

“The ugly side of drama teaching”: Drama teacher resilience in the face of school productions

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Abstract

In this article I explore what Justin Cash refers to as “the ugly side of drama teaching” (Cash, 2015) specifically the long hours required to produce drama productions in schools and the subsequent effect this has on the health of drama teachers. Guided by documents drawn up by the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association Te Wehengarua (PPTA) I question what drives drama teachers to commit themselves to provide co-curricular and extra-curricular productions in schools, above and beyond normal teaching hours. This commitment is, according to the PPTA, “unrecognised” and not funded which begs the question why do teachers feel obliged to volunteer their skills. What do they believe the school production and other extra-curricular drama events offer the students? How do drama teachers sustain themselves delivering the long hours required to produce these performances? Weaving the PPTA documents, health and safety regulations and academic research this discussion challenges attitudes towards the provision of extra-curricular drama as an expected yet mainly unpaid requirement of the job. Since the writing of this article there has been a change of government which may offer further hope for the arts and in particular those drama teachers drawn to providing extra-curricular productions.

Biography



DR JANE ISOBEL LUTON is the Head of the Faculty of Drama and Dance at Macleans College, New Zealand, where she directs and produces several productions a year. She completed her PhD in Education with a creative practice component in drama using an embodied dramatic method. She has co-authored four drama books in New Zealand and continues to write articles and chapters which are published in peer-reviewed journals and books. She has frequently presented at conferences using dramatic performance as her medium. Jane's recent teacher inquiry has focused on school productions and how they help build resilience in students through the creation of community.

Introduction

This article explores what Justin Cash refers to as “the ugly side of drama teaching” (Cash, 2015) and in particular the long hours required to produce drama productions in schools and the subsequent effect on drama teachers. As long ago as 1967, it was acknowledged that “the staging of a school play involves an immense amount of time, effort and thought” and is often for students the “major event” in not only the school year but in “their entire school careers” (Chilver, 1967, p.11). Today I question what drives drama teachers, including myself, in our often extensive commitment to provide co-curricular and extra-curricular drama productions in schools. I draw on a range of academic research from within New Zealand as well as internationally. The discussion is informed by the guidelines for extra-curricular activities provided for teachers by the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association Te Wehengarua (PPTA), the professional association and union of New Zealand secondary teachers. I write from my viewpoint as a secondary school drama teacher who, like many others, has given up personal time, unpaid, to ensure high quality drama productions are presented on behalf of a school. I faced a dichotomy between my belief in the importance of drama productions in schools and my decreasing level of resilience. While I want to direct plays that challenge students and develop a wide range of skills, I often resent the long hours spent at school directing co-curricular and extra-curricular drama.

According to a recent PPTA workload survey:

Pressure on teachers to undertake extracurricular activities continues to increase as schools see this as a competitive necessity. There is no resourcing provided to schools for extracurricular activity (either in terms of staffing time or specific funding). The additional hours teachers put into extracurricular is largely unrecognised and contributes to the overall workload pressures, absorbing many hours annually in the evenings and weekends for most teachers. (PPTA, 2016a, p.97)

Understanding terminology

Firstly it is important to understand the terminology involved in what designates a co-curricular or extra-curricular activity within the school system and specifically the secondary school system in New Zealand. The PPTA defines co-curricular activities as those “that arise from curriculum requirements that involve extension beyond the classroom” (PPTA, 2010, p.2). While Extra-curricular is defined as “optional activities that involve teacher participation outside of normal school hours” (PPTA, 2010, p.2). Therefore productions that relate to drama assessments or that support curriculum studies would fit the first category. The school musical or senior and junior productions best match the latter. The PPTA acknowledges that:

Extra-curricular activities have always been regarded as part of the culture of secondary schools. Many teachers relish the opportunity to act as sports coaches, drama producers, international tour guides and musical directors and all teachers accept the benefits of being able to engage with students in less formal settings than the classroom. (PPTA, 2016)

