Creativity beyond Conformity:
A Study in Secondary School Students' Creativity and Learning

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Master of Teaching

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts and Education

Institute for Sustainable Industries and Livable Cities (ISILC)

Victoria University

2020

ABSTRACT

This thesis touches on the varied outcomes of the recent global push towards creativity development in Australian secondary school education. There is a growing scholarly emphasis on learners' perspectives on their schooling experiences as something integral to creativity enhancement and implementation efforts. However, students' responses to creative pedagogic practices — crucial for enhancing both pedagogy and creativity — are hardly given any substantial consideration at practice and policy level. This study seeks to enrich research that builds around this gap and has implications for the field of creativity education, policy, and research. Five year 9 student groups were interviewed and observed to explore their active negotiation with creativity-focused pedagogy that centred on learner agency, interest, and ownership of learning. In this study, conducted at a secondary school in Melbourne, Australia, portraiture methodology was employed. With its constructivist underpinnings, analytic framework, and narrative focus on documenting success, portraiture enabled the researcher to co-construct an interactional model with the research participants. The dynamic flow that the interactional model suggests between its collaborating elements has the potential to improve teaching and learning procedures through learners' enhanced creativity-based learning, engagement, and voicing practices. The chief theoretical significance of this study centres on foregrounding a learner-centred approach towards creativity enhancement. The practical implications of this study include the ways students, teachers, teacher training, policy, and critical and creative skill enhancement programmes can benefit from these research findings to improve both teaching and learning processes. Through its theoretical as well as practical contributions, this thesis opens the way to make policy, practice, and research developments in this area.

STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Iffat Khatoon, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Creativity beyond conformity: A study in school students' creativity and learning* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.
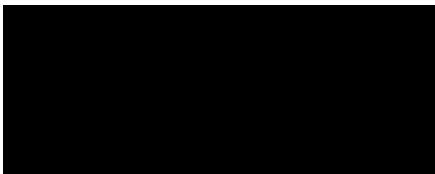
Signature: Date: 06-May-2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thinking of this PhD thesis as my third child comes naturally to me. This PhD journey that began with the birth of my second child — a lively bubbly girl Javeria who is nearly four now — nears its completion with the birth of my figurative child: a PhD research document that registers and sums up my intellectual and research metamorphosis during all this time. Relating genesis of thesis to giving birth to a child may sound quite extreme to some and hackneyed to others, but to me, the metaphor of childbirth is emblematic of diverse emotional, intellectual, and to some extent, physical 'labours' that I as a researcher underwent and that allowed me to expand my mental and intellectual horizons — making the transformation of an inexperienced student researcher into a more experienced research scholar possible. In that, the birth of this thesis signifies my changed status similar to a woman who undergoes a change in becoming a mother after having a baby. Yet, this product of my intellectual and scholarly efforts is a standalone piece that now has a life of its own and underlines an addition to the family of educational research. As a mother to my intellectual child, I wish this child to be able to make a worthwhile contribution to this family of educational research.

Although the process of attaining scholarship in research is solitary, I find myself personally indebted to many individuals who offered invaluable support in diverse capacities in this learning process.

First and foremost, this study — that aimed to examine secondary school students' creative responses to creative pedagogy and engagement experiences as alternatives to the current neo-liberal discourses of creativity — could not have been possible without those valuable student participants who shared their learning experiences with me. It indeed was a privilege accessing and knowing all these wonderful research participants who quite graciously shared their intimate feelings and thoughts on their personal learning experiences. I am grateful to them for their time and contribution to make my research worthwhile. I might not be able to do a

full justice to their unique experiences, but I hope that I have captured their responses and voices in a way that resonate well with most of us. I also want to extend my thanks to the Campus Principal and the Programme Coordinators, who despite their extremely busy classroom routines, supported my research.

I extend my sincere gratitude to my research supervisors for their support at every step in my research. If I say, their *invisible hands* (Chapter 6) co-sculptured this thesis, it would not be an exaggeration. The veteran supervisor Professor Maureen Ryan and my co-supervisor Dr Sarah Tartakover gave me full freedom and support to follow my research interest and path. I cannot help but mention Professor Maureen Ryan and Dr Sarah Tartakover's immense support when I had difficulties managing my new born baby and my studies on campus. They facilitated me in every possible way in this regard. They also guided and gently steered me towards availing myself of the researcher development opportunities — a necessary part of researcher education. They reassured me that my research was worthwhile during the times when I had self-doubts and gave me their productive critical feedback on my work to improve its quality. Their field expertise, benevolence, empathy, and generosity were inspirational as well as educational. Without their kind support and ongoing guidance, this research project was not possible.

Dr Be Pannell, my other co-supervisor, also acted as a critical sounding board by giving me critical feedback on my work that helped me improve the quality of my thesis. Dr Be's critical feedback made me delve into a concept from different critical perspectives which broadened my views of things in unconventional ways. Dr Be always coached and assisted me to navigate the complexity of the research process whenever I got overwhelmed and gently ushered my PhD project towards its completion. Working with Dr Be not only taught me the value of professional rigour, but also made me understand how compassion and sound guidance can help the apprentices in the field transition into more skillful researchers. I can never thank my supervisors enough for their support and guidance in making this research possible.

This thesis is dedicated in loving memory of my mother, Nemat,
whose love and thirst for education made me come this far.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRT   Critical Race Theory

DET   Department of Education and Training

CLASP Creative Learning and Student Perspectives

BPEA   Big Picture Education Australia

HSSSE High School Survey of Student Engagement

NAPLAN The National Assessment Programme – Literacy and
Numeracy

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS DURING CANDIDATURE

Book Chapter, 'Academic perspectives of the skills that business graduates in Australia would need: The case of Victoria-based university', under review.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Preamble

The seeds of this research project were sown almost five years ago. It was one ordinary day of teaching a grade six class in an independent (Foundation to Year 12) school in Melbourne's Northern suburbs. The class of twenty five young female students was unusually chatty and unfocused on their work, and being their class teacher, I could feel the pressure of finishing a particularly important lesson on Australian history in Humanities that morning. Despite several attempts at bringing the student attention back to the lesson, nothing seemed to work. My thoughts were racing fast about how to handle this teaching crisis that every teacher is familiar with, and I came up with an idea of giving my students a short break to help them regain their lost focus. I announced that the students were at liberty to do things of their personal inclination and could freely move about the classroom. I named this activity 'free time' which included free choice and space aspect as well. I was expecting the students to just sit and chit chat with one another. However, the students' activities were quite contrary to my expectation.

I could see one group of three girls retreating to one corner: choosing a space to sit on the floor rather than sitting at their desks and starting to play some complex games relating to their Turkish, Indonesian, and Lebanese cultures. These girls were then joined by other girls who showed interest in learning these games. Now the dynamics changed from game-playing to students' teaching and learning; however, the level of interest remained the same. Seeing that the interested audience was growing in number, I turned my gaze away to another corner. There, I could spot a small group of girls actively playing the game of tag. They were crawling under the tables, jumping on the chairs, and then, onto the floor filling the room with their excited laughter. Another classroom corner was relatively quiet as I could view one or two girls making their way to the lockers, taking out their art and craft works or knitting needles, and beginning to work on their already started

projects. I could glimpse them surrounded by some of their peers who kept talking to them while these girls did their art and craft work. Once these students finished their self-initiated 'projects', their work at once found an interested audience to view it.

On the whole, the students were so immersed in their activities that they forgot my presence altogether and perhaps their own as well. The potency of the flow and immersion in what they were doing struck me deeply and made me wonder how creative and engaged the students were. This introduction to the students' creative expressions was an introduction to a new aspect of their personalities not known to me previously in their routine classes. There was a remarkable shift from disinterested behaviour to more involved one. This perhaps was an implicit comment on what was missing in their routine classroom lives. The 'unfamiliarity' (discussed in more detail in the next section) of this observed spectacle encouraged me to explore this phenomenon more deeply and systematically, and I decided to investigate it as a topic for my PhD research project.

1.2 A Portrait of the Research

Contemporary educational research, as educational research critic Sarah Delamont (2012) claims, is faced with the dilemmas of fighting familiarity and making problems due to its relative disinterestedness in problematising the current educational practices. Delamont (2012) points towards a strong tendency in contemporary educational research to rely on the educators' culture and work around the problems that the educators identify. Bearing this in mind, Delamont (2012, p. 9) further argues current educational research avoids challenging what is familiar in educational settings and, thereby, fails to ''make' problems' that are immediate and that raise questions against the operationalisation of the existing educational system.

In employing the metaphors of the four gates of Damascus, that she borrows from James Elroy Flecker's poem 'The Gates of Damascus' (1947), Delamont (2012) avidly contests these current trends in conducting educational research. What Delamont (2012) calls the trade-based *Aleppo Gate* research is one driven by

monetary interests and attends to finding answers to policy related issues for policy makers. This type of research does not allow room for methodological or theoretical innovations. On the other hand, *Mecca Gate* research with spiritual undertones, contrasts with the fiscal interest-based *Aleppo Gate* research in researchers' aim to find intellectual revitalisation along with methodological, epistemological, and theoretical reassurance. The *Baghdad Gate* research signifies just an exit to find oneself alone and mad in a vast desert. About these three types of research Delamont (2012, p. 5) openly declares:

> We are rarely urged to undertake research of immediate use to pupils, or students, to school and university cleaners, to clerical staff, to canteen workers, to the members of the trade unions. It is also designed to improve the status quo: the value of education is not challenged. Research is never commissioned to help those who reject or resist the dominant value system, escape from the education system or resist it more effectively.

A similar theme is captured by Varenne (2007) when he points towards the paradox in social scientists' work: their research is not about education, it is mostly and merely about schools.

As opposed to this ongoing bent of research that fails to contribute to the advancement of educational research due to its neglect for problematising the contemporary systems of education is Delamont's (2012) *West Gate* research. Delamont's description of *West Gate* or *Lebanon Gate* research that fights familiarity by 'making problems' rather than taking them from educators marks it largely as an untapped source rarely used for improving the flair of educational research. This typology of educational research departs from its research counterparts in education in its risk undertaking stance. Further, this type of educational inquiry shakes our 'epistemological certainties, our standpoints, our methodological foundations', leading us to the direction where 'we could be forced to find new literatures, new theories, new perspectives on education itself' (Delamont 2012, p. 4).

Qualitative educational research, as Delamont (2012) further argues, can be improved by deploying a whole range of qualitative data collection and representation methods instead of only resorting to semi-structured interviews and by responding to the methodological and representational implications of the rhetorical or literary turn. The existing educational research, Delamont (2012) opines, fails to employ the analytic concepts drawn from sociology and cultural anthropology or discipline-related theories. Also, educational research, whether it be the sociology of education or educational anthropology, has mainly focused on student failure and, thereby, has woven familiar stories of failure (Delamont 2012).

Against this narrow focus of the present educational research, Delamont (2012) suggests five strategies to fight familiarity. These strategies include benefiting from the discerning educational ethnographies of the past; studying teaching and learning in formal education in other cultures, assuming the 'outsider' or the 'other' stance of being a researcher to examine the educational processes; taking the standpoint of the research population that is much less explored in diverse settings rather than taking the view point of most researched teacher and student participants in public schools; and finally, examining learning and teaching outside formal educational settings (Delamont 2012).

This PhD research, in exploring students' resourcefulness in artfully and skillfully engaging with the creative pedagogy in a creative and critical skill enhancement programme, is an attempt at 'making the familiar strange' and at making problems rather than taking them from the educator's culture (Delamont 2012, p. 8). Specifically, the decision to undertake a classroom observation of students' creative expressions as a PhD research project was simultaneously an assertion of 'making a problem' and approaching it as a researcher 'other.' What further contributed towards making this educational research 'anthropologically strange' (Delamont 2012, p. 7) was my immigrant background where I — as an immigrant to Australia — not only chose to study teaching and learning within Australian culture, but also decided to research in a teaching and learning culture that was new to me (Chapter 3 for more discussion).

This research is conducted at a public school in the Western suburbs of Melbourne and studies students and teachers as the research participants. As such, this study sidesteps some of the strategies Delamont (2012) suggests for *fighting familiarity* which include examining informal learning contexts, rarely researched populations, and unfrequently visited researched sites. While the secondary school location for this research is similar to other research, it differs from other research in that the teaching and learning context is different from school contexts familiar to me. Further, in challenging the value of education and presenting an outsider view (further discussion in Chapter 3) on current schooling practices, this research comes closer to the type of educational research that Delamont (2012) advocates for fighting the problem of familiarity.

Additionally, the focus of this inquiry is to elicit the student response on the creative pedagogy designed to promote creativity in the students. Also, this investigation responds to the research discourse that advocates for using creativity as a '*method*' (Italics in original; Cropley 2012, p. 10) and foregrounds listening to the student voices integral to their enhanced learning experiences (Yazzie-Mintz 2007; Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012). In debating the value of creativity education, this study not only comes closer to the educational research that stresses the need to discuss the purpose of education (Delamont 2012), but also to the research that challenges the very concept of marketised creativity and the implications of promoting such a narrow concept of creativity (Harris 2014; Harris & Ammermann 2016; Harris 2016a). Thus, this rigour to *fight the familiarity* brings this investigation closer to the *West Gate* research (Delamont 2012) that signifies risk as well as challenges and subverts the dominant research traditions in educational research.

Furthermore, although at times the contextual conditions affecting the research process constrained the use of diverse methodological tools for data collection as endorsed by Delamont (2012), the selection of portraiture methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) helped this research meet Delamont's (2012) avidly reported *familiar* challenge of documenting success rather than describing failure.

Finally, it is worthwhile to mention that Delamont's (2012) conceptualisation of the educational research is as central to this research as is Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) methodology of portraiture. While Delamont's (2012) description of the current trends of educational research provides a backdrop to understanding the place of the current research in the educational arena, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) design framework of portraiture provides methodological foundations of executing this research project. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that time and again, I return to Delmont (2012) and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) to help explain my particular research project.

1.3   Educational Context and Significance of the Research

This research explores the students' ingenious responses to creative pedagogy and their engagement experiences as alternatives to the current neoliberal discourse of creativity in a creative and critical skill enhancement programme in an Australian Secondary School. More specifically, this study aims to look at the creative approaches students employ when provided with creative pedagogical practices which differ from the usual school culture of accountability, performativity, and standardisation. The overarching research question, thus, is:

> In what ways do high school students negotiate creative pedagogic practices?

In developing an understanding of the students' experiences in a specially designed creative learning context, this study also aims to capture student voices which often go unheard — both in research and school reforms. This research approaches creativity as a complex multidimensional construct and creative pedagogy as a practice towards implementing creativity by giving due consideration to the student voice, agency, interest, and ownership (Woods 1993). This approach towards creative pedagogy forms the basis of research sub-questions guiding the study:

1. What is the relationship between students' creative learning and students' creative engagement?

2. What is the relationship between student voice and students' creative engagement?

3. What is the relationship between student voice and students' creative learning?

The current discourse of creativity which views creativity as democratic, ubiquitous, and marketised (Banaji & Burn 2007; Craft 2008; Lin 2011), is also said to promote achievement, competition, individuality, acquisition, and consumption (Craft 2008). These are the same values as the culture of performativity, standardisation, and achievement promotes — although some researchers identify an inherent tension between creativity and standardisation (Craft & Jeffrey 2008) and regard the latter as a barrier to the development and implementation of creativity in schools (Craft 2008; Harris 2014, 2016a). In the present times — with a great emphasis on individuation and measurement — creativity seems to work towards capitalist and neoliberal ends targeting outcomes, productivity, and success (Salehi 2008; Harris 2014).

Such outcome-based approaches to creativity, according to some researchers, stifle collaboration, cooperation, compassion, and understanding (Jeffrey & Craft 2001; Craft 2003, 2005, 2008; Chappell 2008; Harris 2014) which are held as essential values for reducing creativity's destructive potential and malevolence (Cropley 2010; Sternberg 2010; Gino & Ariely 2012; Cropley, Kaufman & Cropley 2013) and fostering communal responsibility (Chappell 2006, 2008; Chappell et al. 2012). In educational settings, an increased emphasis on accountability, outcomes, and achievement has many implications. For instance, at pedagogical level, this urgency for performance results in teachers modifying creative practices towards achieving neoliberal ends (Jeffrey, Troman & Zezlina-Philips 2008) while in learner contexts, this push translates into students' internalisation of neoliberal discourses of individualism and performativity leading to constructing their identities as 'the children of market' (Keddie 2016, p. 108). Further, this performative pressure not only makes learners feel counterproductive for the school community, but also disregards 'who they are as developing adolescents, their

potential for learning and growing, or their emerging passions and curiosity' (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012, p. 744) — leading to their disengagement.

In both cases, the learners serve as an instrument to achieve the policy goals which deprive them of having meaningful learning experiences. The 2006 report on The American High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE; Yazzie-Mintz 2007, p. 8) clearly alludes to the issue of neglect towards the learners' participation in an academic landscape and urges the researchers to investigate the nature of 'the engagement gap' that results from this neglect — to address this more pressing issue. While in educational institutions, the students' disengagement from their learning denotes the existing gap in their engagement with learning as well as with schools, their active participation in the perceived non-educational activities outside of education institutions betrays their quest for engagement in their surrounding world in a meaningful way as I discuss below. The young students' involvement in the recent climate strike (discussed below) is an example of students' eagerness to get involved in their world and the issues that face this world.

Siobhan Sutton' story that features on the ABC News website (Shine 2019), epitomises the students' quest for engagement in their world meaningfully. This 15 years old Perth student has to make a choice between getting a zero on a scheduled test because of her absence and attending the climate strike. She chooses to join the climate strike. This choice of getting engaged with the world outside her academic world is not without consequences: it costs her an assessment. The Maths test that she is going to miss is worth 25 percent of her overall grade. However, Siobhan says that 'she did not care' (Shine 2019). For her, the climate crisis has more urgency. Being involved in the action to 'make a difference to her future' — that is in danger due to risks to the planet earth — is more important than the test scores (Shine 2019). While some schools hold the students' attendance at schools — rather than at seemingly non-educational events — more important for their learning and engagement in debates about significant political issues, the parents' claim is different. Siobhan's mother, Antje Sutton, strongly holds that her daughter 'had

gained more life experience as an organiser of the climate strike than she could learn in a classroom' (Shine 2019).

In addition to the need to investigate the existing student engagement gap through research, some researchers point towards a dearth of research on documenting students' perspectives on creativity (Lassig 2012a) and voice their experiences in an accountability and achievement-based culture (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012). Although the learner responses to creative pedagogic practices have been given importance in contemporary research and practice in the past few years (Jeffrey 2003, 2006; Jeffrey & Craft 2004; Lilly & Bramwell-Rejskind 2004; Corcoran & Sim 2009; Lin 2010, 2014; Lasky & Yoon 2011; Elton-Chalcraft & Mills 2015; Galton 2015; Gardiner 2017; Gardiner & Anderson 2018), the limited nature of such contribution is also recognised (Cremin & Chappell 2019). This recognition calls for further exploration in the area and has a great importance for the study of creative pedagogies (Cremin & Chappell 2019).

This study explicitly addresses these identified gaps with an aim to enrich the field of research. By employing student engagement as a critical lens, this research investigates the ways the students negotiate their experiences with the creative learning practices through their active involvement with them. The study explores the nature and the phenomenology of the students' learning and engagement experiences in school programmes which allow such experiences to happen, but operate within a larger institutional framework that requires individuation and measurement. The inquiry, through its findings, aims to contribute both to the existing body of literature on creativity and student engagement which mainly associates student engagement with 'at risk' students (detailed discussion in Chapter 2).

To conclude, with a back-drop of an ever-increasing interest in fostering creativity as well as accountability and decreasing student engagement due to neoliberal emphasis on performativity and individualism (Yazzie-Mintz 2007; Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012), this research aims to explore the student responses to pedagogical practices that are designed to enhance their creative and critical skills.

To accomplish this, the study examines the dilemmas and tensions which arise when the learners experience creative pedagogy that works from the *third space* (Lin 2014) and carve their way through it.

1.4   Overview of the Thesis

This research project is for a wide range of audiences including students, practitioners, policy makers, teachers, and researchers. It is interesting to note that I myself share some of these identities — of a teacher and a research-student — in common with the anticipated audience. It is hoped that this research, by promoting student voices in creativity education, will be of interest to a variety of readers. This thesis has been divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1, *Introduction*, provides the research background and rationale for conducting this research. This chapter paints a brief portrait of this research project; discusses its theoretical background in the field of creativity; and serves a navigational role. The discussion of the theoretical background also involves a discussion of the educational context of this research, its significance, and relevance to the field of education in general and to the field of creativity specifically. A brief overview of the methodological choice along with the research questions has been presented as well.

Chapter 2, *Literature Review*, systematically examines the rise of creativity agenda across the globe and its relevance to education as a way to position the main argument of this study for exploring learners' creative experiences in a creative pedagogic context (section 2.1 & 2.2). By tracing the resonance of the global creativity agenda in an Australian educational context, the challenges to Australian classroom teaching and learning practices, as discussed in the relevant body of research, are reviewed (section 2.3). The chapter also examines the scholarly critiques of the current pedagogic practices that are seen to hinder the growth of creativity in educational contexts. Since the aim of this study is to register student perspectives on their creative experiences in learning contexts, the concepts related to student learning, student voice, and student engagement are also explored from diverse bodies of research on creative pedagogy, creative learning, student voice,

and student engagement (section 2.4). The chapter concludes by positioning the present study into the existing body of research and argues how this study builds on the previous research by identifying the points of departure or the existing gaps within the research on creativity, creative pedagogy, creative learning, student voice, and student engagement (section 2.5).

Chapter 3, *Research Methodology*, details the epistemological focus driving the research design and methodological choices through three main sections: *Portraiture as Orientation* (section 3.2), *Portraiture as Process and Action* (section 3.3), and *Portraiture as Analysis and Representation* (section 3.4). In addition to giving the rationale for a constructivist paradigm and portraiture research design methodology in *Portraiture as Orientation* section (section 3.2), this chapter presents the processual details of this research in the following section (section 3.3). While *Portraiture as Process and Action* (section 3.3) examines the ethical considerations of this study by explaining the methods of research context and participant-selection, of gaining access to the research site and participants, and of data collection, the subsequent section *Portraiture as Analysis and Representation* (3.4) engages with a discussion on data analysis and representation.

Chapter 4, *Portraits*, and **Chapter 5**, *Illuminating the Portraits*, present the main findings of this research. Chapter 4, outlines the significant themes that emerge from the raw data and resonate with the research focus by foregrounding the research participants' voices. Chapter 5 synthesises and critically analyses the study findings in relation to the overarching research question and presents an Interactional model of student creativity that responds and contributes to the recent creativity implementation efforts at Australian secondary schools. The chapter concludes that the need to develop an interaction among students' creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogic voices is urgent if we are to secure a successful implementation of creativity.

Chapter 6, *Conclusion*, retraces the key research findings by revisiting the research questions that this project investigated and briefly touches upon the ways portraiture research design guided this investigation (section 6.3). Further, the

theoretical and methodological contributions (section 6.4) along with the implications of this research findings for the field of education and educational research are also outlined (section 6.5). Additionally, the limitations of research and suggestions for future research directions are discussed (sections 6.6 & 6.7). Finally, the significance of the students' creative learning experiences is recapitulated along with presenting the researcher's reflective insights gained during the research process (section 6.8).

1.5   Conclusion

The present study, with its aim to investigate the year 9 students' creative engagement responses to creative pedagogy, happens amidst the current discursive as well as policy level emphasis on fostering creativity through education and the diverse measures taken to implement creativity in educational institutions. Recognising the varied outcomes of these efforts, this study identifies the ways learners make sense of their learning experiences generally. More specifically, this study considers learner responses to creative pedagogic practices — crucial for enhancing both pedagogy and creativity but are hardly given any due importance in policy making. There are many instances, on the contrary, of how this area is given importance in contemporary research and practice in the past few years (section 1.3). However, a recognition of the limited nature of such contribution calls for further exploration in this area which can benefit the study of creative pedagogies (Cremin & Chappell 2019). This study seeks to enrich this area of research in relation to secondary school education. Conducted at a secondary school in the Western suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, this study employs a portraiture methodology which enables the researcher to coconstruct significant findings from student experiences with the research participants. The project findings are expected to contribute to the field of creative education and educational research theoretically and practically.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

Researching creativity is an enormous task. As soon as a researcher chooses creativity as a field of their research interest and endeavour, they are ready to take the plunge into a deep ocean which is so diverse yet engaging, confusing yet inviting, and sometimes even overwhelming due to 'varied explanations and theories of creativity' (Lin 2011, p. 150), its 'history of being considered an elusive, fuzzy, or ineffable topic' (Lassig 2013, p. 3), the 'current breadth of conceptions … as well as the relative uncertainty of its fundamental components' (Feldhusen & Goh 1995, p. 232), its multidimensional, 'multifaceted' (Glaveanu 2018), developmental, or processual nature (Lin 2011; Feldhusen & Goh 1995), just to name only a few.

