Creating a sense of ‘self’ in Drama

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the development of student self-concept following a group of Year 8 students. Through the intervention of a one-hour lesson of drama each week culminating in the performance of a production by the students to parents. It examines specific interventions within the time period and evaluates how useful the interventions were, focussing on feedback (teacher and peer), modelling, workshopping and setting. It also discusses the role of drama within English schools in general and what place it might play in the future. Although it was difficult to come to specific conclusions of the impact that the intervention had on self-concept as a whole, the research suggested that specific parts were most useful, including the type and style of feedback given, the nature of the collaboration and the setting of the students by ability when they were cast into roles.

Contents

Introduction

1.1 Aims

I have a strong interest in the teaching of drama and have always believed that children can have the opportunity to find identities and develop their thoughts in new and unexpected ways through the experiences studies of drama can offer. Until recently, I have struggled to explain exactly *why* drama is such a useful arena for children in this area and what the 'it' is that drama seeks to develop beyond vague and well-meaning ideas. This thesis seeks to articulate what exactly is useful about drama in terms of developing children's sense of 'self-concept' and seeks to explore this more specifically through the use of the following questions:

1. How does compulsory drama lessons help create 'self-concept' amongst Y8 students?
    a. What does 'self-concept' mean, in terms of child development?
    b. To what extent do teachers perceive drama as a tool for developing self-concept?
    c. What does 'drama' within schools consist of?
    d. What strategies could be deployed within drama studies to help students develop their 'self-concept'?

Drama has recently been added to our school curriculum for the first time in several years as a compulsory subject in Year 8. The headmaster has added the subject in order to "provide opportunity for children to develop their self-confidence," among a variety of other reasons (See Appendix A). A wide variety of academic literature has noted the effect that drama has on developing self-confidence in students. I would like to test the hypothesis that drama develops self-confidence because drama allows students to develop their own identity and sense of self, from which self-confidence flows as a natural symptom.

A significant part of our school offering to parents is our attempt to 'mould the whole child'; to ensure that students are "developing the skills and competencies that will allow them to participate successfully in their environments and reach their development potential, both at present and by building the groundwork for lifelong development" (UNESCO, 2016, p. 4) rather than relying solely on easy-to-measure academic success. While we are by no means the only school to think of this idea, I believe one reason why many schools (and education systems globally) struggle to achieve this laudable goal is due to the difficulty of measuring the 'whole child' and defining what they mean by that. By researching and describing what is meant by 'developing a sense of identity and self', I believe this will allow us to work more closely and further this goal of 'moulding the whole child' rather than aiming vaguely for a loosely defined goal.

Being more closely aware of how significant (or not) self-concept is to children's development will be useful for children's development as a whole. As teachers, we spend significant amounts of our limited time on things we can easily measure and see that are useful for children's progress or that are insisted upon by inspectorate bodies such as Ofsted (Ofsted, 2019). Being more closely aware of factors that play larger and perhaps longer-term parts in the development of children's lives, alongside other tried and tested measures of success, will help ensure the best for students under my tutelage.

1.2 Rationale

Arts subjects are generally ranked as one of the lowest priority subjects in European schools, with drama often being combined with other curriculum areas like English (Gibson & Ewing, 2020, p. 80). This is despite a significant body of research showing that self-confidence plays an important part in both students choice of study and how well students perform in traditional academic examinations (Federičová, Pertold, & Smith, 2018, p. 145; Bandura, 2001, p. 6; Binns, 2020, p. 148; Dima, Kaiafa, & Tsiaras, 2020, p. 112). Drama studies give students the

opportunity to research and develop their skills and thoughts, and to collaborate as a micro-community within a classroom/drama group setting (Binns, 2020, p. 148).

1.3 Collaboration

Throughout this process, I worked with a fellow professional in school who had a great deal of experience as a drama teacher. He offered advice and thoughts as the process continued over the term of the project as to what he thought might work and might not. I also discussed specific details and implemented the intervention with an outside parent who also happened to have a lot of experience as a drama expert and had time to evaluate the drama programmes on offer at the school and contribute to their delivery.

This mix of advice from a fellow teacher and outside specialist was paired together to allow for a solid impetus and focus to ensure that the lessons and interventions were of a quality level that meant students could develop their understanding of the dramatic process and helped them to explore their sense of self-concept within their own minds as they went through the various dramatic processes. In essence, it offered the students “the chance to explore themselves through the lives of fictional ‘others’ in a safe space that enable[d] mistakes to be made and learned from” (Jindal-Snape, Vettraino, Lowson, & McDuff, 2011, p. 384).

Over the course of the initial development of the intervention and throughout the implementation of it, we focussed closely on the goal of developing student self-concept which helped to tailor the interventions more closely to help achieve the overall objective. Having two collaborators with differing but linked areas of expertise helped to keep the intervention on track. It also helped having the input of fellow members of the MLT course who were studying linked, but different areas to me. This collaboration was most useful for focussing the themes I was studying into a coherent shape and form; something that proved helpful in ensuring that the study did not veer off track into the many interesting tangential areas we could have travelled down.

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The opportunity to explore an imagined context enables students to suspend their real-world persona to express meanings from a range of other perspectives. Drama, studied as a school subject, has exploration of the both the known and unknown worlds, the imaginary and the "Other" (Emmanuel Levinas, 1978, p. 3) at its core – a fact recognised by the DfE in England which states:

> "Pupils should be able to adopt, create and sustain a range of roles, responding appropriately to others in role. They should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances" (2013, p. 14).

This importance placed by DfE rhetoric on exploration of different roles and many of the skills of drama is a useful starting point and allows us to posit that there is enough evidence extant of the significance and usefulness of drama as a subject for furthering student development to provide a brief reference in a significant national planning document, such as the National Curriculum – or perhaps, as the National Curriculum document is as much a political as it is an evidence-based planning framework, that there is a strong enough lobby group within the arts to qualify for a reference. Official bodies such as the Department for International Development place high value on the arts when talking about 'Development Education' (Etherton & Prentki, 2007, p. 143). Unfortunately, compared to subjects like English and Maths, the weighting and time spent on discussion and exhortations to action is small; the inspection and accountability levels for implementation are low in British schools and the impact assessments, more broadly speaking, are not extensive (Etherton & Prentki, 2007, p. 144; Ofsted, 2022, p. 204; Winter, 2017, p. 63).

Closing the gap between students who achieve and students who do not in schools has proved difficult to bridge over the years, as many researchers have noted, due to a wide variety of

differences and problems (Winter, 2017, p. 67; Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010, p. 42; Mitchell & Spady, 1983, pp. 29-30). Winter (2017, p. 60) documents the importance of building trusting relationships between students, parents and staff in order for schools to develop positive learning spaces for children and describes the usefulness of manipulating constructs like trust (and self-concept) that can be difficult to measure but nonetheless have an effect on the development of the child. Braun, Chapman and Vezzu note the lack of impact the 'No Child Left Behind' programme had on the achievement gap between black and white students in America, suggesting that focussing solely on academic outcomes is unlikely to prove a successful way in bridging achievement gaps (2010, p. 3), while Mitchell and Spady discuss the problems of trying to ensure academic progression occurs while maintaining some form of social order and authority in school (1983, pp. 29-30).

This evidence suggests a problem exists that needs to be solved; academic measurement is a handy and useful measure of a student, but there are gaps in the applicability and validity of the measure. Solely using academic measurement doesn't cover all important and useful parts of student development that help to build young people as positive contributors to society, and if characteristics are not being measured, it is unlikely interventions will be created to help develop them. There are strong links between lack of a strong sense of self-concept and low achievement in historic school-related measures, such as academic results (Wright, 2006, p. 46; Jindal-Snape, Vettraino, Lowson, & McDuff, 2011, p. 384; Moscrop & Kleitman, 2006, p. 13). My thesis builds on this previous research and posits that another significant and useful measure of a child comes from their 'self-concept'; a readily measurable feature that teachers are able to assess and manipulate to help support and develop the child.

In order for children to be able to access the full extent of their statutory right to an education that "prepares [them] at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of

later life" (Department for Education, 2013, p. 5), opportunities to develop their own self-concept should occur throughout their time at school.

2.2 What does 'self-concept' mean in terms of child development?

Self-confidence and self-concept are much-promoted and little-defined areas of study in education literature. As Maclellan noted, the literature "is thin in its discussion of what self-confidence is or might be" (2014, p. 3). As a result, the two distinct ideas of self-confidence and self-concept are often treated as almost synonymous terms in the research that is extant and also within classroom practice – of the teachers that are aware of the notion of self-concept. "Theoretically, self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy beliefs share a common emphasis on an individual's beliefs about his or her attributes as a person" (Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004, p. 113). Davis-Kean, Jager and Collins posit that the 'self' becomes more outwardly focussed from the age of around eight years old when children start to become able to compare themselves against others (2009, p. 184). This comes from a change in their development, examining the child and the self through a Piagetian lens and observing as their cognitive abilities start to develop between the ages of five and seven, their ability to compare themselves against their peers and make relative judgements starts to become apparent (Harter, 1996, p. 209).

In this study, I am examining self-concept as a state of mind that is possible to achieve; the successful embodiment of which would, I am suggesting, lead to positive forms of self-expression, such as high levels of self-confidence. I will use Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton's definition of self-concept to inform this research, as I believe it conceptualises the idea rather succinctly.

> "Self-concept […] is a person's perception of him- or her-self. These perceptions are formed through experience with and interpretations of one's environment. They are influenced especially by evaluations by significant others, reinforcements, and attributions for one's own behaviour" (1976, p. 411).

Drama is a useful tool by which to encourage student understanding and ability to develop their own understanding and use of the self. "The self is not some static entity but rather a complex set of properties and processes through which we infer the veracity of our

judgements" (Maclellan, 2014, p. 59). This definition of the self is useful and helps to advance our understanding beyond Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton's definition in several ways. The self is not *static*, but rather moveable and therefore able to be influenced by outside factors, such as a drama studies intervention by their teachers, or analysis of demonstrated behaviour and skills and understanding of what capabilities are when measured against a broader benchmark. It is composed of both *properties and processes*; i.e. states that change and states that are relatively stable. There are many different types of *self* as it is a *complex set* that therefore needs further labelling to identify what is meant by which specific type of self we are discussing. Finally, self-concept is a process or lens through which we interpret the world.

Much of the literature then goes on to define self-concept further and refine it into two distinct categories: academic and non-academic self-concept. Brookover, Thomas and Paterson use this conceptual separation of different spheres of self-concept, asserting that "self-concept of ability" is the relevant indicator of performance for students in school situations (1964, p. 278). *Academic* self-concept flows directly on from that point onward as a significant subset of self-concept: it forms a "mental representation of one's abilities in academic domains and school subjects" (Brunner, et al., 2010, p. 964). It refers to student perceptions of their academic standing by "comparing present abilities to those in the past" and it also refers to how students rate themselves against other known quantities and trusted evaluations, such as other students in their class and teacher/examination board evaluations of their skills and knowledge (Bakadorova & Raufelder, 2014, p. 348). For subjects such as drama, being able to understand the many nuances of the subject and the difficulties in measuring success or levels of ability is a positive way of ensuring that students can develop their sense of academic self-concept in drama. Being aware that there are many ways to 'succeed' and that high achievement comes often by dint of experimentation or from a mix of pre-existing concepts helps students construct and develop their self-concept in this area as it gives the students a set of "properties and processes" by which to infer the veracity of their judgements (Maclellan, 2014, p. 59).

Explaining why a particular characterisation is effective or not and discussing this builds the toolkit in a students' mind as to what is necessarily useful or not useful. Whilst there may be flow-on effects to other relatively closely-related subjects such as english, drama and history, it appears that the link between a strong sense of self-concept in one unlinked subject and another is not particularly strong (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985, p. 2).