As a way to support this culture the PPTA created a set of guidelines designed to “encourage schools to establish supportive practice around extra-curricular activities” (PPTA, 2016). This is important because as the PPTA explain:

The establishment of a competitive regime amongst secondary schools over the last decades has resulted in schools endeavouring to expand the range and extent of extra-curricular activities for marketing purposes as well as for other reasons. The result has been pressure on teachers to increase their

extracurricular participation at the same time as curriculum, administrative and assessment demands and staffing cuts have so increased the teaching workload that teachers find themselves with neither the time nor the energy for other activities. (PPTA,2016)

With over twenty five years of teaching experience in the United Kingdom and New Zealand I have felt the increasing demands made upon myself as a drama teacher to present more and more productions. This year I will have assisted with the production of the school musical, directed a senior production, a junior production and overseen the presentation of several assessment evenings including two nights for the examination presentation of a full length play. This involves long hours and in 2016 I calculated that I had given three hundred and ten hours of extra-curricular time to productions and another fifty hours to assessment productions and scholarship teaching outside of my required teaching and preparation hours. As I write this I know I am not alone or unique. One participant in research by Tracey Lynn Cody “describes his production term as being “insane”, finding he is at school three or four nights a week, for seven weeks in a row” (Cody, 2012, p.172).

But talk to any drama teacher and there will always be stories of the long hours worked and the difficulties encountered doing productions. Cody’s research confirms this with one participant discussing “the burden of productions” (Cody, 2012, p.172) feeling “that being a head Of Department in Performing Arts means a far greater workload, involving many more hours than other subject areas seem to require”. He was left feeling his job was “unsustainable” (2012, p.172). While in Brooks’s research one participant senses that:

There are not many staff in a drama department, and the school production is enormous. After all, people do those jobs for a living. Yet we’re often doing those things as well as teaching our full-time teaching load. I think that’s what burns people out. They love doing those things, but they’re very demanding; very, very demanding of people’s time and energy. (Brooks, 2010, p.236)

While researching my Master’s Thesis I spoke with experienced director and Head of Drama Anton Bentley about his production of *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill. Bentley reflected on the long hours that are required to put on a school production which often resulted in setting aside his own work to meet the needs of his students:

I feel that in teaching there is a lot of good will exploited. My co-curricular was equivalent to a 0.5 job unpaid last year. In effect I gave \$35,000 worth of my time to the school. We can’t say we are doing it for the good of the kids. There is a huge inequality in terms of expectations. Teachers can’t run departments, do productions, resource 5 year levels and write all the lesson plans for a management unit of \$4000. (A. Bentley, personal communication, August 25, 2009). (Luton, 2010, p.67-68)

This use of the word “exploitation” is a powerful indictment of the system that can expect teachers to not only prepare lessons, teach and mark but to then work extra unpaid hours. As Bentley warns, ‘doing productions’ should not be justified by a sense that it is “for the good of the kids”. After all, the PPTA identify these activities as for the benefit of marketing the school. Certainly if state schools paid teachers for the hours spent on extra-curricular activities like productions, it would be unsustainable due to rigid budget constraints. According to the PPTA guidelines “the state does not fund schools for extra-curricular activity and these activities are not defined as part of the paid work” (PPTA, 2010, p.3). This, I believe is a key statement, for if extra-curricular work is not a part of the paid job then why do we feel obliged to volunteer our services on top of the many demands teaching makes. Remarkably teachers feel they are obliged to do what amounts to voluntary work while employers believe it is acceptable

to ask that they do so. However, as part of co-curricular activities “the teacher in charge of Drama may produce a play every year as part of senior performance for assessment requirements” (PPTA, 2010). Despite the many apocryphal stories of teachers feeling debilitated by the workload many drama teachers relish the chance to act as directors or provide opportunities for their students. It is a paradox that while exhausted directing co and extra-curricular productions it can also energise and contribute to the enjoyment of our work.

