‘No kid is an island’: The Gallery as a classroom space for creativity, student engagement and the bigger pictures

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A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Kate Winchester

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</tr>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>Department of Education and Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>FGP</td>
<td>Fair Go Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSIE</td>
<td>Human Society and its Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>Individual Learning Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBOTE</td>
<td>Language Background Other Than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACCCE</td>
<td>National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>QSRLS</td>
<td>Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
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DEDICATION

To my father, Dr John T. Winchester, who dedicated his life to improving the educational outcomes of disadvantaged students.

To my mother Susan, an endless spring of beauty.

And to my husband Chris, our son Charlie and our unborn baby, for being able to simultaneously ground me and lift me higher and higher.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis promotes the importance of arts pedagogy in developing purposeful, creative and engaging learning. Taking a social justice perspective, the qualitative study involves the design, implementation and analysis of the arts within three lower socio-economic status primary school classrooms in a major Australian city. The research distances itself from a need to prove the usefulness of arts programs from an instrumentalist perspective, and moves towards promoting a case for the arts as a deeply worthwhile human endeavour in its own right. With a focus on teachers’ pedagogies, the research considers the effect on students’ relationship with learning. There are four core themes that underpin this research. These are arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour. A driving force behind the research intention around the synchronous interplay of these four research themes, was that this synchronicity could enhance the social and academic outcomes of all learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This research is conducted through qualitative, co-teaching action research methodologies, in line with arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Such methodologies are well suited, as it is precisely the complex and subtle human interactions, artistic representation and emotional expressions that are inherent aspects of arts pedagogy, and the foci of this study. Data collection concentrated on the students’ responses to the pedagogy, and the analysis was marked by an investigation of their responses through the four major theoretical frames of the research.

The focus on arts-based pedagogies led to the conception of ‘The Gallery’ as a guiding metaphorical principle. ‘The Gallery’ is an image describing the intersection of arts-based teaching and students’ learning practices characterised by creativity, student engagement and a human focus to curriculum. Parallels have been drawn between a Gallery and classroom spaces because both can be devoted to the exhibition of learning, and both are community spaces that are open to sharing ideas.
of cultural value and importance. Furthermore, both spaces have the potential to appeal to emotional and aesthetic enjoyment, to the creating of open and shared democratic spaces.

Analysis showed that the pedagogy developed a strong foundation for intellectually rigorous, deeply engaging and human educational experiences. Students began to value the artistic process of their lessons as ‘serious’ academic business, and artistic tools became an acceptable ‘language’ for the students to communicate and demonstrate shared empathy around issues of human concern. The heart of the Gallery emerged, over time, to become the compassionate and emotional expressions of the students during their experience. Concepts of ‘beauty’ in education (Winston, 2010) and ‘humanising creativity’ (Chappell, 2008) surfaced at the intersection of the four research themes. Beauty was thought to have the potential to inspire and engage students in a critical pedagogical space for energising, pleasurable and moral experiences in education. Humanising creativity appealed to a more communal and ethical version of creativity through using inherently human practices such as group work, shared responsibility, a focus on learning, shared goals, reflective practice, and, ultimately, a focus on ‘big ideas’ of human importance.
CHAPTER 1: No Kid is an Island

No man is an island
Entire of itself;
Everyman is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main

This thesis begins with the words of the poet John Donne (1624) to both recognise their influence to the thesis title and to situate the social and humanist intentions of the research. This study explores how arts, as a discipline, might offer a key to enable a moral approach to pursuing creative pedagogy that stimulates student engagement and human approaches to learning. This thesis examines theoretically and empirically the relationship between the arts, creativity, student engagement and a human approach to learning by developing, implementing and evaluating integrated arts-based programs within three socially disadvantaged school contexts. In principle, the research is based on a belief that fostering such an approach in classrooms strongly supports a commitment to promoting equitable student outcomes. The first chapter of this thesis presents a background to this study, outlines the research questions, introduces the methodological approaches and details its structure. The need for the research is now described.

1.1 Research hypotheses and rationale

This research focused on arts-based pedagogical approaches that initiate and bring together affective and cognitive artistic responses in students. The hypothesis is that these responses draw attention to the relationship between arts practice, creativity, student engagement and ethical responsibilities within schools. This research further highlights how arts pedagogy can provide, particularly for students in low socio-economic areas, intellectually demanding and socially supportive classroom environments in order to engage students, and this is a significant matter of social
justice. There is thus a strong equity focus in this study. This research is greatly informed by and takes up the social justice intentions of the student engagement framework of the Fair Go Program (FGP) (2013). The FGP is an action research project into student engagement in low socio-economic (SES) areas.

The challenge remains for those concerned about social justice and education to find ways through which educationally disadvantaged students might be encouraged to embrace classrooms and a school system that have worked against the majority of their people over long periods of time. Low socio-economic status (SES) students still bear the greatest brunt of the educational losses from schools and classrooms that at one level offer hope and achievement for all, but deliver loss, devaluation and exclusion for many. (Munns, 2007, p.301)

The research is based on the equity principles of the Fair Go Program, that has shown that engaging teachers view challenge as a positive, and hold a belief that their contexts provide important opportunities for them to pedagogically ‘shift’ their classrooms into spaces that offer hope for the learners and their communities. This response to challenge has been termed the ‘call to engage’ (see, Sawyer & Orlando 2013). It takes shape through the notion of ‘engaging messages for low SES students’. Indeed, this is the equity fulcrum of the Fair Go student engagement framework. Drawing both on the work of Bernstein (1996) and research undertaken in classrooms in South Western Sydney, the framework holds that messages are organised into five ‘discourses of power’ – knowledge, ability, control, place and voice.

Further, this research examines how purposeful arts programs can provide a platform for students to engage in big ideas of human significance and impact. In consideration of these hypotheses, there are four main themes that underpin this research: (i) arts pedagogy; (ii) creativity; (iii) student engagement; and (iv) learning as a human endeavour. These will be further discussed later in this chapter and in the course of this thesis.

This thesis picks up on a need for research into, and evaluation of, the artistic, emotional and inherently social experiences of learning, in order to gain insight into
how these approaches might constructively engage students and support them to connect to the world beyond their classroom. While technicist practices increasingly dominate schools (Ball, 2000; Eisner, 2005a; Fielding & Moss, 2012), this research is predicated on the idea that there is a need to explore the contribution that authentic arts programs and creative practices can provide, toward a more balanced understanding of understanding student achievement. The focus of the research in practice is the development of what might constitute a deeper emotional connection between the learner and the learned. This thesis will explore how arts-focused pedagogical practices might create a deeper understanding and a more authentic intellectual response to big ideas among students who live in poverty.

The research seriously considers that the arts should command greater prominence in educational institutions for the human qualities that they can engender, particularly in the current system where there are real dangers that arts teaching and learning might be stifled within a technicist structure that promotes testing and comparison, narrow pedagogical practices and favouring curricula that can be measured in high stakes testing environments. In this sense, it is highly appropriate to gather evidence to support the arts as having a vital pedagogical contribution in education. By focusing on the themes of the research described above, this research set out to show how schooling might well be re-imagined as an intensely social practice. This research therefore aimed to provide insights into how the joining of high affective, operative and cognitive experiences serve to provide deeper, more authentic and ethical responses for students.

The background to this research was originally stimulated by my professional and academic journey. I am influenced by my experiences as a teacher, both as a generalist classroom teacher and as an arts specialist in educational contexts of disadvantage in Western Sydney, Australia, and in London and Manchester in the United Kingdom. These experiences led me to be highly interested in pedagogy for the engagement of students in marginalised communities. My personal arts background was also influential in the realisation of the power of artistic practices in engaging and allowing students to experience hope, educational fulfilment and achievement. My professional and personal background contributed to the
conceptualisation of the Gallery (Winchester, 2012, 2013, 2015), which will be described later in this chapter. The pedagogical intervention of the Gallery was designed with the central research themes in mind, and these will now be described.

1.2 Themes of research

The hypotheses and the concept and design of the Gallery model inform and are drawn from the four central themes that underpin this study. They are discussed in turn.

1.2.1 Arts pedagogy

This study examines how the arts are worthwhile in their own right, and that arts pedagogy can be valued for the emotional effects they serve, and asks important questions about why these might be important in learning contexts of disadvantage. An important distinction is thus made in this thesis from the argument that the benefits of the arts are restricted to their usefulness in other areas of education (Eisner, 2002a; Bamford, 2008). It was thus a research intention to explore the artistic results of the implemented pedagogy to examine why and how the emotional elements of artistic teaching and learning could be important assets to a holistic learning experience. By teaching big ideas through arts pedagogy, it was a goal to inspect if student responses included empathic understandings of the topics and connected these to the world beyond the classroom. The term ‘emotion’ is used in this thesis in alignment with the description provided by Elliot Eisner (2008) who promotes that:

> If the arts are about anything, they are about emotion, and emotion has to do with the ways in which we feel. Becoming aware of our capacity to feel is a way of discovering our humanity. Art helps us connect with personal, subjective emotions, and through such a process, it enables us to discover our own interior landscape. Not an unimportant achievement (Eisner, 2008, p.11)

The research is based on a perceived need for further practice-based evidence of how the arts might engender more ethical responses from students, and further, how
emotional, empathic and artistic expressions from students might be given greater status in terms of how these relate to cognitive articulation.

1.2.2 Creativity

This study responds to the increased recognition of the importance of creativity in educational discourse and policy, and questions the inclusion of creativity in educational pursuits as an economic imperative (Ball, 1998; Craft, Cremin, Hay, & Clack, 2014; Craft & Jeffrey, 2008; Flemming, 2010). This study concentrates on the social aspects of creative endeavours in learning over education for competition and individualism. In practice, the creative teaching and learning that are presented in this thesis put forward that elements such as surprise, wonder, imaginative thinking and collaborative pursuits are highly important in classrooms where narrow curriculum and performative structure all too often pervade as the defining model, particularly in low socio-economic contexts (SES). It suggests that creativity’s interaction with the other themes of research might provide a tempering of a western-centred reliance on the benefits of creativity. The focus of creative practice in this research responds to Craft’s call for ‘creativity with wisdom’ (2008), in which creative practice is empowered by its connection to humane concerns.

1.2.3 Student engagement

This theme informs the social justice intentions of the research, from which it is argued that students in disadvantaged classrooms deserve engaging and meaningful learning experiences. The literature continually reinforces the significant gap in the educational outcomes of students from disadvantaged communities (Lingard, 2013, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)). It also underlines how the dominating pedagogy in such classrooms can invariably be defined in terms of teacher control, restricted curriculum and practices that foster comparison and competition driven from performative measures (Haberman, 1991, 1995; Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006). This research adopts the student engagement framework from the Fair Go Project (Munns, Sawyer, & Cole, 2013), which describes how pedagogy that focuses on high cognitive, high affective and high operative elements can lift the overall educational experiences and outcomes of
students in these contexts. It is acknowledged that ‘affect in education’ is an important current area of discourse and debate. It must be clarified that the term ‘affective’ that is used in this thesis is applied in terms of its definition from within the Student Engagement Framework from the Fair Go Project (Munns, Sawyer, & Cole, 2013). This framework is unpacked in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In brief, this framework uses the expression ‘high affective’ to describe pedagogy in which students see the value in the work they do and also that they enjoy it and gain satisfaction from it (2013, p.94). Watkins (2010) contends that learning is often conceived as a cognitive activity alone and that the affective dimension of learning and the interrelationship between affect and cognition “seems to receive very little theoretical explication” (p. 279-280). However, the Fair Go Project emphasise that students are engaged at high levels when affective, cognitive and operative classroom experiences are occurring in interrelated ways. Watkins (2010) argues for a greater recognition of the importance of the affect in education:

The relationship between affect and cognition and the heightening of affect that recognition can evoke are of particular importance to pedagogic theory in terms of what they suggest about the significance of the pedagogic relation of teacher and student: the ways in which a teacher’s support influences a student’s learning (p. 277).

This statement is in alignment with the Fair Go Project’s Student Engagement Framework that emphasises the essential role of the teachers’ choice and application of pedagogy in determining whether students are engaged at high levels or otherwise. At a definitional level, this study takes on board Watkins (2010) understanding of the affective as being a ‘bodily phenomenon’ and that affect is not viewed as simply transient in quality. These states of being are not only momentary. Through the iteration of similar experiences, and therefore similar affects, they accumulate in the form of what could be considered dispositions that predispose one to act and react in particular ways (p.278).

In relation to student engagement and education, this study aligns with the view that experiences of the high affective can have significant long-term effects on students.
and that affect’s “accumulation within the body can promote the desire and capacity
to learn” (Watkins, 2010, p.279).

1.2.4 Learning as a human endeavour

The final theme has twin thrusts. Firstly, that the pedagogy in this study favours
human-centred processes such as play, collaborative work and corporeal expression
(Egan, 2013; Eisner, 2002a; Gallagher, 2010a; Winston, 2015a). It is suggested that
these processes are important to balance the types of performative curriculum
practices that can dominate the pedagogy of classrooms in all too many
disadvantaged contexts. Secondly, that it is a social justice issue to allow students to
connect their learning with the world beyond the classroom by learning authentically
about the big ideas in their curriculum topics (Brophy, Alleman, & Knighton, 2010).
The integration of big ideas with the specially designed arts programs that are
described in this thesis is a key aspect of the human core of the aims of this study.
The terms ‘human’, ‘humane’ and ‘humanising’ are used within this thesis in terms
of the central focus of the learning programs, which was to structure curriculum
around the human condition and to ensure that the lesson content would connect with
students’ life experiences. Brophy and Allerman (2007) offer the perspective that
“teaching students about how their own and other societies have addressed the
human purposes associated with cultural universals provides a sound basis for
developing fundamental understandings about the human condition” (p.15).
Throughout the thesis, the terms ‘human’, ‘humane’ and ‘humanising’ are used in
alignment with this definition.

1.2.5 A word on beauty

Elements from each of the described four themes have been importantly explored by
Winston (2010, 2015) who discusses the concept of beauty in education. Beauty is
valued in this research as an overarching goal in that it might provide an answer for
designing classroom pedagogy in which lessons have aesthetic prominence, where
learning is pleasurable and engaging and in which the cognitive and affective are
connected. Furthermore, it is a research intention that beauty can be realised through
arts-focused pedagogical practices to stimulate more authentic and ethical responses
from students. There is a gap in the wider educational literature in terms of why beauty might be of relevance to educational contexts and how beauty can be employed in practice within the curriculum. Its inclusion is given importance for its potential in fulfilling both the artistic heart and human concerns of this study. Theories and discussions around beauty, as presented by Winston (2010, 2015b), thus inform the practical, theoretical and thematic implementation of the Gallery, which will now be described.

1.3 Pedagogical intervention of this study

This study sets out to implement arts-based programs that integrate the key ideas from each of the research themes that have been described above. Three primary classrooms from three separate and distinctive disadvantaged contexts were chosen as the sites in which to examine these ideas. Contextual information relating to these sites are described in greater detail in Chapter 3. The Gallery (Winchester, 2012, 2013, 2015) was designed as a pedagogical model for the three classrooms of this study.

The Gallery encompasses arts practices as the driving pedagogical style, with intentions to stimulate creative practices, student engagement and a human approach to learning. This intervention is not chiefly concerned with visual art, but equally includes movement, drama, music and literature. The Gallery is so named for comparisons that can be made between this particular pedagogical intervention and an art gallery. Both value the exhibition of art, both are spaces that invite the interactions and expressions of the participants, both have the potential to generate emotion and empathic understanding, and both value the idea that art has the power to reflect local and global issues of human effect. In this sense, the Gallery was designed as a model to guide the process of the implementation of arts-based programs to stimulate students to examine big ideas in their learning.

Practical ideas that inform the structure of a Gallery ‘lesson’ have a number of distinguishing features, including:
• Learning experiences are conducted in a large space such as a school hall, to allow space for movement and for artistic group work.

• Learning experiences begin with an arts-based ‘warm-up’ in order to physically and mentally prepare the students for the artistic nature the Gallery.

• The body of the Gallery includes a variety of artistic experiences that connect with the classroom curriculum and pick up on the central big ideas of the topic.

• The Gallery concludes with an arts-based ‘cool down’ and reflection on the learning experience, that encourages students to both self-reflect on their learning experiences and to generate purposeful class discussion.

1.4 Research questions and aims

The central aim of the research was to question and understand the interplay between arts pedagogy, creativity, learning as a human endeavour and student engagement. In light of the hypotheses, rationale and research themes, the central research question is:

What happens when children in low SES primary classrooms are introduced to pedagogy that focuses on student engagement and the arts?

There are three sub-questions of interest to this research, namely:

A. How can purposeful arts and creative teaching and learning deeply engage students?

B. How can arts-focused teaching and learning experiences contribute towards a more human focus for creativity in education?

C. How can the concept of ‘beauty’ as a human value serve as a bridge between arts-focused creative pedagogical practices and learning as a human endeavour?
The research questions articulated the artistic pedagogical approaches of central importance to this study and also grounded the main research purpose; to expand knowledge and understanding regarding the interplay between arts pedagogy, creative processes, student engagement and big ideas in learning. By conducting the Gallery within three classrooms from disadvantaged contexts, it was a primary aim to bring to light the types of pedagogical approaches that might work to lift the learning and social outcomes of the students. In doing so, the intervention was investigated and analysed against the four central research themes to understand what insights might be gleaned from their integration.

1.5 Overview of the methodology

In response to the research intentions and questions, qualitative practices including arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012) and action research were the central methodological approaches. Action research was employed within three socially disadvantaged primary classrooms and was informed by arts-based research practices that sought to link projects of social inquiry with aesthetic forms. As described in Chapter 3, this methodology is in line with the research intentions that serve to contribute evidence supporting the value of embracing education as a social, rather than merely a technical practice.

1.6 Thesis overview

This thesis is presented in nine chapters.

This chapter has introduced the research intentions, themes and context for the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature in relation to this study and specifically responds to current research from each of the four main themes of research.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of each of the research sites and contextual information about the students, teachers and schools. It then presents the methodological approaches and considerations of this study, and justifies their use in light of the research questions.
Chapter 4 describes a Pilot study that took place in preparation for the formal research.

Chapter 5 describes the first action research intervention. This chapter will present Sarah and her class of Stage 2\(^1\) students at Valley Primary School.

Chapter 6 presents Zara and her Stage 1 class at Green Primary School.

Chapter 7 introduces Mary and her Stage 2/Stage 3 class at Field Primary School.

Chapter 8 provides an analysis of the data highlighted from the preceding three chapters and emphasises commonalities and insights with regard the four main themes of research from each school site.

This thesis concludes with Chapter 9, which summarises the results from this study, describes the implications and proposes future research suggestions. The next chapter, Chapter 2, will now present a literature review of relevance to this research.

\(^{1}\) In New South Wales schools, the curriculum is based on stages of learning with two school years given to one stage. For example, Kindergarten is named Early Stage 1, Years 1 and 2 are defined as Stage 1, Years 3 and 4 are categorised as Stage 2 and Years 5 and 6 are called Stage 3.
Chapter 1 has established that this study can be defined as an action research investigation that explores a distinct pedagogical and curriculum planning model (the Gallery). The literature as presented in this chapter is included to inform and drive the Gallery model and the focus of the case study investigations. This chapter is organised into six sections. The first part of this chapter summarises the research literature on each of the main themes of research. Section 1 explores artistic pedagogy and describes its importance to the intentions of this research. Section 2 addresses various discourses around creativity in education and questions the dominant view of the importance of economic gains from creative pursuits in westernised education. Section 3 then turns to current theory relating to student engagement and how pedagogy can support more equitable student outcomes. The last theme to be addressed in Section 4 is learning as a human endeavour, which discusses the integral human process of learning and how pedagogy can support deeper understanding and empathic responses in students. Each of these areas is discussed and the relevant literature behind the themes is emphasised. Section 5 discusses beauty in education and describes how this concept resonates with each of the four themes of research, thus becoming a consideration in the enactment of the pedagogy in the study and subsequent analysis. Section 6, the final section, describes the Gallery as a pedagogical model for the application of the themes in practice in primary classrooms. The chapter will then conclude and lead into the presentation of the research methodology.

2.1 Arts pedagogy

2.1.1 The arts, pedagogy and big ideas

Central to this research is the belief that arts practices can be authentically enacted towards connecting creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour. A balanced interplay between these main themes is sought in this
research, utilising arts practices as the pedagogical vehicle. This study aimed to explore artistic ways of being and artistic representation at the core of designing and implementing intellectually demanding pedagogy within three low socio-economic (SES) classrooms. In a practical sense, arts pedagogy was pursued in an integrated and holistic manner to enable creative approaches, engage students and examine big ideas in the curriculum. This study draws on the classroom research of Brophy and Alleman (Brophy, 1990; Brophy & Alleman, 2005, 2007) who acknowledge Dewey’s notion of organising curriculum around powerful ideas that emphasise connections and applications and, importantly, connect with students’ prior knowledge. (Dewey, 1938). Following extensive interviews with young children, about their understandings of “cultural universals” Brophy and Alleman emphasise the significance of organising curriculum content around powerful ideas that develop students’ understandings about the human condition. The term ‘big ideas’ as it is used in this thesis aligns with the definition provided by Brophy and Alleman who articulate that:

we consider ideas to be powerful (or big, key, generative, or transformative) to the extent that they help students develop connected understandings of how significant aspects of the social system work; how and why they got to be that way over time; how and why they vary across locations and cultures; and what all of this might mean for personal, social and civic decision making (2007, p. 16)

This definition of big ideas is strongly connected to the work of Newmann and Associates (1996), Productive Pedagogies (2001) and the research by Haberman (1991, 1995). This body of research focuses on ways to lift the social and educational outcomes of students in disadvantaged contexts by focusing on pedagogy of high intellectual quality that connects to students’ lives beyond the classroom. This research will be unpacked in greater detail in section 2.3. In this study, arts were believed to be the foundation from which to build intellectually rigorous, deeply engaging and human-focused educational experiences for students. Big ideas were thus central to the curriculum design of arts programs for this study and it was a fundamental concern to the research intentions “that a focus on goals and big ideas is important not only to help ensure that students perceive the content as interesting, relevant, and worth learning but also to help ensure that the activities based on this
content are authentic and engaging” (Brophy and Alleman, 2007, p. 17). It was a primary objective to consider the educational disadvantage that students living in poverty encounter and ways that engaging pedagogies can subvert the deficit determinism of low SES classrooms.

Within this research, artistic forms of expression were promoted as academic representations and statements of the students’ knowledge, beliefs and engagement with learning. Through engagement with literature, movement, musical expression and appreciation, dramatic exploration and visual representation, students were given access to a variety of outlets for which to communicate their understandings. This study put forward that arts expressions were valid academic forms of representation for their unique capacity to allow students to connect with and express artistic understandings of their topics of study. The importance of this particular representation connects with literature that argues arts, as a form of knowledge, ‘does not have a secure history’ (Eisner, 2008, p. 3) and ‘when education policy emphasises the display and achievement of uniformity, when it diminishes the opportunities for imagination to flourish, when it considers metaphor and ambiguity to be problematic, both the argument and the need for the arts becomes even stronger’ (Eisner, 2005b, p. 8).

The research holds as a central tenet that artistic ideas can shape pedagogy by influencing the design of lessons that involve experiential learning, emotional engagement and empathic reasoning with big ideas of human significance. As will be explored more fully in the theme, learning as a human endeavour, big ideas within the curriculum were intended to be explored through artistic means. Artistic learning processes, such as play, imaginative thinking and collaboration were seen as vital contributors to rich learning experiences that allowed students to question, explore and communicate knowledge of the big ideas of human impact within their curriculum. Big ideas in this study relate to significant concepts that connect with socio-cultural events or human relationships.

Big ideas guide the development of concepts during the process of inquiry into and reflection on the educational experience. Big ideas make statements rather than ask questions. They have relevance; they matter. Some big ideas contain
moral and ethical implications. While they have a clear focus, they also promote open ended inquiry. (Wasserman, 2007, p. 292)

It was a key aim in this study to create a pedagogical environment in which students could connect emotionally with their curriculum topics. In effect, this required that the students undergo significant learning experiences. Dewey debated close to a century ago that schooling should involve the real life experiences of students (1938, p. 374). Dewey’s argument is relevant to this thesis in that the pedagogy intended for the three disadvantaged classrooms in this study were planned in line with the proposition that students can be engaged on both cognitive and affective levels by integrating knowledge and connecting classroom experience to those beyond the classroom (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006; Munns, Sawyer, & Cole, 2013). Wasserman (2007) contends that the success of such experiences can be demonstrated ‘in the changed behaviours, perceptions, and insights of individual human beings … it affects both the cognitive and the affective domains and is designed to change behaviour profoundly – and for the better’ (Wasserman, 2007, p. 291). There is thus an ethical leaning to the enactment of big ideas through arts practices. It was a firm intention of the research that by engaging students cognitively and affectively through the arts, they would move towards a deeper understanding and emotional involvement in their learning. In this study, it was considered a social justice issue to provide authentic learning experiences in classrooms from low SES areas that are often denied stimulating learning experiences because the pedagogical emphasis is on management and instruction in the basics (Cole, Mooney, & Power, 2013, p. 123).

According to Newmann and Associates (1996), authentic learning can be defined through the recognition of three criteria including the construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry and the value of the task beyond school (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006, p.18). Firstly, the construction of knowledge refers to students producing rather than reproducing knowledge. Secondly, disciplined inquiry refers to learning that requires the use of prior knowledge, the development of in-depth understanding and expressing ideas through elaborated communication. The last aspect of authentic learning defined by Newmann and Associates (1996) is that what
is being learned holds aesthetic, utilitarian or personal value beyond school. These elements, in combination, constitute authentic learning (Hayes et al., 2006) and this is the definition of this term that has been adopted for this study.

Arts pedagogy was seen as the vehicle to deliver stimulating learning in these classrooms, and it was here that arts pedagogy aligned strongly with the second theme of research, creativity. Chappell, Craft, Burnard and Cremin (2008) have named ‘possibility thinking’ (PT) (Craft, 2000) as the engine of creativity. The literature maintains that this type of thinking can be fostered by such classroom procedures as play and collaboration, and by allowing opportunities for imaginative activity, procedures that are promoted by the creativity discourse, but that are also elements that align with good practice in arts learning. These attributes are important because this study promoted that ‘the capacity for creativity is essentially human and it holds the constant promise of alternative ways of seeing, of thinking and of doing’ (Robinson, 2011, p. 166). This thesis puts forward that it is important for classrooms, particularly those that are disadvantaged, to seek alternate ways of seeing, thinking and doing, and that these processes are recognised as valid academic expressions.

Imagination, collaboration and play will now be briefly addressed as intrinsic human practices and hence, important classroom procedures for this study. The three engender stimulating learning and intersect across each of the four main themes of research. An important hypothesis of this style of pedagogy is that students might begin to generate empathic understanding of the big ideas in their work and this could, in turn, support them to develop more authentic and meaningful connections to their learning and the world beyond the classroom.

Imaginative activity was seen as having a role to play in the enactment of arts pedagogy to generate experiences of big ideas. Egan (2013) describes how imagination is a vital human capability and should not be considered an ‘educational frill’ (p. 345), but, rather, something that can contribute to making learning more effective: ‘The ability to call up precise and rich images is a unique feature of our
minds and is clearly connected with the development of the imagination’ (p. 351). Eisner has also discussed the centrality of imagination to a holistic and meaningful education and reinforces that ‘the imagination is, fundamentally, an important dimension of human consciousness and, at bottom, the engine of cultural and social progress’ (1991, p. 15). Thus, human activity, such as imaginative thinking, should be given greater attention in planning for rich learning experiences through the arts. This research maintains the importance of engendering imaginative activity in lessons, and is in line with the idea that ‘the transition from ‘what is’ to ‘what might be’ which lies at the heart of PT, implies imagining as both a process and outcome’ (Cremin, Chappell, & Craft, 2013, p. 138). The ‘process’ of imagining was seen as important to the design of the lessons within this study, so that students might be more cognitively and affectively engaged. The ‘outcome’ of imagining, as suggested by Cremin et al. (2013), is that students will develop deeper understanding of the big ideas within their curriculum.

Play as another fundamental human attribute and a feature of artistic learning, can be viewed as a means to create experiences for students to question and connect with big ideas. Play was regarded in this study as purposeful for ‘highly engaged, serious, extended exploration, imagining situations, generating diverse ideas and problems and solving these’ (Craft & Chappell, 2014, p. 8) in learning experiences. The research explores how, by factoring in purposeful and sustained experiences for students to play, there could be further opportunities for PT. Play, which can be enacted pedagogically through artistic means such as role-play, improvisation and make-believe activity, was positioned as an important aspect of the pedagogy because:

… students do not necessarily have to leave the classroom or school to have rich and powerful experiences … there are hundreds of ways in which representative experiences can spark awareness and understanding that go far beyond the effects of lectures or text-books. (Wasserman, 2007, p. 296)

Playful approaches to pedagogy were considered essential in this study to allow the students to engage in deeper meaning and greater involvement in big ideas within the learning experiences.
Collaboration was seen as an important human activity that is salient to the experience of big ideas through arts, due to the social and interactive nature of the pedagogy at work in the three classrooms of this study. John-Steiner (2000) notes the features of group-based practices that support the pedagogical approach of this study. She says ‘collaboration thrives on diversity of perspectives and on constructive dialogues between individuals negotiating their differences while creating their shared voice and vision’ (p. 6). In the construction of deep knowledge, the pedagogy of this study favoured the interaction of students towards building greater connection and meaningful understanding of the world beyond the classroom. To this study, it was an essential consideration that ‘…creative activities are social, that thinking is not confined to the individual brain/mind, and that construction of knowledge is embedded in the cultural and historical milieu in which it arises’ (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 5). These points reiterate the centrality of the social experiences through artistic means that were important in this research.

Improvisation can be viewed as a practical expression of the three artistic and creative processes, imaginative ability, play and collaboration, which have just been discussed. Gallagher (2010a) argues that improvisation as a tool for purposeful learning should be reframed past the standard warm-ups or competitive games that characterise its traditional use in drama classrooms, and reminds us that ‘expanded repertoires have allowed many teachers to extend the creative uses of improvisation and harness them for educationally rich experiences’ (Gallagher, 2010a, p. 44). A highly pertinent perspective is that improvisation can be used as an art form to enhance pedagogy and ‘to understand the relationship between engagement and the social, academic, and artistic contexts of schooling’ (Gallagher, 2010a, p. 43). This description was relevant to the aims of this work and the pedagogical style of collaborative, imaginative and improvised play employed at the three school sites. Gallagher reminds us ‘of how ideas of representation or mimesis are operating in moments of aesthetic knowing for young people’ (2005, p. 83) and how an artistic platform can also ‘distance the players from the subject in such a way as to ultimately engage them aesthetically and offer them a simultaneous sense of recognition (things are as they seem) and the potential for change (things could be otherwise)’ (2005, p. 83). The opportunity for the students to engage artistically with
big ideas was sought by offering them the chance to represent their comprehension of
the learning through improvisational means. There is thus a moral undertone to
preferring improvisational practices in this study, for as Gallagher (2010a) describes,
‘in best cases, improvisation validates play and promises a social agenda with
emancipatory ideals’ (p. 46).

This section has drawn on research literature to put forward that a core aspect of this
investigation was the belief that students should be involved in focused and authentic
learning about big ideas of human impact through arts pedagogy. The next section
reviews the research literature to explore the case for the aesthetic experience of arts
pedagogy as worthwhile in its own right.

2.1.2 The arts and beauty

This research planned to move away from purely justifying the academic benefits of
the arts in order to prove their worthiness in the curriculum, and focus on the
qualitative and humane side of arts experiences. The research sought to focus on
pedagogical practices that promoted the enhancement of affective experience as
important in education, in their own right. This section explores beauty in education
as an important aspect of arts pedagogy, and a more detailed discussion of beauty
will be addressed in the next section of this chapter. The study drew principally on
the writings of Winston (2010, 2015b), who argues that beauty has a worthwhile
place in learning experiences for its potential to charm, to give happiness and to
inspire, and, following from this, to lead towards social justice aims.

Beauty in education can be conceptualised as providing aesthetic potential for
lessons, not limited to arts education, but highly relevant to the practical implications
of the arts pedagogy employed in this study:

The contemplation of beauty involves the imagination in a form of free play
which has no utilitarian purpose, no functional concept driving it. The pleasure
we derive from the appreciation of beauty, therefore, is essentially its own end,
its own purpose. (Winston, 2006, p. 287)
Such a position is at odds with an education system that relies on measureable certainty and utilitarian foundations. As Winston (2006) demonstrates, ‘the arts have learned to justify their value in terms such as creativity, cultural awareness and social welfare, concepts that hold performative currency in the dominant discourse’ (p. 287). This statement reiterates that the discourse around arts in education is often reliant on focusing on measured academic performance, rather than making a case for arts being valuable in, and of, themselves for the beauty they bring to learning experiences.

While this study explored how arts pedagogy can be applied purposefully alongside curriculum objectives to heighten the academic as well as social performances of students, it also aims to make a case for the inherent enjoyment and sense of value that can be generated by educational experience, particularly for those students who come from socio-cultural backgrounds traditionally associated with weak academic or behavioural performance, as equally important educational pursuits. By focusing on student engagement, the practical application of these ideas aimed to deliver creative teaching and learning practices to achieve a more holistic and aesthetic approach to learning. Writing in 1978, Eisner recognised how arts can often become sidelined when they attempt to justify themselves against positivist educational goals:

> When achievement, defined in terms of standardised forms of performance within specific subject areas becomes salient, it is likely that teachers will devote attention to those areas and in the process place less emphasis or neglect entirely areas that are not defined by test performance. What is counted, counts. (Eisner, 1978, p. 199)

Current literature in this area in relation to the Australian national curriculum continues to advise that a traditional subject hierarchy is privileged, with technical skill in relation to reading, writing and numeracy holding priority (Ewing, 2010, p. 28) ‘despite continued evidence that such a curriculum privileges those from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds’ (Ewing, 2012, p. 101). This literature reaffirms the view that so called ‘soft’ values such as empathy, pleasure and charm that can be generated by arts pedagogy, and linked to beauty in education, should be
reframed as valuable and important attributes of classroom learning. As Bamford (2008) reinforces, ‘the arts must see themselves being core and move away from constantly rationalising their existence, arts education needs to maintain its inherent value and to argue the centrality of these values in the learning process’ (2008, pp. 107-108).

Another aim of this thesis is to illustrate to other practitioners in education that art pedagogy and experiences of beauty in education can be readily implemented and are not the sole domain of experienced artists. The pedagogical style and content were established with the intention to be relatable and meaningful to generalist primary teachers, and this intention is consistent with the perspective of Bamford (2008) who writes that ‘teachers should not feel frightened of art or scared of their inadequacies. Enthusiasm is required, combined with an openness to see beauty and be moved … convey this gift on to the children you teach’ (p. 109). This ‘gift’, articulated here as beauty in education, can be conceptualised as the type of stimulating, affective and energising pedagogy that all classrooms, especially those characterised by low expectation and an over-emphasis on management, deserve.

This section has raised a central idea that this study focuses on the inherent beauty and humane core of learning experiences and aims to distance itself from the narrowed view that ‘promotes a technical orientation to teaching rather than an organic or humanistic one’ (Eisner, 2005c, p. 16). Beauty will be discussed more fully later in this chapter, but is included here to state that it is held as having primary importance in supporting and maintaining the joy and energising capacity that is intrinsic to authentic arts pedagogy. The recognition of the strong connection between cognitive and affective learning in the arts is now investigated and discussed.

2.1.3 Cognitive and affective learning

The relationship between cognitive and embodied learning was relevant to the exploration of artistic pedagogy in this research. Gallagher (2005) has introduced the term ‘sociology of aesthetics’ (p. 82) to speak of the unity between cognitive and affective engagement. While referring specifically to drama experiences in
classrooms, her discussion can also apply to wider conceptions of arts pedagogy. In referring to three practical classroom examples of drama pedagogy, Gallagher describes that ‘a provoked imagination’ (p. 82) is of importance when considering notions of aesthetic experience and the relationship between cognitive and embodied engagement. That artistic experiences for students in marginalised classrooms might begin with a ‘provoked imagination’ is pertinent to this study in the way that classrooms in these contexts are often defined by low expectation and a constrained curriculum (Orlando & Sawyer, 2013, p. 10). Equally important is the consideration of the ‘exploration of ideas born out of aesthetic experience’ (Gallagher, 2005, p. 82) and how such ideas can be generated though the collaborative, interdependent and improvised environment that is characteristic of arts classrooms.

A crucial element to this study was the belief that human knowledge and intelligence can be expressed in more ways than linguistically or mathematically. Eisner (2002a) outlines several cognitive functions performed by the arts and he asserts that these should be understood in terms of the way that they illuminate, or what they help us to ‘see’ (pp. 11-12). Firstly, Eisner explains that one cognitive function of the arts is that it provides a stimulus for raising our consciousness of aspects of the world that we had not experienced before. Secondly, he contends that art engages our cognitive imaginative abilities as a means to ‘liberate us from the literal’ (p. 10) as well as stimulating our empathic response in the process. Thirdly, Eisner writes that art allows us to explore ambiguities and exercise judgements and, fourthly, that in the process of creating art, we are able to inspect our own ideas. Finally, his view is that the arts induce a cognitive capacity for us to explore our own responsive capacities (2002a, pp. 10-11) and in turn, such capacities can ‘generate a kind of empathy that makes action possible’ (2008, p. 11). The important link between empathy and arts pedagogy will be noted in the next section. Eisner’s illustration of the cognitive nature of artistic practice also gives weight to the concept that ‘emotional feelings are not separate from or opposed to cognition or understanding, but on the contrary, an emotional feeling is an expression of a certain understanding of the subject’ (Best, as cited in Winston, 1998, p. 63). The pedagogical lean towards the arts in this study is in line with Eisner’s view that human understanding can be represented beyond literal language and quantification (2002a, p. 204).
A traditional perspective of the arts has been that they are ‘ornamental or emotional in character’ (Eisner, 2008, p. 3), and, as a result, the intellect and artistic pursuits are not often paired. An influential perspective that the arts are only about feeling, not reason or cognition, is deeply damaging to education because it advances ideas that the human mind has two distinct realms, namely the cognitive/rational and the affective/creative, and, in doing so, risks categorising all curriculum areas along strict lines of their supposed rational or creative core attributes. Such an assumption promotes the supposed ‘usefulness’ or otherwise of specific curriculum areas and tends to favour linguistic/mathematical areas as commanding a higher place on the educational hierarchy (Robinson, 2011, p. 60). The arts are often perceived in educational settings as being ‘affective’ rather than cognitive, easy not tough, soft not hard, simple not complex’ (Eisner, 2002a, p. 35). A clear aim of this study was to display how the arts might engender authentic intellectual practice in classrooms, and to move away from the perception that arts are only ornamental, soft, simple or easy in education. This study did however, as introduced in the last section, recognise that an important part of artistic pedagogy is that its very nature does allow for ornamentation and emotional expression, human values that are promoted in this research as deserving a place in classrooms. While education systems historically have favoured and assessed intelligence in terms of linguistic and mathematical capabilities, they have often relegated other forms of cognitive ability in the process. As Bamford (2008) asserts:

> The arts have always been a fundamental form of communication. The future is an era dominated by the arts as multi-dimensional communication, and yet schools are not seeing this as vital in the curriculum. The prevailing attitude is that the arts are nice but not really necessary! (p. 102)

Artistic expression is, therefore, favoured in this study as a viable format for the expression of intelligence. As Dewey states:

> Any idea that ignores the necessary role of intelligence in the production of works of art is based upon identification of thinking with use of one special kind of material, verbal signs and words. To think effectively in terms of relations of qualities is as severe a demand upon thought as to think in terms of symbols, verbal and mathematical. (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 46)
While arguing for the importance of recognising the cognitive elements of arts practice, this research did not downplay the significant emotional elements of artistic forms of expression and understanding. Gallagher (2005) describes how aesthetic knowledge hinges on such cognitive capacities as perception and interpretation (p. 92). Thus through collaborative arts practices, students’ own perception and interpretations can combine with others so that ‘new representations, new explorations of language and meaning’ can emerge and that ‘these are often emotional and perceptual, in addition to cognitive, types of language that expand meaning’ (Gallagher, 2005, p. 92). This argument reinforced the importance of the ‘provoked imagination’ (p. 82) in this study, by which it is postulated that, by inviting students to be actively involved in their learning, it follows that there are greater opportunities for both emotional and cognitive engagement. This section has reviewed and proposed that artistic endeavours do indeed have the potential to demand intellectual rigour. The next section will discuss the link between arts pedagogy, aesthetic experience and achievement.

2.1.4 What denotes knowledge and achievement?

Within this study, emotional responses expressed through artistic means in classrooms were considered a primary aspect of the pedagogy. This research was informed by Eisner’s view that ‘our sensibilities and the forms of representation associated with them make distinctive contributions to what we notice, grasp, and understand’ (2002a, p. 204). This research thus recognised the potential strength of artistic endeavours for the affective nature that they bring to classroom learning and the subsequent depth of meaning that they can engender. Egan (2013) endorses the perspective that it is highly important to promote imaginative abilities and evoke in students a sense of wonder to enhance their engagement with the curriculum and their capacities as learners. He states, ‘to be without this sense of awe at the mystery of things is to lack an important constituent of an educated understanding’ (p. 152).

The implication of regarding arts as concrete rather than abstract, emotional rather than mental, working with the hands not the head, imaginary rather than useful, more closely related to play than work (2002a, p. 35), is that the arts are often marginalised in place of curriculum areas that appear to be more cognitively rigorous. Residues of
this perception of the hierarchy of curriculum areas are evidenced in the way that many education systems prioritise, or not, arts programs. Such perception echoes historical-cultural ideas about intelligence and shows itself in the way that arts programs are often timetabled, whether they are included on standardised tests and if they are compulsorily included (Robinson, 2011, p. 60). In such an era of performative centred educational reform movements, learning in the arts is very often side-lined and considered to be ‘extra curricula’, due to beliefs about education that ‘the basics’ are skills that will be useful in employment in later life (Egan, 1997, p. 341). The emphasis on ‘back to basics’ insinuates that certain aspects of the curriculum, specifically numeracy and literacy, are distinct and separate educational skills, rather than fluid, expressive, contextual and relevant to other areas of life or other areas of the curriculum. Within this research, an emphasis was given to creative and artistic pedagogy in which such ‘basics’ are valued as being worth much more than their supposed application within a marketised and economic-centric view of achievement. While this study does not bemoan the essential importance of providing quality teaching in the so called ‘basics’, the research calls for attempts to shift perception towards artistic and creative, as opposed to just technicist pedagogy, as a response to providing more equal opportunities for students to experience success at school. Eisner says, ‘for students the need to do well on the instruments that assess achievement is a necessary condition for upward mobility within the education system’ (Eisner, 1978, p. 199). For this reason, it is a social justice issue to expand our conceptions of what denotes knowledge and achievement.

The emphasis on ‘back to basics’ denotes responsiveness by political bodies to prepare students for employment by concentrating on skills that are perceived to be essential in the economy. From a recent Australian perspective, the then education minister, Christopher Pyne, when responding to developments and aims in the new Australian curriculum, stated that a ‘laser like focus’ would be given to literacy and numeracy and that ‘this back-to-basics approach is designed to ensure all students…have access to a high quality curriculum which equips them with what they need to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy’ (Bita, 2015). These comments are indicative of the value framework of western individualism, driven by a marketised version of what it means to be successful. Sawyer (2006)
highlights that educational reform movements, rather than emphasising the creative production of knowledge towards authentic understanding, instead focus on rigid pedagogy that ‘emphasises a rote learning of material … students are taught that knowledge is static and complete, and they become experts at consuming knowledge rather than producing knowledge’ (p. 42). In this study, arts practices were seen to be important conduits for students to produce knowledge and communicate understanding. An intention of the research was to exemplify how arts pedagogy, deployed in collaborative and engaging ways, can promote a broader understanding of authentic learning in such ‘basics’ as literacy. Gallagher and Ntelioglou (2011) argue that drama pedagogies are both creative and critical forms of literacy (p. 324) and describe how the role of dialogue and the function of performance can work towards students having more meaningful and engaging experiences with literacy (p. 323). The catchcry of ‘back-to-basics’ and the impact of performative educational regimes are not necessarily supportive of the ‘sense of wonder’ (Egan, 2013) nor the ‘wider conception of the sources of human understanding’ (Eisner, 1991) that are aimed for in this research.

For the reasons just outlined, emotional artistic responses were welcomed in this study for their potential to provide a platform for the intellectual understandings of the students from three socially disadvantaged classrooms. As already asserted, the arts were embraced for their potential ‘to eliminate a distinction between cognition and emotion’ and importantly that ‘the social and emotional life of the child needs to be as much a priority as measured academic achievement – perhaps an even greater priority’ (Eisner, 2005c, p. 18). This view supports the main point of this section, that the arts should be pursued as an important and central curriculum area supporting a holistic approach to learning. Artistic and emotional responses were valued in this study as valid, unique and important resources to express understanding. Gallagher Ntelioglou and Wessels argue that ‘emotion is not simply based on feeling … but … the cognitive process of belief and judgement are also active in ‘emotional’ moments in the classroom’ (2013, p. 9). Emotional responses, therefore, were appreciated as particular forms of cognitive expression and were central to the types of intellectual activity that were promoted in this research.
The theme of arts pedagogy has been explored in this section to argue that: arts processes stimulate learning through big ideas; that arts provide opportunities for beauty in education; arts can engender intellectually demanding learning experiences; and, finally, that emotional expressions are fundamental to the types of understanding advocated in this research. As described, the literature presented in this chapter is included to inform the exploration of the Gallery in the research investigation. This chapter now discusses the second theme of research, creativity in education and examines the various discourses that shape its current position. After discussing relevant discourses on creativity for this study, the section then addresses the importance of ‘creativity with wisdom’ as a concept that fits the integration of the four themes of research.

2.2 Creativity

2.2.1 Rhetoric and definition

The concept of creativity in education has gained increasing and significant interest in international educational and political contexts (Craft, Cremin, Hay, & Clack, 2014; Cremin, 2015). This literature review seeks to explore and outline the key reasons and implications for creativity’s increased status in educational policies and draws on the rhetoric of creativity identified by Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010) to assist in positioning the place of creativity in education for this study. The term rhetoric has been adopted for this section in line with its direct usage by Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010). Of particular relevance for this research were the following rhetoric of creativity: democratic and political creativity, ubiquitous creativity, creativity as economic imperative and the creative classroom. Each of these will be discussed below in light of their importance for this study, drawing on their identification by Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010), while also referring to other relevant literature. The oft-cited definition given by the National Advisory Committee for Culture and Creativity in Education (NACCCE) names creativity as ‘imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value’ (1999). This definition is provided here as a starting point for discussing the relevant rhetoric of creativity applicable to this research, for as Fleming (2010) has stated, ‘It is more productive to look at how the term has been used and interpreted,
and what this signals about the arts in education’ (p. 55). For the purposes of this research, the discussion on creativity here does not include cognitivist perspectives that describe internal brain functioning as these are well beyond the scope of this study, but rather it does provide a snapshot of different theoretical formulations of creativity as connected to the classroom cultural context in terms of the wider social impact that each rhetoric can induce. Links are made to each of the creativity rhetoric identified by Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010) that relate specifically to this study. This section will then attempt to define why creativity is important in education by contrasting creative pedagogy with the ‘back to basics’ approach. The creativity theme section will then conclude by discussing creativity and wisdom as an important consideration in this study.

2.2.2 Creativity rhetoric: Democratic and political creativity

The first rhetoric of relevance to this study moves away from the perspective of creativity as a trait of the few (the perception of the ‘creative genius’), to that of democratic inclusiveness. This rhetoric highlights the idea that creativity is possible in the everyday activities of all humans. Embracing the notion of creative inclusiveness, this rhetoric draws a distinction from creativity as an exclusive practice of an elite group. In writing about the creative process, Robinson (2011) describes:

> It can operate in many diverse fields of human intelligence … we all have creative capacities but very many people conclude that they are not creative, when in truth they have never learnt and practised what is involved. (p. 166)

Similarly, Craft’s discussion of life-wide creativity, as summarised in the concept of ‘little c’ creativity (which will be further explored below), also contributes to the rhetoric of democratic creativity.

It appears that many current curriculum documents situate creativity as a democratic practice that is not only achievable for all students, but further, that it is imperative for all students. For instance, from the context of the United Kingdom, Banaji et al. (2010) name the National Curriculum in Action website as promoting creative
activity as important to the future of the economy and society, as well as to the social development of students. This can be seen in such statements as ‘creativity improves pupils’ self-esteem, motivation and achievement’ and ‘creativity prepares pupils for life: an important aim of the national curriculum’ (p. 23). Similarly, the Australian curriculum announces that central to the general capabilities of the curriculum is the notion, taken from the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 2008), that ‘all young people in Australia should be supported to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens’, and, further, that these capabilities ‘will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century’ (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2013). Such statements within curriculum policy suggest a leaning towards a democratic view of creativity in education and reinforce an inclusive discourse for creative activity in current educational settings.

The two curriculum examples provided above situate creativity as a democratic activity and also pronounce the importance of creativity for twenty-first century life, and yet in practice, creativity can, at times, become marginalised within a curriculum that exists within a performatve structure. Banaji et al. (2010) describe how, in practice, educational contexts can situate creative activity along a spectrum of elite and democratic views of creativity, and that such a positioning of creative acts is dependent on the educational policy aligned with the endeavour. Tensions can thus arise when creativity is pronounced to be democratic and socially important within educational policy, and yet, in practice, it must exist within a competitive, target-driven and performatve system. As Fielding and Moss (2012) argue, the ‘dominant rationality is instrumental performativity, leaving no room for uncertainty, provisionality, surprise or wonder, and expressed through technical questions enunciated and pursued through distortingly reductive approaches to research and practice’ (p. 6). When considering this statement alongside the definition for creativity provided above, it can be seen that, despite creativity being promoted in educational policy as essential and democratic, ‘imaginative activity’ and the production of original ideas might not sit comfortably within curriculum objectives and targets.
This research acknowledges that the over-emphasis on ‘being original’ in creative pursuits in education might hinder the importance of mastery in the arts during the practise of teaching. Winston (2010) challenges the current discourse operating in education that creativity is synonymous with originality. Winston’s view is that “…originality is now fully enshrined as integral to contemporary definitions of creativity, thus obscuring the relationship between artistic creation, imitation and tradition” (Winston, 2010, p.96). This research attempts to give authority to the traditions and conventions of arts pedagogy and acknowledges their importance in creative teaching and learning pursuits. In alignment with the view of Winston, the traditions of arts pedagogy are embraced in this study “not as a cage but as a flexible resource to spur children into acts of creation, which can themselves be beautiful” (2010, p.96). Thus the possibilities of originality in the classroom contexts for this research are considered to be the result of, and influenced by, the artistic traditions and conventions that are introduced to the students. Artistic pedagogy is seen as an engine for creative thought and action, and it is the students developing mastery of artistic pursuits that is valued in this research as the main support for creativity and achievement. Furthermore, in line with the research on student engagement that will be detailed in section 2.3, this research attempts to highlight the importance of the teachers’ pedagogy as central to the achievement of students and successful classroom experience. The Fair Go Project (2006) and Productive Pedagogies (2006) both highlight that students deserve classrooms of high intellectual quality and authentic instruction. Such classrooms give weight to the importance of teachers detailed planning and definitive structuring and scaffolding of learning experiences. In this way, the literature on student engagement is clearly linked to the view that working towards artistic mastery, as the main pedagogical tool in this research, is important in allowing creativity to be expressed by students. Thus artistic traditions and scaffolds that are expressed in this study “do not act as a body of rules to be applied mechanistically, thus inhibiting freedom, but instead, provide a rich combination of projects and voices” (Winston, 2010, p.96). This study embraces the possibilities of democratic inclusiveness in creative educational pursuits, while acknowledging the importance of artistic traditions and mastery at the heart of the pedagogy in this research.
The rhetoric, that creativity is democratic, parallels strongly with the other themes of this research, particularly that learning as a human endeavour and the theme of student engagement, which will be explored later in this review. Of core importance to this research is that democracy is a fundamental educational value, and that creativity in education is not simply about rehearsing skills for 21st century life, but part of an inclusive practice of student engagement, in which students gain important messages that ‘school is for me’ (Munns, Sawyer, & Cole, 2013). Creativity is used in this research as part of ‘not a ‘future proofing’ education, but a ‘future building’ education’ (Fielding & Moss, 2012, p. 7). For this study, the notion of creativity as democratic has been included in this discussion for the reason that it was embedded in the pedagogy designed for the three research classrooms. The rhetoric that creativity is embedded in the practices of the everyday is now discussed.

### 2.2.3 Creativity rhetoric: Ubiquitous creativity

Ubiquitous creativity as a discourse links democratic notions of creative practice to the understanding of creativity as the ability to respond to and cope with 21st century life (Banaji et al., 2010). This rhetoric is summarised within Craft’s (2000, 2001) notion of ‘little c’ creativity, which encompasses everyday practices (such as problem solving and imaginative thinking) as important inclusions in educational practice in order to encourage students to become active 21st century citizens. A key component of ‘little c’ creativity is possibility thinking (2000, 2001) which entails posing ‘what if?’ and ‘as if?’ questions in order to promote a cognitive shift from what is, to what might be, and, further, that such thinking can assist in ‘successfully identifying and navigating life’ (Craft & Chappell, 2014). Possibility thinking thus promotes imaginative activity and the ability to problem solve as important educational and life-long traits. Craft and Chappell (2014) cite Craft’s conception of ‘possibility thinking (2000, 2001) as ‘the engine of creative change’ and as a democratic practice grounded in the everyday functioning of life.

Like democratic and political creativity rhetoric, the ubiquitous creativity rhetoric moves away from elite perceptions of creativity towards the presence of creativity in the everyday. Banaji et al. (2010) have explored various critiques of the ubiquitous creativity rhetoric, summarised in the following statement: ‘is this view of creativity,
as an ability to be flexible in meeting the demands of life, incompatible with the
notion of creativity as something that adds a special quality to life?’ (p. 30). They
include references to writing that offer distinct rejections of creativity as part of
everyday life, including the argument that ‘we cannot collapse creativity into
everyday life, as if they are indistinguishable … to say that all our everyday actions
are in some way creative might have a certain polemical appeal, but that is all’
(Negus and Pickering, as cited in Banaji et al., 2010, p. 30).

Despite the various critiques of ubiquitous creativity, this rhetoric can be seen to
have infiltrated educational policy, such as that described above, and is symptomatic
of the emergent value placed on creativity as a practice of the everyday, as well as
the link between creativity and the economy (this discourse will be described below).
This rhetoric of the economic importance of creativity holds that creative practice is
at the centre of effective business, competitive markets and innovative economies
(Ball, 1998; Craft & Jeffrey, 2008). If this rhetoric is accepted, then the prominence
and promotion of creativity within educational policies as an everyday practice that
can be fostered during schooling can be understood from a political position. Craft
and Jeffrey (2008) have highlighted that the parallel prominence of creativity policies
along with an overall culture of performativity in education stimulates tensions for
practitioners and learners in the sense that there is recognition that innovative and
imaginative pedagogy is ‘good’ per se, but in practice, such pedagogy must be
answerable to standardised policy. This argument will be explored further below in
‘creativity and back to basics’. On a pedagogical level, ubiquitous creativity was
promoted for its democratic appeal in this research and aimed to instil imaginative
and possibility thinking within curriculum practices. The idea that creativity is
essential for a successful economy is now discussed.

2.2.4 Creativity rhetoric: Economic imperative

The ‘creative decade’ named by Craft, Cremin, Hay and Clack (2014) was
characterised by an upsurge of policy relating to creativity in education and a growth
in the promotion and recognition of creative pedagogy, despite an overall educational
climate of instrumentalism (Ball, 1998; Craft, 2005; Fielding & Moss, 2012).
Educational policies heralded creativity as important and necessary to foster within
students to meet the changing demands of 21st century life (ACARA, 2013; MCEETYA, 2008; NACCCE, 1999). The discourse has centred on the importance of imbedding creative practice within education with the specific aim to help students become more successful citizens in 21st century contexts. As Craft (1999) explains, creativity in such policies is put forward as ‘an essential life skill, which needs to be fostered by the education system’ (p. 137). These aims reflect a western-centred framework of the benefits of creativity and are encapsulated within policy statements like those from the Scottish Executive in 2004 (as cited in Craft, 2008, p. 17): ‘The creativity of Scots-from the classroom to the boardroom – is the edge we need in a competitive world.’ From an Australian perspective, the prominence of creativity as an important social and economic trait can be seen in the inclusion of ‘critical and creative thinking’ as a general capability within the new Australian Curriculum (ACARA). The Australian Curriculum sets out within the critical and creative thinking introduction (2014):

Critical and creative thinking are integral to activities that require students to think broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school.

The Australia 2020 Summit was held in 2008 by the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, to discuss ideas to shape a long-term strategy for the nation’s future. A critical policy area within this summit was ‘Creative Australia’, which illustrates a renewed cultural and political focus on the importance of creativity for the nation’s future. The final report for the summit described the shifting nature of the economy and stated that ‘success in this new environment demands that creativity is embedded in our education systems, economy and international representation at every level’, and further named creativity as ‘central to sustaining and defining the nation, fuelling the imaginations of citizens’ (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2008). The increased importance of creativity in such policy documents captures a democratic slant toward embracing creativity as ubiquitous. This approach, which signals that creativity is attainable for everybody, parallels with Craft’s (2000, 2001) discussion of ‘little c’ creativity (everyday creativity) as opposed to ‘big c’ creativity (paradigm-shifting creativity). A key reason for establishing creativity as ubiquitous in this
discourse is the sense that creativity is a response to a political drive for society to be equipped to be competitive in the economy (Ball, 1998; Craft & Jeffrey, 2008).

Within this research, creativity as an economic imperative rhetoric was recognised as an indicator for increased policy for creativity in education. The concept of creativity with wisdom will be discussed later in this section in response to how the discourse of creativity has arisen without specific reference to a values framework (Flemming, 2008). The rhetoric around the creative classroom for greater student engagement is now addressed.

**2.2.5 Creativity rhetoric: The creative classroom**

Highly applicable to this research is the rhetoric of the creative classroom, which highlights the importance of creative pedagogy that has the aim to improve the learning of students. From a grassroots perspective, the creative classroom could offer a diverse range of creative pedagogy from encouraging imaginative thinking (Egan, 2007), play and possibility thinking (Craft, 2012), collaboration (John-Steiner, 2000; Sawyer, 2014) and inquisitiveness (Lucas, Claxton, & Spencer, 2014). Within this research, the creative classroom rhetoric aligned strongly with the classrooms serving low SES communities that were studied in the Fair Go Program (FGP): ‘high cognition and content that matters are explored in depth and where students are encouraged to employ their imaginations, investigate and use novel thought and express learning in creative ways’ (Cole, Mooney, & Power, 2013). The links between creativity and learning are situated in this rhetoric in terms of a positive aspiration to improve the experience of education for students.

However, institutional pressure and constraints, in the form of time management and assessment, can work against the practical application of experiences of creativity for students in classrooms. Banaji et al. (2010) have highlighted that there exist practical issues for the successful implementation of creative pedagogy within classrooms, despite creativity being celebrated at a policy level. The tension of creative teaching in education:
appears to lead to contradiction or even paradox: risk-taking is to be encouraged but it is also to be kept within easily controllable bounds; furthermore, time is required for playful engagement with ideas and materials, but this time has stringent external parameters in terms of the school day. (p. 64)

Within this research, the existence of creative pedagogy affiliated with the creative teaching and learning practices supported by the FGP (2013). These practices include the planning and implementation of democratic, imaginative and creative learning experiences, with links to high intellectual quality. Winston (2010) highlights that discourses on creativity and education name various characteristics of creative pedagogy, such as those that have been outlined above, without reference to the practitioner’s actual subject knowledge or understanding of the creative qualities within the learning experience (p. 100). Winston argues that such lists of creative characteristics can disconnect students’ learning from their actual achievements and that ‘in this way, creativity becomes weightless, another tool of technicism’ (2010). Cole et al. (2013) reinforce a view that teachers’ in-depth knowledge of their subject area is crucial in order for them to ‘‘plan hard’ for imaginative and creative lessons with intellectual quality … they value, plan for and promote these abilities (creativity) as essential tools for high intellectual learning’ (p. 135). The creative pedagogy described in this research was thus grounded in the belief that creative traits can be stimulated within high cognitive learning processes that are related to the specific subject area, from creative arts to science, mathematics to Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE).

To summarise, thus far, the rhetoric of democratic and political creativity, ubiquitous creativity, creativity as economic imperative and the creative classroom as identified by Banaji et al. (2010) have been presented with links to further literature on these themes. The main ideas of interest to this research from this discussion were that: creativity can engender a democratic ideal for everyday classroom practices; that creativity as an economic imperative should be answerable to a values framework; and finally, that creative pedagogy is important to student engagement. The next two sections of this thematic review on creativity address challenges to creativity within
the catchcry of ‘back to basics’, and will then move to examining the notion of creativity with wisdom.