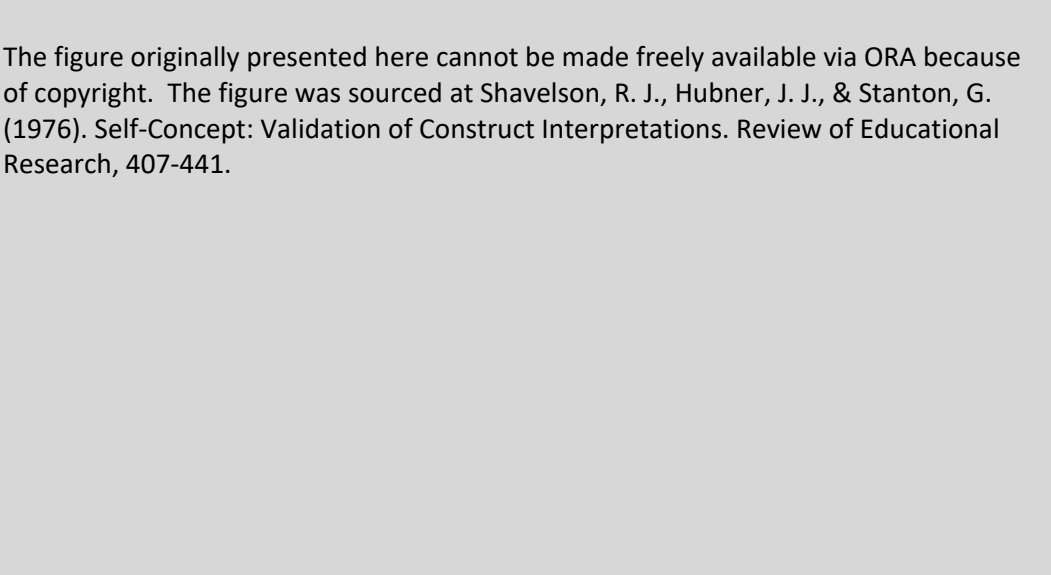

Figure 1: Structure of self-concept (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976, p. 413).

It is useful from a teaching point of view to categorise self-concept into academic and non-academic subsets, and apparently is reflective of real-world actual separation of different types of self-concept in student self (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985, p. 2). Figure 1 shows a useful representation of the sheer *number* of 'self-concepts' that conceptually exist in a student; they suggest the complexity of the idea but also hint at the possibility of being able to adjust and attach a number of different interventions towards more specific and achievable changes in students that would build and contribute to a student's broader sense of self-concept, one which has stronger and more lasting foundations. The final part of the diagram – 'Evaluation of behaviour in specific situations' – gives an idea of how Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton suggest students *act* as a result of their resultant self-concept.

Reflective of the life journey and increasingly complex roles in which students move into as they grow older, the construct of self-concept can become multi-faceted and highly specific. To put this into context with an example reductio ad absurdum, it is unlikely an accomplished rocket scientist would have the same sense of self-concept about rocket science as she did about mining – unless she happened to have the same amount of knowledge in mining. So Marsh and Shavelson's research suggests that it is highly possible to give students the tools to construct their own differing areas of self-concept and also make them aware of when their own academic self-concept is of limited value and requires the assistance of a More Knowledgeable Other in order to make an informed judgement about a specific domain (1985).

It is important to be aware of the lens with which we are viewing this: we are still only measuring categories of interest and apparent use to us as teachers and educational researchers. In part, research papers like this thesis attempt to change the minds of policymakers and teachers in classrooms, so to use constructs that are familiar and have centuries of traditional analysis behind them (such as academic grading of student work) is a useful way to promulgate a theory. Therefore, academic self-concept, more readily, consistently, historically and easily measured than social, emotional or physical self-concept, takes the lead in the quantity of researched material examining self-concept. Research into self-concept is consistently justified on the basis of how it impacts academic behaviour (Brookover, Thomas, & Paterson, 1964, p. 2; Gresham, 1995, p. 95; Brunner, et al., 2010, p. 964; Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004, p. 111). This emphasis and reliance on the relevance of academic behaviour to the research is something to be aware of in that it may act to hinder a broader understanding of how self-concept acts or could act when manipulated or subject to explicit interventions, and in that it also struggles to measure how students are able to succeed in the wider world. Ignoring or not studying how self-concept changes with the onset of things like puberty, or the change in significant life events such as the transition from school to the working world is outside the scope of this paper; nonetheless, it is worth noting that these

events or occurrences are all significant and could have a substantial impact on student self-concept far beyond what is being examined here.

Self-concept forms an important part of an individual's idea of their own 'self': the ideas and understanding of who that person is and what they are and have the skills to do. Understanding self-concept necessitates understanding the 'self' and the related categories used to specify which particular part of the self is being examined, with *confidence* being the most commonly referred to in existing research but *concept* the specific aspect under study in this project. In order to develop a strong sense of self, it is important that students are given the chance to develop their own "epistemic authority" so they do not need to rely solely on a More Knowledgeable Other for judgements of their own abilities to do their own work (Maclellan, 2014, p. 9). This appears to be significant and crucial to students developing positive self-concepts. As self-concept is built and developed through evaluations by significant others, reinforcements and attributions for a student's own behaviour, ensuring that students are able to refer to their own internal 'significant other' (i.e., their own secure epistemological base) should help develop their independence, ability to problem solve and strengthen their ability to negotiate and persuade others to their own point of view. In a changing world, having secure areas of knowledge and skills with which to approach problems and new situations is a necessary and important skill, as acknowledged in the National Curriculum document (Department for Education, 2013, pp. 5-6). A secure and well-founded sense of self-concept is an essential tool for students to have by the time they leave school.

2.3 What place does drama currently have in the curriculum?

Although self-concept has a variety of differing and varying definitions and thus a lack of understanding in the teaching community about how best to support the development within students (Maclellan, 2014, p. 3), it appears there is a reasonable amount of emphasis on the performance indicators it relies on to be measured that are being used across drama (and other subject) classrooms. Luton describes how "educators regard the drama space as a

democratic space for learning, a space in which power can be shared between student and teacher/facilitator-where partnerships can be enacted," describing the trust in which students must hold in their teachers in order to develop their sense of self (2021, p. 81). Challenging specific views of the world and suspending our disbelief in order to examine new varieties of thought from different perspectives, *a la* drama classroom, is a useful method of developing stronger analytical skills and individual epistemological viewpoints of the world based on solid understandings on how the world is seen (Gibson & Ewing, 2020, p. 3). Developing a positive self-concept of one's abilities through specific behaviours such as exploring social issues through drama or giving students independent tasks with specific goals such as producing and performing a scripted play helps develop students sense of self-concept and commonly occurs in drama study (Maclellan, 2014, p. 13).

Despite this evidential basis for positive reinforcement of behaviours and development of key skills to develop ideas such as student self-concept, drama does not carry a pre-eminent place in the National Curriculum; it occupies a mere footnote in the English curriculum and acts as an exhortation to support the study of English rather than as a requirement to undertake a specific course of study that focusses on their own specific 'drama' teaching and learning (Department for Education, 2013, p. 14). This may be apparent as arguments for drama teaching often emphasise the significance of drama as a "learning tool" or discuss the usefulness of drama in helping students with other subjects (Luton, 2021, p. 83; Neelands & O'Connor, 2010, p. 13). This implicitly places drama on a second tier in the subject hierarchy (alongside the explicit second tier with accountability measures such as the English Baccalaureate (Department for Education, 2022)) and raises a legitimate question about the subject's use and function within a school environment: if the only purpose of drama is to help with other subjects, then why not simply initially embed the teaching of it within other subjects and therefore make a more direct link between whatever objective is supposedly being supported?

Historically, Robinson suggests that drama has been “used in UK schools as a pedagogical tool” to explore social themes of varying degrees (2021, p. 90). He suggests that it was used primarily as a way to “engender empathy”, which suggests that this was used as the initial basis for sharing drama as a performance art, rather than to develop skills in which the students could make meaning and tell stories from using dramatic skills (2021).

Offering broad stroke and lofty ideals to justify drama teaching is unlikely to provide anything concrete for teachers and advocates to develop. Goals must be clearer and more distinct in order to be achievable. Drama helps students develop their self-concept; an inherently useful tool that helps students “make sense of the world and their place in it” (Robinson M. , Drama, 2021, p. 89). Having useful conceptual artefacts such as this idea should help teachers articulate with greater confidence the idea and usefulness of drama as a subject.

2.4 What does ‘drama’ within schools consist of?

There are several different forms of drama that take place within schools, with a key difference between drama studies – i.e., drama that occurs within drama lessons for the sake of pursuing knowledge and the skills of drama itself – and pedagogical drama – i.e., when drama is used to achieve another subject’s aim, such as in English or in PSHE subjects.

In a more general sense that encompasses the pedagogical use of drama in other subjects and the study of drama as a standalone study, Gibson and Ewing describe drama as “suspending our disbelief to embody or enact someone or something else using a range of processes, devices and strategies adapted from theatre” (2020, p. 7), whilst Day describes the process and an important outcome for drama as essential for building “personal confidence and self-esteem” (Day, 2011, p. vii). Walter Pitman describes an outcome of drama as a subject as one that can “stretch the mind and emotional capacity of a student” (1998, p. 50), while Kathleen Gallagher insists that drama as a subject can “give meaning to the rest of the school curriculum” (2001, p. 4). Baldwin (2008, p. 9) places a far greater emphasis on the importance

of role-playing in its various forms whereas Robinson insists that drama is an “art form that examines what it is to be human in all its variety”, in an argument exploring the power drama can have to explore social issues in a classroom theatrical setting (Drama, 2021, p. 91). The final word (in theory, at least, in the United Kingdom) comes from the National Curriculum document that emphasises the importance of students imagining themselves in other roles and settings as well as insisting students “should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances” (Department for Education, 2013, p. 14). Drama is defined and debated similarly by other researchers and textbook-writers (Ewing & Saunders, 2016, p. 12; Miller & Saxton, 2016, p. 4; Gibson R. , 2015, p. 4).

Within the differing sets of definitions, we have drama, how it is viewed within schools and across the academic community: a mixture of discrete teaching of the subject, for schools able to provide the students with access, and as the use of drama subject strategies as a pedagogical tool to advance other objectives unrelated, or perhaps loosely related, to the academic subject.

This common thread describes how drama is viewed by the National Curriculum and across wider educational commentary: useful as an engaging way to access other material or skills, but perhaps less useful in its own right to explore theatre and drama skills for their own purpose. While this has parallels with some other subjects, this type of approach feeds back into the application of skills sets and objectives for the subject and any testing that has been applied to it.

Nevertheless, we have a reasonably coherent sense of what is being considered as ‘drama’ within a school environment. To narrow the focus further, we are going to examine in this study a specific context in which drama is being undertaken: the timetabled course of study this term in Year 8 at School X, with the objective given to ‘develop self-confidence’ in the

students. This particular objective means that the final result is less important than the *process* they go through in order to get to the end and final production of the show or unit of drama they are undertaking. This contrasts with shows and drama in the professional and amateur world where the end result is almost the only thing that matters, with everything building up to this on the way, so in terms of real-world preparation, this type of course would not set up pupils well for careers in the real-world theatre or creative industries.

2.5 What strategies could be deployed within drama studies to help students develop their 'self-concept'?

The teaching of drama is varied and has significant variations in the teaching of it, as covered earlier, due to the lack of a central curriculum in primary years and due to the potential areas of study students might choose to take up. Therefore, there are many and varied strategies a teacher might choose to employ, depending on the objectives: in this case, the primary objective is to develop confidence in students, so the strategies chosen must act in service of this aim.