The PPTA’s policy is that “teachers should not agree to the inclusion of extra-curricular activities in their job descriptions because they then cease to be voluntary” (PPTA, 2010, p.3). It is also important to note that according to the Secondary Teachers’ Collective Agreement: “If an activity is done outside school hours and is unpaid then the employer cannot legitimately require teachers to do it. (PPTA, 2010, p.4). It is interesting that while the Union suggests that it is unethical for a school to require staff to carry out extra-curricular activities, drama teachers still feel obliged to do them-volunteering their time and skills. According to the document *Rest and Meal Breaks Guidelines* from the *Guidelines to the Employment Relations Act 2000*:

Teaching can have a heavy and demanding workload. That’s why it’s important for your own health and safety – as well as your students’ learning – that you have the opportunity to take regular breaks. (PPTA 2015, p.1)

All the more for drama teachers who, when engaged in directing a production may hold rehearsals after a full day teaching and often at weekends and during school holidays. Not only are teachers actively directing (which also means teaching acting skills) they are responsible for ensuring other aspects of a production are organised. Zoe Brooks describes this as “an exercise in logistics to ensure that all the facets of a successful production [are] in place” (Brooks, 2010, p.234). This can mean that a drama teacher can work from early morning through to late evenings and during production season they may be working as many as twelve to fifteen hour days. In the current climate there is a serious discourse around health and safety in schools informed by the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. Increased attention is now paid to what can and cannot be done by students. Risk Assessment management Forms (RAMS) are now an integral part of any school trip or activity. Recent safety issues concerning productions in New Zealand has contributed to the stress of drama teachers. Yet little thought appears to be given to the health of staff engaging in long hours, sometimes six to seven days a week, over an extended period of time. A teacher’s employment contract only requires a teacher to be called back to school for professional development or other duties for a maximum of five days in a year (Ministry of Education, 2017). Yet drama teachers are giving up many more days than this during a year to produce school plays. Staff are often given no leeway within the school day in recompense and may still be expected to cover for absent colleagues, take on duties during and after school or participate in school sporting activities like athletics days. In 2010, Brooks’ research suggested that incentives for teachers were few and far between and “the direction of the school production was considered integral to their employment” (Brooks, 2010, p.235). The PPTA suggest that as part of best practice schools should be “releasing teachers who undertake extra-curricular activities from doing duty” (PPTA, 2010, p. 5) and that they should be recompensed for their meals and expenses. Staff finally acknowledging exhaustion may have no other choice than to take sick leave. The PPTA guidelines note that the “the long-term solution for extra-curricular demand is additional staffing and resourcing” and suggest one of the ways to do this is:

Providing time for teachers who take extra-curricular activities in their own time. For example a non-contact period prior to or after lunch for a teacher who takes choir, orchestra or sports practices at lunchtime (PPTA, 2010, p5)

There seems to be no acknowledgement that time should be provided for staff who

engage in rehearsals and production preparation before or after school. There appears to be a lack of understanding by school management, and the Union, of the long hours it takes to produce a high quality production—a lunchtime rehearsal would not in common parlance ‘cut the mustard’. Rehearsals are a lengthy process which requires a more sustained approach, preferably away from the ringing of bells and the noise of the day.

The PPTA suggest that schools which promote a work-life balance for their staff are more likely to recruit and keep staff than those who place undue pressure on them (PPTA, 2010). In these days of teacher shortages it is interesting that schools still expect that extra-curricular activities are carried out. For Heads of Departments or Faculties management units do little to recompense for the long hours required to accomplish school productions. Certainly they would not repay the Bentley’s calculations of \$35,000. The age old cry that teachers work short days (NUT, 2017) and get long holidays fails to recognise that in those holidays the drama teacher will often be found directing and rehearsing student productions. With few other careers requiring unpaid commitment one wonders why drama teachers commit their own time to producing plays. Is it because they have a need to help their students? Or is it to do with promoting their subject in the face of its constant marginalisation? Prue Wales’s research has suggested many drama teachers see themselves as missionaries out to save the world (Wales, 2009) and perhaps we are our own worst enemies. Instead of limiting extra-curricular activities we often present more than one production during a year. This may range from the school musical through to junior and senior productions as well as assessment presentations required to fulfil the needs of the curriculum. Cash asks an important question:

the school production, while often a wonderful and rewarding experience for our students, is unnecessarily stressful for the Drama teacher who directs or coordinates it. On top of a full teaching load and rehearsals for any number of other activities at the same time, why are we expected to direct a full-scale show as well? (Cash, 2008)