### 2.2.6 Creativity and ‘back to basics’

Drawing on the systematic review by Davies, Jindal-Snape, Collier, Digby, Hay and Howe (2013), it can be concluded that the most applicable aspect of creative learning in primary schools, for this research, was the pedagogical environment. Craft et al. (2014) single out that qualitative research from across the ‘creative decade’ has pronounced that school culture and context are central to the development of creative primary schools. This study aims to emphasise that creative pedagogy involves:

… children offered control and appropriate risk-taking, teachers balancing freedom and structure; using playful/games-based approaches, enabling children to set their own pace; mutual respect, dialogue and flexibility between staff and pupils; modelling creative attitudes; high expectations; encouraging collaborative work. (Craft et al., 2014)

Skills such as flexibility, possibility thinking and the ability to use knowledge in multiple and complex ways, have been put forward as just as, if not more important, than traditional skills in ‘the basics’. This discourse stresses the need for a rebalancing of pedagogical focus in creative ways of being (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006, Robinson, 2011; Cole et al., 2013; Craft et al., 2014).

In highly performative education regimes, concepts such as creativity and curriculum areas such as the arts, can lose their place in preference for educational practices that are deemed more essential. Craft et al. (2014) describe how the ‘creative decade’ came to an end in the UK with the incoming Conservative government in 2010 that announced a National Curriculum review that focused on four core educational areas including English, mathematics, science and physical education. According to Craft (2011), this review led to a curriculum with a narrower focus and which reflected a perception of children as vulnerable and passive, as opposed to the view of children, from the creativity in education perspective, as active and capable. This move is mirrored, in a similar pattern, in the Australian context. Echoes of the economic imperative discourse can be heard in the comments of the former Australian
Education Minister, Christopher Pyne, as quoted above in the Arts Pedagogy section. He voiced that a ‘laser like focus’ (Bita, 2015) on the ‘basics’ of literacy and numeracy was essential in the new curriculum. The ‘back to basics’ argument exists in a performative education system that is defined by technicism, competition and comparison, and is exemplified by such mechanisms as that of the ‘My School’ website, which is an Australian online resource provided by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) that was established for the specific purpose of drawing comparisons between schools’ performances on standardised tests in literacy and numeracy.

The performative policies inherent to the current educational climate exist alongside the continuing resonating discourse of creativity as having educational importance. This research was mindful of the ‘blind spots’ (Craft, 2005) of responding to the market-driven call for creativity that places high value on individuality and innovative engagement with the economy as a producer and consumer (Craft, 2006). Sawyer (2006) reports that the economy has shifted from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy, in which the creation and production of knowledge through collaboration are key components: ‘The creativity that matters in today’s world is the creativity of teams and organizations with the capabilities to make a difference’ (p. 42). Sawyer’s comment is thus indicative of the perception of the need for a shift from understanding creativity as an individual practice to an inherently social practice and further recommends that education systems consider how research into creativity and collaboration can better support learners to be active participants in the knowledge economy (ibid). Gaggioli, Milani, Mazzoni and Riva (2012) support this view, and, further, pronounce the importance of collaborative creativity as moving away from competition and individualism towards offering the optimum pedagogical environment for students to share their opinions and engage:

The development of creative collaboration skills in the classroom is not only important because of the team oriented nature of the modern work environment, but also because there is evidence that learning performance is enhanced when students are engaged in tasks that involve social interactions. (p. 107)
Creativity as a collaborative activity was highly applicable to the arts-based pedagogy within this study. Sawyer (2004b) reports that, ‘In social constructivist theory, new knowledge emerges from collaborative, exploratory discussions among learners. In an improvisational classroom, the class collaboratively creates its own knowledge, sometimes in a way that no teacher could have managed or planned’ (p. 199). Responding to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1991, 1996, 1997) concept of ‘flow’ (a state of consciousness of optimal experience in which the participant undergoes complete focus and fulfilment), Sawyer introduced the concept of ‘group flow’ as the essence of creative collaboration to explain the high levels of engagement and positive emotional states that accompany optimal collaborative experience (2007). Group flow can be understood as ‘a collective state of mind … a peak experience, a group performing at its top level of ability’ (Sawyer, 2008, p. 43). Likewise, John-Steiner (2000) has articulated the importance of integrative, collaborative, joint thinking and shared efforts in the contribution towards building creativity: ‘In collaborative endeavours, mutual appropriation is a result of sustained engagement during which partners hear, struggle with, and reach for each other’s thoughts and ideas’ (p. 199). Informative to this research is her critique of market-driven, individualistic conceptions of creativity towards a preference for supporting relationship-oriented and interdependent creative pursuits (2000).

The conceptions of creativity as grounded within a more collaborative and interdependent understanding of learning resonated with the overarching themes of this research. Further, due to the political discourse around creativity as an economic imperative, it is a moral objective that creativity should be answerable to a values framework. Secondly, this research acknowledged that creativity as a concept has an important place in offering stimulating pedagogy for student engagement. The concept of wisdom and creativity will now be addressed in response to addressing the apparent tensions of a creativity discourse that overly focuses on the economic imperatives of creativity.

2.2.7 Wisdom and creativity

The four themes of this study are strongly integrated with the wisdom and creativity argument that raises the importance of joining notions of creativity with an ethical
framework. The link between wisdom and creativity and the four themes is that the pedagogy proposed to be deployed would support a more moralistic and authentically engaging approach to learning through creativity and the arts. Each theme was guided by the consideration of the educational disadvantage of students living in poverty and is informed by Craft’s (2008) discussion that there are two ‘blind spots’ in the creativity discourse. The first being that the discourse of creativity has arisen in response to a westernised liberal individualism in which high value is attributed to economic production and consumption. The second is that innovation is embraced as a societal ‘good’ per se without specific reference to a values framework that considers ethics and the environment (p. 19). Her comments prompt the question of how the creativity discourse can interact with the ethical dimension of schooling and calls for ‘the need to surface a moral and ethical framework – and with this, a recognition of multiple perspectives – into the fostering of creativity in classrooms’ (2006, p. 13). Craft (2008) proposes the notion that educators should encourage students to question the effects of their ideas and, ‘to nurture wisdom and an orientation toward the responsible stewardship, or trusteeship, of ideas’ (2008, p. 28). Her discussion of the ‘blind spots’ of the creativity discourse are also in response to some educational settings that ‘equate innovation with creativity and see it as a good in itself’ (Winston, 2010, p. 91). Claxton (2008) identifies the importance of recognising that ‘wisdom has moral, motivational, and social aspects with which creativity does not necessarily concern itself’ (p. 43). In this regard, the relationship between creativity and wisdom informed the interplay of the four themes of this research.

This section has attempted to highlight that creativity has an important place in this research in combination with the other three themes. Practices such as possibility thinking, play, imaginative activity and collaboration are consistent with both creativity and arts pedagogy and such processes are argued as crucial in terms of engaging students from marginalised backgrounds and in engendering empathic thinking. The literature has reinforced that the practical application of creativity is difficult in a performative educational climate. The various literature as presented in this review on creativity in education has reaffirmed the importance of situating
creativity as a pedagogical process within schools, but, importantly for this study, has also narrowed the focus towards aligning creativity within an ethical framework.

To summarise the main points on the second theme of research, four rhetoric surrounding creativity in education, as identified by Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010), were discussed to situate the main ideas that were relevant to this study. The first rhetoric, democratic and political creativity, was included to emphasise that creativity in education is embraced in this study as an inclusive practice in which all students can be involved, for purposes of student engagement and as part of the belief that students from disadvantaged communities deserve stimulating and meaningful classrooms. The section on democratic and political creativity also raised the issue that despite creativity’s growing prominence in educational policy discourse, tension remains between the view that creativity is democratic and important for society, and the actuality that, from a practical level, it is difficult to adopt within a competitive, target-driven and performative system. The second rhetoric, ubiquitous creativity, was seen to be important because it also has democratic appeal to the pedagogical intentions of the study. It encompasses a vision of creativity as part of everyday life that is accessible to all, and as such it offered everyday human practices such as imaginative and possibility thinking as essential pedagogical concerns. This section also raised the concern that ubiquitous creativity can stimulate tension from a practical point of view because everyday creative habits such as imaginative thinking may not fit with standardised and instrumentalist objectives. Creativity as economic imperative was introduced as the next rhetoric as relevant to this research and highlighted that creativity is marked as an essential aptitude for success in 21st century life, but that this discourse reflects a western-centred framework. This rhetoric described why creativity has increased status in educational frameworks in a reaction to a political drive for society to be equipped to be competitive in the economy. This research sought to situate creative practices in a more ethical light in response to these concerns. The final rhetoric is the creative classroom, which focused on the importance of embedding stimulating pedagogy for the engagement of students. This rhetoric is highly in line with the intentions of this research, in which it was deemed a social justice issue to provide authentic learning opportunities for students from marginalised backgrounds. By examining the four
rhetoric, this review then moved to discuss the ‘back to basics’ catchcry that is evident in highly performative education regimes. This proposed research therefore turned away from the competitive and highly individual style procedures of a ‘back to basics’ approach and emphasised education as a social practice in which collaboration, imaginative thinking and playfulness are essential creative components to support learners to be active participants in the world beyond school. In line with the research intentions to focus on a human approach to pedagogy, the notion of wisdom and creativity was then discussed as a discourse in which a values framework was seen as essential to instil more ethical creative approaches in classrooms.

Creativity is thus included as a key theme to this research for the reasons described above and the literature presented thus far is included to drive and enlighten the practical implementation of the Gallery model in the research study. In summary, creativity is seen as an important pedagogical consideration for the Gallery model in order to provide inspiring, challenging and engaging classroom environments as part of the social justice imperative of concern to this research, and further that this study wished to align wisdom and creativity as an answer to the drive for creativity as an economic imperative. This chapter now moves to explore the literature of the third research theme, student engagement.

2.3 Student engagement

2.3.1 Pedagogy for engagement

International comparisons on schooling policies indicate that there is a severe gap in educational outcomes for disadvantaged communities (Lingard, 2013; Thomson, De Bortoli, & Buckley, 2013). Dissecting and analysing global education performance data or international policy discourse is beyond the scope of the literature review presented here. However, this trend is intensified through western educational policy, that has focused on test based accountability, market-oriented reform ideas such as competition between schools, a prescribed curriculum, the focus on literacy and numeracy and standardised teaching practices (Sahlberg, 2013, p. 103). Lingard (2013) communicates:
International data and national performance data are together used to steer education policy in reductive ways through teaching to the test, teaching by numbers, scripted pedagogies, defensive teaching … any focus on disadvantaged students from poor communities and their school is framed by this test driven accountability and likely to limit the intellectual demands made on students, exacerbating inequality in and through schooling. (p. xi)

This study, in focusing on the critical gap in educational outcomes for students living in poverty, aimed to reflect ethical and moral reasons to support disadvantaged communities educationally through pedagogy for engagement.

The focus of this research is thus that pedagogies that can lift the learning outcomes for students in low socio-economic communities. Haberman (1991, 1995) identified that ‘good teaching’ is paramount in the disruption of what he names ‘the pedagogy of poverty’; a cycle that includes directive and limiting forms of pedagogy resulting in the disengagement of many of the students, and this, in turn, demands further controlling teaching practices (1991). In making a positive difference in addressing the challenges that such a cycle can create, Haberman identifies that ‘active involvement of students in substantial projects’, ‘connecting learning to students’ daily lives’, and helping students to ‘assign their success to their effort rather than their ability’ (1995) are just some features that address issues of inequality in teaching and learning. He outlines the importance of schools that aim to create learning communities whose participants have a shared vision ‘that learning is the primary purpose for their association’ (2004, p. 52). Haberman’s view is that ‘the frequently espoused goal of lifelong learning for our students is hollow rhetoric unless the school is also a learning community in which teachers demonstrate engagement in meaningful learning activities’ (2004, p. 52). Such a view is highly applicable to the intentions of this research.

This research was concerned about pedagogies that contribute to more socially just outcomes for all students. Influential to this concern is the work of Fred Newman and Associates (1996) and their School Restructuring Study from the University of Wisconsin’s Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (CORS) in 1991 and 1994. Their study emphasised that the enhancement of students’ intellectual outcomes demanded a focus on ‘authentic pedagogy’. Such a focus would include
practices that centre on students’ own ‘construction of knowledge’ (producing rather than re-producing meaning and knowledge) by ‘disciplined inquiry’ (using prior knowledge, developing in-depth understanding and communicating ideas) towards ‘connectedness of learning to the world beyond the school’ (what is occurring holds aesthetic, utilitarian or personal value) (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006, p. 18). The concept of ‘authentic achievement’, developed by Newman and Associates, puts forward the essential need for intellectual quality in schooling and denotes that ‘all students deserve an education that extends beyond transmission of isolated facts and skills to in-depth understanding and complex problem solving and that is useful to students and society beyond the classroom’ (1996, p. 18).

A core research principle for this study, therefore, was that pedagogical approaches that actively involve students, include contextually relevant work of intellectual quality, and that nurture a supportive environment, would make a positive difference to the learning outcomes of all students. Both Haberman’s research, together with the findings of Newmann and Associates, provide a strong foundation to support this research intention. Building on the foundations of the work of Haberman and Newmann and Associates, was the seminal Productive Pedagogies Research from the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) research team (Lingard, Ladwig, & Mills, 2001). The Productive Pedagogies Research was based on the findings of the QSRLS, that was commissioned by the Queensland government and conducted by a team of university based researchers between 1998 to 2000, to report on classroom practices that were most effective in promoting both social and academic student outcomes. From these findings, the Productive Pedagogies (PP) research identified the types of classroom practices that would lead to high-quality learning for students, with a specific focus on improving the outcomes of students who ‘traditionally underachieve and under-participate in education’ (Hayes et al., 2006, p. 4). As this study focused on the types of pedagogy that contribute to more engaged learners, the PP Research was of particular importance to this investigation.

This study also aimed to strongly correspond with the view of the above-mentioned research that the quality of pedagogy is a social justice issue. Hayes et al. (2006) argue that deficit thinking (thinking that blames students and/or their families for
students’ lack of academic achievement), when combined with pedagogic
disadvantage, exacerbates the inequities in society (p. 36). Extending the Newmann
and Associates concept of ‘authentic achievement’, the premise of the PP framework
is that all students, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, need classrooms
that are intellectually challenging. The PP framework thus starts with intellectual
quality as the first of four dimensions that categorise productive classroom practices.
Connectedness, supportive classroom environment and working with and valuing
difference make up the other dimensions of the PP framework. The intention of the
framework is to display how these elements combine to provide rich learning
opportunities for students in which they are involved in higher-order thinking,
connecting and integrating knowledge beyond the classroom, giving them social
support and opportunities to explore cultural knowledge and time for active
citizenship (Hayes et al., 2006, pp. 22-23). Therefore, this study is firmly located
within these beliefs; that students from all backgrounds deserve opportunities to
participate in meaningful work. It resonates with the statement by Hayes et al.:

We support the view that all students should be given tasks that require them
to demonstrate high-quality academic outcomes … this is a form of social
justice premised on the assumptions that all students have a right to learn, a
right to the equitable distribution of educational resources and a right to
experience quality teaching. (2006, p. 90)

The potential for rich learning as described by the PP framework has directly
influenced the student engagement theme of this research.

The classrooms that are presented in this thesis reside in low socio-economic status
(SES) communities. Such classrooms are often characterised by ranging levels of
complex factors such as disruptive student resistance, low-learner self-concept,
fractured student or community relationships with mainstream society, reductive
teaching practices, negative media attention for the school community, high student
mobility and specific student cultural needs. These factors vary across the three
schools that are the sites of this research. This snapshot of the various contextual
challenges is presented to highlight the various complexities at work in these schools
and which contribute toward maintaining the ‘pedagogies of under-attainment’
(Lingard, 2011; Thomson et al., 2010) driven by high-pressure educational systems and in which:

… the neo-liberal project remains the default setting for contemporary social and educational policy … our future depends on good schools, good school leaders and good teachers producing critical thinkers and local global citizens, as well as challenging the intransigent nexus between student social class background, school learning and achievement. (Thomson, Lingard, & Wrigley, 2012, p. 12)

The research literature suggests that neo-liberal, marketised educational regimes have increased such practices as high stakes testing, the creation of league tables of school results and teacher accountability, but that these do not contribute to closing the equity gap; and that ‘marketisation has largely benefited those who are already advantaged’ (Orlando & Sawyer, 2013, p. 6). This study acknowledged the importance of pedagogy in addressing the equity gap, without disregarding that deep and long-term change would also require policy on educational equity and poverty. The philosophical heart behind this research aligned with the ‘enlightenment’ view of the term ‘pedagogy’, as presented by Thomson, Lingard and Wrigley (2012) as the belief in ‘the intrinsic worth of all human beings and the potential for personal and social improvement through education’ (p. 10).

The opening section of the review of the literature on the theme of student engagement has attempted to explore and highlight why a socially just pedagogy was of paramount concern to this study. The review now moves on to explore the FGP student engagement framework that further supports the position that authentic pedagogical practices create high levels of student engagement.

2.3.2 A ‘fair go’ in education

‘Fair go’ is a familiar term in the Australian vernacular that captures an appeal to give someone ‘a chance’. The research reported in this thesis is about considering new ways of giving students equal ‘chances’ to participate in quality education and is largely influenced by the FGP student engagement framework. This framework illustrates the position that student engagement is dependent on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students. This view was empirically and
Theorically developed within the FGP, which has been conducting action research within low SES communities for 15 years (Fair Go Team, 2006; Munns, Sawyer, & Cole, 2013). The FGP places emphasis on learning, rather than focusing on the control of student behaviour, in order to explore pedagogies that inspire ‘in task’ (‘substantive’ engagement – that is, strong psychological investment), not ‘on task’ (‘procedural’ engagement – that is merely complying with teacher directions) (2013, p. 19). The distinction between ‘in task’ and ‘on task’ engagement was an important consideration for this study, as a broad characteristic of the type of low SES classrooms under investigation for this research was that their pedagogical environments are often marked by the concentration on behaviour management and ‘back to basics’ instruction (Cole, Mooney, & Power, 2013, p. 123). Rather than emphasising procedural engagement, the FGP sought to focus on substantive engagement. Such a pedagogical stance was at the heart of the arts practices developed for this research.

The FGP offers small ‘e’ and big ‘E’ engagement to refer to types of engagement that develop deeper and longer-term feelings in students that education is something that ‘works’ for them. Small ‘e’ engagement encompasses substantive engagement while big ‘E’ engagement refers to the long-term acceptance by students that education is a productive resource for present and future use (Munns & Sawyer, 2013, p. 19). The theoretical framing of the FGP was strongly drawn from the Newmann and Associates and PP research, as described above. From a pedagogical standpoint, the FGP framework emphasises that a central component of the link between student engagement and classroom practices came back to the teacher’s role in providing regular and specifically targeted experiences for students to ‘think hard (high cognitive), feel good (high affective) and work towards being more productive learners (high operative)’ (p. 21). The practical expression of the interplay between these components was of particular interest to the intentions of this thesis.

The student engagement theme of this research relied on two important aspects of the FGP frame. The first is the creation and implementation of engaging pedagogical experiences and processes, and the second aspect refers to the messages of
engagement that are sent to students through these processes and experiences. The following figures illustrate the first and second aspects of the framework.

The inner circle of Figure 2.1 represents the connection between high cognitive (thinking hard), high affective (feeling good) and high operative (becoming better learners) dimensions of experience. This circular diagram illustrates how each component exists in a relationship with the other, and, that authentic student engagement relies on the interdependence of each element.

![Figure 2.1: Engaging experiences and processes (Munns & Sawyer, 2013, p. 22)](image)

Classroom experiences that work towards student engagement in this model are thus those that are intellectually challenging (high cognitive), enjoyable and seen as valuable by the students (affective), and that assist them in being better learners (operative). The outer circle in the diagram includes student self-assessment, teacher inclusive conversations, teacher feedback and a student community of reflection as important processes that, when operating together, support students to feel that they are valued members of a learning community. The FGP names this as the ‘insider
classroom’ (2013, pp. 21-22; Munns, 2014, p. 225). The notion of the insider classroom was a vital feature of this research in that the pedagogical design is based on the notion that all students should have a ‘vital role to play’ and enact strong involvement within their classrooms and the work that they do (Fair Go Team, 2006, p. 12). When both cycles in the diagram are turning together, they represent the FGP ideas about small ‘e’ engagement, also referred to as substantive and ‘in-task’ engagement. The FGP observed that ‘in-task’ engagement can be observed when students extend learning ‘beyond teacher, task and time’ (Fair Go Team, 2006, p. 21). This research aspired to enact small ‘e’ engagement, or ‘e’ngagement in practice within three socially disadvantaged classrooms.

The second aspect of the FGP framework that was highly relevant to this study was the discourses of power and engaging messages (Figure 2.2) that can operate within classrooms in order to support students in feeling part of an insider classroom. Drawing from Bernstein (1996), the FGP sought to define the way classrooms operate as message systems that influence students’ realisation of whether ‘school is a place for them’ (Fair Go Team, 2006, p. 10). Bernstein argued that classrooms deliver powerful messages to students about their present and future potential as learners (Munns et al., 2013, p. 23). The FGP illustrates that when the classroom emphasis is on ‘e’ngagement, and when students are welcomed to be active participants in a learning community (Figure 2.1), then it is highly likely that students will receive positive and engaging messages about themselves as learners, as identified in Figure 2.2 (Fair Go Team, 2006, p. 12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>knowledge</th>
<th>‘We can see the connection and the meaning’ – reflectively constructed access to contextualised and powerful knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ability</td>
<td>‘I am capable’ – feelings of being able to achieve and a spiral of high expectations and aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control</td>
<td>‘We do this together’ – sharing of classroom time and space: interdependence, mutuality and power with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td>‘It’s great to be a kid from’ – valued as individual and learner and feelings of belonging and ownership over learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voice</td>
<td>‘We share’ – environment of discussion and reflection about learning with students and teachers playing reciprocal meaningful roles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.2: Engaging messages for low SES students (FGP, 2006)**
The FGP acknowledges that messages, engaging or otherwise, can be interwoven through pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, and that these messages accumulate across time around different discourses of power (Sawyer, Callow, Munns, & Zammit, 2013, p. 105). Engaging messages are categorised by the FGP around knowledge (connection and meaning are clear), ability (learners feel capable), control (focus on learning not compliance), place (a sense of belonging is fostered) and voice (there is an environment where students can ‘have a say’) (Munns et al., 2013, pp. 105-106; Fair Go Team, 2006, p. 13). The FGP recognises that students from low SES backgrounds have traditionally received disengaging messages, and the negative consequence from this is that large numbers of students develop a view that they are lacking in ability, that learning is disconnected from their lives and that they are not valued as learners (Munns & Sawyer, 2013, p. 24). Through the activation of engaging classroom experiences (summarised as high cognitive, high affective and high operative) in conjunction with insider classroom processes, the FGP contends that this framework can be used:

… to offer opportunities for teachers to build classrooms in which students are challenged and motivated, and are given opportunities to become more successful learners. The suggestion was that these students can feel valued within an atmosphere of sharing and reflection, where their voices as learners are encouraged and respected. (p. 24)

Taking on board the social justice perspectives of the Newmann and Productive Pedagogies research and the engagement frameworks of the FGP, this study planned high cognitive, high affective and high operative classroom experiences aimed at encouraging students to become ‘insiders’. The collection and analysis of data was influenced by the engagement experiences and processes as discussed here. The lessons were designed by consciously using the FGP framework in tandem with the other main research themes to work towards classroom experiences in line with their description of high cognitive, high affective and high operative pedagogy. Secondly, the FGP framework for engaging processes including student self-assessment, teacher inclusive conversations, teacher feedback and a student community of reflection, was intentionally built into the lessons with the express aim of working towards the FGP illustration of student engagement. The framework was critically
scrutinised within the data that was collected. The analysis of data was thus highly influenced by this framework. A specific aim of the research was also to add to the academic conversation regarding the place for arts pedagogy for engagement.

2.3.3 Student engagement and the shape of the pedagogy in this study

This thesis valued the expression ‘learning trumps behaviour’ (Munns, 2013, p. 47) and set out to explore arts learning within challenging contexts. An influential perspective going into the research was that ‘behaviour issues are rephrased around learning, not compliance’ (Sawyer, Callow, Munns, & Zammit, 2013, p. 106). Considering this, a purposeful goal of the research was to examine arts pedagogy and creative teaching and learning outcomes in light of the small ‘e’ and big ‘E’ theoretical framing as outlined above. An important consideration during the planning phase for the lessons that were to be enacted within three socially disadvantaged contexts, was to ensure that the arts experiences maintained high cognitive prospects, in response to the socially-just ambitions of the study. This consideration is in line with Newman and Associates (1996) and the PP research that ‘when students from all backgrounds are expected to perform work of high intellectual quality, overall student academic performance increases and equity gaps diminish’ (Hayes et al., 2006, p. 45). The literature reinforces the view that the pedagogical emphasis in schools in low socio-economic areas are often based around management and instruction on the ‘basics’ (Cole, Mooney, & Power, 2013, p. 123; Haberman, 2005). In contrast to these types of ‘default mode’ pedagogical responses, or the ‘pedagogy of poverty’ as described by Haberman (1991), this research sought to facilitate classroom learning that students found valuable, engaging and meaningful. By focusing on student engagement as one of the central themes of this research, the learning experiences were shaped by the classrooms described in the FGP:

Students are encouraged to employ their imaginations, investigate and use novel thought and express learning in creative ways. These stimulating environments awaken students to learning that makes a difference to them, their futures and that of others. (Cole, Mooney, & Power, 2013, p. 123)
This theoretical review has already described that arts learning in classrooms has, historically, not necessarily been shaped or planned in line with high intellectual quality. Drawing on the FGP literature, the artistic pedagogy described in this research is highly influenced by the interaction between the high cognitive, high affective and high operative principles of student engagement and how classroom experiences can be shaped by this framework to lead towards more connected, imaginative and stimulating learning spaces.

The pedagogical model for the enactment of artistic learning in this research did not consider affective feeling and cognitive demands as binary opposites, but argued for their interdependence and interaction as vital to authentic learning. Furthermore, this study scrutinises and investigates the possibility that affective artistic responses should be read as important academic expressions. Thus, the study points to how artistic pedagogy can be adopted with student engagement as one of the thematic drivers towards authentic learning. To this end, one model influential to this research is the Storypath approach in which students are presented with a narrative over a sequence of learning episodes in which they create the setting, enact characters and then actively and communally solve the problems that arise throughout the story’s plot (McGuire & Cole, 2008; Cole & McGuire, 2012). In this approach, that is theoretically and empirically aligned with the FGP, students are able to become characters and in doing so can explore critical issues through a narrative structure in which they can ‘live the experience … students deserve a rich and engaging learning environment, and the narrative engages their imagination while developing ownership and meaningfulness’ (McGuire & Cole, 2008, p. 89). The objectives of Storypath and the artistic learning within this research align due to the shared value that is placed on creating deeply engaging classroom experiences at high cognitive, affective and operative levels. The objectives of the Storypath are also consistent with the socially just aims of the research due to the democratic nature of its approach in that ‘through the events of the story, the learners identify themselves as a socially meaningful group, performing a socially meaningful role – essential components of learning and real-life critical thinking’ (Cole & McGuire, 2012, p. 17). The pedagogical interventions described in this research are influenced by Storypath in that students in this study were invited to ‘live the experience’ by taking
on the characters within their classroom topics and furthermore to explore critical 
issues of human concern through this process.

Also highly applicable to this research is the notion that pedagogy can be deployed in 
culturally responsive ways. Wrigley, Thomson and Lingard (2012) name this as a 
‘político-pedagogical challenge’ (p. 201) and call for ‘a conscious rejection of deficit 
thinking about students and their families and a joint commitment to working with 
them towards a better future’ (p. 201). The backgrounds of students from the types of 
contexts under investigation in this research are often viewed in deficit ways with the 
consequence that expectations are lowered and the curriculum is constricted (Arthur 
& Hertzberg, 2013, p. 162). Such consequences can elucidate why many students 
from low SES backgrounds disengage from schooling. This research wished to 
‘challenge the hegemonic discourse of ‘poor, underprivileged kids’ coming to school 
as empty vessels with no hope of achieving academic success’ (Arthur et al., 2013, p. 
151). The pedagogical design of the lessons within this study therefore responds to 
the view that ‘inherited traditions of school-based education are socially, culturally 
and pedagogically inadequate because they are mismatched to the identities, cultures 
and needs of those they purport to serve’ (Wrigley, Thomson, & Lingard, 2012, p. 
201). Culturally responsive pedagogies, however, have the potential to address the 
specific needs of students from a diverse range of backgrounds and who are bilingual 
or multilingual. Arts-based learning was valued in this study as a highly culturally 
responsive pedagogical tool due to its multimodal nature and how it can ‘stimulate 
the visual kinaesthetic and auditory aspects of learning and therefore allow more 
children to feel confident as learners as a variety of ‘points of entry’ are being 
addressed’ (Chang, 2012, p. 7).

Turning away from deficit views of socially disadvantaged classrooms, the design of 
the lessons in this study sought to provide pedagogy of high expectations, intellectual 
challenge and a supportive classroom environment. As discussed, the FGP aimed to 
exemplify classrooms that promoted ‘in task’ as opposed to ‘on task’ styles of 
pedagogy, in which students were producing rather than simply reproducing 
knowledge. Arthur and Hertzberg (2013) demonstrate that producing ideas, risk- 
taking and attempting challenging tasks are often avoided by students from low SES
areas, and that a culturally responsive pedagogy would ensure safe and supportive environments as well as engaging message systems (p. 152). These practices would encourage students to ‘feel confident to take risks’ and would ‘promote imaginative and creative thinking and the exploration of multiple possibilities’ (p. 152). The arts-based learning in this research was employed specifically for such purposes. It was put forward as a central pedagogical tool to intellectually stimulate, deploy high expectations and enact a supportive classroom environment that aimed to emulate insider classroom feelings. The arts-based learning within this study was mindful of the view that ‘the absence of what we have called productive pedagogies exacerbates unequal outcomes from schooling’ (Lingard, Mills, & Hayes, 2000, p. 35), and so aimed to lift the social and academic performance of disadvantaged students through the interaction of the four themes of this research. Recognising the challenges faced by teachers and students in low socio economic classrooms, this research aimed to add to the discussion of how ‘learning trumps behaviour’.

This section described student engagement as the third theme of research and has positioned this study as answerable to more socially just educational experiences for disadvantaged students. The ideas that have been presented in the literature thus far are important considerations in the research investigation for the reason that the practical implementation of the Gallery model embraces the FGP engagement framework and aspires to work towards the insider classroom. A key area of the arts pedagogy deployed within the lessons was that it could be used as a conduit to help students to think critically and meaningfully about human experiences and big ideas within their learning. This idea is named, learning as a human endeavour, and is now explored as the final theme.

### 2.4 Learning as a human endeavour

#### 2.4.1 Learning is human, not technical

A main concern of this research was to highlight the integral human process of learning along with the intention to support young students to connect empathically with their topics of study. There were two main considerations within the research theme, learning as a human endeavour. The first was to investigate the inherently
social, as opposed to technical, aspect of learning, and, second, to add weight to the argument that arts education can provide a platform for students to authentically explore issues of human imperative. Such intentions were valued as important in this research to generate stimulating and meaningful classroom settings that promote intellectual quality and connectedness to the world beyond school.

Moving away from an over-reliance on understanding the achievement of students in only technical terms, this study sought to provide a case for the value of experiential learning by highlighting how social processes in the classroom enhanced engagement and how such processes can be read as meaningful and important expressions of learning and growth. Drawing largely from Dewey (1964), this theme focuses on the importance of experiential learning as an ideal to strive for in education. Dewey talks of the synonymous relationship between education and experience, in that a definition of education should take into account that ‘it is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience’ (1916, p. 59). Learning by experience, then, can be understood as a process of growth in terms of being influenced by the process of education, and, in turn, having the capacity to influence the world within and beyond the classroom from this process. Educational experience, in Dewey’s terms, affiliates with the FGP’s ideas around substantive engagement, part of which means that students begin to see that ‘school is for me’ and that educational experience is relevant for present and future use (Munns and Sawyer, 2013, p. 19). Experiential learning is thus conceptualised in this research as transactional because ‘this process is dynamic and two way; the interaction involves an impact on the environment by the individual as well as, in turn, an impact on the individual by the environment’ (Ord, 2009, p. 498). For Dewey, the engagement of an individual in an experience that renders it meaningful requires that ‘we do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness of experience’ (Dewey, as cited in Boydston, 1980, p. 146). This notion highlights the intrinsically social process of learning in that it can be perceived as a ‘continuous process of growth’ (Dewey, a cited in Boydston, 1980, p. 59) that relies on, and also impacts on, the social environment. Dewey reminds us that it is highly
important for students to value and see connections in their learning for ‘there is no
defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active
co-operation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying’
(1938, p. 67).

The distinction between procedural and substantive engagement is also relevant to
this argument, in that compliant learning and ‘busy-work’ style pedagogy does not
capture substantive and meaningful classroom experience. This is summarised neatly
in Dewey’s writing that ‘mere activity does not constitute experience’ (as cited in
Boydston, 1980, p. 146). Rather, this study aimed to show that learning as a human
endeavour and not a narrow set of mechanical tasks that are disconnected from the
lives of students. As Dewey encouraged, ‘the principle that development of
experience comes about through interaction means that education is essentially a
social process’ (Dewey, 1938, p. 58). It is the experience that comes about through
the students’ embodied interaction with arts pedagogy, creativity, student
engagement and learning as a human endeavour that was of interest in this research.

This theme did not wish to separate experience from the importance of inductive
technical knowledge, but argued that over reliance on the purely technical divorces
learning from its social nature and in the process, takes away important affective and
aesthetic experience. This does recognise a particular need for technical skills as
promoted by Eisner (2002a), who states ‘even an imaginative construction held
clearly in the minds’ eye has no empirical life unless the student has the technical
means for expressing it’ (p. 99). In discussing the rehearsal room pedagogy of the
Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), Winston (2015a) reminds us that the inner
subjective feeling and reflection that constitutes experience does not have to be
divorced from ‘techniques of experience’ (p. 82), and, further, that the type of
pedagogy in question here:

… does not place skills, subjective feeling, craft and artistry in opposing
camps but works pragmatically so that the one complements the other, just as
it models the oppositions of play and work, and of the aesthetic and the
intellectual, as false dichotomies. (Winston, 2015, p. 83)
These thoughts clearly support the link that induction to technique and the practice of teaching itself, as an expression of the ‘techniques of experience’, are important human endeavours because of the inherently human transaction at work in the experience and relationship between teaching and learning. Substantive engagement was privileged in this research and links to the idea that aesthetic considerations are considered a key aspect of the learning as a human endeavour theme.

2.4.2 Arts and learning as a human endeavour

The social process of educative experiences was heightened in this research through the application of arts-based pedagogy. Winston (2015a) draws on the writings of Dewey to discuss the aesthetic as a core feature of experiential learning and states:

> What turns any experience into an experience – into something memorable, intrinsically worthwhile, satisfying and rewarding in itself – is its aesthetic quality and this is true whether we deem the experience to be predominantly intellectual or practical rather than artistic. (Winston, 2015a, p. 81)

This comment is highly consistent with the student engagement framework of the FGP that seeks to align high cognitive, affective and operative learning in the pursuit of memorable and intrinsically worthwhile classroom experience. The artistic work within this study aimed to promote the essentially human process of learning and explore how artistic pedagogical practices could amplify important human behaviours such as empathy and imaginative thinking. In highlighting the aesthetic as an important human capacity, Eisner (2002a) drew on Dewey’s ideas to explain the important place of the aesthetic in learning and stated that ‘John Dewey once commented that the stamp of the aesthetic needed to be on any intellectual idea in order for that idea to be complete’ (p. 199).

By its very nature, arts pedagogy is vastly social, and, within this study, it was characterised as: a communal practice; playful; affective; emotive and aesthetic, as well as intellectual. Two important human capacities that were pursued through arts pedagogy in this study were empathy and imaginative activity. Eisner states:
In schools we tend to emphasise facticity, correctness, linearity, concreteness. We tend to underestimate and underplay those imaginative processes that are so characteristic of the cognitive life of pre-school and even primary-school children. (2002a, p. 198)

Imaginative processes are a part of the enactment of artistic behaviour and ways of thinking in the way that, as Egan (1992a) supports, it has affective aspects in image forming and generating new ideas. Following from this, artistic pedagogy was valued as a procedure to generate critical and evaluative thinking, and emotive and affective representation. Thus, artful expressions were acknowledged in the study as important enactments of intellectual knowledge, and were regarded as aesthetic outcomes of the intellect.

This study employed imaginative pedagogy to incite critical thinking about issues of human impact. The intention was for students to employ ‘imagination in the capacity to think of something as possibly being so’ (Egan, 1992, p. 42) and to imagine the effects of certain socio-cultural events on people. In this way, this thesis endorses that ‘imagination and critical thinking may be conceptualised as mutually supportive capacities’ (Stout, 2007, p. 47). Here, a clear partner for imaginative thinking is empathy. By fostering imaginative capabilities in students in the study, it followed that students could begin to understand an experience from the standpoint of another, by imagining another person’s reality and their response to an experience. Arnold (2005) explains, ‘empathic approaches to education differ in that they are designed to encourage a dynamic between thinking and feeling in order to promote learning more effectively’ (p. 33). It is this dynamic between thinking and feeling that was important to the aims of this research and the deployment of arts pedagogy towards helping students to question big ideas of human significance. Imagination and empathy were recognised as core human capacities and were thus promoted though arts learning as central pedagogical concerns.

As Eisner (2002a) argues, ‘We often fail to nurture a human capacity that is absolutely central to our cultural development’ (p. 198). A part of these concerns was to acknowledge the experiential aspect of learning by engaging students through quality learning experiences and to develop their broader understanding of issues of
humanity beyond the classroom. These issues are summarised in this research as big ideas, and will now be discussed.

2.4.3 Big ideas

This section acknowledges that students should be given chances to encounter issues of human affect in their learning and to gain deeper emotional understanding of these concerns. In the section on arts pedagogy that began this chapter, the notion of the integration of big ideas with arts pedagogy was introduced as an important curriculum practice to give students opportunities to encounter ‘real world’ issues and problematic knowledge. A key belief was that big ideas and concepts of human impact and relevance should be given greater attention in lesson planning and that ‘a curriculum experience that is rooted in big ideas not only identifies the direction of the study, but also illuminates its relevance for serious work’ (Wasserman, 2007, p. 292). Brophy, Alleman, & Knighton (2009) reiterate the value of structuring curriculum around powerful concepts and contend that big ideas are conducive to authentic applications because they are ‘embedded within networks of knowledge and connected to other powerful ideas’ (p. 59). This position necessitates meaningful lessons:

It is not possible to improve parade-of-facts curricula simply by replacing their worksheets with better activities; one must first replace the knowledge component by shifting from parades of miscellaneous facts to networks of connected content structured around big ideas that can provide a content base capable of supporting better activities. (p. 59)

The outcome of integrating big ideas within curriculum is to support students in their understanding of significant human issues. This was seen as important to the social justice aims of the research, in which it was promoted that students should be given work of intellectual quality and ‘real world’ knowledge. Consistent with Dewey’s ideas on the power of education as it relates to students’ development, the involvement of human concerns in curriculum practice is regarded as an important aspect of supplying quality learning experiences. Dewey (as cited in Breault & Breault, 2013, p. 163) says that ‘the educative process is a continuous process of growth, having as its aim at every stage an added capacity of growth’. The students’
engagement with big ideas in this research was valued for its potential for ‘an added capacity of growth’. The application of big ideas was considered important in this research.

When there is no challenge, everything is satisfactory, there may be little motivation to stretch one’s thinking, to try something new, to experiment, to revise, to appraise, and to start again. Creativity profits from constraints. The problem is a major centrepiece by which learning is promoted. It is embedded in a social structure that can facilitate or impede its resolution. (Eisner, 2002, p. 96)

Big ideas can thus foster creative thinking, curiosity, deeper understanding and empathic experience. The focus of this theme in practice was the development of a deep emotional connection between the learner and what was being learned. The emotional or human connection to learning stands in contrast to a purely skills or factual based curricula that separates the learner and the learned. This approach challenges educators to focus on schooling as an intensely social and moral process, and not a technical endeavour (Winston, 1998, p. 90).

This position questions the industrial goal of education that places emphasis on the positivist agenda that favours quantifiable results in the assessment of student outcomes. Dewey (1967) reminds us that to conceive of school as an isolated institution, or that ‘successful’ students can be defined in purely positivist terms, is to deny that school is a preparation for social life and serviceableness.

The much and commonly lamented separation in the schools between intellectual and moral training, between acquiring information and growth of character, is simply one expression of the failure to conceive and construct the school as a social institution, having social life and value within itself. (p. 62)

The concept of creativity in education can be refocused in this context in a more ethical light to embrace what Craft (2006) labels, ‘creativity with wisdom’.

Creativity can be aligned within this agenda to carry a more responsible vision for the relationship between creative teaching and learning practices, social morality and student achievement and fulfilment. As outlined, creativity is seen as a solution to the current socio-economic framework characterised by change, instability and
competitiveness. In this light, it is argued that teachers need to consider how to align creativity to ethical values. Big ideas, therefore, added an intellectual and ethical dimension to this work as students are asked to engage with questions of profound human significance and impact.

This section has presented literature to reinforce the human intentions of the Gallery model. It examined the inherently social nature of learning that this study emphasised in contrast to a performative education system in which technical learning is favoured and promoted. It has discussed how arts pedagogy has the potential to amplify inherent human capabilities, and also that it can be used as a vehicle to produce and express an understanding of big ideas. The next section will discuss beauty in education as a concept of influence to this study.

### 2.5 Beauty

An important concept that was seen as relevant and meaningful to each of the four themes of research as described in this literature review, is the idea of beauty in education. Winston (2010) has discussed in depth the concept of beauty in connection to classroom pedagogy and has positioned beauty in education as important in the quest for finding classrooms where learning is pleasurable, engaging, where emotion and cognition reside together, and in which individual lessons have aesthetic value. Furthermore, he argues that beauty can be realised through arts-focused pedagogical practices to stimulate more authentic and ethical responses from students. For these reasons, beauty in education was regarded as a highly relevant and practical theoretical consideration in regards to each of the four main themes of research. There is a gap in educational literature in terms of how beauty can be employed in practice within the curriculum and also how it can be framed towards fulfilling the ethical dimension from the creativity for wisdom discourse (Winston, 2010, pp. 1 & 91).

In brief, Winston proposes that beauty as a concept can be distinguished in educational discourse for its power to inspire and engage students, to promote holistic learning and to instil the experience of pleasure in learning (2010). A full
discussion of the intricate and detailed history and philosophy of beauty as a concept is beyond the scope of this literature review. However, to pick up the key ideas, beauty can be traced back to the philosophy of Kant, who argued that to name something as beautiful is to make a judgement of taste without it having utilitarian purpose (Winston, 2006). In this sense, something can be imagined or acknowledged as beautiful, without it having a direct ‘usefulness’ to the individual. This perception suggests that the individual can experience and be affected by beauty, and this experience is an end to itself. This treatise has implications for an education system with dominant discourses of instrumentalism and accountability. Winston points out that ‘the arts have learned to justify their value in terms such as creativity, cultural awareness and social welfare, concepts that hold performative currency in the dominant discourse’ (Winston, 2006, p. 287). Such a statement implies that aesthetic considerations are seen as largely irrelevant in the values of a target-centred, instrumentally driven educational system. From this perspective, it can be seen that beauty as a concept was relevant for this research because it gave importance to the power of educational experience, rather than pinning all educational encounters on quantifiable and measureable, skill-based outcomes.

Another Kantian perspective that is important to consider is the understanding of the concept of beauty as working through the emotions, in the sense that to appreciate something as beautiful is to feel it as beautiful. Winston (2010) relates how Kant categorised different experiences of beauty into two types, namely the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘sublime’. The former can be attributed to experiences that ‘move us but also reassure us’ (p. 90), whereas experiences in the ‘sublime’ ‘signifies a beauty that is powerful and overwhelming, that thrills and shocks rather than charms’ (p. 90). The difference between the two therefore depends on the kind of effect that they have on us. Rather than overemphasising the polarity between these two distinctions, Winston (2010) argues that these considerations can support the practical pedagogical application of beauty in classrooms. In referring to the pedagogy of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s (UK) educational work, he argues that the Kantian perspective on the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘sublime’ can be seen as:
… tendencies that inform the rhythm and tone of RSC planning, as do considerations of balancing physical activity with discussion; individual with group work; high energy with stillness and so on. (2015a, p. 92)

This perspective helped to articulate the understanding of beauty as an experience and informed the pedagogical design of the classroom work in this research.

An idea that thoroughly aligns with the four themes of this research is that beauty engages students at both cognitive and affective levels. Winston (2015a) refers to the ancient Greek philosophy of Plato whose writing reinforced that ‘beauty attracts us through qualities we perceive in it – harmony, balance and proportion’, but that the idea of beauty is inseparably infused with love, in that it inspires ‘within us a desire not only to possess but also to know … Beauty … brings the passions and the intellect together as its desire to possess is also a desire to know better’ (p. 90). The connection between feeling and knowing is also fostered in the writing of Kant:

… describes how aesthetic experience engages the capacities of the imagination and of understanding, both of which are cognitive processes. He thus implies a close inter-relationship between emotion and cognition … what amounts to a theory of the emotions as cognitive in nature. (Winston, 2010, p. 27).

This perspective highlights how beauty could be embraced for its potential to not only lift the social and academic outcomes of students, but as a worthwhile venture for learning as a pleasurable and valuable human endeavour.

Finally, another concept that is important to the understanding of a ‘pedagogy of beauty’ is that of ‘unselfing’. This theory, attributed to the philosopher Murdoch (as cited in Winston, 2010), explains that ‘unselfing’ ‘happens when we forget about ourselves, our anxieties and our day-to-day preoccupations and is at the heart of the experience of beauty’ (Winston, 2010, p. 51). Winston clarifies that ‘unselfing’ can be understood as ‘a process of unpossessive contemplation … a loosening of personal preoccupations’ (2015a, p. 91), and, importantly, for this study, describes that there is a moral centre to Murdoch’s argument in that an experience of beauty which ‘alters consciousness’ can stimulate virtues that inspire moral thought and
action. A fundamental aspect of this research was to analyse how both artistic and aesthetic pedagogy are deeply connected to moral qualities such as empathy and compassion, and how beauty as a concept provided another lens through which to examine authentic learning within classrooms. Winston clarifies Murdoch’s position:

We turn to beauty to bring qualities such as these into our lives, to help us find them within ourselves. And given the stress in schools on what we might call the ‘productive’ virtues such as competitiveness, persistence, co-operative and autonomous endeavour, as well as the traditionally liberal virtues of honesty, integrity, resilience and tolerance, beauty can remind us of the softer virtues that we need to create a balanced moral environment. (2010, p. 136)

In the course of data collection and analysis, beauty in education was planned as an important point of reference to question the affective, aesthetic and ethical outcomes of the lessons. Subsequently, beauty in education was seen as an analytical lens that ran parallel alongside the four main themes of research. The concept of beauty was thus an active consideration in the planning and enactment of the lessons and in the subsequent analysis.

The aims of this research are consistent with Winston’s (2015a, p. 92) aspiration that pedagogy in beauty can ‘lead young people step by step into a journey which they will hopefully wish to continue for the intellectual and aesthetic pleasures they derive from it’. This statement is highly in balance with the four main themes for this study because it aims to bring together the high cognitive, affective and operative engagement in learning through big ideas, that was pursued through aesthetic and creative means to support students in feeling part of an insider classroom for long term educational commitment.

To summarise thus far, this chapter has discussed literature relevant to the four main themes of the study, as well as the concept of beauty that was considered an important theoretical and empirical touchstone across each of these themes. As described in Chapter 1, a curriculum model (the Gallery) was established from the research themes and questions. This chapter has aimed to explore and review the literature on these themes with the intention of defining the shape and pedagogical and empirical focus of the case study investigation. To recapitulate, the four themes
are: (i) arts pedagogy; (ii) creativity; (iii) student engagement; and (iv) learning as a human endeavour.

The first theme was arts pedagogy. Within this section it was discussed that an important principle of the research is that arts pedagogy can encourage students to develop empathic understanding of the big ideas in their work, and following from this, that students can develop meaningful connections between their learning and the world beyond the classroom. Related to this point is the premise that the arts can enhance human, affective and aesthetic experiences in classrooms, and that these are considered essential objectives in their own right, in contrast to simply validating artistic curriculum against solely functional or positivist objectives. The review then went on to describe how artistic expressions are important and applicable forms of academic representation for their unique capacity to allow students to connect emotionally and intellectually with their topics of study. This research aimed to subvert narrow and constrained curriculum practices and promote those that move towards more engaging pedagogy that valued empathic and emotional understandings, and supports the connection between cognitive and affective learning. The last main argument discussed in this section was that arts pedagogy can promote a broader understanding of authentic learning in the ‘basics’ and also that this study aims to explore how students can communicate their knowledge and understandings through artistic forms.

The second theme was creativity and the review situated the various discourses regarding its increased status in education. Four rhetoric including democratic and political creativity, ubiquitous creativity, creativity as economic imperative and the creative classroom, as defined by Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010) were positioned and reviewed to orientate the key ideas of creativity as relevant to this study. These include that creativity is embraced as part of the inclusive practice of student engagement important to this research; that ubiquitous creativity has democratic appeal to the practical pedagogical implementation of imaginative and possibility thinking within curriculum practices; the economic imperative rhetoric illuminates why there is increased policy for creativity in education, and as such, suggests that it should be answerable to a values framework; and finally, that this
study affiliates with the view that creative pedagogy can engender more engaging classroom environments. In the section on creativity and ‘back to basics’ it was discussed that this research will embrace creativity as a social practice and the importance of collaborative activity over creativity in education for competition and individualism. In brief, when creativity is used hereafter in this thesis it is understood as having a core human focus and an ethical drive for deeper human understanding. It emphasises characteristics such as collaboration, imaginative thinking, play and improvisation as important pedagogical concerns to enhance intellectual and affective engagement, interdependent and empathic responses and to offset narrow and disengaging curriculum practices. ‘Wisdom and creativity’ was then discussed in the review as part of an aspiration to align creativity with a values framework to stimulate more ethical creative approaches in classrooms.

In the third theme of student engagement, it was established that this research is concerned with enhancing the social and educational outcomes of students from disadvantaged communities. That is, the research impetus was strongly driven from a social justice perspective. In describing the works of Haberman, Newmann and Associates and the PP research, the review illuminated why the quality of pedagogy is a social justice issue and that classrooms from disadvantaged backgrounds deserve rich and meaningful learning opportunities. This section then went on to describe the research of the FGP and stated that its student engagement framework was adopted for the practical implementation of this study. Thus high cognitive, high affective and high operative classroom experiences were purposefully embedded as part of the intention to encourage students to become ‘insiders’ within their classrooms. This section concluded by stating that this research replaces deficit views of disadvantaged classrooms with a pedagogy of high expectations, intellectual challenge and a supportive classroom environment.

Learning as a human endeavour was presented as the fourth theme of research and this section began by describing how this study favours the social and inherently human aspects of learning because these challenge the constrained and competitive curriculum practices that are characteristic of performative educational structures. It also introduced and explored that the focus of the implemented learning programs
would be concerned with big ideas of human importance. This section described how artistic work promotes the essentially human process of learning by strengthening important human behaviours such as empathy, play, collaboration and imaginative thinking. Important to the social justice aims of this research is that students should be involved in learning experiences of high intellectual quality with ‘real world’ knowledge, and this is best achieved by heightening their understanding of significant human issues through examining big ideas.

Beauty in education was next discussed as a highly relevant concept in regards to the overall aims of the research in the way that it provides a case for the importance of enjoyment and engagement, and for its capacity to stimulate compassionate, empathic and emotional responses in students. Beauty, then provides an anchor to the argument that the four main themes, in conjunction, work towards the idea that artistic and creative pedagogy with a humane focus can drive highly affective, engaging and authentic learning within classrooms. This idea is summarised within the perspective of Winston (2015b) that ‘the arts … are particularly well placed to bring the force and energy of love into the curriculum if teachers can find ways to harness the beauty in what they are teaching’ (p. 11). This notion also supports the social and educational enhancement of students as a social justice imperative.

In translating the theoretical concerns and aims of this study for practical classroom application, and for sequenced, in-depth learning, the concept of ‘The Gallery and Exhibition’ was developed as a model to guide the pedagogy in practice. This chapter now proceeds to discuss the literature that informed the Galley and Exhibition model.

2.6 The Gallery and Exhibition

Chapter 1 introduced the Gallery (Winchester, 2012, 2013, 2015) as a curriculum model to be tested through action research and informed by the balance and interplay between four research themes; arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour. The Gallery and Exhibition model embraces the perspective that development of big ideas requires sustained study of a topic in-depth
(Brophy, Alleman, & Knighton, 2009). The term ‘Gallery’ is used as a metaphor for guiding pedagogy because, like an art gallery, the classroom pedagogy in this study was devoted to the exhibition of works of art in all forms, was a community space open to sharing ideas of cultural value, appealed to emotion and aesthetic enjoyment and was a democratic space, open to everyone to share and participate in. These factors were seen as ideals to aim for within each classroom in this study. Similarly, each class group was to work towards the creation of an ‘Exhibition’. Linking a classroom exhibition to that which might be seen in an everyday gallery, this type of artistic culmination was seen as an opportunity for students to share with their community the deep and purposeful learning that had been occurring throughout the Gallery experiences. Within this study, the Exhibition was seen as an authentic expression of the learning that had taken place throughout the Gallery lessons. It was thus not seen as a disconnected, one-off artistic showcase, but rather, a purposeful exhibition of the learning undertaken by the students, which could then be shared with their school and wider community. In planning, the Exhibition was foreseen as a type of performance that had a strong pedagogical focus. Gallagher, Freeman and Wessells (2010) raise important issues relating to the presentation of the Gallery to an audience:

The pressure of having to present a ‘product’ to a school community places pressure on the work, ‘raising the stakes’ for the students and teacher alike. Performing in front of an audience is a special embodied learning experience that one may not be able to simulate in a classroom. Having work culminate in a performance can also generate a feeling of accomplishment and ownership among the participants, especially when the work was an original collective creation. (p. 22)

The Exhibition was thus promoted as a rich expression of artistic learning, and not only a fanciful artistic ‘show’. It was intended to accentuate the participants’ feeling of ownership as part of the insider classroom mentality theorised in this study. For this reason, it was seen less as a ‘product’ of learning and more of an invitation to audience into the ‘process’ of the Gallery learning.
Influential to the pedagogical design of the Gallery are process drama and rehearsal room pedagogy. This section now turns to a brief explanation of these two practices, and how they relate to the Gallery model.

Process drama is a participant centred drama teaching methodology in which students explore ideas, mainly through improvisation, and express these in an unscripted framework. Participants are involved in ‘‘writing’ their own play as the narrative and tensions of their drama unfold in time and space, and through action, reaction and interaction’ (Bowell & Heap, 2013, p. 6). This approach is attributed to Cecily O’Neill from the work of the drama educationalists Dorothy Heathcote, Brian Way and Gavin Bolton (Dinham, 2013, p. 197). It can be defined as educational, improvisatory dramatic activity that is concerned with the participants’ change in outlook, thematic exploration, experiences that do not rely on a written script, outcomes that are discovered through the process and not predetermined and the leader working within and outside the drama (Winston, 1998, p. 77). These characteristics are highly relevant to the pedagogical ambitions of this research in the sense that it was to move away from an objectives model of curriculum planning in which the learning would be judged against positivist indicators, and aimed instead to map the expressive results of the programs within three socially disadvantaged classrooms. The four cornerstones of process drama as identified by Bowell and Heap (2013) include play, learning in context, owning the learning and symbolic representation of experience (p. 8). These cornerstones are in line with the art-based methodology in place for this study, but also with the student engagement theme of research in regards to the intention to create more equal learning opportunities for students to achieve success. A clear purpose of this study was to lift the engagement of the students, and as Winston (1998) articulates, to employ process drama ‘to illuminate how drama engages children in significant moral processes of thought, feeling and representation’ (p. 90). This aligns with the work of Dewey (as cited in Simpson & Stack 2010, p. 29), for whom experience is both a means for, and an end to, education: ‘Education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing.’
Second, a recently published work (Winston, 2015a) on rehearsal room pedagogy also aligns with the pedagogical style of this research. The genesis of rehearsal room pedagogy can be linked to the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and how it describes the types of creative approaches generated in professional theatrical rehearsal rooms that might be applicable and transferable to classroom practice (Winston, 2015a). While the parameters of this review do not allow for an in-depth discussion of the history of this approach, nonetheless it is important to demonstrate that rehearsal room pedagogy includes collaborative approaches, playfulness and improvisation as keys to its function in educational practice. Comparisons and connections are made between the RSC rehearsal studio and a collaborative drama classroom (Winston, 2015a, p. 53). Greatly pertinent to the pedagogical focus in this study are the descriptions of the aims of rehearsal room pedagogy such as ‘the aspiration to make the classroom more like a rehearsal room where sharing, exploration and physical activity characterise the learning process’ (p. 55).

Connecting rehearsal room practices to the classroom, moreover, appears to be highly relevant to the student engagement theme of this study because ‘active approaches are being proposed as the most suitable and engaging way for a class of young people to work them out for themselves’ (p. 73). In explaining the RSC pedagogy in practice, Winston describes a workshop based on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and includes the workshop leaders’ aims that clearly illustrate the cooperative and inclusive nature of the pedagogy, which are also consistent with the aims of this study. These are:

> How do we build communities in our classrooms through which we can explore Shakespeare’s plays together actively? How do we develop a strong sense of ‘us’ rather than ‘me’ at the heart of this? and How might our classrooms become more like rehearsal rooms and what are the benefits of doing this? (Winston, 2015a, p. 55)

These aims mirror the intentions of the Gallery model, in which artistic experiences were central to the motive of creating an insider classroom mentality.

Both process drama and rehearsal room pedagogy were of interest in the planning and enactment of the Gallery model. The learning models and practices described
above both highlight the importance of aesthetic considerations and ‘experience’ in the pedagogy. These models are consistent with the ideas of Dewey who advocated that experience be placed at the centre of learning.

Current educational practice still tends to be dominated by an emphasis on learning objectives and measurable outcomes and these can lead to the kind of overly simplified, means – ends lesson planning that, rather than engaging and intellectually energizing young people, can produce experiences that Dewey defined as ‘infected with apathy, lassitude and stereotype. (Winston, 2015a, p. 81)

The Gallery is thus put forward as a unique aspect of this research, a learning and curriculum model that exemplifies the interaction of the four themes of research.

To summarise and conclude, this section has shown how process drama and rehearsal room pedagogy are influential existing examples of communal, exploratory and artistic forms of teaching and learning, and whose features are consistent with the aims and theoretical mapping of this research. It also justifies the concepts of Gallery and Exhibition as a curriculum and teaching model that may enable teachers to plan in-depth, artistic sequences that promote the development of big ideas. The main sections of this chapter will now be summarised and concluded.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour as the four key themes of research. It has then presented beauty in education as an important concept that is relevant to each theme of research and influential to the design and implementation of the pedagogy in this study. The chapter then described the conception of the Gallery and Exhibition, and how the literature presented in this chapter has been used to inform, guide and drive the implementation of these models in the investigation in the specific research contexts.

Chapter 3 will present the methodology of this research that has been utilised to best gather and analyse data for the study.
Chapter 2 outlined the relevant literature in regards to this research and examined how the integration of arts, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour combined to thematically guide the intentions of this research. These intentions were to investigate how pedagogy can be deployed in artistic and creative ways to deeply engage students and encourage them to be involved in the big ideas in their curriculum. As described in Chapter 2, this pedagogy was deemed important as a social justice issue in that all classrooms deserve stimulating and intellectually demanding teaching and learning, and that such an approach can aim to challenge the equity gap for marginalised classrooms. Furthermore, this research acknowledges that students should be given more opportunities for knowledge and empathic understanding of important human issues as part of the intention to respond to the notion of ‘creativity with wisdom’ (Craft, 2006) and beauty in education (Winston, 2010). Such responses, it is argued, can stimulate dialogue about a more humane approach to learning. The research questions will now be presented.

3.1 Research questions and methodological focus

This chapter outlines the methodology used to investigate the value of arts programs that seek to develop a relationship between creative teaching and learning practices, social responsibility and student achievement and engagement. The methodologies have been carefully designed to rigorously respond to the central research question:

What happens when children in low SES primary classrooms are introduced to pedagogy that focuses on student engagement and the arts?

To reiterate, there are three sub-questions to this study, namely:
A. How can purposeful arts and creative teaching and learning deeply engage students?

B. How can arts-focused teaching and learning experiences contribute towards a more human focus for creativity in education?

C. How can the concept of ‘beauty’ as a human value serve as a bridge between arts-focused creative pedagogical practices and learning as a human endeavour?

With these in focus, this qualitative study involved the development, implementation and evaluation of arts programs within three primary classrooms, each within a different school setting, in the outer suburbs of a metropolitan Australian city. This research was thus conducted through an action research approach in line with arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012) in which the researcher planned and taught the programs and had practical teaching support from the existing class teacher. Each school site was attended for extensive periods each week in order to teach the arts programs and facilitate the collection of data, over two complete school terms (approximately 20 weeks). Full ethical permission was obtained from both Western Sydney University and NSW Department of Education for this research. Pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis. The research contexts in which the arts programs took place are now described.