Marsh et. al. (2018, p. 276) "found that the feedback students received, in the form of teacher-assigned grades, reciprocally influenced the development of [student] academic self-concept over five years." Students take note of how they are being evaluated by a More Knowledgeable Other – in this case, a teacher – and apply this assessment to their own understanding of self. Whilst this may or may not always be a positive outcome, given that it is hardly likely grading will disappear from teaching institutions, the onus is on teachers to make sure that the experience of grading is a positive one for students. In their model and research, the possibility of being able to succeed is all important. They found negative relationships between normative grading in small groups – but not across larger (e.g. national or international) group sizes – and the levels of academic self-concept amongst students. Marsh et. al. suggested that, in order to promote self-concept, normative grading should be replaced by "absolute or individual standards" wherever possible (p. 276). This exhortation would be difficult to replicate or fulfil

in many instances – universities or companies, for example, often must take the best of a year group cohort, rather than all individuals who can meet a given standard due to the lack space and restrictions on numbers and funding. So although it might be useful to have absolute/individual standards to develop self-concept, preparation for worlds that students will inhabit outside of school suggests that we need to also prepare them for the realities of normative grading.

Bakadorova and Raufelder's findings examined the drop off in academic self-concept that students tend to experience in their adolescence and suggest that, while positive teacher-student relationships help act as a determinant for academic self-concept, positive peer-peer student relationships do not act as a significant determiner in academic self-concept (2014, p. 348). Their findings did suggest, however, that students tended to pick groups of peers for friends with "similar academic characteristics to their own" and that peers had a significant effect on motivation (p. 349). This could be for several reasons, but likely a significant reason is when students have limited knowledge of a concept, they turn to the closest and most trusted 'expert' who might be able to help them; for school and class grades and their associated run-on effect with academic self-concept, this is likely, but will not always, be one of their teachers. It might also be down to the fact that the material under study becomes harder and more complex the older students become as they progress through their adolescence and therefore it becomes less likely that peers will act as the More Knowledgeable Other.

The integrated self-concept model developed by Marsh, et. al. over decades of research beginning around 1990 and most recently in papers published in 2018 suggests that academic self-concept and academic achievement are mutually reinforcing ideas that build on each other; achievement of relatively higher academic grades leads to improved academic self-concept – improved academic self-concept leads to better grades. Interestingly, it also suggests that students form their self-concept for particular subjects through different comparison

processes – internal (comparison against another subject) and external (performance of other students in the same subject) (Marsh, et al., 2018, p. 264).

This type of comparison process undertaken by students within their own cohorts immediately shows a problem inherent in the process of self-confidence: clearly, having a group of low-performing students in a single subject and cohort would lead to a boost in self-confidence for a student, as by this measure of success, they can compare themselves reasonably well and have the illusion of progress, but if you change it to a broader measure and compete across the population as a whole, then the comparison falls short and leads to significant problems with student self-concept once they have left that institution and have a different measure of comparison – say in university, or by country comparison across standardised and benchmarked tests like GCSE's.

Another issue inherent in the other comparison that Marsh, et. al. (2018) makes whereby students compare their performance in one subject against another, i.e. 'I am better at Maths than I am at English,' is that students are reliant on the quality of the teacher's subject knowledge in subjects to make a comparison between subjects. If teachers are insisting that a student is more or less competent at a particular subject, and the student is reliant upon the teacher as the More Knowledgeable Other, then it is likely that student will also have a false understanding of their ability in a particular subject and the student will then not be able have an accurate understanding of their ability when making comparisons against other subjects – unless the teacher has sufficient knowledge to make an accurate judgement, in which case the judgment will be accurate. The issue will arise if the students don't have their own external framework to make a judgement on their competence; i.e. if they have no way of knowing whether a teacher is likely to have been accurate or not. Therefore, a key part to ensure is that teachers have sufficient subject knowledge to teach the subject accurately so students can rely on their assessments.

Another common issue Marsh et. al. identifies with school grades is the problem inherent in teacher assessment; often without reference to an absolute measure, teachers tend to give end-of-term grades on a relative curve which often has a negative effect on academic self-concept or ASC (Marsh, et al., 2018, p. 265). A problem this leads to is what Marsh et. al. have referred to as the 'Big Fish, Little Pond Effect' where "students who attend high-ability schools tend to have lower ASCs than do equally able students who attend mixed- or low-ability schools, which is a negative effect of school-average achievement on ASC" (p. 266). So the type and average ability of the students within the school has a significant and demonstrable effect on the self-concept of the students, and occurs widely across different cultures (p. 266). It is also stronger the longer that students stay in the same school. (p. 269). The study also found that self-concept from lower grades has a statistically significant impact for a number of years, with Year Four maths self-concept having an impact all the way through till Year Eight (p. 272). The 'Big Fish, Little Pond Effect' has a statistically significant effect and an "enduring negative legacy" over the full five years of high school in the study (p. 273).

Thus, making inaccurate comparisons amongst small cohort sizes has a negative effect on student self-concept as the students are unable to be confident their comparisons will hold any weight once they leave the bubble of their school environment. The way to resolve issues like this appears to be to assess children across wider data sets so the comparisons and assessments students make of themselves hold water when they leave the school environment and they do not suddenly find themselves floundering with a strong set of unknowns and their self-confidence metrics all suddenly inapplicable.

Because of the link between academic achievement, course selection and academic self-concept, and the feedback loop between the three, academic self-concept is a useful predictor of decisions on courses that students make over the period (Marsh & Yeung, 1997, p. 693). This usefulness as a predictor of future behaviour justifies further study.

2.6 Conclusion

Using the imagined context of drama as the background to explore how students can start to develop their understanding of self and their own self-concept is helpful. It could be useful as a method of bridging achievement gaps in other subjects, as a way to build trust between students and teachers, in order to help them develop self-concept and be readily able to support students in their development of self. The 'self,' at its most foundational state, refers to the various beliefs and perceptions a person has about themselves and is a fairly secure idea, with self-*confidence* flowing from a secure sense of self-*concept* – or so my theory goes.

Following on from this, the drama intervention should, therefore, start as a conversation and encourage trusting relationships to be developed within the class. One of the ways in which we will achieve this is by modelling the relationship between myself and my collaborators, in which we rehearse and model how the cycle of feedback will occur, i.e., through the creation of an idea, to the performance of it, to the workshopping of an idea, to the feedback occurring and the changes made in response to the idea. This initial phase of the process will demonstrate to the students that one version of their 'self' can be quite secure and returned to when not in the workshop process, whilst they must assume a new 'drama self-concept' and adopt this self when going through the workshopping process – as they do in each subject, in order to embed themselves within the framework of each subject and be able to learn within that.

I argue that drama is a particularly useful tool by which to encourage development of self-concept, because of the number of and constant nature of interventions in units of study; by the complex and subjective nature of the assessment; by the necessity of explaining the 'framework' of assessment by which the students are being critiqued; by the constant experimentation with different roles and ways of presenting them; and because of the fundamental exploration and re-presentation of the self and the complex nature of the self as

constituting many parts (i.e. the academic, non-academic, subject specific etc.) as the Other when acting in role.

Therefore, within the intervention, we will ensure that each group has a high number of feedback interactions after they have created a section of performance themselves. They will receive feedback on their ideas from at least one of the teachers each lesson, and the students themselves will become more and more adept at giving feedback to their peers as we go further through the process. We will explain our thinking behind each form of feedback explicitly, so the complex and subjective nature of the feedback allows the students to develop their understanding of the framework within which they are building their self-concept. Students will also be given multiple opportunities to explore different ways of presenting the same character, with prompts and exhortations to experiment with different ways of presenting their identities. We will insist they explain each of the changes they make, with the goal of the students understanding the effect of said changes.

While it would be straying into another essay and thesis to explore too extensively, it would seem there is an overlap with the concept of metacognition here. Informing students of this idea of self-concept might be a useful way in order to design an intervention to give students tools to develop and build their own, in the same way that identifying and showing students how to design and build knowledge/skill frameworks can be a useful way of intervening to help them work on and develop their skill/knowledge set (Education Endowment Foundation, 2022).

I have argued that there is an inherent bias present in the study of self-concept due to the nature of educational research and the politics within the field: studies are probably more likely to result in an impact if they are backed by a number of teachers/educationalists and policymakers, so using the language that has been used to measure success in schools for generations is prevalent: therefore, academic self-concept is significant and important here

and takes the lead in the amount of research. It is important to be aware of this limitation in the research and of our own understanding of self-concept and related ideas; focus on child development, for example, and an education that "prepares [them] at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life", as the DfE says it promotes through the National Curriculum document (2013), might have led to different research focussing on different outcomes.

Drama faces a problem of significance. In the National Curriculum, it is used as a footnote to support English study and is generally not regarded as significant or useful enough to have a place on its own. This begs the question – if drama is viewed only as a support for objectives in other subjects, then why not simply embed it within those subjects and obtain more direct and useful links to whatever is being taught? There is also a broader lack of knowledge as to what self-concept is; self-confidence is a more commonly known concept but also less defined and thus less acted upon. Without having a specific knowledge of the terms, it is impossible to act intentionally with any sort of consistent impact. To help remedy this lack of knowledge, my collaborators and myself will extensively discuss the specific interventions and methods of discussion that will be most impactful and significant in our practice to help develop their academic self-concept in this subject.

Drama appears to be viewed by others in schools and educational environments in many different ways, but many rely on exploration of role-play or using characters to explore different aspects of the human condition alongside the need to perform and express meaning through the different skills of drama. The process undertaken in this intervention will be far more important than the final result as the process will have a much greater impact on how levels of self-concept are determined, rather than the final result. The feedback students receive from their teachers is one of the most important indicators of self-concept. The application of evaluation by a More Knowledgeable Other to their own self-concept is a

powerful tool that can be used by teachers to develop self-concept, so long as the feedback is clear, consistently applied against a framework the student understands, with an absolute or specifically individualised assessment applied wherever possible.

Therefore, ensuring that students are given the tools and an absolute or widely benchmarked framework with which to measure themselves by in drama studies would help develop their academic self-concept. Grades – or continued formative assessments – that are explained and discussed with students and shown alongside different measures of success with clear explanations and with a clear understanding as to why the student achieved or met the criteria would be a useful way to develop their own success (Marsh, et al., 2018, p. 276). Ensuring that students are grouped with peers who might act as the 'More Knowledgeable Other' in different scenarios to develop motivation which would also build self-concept would also help students work together to achieve their ideas and thoughts (Bakadorova & Raufelder, 2014, p. 348). Also attempting to dovetail the student work with another related subject, such as English, might help students develop their sense of self-concept through their internal comparison process, while giving students varying abilities and 'moments to shine' in various different ways would allow them to achieve and compare their performance and skillset in different ways through the performance of other students in the same subject (Marsh, et al., 2018, p. 264). We will use this particular theory in order to compare specific parts of other subjects to the use of devices in drama: using metaphors in English can help to change the way we view a character in writing – for example, in drama, changing the tilt of a chin, or speaking using a different part of the throat changes the way the audience might view a particular character.

In order to ensure they are not comparing themselves against too small a comparison group (such as their own classmates) it would be beneficial to ensure that the grading system is benchmarked or uses absolute criterions to make the judgement of their progress. In the intervention under study, we will do this by watching other students perform shows and acting

in character from other schools, alongside watching professional performers undertake their rehearsals and performances in professional theatres in London. This should help lower the risk of 'Big Fish, Little Pond' effect and make for more consistent measurement of skill in the long run, thereby ensuring student sense of self-confidence is maintained and developed across the time (Marsh, et al., 2018, p. 266). Taking the students to observe other performances at different schools and ensuring that they can have a comparison and see the performance of different students in a wider range will also mean that we have a better chance of promoting long-term, reliable academic self-concept in drama, and will give the opportunity to build their own knowledge framework so they can judge their abilities and their own against others. This knowledge and skillset with which to approach other problems and new situations is a necessary and useful skill in a changing world; multiple sets of strong academic self-concepts are useful things to have in order to be able to solve problems in the worlds in which they interact with.