Perhaps we see these opportunities for students to perform as a vitally important expression of drama’s identity in a school, as well as providing important authentic learning opportunities. Nevertheless it could be argued that all teachers seek to do this. So what is it that leads drama teachers in particular, to spend long, often unpaid hours, outside school time to interact with students? McCammon et al suggest that:

Theatre is not only entertainment but also a rich context for learning and a motivator for better school attendance and academic performance. Its participants learn about art itself and its role in society. (McCammon et al, 2012, p 17)

These researchers outline some of the pitfalls of school productions as well as identifying a wide range of long term benefits for students including among others: self-confidence, friendships, presentation skills, self-worth, interpersonal skills and emotional growth. All of which they say “will help future adults in their vocational and everyday life endeavors” (McCammon et al, 2012). These positive outcomes are significant concepts which underpin many of the reasons why drama teachers direct co-curricular and extra-curricular productions. From entertainment to education, school performances are a dynamic space in which teachers and students can participate on a shared project for a public audience. It is perhaps the first way in which drama entered schools.

The background to school productions

In England school productions have existed since 1110AD (Luton, 2014, p. 7). While in New Zealand they have been an important part of the school system and “the principal manifestation of Drama” (Greenwood, 2009) since European settlement and were “the face of drama in secondary schools” (Brooks, p.72). Schools in Wellington and Auckland have produced school plays since 1893 and:

In 1899, at King’s College Auckland, a performance of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare was described as “a cultural highlight of the early years” (King’s College, 2009). (Luton, 2014, p. 6-7)

According to John O’Toole many schools view theatre as “peripheral and ornamental” (O’Toole, 1992, p.191) and perhaps the fact that school productions are an extra-curricular activity confirms this. Kempe and Ashwell acknowledge the importance of the school play as “the means by which a school celebrates itself and demonstrates its own culture” (Kempe & Ashwell, 2000, p.7) and certainly the PPTA suggest it is a good advertising tool. Schools often embrace school productions for the value it adds to both the school as a community and the students involved. King’s College in Auckland acknowledge the correlation “between participation in co-curricular activities and high academic achievement” (Kings College, 2017). However for this to occur the production must be of a reasonable standard. Chilver suggested fifty years ago that “many school plays are incompetently produced or badly managed, and are therefore of no educational value to anyone” (Chilver, 1967, p.11). Perhaps this has been why so little research has been carried out into the benefits of the school production:

First, it has not always been valued as a serious part of school-based drama education. Second, it is often considered theatrically second-rate, lacking professional-level skills in direction, design and performance. (Mackey, 2012, p.35)

However drama productions in schools have improved as theatre has become more accessible to people and teachers come to the profession with dramatic and theatrical training. The production of the school play, comes nowadays with the expectation that it will be professionally produced (O’Toole, 1992). But as O’Toole suggests drama teachers can be put under immense pressure as often their own, “self-esteem” (O’Toole, 1992, p192) and their desire to “raise the status of drama within the school” (1992, p192) is at stake.

As the PPTA point out, teachers take part in a wide variety of activities outside of normal school hours. Drama teachers are not alone in this involvement. Yet the intensity and complexity of productions within a school setting can mean that drama teachers spend huge numbers of hours with students, teaching and directing as well as unseen hours organising the technical requirements in order to achieve a memorable production. Annually, in Auckland, there is an award ceremony ‘Showdown’, the Auckland secondary school production competition. But while this event celebrates school productions it can also contribute to the pressure to succeed, although the organisers state:

the best part is you don’t have to do anything other than create the same awesome show that you would anyway!(Showdown, 2017)

Drama productions are often closely connected with a desire to demonstrate artistic skills and to prove oneself as a teacher and drama and theatre professional. For many drama teachers the first school production is undertaken early in their career. My first production took place in my second term of teaching when I directed a play about the First World War presented in a local theatre. It is a rare occurrence for a head of drama to refuse to direct the school production. If they do then they may take on production

responsibilities, overseeing others who have taken on the project and acting as a liaison between the school and provider.