3.2 Research context

The primary schools involved in this research are all located in the outer suburbs of a large Australian metropolitan city. This region is characterised as having a large and diverse population. In 2011, the region supported 2.02 million people, with one third of this population having migrated to Australia (NSW Government, Premier and Cabinet, 2013). The schools in this study are all serving low socio-economic (SES) communities, and are thus all influenced by factors, such as high unemployment, high percentages of families living in public housing, high student mobility, low student attendance and frequent negative media attention (Fair Go Team, 2006; NSW Department of Education and Communities [DEC]; 2013). This research is mindful
of the detrimental effects of adopting a deficit view of the students in such contexts (Munns, Hatton, & Gilbert, 2013, p. 34), and so it is acknowledged that not all students in the following classes are affected by the extremes of living in a low SES community. Teachers in such contexts are working with a variety of students. Some have English as a Second Language (ESL) needs, others are from Indigenous backgrounds, and significant numbers have special needs in achieving literacy and numeracy outcomes (Munns et al., 2013, p. 36). While there are students whose oppositional behaviour places significant physical, emotional and pedagogical pressure on the classroom, it is highly relevant to note that oppositional or disruptive behaviour from students in these contexts does not typify all low SES contexts, and that ‘there are schools … where compliance by students is the defining classroom feature and the task is to convince students that active, authentic and collaborative learning is productive for school success’ (Munns et al., 2013, p. 35).

In all three contexts, literacy and numeracy are outlined within school plan documentation (DEC, 2013) as the most critical priority areas for student achievement. Student engagement is also prioritised as an area of focus. The arts and creativity are not specified as areas of focus in any of the three contexts. For these reasons, the three schools in this study were chosen as important contexts for the implementation of arts and humanities based, creative learning programs, because it was a key research intention to focus on student engagement and the link between pedagogy and the improvement of student learning outcomes. Some contextual features of each of the three schools are now provided.

### 3.2.1 Valley Primary School

Valley Primary School is in an outer urban suburb of Western Sydney. This region represents one of the most multicultural areas of Sydney with 89.8% of people having parents born overseas, and the most common countries of birth being Vietnam 26.9%, Cambodia 6.0%, China (excludes Taiwan and Special Administrative Regions (SARs)) 4.6%, Iraq 2.6% and New Zealand 1.3% (Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, 2011). These figures reflect the high numbers of students with bilingual backgrounds at Valley Primary School. Within the region, 13.2% of people are classified as unemployed in the 2011 Australian
Bureau of Statistics Census, a figure that is more than double the current national average (approximately 6%). The school has a strong commitment to fostering student engagement with students. This is reflected in their 2012-2014 School Plan with strategies focusing on learning (not behaviour), supporting students and teachers to be actively directed in their own learning, deeper professional learning and community partnerships (DEC, 2013).

3.2.2 Green Primary School
Green Primary School is located in an outer urban suburb of Western Sydney. The school is in a culturally diverse community with the most common countries of birth reported in the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census being Lebanon 14.6%, Vietnam 2.3%, Korea, Republic of (South) 1.8%, Italy 1.6% and China (excludes Taiwan and SARs) 1.5%. The Department of Education and Communities’ (DEC) Low SES School Plan (2013) for this school indicated that 92% of the student population have a non-English speaking background (NESB). In order to improve phonological awareness and talking and listening skills, all students at this school participate in an educational speech pathology program. The 2011 Census reported that 8.8% of the local population were unemployed, and this figure was slightly higher than the national average.

3.2.3 Field Primary School
Field Primary School is located in a public housing estate of outer Western Sydney. Ninety percent of students at this school live in Department of Housing New South Wales (NSW) homes (a range of housing solutions provided by the NSW government for people in need, DEC, 2013). The annual school report (2012) describes that the school population represents the culturally diverse community of the region with 13.5% of the students having an Aboriginal background and 45% of students having a non-English speaking background (NESB) (DEC, 2012). The 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census reported that 51.7% of people in the area had parents born overseas and that languages spoken at home included Bengali 4.5%, Arabic 3.9%, Samoan 3.8%, Hindi 3.4% and Tagalog 1.7%. The school takes pride in its significant representation of Aboriginal students and has strong links to
Aboriginal members of the community. According to the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, the unemployment rate of the area was 9.9%. This figure was much higher than the national average and the median family income ($1097 per week) was lower than the national average which was $1,481 per week (Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, 2011). A critical issue at this school, as communicated by the 2012 annual school report, is non-attendance (DEC, 2012).

This chapter will now provide some relevant introductory features of each of the teachers and students in the classrooms that were the focus of this study.

3.3 The classrooms

3.3.1 Sarah’s class at Valley Public School

Sarah’s class is a Years 3 and 4 composite class. A significant proportion of students in this class come from families who have immigrated to Australia (mainly from Vietnam, Cambodia and China) in the last 5-10 years. Many students in this class have been observed as ‘compliant’ and comfortable with learning that is centred on quiet, worksheet-style tasks. The students require additional support with literacy largely due to having ESL backgrounds. Sarah is an early career teacher and is passionate about and practises student engagement pedagogy with experience in the FGP. Sarah recognises that her students enjoy arts-based tasks that can be completed on an individual basis.

3.3.2 Zara’s class at Green Public School

This class is made up of students from Grades 1 and 2. Students are performing at or below stage outcomes and all students require significant additional support with literacy, particularly with phonological awareness, and talking and listening skills. Zara is an early career teacher and is passionate about improving her students’ literacy and numeracy outcomes. She also values arts teaching practices and recognises that her students enjoy participating in artistic activities. All students except two within this class have an Arabic cultural background.
3.3.3 Mary’s class at Field Public School

Mary’s class is a composite Year 4 and Year 5 class comprising many students who need extra support in literacy and numeracy in order to reach their stage outcomes. These students could also be described as comfortable with simple ‘pen and paper’ tasks and Mary describes that they are not confident or willing to attempt higher order thinking or more cognitively challenging tasks. Many students display anxious and disengaged behaviours when given less traditional, more problem-based tasks. Mary is an Indigenous teacher who is passionate about teaching Indigenous culture and issues to her class. She is an early career teacher.

These three classrooms are thus representative of the types of challenges and characteristics (described above), that schools in low SES communities might encounter. The students in these classrooms reflect the complexity of student characteristics that might be present in these sites. There are students who are academically able and those who require a great deal of academic support, students who display opposition to certain classroom procedures and those who comply. As the literature reinforces, compliance does not necessarily mark student engagement (Chapter 2) or achievement of outcomes and so compliance is a significant issue to be problematised in the research. A missing feature of each of these classrooms is authentic and ongoing artistic programming. For these reasons, these classrooms were chosen as appropriate sites in which to implement the research. The curriculum decisions of focus for each Gallery will now be addressed.

3.3.4 Big Ideas

For each of the Galleries there was a discussion with the teacher concerning the goals for their class and that of their curriculum objectives. The researcher negotiated and selected a topic with the teacher and from this, big ideas were developed to form the basis of the Gallery activities. As stated in the literature review, big ideas are those that concern the central concepts and knowledges of a topic or discipline. To reiterate, Brophy and Alleman (2007) completed extensive research on children’s understandings of “cultural universals” and define big ideas as those that support students to “develop connected understandings of how significant aspects of the
social system work…and what all of this might mean for personal, social and civic decision making” (p.6). This chapter now moves to describe the methods employed for this research, in light of the contexts as described above.

3.4 **Choice of method**

3.4.1 **Chosen methods in response to research themes and questions**

Within each of these contexts, the focus for data collection was on the pedagogy used within the arts programs and upon the behaviour and artistic, affective, and cognitive responses of the students. Within each program, it was important to carefully collect data on the students’ creative and/or artistic expressions, their levels of engagement or being ‘in task’ (Chapter 2) and their relationship to learning as a human endeavour. The data thus concentrated on exploring the learning experiences across the three contexts in order to analyse these responses and report on the findings. A crucial aspect of this study was the acknowledgement that this program of learning that focuses on artistic, creative and high affective/high cognitive outcomes exists within an educational system that prioritises quantifiable results and specific outcomes of students’ academic progress, usually in relation to literacy and numeracy (Burnard and White, 2008). The programs were planned with the research intention of engaging students in creative and artistic learning that focused on big ideas of human significance. The programs of learning in this study were thus not devised from the sole standpoint of measureable curriculum outcomes in literacy and numeracy, but instead, focused on expressive objectives that highlight exploration and questioning (Eisner, 1985). The curriculum design was informed by the work of Winston (1998) who focuses on expressive objectives in drama and moral education programs. Winston’s work highlights that positivist research procedures are unsuitable in the pursuit of understanding programs that seek to sustain the emotional and cognitive engagement of students in creative and moral representation. Consequently, in alignment with Winston, an arts-based action research methodology was used in this research. The research intention thus informs and justifies the qualitative methods used in this study with the firm and well-grounded belief that an empirical shift is needed in order to value education as a social practice, rather than a technical process (Winston, 1998). For these reasons, the following methodological
considerations will now be discussed; arts-based research, action research and the ‘Gallery’ model.

3.4.2 Arts-based research

The term ‘arts-based research’ is attributed to Eisner (Barone & Eisner, 2012), who sought to connect projects of social inquiry with the role of artistry. Arts-based research confronts and documents complex and subtle human interactions in order to provide rich understandings of an aspect of an experience (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 3). This form of research is embedded in aesthetic forms in order to express meanings that cannot otherwise be communicated through discursive means. As such, arts-based research is a form of qualitative research. This form of research was deemed suitable, and indeed necessary, to the aims of this research, as it was precisely the complex and subtle human interactions, artistic representation and emotional expressions that were the focus of the study. As Winston (1998) has summarised:

> There is a danger when education and educational research are understood in technical terms only, in that those Full ethical permission issues or underlying values, central to the concerns of the practice, become discounted or ignored. (p. 91)

Arts-based research adopts artistic practice in order to capture meanings that measurement cannot, and illuminate human understanding of an idea or experience. Its intention is not to offer complete ‘truth’ but to raise further questions and ignite purposeful debate (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 166). Creativity researchers have documented how everyday professional practice within schools is ‘messy’, in the sense that it is unpredictable, unique across contexts and complex (Winston, 1998; Craft, 2002). In this sense, technical documentation of data would misplace the human issues of most concern for this research. The real qualities of such research cannot be defined purely within the language of measurable objectives. It is important to reflect on the cognitive power of the emotions and aesthetic expressions that could arise from this creative work. As Best (as cited in Winston, 1998, p. 63) has summarised:
Emotional feelings are not separate from or opposed to cognition and understanding, but, on the contrary, emotional feelings are cognitive in kind, in that they are expressions of a certain understanding of their objects.

An important part of this methodology was the intention to ‘explore’ rather than ‘prove’, while maintaining attention towards the research focus and questions. Within this research there were elements of a grounded theory approach (Glasser & Strauss, 1967), in that some theoretical findings of this study were expected to emerge from within the lessons and subsequent analysis. The partly ethnographic style of this study involved the researcher being immersed within the research site to observe and interact with the participants through lessons, discussion and reflection (Delamont, 2002, p. 8). There was, however, a pre-determined theoretical framework underpinning this research in order to guide the development of pedagogy. While the outcomes of the lessons were deemed to be emergent, the lessons themselves were carefully but iteratively planned and prepared with direct reference to the previous lesson outcomes and the theoretical framework and themes of research. In this sense, arts-based research was complimentary to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), because it was the ongoing collection and analysis of data that was to produce theory or deepen conceptual understanding grounded from the context.

The analysis of the data did not aim to provide measureable certainty, but rather set out to explore perceptions of meaning and to deepen purposeful debate within this discourse. As Barone and Eisner (2012) have stated:

> Arts-based research may possess the power to persuade an audience to ‘re-think’ aspects of the social world by re-experiencing them. This re-experiencing is not merely a cognitive act. It also contains a powerful emotional element that can motivate viewers and readers to replace parts of an unexamined value system with new appreciations, attitudes, and even behaviours towards other people(s) who have previously been regarded as alien Others. (p. 167)

### 3.4.3 Action research

Central to the methodological approach for this study was action research. Action research is the process of actively participating in an organisation in order to develop
practical understanding or evaluation of an issue or theoretical framework. It is the combination of:

… action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4)

Action research provided a framework in which theory and practice guided the ongoing process of development, action and reflection of the learning programs within the three school contexts. Action research embraces the view that knowledge and research are embedded in socio-cultural contexts and challenges positivist notions that credible knowledge must remain value-free (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003). As stated previously, it was precisely the actions, opinions, values and emotions of the participants that were of primary concern to this research.

There are two important factors that need to be clarified in relation to the researcher’s position within the three classroom sites. Firstly, I was a full-time postgraduate student at the time of data collection and thus not employed as a teacher at any of the schools of study. Secondly, I was not present within each classroom every day of each week. The fact that I wasn’t employed at the schools meant that I was initially an ‘outsider’ to the teachers, students and school community that I was researching. This had obvious effects in terms of full ‘absorption’ into the daily life of the school. By the same token, this ‘outsider’ perspective may have provided particular insights that might otherwise have been clouded if I were a more involved and informed ‘insider’ (Broadhead, 2013). Even though I was teaching in, and observing, the classrooms of the research at least once a week for two school terms, the creative learning sessions were scheduled across the three contexts within the same time frame, and thus it was impossible to be present daily within each school environment for ongoing daily observations. However, the focus of the research was specifically on the scheduled lessons that were planned at each of the school sites.

The research sites were thus investigated from the perspective of myself as the researcher/teaching professional aiming to draw attention to the practice and effect of
teaching authentic arts programs in primary classrooms in these particular disadvantaged contexts. The teachers who were responsible for the classes involved in this research were also important to the action research approach in that their reflections on the application of the theoretical framework in practice were valued. For this reason, the action research method described here has some critical elements of a practitioner research approach, in that I was involving the teachers as participants in the lessons to reflect on the action. Practitioner research can be recognised by its focus on research done by practitioners themselves ‘usually as an investigation of practice with a view to evaluation or improvement’ (Campbell & McNamara, 2010, p. 24). Zeichner and Noffke (2001) raise the issue that teachers, due to their professional role within the site of research, can offer particular insights into educational enquiry, and further, that rather than simply being consumers of educational knowledge, can be accepted as producers and mediators of educational knowledge (p. 398).

The study was thus informed by practitioner research in terms of how this method influenced the articulation and reflection of theory, partly from the reflective practice of the practitioners who were present and participated in the lessons. As stated, I was not employed as class teacher at any of the three school sites, thus my presence within the classrooms was as an ‘outsider’ and a researcher, despite being a qualified teacher. For this reason, the methodology is best described as action research involving the practitioner in reflective practice.

The focus of arts-based and action research methodology in this research led to consideration and then development of the metaphor of a ‘Gallery’ as an image to help students and school communities understand the intersection of arts-based teaching and learning practices with a focus on creativity, student engagement and a human focus to curriculum.

### 3.4.4 The ‘Gallery model’ – Gallery, photojournalism and Exhibition

Crucial to the research process was the use of ‘The Gallery Model’ (Winchester, 2012, 2013, 2015). The term ‘Gallery’ was seen within this research as an appropriate word to draw parallels between a real-life Gallery space and a classroom
space that appreciates art as a means to communicate important community and cultural values. Just as a Gallery can have an exhibition, so too can a classroom exhibit the on-going and ever evolving process of learning and sharing of ‘big ideas’. Using the Gallery as a model to guide the teaching and learning process, each program aimed to include a range of artistic learning experiences from across the arts disciplines that authentically integrated with the classroom curriculum to encourage students to examine ‘big ideas’ of human impact. This process also greatly valued the input and reflections of its participants (the students) as part of the insider classroom approach adopted within the Fair Go Program (2013). Thus student engagement was a critical element of the Gallery. To support the idea of the students being insiders both in the learning experiences and the research, groups of students, in turn, were invited to become ‘photojournalists’ during each lesson in order to capture, from their perspective, important moments in the lessons by taking photographs of their peers. The students were given the freedom to photograph any part of the lesson that they felt was enjoyable, showed ‘good learning’ or highlighted an achievement of their peers, with the proviso that they would have to choose the most significant photos at the conclusion of the lesson and comment on the reasons for their choice. This process will be discussed in more detail below.

Furthermore, each class participated in a culminating Exhibition to share with the school community the learning that had been occurring within the Gallery over the period of two terms. The programs thus followed this conception of ‘The Gallery Model’ as a pedagogical and philosophical ideal to aim for within classroom arts sessions.

The ‘Gallery Model’ had three important features: (i) Gallery lessons (arts, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour focused pedagogy); (ii) photojournalism (ongoing photographic record by class participants); and (iii) reflection on the key theoretical ideas by the whole group and on images captured by photojournalists and in the Exhibition (culminating performance to share with school community). Each of these will now be discussed.
**Gallery lessons**

The Gallery was used as a metaphor for guiding the pedagogy and communicating the aims of its implementation. Similarities can be imagined between a Gallery and the types of classroom spaces that are aspired to in this research because both can be devoted to the exhibition of different art forms, a community space that is open to cultural transaction, able to appeal to emotion and aesthetic enjoyment, and a democratic space, open to everyone to share and partake, despite individual differences and preferences. Thus, a sequence of the weekly lessons were taught with a clear structure that began with a warm-up (usually an activity to stimulate both body and mind), and then moving to a series of activities that focused on continued and in-depth development of curriculum learning through arts and creative practices, before concluding with a structured student self-reflection and class discussion.

**Photojournalism**

Photojournalism became an important feature of each Gallery. Two willing students were chosen by the class teacher (two different students for each week) to be responsible for taking photographs of moments of learning that they felt were important to capture throughout each lesson. The students became familiar with the term ‘photojournalist’ through class discussion and parallels were drawn between the occupation in the ‘real world’ and what the class was trying to capture during the lessons. The students discussed how photojournalists take photos to record important events that are worthy ‘news’ items, to accurately represent the context in question, and that images can combine with other data to help the reader or viewer understand the news story. Photojournalism was thus embraced as another way to ‘tell the story’.

The two photojournalists for each week were then asked to ‘report’ back at the conclusion of the lesson. This conversation was audio recorded by the researcher. The intention was for the students’ photographs to form the basis for a weekly interview in order to help them reflect on their choices of images which they felt best showed the learning that had taken place. This practice of ‘photo-elicitation’ (Prosser and Burke, 2008) will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The intention
was to also categorise the images in relation to the four main themes of the research to ground the students’ reflections and perspectives.

The inclusion of photojournalism aligns with Wendy Lutrell’s (2010) work on visual sociology, that notes how providing young students with cameras to document their experiences is important in giving ‘voice’ to marginalised or ‘silenced’ populations (Luttrell, 2010, p.224). It was seen as an important opportunity to include students’ photographs in the research process with the main aim being for them to be able to represent their perspective of the learning experience. The students were not given detailed instructions about what type of pictures to take nor when to take them, but were given the very broad instruction to take photos of ‘good learning’ or something that they found impressive, interesting or important. They were told that they did not need to ask permission to use the camera but were welcome to use the camera at any time during the Gallery. In reporting back to the researcher, the students were asked to explain what was important about each image and why they had taken the photograph. As Lutrell (2010) identified, such a process might “open a space for conversations that do not typically take place in school settings, especially in an increasingly competitive and high-stakes test-driven environment” (p.227). An important view outlined by Luttrell is that a “persistent conundrum in this mode of research is finding the line between children’s voices and those of adult researchers, who seek to represent them” (p.225). In acknowledging this view, this study also aligns with Lutrell’s goal that such practices create a “need-to-know more stance towards children as knowing subjects and to appreciate the limits of what we can see, know and understand” (p225). Photojournalism was included as an attempt to equalise the voices of the student participants and the researcher and was paramount to the social justice intentions of the research. This approach recognises the importance of the insider classroom (Fair Go Team, 2006) where student self-assessment, a student community of reflection, teacher inclusive conversations and teacher feedback are all highly important factors in the research approach.
The Exhibition

As with an exhibition in a gallery, the classroom Exhibition was designed to be a place to display artwork of many forms that shared a central theme, and that sought to challenge or probe the audience’s perspective or viewpoint. The term Exhibition in this context was thus used to describe a culminating showcase of classroom learning – drawing from curriculum goals, the expression of arts practices, the expression of ‘big ideas’ and thematic concepts, and the process of probing an audience to reflect on their own responses or reactions to the art work.

The concept of preparing a class Exhibition emerged from within each school context. It was not initially a part of the planning process, but rather, it became increasingly apparent that the school community were interested in ‘viewing’ a performance of the learning that was taking place within each Gallery. In differing degrees within each school site, the school executives, members of staff and the students themselves wished for a performance showcase of the Gallery. Initial responses to these pleas were of caution from the researcher. The ambition for this research was not to create a ‘one-off’ performance with the ‘bells and whistles’ quite often associated with arts pedagogy. The emphasis throughout the planning and teaching was on the process, not the end product, and how arts pedagogy could be effectively used for on-going intellectually stimulating and affectively engaging classroom learning. In recognition of the requests from the school communities, for the students to share their work over the course of conducting the Gallery program, an Exhibition at each site was designed to highlight the depth of cognitive and affective learning that had been occurring in the normal week to week lessons, as opposed to preparing the classes for a ‘one-off’, assembly style performance. Due to the affective engagement within each classroom in relation to the project, the students themselves were mostly genuinely excited about sharing their learning experiences with the wider school community and their desire to showcase a ‘performance of the process’ was a true indication of their engagement, their emotional (affective) investment in the project.

The design, implementation and analysis of the Gallery Model, (Gallery lessons, Photojournalism and Exhibition), were thus crucial parts of the methodology in
relation to this research and data collection. A summary of the data collection procedures will now be presented.

3.5 Data collection summary

Data was collected during each lesson within the three different classrooms over two school terms. As observed, the data collection was focused on how the pedagogy of the lessons served to generate deeper understandings of the intersection of the four themes of arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour. The data was generated by the participants, that is the students, their classroom teacher and the researcher. In line with arts-based research and action research, the procedures used included written records of the events in each Gallery in a research journal, visual images in educational research, and interviews. What follows is a discussion of the use of the research journal, visual images and interviews, and how they embellished the ‘lived experience’ of the research.

3.5.1 Research journal

A key aspect of the qualitative research conducted for this study was in maintaining field notes to document the activity within each lesson at each school site. A journal of field notes was thus used to detail the researcher’s observations of the setting, and, in doing so, also included personal reactions, feelings and ‘sensitising and emerging themes’ (Blumer, 1954) from the research. In line with Emerson’s view (as cited in Corwin & Clemens, 2012, p. 490) that field notes are ‘authored representations of ongoing social life’, the field notes taken during the research were part of an active process of noting observations of the setting and initial interpretations of the study. Corwin and Clemens (2012) detail the importance of the researcher understanding one’s own perspective and positionality, and the resulting implications of these in collecting data and in analysis (p. 491). With this statement in mind, it is acknowledged that an essential point of analysis was to allow triangulation of the field notes to additional data sources, in this case, student and teacher interviews, focus groups interviews and visual data to support their trustworthiness. The journal was written as a method for which other teachers or researchers of education could connect with a ‘portal from the reader to the research setting’ (p. 490). There were
thus two types of field notes taken during the course of the research. The first type were those written in a loosely structured form in a paper journal during the course of the lessons, heeding the warning from Saldana (2009) to be wary of relying on memory for future writing (p. 17). The second type were those written and typed up after the lesson had occurred, by referring to the brief notes taken during the course of the lesson in a more formal, narrative structure. This process was in agreement with the statement by Delamont (2012) about her own research:

This strategy only works if the abbreviated, scribbled notes are written up very soon after they are made. I try to write up within 24 hours of the class, while everything is fresh in my mind. If the longer version is written quickly I can still understand my own scribble. (p. 348)

The research journal was thus representative of a significant method used in this study and was valued in this research for its potential to ‘illuminate and provoke, to address social issues and provide alternative solutions (Corwin & Clemens, 2012, p. 500). Delamont (2012) notes that ‘Fieldwork is only as good as the fieldnotes: the fieldnotes are only as good as the way(s) they are written, written up and analysed’ (p. 347). As will be described later in this chapter, during the course of data analysis, the journal was coded by theme to take note of connections and differences to inform the results of the research.

3.5.2 Visual images in educational research – photography and videography

Image-based research methods were used in this research as a tool for documenting the research process, but more poignantly, for empowering children to play an important role in communicating their own perspectives and meaning making.

The use of photographic data formed a central part of the methodology in this research. The aim of employing this method was to utilise the power of pictorial representation in order to ground the theoretical concepts and communicate the empirical experience of the field. As explained, the use of photography was used in two ways. Firstly, two children per week were chosen to be the photojournalists of the lesson in order to take images that they perceived were of worth. They were not
prompted to take these images by the teachers present in the room, but expected to be vigilant in ‘looking’ for the expression of ‘great learning’ by their peers and were allowed to use the cameras at any time during the lesson. Prosser and Burke (2008) liken this process to giving voice to children in order to pay attention to their way of ‘seeing’. Secondly, the researcher used a separate camera with which to take photographs of the lessons as documentary evidence and to support the emerging analytical themes within the research.

Photo methods in educational research have the ability to capture qualitatively different data in that they can provide an experiential quality that other forms of data cannot (Allen, 2012). Photographs in educational research contrast with established forms of academic communication, such as verbal reasoning, linear written texts (Reader, 2012) and statistical analysis. An historical reliance on written language and numerical data in educational research can account for the scepticism of images as reliable data (Fischman, 2001). However, there was a key purpose for employing the use of photographic evidence in this research. Visual data was relied upon to communicate certain aspects of the experiential nature of the study and aligns with the following view:

These sources have the potential of making our work more comprehensive and clear, but also politically more relevant because images not only carry information in the constant battle over meaning, but they also (or even fundamentally) mediate power relations. (Fischman, 2001, p. 31)

The choice for the primacy of visual images as data was chiefly related to the literature themes of creativity and student engagement for the reasons described below. This research was partly concerned with analysing creative teaching and learning practices in primary schools. Thomson (2011), in describing research related to creative learning, has stated that there are times ‘when only the visual will do’ (pp. 104-112). The image based practices evident in this research complemented the concerns of artistic and creative pedagogy in terms of capturing risk-taking, investigation, idea generation, the expression of knowledge, artistic skill development and abstract and literal thought (Weber, 2008). Arts focused inquiry and research into creative learning has employed the use of visual images to capture
authentically the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Weber, 2008; Cole & Knowles, 2008; Eisner, 1997; Thomson, 2011). The experiential qualities that images can facilitate were thus seen as imperative to the aims of the research. The use of cameras within the Gallery lessons was a method employed to encourage and allow the participants to investigate their own creativity and to capture moments of risk-taking, possibility thinking and imaginative idea generation.

Another important theme in this research was student engagement. The lessons themselves were planned with student engagement as one of the primary concerns of the research. The use of cameras was seen as a crucial element in allowing the students to be active participants in the process of reflective learning and as a tool to communicate through photography their own cognitive perspectives and affective experiences of the lessons. These elements are central factors to being ‘in task’ and to the development of the insider classroom (see Chapter 2) (Fair Go Team, 2006; Munns & Sawyer, 2013). The use of cameras in the photojournalism process gave the students an active and important role in the classroom. The Fair Go Program (2013) highlighted how, when students become ‘insiders’ in the culture of their classroom, they identify themselves as having a vital role in that classroom community. In this research, the students’ abilities to use images in the communication and reflection on their learning supported a commitment to developing a community where participants have a strong involvement in the learning that they are a part of. In this light, the use of photography as a mode of data collection was used to

… deepen an understanding of the perspectives of participants on a particular phenomenon and at the same time engage participants more actively in the process of both researching their own lives and offering ‘ways forward’. (Mitchell & Allnut, 2008)

The use of a small video camera was controlled by the researcher mainly as a tool for documentation in order to complement the research journal. The recordings aimed to capture evidence of the students’ affective and cognitive achievement through the whole class work, small group, pair and individual work. Video was used in various ways in the research process as a way to capture parts of Gallery lessons, to
document interviews with teachers and students and whole-class discussions, and to document the final Exhibitions. The ability to watch and re-watch video recordings of the lessons assisted in being able to ‘keep the context present’ (Weber, 2008). This was also important in order to ‘see’ things that had been overlooked as a participant and to convey ‘new’ knowledge or questions. It proved invaluable in capturing the students’ immediate responses to the pedagogy within lessons and their own reflections.

The choice of methodological tool in research practice is determined by the simple reason that one tool will generally do the job better than another (Eisner, 1997, p. 8). The motive for using visual images through photography and video was due to the belief that these tools benefited the research in terms of authentically summarising the research process and outcomes, and supporting the engagement and meanings generated by the participants through the visual representation of the field.

3.5.3 Interviews

Interviews formed a central role in the research methodology. The purpose of the interviews was to record the students’ and teachers’ immediate perspectives of the lessons and to explore, with the participants, the four themes of the research. With this in mind, interviews were designed to track the engagement levels of the participants, assess the participants’ feelings towards artistic and creative teaching practices, and gauge their responses to learning about ‘big ideas’ in the curriculum. Interview data were collected in four important ways. Firstly, audio recordings of an interview with each class teacher occurred weekly after each lesson. Secondly, audio recordings were made of a discussion/reflection at the lesson conclusion with the whole class group. Thirdly, the photo-journalists were interviewed after the lesson had finished regarding the photographic evidence they had constructed. Lastly, at the completion of the two-term program, focus group interviews were scheduled with selected participating students from each context. A concluding final interview was also held with the class teacher. The intersection of the responses from both the students and teachers, as well as the photojournalistic images were important for the process of triangulation, which will be addressed in the next section.
In order to achieve the purpose of the interviews, it was vital to ask questions in simple and everyday language as opposed to sociological language, and to consider the most effective ways of encouraging the respondents to provide detailed accounts of their experiences (Elliot, 2012, p. 285). This was particularly important when interviewing the students. Questions were designed in order to allow for a conversational atmosphere in which the participants could provide answers relating to their personal experiences or thoughts. The questions posed in the weekly interviews thus centred firmly on the tasks that the participants had just been involved in. Reflection questions that were asked in class discussion during the lessons were largely drawn or adapted from the REAL Framework, which is a student self-assessment tool that can be used to encourage students to move through deeper levels of reflection about their learning (Munns & Woodward, 2006). The use of this framework was influenced by the student engagement theme of the research and the value placed on the link between self-reflection, evaluation and scaffolding (Arthur & Hertzberg, 2013) as evidenced in the pedagogy of the Fair Go teachers (Munns, Sawyer, & Cole, 2013).

One of the key methods in assisting the interview process with the photojournalists in each class was the use of photo-elicitation (Prosser & Burke, 2008). This technique allows the researcher to use images during the conversations in order to explore the significance of the images with the respondent. In the case of this research, the images used in this technique were the ones that had been taken by the photojournalists themselves. The use of photographs in this process facilitated conversations about the students’ perceptions of learning and were useful ‘icebreakers’ (Prosser & Burke, 2008, p. 260) in the interview process. In addition, the photographs acted as:

… neutral third party facilitating a more relaxed atmosphere for interviewing
… This role for imagery is particularly worthwhile where children are interviewees and adults the interviewers since there are inescapable differences in status and power. (Banks, as cited in Prosser & Burke, 2008, p. 260)

The observation and discussion around the photographs taken during the lessons occurred between student and teacher in a mutually explorative way.
3.5.4 Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted at the end of the teaching program. The use of focus groups in this research was regarded as important in order to facilitate interaction and discussion among the participants, allow a flexible but structured process for conversation and to familiarise the researcher with the authentic experiences of the group (Currie & Kelly, 2012; Robinson, 2012). Five students were purposefully selected by the class teacher to form a focus group. The criterion for choosing the focus group members was based on the teachers’ perceptions of students who would be able to offer insights into the learning experiences. The sessions were arranged in a more formal setting (a quiet, un-used classroom space) and the students were taken ‘off class’ so that the flow of the conversation was not disturbed. Robinson (2012) details that the interaction of the group members through discussion can allow participants to challenge or embellish each other’s ideas which can allow for deeper discussion of the focal themes.

3.5.5 Case studies

The selection of two students from each school, as the subject of case studies, was considered an important part of the research methodology, in order to track and closely consider the personal experiences of these students. The two students from each school were selected with the assistance of the class teacher, with the overarching principle that these students were largely representative of their peers and the types of students that can be found in these types of learning communities. They represent a variety of behavioural and learning needs, as well as a variety of proclivities for artistic ways of learning.

Data collection for the case studies included direct observation and participant observation with subsequent field notes, photographic data and focus groups including the students who were the subject of the case studies. During the phase of analysis, this data was scrutinised for similarities or differences in relation to the four main themes of research. Coding of this data assisted in discovering trends to validate the findings and to also develop cross-case analyses (this is discussed more fully in the next section on data analysis). The multiple sources of data thus assisted
in triangulating the evidence. The focus on 6 specific students across the three school sites allowed for richer exploration and interpretation of the results of the Gallery and was beneficial in that the ‘closeness aims to produce an invaluable and deep understanding – that is, an insightful appreciation of the ‘case(s)’ – hopefully resulting in new learning about real-world behaviour and its meaning’ (Yin, 2012, p. 4). Combined with the other forms of data, the case studies played an important role in illuminating the personal experiences of the participants in the study.

This section has outlined the procedures for the collection of data and the chapter now turns to discuss the analysis of data.

### 3.6 Data analysis

The analysis of qualitative data can be understood as the process of undertaking detailed engagement with the data during and after the fieldwork is completed, in order to interpret emerging categories and interpret them. In this research, from its early beginnings, the data being generated was collected against a specific theoretical framework in order to interpret its significance within the themes of the research. The four themes of arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour were thus used as guidelines for data analysis.

The qualitative data was ‘read’ using the approach described by Mason (2002), namely, literal reading, interpretative reading and reflexive reading. Literal reading involves becoming familiar with the content, style and structure of the data and interpretive reading involves interpreting the data and inferring what the data conveys to the researcher. Reflexive reading is the process of exploring the researcher’s role and viewpoint in the collection and analysis of the data. The literal reading of the data was undertaken weekly during the implementation of the research program. Visual data, journal entries and interview material were constantly ‘read’ in order to become familiar and ‘close’ to the content and also to review the style and structure of how this data was being recorded. Due to this continual process of literal reading, slight variations in how data was gathered and organised were able to be made as necessary. One form of documenting the interpretative reading of the data
occurred through a process of coding in order to look for contrasts and comparisons and then to create generalisations. This interpretation of data began early in the research process. As discussed, the visual data, journal and interview material were all read and re-read weekly in order to ascertain important points for analysis and also to explore the themes of research that were emerging from the data. These findings were notated in code and note form. The codes and notes proved helpful in the on-going process of data collection.

The purpose of coding is to break down and deconstruct the data in order to make sense of and consider the similarities, differences and links (Basit, 2010). Codes were generated from the four themes of the research so there were four categories, arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour. Within each category, several codes were generated from points of interest that related to each theme of literature. For example, a specific quality that was generated from the literature theme of ‘student engagement’ was ‘high affective’ thus the code of SE-HA (Student Engagement – High Affective) was used to map any evidence of the students employing high affective responses to the lessons (Appendix 1). This style is called open or emic coding (Corwin & Clements, 2012, p. 497) whereby codes are generated around main categories in order to connect and contrast them against an existing theoretical model.

All the interviews and focus group recordings were transcribed at the completion of the three school programs. The transcriptions from the interviews and the photographic evidence from the research also underwent a process of coding. Coding across the journal, photographic evidence and interviews served to complement each other. For example, in relation to the interviews that were undertaken with the photojournalists, codes were matched alongside the photographic evidence by initial ‘reading’ of the photograph and were then further added to, after analysing the photojournalist interview transcript and journal. The coding of the journal, interview transcriptions and photographic evidence combined to create a rich foundation for interrogating the meanings that were emerging (Appendix 2 & Appendix 3).
As discussed, visual images formed a large part of the data collection. The importance of the visual in this research is related to the argument that pictures can communicate a different form of knowledge that is not wholly reducible to linear text. Photographs that were taken during the lessons proved to be insightful in documenting the effect of the programs and achievements of the students within each context. The photographs, in this case, were a powerful tool in illustrating the students’ performances within the lessons. As a stand-alone form of data they built a holistic representation of what was occurring in the classroom, and without them it could be argued that an outsider would not gain a full understanding of the Gallery experiences, and nor would the researcher have a ‘bigger picture’ perspective going into analysis. When married with other data, including journal entries and the interviews with students and the class teachers, the pictures took on further layers of meaning from the perspective of those present in the lessons. The visual data were used to aid recursive practice with the participants in that they could be used to generate discussion or as the basis for an interview. Questions for analysis with the participants included the following examples: Can you describe what is happening in the picture? Why did you choose this picture? How does the picture show this student being creative? How does the picture show us feeling good/thinking hard about what we are learning? and How does this picture make you feel? Reader (2012) also describes ‘negative spaces’ within a picture, drawing attention to what is not included in a picture. In all, the photographs used in this research were taken by the student participants, the researcher and sometimes the class teacher, thus that which is not seen in the photograph could be both deliberate and incidental.

In the process of analysis, it is important to be aware of the reliability of images in determining knowledge. Reliability in this case is sought through triangulation, or the process of ‘having two or more ‘fixed’ or ‘sightings’ of a finding from different angles’ (Delamont, 1992, p. 181). In this study, it was important to contrast and compare the images against interviews, focus group data and the research journal. The process of analysis in this research acknowledges that historical roots of scientific research methods in educational research may influence the acceptance of visual images as legitimate form of knowledge (Reader, 2012) (see above). Delamont outlines that in qualitative analysis, triangulation is an important process for
checking the reliability and validity of the data and so it was a systematic intention to
gather data ‘between method’ and also ‘within method’ (1992, p. 180). In analysis,
the photographic data was scrutinised ‘between method’, that is, it was positioned
against other forms of data from the research, and, furthermore, ‘within method’, that
is, against other photographic data.

A crucial part of the analysis was the process of reflexive reading (Mason, 2002;
Delamont, 2002). A principal attribute of doing qualitative research is to interrogate
one’s practice in order to analyse it fairly. Reflexive reading involves the ability of
the researcher to maintain critical distance, examine one’s role as the researcher, be
critical about one’s relationship with the participants and examine one’s values. The
process of reflexivity acknowledges that the thoughts, actions and background of the
’self’ can have an impact on data analysis. The acknowledgement is that it is neither
possible nor required to completely reject one’s own way of seeing but that it is
possible and important to interrogate it. According to Hunt and Sampson (as cited in
Anderson & Sangster, 2010):

Reflexivity involves not getting rid of the self, but doubling the self:
distancing ourselves from ourselves to a greater or lesser extent, so that we
have a sense of standing outside ourselves and observing what we are doing
and thinking. (p. 132)

In maintaining validity and reliability, the process of analysis occurred through a
conscious process of reflexivity, in which the researcher continuously questioned and
critically analysed the potential effects of social background, arts experience and
preferred teaching practice.

To further enhance the reliability and validity of the students’ achievements, the
Quality teaching in NSW public schools: A classroom practice guide (Ladwig &
Gore, 2003) was used as a research-based, theoretical guide to inform the process of
analysis. For the purposes of this study, the dimension of ‘intellectual quality’ was
the main area of focus for analysis. The guide defines intellectual quality as

Chapter 3
pedagogy focused on producing deep understanding of important, substantive concepts, skills and ideas. Such pedagogy treats knowledge as something that requires students to engage in higher-order thinking and to communicate substantively about what they are learning. (p.10)

Within the dimension of intellectual quality, the element of ‘deep understanding’ provided a basis for reflecting on and analysing the observable classroom data of the students’ presentations of the central ideas from the Gallery. The guide also provides a coding scale for analysis. Each element, such as ‘deep understanding’, is broken down into five codes with a descriptor given for each one that draws upon observable aspects of classroom practice. The coding scale focuses on the question:

To what extent do students demonstrate a profound and meaningful understanding of central ideas and the relationships between and among those central ideas?

The scale moves from code level 1: ‘students demonstrate only shallow understanding’ towards code level 5: ‘almost all students demonstrate deep understanding throughout the lesson’. It was also important to the overall aims of the study to recognise that “[deep] understanding can be demonstrated in oral, written, symbolic or performance modes” (Ladwig & Gore, 2003, p.15). Thus the *Quality teaching in NSW public schools: A classroom practice guide* (Ladwig & Gore, 2003) was useful in being able to analyse the depth of learning that students were demonstrating.

To reiterate, the *Quality teaching* guide was based on research from the seminal study into classroom pedagogy, Productive Pedagogies, (Hayes et al, 2005). The classroom reflection manual (Education Queensland, 2002) from this research was also used as a reference point for the data analysis. The manual provides a continuum of practice scale for the element of ‘Deep understanding’, which helps to focus on how and if the work and responses of the students demonstrate a deep understanding of the concepts and ideas from the lesson being analysed. This scale ranges from level 1: ‘almost all students demonstrate understanding of simple information that they are to remember’ towards level 3:
Almost all students do at least one of the following: sustain a focus on a significant topic; demonstrate their understanding of the problematic nature of information and/or ideas; demonstrate complex understanding by arriving at a reasoned, supported conclusion; explain how they solved a complex problem. In general students’ reasoning, explanations and arguments demonstrate fullness and complexity of understanding (p.3).

This continuum of practice provided a theoretical reference point with which to analyse the observable data. An important critical question that was asked in the process of analysis was “do the students understand the topic in relatively systematic, integrated or holistic ways?” (p.3). Both the Quality Teaching and Productive Pedagogies frames provided reference points for a detailed, and quantified analysis of the extent of deep learning. Both frames provided exemplars of deep leaning and touch-points for the analysis of the data pertaining to the development of deep learning throughout the arts based pedagogy in the research.

Limitations and the external validity of this study will now be addressed.

3.7 Limitations

As outlined above, reflexivity allowed a process of reflection on the methods used in the research. In the Introduction (Chapter 1), the researcher’s socio-historical background in implementing integrated arts programs in low SES areas of northern England and as a class teacher in London and Western Sydney, and how that led the researcher to this particular research orientation were outlined. The researcher’s values and beliefs in the importance of creativity and authentic arts programs for the engagement of students in poverty has been critical in the process of self-reflection for this research. The researcher has clearly articulated her previous teaching experience as a class teacher and in teaching integrated arts programs. Thus her historical practical experiences acted as a source of knowledge going into the research. Churchley (2010) describes how a researcher should recognise that previous experience is still socially constructed experience. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) acknowledge that social research is an active process in which the researcher adopts both an observational and theoretical interpretation of what is
experienced. Reflexivity acknowledges that researchers will be influenced by their own biography and socio-historical position and thus ‘there is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 15-16).

The researcher’s previous experience proved invaluable, in the first place, in being able to plan effective lessons for the different class groups, and also to inform the evaluation of the data, especially in being able to critically analyse and compare results. When writing the arts-based programs for this research, the researcher was conscious of being able to work with the current curriculum and within the same constraints as a class teacher in order that other teaching professionals would be able to relate to this work and emulate it for themselves. Simple and available resources were used in the arts sessions and the researcher conducted the lessons within a school hall or classroom space so that other teachers could see the ease and simplicity for how these programs could operate.

Another point of reflexivity is that the researcher conducted most of the teaching of the learning programs and that her previous arts teaching and experience provided the confidence to approach this style of teaching. The researcher acknowledges that other teaching professionals may initially not feel that they have the same levels of confidence, capacity or skill to undertake arts-based teaching. On the other hand, it can be argued that this way of teaching does not require a professional background in the arts. To reiterate, the researcher is a qualified teacher but not a professional of any particular arts form. Despite being a self-taught guitarist and having basic skills on the piano, the researcher does not have any qualifications in any arts form and her personal musical skills were not used nor required in the Gallery. The argument is that, as with any curriculum area that a teacher feels low efficacy for, the teacher has a responsibility to address her/his own areas of low ability in order to provide a holistic approach to pedagogy. The programs in this study were also carefully linked and embedded within the current curriculum so that all teachers would be able to relate to the content. A key goal was to use simple arts-based strategies that are not beyond the means of a general primary teacher.
The researcher’s position in the three school sites was as a researcher and as a visiting ancillary teacher. The students thus viewed me in the role of an ‘arts-teacher’, something in their minds similar to a relief from face-to-face (RFF) teacher. This positionality may have affected the responses that students presented in interviews and class discussions. The initial data was thus gathered in the role as an ‘outsider’. The disadvantage of being an outsider is that the ability to thoroughly ‘read’ a context and the subtle interactions that occur might be missed or misconstrued. The difficulties with this subsided in due course in each school context after the researcher had developed a working relationship with the students, learned their names and become familiar with school and class routines. As the researcher slowly became an ‘insider’ within each context, a disadvantage may have been that interpretations were coloured by the insider knowledge of the structure of each class and the relationships within them. On the other hand, an important part of the analytical process was to question the researcher’s own conduct as a teacher within the sessions and also to compare and contrast any interpretations with the teacher and student interview data.

As explained, it was important to the reliability of the learning programs that they were conducted within the same constraints of a normal school environment. This meant that time and normal school procedures and responsibilities impacted the learning. Lessons were sometimes interrupted by other teachers for various reasons. At times the hall space could not be used due to other commitments within the school. Students had various responsibilities (e.g. scripture classes, ESL classes, language classes, meetings) that they had to exit the lesson for and teachers needed to adhere to general administrative procedures. These factors were all seen as the realities of school life and were accommodated. Sometimes, however, some responsibilities or procedures of the students or class teacher meant that planned interview sessions after the lessons could not be conducted. This could be seen as a limitation to the research method. However, these interviews were ‘caught up with’ later in the week.

Limitations to the photojournalism process were noted early on in the lessons. Initially students who were nominated as photojournalists were told that they were
welcome to use the cameras at any point in the lesson. However, some students felt unable to independently take photos without seeking the teacher’s permission. This may have affected the amount or quality of the pictures taken. However, as each lesson progressed, it was clearly reiterated that the children could use the cameras throughout the lesson and the students became used to the process of independently taking photographs of the learning experiences. Another limitation was that some students may have misunderstood the purpose of being a photojournalist and that the photographs that were taken were not necessarily focusing on creative and engaged learning across the class but solely on their peers. As the photojournalists were rotated throughout each week, this did not present a significant problem. The researcher’s own photographs and journal writing could also act together with the photojournalists’ depictions to present a more accurate view of the classroom learning.

3.8 External validity

External validity is an important consideration for qualitative research, in that it is important to question whether findings from the research could be applied to other contexts. In order to interrogate whether the outcomes from this study might be applicable to other school sites, it was necessary to consider that the transferability of the research would need to be undertaken with respect to the arts-based nature of the inquiry and that the initial research favoured qualitative and experiential methods. Thus, the success of implementation would be reliant on the acceptance of artistic responses as valid academic representations, in their own right. This statement is in line with the view that ‘practitioner recognition of quality … is regularly quashed by formal, distinguished systems of assessment’ (Eisner, as cited in Stake & Munson, 2010, p. 20). Cole and Knowles (2008) speak of the transformative potential of arts informed work and that the accessibility of the research is related to the ‘evocative quality and a high level of resonance for diverse audiences’ (p. 67). As stated previously, it was an intention of the design of the pedagogy for the three classrooms that are featured in this study that the work could be relatable and transferable to the generalist primary school teacher and that the practical activities included at the classroom level of the research could be adopted readily in educational programs.
The school contexts described here were chosen to be illustrative of many of those in low SES communities throughout the developed world, so the transferability of the findings of the research could arguably be relatable to other classrooms. It was planned that the research outcomes could be read as an example of the possibilities of implementing arts-based pedagogy to generate student engagement and to support students in comprehending the big ideas in their learning. These intentions of the research can be interpreted in line with the view of Cole and Knowles (2008) that ‘ideally, educative possibilities of arts-informed work are foremost in the heart, soul and mind of the researcher from the onset of an inquiry’ (p. 68). It can be argued that the work from the three school contexts can articulate to the wider educational community, the effects of adopting pedagogy of arts-based creative approaches with a human focus for student engagement, and how such an approach might lift the educational outcomes of all students.

This section has discussed some limitations of this study and has also attempted to address the external validity of applying this research to other contexts.

### 3.9 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has described the research contexts of the three classrooms and has outlined that they are appropriate sites for this study in that they are representative of the types of low SES contexts found throughout the developed world with students who can be characterised by a range of factors, from behavioural opposition to compliance, to high learning needs, Indigenous students and those in need of ESL support. The next section addressed the types of methods chosen as appropriate in gathering evidence of the effect of arts-based pedagogy and creative teaching and learning practices to the generation of big ideas of human effect and the engagement of students in low SES contexts. The qualitative methods of arts-based research and action research were introduced as key methodological procedures for this study. Arts-based research was introduced as a method to enact artistic practices to explore the central research questions by documenting the human interactions, artistic representation and emotional expressions by the participants. Action research was a key methodological choice, that includes the immersion of the researcher in the
research site in order to develop a practical understanding and evaluation of the theoretical framework. Within the action research approach were elements of practitioner research, in which the class teachers’ reflections and insights as participants in the lessons were noted and analysed. The chapter then moved to introduce ‘The Gallery method’ which described an arts-based and creative pedagogical approach to the lessons. The next section addressed the data collection methods and analytical processes, including researcher journal, visual images in educational research, teacher and student interviews and focus groups.

Chapter 4 will discuss a pilot study for this research.
CHAPTER 4:
The Pilot Study

This chapter describes a pilot study that took place at Valley Primary School. This school participated later in the main study, with a different class and teacher involved. This pilot study commenced approximately one year before implementing the formal research across the three school sites that are described over the next three chapters. Having reviewed the literature and formulated notions around a possible learning and curriculum model that draws on arts-based pedagogy, the pilot was implemented in order to test the possibilities of the model, trial the action research approach for its suitability for completing a more extensive and in-depth study to follow, explore draft data gathering instruments and to further investigate the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings of the investigation. In essence, the pilot study was implemented to explore and experiment with the Gallery pedagogy before undertaking the main study.

4.1 Louise’s classroom at Valley Primary School

Contextual information regarding this school site has been detailed in Chapter 3. To reiterate, this school is positioned in one of the most multicultural regions of Australia and services a low SES community. Louise is an early career teacher who was strongly familiar with the student engagement approach of the Fair Go Program (2013), having previously participated in an action study of student engagement with the Fair Go team. Her understanding for the importance of student engagement was thus a great asset and support going into the pilot.

The class that participated in the pilot could be described as unusual in structure in that it was a multi-stage Years 3-6 class. The class is characterised as a group of children who are all first generation Australians. This characteristic proved to become a significant part of the pilot as the students were encouraged to draw from their own family experiences to connect with the curriculum content. This impact
will be explained in more detail later in this chapter. The children within this class, and generalising across the school, could be described as fairly compliant. Despite the school philosophy being centred on authentic and purposeful learning, the students within this context appeared to be more comfortable with quiet, ‘pen and paper’ tasks, such as worksheets. It was also commonly observed that the students displayed risk avoidance for more demanding tasks such as group work or reflective dialogue.

4.2 Big ideas of the Gallery pilot

Louise had planned a program on the impact of human migration within Australia and had designed learning experiences for her English and Social Studies curriculum. The pilot study thus focused on the arts component of this program. The program was designed to explore moments of human migration in Australian history, including the impact of British settlement in 1788 on Aboriginal people of Australia, The Gold Rush (a period of significant immigration in the 1850s), The White Australia Policy (a government policy that favoured immigrants from certain European countries during the early 1900s), Post World War II Migration and the stories of recent ‘boat people’ (international refugees arriving in Australia, often on boats via Indonesia). The big ideas of this program would encompass concepts of dispossession, displacement, the perspectives of various migration groups and the students’ own personal understandings of migration to Australia. The children were encouraged to interview their parents and extended families about their journey to Australia and shared these stories with the class. The big ideas for students to develop in the Gallery pilot included:

1. People have migrated to Australia over many years in order to seek religious and political freedom and a better way of life.

2. Migration is unsettling economically, socially and culturally and can be a frightening experience for those involved. It is important to understand the perspective of others and to respect their rights and dignity.
4.3 Emerging structure of implementing the Gallery

The following aspects of the pilot study became a solid testing ground for the structure of the subsequent research for the formal study:

- The lessons for the pilot study occurred weekly for two school terms.
- The four research themes (arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour) were used as the basis for planning the pedagogy of each lesson.
- Elaborate children’s picture books were used as the link between classroom and creative space and informed the arts pedagogy during the creative sessions.
- Picture books were selected based on their focus on big ideas to match with the curriculum objectives.
- The types of artistic activities that were implemented included tableau (freeze frame), mime, statue work, responding to rhythm and music, drama games, movement and use of simple objects to create visual metaphors.
- Exploring the ability to develop empathy became a crucial concern of the pedagogy in the Pilot. The theoretical underpinnings of the research were founded on ideas that, working with the students to critically examine the feelings and perspectives of the people whom they were studying, would be an important factor in developing deep cognitive and affective understanding of the topic.
- Data gathering instruments were tested, including a researcher journal, student and teacher interview and photographic evidence. The ideas and practical inclusion of photojournalism were honed during the pilot study.
- The pilot study also assisted in the realisation of the Gallery as a metaphor for the work that was occurring within the creative and artistic sessions.

These key practical elements of the pedagogy in the pilot became core aspects of the structure of the Gallery experiences and the methodological considerations of the formalised study.
4.4 Pilot in action

Louise’s class at Valley Primary School had not been involved in regular sustained arts-based learning in the past and as such appeared to be reluctant at first to step outside traditional educational structures and to share their opinions or reflections on the artistic process. A large part of each session included pair or group work where children were encouraged to work with different students to generate their teamwork skills, communication and problem solving abilities. This was challenging initially as some students appeared to show reluctance to participate, preferring individual ‘pen and paper’ tasks. Over time, the students began to show signs of engagement with the Gallery pedagogy.

The following texts were selected to highlight and develop the main themes from each moment of human migration in Australian history. The selected texts included My Place (Wheatley, 1992), an Australian children’s picture book that begins in 1988 and goes back a decade, page by page, telling the history of one specific place in Sydney from the perspective of the generations of children who have lived there; The Arrival (Tan, 2007), a fictitious migrant story told entirely through pictures; The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993), an American picture book that describes a woman’s escape from the Vietnam war and the historical biography of a real migrant, Mei Quong Tart, during the time of the Australian Gold Rush. These resources were chosen because they effectively communicated to the children some of the big ideas for the unit including dispossession, displacement, perspective, leaving home, transition to a new country and desire for a better life.

The students had opportunities in the sessions to reflect on and embody the characters from within the narratives, in order to empathise with and explain their viewpoints, feelings, thoughts and actions. The types of artistic activities that were implemented included tableau (freeze frame), mime, statue work, responding to rhythm and music, drama games, movement and use of simple objects to create visual metaphors. This pedagogical design influenced the approach that was then taken into the larger formalised study. In practice, due to the preference for reliance on artistic forms of communication, the students required explicit encouragement and
scaffolding in order to communicate and express characterisations and landscapes without props, costumes or sets, and without the ability to ‘write’ their responses as they were used to. It was through these approaches that the children brought to life the characters with the historical moments about which they were learning, with the intention that they would begin to develop new, deeper understandings of the topic of study.

Although each activity was highly prepared and planned, a child-centred approach was favoured for these sessions where the children were given freedom to ‘play’ their own ideas and develop their personal responses to the creative work. Throughout the sessions, the children exhibited a growing capacity to share their thoughts and feelings and embody these through the arts. Exploring the ability to develop empathy became a crucial concern of the pedagogy. The theoretical underpinnings of the research were founded on ideas that working with the students to critically examine the feelings and perspectives of the people whom they were studying would be an important factor in developing deep cognitive and affective understanding of the topic. The importance of developing student engagement factors of deep cognitive and affective connection in students to their learning, by employing high operative artistic and creative pedagogy, evolved to become a core process of the pilot. Observational data and interviews continually appeared to reveal the increased empathic and emotional responses from the class, which reinforced the central research objectives in line with the theme learning as a human endeavour.

For these reasons, the pilot at Valley Primary School was a highly influential and encouraging experience for shaping the research. It allowed a testing ground for the action research model and informed the subsequent formalised study. This chapter has explained the pilot study and its influence on the later action research. The following three chapters will present the data from each of the research sites of this investigation, starting with Valley Primary School.
This chapter presents the data from Valley Primary School. There are seven sections that follow. The first section describes the research context by discussing the class and their teacher. Section 2 outlines two students who will be the subject of more focused student observations from the data and Section 3 discusses the aims of the Gallery at Valley Primary School. Section 4 presents each of the nine Gallery lessons that took place, including descriptions of the data that was collected through student and teacher interviews, photographs and photojournalist reflections, class reflections and journal entries. Section 5 describes the Exhibition that resulted from the Galleries at Valley Primary School. Both Sections 4 and 5 include brief statements of how the collected data fits alongside each of the four themes of research; arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour. Section 6 summarises the experiences of the case study students and Section 7 summaries the data against each of the four main themes of research.

5.1 The research context – Sarah’s class

The previous chapter outlined the pilot study to this research. Sarah’s class is at the same school and is a composite class made up of students from Year 3 and Year 4. The students in this group work within a range of academic levels, with most students achieving at, or below, their stage level\(^2\). The research context can be described as having an ethnically diverse makeup, a school ethos that is strongly focused on student engagement and in which there is an observed general behavioural compliance amongst the student body. The majority of the students in this class group has a language background other than English and are mostly the

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\(^2\) In New South Wales schools, the curriculum is based on stages of learning with two school years given to one stage. For example, Years 3 and 4 are categorised as Stage 2.
children of immigrants and refugees, predominantly from Vietnam, but some also from China, Iraq and Lebanon. This cultural diversity characteristic was a significant consideration in the planning for the ongoing Gallery experiences that constitute this research.

Sarah instils high expectations of learning and plans stimulating lessons where students shift between working independently, working in groups and whole class discussion. She acknowledges that, at the start of the school year, most of the students in her class preferred to work on their own, and were reluctant to work with others. In order to help the students to acknowledge and work with their peers, she began to change set groups often and rotate and mix established seating within the classroom on a regular basis. Sarah believes these actions support the children to practise speaking English with each other and to encourage collaboration. She carefully plans lessons to ensure that students feel supported and confident in sharing ideas and exploring the curriculum content in-depth.

Sarah has been involved in the Western Sydney University (WSU) Fair Go research so she is familiar with pedagogy that encourages student engagement. Sarah stated that the children react positively to arts lessons. However, some students lack confidence in their own abilities. She acknowledges that the school advocates for arts integration but that it can be overlooked. In the research journal from the first visit to the classroom it was noted that there appeared to be an established culture of care:

The children support each other by verbal encouragement … the students actively encouraged each other when giving speeches to their class. Sarah positively reinforced the class by praising the ‘respect’ and ‘encouragement’ that was evident in this session.

This chapter will next outline and describe the data gathered at two levels. The first level will address the whole class and the second will focus on the individual student level by reporting on data for two case study students. As discussed in the methodology chapter, these case study profiles are designed to enable deeper data collection and may expose some intricate or interesting details in student responses
to the experiences. The next section will profile two students from the class. Data relating to their progress in each Gallery will be subsequently included.

5.2 Student portraits

5.2.1 Danny

Danny has exhibited difficulty in his relationship to school. In previous years at school, his behaviour has been described as ‘resistant’ and ‘destructive’. Danny has not achieved at a high academic level and exhibits reluctance to try new things or work with people he doesn’t know. He is observed as giving up easily within tasks and experiencing difficulties in working with his peers. The research journal from the first class visit describes Danny’s anxiety during class speeches for a literacy unit of work: ‘He did not want to stand in front of his class, so Sarah encouraged him to face her instead … the other students were verbally encouraging him, ‘You can do it!’”. Sarah described Danny as having a low academic self concept and shy at attempting new tasks and she questioned whether he would refuse to participate in the Gallery. For these reasons he was selected as a case study to track whether he would respond to arts based learning.

5.2.2 Valerie

Valerie is an outwardly happy student and well-liked member of her class. Sarah described her as having strong interpersonal skills and that she has the confidence and communication skills to work cooperatively with all students. Despite her confidence, Valerie struggles academically and she is positioned as one of the lowest in level in her grade. Sarah described that, despite Valerie trying her best to achieve, she can be unfocused in class, ‘She is one of the strongest when it comes to sharing feelings and her ideas during classroom discussions, but she becomes shy and withdrawn in more traditionally academic discussions.’ Sarah goes on to say that Valerie appears to disengage and ‘become silent’ during literacy and numeracy lessons in particular. Research has shown that compliance is not necessarily a marker of the kinds of substantive levels of engagement that are at the heart of this research. For example, the Gallery process, in line with the Fair Go Program (2013), places high importance on ‘in task’ engagement as opposed to ‘on task’ compliance. Valerie
was thus selected as another case study student in order to note how she performed in the Gallery. She is also representative of a large majority of the students in this class, who exhibit behavioural compliance but who have high learning needs.

The two students were chosen for specific reasons. Danny was chosen because he epitomises those students who have traditionally exhibited disengagement from learning. By tracking Danny the aim is to observe if the Gallery pedagogy helps him to have a more positive relationship with learning. Valerie was chosen not only because she usually experiences low academic results but also because she is behaviourally compliant. Valerie is a student who exhibits ‘on task’ behaviour, but as the research literature reinforces, this does not necessarily reflect authentic engagement (Chapter 2). By tracking Valerie there was an intention to note if she connected more deeply to her learning and was able to express her knowledge and understandings of the topics through her involvement in the Gallery.