Navigating their way through all the controversies that are traditionally and historically associated with this concept, the researcher's journey then becomes akin to a 'voyage of discovery' (Craft 2008, p. 1) where diverse metaphors of 'flow,' 'navigating the unknown,' and a 'dive' into an unfamiliar place,' (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Bannerman et al. 2006; Alexander Graham Bell, cited in Craft 2008, p. 1) assume a new meaning and serve to illuminate the ambiguity and obscurity that lies at the very heart of this rigorous journey of discovery.

Given the profuse and multidimensional yet nebulous nature of this construct, it is no wonder to find the same haziness surrounding its practicability, especially in the field of education. Since the present research targets this contested area, this literature review essentially taps into the body of literature that deals with creativity in an Australian education context. This review of literature begins with a brief overview of the rise of the global creativity agenda to set a stage for discussion (section 2.2) and quickly moves forward to trace its resonance in an Australian educational landscape (section 2.3). While section (2.3) draws on the challenges

that are unique to creativity in an Australian educational context — along with more generalised global challenges — section 2.4 extends the scope of debate by tapping into valuable concepts presented by international scholarship in the diverse yet related fields of student engagement and student voice as a way to inform my research focus. The final section (section 2.5) of this literature review presents a synthesis of the gaps found in the body of the discussed literature to determine the scope and significance of this research in Australian context.

2.2   Global Creativity Agenda — an Overview

The recent resurgence of global interest in creativity and schools being the sites of its promotion (Jeffrey & Craft 2001; Shaheen 2010a, 2010b; Forster 2012; Martiniano 2016; Harris 2016b) have been variously ascribed to two seminal events. The first occurred in the field of research when Guilford in his famous address (1950s) presented a strong case for fostering creativity through education (Sternberg & Grigorenka 2001). The second event was the successful launch of Sputnik in 1957 by Soviet Union engineers which sparked the US interest in creativity (Shaheen 2010b). According to Cropley (2001) and Cropley and Gribov (2005), the US explanation for lagging behind in this space race was found in a lack in creativity. As a result, the National Defense Education Act's call for the promotion of creativity in educational settings engendered an intense global interest in the topic (Cropley 2001).

Since then, the interest in fostering creativity has been on the rise and has triggered diverse policy level reforms for its inclusion in education (Shaheen 2010b). Whitby's (2005) curriculum review of 21 countries and states including the Australian states and American, European, and East Asian countries found well-defined arts curriculum in such countries identifying the place given to arts and creativity in education. For Robinson (2001), the global recognition of the value of creativity at trans-national governmental levels is due to its contribution to the economic competitiveness of the emerging global economies. This necessary contribution of creativity, as Robison (2001) further argues, is made through innovative ideas along with its capacity to develop people's adaptability for the

fast-changing social milieu and to live meaningfully and purposefully amidst variously challenged established cultural values. This outcome and value-based view defines creativity as an 'imaginative activity' that produces original and value-based outcomes (NACCCE 1999, p. 29).

Jeffrey and Craft (2001) link universalisation of creativity to creativity research developments and the contemporary political scene. Banaji and Burn (2007) also recognise the research contexts, policies, theory, and practice as formative influences on the emergence of nine rhetorics of creativity that are practiced in English classrooms. These discourses involve: 1) rhetoric of Democratic Creativity and Cultural Re/production; 2) rhetoric of Ubiquitous Creativity; 3) rhetoric of creativity for Social Good; 4) the rhetoric of creativity as Economic Imperative; 5) the rhetoric of Play and Creativity; 6) rhetoric of Creativity and Cognition; 7) rhetoric of Creative Affordances of Technology; 8) the Creative Classroom Rhetoric, and 9) Creative Arts and Political challenge (2007). For Banaji and Burn (2007), these rhetorics have varying impacts on pedagogic strategies concerning arts projects, literacy, and media education.

Particular to the UK context, the reasons for creativity being *on agenda* in the government policy documents have been interpreted variously. For Forster (2012), creativity is included in the UK policy documents for its role in improving students' self-esteem, motivation, and achievement. For Burnard (2006), it is the political import of the creativity agenda due to its explicit role in the economy that has been recognised by various other countries as well including the UK. Crafts and Jeffrey (2008) pin down further three reasons that underscore the central position of creativity in the UK education policy. The first one is the recognition, widely gained through 1990s research perspective, of viewing creativity as something everyone is capable of which, in turn, develops a democratic view of creativity in educational policy. The second reason for the import of creativity policy is the interdependence between creativity and economy, an emphasis coming from wider economic policy which exhorted to boost economy through creativity and innovation. The last but equally powerful reason comes from the recommendations of Creative and Cultural

Education Committee (NACCCE 1999) which — Craft and Jeffrey (2008, p. 578) argue — emphasises the links between creativity and culture to generate 'both creative learners and cultural cohesion'. Craft and Jeffrey (2008) hold this perspective as leading to the conflation of creativity and cultural policies. Along with the cultural perspective on creativity, Craft and Jeffrey (2008) also refer to creativity as life-wide view (Craft 2005) that sees it as a capacity to deal with global economic, social, environmental, political, and technological conditions through flexibility and ingenuity.

Craft (2008) further interprets Banaji and Burn's (2007) nine discourses as reflective of the role of creativity in education, teaching and learning practices, and public policies. Reflecting interpretation, adoption, and practical approaches towards creativity in education, according to Craft (2008), these discourses also represent an inherent tension. On the one hand, they 'suggest exclusivity and competition, and the capacity to thrive in and contribute to a capitalist market economy'; on the other, 'inclusion, democratisation and empowerment' (Craft 2008, p. 3).

While reflecting upon the creativity agenda in the UK, Burnard (2006) also recognises its political import in having a key role in economy. However, Burnard (2006, p. 313) notes the elusive nature of the value of creativity in being contingent upon the 'informing contexts and desired outcomes' which make the individual, institutional, and cultural purpose and value of creativity a contested space. Burnard (2006) further goes on to explain the politicisation of creativity in learning and pedagogy due to government interests and copious funding despite the contested nature of interest in creativity.

While Burnard (2006) talks specifically about the expressed concerns of contemporary scholarship that move beyond the often discussed basic questions of *what* and *when* is creativity and *who* is creative to more pressing questions including the *why*, *where*, and *how* of creativity (Italics are mine), it is not hard to see how these concerns still hold relevance to the present day research. In other words, what Burnard (2006, p. 314) identifies as the rise of a new creativity

paradigm involving 'a repurposing of research and perceptions about what constitutes creative teachers, creative teaching, creative practices which foster creativity, and creative learning', still drives the present-day research on creativity not only in the UK, but also in Australia. With these concerns in view, I now move to explore how these concerns get contextualised in Australian system of education.

2.3 Australian Context of Creativity Debate and Its Pedagogical Implications

This section explores the diverse understandings of the creativity construct in policy, research, and practice and illuminates how this diversity gives rise to different issues pertaining to implementation of creativity and teaching practices.

2.3.1 Creativity enhancement — a void in exhortation and implementation at policy level

Like its global counterparts, Australia has also been quick to recognise the value of creativity in the shifting global economic landscape. The Government has responded politically to the need for Australians to become a 'clever country', and has established education (sector) as a strength to accomplish this goal (Forster 2012, p. 286). Despite a considerable scholarly skepticism in Higher Education over the generic skill development as a form of governance — where the individuals are constructed as responsible for their employability while the state and employers become the enablers (Fejes 2010) — the past Australian governments have played an active role in developing the skills agenda. This has been done by explicitly stating the link between education and the economy, by practically responding to the potential employers' feedback on the graduate attributes, and by bringing institutional and sectorial accountability mechanisms in place (Cummings 2010).

Consequently, diverse government documents, for instance, the Hobart declaration on schooling 1989 (Education Council 2014); the Adelaide declaration on national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century 1999 (Education Council 2014); Finn Review (AECRC 1991); Mayer report (AECC 1992); the Australian summit 2020

report (DPMC 2008); and the Melbourne declaration (MCEETYA 2008) register this trend by rigorously communicating the national understanding of the instrumental role the educational institutions can and should play to promote the necessary skills for becoming economically competitive.

In a quick analysis of the aforementioned policy statements, the economic imperative stands out as a distinct purpose for skill development endorsed by eminent scholarship (e.g. McWilliam 2007; McWilliam & Dawson 2007, 2008; McWilliam, Dawson & Tan 2008; McWilliam & Haukka 2008; Gibson 2010; Lassig 2009; Harris 2014, 2016a). However, a review of literature around creative skill development alludes to further other wide-ranging conceptions for their purpose including support for finding meaning in life, for lifelong learning, for surviving and thriving in rapid social change, for preparing for an uncertain future, for making young people ready for global citizenship, for imagining 'better, more sustainable, and more life-affirming ways of living on this planet' (Fisher 2016, p. 35), and for social good (Schachtel 1971; Craft 1997; Robinson 2001; Harris 2016a, 2016b).

The ongoing emphasis on national capacity or skill building reveals its ubiquitous nature and its 'widespread acceptance at policy-making level … of the need for systematic promotion of creativity in the national education system' (Cropley 2012, p. 9). However, the eminent research scholarship is also quick to point out the superficial nature of this emphasis (Cropley 2012; Tanggaard 2014) due to an existing gap between a burgeoning interest in creativity and its implementation by mentioning diverse barriers (Joubert 2001; Craft 2003, 2005, 2008; Shaheen 2010a; Cropley 2012; Harris 2016b; Harris & Ammermann 2016; Cropley 2018).

McWilliam and Dawson (2008, p. 634) also voice this issue explicitly: 'Evocation of 'more creativity' has been limited to rhetorical flourishes in policy documents and/or relegated to the borderlands of the visual and performing arts'. Given that Banaji and Burn's (2007) nine rhetorics suggest nine distinct approaches to creativity in policy and practice, it can be argued that in the Australian context, these rhetorics can help identify the rifts and inconsistencies between the policy

documents and educational practices that are seen to perpetuate some unhelpful myths that negatively impact the implementation of 21st century skills agenda (discussed below).

In line with McWilliam and Dawson (2008), Harris (2014, 2016a) also links issue of greater creativity with a lack in its curriculum-wide implementation. While alluding to secondary schools as offering the sites of tension between the competing agendas of 'neoliberalisation of arts education and a more widespread attention to the economic potential for diverse creativities', Harris (2016b, p. 14) alludes to the Australian education sectors' — particularly secondary school curricula and teacher-education programmes — slow response to cultural and creative industries adaptations in the workplace (Harris 2016b). However, Harris and Ammermann (2016) contend the conflation of this 'emergent notion of "creativity"' (p. 103) with terms such as 'innovation, imagination, problem-solving, and critical or creative thinking' (p. 104). Harris and Ammermann (2016, p. 109) also acknowledge the profusion and growth of creativity in the present education environment, but regard it to be a creativity of 'an increasingly narrow kind'.

This line of thought is consistent with many higher education scholars who challenge the vocational role of education in bringing educational outcomes closer to industry needs (Green, Hammer & Star 2009). This new paradigm shift (Morton & Moore 2017), signified through aligning educational learning outcomes with Industry needs (Oliver 2011, 2013), has also been described as universities' consumption by pressure (Jackson 2013) where educational institutions are 'losing control over the very means by which … (their) own identity is formed' (Marginson & Considine 2000, p. 14). Alternately interpreted as 'academic capitalism', the institutional external engagement also is described as 'market and market like behaviors on the part of the universities and faculty' (Slaughter & Leslie 2001, p. 154).

Caldwell (2010, 2011) also identifies issues with school autonomy, standardised testing, and national curriculum as contributing to Australia's low status in the top twenty innovative nations. However, a greater school autonomy to implement

generic skills inclusive of creativity — in accordance with the institutional values — may lead to a variation in understanding the skills, the language used to communicate, and the skill sets used to promote such skills which may further contribute to the problem of implementation (Joubert 2001). Even within universities, there has been a difference in understanding the nature of such skills that has been reported by higher education research scholarship as well (Jones 2002; Barrie 2006; Green, Hammer & Star 2009; Pitman & Broomhall 2009; Bosanquet 2011, 2012). This varied understanding of the generic skills also mirrors many creativity scholars' concerns for a need to come to a mutual understanding of creativity (Joubert 2001; Lassig 2009; Cropley 2012; Harris & Ammermann 2016).

2.3.2 Alternative conceptualisations of commodified creativity in contemporary research

The recognition of the current marketised creativity (Salehi 2008; Harris 2014) that is said to promote and thrive on achievement, competition, individuality, acquisition, and consumption (Craft 2005, 2008; Craft & Jeffrey 2008), with some even viewing the pedagogic use of creative strategies as a means to successfully meet the performative pressure rather than a counterpart to it (Sawyer 2004; Troman, Jeffrey & Raggl 2007; Jeffrey, Troman & Zezlina-Philips 2008) has even led some researchers to situate the creativity debate back to values in education.

Osborne (2003) argues that in recent times creativity's value in economics, education, and other areas of life has given it a moral thrust, and it has arguably attained the status of a moral imperative which everyone feels ethically bound to strive to attain. Osborne (2003, p. 507) further holds:

> Yet creativity is a value which, though we may believe we choose it ourselves, may in fact make us complicit with what today might be seen as the most conservative of norms: compulsory individualism, compulsory 'innovation', compulsory performativity and productiveness, the compulsory valorization of the putatively new.

Zizek's (1998, p. 17; Italics in original) conceptualisation of inherent transgression as a form of 'excessive belief' that *'one cannot get rid of'* and 'which returns stronger and stronger' can alternatively be used to understand the unquestionable acceptance of the moral imperative associated with creativity.

Rehn and De Cock (2008, p. 1) view deconstructing the concept of creativity as a useful way to uncover the recent discursive reduction of this concept to a 'set of preconceived ideas' that has distanced this 'theoretical concept from the *praxis* of creativity'.

While Osborne's (2003) identification and questioning of a presumed moral imperative associated with creativity — leading to an obligatory individualism, innovation, productivity, and performativity — situates the creativity discussion in the field of ethics, Craft, Gardner & Claxton (2015) approach the question of values from a different perspective.

Describing how the present approaches towards fostering creativity reflect 'value-neutrality' of creativity where 'the ends to which creativity is put is not seen as significant', Craft, Gardner & Claxton (2015, p. 144) question the role creativity can play in education to raise 'generative citizens' (p. 148). Craft, Gardner & Claxton (2015, p. 148) claim that the creativity that happens in educational arenas displays:

> A variety of forms of "blindness," including a disregard for diversity in culture and values, a lack of engagement with the question of how we might foster wisdom, increasing barriers to doing good work through decreasing trust, and a hesitation to assume responsibility for improving society.

Allowing for this *value-neutral* nature of creativity, Craft, Gardner & Claxton (2015) introduce an alternative conceptualisation of creativity that is, '*wise creativity* or *good creativity*' (Italics in original; p. 149) as value-laden reframing approaches towards creativity. This alternative framing views creativity as responsive to processes and products and 'sees responsibility as sitting equally with self-realisation' (Craft, Gardner & Claxton 2015, p. 149). Craft, Gardner & Claxton

(2015, p. 149) further urge educators, policy makers, and practitioners 'to contemplate how we might conceptualise good creativity and how creativity within education in particular might respond to this rapidly shifting world'.

Earlier, Craft (2006) also advocates the need for a moral and ethical framework for understanding creativity against the *value-neutral* (Craft, Gardner & Claxton 2015) generation of creativity in classrooms and policy documents which Craft (2006, p. 344) holds to be the cause of the ethical and moral dilemmas of 'cultural blindness and over-marketization'. Such frameworks, as Craft (2006) maintains, encourage the use of wisdom as a necessary pedagogical element in nurturing creativity to question what ends creativity serves. Such framing further views creativity developed without wisdom as potentially leading to 'cultural blindness' incapable of serving communities and to an environmental disregard (Craft 2006, p. 346). The pedagogical and learning strategies that might help cultivate creativity with wisdom, as Craft (2006) suggests, involve developing a sense of responsibility, empathy, and a culture of criticism and evaluation of creative ideas that embraces a multiplicity of perspectives and their impact on others.

This line of thought is further extended by Chappell's (2006, 2008, 2011, Chappell et al. 2012, Chappell et al. 2017) idea of 'humanising creativity'. Chappell's conception of humanising creativity emerged from her research project investigating the nature of creativity in dance education (Chappell 2006, 2008 & 2011; eds. Chappell et al. 2011; Chappell et al. 2012). While Chappell's (2006, 2008, 2011; Chappell et al. 2012) diverse research findings reported the disparities between the leading discourses that drive creativity in dance education projects and creativity in effect, the framework of humanising creativity emerged from dance professionals' active negotiation with the tension between 'creativity as individual, collaborative, and communal' (Chappell 2006, p. 15).

This approach towards creativity, in fact, emphasises that 'creativity happens individually, collaboratively and communally' (Chappell & Craft 2011, p. 365). Emphasising the complexity of humanising creativity (Chappell 2006), Chappell et al. (2012, p. 3) define it as an active collaborative process of change that arises

'from people engaging in collaborative thinking and shared action to imaginatively develop new ideas, which are valuable to them and their community'. This process — often coloured by conflicts and differences — involves empathy, compassion and shared values. It is embodied and considers both individual and communal advancement as equally important (Chappell & Craft 2011). Though this conceptualisation of creativity counter-balances the dominant economic imperative and 'the discourse of invidualised, marketised creativity' (Chappell et al. 2012, p. 26), it does not deny the need to 'create with a view to economy and the individuals' (p. 27). However, as Chappell et al. (2012) caution, the economic imperative should not undermine and detriment the ethics and values that support humane creativity and its cultural embeddedness.

The democratic spirit of the 'collective' or humane creativity (Chappell et al. 2012, p. 3) recognises many other voices that 'may otherwise be silenced' and considers listening to other multiple voices as a 'key to negotiating conflict as part of the creative process'. In other words, it recognises the central value of a humanising process in 'developing sense of voice and self but set ethically in the context of others' (Chappell et al. 2012, p. 5). Chappell et al. (2012, p. 27) further state how humanising creativity integrates new and differing voices with the established dance knowledge that otherwise 'hides students' voice'. The principle of 'difference is not buried' (Chappell et. al 2012, p. 23) in this concept of creativity; it, rather, recognises students as partners in creative learning conversations and 'living dialogic spaces' (Chappell & Craft 2011, p. 363) having a creative power to shaping ideas. This concept of creativity values students' journeys of becoming and their personal growth; rather than valuing them for their contributions towards the overall school achievement and performance.

Chappell et al. (2012, p. 27) advocate devoting educational resources for the 'creative work which values becoming' to benefit more students from 'the humanising process'. While discussing the conceptual journey of their humanising creativity framework and their research within dance education, Chappell et al. (2012) highlight the conceptual relevance and use of this term within student voice

research and practice as well. Chappell et al. (2012) also suggest the research potential for future research in aiming to adopt an embodied approach which can be further informed by eastern philosophies and research to understand the concept.

Lin's (2014) study, while not directly dealing with a humanising concept of creativity, still tries to bring out the perceived contradiction between western culture-based values driving creative pedagogy and the traditional values that teachers from Asian countries hold in an effort to nurturing creativity. Lin (2014) conducted a teaching project in two Taiwanese schools in drama classes with a view to gathering insights on the efforts to foster creativity in Asian societies through the use of creative pedagogic strategies. The study findings reinforced the perceived contradiction between values driving creative pedagogy and the values behind the discourse of local contexts in the form of both teachers and students' resistance to creative pedagogy and the majority of pupils' approval of playful learning.

While depicting resistance as a demand for dialogue rather than opposition, Lin (2014) established the need to attend to the concerns and needs of those who resist. Lin (2014) finds how her use of creative pedagogy helped establish a dialogue with her fellow teachers and their traditional values and the values of creative pedagogy, based on western cultures, and formed a hybrid practice epitomising the strengths of both value systems. Lin's (2014) use of creative pedagogy contributed towards the generation of a *third space* for dialogues on creativity to take place. It was a place 'where hybridity (became) possible' (Lin 2014, p. 43).

Lin's (2014, p. 53) study concluded by identifying the need to 'initiate dialogue to achieve mutual understanding as well as to allow space for negotiation, compromise and hybridity'. Earlier, Lin (2011) proposed a framework of creative pedagogy that worked through three interrelated elements namely: creative teaching, teaching for creativity, and creative learning. Lin's (2011) proposed framework offered a standpoint where a congenial environment for enhancing creativity was created.

Lin's (2014) study in Asian philosophies — exploring the possibility of compatibility between teaching goals and pupil development — echoes significant

themes which drive western creativity research as well. While Harris, Craft, and Chappell's studies (discussed above) are variants on discussing and contemplating the nature and the function of contemporary creativity; their real scholarly contribution lies in challenging the 'conceptualisations that have developed by default within increasingly politically and economically driven educational models' (Chappell et al. 2012, p. 30) by presenting 'alternative educational futures' (Chappell et al. 2012, p. 29). Given that there remains a strong need to constantly raise questions, for instance, 'what is creativity' and 'what is it for' (Chappell et al. 2012, p. 29), Cropley's (discussed below) varied studies also offer an alternative perspective on this ongoing debate.

2.3.3 Myths inherent in current educational practices and their impact on creativity enhancement

While Arthur Cropley's research may share afore mentioned researchers' general concern with the current understanding of creativity, his earlier approach to the questions *what is creativity* and *what it is for* — raised by Chappell et al. (2012, p. 29) — is more pragmatic. Arthur Cropley questions the benevolence or 'creativity is good' bias (Cropley, Kaufman, & Cropley 2013, p. 186; also Cropley 2010; eds. Cropley, Kaufman & Runco 2010; Beaussart, Andrews & Kaufman 2013) that, according to David Cropley and Patston (2019, p. 271), makes it 'difficult for individuals to see creativity as anything other than benign and altruistic'.

In this regard, Cropley's (2012; discussed below) studies investigate the myths and misconceptions that surround the current educational practices and the biased ideas that promote such practices contributing towards a patchy implementation of creativity. By exposing these myths or fallacies, Cropley (2012) emphasises the need to revisit the practices that embody them; hence, reinforcing DH Cropley & Patston's (2019, p. 267) later assertion to regard myths, misconceptions, and rhetoric surrounding creativity as 'militat(ing) against efforts to embed creativity in the modern classroom'.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the need to return to Banaji and Burn's (2007) nine discourses as a useful way to identify the inconsistencies in Australian policy

document assertions and the classroom practices that signify particular approaches to creativity. Cropley's (2012) discussion of the nature of emerging pedagogic practices offers an Australian perspective on understanding creativity and identifies biased ideas that promote such practices. The policy level interest may be seen to situate creativity's value in its benefits to society — ranging from national competence and sustainability to social justice, health, and welfare to contribution to communal and personal wellbeing (Cropley, 2012) — which directly correspond to Banaji and Burn's (2007) rhetorics of Democratic Creativity and Cultural Re/Production, Ubiquitous Creativity, Creativity as Economic Imperative, and Creativity for Social Good. However, the actual classroom practices signify their mythical and restrictive nature that limits the wider and more generalised implementation of creativity in education institutions.

Cropley (2012) identifies three major myths that drive the emergent classroom practices including the restriction of creativity to arts, the conflation of creativity with giftedness and special needs, and the incompatibility of creativity with traditional knowledge and the school curriculum content. The segregation between creativity and learning — apparent within the contemporary educational practices (Cross 2012) — has led some researchers to plea the educators to nurture knowledge without harming creativity (Boden 2001). Cropley and Gribov's (2005, p. 9) conceptualisation of two-dimensional education contrasts with a one dimensional approach to education that promotes traditional knowledge only. Cropley and Gribov's (2005, p. 9) concept of education holds combining traditional knowledge with 'teaching to innovate' or 'teaching to create' as a necessity in rapidly shifting modern times. Cropley's (2012) later research also argues for the need of and possibility for the compatibility between creativity and traditional knowledge. Further, Cropley's (2012) description of the first two myths, dealing with art bias, closely corresponds to Banaji and Burn's (2007) rhetorics of political challenges and of creative genius and creative arts, shedding more light on the 'muddying of understanding of creativity by such notions' (Cropley 2016, p. 238).

