they enjoy, suggesting it’s of ‘crucial importance within the school day for those moments when children can spend time with chosen friends’ (2011, p.451). The literature considers activities such as ‘circle time’ as proactive approaches to friendship-making, but for Kirsty it seems that acting in free play and re-play also gives her opportunities in the school day to spend time with her peers and get to know more about them. Kirsty continues to talk about these ideas in a later interview, suggesting that you can tell someone’s personality in the way they are acting and find out if you have anything in common. She then goes on to describe the process of sharing and selecting
ideas during re-play, which means you get to ‘see a bit more of them’ (Kirsty, 24th February, 2016). Millie also describes making new friends when they share ideas during free play, ‘because you are expressing your ideas and you have similarities’ (25th November, 2015).

The class teacher, Carly, describes how Kirsty and Will have been working together, explaining that they don’t usually have anything to do with each other in class, and that Will is ‘a quiet person’, but in the drama they have a ‘strong relationship’ (11th November, 2015). Both Kirsty’s and Carly’s reflections suggest that Will and Kirsty were not close friends before taking part in IC. Will’s character is the head teacher of the small school in the village, and Kirsty is one of the students at the school. Carly describes how they are ‘both so involved in the task that they don’t even think about who they are in real life’, suggesting that all of their focus ‘is about the characters’ (11th November, 2015). One moment that surprised Carly occurred during free play, when she observed Kirsty and Will hugging after the great storm hit their village. She explained that Kirsty and Will would not normally feel comfortable enough with each other to do this. Both children are playing out ideas about how their characters would respond to the storm, and Carly describes this as the ‘next level’ of acting (11th November, 2015).

I consider Carly’s understanding of the ‘next level’ of acting in line with Slade’s understanding of ‘absorption’ and ‘sincerity’ (Slade, 1971). For Slade, these are important qualities in child drama. Absorption is when a child ‘is completely wrapped up in what is being done, or what one is doing, to the exclusion of all other thoughts’ (1971, p.2). Kirsty and Will seem to adopt this quality of absorption during the free play, when both children appear so involved in what their characters would do in the make-believe situation that they surprise their teacher. Kirsty and Will were both particularly excited about the free play experience and spoke about how much they enjoyed the drama and developing their characters. Their interaction, including the unexpected hug, demonstrates a level of sincere commitment to their characters. Slade describes sincerity as ‘a complete form of honesty in portraying a part, bringing with it an intense feeling of reality and experience, and only fully achieved in the process of acting with absorption’ (1958, p.3). The combined sincerity and absorption that the two children appear to
display during free play allows them interact in a more intimate way, ‘they are not held back by the fact that they are not friends’ (Carly, 11th November, 2015). The children are not embarrassed or uncomfortable as the teacher would have expected. From Carly’s perspective, the children are able to use the characters and free play to work together even though ‘they are not friends.’ This perspective differs from Kirsty and Will’s, which suggests that they are in fact becoming friends through acting together in these new ways.

The absorption and sincerity of the children within these roles enables them to commit to the action. At the same time, they can try out physical touch and closeness, which they might not have felt comfortable to do outside of the drama. This can be considered through Bolton’s understanding of metaxis – the capacity to hold two worlds, the real and the fictitious, in the mind simultaneously (Bolton, 1985). Will is both head teacher, and Will when he hugs the character Belle, who is also Kirsty in that moment. During free play, it seems that the children are going beyond their normal boundaries as class peers through their absorption and sincerity in the moment, yet they are able to experience this level of ‘closeness’ as the characters and as developing friends. There is a level of confidence and comfort that the children seem to develop through free play, and it is perhaps through the experience of metaxis. Will talks about how much he enjoys getting to do ‘acting with everything we want to’, he enjoys the ‘freedom’, and says ‘we can’t be embarrassed because it’s like our own ideas and it’s just lovely really’ (24th February, 2016).

Returning to Kirsty’s understanding of friendship, she feels she gets to know the ‘likes’ of other children in the class. She is finding out more about what Will likes through his imaginary character as the head teacher. Carly also echoes Kirsty’s reflections, suggesting that the children’s engagement in free play and re-play is a way for them to show their personalities: ‘They are creating their own scenario, their own response, I think it reflects their personalities’ (11th November, 2015). Kirsty explains this further by suggesting that she can share things about her personality through her character. She describes how her character is ‘showing a bit of me’ and explains the reasoning behind certain character choices. Her character is called Belle Jenkins, and she told me that her Grandma was
called Karen Jenkins before she got married, so Kirsty decided to take her maiden name for her character. Kirsty also describes how she is similar to her character because they both like exploring and they both have a dog, called Sasha. These are things about Kirsty that she may not have shared with the other children in her class before, and in particular with Will. She likes that she is able to use her character to ‘show’ and ‘express’ herself, rather than just ‘saying it’ (Kirsty, 11\textsuperscript{th} November, 2015). There is a sense that performing is an important vehicle for her to communicate with peers and express herself, allowing her to share these things about herself with others. Kirsty repeatedly describes how she isn’t ‘confident’, and how the drama has given her a way to speak out and join in more. Carly also describes how Kirsty usually lacks confidence but the drama ‘is giving her more of a personality because you’re actually seeing a different side to her where she is more confident’ (11\textsuperscript{th} November, 2015). Through the character of Belle Jenkins, Kirsty is able to share things about her life and present a more confident side of herself through her acting.

**Teacher in Role**

So far, I have used Carly’s class and their Primrose Valley story to show how children can actively generate friendships through new groupings and by acting together in free play and re-play. This final section suggests that IC also offers teachers a proactive approach to support the development of positive relationships between children when working in role. The potential of IC as a pedagogy of friendship emerges most clearly from Sarah’s reflections. Sarah describes how IC enabled her to use her role within the free-play activities to engage and support children who often ‘isolate’ themselves and struggle to make friends. Sarah is, as Healy advises, identifying ‘children who have difficulties forming relationships and problems in reaching out in friendship to others’ (2011, p.453). Healy suggests that teachers can identify opportunities to support these children to get to know other children in the class. I consider a moment from the work in Sarah’s class when she encourages these opportunities using her role and the children’s own characters during free play.
In one of the later IC sessions in The Magical Mayhem School of Magic, the characters were preparing for a great battle against the unicorns. Most of the characters in the class had worked out intricate plots and sub-plots they were involved in and were exploring these through a free-play and re-play activity. The head teacher, Bloodbones, was working with her adopted daughter and several members of the school to work out how to use the newly discovered ‘hands’ to stop the unicorns once again; the football team were building protective barriers around the school; and several characters were preparing for battle to hold off the unicorns until Bloodbones cast the last-minute. Sarah reflects about how she was able to use her role as Nurse Frostman during the free-play activity. She explained that three of the boys in the class, who often find it difficult to engage, were on their own and didn’t appear to be joining in. She noticed that one child was reading a book in the corner and another was under a table on his own. In role as Nurse Frostman, she approached the first child, Aiden. Using an idea that he had shared in a hot-seating activity\(^8\) earlier in the lesson – he wanted to gather an army to protect the school from the unicorns – Sarah asked if he would need a nurse on the field. Knowing the other boys’ characters (Petruvius, the Ancient Sapphire Ice Monster, and Jack Frost the Minion), she and Aiden then went and asked for their help. All three of the boys, in role, began to join in and the group became bigger as they went over to the magical footballers to ask for their help. Sarah reflects on her actions:

> I think it makes it easier because of how wide-open it is, to make sure more children who might isolate themselves become involved so there are fewer children who are isolated, so in doing that I might be exhausted running around the room but I was able to make sure that three children who generally isolate themselves or are unpopular for whatever reason became involved (26\(^{th}\) February, 2016).

Sarah is using her role in the moment to support children who she thinks are ‘isolated’. She feels it is easier for her to do this because of how ‘wide-open’ it is. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Sarah has much more freedom to use her role in a responsive way than if she were using her role to set up a specific narrative situation. Sarah doesn’t have

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\(^8\) See the Equal Playmaker Strategies Document in the practical submission at the end of the thesis for a description of hot-seating.
a pre-determined narrative to introduce or engage the children in, so she is better placed
to play alongside the children in ways that she feels are beneficial. Sarah is open to
emerging priorities, particularly in connection to the children’s personal and social
development. In this case, she is keen to support the children who may find it difficult to
make friends with other children. Sarah is observing children isolating themselves and
using her character – and the children’s previous ideas and characters – to offer them a
new way into the experience. Sarah finds a way to proactively support the children’s
friendship-making within and despite of the ‘pressures and priorities’ that can often
‘undercut (...) attempts to facilitate and support friendship’ (Vincent, Neal & Iqbal, 2018,
p.126-127). Sarah describes how she wants to make them feel ‘part of something’,
because ‘when they are part of something they forget that people don’t like them very
much, it becomes, they become a little bit happier’.