5.3 Gallery aims and curriculum decisions

The intention in planning Galleries for Sarah’s class was not to deviate from her curriculum plan but to use it as the foundation for arts-based learning. Drawing on the curriculum objectives she had set, the task was to plan activities for the class in literature, drama, music, visual arts and movement using creative teaching practices, within the thematic scope of the unit. Sarah had planned to study the prescribed syllabus topic of British colonisation of Australia with her class and to examine the historical impact of this event by teaching the students about the Stolen Generation3. This was in line with mandated Aboriginal perspectives to be taught in NSW schools. Sarah explained that she believed that it was important to include these perspectives in relevant and meaningful ways because she had experienced that many of her students had either no knowledge or an underdeveloped understanding of these important historical moments in Australian history.

3 The Stolen Generation was a phase in Australian history in which the governments of the early to mid twentieth century planned and enacted a policy to assimilate Indigenous children into the ‘white’ community by forcibly removing them from their families.
The major goals that were considered important for this group of students were to:

1. imagine, reflect on and understand the perspectives and emotions of both the Aboriginal peoples and the British colonisers and convicts at the historical period of the Australian colonisation/invasion

2. understand and empathise with the perspectives of those involved, and the on-going significance to Australian society

3. to research and share the story of their own families’ immigration to Australia, and to make links to the themes of the historical period of Australian colonisation/invasion and the Stolen Generation.

These goals formed the basis of the big ideas to be focused on in the Galleries through interactive discourse and arts-based practices. As explained, big ideas are those that link concepts and stimulate students to think about the topic, and to consider meanings and wider social implications. Therefore, big ideas are not concerned with “attempts to elicit ‘right answers’ to miscellaneous factual questions. Instead, questions should be used as a means for engaging students with the content they are learning” (Brophy and Alleman, 2007, p.183). The big ideas to be developed by students in Sarah’s class were:

1. The British colonisers considered Australia to be ‘terra nullius’ or empty land and disrupted the families and ways of living of the Aboriginal peoples.

2. Colonisers and the colonised are affected when encounters occur. The British colonisers made decisions about Aboriginal families and ways of living that have had long term consequences for Australian Aboriginal peoples' families, identity and culture.

3. Migration often involves separation from family and culture.

In order to plan for the Gallery, the research decision was to use literature as a bridge between the students’ classroom learning experiences and the arts-based lessons. The texts included:

**5.3.1 Pilawuk: When I was Young (1996)**

An Australian children’s book by Janeen Brian that provides a factual recount of a survivor of the stolen generation.
5.3.2 The Rabbits (1998)

An Australian picture book written by John Marsden and illustrated by Shaun Tan, that tells the story of the colonisation of Australia from the point of view of the colonised. The book entails a large amount of allegorical imagery, most significantly in that the British colonists are depicted in illustration as colonising rabbits and the Aboriginal people are depicted as the colonised native Australian possums.

In order to provide authentic visual arts learning, the artwork of a central desert Indigenous group was incorporated:

5.3.3 The Tjanpi Desert Weavers

This is a group of Aboriginal women artists from remote communities across the Western and Central Deserts of Australia. The weavers belong to a not-for-profit social enterprise of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women’s Council (NPYWC). This council was established to allow women of this region to earn an income from selling their artworks. The artworks are made from local fibre and are largely sculptural in form.

In order to link literacy and music, a focus song was selected.

5.3.4 We Live on an Island (2007)

Written and recorded by Mr Percival. This is a song about the initial contact in 1788 between Aboriginal people and the First Fleet of colonisers from Britain (Appendix 4).

The next section provides a guide to the content of each Gallery and also includes a summative statement for each Gallery addressing each of the four key themes of research.
5.4 The Galleries

5.4.1 Gallery 1 – Pilawuk

Snapshot of the Gallery

The opening Gallery used the text ‘Pilawuk’ to build communication and group work skills, and then to critically analyse the main events of Pilawuk’s life.

Gallery in action

Small teams of five were constructed to create a freeze frame with their bodies of a given object. There were immediate signs of engagement as it was noted in the research journal that there was high levels of attention and participation. All students were involved in the process by either adding their suggestions verbally or moving their own bodies to show the rest of the group their ideas. It was observed that some students found the reduced time frame and the inability to communicate through speech difficult, but despite the challenge, the teams were creating structures that demonstrated different level, or heights, and interesting formations.

The students appeared to be proud of their subsequent attempts and one student reflected, ‘We all worked really hard to use our imaginations.’ Another remarked, ‘Each group came up with something different.’ These were signs that the students were beginning to respond positively to the artistic pedagogy.

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4 The ‘Gallery in Action’ notes are composed from the research journal and include data from teacher and student interviews and photojournalist photographs.
The students were asked to verbally re-tell the main events from the recount of Pilawuk and then groups were formed to choose one of the main events and a word that would summarise how Pilawuk might have felt during that phase in her life. Words were written on post-it notes and groups began to create new tableaux.
The groups again brainstormed new words to describe the time when Pilawuk was taken from her family, and chose ‘afraid’, ‘angry’, ‘isolated’, ‘mournful’ and ‘confused’. The words demonstrated that the students were beginning to recognise the emotional issues behind this historical period. Their accompanying tableaux demonstrated their developing artistic interpretation of the text. In the research
journal it was noted, ‘I did not expect that on the very first Gallery, that the students would respond seemingly so passionately … they even surprised themselves in how beautiful the final activity became.’ This excerpt signals the beginning of affective experiences of artistry and emotion in the students’ work. The students reflected on what they were proud of in the session: ‘It felt good to use our imagination’; ‘We had really great team work in my group’; ‘The music was sad and it helped me to get in the mood’ and ‘We have been learning about this in class and we could use our bodies to tell the story.’

Danny showed opposition to the Gallery. Before the Gallery commenced he told Sarah that he didn’t want to participate and asked if she had a ‘job’ for him to do back in the classroom. Sarah commented that these kinds of diversionary requests from Danny were common. It was observed that Danny was not participating fully with the tasks but to encourage his participation, he was asked to be a photojournalist. He appeared to enjoy this role and reported on which groups he liked the best. He did return to his group for the concluding activities.

Valerie appeared to be comfortable in working artistically. This was evident in the way she moved her body into interesting formations almost from the very first activity. It was observed that her peers began to look to her for guidance for their own formations. Her movements and reflective comments in the discussion after the lesson suggested her high affective engagement in the lesson and also seemed to give her an opportunity to begin to engage at a high cognitive level with the ‘big ideas’ of the Gallery.

During the teacher interview after the first session, Sarah commented that,

I think if this is what they are doing (in their first Gallery), I can’t imagine where they will be at the end, even what they do now has blown me away, I can’t wait to see how they go and I think it will be a great success for them.

The photojournalists selected the following photographs to summarise the learning that had taken place in the Gallery:
‘They are using their bodies and emotion to show you the story of Pilawuk. She was sad and scared.’

‘I love this one. I can tell what they mean from their faces. They are being torn apart.’
‘The photo is showing us working together. This photo shows us having fun.’

5.4.2 Gallery 1 – Review

Arts pedagogy

By working with the dramatic technique of tableau, the students demonstrated that they were beginning to express their knowledge artistically and were emotionally connecting with the topic of the stolen generation.

Creativity

Most students gave the impression that they enjoyed trying new tasks with their peers. Individuals within groups showed initial signs of apprehension in communicating their ideas or taking risks however there were increasing signs of comfort with this as the Gallery continued.

Student engagement

There were some early signs that the students were cognitively engaged as they had to ‘think deeply’ about the emotional element of the text. They seemed to enjoy working in teams and to be given the opportunity to be artistic which could reflect
the emerging high operative and high affective level of involvement and possible engagement with the Gallery.

**Learning as a human endeavour**

The creative pedagogy of the lesson was intended to move the students’ intellectual understanding of the events of the Stolen Generation towards a humanising focus. To reiterate, one of the big ideas for this class was that:

Colonisers and the colonised are affected when encounters occur. The British colonisers made decisions about Aboriginal families and ways of living that have had long term consequences for Australian Aboriginal peoples' families, identity and culture.

The students’ artistic responses showed some early signs that the class was exploring the ongoing consequences of the government policy that resulted in creating the Stolen Generation.

**5.4.3 Gallery 2 – Walk in someone else's shoes**

**Snapshot of Gallery 2**

The class discussed the expression ‘to walk in someone else’s shoes’ and formed small groups to create a movement sequence.

**Gallery 2 in action**

The class discussed the expression ‘to walk in someone else’s shoes’. Sarah reflected that due to their English as a Second Language (ESL) backgrounds, many of the students have difficulty with idiomatic sayings and double meanings. After discussion, the proceeding activities were planned to support the students’ understanding of this saying. The students were arranged in pairs and were given a small section of text from Pilawuk from which to decide on two emotions that Pilawuk might have been feeling at that time in her life. The concept of ‘walking in someone else’s shoes’ was again reinforced to help the class to understand that they would be thinking about Pilawuk’s feelings. The students wrote their two chosen
words on post-it-notes and were asked to then create a short simple movement for each word to visually ‘describe’ it. The class practised how each movement could blend or flow from one into the other to make it look aesthetically pleasing.

Each pair joined with another pair to teach each other their sequence and then add it together to create a sequence of four movements. The whole class was participating and they appeared to be ‘in task’, carefully teaching and practising their movements together. Each group shared their movement sequence with the rest of the class and the students were supportive of each other. They seemed genuinely curious to see what each group had created. The class chose four important emotions in the text and movements were decided for these. The class decided upon movements for the words: ‘pain (step to the left and push hands away from body); peace (hands reach down and touch the floor); depressed (whole body crouches down) and sad (sit on bottom and slide backwards by pushing off the floor with feet and with arms outstretched)’. These movements were combined and the students ‘danced’ the words that they had chosen with focus as a whole class.

The students reflected: ‘We were thinking about how someone else feels’; ‘We were moving to understand more about that person’; and ‘To find out what’s inside of them.’ The activity exemplifies how artistic learning, when combined with thinking about ‘big ideas’, can be employed as an expression, possibly even an assessment, of developments in intercultural understanding. Sarah commented that she was impressed that all of the students tried their best and contributed to the group. She noted that a particular student impressed her, ‘The way he expresses himself and the way that he moved his body, because he’s not a very confident speaker but you could tell them that he was stimulated and engaged.’

As in the previous Gallery, Danny showed opposition to participating in this Gallery at the beginning of the lesson. Without teacher direction, he joined a group after the initial activities. Perhaps this was the first sign that he was beginning to be affectively engaged. He continued to have difficulty in sharing ideas with his group and actually began to say, ‘I need help.’ Sarah said that this was unusual from Danny
and that he normally wouldn’t ask for help, that he would typically just walk away or ‘give up’. She said, ‘He was trying his best, I was so happy about that.’

In the follow-up reflection session, the photojournalists selected the following photos and made these comments regarding their learning in this Gallery:

‘This one almost made me cry … Pilawuk being apart from her family and then coming back to her own family. It made me think about what it was like.’
‘They are sharing a relationship. They are hugging because they finally find her family … we know how other people feel … like you feel that you’re actually that person.’

‘They enjoyed working together as a team. They had no arguments because they tried things out together.’
One of the photojournalists, who happened to be Valerie, made an important reflection about her learning. It highlighted that she was ‘in task’ and engaged, that she was effectively applying her cognitive understandings of the main themes of the text, ‘I was proud when we were thinking about the book, we can act out the book so we understand more about the book. It made me feel like I was actually inside the book.’

5.4.4 Gallery 2 – Review

Arts pedagogy

The use of movement within the lesson was designed to give the students a different platform in which to consolidate their understanding of empathy. The students appeared to demonstrate that they could re-imagine the names of emotions as if they were movements. Moreover, it seemed that some students who had difficulty in expressing verbally their intellectual understanding of key elements within the book were able to visually ‘dance’ the emotional meaning of the text.

Creativity

The students, particularly those with high ESL support needs, showed signs of deeper cognitive understanding of key emotions within the text. Re-imagining words as movements seemed to be a creative strategy that helped connect the students with the concept of ‘walking in someone else’s shoes’.

Student engagement

The high affective and cognitive requirement of the Gallery was evident in the way the students seemed to take risks in their performance, transferring their intellectual and empathic understandings of the text into a movement sequence. This task was high operative as the students had to interpret their understanding of the text from a verbal response to perform a movement response.

Learning as a human endeavour

By introducing the concept, ‘to walk in someone else’s shoes’, the intention was for the students to examine in subsequent activities the human impact of the stolen
generation. The students’ ideas of the emotions present within the text were translated into a movement sequence in order to further humanise their understanding of critical moments in the life of the main character.

5.4.5 Gallery 3 – The Rabbits

Snapshot of Gallery 3

The Gallery focused on the text *The Rabbits*. Tableaux were created in response to the book and the students critically analysed the lyrics to the song, *We Live On An Island*.

Gallery 3 in action

‘Imagination walk’ consisted of asking the students as a group to move from one side of the hall to the other imagining that they were in a given location, such as the moon, a frozen lake and a bridge over an active volcano. The purpose of this activity was to support the students’ use of imagination and to encourage them to feel more comfortable with movement through space. There were signs of engagement from squeals of delight to purposeful movements. A memorable moment from this activity was when the class imagined a rickety bridge over an active volcano. They were so excited by this idea that they began to jump up and down. The children showed control and expression with their bodily movements and their facial expressions as they crossed the bridge.
As Valerie approached the middle of the hall space she improvised, ’There is a hole in the bridge here – watch out! We have to jump over!’ Some members of the class screamed and they worked together to solve the problem. Sarah noted that Valerie is not usually a student who experiences leadership opportunities in the classroom but in this lesson she was able to employ her creative skills and experience success. The students showed trepidation and fear on their faces, their movements became slower and without direction from the teachers, they began to work in small teams to attempt the ‘jump’ across the hole. The students’ enjoyment of the task pushed the activity past its intended time frame as the students ad-libbed new ‘problems’ in the improvised narrative. In the journal, it was noted that it was a special moment of engaged ‘play’ between the teachers and the students:

This play came from the students – they led us. It was hard not to be swept up in it because they were so animated! It was their imaginations that brought this sequence to life and Sarah and I also began to improvise and play with them too.

_The Rabbits_ was read to the class and a discussion about the symbolism of the story was initiated. Students were connecting their thematic knowledge between this text
and Pilawuk: ‘The children were taken away and the rabbits are the British people’; ‘They (the colonists) stole the children too’; ‘It’s like Pilawuk is the possum’, and ‘In both stories the children were taken.’ The students made tableaux of a given section of the text before sharing these with the whole class. One student remarked after watching another group perform, ‘That group showed us that rabbits take over land and they can ruin it like what the colonists did. They didn’t understand about the land.’

Danny appeared to be more comfortable in joining in with his classmates. He did not verbally oppose completing the Gallery tasks and he was observed to be listening to his group members and even giving his opinion about the ideas his classmates were putting forward in the tableau work. These were perhaps signs that he was beginning to be more affectively engaged in the Gallery process.

After the tableau work, the children gathered together to hear the song, We Live On an Island. The song describes the First Fleet’s first impressions on their arrival to Sydney (see Appendix 2). Musically, the song is performed solely by the artist’s voice, recreating the sounds of instruments including drums, bass guitar and maraca by layering his voice in the recording process. The class was asked to identify all of the instruments and were seemingly engaged in imitating the artist and in being able to detect the unique tone colour of the song. The lyrics were also discussed by the students: ‘The song is about Sydney Harbour before it was colonised’; ‘We can walk in the shoes of the Aborigines in this song’; and ‘We enjoyed the song but at the same time we got to think about what the Aboriginals felt.’

One student made a contrasting comment, ‘The song made me think about the British perspective before they came to Sydney.’ This comment prompted a lot of discussion and they shared their opinions of the perspective of those on the First Fleet:

They were sad because they want to be at home … They were homesick’; ‘They might have been happy to arrive because they were seasick! … They wouldn’t know what to expect … They might have been really happy because when they saw the Aborigines dancing on the shore, they thought ‘we are in a happy country!’
Sarah remarked afterwards that the students had little to no experience in musically or lyrically analysing a song and that she enjoyed watching her class appreciating the music. After this activity, the students moved into groups and each chose a different line from the song to represent either literally or metaphorically. The students showed signs of cognitive engagement as they were observed as critically engaging with the texts and expressing the big ideas of ‘first contact’, suggesting a growing capacity to empathise. The photojournalists made the following comments to represent the learning that had taken place:

‘I chose this one because this is the mum and dad and it shows the children are taken away from them. They were showing us what eventually happened to the Aboriginal people’
‘This photo shows a lot of great expression. This group came up with some great ideas.’

‘This photo shows us that we need to remember what happened to them so we know how to help them and to make them feel better.’
5.4.6 Gallery 3 – Review

*Arts pedagogy*

The students showed signs that, after learning the lyrics of the song and analysing the musical structure, they could relate empathically to the moment of first contact.

*Creativity*

The students demonstrated increased confidence and skill in improvising and being ‘playful’. The simple warm up game turned in to an elongated student-led activity in which the students’ imaginations seemed to spark off each other and propel them to work as a team to problem solve imagined obstacles.

*Student engagement*

The students were making connections in their learning across the texts and were more willing to share their understandings together. They also demonstrated signs of working more cohesively as a team, evidenced by the environment of purposeful discussion and play between the teachers and each-other.

*Learning as a human endeavour*

The students appeared to be developing authentic curiosity about the topic and began to pose some questions around the big ideas in their work.

5.4.7 Gallery 4 – We live on an island

*Snapshot of Gallery 4*

Students created a ‘story circle’ to retell the story of *The Rabbits* through improvisation and mime. Origami boats with adjectives were made to describe the perspectives of the First Fleet and the Indigenous people of the time.

*Gallery 4 in action*

Before the lesson began, many students asked if the whole class could sing the song ‘*We live on an Island*’. Sarah remarked afterwards that several children had ‘Googled’ the song in their own time at home and had discovered various clips of the
song on YouTube. It was important to the Gallery that this song had authentic links to the content that the students were learning about. The fact that many students had searched for the song in their own time suggested that they had deep interest in it and extended their own learning ‘beyond teacher, task and time’ (Fair Go Team, 2006, p. 21). The Fair Go Program (2013) observed how students expressed deep engagement when they applied and transferred classroom learning to their own personal interests.

A story circle was then introduced to the class\(^5\). The students who had demonstrated the most confidence in leading activities in previous Galleries were the first to enact the re-telling of the story, but it seemed their confidence encouraged others to participate. The students began to non-verbally take cues from each other and negotiate their ‘entry’ into the story circle. Sarah remarked afterwards that she could see that the Gallery work had helped with their artistic skills, ‘They have come a long way in developing the idea of how to improvise without talking.’ For example, one student made a tree shape with his body, almost in invitation to another student, who ‘sat’ in the tree and made their body shape possum-like. These changes in artistic behaviour gave an indication that the pedagogy was engaging students and developing their dramatic skills and creativity.

Within the story circle, Danny was one of the most enthusiastic students in terms of participation. He was jumping into the action and interacting with his peers through improvisation. Valerie too, displayed enthusiasm and skill in improvising. An important element of collaborative and spontaneous drama exercises is the ability to give or respond to ‘offers’ (ability to improvise suggestions of context or character). Valerie appeared to draw on her imaginative ability in moving in and out of different roles and was able to ‘make offers’ to her classmates. Danny’s and Valerie’s

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\(^5\) In order to enact a story circle, students sit in a circle and listen to the teacher read aloud the book, or re-tell the story. The students can ‘enter’ the circle to participate in miming the action of the story. The teacher can ‘clear’ the circle at any time by giving a cue in order to allow new students to participate in the mime. This dramatic device is a useful way of reinforcing the themes and sequence of a text while at the same time allowing the students to physicalise their understanding of the main events.
involvement within this activity was evident and a positive indicator for the effectiveness of the pedagogy.

Origami boats were made within the scope of the overall Gallery plan to artistically work through the stories of the students’ families’ arrival in Australia, in a later session. The intention for including origami was to conduct a purposeful activity that linked carefully to the idea of the first immigrants to Australia arriving on boats in 1788 and with the fact that many of the students within the class had personal family connections in coming on boats to Australia. The class appeared to enjoy making the origami boats together in the way that they responded with smiles, laughter, focus in making their boats and in assisting each other to complete the task.

Adjectives were brainstormed to summarise the feelings and perspectives of the two ‘sides’ at this point in history. The students were instructed to pick an adjective from one perspective and write it on one side of the boat and then to do the same for the other perspective. Some of the words the students selected for the rabbits included ‘sea-sick’, ‘home-sick’, ‘afraid’, ‘relieved’ and ‘excited’. Words from the possums’ perspective included ‘curious’, ‘nervous’, ‘shocked’, ‘surprised’, ‘angry’ and ‘scared’. The choices that the students made suggested they were empathising with the key human issues from the historical period. There was silence as the students sat in a circle and in turn read aloud the adjectives they had chosen whilst adding their boat to a large blue sheet of material in the centre.

The photographs selected by the photojournalists included:
‘We thought about the two sides and how they felt. We did it in story circle and then we wrote it down on the boats.’

‘We did so good as a team in story circle.’
‘He was the best at story circle. He kept coming up with cool ideas.’

‘I felt creative today in the story circle because no one told us what to do – we just had to do it.’
The colours of the boats could also show their emotions like orange could be happy and blue could be sad.’

5.4.8 Gallery 4 – Review

Arts pedagogy
The story circle was a new dramatic device for the students. Observations showed growing artistic skills, coupled with increased levels of confidence and teamwork.

Creativity
The students drew on their growing empathic understanding to participate in a story circle. Not only did they communicate their knowledge creatively, they demonstrated key creative skills such as problem solving, non-verbal communication, teamwork and risk taking.

Student engagement
The affective engagement of the students was evident in their active and enthusiastic participation in the story circle. The students had further high cognitive challenges when asked to summarise two perspectives within the historical period that they were learning about. The different activities reflected the high operative nature of the Gallery as there were a variety of practices for the students to be involved in.
Learning as a human endeavour

The students communicated their intercultural understandings within the topic by choosing adjectives to summarise two different perspectives. They also provided some evidence that the story circle was effective in communicating the big ideas from across the Gallery experiences.

5.4.9 Gallery 5 – The rabbits came by water

Snapshot of Gallery 5

A creative literacy activity called ‘simile swap’ was played to help the class imaginatively generate similes to include in a poetry writing session scheduled for the next gallery.

Gallery 5 in action

‘Imagination walk’ was played but with a new challenge, in that the class was asked to improvise together as a whole class instead of moving individually through the imagined space. They were asked to think about the line from *The Rabbits*, ‘They came by water’ and to share their ideas for how they could create this image as a type of movement sequence. A student suggested that the class make an image of a boat but animate it together instead of remaining in a freeze position. When the class began constructing themselves into a boat shape, some students offered to ‘be’ the water supporting the boat and these children collected some blue streamers as props to emulate the movement of waves. The class moved from one side of the hall in the shape of a boat in the ocean with some students forming waves with their arms with the streamers. Dramatically the structure and shape were somewhat unclear but students demonstrated team work, improvisational skills and non-verbal communication.

‘Simile swap’ is a game played to enhance descriptive writing skills. Small teams of three students were positioned in a circle around the hall and a picture card with a sentence was placed face down in front of each group. The sentence was half completed with the goal being that the students would have to add a simile to the card. For example, the card could contain a picture of a lion with the sentence, ’The
lion’s eyes were as golden as …’. The students would read their sentence, add a simile to the end and wait for a musical cue to quickly take their simile to the next group. The receiving group had to come up with a new simile for each sentence so that, theoretically, the game would get harder with each rotation. In some ways, this game had an element of time pressure for the students to be creative and generate ideas swiftly. Making the activity a ‘game’ with a time limit created the possibility that imaginative thinking would be hindered as students could feel too much pressure to generate ideas. It was an experiment to see how the students would respond. The signs of involvement and engagement were evident. For example, the students were very focused and seemed to respond positively to the time limit because it became a challenge. There were giggles and squeals of excitement with each rotation and there was a lot of positive energy in the room.

Danny participated thoughtfully and excitedly in this game. It had been previously observed that he had difficulty participating and staying focused during team work. However, in this game, he was trying and co-operatively working with his team. Perhaps the fast paced nature of the activity helped him to stay involved in the game. Sarah mentioned that she noticed that he was curious as to what each new simile card was going to be.

The simile cards that were created were not authentically linked to the curriculum content for two reasons. Firstly, it was an experiment to see how the students would respond to the game and secondly, if it was successful, it could be an opportunity for the students to practise the game in a safe environment and to feel a sense of achievement in constructing the literary device of similes before moving onto a higher cognitive challenge.

Sarah remarked, ‘They went for it! They liked seeing what each other had come up with and there was this unexpected class collaboration element.’ She also remarked that Danny was affectively stimulated by the task, ‘He was engaged in helping his group and he was having fun. He participated with no problems with his group. He was challenged by the game and wanted to win even though it wasn’t about that!’ Sarah noticed that the class was actively employing the teamwork and
communication skills that they had been developing over the previous weeks, ‘I saw
the language development occurring with the similes. Tom was trying to think
differently and he was adding heaps of ideas to his group. I hadn’t noticed that before
about him.’

The following photos and comments were given by the photojournalists:

‘This is the boat we made. I had to move like water and it was a bit hard.
We didn’t get it really good at first.’

‘We made a boat as a class and we had to work together to make it look good.’
‘This was my favourite today, I had fun with my team.’

‘This is my team. We had to swap the cards and we had to think quick.’

‘Sometimes someone on another team already had my idea so I had to write down another one.’
5.4.10 Gallery 5 – Review

Arts pedagogy

The first activity, which combined the students’ ongoing exposure to dramatic play and imaginative movement sequences, demonstrated that the class had developed competent skills in being able to work effectively in sharing ideas and putting them into practice artistically.

Creativity

The students were able to work effectively when creating a whole class image of a boat by experimenting, problem solving and re-assessing. In the simile swap game, the students responded creatively to selecting words to complete a simile sentence with spontaneous and swift idea generation.

Student engagement

The students showed strong signs of being affectively engaged in the simile swap game. The students were given support in order that they could take risks in their writing.

Learning as a human endeavour

The students were exposed to practices required for subsequent Gallery experiences in which they will employ their empathic understanding of the topic in writing poetry from two perspectives.

5.4.11 Gallery 6 – Tjanpi Desert sculptures

Snapshot of Gallery 6

The Aboriginal weaving group, Tjanpi Desert Weavers, were introduced to the class. Students made their own sculptures in the style of the Tjanpi artists. The Tjanpi Desert Weavers were chosen in order for the class to gain insight into productive, fluid and modern artistic representations of Aboriginal identity.
**Gallery 6 in action**

The students were introduced to the website of the *Tjanpi Desert Weavers* and they appeared interested to learn about this group of artists. They asked a variety of questions, including, ‘Where do the artists live?’; ‘Could the artists speak English?’ and ‘Why don’t the artists do dot paintings?’ These questions showed that the students were curious about the artists and also indicated that their conception of Aboriginal art could be quite limited. This class discussion prompted further discussions and research, including asking the class to find where the Western and Central Desert region were positioned on a map of Australia. The class was shown photographs of sculptures constructed by the *Tjanpi Desert Weavers*. They discussed the materials that the *Tjanpi Desert Weavers* used and possibilities for how the sculptures were made.

The students seemed to like the artwork, responding positively with smiles and questions. They were also interested in the group of artists and why they made the artwork. They discovered, through analysis of the website and by close observation of the materials used in the artworks, that ‘Tjanpi’ means ‘grass’ in the artists’

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6 A Central and Western Desert Indigenous painting style.
language. The short introduction to the Aboriginal artistic group that had been planned became a prolonged, student-led and purposeful discussion that demonstrated the developing culture of enquiry within the class. This activity was planned as pedagogical commitment of the Gallery to include authentic classroom visual arts practices. From a research perspective, this activity was a purposeful choice for building student exposure toward authentic, modern and relevant Aboriginal artwork.

The children were visibly excited and raised their arms when told that they were going to be making their own *Tjanpi* sculpture. The making of a lizard shaped sculpture was demonstrated, including how to form the general shape using newspaper and adhesive tape and how to use wool to start to ‘weave’ around the newspaper and decorate the sculpture. The students were asked to pick an Australian native animal to sculpt. The class appeared focused and committed to their artwork and there was meaningful chatter as the students gave instructions, advice and support to each other. Soon there was newspaper and wool all over the classroom as the students worked to complete their sculptures. There was a lot of focus and some students found it quite physically challenging to wrap the wool around their formation without getting the wool tangled. It was noted that it was quite hard work for many of the students but there was a strong sense of commitment and dedication to their work. When the school bell rang for break-time, the students asked to keep working on their art. Their desire to finish their work could be another indicator of their enduring interest in the classroom Gallery. Sarah commented,

> When we were looking at the Tjanpi pictures they were stone quiet, not that that’s necessarily an indicator of being engaged, but they were so captivated by it all. And then we started to do it [sculpt]. They were all really engaged.

Valerie made a significant contribution to a discussion about the weavers and her curiosity was obvious. She gave some thoughtful responses about the *Tjanpi Desert Weavers* about why art would be important to them as a group of people and how the weavers had evidently used materials in their natural environment. Her responses stimulated other students into asking questions about the artists. When making the sculptures, Valerie appeared absorbed and made an Emu. Sarah remarked, ‘Valerie,
someone who, academically speaking, does not keep up with the other kids but her contributions to the discussion were so higher order … and her sculpture is beautiful.’ Danny too, was observed as absorbed in this artwork. To start with, he kept saying, ‘It’s too hard.’ He initially scrunched the newspaper, stating that his artwork was ‘bad’, and referred to the near-completed works of the other students, comparing his work with theirs. Eventually Danny was focused on his artwork. When he began wrapping his sculpture with wool, he sat completely quietly and continued with his sculpture with slow, careful movements. Sarah noticed that, eventually, Danny’s engagement in the task was strong, ‘If he didn’t enjoy it, he wouldn’t be involved, he wouldn’t talk to you. When there is an area that he doesn’t feel that he is succeeding in, he doesn’t like it and he just shuts off.’

The photojournalists selected the following photographs:

‘This photo shows how people who were finished asked if anyone needed help.’
‘When you finish a part you go ‘finally’ and then when you look at your sculpture you think, I actually did a good job.’

‘It was hard sometimes with the newspaper, sometimes it was hard to get the animal to stand up and the string kept getting in knots!’
'I liked the activity because we really had to think and use our imagination.'

'We got to really think and learn more and be creative.'
‘I think they look good because they are colourful and they look creative.’

5.4.12 Gallery 6 – Review

Arts pedagogy

The students were allowed the time and space to appreciate the diverse nature of Aboriginal artistic forms. The activity drew on, and demonstrated, through the students’ affective responses, the qualitative side of artistic experience in the enjoyment of creating an individual sculpture.

Creativity

By making their own Tjanpi sculptures, the students were employing creative abilities such as experimentation and innovation, while at the same time, making links to their learning and understanding about authentic Aboriginal art through self initiated research and discussion.

Student engagement

The sustained and focused whole-class discussion at the commencement of the lesson, with inquiring questions about the Tjanpi weavers, was an indication that the students were becoming cognitively engaged with the topic. Individual conversations that took place when the students made their own sculptures, demonstrated that they
were articulating their own challenges, solutions to problems and achievements in the process of learning. The students took risks, and despite the difficulties and challenges that some students encountered, they expressed satisfaction and enjoyment from the task.

Learning as a human endeavour

Students demonstrated, by creating and researching the Tjanpi sculptures, signs of their engagement with ‘big ideas’ by asking critical questions, exhibiting curiosity in the artists and making connections with their prior knowledge to a modern, living and surviving Aboriginal arts group.

5.4.13 Gallery 7 – Poetic perspectives

Snapshot of Gallery 7

The poetry devices of simile and alliteration were re-introduced through the ‘simile swap’ game in order to examine the indigenous and British perspectives of the colonisation period of Sydney.

Gallery 7 in action

The students had begun a poetry-writing unit in class and the intention was to link these lessons with the Gallery. The Gallery pedagogy is intended to link authentically to the classroom curriculum and this decision would naturally extend the students’ developing language skills and provide opportunity and support for them to generate quality poetry with purpose. Alliteration and simile writing were chosen as the poetic devices on which to focus.

The class was to use seven stimulus picture cards of images that related to Sydney at the time of colonisation. These included a bright sun, rolling waves, a blue sky with clouds, an image of a replica of HMS Sirius (the leading ship of the first fleet of convicts to Sydney in 1788), a tall ghost gumtree, a kookaburra and an early British painted scene of Sydney Cove. These pictures were to be rotated for the children to add alliteration in the form of adding an adjective to describe the noun in the picture, and a simile sentence that would describe the picture on the card. The students
showed signs that they were eager to begin the game in the way that some repeatedly asked if the activity could begin and showed positive facial expressions when they were told that the class could play ‘simile swap’.

The groups appeared to be working hard together because they were offering lots of suggestions to each other and sharing ideas. Danny voiced his happiness to participate in the task and said that he wanted to ‘win’. A competitive edge to the activity was not encouraged but, perhaps this statement of Danny’s reflected his growing feelings of being able to achieve.

The alliteration sheets were rotated first, but after three to four rotations, the simile sheets were also added. For each rotation, each group had two poetic devices to consider. There was evidence that they liked the challenge and it was observed that the students were actively excited about getting a new sentence and discussing their ideas. Pre-prepared simile sentence cards were available to support all the students if they needed them.

Some of their writing included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliteration</th>
<th>Similes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cackling kookaburra</td>
<td>The sun as hot as a volcano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soothing sails</td>
<td>The waves crashing like swords</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The class then used a template to construct a poem, as a group, using their favourite simile and alliteration sentences. The topic for the poem was colonisation, but the groups had to choose a perspective of either the ‘rabbits’ or the ‘possums’ and to write from that angle. In order to link to The Rabbits, the line from the text ‘They came by water’ was given as the first line of the poem. The students were told they could change the line to reflect which position they had taken.
The formula to use was as follows:

*They/We came by water* (from *The Rabbits*)

*Origami word* (from Gallery 4)

*simile sentence*

*simile sentence*

*alliteration*

This structure was given in order to facilitate focus for the students’ ideas and to make it easier to work within a group. From a research perspective, it was questioned whether using this type of formula as a teaching tool was useful in encouraging creativity or whether it could instead, be too limiting and narrow. Nonetheless, it was decided that such a template would give them a structure on which they could pin their ideas in order to allow expression and let creativity flow. Also, due to the diversity in literacy achievement within the class, the template could, in some instances, be necessary to aid those students with ESL needs.

There was a lot of discussion, and sometimes, purposeful disagreement within the groups as to which sentence to use. Sarah remarked afterwards that there was a feeling of achievement for the students in writing a poem using the devices that had been taught. Valerie, who usually does not confidently express feelings of her ability in academic pursuits, was suggesting many ideas to her group and appeared keen to argue for the inclusion of her suggestions. This could perhaps reflect Valerie’s growing self-confidence in attempting new tasks.

The groups showed signs of excitement to read their poems to each other. Some poems were poetically sophisticated and others strongly highlighted the perspective that groups had taken. For example, this poem highlighted the position of ‘the possums’:
They came by water
Scared and confused
The land is as peaceful as snowflakes
They invade like a wave
Panicking possums
And they came by water

This poem highlighted the feelings of ‘the rabbits’:

We came by water
Confused
Waves crashing like thunder
The sun as hot as fire
Slow ship
And we came by water

The students enjoyed listening to each other’s work, which was evident when they made positive reflections about aspects of the lesson that they liked. Sarah remarked how well they worked in groups and that they were used to poetry writing as an individual activity:

These children can really benefit from sharing ideas together, particularly those ones that struggle with expressing themselves fully in English … it was intellectually challenging for all the students not just the ESL kids. I felt so proud of their work, and when reading their work aloud you could see how proud they were.

The photojournalists noted:
‘The swap game was fun. Our group was quick.’

‘Maybe sometimes it’s hard to think of words, maybe they thought of something but it was already written by someone else.’

The photojournalist meeting led to an interesting discussion wherein they began to draw parallels between the journeys of the people on the First Fleet with their own stories of migration to Australia. The photojournalists noted, ‘I liked the poems. They talk about coming to Australia. Most of our families came over to Australia because of the war.’ A second photojournalist responded, ‘Yes. They were looking
for a better place … for asylum and refuge.’ I asked how this was similar to the experience of the people on the First Fleet. They said, ‘The people want a place that is positive and nothing can harm them. We are a multicultural country.’

These comments likely indicate the connections that the students were making between their classroom learning and their own lives. They perhaps show the engaging messages of ‘knowledge’ that were playing out in the Gallery in that the students communicated a higher-order understanding of the task and the big ideas of important historical moments in Australia’s history.

5.4.14 Gallery 7 – Review

Arts pedagogy

The use of simile and alliteration was carefully scaffolded and students were called upon to employ their artistic sensibilities in the form of metaphoric figures of speech and in the repetition of consonant sounds, for dramatic effect. The students’ writing further communicated their understanding of the topic.

Creativity

The creative pedagogy was designed to make the process of employing poetic devices in writing more relevant, imaginative and connected to the students’ learning. By designing a poetic writing activity that was team based, scaffolded and integrated to other Gallery experiences, the students showed signs that they were able to generate effective ideas and employ their creativity to the task.

Student engagement

It could be that this high operative environment allowed students to feel that everyone in the class was capable of contributing ideas to their group and to create meaningful poetry. At the conclusion of the lesson, the students showed signs of feeling pride and achievement, as there was ‘high emotion’ from both the class and the teachers in praising each other’s hard work.
Learning as a human endeavour

The students’ background knowledge and previous experiences in the Gallery helped the groups to be confident in expressing their empathic understandings of the human relationships and big ideas within the topic.

5.4.15 Gallery 8 – Students’ stories

Snapshot of Gallery 8

The class discussed ideas for putting on an Exhibition of learning for the school community. The students were also asked to think about their own families’ migration to Australia and how they could be incorporated into the Exhibition.

Gallery 8 in action

The session began with a class discussion about the term ‘exhibition’. Possible meanings were discussed and the students articulated their familiarity with the idea of an exhibition in a museum or art gallery. The students were informed that they would be creating their own Exhibition for the school community to show them what they had been learning in the Gallery. The class was asked what they wanted to include in the Exhibition, which was an important step in allowing the students to feel ownership of their learning. It is integral to both the Gallery pedagogy and the key theme of student engagement for the students to feel included within the Exhibition process. The class also had a discussion about which big ideas they wanted the audience to walk away with. The students suggested important ideas such as: ‘We are all the same (human)’; ‘To walk in someone else’s shoes’ and ‘To understand someone else’s feelings’, all of which articulated key concepts at the core of the topic of study.

The class was informed that they would be invited to re-enact their own families’ stories of migration to Australia. The class discussed the importance of giving the audience of the Exhibition a chance to ‘walk in your families’ shoes’. The students organised the main ‘chapters’ of the performance: Tjanpi sculptures; We live on an Island song; British settlement; Pilawuk’s story; and finally their stories of
immigration to Australia. The children were invited to ask their parents’ permission to re-tell their immigration story; it was not a compulsory activity.

The purpose of the next activity was for the students to experience a quick example of how they might play out their own personal migration stories for the Exhibition. The students were told the story of the researcher’s own great grandfather and how he came from England. They were shown, on the interactive white board, pictures of Preston, England, and the tenement houses typical of where he grew up. Volunteers were asked to use their bodies to show a line of these houses. Students came up and stood straight and close together and made roofs with their hands. A student named Adnan volunteered to play the part of Joseph, the great-grandfather. While a simple version of Joseph’s story of coming to Australia was narrated, Adnan became very animated and dramatically improvised the main events through mime. He demonstrated enthusiasm and confidence. Other students also volunteered to play his mum and dad; others wanted to be the houses of Preston; and then more students volunteered to create the boat when Joseph sailed to Australia. It became an impromptu ‘story circle’ with full participation from the class. The class was an active audience. Next, the class was asked what message the story conveyed. One student remarked, ‘Joseph came to Australia for a better life’ and ‘he left his home because he was so poor.’ The class also talked of the happiness and pride that Joseph felt when coming to Australia. Valerie asked if he was a refugee and was perhaps making connections to her own life. The purpose of this activity had been to build the students’ confidence and understanding in being able to create a short dramatic representation in preparation for their own stories. Sarah commented afterwards that despite the time pressure that she now felt the class could create an Exhibition: ‘If you asked me at the beginning of the process I would have really doubted that they would be at the stage they are now. The way they work together and the enjoyment they show is really outstanding’.

The photojournalists made the following comments:
‘That was so funny today. The story circle we did for your great grandfather. Adnan was so good.’

‘I was part of the boat. We could use the sheet to make a sail and tell the story.’

‘The true meaning of the Exhibition is that whoever you are and wherever you came from, you always have to treat people fairly.’
5.4.16 Gallery 8 – Review

Arts pedagogy

The students responded enthusiastically to the story circle and many students wanted to participate in the mime. The students were able to be self-directed in the enactment of the story, which indicated that they were becoming increasingly comfortable and confident in artistic practices.

Creativity

The students worked well as a team alongside the teachers to think about and plan the kind of Exhibition they wanted to share. The story circle included many moments of innovative thinking from the students in being able to work in a self-initiated way to creatively tell a story through improvisational mime.

Student engagement

There was a strong sense that the students involved themselves as ‘insiders’ in this Gallery. The students showed signs of being dedicated to planning their Exhibition with an enthusiastic focus on wishing to share with the school community what they had been learning about.

Learning as a human endeavour

Students suggested big idea statements such as: ‘We are all the same (human)’; ‘To walk in someone else’s shoes’ and ‘To understand someone else’s feelings’ highlighted that they were thinking about and engaging with the issues of human concern at the centre of their experiences of the Gallery.

5.4.17 Gallery 9 – Exhibition preparation

Snapshot of Gallery 9

The class began to workshop their own stories of migration to Australia through the techniques of play-building (see Chapter 2).
Gallery 9 in action

The class had an extended period of time in which to concentrate on bringing to life the migration stories of the students’ parents. Students were reminded that they would be telling these stories without literal props, costumes or sets. The goal was to tell the story as a class using bodies and expression alone. One student remarked, ‘It’s more interesting to not have costumes and other things because we can show the audience more of what we mean.’ And another student commented, ‘We have been trying to be more creative so it’s good to try showing the audience how creative we are.’ These comments reinforce that the students likely understood how their work in the Gallery was purposeful.

Jane’s story was about her father who escaped from Vietnam during the time of the Vietnam War and came to Australia for a better life. The class was asked to raise hands to show if they wanted to play the part of Jane’s father. Several hands went up and Jane selected Joshua. The class reacted somewhat surprisingly with ‘cool, yeah, wow!’ The whole class started clapping. Sarah later revealed that it is extremely rare for Joshua to want to do anything that makes him the centre of attention and that even reading aloud to the class frightens him. The reaction of the class, therefore, was likely a feeling of being proud of him, as well as signalling that Joshua’s increased confidence and wish to participate in a key role were signs of his engagement in the process.

An improvisational environment was encouraged where a small chunk of the story was selected and then students volunteered to take part and either mime a section of the story or provide an idea for how to create an inanimate object. The students and teachers were absorbed in the process and soon the class had improvised a strong re-enactment of the storyline and began to rehearse it several times. Joshua performed well in role and although he needed some clear directions as to how to move or use facial expression, he showed a lot happiness. Sarah commented after the session, ‘It amazes me that he was able to do his part with so much confidence.’
Three more students’ stories were then workshopped and all stories explained the immigration from Vietnam or Iraq to Australia. It was clear, in the way that the students immediately began arranging their bodies and suggesting ideas, that the students were drawing on the knowledge and techniques that they had been using in previous Galleries. They incorporated many artistic techniques including tableau, mime, movement and symbolic gestures. Each of the students’ stories contained shared elements such as a desire for a better life, periods of suffering, terror and survival, a feeling of alienation and not belonging in a new place and love for and appreciation for life in a new country.

The class spent the rest of the Gallery rehearsing the Exhibition from beginning to conclusion, including the newly arranged students’ stories. The students showed increased confidence in their performances, flowing from sequence to sequence without direction from the teachers.

The photojournalists noted:
‘We are showing what other people felt and what to remember.’

‘It’s really unique because sometimes you can’t show your ideas but when we are in groups we can show our ideas and we always show it differently in groups.’
‘We can treat people better now when you know how they feel.’

‘It’s creative because we use our bodies instead of other things.’
5.4.18 Gallery – Review

Arts pedagogy

The students combined effort in re-enacting their own class mates’ family stories came as a result of their involvement in developing artistic skills over the entire Gallery experience. With minimal teacher direction, the students were able to articulate, plan and create their own Exhibition using the combined artistic skills of the class.

Creativity

The class worked together to employ their imaginations in the process of play building each other’s stories. Individual students were suggesting original ideas in the play building session and others, like Joshua, took risks in their learning.

Student engagement

The students communicated that they were feeling excited, albeit nervous, in sharing the Exhibition with their community. The students exhibited signs of deeply valuing the learning that they were involved in.
Learning as a human endeavour

The students articulated that walking in other people’s shoes, feeling empathy for someone else and understanding someone else’s journey, were the big ideas in their learning. The students focused on the emotional moments within each of their classmates’ stories to be able to communicate the events at a deeply human level.

5.5 The Exhibition

5.5.1 Snapshot of the Exhibition

The Exhibition comprised a selection of the Galleries that the students had been working on in previous weeks. The different parts of the Exhibition, in sequence, included:

- Tjanpi ‘gallery’: students placed their Tjanpi sculptures around the hall space for visiting guests to observe.
- Adjective movement sequence: students communicated through movement and mime the moment of first contact between the Aboriginal people and the British settlers.
- Poetry presentation: individual students read aloud their simile/alliteration poems from the two perspectives of the Aboriginal peoples and British colonisers. The rest of the class performed tableaux to match the reading.
- Pilawuk tableau sequence: The class enacts tableaux of different moments of Pilawuk’s life.
- Students’ stories: The students share the migration stories of each others’ families by sharing the outcomes of their play building Gallery.
- Conclusion: The class conclude the performance by singing the song ‘We Live on an Island’ alongside their Tjanpi sculptures.

The Exhibition in action

The philosophy behind the Exhibition was to share with the school community the ongoing learning achievements of the students, including their understandings of the
big ideas of human impact. It was not a teacher designed and led, artistic performance that has little to no direct linking with the topic of study.

The students expressed that they were feeling both nervous and excited. Student responses included: ‘I’ve never done a whole Exhibition before so I am nervous that I will forget something’; ‘I’m really excited and can’t wait to show my mum’; ‘We have sculptures, dance, singing, drama; lots of things to show – I hope everyone loves it’; and ‘I’m excited because I really want to show everyone but sad because after the Exhibition we won’t do it anymore’. Sarah commented that she was excited about the Exhibition and proud of her students, ‘Now they can really show their knowledge by using their bodies effectively … they are getting into that deeper knowledge of what they are learning about.’

Other classes were invited to be the audience, as well as parents and the Executive staff. The students were able to lead themselves throughout the entire Exhibition with minimal teacher input. The students showed signs of being deeply ‘in task’ throughout the Exhibition. They talked afterwards of being ‘proud’ to share their learning. One student said, ‘Our Exhibition is really different than other plays because we have a meaning and we want the audience to know and remember.’ Another said, ‘We needed to really use our brains and think of the dragon’. Another student remarked, ‘I’m proud because we are showing what other people felt and what to remember.’

During the Exhibition, Danny was waving and smiling to his mother in the audience. Despite not always being ‘in role’, this behaviour signalled that he was proud of his work. While he initially showed signs of disengagement at the start of the Gallery process, it could be seen during the Exhibition that Danny was cooperating with his peers. Valerie talked of being happy and excited going into the Exhibition. While she was on stage, her movements and facial expressions were always clear, focused and confident.

7 ‘Dragon’ was the metaphorical term we gave to the concept of ‘creativity’.

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After the performance, members of the Executive staff gave their congratulations to the class and commented on how they were exploring some big ideas and concepts. They also thanked the parents of the students for sharing their stories of war, conflict and escape, and acknowledged that it was important for the students to share these stories with the community. These parents were reluctant to speak to the researcher to share their thoughts, perhaps as a result of language barriers. One of the parents whose story had been enacted however, at the conclusion of the Exhibition, approached the researcher and said ‘very good, very good’. Several other parents commented afterwards that they could see that the class had done ‘a lot of work’.

The children’s ideas and engagement with the curriculum seemed to have been interpreted by the audience as both intellectual and artistic ‘work’. Other parents commented on the artistic abilities and confidence of the students and that they were surprised by the level of artistic skill.

During the days after the Exhibition, several teachers and parents shared with Sarah how much they enjoyed the Exhibition. Sarah remarked that other teachers responded with positive feedback, particularly in regards to the way the students shared the stories from the parents. Sarah also commented that children from other classes would approach her to give their praise for the Exhibition and some even asked her how to make a *Tjanpi* sculpture.

The photojournalists made the following comments:
‘I think we did the Gallery so we can tell everyone what we have learnt.’

‘I think we got more confident by doing our own stories and we worked with other people and we did fun activities. Because when we invented the Exhibition and learnt all these unusual poses it wasn’t just me alone it was the whole class together.’
‘I’m proud of other people in the class because basically everyone, the whole class said, ‘I don’t want to go up on stage, it makes me nervous’ … and then everyone did it at the end!’

‘Whenever we did an action of her story I could imagine how it felt in the past and how she felt.’
‘We use our bodies to do the performance and we took like precious time to make it. Usually you can write something out but the Exhibition is out there and it’s using facial expression and your whole body … When we show creativity it shows everyone a message.’

5.5.2 Exhibition review

Arts pedagogy

It was an intention for the students to be involved in artistic performance without the use of literal sets, props or costumes in order for them to be the main vehicles of communicating the big ideas. The Exhibition was an opportunity to meaningfully integrate a variety of artistic techniques.

Creativity

The students were capable of having a voice in the planning, preparation and delivery of their own Exhibition and an opportunity for them to showcase their creative skills. The comments by the students articulate that they saw how the Exhibition is a unique way for them to show the learning activities in which they have been involved.
**Student engagement**

The learners themselves communicated their high affective involvement in the tasks and talked of being proud of their achievements. The students’ comments reflect how the Exhibition was a forum that allowed them to be active participants in their own classroom. Their reflections echo positive messages of engagement around knowledge, ability, control, place and voice.

**Learning as a human endeavour**

Importantly, history is often perceived by young learners as ‘stories of the past’ and irrelevant. In the Exhibition these students transferred their historical understandings to make personal connections with contemporary experiences. They were conscious that the Exhibition was a vehicle for them to send important messages to the school community about their big ideas about differing perspectives of experiences and empathic understanding.

This chapter has discussed the Gallery and Exhibition at Valley Primary School. In the next section, the experiences of the case study students will be summarised. The chapter will then conclude with a review of learning across each of the four main themes of research. In doing so, data from the final teacher interview and the final student focus group will be drawn on.

### 5.6 Student case studies

Danny and Valerie were chosen as case studies for specific reasons. Danny has demonstrated opposition to classroom processes in the past. On the other hand, Valerie is behaviourally compliant but has academic difficulties in the classroom. As a result of these factors, Danny often chooses not to participate in activities that he does not enjoy, and Valerie can become quiet and passive in the classroom. For these reasons, it was decided to track the progress of these students in the Gallery to question whether they became engaged in artistic and creative pedagogy of human concern. The focus on these students adds to the investigation of the whole class of students across the study, as they are representative of other children in the class context.
Before the Gallery commenced, Danny did not appear to enjoy group work or tasks that were unfamiliar to him. He was seen to give up easily in his class work and exhibited negative behaviour towards most tasks. Initially, Danny also resisted the Gallery. He tried to avoid participation and would only join in with the class after specific teacher instruction and scaffolding. By the end of the Gallery process, he did not require teacher encouragement to participate in the sessions and it was becoming evident that his affective engagement was growing, as evidenced by the way that he voiced positive feelings towards the tasks and had confidence to join in. In previous classroom experiences he did not participate well within group activities and would disrupt the learning of others. As the Galleries progressed, these issues became less and less of a problem and it was more common to see Danny persist with ‘tricky’ activities and to ask for help, rather than disengage from a task entirely. In the final teacher interview, Sarah reiterated, ‘After the first few times he was starting to care about the work we were doing. You could tell because he was really passionate about it and he was trying.’ It would be reasonable to conclude that the pedagogy gave Danny a new type of learning forum wherein he did not need to fight against classroom processes and he began to develop ownership of the learning experience. Sarah stated, ‘I remember him wanting to do all parts of the story circle! And we have to remember that normally, he’s very shy. He really enjoyed it and he was proud of it.’ Within this research, active participation within the classroom is valued as a key component of engagement.

Valerie, who is behaviourally compliant and struggles academically in the classroom, was a student who appeared to embrace the artistic and creative pedagogy and as such quickly moved to become a leader for the rest of her classmates. Sarah reinforced in the final interview that Valerie does not usually have the opportunity to ‘lead’ the rest of the students in classroom pursuits, ‘Seeing Valerie truly shine … in this class, she academically does not keep up with the others … but in the Gallery, she just stands out.’ In many of the activities she also appeared to have a natural intuitive skill in dramatic activities. Observations indicated that the Gallery pedagogy gave Valerie the experience of acting as a mentor to her peers. The research journal notes, ‘It’s interesting that she became a strong role model for everyone else. She may not feel that as strongly in other areas of her life.’ There was data to suggest that
Valerie felt a sense of leadership in the process as well as feeling accepted and well-liked by her peers. Consider, for example, the following comment, ‘If I tell you how I feel about it (the Gallery), well I actually let my feelings go so I felt very happy to let it go and I was very popular.’ Furthermore, the activities in the Gallery arguably resonated with Valerie’s ability to connect empathically with her learning. She voiced that in one Gallery, the artistic activities made her feel like she was ‘inside the book’. The high affective involvement that she was demonstrating with the Gallery activities seemed to promote high cognitive engagement with the topics of study. The empathetic connections that she was able to articulate both verbally, in poetry writing and in her artistic work communicated the deep and authentic learning that she was achieving in the Gallery and subsequent Exhibition.

The case studies have highlighted that disadvantaged students, like Danny and Valerie, were able to experience success in the Gallery. Despite signs of disengagement from both students to traditional classroom structures, the data suggests that both Danny and Valerie were beginning to connect to the Gallery pedagogy. It appeared to give both students a creative outlet for which to experience achievement.

The chapter will now address the data in reference to each of the four themes of research.

### 5.7 Summary of thematic statements across Gallery experiences and Exhibition

The previous sections of this chapter have described the pedagogical content of each of the Galleries at Valley Primary School and have also addressed each key theme of research in brief summative statements. The chapter now moves to a short reflective summary of the Gallery and Exhibition processes by identifying notable behaviours and characteristics that became evident in the students across each of the four themes of research. Arts pedagogical practice was in place to stimulate artistic ways of being, thinking and feeling. Lessons were designed with an emphasis on ‘being’ creative and with a student engagement approach that focused on creating a
community of ‘insiders’ in which all members of the class identify that they have a significant contribution to make in their classroom. The theme of learning as a human endeavour was used to apply a humanising lens to curriculum objectives. To reiterate, the big ideas for this Gallery are:

1. The British colonisers considered Australia to be ‘terra nullius’ or empty land and disrupted the families and ways of living of the Aboriginal peoples.

2. Colonisers and the colonised are affected when encounters occur. The British colonisers made decisions about Aboriginal families and ways of living that have had long term consequences for Australian Aboriginal peoples' families, identity and culture.

3. Migration often involves separation from family and culture.

Thematic statements across each Gallery will now be summarised.

### 5.7.1 Arts pedagogy

Arts pedagogy was employed within each Gallery to examine the qualitative and human side of the curriculum. The Galleries at Valley Primary School included a range of artistic experiences such as movement, poetry writing, mime, music appreciation, tableau, sculpture making, Aboriginal art appreciation and song. These approaches were used as vehicles to examine the issues of human concern within the curriculum, to encourage student creativity and to enhance levels of student engagement. There was a variety of student responses to each of the different artistic modalities. Some students responded enthusiastically at all times to each artistic experience. For reasons described above, some students showed initial apprehension in participating fully within each artistic activity. In the final student focus group, one boy described his feelings toward artistic ways of learning:

> I felt like I achieved like a goal because we did some things that I thought I would never do. Like I wasn’t really interested in drama and all that stuff we did, but now I just want to do it a million times.

Data indicated that generally, students showed signs of high affective engagement across each artistic experience, and those students who seemed to be more reluctant
at first, demonstrated that they became more comfortable with further practice, encouragement from their peers and exposure to the routine of the Gallery. One student commented in the final focus group, ‘We used our body and we used drama and dance and poetry and we mixed up together and it turned out really good.’ Another student talked about the link between enjoyment and learning, 'It’s good to entertain and teach someone so that they know and they enjoy the performance while learning something.’ These comments were typical reflections across the class.

One of the most notable features of the arts pedagogy was that students showed ability to express their intellectual understandings of the curriculum content through the arts practices. As many students in the class require ESL support, the tasks were designed so that all students would be able to ‘achieve’ and access the cognitive dimension of the work by interpreting their understandings through the arts. Students who were academically positioned as ‘low achievers’ in the mainstream classroom environment, showed signs of intellectual understanding within their artistic interpretations. A student commented, ‘What’s good about it is it’s like talking to someone except it’s usually showing them how you feel … instead of like writing something out, we used our bodies to do the performance.’

The arts practices and high operative lesson format seemed to help students become increasingly more flexible in their thinking, to take risks and show confidence in their abilities. One student commented, ‘If you had a group it would make the idea grow bigger and it would turn out a better drama or picture or sculpture.’ The exposure of the students to arts practices particularly seemed to help them in becoming better team members, to share ideas and showed a decrease in their need for teacher direction and praise.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the students’ learning was their ability to communicate issues of human concern through the arts. The various artistic practices appeared to give the students a way to connect emotionally with their curriculum. Sarah expressed, ‘Their understanding, the ideas of the stolen generation I thought were really quite significant. The arts learning really helped … there’s a reason and its got a purpose … it’s connected.’ This comment signals that the class teacher
recognised that the students were demonstrating understanding of the topic “in a relatively systematic, integrated or holistic way” (Education Queensland, 2002, p.3). The practices encouraged the students to intellectualise the concept of empathy and express it themselves. As one student commented about the Exhibition:

…” showing how everyone feels about Australia and how we want it to help us live and help other people be happy about Australia. Everything in our Exhibition was unique because like everything was different.

This statement demonstrates that the student was achieving at code level 4 of the Quality teaching framework, as they were beginning to “provide information, arguments or reasoning that demonstrates deep understanding” (Ladwig and Gore, 2003, p.14).

One photojournalist commented on a photograph of their peers in a tableaux about Pilawuk’s story: ‘Whenever we did an action of her story I could imagine how it felt in the past and how she felt.’ This statement encapsulates big idea 2 and reflects how some students were beginning to connect arts pedagogy to academic expression and that it could be used as a vehicle to represent their deep understanding. This statement is in line with the Quality teaching framework definition of the element of deep understanding, which states that “students demonstrate deep understanding when they explore relationships…in systematic, integrated or complex ways” (Ladwig and Gore, 2003, p.14).

Sarah described how she saw the work from the Gallery transfer into other areas in the classroom in writing and class discussions, such as using the term ‘walk in other people’s shoes’, raising the concept of empathy and connecting the big ideas around the stolen generation and Australia’s first settlement to their own stories of immigration.

The ambition of employing arts practices was to help the students to frame the human experiences within their learning. The students exhibited deep intercultural understandings of the topic and were able to artistically represent the impact of
personal and historical moments in the Gallery. In the final teacher interview, Sarah elaborated, ‘Arts pedagogy in the Gallery holds so much value because every child has a chance to be successful in it and it can make learning more rich.’

5.7.2 Creativity

Before the Gallery, the class exhibited behavioural compliance and most students were more comfortable with classroom learning that centred on quiet, individual tasks. Sarah commented that the students were wary of what she termed, ‘stepping outside the box’, in their thinking and showed signs of avoiding class discussion or answering questions as they did not want to be ‘wrong’. A distinct development that was highlighted by the data was that there was an increased ability to take risks and to ‘test’ ideas. Initially, some students showed signs of having difficulty in participating fully in this way. These students showed some signs that they might have been wary in employing or ‘trying out’ their own creative abilities because they were more comfortable with analytical and logical, ‘pen and paper’ learning processes. It became evident that the students were willing to take risks and try new experiences. The students made the following comments:

I felt like I couldn’t dance in front of an audience but now I can … Well this is much more creative than a maths test … I was really proud of Anthony because he is usually shy … I think we did the Gallery because it could help us with like making our performances more creative, not all plain and dull and stuff.

Despite not initially favouring working as part of a team or collaborating over ideas, the data suggests that students saw the benefit of these learning processes, as described by a student in the final focus group:

It’s better to work together than individually because your group members can help you. You should work with other people instead of working individually because when other people help you it makes the idea even better … everybody has something to say.
They also exhibited greater confidence in their creative abilities that culminated in producing the Exhibition. In the final teacher interview, Sarah picked up on this and explained:

I think their confidence is growing. The fact that you never said, ‘that’s wrong’ … it’s more about how to improve or how can we change this, what could we do differently, not ‘no’ … I think that’s why they tried new things and they took that risk, because they knew that they could feel comfortable.