Elsewhere, Cropley (2016a) traces at least six other myths that drive modern discussions of creativity. These myths link creativity to aesthetic domains, to mental disturbance, to involving divine inspiration, to sending this divine inspiration to the chosen few, to the uselessness principle of the beautiful, and to the ill-defined nature of creativity (Cropley 2016a) — also contributing to the diverse understanding of creativity. This particular approach holds creativity as ineffable: creativity cannot be defined; ineluctable: creativity cannot be controlled; and inscrutable: creativity cannot be understood (Cropley 2018; also Cropley 2016b). Instead of altogether rejecting these myths of creativity as 'overblown' (Cropley 2018, p. 238), Cropley (2016a, p. 239) proposes to attain a 'more encompassing understanding of creativity' that embraces domains other than the aesthetic and the artistic; that is inclusive of elitist as well as everyday creativity everyone is capable of; and that 'distinguishes humble creativity from (commodified) fast food creativity'.

Harris and Ammermann (2016) in their study identify the alternatively proposed interdisciplinary curricular approaches towards creativity that reveal how the concept of creativity has been reframed in the current curriculum policy with implications for teaching, learning, and teacher education. This policy level reframing of creativity that recognises creativity by its 'higher use value … than the arts alone' (Harris & Ammermann 2016, p. 109) in contributing to the country's economic prosperity, also recognises arts by its use value in engaging 'at risk' students. However, Harris and Ammermann (2016, p. 107) locate the source of implementation difficulties beyond arts bias to the inconsistencies and contradictions in diverse policy documents that promote the 'discipline based siloed approach' and fail to promote the cross-disciplinary concept of creativity that in turn leads to the failure of implementation efforts. Further, Harris (2016b) identifies pedagogical and institutional impediments to creativity in schools which include: time and space, academic success tied to reproductive knowledge requiring a redefinition, poor teacher skills, resources, and timetable, and leadership.

Lassig (2009, 2012b) also views the emphasis on the importance of creativity as rhetorical and urges the educators to go beyond this emphasis to 'concrete action and changes in pedagogy within schools' (2012b, p. 8). While Lassig's (2009) study describes the nature of creativity to be the personal every day little-c creativity, Lassig's (2012a, 2012b) subsequent studies further specify the nature of school students' creativity which is governed by different 'motivations, constraints, and contexts' (2012b, p. 2).

Similar to mini-c (creativity inherent in learning process; Beghetto & Kaufman 2007; Kaufman & Beghetto 2009) or little-c creativity (everyday creativity; Craft 2001), this creativity type — which Lassig (2012a, 2012b) calls as ed-c or educational creativity — deals with producing novel and useful outcomes for learning as well as achievement purposes in educational contexts. This concept, however, stands distinct to little-c creativity in developing creative processes and outcomes under the 'external constraints of the educational system, including limitations posed by curricula, task demands, assessment criteria, or teachers' instructions' (Lassig 2012b, p. 2). Finally, in educational settings, the audience and judges for such creativity are generally teachers or peers (Lassig 2012a, 2012b).

Identifying the creativity implementation difficulties in educational settings, Lassig (2009, p. 7) further asserts the need to develop a shared discourse about the nature of creativity 'understood by and relevant to, all stakeholders'; to develop informed policy; and finally, to employ effective pedagogic practices for fostering creativity by providing teachers with relevant strategies and mechanisms to effectively promote everyday creativity.

Quite relevant to policy level understanding of creativity and implementation practices is the concern how the prevailing conceptualisations and myths — surrounding the teachability of creativity — impact teachers' beliefs about creativity that might hinder the efforts to foster creativity (Cropley & Patston 2019). What further complicates the issue is the young teachers' muddling understanding of creative acts (Crow 2008); their inadequate conceptions of creativity in conducting the matter of fact science investigations (Newton & Newton 2009); and

their narrow understanding of creativity in associating the creative practice with teaching creatively rather than teaching for creativity (Bolden, Harries & Newton 2010).

Drawing on recent research findings, Patston et al.'s (2018) study investigates the arts bias myth, reports teachers' rejection of the art bias, and suggests rather minimal impact of teachers' faulty perceptions on the efforts to foster creativity in school curriculum. However, there still remains a need for establishing a dialogue and constructing knowledge with the colleagues, professionals, and researchers to enhance teachers' understanding of creativity (Wyse & Spendlove 2007; Howard-Jones, Winfield & Crimmins 2008; Reilly et al. 2011).

Additionally, there is growing scholarly emphasis on boosting the creative potential of teachers and in turn of learners through effective teacher training and its effective use in classes (e.g. Cropley 2012; Harris 2016b). Apart from teacher development and discursive emphasis on employing effective pedagogic practices to implement classroom creativity, the curriculum reforms to support the teachers to practice creativity-centred paradigms in their classes have also been suggested through differentiated teaching and other approaches (Cropley & Patston 2019).

However, despite that recognition and emphasis, Davies et al.'s (2014) systematic review of literature indicates a lack of robust professional, policy, and research evidence regarding the roles teachers are playing and the support they get to perform their roles in promoting creative learning environment. Defining creative learning environments as those shaped to develop creative learning, Davies et al. (2014) indicate the need to provide further research evidence for the skills required by teachers to enhance such creative learning environments and their impact on learners.

Reviewing his half a century career as creativity researcher, Cropley (2018) also interrogates the real state of affairs in creativity enhancing efforts (particularly in the Australian context) and his declaration locates a gap in teachers' understanding of the concept, the (creative) pedagogic practices they employ for (creative)

learning to take place, and the teachers' inability to understand the learners and the purpose of their learning:

> I also cannot see any evidence of real change in, for example teachers' understanding of creativity or of what they are supposed to be doing in the classroom or what children are there to learn. Much "creativity" talk is mere lip service or even cant (p. 17).

By recognising the integral role of the teachers in enhancing learner-creativity, the next section extends the debate on the nature of the gaps identified by Cropley (2018) and Davies et al. (2014) in creativity enhancing teaching and learning contexts.

2.4   Creative Pedagogy and Student Voice

This section extends the discussion on alterative conceptualisation of creativity and further explores the issues faced with current creative pedagogic practices. By reviewing the literature on students' creative learning, the section establishes creative learning as a helpful construct to the study of creative pedagogies (sub-sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.4.4, & 2.4.5). This section also involves a discussion on students' creative learning in relation to the concepts of student engagement and student voice as they appear in their respective bodies of literature (sub-sections 2.4.6 & 2.4.7).

2.4.1   Creativity as a means to enhancing student learning

While the policy makers, practitioners, and researchers still grapple with what creativity means in practice (Selkrig & Keamy 2017) asserting the need to understand creative pedagogies (Cremin & Chappell 2019) and have conceptual frameworks for creative practices (Loveless et al., 2006), Cropley (2012) raises another crucial question of *what it is for* to inquire the fallacious nature of the use-value of creativity. Cropley (2012) argues:

> Creativity is looked at in a specific utilitarian way with its products (such as new tools, procedures or methods) seen as a direct pathway to national

prosperity, not because it is valued as a pedagogical measure for improving all learning (p. 22).

Looked at more closely, Cropley's (2012, p. 9) perspective on approaching 'creativity as basic pedagogic principle', shares common grounds with the researchers (discussed in section 2.3) who question the narrow understanding of creativity and propose alternative understandings of this concept. While advocating for creativity as a '*method* or pedagogy' rather than a result, for improving educational processes (Cropley 2012, p. 10; Italics in original), Cropley (2012, p. 22) also joins hands with the researchers — that he mentions in his paper (e.g. Ewing 2011; Hunter 2005; O'Brien 2011; O'Brien & Donelan 2008; Thomson & Sefton-Green 2011) — who have recognised the value of creativity as a *method* and 'emphasise its application to creative learning through creative pedagogy'. While Cropley's (2012) study advocates the use of creative pedagogy in Australian educational settings and presents a distinct Australian perspective on the need to implement creativity as a basic pedagogic principle, it also identifies the existing flawed pedagogic practices which hinder the thoroughgoing implementation of creativity in the classrooms. These practices narrowly focus on arts and on nurturing the gifted-students' creativity only while viewing creativity as incompatible with knowledge (discussed in section 2.3).

Apart from the flawed pedagogic practices, studies also indicate the teachers' reluctance to adopt creative pedagogies due to performativity culture (Burnard & White 2008; Davies et al. 2014); their perception of restraints related to time, assessment, professional-development, and curriculum (Braund & Campbell 2010); their lack of confidence in creative pedagogies and their training into it (Alter, Hays & O'Hara 2009; Waite et al. 2009), and many pedagogic as well as systemic barriers to the use of creative pedagogies in schools (Wyse & Spendlove 2007). Consequently, there is a growing emphasis on 'teaching to innovate,' or 'teaching to create' as necessary for developing pupils' 'predisposition to create and participate in both supporting and developing the emerging innovative culture'

(Cropley & Gribov 2005, p. 9). Here Cropley's (2012) explication of creativity as a *method* is quite informative:

> In fact, it is possible to see creativity as a general approach to teaching and learning whose value lies not in directly increasing students' creativity (although this may occur), but in improving learning in general — not only in "creative" domains and in gifted individuals, but also in areas which are not typically linked with creativity and in students who are not regarded as having special needs. The educational benefits of creativity would not then be defined in terms of its direct value in promoting national wellbeing through discoveries, inventions and the like, but in terms of its indirect value as a promoter of a special social atmosphere, favourable attitudes to school, positive self-image, acquisition of general skills, positive knowledge development and similar things (p. 15).

Fielding's (2007) research is also a variant of the same theme. Tapping into the present educational situations which recognise students by their value to the improvement of overall institutional performance and image, Fielding (2007) asserts that the real challenge is to move from such situations to the new educational futures where this functional role gets coupled with the personal development of wise persons. This process-based approach is in line with Craft, Chappell, and Harris's (further discussed in section 2.3) line of argument that takes issues with the present day narrow conceptualisation of creativity.

Though the current creativity debates underline the struggle to understand what it means for creativity to be in practice (Selkrig & Keamy 2017), the years after Cropley's (2012) invocation to *creativity as a method* have seen increased attention at an individual, institutional, and collective level for bringing creativity to classrooms as reported by many creativity scholars (e.g. Beghetto 2007, 2010; Beghetto & Kaufman 2011, 2014; Kaufman, Beghetto & Dilley 2016; Beghetto & Karwowski 2017). Along with the scholarship reporting student-identified environmental conditions supporting creativity (Lassig 2012a), other research scholars have registered their self-employed successful creative pedagogic

practices in their classrooms in diverse disciplines (McWilliam 2009) in addition to talking about the programmes that have been developed to implement creative pedagogy across the curriculum (Lin 2014; Cropley & Patston 2019).

However, despite such scholarly contributions to pedagogy, the issue of pedagogic practices remains complex. For instance, while Lassig (2009) underlines the need to identify the educational practices that can effectively foster creativity, Troman, Jeffrey & Raggl (2007) and Jeffrey, Troman, and Zezlina-Philips' (2008) studies indicate the practitioners' use of creative pedagogy to serve the pressure of performativity. Similarly, Cheung's (2012) study indicates the teachers' failure to use creative pedagogy in classes despite their sound understanding of teaching for creativity.

Similarly, Sawyer (2004, p. 12; also Sawyer 2006, 2011) critiques the present reform efforts that have reduced the teaching of creativity to 'scripted instruction' denying teacher creativity and reducing students to 'passive, observing audience'. It is also interesting to note that more recent discussions of fostering creative pedagogy in educational settings allude to the focus of creative pedagogies within teacher education and school classroom contexts — placing learning in a secondary place (Tanggaard 2014) or ignoring students' creative learning altogether (Lin 2011). It can be argued that an informed perspective on learners' understanding of and their performance of the pedagogic values can benefit the teachers in the roles they can play to further enhance student creativity.

Similarly, even though Cropley's (2012) paper talks at length about developing students' creative learning and advocates the use of creativity (teaching) for enhancing creative learning, it stops short of describing the nature and characteristics of creative learning or its relationship with creative teaching. Cropley's (2012) paper concludes with the suggestions that emphasise teacher training as central to improving the broader understanding of creativity.

2.4.2 Creative learning ─ an under-researched area in the study of creative pedagogies

Tanggaard (2014) contends this dominant trend in educational research on creativity by critiquing its predominant focus on explicating the relation between teaching and creativity which has relegated creative learning to a secondary place. Consequently, there still remains a need to 'describe what kind of learning is vital and how learning processes actually lead to more creativity' (Tanggaard 2014, p. 108). Tanggaard's (2014, p. 107) Situated Model of Creativity and Learning — also called the Model of a Creative Learning Community — is her attempt to 'describe the concept of creative learning and to analyse its possible constituents'.

Tanggaard's (2014) Situated Model works on three learning principles which include: 1) Immersion in the topic of interest, in traditions and in the subject matter; 2) Experimentation and inquiry learning; and 3) Resistance from the material of interest. Tanggaard (2014) holds that when all these three principles work together, for instance, when children experiment with their learning and have a sound knowledge of the subject matter, and also experience a resistance from the tools, artefacts, or materials in engaging with them, there is a great likelihood of the students' enhancing their own creativity through learning.

Likewise, Beghetto (2016) maintains that the interdependent relationship between creativity and learning mostly remains an unrepresented area in the previous conceptions of creative learning. Beghetto (2016) further emphasises the need to underscore the interpersonal and subjective experiences of learners in the creative learning process. Beghetto (2016, p. 9) splits creative learning into sub concepts that include *creativity-in-learning* and *learning-in-creativity* to describe the intrapsychological and interpsychological processes. Beghetto's (2016) Creative Learning Process Model establishes the interdependent relationship between creativity and learning through the collaboration of intrapsychological and interpsychological processes that subsequently refer to the subjective as well as interpersonal aspects of the learners' creative learning.

The intrapsychological process in Beghetto's (2016) Creative Learning Process Model is further schematised into 1) learners' attending to optimally discrepant stimuli provided by their teachers; 2) the participants' combining new discrepant stimuli with their existing knowledge; 3) their personal meaningful interpretations through the combining of their existing knowledge and discrepant stimuli; 4) the learners' new understanding of the situation.

The interpsychological sphere (Beghetto 2016), on the other hand, works on teacher's provision for the learners of the 5) opportunity to express their newly developed understanding; 6) the others' (teachers and peers) effort to evaluate the learners' discrepant conception in the light of their own conceptions; 7) the others' effort to understand an apparently incompatible conception of learners; 8) the others' efforts to determine if the learners' discrepant conception can be made compatible with their understanding; 9) the others' ability to understand the novel contribution the learners' discrepant conception has made to their understanding.

Earlier, Craft and Jeffrey (2003) acknowledge the integral relationship between creative teaching and creative learning in research where the former is held to be the source of the latter. Jeffrey (2001) identifies the basic features of creative learning, characterising control, ownership, innovation, and relevance, to be the same as creative teaching.

Davies et al. (2014) also regard control, ownership, innovation, and relevance as characteristic of creative learning environments. Davies et al. (2014) view teachers and their organisation of learning central to creative learning environment. Although teachers' understanding of and attention to the learners' needs is deemed essential to performing their roles for promoting creativity, the relative dearth of research evidence (Davies et al. 2014) in this area indicates the need for a systematic approach towards it.

2.4.3   Creative learning and learner inclusiveness

Jeffrey's study (2001, p. 2) is among very few studies (e.g. Horng 2005; Sharp et al. 2005; Schacter et al. 2006, Webster & Campbell 2006; Bancroft, Fawcett, and

Hay 2008; Cochrane & Cockett 2007; Walling 2009; Braund & Campbell, 2010) that consider learning from students' perspective and hearing 'the pupils' voices in matters concerning their own learning' to be a significant area of investigation.

Further along the way, while the other research in this area is preoccupied with defining and exploring the characteristics of creative learning, the subsequent studies establish the relationship between creative teaching and creative learning more useful for creative pedagogy discussions rather than the relationship between teaching creatively and teaching that NACCCE (1999) report holds necessary for enhancing student creativity (discussed below).

Jeffrey's study (2001) reports the initial findings of the ten-partner European research project CLASP (Creative Learning and Student Perspectives) which aimed to do a comparative pedagogic research into creative teaching and learning practices. The project focused on 'how creative teaching was experienced, adapted, appropriated or rejected by students and what kinds of creative agency is released through creative teaching contexts' (Jeffrey 2006, p. 401); and how leaners made their 'creative experiences meaningful' (Jeffrey & Craft 2003, p. 2). In order to do that, the project examined creative learning from five foci: 1) the construction of the learning contexts; 2) social interactions; 3) cognitive explorations; 4) the subjective experience of learning; and 5) an examination of learning processes by teachers and learners (Jeffrey & Craft 2003). The final findings of the project are reported fully in Jeffrey (2006).

Early findings (Jeffrey 2001) of the CLASP project showed that students use their experiences to enhance their learning; use imaginative links to aid conceptualisations and to collaborate strategically with peers over tasks; add to the curriculum and pedagogy; and offer evaluations to improve the teaching and learning contexts. The research process (Jeffrey 2001) included observation and recording and focused on the participants' engagement with learning and their social interactions with peers and teachers. These areas also worked as lenses to gather the students' perspectives while simultaneously providing evidence for creative learning.

Jeffrey (2001) finds registering learners' perspectives gleaned through observation and recording of the participants' engagements, their social relations, and reflective evaluation significant in broadening our understanding of the ways in which children engage with their learning environment. Further benefits, according to Jeffrey (2001), involve providing empirical evidence for the success of these teaching and learning practices along with raising our awareness of the viable extent in which children bring their creative learning to the learning context. Jeffrey's (2001) project establishes the diverse facets of pupil engagement that are significant for assisting creative learning but most likely are overlooked by teachers. Jeffrey's study (2001) culminates with some practical recommendations for the teachers to assist students' creative learning.

Jeffrey and Craft's (2003) next study further develops the conceptualisation of creative learning in connection with the aspect of 'possibility thinking'. While on this point, if one strand of research into creative learning is busy exploring the concept from the learners' perspective; the other end of research strives to provide theoretical as well as empirical evidence for establishing the existence of the pedagogic discourse of creative teaching and creative learning widely used across the globe. Craft and Jeffrey's (2004) study falls into the latter category in exploring the distinction between creative practice and the practice which fosters creativity and concludes by asserting that the boundaries between them are blurred.

Jeffrey and Craft's (2004, p. 77) other study extends this argument and returns the discursive focus onto a 'learner-inclusive' pedagogic approach. Examining the relationship between the NACCCE (1999) proposed distinction between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity, Jeffrey and Craft (2004, p. 77) argue that there is an integral relationship between the two and any attempt to dichotomise them creates 'a false construction of pedagogic reality' (p. 85). Jeffrey and Craft (2004, p. 85) regard a focus on both the teachers and the learners as important for making creative pedagogic practices transparent.

Jeffrey and Craft (2004, p. 77) through their study advocate *teaching for creativity* as a learner-inclusive pedagogic approach where learners are involved in making

decisions about their knowledge construction; where there is collaboration between teachers and learners; and where learner agency is prioritised. Jeffrey and Craft (2004) further hold that an attention to the relationship between teacher and learner helps discern the pedagogic practices. Similarly, a focus on the 'creativity (sic) agency of each enables the constituents of creative teaching and creative learning to be identified, characterised and assessed' (Jeffrey & Craft 2004, p. 85).

By establishing the integral relationship between the above terms through their discussion, Jeffrey and Craft (2004) claim that the relationship between teaching creatively and creative learning is a more useful 'distinction for the study of creative pedagogies' (p. 77). This relationship is also helpful to study the institutionalisation of the values 'concerned with developing creative people' (Jeffrey & Craft, p. 86) put forth by NACCCE (1999).

2.4.4 Defining creative learning — diverse scholarly perspectives

Though the above studies present scholarly efforts to establish pupils' creative learning as a significant field of research, it is worthwhile to consider Craft's (2008; discussed below) later stance on viewing creative learning as an uninformative term (Craft 2008) that can be approached as a revocation of her earlier stance on viewing the relationship between creative learning and teaching for creativity useful to study creative pedagogies. While acknowledging the rise of the term creative learning in diverse creativity discourses, Craft (2008, p. 7) contests the use of this very term as 'unhelpful' for schools and other learning contexts because of its lack of distinction as a process. Other reasons include creative learning as posing varied challenges for scholarly and policy-level understanding of the term and the ways it differs from 'effective learning'.

The later scholars (Sefton-Green et al. 2008, 2011; Selkrig & Keamy 2017) also acknowledge the contested, loose, and imprecise nature of this term; however, Sefton-Green (2008, p. 12) argues that this phrase 'does stand for a set of values focused around developing individual potential and with an emphasis on authentic 'deep' educational experiences'. Sefton-Green's (2011) conceptualisation of creative learning has been critiqued as a broader conceptualisation of learning

(Beghetto 2016) that while considering the relationship between creativity and learning (micro level relationship), places emphasis predominantly on 'mesolevel activities (i.e., creative curricula and pedagogy) and macrolevel policy and reform (i.e., creative school change and system change)' (Beghetto 2016, p. 9). Beghetto's (2016) critique helps introduce micro-, meso-, and macrolevel distinctions in the conceptualisation of creative learning, and his Process Model of Creative Learning (discussed above) further broadens the microlevel conception of creative learning by approaching the construct from a creative cognition dimension. Beghetto's (2016) study, therefore, by introducing the distinctions in creative learning process, helps address Craft's (2008) concerns (discussed above).

However approached, Sefton-Green's (2008; also Sefton-Green et al. 2011) conceptualisation of creative learning establishes it as a significant yet diverse field of research: it views creative learning as having varied dimensions defined and enacted differently across discrete levels. Linking back the term 'creative learning' to the question of values, Sefton-Green et al., (2011) hold that the term creative learning touches on the deep questions dealing with the purpose and nature of education systems. Sefton-Green et al. (2011, p. 7) regard creative learning to be a 'peculiarly contemporary education 'ideology'' in its ability to address the contemporary economic as well as educational issues. Besides, Sefton-Green et al. (2011, p. 7) see the notion of creative learning deeply engaged with the concern 'for the quality of relationships and for individual lives' signifying the formation of specific learner subjectivity. However, in addition to developing individual growth and potential, creative learning also frames 'a new place for authority and knowledge within learning, and an active, production — rather than consumption — based curriculum' (Sefton-Green et al. 2011, p. 2).

Sefton-Green also views creative learning as an irritant: as a 'positively disruptive agent — because creative learning models other and different ways of carrying out what is perceived as the status quo' (2008, p. 12). This further highlights its analytical nature that deals with 'the analysis of forms of teaching and modes of learning' (Sefton-Green et al., p. 2). Additionally, this characteristic of creative

learning signifies the spirit of deep-rooted change. Though still not used widely (Sefton-Green 2008), the frequent use of this term in England comes to signify a blend of aspirations for making children (teaching for creativity) as well as instruction creative (teaching creatively; Sefton-Green et al., 2011).

By raising creative learning to the status of a paradigm, Sefton-Green et al., (2011) come to see creative learning also as entailing a shift of authority in teachers' roles and:

> An interest in active, production based kinds of learning activities; an emphasis on developing habits of curiosity, collaboration and cooperation in group work; an insistence on the value of performances and the development of audiences within the school and the wider community. (Valuing) the products of making (not just artefacts but performances). (Focusing) analysis on wider meaning-making process, such as those located 'in' the learner's body through performance. (Attempting) to build explicitly on those forms of play and playful thinking … which are often presumed to lie at the heart of creative learning (p. 5).

Jeffrey (2006, p. 401) also continues exploring the term creative learning in conjunction with creative teaching. Jeffrey (2006) reports the findings from the CLASP project (discussed earlier) in terms of the creative teaching of teachers, the creative learning experience of the learners, and the meaning that they assign to such experiences. Jeffrey's (2006) study conceptualises the characteristics of creative learning identical to creative teaching, that is, relevance, ownership of knowledge, control of learning processes, and innovation.

Besides, Jeffrey's (2006) study reports on how the use of specific teaching strategies — which involved setting up the critical events (a concept borrowed from Woods 1993), using space creatively, and modeling creativity — helped promote students' creative learning contexts as well as their experiences. The students' creativity in learning featured through the students' use of personal experiences and imagination in their learning; their use of a range of intelligences to attend to diverse activities simultaneously; and their taking on of both learner and teaching

roles. However, apart from these, Jeffrey (2006) views the major characteristics of creative learning involved 'the grasping of opportunities to engage in *intellectual enquiry*, the possibility to *engage productively* with their work or activity and the appreciation shown for *reviewing* both product construction and processes' (Italics in original, Jeffrey 2006, p. 407).