Challenges and benefits of school productions

When drama is intended for an audience then most teachers want that work to be complete. This means it is presented to a high standard demonstrating an overall production concept and an attention to the aesthetics of the art form including lighting, setting, costume, and. This can bring with it several challenges as Shifra Schonmann points out:

It is extremely difficult to acquire various accessories, props, proper lighting, and audio equipment due to the lack of a reasonable budget. Technical and logistical constraints are an added problem. (Schonmann, 2016, p.56)

The exception, I have found, is the school musical which of all performances is often the best resourced and supported. The demand for musicals as the main school productions is also challenging requiring extensive resources in terms of finances and personnel. Cash suggests that we:

remind ourselves most of these shows were written to be directed, choreographed, acted, sung and danced by professionals on Broadway and the West End ... not students in Year 10 ... for a reason. (Cash, 2008)

Back in the 1970s Head teacher Charles Gardiner, in Leeds, England was also the director of drama and for him “there was only one standard as far as I was concerned, and that was what I understood as the standard of performance of the professional theatre” (Hodgson & Banham, 1973, p.158). There can be huge repercussions for teachers attempting to maintain this level of work output as Cash suggests:

Drama teachers preparing school productions don't just have lesson planning problems, but sleepless nights, endless hours (sometimes in the dark) up at school building sets, constructing costumes, rehearsing with students, printing programmes, rigging stage lights ... the list goes on. We become unnecessarily stressed and anxious, so much so we sometimes find it THE most difficult time of the year in all aspects of our life, be it personal or professional. (Cash, 2008)

This is indeed an ugly side of drama teaching. Schonmann suggests that “out of frustration the teacher eventually declares never to take part in a play in the future, even though s/he recognizes its worth” (Schonmann, 2016, p.56). I return again to ask why, as drama teachers, we put ourselves through this level of stress to direct a school production.

The limited research that has been done on school productions has suggested that they offer valuable experiences in the life of students who participate (Kempe & Nicholson, 2001; Burton, 2005; Mackey, 2012) confirming the many skills that that can be gained (McCammon, Saldaña, Hines & Omasta 2012). Sally Mackey's research led her to contact and question past students involved in one of her productions. She was pleased that:

All the responses were pleasurable to read. I had hoped for the positive and, as a former teacher, my first response was a profound reassurance that these ex-pupils felt the project had offered them something worthwhile, remembering it as an important event in their lives. (Mackey, 2012, p.42)

She found that students carry special memories of the process many years after a

school production:

Several believed that they had gained increased confidence and self-esteem, a sense of community, a nurturing of pride in achievement, discipline and attention to detail and, of course, performance skills which some went on to use in their later careers. (Mackey, 2012, p.42)

Michele A'Court, New Zealand comedian and actress, has fond memories of drama at school but in an interview reflects critically that there is lack of understanding of its importance:

People think of it as an add-on or a frilly bit because it's so much like play, and we don't value play as much as we should. I don't think people quite understand or can easily quantify how important play is, and creativity is, to everything else we do. (Chin, 2014)

While interviewing drama students working on a production of *Vinegar Tom* with Anton Bentley I noted that:

The students had a strong working knowledge of how a play is rehearsed and what steps an actor has to go through to develop a role for performance. Although only 17 or 18 years old, and without formal tertiary drama training, these students demonstrated a mature grasp of theatrical processes and, in particular the student actors understood the nature of the job. (Luton, 2010, p.63)

With research supporting the value of the production we can find it hard to refuse its place in the extra-curricular life of the school. According to Andy Kempe's research "experienced drama teachers tended to regard themselves as artists whose art was teaching drama" (Kempe, 2012, p.533). Cody's research confirms that the drama teachers she interviewed all had experience as "dramatic artists" (Cody, 2012, p.190). For many of us the school production provides the opportunity to work as an artist with an accessible group of actors, in an accessible space for an available audience. Working with a team of colleagues can expand personal friendships in the school and, while exhausting, a successful production can bring with it a sense of personal satisfaction.