The Gallery was deliberately planned with guided opportunities for the students to respond to creative challenges such as collaboration in teams, hands-on experimentation, making connections to other learning experiences, open discussion, questioning, applying the use of imagination and problem solving. Reflection also became a valued part of the creative process. Sarah discussed that she believed the planned reflection time during each Gallery became a natural classroom practice and that by the end of the Gallery process, the majority of students wanted to contribute their ideas, as opposed to the ‘same kids’ at the start of the program.

The students required less teacher direction as the program progressed and became more confident and skilled in sharing ideas and taking turns to achieve a goal. In the final student focus group, the students talked about the link between creativity and learning. Consider their remarks: ‘We got more confident maybe because we kept on trying new things’ and ‘It (the Gallery) really builds up a lot of creativity so we all like remember what we did during the year and how we improved.’ Over time, the students showed increased skills in their ability to generate and experiment with their own ideas and imaginations, more interest in creative challenges, and an increased ability in working effectively in teams. Their comments in the final focus group are indicative of this:

I really liked making the Tjanpis. Because we used our creativity and imagination … I liked doing our own story because we worked all together
and everyone had a bit of different dragon⁸ … Dragon is creativity, it means you need your imagination to make something.

Before the Gallery, the majority of the class showed preference for structured, linear tasks that concentrated on learning by rote. As the Galleries progressed week by week, the students were more open to ‘play’ purposefully within their learning and had the flexibility of mind to experiment or test ideas. There was clear research data to indicate that creative teaching approaches facilitated learning across the other three themes of the research. The next section of the chapter will now address student engagement.

5.7.3 Student engagement

The student engagement approach adopted as part of this study focused on learning experiences that were high cognitive, high affective and high operative. In brief summary, this includes learning that is intellectually challenging, practices that are enjoyed and valued by the students and also teaching practices that guide students to become better learners.

The students were guided through a variety of creative and arts-based practices that reflected a high operative learning model. One of the key developments within the Galleries was that the lessons became increasingly student led and that that this occurred when students began to feel more comfortable with having autonomy over their own creative and artistic interpretations of the learning tasks. In the final teacher interview, Sarah discusses this development:

I noticed that there was always a focus, there was a high expectation but it was up to the kids to see how they could get there. When you give students ownership it makes the learning much more powerful … they were just so proud of themselves because ‘we came up with this’ and ‘we did this’ and ‘this was our idea’. I think it gives them so much more pride and more of an emotional connection to their work.

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⁸ ‘Dragon’ was the term chosen and used by the class to describe the process of creativity.
The structure of the lessons reflected a high operative message system in that all students were expected to contribute and that all students had a vital and important contribution to make. The majority of the tasks centred on teamwork, which required creative skills such as imaginative thinking, risk taking and idea generation. The students were observed to be more comfortable with these skills over time and seemed to exhibit understanding that their individual contributions made a difference. This student’s comment is indicative of insider classroom identification:

I think that we got more confident because we worked with other people and we did very fun activities. Because when we invented the Exhibition and learnt all these unusual poses it wasn’t just me alone it was the whole class.

The data also shows that a common trend across each Gallery was the growing perception of the class by the students themselves, that their class was a cohesive team. In the final interview, a student reflected, ‘I like 10-second object game (see Appendix 3) because everyone got to do a part and no-one got left out.’ Another student commented, ‘We all can contribute; everyone can have something to say.’ A community of student reflection was fostered within each learning experience so that the students became used to peer support and positive feedback. The students appeared to place an emphasis on the value of learning itself. In the final focus group interview, when the students were asked their perspectives on why the Gallery was important, their responses included: ‘We show our art and show our creativity’; ‘So we can show our school what we’ve been learning’; ‘That we should always walk in people’s shoes because how they feel is important’; and ‘I think we did the Gallery so we can tell everyone what we have learnt.’

Students’ high affective level of engagement was evident in the way that they displayed increased confidence and enjoyment in taking risks. The students showed greater comfort and skill in being able to share ideas freely with each other, ‘play’ with ideas and attempt ‘new’ challenges as the Galleries progressed. In the final focus group, one student commented:

I felt really happy in the Exhibition because it made me feel very confident and I just wish that I got to actually go back to the part and do it all over again. I feel happy because I achieved a goal.
Finally, this chapter will provide a summary of learning of the final theme; learning as a human endeavour.

5.7.4 Learning as a human endeavour

As opposed to simply learning facts or ‘basics’, the research takes seriously that learning big ideas are an imperative part of a holistic education and that big ideas are associated with transferable learning across time, place, culture and context. Through the creative and arts-based pedagogy, the students had increased opportunities to empathise with the people they were learning about. In the final student focus group, one student reflected:

I think we did it as a Gallery so that other people could understand how the Aboriginal people felt when the people took their children and stole their homes and that we should be grateful now that everyone can be different and Australia multicultural.

This statement and the accompanying data connects with big idea 2 and reflects level 3 of the Productive Pedagogies continuum of practice for Deep Understanding in that it demonstrates that “almost all students were sustaining a focus on a significant topic…students’ reasoning, explanations and arguments demonstrate fullness and complexity of understanding” (Education Queensland, 2002, p.3). It was important to the research outcomes to design activities in which students were able to focus on the human relationships that were at the heart of the curriculum topic. Through an arts-based activity in Gallery 1, the class demonstrated that they had affectively connected at an introductory level with the complex human issues of the stolen generation. In referring to the Deep Understanding coding scale of the Intellectual Quality element of the Quality teaching framework (Ladwig and Gore, 2003), the students seem to be demonstrating code level 4 that states “most students provide information, arguments or reasoning that demonstrates deep understanding for a substantial portion of the lesson”. In Gallery 1, students were providing information that they understood that events such as the stolen generation have long term consequences for indigenous peoples. This understanding connects with big idea 2. The photojournalists articulated the emotions felt by the victims of the Stolen
Generation and referred to how their photographs demonstrated their understanding of the central ideas of the topic.

In each subsequent Gallery, the class had opportunities to engage critically with different perspectives present within the topic. It became increasingly evident that the students were developing more sophisticated empathic responses across the learning experiences. The notion of ‘walking in someone else’s shoes’ was used to explain the concept of empathy, as described by a student in the final focus group:

I think walking in shoes is really good because you have to walk in someone's shoes, and know how they feel and you can feel their emotions like you are the same person, you get the same feeling, so you don’t want that to happen to you.

The Gallery allowed a forum for the class to concentrate on the emotional moments in their topics of study. As described previously, prior to Gallery learning, the class was observed to be developing a ‘comfort zone’ within learning tasks that concentrated on technical skills as opposed to learning that concentrated on the development of a holistic emotional connection between the learner and the learned. The focus of developing emotional attachment to learning is one of the keys to student engagement. The students exhibited increased confidence and focus on the issues of human concern across the Galleries.

A key attribute in this class’s learning was their improving ability to make ‘big idea statements’ within their learning. For example, when working on the text, The Rabbits, and then learning a song about the time of ‘First contact’ between the First Fleet and Aboriginal people, one student said, ‘The song made me think about the British perspective before they came to Sydney.’ Such a statement reflects directly on big idea 3. Another student suggested a contrasting opinion that reflects big idea 1, ‘We enjoyed the song but at the same time we got to think about what the Aboriginals felt’. These big idea statements reflected their ongoing intellectual and empathic understandings of the topic, and are exemplars of those given by many students in the class. In reference to the continuum of practice scale for Deep Understanding as defined by the Productive Pedagogies Classroom Reflection
Manual (Education Queensland, 2002), the data suggests that almost all students were sustaining focus on the topic and “in general, students’ reasoning, explanations and arguments demonstrate fullness and complexity of understanding” (Education Queensland, 2002, p.3).

In class discussions, students began to speak of the importance of ‘walking in someone else’s shoes’ and ‘to understand someone else’s feelings’. These sentiments were at the heart of the intention of the learning as a human endeavour theme of this research. In the final focus group, one student commented:

I think it’s good in schools so that other people know … we did show how other people felt by walking in other people’s shoes, so maybe now when they understand how the Aboriginals felt and how Pilawuk felt.

Statements such as this appear to express the links that the students were making between the texts and also summarise their understandings of the intercultural and human issues that were involved in the study. This statement and the accompanying data aligns with code 5 of the Quality teaching framework for analysing ‘deep understanding’ that provides the descriptor that “almost all students demonstrate deep understanding throughout the lesson” (Ladwig and Gore, 2003, p.14) by demonstrating meaningful understandings of the central ideas of the topic. It further indicates that the class was achieving at code level 4 with the possibility of moving towards code level 5 for the Gallery as a whole.

As the Exhibition approached, the class voiced a desire to share the big ideas from within the different Galleries with their school community. They expressed a view that they wanted to communicate empathic messages to the audience and that they wanted them to come away from the Exhibition with a deeper understanding of the human relationships that they had been learning about. Not only did this signal that the students had embraced that learning as a human endeavour, but it also signalled a deep level of student engagement, in that the students seemed to value their Exhibition and wanted to share their learning with others. This outcome parallels with the student engagement finding wherein classroom tasks that are set with high expectation can generate aspirations within students to share their learning with an
audience. This data suggests strong student feelings around their ability to achieve. Sarah commented on how the students’ stories of their own familial human struggles and triumphs in the Exhibition seemed to make the most impact on the school community:

So much positive feedback, not just from the staff, but the parents were so proud, and other children at the school would run up to me on the playground to talk about it … it was really beautiful, it was really nice to hear that. Most significantly was the praise they got for sharing their own stories … the teachers were saying about how much they enjoyed it and especially loved the sharing of the stories. It’s something they don’t get to share I guess normally but it means a lot to them to do something like that and to feel so special. Truthfully, it surprised me how good they were, how good they were at it, how they understood how important it was and how proud they were of what they did.

5.8 Conclusion

There have been seven sections in this chapter. Section 1 outlined the school context and gave relevant information regarding the school, the class, and the teacher. Section 2 gave student portraits of the two students who were selected as case studies for this research site. Section 3 provided information about the aims of the Galleries and the curriculum decisions that were made to facilitate these aims. Section 4 detailed the content of each Gallery, described what took place during the implementation of the lessons and gave a brief summative review of each Gallery in relation to the four themes of research, while Section 5 presented the Exhibition. Section 6 discussed and illustrated the main summative findings of the student case studies. The chapter then provided an analytical summary of the Gallery and Exhibition in Section 7 by referring explicitly to each of the four themes of research. The next chapter will focus on the Galleries at Green Primary School and thematic characteristics evident at this site.
Chapter 6: Green Primary School

The previous chapter presented the data from Valley Primary School. This thesis now describes the data collected at Green Primary School. The first section presents the research context and introduces the class and its teacher. Two case study students are introduced in Section 2, and then the aims of the Gallery at this site are explained in the third section. The chapter then presents a description of each of the Gallery lessons in Section 4; plus the final Exhibition in Section 5. Sections 4 and 5 draw on the data, including student and teacher interviews, photojournalist comments and photos, class reflections and journal excerpts. In doing so, brief statements in relation to the four themes of research; arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour are included. Section 6 summarises the experiences of the case study students. The chapter will present a summary of the data in Section 7 by giving a more comprehensive thematic discussion. The research context of Green Primary School is now presented.

6.1 Research context – Zara’s class

Zara’s class is a composite Stage 1 class combined with students from Grades 1 and 2. The children of this class demonstrate a wide range of achievement in syllabus outcomes and most significantly many require extra assistance in reaching literacy outcomes. Many students in the same grades across the school are achieving below stage level in literacy. Like Valley Primary School, many students at Green Primary School have high English as a Second Language (ESL) needs. The Department of Education and Communities (DEC) Low SES School Plan (2013) for this school indicated that 92% of the student population have a language background other than English (LBOTE).

Green Primary School has established a speech therapy program as well as a focused reading program in order to help the students improve their literacy skills. Qualified
speech therapists work alongside the class teachers in weekly sessions in order to improve the students’ basic literacy needs, targeting talking and listening as a fundamental area to address. During her own scheduled literacy time in class, Zara is particularly focused on improving the reading comprehension, phonological awareness and talking and listening skills of her students.

Zara tries to create a stable and supportive classroom environment. There are students in the class who require additional support in order to achieve social and educational outcomes. Zara also argued that many of the students’ social difficulties were a direct result of their poor literacy in that basic communication skills were a challenge for some students. She maintained that much of her planning and preparation time was given to differentiating tasks so that all students would be able to equitably access the curriculum. Zara aims to provide a calm and structured school day for all of her class. Early observations from the first few visits to her classroom indicated that the students appeared to feel safe and supported by their teacher.

In relation to the arts, Zara believes in their importance in the curriculum but also suggests that it is hard to authentically teach across all arts strands due to her own lack of knowledge or skill in some of the areas. She believes that the students greatly enjoy lessons that involve the arts and, where she can, she wants to employ more artistic learning for the benefit of her class.

This chapter will outline the data collected in the Gallery at this school at two levels. At the first level the chapter will present data gathered from the learning experiences of the whole class. At the second level, individual student level data will be presented from two purposefully selected case studies. Two students were selected for specific reasons that will be described in the next section. As outlined in Chapter 3, the two case studies enable focus for deeper data collection and opportunity for exploring specific details related to the research pedagogy and students’ outcomes. The next section describes the two students selected as case studies from this class.
6.2 Student portraits

6.2.1 Isaac

Isaac has behavioural challenges and high learning needs. He has demonstrated low academic achievement and requires much support in the classroom. Isaac has an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and Zara differentiates tasks so that Isaac can access the curriculum at his level. Isaac has a very short attention span and so has difficulty in remaining focused on a task and does not sit for long periods. He can become disengaged very quickly and exerts oppositional behaviour regularly. Group work is a challenge for Isaac because he has difficulty in turn-taking, sharing his ideas and listening to the ideas of others. He therefore does not usually want to work with his peers and participate in whole-class activities. Zara describes how Isaac does not have the skills or desire to share his ideas during class discussions. Isaac could thus be described as the most challenging student in the class and places high demands on his teacher. From a research viewpoint it seemed important to observe and document whether he would become engaged by the Gallery lessons and thus become more fully able to participate with his class in artistic activities. It is also of interest, in light of this research, to question whether any social or academic improvements might flow onto other aspects of his classroom work.

6.2.2 Sarim

Academically, Sarim performs highly in all aspects of the curriculum. Zara describes him as being diligent and self-motivated in class, and that he is popular among his classmates. Despite his high academic achievements, Zara explains that he can become shy and withdrawn in class and because of this, is sometimes unwilling to share his ideas or to be singled out in class for his achievements. Zara also believes that his bilingual background creates some difficulty for him when he needs to express himself. She further explains that he can become anxious when out of a routine and when there are no clear boundaries in a task. Sarim enjoys and excels at tasks that can be completed as an individual and while he complies with group tasks, Zara has observed that he is much more comfortable when working alone. For example, Sarim participates in artistic activities but shows a preference for those that can be completed individually, such as painting. The research intention behind
selecting this student centres on asking whether this behaviourally compliant and academically gifted individual become engaged and more authentically connected to his learning in the process of the Gallery? Again, there were important other questions about whether such engagement would have wider social and academic benefits for a student like Sarim.

These two students have been chosen specifically for observation of their progress in the Gallery. Isaac and Sarim have different learning needs. While Isaac requires strong teacher support, Sarim completes tasks independently. While Isaac exhibits oppositional behaviour, Sarim is behaviourally compliant. As stated previously, compliance is not necessarily a feature of engagement. That is, this research makes important distinctions between procedural and substantive engagement (Chapter 2). One of the key research tools therefore, was to track how both students responded to artistic and creative activities, as both students, for different reasons, seemed to require strong boundaries or clear rules to be able to function well in class. Through an intensive focus on these students within the planned observations across the whole class, the intention was to see how they responded to creative and artistic practices and whether the Gallery had an impact on their connection to and engagement with learning.

The next section describes the aims of the Gallery at Green Primary School, before moving on to present the Gallery lessons as they took place.

### 6.3 Gallery aims and curriculum decisions

As noted previously, the aim of the Gallery was to use the current curriculum plan for the classroom as a springboard to design integrated, creative learning and arts-based experiences with a human approach and a focus on pedagogy that promotes student engagement.

Zara was particularly interested in developing and improving her class’s reading comprehension skills through the Gallery. She felt that this was an area that was of most need as the majority of her class was not reaching required syllabus outcomes
in this critical literacy area. She did not have a specific thematic focus that she wanted to pursue in the Gallery. However, the class was already involved in a literacy unit on ‘fairy tales’. In order to integrate with this literacy focus, texts were sought that would support this unit. The purpose was to select texts with a human focus and strong human moral themes. Decisions were also made to select fairy or folk tales that the students were unfamiliar with as an opportunity to expose the students to stories from a different cultural context and to begin to explore the universality of human morality and codes of behaviour at the students’ levels.

Brophy and Alleman (2007) contend that in curriculum planning “a focus on goals and big ideas is important not only to help ensure that students perceive the content as interesting, relevant, and worth learning but also to help ensure that the activities based on this content are authentic and engaging” (p.17). The central goal for this class was for students to:

1. connect with the human qualities of each text by empathizing with the major characters

The big ideas to be developed by students in Zara’s class were:

1. All humans have needs, such as water, food, clothing, shelter, safety and love/happiness, and wants.
2. People have their needs and wants satisfied to differing degrees.
3. People can help others to be happy and have their needs met.

Many important questions emerged from both stories in this gallery sequence, including: ‘What does it mean to be rich?’ (rich in friends, rich with happiness); ‘Does money buy happiness?’; ‘How does giving make you happy?’ and ‘How would the stories be different if the main characters were greedy instead of giving?’.

These questions informed the big ideas during the Gallery process. It was important for these students to be involved in these critical big ideas about social and cultural relationships given their context in a community that is often marginalised and perceived negatively in many aspects of the media.
The chosen texts included:

6.3.2 **The Magic Paintbrush (2004)**

This text is a traditional folk tale from China, re-told in poetic form by the English author Julia Donaldson. The text has strong moral themes and the big ideas within the story could be summarised by the ideals of generosity, integrity, strength and service to community.

*The Magic Paintbrush* is the story of a young girl Shen, who is given a paintbrush by a mysterious man who instructs her to ‘never to paint for wealthy folk but only for the poor’. Shen discovers that her paintings come to life and so she is able to paint things of necessity for her community. The powerful Emperor hears the news, and orders Shen to paint him a golden tree with never-ending coins on each branch. Shen, unwilling to go back on her promise to the mysterious magic man, refuses and is locked in a dungeon. Through cunning and artistic talent, Shen is able to outsmart the greedy Emperor and return safely to her village. The character of Shen stands in stark contrast to the Emperor and respectively they illustrate the dichotomies of giving versus greed, poor versus rich, peace versus war, contentment versus anger, integrity versus corruption. These themes and big ideas were the focus for the arts-based Gallery lessons and were largely explored through working on the feelings and perspectives of Shen and The Emperor.

6.3.2 **The Smartest Giant in Town (2010)**

The second text within this study was another Donaldson picture book, *The Smartest Giant in Town*. Although this is not a traditional Fairy tale, this text was selected because it continues with many similar themes to those in *The Magic Paintbrush*. The text may be considered a ‘fractured’ fairy tale in that it draws references to other well-known characters and plot lines from within the genre and, as such, includes many literacy references and sub-textual layers. The intention was not to exclusively use the works of Julia Donaldson alone. There may be an argument that it might have been better to use works from two different authors in order to give the students experience of different literary styles. However, on reflection, these texts were ideal
research choices in terms of the thematic content they contained and the big ideas that were the focus of the Gallery lessons. Donaldson’s texts are also widely stocked in school libraries, which make them easily accessible to classroom teachers.

The giant in this story, George, is not the human-eating kind that might be found in stories like *Jack and the Beanstalk*, but a kind soul who, after buying a brand new suit to replace an old shabby robe, gladly gives away his items of clothing to unfortunate animals whom he meets along his journey. Like Shen from *The Magic Paintbrush*, George the Giant personifies the qualities of giving, kindness and service to community.

*The Magic Paintbrush* and *The Smartest Giant in Town* added to the canon of fairy tales and the literacy focus on comprehension that the children were learning about in class. It was the big ideas within the texts that were the focus of the learning as a human endeavour theme in the Gallery. Similarly, in relation to the other themes of research, it was expected that the characters that are presented in these texts could capture the students’ imaginations due to their fantastical qualities, which is recognised as an affective hook for student engagement and provided opportunities for creative and artistic exploration.

### 6.4 The Galleries

#### 6.4.1 Gallery 1 – Getting to know Shen

*Snapshot of Gallery 1*

*The Magic Paintbrush* was introduced and the students created individual statues of the main characters. They used their imaginations to play in different locations from the text.

*Gallery 1 in action*

A warm up chant was taught to the class and it seemed reasonable to conclude that the students’ smiles and animated body movements were signs of their enthusiasm, along with the focus they appeared to display. Having read the book, the students were asked to summarise what had occurred in the book *The Magic Paintbrush*. The
students with high ESL needs referred to the illustrations within the book and repeated verbally the pivotal moments from the text, and others recounted the story in sequence.

The students then made individual statues of Shen. On the first attempt, many students were unsure of what position to assume and remained in a standing, neutral position but there were some who made more distinct shapes. These students were asked to hold their positions and the class was asked for feedback as to how they could tell that these statues were showing the character. The class identified that they could see Shen ‘painting’ and that she looked happy. The class was prompted to make another statue of Shen but to give her a different position. Some students made minimal changes so an example for the students was modelled, AND IT encouraged them to change their ‘level’ so that they could experiment with different heights. Some students showed that they were working hard at creating a whole new position for Shen. The activity was repeated with the character of the Emperor as the subject for the statues. The class was divided into two groups and each group took it in turns to be the statues or to be the audience and walk around the hall space to view the other statues.


The students were asked to recall all the different locations from the story and these were then assigned to a different part of the hall space. The class was told that they could use their imaginations to explore each place from the story. Students rushed to their favourite location to ‘play’, indicating enjoyment in the task. The students interacted with each other and communicated to each other in character. Some students chose to stay in one location and were ‘acting out’ a scene from the story. Each member of the class appeared to be participating fully in the activity. Some students could be seen to be ‘swimming’ across the river, cooking a stew in Shen’s home, pretending to be soldiers in the Emperor’s palace and escaping from the Emperor’s dungeon. After the completion of this activity, some students shared how
they had used their imaginations. One student relayed that he had been locked up in
the dungeon and described that he felt scared and alone. Another student added that;
‘I stole gold from the Emperor and it was heavy to carry across the river’.

During the initial stages of the Gallery, Isaac remained on the edge of the hall space,
was disruptive vocally and did not participate. However, during the statue work, he
began to assume the roles of the characters but could not remain stationary in a statue
formation. For the concluding activity, he appeared willing to ‘play’ and use his
imagination. Zara and I watched him move around the hall and questioned whether
he was applying his knowledge of the book in using his imagination. He had taken
one of the tambourines and was playing it as he moved quickly in the space. This
observation indicated that he was likely not participating in the activity. I asked him
afterwards what he was doing and his response was that he was ‘scaring the dragon
away’. Such a response could perhaps indicate that Isaac was employing his own
creativity to the task.

Sarim complied with all the activities and appeared eager to join with his classmates.
In the research journal it was noted that Sarim was one of the students who was
quick to assume new formations and try interesting positions without teacher
direction. It became apparent that other students were watching him for guidance as
to how to move their bodies. Zara pointed out, after the Gallery, that Sarim’s
apparent confidence in the artistic activities was a surprise to her as he is normally
quite reserved and shy within class.

After the session, Zara commented that she was amazed that her class were so eager
to ‘play’ within the scope of the book, but also that the students exhibited control and
focus when creating statues of the two main characters. The researcher and teacher
both reflected that, had another teacher walked in during the imagination/location
activity, that it might have looked like the class were just wildly running around the
hall space without direction or focus. The reality was, that the class were focused and
in role during this activity and that they were actively reinforcing their
comprehension of the characters and plot of the story. In a whole class discussion,
the students replied when asked how they felt during the session; ‘It makes me feel
wonderful because it’s fun and playful. It makes me feel smart’. I asked why the session made them ‘feel smart’ and the response was, ‘Because I can learn more things’. After the session, the photojournalists selected the following photographs to represent their learning:

‘We had to move around using your body to show the book. We imagined the place – the river, the gold, the dragon.’

‘We pretend. We are learning about Shen in the book.’
‘I drew pictures in the sand at the beach and then I slept in the Emperor’s bed when he wasn’t looking.’

‘He is being the Emperor. His face is angry. He is acting the story.’

6.4.2 Gallery 1 – Review

*The arts*

The students showed some difficulty in taking risks in their learning when they were asked to make a statue of the main characters but they began to adjust their facial expressions and bodily movements to reflect the characteristics of Shen and the Emperor. The arts-based activities were also designed to help the students to intellectualise the moral aptitudes of the main characters in the story.
Creativity

The students exhibited signs of engagement in being allowed time and space to ‘play’ in role and respond to the imagined landscapes within the story.

Student engagement

Students appeared to exhibit affective responses, particularly with the imagination location activity. There were signs that students were beginning to respond positively to the high operative nature of the Gallery.

Learning as a human endeavour

After the statue activity, the students verbally explained what characteristics and moral values their representations communicated.

6.4.3 Gallery 2 – Developing empathy and dancing adjectives

Snapshot of Gallery 2

The students brainstormed words to describe how Shen felt in different moments in the story, which were used as a stimulus to create movements.

Gallery 2 in action

It was an intention of this Gallery to familiarise the students with the concept of empathy by creating a movement sequence. The students would brainstorm words whilst ‘imagining’ oneself in another’s position to use as the foundation for creating a unique dance sequence. The movement activity was designed to support the students’ understanding of characters’ feelings and how feelings can be expressed artistically.

The Magic Paintbrush was read to the class. The students were asked to imagine Shen in their minds as the story was read and to think about how she might have felt at different moments in the book. During pivotal scenes, the story was paused and the class was asked to suggest words to describe Shen’s feelings in that moment. These words were then added to post-it notes, which were stuck in the book.
The class picked some of these words as stimuli to create a movement piece: kind, proud, generous and happy. As the words were not nouns or verbs, the students initially seemed to find it more challenging to brainstorm movements that could match these feelings. Some confident students suggested some ‘small’ movements, which were then embellished to create a final sequence. The ‘kind’ movement was hands outstretched in front of the body; for ‘proud’, hands high in the air; for ‘generous’, a student suggested that we kneel and move hands outstretched in a ‘rainbow’ action and for the word ‘happy’, it was Sarim who suggested that we could lie on our backs and kick in the air. In relation to the research theme of creativity it was noted that some students began to ‘think outside the square’. Sarim appeared eager to participate in the movement activities in the way that he showed willingness to suggest ideas. Zara explained previously, that he is not usually a student who likes to share his ideas openly or be the centre of attention, so his ability to suggest an interesting and distinctive action could be indicative of improving self-efficacy for artistic endeavours. Isaac began the Gallery by staying on the edge of the space and by being vocally disruptive. However, this only lasted for a short time. He independently joined in with the rest of the class to create movements.

Zara noticed that some students found it challenging to suggest actions that could match the meaning of the words that they had brainstormed:

What this class is used to is the teacher saying, ‘This is how things are done and this is the expectation.’ So to give them that kind of range to be free with what they need to do is a whole new role for them.

After, the Gallery, the photojournalists chose the following photographs to discuss their learning:
‘It’s not easy and it can be hard to move our bodies.’

‘I have a brain for dancing.’
‘We chose these words to show what Shen felt.’

‘This photo shows us having fun the most.’

6.4.4 Gallery 2 – Review

The arts

The artistic experiences challenged the students to expand the way that they would usually use their minds and bodies within the classroom setting. The movement sequence was an intentional pedagogical choice in order to allow the students with ESL and high literacy needs the chance to bodily experience the emotional elements of the story.
**Creativity**

Initially, the students seemed to be hesitant when brainstorming actions for the movement sequences but began to creatively explore the way they could move their bodies to communicate a message.

**Student engagement**

The students seemed to find the activities intellectually challenging. They began to take risks in their learning by suggesting and practising a variety of appropriate movements.

**Learning as a human endeavour**

The students chose words to describe how Shen was feeling during key scenes within the story. The movement activity was included to help the students to express their understanding of the emotional side of the text.

**6.4.5 Gallery 3 – Story circle and hot seating**

**Snapshot of Gallery 3**

The students enacted a ‘story circle’, made tableaux of key scenes within the text and hot-seated the Emperor.

**Gallery 3 in action**

The story circle activity was the first time the class was asked to re-enact the story by improvising through mime. The students showed signs of interest in the activity as the whole class was willing to participate and each student was given a chance to enter the ‘story-circle’. The students were watching each other intently, laughing and applauding their peers during this activity. The narration was paused at times during the re-telling in order to ask questions about the story. Not only were the students able to recall important moments in the plot, they also responded carefully when they were asked inferential and higher order questions. For example, when asked to think about things that Shen could have painted for the people in her village that weren’t included in the text, the students’ responses indicated that they had thought carefully
about the nature of her character by choosing items of need, such as ‘toys for the babies’, ‘a pot’, ‘a shirt’ and ‘another watermelon’, rather than items of greed.

The class was divided into three groups and each group was given a different scene from the story in order to make a tableau. The students worked quite quickly in their groups to create a still image of their given scene. They appeared more comfortable in sharing ideas and testing out their images. These could be signs of improvement in being able to communicate effectively within their teams to create images that captured the key elements of their given scene. Zara commented that the students were becoming better team members:

They are becoming more aware of their body and how they can use their bodies to be something … they know that they are all contributing to it and they’re all willing to take on that role.

The class was encouraged to ‘hot seat’ a finger puppet of The Emperor. Zara commented that she thought the students would ask very simple questions like, ‘What’s your name?’ or ‘Are you a boy?’ However, the students began to ask some higher order questions, such as: ‘Why are you so mean?’; ‘Do you have any friends?’; ‘Why aren’t you kind?’; ‘Why do you want the money?’ and ‘Don’t you like children?’. From their questioning, we then chose words as a class to describe the Emperor. The words the class came up with were; ‘mean’, ‘bossy’, ‘greedy’, ‘rich’, ‘powerful’, ‘hateful’, ‘bad’, ‘old’, ‘angry’ and ‘strong’. Zara noted, ‘What I found really great was my two students who are quite far behind, I actually found them really involved and participating. It’s great to see.’ During the concluding class discussion, the class was asked to reflect on how using imagination can help them to learn. One student responded, ‘When you can use your imagination, it makes it sit in your brains. Then you can memorise it in our head and we know what it is.’

Isaac did not show disruptive or challenging behaviour in the Gallery. He began to become inanimate objects within the story circle without teacher direction and was seen to take on the role of a tree and a rock at different times. This was taken to exemplify his growing artistic self-efficacy. Sarim continued to be a ‘leader’ in all of the activities in the sense that he showed confidence in participating in the Gallery.
and his peers were always watching him for guidance. More than other students, he appeared to be comfortable with using his body to express his comprehension in the story circle. His animated movements and facial expressions, along with the joy he appeared to exhibit in the Gallery could be indicators of his high affective engagement and also his growing passion for artistic endeavours.

The photojournalists selected the following photographs:

‘We are staying still to help people understand.’

‘I liked being the photojournalist today because I can take photos of us.’
‘Having imagination makes you get great ideas and you make it up. When you use your head it gives you more ideas about what the character is.’

‘We stay like statues so you can imagine the book.’

**6.4.6 Gallery 3 – Review**

*The arts*

The arts activities seemed to aid in the students’ abilities to effectively work in teams and to share their ideas. Within the Gallery, the students showed some signs of their understanding that everyone can participate and add value to the experience.
**Creativity**

In the story circle, the students were able to re-tell the story creatively by thinking ‘on the spot’ through improvisation. They seemed to exhibit an increased ability to share their ideas openly with each other without needing teacher assistance or approval.

**Student engagement**

The students’ high cognitive understanding of the text seemed to be apparent in the way that they were able to re-tell the plot of the text and embody the characters in the story circle. The students embarked on a substantive conversation during the hot seat activity as they were asking questions that could be reflective of higher order thinking.

**Learning as a human endeavour**

There was a sustained conversation between the teacher (in role as the Emperor) and the students in regards to the big ideas from the text. The students were able to express their empathic understanding of the moral features of the main characters.

6.4.7 **Gallery 4 – Finger puppet craft**

**Snapshot of Gallery 4**

The students created their own finger puppets of a character from the story.

**Gallery 4 in action**

The students showed signs of excitement when told they were going to be making a finger puppet. The students worked in small groups to share which character they were going to make and to also help each other to choose an adjective to describe their character. Zara was eager to see whether the class had recalled the descriptive vocabulary that had been used in previous Galleries. The groups worked well and animatedly shared with their peers which character and adjective they had chosen.

The finger puppets were made from a ‘finger’ of a washing-up glove and a variety of decorative materials. It was observed that there was a lot of loud chatter and the
students seemed focused and excited in the process. Without direction from the teachers, the students who had finished began to play with their finger puppets together and immediately took on the role of their character. Each child who finished joined in this student-initiated game. Zara noted, ‘Anna is usually so shy, but in order to join in and collaborate with them…once she had the finger puppet character on her finger, she was able to do it.’

Isaac, who in previous sessions had not wished to participate and stayed on the periphery of the classroom, showed clear signs of wanting to participate with his peers and to complete the activities. Where he previously did not wish to share his ideas with the class, in this session, he shared the words ‘greedy’, ‘angry’ and ‘wealthy’ when describing his Emperor finger-puppet. Zara was impressed that he was taking on the vocabulary from the comprehension activities. During this session an executive teacher was present in the classroom. He remarked afterwards:

I can see much growth in Isaac. He participated, was calm, focused and also when describing his puppet, he used impressive vocabulary. Whereas before, this student could be disruptive, unengaged. I would usually be needed to assist him and called to the classroom when there are visiting teachers, but this hasn’t happened once in these sessions.

The following photos were selected by the photojournalists:

‘I know this finger-puppet must be Shen because she has a happy face.’
‘We asked the Emperor, ‘You are already wealthy, why do you want more money?’”

‘All of them (finger-puppets) are creative.’
‘I made Shen’s horse. I was running away from the dragon who wanted to eat me.’

6.4.8 Gallery 4 – Review

The arts

The finger puppets appeared to give the students an expressive outlet to complement their comprehension of the text. The act of thinking deeply about the characters from previous Galleries and connecting this with their growing vocabulary from the story was used as the basis to artistically represent a character as a finger puppet.

Creativity

The students, independently and without teacher direction, began to use their imaginations and to play with each other in role. Their interactions related to events from the story and their play indicated comprehension of the story and interactions between characters.

Student engagement

The students appeared to enjoy each task while at the same time exhibiting high cognitive understandings of the big ideas, character interaction and sequence of events in the story.
Learning as a human endeavour

The playful conversations that the students had with each other in role could illustrate their growing understanding of the main themes as their interactions were based on the big ideas of greed and giving within the text.

6.4.9 Gallery 5 – Character play and tableaux writing

Snapshot of Gallery 5

The students engaged in imaginative play and completed a writing task using photos of their previous tableaux work.

Gallery 5 in action

The students were able to recall which landscapes from the story were assigned to each part of the hall from the first Gallery. The finger puppets were distributed and the students were instructed to take their character on an exploration of the landscape. This was the only teacher direction that was given, as it was important from a research perspective, to see how the students naturally responded to this task with their puppets. The students showed signs of eagerness to begin this task by immediately rushing to an area of the hall as soon as they received their puppet. The students seemed to take on the roles of their puppets. The ‘Emperors’ were chasing ‘Shens’, the ‘dragons’ were chasing the ‘Emperors’ and the ‘Shen’ puppets were drawing the ‘dragons’ to life. There were a handful of students who were leading the play and improvising story lines from the book. The smiles, noisy chatter and apparent character embodiment could be indicative of the affective engagement that the students were involved in. Sarim was one student who was leading the play during this section of the lesson. It was observed that he improvised from the text with a small group of other students and that he embellished the story line with new ‘twists’ such as making the Emperor visit Shen’s village, asking her for forgiveness and making some dragon finger puppets become ‘pets’. The other students responded to his dramatic offers of action and dialogue. Zara reflected:

I was having fun just watching them because they were so imaginative with their puppets. They were re-telling parts of the story, acting out new possibilities or story-lines. They were being very creative.
In the research journal it was noticed that the students’ in-character language and focussed behaviours indicated engagement in the task and joyful cognitive expression of their learning.

Photographs taken of the students in groups creating tableaux from previous Galleries were used as a springboard to write compound and complex sentences. A tableaux from the opening scene in the story was used as a whole class modelling activity, and by brainstorming relevant adjectives, the class created the sentence, ‘The old magical man gave kind and lucky Shen a special paintbrush.’ Small groups then worked together to create new sentences describing the action in different photographs of the tableaux from Gallery 3. Post-it-notes of adjectives were used to support the students. Some were able to independently begin their sentence and others were assisted by discussing the given scene, re-enacting poses from the tableaux and handling the adjective post-it-notes. Many students showed willingness to read aloud their work, which included: ‘The bad and angry Emperor was taking frightened Shen to the scary dungeon’; and ‘Happy Shen painted oysters in a big pot for her lucky family. They felt excited.’

The pedagogy of personalising the students’ work is an intentional and important aspect of the Gallery experience. After the session, Zara reflected on how the activities supported the students’ writing process. She discussed how Isaac gave the impression that the photographs of his classmates helped him to plan his writing. Zara speculated that the personal nature of the task, in using photographs of the students’ previous work rather than illustrations from the book, assisted in making the activity more authentic for students like Isaac. She stated, ‘He does not normally sit and write, the pictures must have helped him.’ Zara further articulated how the class as a whole took ownership of the task:

I think I noticed that the imaginative work helped them in their writing. They need, especially the ESL students, need visual support and I try to give them that in the classroom. But they need more than that and to really understand things, they need to embody the characters or it becomes a bit wishy washy to them.
The journal reinforced this:

The opportunity for the students to ‘play’ first and embody the characters before the writing process began seemed to encourage and support all the students to achieve the writing task.

The photojournalists selected the following photographs as a summary of their learning:

![Image of students playing with dragon toy and writing](image1)

‘We were trying to act the dragon out.’

![Image of students writing](image2)

‘We are imagining what that will be and we write it down.’
‘I looked at the picture and I did the writing. He was being the Emperor. He is angry and has a really cross face.’

‘Shen was very generous so she painted for her family with a magic paintbrush and in the bowl there were fish and oysters. Her family got excited and they were full.’

6.4.10 Gallery 5 – Review

The arts

The students’ artistic learning experiences seemed to assist them in idea generation for writing sentences about key scenes from the text. It could be that these students felt that it was necessary to artistically embody the characters that they were instructed to write about, in order to support this process. Personalising the learning activity was an intentional pedagogical decision.
Creativity

The imaginative play activity combined with the visual stimulus of the tableaux photographs from Gallery 3 seemed to assist in the writing process. The opportunity to ‘be creative’ first before more formal writing activities was an important step to allow the students to be more expressive and descriptive in their writing.

Student engagement

The students’ seemingly enthusiastic involvement in the tasks, coupled with the expression of their intellectual understandings of the text through play and writing, could be indicative of their engagement in the Gallery.

Learning as a human endeavour

The students were able to express in writing some empathic understandings of the interactions between the main characters.

6.4.11 Gallery 6 – Greed and giving

Snapshot of Gallery 6

The students imagined the types of objects they would paint for their community if they had a magic paintbrush.

Gallery 6 in action

Tables were set up so that the students could perform an improvised finger puppet theatre. Isaac was one of the students who put his hand up straight away in order to be involved. He was chosen to be ‘The Emperor’ and he dived into his role along with the other students who had volunteered to take on the other characters. Isaac seemed to become the leader in this activity in the way that he was using improvisational strategies to give the other students working with him the opportunity to react to his dialogue and represent their differing power relationships. He encouraged the other students to play in-role by ad-libbing such phrases as, ‘Come here Shen! … I hate children … I want more gold … where are my soldiers?’ After this whole class activity, the other students were able to perform their own
finger puppet theatre. The students were observed to be improvising in role and working through sequences from the text, as well as new and imagined scenes.

To conclude, the students were asked to imagine what they would choose to paint for someone they cared about, if they were given a magic paintbrush. The class reflected on how Shen had given special gifts to her community. One student reflected how Shen gave ‘kind little’ gifts. When probed, this student was able to articulate that Shen was thoughtful because her gifts, despite not being ‘big’, made the recipient happy and their life became a little bit easier. Another student reflected that Shen was careful with what she painted, ‘She didn’t finish her painting of the dragon. She let the Emperor escape.’ When this student was asked why they thought Shen did that, they replied that this made the Emperor learn a lesson. The students had a short time to think about what they would paint for a loved one if they had a magic paintbrush. The responses were varied and included a toolbox for dad, a climbing tree for the back garden, flowers for mum and custard for a baby brother. These simple responses seemed to echo the types of ‘kind little’ gifts that Shen had painted for her village. Zara reflected, ‘I’ve seen an increase in their ability to work in teams and improved social skills. They couldn’t work with each other before, now they support each other’.

The following photographs were selected by the photojournalists:

‘It’s fun to play.’
‘My team did the story again with our puppets.’

‘In this photo we are being low so you can only see our puppets and you can watch our story.’

‘My puppet is Shen and I can be her.’
6.4.12 Gallery 6 – Review

The arts

Once again, the finger puppets appeared to have been a successful tool in allowing the students to embody the characters and express the moral characteristics and themes of the story.

Creativity

The students continued to show confidence and skill by creatively improvising within the frame of the text. They used their imaginations to assist them in communicating their understandings of the human issues through play.

Student engagement

The class as a whole were working cohesively as a team in the finger puppet theatre and class reflection, and this could well be signs of an insider classroom mindset developing.

Learning as a human endeavour

When applying gift giving to their own lives, the students seemed to be able to imagine painting ‘kind little’ gifts that their loved ones needed as opposed to ‘greedy big’ gifts that they otherwise might have decided to imagine painting.

6.4.13 Gallery 7 – Meeting the giant

Snapshot of Gallery 7

The Smartest Giant in Town was introduced and the class was involved in musical based activities that focused on the musical concepts of tempo and dynamics.

Gallery 7 in action

The students were taught a chant that incorporates movement in which they have to use their voices loudly and softly during different sections of the song. The students were able to switch from loud to soft seemingly without difficulty. This was an opportunity to reinforce the concept of dynamics and how ‘loud’ and ‘quiet’
moments can be interchanged within music. The students were introduced to the main character of the text by copying the mimed actions of the researcher to try to imagine what kind of character it could be. The students seemed to be very amused by the very slow, heavy and ‘big’ movements of the unknown character and a student guessed that it could be a giant. The students were then involved in responding to musical dynamics through mime. The research journal explains that it was predicted that the students would find it very challenging to respond to the music, however:

When we did the actions, the students remained focused on the musical challenge, trying hard to keep to the beat of the slow musical track and switch from loud to quiet dynamics with their stomping feet. Without teacher prompting, these students began to create their own impressions of the Giant.

The text was read to the students and they were able to join together as a class to say in chorus the repetitive rhyming sections of the story. The students appeared to respond positively to the story and were asked to think of adjectives to describe the Giant. At first the descriptions were quite physical, but with prompting they were able to describe what type of giant he was. Their ideas were recorded on a mind map and the class discussed how they could compare the Giant to another character from *The Magic Paintbrush*. Many students agreed that the Giant was like Shen because, as one student described; ‘they were both generous and nice to other people’.

To reinforce the musical concepts of dynamics, and to introduce the concept of tempo, the students were taught a song that sequenced the events from the new story and that switched from loud to quiet dynamics and also switched the tempo to which they performed actions. The students seemed to respond positively to the activity by voicing their enjoyment with laughter and requests for different animals to be included, and remaining focused on the task. Some students asked to repeat certain activities and protested when the recess bell sounded as they wanted to continue with the lesson. After the Gallery, the photojournalists made the following reflections about the students’ work:
'We did very big stomps to be the Giant.'

'The giant was kind, and he was giving his clothes to the mice. He put down his belt and the dog went over the mud.'

'We went loud and then we went quiet. The word for loud and quiet is dynamics.'
6.4.14 Gallery 7 – Review

The arts
The students were able to confidently and accurately respond to dynamics and tempo within the activities. They showed signs of enjoying the challenge as well as correct understanding of the musical concepts.

Creativity
Without teacher suggestion, in the musical activities some students began to move their bodies in giant-like ways. These students were perhaps injecting their own creativity into the task by imagining themselves as giants.

Student engagement
The students voiced their enjoyment of the task. The students seemed to be engaged cognitively in the musical tasks as they appeared to be focused on moving their bodies accurately to the musical activity.

Learning as a human endeavour
When comparing the main characters of the new text to the first Gallery text, the students were able to draw parallels between the two main characters and identified that both had generous and kind personalities.

6.4.15 Gallery 8 – Missing pictures

Snapshot of Gallery 8
The students participated in a listening and movement activity and played new games called ‘Before and After’ and ‘Missing Pictures’.

Gallery 8 in action
The class selected particular percussion instruments to musically represent the different animals from the story. The students seemed eager to select which animal could ‘match’ a musical symbol in the way that they all raised their hands to give their perspective. The class moved around the hall space and were instructed to
freeze in the shape of the animal from the story when they heard its matching sound. They were showing signs that they focused on listening to the music as their faces showed concentration and they were looking to their peers to support them. This simple body warm up and listening game seemed to be both stimulating and challenging for the class for these reasons.

The class was introduced to a new activity called ‘Before and After’. The students worked individually to show an image of the emotions of each animal before and then after the Giant had given them a gift. The students stood in a circle and the activity was completed together as a class with the use of a musical cue to switch between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ images. The journal noted:

This format gave the more introverted students the support to be able to use facial expressions and movement to show the change that took place in each character because we all did it at the same time.

Zara reinforced by saying, ‘I noticed that some students who normally are shy were able to achieve some great representations of the emotions.’

The final activity was ‘Missing Pictures’. The class was instructed that the researcher was going to freeze in a position showing ‘half’ of a picture or scene from the book and that they would have to guess what the scene was and then volunteer to join the picture to complete the image. An image of the mouse was presented, pointing in fear at her ‘missing picture’ house that was on fire. The class appeared to understand the concept as there were many hands up to guess the scene. Sarim guessed the scene correctly and then took a position as one of the baby mice to complete the picture. Other students then volunteered to join in the scene and soon the students had made a frozen image of this section of the book. The class wanted to complete several rotations of the activity and they were asked what they liked about the lesson. They said, ‘I liked the half picture game, it was fun and we got to be the people in the story.’ When asked what was important about ‘being’ the characters in the story, they said, ‘You are being different parts of the book, you can act and be the animal in the scene … because you get to learn.’ To finish, the class was asked to think about how the story would be different if the Giant was nasty. The students responded by
making inferences such as: ‘The mouse wouldn’t have anywhere nice to live’ and ‘The dog would be stuck in the bog forever’, and were able to pose evaluative statements such as: ‘The title would be different – it would be called ‘The meanest Giant in town’.

After the session, Zara discussed how the Gallery experiences might have helped her own classroom pedagogy in assisting the students with the highest needs in literacy:

I’ve noticed that it’s changed my perception of how I assess, because in telling and re-telling, some aren’t able to write things down. How can I assess what they comprehend from the text and how can I get it out of them? These activities can work (as assessment) for these kids.

The photojournalists chose the following photographs as a reflection of their work in the Gallery:

‘I like this one because he got sad and using emotions. We learned about being kind to other people. Because if we hurt other people it’s not nice. We can be kind to other people and remember always’
‘I liked because you could be the fox and the tambourine told you what to do and could go like that or like that (mimes being the fox sleeping in his sock).’

‘My favourite game was after/before because we got to be like little mice. This is the mouse’s house. And we learn to read the book so we can be kind.’
‘I liked the half picture game. It was fun and we got to be the people in the story.’

‘It makes me feel like I am actually in the book. Because it’s like I am in the book and I see it for real. It makes me feel that we are really inside the book.’

Interestingly, the comments made by one of the photojournalists about feeling like they are ‘really inside the book’ mirror the sentiments made by a student at Valley Primary school. Both comments could indicate that time allowed for imagination and artistic work help students to construct their own meanings about the texts they were learning about, to be able to understand and to re-state the perception of a photojournalist, to ‘see it for real’.
6.4.16 Gallery 8 – Review

The arts
Particularly in the ‘Missing Pictures’ activity, the students were adept at being able to visually analyse an incomplete scene from the text and to be seemingly eager to participate and move their own bodies to create a full scene.

Creativity
During the ‘Missing Pictures’ activity, some students seemed to have the imagination to visualise an incomplete, ambiguous picture and then had the ability to interpret it through dramatic representation. The students appeared to enjoy the creative challenges.

Student engagement
The photojournalist comments suggest that the students understood that their own artistic and creative learning was moving towards the high cognitive component of student engagement. They responded that they were mentally focused on interpreting the events of the story through dramatic representation and their comments also suggest that they favour ‘feeling’ like they are within the story.

Learning as a human endeavour
In the ‘Before and After’ activity, the students had the opportunity as a class to show through dramatic action the sequence of sad/happy feelings that the characters experienced by their meeting with the Giant. Their participation could indicate their growing abilities to recognise the feelings of others.

6.5 Exhibition
Other classes were invited to participate in the Exhibition. This format came about because other teachers expressed an interest in their classes taking part and so it was decided to hold two separate Gallery experiences so that four of the classes and their teachers could participate. Zara’s class would also be present during these sessions and act as the ‘leaders’ of the learning process. The Exhibitions would thus have
about 50 students in each session. The plan was to continue using the same activities that Zara’s class had become used to so that they could model some of these for the other classes. There would be two Exhibitions on the text *The Magic Paintbrush* and two Exhibitions on *The Smartest Giant in Town*. Each text was to be read to each class before participating.

6.5.1 Exhibition experience No. 1 – *The Magic Paintbrush*

**Snapshot of Exhibition No. 1**

The activities in the Exhibition included an imagination sequence, statue freeze, adjective brainstorm leading to an adjective movement sequence and a musical listening game.

**Exhibition in action**

During the opening imagination sequence activity, the apparent curiosity and engagement of the visiting class was noted. Class 1/2E took on a strong leadership role in that they seemed to be ‘performing’ in role for the other class and at times gestured to the visiting students or modelled for them, without direction from the teachers. The teachers stood back from the opening sequence as 1/2E were encouraged to lead this activity and allow the visiting students to respond by freely using their imaginations. However, the activity soon became a little unstructured because one of the visiting students seemed to find it hard to maintain control and began to try to lead the activity himself. This confused the rest of the students and so the teachers had to intervene to get the activity back ‘on-track’. Despite this small diversion, the students maintained focus on the purpose of the activity, which was to use and apply their imaginations. Zara mentioned:

> It's clear my class like ‘performing’ now, to me it shows they are proud of their work. The opening activity got a little messy but the kids still had fun, it was clear that both classes enjoyed it.

Class 1/2E was chosen to model the next set of activities for the rest of the group. The classes were asked to freeze in statue formation of various characters from the text. Class 1/2E showed greater variety and expansiveness in their chosen
movements and how they positioned their bodies. Their dramatic movements could perhaps reflect their growing artistic and creative skills or could perhaps indicate their pleasure at being able to ‘perform’ for their peers. The other children chose more subdued movements and positions that really contrasted against the exaggerated movements of 1/2E. After various rotations, the visiting class began to get a little more creative with their ideas. Despite the volume of students, there were no behaviour issues and all the students remained ‘in character’, perhaps a sign of high cognitive and high affective engagement.

In smaller groups, adjectives were chosen as stimulus for creating movements. These movements were performed over a 4/4 beat with one action on each beat for four bars. In this activity, the visiting students seemed to exhibit more confidence in being able to share their ideas. An executive teacher was present during this activity and mentioned:

> I really enjoyed watching the children learn. They were all participating and it was great to see them performing to the words they had just brainstormed. I can see how for some children this kind of thing can really help with their comprehension and vocabulary building.

The concluding activity was a musical listening activity where the students were instructed to learn and repeat a short rhythmic and movement sequence. Class 1/2E was used to performing this type of activity and it was noted that the visiting students were looking to their more practised peers to be able to achieve the rhythm sequence. The whole group appeared to be concentrating and they seemed to enjoy the challenge.

The first Exhibition session appeared to be a success as the visiting students were able to participate effectively and showed signs of enjoying the activities. Class 1/2E was able to take on a strong leadership role in the learning process. The visiting staff gave positive feedback and an executive staff member who was present mentioned:

> I also noticed how the teachers were clearly enjoying themselves. This kind of teacher enjoyment must be infectious for the children! Everyone had happy
faces. It sounds clichéd but it’s so important that teachers model a love of learning.

Zara talked of her relief that her class exhibited such strong leadership skills and also gave positive feedback regarding a student from the visiting class who had an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). She questioned:

Would it be beneficial for them, would they be able to be engaged? And what I noticed was the student on an ILP, he was absolutely loving every moment of it and I think he felt more a part of his learning.

The photojournalists noted the following:

‘We had to make a shape, we had to think of the dragon, the Emperor and Shen.’

‘We are being soldiers and being the Emperor’s army.’
‘This photograph shows the other class who came with us, they are learning about our book.’

‘We made the Emperor’s palace so the other class could come and see it and we pretend to be the story.’

### 6.5.2 Exhibition experience No. 2 – The Smartest Giant in Town

**Snapshot of Exhibition No. 2**

The activities in the second Exhibition included a warm-up freeze activity, a Giant mime sequence, movement in response to dynamics (loud/soft), Tableaux making and a musical listening game (tone colour).

**Exhibition experience in action**

For the second Exhibition, the teachers of the other classes requested a music focus for the activities, so the session was designed with this in mind. There were more
children in the visiting classes who were on ILPs and who exhibited difficulty in being able to participate in the activities. One of these students became quite disruptive and this became very distracting to the flow of the session. The journal picks up on this:

I wonder whether with continued exposure to these sessions, would this student be able to participate fully in the Gallery? Isaac from 1/2E also experienced initial difficulty at being able to participate so I wonder whether this student, like Isaac, needs time to adjust to this type of pedagogy.

Despite some off task behaviour, the particularly disruptive student from the other class was able to respond well in the movement activity by showing differences in his movements to loud and soft dynamics and could also join in with the Giant miming activity, which he appeared to enjoy. Zara communicated that the visiting teachers were interested in seeing whether some of their other students on ILPs would be able to participate without their class teacher’s constant encouragement:

Joanne (teacher from a visiting class) wanted to see, if she left the room, would they maintain the focus? So she went out for about five minutes to ‘spy’ on the class and slowly came back in and didn’t interact with those students to see if they were engaged and they were, even though she had left.

The group showed signs of being able to generate and try out new ideas in their statue and tableaux work. This leadership also seemed to help the visiting students to experiment with their artistic responses. A visiting teacher remarked, ‘My kids sometimes were unsure with what to do but I think having Zara’s class show them some ‘out-there’ moves made them feel more comfortable at ‘giving it a go’’. Zara was pleased that Samara, a girl from her class, who normally has difficulty in showing confidence, ‘was able to work with her small group and I saw her actually give her opinion. It sounds small but I know that’s a big thing for her’.

Despite the challenges of working with much bigger groups, the Exhibitions were a success in that the visiting classes participated to the full and showed enjoyment by laughing and smiling purposefully in the creative and artistic learning. Class 1/2E showed signs of being proud to lead the sessions in the way that they effectively
modelled the activities to the other students and at times helped visiting students without teacher direction.

The photojournalists noted:

‘He is good because he is really the Emperor. I enjoyed being the Emperor too.’

‘We had to do our words with our bodies.’
‘It is good this photograph because we make characters.’

6.5.3 Exhibition review

The arts

The visiting classes were able to look to their peers to be able to artistically participate more fully in the Exhibition. Class 1/2E showed skill and also apparent pride in demonstrating the arts-based learning tasks.

Creativity

The Exhibition appeared to highlight the growth in creative skills by 1/2E. Zara’s class was able to confidently express more playful and divergent practices in the way they moved their bodies, used their voices and generated ideas.

Student engagement

The students showed signs of being able to successfully take on a leadership role and to confidently apply their learning. This could be indicative of the high levels of engagement in the sessions in the sense that the students from both classes clearly expressed their understandings of the text through the artistic activities.
Learning as a human endeavour

The Exhibition played out the highly social, as opposed to just technical, experiential possibilities of learning in disadvantaged classrooms. The students appeared to value the aesthetic, collaborative and expressive nature of the learning in the Exhibition, which are promoted in this research as intrinsically human endeavours.

To conclude this chapter, brief summaries of the two students who were monitored as case studies will be given and a summary of learning across each of the four main themes of research will be provided. In the following summaries, the final interview data from the teacher and the student focus group will be drawn on.

6.6 Student case studies

Isaac and Sarim were purposefully chosen as case study students. Both students arguably, have a disengaged relationship to their learning. Before the Gallery lessons, Isaac exhibited oppositional behaviour in the classroom and found it difficult to work successfully within everyday classroom procedures. Sarim, on the other hand, was behaviourally compliant but lacked confidence to join class discussions and preferred individual tasks. A review of the data collected across the Galleries provides an illustration that both students responded positively to the pedagogical approach of the activities. In terms of student engagement, the data supports that both students appeared to show improved involvement in the Gallery activities and even eventual enthusiasm for participating. Their apparent enthusiasm, desire to extend learning beyond set ‘teaching time’, positivity and signs of emotional happiness are signals of high affective relationships to the learning that took place.

Isaac did not engage initially and started off by exhibiting oppositional behaviour. It seemed that he was indifferent to the Gallery pedagogy. However, he soon began to participate along with his classmates. The imagination and playful activities appeared to allow him to enter the Gallery space. In subsequent lessons, his impassive manner was absent and he became one of the most enthusiastic students in terms of his desire to be in ‘the centre’ of all the activities. Zara explained that before the Gallery, she did not know how to help him to engage with his learning, ‘I think that this has lured
him and got his attention. It’s given him a whole new platform I guess, to show his true self.’

Unlike Isaac, Sarim showed a willingness to participate in the Gallery from the first lesson. From a researcher’s perspective, he continued to be involved in all the tasks and was one student who responded particularly successfully to the artistic practices. This increasing level of participation and apparent enjoyment from both students could be described as a pathway toward high operative and high cognitive levels of engagement. Both Sarim and Isaac responded to the atmosphere of investigation, improvisation and experimentation shaped by the creative and artistic work in the way that they began to work more effectively in groups and shared their ideas openly and confidently with the class, which had previously been a challenge for them both.

The creative and artistic practices appeared to equip both students with a new pedagogical arena in which to exhibit their curriculum understandings and extend their abilities in imaginative thinking and artistic practice. On several occasions, Sarim was noticed for his effortless ability to lead the rest of the class with artistic skill. Zara talked of his preference for individual tasks before the Gallery and that, despite being diligent, he was not necessarily engaged. The artistic pedagogy was purposely designed so that all students would be on an equal platform. She said:

> He finds it hard to express himself sometimes and he can become very shy and withdrawn in class … but (in the Gallery) he let himself go … he became more relaxed and ready to share ideas.

The data provides an illustration of both students ‘leading’ the rest of the class and achieving success artistically and academically. The dramatic and imaginative activities appeared to stimulate Isaac and he was always strongly involved during times when he needed to be ‘in role’ or to play with his imagination. The improvisational humour and strong ability to be in role that he exhibited allowed him to experience success individually and to show his classmates a new side of himself as an active and talented member of the class. Zara stated that, in terms of Isaac’s growth in the Gallery:
I have to say that, in these lessons, I’ve learned how to manage him … so many visitors to my class say that he is a different student, and he wants to be involved with the other kids and he wants to be involved in discussion.

Both Sarim and Isaac had specific learning needs in terms of being behaviourally challenging and behaviourally compliant, respectively. In the final interview, Zara commented:

When we first started this he [Isaac] kind of stood on the sidelines. He needed a little bit of prompting but he wanted to participate and he found it so exciting and I know that for a fact because every Tuesday morning when he knew you were coming in, as soon as he’d see me in the morning he’d ask if he was going to be participating in that lesson.

Sarim appeared to benefit from artistic ways of learning. Zara summarised in the final interview that before the Gallery he may not have been singled out as particularly artistic or creative:

The arts activities seem to really support him in his learning … through this I’ve seen something that is going to support him individually. He said to me that [the Gallery] ‘gave me confidence’. I think that something that has stood out was the confidence that it gave a lot of the students, even the shy ones … they go into their own little element.

In summary, the Gallery pedagogy appeared to assist both students in their learning. For Sarim, this was most notable in relation to his achievement in artistic ways of being in the classroom and for Issaac, there is evidence to support that he began to think hard, feel good about his work and that he was building to become a better learner.

This chapter has presented the pedagogical content of each of the Galleries at Green Primary School. It has also provided brief summative statements across each key theme of research. The chapter will now present data of the Gallery and Exhibition processes at Green Primary School through notable characteristics and patterns that emerged across each of the four themes of research.
6.7 Summary of thematic statements across Gallery experiences and the Exhibition

The pedagogical approach of the Galleries and Exhibition included arts-based learning practices to facilitate creative ways of thinking and ‘being’. The approach required planning along a high cognitive, high operative and high affective engagement focus. While arts pedagogy, creative practices and student engagement were pedagogical features, the learning experiences also included the theme of learning as a human endeavour and therefore sought to channel a human focus to the lessons. To reiterate, the big ideas for this class were:

1. All humans have needs, such as water, food, clothing, shelter, safety and love/happiness, and wants.
2. People have their needs and wants satisfied to differing degrees.
3. People can help others to be happy and have their needs met.