Jeffrey (2006, p. 407), however, distinguishes between the learning aspect from being creative in creative learning: while being creative implies 'being innovative, experimental and inventive', the learning aspect deals with students' engagement with knowledge inquiry. This intellectual inquiry further included '*possibility thinking* and *engagement with problems*' (Italics in original, Jeffrey 2006, p. 407). It was their engagement with knowledge inquiry that led the students to *engage productivity* where they 'focused intently on the process of their activities and the production of their products' (Jeffrey 2006, p. 408). Jeffrey (2006) also reported the impact of creative learning on the participants. From the students' self-report on their creative learning experiences, self-affirmation which included personal development, social identity and belonging; experiencing social roles as innovators as well as creators; and shared engagements emerged to be the significant areas of the students' meaningful experiences.

Given that Jeffrey's CLASP project (2006, p. 412) establishes the existence of a common teaching and learning discourse across European partners, he holds the future research potential in adding more 'character to these findings, to add more features and to take advantage of the comparative aspect to sharpen and test these findings in new situations'. Jeffrey (2006) further considers the benefit of the study of creative teaching and learning pedagogy across diverse countries and cultures as:

> An opportunity to challenge the domination of narrower global educational research and to link teachers, educational institutions and policy-makers in a joint effort to base education within a social context and situation (p. 412).

In line with Jeffrey (2006), Lin (2011) also argues against a major neglect towards understanding the importance of creative learning in fostering children's creativity

and presents a framework of creative pedagogy that involves creative learning as an integral element working along with creative teaching and teaching for creativity to enhance students' creative development.

Lin (2011, p. 152) further cautions that 'the neglect of a spontaneous and creative learning and its characteristics, such as autonomy' could lead to complexities in cultivating children's creativity. This approach leads Lin (2011, 2014) to view *creative learning* as a distinct but integral part of her creative pedagogy framework — including both teaching for creativity and creative teaching. Creative learning, as Lin (2014, p. 45) defines it, is the opposite of authoritarian teaching and passive learning and signifies the 'learners' spontaneous learning with active and creative engagement'. Lin (2011) views the interplay between innovative teaching and effective strategies necessary for facilitating student agency and creative engagement. Drawing on the contemporary scholarship, Lin (2011) identifies playfulness, collaboration, development for imagination and possibility thinking, and supportive/resourceful context as features of creative learning.

As well as viewing the propagation of creativity in schools dependent on students' creative learning and having opportunities for creative learning, Lucas and Anderson (2015) also outline the benefits for individual students which brings their understanding of creative learning closer to what Cropley (2012, p. 10) defines as *creativity as a method*. The benefits that creativity yields in the classroom, as Lucas and Anderson (2015) enumerate, include students' better learning, increased general achievement, improved motivation and engagement increased levels of confidence, personal achievement, enhanced resilience, social and emotional development, improved attendance, and parents' engagement.

Lassig (2012b) regards creative teaching, teaching for creativity, and creative learning as interrelated constructs and important for fostering creativity. Though to her creative learning evades a consistent definition, Lassig (2012b) nevertheless defines it as a concept that allows students autonomy and ownership of learning and helps them use and develop their imagination.

Dusseldorp Forum (cited in Lucas & Anderson 2015) views creative learning as a pedagogic style that facilitates learners' use of imagination; arouses their natural curiosity; helps them pursue their interests and strengths; enables them to approach problems from new perspectives along with engendering a spirit of experimentation; and a use of diverse mediums along with cross as well as interdisciplinary approaches for developing an enduring love for learning.

Some recent studies, for instance, Peng, Cherng, and Chen (2013), Wang and Marota (2016), and Gajda, Beghetto, and Karwowski (2017) empirically establish the impact of creative pedagogies on learners' creativity. However, despite reporting the benefits of creativity, Lucas and Anderson (2015) indicate a dearth of reliable research that could establish whether the students partaking in creative learning become creative as a result of creative learning. Cremin and Chappell (2019) also establish the paucity of empirical evidence for the impact of creative pedagogies on student creativity.

Lucas and Anderson (2015) further state that the evidence of the benefits of creative learning mainly comes from teachers and practitioners — leaving more room for providing a systematic evidence for the widespread benefits of creative learning (Lucas & Anderson 2015, p. 1).

Robson and Dusseldorp (2015, p. 2) regard seven design principles as driving creative learning that include giving control to young people, allowing them to 'muck around', freedom to be the learners that learn, freedom to grow new roles and responsibilities, allowing them to practice language and express identities in diverse ways, allowing them to be enterprising, and the freedom to engage with the world. However, to Robson and Dusseldorp (2015), despite the benefits and the need for creative learning, the overworked and uncompromising education systems with scarcity of teaching support can defeat meaningful change. Robson and Dusseldorp (2015, p. 5) further opine, 'the Creative Learning culture still needs building' and much needed efforts are required to build the culture of creative learning that can effectively counter the pressure of performativity.

2.4.5   Student learning and the culture of performativity

The fact that a creative learning culture still needs to be developed (Robson & Dusseldorp 2015) has led some recent research scholars to underline the impact of a culture of performativity on students as well. Keddie's (2016) study problematises the naturalisation of neoliberal discourses of performativity and individual responsibilisation driving student self-worth or value. Keddie (2016, p. 109) maintains:

> Students in today's classrooms are children of the market, that is to say, that they are crafting their identities and making sense of their educational and employment experiences and choices within the context of neoliberal imperatives.

Featuring the voices of very high academic achievers, Keddie's (2016, p. 118) findings indicate the formation of neoliberal subjectivities through students' internalisation of the discourse of performative neoliberalism that promotes competition, perfectionism, accountability, testing and performance, individualism, and responsibilisation — all leading inevitably to the construction of 'good' or 'successful' student identities directly determining their self-worth and value. It is important to note here that Sefton-Green et al.'s (2011, p. 6) view of creative learning, that is responsive to the changing knowledge economy, promotes 'a different notion of the subjectivity of learners and a series of values about relationships between learners and teachers, and between authority and knowledge'. While Keddie (2016) recommends a broad structural and policy change to undermine the vigour of neoliberal discourses, at student level, she also suggests to:

> Foster students' critical thinking about the narrow vision of ideal student hood and citizenship in which they are compelled to engage if they are to be seen as 'successful'. Such critical thinking will be requisite to supporting children of the market to imagine creatively different ways of being that are less about competition, individualism and personal gain and more about collaboration, creativity and social responsibility (p. 120).

This plea for developing a certain set of value-based skills and behaviours also underlines the scholarly dissatisfaction with the outcomes produced by conventional education settings (Sefton-Green et al. 2011).

Macfarlane's studies (2015, 2016) in Higher Education investigate the recent performative turn in the assessment of student learning from a student-rights perspective. Macfarlane (2016, p. 851) argues that the performative expectations have significantly altered what it means to be a university student: 'assessment practices increasingly evaluate social and behavioural skills in a public learning space rather than individual intellectual understanding in a largely private one'. This, according to Macfarlane (2015, p. 347), undermines students' freedom to make decisions as learners and encourages 'inauthentic behaviour as individual endeavour to conform' or 'game playing behaviours' (Macfarlane 2016, p. 851). To establish students' rights within the curriculum — rather than through the curriculum — Macfarlane (2016) urges rebalancing assessment policy practices by allowing students' freedom to choose their learning preferences.

As discussed above, an increased emphasis on accountability, outcomes, and achievement either translates into students' internalisation of neoliberal discourses of individualism and performativity and constructs their commodified identities (Keddie 2016); or makes them feeling counterproductive for the school community and disregards 'who they are as developing adolescents, their potential for learning and growing, or their emerging passions and curiosity' (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012, p. 744) — leading to their disengagement. In both cases, the learners serve as an instrument to achieve the policy goals which deprives them of meaningful learning experiences (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012; Keddie 2016).

2.4.6 Exploring student engagement from a student voice-based perspective

The USA High School Survey Report on student engagement (Yazzie-Mintz 2007, p. 11) also documents the survey participants' expressed purpose of being at school as to get a degree; however, there are also the participants who search for something

meaningful in their school experience: 'to be actively involved in their learning, to be taken seriously as individuals, and to mean something within their high school communities'. These survey results allude to the issue of neglect towards student perceptions or their voices on their schooling experiences and urge researchers to investigate the nature of 'the engagement gap' created due to pressure to bridge the 'achievement gap' and a possible link between these gaps to address this more pressing issue (Yazzie-Mintz 2007, p. 8).

The HSSSE report (Yazzie-Mintz 2007) regards student voices necessary for exploring student engagement and in bringing about cultural, structural, and practice level changes in individual high schools by understanding students' accounts of their schooling experiences as valid and truthful. Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick (2012), two scholars from student engagement literature, further extend this line of argument by holding that student perspectives provide an alternative view of and a deep understanding of the student experiences of school. Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick (2012, p. 758) argue that although listening for student voices on their schooling experiences has existed for a while now in policy, practice, and research, the interest in the quantifiable aspect of student experiences — mostly dealing with student achievement — fails to deal with the breadth of voice in student experiences. Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick (2012, p. 758) further raise some potent questions about the nature of 'the processes, interactions, and relationships that are important parts of students' schooling experiences' and often get neglected in such listening-to-student-voice efforts.

Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick (2012, p. 743) argue for understanding student engagement or disengagement from students' perspective by calling it 'finding the humanity in the data'. Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick (2012, p. 756) maintain that generally the responsibility for student disengagement rests with individual students which constricts 'the opportunities for understanding and strengthening student engagement'. As opposed to that position, the research that pays attention to the student perspectives considers student engagement to be greatly impacted by the school and its community — including the people, programmes, and practices.

This perspective may pose, as Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick (2012) claim, some challenges for research, policy, and practice. This may require researchers to approach and understand student engagement beyond narrow indicators or constructs of measuring student engagement, and urge the policy makers to create policies keeping in view students' culture of engagement greatly impacted by 'relevance, interest, challenge, and instructional method' (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012, p. 759).

Despite the significance of student voice in promoting student engagement, the concept of voice has been regarded as problematic (Arnot & Reay 2007) due to diverse 'relational and discursive contexts' that influence individual voices (Charteris & Smardon 2019, p. 95). Charteris and Smardon (2019, p. 106) further elaborate on the enactment of student voice in educational settings as driven by diverse purposes. Charteris & Smardon (2019, p. 95) regard the enactment of agency socially, culturally, and discursively situated and demand a 'close scrutiny of the purpose behind voice, its appropriation and its use … (as a way to) challenge hegemonic schooling practices' that appear to be so emancipatory.

Charteris and Smardon's (2019) study identifies six student voice discourses operating in New Zealand schools that exhibit diverse enactments of student agency in educational settings. The discourses of voice: 1) use student voice to monitor the efficacy of teaching practices (governmentality); 2) provide evidence for teaching and school performance (accountability); 3) raise school achievement through school reforms (institutional transformation and reform); 4) agentically and tokenistically articulate their learning experiences but allow them no power to take action (learner agency); 5) instrumentally communicate the individual learning needs (personalising learning); 6) and position students as active partners along with their teachers in knowledge construction and decision making in schools (radical collegiality). Charteris and Smardon's (2019) findings suggest a potential to further explore the radical collegiality practices along with voice work that poses a challenge to traditional hegemonic pedagogical practices silencing student voices at diverse design and systemic levels.

2.4.7 The pedagogic voice

Given the complexities attached with the construct and interpretation of voice, Arnot and Reay (2007) — following Bernstein (in Arnot & Reay 2007) — present an alternative theorisation of voice called the sociology of pedagogic voice that 'focuses not on voice per se, but on *pedagogic voice* (italics in original, p. 312). Pedagogic voice is a differentiated voice that arises out of the pedagogic encounters and can be heard as students' classroom talk, subject talk, identity talk, and code talk (Arnot & Reay 2007). Arnot & Reay's (2007, p. 323) defined pedagogic voice is a common 'language of learning created by school pedagogies' 'that pupils as pupils speak'. This voice, constructed by pedagogies, has the potential to be heard by teachers and researchers for improving teaching and learning and reduces class, gender, and ethnic inequities in student learning.

It is also interesting to find parallels between Arnot & Reay's (2007) conception of pedagogic voice and Rinaldi's (2006) description of pedagogy of listening that is attentive to children's thoughts and ideas, respects their diversity in constructing and communicating their meanings and ensures that children are not silenced by their inability to communicate in a dominant language, or within a dominant culture' (Wood 2017, p. 160). Hay's (2017) arts-based action research organisation 5x5x5= creativity, which is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, practically employs pedagogy of listening by encouraging children and young people to participate, establish dialogue, exchange ideas, and negotiate in various educational settings. This approach helps children and young people express and develop lifelong creative skills (Hay 2017) which is creating an educational impact by transforming classroom practices in other educational settings which go beyond the early and primary settings to secondary and higher education environments (Bancroft et al. 2008).

Building on the concept of the pedagogy of voice, Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016, p. 128) define pedagogic voice as describing 'the ways young people may have influence over the context and content of their learning'. Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016) advocate finding young people's pedagogic voice as necessary for

redressing the long term socially unjust outcomes of schooling and education — created through students' disengagement from learning. Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016) also indicate that student engagement in learning and their civic engagement can be enhanced by developing pupil pedagogic voice.

Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills' (2016, p. 137) study, however, highlights the democratic aspects of teaching practices with an ear to pedagogic voice in ECC visual arts programme that enable 'teachers to both 'find out' and to be surprised by the capabilities of all their students, especially students like those at ECC who have been constructed as unteachable'. Drawing on literature on student voice, Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016) mention multiple institutional and personal gains that students' developed pedagogic voice yields. The developed practices, revealing the developed pedagogic voices, included empathy, respect, ownership of learning and place (community membership) and decision making in curriculum choices, and the use of their personal strengths and individual interests in school environment (improved engagement).

Flewitt et al.'s (2017, p. 372) participatory research project with disadvantaged young children in England — whose ideas remain misunderstood and excluded from policy affecting processes and 'mainstream opportunities for learning'— attempts to develop their voices by enabling them to lead their research projects. The participants choose their ways to explore their experiences of disadvantage. This approach enabled Flewitt et al. (2017, p. 373) to develop and sustain relationships with the disadvantaged participants; to involve the participants 'as active and empowered agents'; and to train and mentor the participants in skills and practices related to all stages of the research process. These in turn became the working principles for their participatory pedagogy — opening avenues for the future collaborative research work with educators to empower the learners, to create conducive school cultures, and to enable teachers to engage students with learning and to 'renegotiate the sometimes conflictual relations between themselves and their students, and between their students and wider society' (Flewitt et al. 2017, p. 385; also Harris 2013).

Simpson's (2018) action research project around the effective integration of participatory pedagogy in the primary classroom settings investigates effectiveness as well as the viability of this framework in primary classrooms. Built around Hart's (cited in Simpson 2018) Ladder of Participation, Simpson's (2018) participatory pedagogy framework gathers its force through problematising the very notion of pedagogy as a way to improve teaching and learning. Her participatory pedagogy framework encourages students' deep participation by enabling them to make the pedagogical choices about their own learning. Simpson's (2018) study findings indicate the impact of participatory pedagogy on student voices and engagement. Simpson (2018) identifies the future research scope in further developing this new participatory pedagogy framework and in confirming the findings with varied age groups.

Having discussed the complex nature of debates surrounding creative teaching and learning practices by drawing on diversely situated literature, I now turn to position my research within the discussed literature by explicating the ways my project builds on it or departs from it.

2.5   The Present Research

The overarching aim of this research is to explore the alternatives of secondary school students' creative expressions outside of performativity, standardisation, and achievement. However, by addressing this aim, the study also taps into various other research gaps in the related fields of creativity, creative learning, student engagement, and student voice — as identified by research scholars — that fall into the scope of this research and that this study addresses as I will discuss below.

To begin with, the need for this research arises in the midst of the current discursive focus of creativity debates on the nature of creativity that propose alternative conceptions for creativity that is wise (Craft 2006); is humane, collective, and communal (Chappell 2006, 2011, 2012, 2017); is responsive to diverse voices rather than hiding them (Chappell et al. 2012); is flexible and produces 'creative elites for mobile global industries, and nurtures social and educational engagement engendered through collaboration and critical and aesthetic understandings' (Harris

2016, p. 111); and is 'a *method* or pedagogy' benefiting overall learning (Italics in original; Cropley 2012, p. 10). A focus on students' creative responses to creative pedagogy — as alternatives to what the culture of performativity develops and supports — helps the current study to illuminate the nature of creativity that students develop in specific teaching and learning contexts. Exploration of the nature of student-creativity leads this study to contribute to the debates surrounding the nature of creativity which are timely and purposeful for educational futures.

The proposed study is also responsive to the growing discursive recognition of creativity implementation difficulties in educational settings. The current scholarship asserts a need to employ effective pedagogic practices for fostering creativity by providing teachers with relevant strategies and mechanisms to effectively promote everyday creativity along with the need to develop a shared understanding of creativity and informed policy (Lassig 2009). Also, as established earlier (section 2.4), the development of creativity in the global economic landscape through creative pedagogical practices remains a contested space marked by a lack of evidence regarding the teacher roles and the support available to them along with their differing attitudes towards employing pedagogic practices in classroom. By documenting students' experiences of creative practices and exploring the difficulties in implementing creativity in schools, this study is located within the field of creative pedagogy. The research focus on student perspectives on creative practices helps teachers develop an understanding of the learners' needs which further will assist teachers identify and employ effective pedagogic practices for effective learning.

Additionally, the research scholarship emphasis generally falls on visiting the relationship between creativity and teaching (Tanggaard 2014), or between teaching for creativity and teaching creatively for making students more creative (section 2.4) — ignoring students' creative learning altogether (Lin 2011) — despite the dependence of the propagation of creativity in schools on students' creative learning and having opportunities for its development, (Lucas & Anderson 2015). With a focus on students' learning experiences in a creative pedagogic

context, this study establishes the importance of students' creative learning in teaching and learning contexts for enhancing their creativity and provides further empirical support for Lin's (2011) argument.

By considering students' (creative) learning experiences in creative teaching contexts, this study also extends the line of argument that regards the emphasis on the relationship between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity as unhelpful while asserting the importance of the relationship between creative learning and creative teaching practices for the study of creative pedagogies (Jeffrey & Craft 2004). Furthermore, with attention on the processes of students' learning experiences, the study enriches the studies that stress the need to explore the relationship between creativity and learning and present a Process or Situated model of creativity and learning (Tanggaard 2014; Beghetto 2016).

Given that creative learning has been critiqued for lacking any distinction in its processes (e.g. Craft 2008), this study — through its focus on students' creative responses in a learning context — chalks out distinct processes of creative learning which are also capable of yielding more creativity. Additionally, some scholars (e.g. Jeffrey 2001, 2006) have directed their efforts to establish the worldwide prevalence of discourse around creative teaching and learning by exploring student responses to creative teaching. This study, by documenting Australian student-perspectives on their teaching and learning contexts, strives to respond to the scholarly call to further add to their findings: 'to add more features and to take advantage of the comparative aspect to sharpen and test these findings in new situations' (Jeffrey 2006, p. 412).

While creative learning is held central to empowering young learners to construct their knowledge experiences, it still remains an underdeveloped and under-researched area in an Australian education and research context (Robson & Dusseldorp 2015). It is seen as an ethos that still needs to be built (Robson & Dusseldorp 2015) in schools in the midst of the competing and dominant drives of performativity and accountability. Apart from its reported benefits in empowering learners, its role in facilitating student agency and creative engagement (Lin 2011)

along with its further wide-ranging perks for student well-being and learning, as enumerated by Lucas & Anderson (2015; section 2.4), research in this field offers a fertile ground for providing systemic evidence of enhanced student creativity and the broader benefits of creative learning (Lucas & Anderson 2015). The exploration of students' learning experiences in creative teaching and learning contexts helps contribute to this area.

The epistemological orientation of hearing student voices and a focus on students' learning experiences brings this research close to the student voice literature. While the avowed benefits of agentic creative learning have often been alluded to by the scholarship to involve a consideration of student voice and students' increased engagement with their learning among many others, some studies from the student voice literature pick up on the theme of a disregard for students' meaningful learning experiences as the leading cause of student disengagement (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012) in performative culture. The issue of neglect towards students' schooling experiences — resulting in an 'engagement gap' — needs to be addressed and investigated (Yazzie-Mintz 2007, p. 8). The purpose of this study, to explore the relationship between creative learning and students' creative engagement, also enables it to contribute to the above line of argument.

Also, Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick's (2012, p. 743) call for 'finding humanity in the data' urges researchers to take into account the student voices which they regard as the cornerstone of the American education policy and schooling. Challenging researchers to investigate student engagement by using student voices, Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick (2012) accentuate the need for researchers and educators to connect to the students' culture of engagement — which gets greatly impacted by programmes, people, and practices, particularly instructional methods — to bring about changes in the overall school structure. The present research studies the relationship between creative engagement, creative voice, and students' creative learning which helps it to contribute to the above debate.

It is interesting to note, while the student engagement research employs *finding humanity in data* to improve student engagement and to bring about an overall

change and reform in the school structure, the student voice literature questions its very use as an emancipatory practice in diverse schooling contexts. Given that the diverse relational and contextual forces can impact individual voices (Charteris & Smardon 2019, p. 95) — some even constructing the neoliberal learner subjectivities (Keddie 2016; Lin 2014) — a critical approach towards the purpose, appropriation, and the implementation of voice practices can help view the hegemonic nature of the apparent emancipatory voice-based schooling practices.

The present study with its exploration and examination of student responses to creative pedagogy has a scope to investigate the dynamic interplay between the apparent emancipatory pedagogic practices — that silence student voices at diverse design and systemic levels — and the collaborative pedagogic as well as systemic practices that promote student voices (Charteris & Smardon 2019). In doing so, this study contributes to the line of argument that recognises the instrumental and hegemonic nature of dominant voice-implementation practices and suggests radical collegiality as a potential area of further research.

With its aim to document the pedagogic voice (Arnot & Reay 2007), the research project attains a philosophical affinity with the vision and values of 5x5x5= creativity projects (Hay 2017) that are attentive to the pedagogy of listening and document pedagogy and learner creativity. The present research focuses on capturing the learners' pedagogic voice in their research-based projects for improving teaching practices and aims to present documentation of pedagogic voices in the Australian education context.

While the present focus of literature reviews deal with creativity implementation efforts, this study particularly approaches and locates the problems with its implementation in the field of creative learning in the present milieu of performativity. By attending to the pedagogic potential of creative learning in allowing students' creative voices become prominent, this study is useful for student voice literature that considers student voice crucial for enhancing student engagement.

Since the above discussion establishes the potential of the present research to address the identified research gaps, in doing so this study becomes a metaphorical *third space* (discussed in Chapter 3) where the intertextuality between diverse yet inherently related bodies of literature on creativity, student engagement, and student voice takes a definite shape. Given that present scholarship attaches considerable importance to creative learning with its potential benefits in developing student engagement, the present research contributes to the field of voice research that questions the hegemonic practices appropriating students' agentic voice.

In exploring the relationship between student engagement, creative pedagogy, and student voice, this study extends the concept of pedagogic voice to creative pedagogy and responds to the scholarly calls to address the engagement gap and to find humanity in data. Also, the specific focus on the creative learning aspect of creative pedagogy establishes a systematic evidence base for the field of creative learning as discussed earlier. Additionally, this study extends Lin's (2011, 2014) line of argument in exploring the possible compatibility between policy level interpretation and propagation of creativity and a scholarly concern with highly individualised, competitive, accountability, outcomes, and performance-based concepts of creativity. Finally, the examination of the pedagogic voice aspect of the creative pedagogy helps educators and practitioners identify and employ socially just and inclusive pedagogic practices that have a potential to effectively reduce the long-term impact of socially unjust schooling practices — scrupulously critiqued for silencing student voices and for alienating learners from their learning experiences.

CHAPTER 3
METHDOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1   Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand students' creative experiences in a contemporary critical and creative skill development programme. The overarching research focus was to explore grade 9 students' creative and agentic responses to creative pedagogy as a means to enhance student creativity. In the context of this research, the term 'creative and agentic responses' signifies the autonomous and self-directed creative ways that the students themselves proactively devise to manifest their creativity and agency in the midst of diverse environmental and dispositional conditions.

The course of this research was marked by constant movements between theoretical, philosophical, and methodological domains. Such movements can be best described through Berg and Lune's (2017, p. 25) 'spiraling' approach towards the research process. While this approach progresses distinctly from one phase to another, it always revisits the previous phase — never leaving it behind. Likewise, my research process continuously oscillated between the main idea and its theoretical exploration within the relevant literature; between the refinement and conceptualisation idea to its design exploration; and between returning to theory for its further refinement to polishing my original big idea, moving forward yet always returning and refining the former concepts. The process also adopted a more practical approach towards theory by regarding it as a framework that provided concepts before the fieldwork began which then was revised in the light of the collected data.