So I suppose we are able to make sure that those children who are unhappy
sometimes aren’t unhappy for that period of time. Maybe that’s part of the
decision, maybe it’s very subconsciously done but, Caleb has had a very tough
week, he reacts badly when people are not his friends and can be aggressive.
Thomas said something he didn’t like and he kicked him, so he had a really tough
week so we have given him quite a lot of success today, and for Caleb that success
carried on into his maths – it’s a big deal for Caleb not to be unpopular (26th
February, 2016).

Sarah’s reflections suggest that she values friendship and understands the significance for
children like Caleb. In addition to the pressures of progress and curriculum, Healy (2011)
and Vincent, Neal and Iqbal (2018) identify a problem whereby teachers may see
friendships as ‘insubstantial’ (2018, p.129) and/or ‘fluid’ (2018 p.127). Healy suggests that
the ‘general attitude tends to be a “bus theory” of friendship: do not worry if you miss
one, another will be along in a minute’ (2011, p.442). This attitude suggests that teachers
may not always value children’s friendships, at least they do not value them for anything
more than a ‘utilitarian friendship’ (Healy, p.444). A friendship of utility means the
children simply make friends with each other to have someone to play with or borrow
things from, hence the attitude of ‘not to worry, another friend will come along soon’.
Viewing children’s friendships in this way ‘underplays the process of friendship and
undermines the richness and value of friendship’ (Healy, 2011, p.445). Sarah, however,
reflects extensively on the impact of ‘friendships’ on children who are ‘unpopular’ and ‘isolated’. She considers how the children’s involvement in the drama and their interactions with other children can affect their well-being, making them ‘happy’ and having a positive impact in terms of their engagement in other lessons such as maths.

Sarah describes how the other children in the class, who may have had a problem with Caleb or Jayden earlier in the week, are able to see them engaging positively in the drama and the shared narrative. The other children are able to forget about the problems, reducing the possibility of further isolating Jayden or Aiden. In fact, she suggests that the children have then welcomed them into the drama, ‘so this kind of opportunity (...) builds bridges maybe’ (26th February, 2016). Sarah has seen examples of this in the classroom and explains, ‘I ask who wants to help Aiden and there are more hands go up and that sort of thing, whereas before they don’t want to sit with Aiden because he might kick them. Well now they might want to sit with Aiden because they understand a little bit more’ (26th February, 2016).

Two of the children in Sarah’s class talk about Aiden and Jayden in the interviews. Evelyn explains that working with other people allows her to get to know people’s likes and dislikes, and ‘it changes because if Aiden and Jayden don’t get their own way they are a bit sad about it so it changes the way we are working because they know that if they can just relax and have fun then they will get what they want’ (26th February, 2016). Evelyn doesn’t comment on the boys’ behaviour but instead seems to empathise with them, suggesting that they get ‘a bit sad’ sometimes. She feels that they are given the opportunity to ‘relax and have fun’ and this gives them a positive experience with their peers in the classroom. Charlotte also talks about these two classmates: ‘Jayden and Aiden are normally bad but when they are doing drama they like to do it so they love drama. There is no more screaming and shouting’ (26th February, 2016). The other children have had the chance to see both boys taking part in the same way as them – they have been involved in the activities alongside them, which marks a difference in behaviour from when they are ‘screaming and shouting’. 
Both of the girls spoke about the boy’s engagement in separate interviews on the same day. When looking back over my reflections with Sarah from that day, I noticed that we also discussed the boys’ engagement in depth. They both experienced a particularly positive session and joined in more than they had previously. This would explain why both girls noticed and commented on them. This was the session, described in the last chapter (see pp.103-104), when Jayden fainted during the hands’ speech, and the rest of the class copied him. He also took part in the free-play and re-play activity that day – he was part of the group who found the map and cracked the code, referenced in Chapter Two (see pp.72-73). Sarah reflected that she needs to allow more opportunities for Jayden to play in this way, and she is seeing the value of this kind of play as a tool to support his relationships with other children. In the reflections, she noted that this gives the boys the ‘opportunity to interact with other children and not isolate themselves’, and she describes how ‘other children welcome them’ (26th February, 2016). Sarah has seen these positive relationships develop in other social spaces: ‘Caleb is now part of it and they have played together at lunchtime and playtime as well, so he has been more included today and happier because we taught in that way’ (26th February, 2016). Sarah is considering ‘teaching in this way’ as a proactive tool she can use to support friendships.

This chapter has explored how the children’s personal and social worlds at school have changed during the IC process. The children have established a new culture of friendship in their classrooms and articulated a new understanding about how to form friendships. Unearthing and making this knowledge more explicit is of value to Chol’s future practice. We are now more aware of the value of friendship-making for children, and how we can create space for this in the classrooms we work in. This research is also particularly timely in terms of contributing to wider discussions. The Department for Education has launched new statutory guidance for a ‘Relationships Education’, which is compulsory for primary schools to teach from September 2020 (Department for Education, 2019). ‘Caring Friendships’ is one of five key areas included within the Relationships Education guidance. I have argued that proactive approaches to support friendship are currently difficult to implement due to an over-crowded curriculum, and because important work about friendship is held in a non-statutory subject such as PSHE. The inclusion of
friendship within a statutory subject in the National Curriculum from 2020 offers scope for more conversations about the possibilities of friendship in schools.

The guidance suggests that pupils should be taught about the characteristics of friendship, as well as the importance of it in our lives. There is a risk that ‘friendship’ becomes yet another segregated topic squeezed into the already over-crowded curriculum. This chapter offers an alternative pedagogy of friendship that teachers and practitioners can adopt through IC during core curriculum time. Children can develop their own culture of friendship, instead of being taught about the characteristics of friendship in a separate lesson. This opens up questions about how drama and story-making practices can create space for children to experience friendship in school. The IC pedagogy of friendship presented in this chapter reminds us – as does Rogers’ study – that the children in our classrooms are ‘active agents in their own development’, and that we need to pay attention to children’s own understanding of friendship (2012, p.484).
Conclusion

The model of practice at the heart of this research represents ten years of practical exploration with teachers, children, and other artists at Chol. IC has been developed in state schools during core curriculum time and has, from the outset, committed to offering both children and teachers the opportunity to co-create stories through drama and play-based strategies. This has been achieved within, and despite, the ‘highly legislated and prescriptive’ education system (Neelands, 2006, p.30), which has undergone significant changes to curriculum, examinations, and assessments since we developed the first iteration of IC in 2010. For a small arts organisation such as Chol, retaining this kind of work in schools has required an ongoing collaborative relationship in which both teachers and artists negotiate an array of objectives. The practice has never shied away from supporting core curriculum learning such as literacy, and its success – and even existence – has depended on artists standing side-by-side with teachers to face an array of challenges and pressures through a decade of Conservative government policies. These policies have resulted in a reduction of the arts in schools and a move towards ‘teach to the mark scheme’ styles of teaching (Durham University and Arts Council England, 2019). This thesis has presented a body of practice-based research that offers teachers, children, and artists a manageable model of practice and pedagogy that can support collaborative, open-ended drama and story-making practices whilst working within this school system. It demonstrates the value of practitioners and arts organisations working collaboratively and reflectively with teachers in schools to share and develop new practice as a form of critical pedagogy.

The educational and political drive of this practice and research is inspired by approaches that committed to using drama for learning in schools within difficult and turbulent environments. The first chapter of this thesis shared a genealogical review of drama education throughout the twentieth century, highlighting moments in history when drama education was supported by, or set out to challenge, wider political influences. It is a political choice to work in schools, tackling the challenges of overtly assessment-based and performance-driven policies. The histories suggest that some practitioners and
organisations chose instead to embrace ‘opportunities for ‘informal’ education at cultural
institutions outside of schools’ (Jackson, 2007, p.43), because working in environments
that are ‘less constrained by national curriculum demands’ can offer more scope for
‘active-learning practices’ (2007, p.43). Working in spaces outside of schools – such as
theatres, libraries, or community centres – arguably demands less negotiation, or at least
a negotiation of different objectives, than those within schools. IC, however, embraces
the negotiation required to work in core curriculum time. This thesis positions IC as a
political and educational practice – one that is committed to working in schools with
teachers and children, in order to challenge ‘teach to the mark scheme’ approaches and
the disappearance of drama and the arts in schools.

The aims of this research – to create manageable practice and pedagogy and to offer the
practice as a form of critical pedagogy – align with Chol’s day-to-day political drive. These
key aims have informed the entire research process, shaping the questions asked, the
methodologies applied, the analysis of the data, and the presentation and framing of the
findings. The research started with the following questions:

- In what ways does it draw upon, revive, or in some cases depart from the
  traditions and discourses in the histories of drama education?
- What is the core artistic practice and pedagogy of IC?
- How can it be broken down and shared with teachers and other professionals?

These initial questions aimed to understand and share IC as manageable practice,
ensuring the work is accessible to teachers working in state primary schools and offering
the field of drama education a new model of practice. I discovered the second set of
questions through the collaborative reflective practice. These respond to the teachers’
and children’s critical reflections and changing practice articulated during the interviews:

- How can teachers continue to work as equal playmakers, while still meeting a
  range of pre-determined formal learning objectives and producing outcomes?
- How do the children generate new friendships in the classroom when taking part
  in IC?
- How can teachers use IC to value and develop a pedagogy of friendship within their teaching practice?