Thematic statements across the Gallery and Exhibition experiences will now be summarised.

6.7.1 Arts pedagogy

The arts were used as a pedagogical tool to allow the students to think deeply about the texts, to practise their growing vocabulary and to enact their comprehension of the interactions between characters and the big ideas inherent to each story. Zara shared that the artistic pedagogy within the lessons influenced the way that she would like to plan her own present and future teaching:

The arts practice, that’s what I found most important. Because it’s something that I ended up going away with and I would boast about it in the staffroom and something that changed the way that I taught.

Across the Gallery experience, it appeared that the students’ artistic embodiment of the stories improved their basic comprehension skills. Artistic embodiment included such activities as creating movements to match an adjective, miming, statue work,
tableau construction and imaginative play. Many students from the class have ESL and high literacy needs so the corporeal practices of the Gallery appeared to generate greater understanding of the texts. In the final interview, Zara commented:

One of the things that we noticed was their vocabulary and I think that before the Gallery, that held them back a bit because they weren’t able to express themselves as well as they probably could, they had the idea in their head but they couldn’t verbalise it.

The Principal of Green Public School was present for the Exhibitions and stated afterwards that she was passionate about helping the children with their literacy skills. She expressed that she could perceive how the sessions were seemingly able to help the children with their language skills and vocabulary development. She stated:

I can see the children really embodying the language that they are learning about. This is so important for these children. They have the chance to build on their knowledge and make links to the classroom.

When taking on the role of a character through mime, tableau or with finger puppets, the students were able to rehearse new vocabulary or enact their own understanding of the texts. They began to insert the vocabulary that was being practised into their writing. Zara commented that the improvement in vocabulary from artistic experiences transferred into other areas:

It might be small but you see it in their writing, they are making the connections for how a character is feeling and applying the words they learned from drama whereas before we’d have to go over what words mean and simplify it.

The enjoyment of the arts pedagogy and sense of achievement felt by the students appeared in the data. In the final focus group interview, the students reflected, ‘I liked when we learned a new dance … we made it all together’ and ‘When we did the giant stomping was my favourite because that helped make me feel smart.’ These comments are also indicative of how the students began to equate the enjoyment of arts learning with the high cognitive:
Actually we’re doing smart things and when we’re doing drama it’s really smart. You can imagine … The creative thing we have done is when we done the finger puppets – if you had any of those ideas you could show it to someone else that doesn’t know … I felt smart and clever when we read about the story – I can play it and write about it and it makes me think like I want to write my own story.

A point of discussion during the final interview with Zara centred on the challenges that generalist teachers can face for how arts pedagogy can be purposefully incorporated into the classroom, ‘Everything that I’ve watched, everything that I got to participate in was very simple things. I definitely think it’s something that’s achievable with teachers.’

In reference to the Quality teaching coding scale for ‘Deep Understanding’, students demonstrated code level 2 in the opening Gallery: “for most students, understanding is shallow during most of the lesson, with one or two minor exceptions” (Ladwig and Gore, 2003, p. 14). The photojournalists were able to report on how the class were starting to connect with the artistic pedagogy of the Gallery, demonstrated by descriptive comments such as, ‘we had to move around using your body to show the book. We imagined the place – the river, the gold, the dragon’, however, communication and demonstration of the big ideas of the program were limited. The data reveals that most students were able to embody the characters but that they weren’t revealing an understanding of the big ideas of the Gallery, although their were minor exceptions. While the students’ demonstration of understanding through the arts practices in the Gallery was scaled as basic and shallow in the introductory lessons, the extent of the students’ understandings was rated more highly as the Gallery lessons progressed.

The pedagogy of each Gallery was centred on arts-based learning. The arts were used to deeply engage students, to create opportunities for opening empathic understanding of big ideas and to stimulate creative thought and action. The next section discusses creativity in the Gallery.
6.7.2 Creativity

Before the Gallery program commenced, Zara articulated that her class required structured lessons and a strong routine. Many students preferred tasks that are not open-ended and that some students found it difficult to take risks in their learning. Often in low socio economic schooling contexts, a ‘default’ position of low-level pedagogy of control is used to manage classrooms with a variety of challenging teaching and learning issues (Orlando & Sawyer, 2013, p. 10). This ‘default’ position is reflective of a systemic pressure, sometimes from community members and from within the school gates, in which there is a view that compliance and rote learning achieve the best results. The creative pedagogy of the Gallery stands in contrast to such a position in that it included sequenced artistic challenges to stimulate student-led play and student-led conversations with an emphasis on the employment of imagination.

One of the most notable developments in creative learning in the Galleries and Exhibition was the increased comfort that the class exhibited for trying new things, taking risks and sharing ideas. Activities such as finger puppet play, tableau making, mime and imagining oneself as a book character required the students to try unfamiliar tasks, engage in open-ended activities, attempt to use their bodies and voices in different ways and to improvise in groups. Many of the activities were student-led; so much of the classroom control was shared between teacher and students. Zara reflected in the final interview that the highly planned but student-led Gallery pedagogy was an opportunity for the class to experience a ‘safe’ place for non-judgemental creative expression of learning, ‘There was no judgment as well; I don’t think the kids ever felt at any time that … they were free to try things without fear of being wrong.’

Hesitant behaviour appeared to be quite common during the first few Galleries. However, it became apparent that there was increased comfort with trying new things and the students appeared to begin to welcome creative challenges. It appeared that they were less afraid to think and behave outside their normal classroom routine. For example, in statue and tableau making, the students initially moved their bodies very minimally and seemed to be anxious about ‘getting it wrong’ because they were
constantly looking to their peers or teachers to ‘check’ that they were doing the right
thing. It was also observed that the students required less and less teacher ‘approval’
and appeared eager to participate in an activity without the trepidation about ‘getting
it wrong’. The observational and teacher feedback data showed that students were
becoming more confident and comfortable in taking risks in their learning. In the
final interview, Zara talks of one student whose confidence in attempting new
learning tasks grew through the Gallery process:

That might have helped a student like him feel like he could take risks, and
feel like he could give a little bit more of himself. There were many examples
of students having increased desire in sharing their opinion or ideas, and
showing imagination.

The Galleries allowed the students some opportunities for unstructured play.
Seemingly, the students became more motivated to share ideas, improvise with each
other and take risks. The finger puppet activity is one such example that showed that
the students began to play imaginatively, independently and without teacher
direction. It was also reported by Zara after observations of playground behaviours
that the students were playing the same games in free time in the playground. It
seemed that ‘being’ creative first helped them to focus their attention and their ideas
toward writing more descriptively. In the research journal it was noted:

They have gone from being quite fragmented as a group to working more as a
team and allowing new ideas to lead them. I have noticed that a lot of the
sessions have gone away from the plan and the students have taken the lesson
to a new place.

In the final interview with the students, one student talked of the link between
creativity and thinking hard in the path towards the high cognitive:

I remember when we done those freeze frames and that’s getting me better and
every day I come I get more answers and then in my brain I think I wish we’d
done ten freeze frames because I’m very good at freeze frames. They make me
more creative.
Creative learning was one key focus of the research at Green Public School. The next section now discusses how student engagement, another central theme of the research, played out within the Gallery.

### 6.7.3 Student engagement

It was important to the Gallery pedagogy that there was a focus on learning, not behaviour. Zara commented in the final interview, ‘I don’t remember really having to intervene, there was never an issue of real behaviour management I guess.’ It seemed to be evident that the high affective component of the lessons became the hook that led to high cognitive and high operative results. The creative and artistic activities were purposely designed to be enjoyable and attractive to the students. In the final interview, the students shared their feelings of enjoyment of the Gallery, ‘I liked it because you actually got to play with us and we got to play really nice games and you were in the games with us’ and ‘We done lots of fun activities like the freeze frame and pretending we were in the Emperor’s Palace so we had to steal gold and go back to the sand. I liked that part.’

By being involved in a variety of movement, dramatic and musical activities, the students appeared to develop emotional attachments and responses to the work. This was evident in the way the students independently ‘played’ as the characters without teacher direction in the classroom and also the playground, in the way that they wanted to continue with the lessons after the bell signalled the end of a session, and the way the students would vocally react with concern about the welfare of the characters in class discussions. Within the activities themselves, the students appeared to be happy and to show excitement at sharing their work with their peers. The positive feelings that the students appeared to show regarding their work in the Gallery could be perceived as the important hook that led the students to exhibit deep understanding of the texts and the big ideas within them. In the final interview, Zara reflected on a student who has experienced academic disengagement and who appeared to benefit from the Gallery pedagogy:

> He finds it very hard to socialise with the students more because he struggles to have a conversation at their level. He’s got a language difficulty and so it was interesting to see whether during these tasks where he could use his body...
and expressions and those kind of things and finger puppets whether that support would engage him further to be involved. It engaged those students that have learning needs as well. So it got them involved in a way that they haven’t been involved before.

Imaginative play worked alongside artistic practices to challenge the students intellectually. Within the lessons, there was time allocated for play in imagination sequences, to play with their own finger puppets and for space to work in pairs, with small groups and individually. The journal expresses that, for this class, opportunities for imaginative play also appeared to be a key element in working towards the high cognitive dimension of student engagement:

Sometimes I forget how young these students are because their work and intellectual involvement has been deep. The students have really responded to the time allowed to ‘play’ as the characters and in imagining themselves in the world of the book. I can see how they have truly enjoyed being imaginative and relished the chance to have the time we have given them for that structured playtime. It reflects that strong link between play, enjoyment and learning.

Zara reflected in the final interview that she also enjoyed watching her class play and that it was a valuable learning opportunity for her to observe the depth of the students’ comprehension of the text:

It was beautiful just to see what the students understood and remembered and I definitely noticed the kids’ recollection of the text and how simply playing really supported that … they need to play, to be kids.

The children appeared to respond to the Gallery tasks with enthusiasm. This enthusiasm seemingly led them to think deeply about the human issues between characters and to physically express their understanding of the text. Thus, imaginative play together with the creative and artistic pedagogy of the sessions seemed to contribute to high levels of cognitive understanding and expression.

On the high operative level, a growing sense of ownership and connection to learning appeared to become apparent for some students who were otherwise experiencing difficulty with their relationship to the classroom. A student in the final interview
reflected, ‘We can get better and we can learn lots of new things and we can play them in class and we can get better and better and better.’ Another student talked of how the photojournalism was an important aspect for her, ‘I liked it when we were voting for the pictures of us doing the best work.’ When this student was asked to elaborate, she replied:

I felt really good because, if people say ‘what are you doing in the picture’ we can tell them, we can say Shen came back from sea and she got a magic paintbrush. Like I felt happy.

These comments are indicative of the positive feelings of ownership of learning. Across the class, students appeared to be proud to share their work with each other and were seemingly excited to invite visiting classes and teachers into the Gallery for the Exhibition. There were times when teacher ‘control’ was not required as students were seemingly so engaged and focused in the learning task. The focus on learning and student ownership of the tasks appeared to support ongoing positive engaging messages across the Gallery experience. This is reflected in the final student interview data:

I liked it when we taught [sic] the other classes because it improved my learning that we can be teachers … I liked it because we got to teach the other people and they learnt a lot … I felt excited because I’ve never got to teach someone something like this.

Most notably, the case study students, whilst initially quite different in their academic and social behaviours and achievements, both seemed to become more engaged learners in the Gallery. Sarim, who had difficulty with risk taking and who preferred to work alone, was, from early on in the Gallery, showing signs of leadership during group work and also, initially, experimented artistically more than other students. The Gallery sessions appeared to allow him to ‘shine’ in a new way. He stood out among his classmates in the creativity he showed and became a student whom others looked to for guidance. The Gallery appeared to be stimulating for Sarim and to help him express his high cognitive achievements in a new way. Isaac, on the other hand, who was uninterested in the Gallery in the first session, became more and more involved as the sessions continued. The creative routines and artistic
practices seemed to appear to give him the physical space and release he needed to stay focused and to achieve success. The high affective hook allowed Isaac some opportunity to be free to experiment with his ideas and to feel positive about learning. His contribution to class discussions and his growing desire to be involved and to control his behaviour in order to achieve the tasks could be reflective of Isaacs’s engagement.

Zara discussed how the students recognised that the high affective nature of the pedagogy was a medium for the expression of learning in the Exhibition: ‘they realised that this is actually an opportunity to play a part in class and show what I understand’. In conclusion to this chapter, learning as a human endeavour at Green Primary School will be summarised.

6.7.4 Learning as a human endeavour

The pedagogy of each Gallery included a human approach to learning and opportunities were sought for the students to be involved in exploring big ideas. Learning tasks embraced issues of human concern within the curriculum content and students were involved in creative and arts-based experiences that focused on the human relationships from the chosen texts.

The intention was for the students to come to a clearer understanding of the human qualities of the characters and to be able to empathise with their unique traits. By employing creative and artistic practices, the students began to embody the characters from the texts, and from this it seemed that they were able to build a meaningful descriptive vocabulary for the characters. Further, it appeared to emerge from early in the Gallery that after embodying the people or animals portrayed in the story, most students could provide an explanation of the moral values evident in the text. In Gallery 4, one photojournalist commented: ‘We asked the Emperor, ‘You are already wealthy, why do you want more money?’’. This statement directly links to big idea 2 and 3 and reveals that students were thinking critically about the themes of the Gallery. In line with the Productive pedagogy continuum of practice scale for ‘Deep Understanding’, this statement illustrates that the students were demonstrating their understanding of the problematic nature of ideas (Education Queensland, 2002,
This statement was an exemplar of code level 4 on the *Quality teaching* coding scale for ‘Deep Understanding’: “most students provide information, arguments or reasoning that demonstrates deep understanding for a substantial portion of the lesson” (Ladwig and Gore, 2003, p.14) because the student articulated a meaningful understanding of the central big ideas. The artistic activities appeared to provide them with a more meaningful understanding of the human issues within the texts. In a final interview with the students, one student reflected that the tableau work helped them to think about the big ideas of the text, ‘It was like it really happened. I liked when we done that.’ Another student stated, ‘You can learn about that book sometimes you can be happy for yourself because you’re giving people a good chance as well.’

After spontaneous and improvised finger puppet play led by the students, they were able to communicate their higher order understanding of the main issues by participating in a hot seating activity. Their empathic comprehension of the texts seemed to grow as the Galleries continued week by week. Zara reflected in the final interview that the big ideas within the text appeared to emerge organically in the conversations that the students were having during organised ‘play’ sessions and also in whole class discussions, ‘I think that they were supported through the conversations. Their conversations were quite rich with each other.’

It seemed that by allowing the students the time to play imaginatively and to participate in artistic group work, they were not only developing their comprehension skills but also their expression of key moral elements of the text. For example, by participating in dramatic activities and embodying characters in the text, the students were then able to isolate adjectives to explain the personality traits of the characters. In subsequent Galleries these adjectives were constantly referred to with the goal of expanding the vocabulary of the students and adding to the empathic comprehension of the stories. Students were able to construct short passages of writing about the text and some students were spontaneously using this vocabulary. One student reflected in the final interview, ‘When we did the Shen freeze frame that helped us learn new ideas and new words and new actions.’
Across all Galleries, there was an increased ability for students to reflect on the human qualities within the texts. In whole class discussions, students revealed thoughtful responses about the big ideas in the stories and were able to discuss the moral issues between characters and the effects that the characters had on each other. After a class discussion, it was noted that small acts of kindness, or ‘kind little’ gifts, as articulated by one student and generosity can make a difference in contrast to the individual greed exhibited by the anti-hero of the text. The statement by this student reveals that they were connecting to big idea 3 and that as a result of this understanding, the students were producing “new knowledge by discovering relationships…constructing explanations and drawing conclusions” (Education Queensland, 2002, p.3). Zara reflected in the final interview:

They could make connections between stories as well and they identified it in their own lives, in the playground or through discussions that we were having. And that vocabulary was brought in through those big ideas, translated into the conversations we were having in the classroom … even in being supportive of each other and caring about each other.

The class teacher communicated that students were performing on level 3 on the continuum of practice scale of ‘Deep Understanding’ of the Productive pedagogies framework in that the students could “demonstrate complex understanding by arriving at reasoned, supported conclusions” (p.3). The outcome of the arts-based and creativity-focused activities appeared to be a seemingly increased ability across the class to reflect on human issues of concern. This was one of the intentions of the Gallery process.

This section has addressed each of the four main themes of research and given a summative review of the main findings from the Gallery at Green Primary School.

6.8 Conclusion

There have been seven sections to this chapter. Section 1 outlined the context of the class and teacher at Green Primary School. Section 2 described two students who were selected as case studies for the research. Section 3 provided information regarding the curriculum objectives of the overall Gallery. Section 4 described the
content of each Gallery, and Section 5 discussed the final Exhibitions. Sections 4 and 5 included summative statements in regard to the four themes of research. Section 6 described the experiences of the case study students. An extended summary of the data collected over the entire Gallery and Exhibition program was provided in Section 7, by referring to each theme of research. The next chapter will be the final data presentation chapter and will focus on the Galleries and thematic qualities at Field Primary School.
CHAPTER 7: FIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

The previous two chapters have presented data from Valley Primary School and Green Primary School. This chapter now presents the data collected at the third and final research site, Field Primary School in the form of student and teacher interviews, photographs and photojournalist reflections and journal excerpts. There are seven sections that follow. Section 1 of this chapter will describe the research context. Section 2 will introduce two case study students who were the subjects of more focused student observations. The aims and curriculum decisions of the Gallery will then be presented in Section 3. Section 4 will then move to detail each of the Galleries. Section 5 will present the final Exhibition that occurred at this site. Each of these sections will include brief thematic statements drawn from the data. Section 6 provides an extended summative discussion in regards to the responses from the case study students. A summary of the main summative points across each of the four main themes of research will then be provided in Section 7. The research context will now be described.

### 7.1 The research context – Mary’s class

Field Primary School is situated in a public housing estate on the outskirts of a large Australian city. Housing estate environments can be characterised by high levels of unemployment, drug and alcohol issues, violence, large proportions of female-headed single parent families and surveillance by police and security (Munns, Hatton, & Gilbert, 2013, p. 35). Not unexpectedly, such factors can have an impact on the students’ relationship to schooling. Indeed, some students’ perceptions of learning are arguably influenced by the negative educational experiences of their own parents (Munns et al., 2013). Lack of attendance and a general low learner self-belief remain fundamental difficulties for significant numbers of students in this class context.
Mary is an Indigenous teacher who delivers strong teaching programs related to Aboriginal culture. There is one student in 4/5M who is also Aboriginal. Mary believes that the students in her class have experienced underachievement in their schooling and have a low self-efficacy in their abilities. The students require high support in literacy and numeracy to achieve their stage outcomes. Mary described that a major difficulty for her students is a lack of persistence and that most students will not attend to a task if they believe it to be too difficult and not achievable for them. As such, the students seem to feel most comfortable if the tasks that are set are low-order and they tend to present oppositional behaviour when given tasks that require higher-order or creative thinking. Some students request activities such as ‘colouring in’ and simple ‘pen and paper’ tasks. Mary explained that students present anxious or disengaged behaviour if they are required to do problem-based tasks, work in groups or share their ideas openly.

In relation to the arts, Mary’s perspective is that it is not a high learning priority for the school. She suggests that some teachers offer their students exposure to the arts within their own classrooms, but that there is not an emphasis on sustained arts learning at a whole school level. Students do have access to joining a dance group, a drumming group and the choir, but these are extra-curricular activities and do not exist as part of integrated learning programs within class time. Before the Gallery began, Mary’s chief concern was that her class would lack the confidence and persistence to excel in arts-based learning. She summarised: ‘Some may struggle to maintain focus and muck up. Students who have poor behaviour may refuse to participate and those with low self-confidence may withdraw or be anxious… or they may get overexcited and behave inappropriately!’ A description of two students who were selected as case studies for this site will now be presented.

7.2   Student portraits

7.2.1   Karen

Karen has experienced a strained relationship to schooling. She frequently has in-school suspension, which means that because of inappropriate classroom behaviour, she is required to leave her class and sit outside the Principal’s office. Karen has also
experienced ‘at home’ suspensions whereby she cannot come to school and must remain at home for several days. The suspensions are often due to severe oppositional behaviour directed at some teachers and fellow students, including physical violence, verbal abuse and refusal to participate in class. Karen has low academic results in literacy and numeracy. Mary believes that Karen displays anxious behaviour during tasks that she feels are too challenging for her. She is quick to disengage with most classroom tasks. One of Karen’s most significant challenges is getting along with her peers. She finds group tasks demanding and often her classmates refuse to work with her. Mary explained that Karen does not cope well if another teacher takes the class or if Mary is absent and that this often leads to suspensions. Mary expressed concern that Karen would refuse to work within the Gallery program and would express strong oppositional behaviour.

7.2.2 Andy

Like many students in the class, Andy has also had a fractured relationship with schooling. Mary described how Andy feels comfortable in the classroom when learning tasks are low-level and work sheet oriented. He can become oppositional if classroom learning deviates from familiar tasks and can refuse to participate by opting to self-exclude himself from the lessons. He does not enjoy extra-curricular tasks such as arts or sports. Mary discussed that Andy is a student with low self-confidence who does not like to participate in class discussions or group work. Mary believes that Andy does not recognise his own abilities and has a low self-concept about his identity as a learner. Before the Gallery commenced, Mary expressed concerns that because Andy does not like arts-based activities, group work or unfamiliar tasks, the Gallery would not be a success for him. She was also concerned that Andy would not be comfortable in working with an unfamiliar teacher.

The aims and curriculum decisions of this Gallery will now be described.

7.3 Gallery aims and curriculum decisions

Mary’s request was that the Gallery program included links to her literacy program, which had a focus on narratives and writing poetry. The surrounding housing estate
area is culturally characterised by Australian students of Indigenous, Anglo and Pacifika backgrounds and Mary believed that the students rarely have opportunities to learn about the lives of people from other backgrounds, and so she requested that the Gallery include multicultural perspectives. Mary also suggested that the students would benefit from learning about immigration in the context of modern Australia, as she believed there was a general lack of understanding across the class about this social issue. It was also her view that there was a negative perception within the community about the refugee experience and that the class would benefit from further understanding about the topic. Brophy and Alleman (2007) suggest that an important principle for including big ideas in the curriculum is to “focus instruction on the study of particular individuals and groups of people rather than on impersonal abstractions; study these people with emphasis on developing understanding of and empathy for their contexts and points of view” (p.101). It was important to the aims of the Gallery that the students were exposed to a multicultural perspective about the refugee experience and to relate this to their own lives, in terms of imagining what they would do if they were in the same situation. The major goals that were considered important for this group of students were to:

1. understand and appreciate the stories of refugees
2. develop empathy towards the reasons why people risk their lives to seek asylum in Australia
3. engender a positive attitude about their community to subvert negative media stereotypes about the area

The big ideas to be developed by students in Mary’s class included:

1. People have migrated to Australia over many years for many reasons, including to seek religious and political freedom and a better way of life.
2. People are continuing to migrate to Australia today.
3. People who migrate to new places adapt and contribute to their identities and expand the experiences and identities of others.

The following texts were chosen as the inspiration for learning activities in the Gallery:
7.3.1 **Ziba Came on a Boat (2012)**

*Ziba Came on a Boat* is a picture book by Liz Lofthouse that details the story of a refugee from Afghanistan. It describes the journey of a young girl who escapes from the war in Afghanistan with her family.

7.3.2 **Home and Away (2013)**

A dystopian picture book by John Marsden, *Home and Away* details the story of a family who are suddenly confronted by an outbreak of war. Marsden’s story communicates that an imaginary war has broken out in Sydney, Australia and illustrates how a family cope with the refugee experience.

7.3.3 **The Magic Box (2009)**

*The Magic Box* is a poem with descriptive language by Kit Wright that describes the fantastical contents of an imaginary box (Appendix 5). This poem was selected as stimulus to support the class in their own poetry writing.

The chapter will now include descriptions of each of the Gallery sessions. At the end of each Gallery description, there will be a brief discussion of points of interest within the session from each of the four main themes of research.

7.4 **The Galleries**

7.4.1 **Gallery 1 – Ziba Came on a Boat**

*Snapshot of Gallery 1*

The dramatic game of 10 second⁹ objects was played and groups created tableaux of one of the emotions selected from the text.

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⁹ 10-second objects is an improvisational drama game played in small groups. The leader (in this case, the teacher), calls out the name of an object. The groups must make the shape of this object out of their bodies by working with, and responding to each other, while the leader counts down from ten to zero.
**Gallery 1 in action**

The routines of the Gallery were introduced as a ‘challenge’ but one student, Andy, did not participate. He entered the hall space last and kept his head down to avoid eye contact. Andy sat on the edge of the hall space and turned his body to the wall. Andy’s initial response to the Gallery was thus one of apparent disengagement. It was important to the aims of the Gallery that this group of students became more confident and enthused about working in teams. A game that reinforced teamwork skills was played and the students appeared to respond eagerly and rushed to make groups. Several students asked if there would be a winner and prizes. Perhaps this request reflected the extrinsic rewards that procedural classwork often generates, and the students’ accustomed style of pedagogy. This idea was challenged; the class was told that they would work together and help each other. The groups started by making a ship with their bodies. The teams immediately began to move into different formations and shapes and there was a high level of noisy chatter about how to make the object. The research journal picked up on the students’ responses, in particular, their feelings of excitement:

> The noise was deafening as the students purposefully debated how to create their objects … it was noise that reflected their level of involvement … there was a real feeling of excitement in the room and the kids asked again and again if we could keep playing it.

The activity was repeated and the students reflected on the qualities of each group’s ideas. With subsequent attempts, students were encouraged to try using different levels and interesting formations. An extra challenge was introduced when the class was instructed that they had to incorporate a hoola-hoop into their picture. Although puzzled at first, students immediately began to experiment. Later, Mary commented, ‘The students had to almost re-think what they were doing and they rose to the challenge. They had fun with the new challenge … it was like they all really wanted to achieve that goal.’

At one time, Karen appeared frustrated with her group and excluded herself from the game. When asked why, she responded, ‘They never do my ideas.’ She remained sitting on the edge of the hall for the rest of the Gallery. However, it was noticed that
Andy had turned his body away from the wall and was watching his classmates. This was a small, but important breakthrough.

Midway through activity, he had turned his attention to his peers and was no longer sitting with his head facing the walls of the hall. After one more rotation of the game, I witnessed Andy get up from his seated position and he joined a group of other boys. (Research Journal)

The text was read to the class and they gave the appearance of listening intently and asked questions about the pictures and the storyline, ‘Is this about boat people coming to Australia?’; ‘Why was there war in Ziba’s country?’ and ‘Why couldn’t girls go to school?’. The class seemed particularly shocked to learn that girls were refused an education in Afghanistan and one boy commented, ‘Well then we are lucky to be at this school because it is a calm and happy place.’ New groups were formed and the students were instructed to think of two emotions from the story and to write them on post-it notes. These were subsequently read out. Groups then created a new tableaux image to symbolically represent an emotion from the story. Each group performed their images and Mary later mentioned that their responses surprised and impressed her, observing that ‘there was not a sound in the room and each group did a beautiful job, the emotions they communicated were powerful’

The photojournalists selected the following photographs to summarise their learning in the Gallery:
‘I’m proud of how our group acted … because it was fun.’

‘I liked 10-second objects – we made something different from everyone else. I’m proud that our group held their positions to make a mountain.’
'This group chose the word ‘threatened’. In this picture, the people in the war have captured the girls. With a rope or a chain. Her and her mum had run away from the war, they got caught. The government. They were going to a different country, I think so Ziba could go to school.’

‘She felt lonely, alone, scared. We were thinking together, they were helping each other. They were all thinking what words they had to put on the cards. Lonely and afraid. Everybody is working together to write words to describe Ziba and her mum – what they were feeling when they were in the war.’
7.4.2 Gallery 1 – Review

The arts

The class seemed to enjoy the introductory drama-focused activities of the Gallery and began to show ability in being able to convey meaningful artistic representations of their learning.

Creativity

The students appeared to enjoy the game-like nature of the task and began to be more experimental in attempting new formations and in applying their imaginative thinking.

Student engagement

The students appeared to enjoy the new experience for them of creating tableaux and repeatedly requested to continue the activity.

Learning as a human endeavour

The class was able to articulate a variety of emotions from different episodes within the story and began to ask critical questions about points of human consequence within the text.

7.4.3 Gallery 2 – Morphing

Snapshot of Gallery 2

The students formed groups to make tableaux of important scenes from Ziba Came on a Boat

Gallery 2 in action

A chant with body percussion was taught. It involved moving the body to a syncopated rhythm and so requires mental focus to play on the off-beat. The following excerpt from the research journal explains the outcome, ‘All eyes were on me to follow the rhythm, some kids were getting frustrated when they missed it … when they got it, everybody cheered.’
The book *Ziba Came on a Boat* was reread to the class and the class was asked basic comprehension questions throughout the book. Mary suggested that the students’ experience of creating tableaux last session had helped with their understanding of the text, ‘They seemed to really care about this book and what was happening to the characters. Some students have talked to me in class about what they did in the freeze frame last time.’ Groups were formed to make two different tableaux. The first was to represent a war scene and the second was to show Ziba fleeing her country on a boat. Each group also had to incorporate the use of a hoola-hoop or a large sheet of lycra material as a challenge. The class discussed how to change from one scene to the next effectively so as to make the two scenes ‘flow’ from one to the next. One boy suggested, ‘All we need to do is ‘morph’.’ Groups were seen to communicate their ideas and to try out a variety of formations. A student was overheard to exclaim, ‘Let’s be really different!’ Versions of this expression were overheard several times by several groups. The desire to create something unique appeared to be a motivating factor amongst the class.

Each group shared their work with the class and Mary commented, ‘I was happy that they took this activity seriously, they came up with some great ideas … it was great that the rest of the class actually wanted to watch each other too.’ The rest of the class was asked to give their peers some feedback and the strategy ‘two stars and a wish’ was used. This strategy asks for two positive comments (stars) and a suggestion for improvement (wish). Consider these comments given as feedback by the students:

> I thought they were great when they made the objects and how they were working together as a team … They did it different to everyone else which was great – but they could show better morphing … They were communicating with each other but in silence and they didn’t use words they just did it … They are being very imaginative.

The students then had a chance to improve their tableaux and the research journal noted, ‘After hearing what their peers suggested there seemed to be a real desire to make their tableaux look better!’ And there was silence as the class watched each other share their work at the end.
Despite choosing to exclude herself from some activities in the previous Gallery, Karen participated in all activities throughout the Gallery. She was also an active contributor in the class reflection session and gave the following comment to a group, ‘They had imaginative ideas but a wish could be that they could use their hoola hoop so we know what the hoola hoop is supposed to be.’ Her involvement was noticed by Mary who said, ‘She very rarely offers her opinion on anything in class. It was so good to see her actually giving feedback to her peers.’ Andy was also a student who participated in all activities of the Gallery in spite of his initial negative response to the opening activities in the previous session. He raised his hand to give positive feedback during the reflections and Mary noted his growing level of effort, ‘He has low self-esteem and usually doesn’t like to do things that are different or work with new people, but he has been really good in these sessions.’

The photojournalists selected the following images to represent their learning:

‘I like learning in different ways. You can learn new stuff and you do new things to get more smarter.’
'They are trapping her. We feel glad because we’re having fun and we’re working together.'

‘This group used lycra. I think they were making Ziba’s boat. I picked this photo because I feel happy when I do things a bit different … because I’m learning new things.’
‘I chose this because they are happy. It’s boring just doing it by yourself, you feel so lonely, you have to have someone by your side to do it together.’

7.4.4 Gallery 2 – Review

The arts

The class showed a lot of focus in being able to sustain a syncopated beat with body percussion. The class were able to achieve tableau representations of different pivotal scenes from the core text.

Creativity

The students appeared to work successfully in groups by combining their knowledge to re-tell important scenes from the text. Individuals within each group were seen to suggest interesting formations, to try new ideas and actively work at being ‘different’ from the other groups.

Student engagement

The students showed control and focus in the musical activity and were also seen to express a positive reaction upon completing the chant successfully. An important feature within this Gallery was the ability of the class to reflect on the work of their peers and actively work towards building upon and improving their own work. This attribute is illustrative of high operative engagement.
Learning as a human endeavour

The students’ interest in the human issues of the story appeared to raise their curiosity outside of the Gallery. In the tableau work, the class were able to articulate dramatically some of the key issues of human concern with the story-including representations of the effects of war and the plight of refugees.

7.4.5 Gallery 3 – The boat

Snapshot of Gallery 3

The class enacted a story circle of the text and then made origami boats with adjectives to describe Ziba’s feelings.

Gallery 3 in action

The students had requested to begin the session with the rhythm chant from last Gallery. When the class achieved the sequence after a few rotations, they smiled, jumped in the air and cheered. Their achievement of the musical rhythm appeared to give them a real sense of satisfaction and success.

The next activity was to complete a story circle with the class. Mary discussed that she had doubts about whether the students would be confident enough to participate but she noted, ‘Everyone worked together and was ‘diving in’…it helped that the more confident kids jumped in first and then rest of the class could see that it wasn’t scary and that they could give it a go.’

A notable part of the story circle was when the narration described the landscape as Ziba and her mother ran from the violence of the war. Without teacher direction, some students began to improvise images of different parts of the landscape. A small group of students created an image of a mountain and the students who were playing Ziba and her mother responded to this dramatic offer by pretending to walk around and up the mountain. This event appeared to energise the rest of the class and immediately the whole class formed groups, again, without teacher direction, and created other images of their imagined landscape. It was noted in the research journal that the students responded to each other’s dramatic ‘offers’, ‘What was beautiful
was that this just happened organically, there was no direct instruction from the teachers. Every class member was involved and adding something.’ In a short class reflection after the story circle, the students discussed the skills that they employed in order to make the story circle a success. They said, ‘We were creative by imagining the rocks, the trees, everything … so we had to change shapes.’

The next activity was to make Origami boats and the class focused on the construction of their own boats. Adjectives that described how Ziba might have felt when she was on the boat were added to the students’ boats. They selected ‘sad’, ‘lonely’, ‘frightened’, ‘excited’ and ‘trapped’. After the session, Mary talked of her sense of pride in her class, ‘They were able to listen and focus for the whole time … it was a long session and I was worried that they wouldn’t be able to be that well behaved.’

Karen did not require teacher direction to be involved and was one of the students who independently joined with another group of students to create a river in the story circle. Mary commented afterwards, ‘I’m just pleased to see that she is participating. She was great in the story circle and even put her hand up to give an adjective in the class discussion.’ Andy was also actively participating with the rest of the class in this Gallery. In the research journal, it was noted, ‘He was switched on all lesson. If someone told me in Gallery 1 that this kid would be happily joining in and putting in a superb amount of effort by Gallery 3, I wouldn’t have believed them.’ Mary commented, ‘He needs to be engaged intellectually and academically. So clearly he is being stimulated in this way.’

The photojournalists chose the following images to represent their learning:
‘This photo shows teamwork to make all the folds and we did it together.’

‘That was a mountain, we were creative by making our things move when Ziba and her mum were running from the soldiers ... and then people were seeing what we were doing and they would like, help each other.’
‘We put our boats on the blue sheet and told everyone what we did.’

‘I chose this one because the boats look good.’

‘This is the story circle and we were all telling the story about Ziba.’
7.4.6 Gallery 3 – Review

The arts

The observation that the students were able to spontaneously improvise key elements of the story during the story circle without teacher direction emphasises the growing self-assurance in the class with artistic representation.

Creativity

The students’ abilities to imaginatively communicate the main plot of the story, combined with innovative group representations of the landscape within the text, highlight an improvement in their capacity for creative thought and action.

Student engagement

It was evident that students were connecting more authentically to the text in the way that their responses communicated a deeper cognitive engagement with the central themes of the story.

Learning as a human endeavour

During the origami activity, the students were prompted to consider various words to describe the feelings of the main character, Ziba and their choices highlighted a growing capacity for empathic reflection.

7.4.7 Gallery 4 – The wave

Snapshot of Gallery 4

The activities centred around empathic understanding of Ziba’s boat journey.

Gallery 4 in action

A class reflection about what it might feel like to spend several days on a boat in the ocean without adequate food, water, shelter or toilet facilities prompted the following responses from the students:

I think I would feel really sick … I don’t like big waves and I think that would scare me … I would just want to go home maybe after the first day …
Actually it would be boring … You’d be scared because you don’t know where you are or where you are going.

The students each held a blue ribbon and were told that when the book was re-read, they could add movement and sound effects during the boat scene. Some began to add sound effects at the appropriate point in the story, and to encourage more students, extra narration was added to the story so as to encourage ‘bigger’ movements and sounds. This appeared to assist the class and soon, more students were adding their voices to the reading. This activity led into a challenge to create a whole-class image of Ziba’s boat. Some students voiced their concern because they had previously only completed still images within small groups, not the whole class. Students suggested: ‘Help a classmate with their idea if you can’t think of an idea yourself’; ‘When we start it, don’t sit and talk about it, just do it and then everyone can see what you mean’; and ‘Try a new position if someone has already done your idea.’

Students immediately began to start to position themselves in a variety of ways. A student positioned himself in the shape of a driver and this action helped the other students to improvise. Other students positioned themselves in different levels to make the image. There was a lot of purposeful chatter and the students created a still image of a boat. Mary commented immediately to the class, ‘Wow! Guys! It looks so great!’ The students’ apparent enjoyment and satisfaction of the task was evidenced by their smiling faces, laughter and nodding heads. The class commented: ‘I feel super because I haven’t done it before’; ‘I feel like we did something different and we learnt something new’; and ‘I feel very active and confident today. I like working in teams.’ Andy was seen to participate in all the activities in the Gallery. It was noted in the research journal, ‘Andy made very effective movements when creating the boat. It is encouraging to see him not only participating but actually enjoying the work with his classmates.’

After the Gallery, the photojournalists made some pertinent reflections about their learning. These comments particularly reflect the apparent high levels of engagement:
It’s good to be happy when you are learning because then you can learn stuff and you feel better about yourself learning … Sometimes people feel bored learning, sometimes when you try stuff, it turns out fun … At first you think you might not think it’s fun but then we got into it.

They selected the following photographs to represent the class’s achievement in the session:

‘When we started making the boat everybody just tried to hop in and fit in. Everyone was being creative because all of us joined in together and made one thing.’

‘I hardly get to use streamers so it was fun, we had to be water. We are trying something new. Jules is transforming her body into a wave. Nick was doing his own thing which is different to everyone else.’
'The photo with Eric in front shows everyone working together, smiling face and good thinking as well. This photo shows everyone into it. Everyone is smiling and having fun.'

7.4.8 Gallery 4 – Review

The arts

In creating an image of a boat, students were seen to present ‘offers’ to their peers with the goal of building the scene as a team. These responses indicate a growing capacity to connect artistically with their topic of study.

Creativity

Various students voiced enjoyment at working together on a new activity and the data suggests that they could apply such creative capabilities as risk-taking, the communication of ideas and experimentation that they had been practising in previous Galleries.

Student engagement

The evidence shows that the students were beginning to reflect on learning processes to make them work better as a team, and individually, within the Gallery. They reflected on and executed effective strategies to work together as a whole class in creating a dramatic freeze frame of a boat.
Learning as a human endeavour

The students were able to put themselves in the position of Ziba and express how they might react to such a situation. In doing so, they were reflecting on the human issues within the topic that they were learning about.

7.4.9 Gallery 5 – Our Place

Snapshot of Gallery 5

The students put together a movement sequence and they began generating ideas for poetry writing.

Gallery 5 in action

The students were asked to reflect on the adjectives that they had chosen to write on to their origami boats in Gallery 3, which were to be used as a stimulus for creating movements. To demonstrate the activity, the word ‘frightened’ was used and movements were improvised to communicate this feeling. The students showed initial reluctance to suggest ideas for movements but soon, two boys shared an idea they worked out together, with the class. They appeared to be energetic with their movements and the rest of the class approved. Other students began to perform their actions to the class. The class had decided upon four separate movements to be performed to communicate the feeling of being frightened. The research journal reported, ‘It actually looked really effective when we put it to music … it appeared to motivate them and they performed the movement sequence with no one talking and with everyone contributing.’

‘Hopeless’ was selected by the students in order to create a new short movement sequence. It was noted in the research journal that the students were more confident and experimental and that disagreements lessened. It continued, ‘They aren’t too concerned about getting it ‘right’ necessarily, but there is more of a focus on being ‘different’ or creative.’ Their suggestions were combined into a new sequence, and the class as a whole created a new dance. The sequence was performed and Mary said to the class, ‘I am super impressed! Its looks like you are professional dancers! I can see that you are proud of your work.’ The students reflected afterwards, ‘The
dance was cool’; ‘I liked that everyone chose one of my ideas and then we made it better’; and ‘We were thinking of the origami word that Ziba felt and we danced the words ‘frightened’ and ‘hopeless’’. As described previously, Karen has faced difficulty in the past in working in teams but it was observed that she would listen to her group members and to also try their ideas, ‘Surprisingly, the group task appeared to energise her and she actively participated with her peers.’

A Y\textsuperscript{10} diagram was used to organise the students’ ideas about positive aspects of the community in which they lived for a poetry writing session in an upcoming Gallery. The diagram contained a section to describe what they could see, another section to describe the different sounds they could hear, and a final section to describe how they felt about their home community. The students agreed on many aspects of their community that they liked, and soon the chart was full of ideas. Andy was continuously putting up his hand to give his ideas. Mary commented, ‘I was really impressed with that because he’s kind of the one who is very shy … I didn’t think he would want to but he’s always putting his hand up.’

The class reflected:

We have a happy school … I always go down to Sandy River with my brother and it’s so much fun … We have the best pools here, we don’t need to go to the beach … I love the skate park and the library is actually cool.

Housing estate communities such as those around Field Primary School can often be marked within the media in a negative light. Such media attention can often feed a perception that such communities are undesirable and destructive. The class discussion contrasted with the images about this community that are often portrayed in the media. At the conclusion of the Gallery, Mary said, ‘They consider this work really important. It’s really impressive to see and it’s interesting because it’s not the children who I thought would achieve in this area.’

\textsuperscript{10} A diagram that organises ideas into three different sections, i.e. in each section of the Y.
The photojournalists chose the following photographs from the Gallery:

‘I loved when we did the dance. He was really good at it. We had to walk and point to the floor but we were doing it because we were doing Ziba.’

‘We did a bit in the dance when we had to go really low like we were hiding or scared and this is how we did a Ziba dance.’
'This photo shows us thinking really hard because we had to come up with so many thoughts for what we like about it (our place).'</td>

‘I don’t like dancing at school but this one was OK and we could be more fun because we all did it together and used some of the groups’ ideas.’

### 7.4.10 Gallery 5 – Review

**The arts**

It was a new experience for the students to create a movement sequence that related specifically to the text that they were learning about. The students began to embrace the practice of representing the idea of an emotion artistically through movement.
Creativity

The class showed difficulty initially in being able to suggest ideas for movements to match the adjectives. There appeared to be a greater capacity within each team to take risks with their creative decisions, and each pair or small group seemed focused at working towards creating unique movements to share with the class.

Student engagement

The students showed signs of affective engagement in their enthusiastic participation in the movement sequence and in creating the Y chart. This was evident in their apparent happiness and eagerness in creating a unique dance routine and in speaking positively about their community.

Learning as a human endeavour

The students articulated the positive feelings that they had for aspects of their community. The activity appeared to reinforce the shared sense of belonging that the students held about their school and neighbourhood and served to connect their community identity with the learning experience.

7.4.11 Gallery 6 – Home and Away

Snapshot of Gallery 6

The game ‘simile swap’ was played using the nouns that the students generated in the Y chart activity in Gallery 5. The session concluded with reading the text Home and Away.

Gallery 6 in action

Kit Wright’s poem, The Magic Box, was read to the class. Without teacher direction, the students began to put up their hands to suggest which parts of the poem they liked the best, ‘It’s imaginative because you can’t really keep sparks from an electric fish in a box’ and ‘The box must be limitless in size if it is keeping all those things inside.’ The students were asked to think about how the poet felt about the objects he put in the box. One student replied, ‘Well, they must have been important to him,’
and another said, ‘He must have imagined some of these things, but they still must have been special to him.’

The students were then asked the question, ‘If Ziba was going to pack a magic box, what would she put inside?’ The students responded with elements from the story, including ‘cool water from the mountains’, ‘the smell of spices’, ‘flatbread’, ‘her aunties’ and ‘her dad’. They were then asked the question, ‘If you had to leave your home and pack a magic box, what would you pack inside to remember it?’ The Y chart from the previous activity was presented to support the students and students put their hands up straight away to share their ideas. After most of the class shared one of their ideas, a student put up their hand and asked, ‘Can we please write a magic box poem now?’

This led to the next activity, which was to play the game ‘simile swap’. The students were placed in small teams and were each given a card with a picture and incomplete sentence based on the words they had brainstormed from the Y chart in the last Gallery. Each team had a minute countdown to create a simile sentence before the card was to be passed to the next group. The rotation continued until all groups had provided a new simile sentence on each card.

The Gum Tree was as tall as …
The students were observed to laugh, squeal with excitement and jump up and down between the rotations and there was a lot of purposeful discussion between team members. The time limit also appeared to be a contributing factor to the focus within each group, which may reflect that this group of students is used to a competitive aspect to learning tasks. Such aspects are features of many types of procedural learning. The research journal picked up on both Andy and Karen’s active participation in the session and that both students appeared to want to be involved and offer ideas to the group:

Andy is so much more confident in speaking in front of his peers. Karen suggested that Ziba would like to pack her Dad into the magic box. Her comment really touched me because it showed that perhaps she was engaging with the text at an emotive level.

At the completion of the game, each group was asked to read aloud one simile that they had written which they were most proud of. The sentences included:

The water at Sandy beach is as clear as glass.

The noise at the shops is like a chattering kookaburra.

The grey koala is as slow as a Grandpa.

The cars on the street are zooming like an asteroid.

The gum trees were as tall as the Eifel tower.

The students were informed that they would be using their simile sentences to make their own class poem, inspired by *The Magic Box*, about their community. Some members of the class cheered, others said, ‘Yes’ aloud and other members smiled. After the Gallery, Mary made the comment:

If I had said to these kids during class, ‘OK we are going to write a class poem now’, no way would they have had that reaction. I think it’s about the tools the Gallery is giving them, but it’s also like they can see what the fun is or the rewarding part of writing something that you are proud of.
The Gallery ended by reading the text, *Home and Away*. The students were asked, ‘What are some of the big ideas from the story?’ and their responses included:

To show you how horrible it would be if Australia had a war … To be grateful for what you have got’; ‘In both books, the dads die … They both went on a boat to a different country’ and ‘It was a sad story.

The photojournalists chose the following photographs to summarise the learning that had taken place in the Gallery:

‘This was a team who were thinking of what to write on the paper. We had to think of a simile so its describing what something is like. The photo shows them working hard and good team skills.’

‘We listened to *The Magic Box* poem and then we talked about it. We had to think about the imagination in the poem.’
‘This shows good team skills because they worked hard together. Working hard because you think and listen to each other.’

7.4.12 Gallery 6 – Review

The arts

As a group, the students appeared to exhibit pride when sharing their own descriptive writing and were able to generate a range of imaginative similes.

Creativity

The students were able to recognise the imaginative writing within the poem and appreciate the poet’s creativity. The data suggests that the students were actively intending to be unique when writing their own similes in the simile swap game.

Student engagement

The behaviours that the students exhibited in this Gallery illustrated a positive shift in the students’ self-concept towards their ability to achieve at cognitive tasks. The students organically began to discuss the poem and to analyse it at an empathic level by connecting their understandings to the other text that they had been learning about.
**Learning as a human endeavour**

After reflecting on the imaginative elements with the poem, the students were able to relate the sentiments of the poem to the character of Ziba by listing a variety of items that she would wish to take with her on her journey. This led to a discussion wherein the students decided upon aspects of their own community that they would wish to keep in their memory.

**7.4.13 Gallery 7 – Meet your shadow**

*Snapshot of Gallery 7*

Students were introduced to the concept of shadow theatre and the class experimented with making shadow shapes. The students then created a class poem.

*Gallery 7 in Action*

A pedagogical decision was made to use shadowgraphy for the Exhibition. Shadowgraphy appeared to be a logical choice because the students had been working on creating dramatic metaphorical and literal representations of the stories that they had been analysing as a class, and shadowgraphy relies on imagery and literal representation to retell a story. The students were shown a short video of some professional shadow theatre and were told that the aim for their Exhibition was to present their own Shadow Theatre and they appeared to respond with doubt, but eagerness to attempt it.

The students went outside to use their own shadows projected by the mid morning sun to make new shapes with each other. The students appeared happy to go outside and to ‘play’ with creating images with their own shadows. The un-structured nature of this activity seemed to allow the students time to imagine and test their ideas. In the research journal, it was noted that they were problem solving together – posing questions, giving opinions, suggesting new ways to approach something, ‘The students busily began working on twisting and stretching and arching their bodies. No two pairs created the same representation – there was a real atmosphere of focused experimentation.’
The class reviewed the poem *The Magic Box* and were instructed that they were going to create a class poem using their own similes about the positive attributes of their school and community. Their completed poem read as follows:

I will pack in my suitcase  
The gum trees tall as giants  
The sand at the river yellow as golden sun  
The breeze that moves like a shadow

I will pack in my suitcase  
The children’s laughter happy like rainbows  
The cars on the street zooming like asteroids and jetting like stars  
The grey koala slow as the sun setting

I will pack in my suitcase  
The noise at the shops like a chattering bird  
The grey headed flying fox rare as a flood in the desert  
The secretive possums hiding like gold deep in the earth

My suitcase is packed with  
The kookaburra’s laugh as loud as a waterfall  
A splash at the pool as cold as Antarctica

I shall surf on my suitcase  
on the great high-rolling waves of the Pacific,  
then wash ashore on a different lonely yellow beach  
the colour of the sun.

A class discussion was held about the significance of the poem and the students were asked how it might relate to the texts that we had been reading. Consider these students’ responses, that are representative of the whole group, ‘*The Magic Box* is about putting things in a box that you want to keep if you had to go away’; ‘Ziba and the other boy (from *Home and Away*) had to leave their homes and so the poem is about things you can bring with you like its memories’; ‘If you had a war and you had to run away well this is like a memory list so you can keep remembering your place’; and ‘We all put down things that are great about Field Primary School and it’s like we can put those things in a suitcase and keep them even if we are far away.’

Mary mentioned after the lesson:
I thought this was a really valuable exercise. Students that don’t usually put their hands up for literacy work were offering their opinion and trying to come up with solutions … we actually achieved our own poem, it matters to them, it’s about them and they understand what they are writing about.

Karen was absent from school on the day of this Gallery. Mary mentioned that she can be absent for several days in a row without explanation. Low attendance rates, for some students and their families, are an ongoing issue within Field Primary School and indeed, at schools with challenging contexts like housing estates. Andy, who was present, was seen to be actively involved in each activity, ‘Andy showed a lot of focus today. He was so excited and motivated by the prospect of creating shadow shapes. He raised his hand repeatedly in the poetry session’ (Research Journal).

The photojournalists chose the following photos to represent their learning:

‘We were watching some shadow theatre and everyone loved it, I’ve never seen it before.’
‘The best part was when we went outside and we could try to make shapes with our shadows. They were trying to make the flower that we saw in the YouTube video – you can see the petals.’

‘We were experimenting with our shadows to practise for a Shadow Theatre.’
7.4.14 Gallery 7 – Review

*The arts*

When allowed time for unstructured play, the data suggests that the students demonstrated effective teamwork, problem solving skills, enhanced communication skills and imaginative thinking in the arts-based activity.

*Creativity*

The students were seen to embrace the unstructured nature of the activity and used the time to work together to be creative and test some of their ideas.

*Student engagement*

The learning conversations that the students were having with each other during shadow making included questioning, idea generation and problem solving, and highlighted the engaging messages of shared control that were operating within the Gallery. The self and peer reflection that began to occur in the process was evidence of the positive environment that was building about learning and achievement.

*Learning as a human endeavour*

The students combined many of their ideas towards creating a class poem about their favourite aspects of their school and community. In doing so, the data indicates that the students could connect empathically with the big ideas of the texts and relate their own work to the issues of human significance in their topic of study.

7.4.15 Gallery 8 – Shadow theatre workshop

*Snapshot of Gallery 8*

The class began to devise a story-line that could be presented as a shadow theatre Exhibition.

*Gallery 8 in action*

A make-shift screen was back-lit so that the class could begin to practise projecting their shadow images. Small groups were arranged to each have a chance of trying to
make an image behind the screen while the rest of the class gave suggestions. The students were asked what they found challenging and they replied:

It is hard to create the images because you have to stop thinking in 3D like we did before and we almost have to think in 2D now … We are used to making image now but this time we are behind the screen which is different … Even if you make a tiny mistake then the whole audience will see the shadow so you have to be in the right position … What you think looks good behind the screen sometimes doesn’t look good for the audience.

The students then began to plan what to include in the Exhibition and to create a story line for their own shadow theatre based on the big ideas from the Galleries. They came up with the following sequence, as inspired by the two texts that they had been working with:

1. Peace scene – family together enjoying a meal.
2. War scene – war disrupts the peace scene. The father gets captured.
3. Journey scene – A girl, her younger sister and her mother run away.
4. Boat scene – the family get on a boat to escape their country.
5. New country scene – the family arrive in a new place.

Five groups were created and each group was given a different scene to begin to improvise. This activity was closely aligned with the principles of play building (see Chapter 2), as this was a student-centred activity that encouraged the class to create scenes for the Exhibition based on their ideas for artistic representation. The groups appeared to enjoy the task in the way that there was a lot of activity and discussions as the students experimented with ideas. Each group were seen to experiment with mime, tableau, symbolic movement and creating images, and the teachers were available to give support and advice. Each group was given a chance to perform and revise their ideas behind the screen while the rest of the groups offered feedback.

Karen was present in the session and showed signs of happiness in the way she cooperated and laughed when working in her group, particularly when she had the opportunity to work behind the screen. She was seen to join with her group to create
shadow images and was laughing and smiling as the group attempted interesting formations. Andy too, showed dedication to the activity in the way that he raised his hand to offer his suggestions for what to include in the scenes.

After the session, Mary reflected that she was excited about the shadow theatre taking shape:

It’s good to do something different. They are obviously finding it challenging, it’s keeping them engaged but what I think is helping is that it’s not threatening for them to ‘perform’ if they are behind the screen.

At the close of the Gallery, the students were asked to give their opinion towards the Exhibition:

‘It’s going to be fun and I like all the team-work … We need time to work on it and if we keep working on it we’ll get there … The rest of the groups were helping us because they were telling us what looked good and what was wrong … We need to visualise what it will look like because what it looks like in your head sometimes isn’t what it looks like in the shadow.

The photojournalists chose the following images to represent the Gallery that had taken place:

‘The groups were making shapes for the shadow theatre. They practised using a sheet to make a boat. Before we went behind the screen we had to work out how to do it.’
‘They were using a sheet to make a mountain. It looked really good.’

‘We all wanted to put the flower into the story so I think we decided that we are going to put it in the ‘peace’ scene. It looks good if the three people are in a straight line behind each other.’
7.4.16 Gallery 8 – Review

*The arts*

In incorporating a range of arts practices, the students were also demonstrating their growth in communicating effectively with each other, problem solving together and working effectively in teams.

*Creativity*

The shadow theatre concept presented new creative challenges for the group and they showed a high level of purposeful activity in devising their own Exhibition. The style of drama produced an atmosphere of experimentation in the Gallery and the students worked as a whole class to reflect, suggest ideas and problem-solve.

*Student engagement*

The class appeared to be energised by the challenge of creating their own shadow theatre Exhibition. The play building element of the Gallery highlighted the shared ownership of the learning experience and that all students in the class appeared dedicated to share their ideas and work towards a common goal. The students played important ‘insider’ roles within the Gallery by taking ownership of the Exhibition.

*Learning as a human endeavour*

The class reflected on the similarities of storyline and themes within the texts that they had been working on. They used these similarities as inspiration towards devising their own original storyline and in doing so appeared to strengthen their understanding of the core meaning within each text and of the overall Gallery experience.

7.4.17 Galleries 9 and 10 – Shadow theatre workshops 2 and 3

*Snapshot of Galleries 9 and 10*

The next two Galleries have been grouped together as they followed the same structure and worked towards the same goal. These Galleries operated as rehearsals for the Exhibition.
Galleries 9 and 10 in action

Galleries 9 and 10 were important rehearsal sessions for the Exhibition. The class was given time to perfect the storyline that they had decided on in Gallery 8 and to continue to rehearse how the scenes would develop when using the screen. The class were then asked to think about what messages, or big ideas the Exhibition would be sending to the audience. The students responded, ‘The audience will know what it is like to experience war’ and ‘They will think ‘what if war happened to you?’ ‘What if you had to get on a boat?’”

Each scene was worked through in sequential order. The students were rotated for each scene so that everyone had an opportunity to be involved. The research journal explains the experimental nature of the rehearsal, ‘It is a real trial and error scenario … we all needed to ‘change the way we think’. It is quite a challenge for the kids, but they created some really fantastic images in each scene.’

Andy continually voiced his opinion for how an image could be improved. It was noticed that if Karen was not behind the screen actively doing the shadow work, she became restless and began to lie down and not be involved. When the class was asked for feedback, Karen said that the shadow theatre was ‘stupid’. Her comment stood in direct contrast to her apparent interest and involvement in this and the previous Gallery. Other students raised their hands and said, ‘I like how we made the boat’; ‘I love the mountain’; and ‘I’m proud of everyone doing excellent jobs.’ By the end of Gallery 9, the class had been able to practise each scene and develop ways to transition between scenes. There was evidence that the students were cooperating effectively with each other and were working cohesively as a group because they remained quiet off stage and did not need teacher direction.

Gallery 10 was the last official rehearsal before the Exhibition. The students, in their own time, had been viewing shadow theatre productions online and had discovered new motifs to experiment with. They had seen a shadow theatre group create a cityscape and another motif where a girl is praying in a graveyard and they wanted to incorporate it into the Exhibition. The research journal describes the rehearsal of the new motifs:
They wanted to directly copy what the other theatre group had done in the YouTube clip. I was reluctant at first; I really wanted the students to be creative with their own ideas and to minimise suggestion of a specific religion or culture. However, I reflected to myself that this was their show and that it was perhaps more important for them to feel the sense of ownership over the Exhibition, so I let my own perspective go.

Karen was seen to be an active participant in the Exhibition rehearsal and asked to create a palm tree motif that she had seen online. Mary mentioned, ‘She never really asks to do anything so the fact that she has volunteered herself – I am reluctant to say ‘No!’ to her’. The research journal explains that it was important for Karen to try her idea out: ‘I could see that she was ‘in’ task and trying her best to make the palm tree image and she was really interacting well with her peers, something that she can find quite hard’. After Gallery 10, Mary reflected on Andy’s contribution to the Exhibition, ‘He has become one of the most ‘in’ task students and is always willing to share ideas now and give his opinions.’

The students proved that they could maintain focus and the entire story was rehearsed four times. The class reflected about how they were feeling about performing, ‘I think they will be all be surprised because it’s something new that no one has ever seen’; ‘My dad is coming to see it and I think my grandma wants to come too’; ‘I am glad we are putting our poem in as well because it’s really good’; ‘I feel nervous but we have worked hard at it so it should be OK’; and ‘It is so fun and I think that everyone will enjoy it.’

The photojournalists selected the following images as a summary of class learning:
‘This is the scene when the family is happy and having dinner together.’

‘The peaceful scene ends and the father is taken away.’
‘We worked out how to make a shadow image of a city. We worked for ages at getting it right. We had to try things over and over.’

‘I like this photo because I wanted to show the shadows but also show you what was happening behind the screen. They were pretending to be soldiers and they had to march in a straight line.’
‘This photo is good because it shows how hard we worked at getting all the parts of the scene right. This was a new scene and so we had to get it ready.’

7.4.18 Gallery review

The arts

Their interest and active participation in shadow theatre highlight their growth as artistic learners and the value they placed in creating a successful Exhibition.

Creativity

There appeared to be an atmosphere of experimentation in the last two Galleries. The students injected their creativity to the rehearsal by trial and error of their ideas.

Student engagement

The data communicates that the class deeply valued the experience of creating their Exhibition of learning, evidenced by their focus in working effectively together as a whole class.

Learning as a human endeavour

The students articulated the big ideas that were present in the story that they had devised for the Exhibition. They discussed the major themes of their work and what messages they hoped would be communicated to the audience.
7.5 Exhibition

Snapshot of the Exhibition

The philosophy behind preparing an Exhibition is to generate a purposeful, student led presentation of the learning experiences from the Gallery sessions. The content of each scene was devised by the class themselves with some teacher support and included a combination of arts-based techniques to tell their story through shadowography.