Out of this spiraling inquiry process emerged three sub questions to address the overarching research question:

1. What is the relationship between students' creative learning and students' creative engagement?

2. What is the relationship between student voice and students' creative engagement?

3. What is the relationship between student voice and students' creative learning?

This study culminated with the synthesis of an Interactional model (details in Chapter 5 section 5.5) for enhancing student creativity that explained the self-directed efforts of the research participants to manifest as well as enhance their creativity and learning.

This chapter is structured around the epistemological and methodological orientations that guided this research and the researcher (section 3.1). Section (3.2) not only discusses the rationale for the researcher's favouring a specific epistemological bent, but also details the ethics and representational concerns that are bound with any research endeavour. Section (3.3) outlines research as a process and expounds the methods of data collection that were used in this study. The following section (3.4) presents how data were analysed and represented. The concluding section (3.5) recapitulates the research orientation, process, analysis, and representation.

3.2   Portraiture as an Orientation

This section taps into my paradigmatic inclinations to choose a specific methodological design framework — called portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) — to conduct this investigation. The discussion begins with exploring my role as a traveler and craftsperson to co-construct knowledge along with the research participants (sub-section 3.2.1). The next sub-section (3.2.2) conjoins the orientation towards co-construction of knowledge with the aesthetics of research which has a great appeal to me due to my diverse identities. The following sub-section (3.2.3) discusses the ethical issues with which the present study deals. The subsection (3.2.4) gives a rationale for choosing portraiture as a methodological design framework for conducting the current investigation.

3.2.1   On being a traveler in a qualitative landscape

In the methodological terrain of human inquiry, Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) compelling yet contrasting metaphors of craftsman-traveler and data-miner signify two divergent epistemological orientations. The miner or gatherer performs a range of data-mining operations to collect knowledge and access reality that they believe exist a priori to any efforts of discovering them and stay uncontaminated by any data collection procedures. The traveler, on the other hand, is a craftsman who is skillful in constructing knowledge in collaborative encounters with people or places.

This traveler, who is a yarner and interpreter as well, encourages people to tell the stories of their actions in their meaningful worlds and creates powerful narratives with a new frame of reference which are 'believable, that make(s) sense, that cause(s) that "click of recognition" … a resonance' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 247). Apparently, many postmodernist researchers will have no difficulty relating to Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) craftsman-traveler because of their transactional and subjectivist epistemology that views findings as co-constructed by the researcher and the researched (Denzin & Lincoln 2018). The same is true of me as well. I now explore the notion of co-construction of knowledge more fully below.

For the purpose of my research, social constructionist and constructivist assumptions adequately address how I view my research world, interact with the people or places in it, and traverse it to know it more. My constructionist and constructivist approach views 'the social world … as socially, politically, and psychologically constructed, as are human understandings and explanations of the physical world' (Patton 2002, p. 546). To me, this means experiencing participants' worlds, developing an understanding of, and constructing a knowledge of that social world in collaboration with the people who experience it.

Further, my constructivist approach embraces relativist ontology (Denzin & Lincoln 2018) that is, it holds reality as 'multiple, processual, and constructed — but constructed under particular conditions' (Charmaz 2008, p. 402). This implies that I approach the social world with an awareness of the constructed nature of

reality and its multiplicity which depends on diverse subjectivities of the researched who experience it and of the researcher who tries to understand it. Finally, in line with Charmaz (2008), I believe that my research process emanates in interaction and considers both researcher's and participants' positionality. My research shares these characteristics in common with the epistemology of a postmodern paradigm. However, my research departs from the postmodern epistemological paradigm by infusing aesthetic elements into the methodological framework of this qualitative inquiry and embraces an alternative paradigm view and practices that draw on 'orientations, processes, and forms of the arts' (Knowles & Cole 2008, p. xiii).

Although Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) metaphor of traveler may well reflect my epistemological, ontological, and methodological beliefs, to me it stops short of describing the complexity of the research process. In order to adequately communicate the complexity and challenges associated with conducting my research in education, I find Delamont's (2012) metaphor of educational researcher traveler leaving the educational arena of Damascus through four metaphorical *Gates* highly relevant (discussed earlier in Chapter 1). Delamont (2012) identifies the researchers' exit through The *Lebanon Gate* as the most desirable because it is:

> The high risk and high reward alternative. Many educational researchers never choose the Lebanon Gate because it exposes us to risk. We could lose our epistemological certainties, our standpoints, our methodological foundations, and we could be forced to find new literatures, new theories, new perspectives on education itself (p. 4).

The researchers who undertake *Lebanon Gate* research risk their epistemological, theoretical, and methodological beliefs and are rewarded with enlightenment and wisdom on successfully finishing their research journey.

3.2.1.1 The researcher as a *seer*

For me, finding traction with Delamont's (2012) educational researcher-traveler who leaves through the most challenging *Lebanon Gate* is not a forced one. It is very much embedded in my researcher disposition, my belief in acting with other

social creatures, taking 'knowing as an activity' (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015, p. 57). This *Lebanon Gate* researcher's disposition gets reflected in my 'seeing, rather than mere looking' (Eisner 1998, p. 1), acting curious, and acting 'embodied' (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015, p. 56). This *Lebanon Gate* traveler-researcher in me becomes all curious and intrigued when as a class teacher, I first *see* grade six students' creative expressions during unstructured time and *experience* a strong urge to explore and understand the dynamics and processes constructing student experiences. This in a way is a step towards *fighting familiarity* in the classroom routine and *making problems* rather than taking them from the educators (Delamont 2012).

This peculiar *experience* of *seeing*, which to me is a variation in multiple ways of knowing, takes this *me-traveler* beyond the mere asking of the 'what and 'why' questions which are problematic due to their relation to quantitative data-mining (Berg & Lune 2017). This *seeing*, in fact, leads me to experience qualities deeply (Eisner 1998) and *make problems* rather than *take* them (Delamont 2012). However, before discussing the notion of qualities further, let me pause here to discuss this act of *seeing* more and what made me a *seer* in that sense of the word to recognise those peculiar qualities.

To me, getting engaged in differential acts of *seeing* means developing certain personal resources or attributes which can differentiate me as a researcher from novices: for most people 'this integration of the visual in daily life is a taken-for-granted, unexamined part of living and not a subject of systematic inquiry or an articulated part of scholarly methods' (Weber 2008, pp. 41-42). Eisner (1998, p. 34) regards developing or having a sensibility to recognise the 'nuanced qualities' necessary for developing a researcher vision — a characteristic that his Educational Critic displays. Davis (1997, p. 33), calls this virtue 'judgment' entailing 'the manipulating of elements' which helps researchers to select the significant details while disregarding the others in the process of creating a portrait. I believe my past educational experiences as a teacher and as a student-researcher have helped me considerably to develop a sensibility or judgment, which by *making familiar*

strange in educational settings, helped me identify the problems necessary for conducting the *Lebanon Gate* educational research orientation (Delamont 2012).

Furthermore, the specific purpose of my research, my research questions, and methodological or theoretical frameworks, called 'schema' by Eisner (1998), also guided my vision. What further aided my seeing as a researcher was my ability to understand and interact with others empathically and nonjudgmentally. This was in line with Verstehen tradition — also referred to as empathic neutrality (Patton 2002) — that asserts 'emphatic identification with the actor' (Patton 2002, p. 52). I explore this more fully in sub-sections (3.3.3.1 & 3.3.3.2). Also, my reflexive approach towards my role and practice as a researcher (discussed below) shaped the keen vision of a researcher required to conduct a responsible qualitative research.

3.2.1.2 Seeing as a 'qualitative' act

The act of seeing and experiencing qualities, which gives vision a qualitative characteristic and makes inquiry qualitative, differs from defining the word 'qualities' etymologically by tracing its origin. Erickson (2018, p. 36) defines the term 'qualitative' by tracing its Latin roots, *qualitas* which refers to 'qualities, the features, of entities — to distinctions in kind'. However, Hammersley (2013) finds this etymological method of defining quality illuminating yet limiting, because it defines some features of qualitative research while leaving out the others and has only a broad precision. In such a situation, unpacking how the notion of quality in qualitative inquiry works becomes more relevant (Berg & Lune 2017). A consideration of the operational aspect of qualities takes attention away from appearance to the 'what, how, when, where, and why of a thing — its essence and ambience … to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things' (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 12). In my research, my deliberate act of *seeing* and my critical attention to the action of qualities helped me comprehend the meaning-making role of the qualities of things, events, and people in naturalistic settings as well as understand their lives deeply.

But to Eisner (1998), the role of meaning in making sense of qualities is problematic due to its elusive nature. However, rather than ignoring meaning altogether as behaviorists do by focusing just on the observable behaviour, qualitative interpreters still value elusive meaning and by rupturing a familiar surface, 'aim beneath manifest behavior to the meaning events have for those who experience them' (Eisner 1998, p. 35). In my qualitative inquiry, I penetrated this surface by examining students' routines, 'regular and familiar patterns of events' (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 14); by observing the ways students positioned themselves; and by using context as framework 'to place people and action in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they say and do' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 41). In this regard, a focus on the context of a critical and creative skill development programme — along with a keen awareness and understanding of the students' perspectives, both through observations and interviews — was useful (details in section 3.3).

According to Patton (2002, p. 62), qualitative inquiry 'preserves natural context' and holds it crucial for understanding a particular social reality in its entirety. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 41) further elaborates that context includes 'physical, geographical, temporal, historical, cultural, aesthetic — within which the action takes place'. It also stays unmanipulated by the investigator (Lincoln & Guba 1985). My research fulfilled my aim to study the students' creative expressions in educational settings naturalistically and interpretively which meant studying the phenomena of my interest in a natural context and interpreting it 'in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, p. 2). Taking all these aspects together, as Leavy (2014, p. 2) puts it, my research process becomes akin to 'learning about social reality' where I as a researcher:

> Explore, describe, or explain social phenomenon; unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artefacts; build a depth of understanding about some aspect of social life; build "thick descriptions" (see Clifford Geertz, 1973) of people in naturalistic settings; explore new or under-researched areas; or make micro– macro links (illuminate

connections between individuals– groups and institutional and/or cultural contexts) (p. 2).

3.2.2 The aesthetics of research

This section gives a detailed account of the researcher's positionality that not only determines the choice of a specific research design framework, but also govern the researcher's participation in her research.

3.2.2.1 On approaching arts as a mode of inquiry

Like Eisner (1998), I believe that qualitative inquiry does not just pertain to the recognition and interpretation of qualities, it involves evoking the same qualitative recognition among the public through an artful representation. Following Eisner (1998), I fully appreciate that in an effort to make the research public, arts provide a medium to re-create qualities which can generate a similar experience among the audience. The potential of arts as a powerful form of inquiry and representation re-orientates me to approach Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) metaphor of traveler in its association with the narrative aspect of knowledge from a new perspective. This fresh perspective allows me to take the epistemological question of 'what it means to know' (Knowles & Cole 2008, p. 1) to the next level — where the boundaries between knowing and arts get blurred and art emerges, 'in its many forms, as a way of knowing, and knowing in many forms, as an art' (Knowles & Cole 2008, p. 1).

As such, qualitative researchers (travelers) are described as philosophers who are enmeshed in a paradigmatic net of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln 2018) that shape the researchers' world view about knowledge and reality, guide their actions in the complex and ever-changing social world, and define their research process qualitatively (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). However, to me such guidance comes from the 'alternative paradigm orientation and practice' of arts infused research in line with Knowles and Cole (2008). My belief in the power of art to enlarge human understanding resonates well with Eisner's (1998, p. 31) 'aesthetically oriented philosophers,' who have 'attended to the ways in which qualitative, artistically crafted form can convey meaning'.

My interest in arts as a mode of inquiry and a form of its representation stems from the oft-mentioned need to use arts in educational research (Eisner 1998). Delamont's (2012; Chapter 1) scathing criticism of the present-day educational research that faces the deadly challenges of *fighting familiarity* and *making problems* — due to the failure of educational research to engage with the mainstream disciplines of sociology and anthropology — strikes a note of urgency. Delamont's (2012) critique warrants educational researchers' attention to address these challenges in many domains. I have explored this notion more fully in Chapter 1 of my thesis.

In the methodological domain of educational research, these challenges pertain to the rhetorical textual strategies and methods and methodology (Delamont 2012). The rhetorical issue persists due to presence of authoritative voice in texts that ignores any other voices in the text, lack of reflexivity in writing, lack of experimentation with new textual representational forms, and lack of attention 'to the rhetoric of 'canonical' texts' (Delamont 2012, p. 13). This gripping issue necessitates my return to Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) metaphor of traveler in order to find a powerful explanation to counter the above-mentioned challenges. The craftsman-traveler who is a yarner as well — first encourages others to share their stories and then represents them in his own unique way — may symbolise the qualitative researchers' interest 'in understanding the meanings of events and experiences from an individual's perspective' and their use of narrative as a 'powerful tool for the collection of information in research' (Elliott 2012, p. 281).

Apart from taking an interest in people's experiences, which necessitates an artful narrative turn in my research and is one of Elliott's (2012) five themes that are integral to any narrative inquiry, my research also draws on Elliott's (2012) four other themes. These themes include a longing for empowering the research participants, attentiveness to processes of change over time, preoccupation with the notion of self and its representation, and the researchers' cognisance of themselves being narrators (Elliott 2012). According to Leavy (2014, p. 2), all qualitative research has this social justice undercurrent which owes to a sociohistorical milieu

where qualitative research thrived and developed and remains explicit or implicit 'depending on the positioning and goals of the practitioner and the project at hand'.

3.2.2.2 The epistemological orientation of 'giving voice' and the complexities attached

The primary focus of my study is school children — an oft-neglected marginalised research population — who according to Marshall and Rossman (2006), get affected by educational policy decisions yet are often missing from inquiry**.** My inquiry — with a purpose to explore the students' perspectives on their educational experiences in the neoliberal creativity context — is a response to the 'calls for including children's perspectives as relevant and insightful in learning more about aspects of their worlds' (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p. 106). This interest in empowering my research student-participants and in registering the student voices gives my research social justice imperatives.

However, the issue of giving or registering voice is far from simple due to the 'situated, socially determined, and institutionally organized' production of voice in educational discourses and due to the actors' lack of conscious awareness of their voices and the freedom to choose the voice they want to produce (Juffermans & Van der Aa 2013, p. 112). What further complicates the issue of registering voice in research is that 'research inevitably has to deal with the voice or voices of the researcher or researchers as well' (Juffermans & Van der Aa 2013, p. 117), power differentials in research relationships (Flewitt et al. 2017), and favouring some voices over others in reporting research (Arnot & Reay 2007).

Gitlin (2012, p. 521) illustrates this point by exploring the relationship between the voice that informs the Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the one that constitutes the Research Narratives: both use voice to make the unheard heard, to counter the inequities, and bring 'balance, a social justice or sorts, for those who have been denied an opportunity to make history as opposed to being only an object of that history'. Drawing on Ellsworth's (cited in Gitlin 2012) critique of critical pedagogy for producing student inequities because of partiality of voice in prioritising certain disadvantages and neglecting others, and a critical pedagogue's inability to instruct

on devising ways to balance power imbalances between teacher and students, Gitlin (2012) advocates for *making voice better* for both Critical Race Theory and Critical Pedagogy Narrativists.

Gitlin (2012, p. 528) effectively employs the metaphor of 'working the borderlines' to suggest the ways voice can be made better, effective, and just. This metaphor is suggestive of balancing experimental arts with subjective sciences: by working in-between, by dwelling on the history of past injustices and invoking the 'unknown future' (Gitlin 2012, p. 530), by presenting an alternative vision, using an alternative language, and by employing alternative ways to represent knowledge. According to Gitlin (2012), this blending of past with the future vision by working on the borderlines constitutes one facet of the power of experimental arts as well as is an act of transformation which is absent from current policies and proposals. It also constitutes an epistemology where 'the known and the unknown are balanced, vision and understanding, work together to inform and be informed by an activist agenda aimed at transformation' (Gitlin 2012, p. 531).

3.2.2.3 The art of 'making voice better'

Drawing on and reframing Gutiérrez's (2008) conceptualisation of 'third spaces', Flewitt et al. (2017, p. 384) advocate participatory research as offering opportunities to create potential locales for the development of participatory pedagogies. Working along with disadvantaged young individuals, Flewitt et al.'s (2017) participatory research enabled the young participants to plan and design their own research to voice their experiences of disadvantage which was a great learning experience for them. Doing that, Flewitt et al.'s (2017) research becomes a 'methodological tool to for empowerment in education and research, i.e., as a notion to give voice to those who are generally not being heard or able to make themselves heard' (Juffermans & Van der Aa 2013, p. 114). It also serves as a locale to offer the participants 'freedom to develop a voice worth hearing' (Hymes 1996, p. 64) by creating a research space 'where children feel safe, included, valued and free to express their own views and perspectives' (Flewitt & Ang 2020 pp. 95-96).

While Gitlin (2012) problematises the notion of voice and offers to make it better by working on the borderline between the known past and the visionary unknown future that contributes remarkably to epistemology, Flewitt et al.'s (2017) creation of *third spaces* through their participatory research offers an alternative perspective on making voice better by helping develop it.

Further along the line, Somerville (2012) draws on Green's (cited in Somerville 2012, p. 536) metaphor of 'lingering in the in-between' to explain the problem of representation and its link to epistemology. For Somerville (2012, p. 534), the researchers' reflexivity: 'the acknowledged presence of researcher within the text reflecting on the processes of knowledge production', offers researchers an in-between space where new knowledge emerges when researchers reflect on their research actions, methodological procedures, and the ways they can represent their findings. To further illustrate her point, Somerville (2012) draws on Richardson (1994) who regards the act of writing synonymous to the act of knowledge construction and gaining new insights. The fact that now researchers reflexively attend to their research and its presentation has resulted in the proliferation of textual genres where the researchers' sometimes use different genres of writing simultaneously to 'generate intertextual meanings' (Somerville 2012, p. 537).

For Somerville (2012, p. 539), this use of multiple textual genres is a result of 'working the boundaries of in-between' which results from the researchers' reflexive attention to their research actions and the translation of these actions in diverse representational forms. However, Somerville (2012) cautions that the researchers who use diverse forms of knowledge representation do not use them merely to provide an effective alternative to present their research findings. Rather, they use it because they had no other alternative to it:

> The development of new forms was an essential precondition of the generation of knowledge from working the boundaries of in-between. The second was the recognition of the need for a 'new understanding of representation itself' (Somerville 2012, p. 539).

While Somerville's (2012) explication of the new defiant forms of writing — ensuing from the researchers' reflexivity and generating an in-between space for new knowledge generation — partly offers an explanation to the debate of art as a form of knowledge, Eisner (2008, p. 3) responds with a more detailed explanation of the role arts play to answer the criticism of art as 'ornamental aspects of human production and experience and their significance in enlarging human understanding'. In 'Art and knowledge', Eisner (2008, p. 11) explains that arts help us (the researcher, the researched, and the readers) understand the world by making us aware of the oft-ignored significant subtleties of life; by generating the feelings of empathy through its form which help us to understand others' experiences and feel compassion; by granting us a new perspective to view the familiar and strange *making* 'the familiar strange and … the strange familiar'; and by educating us about our capacity to feel and experience emotions which is akin to 'discovering our humanity'.

3.2.2.4 The researcher's positionality — working from a middle ground

Somerville's (2012, p. 535) personal account of the nature of her research and the role her gender, her immigrant status, and her relation as a researcher to two contrasting knowledge traditions played in making her research a 'contact zone of cultural difference, necessitated her cross disciplinary and cross paradigmatic movement' and extended her research beyond the normative use of writing as a method of inquiry. Further, Somerville's (2012) account of her research students — who operated from an in-between space — reflects the process of knowledge generation as inextricably bound with a meaningful intertextual mix of their actions, limitations, reflexivity on their actions, and a use of alternative forms of representation. This description also makes me see myself working from the same point of reference. I find Green's (in Somerville 2012) metaphor of 'lingering in the in-between, learning as a form of indwelling' and its variations in Gitlin's (2012) and Somerville's (2012) metaphors of *working the borderline* and *working*

the borders of in-between as helpful explanations for methodological choices that I made and the forms of representations I chose to communicate the new knowledge.

It is important to mention that the concept of *third space* is central to my research purpose and has been discussed throughout this work, but it is used in different connotations to what Flewitt et al. (2017) suggest. Flewitt et al.'s (2017) reframing of Gutiérrez's (cited in Flewitt et al. 2017, p. 348) metaphor of *third spaces* views them as 'sites for the development of participatory pedagogies' created through participatory research. Although like Flewitt et al.'s (2017) my research shows my powerful yearning to hear the students' voices, the way it is executed is my point of departure from Flewitt et al.'s (2017) preferred mode of conducting research. My reluctance to embrace *third spaces* as sites for developing and hearing student voices through participatory research, in fact, stems from my troubling identities that impacted the ways the voice was heard or developed in this research project.

By describing her research experience with Critical Race Theory (CRT), Ladson-Billings (2000, p. 272) indicates how the theoretical framework of CRT required her to acknowledge her different selves, 'the self that is a researcher, the self that is a parent, the self that is a community member, the self that is a black woman' that she invested in her work. Like Ladson-Billings' (2000) diverse identities that pervaded her work, my diverse identities also tinted and shaped my research orientations and processes. For instance, my position as a female, as a mother of two beautiful girls, as a Pakistani immigrant to Australia, a teacher both in Australian and Pakistani educational contexts, a student of literature and education there and here and a researcher, the 'other' the unfamiliar studying natives (Delamont 2012), and the outsider researcher studying the school insiders reveal different roles in which I operate and that colour my research as well. But these multiple subjectivities or identities also explain something more: they explicate my 'in-dwelling' (Green cited in Somerville 2012, p. 536), 'working the boundaries of in-between' (Somerville 2012, p. 539), or cultural difference (Somerville 2012, p. 535) as well — having deep implications for my methodological and

representational decisions. Consequently, the issue of registering voice assumes a new dimension.

Hymes (1996, p. 64) describes the dualistic nature of voice in encompassing both the 'freedom to develop a voice worth hearing' and 'freedom to have one's voice heard.' Flewitt et al.'s (2017) participatory research by creating *third spaces* generates opportunities for the disadvantaged to develop their voices. Doing so, it parts ways with the ethnographic research that interprets participants' views by observing and interviewing. Flewitt et al. (2017, p. 374) acknowledge the nature of difference between both research paths and the varied 'navigational skills' both types of research require. Flewitt et al. (2017, p. 375) call their collaboration with partner organisations as an 'attempt to break away from the communicative contexts of educational institutions and their interactional principles' that regulate and impact the forms of communication, thus, making the difficulties in the process of conducting research in educational institutions obvious. Further, Flewitt et al. (2017) identify the gap between the rhetoric of participation and provision and delivery of bettered services to the disadvantaged people in spite of having conducted a successful participatory research.

Within the methodological domain, what reveals my indwelling as a researcher is the tension between what I actually wanted to do as a researcher and what the circumstances allowed me to do which actually emanated from the broader problem of the power dynamic between the researcher and school practitioners (Eisner 1998). According to Eisner (1998), the power relationship stems from qualitative researchers' longer stay in the field than in the past, the teachers' and schools' risk of identification, and the practitioners' demand for the researchers' feedback. It is further stemmed by the inaccessibility of the research findings due to the researcher's focus on writing for scholarly community and incomprehensibility of research reports due to the use of complex technical jargon. Consequently, according to Eisner (1998), the researchers are generally viewed by teachers as strangers rather than colleagues — resulting in the researchers' difficulty in

accessing schools. If at all they are granted any, the access has to be negotiated on certain terms.

My indwelling also emanated from my complex and disadvantaged identities as an immigrant researcher doing research in another culture; my learner identity that was shaped by the banking system of education overseas (Freire 2000) where students' voices are never heard; and my identity as a non-native English speaker. Having experienced those disadvantages, and conducting research in a new culture employing a voice-orientation that allows 'freedom to develop a voice worth hearing' at once seemed daunting and incongruous with my researcher disposition — despite my close identification with the learners due to their disadvantaged position in educational discourse. Consequently, I found Hymes' (1996, p. 64) second orientation of voice that allows 'the freedom to have one's voice heard' resonating more with my researcher disposition, and I chose this mode of voice as my epistemological orientation which further impacted my methodological choices. My choice of hearing my participants' voices became an effort to have them 'legitimated within this new context' (Bartlett 2012, p. 16). The final form that my research design acquired and the way my research was conducted typifies my indwelling as well as the research constraints that shape any research (details in sub-section 3.3.2).