This second set of questions, and the learning generated through the collaborative research, are crucial in framing IC as critical pedagogy. The teachers and children developed new practices and pedagogies within their classrooms, which were presented in the final two chapters of this thesis. These final chapters demonstrate that change is possible – the new approaches challenge examination-led practices and demonstrate how the children and teachers value and enact new social pedagogies.

**Manageable practice and pedagogy**

The histories explored in Chapter One map out a commitment to understanding and sharing new approaches and models of practice with teachers and practitioners throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Influential practitioners and researchers working during this time took practice seriously, explored possible pedagogies, and – importantly – opened up this conversation to educators and artists both nationally and internationally. The questions, aims, and methodologies at the heart of this practice and written thesis demonstrate a relentless commitment to practice-led research that ensures the findings are relevant and accessible to the people it matters to most – teachers and artists working in schools.

This thesis builds on the rich tradition outlined in the introductory chapter, but also offers clear and pragmatic ways of disrupting the position of the master teacher to de-mystify open-ended and dramatic processes. Framing IC through five accessible stages of practice, supported by a series of clearly articulated equal-playmaker strategies, offers an alternative approach to both the master teacher demonstrations and the sole authoritative voice of the master researcher. The chapters in this thesis share IC as a carefully theorised and rigorously researched model of practice, whilst ensuring the pedagogical theory does not distract teachers and practitioners from the collaborative and dialogic possibilities inherent in the practice. I propose fresh ideas about pedagogy as a *way of being* to invite teachers into a conversation about their developing pedagogy. The practical workshops, delivered on this occasion with BA drama students, utilise the
five stages and the idea of working as equal playmakers to disrupt the notion of the innovative, highly skilled, and experienced practitioner demonstrating her best practice. The students are not expected to observe and mirror my facilitation. Instead, I offer them clearly articulated stages of practice, as well as a pragmatic way to talk about pedagogy and reflect on their own way of being when working with children.

**Drama as critical pedagogy**

The arguments presented in the final two chapters are driven by the teachers’ and children’s reflections. They disrupt the sole voice of the reflective practitioner and identify research questions that are important to other teachers and children. The detailed analysis of how Carly re-negotiated the performative use of learning objectives, alongside the presentation of a pedagogy of friendship driven by the children’s reflections, offers valuable insights to other teachers wanting to use drama at the heart of the curriculum. Chapters four and five, demonstrate how the IC process gave the teachers and children an opportunity to critically reflect on teaching and learning in the classroom. In this way, the research acknowledges that it is ‘important that both the critique and the vision of education be developed within and not outside what we conceive to be our learning community’ (Greene, 1996, p.61). The teachers’ and children’s reflections and new experiences in the classroom demonstrate this commitment to working from within the school system, reiterating the value of using dramatic, open-ended practices as critical pedagogy. This research offers a model of collaborative reflective practice that can be used and adapted by practitioners and other arts organisations interested in applying more formal research in schools. More teachers, artists, and children can imagine and co-create new imaginary worlds, and at the same time discover new possibilities within their own everyday spaces.

**A new model of practice**

To understand and clarify the artistic process and the equal-playmaker pedagogy, I draw on practice-based research throughout the twentieth century, such as that of Slade, Malaguzzi, and Heathcote. I also consider research emerging at the time of writing, for example Bowell and Heap (2013; 2017) and McDonagh and Finneran (2017). This thesis presents a practical and theoretical commitment to learning from the core traditions of
drama education, whilst also reviving practices and ideas that may have been previously side-lined. The research shows that the practice and pedagogy of IC does not simply build, in a linear way, from the developing methodologies and traditions. Rather, it has been responsive to what works for the children and teachers working within the political contexts and challenges we have faced. Although my research did not set out to conduct a thorough and detailed study of Slade’s approaches, his work became a valuable resource for understanding how IC can be used as an artistic and educational practice. This is significant in an age when there are widespread concerns about the value accorded to holistic, social, and emotional education in primary schools. I propose that a more focused study of Slade’s therapeutic understanding of drama in the classroom could offer valuable insights, creating new possibilities for children to re-gain a sense of autonomy in school and re-value additional personal, social, and emotional learning opportunities.

The detailed documentation, critical reflection, and interviews carried out in the two classrooms gave me the ingredients needed to develop and present IC as a new model of practice and an artistic pedagogy. The two IC narratives developed during the practice-based research – The Magical Mayhem School of Magic and Primrose Valley – are drawn upon to offer a contextualised critical reflection of IC. The narratives help me to share the research through the teachers’ and children’s narratives and experiences as equal playmakers. IC is broken down into five stages – Idea Generation, Dramatic Setting, Characters, Shared Starting Points, and Equal Playmaker Strategies – sharing a new model of dramatic story-making with the fields of education and drama. Influenced by other well-articulated approaches, such as Heathcote’s Mantle of the Expert and Bowell & Heap’s interpretation of Process Drama, this research contributes IC as a new model of practice. Unlike other models, IC is explicit in its commitment to creating the dramatic narrative with the children from the very start of the process. Throughout the story-making experience, every member of the group – each child, teacher, and artist – is positioned and valued as an equal playmaker. This involves the teacher and artist trusting in the children’s and their own abilities as capable playmakers. IC demonstrates how a particularly open-ended and collaborative process offers children and teachers an artistic
experience whereby they can regain a sense of autonomy and creative freedom in the classroom.

**A new approach to learning objectives**

The teachers’ reflections offer crucial insights into how this artistic process can support formal learning whilst still retaining a commitment to working as equal playmakers. Finding and sharing new ways to meet formal learning objectives and outcomes is key to ensuring that teachers can use IC in core curriculum time and that they feel confident in using the approach to support learning in the classroom. Carly’s critical reflections drive the questions and analysis in Chapter Four and offer a real, pragmatic alternative to ‘teach to the mark scheme’ approaches. It shows how Carly and the children are able to de-centre the formal learning objectives and outcomes, making them more meaningful to the group and the developing imaginary narrative. This section of the thesis highlights a distinction between IC and other approaches that involve the teacher developing the initial dramatic experience in response to clearly stated learning objectives. In both Bowell and Heap’s *Process Drama* and Heathcote’s *The Mantle of the Expert*, the teacher creates roles for herself and the children to ensure they meet the pre-decided objectives. This alternative approach to objectives allows the teacher and children to continue to work more equally as playmakers, retaining the sense of autonomy and creative freedom that they establish during the story-making stage.

**Personal and social possibilities**

Finally, the children’s and teachers’ reflections about friendship show how they discovered new possibilities for personal and social learning when taking part in a more open-ended and collaborative dramatic process in the classroom. The research shows that the children valued the new friendship-making opportunities they discovered during their IC experience. The final chapter presents the children’s reflections and articulates how they got to know one another better when working in new, small, and flexible social groupings and acting together in free play and re-play. I consider Sarah’s reflections to further understand how teachers can explore their own pedagogy of friendship through IC’s more flexible approach to working in role. The final chapter shows how the process encourages children to see their classroom as a space with social possibilities.
This thesis marks my professional transition from using reflective practice informally with teachers and colleagues towards a process of formal collaborative reflective practice, which has enabled me to share practice-based research with wider audiences for academic purposes. Learning objectives and friendship are two themes of many that could hold valuable learning for teachers, children, practitioners, and a range of other professionals working in education. The pedagogical opportunities created when using dramatic story-making in schools present vast research opportunities for Chol and the teachers we work with. I intend to continue developing collaborative research projects with teachers, children, and other artists to share further stories of change and possibility that are relevant to everyday classroom experiences. Importantly, my research serves as a valuable entry point to incorporate IC into wider critical dialogues with both existing and emerging models of drama education. For Chol, and the teachers and children we work with, we now have the opportunity to widen our learning community. Through new academic conversations and collaborations, we share our reflections, our voices, and our discoveries with others who are seeking new practices and pedagogies in their classrooms. I have seen that change is possible in our classrooms, and I now look forward to the challenges and opportunities that come with entering a wider research community.
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Appendix One: IC Timeline

September 2009 – July 2010: The Groundwork
I worked as Artist in Residence at a secondary school in Rotherham (children aged eleven-sixteen) on a project funded by Creative Partnerships, a government-funded education initiative within English schools. Susan Burns, CEO of Chol Theatre, worked as the Creative Agent on this project supporting the relationship between the artist and the school. Towards the end of this year a new project called Imaginary Communities was planned for the next academic year. It involved an additional four local primary schools.

September 2010 – July 2011: IC Was Created
In line with the Creative Partnerships model, lead teachers were identified from each of the five schools – one teacher from each of the four primaries and two teachers from the secondary school. Throughout the year I worked across all of the schools to develop IC with the teachers. We shared weekly written reflections and met every half term to share the emerging practice, reflect on developments, and question ways forward. At the end of the year Cape UK (Art Council England’s Bridge Organisation for Yorkshire), who ran the Creative Partnerships programme, commissioned a written handbook to document the practice and the learning from the year.