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

I researched several methodologies before determining the most effective way to understand and explore the answers to my research questions. The intervention itself consisted of a single one-hour lesson each week of compulsory drama studies as students prepared for the end of year performance of *Matilda: The Musical.* Students would complete a survey at the beginning and the end of the intervention, which lasted for a total of a term, alongside a follow up interview for a selection of students who reported anomalous or substantially different results.

I considered the possibility of giving the students in the study a specific questionnaire that related directly to the questions in the study and following up with the students several courses of action that required attention. The key issue in this case was the amount of time it would take to write a questionnaire that asked the relevant questions in a manner that was valid and applicable to the research whilst keeping the students in an environment as close to their normal classroom as possible. I was concerned that the amount of time I would spend teaching and leading the new drama department would mean that I would not be able to delve deep enough into the subject material to ensure my method actually gain useful findings relevant to the research I was looking to examine.

I thus decided to use mixed-method research, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to inform my understanding of the research questions, adjusted and focussed on the intervention:

1: How can drama studies assist with the development of self-concept in students at my school?

2: To what extent can drama justify a place in the curriculum due to how it affects self-concept?

3: What strategies within drama studies are the most effective for the development of student self-concept?

I began by evaluating a personal self-concept and wellbeing questionnaire that the school utilises to understand how students are affected by the change in their regular timetable: the introduction of drama as a timetabled lesson. I used the data from the GL Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) assessments, questions and data that has been used and evaluated amongst the wider school population in England and Europe in order to ensure the validity of the research and make sure the results of the survey are worth commenting on. The quantitative data from this should help "generate a broad understanding" of the issue and find patterns to analyse and examine closely with qualitative data (Watkins & Gioia, 2015, p. 6). A stratified sample of students from across the range of results were then interviewed and given the chance to answer qualitative questions to help probe for deeper understanding of the reasons behind their quantitative results (Watkins & Gioia, 2015, p. 5). The students who were interviewed all had substantially different results from their initial baseline assessments so were chosen for the qualitative survey to help understand the reasons why their results were different.

3.2 Methods

The intervention itself involved a single drama lesson of approximately one hour each week. Students were preparing for a production of *Matilda: the Musical.* The rehearsals during the intervention process were in the workshop stage, where they had a relatively large degree of agency around what they could achieve, how they moved on the stage and how they expressed themselves in the performance. My collaborators and myself modelled how the workshops would run using our own performances and casting of ideas as a way for the students to understand and have a foundation on which to build their own. We modelled the creative process of coming up with an idea, testing it out, giving feedback as performers to each other, receiving feedback from the 'students as teachers' and then making changes based on the

feedback. We also made explicit the identity they would be inhabiting in the drama classroom; they had a particular version of themselves they had to enact once in the theatre and working with the group, which included a willingness to buy into the process and take part in it.

Subsequently, we ensured that the groups had high levels of feedback on a continuing basis from both ourselves and the rest of the student group. We demonstrated a new idea in each session, either by modelling different elements ourselves, or by viewing performances from different genres and times and then discussing how the students might use the tools to come up with their own performance in that section. So each of the seven workshopping sessions acted as a continual refinement and cycle of preparation of new ideas, testing applicability in student groups and subsequently receiving several forms of feedback in order to go through the cycle again. Feedback was given explicitly, with students understanding the reasoning behind our suggestions and subsequently altering the student body of feedback given as well, as they appraised the value of the specific and explicit feedback.

Table 1: Demographics of the student body in the intervention

	Number of students
Male	13
Female	8
Students with Special Educational Need	5
Students who spoke English as an Additional Language	5
Total Number of students	21

An overview of the research process underwent as follows:

1. Drafted a proposed process to discuss with my supervisor.
2. Amended and then sent the request to CUREC.
3. Received positive response and students completed baseline assessment PASS survey.
4. Began to analyse the data received.
5. Implemented intervention (timetabled drama teaching to Year Eight students).
6. Students completed the same PASS survey for a second time upon completion of the intervention.
7. Identified several students whose results showed a substantial difference to other students
8. Wrote draft interview questions based on the data to send to my supervisor.
9. Amended and then interviewed students based on new questions.
10. Recorded and wrote responses during informal interview session.

There were twenty-one students in the sample group of Year Eight students who went through the whole process from start to finish and responded to the survey in various different ways. I compared the student level change from before the intervention and after the intervention and defined whether it was a 'major' change or not, which I defined as a change of < +/- 20% in their percentile score *or* a less major change, but at the lower end of satisfaction levels where the recommendation for specific interventions is strongest. From there I grouped the students to see who had the most columns of major change which left me with six students for a focus group. Boys made up five of the six members, so I added the next four girls who were on the list to create a more gender balanced sample, and to seek clarity around why the results were so different for boys and girls. There was a mix of children on the SEN register and independent learners on the list which made for an effective group to test and question my theory.

In this way, we hoped to give the students an idea of how we were thinking and how their performance might be viewed, in a subject and discipline renowned for subjectivity. This

practice was developed in line with the theory espoused by Maclellan (2014, p.9) to help develop their own independence and secure epistemological base for evaluating their performance, alongside our own experience of effective teaching of drama. We ensured that our own thinking about what was effective and what was not effective was articulated clearly in order to make sure their understanding of the inherently subjective assessment was developed and made into an effective piece of work.

As noted by Fleming, Merrell and Tymms, there is often a somewhat "inevitable conclusion" that a place exists in the research to use both qualitative and quantitative data, using one to reinforce the others' findings and suggestions (2004, p. 4). Simply gathering the data has a positive impact on children's wellbeing, further reinforced if they see an action as a result of the assessment (Sharp, 2014). Discussion methods were referred to as the "most commonly described method" for educational psychologists to elicit the views of students and young people in general (Smillie & Newton, 2020, p. 339). I chose to use discussion to elicit an understanding of what was coming to pass and why the changes in the quantitative data had occurred. This richer data would help to illuminate patterns in the information under question and show why the students felt the changes were occurring and why their attitudes were different to before the intervention.

3.3 Limitations

One of the key limitations in the survey data and through the method is the inherent difficulty in separating out the effects of the specific intervention under study. There are a huge number of variables that could have affected their responses to the questions across the course of the study that do not include the drama course that they were undertaking over the course of a single double period each week, ranging from factors outside of school (family issues, preparing to leave the school and move onto senior school etc.) to factors that school can have an impact on (attitudes in other subjects, teaching in other subjects, changes in friendship groups, development of different interests etc.).

The school went through a major shift, after announcing that it was expanding to GCSE, from an EFYS – Year 8 school, to an EYFS to GCSE school, before cancelling this planned expansion, during this study which also may have had a significant negative impact on several of the responses from students who were directly affected by this change. Because the survey was run as a normal part of the testing and analysis they undertook as students in the school, they may have used it as an opportunity to voice their discontent. This is a problem with taking a 'snapshot' of attitudes, rather than a continual monitoring process. As all of the students would have left anyway, as they were at the end of their time and were departing for senior schools, I'm hopeful that this rather significant event would have only affected a minority of students who had siblings affected by the change rather than a plurality of the Year 8 body.

3.4 Validity

The respondent size and sample group for this research are not broad enough to ensure wide validity and the corresponding conclusions should be treated as useful within the context of the school environment and as a useful comment on patterns of behaviour from this specific group of students, rather than widely applicable to differing groups of students across broad swathes of different demographics and very different cultures and students.

Another issue this survey comes up against is the bias in self-reporting. It is entirely possible students have misconceptions about their levels of ability or effort or associated measures and therefore the results of the survey can be misleading. This rationale notwithstanding, the data provides useful insights into how these students respond to drama being taught with the specific goal of developing their self-concept. The GL PASS survey used is widely tested and the results should be trusted; the questions and interviews with students who I have built strong relationships with are useful indicators of specific interventions that have a positive impact on their self-concept and could be applied, with appropriate professional judgement, to differing schools in different areas. The use of an existing quantitative survey also meant that

conceptions I held before the research had begun were less likely to have an impact on the results of the study.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

I applied and gained approval to research from CUREC before analysing any of the data the school obtained; the headmaster gave permission for the research to be undertaken within the school and for the data and school to be written about anonymously. All students within the research were anonymised; hard copies of data were kept secure in a locked drawer. The students completed the survey as part of their normal round of testing and information gathering within the school term. Students have undertaken such surveys before and are used to doing them, so I was not worried the results of the survey would be skewed by students anticipating any major consequences for their answers. All students taking part in the testing were anonymised and given the opportunity to opt out. Students taking part in the interviews were given information about the course and intention of the study and given the opportunity to opt out, either by letting me or another staff member know, with interviews taking place two weeks after initial discussions so students had an appropriate amount of time to think about whether they wanted to be involved or not, and to give them an opportunity to discuss with parents/caregivers.

I also had the problem of conducting the focus group interviews myself. Students needed to trust me with their responses. I was fairly confident they wouldn't worry about getting into trouble with their responses because of the relationship that I had with them (I had taught some of the students for four years), but I was quite concerned they wouldn't answer honestly because they were worried about offending me. I tried to get around that type of response by asking how the students would feel if another teacher had taught them the same thing, to make them feel more comfortable in critiquing their own experience of the intervention with a degree of honesty. I believe this approach was reasonable and gave me sufficient grounds to back the honesty that enough of the students would be likely to give me.

A key ethical issue arising from me undertaking the student survey and interviews, was that I also taught many of the students in other subjects, including the core subject of English, alongside games and as their form tutor, so I had a fair amount of influence over key areas of their lives. I had to take into account the fact that I would take part in things like writing their reports and sending references to senior schools for scholarship applications and the like; alongside monitoring their behaviour in drama lessons, I was also trying to objectively monitor their responses to the stimulus.

I believe the students were able to separate the fact that I was analysing the data from PASS assessments that they completed on computers with their opinions and any ethical quandary that they might have felt towards me. To help mitigate the effects that might have occurred because of the power I had due to my relationship with them for the qualitative interviews, I waited until near the end of term after their reports had been completed, all students had received confirmation for secondary schools and scholarships and until I held far less power and authority over them than I potentially had previously.

Findings and Discussion

4.1 Analysing quantitative data

I conducted a survey at the start and end of the intervention using the GL PASS assessment programme, with twenty-one students in Year Eight taking part, in order to glean an insight into their thoughts and attitudes to themselves and school along the way and to determine whether or not the intervention had an effect (or whether there had been a change in the self-concept and whether or not they attributed it to drama or not).

The factors measured by the PASS survey were:

1. Feelings about school
2. **Perceived learning capability**
3. **Self-regard as a learner**

4. Preparedness for learning
5. Attitudes to teachers
6. General work ethic
7. **Confidence in learning**
8. Attitudes to attendance
9. **Response to curriculum demands**

The bold factors were the ones I focussed on, as I believed they were the most concentrated factors on what I was investigating in my context: changes in student self-concept.

The survey data was then analysed across the year group, to give a mean, and then I looked at the individual scores to see what comparisons I could make from that data. There were thirteen boys and eight girls, with five students classified as having a special educational need of one kind or another and five students for whom English was spoken as a second language.