As discussed earlier in this section, the concern for making voice better has led many researchers to engage their research participants in the research process through participatory methodologies (Aldridge 2015). In arts as an orientation for research, this action-based research element gets coupled with the use of creative participatory research methods or affective research methodologies (ed. Leavy 2018; eds. Knight & Cutcher 2018; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny 2014; eds. Knudsen & Stage 2015). However, as discussed in detail above, my diverse subjectivities and troubling identities determined my epistemological orientation where I ended up preferring the orientation of making 'voice heard' over 'giving voice'. This orientation impacted on my selection of a research design frame-work as well. Portraiture methodology not only took into account my diverse identities, but also

accommodated them (discussed in section 3.2). Further attached to my inclination for using this particular research framework and methods of observation and interviews was the experience of practical difficulties (discussed in detail in section 3.3) that hindered the use of other methods. Also, given that Cremin and Chappell's (2019) meta-review of empirical evidence of research in creative pedagogies establishes a small number of studies in secondary school settings and given the difficulties that I experienced accessing the research site (discussed in section 3.3), it can be implied that difficulties of accessing the research sites and the time-poor conditions in secondary schools, greatly impact the choice of methods and methodologies.

3.2.3   From aesthetics to ethics of research

In addition to the power dynamics between the researcher and the practitioners, the methodological push towards boundaries further gets an acceleration from the link between ethics and methodology (Powell et al. 2012) and the resultant ethical dilemmas (discussed further in sub-section 3.3.9). These dilemmas arise due to interaction with the researched and 'present themselves more sharply when the subjects are children' (Thomas & O'Kane 1998, p. 337). All research paradigms necessitate the use of ethically correct methods to answer ethically correct questions (Thomas & O'Kane 1998). Researching with children becomes more difficult because a researcher assumes all 'the power to chose (sic) … standpoint or way of seeing' children (Morrow & Richards 1996, p. 99). Given that the power differential in viewing vulnerable participants, according to Morrow and Richards (1996), has ethical implications, a study of the power relationship between researcher and the researched puts the decisions — that are made from a *third* or *in-between space* (Gitlin 2012; Somerville 2012) — also in perspective.

The existing codes of conducts and guidelines to conduct ethically responsible research only solve part of the problem: 'while it is relatively easy to prescribe a set of abstract principles it is less easy to apply them or to enforce them' (Burgess 1989, p. 68). Here the researchers' ethical dilemma and their response to it is a characteristic example of the multiple acts of translation that Somerville (2012)

discusses and that shape any research (more detailed discussion in sub-section 3.2.2). For Burgess (1989, p. 68), in order to meet these challenges, a 'review of the ethical problems and dilemmas should be at the heart of the reflexive practice by those ethnographers who are working in the field'. In the present ethnographic research context, this meant keeping a 'fieldworker's diary of each day's happenings, personal feelings, ideas, impressions or insights with regards to those events' (Merriam 2009, p. 28) or 'impressionistic records' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 188).

A recent shift in the researchers' perspective to view children and young people as competent social actors — who have competency to undertake informed decisions and rights to be researched and represented fairly — has promoted participants' active participation in research (Morrow & Richards 1996; Morrow 2008). The benefits of this approach are twofold: this enhances the ethical adequacy of research by giving it validity and gives voice to socially marginalised childhoods. To enhance the children's participatory role, there is an increased research practice of adopting 'innovative and participatory research methods' (Morrow 2008, p. 52). The use of diverse data collection methods (Creswell 2007; Morrow 2008; Punch 2002) is instrumental as well, because an overdependence on one sort of data collection method can lead to biases (Morrow 2008).

My ethnographic study made use of diverse methods, for instance, observations and on site semi-structured individual and group interviews with students during available times to ensure their participation by giving them 'more control over the process and to value what they had to say' (Thomas & O'Kane 1998, p. 342). During formal and informal interviews I allowed the participants to take a lead, gave the participants a right to withdraw from my research at any time, and kept their anonymity. In doing so, I also exercised respect — a much proclaimed virtue to acknowledge the young research participants' competencies. Accordingly, I affirmed what Morrow and Richards (1996, p. 100) proclaim: 'Indeed, respect needs to become a methodological technique in itself'.

For Thomas and O'Kane (1998, p. 336), Morrow and Richards' (1996) notion of integrating children's respect to the methodological framework implies giving value to research through the use of ethically sound techniques. However, children's active participation in research is no less problematic. Among the issues identified by the researchers are the challenges of 'authentically access(ing) children's views' (Powell et al. 2012, p. 38) and a representation of children's voices (James cited in Powell et al. 2012). While approaching children ethically and helping them participate in research at all stages may offer one solution, reflexivity (Powell et al. 2012) and assuming different researcher roles may offer another. For Morrow and Richards (1996), this entails finding a fine balance between acknowledging the children's competencies, the researchers' role to protect the vulnerable participants from harm, and a realisation that the final power of interpreting the children's views rests with researchers.

According to Watson (2012), the very same virtues of the researchers' reflexive awareness of themselves and an ethical acknowledgement of the difference between the researcher and the participants to co-construct research narrative also help the researchers' to counter the scathing criticism of narrative violence that is said to be 'done' to human experiences. This occurs when narratives are constructed and experiences are interpreted in a limited way which leads to an erasure of such experiences (Hendry, 2007, p. 491). The described virtues also help researchers dispel a common misunderstanding of viewing narratives as representing shared understandings. Watson (2012), further argues that the acknowledgement of the gap between the researcher and the researched assists narrative analysis as well: 'We may be engaged in 'co-construction' of the narrative, but it does not necessarily imply shared meanings' (Watson 2012, p. 464).

While ethics and my role as a researcher constantly push the boundaries of my research methodology, my interest in literature determines the form and shape of representation that my research eventually takes. As a student and teacher of English language and literature and a mother of two children, I know the immense potential of storytelling to soothe the curious minds and its immense power in

evoking some powerful feelings through words that enlarge human understanding. Being a student of literature, a teacher, and now a researcher, I believe in the opacity of language that helps it express the intended meanings. Atkinson's (2012, p. 512) recognition of the opacity of the written word makes him declare: 'written language is not neutral medium through which we can convey equally neutral 'findings' about the social world'. What makes my study opaque is coming to a middle ground by striking negotiations with the powerful (The school authorities, the me-writer) and the powerless (the participants, the readers); however, there is something more imminent to it, that is, my subjective interests in constructing knowledge.

It is here the personal dilemma acquires a new dimension: caught in-between the history of being a teacher and being taught, and my present role as a researcher, my dilemma becomes that of duality and partiality: the dilemma of my projected voice throughout my research that might suppress the other voices in me and my research; the dilemma that I might favour some voices over others. To me, this tension becomes so powerful that it requires an alternative form of expression to make sense of the research processes and my own subjectivities. The convention of academic writing despite its academic rigour seems inadequate. Resorting to arts, in the characteristic fashion of Somerville's (2012) research students, does become a precondition for my research. The Arts, in such a situation, offer itself not only as 'a *mode* of inquiry' (Knowles & Cole 2008, p. 1), but as a mode of analyzing and representing information and a form of self-discovery as a researcher.

As a mode of analysis (Watson 2012), art transforms the 'me-researcher' into a story teller for whom analysis itself becomes a story: the story teller generates a narrative in diverse literary forms through 'creative analytic practices' (Richardson & St. Pierre cited in Watson 2012, p. 462) to examine and represent their research findings. As a form of self-discovery, it offers me the same illumination and wisdom that Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) and Delamont's (2012) travelers finally attain. Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) reflexive traveler undergoes an intellectual metamorphosis by constructing new knowledge during their journey, while Delamont's (2012) educational researcher leaves the academic arena through the

risky *Lebanon Gate* to meet perilous challenges and if succeeds, finally attains enlightenment and wisdom.

3.2.4 On Choosing Portraiture

Researchers may possess strong paradigmatic, philosophic, and conceptual theoretical orientations; however, in order to move in the actual world systemically and purposefully, they still need a design framework that can guide them in this process. Denzin & Lincoln (2011, 2018), apart from defining research design as a malleable network of guidelines, advocate its role as a binding force that links the inquest strategies and data collection methods to theoretical and philosophical paradigms. Given that choosing qualitative research as a mode of inquiry opens up a prolific yet diverse field of 'alternative possibilities *within* qualitative research' (Patton 2002, p. 76), the choice of a particular design framework shapes our experiences (Eisner 1998) because of the power of the framework to focus our attention to significant things which in turn influences qualitative inquiry.

3.2.4.1 An appeal to the researcher's interest in arts and story

Like Brooks (2017, p. 2235), I embrace portraiture methodology because of my recognition of the value of the art and story in our lives and portraiture's capacity to construct the symbolic meaning that is 'reframed (by) using interpretation'— a distinctive characteristic of this qualitative research methodology. Also, my preference for the design framework of portraiture — offered by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) — not only stems from my inclination to bring to my educational inquiry points of reference from humanities and arts, but also because by blurring the boundaries between the strategic, theoretical, paradigmatic, and aesthetic, it effectively captures the 'complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. xv).

3.2.4.2 Accessibility to a wider audience

With its ability to access the wider audience (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, 2016) through a user-friendly presentation of research findings (Hackmann 2002), this artistic inquiry addresses the accessibility concerns of the educational research

raised by Eisner (1998; discussed in sub-section 3.3.2) parting ways with many other forms of artistic inquiry that target research scholarship as its audience (Shannon-Baker 2015). But for Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016), this inclusion of broader readership is intentional: it is to engage the diverse readers in a thoughtful consideration of the complexity of the important questions. Hackmann (2002) further expands on the accessibility of research findings by comparing the traditional research reports with the portraits: the traditional research reports evoke distance through their formality and create a little desire for change among the practitioners owing to their lack of resonance with the practitioners. Portraiture, on the other hand, enables the educational administrators and practitioners to look at their problems differently, reflect on them, and feel challenged and provoked. According to Hackmann (2002, p. 57), this 'enhanced understanding (thinking more intelligently) brings with it the possibility of change'.

3.2.4.3 Ability to capture the complexity of human life

As a form of narrative inquiry and its representation, portraiture joins the rigour of science with the aesthetics of arts, which according to some researchers, is a challenge facing educational anthropology and sociology today (Delamont 2012). As a process and method of inquiry to develop a 'convincing and authentic narrative' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 12), portraiture requires of me, the portraitist-researcher, to consider diverse contexts essential for understanding the participants' experiences which is in line with the purpose of my study to examine the students' actions in a neoliberal creativity context.

In addition to regarding the context necessary for making sense of the participants' experiences, portraiture design also requires of me to be attentive to descriptive details during my interaction with the participants in the fieldwork which I deem necessary to finding 'the central story' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 12) for narrative construction. As a process of inquiry, this framework also demands of me to carefully interpret the data, without silencing the participant-voices, to find the emergent themes (a discussion on representation of voice in data analysis in sub-section 3.4.1). For me, by using this framework, the creation of the narrative text

becomes a highly selective and dynamic process where I am analytically engaged with the data becoming an analytic story teller (Watson 2012) to find a story on the one hand; and apply aesthetic principles to meaningfully express that story, on the other. In other words, for me, this whole process becomes akin to 'a crucial dynamic between documenting *and* creating the narrative, between receiving *and* shaping, reflecting *and* imposing, mirroring *and* improvising … a string of paradoxes' (Italics in original; Lawrence-Lightfoot 2005, p. 10).

As discussed earlier, Eisner (1998, p. 3) relates the act of *seeing* to experiencing and describes how his educational critics, like arts critics, help 'others see and understand'. My role as a portraitist, like that of Eisner's Educational Critic, shares the same purpose. However, portraiture extends this act of seeing to acquiring a vision which resonates well with my appreciation of art and literature as enlarging human understanding. In *The art and science of portraiture* (1997), Lawrence-Lightfoot describes her personal experiences of being the subject of an artistic portrait which evoked a peculiar feeling of being seen and understood as the subject of an artistic portrait as well as making her conscious of an artist's perspectival 'seeing' of her. The final portrait did not mirror her as she saw herself; it, rather, captured how the artist saw, recognised, and understood her and communicated that understanding in terms of her essence which was 'a haunting paradox, of a moment in time and of timelessness' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 4).

In a similar fashion, portraiture through narrative methodological processes and representation 'raise(s) the mirror, hoping — with accuracy and discipline — to capture the mystery and artistry that turn image into essence' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. xvii). What co-joins a portraitist-researcher in this active process of seeing is active, engaged, and search-orientated listening *for* story which is different from the ethnographic tradition of passive and unmanipulated listening *to* story (Welty cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997). Such an attentive listening *for* a story coupled with critical and engaged *seeing* produces a portraiture which evokes the same feeling of being seen and understood among the participants and the readers that Lawrence-Lightfoot herself experienced. The finished product through

mirroring generates a paradoxical experience of meeting someone strange but familiar and a contradictory feeling of being in time and timelessness among the readers and participants which has a transformative influence on them. Doing so, portraiture attains an epistemological balance between the known past and unknown future that Gitlin (2012) regards necessary to making voice clear and effective. Moreover:

> This expanded vision allows the subject to continue to learn from the glass that is held to experience — from the telling of one's story through another's voice, and from the clarity that can be gained from artistic perspective (Davis 1997, p. 36).

3.2.4.4 Portraiture — some critiques and responses

Leavy (2014, p.1) views all qualitative researchers fully enmeshed in their projects, located within, and constantly 'shifting within them'. This location of the researchers within their qualitative research projects resonates well with Davis' (1997) experience of reading Lawrence-Lightfoot's *The good high school* portraits where she noted the portraitist's presence and her judgment everywhere in the story.

3.2.4.4.1 The omniscience concern

Some epistemological experts see the researcher's omniscient presence as problematic. In his powerful critique of the methods and assumptions underlying portraiture framework, English's (2000) postmodern stance challenges the authority and omniscience of the portraitist on epistemological grounds. English's (2000) first criticism against portraiture deals with the representation of narrative-portraiture as a finished product which may well be called an imposed vision denying them any access to alternative information and explanation other than the portraitists'. English's (2000) second charge deals with the portraitists' aim to capture and represent the 'mirrored-essence' signifying their quest for a stable truth which disregards the existence of multiple realities. English (2000, p. 21) terms this portraiture tendency to hide alternative truths 'the politics of vision'.

To Bloom and Erlandson (2003), English's (2000) critical appraisal of portraiture reveals his limited understanding of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) work. Disagreeing with English's misinterpreted conclusion of the singularity, equivocality, and transcendentalism of portraiture truth, Bloom and Erlandson (2003) note English's (2000) failure to provide evidence to support such a conclusion. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) hold that instead of establishing a total and grand truth, the portraitists, in fact, strive for creating a powerful and coherent story that is credible and compelling. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) also object to English's (2000) position on the readers having minimal or no power, and through their study (2003) establish that portraiture offers its readers substantial control: not only are they in a position to refuse to be its readers, they have an absolute freedom to make meanings out of it that are relevant to them and help them understand the complexity of life. In fact, the purpose of portraiture is to 'communicate a meaning that can have an effect on the understandings, attitudes, and actions of its viewers' (Bloom & Erlandson 2003, p. 877).

For me, English's (2000) criticism echoes Riessman's (1997, p. 158) anticipatory declaration of the danger of narratives becoming a hegemony through a possible reification of narrative forms, particularly in educational and clinical evaluation, which 'label(s) those who narrate "differently" as "deficient"'. Watson (2012) further expands on Riessman's (1997, p. 157) examination of the danger of the 'tyranny of narrative' that stems from their modern-day tendency to embrace 'all talk as narrative' making it susceptible to banality. Gradually steering his way through the enquiry of how the tyranny of narratives can be interpreted differently — when looking at the power this genre has assumed to subvert the status quo and in some instances, has been used by the disadvantaged against the powerful — Watson (2012, p. 463) alludes to 'a darker side' of narratives which presents narratives as 'a form of violence done to experience'. Drawing on Hendry (2007) who posits that a certain selection and representation of story erases other valuable parts of human experience; thereby, committing an act of atrocity against the wholesomeness of human experience (discussed in the next paragraph), Watson (2012, p. 463) comes to view story telling as an 'ideological process' that exploits

the participants' experiences and constructs fabricated narratives. Matthias and Petchauer's (2012) belief that the dilemmas and complexities surrounding portraiture are the same as around stories and narratives makes all this discussion relevant to portraiture methodology.

In my personal context, the issue of the omniscience of the researcher is translated into the tension between my projected voice and my other silent voices along with my preferred choice for a specific medium to hear the participant voices. This gave rise to the characteristic dilemma of partiality and/or duality that I experienced vividly through the course of my research. Chapman (2007) uses her study to illustrate how the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and portraiture facilitated her to explore and present the *untold* stories of race in urban classrooms. Countering the issue of the erasure of other stories, Chapman (2007, p. 161) declares boldly, 'there will always be someone who wants the researcher to tell another story'. According to Chapman (2007), the personal dimension of portraiture cannot be separated from the portraitists' professional and personal identities and interests.

Chapman (2007) further maintains, portraiture requires researchers to acknowledge their diverse subjectivities, a point in common with CRT, that also demands researchers to acknowledge their 'double (or multiple) consciousness' in which they operate (Ladson-Billings 2000, p. 272). For Chapman (2007, p. 157), portraiture uses these diverse roles of the portraitist to generate understanding in the people as well: 'the necessity of embracing the multiple selves of the researcher is unseen, but pivotal aspect of portraiture and CRT'. In fact, both portraiture and CRT 'allow the researcher to evoke the personal, the professional, and the political to illuminate the issues of race, class, and gender in education research' (Chapman 2007, p. 157). Through her study, Chapman (2007) also establishes how her many past and present roles and identities were beneficial to her project.

Opposing the notion of 'violence of narrative', Watson (2012, p. 463) advocates the researcher reflexivity as a counter force. *The art and science of portraiture* proffers the same solution. Portraiture framework fully recognises the researchers' role in deciding the purpose, focus, methodological choices, interpretation and

representation of the story, and their perspectival values and personal style. It acknowledges that 'the person of the researcher … is more evident and more visible in any other research form' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 13). However, it also fully appreciates the dilemmas arising from the centrality of the researchers' role in the research process through their 'personal predisposition' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 2005, p. 11) and effectively counterbalances it by the methodological rigour of presenting diverse voices that it captures and by the portraitists' reflexively bold admittance of the limitations of their biases.

For Hackmann (2002), Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's assertion of the portraitists' constant search for deviant voice becomes a counter argument for English's (2002) charges against portraiture. The formal and structural integrity of the aesthetic whole rests on striking a balance between the researchers' overarching voice and the actors' voices as well as the researchers' overarching vision and its counterpoint. The balancing principle makes sure that the portraitists':

> Voice is premeditated one, restrained, disciplined, and carefully controlled. Her voice never overshadows the actor's voices (though it sometimes is heard in duet, in harmony and counterpoint). The actors sing the solo lines, the portraitist supporting their efforts at articulation, insight, and expressiveness (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 85).

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 15) employs the same metaphor of musical 'duet' to describe the co-authorship of *The art and science of portraiture* with Jessica Hoffman Davis which Tamboukou (2012) uses. Tamboukou (2012, p. 88) underlines music as an 'illuminating metaphor for methodological encounters in the social sciences'. In portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) broader efforts to initiate encounters between art and the normative sociological methods of inquiry create such a musical duet.

Situating this metaphor of music at the heart of her method of inquiry, Tamboukou (2012) likens the relationality and working together of genealogy and ethnography to composing a musical piece. Tamboukou (2012, p. 89) calls it a 'rhythmic configuration' where genealogy guides the ethnographer's attention to the

alternative truths existing beyond their specific domains, illuminating the past, the invisible, uncertainty, and exclusions. The ethnographer, on the other hand, deals with and analyses the present and the visible: 'the rhythm of their sounding together resonates the contrast between visibility and invisibility, the sayable and the unsayable, pointing to what has been hidden or muted and what has been allowed to emerge or sound' (Tamboukou 2012, p. 89). Taken in the context of a portraiture design framework, the analogies of genealogy and ethnography become analogous to the actors who along with a legacy of their now-past actions work relationally and together with the portraitists' examination of them, collaboratively composing a musical and rhythmic piece. Consequently, it is not surprising to see the final portrait reflective of multiple competing truths musically configured together (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997; Hackmann 2002).

3.2.4.4.2   The portraiture goodness

The aforementioned characteristics of portraiture to offer competing truths not only emerges from portraiture's proffered freedom for the portraitists to know in diverse ways (Marble 1997), it is inherent in the notion of *goodness* the portraits so vividly capture. While documenting her resistance against the normative forms of social research that mostly document failure and blames the victims, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, 2016) describes the search for and the expression of goodness as central to the process of portraiture inquiry. It tries to understand notions of worth and strength with a growing recognition that goodness is entwined in imperfection (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1986, 2016). Goodness, then, becomes an expansive term in portraiture methodology: the reality that is offered is different from 'the one who is on the mission to discover the sources of failure' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p .9).

The concept of goodness also deals with the actors' multiple ways of knowing and then describing that goodness. Consequently, this vision gets reflected in the portraitists' belief that goodness can be expressed in diverse ways (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1986, 1997). Goodness further refers to the ways the actors handle the professed weakness or failure and looks across the institutional change (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1986). For Dixson, Chapman, and Hill (2005, p. 19), this description of

goodness gets reflected in the process of negotiation and resistance that eventually leads to overcoming such challenges and to success: 'Finally, the inconsistencies, the vulnerabilities, and the ways in which people negotiate these terrains are central to the expression of goodness'. It is not hard to argue, following Dixson, Chapman, and Hill (2005), how this notion of goodness becomes a political statement, a performance against the conventional notion of goodness that evokes complacence rather than praxis and action. In my research, my purpose to hear the voices of adolescent students — along with my methodological decisions to conduct my research in a secondary school programme — helped capture the goodness that portraiture enables its researchers to portray.

3.2.4.4.3   Portraiture and human presence

Hackmann (2002), drawing on Wolcott (1999 in Hackmann 2002), further illustrates portraiture's recognition of the human presence in research. Wolcott (in Hackmann 2002) asserts the acknowledgement of the presence of a human element in research in the face of the positivist research traditions that deny any such presence. According to Hackmann (2002), what further makes portraiture unique from the traditional research methods is the portraitists' recognition and declaration of their biases. The traditional research eliminates human bias by eliminating human presence altogether; portraiture, on the other hand, eliminates human bias through the researcher's admittance of their biases while keeping the human element intact. Hackmann (2002) dismisses English's (2000) critique of the portraitists' power to disseminate controlled information as misguided. According to Hackmann (2002), all qualitative researchers represent their reports by selecting information. To Hackmann (2002), what makes portraiture distinct is the portraitist's recognition as well as exploitation of the change brought about by human presence for the final shaping of the portrait.

Dixson, Chapman, and Hill (2005) also admit the notion of partiality inherent to the portraits. However, instead of seeing this partiality as a negative research aspect, they view it as opening a space for the researchers to admit their presence in the research and as a way to effectively dismantle the 'notion that the researcher is the

only knower and expert on the lives and experiences of the participants' (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill 2005, p. 17). The portraitists' validation, which follows the critical race theorists closely, involves acknowledging the extent their personal context colours the portrait, sharing their personal contexts, and the researchers' selection and representation of stories (Dixson, Chapman & Hill 2005). It was this appreciation of the presence and visibility of researchers in portraiture research process and representation (although generative of some vital tensions) that looked quite promising and helped me deal with the dilemma of my silenced and projected voice. Further, portraiture guided me to address my dilemma of 'lingering in-between' (Green cited in Somerville 2012, p. 536) owing to the decisions that I had to make. Portraiture not only takes the researchers' personal context into account, it offers researchers a space where they can function optimally in the face of different researcher limitations they experience during the course of their research process.

3.2.4.4.4   Portraiture and the concept of space

Davis (1997, p. 33) calls the space offered by portraiture 'the aesthetic space' which is framed by the boundaries of the narrative and presents a reality which is different from the familiar as experienced by the participants, researcher, or the readers. Davis (1997, p. 29) declares:

> At the heart of the aesthetic experience … is a conversation between two active meaning-makers, the producer and the perceiver of a work of art. This conversation results in a co-construction of meaning in which both parties play pivotal roles.

This acknowledgement illustrates well the existence of multiple realities closely associated with meaning making activities operating at various levels. Not only is a portraitist narratively interested in making sense of the qualities that they see and experience, they are also descriptively attracted to documenting the nuances of human experiences and individuals' stories 'hoping to capture more universal themes' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 2016, p. 22). This has several representational and universal implications.

To begin with, on one level, the portraitist negotiates and interprets meaning of the participants' experiences through a dialogic-conversation with them; on another, the construction of meaning takes place between the researcher and the readers. This co-construction of meaning happens through the artistic and aesthetic rendering of human experiences and their meaning, further co-joined by the readers' interpretation of meaning:

> This new interpretation of the subject on the part of the reader or perceiver can be thought of as a kind of reinterpretation. With each reinterpretation, it is as if the portrait is being recreated (Davis 1997, p. 29).