September 2011 – April 2012: Interim Work and Funding Application Submitted
During this interim period, I continued to work at the secondary school as Artist in Residence using IC across the curriculum. Together, Chol, the schools and I applied to Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) for funding to develop a new project using IC.

April 2012 – April 2014: Reducing Truancy and Exclusion in Clifton Partnership Schools
After being awarded funding from PHF, I started working in a full-time position for Chol in April 2012 to lead the IC programme. We worked across six schools to further develop and understand the practice. We focused on the potential of using IC to support children who were deemed at risk of exclusion. During the two years we also began to share the practice at Universities and in other schools through workshops.
September 2012: PhD Research Began
I began the Professional Doctorate programme at the University of Manchester.

August 2014 – 2017: IC Across Yorkshire
With further funding support from PHF, Chol partnered with 20 new schools, predominantly across South and West Yorkshire. We continued to use IC in core-curriculum time to support children at risk of truancy and exclusion but also aimed to improve attainment in children’s writing. New IC practitioners were recruited and trained and further connections were made with the University of Warwick, Sheffield Hallam, University of Sheffield, University of Manchester and Leeds Beckett.

September 2015 – April 2016: PhD Classroom-Based Research
I carried out collaborative reflective practice in two of Chol’s IC schools.

April 2018 – March 2021: IC – A Core Strand of Chol’s Programme
IC has become one of Chol’s core strands of delivery and the artistic process is used in multiple projects and commissions. There are two significant projects taking place during this time period. Firstly, a project called Equal Players, funded by Arts Council England (April 2018 – Sept 2019), in which we:

- created the IC book of short stories
- produced a series of IC animations (made by children)
- visited New York to share IC with other organisations, academics, teachers, and children - created the 5 stages of practice animation.

The second project, A World of Imaginary Communities, funded by PHF (2018-2021) involves Chol working with 24 partner schools, 18 in Yorkshire and six across England. The aim of this project is to share the practice wider with a focus on supporting student and teachers’ positive well-being and further understanding the possibilities of IC to support children’s writing. Within this project we are also focussing on the development of a series of on- and off-line resources (being developed in 2020).
Documentation of Practical Submission (elements 7 and 8)

7. BA Drama in Education Module Lesson Plans with links to filmed sessions
The following five lesson plans are tailored specifically for the BA Students (2018-19) and focus on sharing the artistic process and pedagogy. The plans are given to the students to support their own session planning later in the module. These session plans are adapted when training teachers in the five stages – there is a stronger integration of educational pedagogies, taking into account the curriculum and related learning objectives. These are not a generic set of plans to be used with any group of BA students, rather weeks four and five are responsive to the characters and setting created by this particular group.
IC Stage One: Idea Generation

This stage is generally used at the beginning of any IC project, but its ethos continues to be important throughout the process. We select strategies that will encourage children to share ideas confidently. We also aim to create a culture of trust between the artist, teacher, and children as we begin to understand what it feels like to work as equal playmakers. It is important at this stage to allow space for all participants to join in and feel valued. The aim is to encourage all participants to share their own ideas confidently and generously and for the rest of the group to become interested in how their ideas connect to others. Practically, this involves carefully selecting exercises and games which encourage every participant to play and contribute ideas around a shared theme.

In this first practical session, I have selected some activities to demonstrate Stage One (see details in the session plan below). There are however lots of exercises that you might want to use or adapt to fit this stage. You will probably have some ideas of your own but I have included a list of some extra ideas to help you get started when planning your own workshops (see Equal Playmaker Strategies Document for further details):

- Soundscape
- Corners
- Rhythmical Chanting
- Imaginary Journey
- Keeper of the Keys
- Objects
- Walking Through

Week One Practical: 28th January 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>Why</th>
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| Balloon Name Game | All participants are to stand in a circle and pass the balloon clockwise whilst saying their name. Each person should try to tap the balloon only once and try to stop it touching the ground. Next, one person steps into the middle and hits the balloon into the air, calling out another person’s name. That person must hit the balloon into the air and call another person’s name (and so on). The facilitator can count the | - Get to know each other’s names  
- Create a safe working space.  
This is a great game to begin with as it involves all participants straight away in a non-threatening way. It encourages the group to start working together as a whole group and helps set up a more playful and active space for the rest of the session. |
successful hits to add an element of competition. An extension is to play the game without using hands.

| Lines (names/birthdays) (10 mins) | The group is asked to order themselves alphabetically, using the first letter of their name. An extension of this is to ask the group to order themselves by their birthdays starting from January 1st to December 31st, but this time without speaking. | - Get to know each other’s names  
- Create a safe working space.

As this is the first time we have met I have decided to use a second game that helps us learn each other’s names. This game also encourages all participants to communicate with each other in familiar and different ways. |

| Penguins (10mins) | Everyone in the room sits on a chair in a space. One person is nominated to be the penguin and stands up and moves as far away from their chair as possible. The penguin must attempt to sit in an empty chair but can only move with his/her knees together (walking like a penguin!). The rest of the group must try and prevent the penguin from sitting down by sitting in the empty chairs (they can move freely without their knees together). Once the penguin has sat down another penguin is selected/volunteers and the game continues. | - Creating a company (team skills)

Another whole group team game involving a challenge. The participants need to use communication skills to beat the penguin. This really supports the development of the company/ensemble. The communication skills are often non-verbal and spatial awareness is heightened. This game is fun and often gets the group laughing out loud. The whole group compete against the ‘penguin’ but this role changes regularly and therefore resists the sense of someone losing. |

| Bish Bosh / What are you doing? (10mins) | The group stands in a circle and the facilitator moves into the centre. If the facilitator points at someone and says ‘Bish’ the participant must reply quickly with ‘Bosh’. If the facilitator says ‘What are you doing?’ the participant must improvise something i.e. ‘riding a horse’. If someone hesitates or repeats an improvisation they are out and must sit down. | - Developing confidence in improvisation skills  
- Beginning to ‘play’ in a more performative way  

In this game we are using our bodies to ‘pretend’, we are performing actions. The game has several levels and requires deep concentration to do successfully which often unlocks the confidence of the group to ‘perform’ without feeling embarrassed or worried about performing in front of each other. Everyone is asked to contribute an idea of their own and this is an important step towards working as Equal Playmakers. |
### 10 Second Statues (15mins)

Starting in small groups the class are asked to create frozen pictures using their bodies. Remind the group that they are creating one picture together rather than freezing individually. The facilitator counts down from ten and asks the groups to freeze in their image by the end of the count down. Start with an idea linked to the theme i.e. a magical waterfall. As an extension you can then begin to give slightly longer times as the group grows in confidence and also ask the groups to come up with their own ideas.

**Potential literacy links**

When you are looking at each other’s frozen images, describe what you can see, think about how the images might move and how they make you feel. Begin to pull out any interesting adjectives, ad-verbs, verbs, sounds etc. Write these down on pieces of paper and begin to create a word carpet.

- Begin to explore the theme and start to create and share ideas
  - Start to use bodies to tell a story

A great way to introduce a topic and begin generating ideas. Once the group are warmed up and understand the game quickly ask the group to take over and start sharing their own ideas. We are working in groups and ideas are starting to be created collectively, minimising the pressure on individuals to think of an idea alone.

### In our Enchanted Forest there is ... (20/25mins)

In a circle the facilitator asks the group to perform the sentence ‘In our Enchanted Forest there is’ all together. The first person is then asked to make a suggestion about something in our forest e.g. a tall tree with eyes in the branches. The group then create a sound and action and the facilitator helps construct a mini performance. The group start from the beginning and say the sentence followed by the first suggestion. The next person in the circle is then asked to suggest something else that is in our enchanted forest, each time the group starts from the beginning and performs all of the ideas in order. This can be performed in

- To generate and accept ideas
  - Begin to see and feel that we are creating something new together

The group are now playing out ideas based on a shared theme (Enchanted Forest). We are at the very beginning of creating something together. The group enacts everyone’s ideas and repeats them with each round of the performance, this validates ALL suggestions.
different ways i.e. children’s tv presenter, ghost story etc.

**Potential literacy links**
Encourage every contribution to use an interesting adjective and allow the whole group to help think of the best adjective and sentence possible for every idea. The children are then repeating this vocabulary (which may be new to several members of the group) over and over again verbally. After the game discuss as a group some of your favourites and write them down on pieces of paper and add them to our word carpet.

| Reflection (10mins) | Reflect on what we achieved within today’s session. What kinds of ‘play’ did we take part in? How did it feel to play? How might this link with learning at school? What might be the value of learning that is based in play? | -To pull together key learning from today’s session |
IC Stage Two: Dramatic Setting

In this stage we create the imaginary setting for our shared story. We continue investing in the notion of equal playmakers and aim to co-create the world together, acknowledging all ideas and therefore giving them value. No idea at this stage is a ‘bad idea’ and all suggestions are included or adapted (with permission). It is important that ideas are shared and the group have a strong sense of ownership over the setting that is created.