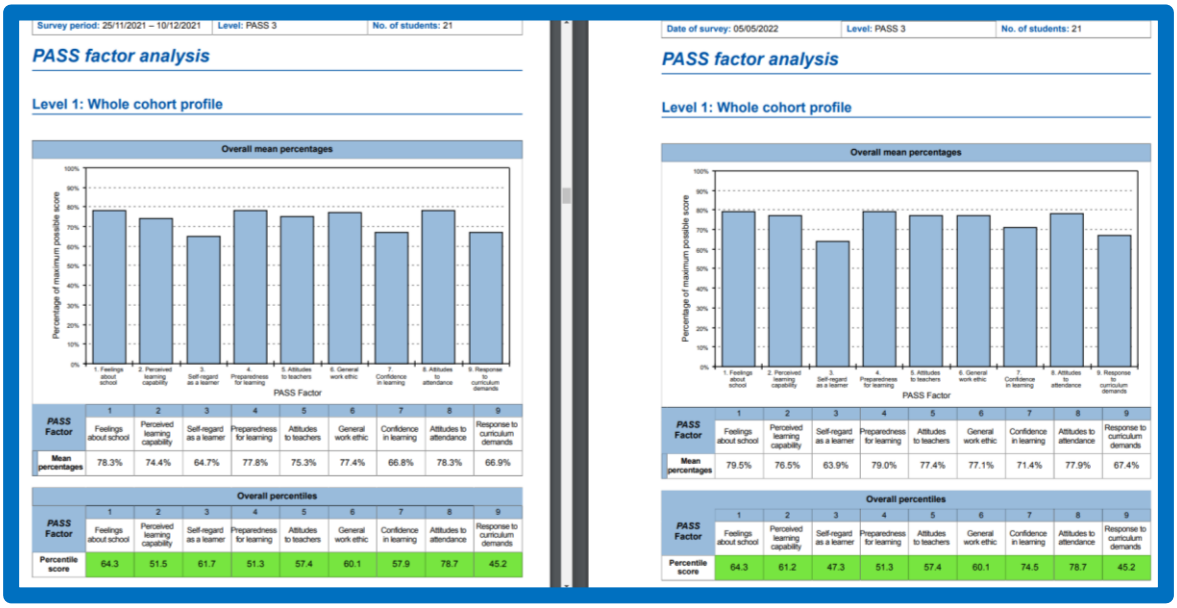

Figure 2. Change in whole cohort responses. The left-hand side graph shows the overall results pre-intervention, while the right-hand side graph shows the results post-

As you can see in Figure 2, there wasn't a great deal of difference in the cohort as a whole across the intervention period, with six factors (feelings about school, perceived learning capability, preparedness for learning, attitudes to teachers, confidence in learning and

response to curriculum demands) showing a slight increase and three factors (self-regard as a learner, general work ethic, and attitudes to attendance) showing a slight decrease.

So, as an intervention that was measured across the cohort, it does not appear, at first glance, that this intervention had a major impact in student levels of self-concept, as measured by the GL PASS assessment. The cumulative changes were minor and did not show a major positive increase or major decrease over the time period. The biggest changes I was hoping to see were from factors 2, 3, 7 and 9 (perceived learning capability, self-regard as a learner, confidence in learning and response to curriculum demands). The reason I was focussed on these was because I believe these factors correlated most closely with what I was investigating: changes in self-concept, and the perception of the self.

Other noteworthy results from the survey as a whole came from results of children with special educational needs, with their results for factor 3, 'self-regard as a learner' coming in with a reduction of nearly 6%, reducing from 61.7% positive self-regard as a learner to 55.8% positive self-regard as a learner. If we were to measure the results of the intervention thus, for students with special educational needs, this would mean a failure in this particular student demographic.

Breaking down the results into the factors of interest (2, 3, 7 and 9), showed one student become slightly more satisfied with their learning capability, shifting from low-moderate satisfaction to moderate satisfaction with perceived learning capability. For factor 3, self-regard as a learner, two students shifted across from the low – moderate band of satisfaction into high satisfaction band, which was a positive sign of the intervention working, as you can see in Figure 3 below. Figure 3 helps to show the phenomena that occurred; there was a general shift in attitudes across the cohort, with two students showing more positive results,

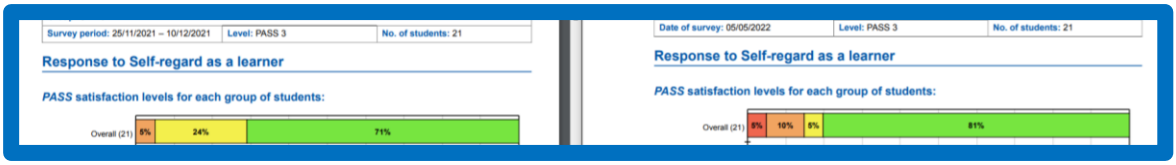

Figure 3: Change in student self-regard as a learner. The left-hand graph shows pre-intervention; the right hand shows post-intervention.

one staying the same and two showing more negative results. The net result explains more than the cohort-wide mean analysis seen in Figure 2 and gives a greater degree of nuance to help us understand what changes actually occurred.

The results for factor 7, confidence in learning, showed a different upswing, with students in this area reporting positive change in how confident they felt in their learning. Two students shifted from low-moderate satisfaction to high satisfaction, showing an overall positive change in student perceptions of their own confidence in learning. This type of shift was a common thread across the factors, with slight upswings reported amongst a largely positive grouping.

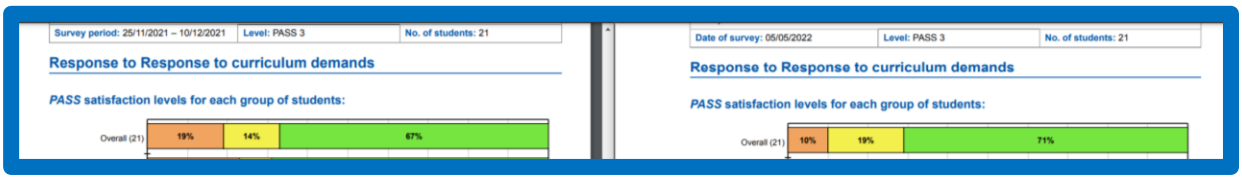

Figure 4: Change in student perceptions of Response to Curriculum Demands. The left-hand graph shows pre-intervention; the right hand shows post-intervention.

Figure 5 shows the change in how confident students say they are in their learning. Two students shifted from low-moderate satisfaction to moderate satisfaction, while one student shifted from moderate to high satisfaction, with a net positive uplift of three students perceiving their self-concept to be stronger than before the intervention.

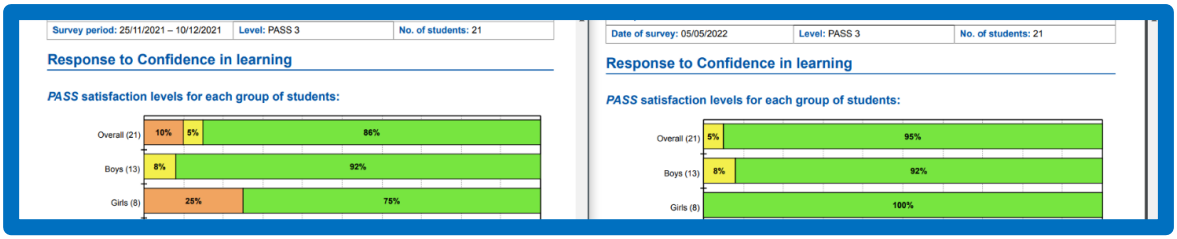

Figure 5: Response to confidence in learning. The left-hand graph shows pre-intervention, whilst the right-hand graph shows post-intervention. Gender split included due to the interesting result.

The response to the 'confidence in learning' factor was interesting, due to the clear gender split. Two girls' results shifted from the low satisfaction to high satisfaction, with the high satisfaction in the boys' 'confidence in learning' responses remaining unchanged. This result could have been due to several factors that occurred across the year. Before this intervention, not all students had been accepted into senior schools, whereas afterwards, students had all been accepted into their various schools and this could have been a factor in this change. However, due to the specificity of the change and boys showing no change whilst some girls did, it is possible that this change could be due to an unintended and unplanned quirk of the intervention. The two girls who shifted from low satisfaction to high satisfaction both happened to receive leading roles in the production and therefore had more time spent with myself and my collaborators developing their characters. The time spent developing character was far more significant with the students who had leading roles than with the students who had minor roles and could have been a factor in the change in their confidence in learning responses.

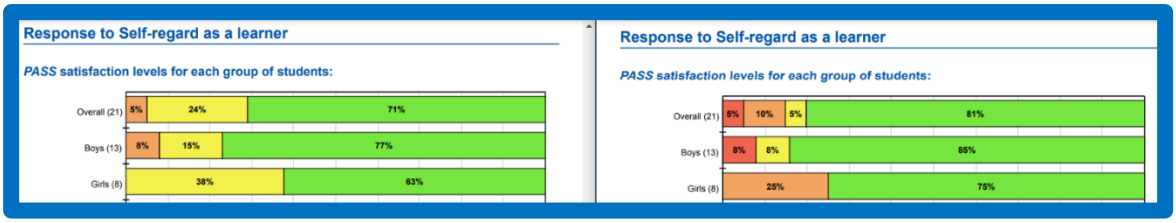

Figure 6: Response to 'Self-regard as a learner'. The graph on the left shows pre-intervention, whilst the graph on the right shows post-intervention. Gender split included due to an interesting result.

The response to the 'self-regard as a learner' question showed another interesting change, with girls having a marked change, with three girls initially reporting 'low-moderate' satisfaction with their self-regard as a learner subsequently shifting to one girl reporting 'high' satisfaction with their self-regard and two girls dropping to 'low' satisfaction levels with their 'self-regard as a learner.' One boy also suffered a negative drop in his 'self-regard as a learner,' dropping from 'low-moderate' satisfaction to 'low' satisfaction, whilst one boy shifted up to 'high' levels of satisfaction and another remained unchanged, alongside the overwhelmingly positive levels of satisfaction reported from the majority of students.

To determine whether any further items of interest had come of the survey and were to be of value-added to the research when I followed up with students, I looked at specific results from the individual questions that fed into the factor response scores (see Appendix B for a full list of statements).

One particularly interesting result came from a specific statement: "Learning new things is easy for me." All groups of students showed lower satisfaction scores of 24.2 % on average from this statement *after* the intervention, a lower level relative to their responses from other questions tackling and analysing the same factor of 'confidence as a learner.' Other (all post intervention satisfaction scores) statements such as "I know how to solve the problems in my schoolwork" (59.9% satisfaction), "I find schoolwork too difficult" (38.2%), "When I get stuck with my work, I can work out what to do next" (50%) and "I get anxious when I have to do new work" (56%)

that are all focussed around the idea of interrogating confidence as a learner saw far higher and more secure satisfaction scores. *Before* the intervention, students as a whole had a higher level of satisfaction with this question. This was driven by a change in the responses from the boys; girls levels remained exactly the same. Boys were 40.1% satisfied initially and girls were 18.4% satisfied; after intervention, boys' level of satisfaction had dropped to 27.4%, while girls' level of satisfaction had remained the same at 18.4%.

I believe this suggests that perhaps a cultural factor may have come into play with this question, due to the wording. Students may not have wanted to feel like they could 'boast' of their success or the ease with which they could learn new material, and as such responded to a privately asked question in a similar manner as how they would respond if asked publicly; denying what they might see as an overconfident response in order to avoid being singled out and being the tall poppy who was chopped down by her peers or teachers. Another reason for the change could be a more straightforward reason in which several the boys under question had started to go through puberty and had therefore begun to feel more self-conscious as the year had progressed, so this question captured that change, whereas the girls were more likely to have begun puberty earlier and the self-consciousness which comes with that change was not reflected in the survey results. This anomalous result therefore shows an interesting potential problem in the way this survey was conducted and the importance of localised testing and analysis of results for different setups, alongside the fact that it is well-nigh impossible to determine reasons for survey changes based on quantitative results alone.