3.2.4.4.5   Portraiture and the 'third voice'

Bloom and Erlandson's (2003) study indicates the possibility of a *third voice*, that is, the readers' voice along with the artists' and the actor's voices as inherent in portraiture methodology. The diverse interpretations of the six portraits by different reviewers, in Bloom and Erlandson's (2003) study indicates how portraiture allows the third voice of the readers to emerge by allowing them freedom of interpretation. The portraitist's descriptive interest in registering nuances and subtleties of human experience invites all readers to mark and identify their presence within the portrait. Hence, each portrait comes to signify a single case that illuminates the universal.

For Berg and Lune (2017), dealing with the issue of essence means returning to the very definition of qualitative research that deals with the quality of things and the meanings arising from such qualities. They address the vital question confronting qualitative inquiry:

> To understand our lives, we need qualitative research. But can we really measure the unquantifiable essences of the phenomena that imbue our lives? Can we ever, in a word, *know?* The answer is *yes*, though it is a qualified *yes* (Italics in original). We can study and measure qualities as collections of meanings, as a spectrum of states of being, but not as precise and solid objects. Qualities are like smoke; they are real and we can see them, but they won't stand still for us or form straight lines for our rulers to capture.

Clearly, qualitative research requires some specialized tools and techniques (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 12).

3.2.4.4.6 Portraiture and the methodological critiques

Berg and Lune's (2017) assertion of the possibility of qualitatively capturing the dynamic essence is dependent on the use of appropriate and specialised tools and techniques. But does portraiture offer any expert methodological tools and strategies? English (2000, p. 21) steps forward again with his methodological critique of portraiture for its methodological obscurity in being 'so esoteric as to render it impossible for competently trained practitioners to teach or utilize it'. Lawrence-Lightfoot defines portraiture as a 'central method of documentation, analysis, and narrative development' (2005, p. 3). Davis (1997), while talking about the implementation of portraiture, guides the portraitists to constantly engage with the five methodological components of portraiture that is, context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and the aesthetic whole. By asking themselves repeatedly the methodological question of how the process and the product inform each other while dealing with each processual component, the portraitists can produce an evocative, expressive but authentic portrait.

Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd (2015) link the epistemological and methodological criticisms raised against portraiture to broader issues of research quality and politics of representation. Denzin & Lincoln (2018, p. xiv) explain the politics of representation as a politically charged term that 'asks what is represented in a text and how should it be judged'. Drawing on Lincoln and Connella (cited in Muccio, Reybold, & Kidd 2015) and Lather's (cited in Muccio, Reybold, & Kidd 2015) criticism of the current legislated politicisation of qualitative research that determines its quality, Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd (2015, p. 6) describe the issue facing qualitative researchers in educational research as no more than that of 'commensurability, but of viability'. They reflect on whether the political and ideological nature of quality inhibits the use of some (their observation of the

relatively forlorn use of portraiture methodology for conducting research) and favour other methods in educational research.

To Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd (2015), the impact of research has become a 'matter of policy — funding, journal space, even tenure and promotion' (Muccio, Reybold, & Kidd 2015, p. 6). The educational researcher-critic Delamont (2012, p. 5) describes this kind of research as the *Aleppo Gate* research which serves the status quo 'never commissioned to help those who reject or resist the dominant value system escape from the education system or resist it more frequently'. However, rather than dispelling the concept of research quality altogether, Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd (2015) reject the notion of scientific objectivity, universal truths, and researcher detachment that surrounds quality research — though still regarding it necessary for the researchers to establish the qualitative value of their work.

In their study, Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd (2015) explore the value, goodness, and quality of portraiture as an alternative qualitative research method. By challenging and rejecting the 'either/or mentality of methodological fundamentalism exhibited both outside and within the field of qualitative research', Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd (2015, p. 2) describe how their experience with the emergent methodology of portraiture transformed them and made them understand the phenomenon of their interest further illuminating both the technical (methodological) and epistemological goodness of their research. They counter English's (2000) criticism of the obscurity of portraiture methodology with the transparency in its methodological processes, which takes into account perspective, reflexivity, subjectivity, and 'messy texts' (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill 2005).

Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd (2015) interpreted and sometimes expanded on the methodological guidance provided by portraiture to gather their data, analyse it, and represent it. By doing so, they engaged in a research that went beyond scientific evidence-based research and 'embrace(d) the powerful potential of organic and artistic representations of education research' (Dixson, Chapman & Hill 2005, p. 17). Through their own process of interpreting quality, they suggested that the aesthetics of inquiry could be judged through aesthetic and artistic criterion. They

established the epistemological quality and rigour of their research through their search for and a documentation of goodness which is a characteristic of portraiture study design.

Eisner (1998) describes every qualitative inquiry as exhibiting six characteristics that is, it is field focused, uses self as an instrument, is interpretative in nature, uses expressive language, attends to particulars, and is judged as successful and plausible due to its coherence, insight, and instrumental utility. The degree of the presence of such characteristics makes research qualitative 'by degree' (Eisner 1998, p. 40), and for Eisner, Lawrence-Lightfoot's study of schools (with portraiture methodological design) has 'many of the features' (1998, p. 40).

With this discussion, I now turn to the next section that contains a detailed discussion of my practical engagement with portraiture methodology that helped me discover its latent goodness.

3.3   Portraiture as Process and Action

In research design, apart from deciding on the qualitative or quantitative nature of the inquiry, thinking about particular methodological practices, skills, and assumptions also assumes importance, because they can help answer the research problem. Lincoln and Denzin (2011, p. 14) call these methodological approaches 'strategies of inquiry' that 'put paradigms of interpretation into motion' and 'implement and anchor paradigms in specific empirical sites, or in specific methodological practices'. Leavy (2014) alternatively uses the term 'genre' for methodological approaches which are topic specific comprehensive categories to approach research from diverse sets of data collection, analysis, and representation methods along with considering the issues of time, funding, audience, researchers' training, and their methodological choices as well. While describing the sources and types of data for educational research, Eisner (1998) gives primacy to the researchers' experiential self-consciousness which arises through the researchers' direct exposure to and involvement with school life or classroom events. Eisner's (1998) Educational Connoisseurs pay attention to the events as they happen and

their impact on their experiences generating a critical self-consciousness which lays the foundations of educational criticism.

The methodological framework of portraiture also recognises and emphasises the centrality of human experience. The portraitists' role in representing human experiences — by registering the participants' experiences and documenting their own impressions — becomes instrumental. De Freitas (2008, p. 470), however, problematises the reflexive presence of the researchers in the text due to its tendency to reduce 'the Other to categories of sameness'. By deconstructing the notion of researchers' presence in the texts, De Freitas (2008, p. 472) presents a radical hermeneutics-based alternative notion of 'presence' which recognises and nurtures 'a radically different space of learning, where distinct horizons are not fused, and where the unanticipated is invited, and indeed demanded'. To De Freitas (2008), this new space not only promotes critical reading practices, but also enhances the understanding of research. According to De Freitas (2008), some forms of artistic research align with this postmodern notion of presence, establish a new space by questioning — sometimes to the extent of confrontation — the desire for presence and interrogate the researchers' reasons for conducting research. This new presence renders the researchers' vulnerability visible which inevitably arises due to 'having allowed the Other into his (their) home and having risked his (their) presence and status' (De Freitas 2008, p. 471).

In portraiture, the existence of the line of demarcation between the researcher and the researched, however hazy (Hackmann 2002), offers a space analogous to De Freitas' (2008, p. 472) new 'nonphilosophical space', where methodological boundaries are negotiated and critical interpretations are made possible. The flexibility of portraiture's emergent design allows portraitists' the interpretive freedom that opens up 'opportunities for exploring the intricacies of becoming a researcher through firsthand experience' (Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2011, p. 5). It is this interpretive character of portraiture methodology that renders varied insights into this framework possible — making it a rich site for creating both methodological and pedagogical possibilities. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016) likens

this continued development, diversification, and refinement of portraiture methodology through the researchers' engagement with it to an advancement in her work. Brooks' (2017) study is an example of her use of interpretations from portraiture methodology to guide her research process. Brooks (2017, p. 2235) used her portraiture interpretations to re-envision portraiture procedures expanding them 'to think with theory about data' by incorporating Jackson and Mezzei's (2012, p. 1) concept of 'plugging in'. Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd's (2015) joint study servers another typical example of their interpretive engagement with portraiture design framework:

> We used interpretations from *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) as a guide for the data collection, analysis, and reporting process. We realized this would be an interpretive experience without absolutes or certainties, and began to understand what Lawrence-Lightfoot meant by the art in the development of science. We seesawed between boldly embracing a completely emergent design guided by portraiture and retreating back to the tested approaches we'd used in our previous research. We compromised and would use research questions and interview protocols, code for both emergent theses guided by constant comparison and for resonant refrains guided by portraiture, and present the portraits first as stories before ultimately transforming them into poems (p. 8).

Though Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd's (2015) inquiry started off by using traditional inquiry methods, it culminated with their full implementation — even the expansion — of portraiture methodology through poetic fitting technique. Their experience with portraiture was similar to that of Gaztambide-Fernández et al.'s (2011) research experience. In the process of negotiating diverse boundaries, portraiture offered both teams of researchers many pedagogical opportunities (Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2011) to help them understand the complexities of research as well as discover the goodness of portraiture methodology (Muccio, Reybold & Kidd 2015).

Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd's (2015, p. 18) study is particularly helpful in shedding light on the diverse ways their study met the 'multiple definitions of "good" research'. Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd's (2015, p. 17) research was good, because it put 'regard for participants at the centre of the research method'; it was good theoretically, because it looked for goodness in their participants' experiences; it was good ethically, because following Hostetler's (cited in Muccio, Reybold & Kidd 2015) criterion of good education research, it served the wellbeing of teachers and children; and finally, it was good methodologically as it met Patton's (2002) criterion of good and transparent research. This discovery of goodness through their methodological engagement with portraiture indicates yet another level of the pedagogical opportunity offered by portraiture.

By using portraiture design, my research experience becomes akin to that of Muccio, Reybold, and Kidd's (2015) and Gaztambide-Fernández et al.'s (2011) transformational study experiences which enlarged their understanding of portraiture methodology in particular and research process in general. By offering me the pedagogical opportunities to negotiate diverse boundaries and learn about the intricacies of the research process, it made my journey from a naïve to a confident researcher possible. Like De Freitas's (2008) notion of presence, portraiture offered me a heuristic to explore the reasons for conducting my research (discussed in section 3.3.1) and provided me with a lens to understand and then express my vulnerability which arose from my very decision of researching the others — the school people.

Following De Freitas' (2008, p. 471) notion of presence, portraiture's pedagogical possibilities helped me explicate how my presence as a researcher was 'put into play' and was questioned — though not confronted (discussed in the section below). My engagement with portraiture framework also allowed me to 'interrogate and reflect upon (my) desire for presence' (De Freitas 2008, p. 473) in a certain context (discussed below). In short, the 'goodness' of portraiture methodology became a compelling reason for me to keep adhering to it despite my experience of

researcher limitations during the research process which otherwise could have called for the use of other qualitative research frameworks.

3.3.1　Selecting research context

As discussed earlier, the methodological framework of portraiture recognises and emphasises the centrality of human experience but views it within a contextual framework. Alternatively called natural setting, or the arena for human activity and action, 'portraitists … view human experience as being framed and shaped by the setting' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 41) and see it central to making sense of the actors' actions and the researchers' experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot 2016). Not only that, it also offers 'clues for the researcher's interpretation of the actor's behavior' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 43) and 'allows the actors to express themselves more fully, more naturally' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 43).

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) describes five variations of the context in portraiture that the portraitists engage with: the internal context that deals with the physical characteristics of the setting; the personal context that brings the researchers' theoretical and experiential perspectives in view; the historical context that is embedded in the history, traditions, and ideology of the physical setting; metaphors that are closely linked with the physical context of the site; and the fluid and shaping context documenting the change in the research context. An attention to, understanding of, and engagement with these contextual variations constructively helped me carve a new space opening up many learning opportunities for me as a researcher. However, like Gaztambide-Fernández et al. (2011), I would admit that portraiture's capacity to offer its researchers' the pedagogic opportunities is not unique, and like many other social science research methodologies, it can be feasible in certain specific research contexts (Lawrence-Lightfoot 2016).

3.3.1.1 Personal context

If Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) illustration of internal context signifying the physical setting directed my *seeing* and listening during my fieldwork (section 3.3.8); its variant — the personal context — also required of me to explore my

personal reasons for conducting research that shaped my research focus and helped me select the research site and research participants. In line with Denzin and Lincoln (2018), who view the researcher as biographically situated, Davis (1997) opines that the researchers' *tabla rasa* is coloured by their prior embodied experiences or theoretical exposures. Critical to the development of my personal research context (and a convincing reason for conducting this research as well) was my pedagogic experience with grade six students whose innovative use of unstructured time intrigued me to the extent of exploring this phenomenon as my PhD research project. Equally powerful were my diverse working identities and history as a learner in diverse contexts that determined my research orientation to hear and register voices as compared to developing voices worth hearing (section 3.2)

My theoretical exposure to the relevant body of literature (Chapter 2), in an effort to contextualise my observation, also helped me refine my research foci and research problem and provided me with a framework to conceptualise my research problem. This conceptualisation of my research problem, also called 'operationally defining a concept' (Berg &Lune 2017, p. 32), involved specifying the kind of information and empirical materials needed to inform the concept of study. Though some adherents of portraiture methodology, for instance, Gaztambide-Fernandez et al. (2011), assert its complete inductive nature to suggest its distinction from positivist frameworks, to me, the grounded portraiture design accepts the centrality of the researchers' vantage point and their vision. When Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) talk about the grounded nature of the research that is to stop the researcher from becoming trapped into a rigid hypothetical, conceptual, and methodological structure to the extent of ignoring the alternative realities of the field. Being trapped in such a situation leads the researchers to become closed off to surprises as well as changes where they fail to modify their conceptual and methodological plans:

> Whether she (the portraitist) is coming to the setting with a well-developed, discrete hypothesis, or with a theoretical framework that she is testing and

refining, or with a number of relatively informal hunches, the realities of the context force the reconsideration of earlier assumptions. There is a constant calibration between the researcher's conceptual framework, her developing hypotheses, and the collection of grounded data. Working in context, the researcher, then has to be alert to surprises and inconsistences and improvise conceptual and methodological responses that match the reality she is observing. The researcher's stance becomes a dance of vigilance and improvisation (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 43).

This dance of vigilance and improvisation signifies constant movements between theoretical, philosophical, and methodological domains. Such movements can best be described through Berg and Lune's (2017, p. 25) 'spiraling' approach towards research processes as discussed earlier (section 3.1) that signifies a constant oscillation between an idea, its theoretical (within relevant literature), methodological and design exploration which leads to a subsequent refinement of both theory and the original idea.

Once, my research problem was defined and conceptualised, the next step was to look for the availability of contexts that could offer potential participants for this research. Given that the purpose of my inquiry was to understand the deep meaning of specific human experiences within a particular educational setting, the identification and selection of a site appropriate to the purposes of study was essential. With this purpose in mind, I now turn to describe how Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) conceptualisation of historical context helped me physically identify and then access a context appropriate to my research purposes and focus.

3.3.1.2 Historical context

As discussed earlier (section 3.2), my voice-orientation to hear the participant voices as an act of validating them, if on the one hand, corresponded to the representation of goodness which is a characteristic of portraiture methodology; on the other, it also determined my site selection. Marshall and Rossman (2006) regard focusing on a specific site limiting compared to focusing on population or

phenomena due to its limitations in yielding numerous site-options. The selection of a site in my study was open to many possibilities of choosing from the school programmes that develop students' creative and critical thinking skills. However, the existence of such programmes in Victorian Schools and accessing them made site-selection quite restricted as Marshall and Rossman (2006) identify. In order to find a secondary school setting that could lead to the required inquiry population and collection of necessary data, I found Vallance's (cited in Berg & Lune 2017) practical advice of using contacts or relationships to initially access the field useful. One of my supervisors knew about the year 9 Immersion Programme at Elan High school (pseudonym) and suggested to me to explore it further as a potential site for gathering empirical data.

An exploration of Elan High School website made me aware of the school's over a hundred years history, the values it promotes, and its curriculum delivery and design plans and practices. Located in the Melbourne suburb of Elan, Elan High school has two campuses: one is Beach-view Street Campus catering for the learning needs of year 7 to year 9 students while the other is called Pollard Street Campus dealing with year 10-12 students (pseudonyms). Both school campuses are very close to each other. Since my literature review phase helped me to focus on the young adolescents' creative experiences, any year 7 to year 9 school programme that dealt with creativity and young adolescents, could be a worthwhile choice.

Elan's Beach-view Street Campus with its year 9 curriculum programme called the Immersion or Make a Difference (MAD) Programme emerged to be a promising site for gathering empirical materials. The year 9 Immersion Programme, as the school website (2018) indicated, was an innovative and student-centred curriculum Programme that encouraged the students to become '21st Century thinkers, develop creative solutions to local and global issues, learn by experience and cultivate individual growth through engaging exploration, collaboration and practical application'. This programme was based on the principles of improving student learning through a use of research-based thinking process, developing individual and educational growth in a learning context, making them confident 21st century

thinkers, and building individual organisational, time management, and leadership skill for lifelong learning. Further principles included providing the year 9 students with real-life problem-solving experiences, working in collaboration with community, developing student-resilience in a challenging environment, and developing students' higher order thinking skills (School Website 2018). These aims and principles were in line with the school's mission statement of developing excellence and creativity in students' achievements and ambitions, the school's social justice orientations and passion to sustain and enrich environment and community (School Website 2018).

Further, with its student-led research project component that drew on the wider community, this locale offered interesting parallels with Flewitt et al.'s (2017) participatory research where students designed and determined their research projects. It was expected that this research would also contribute to what Flewitt et al. (2017) proposed as a future project to help teachers to engage students with learning by renegotiating the conflictual relationships between themselves, their students, and their broader community.

Though Davis (1997) situates the utility of exploring and expressing the historical context in framing and giving meaning to action, to me its purpose extended to identifying a research context where I had to see such action happening. The information about the historical context of Elan High School including its journey, culture, and ideology (Lawrence Lightfoot & Davis 1997) indicated the availability of a pertinent creativity and critical skill development programme context, the availability of appropriate student population within the programme, and high possibility of the data which directly related to the research question (Morse & Field cited in Braun & Clarke 2013; Berg & Lune 2017). However, the availability of the desired study population was not the sole reason for approaching this site. This site had a potential to meet Marshall and Rossman's (2006) criterion of being a realistic site in terms of its easy accessibility, a high probability of offering rich empirical materials, providing this researcher with an opportunity to develop trusting

relationships with student participants, the possibility of ethically conducting research, and assuring the quality of data and study credibility.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) admit the aforementioned criterion to be somewhat idealistic; it, nevertheless, helped me make a sound site selection. This criterion did help me to ensure that the setting emphasised my role as an ethically responsible researcher. Whilst the site had a rich data context available which could establish the credibility of my findings, it also made me aware of the restraints the researchers' work with when negotiations take place and compromises are made. I felt these restraints acutely while accessing the site and developing trust and rapport with the participants. Nevertheless, this experience made me more flexible in my research procedures.

After making decisions about the potential site and appropriate population from which to collect rich data, the next step was to seek an entry to it. Patton (2002) divides entry into two phases: the first phase means negotiating with the gate keepers and the other involves physically entering it. In order to have access to the site, I arranged a meeting with multiple stakeholders (Felzmann 2009, p. 104)', or 'adult gatekeepers' (Punch 2002, p. 4; Morrow 2008, p. 52) to seek their consent. My co-supervisor helped me contact the school to arrange a meeting with the Campus Principal and the Programme Coordinators. As the meeting began, my co-supervisor re-introduced herself to the school authorities as my supervisor, the mother of a child who graduated at the same school, and a lecturer at Victoria University. My supervisor also introduced me as her PhD research supervisee, and a former teacher in local school contexts who knew how schools work. Given these introductions, it was not hard to see how my supervisor was attempting to establish a research relationship with the school.

For me, this experience of finding an access to this research site became akin to Tieken's (2013) experiential attempts of positioning herself in a research context by evoking her diverse geographical, occupational, and racial identities to build research relationship that could help her get access to the field. While I have discussed the issue of my multiple subjectivities elsewhere (section 3.2), this

negotiation experience 'made me familiar with the implications of these labels' (Tieken 2013, p. 323). These carefully selected and revealed multiple identities as a student researcher, a supervisee to a school parent, a student at Victoria University, and a former teacher at a local school helped erase the distance and establish an initial connection with the school.

The fact that the meeting ended with gaining the school's initial consent (albeit conditional) illustrates well the impact these diverse identities had on the multiple identities of school staff as well. For instance, my identity as a student at Victoria University was valuable because of the former connection between the university and the school in terms of sending and receiving pre-service teachers. Also, the fact that their students were doing a research component in the programme that I was to study also made them think my presence as a researcher was to be beneficial to the students. However, to some extent, these suggested identities evoked some distance as well. For instance, their identity as teachers demanded of me, a former teacher, to understand the busy school routine and thereby to impact the site as little as possible. Once, I resubmitted the changed research plan through an email, I was able to acquire their initial consent which was to be confirmed after I received ethics clearance from the University Ethics Committee and Department of Education and Training Victoria.

3.3.1.3 Number of participants

For my qualitative inquiry, the fundamental research question of 'how much data' boiled down to two sticky but diverging classic qualitative methodological views of data saturation or 'it depends' (Patton 2002, p. 244). Though the eminent scholarship on naturalistic inquiry hold data redundancy as the primary criterion for naturalistic sampling when maximising information is the leading purpose (Lincoln & Guba 1985), data redundancy has far exceeded this purpose to act as a widely used sampling size 'rationale' within and across the qualitative field (Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 56). It is typically seen as a point where no new information can be generated from the additional data (Lincoln & Guba 1985). However, this theoretical orientation with an aim to present a truthful information had positivist

and experiential bearings (Braun & Clarke 2013), which did not sit well with the qualitative leanings of my inquiry that looked for patterns across data (e.g. Gough & Conner; Terry & Braun in Braun & Clarke 2013) and had 'more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size' (Patton 2002, p. 245).

Additionally, the issue of time and resources, the purpose of my study, my access and negotiation issues (Patton 2002), and the availability and willingness of the participants further impacted the size of my data making it small, malleable, and flexible (Patton 2002). Though Braun and Clarke (2013) identify 15-30 as a sample size common in qualitative inquiry, 'sometimes only a single participant or text is analysed in depth' (e.g. Crossley cited in Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 55).

As discussed earlier, my access to participants was directly linked with my access to the site. In practical terms this meant that I had access to a class of all Immersion students who were doing the MAD Programme in term 2, 2018. However, this access to the site and the student population did not directly relate to the number of participants taking part in my research, because my research strongly advocated the students' competencies and sought their assent for their willingness to participate in my research inquiry. Based on the participants' number of recruitments, my study design planned to observe all willing participants within the programme setting. However, since this large number of students could not be observed or interviewed within the busy time frame of the specific educational setting, I had to come up with an 'inclusion and exclusion criteria for our sample: who or what *do* we want to hear from, and who or what do we *not* want to hear from' (Italics in original, Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 56). Consequently, I planned to approach the task by broadly looking at all students during the first and more generalised observations. This approach closely corresponded with what Patton (2002, p. 234-235) calls the maximum heterogeneity approach which captures the diversity of 'describing central themes that cut across a great deal of variation'.

However, as soon as the data collection process started, I found out that the students worked in teams ranging from a group of three to five students. I therefore started

observing groups instead of individuals on the basis of their engagement with learning and creativity. In order to go for depth rather than breadth of information, I planned to observe three to five groups in the next wave of observations. An analysis of the initial observations and initial group interviews could help me choose these specific student groups. Once this focused and more selective student population was determined, it was to be further examined closely through my theoretical framework. This phase of fieldwork was similar to Patton's use of Criterion Sampling to study 'all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance' (Patton 2002, p. 238). The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to access 'a more open range of experiences for a smaller number of people (seeking depth)' rather than breadth (Patton 2002, p. 244) and then to represent their detailed experiences by delineating portraits. This purposeful study of a specific student population helped me 'document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 14).

3.3.1.4 Shaping context

In my research, with a focus on capturing the students' alternative engagement experiences within the neoliberal creativity discourse, the shaping context acquired special resonance because of its capacity to direct my attention to the dynamics and complexity embedded within this contextual dimension. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 58) draws portraitists' attention to the dynamism and life of a context that indicates not only its capacity to shape the participants, but also to be changed and 'shaped by the people who inhabit it'. The portraitists' task then becomes akin to examining 'the ways they shape, disturb, and transform the environments in which they live and work' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 58). This suggested attention to closely look for the ways people change their context brought this contextual dimension closer to the philosophical and structural component of my research that attempted to look at the ways the student-participants generate their alternative creative expressions in the MAD Programme. Also, in documenting such changes in the context, my research became fully synchronised with portraiture philosophy that aims to document complexity instead of failure and celebrates success in terms

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of showing how people in a system negotiate weaknesses and overcome them (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997; Chapman 2007).