In today’s practical session I have selected a few activities that allow us to create an imaginary setting quickly. It is important to remember that each of these stages can be carried out quickly, in only one lesson, or the children and teacher can spend several lessons exploring each stage. In schools, we will often spend a couple of weeks building up a dramatic setting using a range of the techniques listed below and through other tasks linked directly to the curriculum e.g. setting descriptions, scaled maps, directions.

Additional activities you may like to use are:

- Draw One Thing
- Mapping (pictures, fabrics, bodies, masking tape, labels, objects)
- Bringing the World to Life
- Soundscapes
- Senses

Link to 5min video clip from this session

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<th>Week Two Practical: 4th February 2019</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>Why</th>
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| POW (5mins)                          | Starting in a circle the facilitator explains that the whole group are going to perform a POW at exactly the same time. The facilitator demonstrates what a POW looks like by punching her arm up into the air sharply and saying the word POW – the action is also short and sharp. The challenge is then to perform POW collectively at exactly the same time. | - To come together as a collective company  
- Bring energy and focus to the room  

A Pow is a really quick and easy way to focus the group at any point in sessions. It is also a fun thing to try and get better at as a group – you can give a score out of 10 each time the group attempt a POW and the group work at beating their previous record. |
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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| Names and Three Things       | Starting in a circle ask everyone to get into pairs and tell each other three things about themselves. Each person must then prepare to introduce their partner to the group by performing the three things. | - To continue to learn names  
- Get to know each other more  
- Begin to warm up and perform  

*This is a fun way to get to know each other more. It is also a good game to encourage everyone to perform in front of each other without thinking about it too much.* |

| Sorry I’m Late But ...       | One person is selected to be a late employee and one person is selected to be the boss. Everyone else becomes the rest of the employees. The class can decide what kind of workplace it is and what kinds of activities they would perform each day i.e. answering the phone etc. The worker who has been selected to be late leaves the room and the rest of the group decide why the person was late that day and agree on a sequence of events. The group then improvise being at work and the boss stands at the front with her back to the workers. The late member of staff comes in and faces the boss and has to explain exactly why they were late. The group act this out while the boss has her back turned to them and when she turns they must quickly return back to their work duties. If anyone is seen they are out. | - Developing confidence in improvisation skills  
- Beginning to ‘play’ in a more performative way  

*This builds from the ‘Bish Bosh’ game last week and requires the group to work together to perform a narrative. The narrative is often strange and means the group have lots of fun trying to mime a crazy story. The fact that the story can be anything and the crazier the better, helps develop confidence in the acceptance of ideas.* |

| Keeper of the Keys – Enchanted Forest themed | The participants are asked to stand at one side of the room and the facilitator stands at the other, the aim of the game is for the group to steal the keys/object from the facilitator without being seen moving or holding the keys/object at any time and get them all the way back to the starting point, along with every member of the group. The facilitator turns his back for periods of time to allow the group to move towards the keys at his feet. If one person is seen moving, ALL participants must go back to the starting line. Once the keys are taken. | - Creating a company (team skills)  
- Further explore ideas and modelling playful improvisation  

*This game is great to engage the group through competition whilst also beginning to develop ideas about characters and stories. The level of challenge is high and groups begin to work together in more nuanced ways. This is a good game to focus and calm a group as they become very focused on succeeding against the facilitator. The facilitator is able to take on a character who is guarding the keys in the enchanted forest and it is a* |
| **Draw One Thing (5mins)** | The facilitator leads a quick discussion about ideas from last week (‘10 Second Statues’ and ‘In our Enchanted Forest There is …’) to recap ideas so far. Everyone is asked to draw one object/place/idea that they would like to see in our enchanted forest – the facilitator and teacher also contribute their ideas. It can be one of the ideas from last week’s session or something completely different. The group is asked to make these quick sketches and not ‘works of art’. Some children will want to add words and phrases to their sketch. | -Individual ideas are documented and valued
*This is a quick non-threatening exercise that allows everyone to create an idea that will be contributed to the dramatic setting. The drawings allow us to have a visual reminder of each idea and allow us to create a map in the next exercise.* |

<p>| <strong>Mapping with Drawings (15mins)</strong> | The facilitator explains to the class that we will now use the pictures to turn the classroom floor into a giant map of the enchanted forest. As a group we will look at each individual picture and allow the student to decide where their object belongs in the space. The facilitator and group can ask questions about the objects as they are placed to begin to build up a shared narrative. The facilitator can take a lead in this questioning to help the group make connections between the different locations and objects, e.g. do you think anyone dares go near the troll mountains? | -Individual and group ownership over the enchanted forest setting. <em>This allows each individual the opportunity to participate in the co-creation of our setting giving them the chance to feel ownership of the shared experience. Physically placing objects around the space creates an immersive environment that the group can see.</em> |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Has the golden charm always been in the cave? Do people know it is there?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mapping with Materials (15mins)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reflection (10mins)</strong></td>
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IC Stage Three: Characters

Each child and adult within the class will now be supported to create their own unique character within our shared world. Again, there are no wrong suggestions, but the facilitator and the rest of the group will support everyone to create a character that is connected to the developing community and narrative. It is important to remember that we are not creating 30 individual characters who exist in isolation, so we need to help the group find connections between characters and the emerging narrative. This approach to using character is different to some other forms of process drama where the children will take on a group role, dictated by the teacher or facilitator. The idea of 30 different characters in the group can seem daunting but the group’s shared commitment to developing the events and wider story will ensure everyone is involved. Developing your own unique character is lots of fun and ensures that every member of the group can experience the joy of creating and contributing something to the shared imagined world.

In this week’s practical session, we will spend a bit of time further exploring our enchanted forest before creating our characters. I have chosen exercises that will enable us to create characters quickly but there are lots of other ways to encourage the group to further explore their characters. Here are some other potential exercises you might want to use:

- Thought Tracking
- Hot-Seating
- Interviews
- Visualisation
- Special Object
- Diaries and Video Diaries
- Character Profile
- Memories
- A Day in the Life Freeze Frame
- Solitary Activity
- Costume and Prop Making

Link to 5min video clip from this session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Three Practical: 11th February 2019</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>Why</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuck in Tight (2mins)</td>
<td>Stand in the centre of the room and ask the group to stand as close as they can to you and each other but without touching. Next ask the group to carefully look around them to see who they are next to and then go and touch all 4 walls as quickly as possible and get back into these exact positions without touching again.</td>
<td>Increase awareness of each other and the physical space we are working in. This helps bring the group together and develop a heightened awareness of each other and the space. It is great with younger children to let out a burst of energy and then bring them back together and focus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Night Watchman (10mins)</td>
<td>All participants are to find a space in the room. Explain that this is a museum and it is late at night. They are the exhibits and collections and must freeze in different kinds of positions. The facilitator becomes the night watchman and walks around the museum making sure everything is as it should be. This is no ordinary museum however as the collections come to life at night. Whenever the watchman's back is turned everyone comes to life and sneakily moves around, changing shape. If the Night Watchman turns around and sees someone moving they are out.</td>
<td>Good physical warm-up. Encourages improvisation and playfulness. This game encourages a playful energy, children tend to love the 'sneaky' element. It is also warming up our bodies and preparing for more performative exercises later in the session. Everyone is 'performing' together so there is less pressure to begin with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-map the materials (5mins)</td>
<td>The same materials as the group used last week are given out again and the challenge is set to re-build the enchanted forest in only 3 minutes.</td>
<td>Re-cap from last week. Create a physical set to support the development of the world and help imagine the characters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bring the World to Life (15mins)</td>
<td>In small groups or in different areas on the map ask the children to create a freeze frame of one part of the world. Once this is established ask them to bring it to life for 10 seconds. What movement/sounds/actions will happen in that area? You may also want to ask another member of the class (or yourself) to explore this area and bring them all to life one section at a time through a trigger walk. Really use the movement here – how would you and the children describe the way the different areas move. Ask some groups to repeat movements and try and find language to help you describe it to an audience that cannot</td>
<td>Begin to add depth to the setting. Begin to think about what characters might exist. This is an extension activity for the dramatic setting stage. Discover more about what this place is like, how it feels, what kinds of people/creatures might exist here. Also good for developing confidence in performing in small groups as the participants will next be invited to come to life as a character.</td>
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</table>
see what you can see. Also think about describing the sounds – are there any onomatopoeic words that you can pull out?