A difference between the boys' and girls' results was interesting. The boys' group had a relatively low satisfaction rating for "I can concentrate on my work in class" (27.4 %) compared to the girls score of 54%, whereas boys were more likely to want a challenge, with 75.8% agreeing with the statement "I like having difficult work to do" and only 56% of girls agreeing with the same statement. Although the two statements are related, with students having to

work hard and concentrate on their work in class to be able to complete more difficult work, it is interesting to note the differences in attitudes towards the two linked statements. The lack of knowledge about the importance of metacognition and explicit understanding of the learning process that links the two statements is rather striking, or perhaps simply explores and links teenage priorities about what is important and how perception can be more important than internal explorations of identity and internal self-concept. Interestingly, it linked with comments from Students A and B, saying "I'm quite used to that sort of stuff because I've been doing drama my whole life […] Again, I've been doing it my whole life, so I'm quite used to it." The repetition of the statement suggests that the student found it important to get across that part of the response and demonstrate their experience in drama and the field, even though it might not have been directly related to the question. This statement of confidence might imply a strong sense of self-concept.

So overall, there was a minor increase in student self-concept, as measured by the four major factors. That is hardly a ringing endorsement of the intervention as a success or complete support for the change as a whole, and it might be difficult to attribute the changes that occurred across the student body toward it, but nonetheless it shows some interesting changes for individual students from across the time period that occurred that will be explained to some degree by the qualitative data below.

4.2 Analysing qualitative data

For this section, I chose to interview four students in two pairs, based on their test feedback from the quantitative assessment. Students were chosen based on anomalous or outlying results with major changes which I felt were worth following up on and which might help to explain some of the results that were found in the quantitative assessment section. Students A and B initially discussed how they felt the drama lessons were useful for preparation perhaps in what we might call the 'direct' drama industry, with Student B clarifying the direct skills and ideas that they thought they could use: "Let's say I want to read a speech out loud, it will help

build up my confidence for the future." They were discussing the importance of the subject and quantifying the advantages of the subject in terms of usefulness for exams such as GCSE's, a salient subject in student minds at almost all times within the education system in England, and also in terms of potential usefulness in the future for inhabiting different characters or 'selves' in different situations, like giving a speech as a business executive. They also referred to the idea of finding jobs directly within theatre - "Well, I mean it is a category of like jobs and stuff..." - but this seemed like more of an aside in the context of the conversation as they began to think of an idea, rather than a serious thought for the future.

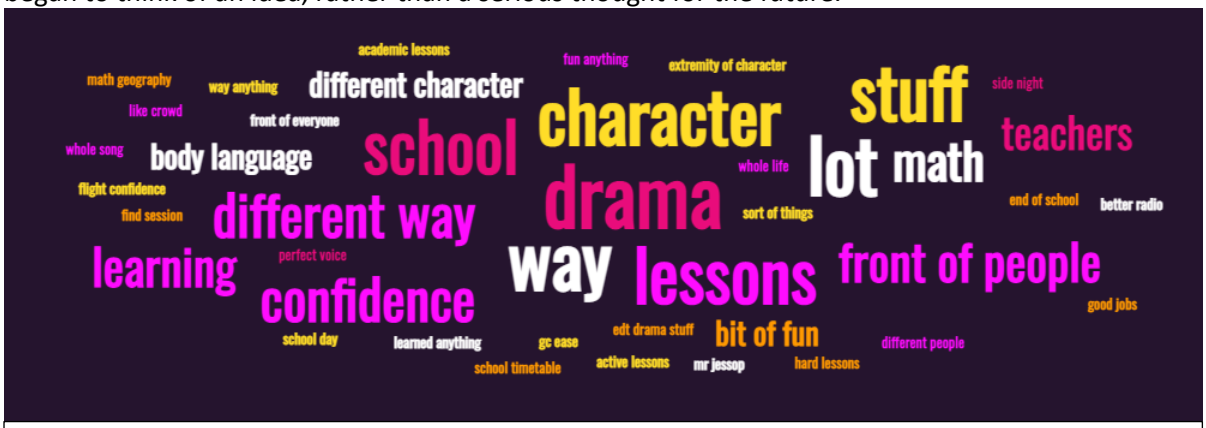

Figure 7: Word cloud of responses from students, based on raw data from interviews. The most interesting result is the frequency of the word 'character', based mostly on the salience of this concept to the students and how useful the sessions focussed on character were to the students.

Students C and D were focussed on the importance of drama to developing or "building up" their *confidence*, which they further defined as "talking to people" and "[the ability to] express my emotions [using] language at lot more." The salience of this idea to the students was perhaps suggested by the difference in their roles to Students A and B: C+D had large roles with a great many lines and time on stage, whereas A+B had smaller roles with a smaller level of engagement on the whole. Students A and B were cast in roles that were largely similar to what we might call their 'authentic' self, so not a huge amount of acting was required, in contrast to Students C+D. Perhaps because they had to work harder and were forced to practice in role several more times in different ways made the issue of confidence more salient

and the students more able to overcome the initial barriers that were in place at the start of the year when they first began rehearsals.

In terms of whether or not the students felt that drama had boosted their self-confidence, they all reported yes, in one form or another. “It’s definitely improved not being scared in front of people” said Students C and D. Students A and B reported confidence boosters, but mostly referred to drama as a "bit of fun to help you get over the hard lessons like maths”. This idea that is promulgated quite widely shows drama to be viewed as a subject – both from student and teacher points of view, as discussed earlier – shows and confirms, at least in this small sample, how the perception of a subject can shape the impact it has. Nonetheless, it is definitely possible for an impact to be had without realisation of the fact itself by the student who is studying it; perhaps just not necessarily possible or likely for them to notice said impact.

Interestingly, Students C and D reported the increase in confidence and happiness to experiment came from the fact that it was the purpose of the lesson; they compared it to a maths lesson in which they revised and then gained confidence from achieving success. Likewise, in drama lessons, because they were weekly and compulsory, they were impacted more significantly and felt comfortable experimenting with character and the like, so were far more settled and able to develop their confidence in that setting than with previous dramatic interventions. “Before, like, at the start of this year I hated doing it. Yeah, I hated doing drama, but it was a bit like I don't want to express myself and embarrass myself in front of everyone, but I've realised that you can do it because it's basically what the lesson is for.”

So, it had a positive impact on these students because having the weekly structure for it allowed them to compare it to other subjects in which they had experienced similar needs and patterns of learning – in short, their implicit knowledge of metacognition and their understanding of the way they learn was able to impact the way they approached drama and give them a mental framework from which to approach and thus gain from the lessons.

As the theory suggests, the students found no link or did not notice any connection between their performance and confidence in drama and their ability and confidence in other subjects. Students C and D suggested that perhaps English might be a candidate "because we learn how to speak different" for a subject which benefitted from extra lessons but sounded unsure and equivocated rather than settling firmly on a specific response. Students A and B were unequivocal and said there was no link - "It's sort of separate from other subjects." This ties in with Marsh and Shavelson's theory and depiction of the separation of different types of self-confidence that students retain (p.2 1992). Interestingly, they did not make any other connection with subjects or learning that requires a great deal of group cohesion, such as team sport, although several of the skills and qualities required and taught are similar.

In terms of how the students felt with several of the skills I used as a proxy for determining how confident and happy they were to experiment (speaking in character, performing extremities of characters like screaming or absurd laughter, acting in ways that they themselves would not otherwise act in the normal course of a day). Students A and B said that "Speaking in the character lets you be somebody else and gives you a chance to see what's going on to different people." This insight shows they understood the benefit of being able to act in different characters, although not necessarily all thought of the particular usefulness of the skill in terms of confidence building: i.e., how having different frameworks with which to approach the problems and issues they are likely to come up against can sometimes be partially solved by taking on a new 'character' or identity which has different attributes for use in different situations.

Students C and D were enthusiastic about how much more comfortable they felt performing extremities of character and the like saying they "definitely" felt a difference, because "I can't be judged by it because I'm doing it the way I think the character should be interpreted by." This type of framework 'armour,' in which experimentation and development of character in

different ways is prioritised and expected as a normal part of the daily routine, appears to have been a useful way of giving students confidence in themselves to play around with the characters and “keep practising over and over again and then you feel more comfortable doing that part.”

Although Students C and D did not acknowledge it explicitly, they said they felt more comfortable doing “the dancing of it because it’s a lot more like you’re not letting your voice out as much.” These particular students were exceptionally athletic and were quite comfortable learning the choreography, in contrast to other students. It was useful for them therefore, to utilise their inbuilt and previously tested skills from the team and individual sports they were accustomed to, with Students C and D likening the blocking of a scene to “preparing for long jump.” Although they are quite different things in my mind, it would appear that a lot of truth exists in that statement, when done properly and with a full outcome in mind. So although there exist natural barriers to collection of different frameworks for approaching different challenges, students in this case put the framework they know to work in a new way and attempt to make the best of the new situation as a result of their old knowledge and skills.

Students found some sessions far more useful and helpful than others. The common theme across both of the groups of students were sessions in which feedback was apparent and regularly given to promote ideas and character. Students C and D said the individual sessions they had with a teacher in which they learnt “how to be a character in different ways rather than doing exactly what I think I should do.” These particular sessions became quite specific, focussing on the smallest movements of the students in character and constant variation in voice, alongside other elements of expression that helped students to develop their expression of character and adopt a new identity as far as is possible. Students C and D also referred to the development of the “moods” of their characters and “what they’re living in” as being useful in the development of their characters. Thus, identifying a series of indicators that allowed them

to develop a picture in their mind of what they should be looking for and how they should be looking at it was useful; a goal for which they could set out to achieve what they were after by responses to feedback and specific instructions to change their dynamic. Students A and B concurred in a similar but different way, referring to "sessions where we crackdown on lines and think about body language to help show the character" as useful. In order to determine how successful or not the characters were and find their own subsequent development of a framework with which they could judge their own performance, these students rated the feedback of a More Knowledgeable Other useful and satisfying way in which to progress in their dramatic performance.

4.3 Discussion of findings and connection to theory

The idea of being able to explore an imagined context which enables the students to make meaningful creations from a range of other perspectives, is a useful tool for developing self-concept and building self-confidence, and one that is particularly useful in the world of drama teaching and learning. Some of the students were confident enough to discuss their changes with their partners and use the weekly sessions of drama to develop themselves in a way that showed they were comfortable making mistakes and errors in their performance but were happy to experiment with different forms of creative expression, such as shouting and screaming or crying in the session in order to achieve their goal of convincingly performing a different character.

Thus, the development of another framework within which rules and expectations were clearly set allowed the students to compare their performance to another subject – like Students C and D said: "It's a bit like long jump, in a way" – and further apply the framework with which they learnt a skill in another and the self-concept in the other subject to drama studies. Students A and B also referred to one of the benefits of acting extremities of character as being that "it just gives you a chance to see what's going on to different people." This concept that

students can develop ideas from different perspectives is helpful and shows that one of the tools was effective for these students.

The DfE specific endorsement of dramatic studies in schools, exhorting schools to give students a variety of opportunity in the dramatic arts to develop various skills is clearly noted in different ways by the students, with constant references to “rehearsing” and “learning how body language [affects meaning] to make sure that you get it across right”, alongside references to “help[ing] us speak in a different way”. This response is effective and useful for students; as a learning tool, it made a small cumulative difference across the cohort, with 87% of students reporting high satisfaction with their self-regard as a learner, compared to 71% pre-intervention.