Exhibition in action

On the day before the Exhibition, Karen was given an in-school suspension over an incident with a visiting teacher. This meant that she was to be separated from her class and was not allowed to participate in the Shadow Theatre. Mary voiced her frustration, ‘This isn’t the first time that she has had a suspension in school but it’s typical that this one falls on the day of the Exhibition, particularly after she has really put in personal effort for the show.’ The research journal describes this frustration:

I couldn’t believe it … it just felt like such a blow that this student, who had shown such growth, would be forced to stay away … it would have been a great opportunity for the school community to see that she is capable of being an active member of her class. It was just such a disappointing end to the whole thing. She had worked so hard for the Exhibition.

Karen’s in-school suspension highlights the reality of behaviour management in challenging school contexts. The rest of the class were briefed about Karen not being present in the Exhibition and arrangements were made so that other students could step into Karen’s position during certain scenes.

The audience was made up of other classes, parents, teachers and executive staff. The students performed their class poem and shadow theatre smoothly and confidently from beginning to end. Each scene was performed as planned and the students were able to manage the transitions without teacher involvement. The research journal makes note of the sense of accomplishment that was felt at the end of the Exhibition:
This Exhibition was a powerful and successful performance. I really feel so proud … I’m not sure whether I believed at the start of the process that we could have put together such a unique Exhibition today … it was so much better than I thought we could have achieved! It was impressive … they were able to cooperate together and take responsibility – no teacher direction at all. This was a big achievement for this group.

At the end of the Exhibition, the executive staff and several of the teachers in the audience congratulated the students and Mary for the shadow theatre. Mary commented after the shadow theatre that the staff had given her much positive feedback about the Exhibition:

It came as a big surprise, everyone was really positive, really impressed, maybe because it was something different. Mr D. (executive) commented on how unique and important the show was, and about the kids generating their own poetry.

Andy’s full participation in the Exhibition is an indication that he experienced growth in the Gallery process. He was able to execute his roles without teacher encouragement, supervision or persuasion. When Andy was asked at the conclusion of the Exhibition how he felt, he replied, ‘Awesome. Everybody did the shadows well and everybody that wasn’t on stage was amazed by everything.’

An interesting aspect of the Exhibition was that many parents of Mary’s class were present. Mary explained that it was unusual to have so many parents in attendance:

That was my favourite part … it’s very hard to get parents up to the school. It’s unprecedented. So for them to come it was obviously something the students were speaking about at home and something that the parents felt worthwhile coming up and supporting the students.

Mary went on to explain that she felt that the Exhibition helped to create positive relationships between the teachers, parents and the class:

Ali’s mum commented she had tears in her eyes. Jess’s mum said the same thing, they were all so proud of their children, they were all really positive and they all stuck around afterwards. We put out 48 seats and they were all full and there were people standing as well … I was just so happy to see them. And it
gave me that chance to just talk to them in a non-threatening environment. It was such a surprise to have that many parents come up, a good surprise.

The students were asked to reflect on their feelings after the Exhibition. The class provided the following insights:

I feel sad because after we finished it we couldn’t do it again and I thought I’d just keep on doing it and keep on showing everybody, it was spectacular … Like awesome because I’ve never did it before … At the end when everybody started clapping and cheering for us it made me feel proud … Because all of the hard work that we done actually paid off and we made something that no one had seen before … Even though they (the audience) couldn’t see me, I felt nervous. Yeah, I felt scared. But after it was finished I felt proud.

The students’ comments highlight the positive feelings that they seemed to have towards the Exhibition and reiterate the pride they appeared to experience in working together as a class toward a common goal.

The photojournalists chose their favourite photographs from the Exhibition and explained why they selected that photo to represent their achievement:

‘I think the city that we made was really creative. It took teamwork, because look, it actually looks like the thing, it looks exactly. See the towers and it’s like a big church or something in the middle. We had to work together and think. I love this.’
‘I felt sad in this scene because once we take the family away from the parents and children and we make graves, it’s pretty sad when you lose your father.’

‘My favourite part that I enjoyed is making the city and taking the most saddest part in the shadow theatre is taking the father away and making the graves.’
'It shows how hard we worked because all it was is just shadows. It’s our bodies making the shadows, it’s not much props.'

‘Look at the people on the boat. See the sailor searching. It shows that we had to think hard because they’re all joining in to one thing, we had to do it together, to make one centre boat. I picked this one to show that we loved doing it because it’s so beautiful.’
7.5.1 Exhibition review

*The arts*

The students’ artistic achievements were demonstrated in the way they imagined, planned, rehearsed and performed a shadow theatre Exhibition to their school community. The data suggests that the students developed increased confidence and skill in regard to artistic expression in the form of movement, dramatic interpretation and visual representation.

*Creativity*

The evidence suggests that the students took many risks in their learning in order to achieve the Exhibition. Their combined creative effort was evidenced in their active participation, idea generation, reflection, problem solving and flexibility, playfulness, and team work.

*Student engagement*

The Exhibition presentation demonstrated a highly engaged class environment and the data indicates that the students communicated positive messages about their ability and the control that they held in devising, planning and creating the Exhibition.

*Learning as a human endeavour*

The Exhibition was a democratic space wherein the students could actively contribute and have a voice. The resultant Exhibition demonstrated successful student-centred approaches to the expression of knowledge, compassion, understanding and intelligence.

This chapter will now present a summative review of the two students who were monitored as case studies in the Gallery. To conclude the chapter, a summary of learning across each of the four main themes of research will be presented.
7.6 Student case studies

Karen and Andy were selected as case study students for particular purposes. Karen has had a fractured relationship with schooling and has demonstrated strong behavioural opposition in the past. Karen’s resistance to learning is arguably as a result of a low learner self-concept and the negative feelings she appears to have towards the classroom context. Andy has demonstrated a firm resistance to extra-curricular activities and has voiced opposition in the past to arts-based activities or physical education. He also has demonstrated a preference for work-sheet oriented tasks and shies away from group tasks and class discussion. For these reasons, these students were selected as case studies, alongside their peers, to track the responses they gave to the Gallery experience. The emphasis on these students can also be considered as representative of other oppositional students within this context. The case studies thus add to the investigation in terms of aiming to question whether these students became engaged in the Gallery pedagogy.

The data suggests that Karen began to feel more confident at contributing to class discussions and joining her peers. She offered her opinion during class reflections about how the artistic work could be improved and was also seen to demonstrate empathic understandings about the human issues within the area of study by sharing her thoughts. After the first Gallery, Karen did not require teacher intervention to participate or to work with her classmates. Karen began to voice positive feelings about the Gallery space and it appeared to allow her a forum to work successfully and raise her ideas confidently. In the final journal entry, Karen’s growth in the Gallery is discussed:

One of the most rewarding attributes is to see the positive progress in Karen … perhaps simply from the continued exposure, Karen has been able to learn effective strategies for working successfully with her peers … from my observations Karen has genuinely enjoyed working artistically. Perhaps the creative and artistic environment has worked to her benefit.

The data suggests that Karen began to develop positive feelings towards her own learner self-concept. The Gallery forum allowed Karen to experience a deeper level of engagement with learning, perhaps because the classroom discourse was not
dominated by behavioural observance. The Gallery pedagogy sought to focus on learning, not compliance, and Karen was seen to respond encouragingly to an environment that emphasised sharing power with students as opposed to enforcing power over students. The data suggests that she was receiving positive messages around her ability as a learner and that she began to play an ‘insider’ role in her class. Mary described Karen’s high involvement:

> I guess it comes back to high expectations. But she surprised me, like I saw things that I didn’t expect. Karen participated which was huge. I think her confidence grew, I think she felt more capable of being able to do it. Which is great because she’s had that many suspensions over her time at school.

Mary’s comments give some weight to the idea that the pedagogy of the Gallery was connecting with Karen in constructive ways. Despite the positive gains that Karen made in the Gallery, she was not allowed to participate in the final Exhibition due to her receiving an in-school suspension. In housing estate contexts, suspensions such as this are a typical response towards oppositional behaviour.

Before the Gallery experience, Andy was seen to maintain strong opposition to any task that he deemed to be ‘non-academic’. He often refused to participate in arts-based tasks and sporting activities. He would object to completing tasks that required higher order thinking, physical activity, group work or class discussion. Andy was seen to adhere to this line of non-participation, initially. By the end of the second Gallery, Andy began to join in with class discussions and it became a familiar sight to see him raise his hand to offer ideas or reflections in all subsequent Galleries. Mary inferred that for a student like Andy, the affective hook of the lessons was not necessarily the explanation for why Andy felt able to participate:

> He would have felt academically challenged, otherwise he wouldn’t have participated. And at the start he was sitting in the corner but I think the discussions that we had kind of perked his interest up … by the end he wanted to be involved in every lesson and I think that’s an example that they were cognitively engaged.

The evidence suggests that Andy was able to embrace the artistic pedagogy of the Galleries. Mary explained that prior to the Gallery, Andy would have had very little
experience or personal motivation for involving himself in artistic pursuits. His artistic intelligence also appeared to be growing in the way that he became an active contributor to class discussions and was able to reflect on the arts-based work. The data also suggests that Andy began to become more creatively in-tune with the topic of study in the way that he began to work experimentally in group tasks. These claims are substantiated by the comments of Mary, who exclaimed in Gallery 10 that Andy had become one of the most in-task students of the class. The evidence suggests that Andy exhibited a great deal of thought and personal control in the way that he dramatically, musically and visually used his body when responding to the artistic challenges. This was exemplified in his high level of participation and artistic performance in the Exhibition.

When Andy was asked what was the most enjoyable aspect about his participation in the Gallery, he responded, ‘Making you feel more popular … all of us tried our best and maybe everyone will say ‘that was awesome’. To believe in yourself.’ These comments are telling of the positive feelings that the Gallery appeared to generate for Andy and that the pedagogy was perhaps working for him to express himself in new and important ways.

The chapter will now turn towards a summative review of the data in reference to each of the four themes of research.

7.7 Summary of thematic statements across Gallery experiences and the Exhibition

This chapter has given descriptions of each of the Galleries and the Exhibition at Field Primary School with brief summative statements for each key theme of research. In doing so, notable features that emerged across each of the four themes of research will be highlighted. To reiterate, the big ideas for this class included:

1. People have migrated to Australia over many years for many reasons, including to seek religious and political freedom and a better way of life.

2. People are continuing to migrate to Australia today.
3. People who migrate to new places adapt and contribute to their identities and expand the experiences and identities of others.

The chapter will now provide a summary of the themes and refer to data from the Gallery and Exhibition.

7.7.1 The arts

A key area of growth in the students was in their confidence and willingness to embrace artistic forms of expression. In the first Galleries, the data communicates that some students refused to participate, others showed a lack of confidence and others exhibited apathetic responses to some artistic challenges. However, the data also indicates that by Gallery 3 and in all successive Galleries, the students began to grow accustomed to the artistic pedagogy and that all students were seen to work more confidently. Mary reflected on how the students began to work more confidently together as a class and that the pedagogy appeared to help them interact in a more positive way:

There were students who I thought would be so anxious about working artistically. If you asked me at the beginning if certain kids would involve themselves in the Exhibition I would say, ‘no way she’s going to get up on stage, she’s going to have a heart attack’. But in the end, nope, no issues whatsoever.

Mary’s comments support the view that the artistic and student-led pedagogy assisted the class in building confidence in their abilities and willingness to express their ideas with each other and the school community. Mary went on to explain that the authenticity of the artistic pedagogy was a central feature in the students feeling a sense of ownership over their learning:

It was enjoyable to watch them have fun, I think that was really important that they had that opportunity. The fact that it was self-directed gave them that sense of purpose as well and it gave them responsibility … they took more pride in that because it was them, they had to do it, it wasn’t us doing it for them.
Mary’s comments hint at the possibility that the high affective enjoyment of the artistic work was an important outcome in its own right, but that it resulted in the students gaining a deeper confidence in their ability to express their understandings symbolically but also that it assisted them in working more effectively as a class.

The class showed aptitude in being able to employ the skills that they had been working on when devising scenes for their production. Mary communicated that members of the school community were surprised that the students had not been given a great deal of time to work on the Exhibition:

Many were asking, ‘Were you practising it all year?’ I was like, ‘No, we weren’t doing it all year, it was only a few weeks’. I was surprised myself and I’m really impressed with the kids. It looked like something that, a performance group might make. Other teachers asked, ‘Was that your dance group?’ I said, ‘No, it was my class.’ Then, ‘Who in your class?’ and I was like, ‘Everyone.’ I think that was for me the wow factor, that everyone was involved.

It was an important aspect of the Gallery pedagogy that all students were actively involved in the Exhibition, the ambition behind which was to present to the school community an expression of the whole class’s learning.

The students appeared, over time, to express empathic understanding with the characters in the texts and express these understandings through tableaux, mime, movement and poetry. The students shared the following insights about how they positioned themselves empathically in their artistic work, ‘It’s still fun and you’re still doing work. It was our creativity skills that made us show how it would feel if that happened to you.’ Others responded by saying:

I learnt to work together with my team and we showed what art can do because art isn’t just like a piece of paper, you can do it with your body, and you can explain what is happening to the character.

Well, just think about the shadow theatre. That proves it. Everybody did the shadow as well and everybody that wasn’t on stage was amazed by everything. We had to really think about refugees and then we made up our own story about a girl who is a refugee.
An important outcome illustrated by the data was the spiral of high expectations that the Gallery work and the resultant shadow theatre appeared to generate. This is reflected in Mary’s comments about the students’ abilities, ‘I guess it comes back to high expectations. But individually they surprised me, like I saw things that I didn’t expect. Some of them took on leadership roles and rose to the challenge.’ The data also indicates that the students were receiving engaging messages about their ability to achieve. A student in the final student focus group expressed, ‘It’s special because we’re just children and children wouldn’t do these things normally.’

### 7.7.2 Creativity

Prior to the Gallery program, Mary commented that the class had limited experience or understanding of creativity as a way of thinking or being. She maintained that this could be due to their being conditioned towards perceiving academic pursuits as the accumulation and reproduction of facts. In low socio-economic contexts, the pedagogical emphasis can often focus on the management of behaviour and instruction on the basics of literacy and numeracy, as opposed to creative learning. In the Gallery, there was an emphasis on encouraging creativity through facilitating a student centred approach to learning, working in teams, expressing understandings and feelings, exploring meaning in intellectually stimulating activities and working symbolically.

At first, the creative activities appeared to be a novelty for the class and the students showed apparent enjoyment of working experimentally in teams to the creative challenges. In the initial few Galleries, the students appeared to respond more successfully to creative challenges when working in teams. By the end of the second Gallery, the students appeared happy to construct tableaux of scenes from the core text in groups and were beginning to reflect on each other’s work. The evidence suggests that the students began to grow accustomed to the non-competitive nature of the pedagogy and that they began to rise to the challenge once they experienced that the focus of the Gallery was on learning, not behaviour.

Mary described how the students exhibited a growing ability to express meaning symbolically, ‘They aren’t used to going from the literal to the abstract … but I think
they got there which is really important.’ It became a common occurrence to hear the students in their teams express a desire ‘to be different’ and work towards creating unique pieces from their peers. In the final interview with Mary, she described how the students responded to the creative challenges within each Gallery, ‘So it was different, so it was challenging … it was important that they were pushed to really think … their enjoyment and their sense of purpose were important.’

Mary reiterated in the final teacher interview how the Exhibition was not designed to be an unrelated performance but an authentic representation of the learning that had been occurring in the Gallery:

It’s not like we’ve been spending two terms practising the performance, I explained to them (the school community), it wasn’t ‘let’s practice for this performance’. It was all the stuff leading up to that, that came to the epiphany of the performance.

Mary’s comments signal how creative practices were at the forefront of the students’ thoughts about learning across the Gallery experience and how such skills that they were building in this time helped them to produce a successful Exhibition.

When the students were asked what they felt they had achieved by producing the Exhibition, their comments in the final interview reflect their growing understanding of their creative capabilities:

Maybe to try something new … Creative thinking … You use your bodies to make objects. That’s creativity. Because it’s so beautiful. It took a lot of time. It took my time … It was good that we could make the shadows and not use much props.

The comments of these various students at once indicate the importance they place on creativity as an active tool for achievement and signal the positive feelings that the students had about their Exhibition. The comments also reflect that they recognised that their creative achievement was aligned with their enjoyment of learning, producing something unique, innovative thinking, working symbolically and employing time and effort.
7.7.3 **Student engagement**

The data shows that the class initially responded to the Gallery as if it were a competition. Their affective response towards the pedagogy seemed to be embraced in a competitive light. Their desire to be involved at this early stage appeared to stem from a desire for extrinsic rewards. This expectation of the students could perhaps reflect their experience of being behaviourally managed with material incentives. With further involvement and familiarity with the Gallery pedagogy, the evidence shows that the students began to express affective responses to the learning tasks. By the second Gallery, when the class were involved in making tableaux of significant moments from the text, the students reflected on the quality of their work and appeared to express commitment towards perfecting their artistic representations. In each subsequent Gallery, the evidence shows that the students conveyed enthusiasm in their behaviour towards the artistic and creative learning tasks and that their active involvement in each task was reward enough. In the final teacher interview, Mary picks up on the link between reflection and intrinsic reward and indicated that the students began to see the lessons themselves and the Exhibition as an intrinsic reward:

> I think the reflection gets swept away sometimes, but because they had that reflection time … they could explicitly see their achievement or areas for development … because it was fun they were engaged as well but I think it was more than that, it was a challenge and that was its own reward.

The artistic and creative pedagogy was used to facilitate a high cognitive learning environment in the promotion of critical thinking, higher order questioning and problem solving. Early on in the Gallery, it appeared that the students began to express positive emotions and affective responses to the learning. Yet it also appeared that the students were responding to the cognitive demands of the Gallery at an early stage. This can be seen in the way that the students began to enact metaphorical intellectual understandings by creating symbolic images in the first Gallery. In subsequent Gallery lessons, the students’ understandings of the big ideas in the area of study were illustrated in their abilities to role play moments of human significance from the texts. The students were also able to express their empathic understanding by drawing on their own experience and linking it to the topic of study
when they devised a class poem. In the final student focus group, a telling conversation occurred regarding the close link between high affective and high cognitive achievement:

*What are the benefits of being a student in these lessons? What are the good parts?*

Sharing our ideas. And that we can skip class and not do work.

*Did you think that you weren’t doing work?*

Nope, I felt like it was all fun.

*But were you not using your brain?*

You were using your brain because you were thinking of ideas and sharing them and that’s how you came up with it.

Well people think maybe it (the Exhibition) was just a play but then they see it and it looks, people think it’s easy but when you look at it it’s easy but then when you’re really behind the screen and try and do it, it looks really really hard.

Yeah, because it’s just fun and it’s hard because you need to concentrate and then you’re just having fun, not doing work but you’re still doing work.

It’s good that we are getting out of work but we’re still doing work because we’re using our brain for thinking of ideas and sharing it and if we’re doing that we can concentrate and if we concentrate it will go perfect and everything will go smooth.

I was just trying to say that we were still working, but working with fun.

It was fun and hard. That’s the whole idea.

These comments from the students reinforce the view that the students did not perceive the Gallery work as trivial but that it was purposeful, that it challenged them and that they felt a strong sense of ownership and achievement over their learning. Their reflections also indicate that the students were beginning to define engagement on their own terms.

A critical feature of the pedagogy was that students were generating and expressing their own ideas in each Gallery. Mary’s comments reflect how the student centred
approach appeared to foster high expectations, team working skills and increased confidence in the students:

They could choose what they were going to do and direct it. They were, ‘Let’s do this’, ‘We can do this’ and ‘Do you want to try that, yeah, we can try that.’ I think they had that higher expectation for themselves.

The students appeared also to understand that they were operating more effectively as a team as a result of the artistic pedagogy. It became common during reflections to hear the students talk about effective teamwork and communication skills in each Gallery. By the end of the Gallery, the students were working together to devise a complete shadow theatre piece for the Exhibition and achieved this by peer and self-reflecting, listening to and testing ideas and having significant conversations about learning. Consider this comment from a student in the final student focus group:

We had to make things and we had to talk and we had to get it looking good … so that meant we had to be a really good team. Because we weren’t working together in a team before we done the shadow theatre and it was fun … it made our class more like to work together.

Mary also reflected on how the learning experiences appeared to create a sense in the classroom that all students had a vital role to play and that they noticed the growing ‘insider classroom’ mentality developing, ‘That really made me quite happy. That’s what you want, that sense of we’re a group and we’re a team and we work together.’ The students themselves reflected on the notion that they were ‘insiders’ in the classroom, ‘It wasn’t just the teacher telling us what to do, it was good that we were actually joining in and participating. Everybody had heaps and heaps of fun.’ This comment embraces the view that the students felt like they were active contributors in the learning process.

Before the program began, Mary stated, ‘I really hope that this program will lead to an opportunity for the students to excel and experience success at school.’ After the Exhibition, when asked if she felt that the students had felt a sense of achievement, Mary commented:
They were so proud of themselves. You go onto their Facebook, they all shared the photo (of the Exhibition), they’re all talking it up, they’re just so… and I think that goes back to why the parents were there, they obviously felt, like I said pride, they enjoyed it, they owned it.

The data communicates how the pedagogical approach of the Gallery worked towards fulfilling the intention of creating a classroom of insiders. In general terms, there appeared, for the time being, to be a pedagogical shift in the students from intellectually low-level and competitive expectations towards effective group work, meaningful expression of knowledge and a strong sense of ownership of learning.

### 7.7.4 Learning as a human endeavour

The research takes seriously that it is important to ensure that students gain experience in exploring human relationships, emotional understanding and big ideas within their learning, as opposed to simply learning facts or ‘basics’. The concept of a Gallery embraces Learning as a human endeavour as a pedagogical imperative because big ideas are usually associated with transferable learning crossing time, place, culture and context. Over the course of the Gallery program, the students re-told and singled out key moments of human concern from the texts through artistic representation. The following comments from the final student focus group interview communicate their feelings:

> What we did with the work was show that in Australia we are lucky because we don’t have war and we don’t have to go to different countries.

> The Exhibition will show them how you can walk in other people’s shoes. Walking in other people’s shoes means feeling what they are feeling.

> What you mean by walking in someone else’s shoes, our story was about refugees so we’re actually walking in the refugees shoes, pretending that we’re refugees and what it would be like to be a refugee and to flee the country.

These comments highlight that most students were able to sustain a focus on a significant topic and demonstrate an understanding of the problematic nature of information and ideas (Education Queensland, 2002, p.3). This evidence was consistent with level 3 on the continuum of practice for ‘Deep Understanding’ on the Productive pedagogies, reflecting that the students were grasping and demonstrating
a deep understanding of the concepts and ideas of the Gallery, particularly big idea 1. Statements such as these provide evidence for the view that the students were thinking critically about important global human issues and that the Gallery was contributing to help them connect empathically with their work.

In the first Gallery, the students began to raise critical questions such as: ‘Why was there war in Ziba’s country?’ and ‘Why couldn’t girls go to school?’ By Gallery 2, the data shows that the students were beginning to reflect on the key issues of human concern in their artistic representations, ‘Their image is showing that to have those things like safety and education and freedom that she’s not getting at the moment.’ In Gallery 4, the data shows that the students began to express empathic reasoning such as, ‘You’d be scared because you don’t know where you are or where you are going.’ The students began to also draw on their own experiences and emotions and connect these with the topic. A student stated in Gallery 7, ‘Ziba and the other boy (from Home and Away) had to leave their homes and so the poem is about things you can bring with you, like it’s memories.’

The evidence illustrates that the students began to be able to give empathic comments or raise questions about the issues within the topic of study and also began to be able to have meaningful class discussions on the central themes within their work. In the opening Galleries, students were demonstrating understandings that reflected the lower level of the Quality teaching scale for ‘Deep Understanding’, as the understandings that they were communicating were mostly shallow and basic. For example, they were able to isolate individual adjectives to describe the feelings of the central character, such as ‘sad’, ‘lonely’, ‘frightened’, ‘excited’ and ‘trapped’. These expressions from the opening Gallery relate to big idea 1 and reveal that their understanding of the central concepts of the Gallery were developing. However, as the Galleries progressed, the data began to demonstrate understandings that fit with higher levels on this scale. An example of this comes from Gallery 6, when a student communicated deeper understanding of big idea 1 when discussing a central message from the text:
To show you how horrible it would be if Australia had a war … To be grateful for what you have got”; ‘In both books, the dads die … They both went on a boat to a different country’ and ‘It was a sad story’.

This statement and the accompanying data were exemplars of code level 4 because it was observed that “most students provide information, arguments or reasoning that demonstrates deep understanding for a portion of the lesson” (Ladwig and Gore, 2003, p.14). It was evident that for the remaining lessons, the students’ responses were demonstrating a deeper understanding of the concepts and ideas of the Gallery.

The students’ abilities to summarise and draw on the similarities from the texts that they had been using in the Gallery shows that they were able to isolate the key points of human interest and the big ideas from the topic. Mary illustrates how the students used their empathic understandings in this process:

They could say they wanted the audience to think and imagine if it would happen to them. So I think they understood the idea I guess of empathising because they could say that’s what they wanted the audience to do.

Similarly, in the student focus group interview, several students made comments about the messages they wanted to send to the audience.

Yeah, so if war was in Australia, we are showing what would happen.

The whole point is to tell all Australians about refugees from another country because you never know if their home is destroyed by war.

The most important thing is making them (the audience) use their own imagination by being in dragon\textsuperscript{11} … feeling how the refugees feel about losing their parents and their homes.

These students’ comments reflect that they were conscious of the links between arts practice, creativity and Learning as a human endeavour in the Exhibition and that

\textsuperscript{11} A term used by the class to describe being creative.
they wanted to communicate specific big ideas to the audience, particularly big ideas 1 and 2. The data signals that the students were showing deep understanding by communicating “the relatively complex relationships between the central ideas of a topic…as a result of their deep understanding, they can produce new knowledge by discovering relationships…and drawing conclusions” (Education Queensland, 2002, p.3). These comments reflect level 4 on the Quality teaching scale for ‘Deep Understanding’, which identifies that “most students provide information, arguments or reasoning that demonstrates deep understanding” (Ladwig and Gore, 2003). A student made the following comment about the arts-based activities, ‘Like when we did it I was actually a refugee and I felt like I was actually in the book.’ Interestingly, this sentiment was also repeated by other students at both Valley Primary School and Green Primary School, perhaps indicating how closely arts practice, creative ways of thinking and being and learning as a human endeavour connect towards empathic embodiment.

7.8 Conclusion

There have been seven sections in this chapter. Section 1 gave a description of the school context including important information about the school, the class and the teacher. Two students, who were used as case studies from this context, were described in Section 2 and their progress was highlighted in discussions throughout the chapter. Section 3 then provided information about the aims and curriculum decisions of the Gallery at Field Primary School. Section 4 provided detailed information about the content of each Gallery and the final Exhibition, in Section 5, and described what occurred in practice with brief summative reviews of these in relation to the four themes of research. Section 6 and Section 7 provided some initial points for analysis from the data collection at this site by referring to each of the case study students, and then explicitly to each of the four themes of research. The three data presentation chapters have now been provided from each of the research contexts, Valley Primary School, Green Primary School and Field Primary School. The next chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of the data from these contexts in greater detail.
The previous three chapters described the action research investigation that occurred in three low SES primary schools. This chapter presents the patterns and findings that have emerged from analyses of the data from the three sites. There are four sections in this chapter. Following this introduction, Section 2 discusses the main analytical points from each of the research themes; arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour. It highlights commonalities across each of the school contexts by addressing each of the research themes in turn. After focusing on each of the main themes, Section 2 critiques the Gallery and Exhibition model as a pedagogical framework in light of its implementation at all three primary school sites. Part three of this chapter discusses two further theoretical concepts, namely, humanising creativity and beauty in education. This section describes how humanising creativity emerged as a valuable concept to illuminate the analyses of this research; and how beauty in education was an important foundational theoretical consideration that proved to also support the research findings.

8.1 No kid is an island: A portrait of the Gallery

The analyses of the data is presented with the acknowledgement that this pedagogical intervention occurred for only two school terms (approximately 20 weeks) in each context. It is reasonable to assume that there is a possibility of a ‘novelty’ effect of the program operating through the data. The analyses that follow thus presents some important points that can be isolated from a relatively short intervention. Patterns and similarities from each school context are highlighted to suggest the overall principles that have emerged for an analytical discussion of this type of pedagogical framework. The next chapter will present what these may mean for classroom application beyond a two-term investigation. The outcomes and commonalities across the four research themes between each of the Galleries will now be discussed.
8.2 Commonalities across the three contexts

To determine the central points for analyses from the study, commonalities from across the three contexts were drawn from the data. As described in Chapter 3 (section 3.6), the qualitative data was collected against a specific theoretical framework and sorted according to the four central research themes. The data was then subjected to open or emic coding (Corwin & Clements, 2012, p. 497), to highlight contrasts and comparisons against the main themes and existing theoretical framework (Appendix 1). From this information, and in order to establish the core points of analysis, the researcher constructed two tables. The first contained guiding principles of research that were generated from the research literature (Appendix 6) and the second singled out the commonalities that emerged across each of the three research sites (Appendix 7). The resulting analytical concepts from each of the four main themes of research were thus derived by exploring and scrutinising the information from the data that had been condensed into the summary tables (described above). This process was beneficial in the way that the variety and depth of data from across each site was made more available for analysis and interpretation. Table 8.1 provides a visual snapshot of the central analytical points:

Table 8.1: Central analytical points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Key points of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts pedagogy</td>
<td>Explore human issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think deeply through art</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Corporeal learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aesthetic potential for lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Group flow</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Imaginative play</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Risk taking</td>
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<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>Focus on learning not behaviour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engaging messages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emotional connection to learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning as a human endeavour</td>
<td>‘Bringing closer’ human issues in the curriculum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deep thinking, deep understandings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each of these key points will now be discussed.

### 8.2.1 Arts pedagogy

Four key analytical concepts from the theme, arts pedagogy, emerged from the investigation. These are that human issues were authentically explored through arts pedagogy, that the students were prompted to think deeply through art, that the Gallery space allowed more room for corporeal learning and finally that the data illustrated the aesthetic potential for lessons. Each of these points will now be addressed.

#### Art pedagogy to explore human issues

Within this research, arts pedagogy was employed as the anchor to bring together each of the research themes, due to its capacity to engage students and to promote creative and expressive interconnections with significant real world issues. The aim was not to justify the educational benefit of the arts in boosting student achievement in other curriculum areas. Rather, artistic practices were utilised in the pursuit of exploring big ideas with the aim to increase engagement, creative capabilities and enhance understanding of significant human relationships within the curriculum. The students were involved in artistic forms of expression in order to awaken them to deeper empathic understandings. The guiding principle in designing learning programs with artistic pedagogy at the forefront was thus to gather evidence of the educational value of arts to explore human issues. In referring to theatre education, which shares some common elements with the Gallery, Winston (2005) argues:

> Playful and participatory practices … engage children effectively in ethical reflection and debate; and that those elements of dramatic form that open rather than close down narrative meanings complement this process. (p. 321)

Within this research, this and other types of arts practices were seen as important in the aspiration to move beyond the positivist discourse surrounding arts education towards a deeper recognition of the aesthetic, social and moral qualities that arts practices can potentially bring to classrooms.
In analysing artistic practices across all sites, a finding common to all contexts was that the students generally expressed heightened artistic and empathic responses to their respective learning programs. Despite the different age groups present within each context, each class of students communicated, chiefly through artistic means, empathic expressions of the big ideas from within the class’s Gallery topic. At Valley Primary school, the data indicated that, by their involvement with artistic forms of expression, the Years 3 and 4 students built stronger empathic connections to historical issues affecting an Australian minority group and were able to increase their understandings of the diverse human relationships within the history of Australian settlement and colonisation. At Green Primary school, the artistic emphasis was on artistic improvisational playfulness in order for the Years 1 and 2 students to examine notions of happiness, material wealth, utilising one’s talent and intellect, service and responsibility to community and courage. These human issues were explored by focusing on a text and inviting the students to empathically examine the characters through artistic means. Similarly at Field Primary School, the data illustrated that through artistic practices, the students started to become cognisant of the big ideas within their Gallery and were able to express compassionate understandings and develop some deeper knowledge about such topical real world issues as human immigration. The students across all sites were beginning to show compassion for the real and imagined characters within their topic of study, to isolate and explore big ideas from their respective portraits of human experience, and further, to apply these to their own contexts.

Within the Gallery, emotional expression was valued as an important and legitimate aspect of learning and the expression of knowledge. Thus at each site, the communication of emotion was enacted through the arts. The students were encouraged to connect with real world issues of human concern in their Gallery and to express the emotion of these issues artistically. The data revealed that by engaging in empathic artistic activities, the students began to build and communicate a deeper and richer connection to their topic of study. That human issues were successfully and authentically communicated empathically through artistic means was one of the key outcomes of the Gallery across all contexts. In this way, the arts pedagogy was valued as an important vehicle to explore and make meaning of significant human
experiences and real world issues. This was seen as important to the social justice aims of the research, which acknowledges that students should be given work of intellectual quality and ‘real world’ knowledge beyond their classroom (Hayes et al., 2006, pp. 37-38).

**Think deeply through art**

As the review of the literature in Chapter 2 has reinforced, art is not always strongly associated with intellectual challenge in educational curriculum programs. A common finding across all contexts was that the students showed evidence that their cognitive reflections and insights were not only influenced by, but furthermore were generated by, having the opportunity for thinking deeply through art. The Gallery programs relied on arts-based strategies for students to explore and present their feelings, perceptions and emotions. The artistic expressions by the students were thus valued strongly within the Gallery as academic achievement.

The data from all sites suggested that the students could show cognitive understandings of their topics of study authentically through art, despite these expressions being largely non-linguistic and sitting outside evaluation in terms of quantifiable, target-related outcomes. Through various artistic modalities such as movement, shadowography, puppetry, responding to music, sculpture making and poetry writing, the students expressed their intellectual understanding in the sense that these artistic tools were presented as an acceptable ‘language’ with which to communicate their comprehension of the topics and demonstrate empathy when focusing on issues of human concern. The artistic practices employed in each context were thus an appropriate semiotic system to meet the cognitive demands and humanising heart of the Gallery.

This research takes seriously that an important and crucial aspect of effective, lifelong and genuine education is to connect emotionally to what one is learning. More than just connecting emotionally with what one is learning, data from each school site combined to show that the students began to connect empathically with the big ideas promoted through the Galleries. Within each context, the cognitive expressions of the students were shared with the respective school communities in
the form of an Exhibition. The Exhibitions were not designed to be an artistic
showcase disconnected from classroom learning, but a collective, communal
celebration and sharing of the deep learning through art that had occurred in each
Gallery. The Exhibitions highlighted that each cohort of students had embraced the
artistic pedagogy and saw it as a valuable means to express their cognitive
understandings. Furthermore, the data revealed that the students felt the need to share
their empathic and artistic journey and that they felt it was important to communicate
their understanding of critical human issues. That the students were able to express
compassionate responses revealed that they were displaying deeper understandings,
and not just superficial factual recall of the subject matter.

The literature supports the idea that emotional responses are dependent on cognition.
That is, to understand something is to know it and express it in terms of the emotions
that it prompts within us (Winston, 1998). The data illustrated that arts pedagogy was
an effective meeting place for feeling and knowing, in the way that the students in
this study quite often successfully and meaningfully employed their capacities for
imagination and understanding. The Gallery stood in contrast to the technicist
approach that can dominate curriculum planning in many current education settings,
especially in low SES communities (Orlando & Sawyer, 2013, p. 10). The research
supports the fusion of emotion and cognition through arts pedagogy as an important
and underdeveloped area of educational practice.

*Corporeal learning – ‘I was in the book’*

An interesting and telling piece of data to emerge was that students from all three
different contexts spoke of feeling as if they were ‘in’ the texts that formed the basis
of their learning experiences. The highly kinaesthetic and high cognitive arts-based
activities in the Gallery allowed the students to physicalise and literally play out their
imaginings. The data showed that a key strength of arts pedagogy was that it allowed
children to use their minds and bodies concomitantly.

A vital attribute of the planning process for the Gallery was to limit, or indeed
eliminate, the use of external supports in the form of props, costumes, instruments or
other such aids. The intention behind this planning decision was to favour the
corporeal process of learning and focus on the students’ bodies, minds and voices to enact the Gallery. By eliminating, for the most part, such external supports, the students were thus given greater encouragement to awaken their imagination, which, in turn, appeared to open them up to expressing their learning through movement, dramatic play and metaphorical expression.

Each Gallery thus focused on somatic experience as a valid form of representation and meaning making. The data across the three contexts showed that the students’ abilities to articulate meaning and understanding through their own ‘body knowledge’ (Eisner, 2009), reinforces how corporeal learning is a significant form of literacy. The Gallery can be positioned as a form of learning that can expand upon what is currently perceived as valid cognition in an education system that advantages technical means of communication. As Eisner asserts, ‘We tend to think that in order to know you have to be able to say. I would argue that the limits of language in no way define the limits of cognition’ (2009, p. 8). The data from all three sites highlighted that the kinaesthetic arts-based activities generated higher order thinking across the student body and in the process allowed them to express a more sensuous and corporeal cognizance of their learning and understanding.

**Aesthetic potential for lessons**

A clear pattern that occurred across all sites was that the students embraced the artistic pedagogy of the Gallery. While there was some initial resistance across the student body in confidently employing arts practice, it emerged quite early on in the Gallery journey that the students at each school were beginning to welcome artistic forms of expression. Common to all three contexts was that the arts-based pedagogy fostered a certain kind of liberation of expression and sense of joyfulness in the students. Surprise, play, wonder, beauty and facilitating the use of imagination were key elements behind the planning of each Gallery. It was reasoned during the planning that these elements could become the building blocks for the aesthetic potential of the lessons and would be used, not to drive or meet standardised outcomes necessarily, but to create a rich and rewarding experience for each class. The data makes plain that it would be erroneous to summarise the educational value of the arts in the Gallery in purely technical or target-based language. In this light,
this research argues for the aesthetic potential of lessons as worthwhile in its own right.

Too often, arts programs in education are obliged to prove their worth in terms of their functionality towards meeting outcomes or in their ability to enhance students’ performance in other curriculum areas (Eisner, 2001; Winston, 2006; Bamford, 2008). While the data illustrated that, in fact, the Gallery did create a useful platform for enhanced learning across the three contexts, there is another argument to consider. This is that the experience in, and of itself, had a positive and uplifting impact on the students and their teachers. Indeed, the freedom of expression and pleasure of experience that the students and teachers communicated about the Gallery should be considered as highly important outcomes of this process. For these different student bodies, who, prior to the Gallery could be characterised as largely not focused on arts-based approaches in their classrooms, it is not a trivial outcome for them to be exhibiting happiness and dedication to arts learning as a class, particularly as this pedagogy appeared to engage students who had otherwise experienced a strained relationship with learning. The evidence strongly suggested that the aesthetic and creative shape of each Gallery lesson proved to be the catalyst to allow the students to experience the joy, self-expression and uplifting experiences, or ‘beauty’, inherent in learning.

While the artistic and humanising focus ensured a meeting place between emotion and cognition, the arts pedagogy at work in the Gallery should be considered as more than just a fanciful motivating tool to energise the students in attending to their learning. The students’ positive feelings about the Gallery, highlighted in the data, emphasised the heightened sense of value that they placed upon artistic ways of being. It is this sense of value that remains an essential analytical point for this research. The fact that the students placed high value in wanting to share their artistic experiences and empathic journey with the wider community (including their parents) was testament to the worth of the aesthetic potential for lessons. The impact of the Exhibitions on the wider school community cannot be summarised purely in quantitative forms, but can be embraced in terms of the emotional experiences that they generated. Teachers, students and parents who were invited to witness the
Exhibitions spoke of the affective impression that they held. Thus, the impact across the wider school community of both the Gallery and Exhibition could be seen in observational and interview data, and such data stands in contrast to the reductive technocratic language that is quite often prevalent in summarising the educational benefit of arts programs (Winston, 2013, p. 135). One of the founding purposes behind the Gallery was to help students to find joy in the experience of learning and connect emotionally and empathically with their objects of study through artistic expression. To this aim, the Gallery arguably seems to have reached this outcome.

8.2.2 Creativity

Three important analytical points emerged from the data within the theme of creativity. These are that group flow became an increased feature of the Gallery, that imaginative play was embraced at each site and, finally, that the Gallery became a safe environment for taking risks in learning and reflecting on ideas. These three points will now be described in more detail.

**Group flow**

A point of commonality across each site was the increased creative collaboration amongst the students. The cooperative structure of the Gallery became an important feature of the lessons in allowing the students to improvise, plan together, role-play, share opinions and overcome challenges. It should be considered that arts-focused and group task pedagogy was, on the whole, a novel experience for each class group and that the students at the beginning appeared to be more familiar and comfortable with ‘pen and paper’ individual task lessons. Despite this, it emerged that across the three learning contexts, each class of students displayed growing effective cooperation and creative engagement in working towards shared goals. As cited in the literature review, the concept of ‘group flow’ (Csíkszentmihályi, 1996; Sawyer, 2008) thus becomes highly significant as a point for analysis.

As previously addressed in the literature review chapter, the concept of ‘group flow’ addresses successful creative collaboration. The data indicated that each class of students in the three different contexts was developing a stronger cooperative
mentality and increased effectiveness in collaborating as a group. This can be seen in the increased levels of group engagement that the arts-based creative tasks appeared to generate, and in the productive communication, reflection and focus towards a shared goal that each class demonstrated. Two levels of group flow in the Gallery were thus observed. At one level, there appeared to be group flow across the whole-class in the way that the different class contexts developed high affective responses towards the overall aims of each Gallery, together with an aspiration to share their learning with their school community. At another level, group flow could be observed when each class was allocated into smaller groups to achieve smaller creative goals. At both of these levels, a highly important feature of the resultant group flow was that a democratic participation was observed. Each student as a participant seemed, for the most part, to be valued by peers as having an equal role to play and that the ideas and responses of each person were regarded as valid and important. In this sense, the Gallery moved away from competitive classroom practices and welcomed the contributions of each member.

Each class of students selected and workshopped the final content and overall ‘message’ of each Exhibition. It appeared that each class was united in their aim to share their learning experiences and communicate the big ideas from the Gallery. The students took on ownership of the Exhibition and democratically shared all aspects of the production towards the final piece. In this way, no one student was selected to play a ‘starring’ role. In the instances where it was necessary to have one student perform a particular function in the Exhibition, the classes decided as a group who would take on this role and each member was given opportunities to be involved at all stages. This equal participation appeared to foster the developing team mentality of each class group. A basic commonality across each site was that it was cooperation and collaboration, rather than competition and individualism, that were important to the success of the Gallery and Exhibition. This emerged to be an important outcome in line with the humanist ideals of the Gallery and for the fact that the pedagogical practices of the Gallery sought to distance themselves from reductive and positivist educational terms.
**Imaginative play**

A consistent pattern was that students across all three contexts embraced the sense of play that was encouraged within the Gallery pedagogy. A key aspect of the planning behind each session was to allow the students space and time to work artistically, either individually or in small groups, in order for them to work through their ideas. Giving the students a few points of structure and direction, and also the necessary time during smaller group tasks, seemed to help the students to embrace the atmosphere of playfulness in working productively toward a group goal. Two types of play were observed in the process. The first type refers to improvised role play in which the students became the characters themselves. This occurred more frequently with the younger class group, in both formalised and spontaneous ways. The second type of play refers to individual or group participation with a set creative challenge in which the students were required to combine ideas artistically towards a common goal. This latter type was utilised across each class context but was more frequent with the two older classes of children. It might well have been assumed that, to an uninform ed outsider looking in during both types of play, that the students were involved in unstructured, undisciplined and ineffective amusement. However, the data revealed that students were highly focused, engaged and were operating within the boundary of their imaginations within the topic of study.

During these play-oriented sequences in the Gallery, the data brings to light that students demonstrated openness and flexibility of mind, the ability to test each other’s ideas and corporeal expression of comprehension and empathic understanding of the big ideas in the topic. It is a key point of analysis that across all age groups and contexts, the playfulness and atmosphere of creativity in the Gallery process enabled a deeper cognitive and emotional engagement in their learning (see below).

At all school sites, an important part of the planning behind the Gallery was to allow time for the students to use their imaginations to empathise with the real and fictional characters in their topics of study. An outcome of the Gallery was that across each context, the data showed that the students’ experiences in employing their imaginations artistically, and in a play-oriented environment, helped them to
recognise and articulate the human dimension of the topic. In this sense, the imaginative play element of the Gallery can be considered as a conduit for involvement with and deeper understanding of global issues of human concern. This finding resonates with the perspective that ‘the imagination is not some kind of frill we should attend to only on the periphery of our teaching, but is rather the basic work-horse of learning’ (Egan & Judson, 2009, p. 140). The data strongly supports this suggestion, highlighting how playfulness needs to be considered in educational contexts as an important ‘work-horse’ for creative cognitive expression.

**Risk-taking**

Strongly related to playfulness is the issue of risk taking in the Gallery experience. Risk taking is an important factor to consider within performative educational contexts (Burnard & White, 2008; Craft & Jeffrey, 2008). Research has consistently shown (e.g. Fielding, 1999; Burnard et al., 2006; Munday, 2014; Chappell & Jobbins, 2015) that the performative culture of standardised testing within schools may not allow for the development of risk-taking, questioning and curiosity as learning behaviours. It was seen across the data that at each school site, the students became increasingly open to taking risks in their own learning. Risk-taking was observed in many forms. For example, it could be observed that during group tasks, a growing aim for each creative challenge was for the groups to create something unique or different from each other. Risk-taking was also seen in the way that students became increasingly more confident in sharing their opinion or suggesting a new idea to the class. Similarly, students took risks in the way that they became more comfortable in expressing themselves artistically. In this sense, the students generated a climate of positive class feedback, reflection, encouragement and praise that was observed in all contexts.

A sentiment that was shared by all of the regular class teachers was that they were surprised by some of their students’ attempts at taking risks in their learning. The Gallery platform appeared to provide a secure testing-ground for the students to generate ideas, try them out as a group, evaluate their effectiveness and perfect them. Within this system, the students had the time and space to ‘play’ with their ideas, pose and respond to questions, communicate their curiosity and enact their
imaginations. In this way the Gallery became a safe environment for testing and reflecting on ideas.

Risk-taking became an acceptable feature of classroom learning. The data revealed that the risks that were being taken in the Gallery were opportunities for the students to challenge themselves to become better learners. The ‘in-task’ playfulness and risk taking inherent to each Gallery is indicative of the growing creativity that was observed at all sites. The Gallery process highlighted that this style of pedagogy encourages and provides the right environment for purposeful risk-taking towards effective and purposeful learning.

8.2.3 Student engagement

The central analytical points from the student engagement theme will now be illustrated. The following section will discuss three central analytical views that include, how the increased focus on learning over behaviour generated more positive responses to learning from the students, that the combined student voice in the data from across the three contexts communicated messages of high achievement, capability and shared control, and finally, that across each context, the students were developing emotional connections to the Gallery.

Focus on learning not behaviour

A key research aim was to examine the quality of pedagogical practices in the Gallery in a commitment towards the premise that all students, including those from marginalised backgrounds, need to be provided with intellectually demanding and meaningful work, not only as an engagement strategy but as a matter of social justice (Hayes et al., 2006). The research occurred in educational settings that have traditionally been perceived and labelled ‘challenging’; for example, housing estates and urban multicultural suburbs. The pedagogical focus for learners in these contexts can often default to instruction in the basics and, as such, many students are often denied creative and artistic pedagogical practices due to the perceived potential for challenging behaviour (Munns et al., 2013). The data in this study suggested that the Gallery process supported the students to develop, over time, more positive
relationships with learning. While it should be stated that during initial Gallery lessons, some students displayed opposition to the pedagogy, such behaviours were observable in the introductory sessions and were commonly replaced by more positive and productive responses for the remainder of the Gallery program. The data gathered during this research highlighted that the Gallery allowed the students, for the time being, to begin to feel a part of an insider classroom. To recapitulate from the literature review chapter, the term ‘insider classroom’ refers to ‘classroom processes designed to encourage all students to feel they have a voice and are valued members of a cohesive learning community’ (Munns, 2014, p. 225). Such a process emphasises learning over behaviour, and the data reinforces how such a focus was a key engagement element of the Gallery.

The group-focused and playful nature of the pedagogy appeared to influence solidarity within each class group. This unity appeared to fuel a growing ‘insider’ student concept and supported an emerging classroom atmosphere that all learners were included and that their involvement was meaningful. Practices such as student and peer reflection, including photojournalism, and inclusive and substantive learning conversations, appeared to support students to take an active role in the classroom processes of the Gallery. The intention behind the artistic and creative pedagogical practices was to support students to develop engaging experiences (high cognitive, high affective and high operative) that would assist them to have more meaningful experiences of productive and stimulating learning.

The data highlighted that an important point for analysis was that the Gallery aligned with the notion that ‘learning trumps behaviour’ (Munns et al., 2013). The data communicated how the Gallery tasks, that centred on creative, collaborative and artistic forms of expression, helped to build a focus on enjoyable and intellectually stimulating learning. In each context, there was a key aim to work towards developing a culture of belonging. In this sense, ‘individual students who are ‘outside’ the accepted patterns of learning and behaviour are embraced and encouraged to join the classroom community’ (Munns, et al., 2013, p. 50). The data implied that there were many instances when students who could be traditionally positioned as low-academic and/or having behavioural problems, were, indeed,
showing more engaged learning and achieving Gallery outcomes at high levels. Apart from minor behavioural disruptions early in each school context, the data illustrates how the pedagogical conditions of the Galleries allowed students to become ‘insiders’ in their classrooms and that in each classroom context, a growing culture of belonging was strengthened.

**Engaging messages**

An important finding from the data across all sites was that the students began to speak in the language of engagement and that the message systems present in the data from each Gallery encouraged the learners to begin to identify as ‘insiders’ in their classrooms. Apparent positive student self concepts evolved over time in each context and it was a commonality that each group of students, by the end of the program, had strong involvement in their classroom learning. It is suggested by the data that this appeared to be fostered by many factors, most significantly including; high expectations of all students, the use of high affective, high operative and high cognitive tasks, student collaboration, inclusive class discussions and reflections, developing links to the wider school community and creating an environment for students to have a say in their own learning. These findings are consistent with those of the Fair Go Program (FGP) (2013) that highlighted when students receive engaging messages there is a greater potential for them to value their learning and to develop a more enduring relationship with schooling (Munns et al., 2013). In summary, the FGP highlighted the following discourses of power that operate within classroom message systems – knowledge, ability, control, place and voice (Munns & Sawyer, 2013). Data in this study provided evidence of the students’ expression and opinions from each Gallery and revealed the positive messages that they were communicating about these discourses of power. In reference to the ‘engaging messages frame’ (Figure 2.2, Chapter 2), the students began to build constructive reflections about their learning (knowledge) into the everyday practice of the lessons as well as communicate feelings of being able to achieve (ability). Similarly, their responses were indicative of a focus on learning (control) and a sense of being a valuable and valued member of the class (place). Particularly in the students’ photojournalism responses, whole class reflections, and in their ownership of tasks
and in planning for the Exhibition, they articulated their feelings and perspectives (voice).

There was thus a consistency across each context and age group that students were beginning to talk about themselves and each other as capable, valued and interdependent members of a shared learning experience. Statements from the students at each site demonstrated their recognition of growing team-working capabilities and that they felt more intrinsic worth from learning and achieving at new tasks. They also had ‘power with’ the teachers. Their combined voice across each context perhaps showed, most significantly, engaging messages of high achievement, aspiration, connection to the task as relevant to them and shared control over the Gallery experience as being played out. The recurring outcome of these messages in each context appeared to indicate that the students saw themselves as active participants in the learning of the Gallery. Their active involvement in each Gallery included not only their participation in the physical activities, but their voice in class discussion, self and peer reflection and the shared control they held in classroom processes, and perhaps, most significantly, in the Exhibition. The voices of the students in the data were reflective of a growing perception of positive achievement and meaningful learning.

**Emotional connection to learning**

An important outcome of the Gallery was that the students’ emotional connection to their topics of study appeared to increase. One key aim from the Gallery lessons was to prompt students to think and feel empathically within their topics of study. The students were given opportunities in each Gallery, through artistic and creative pedagogy, to empathically connect to their curriculum focus. A common pattern in the data was that the students began to express through movement, drama, music and also through written and verbal forms. They also showed an increased understanding of the emotion within their topics of study and abilities to make sense of the actions or thoughts of the characters from their core texts. In approaching the Exhibitions, the older groups of students expressed a desire to send empathic messages to an audience. The younger group of students showed evidence of wanting to share their artistic comprehension of their core texts and for the visiting classes to empathise
with the key human traits of the characters. In all contexts, the evidence communicated that the students began to connect empathically with the content of the Gallery, and, as a result of this, that they wished to share their empathic understandings with the school community. Such evidence brought to light the more positive perceptions that the students held about themselves as valuable and capable learners with important knowledge to share.

There were instances from each context when the students requested to take the task beyond the designated time frame. This data is consistent with findings in the research literature on student engagement in which students want to take learning ‘beyond teacher, task and time’ (Fair Go Team, 2006, p. 21). There was also evidence from each context that some students embarked on independent, self-motivated learning springing from their experiences with the Gallery content. Instances included student self-initiated and directed playground games based on the texts and learning experiences in the Gallery and internet-based research on the artistic forms of expression that were used. Such instances indicated the high operative engagement displayed by the students, in that they were positioning themselves as active learners in the Gallery space and were feeling increasingly comfortable and willing to embrace the pedagogy of this study, on the long journey towards becoming better learners.

In each instance the Exhibition presentation to the school community, as a culmination and celebration of the learning that had occurred throughout the Gallery program, demonstrated that each class was emotionally connected to their learning. This was not only evident in the responses in the classroom observation data but also in the students’ expressions of enjoyment of the process, as evidenced in their Gallery reflections, further indicating that the students viewed their work as important, relevant and meaningful. In this sense the affective ‘hook’ that appeared to catch students and enable them to feel enjoyment in the first instances of their experience of the Gallery, developed over time into a deeper, more authentic level of enjoyment for students encouraging them to feel more empowered and to gain a greater sense of ownership over their learning.
8.2.4 Learning as a human endeavour

This chapter will now describe three key analytical points from the theme, learning as a human endeavour. These points include that empathic learning became a central focus, that the students began to express understanding of human issues in the curriculum in meaningful ways and lastly, that the pairing of high cognitive learning experiences with that of the high affective, served to promote deep thinking and deep understanding. The following sections expand on these points.

Empathy – a key focus

A recognisable feature of each Gallery was that the students were developing an empathic connection to their topics of study as the program progressed. A research intention was to purposively engage the students, across each stage group and context, in encounters with big ideas of human imperative and, importantly, to develop deeper emotional understanding of these concerns. As defined, a core intention of structuring the content around big ideas was to help students “to see the time, place, and situation through the eyes of the people under study and thus to see their decisions and actions as understandable given the knowledge and resources available to them” (Brophy and Allerman, 2007, p. 16). These intentions are in line with the student engagement theme of this research in which connectedness to the world beyond school, depth of understanding and higher order thinking are considered highly relevant elements of authentic pedagogy. Thus empathic considerations became one of the guiding principles of the pedagogy. The evidence reveals that, through their experience of artistic pedagogy, the students began to identify with the emotions embedded within their topics of study. In this sense, empathy became a key focal point of analysis.

The evidence supports the view that, by focusing on the research theme, learning as a human endeavour, in planning for the Gallery; the result was that the majority of students from each context were beginning to think critically, represent symbolically and express affectively global human issues. From this pattern, it can be concluded that there was an emotional connection between the learner and the learned. The Gallery, while aiming to authentically engage students intellectually, also intended to
focus on the emotional human concerns within the curriculum topic. In this way it was feelings, as opposed to just facts, that were embraced as a pathway to deeper learning. The students’ artistic empathic expressions were encouraged and thereby valued in the Gallery process as valid academic representations.

As noted earlier, a telling point of the findings was that a student from each context made comments that they felt as though they were ‘in’ their texts of study. These comments revealed a link between each context, namely that the Gallery was allowing the students to empathise and imagine themselves within the world of each topic. Similar findings at each site included: demonstration of meaningful class discussions about important human concerns; students showing the ability to represent through movement and drama the emotions at work in the topic; and observation of the ability for each group to reflect compassionately with the characters. These pedagogical findings appeared to foster a deeper cognitive and affective level of engagement between the students and their learning, and connections to their world. These links reveal how essential empathic feelings were critical to the students developing a deeper understanding of what they were learning.

Across all sites, the empathic dimension of the program grew as each Gallery progressed. As the artistic practices appeared to encourage the emotional aspects of the topics, the students’ abilities to reason empathically developed. The student-centred Exhibitions demonstrated that the students were not only able to recognise the big ideas from their topics of study but that they developed a desire to share empathic messages with a wider audience. The Galleries and Exhibition were thus examples of how educational contexts can embrace empathic learning. They aligned with the notion of wise humanising creativity in education (Craft, 2014), with its potential for an emphasis on ethics and the wider impact of human action. The data illustrated, in a practical sense, how classroom practices can connect with empathic learning and the positive impact that such connections can produce for students in marginalised contexts.
‘Bringing closer’ human issues in the curriculum

To recapitulate, a focal subject area of the Gallery was to provide sustained learning experiences on human issues in the curriculum. By reviewing the research literature, it can be seen that an important area of concern in primary education is for students to develop an understanding of their civic responsibilities (ACARA 2013; Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008; Brophy et al., 2012, Cole & McGuire, 2002). From an Australian perspective, curriculum documents, such as the newly revised Australian Curriculum, advocate for lessons that deepen knowledge and understanding in ‘how people can participate as active and informed citizens with high-level skills needed for the 21st century’ (ACARA, 2013). In relation to the analytical point of growing empathic concerns, the outcomes of the Gallery brought to light how the majority of students maintained a focus on the human issues in their topics of study. The evidence suggested that the students in this study were high cognitively, high affectively and high operatively engaged in prolonged humanising learning experiences that, according to their teachers in interview, stood in contrast to one-off lessons of citizenship. Each program of study for the Galleries had a different focus relating to big ideas that underpin the humanities. For example, the younger group of students, in the second context, considered big ideas in the form of human relationships and how personal action can affect a community. In the first context, the Gallery focused on the key historical moments in Australian society and the impact this had and continues to have on a particular minority group. In the third school context, the students were prompted to gain an empathic understanding about immigration. To reiterate, in each context these themes were entwined with artistic learning experiences with the intention to provide deeper and more meaningful understanding of these civic concerns throughout the program.

The data from across each school context suggested that the students began to explore the human relationships at work in their topics by examining big ideas and expressing their empathic understandings through artistic practice. By examining the pedagogical features of the Gallery that preferred team focused arts-based tasks, the data illustrated that the students had learning opportunities to communicate
different viewpoints and express empathic reasoning that worked together to problematise and synthesise their understanding of the big ideas. For example, in the younger class group, the students expressed through drama and movement activities, play-based activities and, in writing, an enhanced empathic comprehension of the key moral elements of the topic. In the first school context, the evidence points to the students developing the ability to communicate intercultural perspectives in relation to significant historical moments in Australian society. The data from the older class reveals how the students were able to express compassionate understandings of the big ideas involved in human immigration. A commonality across each group was that the students demonstrated the key areas of human concern and communicated their understanding of big ideas during organised imaginative play sessions, structured team based tasks, descriptive writing tasks and in whole-class reflections. In all sites, the arts practice appeared to provide a platform for the students to express the humanising subject matter in an enriched and meaningful way, and brought the larger issues of human impact closer to students’ lives. The data revealed that the students’ abilities to empathise were enhanced through the Gallery program. This finding resonates with Egan’s (2013) perspective that employing imagination and wonder in educational experiences can enable students to enact and gain more authentic meaning and deeper understanding.

The majority of the students across all sites expressed an enjoyment of learning about significant human issues in each Gallery and were able to demonstrate pride in their ability to present an Exhibition about their learning experiences to their school community. Findings indicated that the arts-based practice helped to ‘bring closer’ concepts of human importance to the students, so that big ideas and complex human issues became more meaningful. The students’ voices in the data across each context were indicative of a growing empathic mindset that became more closely interlinked with a notion that important civic concerns were of relevance to them. Coupled with this was a growing understanding for some students, particularly at the Valley and Field school sites, that ‘we are not just some kids’ (Valley Gallery), but that they had a powerful message to send to their communities and an ability to bring a different perspective to the audience. The Gallery data brought to light, in a practical sense, how students can engage in sustained and meaningful learning in the humanities, as
opposed to one-off disconnected lessons and, further, that such learning can be powerful and productive towards students developing an appreciation of their place and their impact on society.

**Deep thinking, deep understandings**

A principle governing this research was to provide students with intellectually challenging tasks in the form of arts-based pedagogy. This key aim corresponds with the research literature that supports the need for high intellectual quality in schooling, as a means to lift the academic outcomes of all students (Hayes et al., 2006, Munns et al., 2013). In addition, the research sought to connect issues of human concern to the process of learning so that students could see the relevance of their work to the world beyond the classroom and to develop empathic responses to important human issues. The Gallery and Exhibitions were designed to allow students to demonstrate their understandings in a variety of ways through a rich selection of arts-based processes, as opposed to traditional forms of measurement which test a limited set of knowledge through more narrow means. As suggested by the research literature (Barone & Eisner, 2012, Winston, 1998), artistic forms of expression are often not formally regarded as adequate markers of academic, or intellectual, performance. Artistic learning was valued in this research as an important medium to justify the core aims of the program and the purpose behind implementing such classroom practices. The analysis of the effectiveness of the Gallery and Exhibition moved away from the ranking and sorting practices of standardised assessment and affiliated with the view that ‘high stakes testing regimes do not offer opportunities for all students to engage in high-quality intellectual activities’ (Hayes et al., 2006). The pedagogical practices of the Gallery were purposefully developed so that students would be encouraged to embrace artistic ways of being, along with the chance for them to engage with intellectually stimulating activities.