| Characters (30mins)  
1. Freeze  
2. Read  
3. Tap  
4. Question | Begin with a very quick discussion about what kinds of characters would exist in our Enchanted Forest (some ideas will have already come up during the dramatic setting stage). Next ask everyone to look at the space and think about what these characters might look like, where they might be in the forest and what they might be doing?  
1. One person who has an idea for a character is invited to place themselves in the forest in a frozen position as the character.  
2. The rest of the group look at the frozen image and discuss who this character could be and what they might be doing. The group draw on all the knowledge they have from previous work building the forest and what they can ‘read’ from the image.  
3. Now the character comes to life for a few minutes. When they are tapped on the shoulder they can either come to life as their character or just tell us something about who they are.  
4. The group now have up to three questions to find out a little more from this character. The questions should be focused on finding out as much about the forest and how the character is connected. The person remains in position and another person in the group is invited into the Enchanted forest.  
Opportunity here to further develop the character through writing. You could create a character profile or the children could write a diary from the perspective of their character. |
| - Everyone is to become more engaged with the imaginary world through their own character  
- A sense of autonomy is encouraged as everyone creates their own character  
The process we use to develop characters is designed to support all children to find their own character rather than being given one by a teacher or leader. After asking the volunteer to take their frozen position the group ‘read’ the character first. This allows lots of ideas to be discussed or questioned by all the other participants before the volunteer has to come to life. This continues to allow space for the child to further develop and explore the ideas. Giving the volunteer the option to ‘perform’ as their character or simply tell us about their character makes the exercise really accessible for all children. The questioning is a very useful tool for the facilitator to make links with other characters, the developing narrative, or the setting. This helps keep the drama a ‘shared’ collaborative piece. |
| Reflection | - How does it feel to have your own character? | - To pull together key learning from today’s session |
- How might you be able to use these roles in the drama/for learning
- What other ways might you approach character?
- Do you have any concerns about using characters and working in role with children in the classroom?
IC Stage Four: Shared Starting Points

After creating our unique world and characters, we now need to identify a starting point for our drama. This means discovering a point of conflict, or an area of tension, that will engage all of the characters in the community. Sometimes the tension will have already been teased out during the first three stages and will be blindingly obvious by the time the characters are developed. Other times you may need to use some of the strategies below to help you discover it. The drama is then launched by setting up an activity or exercise that will establish this tension and engage all of the characters.

- Free Play/Re-play
- Circle of Playmakers (discussion)
- Objects
- Secret Letters
- Message in a Bottle
- Hot-Seating
- Role Play

In today’s session we will find our own shared starting point and begin to focus more on the ways in which our story making process can connect to the kinds of learning that the teacher will be hoping to achieve. Chol often use Imaginary Communities to connect to the literacy curriculum, these are some of the text types that we might use within our dramatic adventure:

NON-FICTION, LETTER, PREDICTION, DESCRIPTION, BALANCED ARGUMENT, NARRATIVE, BIOGRAPHY

Link to 5min video clip from this session

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week Four Practical: 18th February 2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zombies (10mins)</td>
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</table>
do this successfully before being tapped on the shoulder the zombie then stops in their tracks. The zombie’s feet are now stuck, and the person who’s name was called becomes the zombie and moves towards their closest victim.

**Introduce Characters and Three Facts (perform) (10-15mins)**

In pairs, tell your partner three facts about your character, it can be anything. Think about the best adjectives to share the three facts. Create actions to go with the facts. In a circle introduce your partners character ‘this is ...’ and perform the three facts.

*Note down facts – this could be the start of a ‘fact file’ style of activity (non-chronological report)*

*Re-cap and further develop characters
Further develop confidence in performance and idea generation
This exercise is a great way to begin building up more ideas about the characters in our community. The facilitator can learn more about the groups characters and begin to make connections which will help the group find their shared starting point.*

**Letter/Video message (5mins)**

Vicky’s character sends a letter or the video message to the character down the pit. We see the character read/receive the message in role. The rest of the group watch as an audience. This may lead to a short hot-seating activity.

*Begin to pull together a shared starting point
As always there are lots of potential plots and sub-plots emerging in our Imaginary Community. As facilitator I have gone away and thought about a message that would mean something to all characters who live in the forest. I want to heighten the tension – or discover the conflict.*

**Circle of playmakers discussion (5-10mins)**

In a circle discuss the message and the reaction – what might this mean for any of our characters? What do we think might happen next? Think about it with our play-makers hats on rather than our characters.

*Ensure the group continue to work as Equal Playmakers
It is important to remember that the children can work as playmakers both in and out of role. You don’t need the children to buy into the ‘big Lie’ – they create it with you – they work behind the scenes as well as on the stage. It is also very useful to discuss out of role as a group to find some kind of consensus before going into free play or individual activities.*
**Free Play and Re-Play** *(20mins)*

From the equal playmaker discussion select a moment that the group will free play. This has to be a moment that will include all of the participants. For example, a loud noise will be heard throughout the enchanted forest. The sky might change colour. A message might be given. A meeting might be held. One of the characters might get ill etc. Re-imagine the forest and re-cap where everything is in the space. All take a frozen position as characters in the forest at the chosen moment ... the facilitator counts to three and brings the action to life ...

After free-playing for a short while stop the group by counting down to a freeze frame again. Ask for small groups to structure a very short 10 second scene to re-play the action to an audience. Watch back scenes and discuss.

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**Write secret letters/films**

Ask everyone to think about who they would need to get a secret message to, and either write or film it. This could be done individually or in pairs/groups if that makes sense for your character and the narrative.

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**Curriculum Links**

Use the starting point to inspire your curriculum work.
- If you are writing a letter, think about how this connects to our drama? Who might we write a letter to? Why would we be writing the letter? What do we hope it will achieve? How will this impact the tone of the letter?
- If we are writing a newspaper report, think about what action that has happened is newsworthy? Who’s side would the press want to represent? Are...
there any characters we could interview to get some speech for the report? What might our characters think when they see this printed in the local or national press?

| Reflection                                      | - What other curriculum/learning opportunities might come from our Imaginary Community?  
|                                                | - What kinds of ‘learning’ takes place during our practical sessions? What kind of learning do you think the teachers and the school we will be working in will value?  
|                                                | - Are there any similarities/differences to the way that you learned in school?  
|                                                | - To pull together key learning from today’s session |
IC Stage Five: Equal Playmaker Strategies

The Imaginary Community has now been established and all participants are investing as equal playmakers. The children, teacher, and artist can now explore their story in any direction they choose by using a range of equal playmaker strategies and finding their own connections to the curriculum and wider learning opportunities. The possibilities for both the story and the learning is endless. Many of the strategies have already been introduced in stages one to four and there are some additional ideas below. You and the teacher will also have additional strategies, tools, and exercises that will help you explore the shared story and connect with learning opportunities. The important thing to remember is to adapt all of the tools to fit the equal playmakers philosophy.

An example of an equal play-maker strategy:
If you were to introduce a new character you might ordinarily do this through a ‘teacher in role’ approach entering the space in role or using a signifying piece of costume and then interacting in role or delivering a message to the children. When using teacher in role in this way you would likely decide who the character is, how they might behave, and what function they have in the drama. To ensure you are working as ‘equal playmakers’ we suggest that you develop the character together with all of the participants first. This could be done through a ‘role on the wall’ activity. You might then discuss who will step (temporarily) into that role or discuss if you want to invite someone outside of the classroom to come and be that character. Alternatively, you might decide that the character doesn’t need to physically appear in the drama and you might create a video message or write a note from the character. The important thing is that the children are always working alongside you as playwriters, directors, and performers.

Additional strategies:

- Structured Role Play
- Debates
- Story Circle
- Whoosh!
- Forum Theatre
- Roll on the Wall

In this final practical session you will have the opportunity to bring the drama to life using an equal play-maker strategy. We will reflect on the different directions that the drama can go and discuss how these might connect to the curriculum. We will think about how you interact with your participants, how you respond to ideas, and how you can work in and out of role when facilitating.
## Week Five Practical: 25th February 2019

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>Why</th>
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| Silent Shapes                    | Explain that you are going to ask the whole group to create one giant shape together and that the key to the game is that they have to do it in silence. Not only silence but without communicating via eye contact, gesture, or sign. The idea is that the only person that they can control in this game is themselves. Then draw a shape (or have one prepared) and reveal the shape to the group. The group must then create the shape until they settle into a formation. | - Accept other ideas and work with them rather than against them  
- Great for group focus  
*There are always natural leaders in a group and sometimes they can fall into that role in IC – leading more of the decisions. This is a good activity to model equal engagement by all participants.*                                                                                                                                 |
| 12-12.10                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Role on the Wall – introduce a new character (equal playmaker style) | Decide together on a character that we would want to bring into our IC. Draw an outline of a body or character shape on a big sheet of paper. Ask the group for suggestions to help develop the character. On the outside of the shape add context and facts about the character i.e. where do they live? Do they have friends/family? What do they look like? How old? On the inside add emotions, thoughts, feelings of the character – particularly in relation to the IC, i.e. how do they feel about the impending war? Anything that makes them angry or upset? Once this character is established a child or the facilitator can step into role for a role play activity or a hot-seating activity. | - Further develop plot line  
- Add greater depth to characters  
*There are lots of different reasons why you might want to add a new character into the drama – this could be done to set up a shared starting point, you might want to build tension, establish conflict etc.*                                                                                                                                 |
| 12.10 – 12.20                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Equal Playmaker check in         | Check in with all of the potential plot lines that were developing last week – note them down on big paper in the centre of the story                                                                                                                                         | - Keep all ideas on the table  
- Encourage the group to take responsibility for the drama                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
<p>| 12.20 – 12.30                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Strategy Task                    | Keeping one of the texts that your group selected in mind, plan to use                                                                                                                                                   | - Develop planning skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| 20mins to plan 10mins each group (total 1hr) 12.30-1.30 | one of the strategies to help you develop the drama further and work towards the outcome. Write a mini plan, breaking down who will facilitate what, and timings. Add two or three learning objectives. Each group have 10mins to facilitate their activity with the group. | - Uncover any challenges in group planning  
*This stage can feel daunting as it is so wide open compared to the other stages, particularly the first three. It is great to get stuck in and have a go straight away. We will hopefully see four different strategies and narratives from the different groups which helps demonstrate the endless possibilities.* |
| BREAK 1.30 – 1.50pm |                                                                            |                                                                                     |
| Reflective Discussion 1.50 – 2.20 | Any moments when it really worked? Anything that felt awkward/difficult? What have we learnt – how will this impact on our planning this week? | Tease out success, any concerns, begin to start thinking about what it might be like in school.                                                                                                               |
| Email to teachers 2.20 – 2.30 | All share emails and Vicky to collate into one document for Simon          | We will collate all of the questions and agree on a generic email that can be sent to all four teachers. We will ask them to respond to a nominated person’s email address.                                      |
| Group Role (if time) 2.30 – 2.45 | Potentially become the little people of the enchanted forest all called to a meeting by the Gremlin Queen – convincing them to join her army. OR Reporters | - Consider how and when we might want to step out of our character roles and take on a whole group role.  
*Sometimes it might be beneficial to agree on a group role to explore part of the story further/offer another perspective/add ethical/moral dilemma etc.* |
| Questions about planning and delivery task for next week. | In groups discuss your task for next week (5mins) Join together to ask Vicky questions/voice concerns etc. |                                                                                     |
8. Equal Playmaker Strategies Document