Key practitioners on drama in schools

So how does a drama teacher cope with the intensity of productions and what discourses do they use to remain resilient? In their research into the lifelong impact of participation in drama at school McCammon et al suggest the drama teacher should be:

physically and mentally healthy because her job consists of time-consuming hard work. She has cultivated ethics of patience and perseverance because she has committed herself to immersion in the art forms with dedicated and selfless understanding. Most importantly, she loves her job and is passionate about the art form, yet she also knows how to balance her job with her personal life. (McCammon et al, 2012, p 13)

The ability to balance work and personal life in this time consuming job can be difficult. Especially during production season which may last for several weeks during term, weekends and holidays. Being passionate about productions means we can become consumed by them. Ultimately this can lead to exhaustion and a loss of resilience or ability to bounce back from difficulties. During my research with key international drama practitioners into what sustains them (Luton, 2015) Andy Kempe recounted his first forays into drama productions as a young teacher. His career had found him spending many long hours delivering productions which were not always supported:

I kind of thought I'm at sea I don't know how to deal with this. But what kept me going definitely ... what kept me going was the pupils. (Andy Kempe, personal communication, 2013)

Spurred on by this he spent the next few years involved in numerous productions:

it was a bit like working in rep actually because we would always have a show on and then there'd be another one in rehearsal. (Kempe, 2013, personal communication).

Over the course of ten years he was involved with over seventy productions- "knackering but very, very exciting" (Kempe, 2013, personal communication). In this colloquial statement Kempe captures the dichotomy for the drama teacher between exhaustion and excitement which lies at the heart of drama production.

John O'Toole believes that playmaking is an integral aspect of a drama teacher's *raison d'être*. He has fond memories of his own school productions as a student and it was this that encouraged him into the field of drama. During our research session he recounted his involvement in Shakespeare productions which, helped by "inspiring teachers", encouraged his love of theatre and drama:

I got the opportunity to play Portia when I think I was 12 at the time, a very nifty figure and we had very good cossies, I remember a fur coat of beautiful velvet grey and yellow coat costume. Kissing Bassanio was a problem but I think that was the apotheosis of my acting career. (O'Toole, 2013, personal communication)

Ron Price, author and drama educator for over thirty years had the opportunity to take part in professional productions outside school while still a pupil. During our research session he recalled being asked to take part in a production at The Everyman Theatre in Liverpool.

I went from nothing (gesture) to suddenly working in a professional play working with professionals and not working on, excuse the theatre expression, whoops you've dropped your trousers type of drama, it was, I was working on a piece of classical Greek theatre and... It was just... the Shell broke (*Ron opens his hands like a shell*) I came out of it and I was... Suddenly found a completely different me... it just allowed me to blossom. (Price, 2013, personal communication)

Ron's own experiences, albeit in a professional production, supports research that suggests that confidence and a sense of belonging can be developed as a result of involvement in productions (McCammon, Saldaña, Hines & Omasta 2012). One of the participants in McCammon et al's research describes a similar moment:

I had always been shy and unsure of myself; being in theatre gave me the opportunity to come out of my shell and interact with others who had the same interests. (McCammon et al 2012, p.2).

The metaphor of the shell breaking open seems an apt description for what many drama teachers hope their productions will achieve. With such a powerful purpose it is hard for drama teachers to deny students an opportunity to take part in a school production. Price's involvement ultimately led to his creation of a summer school in England for gifted and talented students which has successfully run for over 30 years. It is attended by students from national and international locations. The long term effects of productions are only now beginning to be recognised in research although apocryphal stories abound from decades of drama productions in schools.