Winter (2017) discusses the importance of trusting relationships between parents, students and staff for schools to develop positive learning spaces for children. This quality showed up positively on the data used in this research, with nearly 80% of students reporting positive responses for the ‘feelings about school’ segment of the collected data, both pre- and post-intervention. This suggests in this particular case that the trust was perhaps a necessary pre-condition of learning in the first place in order to expose themselves to making what they might call ‘mistakes’ in another context and what we referred to as a necessary part of the creative process. The students also referred to Mitchell and Spady’s (1983) study in which the challenges of maintaining some form of order in a challenging school environment were contrasted with the difficulties of ensuring academic progression; Students A and B, and Students C and D reported that they found it far more beneficial to learn when they were either in small groups and there was no hope of a challenge to the authority of the implicit social order, or when there were “sessions where we crackdown on lines and think about body language” as far more beneficial to the learning.

One particular student whose PASS scores demonstrated a major change from the before and after the intervention described why his feelings towards school and attitude to learning had changed had much to do with his much better results in English, rather in than from anything he attributed specifically to the course of drama study at the time. This finding indicates a classic problem with this study and a distinctive problem with using a test that also captures attitudes and characteristics of the self that have changed due to interventions in other subjects, or other things in their lives that have also had an impact, rather than focusing on the drama intervention specifically.

As Harter (1996) observed, the ability for students to compare themselves against their peers and make relative judgements is crucial for this age, and as they begin to hone the skill as they move through their developmental stages, it is important to help shape it. Students A and B spoke of how useful it was to be able to walk in another characters' shoes and understand what it was like to be able to do this – to "get a chance to see what's going on to [sic] different people".

Marsh and Shavelson (1985, p. 2) made the clearest distinction between different forms of self-concept, with an overall self-concept that then flowed out and had several sub-areas of self-concept. The students under study confirmed this thinking, with Students A and B saying, "it's sort of separate from other subjects". Nonetheless, there was a linking in the learning tools and the metacognitive processes they used in order to complete some of the tasks, with students making a connection between choreography and "long-jump", alongside being more comfortable with performing actions they were used to doing or had some familiarity with from another subject tor area of their lives. Therefore the link from this might be that students have a possibly deeper and more specific linking mechanism of the *skills* themselves that are taken and go to be used in other subjects and the *self-concept* they form as a result of these links they make between new skills they have learned, ones they already have and the different

ways to apply these skills in each new area is the really useful part of the learning. An adjustment to the diagram from Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) might see the end result as something like below, with a series of messy connections across different subjects resulting in changed behaviour in specific situations.

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The figure was sourced at Shavelson, R. J., Hubner, J. J., & Stanton, G. (1976). Self-Concept: Validation of Construct Interpretations. Review of Educational Research, 407-441.

Figure 8. Structure of self-concept revised. (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976)

Although this would need far more research to ascertain definitively, this Figure 8 diagram posits that behaviour in specific situations comes from not only one specific sub-area of self-concept but comes from links made by students using other relevant skills and all the tools they can come up with to behave in a specific way in a certain situation. For example, acting self-confidently, a common outcome from a drama lesson or course of study, might feed into sub-areas of self-concept such as social self-concept and emotional self-concept. Cremin, Goouch and Blakemore identified a similar link with their research examining how creative writing and drama benefit from each other, as long as the objectives are aligned (2006). This experimentation process in which skills from two different subject areas were used together to create a shared outcome using skills relevant to be subjects. This had a beneficial impact on the students' self-concept in drama.

The students shared the understanding of the drama and their knowledge of what drama itself was and was referred to as. Students C and D reported a significant change in their attitude towards drama because they "hated it" at the start of the year whereas by the end of the study, they were happy to "express [them]selves and embarrass [themselves] in front of everyone, because it's basically what the lesson is for" – reflecting Luton's idea of drama as a place where "partnerships can be enacted" (2021, p. 81). The reflection of the intervention as a place to challenge specific views of the world and examine new varieties of thought from different perspectives, enunciated by Gibson and Ewing (2020, p. 3) and Brinol and Petty (2009) was referred directly to by Students C and D, with the students saying "speaking in the character lets you be somebody else" which is a key element and skill useful for development and the choices that students will make as they age.

The significance problem drama faces nationally was also reflected in the student attitudes to it: Students A and B said "It's a bit of fun to help you get over the hard lessons like Maths." This type of realisation and attitude towards drama is something that really needs to be considered; what is the purpose of drama in schools? Drama's principle use as a pedagogical tool, as Robinson (2021, p. 90) suggests is historic, rather shifts the focus away from performative aspects of productions and performances to the process-based elements of the subject, as Day suggests is more important (2011, p. vii). Incremental change is probably more likely to happen than significant change; using drama as a pedagogical tool to realise benefits in self-concept might help to cement the place of drama and develop skills for the goals for which it might be used.

Grades and formative assessment tools were noted by Marsh et. al. (2018, p. 276) as a particularly important piece of feedback relied upon by students to develop their self-concept. The students noted it as well, with the sessions in which they were in very small groups or in an individual session noted as the most helpful by Students C and D – these were feedback-heavy

sessions and very specific – while Students A and B appreciated the group sessions where lines and choreography were learnt and feedback was given consistently – or, in their words, when we "crackdown on lines and think about body language" to make changes and improvements to the scenes.

Bakadorova and Raufelder's research showing a decrease in academic self-concept that students experience in their adolescence was mirrored in a small way in my research, with boys, who are most likely to have gone/started to go through puberty at this stage showing a large drop off in satisfaction levels from the question in the GL PASS survey 'Learning new things is easy for me'. Although boys and girls had a similar level of satisfaction in the post-intervention survey, boys showed a significant decrease in their levels of satisfaction. As girls were more likely to have started going through puberty already and thus would be more likely to be self-conscious than their male counterparts, they did not show any change, whereas the change into adolescence would have captured a good number of the male students and thus were living embodiments of the initial theory (2014, p. 348). This is another example of the difficulty of surveys such as this; one of the most evident explanations for the data has very little to do with the thesis or drama.

Overall, the student response to 'confidence in learning' tagged questions increased in the GL PASS assessments, with girls showing a significant change and boys showing no change. This reinforces an idea promulgated by Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton with their integrated self-concept model, showing a virtuous cycle: achievement of relatively higher grades leads to improved self-concept which leads to achievement of relatively higher grades which leads to improved self-concept and so on (1976, p. 413). Narrowly focussing this change on drama, we can see the change in attitudes that Students C+D have undertaken over the year from "I hated doing drama […] but I've realised that can do it because that's basically what the lesson is for." The repetition of the lesson week on week implicitly showed the students that they were

succeeding in the lesson and felt able to develop their drama self-concept from zero to being able to “do it” and gain something from it.

Marsh et. al. suggests that the students compared their performance through comparison processes - internal (comparison against another subject) and external (performance of other students in the same subject (2018, p. 264). An interesting difference in this was the response from Students A and B, who held chorus roles, and Students C and D, who performed leading roles. Students C and D were relatively comfortable in their own skin, saying “I can’t be judged by it because I’m doing it the way I think the character should be interpreted by”. This suggests that perhaps they did not consider themselves to have a peer to compare themselves against, as the roles were so different that they were playing; it could also have been that this comparison process was carried out earlier, during the casting process when students received their roles in the production and therefore wasn’t accurately captured by the study. Students A and B, by contrast, were more focused on how their character and production of it would fit into line with their peer’s expectations, saying that “I wanted to show it good [sic] because my friends were doing it, so yeah.” Peer expectations are important when they are doing a similar task and have comparable roles; perhaps less so when they don’t – or perhaps the effect of what might be called ‘setting’ in drama: giving roles, wasn’t captured by the surveys.

One other effect that will be entirely possible to occur at the end of the survey is the aptly-named ‘Big Fish, Little Pond Effect’, where students who are using their peers as a yardstick for their ability graduate into a larger setting where there are far more students and breadth of talent (Marsh, et al., 2018, p. 265). So, although students might end up leaving the school with a relatively secure sense of dramatic and general self-concept, it is entirely (and highly likely) possible that they will arrive in schools with talented students and find they are not as capable as they had assumed. The ‘Change to self-regard as a learner’ category showed a general upswing in results, with two students showing negative results, alongside two more students

who had showed relatively more positive results, as well as the rest of the cohort who remained unchanged. While it would be too early to suggest for many of the students, some students who were on the receiving end of negative news following a lack of attainment at scholarship level that they had expected may have been captured by this survey result. This could be an early indicator of 'Big Fish, Little Pond Effect' for these students. Further research when the students began their new year at their senior schools would be necessary to discover what, if any effect, that would have had and whether it presented itself or not.

Conclusions and implications

5.1 Summary of findings

Research Question 1: How can drama studies assist with the development of self-concept in students at my school?

As a cohort, there was very small cumulative mean change in the development of self-concept of students at my school. This did not mean, however, that there was no change. Individual students demonstrated changes in their responses and showed both further development and also some regression in the measures that were used over the course of the intervention to measure changes in student self-concept. The overwhelming majority of quantitative student responses to their changes remained the same over the course of the intervention, and there was no consistent demographic split in all measures between boys and girls in the quantitative data collected. During the qualitative data collection phase, students referred to specific elements in the intervention as being particularly useful, in line with the theory, with the consistent and applied feedback in the character development sessions being particularly useful (Brunner, et al., 2010; Bakadorova & Raufelder, 2014; Maclellan, 2014; Moscrop & Kleitman, 2006). Students reported that drama lessons had little or no effect on their self-concept in other subjects, in line with the theory, which suggests that self-concept can be quite specific and refer to discrete areas of knowledge (Marsh, et al., 2018), although the qualitative data suggests that they applied knowledge and metacognitive processes from other subjects in order to construct a framework with which to approach learning in drama, in line with Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton's (2007) theory, but perhaps with subareas of self-concept linked to specific skills, rather than subject areas, as suggested was possible in Cremin, Goouch and Blakemore's research (2006). The quantitative data had varying results, with some factors showing a net positive increase in the results and other showing a net negative decrease in the responses, with many students showing no change across the course of the intervention. These results suggest several things; the intervention was not consistently applied to all students, and they had varying outcomes as a result primarily of the roles they were cast in; as the survey was not specific to drama, it captured responses from the whole year and all parts of the

student life combined as a whole, rather than simply just from what they thought about drama. As a whole, the qualitative responses showed a positive impact on the students' self-concept in their subject-specific drama sub-area, whilst the quantitative responses showed a mixed response to changes in self-concept across the cohort and general self-concept.

Research Question 2: To what extent can drama justify a place in the curriculum due to how it affects self-concept?

Drama occupies a tenuous foothold in many school programmes and is used both as a pedagogical tool to help learning in other subjects and to advance specific knowledge and skills of the subject itself (Luton, 2021; Neelands & O'Connor, 2010; Department for Education, 2013; Maclellan, 2014; Robinson J. E., 1999). Students reported positive responses to both uses of drama in the qualitative responses, with particular emphasis given to the advantage of the one-on-one sessions with constant and specific feedback. More generally, students did not report that they felt drama had any impact on the confidence or ability to perform in other subjects and the quantitative data was unclear as to the impact of it. The qualitative data suggests that students found the intervention particularly useful for exploring different versions of the self and performing extremities of character and the quantitative data showed at least some of the students showed a positive change in their self-concept across the intervention. Whilst this does not mean that there was no impact (i.e., the measurement may have simply be insufficient), these results do suggest perhaps that drama is useful as one of many tools in the curriculum used to develop self-concept and that it perhaps does not occupy a pre-eminent place in the curriculum toolbox but may offer a useful way of exploring and developing the self.

Research Question 3: What strategies within drama studies are the most effective for the development of student self-concept?