In the analyses of the Gallery programs, the data showed that the majority of students in each context were building towards developing deeper thinking and deeper understanding of their topics. A shared observation across each site was that students demonstrated higher-order thinking towards the latter Galleries, as each group engaged in the active participation of their learning. The arts-based learning allowed
time for the students to combine their thoughts and ideas by working in teams, reflecting as a class, raising questions and working together on artistic challenges. The social constructivist pedagogical approach gave the classes a chance to combine their knowledges and manipulate information in order to create a solution to a problem or provide their interpretation of the content matter in artistic means. In doing so, each group of students demonstrated a range of points of view or conclusions to consider. In the younger class of students, the topics centred on issues of morality in human relationships. In this context, the data showed that the students were working towards communicating their understandings in more sophisticated ways by accurately demonstrating comprehension of the key ideas and concepts in their topic. More complex human correlations were explored in the older year groups by thinking about big ideas of immigration and effects of colonisation on Indigenous Australians. In these contexts, the data conveyed that the students were able to synthesise information in order to explain and interpret their findings, consider and communicate differing points of view and coherently communicate their ideas. In all contexts, the students’ achievements in deeper thinking and deeper understanding occurred through their active involvement in arts-based learning. An intention of the Gallery programs was to provide students with the opportunity to explore human relationships and develop greater capacity to develop compassion and greater understanding of themselves and others. Through analyses of the movement, drama, visual literacy and music activities, the evidence suggested that it is reasonable to conclude that the students were able to express conflicting perspectives and discuss the complexity of human impact at work in their topics. In this sense, arts was a valuable vehicle for the students to connect emotionally with their learning while at the same time producing work of high intellectual quality.

To summarise thus far, this chapter has discussed specific points of analysis from within each of the four main themes that came to light across the three research sites. A description of some of the ‘mess and struggles’ that occurred in the implementation of the Gallery sites will now be discussed.


8.2.5 Mess and Struggles

In the course of conducting research within the three sites, there were difficulties that presented themselves. Firstly, initial resistance to the Gallery pedagogy was common at each school. There were students in each context who presented opposition to participate during the initial lessons. There were also students who may not have presented oppositional behaviour but who, instead, did not necessarily ‘buy in’ to the pedagogical style that had been introduced in the Gallery. These students required additional support to be able to participate in the lessons. Over time, resistance to the Gallery pedagogy lessened. Secondly, one site requested a different model of Exhibition. The school wished to have other classes participate, which presented challenges to the overall structure and purpose of the Exhibition. Initial plans had to be amended to accommodate the school’s request. There were difficulties during the implementation of the new format for the Exhibition at this site, including resistance from some of the ‘new’ students. This had an impact on the overall success of the Exhibition at this site, to the extent that it was questioned by the researcher whether the aims of the Exhibition would have been better served if the original class had presented their own Exhibition to the visiting classes. Thirdly, at another site, a student was suspended from school which prevented their participation in the final Exhibition. Such an event was upsetting to the researcher, the class teacher and the student concerned. This student’s exclusion also had a direct impact on the rest of the class, who had to largely improvise sections of the Exhibition to cover the roles of the missing student. This incident is reflective of the often frequent approach to behaviour management in these contexts, where control and compliance are often the main discourse in low SES classrooms. Despite these difficulties around resistances and administrative challenges, the data clearly indicated that the Gallery brought about important gains for the students with respect their engagement in their learning and subsequent development of deeper understandings, and it has been these gains that have been the most critical outcome of this research.

This chapter will now describe some commonalities that can be deduced about the pedagogical model of the Gallery from across each research context.
8.2.6 Gallery and Exhibition

*Gallery as a democratic space*

The Gallery and Exhibition, as a combined pedagogical strategy, is the expression of the four research themes (arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour) in synchronicity. A driving force behind the research intention was that this synchronicity could enhance the social and academic outcomes of all learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The conception of the Gallery as a pedagogical framework draws metaphorical reference to an art gallery, in that it is a space to share artistic work and it is open to the ideas and contributions of learners. In this sense, the Gallery was designed as a democratic space with the intention that all students would be able to participate and experience achievement.

Findings indicated much commonality in the responses of the case study students. To reiterate, the case study students were chosen as representatives of the student body for differing reasons. Their selection prior to the Gallery program was based on them displaying a range of compliant and/or challenging behaviour, a span of academic abilities, and, in turn, a variety of levels of engagement in their classrooms. In analysing the data after the Gallery program, the findings indicated that these students were mostly actively participating in the activities. A common response from these students was that they expressed enjoyment of the activities and further, that they communicated that they were feeling a sense of being capable students. A case study student revealed that she felt admired by her peers, a feeling that this student may not otherwise have felt in more traditional classroom formats. The class teachers gave common responses in regard to the general effects of the Gallery to their students, in that they noticed certain students were becoming more ‘in task’ and that other teachers, external to the classroom environment, had made comments about particular students’ heightened engagement since the Galley program. The case study students’ experiences in the Gallery were representative of their peers and were also indicative of a notion that the Gallery was functioning as a democratic space that was more open to the ideas and contributions of all learners.
Arts pedagogy was utilised as a key strategy for promoting the active participation of all learners and for them to experience achievement. This research takes seriously that artistic and creative forms of knowing and expression are important factors in contributing to educational equity. Eisner (2002a) states:

> It is important for students to recognise that neither meaning nor human intelligence is the sole province of literal language or number. It is important for teachers to recognise that non-linguistic and non-quantitative forms of representation should be a part of the programs that they design. (p. 205)

It is this recognition that became increasingly essential to the insider classroom identification that began to occur at each site. The evidence suggested that the Gallery allowed the majority of students an option to display their learning in artistic ways. It was observed that artistic and creative ways of being became a successful and increasingly utilised form of expression for some students who had not experienced academic success in other areas of their school life. In this way, the Gallery can be analysed as a contributor towards equity of academic expression for all students.

The Gallery led to a culminating learning experience in the form of an Exhibition. To summarise, each Exhibition was, in varying degrees, depending on the age of the students, largely constructed by the learners. In all contexts, the students were given control over what content to include in the Exhibition and in doing so were also prompted to focus on the messages that they wanted to send to the audience. The data suggested that in each context, there was a high level of engagement in preparing each Exhibition to share with the school community. This data reflected that the students were developing strong feelings about themselves as capable learners in their desire to share their achievements with, and send important messages to, an audience. While the research has highlighted three different styles of Exhibition, from a practitioner perspective it can be imagined that there are limitless opportunities for what an Exhibition could ‘look like’ or include, and that the culminating Exhibition could be adapted to suit the age-level, cultural context of the learners and links that could be made to the community. In this way, the data in this study also supported the notion of the Gallery and Exhibition working towards
educational equity for students in disadvantaged contexts. Fundamentally, the purpose of the Exhibition was to allow the students a platform to showcase their deep learning and to invite the school community to share in their Gallery experiences.

A research intention was to examine the Gallery and Exhibition pedagogy in terms of how it might challenge the discourse of low expectations and ‘deficit thinking’ related to students from disadvantaged communities (Orlando & Sawyer, 2013, p. 10; Hayes et al., 2006, p. 36). Gallagher and Service (2010) discuss how theatre work can bring to light the assets that students bring to the classroom (p. 237) rather than focusing on what students’ lack. For this research, it was important to consider that ‘children bring a vast range of stories to the classroom, drawing on their cultural and experiential knowledge’ (p. 240) and to acknowledge how the Gallery and Exhibition could address not only their academic but also their social needs. The Gallery process sought to involve the students in the construction of knowledge, and also to draw on their experiences to relate their learning to their own world and connections beyond the classroom. All three classrooms were involved in artistic practices with the aim to consider big ideas and relate them to their own lives, or to be able to build empathic understandings. At Valley Primary School, the students were involved in re-telling their own families’ immigration stories through drama. Gallagher and Service (2010) remind us:

> When stories are difficult … teachers enter into difficult ethical terrain, as they make decisions about how to keep their students safe and protect them from becoming stigmatised by the stories of their lives. (p. 240)

In recognition of this statement, the Gallery and Exhibition process was focused on interlacing the social with the aesthetic (Gallagher & Wessels, 2013, p. 31) and in being able to open up opportunities for both the students and the wider school community to reflect on big ideas, to build positive relationships with learning and to empathise with the human stories in their topics of study. This focus is seen as important in the commitment to create engaging, meaningful and intellectually stimulating classroom learning experiences that connect to the world beyond school.
Creative student self-concept

In the analysis of the Gallery, an emergent theme was that the pedagogy appeared to promote an artistic and creative self-concept amongst the students. In all contexts, the students had not had experience of sustained artistic learning in their school environments. An examination of the data drew attention to the fact that the large majority of students began to express themselves confidently in artistic and creative ways, leading to them developing more meaningful connections to their curriculum. Analyses of the students’ reflective comments show that the students were beginning to value the artistic process of their lessons as ‘serious’ academic business. Similarly, in interviews, the class teachers also made comments about the focus of the students in the lessons and the emerging creative self-concept of the students. Together, the student and teacher responses indicated that they were self-reflecting on how artistic forms of expression had added value to their classroom experience.

Heightened creative and artistic self-concept appeared to be promoted by the exercise of the students’ imaginations. There is a growing body of literature (Egan, 2007; Eisner, 2009; Cole et al., 2013; Fleming et al., 2015) to support the notion that instilling imaginative pedagogy is highly important in the journey towards building more holistic learning experiences in education. Egan contends that imaginative pedagogy should be considered as allowing ‘a particular kind of flexibility, energy, and vividness that can imbue all mental functions, as a kind of mood of mind’ (Egan, 2007). The research data supported the finding that the Gallery pedagogy was allowing the students the time and space to actively utilise their imaginative capacities. Further, in this process, it seems that the students’ creative self-efficacy was advanced and that from this, they began to value artistic and creative practices as important educational tools. From learning conversations, there is evidence from each school context to support this analytic point, as students began to talk of how using their imaginations enhanced idea generation and group work. It was even referred to as a useful cognitive tool in the way it could help to make learning ‘sit in your brain’ (Green Primary School). In this sense, the Gallery can be viewed from the student perspective as a valuable and important means to express understanding. Klug and Whitfeld (2010) refer to the importance of giving a serious role to arts in
the curriculum to heighten social and academic outcomes for all students. In order to shape enriching curriculum, ‘our focus as educators needs to be on successful strategies for teaching and learning of all students. Instead of curtailing arts in our schools, we should be incorporating them across the curriculum to further enhance students’ learning opportunities’ (Klug & Whitfeld, 2010, p. 161). The data in this study communicated that students with a range of academic and behavioural needs were able to experience important levels of success in the Gallery.

**Engagement and intrinsic reward**

An important analytic point from the data was that the majority of students across the contexts were beginning to intrinsically value the Gallery and Exhibition process. Before the Gallery intervention, it appeared from each context that the students’ perspectives of achievement, and their conceptions of what constituted rigorous academic success were defined along lines of competition, rank and extrinsic reward. This may not be surprising given that classrooms in these contexts can be historically defined by confined, low level curriculum practices and an over-emphasis on performance driven expectations from the school community and the wider political social sphere (Hayes et al., 2006, p 36; Thomson, Lingard, & Wrigley, 2012, p. 12; Lingard, 2013, p. xi). Before the Galleries, engagement with artistic practice was not necessarily perceived by the majority of students as important cognitive learning. The research story highlighted how the students began to ‘buy in’ to the arts-based practices as meaningful and purposeful expressions of learning. Further, it appeared that the pedagogy began to intrinsically motivate the majority of students, and so arguably they increasingly saw this type of learning as a legitimate form of achievement. Responses from students demonstrated the intrinsic benefit that the Gallery appeared to generate as they made comments suggesting that they both enjoyed the Gallery and found it intellectually challenging. Similarly, the teachers began to communicate how they noticed the intrinsic engagement of the students expanding by commenting that, as the students’ active participation increased in the process, they began to inherently care about the Gallery and the Exhibition.

As the Gallery process drew to a close, each group appeared to be intrinsically motivated to prepare an Exhibition to share with their school community. To
reiterate, the Exhibition was not designed as a disconnected performing arts ‘showcase’ but an expression and amalgamation of the learning that had continued across the Gallery program. It was thus imagined as a space for aesthetic, social and pedagogical interaction and for its potential for ongoing positive impact within the class and wider community. This type of pedagogical culmination in the form of a learning Exhibition served to both question the ‘one-off’ and potentially superficial style of primary school artistic showcases and provide an example of the kinds of meaningful artistic learning demonstrations that students can construct. The Exhibition thus paralleled with the types of theatrical experiences described by Gallagher and Wessels (2013) that re-imagine the pedagogical potential of such exercises by suggesting that the social and aesthetic exchange of theatre can occur ‘beyond the limits of the theatre auditorium’ (p. 31) and that there is room within schools to embrace more creative and ‘alternative’ types of learning demonstrations. Importantly for this research, the possibilities of such an exchange is also intertwined with the belief that such practices are ‘engaged in a broader educational/social change agenda that invite people to continue relationships with them and to become involved in ‘doing good’ in their local communities’ (pp. 31-32). As stated, in line with the student engagement theme of research, this study embraced a commitment to socially just educational experiences for all. To reiterate, the Exhibition worked strenuously against the ‘pedagogy of poverty’ (Haberman, 1991) and ‘deficit thinking’ (Hayes et al., 2006, p. 36) that can characterise these communities, because high expectations, dynamic and varied pedagogical practices and student ownership were paramount to the design and enactment of the Exhibition space.

The evidence from each learning context suggested that the students became, over time, immersed in the activity of creating an Exhibition and that they saw this act as meaningful. Student responses, particularly from the older classes, expressed enjoyment in the Exhibition planning, willingness to express meaning and pride in what they were accomplishing, which indicated their growing motivation. As communicated by the data, the Exhibition was seen as a risk, by both students and teachers in each learning context, because it was a form of artistic expression that they were not used to presenting. The Exhibition was a new format for the class to express their learning in a modality that wasn’t initially comfortable for many
students, nor for the teachers. However, the data clearly depicted that the majority of students in all contexts began to value the Gallery and further became inspired to share their work with the community in the form of an Exhibition. It seems reasonable then to conclude that the Gallery and Exhibition processes began, for the time being, to assist these three groups of socially disadvantaged students in being intrinsically motivated to take pride in and share their knowledge. This finding confirms literature arguing that, ‘As grades become important and as test scores define achievement, as artificial incentives are employed to motivate students, the need for activities and situations that generate intrinsic motivations for achievement looms larger and larger’ (Eisner, 2002a, p. 202). The Exhibition process appeared to off-set the types of low-level pedagogy and performative pressure that these students were generally used to, and importantly, that the students started to value their involvement in the Gallery and Exhibition as academic work.

As the analyses of the four research themes unfolded (arts pedagogy, creativity, learning as a human endeavour and student engagement), further concepts informed the pedagogical project at the heart of the study. These were humanising creativity and beauty in education. This chapter now turns to explore these frameworks as the emergent and essential foundations to support the Gallery and Exhibition process as applied to arts pedagogy in primary schools.

8.3 Humanising creativity

8.3.1 Humanising creativity as a frame in the Gallery

In the process of analysis, the concept of humanising creativity (Chappell, 2008) appeared to align significantly with the findings of this research. This idea, generated from qualitative empirical research and embedded in prevailing discourses of creativity, emphasises a creative experience in which participants undergo an active process of change by ‘engaging in collaborative thinking and shared action to imaginatively develop new ideas, which are valuable to them and their community’ (Chappell, Craft, Rolfe, & Jobbins 2012, p. 1). Furthermore, this concept supports a view, that, through shared action, the process is inherently grounded in the human
body itself and also that the experience leans towards shared ownership and communal development.

The idea of humanising creativity builds and extends upon other related versions of creativity, that are also relevant to this research, including ‘democratic creativity’ (Banaji, Burn, & Buckingham, 2010) and ‘wise creativity’ (Claxton, Craft, & Gardner; 2008). These concepts support the understanding of creativity in education as promoted in this research, namely, the humanising focus and ethical drive for deeper human connections in learning. In promoting creative pursuits in education with a greater humanising approach, the pedagogy that was implemented in this study included practices such as collaboration, play and imaginative thinking. Democratic creativity, like humanising creativity, promotes the idea that creativity is an integral cultural and symbolic practice of being ‘human’, and that educational practices need to consider more inclusive perceptions of what counts as creative (Banaji, et al., 2010). In considering democratic creativity as a move away from elite notions of creative practice, it appears allied to the student engagement slant of this research that targets more equitable and improved outcomes for all students as an important social justice issue (Munns et al., 2013). In a similar vein, humanising creativity also connects to the ideas of wise creativity, which examines issues of ethics within the creativity discourse. Both lines of discourse emphasise how creativity should be accompanied by ‘compassion, empathetic negotiation and communal as well as individual advancement’ (Chappell et al., 2012, p. 4). Humanising creativity thus comprises the key notions of democratic and wise creativity but draws deeper connections to sensual or embodied educational approaches, and more communally focused creative objectives. In this way, humanising creativity as a concept can be distinguished as a significant framework for bringing together the research themes of arts pedagogy, creativity, learning as a human endeavour and student engagement.

The rationale for aligning humanising creativity with this research is that there appears to be two aspects of significant relevance. The first is that the creative and artistic pedagogy served as an intrinsically humanising process, and, secondly, that
the process itself enhanced a focus towards connecting classroom practice with
issues of human concern. These two ideas will now be explored.

8.3.2 Humanising quality of creativity and arts pedagogy

A key finding across each context was that the creative and artistic pedagogy served
as an increasingly important means of learning and expression for each group of
students, and that this reinforced such essentially human processes of learning as
play and collaboration. The evidence supports that the Gallery and Exhibition
process allowed opportunities for the vast majority of students, with a diverse range
of academic and social needs, to be active participants in their classrooms. Chappell
et al. (2012) address communal creativity as ‘shared action’ in that ‘humanising
creativity is embodied; it is grounded in the very place of being human, the body’
(p. 3). Parallels can thus be drawn to the emphasis on the body in the Gallery, in that
the students were encouraged, through artistic ways of expression, to use their bodies
to communicate their thoughts and emotions about what they were learning. The
collaborative and corporeal nature of the Gallery seemed to have allowed some
marginalised students to have a voice in their classroom, and to enhance their
perspectives of their own, and their class’s, capabilities. In this sense, the Gallery
could be seen to offer a more humane, or democratic approach to lifting the learning
potential of many of the students. The images and comments captured during the
Galleries and in the post Gallery reflections/interviews with photojournalists
provided evidence of the students’ growing acceptance of the validity and the power
of their corporeal, and artistic, ways of learning. In each context, the evidence
pointed to the students developing an increased level of participation in the process
and more authentic relationships with the learning presented in the Gallery. The
collaborative artistic and creative practices appeared to invite students from a variety
of backgrounds to physicalise their understandings and present empathically the
emotions within their topics. To reiterate, there were limited props and resources at
use and the focus was on the students using their own bodies and voices to enact the
Gallery. Due to the corporeal nature of the forms of expression presented in this
research, artistic and creative ways of learning in the Gallery and Exhibition are thus
regarded as intrinsically human capabilities that this process appeared to enhance.
The photojournalists’ reflections presented the apparent high value that the students themselves placed on their artistic representations of knowledge. Eisner (1992) advocates for emotion as a vital attribute to true understanding:

In failing to experience the emotion of such moments, we miss out on an aspect of life that has the potential to inform. Detachment and distance have their virtues, but they are limited resources for understanding, and any conception that assigns them dominion in cognition misconceives the ways in which understanding is fostered. (p. 593)

Humanising creativity is thus regarded as an important framework to align with the practices of the Gallery and Exhibition process in the sense that it describes how the construction of knowledge through corporeal, emotional and artistic means is a humanising capability that deserves greater attention in education for the enhancement of the social and academic outcomes of all students.

8.3.3 Connecting the classroom to humanising creativity

At the core of the humanising creativity educational approach is the notion that students can be guided by practices of compassion, empathy and shared goals. As the review of the literature has previously demonstrated, the fostering of creativity has become part of educational policy and is reflective of a discourse that presents creativity as a response to the changing demands of a globalised, competitive, market-based economy (Banaji & Burn, 2007). The implication for education is that creativity might be celebrated as an essential skill at an economic level. Craft and Jeffrey (2001) describe that the discourse of creativity as an economic imperative may draw the focus away from humanly-focused values towards individual achievement, a form of achievement that is in alignment with market-driven values. This research alternatively aims to pursue a route for creativity in education that contributes to the promotion of humanist ideals. The idea of humanising creativity acknowledges the importance of an individual’s ideas in contributing to the process of creative practice. However, the overriding concern in this line of thought is that ‘individual advancement is not the dominant force behind the creativity’ (Chappell et al., 2012). The notion of a more communal and ethical version of creativity was promoted in the Gallery through human practices such as group work, shared
responsibility, a focus on learning, shared goals, reflective practice and ultimately a focus on big ideas of human impact.

An important similarity between each site was that the classroom pedagogy of the Gallery served to heighten the human understandings of the students towards their areas of study. The big ideas that were the focus of each Gallery program link to the growing advocacy in current Australian curriculum documents (e.g. revised Australian curriculum, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2013) that state ‘all young people in Australia should be supported to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens’ (General capabilities, ACARA, 2013). Big ideas were used as a catalyst in the Gallery programs for students to consider issues of human impact in their learning. The revised curriculum includes general capabilities that are stated to be informed by the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008). This report proclaimed that education should help to develop individuals who:

… manage their own wellbeing, relate well to others, make informed decisions about their lives, become citizens who behave with ethical integrity, relate to and communicate across cultures, work for the common good and act with responsibility at local, regional and global levels. (MCEETYA 2008)

These goals are surely characterised by their emphasis on democratic and humanitarian principles and thus can serve to inform the importance of humanising creativity as a curriculum objective. In association with the research theme of learning as a human endeavour, the Gallery program for each school context focused on a different area of human concern, and included a variety of ideas such as, confronting multicultural perspectives, empathic reasoning, problematising historical knowledge and questioning human relationships. The research illustrated how an ethical dimension can be nurtured through such pedagogical interventions as the Gallery. The curriculum content was organised around big ideas in order to support the students to develop deeper understandings. Brophy and Alleman (2007), drawing on the theorising of Dewey (1938) and their extensive classroom research on children’s understandings, argue that focusing content around big ideas helps
students to connect with the content and perceive it as relevant and worth learning “but also to help ensure that the activities based on this content are authentic and engaging” (p.17). The argument that the Gallery aligns deeply with the humanising creativity rhetoric is supported by the evidence that the students’ collaborative thinking and shared goals worked towards them developing more enduring relationships with the learning that had been generated.

This chapter will now explore beauty in education as another concept that informs the research findings.

8.4 Beauty in education

In analysis of this research, the concept of beauty in education was an important consideration at the intersection of the four themes of arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour. This analysis, in line with the research themes, focuses on the beauty inherent in arts pedagogy, but does not claim that notions of beauty or aesthetics are limited to this curriculum domain. This analysis takes up and embraces Winston’s (2010) interest in the topic of beauty in education and draws on these key ideas as relevant to the shape of this research, for its potential to deeply engage students and to recognise the experience of pleasure in learning as an important educational pursuit (2010). It can also be embraced as a part of the overall social justice element of the concept of humanising creativity.

8.4.1 Awakening the ‘sleeping beauty’

Winston articulates how the language of beauty in education, and indeed even in relation to artistic pedagogy, remains largely absent in curriculum and policy documents (2010, p. 1). However, the idea and identification of beauty appears to be a common and shared human practice that is part of the ordinary and everyday existence. In fact, in each research context, the word was used several times in the course of the Gallery program by the participants to describe the experience of which they were a part. For example, students’ comments suggested that they acknowledged the hard work that went into their Exhibition and the team-work that helped them to reach their goals. Their comments implied important aspects of
cognitive and affective fulfilment in learning, but on another level suggested the deep emotional value of ‘loving’ what they had achieved. A student stated that as a group, they ‘loved’ their work ‘because it’s so beautiful’. The beauty of the experience, in this case, seemed to have provided an energising and emotional connection to learning for this student and serves as a reminder that the word beauty, perhaps used even unconsciously by the student here, seemed an appropriate term to describe the practice as worthwhile to its own ends.

References to beauty arose intermittently throughout the data from teachers talking about their students’ work, including the use of the word to label the students’ sculptures in Valley Primary School, to describe the way the groups worked together at Field Primary, and as a way to illustrate the intellectual understandings that the students were representing through art at Green Primary School. Likewise, the research journal also included references to the term at all school sites, particularly when describing the times when students seemingly communicated their valuing of the tasks and when the students experienced success in their artistic endeavours.

While the long philosophic history of beauty can position the term as being aligned to elitist notions of ‘good or bad taste’, Winston (2006) points out that the word is used ‘effortlessly and unproblematically in everyday speech, within contexts where ordinary people know perfectly well what they are talking about and what they mean’ (p. 288). To this end, this research embraces the concept of beauty as a notion that primary school students and their teachers are able to understand and appreciate. Furthermore, the fact that such a core human value appears to be absent from curricula raises the issue of the function of education, and a concern that Dewey highlighted as an important consideration in the social sphere. Dewey reminded us that schools are intrinsically social places made up of children who are members of society and that students ‘must be instructed and cared for as such a member’ (Dewey, 1964, p. 112). Dewey argues that education is the essential platform for a human vision of democracy and that schools exercise a responsibility in advancing and preserving the welfare of society (p. 112). The analyses supports that the concept of beauty is a human value that should be recognised and encouraged in schooling.
The very ubiquity of beauty in our cultural lives is sufficient evidence for us to regard it as a necessary human value. As with all such values, it will be shaped and influenced by the culture, or cultures, we live in; and one of the key socio-cultural roles of schools has always been to help shape the attitudes and values of young people. (Winston, 2010, p. 4)

The aesthetic comprehension and artistic practice characteristic of each Gallery at the different sites appeared to move each group of students towards a deeper connection to the important human issues involved in their learning. For this reason, an education of beauty can be embraced in this light in that it can be connected to positive values as a moral force for societal ‘good’. To reiterate, beauty is promoted as relevant in this research for its potential capacity to inspire and engage students, to promote holistic learning and to instil the experience of enjoyment in learning.

8.4.2  Beauty as experience

This research moves away from justifying the arts or learning programs simply on utilitarian lines, but rather seeks to argue for a place for the energising, pleasurable and moral slant of beauty as an experience in education. When describing a community arts project that he was evaluating, Winston states that the real qualities of the venture could not ‘be properly expressed from within the reductive language of measureable objectives. For me, it was the beauty of the experience that mattered most’ (2006, p. 293). Similarly, one of the most poignant aspects of the Gallery was the simple pleasure of the experience that continuously appeared to be communicated by the students involved in the research. The students’ reflections within the data were evidence of their positive, emotionally charged feelings towards the Gallery and one could argue that there was the trace of beauty in their sentiments when they talked of the pride they felt in their achievements, in their recognition of their affective feelings and in the use of the word ‘love’ when describing their work. Such expressions can comfortably be categorised as positive and emotional, and could lead towards the classification of ‘beautiful’ in the pleasure that is communicated by the students at each site. In alignment with the high affective theory of student engagement, this research argues for the development and importance of intrinsic joy in learning. Eisner (2002a) asserts that intrinsic satisfactions are important and that:
… engagement in the arts, when you see it happen seems to place the individual in another world … it is the process, the immersion in the activity itself and the quality of life that it makes possible, that should command more of our attention. The arts remind us of what life can be at its most vital.

(pp. 202-203)

The intrinsic joy in the process of learning was expressed by some of the students from each site. One such student who, prior to the Gallery, was described as having low academic self concept and also largely disengaged on the whole, stated that the process contributed to her feeling of being more accepted and ‘liked’ in her classroom. That a majority of the participating students were compelled to express sentiments like these was a successful result of the research, given that each school context was tagged with having significant numbers of behaviourally disruptive and disengaged students. Beauty as a concept can thus be embraced as important purely as an experience to uplift and morally influence. For these reasons, an experience of beauty in learning may be argued as a valid and worthwhile educational right.

It is important to include a few brief remarks on the effect that the Exhibitions appeared to have on their school communities, in the pursuit of beauty in education. Sarah, the teacher at Valley Primary School, revealed how the school staff, visiting students from other classes and the parents felt moved by the children’s work, and that there was a communal sense of pride and praise for the students’ artistic representation of their parents’ immigration stories. The word beautiful was even used as a description of how Sarah felt about the feedback. Similarly at Green Primary School, the Exhibition appeared to positively affect the visiting classes who were invited to participate along with Zara’s class, and students who usually experienced difficulty in new learning environments were seen to participate. What was clear was the notion of enjoyment by both the students and the visiting teachers. Perhaps most poignantly at Field Primary school, an unexpected and rewarding outcome was the number of parents who came to the Exhibition. Mary explained that the large number of parents turning up at the school to witness their Exhibition was unprecedented, and was perhaps an indicator of the positive feelings that the children were sharing about the Gallery in their home environments. Individual parents spoke to Mary about their favourable impressions of the Exhibition and how they were
surprised by their child’s artistic success. In a school environment where behavioural issues and parents’ own negative histories of schooling can influence their active support of education, the parents’ attendance and praise in this case seems to support the notion that the aesthetic can uplift and engage a community.

The heart of the Gallery emerged, over time, to become the compassionate and emotional expressions of the students during their experience. The aesthetic, or power of beauty, in the creative and artistic pedagogy appeared to generate more authentic understandings and expressions of the curriculum content by the students, that in turn led them to become empathetic of the big ideas of human importance in their work. To this end, this ‘outcome’ could be described as intrinsic rather than instrumental and resonates with the claim that ‘social justice is not an instrumental objective of beauty but part of its ‘secret power’ (Winston, 2006, p. 299). To reiterate, this research takes seriously that arts education is important for its own sake, and in agreement with Winston (2006) it is ‘morally worthwhile … for the life enhancing qualities they can bring rather that the economic or social purposes they can serve’ (p. 299). It is for this reason, that the concept of beauty in education is highly relevant as an important concept at the crossroads of the four research themes of arts pedagogy; creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented analytic results from the research. In the course of the analysis of the four research themes, arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour, the concept of humanising creativity emerged and beauty in education was utilised as appropriate foundations to support the research findings. The key results from across each context, relative to each of the research themes will now be briefly re-stated.

Significantly, arts pedagogy fuelled authentic empathic expression within the students. The kinaesthetic and aesthetic practices served to produce emotional and cognitive expression and understanding across each class context. It emerged that arts pedagogy enhanced the pleasure of learning for the majority of students and gave
them an underexplored platform for which to express themselves in a new modality. In relation to the research theme of creativity, the students recognised that collaboration and cooperation were important creative principles. Playfulness, risk taking and imaginative capacities produced effective and purposeful learning, and it was seen that these attributes became increasingly more important to the students, over time. In regard to student engagement, it came to light that the Gallery encouraged ‘insider classroom’ (Munns & Sawyer, 2013, p. 21) ideals. The voices of the students throughout the data from each class context reflected positive and capable learner self concept and importantly, ownership of learning. The last research theme, learning as a human endeavour, appeared to emphasise the intrinsically human elements at work in the Gallery, such as corporeal and emotional communication, collaboration and play. Also, learning through big ideas produced greater levels of compassionate and empathic understanding and expression within each class. Combined, these factors worked to suggest that the Gallery can be considered as a contributor towards equity of academic expression for all students.

This chapter has presented analytical points from the four research themes and has also described how humanising creativity and beauty in education were significant concepts to support the outcomes of the research. Humanising creativity emerged as an important framework to affiliate with the practices of the research in the way that the expression of knowledge through corporeal, emotional and artistic means enhanced the social and academic outcomes of all students. Beauty in education was recognised as significant for this analysis in that it was seen for its power to inspire and engage students, to promote holistic learning, to stimulate the experience of pleasure in learning, and for its capacity to morally influence and contribute towards the social justice element of the research. These key principles can be considered as the essential points of analysis and outcomes for the research on the Gallery and Exhibition process in education. The thesis now turns to the final chapter, in which the research will be summarised before implications and recommendations will be explored.
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This thesis has described the implementation of a specifically focused arts-based pedagogy (named ‘Gallery’) in three distinct low SES classrooms with the view to highlight how this approach might lead the students to more engaged relationships with learning, more ethically grounded creative learning practices and to the authentic development of big ideas of human importance. Chapter 1 presented a background to the study, justified the importance of the central research question, introduced the four main themes of research (arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour) and gave a short summary of the methodology. Chapter 2 gave a review of the relevant literature in relation to the four main themes of research. This chapter concluded that arts pedagogy could be refocused in a more human light in order to stimulate empathic responses within students to big ideas in their curriculum, and, importantly, that the arts can engender more human and affective experiences in education. The creativity theme highlighted that this study would embrace creativity as an inherently social practice, and focus pedagogically on human creative traits such as collaboration, imaginative thinking, play and improvisation, as opposed to creativity in education for competition and individualism. The critical objective here was that this might lead to ‘creativity with wisdom’; that is, the belief articulated by Craft (2006), that the ‘creativity’ in education discourse should be reframed within an ethical framework. The student engagement theme introduced relevant literature with regard the importance of building engagement in disadvantaged contexts, as a matter of social justice. It outlined ways that the Fair Go Program (2013) student engagement framework was adopted for the practical implementation of the research. The final theme that was explored in Chapter 2 was learning as a human endeavour, which discussed, in answer to the social justice intentions of the research, how students should be involved in learning experiences of high intellectual quality with ‘real world’ knowledge (big ideas). It influenced why the research valued human procedures of learning, such as empathy and collaboration. The literature review chapter also
Chapter 9

introduced the concept of beauty as a highly relevant theoretical and empirical touchstone across each of these themes, for the empathic and affective qualities it calls on in education. The Gallery and Exhibition was then presented as the core vehicle for the practical fulfilment of each of these theoretical principles. Chapter 3 detailed the arts-based, action research methodology for this study, described the research contexts and examined the procedures for the collection and analysis of data. A Pilot Study was discussed in Chapter 4. The next three chapters presented the data collected at the three research sites, Valley Primary School in Chapter 5, Green Primary School in Chapter 6, and, finally, Field Primary School in Chapter 7. The thesis then moved to present analyses of the data in Chapter 8, by highlighting commonalities, and some distinctions, that emerged amongst the three schools as a result of the implemented study. The final chapter to the thesis presents the conclusions to this study with regard the research questions and the research literature. This chapter will then suggest future directions for research and pedagogy in light of the Gallery implementation. Following first, is a recognition of some limitations of this study, followed by a restating of and responses to the research questions, before presenting a more definitive summary of the results and conclusions.

9.1 A recognition of the limitations

An important caveat that must be made in relation to the conclusions of this research is that this investigation was a relatively short project in only three classrooms. Nevertheless, it is argued that its conclusions might generate further discussion about what can be learned for more long-term applications of the research principles that have been described. It is put forward that the specific combination of the themes that have been explored in this thesis might offer teachers, school leaders and education policy makers a new and practical approach to arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour in the implementation of the Gallery.

The recognition that this thesis has presented a ‘snapshot in time’ of the Gallery in action in three disadvantaged classrooms, raises the issue that there are limitations in
terms of the length and breadth of the implemented action research. The effects of such an implementation are thus confined overall to a relatively small group of students and a restricted length of time. The results are therefore presented in light of the understanding that the action research took place for a relatively short period (two school terms) and that it was implemented in only three classrooms. While the analyses has highlighted some commonalities that emerged from the data across each site, which in turn has led to the results highlighted throughout the thesis, these commonalities are read and interpreted through a lens that accepts that these commonalities are reflective of the limitations that have been raised here.

Later in this chapter, future research suggestions highlight ways that these results can be further tested in larger sample groups, in a wider range of contexts with students of all school ages and across a longer time frame.

These caveats aside, the thesis has highlighted important insights into the responses of students to the arts-based pedagogy at the heart of this action research, and so proposes that the Gallery might provide an alternate curriculum and pedagogical approach in educational systems where the inscribed performative approach fosters utilitarian values. While technical curriculum planning is not disregarded here, this thesis has put forward that a focus on the technical should be balanced, and indeed that it would be enhanced, by a re-focus towards the aesthetic, and the important connection between emotion and cognition. In this way, the results are compelling; certain aspects of the Gallery that have been described might inform crucial variations that could uplift everyday classroom practice, especially for students in disadvantaged contexts where low level controlling tasks in ‘basic’ subjects are far too often the fall-back classroom positions. It is put forward that this study contributes to an understanding of the types of pedagogical interventions that might work for other students from low SES backgrounds, and, importantly, that these are intended to add to an academic and educational conversation about why such interventions are necessary and meaningful for these students. The conclusions offer critical insights to consider for future research and for future classroom integration.
9.2 A response to the research questions and the Gallery model

The thesis began by posing the question:

What happens when children in low SES primary classrooms are introduced to pedagogy that focuses on student engagement and the arts?

The three sub-questions to this research include:

A. How can purposeful arts and creative teaching and learning deeply engage students?

B. How can arts-focused teaching and learning experiences contribute towards a more human focus for creativity in education?

C. How can the concept of ‘beauty’ as a human value serve as a bridge between arts-focused creative pedagogical practices and learning as a human endeavour?

The research was an arts-based, action research project designed to capture evidence of the effect of artistic learning that focused on big ideas of human effect. In answer to Research Question A), it was found that it was the interdependence of the artistic, corporeal, communal, emotional and enjoyable aspects of the pedagogy that led the students to produce meaningful expressions of the big ideas from their learning. It was found in answer to Research Question B), that it was these same factors that created an important learning space for the students to more deeply connect cognitively with the human focus of the study, and which, in turn, led them to react to their learning in a more democratic and ethical light. In regards to Research Question C), it was found that beauty was a vital element in the realisation of the intentions of the Gallery, and that it generated pleasurable and compassionate effects on the participants. The qualities of affect and empathic response that were engendered in the Gallery process via beauty were seen to be the bridge between artistic expression and the humanising core of the pedagogy.
The Gallery concept (Winchester, 2012, 2013, 2015) that was developed specifically for the research, established a model that could answer the call for more artistic, humane and democratic practices in learning. In practice, it is a model for planning learning around big ideas of human significance drawn from the curriculum topic, and fosters the designing of arts-based and creative experiences to enact this learning. The Gallery places an emphasis on reconsidering artistic practice as vitally important for two reasons. First, this research has shown that artistic expression should be valued as a valid form of the expression of learning, and, second, that authentic artistic practice should be given greater prominence for the joy it can bring to educational experience. Indeed, this thesis strenuously argues that this is a highly important position in its own right. The literature reinforces a view that high affective experiences in education (in concert with high cognitive and high operative experiences) are particularly important for low SES communities to counter the low-level curriculum practices that are often definitive of these contexts. Further, high affective learning is an essential ingredient in a student engagement project that encourages students to feel that ‘school is for me’ (FGP, 2006). To meet the demands of these research ideas, the Gallery can be distinguished from technicist approaches that are paramount in many current educational settings, particularly in disadvantaged contexts (Orlando & Sawyer, 2013, p. 10).

The Gallery model thus grew from the research questions and the generation of the four key themes of research, as described above. This chapter now presents the summary of results and conclusions, in light of these research questions, themes and the implementation of the Gallery.

### 9.3 Summary of results and conclusions

There are three aspects of this study. The first is that the pedagogy that was put into action in three separate low SES classrooms has clearly shown that the Gallery and Exhibitions were working towards educational equity for students in these disadvantaged contexts. The second feature is that arts pedagogy was the essential platform to bring together each of the main research themes, and that importantly, arts became a key contributor to providing an equity of academic understanding and
communication across each context. The third result is that humanising creativity and beauty in education were both essential cores of the Gallery and Exhibition in action, and that the Gallery provides a ‘working model’ for each of these discourses. These are valuable reflections of the research intentions. The conclusions of this research will now be discussed.

9.3.1 The Gallery for educational equity

Competition, rank and extrinsic reward can be features of the perception of achievement and academic intelligence in contexts in which low level curriculum practices and an over-emphasis on performative structures are frequently the defining story. The three contexts that are the subject of this investigation are illustrative of such a narrative. This research has exemplified how the Gallery is a clear example of how learning structures of a performative nature could be counterbalanced by a model in which students construct their own knowledge, learn through experience, make connections and conceptualise the world beyond the classroom, and, importantly, where artistic expression is prized as a valid form of academic representation. Arts pedagogy is thus an important foundational theme. Creativity contributes to the educational equity outcome for its capacity to enact creativity with wisdom (Craft, 2008) and the humanising creativity discourse (Chappell et al., 2012). That the students began to build feelings and aptitudes towards an ‘insider classroom’ (FGP, 2013) (Chapter 2), is directly relatable to the student engagement theme, and points to how such an effect might well be a vital leveller on the journey to educational equity (Hayes et al., 2006). The learning as a human endeavour theme embraces educational equity as a key component of the pedagogy, in which greater democratic and humanising processes in the classroom are sought (Dewey, 1967; Eisner, 2002b, Egan, 2013). In support of this literature, this study has verified that artistic and creative expressions are valuable considerations on the path to educational equity.

As evidenced in the data and analyses that have been presented in the previous four chapters, this thesis demonstrates clearly that students’ deeper engagement in the learning process, their more active involvement and participation in learning and their increasing recognition of the value of their work, are together able to tackle the
deficit thinking mentality that students in marginalised contexts are invariably faced with (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006, p. 36; Wrigley, Thomson, & Lingard, 2012, p. 201; Arthur & Hertzberg, 2013, p. 162). In describing the limitations of this research, it is acknowledged that this study represents a relatively short project in only three classroom contexts but that the conclusions might offer teachers some guidance for more long-term implementations of the Gallery. In the course of the Gallery, the data reveals that the students moved from shallow understandings of the curriculum big ideas and were working towards connections and deeper understanding of the curriculum content. The students’ progression of understandings was supported by the Gallery experiences which, in turn, supported the development of ‘insider classroom’ mentality. This research concludes that the Gallery approach is a vehicle for more socially just educational experiences.

9.3.2 Emotional, communal and empathic aspects of Arts pedagogy as the ‘stage’ for academic understanding and expression

The Gallery process relied on arts-based strategies for students to explore and communicate their feelings and intellectual interpretations of their learning. This thesis has argued that the students from each context were able to utilize the artistic procedures to express their cognitive understanding of the topics, which importantly, also contained empathic embodiment of the big ideas. Consistent with the research literature on arts pedagogy and cognitive understanding (Eisner 2002a; Gallagher, 2005; Gallagher & Ntelioglou, 2011; Robinson, 2011; Egan, 2013), this study strongly advocates for the artistic expressions by the students within the Gallery and Exhibition as academic achievement. The arts were thus promoted not only as a primary element for the demonstration of understanding, but as valid, compelling and highly pertinent modes for displaying academic achievements. It is recognised that some students’ responses and connection to the arts pedagogy began at superficial levels and that initially there may have been ‘novelty factors’ in play; that is, it may have been seen purely as a form of amusement rather than as a form of academic expression. At all sites, there were some students who also rejected the artistic pedagogy and refused to participate in the opening lesson, and some did not ‘buy in’ to the pedagogical style until after a few Galleries had progressed. There were thus
some students in the early stages for whom the artistic activities were connected with at only simplistic and shallow levels. The data reveals that this began to change towards the middle of the Gallery programs, with most students demonstrating deeper participation and understandings of the big ideas through the arts pedagogy. For some, the artistic modalities in the Gallery became key drivers of academic communication for such students who had experienced limited academic success in more traditional classroom processes. A conclusion that can be drawn from this, and one that connects closely to the first outcome, is that arts pedagogy should be given greater primacy in education as a factor that can contribute to student engagement and educational equity for academic understanding and expression.

This conclusion is essentially imbedded in the fact that the evidence from this study has demonstrated how empathy and emotion, in other words the high affective focus at the heart of the pedagogy, were inseparably linked to the cognitive expressions of the students, and, further, that these were communicated through artistic modalities. In this sense, the study has distanced itself from an over-emphasis on a utilitarian perspective of arts education. Empathic understanding became a key point of analysis across each context. This research has shown that by incorporating arts practice to explore big ideas, students were able to more strongly connect to real world issues of human concern and relate emotionally to their learning. Thus, an important conclusion was that the students’ developing artistic expressions were illustrative of the interdependence between the intellectual and emotional construction of knowledge. This outcome also demonstrates a more holistic and authentic approach to what constitutes learning, as opposed to approaches in educational settings where test performance and standardised procedures are paramount. This research has clearly demonstrated that the relationship between cognitive and emotional understanding that was promoted in the Gallery illuminates how students can be led towards deeper, more authentic understanding, as opposed to superficial factual recall of the subject matter.

The focus on artistic practice in the Gallery is an exemplar of how collaborative and corporeal pedagogy allowed some students from these marginalised contexts to have a voice in their classroom, and to increase their perspectives of their own, and their
class’s ability. This outcome is related to the foundations of humanising creativity and beauty that will be described in the next section.

9.3.3 Humanising and beautiful core of the Gallery

A core outcome was that humanising creativity (Chappell, 2008; Chappell et al., 2012) and beauty in education (Winston, 2010, 2013, 2015b) strengthened the collaborative, moralistic and aesthetic core aspects of the Gallery experience. Humanising creativity affirms that collaborative practice and thinking can support groups of students to create imaginative ideas of value (Chappell et al., 2012). Consistent with this literature, a conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that the arts and creativity focused pedagogy served as an intrinsically humanising process in terms of the collaboration and corporeal expression it engendered, and secondly, that these elements enhanced a connection between classroom practices and issues of human concern. In alliance with the doctrine of humanising creativity, the Gallery became an exemplar of how students’ expressions of learning can be guided by compassion and shared values (Chappell et al., 2012). This outcome is highly relatable to the student engagement and learning as human endeavour themes of research, which have shed light on the outcomes that the students were positioning themselves as active learners in their classrooms, and that they began to acknowledge that, for the time being, they were part of a valuable and collaborative learning experience. The recurring outcomes from each context was that the students communicated engaging messages of high achievement, aspiration, connection to the task as relevant to them, shared control over the Gallery and Exhibition, and finally that they desired to share their learning of the big ideas from the curriculum with their wider school community.

This study thus contributes to the literature on beauty by Winston (2010, 2013, 2015b) by providing evidence for how beauty can uplift and engage students. There is currently an underexplored discourse in educational literature and practice about why beauty matters in learning and what it ‘looks like’ in practice. This research wishes to make a case for the importance of the corporeal, emotional and artistic expressions that are distinctive aspects of the beauty discourse, as being important for their own sake, for the inspiring, empathic and joyful elements that can be
brought to classrooms. This intention strongly aligns with the arts pedagogy and learning as a human endeavour themes of research, in which artistic practices that embrace democratic, humanising and moralistic purposes are sought. These elements of beauty were communicated strongly across the data. Indeed, the evidence has pointed to the fact that the aesthetic was inextricably bound to the empathic and humane responses of the students.

The beauty of the experience was confirmed by the data in several ways. It was a value that was communicated by the participants. It was reflected in the increasingly accepted modalities of aesthetic expression, through the climate of imagination generated by playfulness, and in a sense of the affective being a central aspect of the classroom activity. These commonalities across each site confirm that the beauty discourse was a relevant and essential contributor. In this sense, this thesis responds to the call in the gap in research literature about what beauty ‘looks like’ in action in classrooms. It argues that, as a fundamental human concern, that beauty should demand greater attention in educational discourse. This study concludes that the enhanced ethical and affective responses of the students from the data point to the discourse of beauty as having a profound influence. Beauty in education in this study illuminates how and why such pedagogies have made a difference to a particular set of classroom experiences of the students in three disadvantaged classrooms.

The section has pointed to the Gallery as providing opportunities for educational equity, that its artistic principles have generated authentic academic understanding, and further, that humanising qualities as well as concerns of beauty in education are important, under-explored areas for educational experience. This chapter now presents the implications of these conclusions.

9.4 Implications of research

In summary, the previous section has offered three main conclusions to this study. First, it offers evidence that the Gallery as a model could be employed to create opportunities for educational equity. Second, that the emotional, collaborative and empathic aspects of the pedagogy are important factors in academic achievement.
Third, that the conclusions of the study are confirmed by discourses in beauty and humanising creativity. In terms of the practical implications of the Gallery, there are three central issues that should be raised. The first addresses the transferability and external validity of this study, and the second refers to the pedagogical possibilities that might be applied more widely across the whole classroom experience. These will be discussed before considering the wider implications in relation to each of the three main conclusions to this study as described above.

### 9.4.1 Transferability

This section now turns to the question of transferability and the wider implications of the types of pedagogy that have been presented. Firstly, before the implementation of the study, it was a research intention that the types of pedagogy that were presented in the Gallery could be relatable to a classroom teacher. The artistic procedures of this study were not designed, nor intended for specialist arts teachers, but were purposefully planned with the idea that general classroom teachers could implement them. This thesis acknowledges that, for some teachers, arts pedagogy may not come as naturally as to others. This is an important implication when the evidence has pointed to how vital artistic pedagogy can be for the social and academic enhancement of students in marginalised classrooms. An implication for this point would be that teachers would need to reconsider the process of planning for lessons that include purposeful intentions to incorporate places for beauty and for students to have greater contact with the aesthetic. This research puts forward that these considerations are just as important as technical concerns in curriculum planning, and indeed that they are crucial as a matter of social justice. A solution to this issue would include teacher professional development to gain insight into how teachers might be equipped to implement the Gallery pedagogy (see below, where the idea of the Gallery as a heuristic is proposed).

### 9.4.2 Pedagogical possibilities

Secondly, an important implication to address is the consideration of how the Gallery might be applied more broadly as an ongoing classroom experience, instead of the way it was presented in this study in the form of weekly ‘lessons’, despite the fact
that they were planned to be connected to the classroom curriculum. A relevant area to consider is what specific strategies or practices, that were part of the Gallery, could be incorporated more specifically and routinely into everyday classroom experiences. These could include increased opportunities for movement and aesthetic expression, further attention given to generating and allowing empathic understanding in learning, more collaborative learning opportunities, and deliberate integration of arts-based learning into overall classroom learning. It is thus acknowledged that the question of teacher planning is a central implication of how the classroom environment and classroom experiences can respond to the principles that have been communicated by the research. In direct relation to the transferability issue in the previous section, it would seem necessary that the Gallery approach for wider application into everyday classroom practice would demand alternate approaches to lesson planning, where teachers could feel supported to plan lessons that comprise wonder, surprise and opportunities to integrate the aesthetic in all curriculum areas. The Gallery reinforces narrative approaches to lessons, such as those in the Storypath method (Cole & McGuire, 2012), and demonstrates how teachers can build more affective and meaningful learning opportunities. Further, this study shows how the high operative nature of the Gallery, by the inclusion of a varied and dynamic array of activities, can affectively engage students and drive their cognitive engagement, thereby assisting them to develop depth of understanding and valuing of their own learning journey.

Another implication might be the consideration of the core outcomes of this investigation for their relevance for older learners. In terms of the wider pedagogical possibilities of the Gallery, an important question to address would be if the Gallery model could be applied in high school settings. Although this research has focused on primary aged learners, the analyses have projected certain pedagogical principles that would be equally as applicable and beneficial for students of all ages. These include the wider integration of arts-based learning methods, the inclusion of surprise and wonder in the classroom, greater opportunities for collaborative learning and playfulness and sustained learning opportunities to explore big ideas artistically. These considerations might challenge the compartmentalised nature and pedagogy of subject areas in high school settings, in which subjects are largely delineated from
each other. The analysis contributes to our understanding of why the Gallery approach could give learners of all ages more authentic, vibrant and connected learning spaces.

9.4.3 Wider implications

In the previous section, I have described that the three central conclusions of the study have been that the Gallery solidifies educational equity for all students, that arts pedagogy was important in generating emotional, communal and empathic academic understanding and that humanising and qualities of beauty were the core of the pedagogical interventions. Implications for these are now described.

The first outcome of research highlighted that the Gallery generated educational equity across each context. The significance of this outcome would be recognised by school leaders and teachers, particularly those in low SES contexts, who are interested in a working model for how to implement practices that aim to close the gap of educational outcomes for disadvantaged communities. The Gallery could be adopted as a model that could be given more long-term implementation for the chief purpose to provide more educationally just approaches in classrooms. An implication from this study is that it provides a strong example of a move away from low level, confining, and over-performative educational practices. The Gallery could prompt further purposeful discussion about the power of arts-based, creative pedagogies with a student engagement and a human focus in low SES environments. Such pedagogy is not restricted to disadvantaged communities. It has been described above that a clear implication of this outcome would be ongoing teacher professional learning in arts pedagogy and curriculum planning that would value the importance of the aesthetic for its ethical power as well as how artistic expression can be recognised as valid academic representation.

This implication is related to the second conclusion of this study, that the communal, emotional and empathic elements of the arts pedagogy in this study supported the students’ deep cognitive engagement and expression in the process of the Gallery. The political preoccupation in an Australian context with a ‘back to basics’ approach, based from within a performative educational reliance on competition, rank and
testing (see Chapter 2), has marked ramifications on this outcome. It raises the notion that education policy would be required to move beyond its current preoccupation with standardised forms of academic measurement in ‘the basics’. The current policy position has implications on the types of funding, training and professional development available to schools and teachers who are interested in applying arts-based learning in their classrooms, and importantly, also has implications on how teachers perceive and assess knowledge construction and expression. This research calls for greater prominence to be given to the concept of the construction of knowledge through corporeal, emotional and artistic means for the benefit of all students. This investigation has illuminated why arts-based, creative and humanising learning can work to not only build more authentic and relevant academic expressions, but also that this approach can deeply engage students.

This research puts forward that a greater focus on humanising creativity and beauty in education is highly pertinent and deserving of greater attention in all classrooms, but particularly in classrooms of disadvantage as presented in this study, for the reason that they provide educationalists with another lens through which to scrutinise the over reliance of student achievement on performative lines alone. There is currently a gap in educational policy with regard to these views about education. This study has demonstrated how a core result of the Gallery pedagogy was to bring forward the beauty and humanising elements of educational experience. Such a focus on humanising creativity and beauty also gives weight to the argument about the intrinsic, inspirational and moralistic benefits that the arts bring to students, distinct from the argument about arts education for utilitarian functionality. It is an important implication for teachers in marginalised contexts to take note of this argument, and to further consider how a re-focus towards human qualities and recognition of beauty in learning, as stimulated by arts practices, can be highly relevant for their classrooms.

One distinct feature of the study is that it adds to an educational conversation about what beauty might ‘look like’ in schools, and why such approaches might be important. This study has highlighted how notions of beauty have played out within the Gallery model, and that the implementation of arts pedagogy with intentions of creative stimulation, student engagement and a human core has generated different
responses from the students. These responses have been characterised by statements and behaviours that centre on the high affective, that is, the deep sense of intrinsic value and pleasure in learning. To reiterate, the student engagement literature speaks of this being of vital importance in the low SES environments that are characteristic of this study, in the journey towards students developing substantive, or authentic, long-term engagement (Munns & Sawyer, 2013). In response to the literature on creativity as an economic imperative that has been presented (Craft, 2008; Craft & Jeffrey, 2008; Flemming, 2010; Craft, Cremin, Hay, & Clack, 2014), beauty can be seen as ‘the missing link’ to bring to focus a more ethical approach to favouring creative pedagogy, over the more individualistic, economic-centric discourse. It is acknowledged that due to its current scarcity in educational dialogue, it is an implication that beauty as a concept might not be readily recognised or accepted at first by teachers as having significance in classrooms. This research demonstrates why increased opportunities to discuss beauty as having important educational impact are indeed worthy of reflection. This would require attention to the claim that planning for beauty and artistic pedagogy is not an ‘optional extra’ but an integral curriculum consideration.

This section has highlighted that a central implication of the research conclusions is that for these to be accepted and adopted as important pedagogical principles, greater opportunities for teacher professional training through this type of pedagogy and dialogue on the significance of the results of these would be essential. This chapter now turns to suggestions for future research.

### 9.5 Future research suggestions

There are four suggestions for future research that arise from this study. The first is that, in response to the implications of transferability and wider classroom adoption that have been described above, research could be conducted in classrooms where the principles of the Gallery are adopted in the everyday practices of classroom life, as opposed to the method of classroom withdrawal that have been described in this research. An action research project to track the implementation of the Gallery in classroom routines as an active planning process would shed further light on the
transferability of the Gallery to daily classroom life. It could also illuminate how the Gallery might be adapted as a conscious planning tool to lift the learning experiences of students across a school day, and not just a singular period of time in a week. Such an investigation could test any novelty effect of the Gallery and harness more understanding about how such practices might be of benefit to low SES classrooms.

A second suggestion would be to return to the teachers who were presented in this study, to research how or if the Gallery made an impact on their teaching. This longitudinal suggestion could assess the impact of the pedagogical intervention presented in this thesis. To further examine the limitations of transferability and the short term implementation of the study in this thesis, the teachers that feature in this study could act as mentors of the Gallery to other teachers with low self-efficacy in the arts in the same research contexts with the intention that the mentees could enact the Gallery with new classrooms of students. This suggestion would also give some insight into the impact of the research intervention described in this thesis and if the principles of the Gallery can be successfully implemented by generalist classroom teachers.

Building from the results of this thesis, a third research recommendation would be to investigate the professional development of student teachers in the principles and practical implementation of the Gallery. A heuristic of the Gallery is introduced in the next section of this chapter, which could serve as a guide for such an investigation. Teacher education courses could benefit from the inclusion of the pedagogical ideas and results of this study and that student teachers could be provided with practical guidance about how to plan and apply these principles to their professional practice experience. A study of the professional development of student teachers in the practical application of the Gallery could provide insight into the transferability of the principles of the Gallery. Student teachers could be tracked longitudinally, following their journey from student teachers to early career teachers, to investigate how their training in the Gallery as students might influence the way they design and teach lessons as professionals. This approach could be implemented in many classrooms to counter the limitation of small sample size that has been raised in this thesis.
A fourth recommendation about future research concerns an investigation on the wider impact of the Gallery model. That is, an investigation to articulate if the Gallery has a flow on effect to other curriculum areas and if the students are generally more engaged as a result of their involvement in the Gallery. A research question to ground such a study could be if the Gallery could generate a greater sense in students of ‘school is for me’ (FGP, 2006); that is, the feeling and attitude that school is relevant and meaningful for present and future use.

9.6 The Gallery as a heuristic

The analyses of the data from this research has led to a tentative, developing heuristic to be tested practically and empirically. It is presented in light of the possibilities for future research opportunities as included above, and also to be considered by teachers for practical use as part of everyday classroom practice. The following table presents each theme, key points of analysis and ideas for classroom implementation that have emerged from the study. It is not suggested that such a table could be used in its present format as a classroom lesson-planning template, but rather, that educators could view this table as a heuristic to generate purposeful discussion and further, that it could be used as a guide for experimental implementation of the Gallery. The third column in the table lists ideas for classroom action in the form of a combined and condensed statement of the central analytical points from each theme, including influences of key ideas from humanising creativity and beauty in education. They are thus open to teacher discussion, debate, testing, reflection and refinement.

Table 9.1: The Gallery as a heuristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Key points of analysis</th>
<th>Ideas for classroom action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts pedagogy</td>
<td>Explore human issues</td>
<td>Sustained aesthetic practices that value empathic and artistic expression as intellectual expression and for beauty in learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think deeply through art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corporeal learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aesthetic potential for lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Group flow</td>
<td>Experiences of the essential human qualities of play, collaboration, improvisation and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imaginative play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>Risk taking</td>
<td>imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on learning not behaviour</td>
<td>Focus on learning, high expectation, student active participation (shared control, student voice in reflection and discussion), high engaging experiences, increased student collaboration with links to wider school community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging messages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional connection to learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning as a human endeavour</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Sharing empathic understanding through big ideas of human importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Bringing closer’ human issues in the curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep thinking, deep understandings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is intended that Table 9.1 could be used for ongoing discussion on the key ideas presented in this thesis and that through purposeful reflection and practical trials, the table could be further modified and enhanced for the benefit of students and teachers.

9.7  **No Kid is an Island**

*No man is an island*

*Entire of itself,*

*Everyman is a piece of the continent,*

*A part of the main*

The words of John Donne (1624) which inspired the title of this thesis, are included here as a reminder of the central intention of this research; that is to highlight the importance of the intrinsically human process of education. This thesis has presented an action research intervention centred on the interplay between arts pedagogy, creativity, student engagement and learning as a human endeavour in three low SES classrooms. This approach to pedagogical practice has been named The Gallery for the metaphorical connections and aspirations that can be made for classrooms as places where artistic expression is prized, where beauty inspires and generates ethical response, where entry is ‘free’ (all are welcome and each person can contribute). It is also where important big ideas of human impact are located, and where knowledge, empathy and understanding are expanded. The Gallery model in this thesis has contributed valuable insights into how the dynamic practical implementation of these
ideas might well work in more positive and constructive ways for students in disadvantaged contexts. When this happens, we might imagine creative, engaged and critically involved classrooms where ‘no kid is an island’.


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