I initially created this document to support the BA students during the five IC practical sessions and when they planned and delivered their own workshops in a local primary school. We (Chol) are developing this document to become one of the resources being made for teachers in 2020 (through PHF funding – see Appendix One: IC Timeline).

Equal Playmaker Strategies

This is a list of the strategies that you can use throughout the five stages of IC. This is a particularly useful document to return to when you are in stage four and five to help you decide on the best possible strategy to bring your drama to life. Most of the strategies can be used with a range of ages but you might want to think about how you adapt the games slightly or how you facilitate them for older or younger children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EP Strategies</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>When and Why...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Second Statues</td>
<td>Starting in small groups ask the class to create frozen pictures using their bodies. Remind the group that they are creating one picture together rather than freezing individually. The facilitator counts to ten and asks the groups to freeze in their image by the end of the countdown. If using for Idea Generation, start with an idea linked to the theme i.e. a magical waterfall. As an extension you can then begin to give slightly longer times as the group grows in confidence and also ask the groups to come up with their own ideas.</td>
<td>This is a great activity for teamwork, creative thinking, and quick thinking. It can be used at any stage to generate ideas. Particularly useful in stage one and two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soundscapes</td>
<td>In small groups ask the class to create a sound picture of a given place. You can support the group to build different sounds one at a time. When listening back to them you might want to ask the rest of the class to close their eyes. You can act as the conductor or have the group</td>
<td>This is an immersive activity to highlight sound, it is good for teamwork and creative thinking. It can be used to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chose a leader to conduct the sounds, bringing the dynamics of individuals and the group up or down.</td>
<td>create the setting but can also be used at any stage to add depth/atmosphere to a moment of drama.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corners</td>
<td>Begin by giving each corner a name or a theme. You might do this yourself or come up with the ideas as a group. One person stands in the centre of the room and is blindfolded, and the rest of the group secretly choose a corner by standing in it. The person in the middle is asked to choose a corner whilst still blindfolded and everyone in that corner is out. You can also ask the class to move between the corners in the style of that place.</td>
<td>This is a good warm up game for energy, focus and engagement. It is useful to input facts during stage one, particularly if it is a historical topic, i.e. you could introduce 4 different facts about the Vikings. Also great for re-capping the dramatic setting by labelling 4 corners as the areas in your imaginary world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhythmical Chanting</td>
<td>Using Rhythm to help learn and establish the topic/theme. As a whole class or in small groups create chants that can be recited throughout the IC experience. Allow the chants to be created in the class rather than by the artist or teacher beforehand, although sometimes it is beneficial to have an example.</td>
<td>This is another useful warm up exercise for body, mind, and voice. Also, a useful tool for learning and remembering facts about a historical topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imaginary Journey</td>
<td>Similar to <em>Going on A Bear Hunt</em>, as a whole class or in small groups go on a journey through the place/theme you are discovering. Introduce obstacles that you have to overcome at various points, use class suggestions for these obstacles and decide on ways to overcome them together.</td>
<td>This is a playful physical warm up. It can be used to generate ideas but also useful for moving the drama on and exploring or re-capping the shared world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeper of the Keys</td>
<td>Usually best for the artist to be the keeper. It works really well if the class as a whole think of the character of the keeper and mould/direct</td>
<td>This can be used as a warm-up game and is particularly</td>
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</table>
the artist so that they can take on the role. You may also want to think of a reason why the keeper is looking after these keys (or exchange keys for an object that makes sense for your community).

Once the keeper is in place at one end of the room the whole class try to sneak up on them without being seen moving. If the Keeper catches anyone move EVERYONE must go back to the start line. If the class manage to get to the keys and pick them up the keeper gets one guess each time they turn around. If they guess who has the keys everyone must go back. The class only wins if they get the key and everyone back to the start without the keeper guessing who has the keys or seeing anyone move.

Extra challenges can be added, i.e. everyone must sit on this chair/ must pick up this prop/ must put on this hat either on their way there or on their way back.

| Objects | There are a variety of object-based games and using objects is a tactile way of generating ideas and igniting imaginations. The easiest object game is Experts. In a circle pass around an object and explain that the class are all experts in objects and they will be able to tell everyone something about the object. After one round of this explain that whoever had the object before them was completely wrong and they need to start off in this round by say 'Thank you for your opinion but that is simply not true it is........’

Objects can also be used to focus the drama, find a shared starting point, further develop characters. |
| Costumes and Prop Making | This often happens naturally when you introduce fabrics and materials to the children – they will often create costumes themselves. You can also plan in time to make props and costumes with the group. | Again, this is a tactile activity and can help with generating ideas but can also add depth and |
Using costumes and props is useful when developing characters, plot-lines and to enhance re-play and role play strategies.

**Inspiration.** This also works well to inspire the shared starting point of the drama.

Encouraging the children to create their own costumes and props, rather than bringing in a dressing up box, will help the children imagine their own character.

| In our IC there is ... | Standing in a circle ask the group to perform the sentence ‘In our IC (magic school/desert island/underwater world) there is...’ as a chorus. Then ask someone to share an idea about what might be in our imaginary world. Create a simple action, an adjective, and a sound effect. You might want to offer an idea and demonstrate. Repeat this together and then ask the next person in the circle to introduce another idea, building up each time until you have the whole list in one chant. A good way to keep the class engaged is to perform the chant in different styles as you are adding more in.

In a large group of 25-30 children split the group up into pairs or groups and ask each group to come up with one thing they would like to see in our imaginary community before returning to the circle to start the game.

This is a useful strategy during stage one. It is a fun way to allow everyone to contribute an idea and to see and hear it accepted by the whole group as they repeat it back.

It is great for teamwork, creativity, performance, vocabulary, engagement, and focus. |
| Draw One Thing | As individuals ask the class to draw one thing that they would like in our shared world. For a focus on literacy ask them to include as many adjectives as possible. For older classes adding in alliteration is also good.

You can use these drawings to map the world – See Mapping.

This is a useful way to receive an idea from every child, teacher, and artist. It helps everyone in the class feels like they have contributed to the shared world and feel valued. |
| Mapping with ... drawings, | A great way to start is using the drawing that each individual has created. Sitting in a circle, explain that the room is now a giant map of our |

This strategy allows everyone to take
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fabrics, bodies, masking tape, labels, objects</th>
<th>Imaginary Community. Look at all of the drawings and begin to map each idea into the room. Some children may have drawn the similar ideas, but don’t presume they will be in the same place. Allow them to decide if their drawing represents the same castle or whether theirs is something different. An alternative way to map is to write down labels and place them around the room, making sure as many children as possible have contributed. Following the mapping of pictures and labels you can physically create the space using materials, objects, art materials, tape, bodies, and by making props.</th>
<th>Part in creating the shared world. This is an important part of IC and should always be used in one form when creating the world during the Dramatic Setting stage. However, when the drama has moved on it is also useful to use in later stages if you need to create another setting within the drama or look at an area in finer detail.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bring the World to Life</td>
<td>In small groups or in different areas on the map ask the children to create a freeze frame of one part of the world. Once this is established ask them to bring it to life for a few moments. What movement/sounds/actions will happen in that area? You may also want to ask another member of the class to explore this area or bring them all to life, one section at a time, through a Trigger Walk.</td>
<td>This can be used in the Dramatic Setting stage to encourage the children to interact with the shared world. The activity also continues to generate new ideas through the action. It is also a good way for children to build confidence in performing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senses</td>
<td>Ask each member of the class to find a space in the world and sit down with a piece of paper or white board. Ask them to write down a list of things they can see up close and a list in the distance. Ask them to do the same for each of the 5 senses. Share back their lists either as a whole group or in pairs.</td>
<td>This can be a useful activity in Stage Two to further support the children to engage with their shared world. The writing element can also be developed into a story opener or setting description.</td>
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</table>
### Meet the Characters

1. Freeze  
2. Read  
3. Tap  
4. Question

Begin with a very quick discussion about what kinds of characters would exist in our dramatic setting (some ideas will have already come up during the dramatic setting stage). Next ask everyone to look at the space and think about what these characters might look like, where they might be and what they might be doing?