The theory suggests that feedback students received would be one of the most effective ways to develop self-concept and the qualitative data reflected that suggestion; the qualitative data showed that students found the sessions where they received the most feedback the most

useful sessions. Having a collaborator with a deep and wide understanding of drama as a subject was also particularly useful. The students found the feedback that he was able to give as a More Knowledgeable Other an effective and a useful way to build their self-concept in drama, from the qualitative data. The comparison process that Marsh, et. al. theorised that students went through (external comparison of performance of students in the same subject) was an interesting result that I hadn't considered. The key assessment students received was at the beginning, when they were cast in their roles in *Matilda: the Musical*, essentially setting the students based on ability. This comparison against other students may have been captured by several changes in quantitative data, as there were negative changes in the measures of self-concept for some students who had minor roles and positive changes for other students who were assigned leading roles. The students who were assigned leading roles and were interviewed also talked more eloquently and extensively about the impact the intervention had on their development than the students assigned minor roles. This is an interesting outcome where the initial setting of students resulted in positive outcomes for a small number of students and negative outcomes for others. We also tried to widen the field of study so students could see what other students were doing in their dramatic performances to avoid the "Big Fish, Little Pond" effect that was likely to occur in such a small environment and as students had no real external framework by which to measure themselves (Marsh, et al., 2018, p. 265). Further study would be required to determine whether or not this part of the intervention was successful as it would become apparent after they left the school; it was not effective during the period of the intervention, perhaps due to the time we spent on the internal production relative to the time spent looking at other school performances to give students an external comparison.

5.2 Evaluation of collaboration

My collaborator was a massive and significant support during the process, with his ready knowledge and understanding of dramatic skills and performances being helpful to both me

and the students. In terms of continuing professional development, it was the most effective course of improvement for my drama teaching that I have undertaken. I have learnt how to manage and develop relationships from colleagues and parents that are positive and well worth the time for the students' benefit, especially when given from such a knowledgeable source. Leveraging outside support and help was of significant benefit to student outcomes in this case and I will take away the knowledge and skills I gained from that for the future. The students in the qualitative interviews discussed and commented on how useful these sessions were. Thus, an interesting implication for the school came from the process itself, rather than the study at hand. Consistent, highly specific support from a More Knowledgeable Other (my collaborator) tailored to the task at hand (creating a drama scheme of work) was a particularly useful method of continuing professional development that resulted in more positive outcomes for the students.

In terms of learning for myself as a teacher, learning how to structure outside support from parents and other enthusiastic people was really effective and helpful. There was concern from other teachers and staff members initially about how I might lose control of the process if I asked for parent support and how that might end up with negative outcomes for the students. This was also a concern of mine, but I decided to frame the issue of where help might be specifically realised very narrowly at first in order to build a positive and trusting relationship with us both that we could collectively leverage and work together positively in order to create positive outcomes for students. This strategy was effective and allowed the development of a successful relationship on both sides that meant we could make changes and adjust the programme as and where necessary once we had established the parameters of our relationship. So, in summary; having a mentor who is willing and able to support consistently throughout the year makes for useful progress and more positive outcomes for both staff and students.

Understanding how self-concept works across different subject areas and how it could affect student behaviour and attitudes was a useful implication, alongside learning the mutually reinforcing nature of positive achievement leading to higher levels of self-concept leading to higher levels of positive achievement. Having the knowledge that this virtuous cycle exists was beneficial for interventions with several students in the drama lessons, as it gave me a strong basis to implement behavioural interventions with an academic effect. For example, one student had a very low self-concept in drama to begin with and often reacted to drama lessons by causing negative attention to be brought to himself. Regular, positive comments that were given when he deserved them were useful elements for him to be a recipient of and helped to alter his behaviour in the short term.

5.3 Implications for the classroom and wider research

Examining how significant the development of 'self-concept' and the idea of development of the 'self' more generally has been one of the most useful parts of the research I have undertaken here, with knowledge of the specific strategies and methods that are useful for building and developing self-concept in students being a valuable asset to my classroom practice. The key elements to the theory behind the development of self-concept were accurate, consistent and regular feedback from a More Knowledgeable Other, with thoughts behind assessments explicitly laid out, and regular cycles of creative effort, evaluation, making changes and the gradual embedding of an internal framework of self-assessment within a student's mind. One area we could have focussed more on developing was the modelling of new ideas and developing and explicitly aiming to further their internal framework so that students became more and more adept and specific with their ability to adapt, create new ideas and recognise effective dramatic performance when they observed it. Although we did watch performances from the rest of the theatre world, this was not emphasised nearly as much as the importance of the feedback cycle and the process behind it. This would have been

an area for further research to develop a fully linked and thought-out model behind it specifically for drama studies.

In my teaching of other year groups and subjects, I have fully taken on the significance of feedback and modelling different forms for students, and I have focussed my feedback, so the students were given greater opportunity to respond and make changes to their work. For example, in English, students now hand in prep which I give a paragraph's worth of feedback on suggesting changes and ideas, in which we then spend a full lesson on going through and making changes to the work.

In drama lessons for other students and year groups, we used a similar model with the rehearsals, giving time and opportunity to the students to develop and create their own versions of characters and scenes before returning and giving feedback, so the focus was less on the end-product that was a result, and more on the process the students went through. As a sidenote, this had a varied effect on end-products, depending on the type of production; improvised and small group performances benefited from this method, whilst larger-scale year group productions perhaps had a lower level of benefit.

5.4 Concluding remarks

So then – how does compulsory drama lessons help create self-concept amongst Year 8 students?

This practitioner research was a useful indicator more for the specific skills and interventions that were uncovered during the process than as a broad indicator as to whether or not the importance of self-concept can be used to justify drama – or indeed, as to whether it is a useful tool with which to facilitate the development of self-concept amongst Year 8 students. I can say fairly definitively that it helped developed the student self-concept sub-area of drama skills covered in the intervention, but the measure used to define whether or not this had an impact was inconclusive across the year group. The feedback cycles were useful; having an extensively More Knowledgeable Other as a collaborator resulted in better outcomes for both students

and staff; setting students according to ability had a significant impact on their attitude towards self and subject, both positive and negative; students reported both positive and negative outcomes from the intervention over the course of the project and I was able to find out insights into why. This project allowed me to understand far more about my own teaching practice and how it can impact students and staff and was thus truly valuable in this way.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Redacted text of email sent regarding implementation of drama as timetabled subject

Dear [x],

In the new school year, I would like you to take the lead in teaching drama from Years 3-8 in our new timetable. This should be implemented to help provide opportunity for students develop their confidence in a variety of different situations, perform onstage using different performance methods and gain experience of the many different varieties and forms of drama.

I would like to set up a meeting with you in due course to discuss this idea. Please let me know when suits.

Yours,

[Headmaster]

Appendix B: GL PASS Survey Individual Statements

PASS 1 - 27 STATEMENTS

Number	Statement
1	I think carefully about school work
2	I like getting on with my work in class
3	I know how to work things out in lessons
4	I think this school is a friendly place
5	I want to come to school every day
6	I like doing tests
7	I feel lonely at this school
8	Most of the time I think my teacher wants me to do my best
9	I behave well in class
10	I like having hard things to do in class
11	I like to think in my lessons
12	I know how to learn things
13	I find learning hard
14	I have friends in my school
15	I find school work too hard
16	I am bored when I am at school
17	I am happy in school
18	I like being at school
19	I can usually work things out when I get stuck
20	I need more help with my work
21	I find it easy to learn new things
22	I like my teacher
23	I like being in this school
24	I am clever
25	I think the work in my lessons is too easy
26	I try to do my best in my lessons
27	I like to try new work in my lessons

Appendix C: Student interview questions sample

Interview questions:

What do you think of drama being useful for helping you to develop -i.e. why do we study it in school?

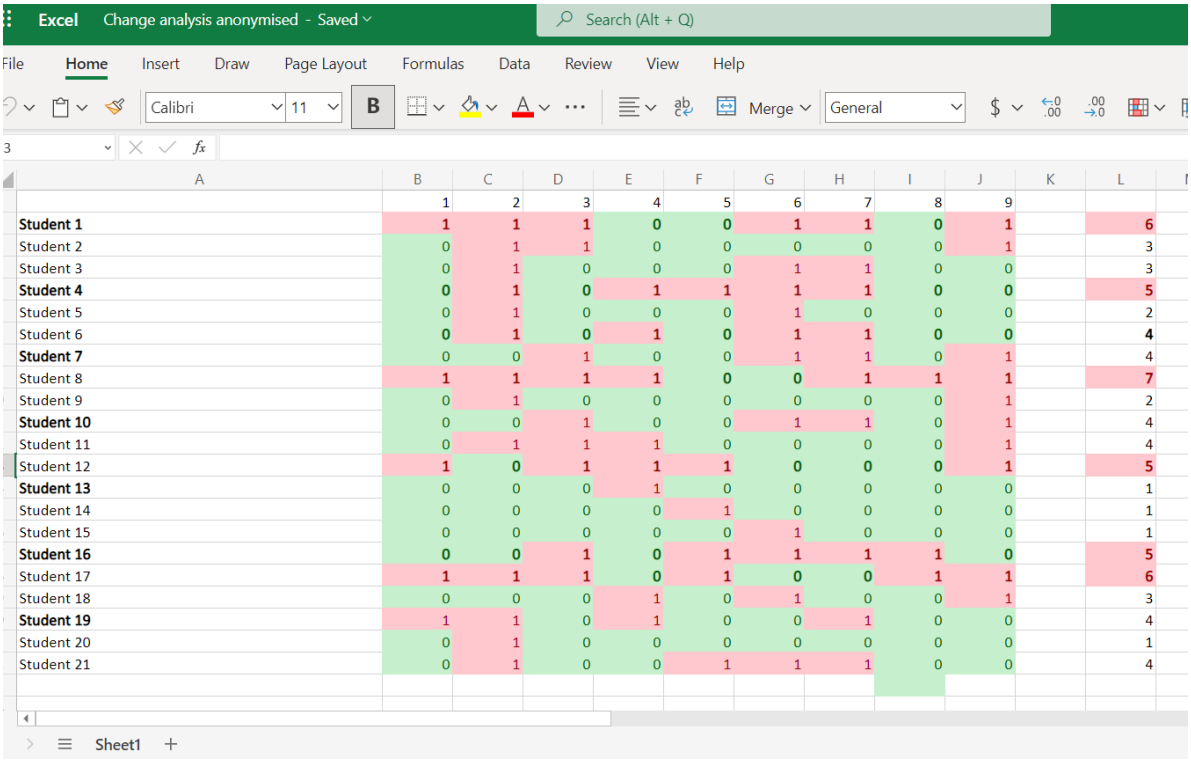
What sort of impact do you feel that the drama we have been doing over the last term has had on your confidence?

Do you feel more/less comfortable doing things like dancing, speaking in character, performing extremities of characters, acting in different ways in different situations?

Do you think there has been any impact on your own learning in other subjects because of the drama that we have done over the past term? Why/why not?

Have you noticed anything in particular that has been particularly helpful for your own development within the unit over the past term, i.e. specific activities/classes/sessions etc.?

Appendix D: Selection of students for qualitative questions based on quantitative responses to different factors in GL Assessment



Excel Change analysis anonymised - Saved

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
Student 1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1		6
Student 2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1		3
Student 3	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0		3
Student 4	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0		5
Student 5	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0		2
Student 6	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0		4
Student 7	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1		4
Student 8	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1		7
Student 9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		2
Student 10	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1		4
Student 11	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1		4
Student 12	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1		5
Student 13	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0		1
Student 14	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0		1
Student 15	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0		1
Student 16	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0		5
Student 17	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1		6
Student 18	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1		3
Student 19	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0		4
Student 20	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		1
Student 21	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0		4