O'Toole, Price and Kempe, have all found the personal experience of drama productions have informed and inspired their subsequent work. Kempe's research with trainee teachers suggests that "on average, 81% of respondents claimed that their teachers had been particularly influential in developing their interest in and involvement with drama" (Kempe, 2011, p. 7). One participant commenting that "I had a fantastic drama teacher at secondary school who put on amazing school productions which I loved being involved in and as a result loved her lessons" (2011, p.8). Just one example of the way in which school productions can help develop positive relationships within the school community and inspire and assist future careers.

Conclusions

When students have been part of a production process, required to learn lines, develop a role and perform over several evenings to a public audience, they are learning valuable skills. The production is also a vehicle for a drama teacher to demonstrate their own artistry. This, nevertheless, come at a cost. The PPTA suggests that as stress levels rise among teachers and no recompense is made for long hours spent in extra-curricular activities then this "may result in actions under the Health and Safety in Employment Act (2000)" (PPTA, 2010, p.7).

While the PPTA advise their teachers to have regular consultations regarding their co-curricular and extra-curricular activities it does not solve the dichotomy for drama teachers. We want to direct productions as part of our authentic professional development and give our students opportunities which curricular drama may not give.

Sometimes, as Mackey found, the positive effects of a production are not experienced immediately. McCammon et al note that "it may not be until years later that the teacher discovers he or she literally saved a student's life through an ethic of care and the expressive power of the art form" (McCammon et al, 2012, p.15). While the production may be considered worthwhile, remembered for years after the event, its demands on us, the teacher, can lead to a loss of resilience. In some cases a loss of passion and ultimately 'burnout' occur. It is a vicious cycle which could be improved if the education department finally acknowledge that teachers should be paid or recompensed fully for the hours they contribute to their community. Particularly as New Zealand's new education minister Nikki Kaye calls for children to be "well rounded" and to "succeed in the arts" (Collins, 2017).

So what can drama teachers do? McCammon et al suggest that:

the speech and theatre teacher should exhibit Lifelong Endurance throughout one's career. A self-monitoring reflexivity on one's personal engagement with the profession and art form is necessary to ensure a passion for teaching and a resilience to challenging issues that guide each day, lest dysfunction erode a program and career—not to mention student life. (McCammon, et al, 2012, p.12)

For me this article is a part of my self-monitoring reflexivity. Yet I am still left with a concern. While we as drama teachers continue to sacrifice our own time to ensure productions take place in schools, the longer school management will continue to expect us to do so. One drama teacher realising that she couldn't do everything suggested that we stand up and say "I can't do all this" (Brooks, 2010, p.233). It takes a brave teacher to step outside the expectations and find other solutions which may include the buying in of a professional team to direct the production. While this can relieve some of the stresses it can also leave drama teachers feeling empty-denied our opportunity to be creative outside the classroom.

It is my belief that as drama teachers we will probably continue to work long hours

unpaid because the alternative is a cheerless one. Without teacher's voluntary services many extra –curricular projects would come to an end. Schools could no longer offer school productions unless they paid an appropriate remuneration to those involved. There is also the possibility that by giving of our time so freely without recompense we are contributing to the devaluing of the very art form we aim to promote. The old adage that the worker is worthy of their hire may be useful to remember. While the PPTA list several possible improvements to the situation (PPTA, 2016b, p.97) perhaps "less extracurricular pressure, commitment, expectation" might be a helpful start. In the future it may be that the new health and safety laws in New Zealand may be the only hope as it becomes more apparent that teachers' health is being harmed working long hours in a stressful activity. At a recent international summit on the teaching profession New Zealand made a commitment that teacher "wellbeing must be a priority, both for their personal and professional efficacy and for the quality of their students' learning experiences" (PPTA, 2017, p. 9). Perhaps by acknowledging the difficulties and dichotomies we face and prioritising health, safety and happiness we might encourage solutions to be found to the 'ugly side of drama teaching'.

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