1. One person who has an idea for a character is invited to place themselves somewhere in the imaginary world in a frozen position as the character.

2. The rest of the group look at the frozen image and discuss who this character could be and what they might be doing. The group draw on all the knowledge they have from the previous stages and what they can ‘read’ from the image.

3. Now the character comes to life for a few minutes. When they are tapped on the shoulder they can either come to life as their character or just tell us something about who they are.

4. The group now have up to 3 questions to find out a little more from this character. The questions should be focused on finding out about the imaginary world and how the character connects to it.

The person remains in position and another person in the group is invited to take a frozen position. Make sure you and the teacher also create characters in the same way.

This activity is used in Stage Three. Encouraging all participants to have their own character is really important in IC.

Remember that this is just the start of them developing their character and there is no pressure to have the ideas fully formed at this stage.

The group can support each person for example, the ‘reading’ of the initial frozen statue enables everyone to get involved in the process and also gives the volunteer space to change their mind/adapt their idea if they want to.

### Thought Tracking

Thought Tracking (also called *thought tapping*) allows children to verbally express ideas about how their character might feel, what they might be thinking about the current situation, their hopes or fears.

As facilitator or teacher you can direct questions as you touch the shoulder of an individual, for example ‘how are you feeling about the evil queen? What do you hope to get out of the meeting?’

This a helpful tool to develop ideas and discover possible tension that can be used for the shared starting point. It can also help children to further develop their own character.

This activity also develops children’s confidence to speak.
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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hot-Seating</td>
<td>A character is questioned by the group about his or her background, behaviour, and motivation. Even done without preparation, it is an excellent way of fleshing out a character. Characters may be hot-seated individually, in pairs, or small groups. Remember you don't need to set up a chair and use this strategy as a separate activity. At any moment you can ask someone to remain in role whilst the rest of the class step out of role to ask questions.</td>
<td>Hot-seating can initially be used to dig deeper into character connections and relationships in the Stage Three. It is also very useful however to develop the drama and discover potential starting points and plot lines with the whole class.</td>
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<td>Visualisation</td>
<td>This can be done sat or lying down with eyes closed. Once comfortable, lead the group through a visualisation exercise that will either bring to life the world or their character. To visualise themselves as their character, you could ask them to imagine they are looking into a full-length mirror and starting at the head and facial features ask them to examine each part of their character and what they look like/are wearing. This is also good exercise to get the class in the zone each time they are to become the characters and to say goodbye to the characters.</td>
<td>This strategy is used to develop characters or setting.</td>
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<td>Special Object</td>
<td>Bring in a collection of different objects and ask each member of the class to pick one that is special to their character. This is a very useful writing exercise but also works as a drama exercise asking them to devise a short scene around the object. You might choose to show some of these back to the whole group, or to perform to one another in pairs or video the drama. Special objects can also be imagined, drawn, created as part of the process.</td>
<td>Selecting a special object is a great way to generate ideas throughout the process. It can also help the children to develop their own character.</td>
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<td>Diaries and Video Diaries</td>
<td>Writing or recording a diary entry for your character is a great way to connect to the shared world and reflect on how the children’s characters feel about the unfolding action.</td>
<td>A great way for all of the class to perform and validate their ideas.</td>
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<td><strong>Character Profile</strong></td>
<td>Write and/or draw a character profile about their chosen character.</td>
<td>A simple drawing and writing task to develop characters. They can also be very useful for the teacher/facilitator to take away and learn more about the characters, and get ideas for shared starting points.</td>
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<td><strong>Memories</strong></td>
<td>The children can either work alone or in small groups to develop scenes which take place seconds, minutes, days, or years before or after a dramatic moment. This enables the children to explore their characters’ backgrounds, motivations, and consider the consequences of their actions. The method can be used to quickly bring depth to activities involving freeze frames or improvised drama. Adding Flashbacks or Flash Forwards creates a context – it shows what led up to a particular moment, how it might be resolved, or how it may lead onto additional challenges. The technique helps to flesh out a dramatic moment or create the beginnings of a story.</td>
<td>A way to develop the characters whilst identifying or developing the shared starting point or dramatic narrative.</td>
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<td><strong>Solitary Activity</strong></td>
<td>Ask each member to think of a solitary activity that their character can do without interacting with others. In a space on their own ask the class to come to life and perform that activity, paying attention to the small details of their actions and consider what their character is thinking. You may ask the group to freeze at a certain moment and find out more about individuals by thought tracking or hot seating..</td>
<td>This strategy can be used during Stage Three to develop characters. This is one of the few points we encourage the children to work on their own.</td>
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<td><strong>Free play/Replay</strong></td>
<td>Free Play Deciding on a moment/situation that you will use to bring all of the characters to life to free play simultaneously. You need to work together to</td>
<td>This strategy often becomes a very important part of the IC process. Through this the</td>
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discover a moment that can include all of the participants. For example, a loud noise will be heard by everyone/ the sky might change colour/ a message might be given/ a meeting might be held/ one of the characters might get ill etc.
Set up the moment and ask the group to take a frozen position as their character … explain that everyone is going to come to life and act as their character for a few moments. You might want to move around the space asking some questions and making suggestions before you bring everyone to life to ensure everyone has some ideas and feels comfortable. Then count to three and bring the action to life. After free-playing stop the group by counting down from three to freeze the group again. Re-Play
Ask the children to discuss what happened during their free play and which small part they would like to re-play to the group. Ask the group to create short scenes to show an audience what happened. Watch back scenes with a quick reflection.

| Circle of Playmakers (Discussion) | For these discussions it is useful to have a large piece of paper to jot down ideas. Remind the group that we are not discussing this from the perspective of our characters but thinking about the drama and narrative as playmakers. You can ask the group to discuss ideas about:
| Events that we could set up
| Characters we might want to meet
| Possible directions the drama might go in |
| Letters or Video Messages | You might ask the class to write a secret note to another character. This strategy is useful to move the drama on or set up a shared starting point. |

children really begin to feel what it is like to work as Equal Playmakers using improvisation and performance.
It is a great technique to find the shared starting point or develop the drama whilst also developing confidence in performance.

Used at any stage, an integral strategy to cement the idea that we are all equal playmakers.

The children are framed as script writers or idea generators and this makes class discussions exciting and engaging.

This can be particularly useful from Stage Four onwards.
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<th>Role Play</th>
<th>Setting up moments to role play between a few characters is a great way to try out ideas you have discussed. If the group verbally agree on a simple action or scene that they want to take place, you can ask certain characters to perform this for the group in a role play.</th>
<th>This can be used at any stage to try out ideas and develop confidence in performance.</th>
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<td>Trigger Walk</td>
<td>Trigger walk is a useful technique for sharing drama performances that have been created in small groups. When the children are ready to perform, explain that you will walk around the room and as you get closer to each group, that group will come to life and show their performance. As you move off towards the next group, they will stop the drama and freeze or quietly sit down again so that they can watch other groups.</td>
<td>A useful technique to introduce early on and keep using when the whole group have created performance. This is often used to bring to life parts of the world during Stage Two or as a way to set up and structure moments of short re-play.</td>
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<td>Role on the Wall</td>
<td>To begin with draw an outline of a body or character shape on a big piece of paper and ask the group for suggestions to help you develop the character. On the outside put facts and context i.e. how old? Where are they from? Where do they live? Any family/friends? What do they do? What do they look like? Then on the inside add emotions/thoughts connecting the character to the IC narrative i.e. what do they think of certain characters? How do they act around the other characters? What do they secretly want? What kind of temperament do they have? How are they feeling right now in the drama? Once this character exists on paper, an adult or a child can volunteer to step into role in either a hot seat exercise or a short role play.</td>
<td>This is very useful when the group want to introduce a new character (not one of the participants IC characters). It is a way to ensure all of the group can help ‘write’ and ‘create’ the new character. We often use this to support a shared starting point or as an ongoing equal playmakers strategy. It can be</td>
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<td>Story Circle</td>
<td>Sitting or standing in a circle, start to tell a story inspired by the group’s IC so far. During the story leave regular pauses for the group to contribute ideas and fill in important gaps. The facilitator then incorporates the ideas into the story and continues to verbally improvise the next part of the narrative.</td>
<td>useful to build conflict if needed i.e. a potential threat or twist to the story. This is a great way to develop a back-story or begin to think through possible narratives moving forward.</td>
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