3.3.2 Gaining access to the context

Generally, in methodological literature access is regarded as an active process of negotiation and renegotiation (Burgess 1991) between the researcher and the research participants that keeps happening throughout the research process. However, for me this process — which I am tempted to call my rite of passage to the research site — started as soon as I approached and interacted with the adult gatekeepers (Berg & Lune 2017; *Figure 3.1*). While requiring some significant research bargains or arrangements (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 112), in terms of modifying the operation of my research methods and the research procedure, this process also made the difficulties attached to this process known to me (Berg & Lune 2017) — requiring flexibility on my part while also rendering my research design viable.
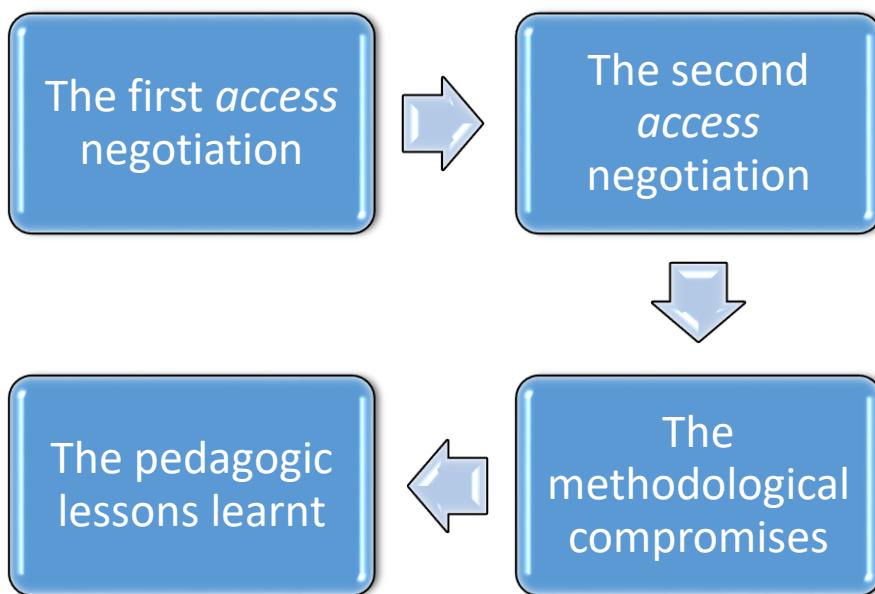
Figure3.1. The sequence of gaining access to the research site

3.3.2.1 The first access negotiation

These research bargains altered the way I participated in my research, interacted with the participants, and operationalised my research methods. These research bargains took place during two meetings. The first meeting, that happened before I got formal ethics approval, was to seek the school's initial consent to gain access to the research site. During my first meeting with the Programme Coordinators and the Campus Principal, the Principal and the teachers communicated their expectations of my research procedures to impact on the students' activities as little as possible. Initially, my research design included two rounds of in-depth interviews with individual students, entry and exit activities, and student journal writing as well. However, both the Principal and Programme Coordinators found it an additional burden on the students and asked me to modify my research plan to reduce the interviews to 10 to 15 minutes. There was also an expectation that I would not impact the routine programme activities and would find the appropriate pockets of time to interact with the students. This also impacted my research participation plan as well which I will discuss below.

In higher degrees, gaining access to the research site and the participants is invariably tied to gaining research consent from the university ethics review board and Department of Education and Training (DET). Once I gained ethics approval, I contacted the Campus Principal and Programme Coordinators to inform them about the Department and the University ethics sanction. I also inquired about the time to start data collection. Patton (2002) in his characteristic fashion mentions the difficulty of collecting data at some places. By mentioning that 'in some programs there never seems to be a good time to collect data', Patton (2002, p. 229) shares his difficulty of collecting data at schools and African villages where collecting data at a specific time period became 'both an important context for a study and sampling'. In a similar fashion, I was told to wait until the 2nd term of the first semester, 2018 until when the students were settled into the new class environment.

De Freitas (2008) in 'Interrogating reflexivity', to describe the ethical complexity that arises from narrating the others' experiences, employs a powerful

confrontational scene from Peter Clough's research fiction *Lolly: the final word* (Clough cited in De Freitas 2008). Clough's fictional persona, Doctor Clough, is confronted by his research participant's brother who accuses him of the disastrous impact his research has on their family. De Freitas (2008, p. 469) alludes to this potent scene not just to describe the ethical concerns regarding representing others, but also to describe the ethical consequences of the 'unanticipated return of the researched (that) incites terror in the scholar'. What results is the vulnerability of the researcher which arises not from exposing their presence in the text; rather, it stems 'from having allowed the Other into his home and having risked his own presence and status' (De Freitas 2008, p. 471).

For De Freitas (2008, p. 471), this vulnerability, which allows the presence of the Other, disrupts the common ways of epistemological production and questions the possibility of any artistic inquiry to create a 'space for critical reading practices that productively problematise the goals of reflexive writing, while ethically contributing to our understanding of research'. In my research context, the very idea of researching the school Others — the researched — by using portraiture methodology was a step towards empowering them (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1986) that made their presence inevitable and my vulnerability visible. The impact of the powerful presence of the research participants (discussed in Chapter 5), the adult gate keepers, and the Programme Coordinators (discussed below) on my research design and representation reflected their desire and/or power for *presence*. It was the flexibility of portraiture design framework which provided not only the researcher an interpretive freedom to flexibly engage with the research processes, but also enabled the researched to return with all their might. What resulted was the creation of a new space where negotiations were made and diverse pedagogic lessons learnt.

3.3.2.2 The second access negotiation

My second negotiation meeting took place during the first week of term 2, 2018. During this meeting, I again introduced my research project to the two new Programme Coordinators. During this meeting, the Coordinators again

communicated their expectation of the minimum impact of inquiry processes on class activities and discussed the possibility of conducting electronic interviews instead of face to face interviews due to time constraints. They asked me to send them the interview questions as well. After the meeting, I emailed to them the first and second round of interview questions. During this time, they also told me what they thought was an appropriate time of my entry. They told me that they would call me in the middle of the term when the thesis component of the programme started — which they thought was most relevant to my research. Many methodological texts urge the researchers to observe a 'complete cycle of activities' (Wolcott 2003, p. 178). In my research context, this meant observing the MAD Programme with one set of students from its beginning to end for a term. Despite the fact I communicated to the Programme Coordinators the import of observing the programme for one term, I was called in almost in the midst of the term which they thought was the time important for my research.

3.3.2.3 Altering research methodology / methodological compromises

This restricted access impacted my research design again and the kind of relationship I could develop with the research participants. I had paced my research design initially with an opening activity and an initial round of interviews and observations. There was also an expectation to develop a rapport with the students during this period of time. I reserved some time for the Hawthorne effect (William Dickson in Berg & Lune 2017) and for the transition to becoming relatively invisible by joining in the routine activities (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 113). However, my entrance to the research context in the midst of the term reduced the amount of time to collect data as well as impacted the way I could proceed with my research procedures and develop trust and rapport with the research participants.

Also, the practitioners' repeated reminders that the students had to be minimally disturbed during their activities also influenced my role as an observer. But once I started my fieldwork, I was able to develop my relationship with the staff who helped me negotiate my further access to the programme — although with another

set of students. This entry at the start of the following term allowed me the time and opportunity to develop my relationship with the students through participating in their activities. This process practically proves Maxwell's (2013) pragmatic stance that access and entry are not a single event. They get negotiated continuously, and there is never a total access: 'nor is total access necessary for a successful study; what you need are relationships that allow you to ethically gain the information that can answer your research questions' (Maxwell 2013, p. 90).

Gaztambide-Fernández et al.'s (2011) research experience offers similar insights into the dynamics of the first encounters that I experienced. Their meeting with the curriculum leader required of them to establish the contextual relevance of their study for gaining entry despite having the School Principal's prior consent and formal ethics approval. While reflecting on their experience, Kate (one of the paper authors) alluded to the ways 'the research site is understood by those within it' (Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2011, p. 7), and the demands this perspective put on their research team of re-contextualising their research by making it meaningful and beneficial for the school and participants. Though Kate's team (Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2011) was successful in establishing the value of research to the school community and assured them of their unobtrusive efforts owing to the scarcity of time in school context, they also discovered that in questioning their research, the curriculum leader, Diane Green was also responding to her broader ethical responsibilities towards her students and the school staff. Kate also discovered that the ethicality of research also meant making it meaningful and beneficial to the participants. In this process of negotiation, Kate along with her research team learnt 'ethics as a lived process that is continually negotiated though the interactions with participants, rather than simply an institutional mark of approval' (Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2011, p.8).

3.3.2.4 The pedagogic lessons learnt

My initial restricted access to the site, similar to Kate's, illuminates the ethical dimensions of the gatekeepers and the practitioners' responsibility towards their school community, reflected in their demands of making my research as

unobtrusive as possible and of sharing my research findings with them so they could benefit from my inquiry. Perhaps, it was also to make this research risk-free, which according to Eisner (1998) is yet another robust reason for a difficult entry.

At a personal level, such encounters with the stakeholders helped me develop my understanding as a researcher of how research ideas get played out in the real and complex world — becoming 'less elegant' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1986, p. 26). Further, such negotiation processes challenged me to be 'more worldly, more complicated, more generous and less arrogant' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1986, p. 26). The fact that the school authorities expected to benefit from my research findings by having an access to my final research work made me see the importance of reciprocity in developing relationships. To me, the very prospect of presenting the stakeholders with the findings of my research was an act of reciprocity seen as integral to relationship building (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997) and a way to acknowledge their time and contribution to my research. This reciprocity was also embedded in my research process where my 'full attention and discerning questioning … (was) clarifying, energizing, and inspiring to actors' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 153).

During my fieldwork, one of the Programme Coordinators acknowledged how my research process was helping them to reflect on their work and shape their programme content which Lawrence-Lightfoot (1986) stresses to be a benefit of research for the researched. Additionally, my acceptance of the *Others'* presence in my research process became analogous to the emphatic understanding of *Verstehen* tradition (discussed in section 3.2) that positively changes ones' relation to ones' own self or the 'empathetic regard' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 146) which helps the portraitist develop an understanding of the *Others'* perspective by understanding and responding to their demands. Cooley's (cited in Witz 2006, p. 264) idea of sympathetic introspection is quite relevant here too in requiring the researchers to put themselves into 'intimate contact with [the other] and allowing [him, her, or it] to awaken in himself a life similar to [his/her, or its] own'.

Drawing on Cooley's notion of sympathetic introspection, Witz (2006, p. 265) establishes that only through this new and deep awakening within the portraitist is the description of the 'deeper aspects in the participant's experience, consciousness, or state' possible. Witz's (2006) study can also present an interesting perspective on the reflexivity problem as described by De Freitas (2008). While De Freitas' (2008) new textual space allows a forceful thrust of the researched in the text, making the researcher vulnerable, Witz's (2006) approach requires the researchers to open themselves up to accept the experiential influences of the researched to develop a deep understanding of the inquired. Such a relationship between the researcher and the researched does not render the other vulnerable; rather, it strengthens the other by empathic understanding. Not only is this identification central to developing meaningful relationships, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 136), it has an added benefit as well: 'this self-understanding—which emerges out of the intersubjective experience of relationships — becomes the impetus for deep inquiry and the construction of knowledge'.

Once the school gave its final consent, active consent from the potential participants' families and guardians was sought by giving out 'invitations to participate forms', 'parent/guardian consent forms', and 'information sheets' (DEECD 2012). In order to acknowledge children's competencies in the research, I sought both informed assent and dissent from the research participants. Also, the research participants were informed that their participation was renegotiable at any point of research (Powell et al., 2012), and they could withdraw from the research at any point (Spriggs 2010).

3.3.3   Methods for seeing and listening

Given the centrality of the researchers' presence in portraiture process and representation, the portraitist's voice in portraiture assumes an instrumental role in the production of portraiture: it is seen everywhere and echoes 'the *self* … of the portraitist — her eyes, her ears, her insights, her style, her aesthetic' (Italics in original; Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 85). As a research instrument, voice, then, serves the epistemological, ideological, and methodological purposes (Lawrence-

Lightfoot 1997) described through Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) six voice modalities that help the portraitist develop the text.

Expanding on De Freitas' (2008) notion of new presence, in this section I argue — how voice as a methodological orientation provides the researcher with methodological tools to create a new space where they can document 'perspectives and experience of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their visions — their authority, knowledge, and wisdom' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. xv). This documentation of the participants' voices makes their presence inevitable. By employing diverse modalities of voice as tools for data generation, an interview technique and observational strategy, I establish how portraiture process makes the return or presence of the researched possible contributing to the central paradox of the voice that is omnipresent yet 'is judiciously placed; it is central and it is peripheral' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 85).

3.3.3.1 On employing observations as a methodological tool — rationale and benefits

Observations — alternately called ethnography, fieldwork (Patton 2002), ethnographic fieldwork, and participant observation (Patton 2002) — are significant qualitative methodological tools for gathering human information in a changing social world. Originally associated with prolonged anthropological fieldwork to understand the culture of others, observations now a days have come to be seen as short but concentrated activities 'limited to a particular aspect of human interaction' (Litchman 2013, p. 225). Observations situate researchers in social contexts where 'the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs' (Merriam 2009, p. 117), and with their ability to provide firsthand accounts of human experiences in a peculiar social context, observations differ significantly from interviews that offer a vicarious account of such a world and human experiences (Merriam 2009).

However, observations are seen to have some limitations too. For instance, the observers' presence is seen to impact the way the participants behave and act. Observations are regarded as limited to registering only external behaviours and

actions, and observers are said to have a limited focus to view a limited number of activities at time which might require some other methods to know the things that the researchers have missed (Patton 2002). Interviews, on the other hand, have been seen as registering biased and political answers or the answers that reflect the interviewees' lack of awareness (Patton 2002). However, far from privileging one method over the other for their limitations, more fruitful approaches celebrate the individual differences between interviews and observation and encourage combining them for meeting the inquiry purposes. In such cases, the triangulation of observations with interviews strengthens each other by mitigating the limitations of their complementary approaches (Patton 2002) and increases the quality of research (Hatch 2002).

The use of observations in my qualitative design derives directly from the centrality given to context in portraiture methodology. As a framework, a context not only places 'people and action in time and space', it is also 'rich in clues for interpreting the experience of the actors in the setting' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 41). Observations, in such a situation, appear a handy tool to enhance the understanding of human experiences by documenting such clues. In fact, their relevance to my research derives from their strength to provide the 'richest vein of information' (Eisner 1998, p. 182) on people's actions and words, their ability to enhance the understanding of human experiences, and their ability to address the research purposes of my inquiry.

For the purpose of my research to examine the students' alternative creative expressions, the study of the MAD Programme context, which stimulated the student actions, assumed a central importance. An understanding of the MAD Programme setting, developed through observations, could help me understand the participants' experiences. Also, in the midst of the MAD Programme activities, it was possible for the informants not to mention the activities which had become a routine to them. In such a context, the use of observations could help me bring fresh perspectives on the things or activities taken for granted by the respondents (Merriam 2009). Closely linked with the information that escaped the participants'

attention was an anticipation that the students might not be aware of how they interacted within the MAD Programme space or the changes they went through over a specific period of time. Consequently, asking questions about such changes or to develop their awareness of their engagement with creativity discourse would require a great deal of conceptual explanation which was not possible within the time-poor educational context. In such a research context, fieldwork enabled me to observe keenly the changes the research participants went through over a period of time.

These observations, by helping me understand human actions in a given context, emerged as an effective methodological tool to target such ends which other forms of research could not address (May 2011). The use of observations provided factual information (Uwe 2009) of the participants' actions and interactions in the MAD Programme space by transporting me to the participants' real world which further paved my way to access the insiders' perspectives. I could ask of the participants specific questions informally about the meanings they associated with those actions. This process of understanding the participants' views on their own terms, according to May (2011), also removes the threat of overshadowing the participants' world and reality which the aspiring researchers so eagerly want to explore and understand.

Another reason for using observations as a methodological strategy was my appreciation of the time constraints in educational contexts. While it was hard to cover a wide range of topics of interest and to get the participants' perspectives during one-off formal interviews, observations offered me an opportunity to know what was on their minds through informal conversations with the participants. Therefore, I used fieldwork to get the participants' perspectives on the topics which I could not cover during formal interviews. Once in the field, I increasingly came to recognise the significance and the benefits of the fieldwork for meeting my research purposes. The benefits of fieldwork are effectively summed up by Patton (2002) which adequately explain why the researchers use or should use observations as an effective data collection strategy. For Patton (2002, p. 262),

observations establish the researchers' 'direct, personal contact with a setting'. In line with Patton's (2002) avowed benefits of observations, my direct experience of the MAD Programme helped me considerably understand my research context to develop a holistic perspective of this programme. Such field work contextualisation, for Hatch (2002), is beneficial for the readers to make a sense of qualitative research while its benefits for the researchers include helping them focus on the areas of significance.

Experiencing the research setting also made me open in my outlook to discover new phenomenon of interest outside of my theory-based orientation (Patton 2002). Moreover, observations enabled me to approach the educational setting from a fresh perspective rather than viewing it from the participants' taken-for-granted perspectives on their routines (Patton 2002). In addition, observations facilitated me to know what was omitted from interview questions or what respondents were unwilling to talk about during interviews (Patton 2002). Unlike interviews, which offer only the participants' perspectives, the use of observations assisted me to record and present my impressions on my fieldwork experiences. This opportunity to present my *etic* views combined with *emic* helped me draw a more comprehensive picture of my research context (Patton 2002) which was beneficial in many other respects too (discussed in section 3.3.8). Besides, a reflection on fieldwork interaction with other people helped me to approach my fieldwork analysis in more balanced ways — where my new personalised knowledge combined with the participants' perspectives helped me present a fuller picture of the research setting.

3.3.3.1.1   The operationalisation of observations

After deciding on the use of observations for generating useful information, the next step was the design phase of the fieldwork which included decisions about operationalisation of observations. My readings of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) chapter on Voice from *The art and science of portraiture* introduced me to diverse modalities of voice that the portraitists use to create their expressive texts. My interpretive engagement with the voice modalities led me to discover their

latent potential in serving as an observational framework. A different reading of voice modalities with the operational perspective in mind revealed that these typologies could serve as effective guidelines for conducting my observational fieldwork (discussed below).

The design stage of the observational study began with determining the duration of observations. Though Hatch (2002) links the question of the length of the researchers' stay in the field to their constant in-field monitoring of the generated data to ensure it fulfills the research purpose requirements, I found Hatch's (2002) advice relevant only when I actually started my observational study. Once in the field, I constantly and closely monitored my data generation, and when I realised that my data was insufficient due to a delayed entry, and I had missed noteworthy parts of the participant experiences, I negotiated with the Programme Coordinators for their consent to allow me to collect some additional data next term. Before I started my field work, however, my research purpose and question (Patton 2002) and site selection had a determining influence on how long I had to stay in the field. Once the decisions about the site selection came in place and the MAD Programme at Elan High School was finalised as the research context, the decision of the length naturally ensued. The MAD Programme runs for a term with year 9 classes which meant that I could observe one set of students for one term. This was in line with Wolcott's (2003) strategy of getting the desired data by studying the full cycle of activity.

3.3.3.1.2   Voice as a framework for observations

Though the task of conducting observations at first appears to be deceptively simple, a closer look at it reveals the availability of depth and detail of information that makes it quite overwhelming. Patton (2002) and Hatch's (2002) appreciation of the impossibility of observing everything and the limitation of the researchers as human beings to pay attention to, see, write down, and remember the nuances of details, if on the one hand, relieves the researchers' of the undue pressure to record everything; on the other, it requires the researchers' to be focused and more systematic in what they decide to observe. My observational plan was based on my

aim to study the MAD Programme sequentially: from the first day when the teachers explained this programme to the students, to its very end; from the processes and activities that it involved to the participants' interaction with their peers; and from studying the programme space to the teachers' role in it. All these areas of activities determined the scope of my observations. This focus helped me study all the components of the MAD Programme along with observing the human experience in it. What could refine this scope was Patton's (2002) advice to prepare a list of sensitising concepts which came from the conceptualisation of my research. However, far from being rigid, my research scope and focus evolved with discovering new phenomenon of interest in the field. The awareness of the impossibility of observing everything called for making observations more methodical.

In this regard, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) framework of diverse voice modalities offered me a frame of reference to move progressively from broad to specific which echoes in Hatch (2002) and Spradley's (2016a) advice of moving from broad to more specific observations. Given that these voice typologies range from *voice as witness* to voice *as interpretation*; to *voice as preoccupation* to *voice as autobiography*; and to *voice discerning other voices* to *voice in dialogue*, they offered me a continuum to organise my observations (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997). Consequently, I divided my observations into three phases. Drawing on the modality of *voice as a witness*, the first phase dealt with general observations. The second phase of observations was more focused employing a strategic use of *voice as interpretation*, *voice as preoccupation*, and *voice as autobiography*. The third phase centred on selective observations using the modalities of *voice discerning other voices* and *voice as a dialogue*. However, as discussed earlier, the negotiation with the Principal and the Programme Coordinators required some changes in the design of observational studies. I merged the first two phases of the fieldwork together to register the MAD Programme context along with diverse human actions taking place within it.

Like Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) 'discerning observer' (p. 87), who is a 'boundary sitter' (p. 87), and pays close attention to the contextual features by 'scanning the action, systematically gathering the details of behavior, expression, and talk, remaining open and receptive to all stimuli' (p. 87), I started my first generalised observations. It was Friday, week five of the second term, semester one 2018. I began with an observation template. Initially, I thought to record observations in a structured way by using this observation template; however, as soon as I started the fieldwork, the classroom dynamics changed my perception of how to record them. I realised that the flow and dynamics of the classroom could not be captured by structuring observations in different categories. From thence, I used this template only as a reference point to focus on important areas which immensely helped me prepare the raw data for observations. Though at a surface level, this may appear to be a simple methodological improvisation, it has its roots deep in portraiture philosophy which regards improvisation and boundary crossing essential for capturing the complexity and fluidity of life (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997).

For recording subsequent observations, I followed a sequential method of notes-taking that included the time, place, and the order in which diverse activities took place. These 'cryptic jottings' (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 120) — also called 'raw field notes' (Hatch 2002, p. 82) — were either in the form of short statements or line-drawn sitemaps; were descriptive and factual registering the physical details of the setting or people; and contained conversations the participants engaged in, their verbatim and key words, or their actions (Hatch 2002; Berg & Lune 2017). These notes also included my comments in the form of critical notes explaining a particular behaviour, action, appearance, or setting. As soon as I finished my daily fieldwork, I would change these short descriptions into fuller descriptions. Sometimes, I used recess and lunch times to convert my fresh memories to detailed descriptive accounts on my laptop. Once, I typed in my observations into the word document, I made separate documents arranged by different dates. I exercised a lot of care to separate my personal impressions from the descriptions of events. I

registered any impressions or thoughts in separate comments paragraphs instead of using a separate diary for that purpose.

But the portraitist's role, according to Lawrence-Light (1997), is not just limited to producing the descriptive accounts of the complexity and fluidity of life; rather, it involves a search for the central narrative. This narrative search requires a carefully gleaned systematic and thorough observation:

> Through watching, listening to, and interacting with the actors over a sustained period of time, the tracing and interpretation of emergent themes, and the piecing together of these themes into an aesthetic whole (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 12).

I accomplished this by paying attention both to the context and the participants. For the context, I gathered information about the feelings as well as sensations evoked by the physical characteristics of the place where actions took place and the kind of behaviour and actions that this site promoted or prevented. The participant information considered the onsite presence of the participants, their role, their number, and their reason for being there along with the specific participant actions either alone or in a group and their body language. During these 'grand tour observations' (Spradley 2016a, p. 79), I looked keenly for what mattered to the participants and their interpretations of their actions and ongoing activities.

Following Merriam's (1988) observational questions, I also looked closely at the participants' activities and interactions: documenting the sequence of activities, their frequency and duration, any unplanned or informal activities, the people involved in activities, their roles, what they wanted to accomplish, the objects they used, their interaction with others present at site, the expressed emotions, and the flow of communication and its direction. I also figured out the ways the participants and the activities were connected or interrelated. Additionally, I explored what happened in non-happening moments and the things that were relevant to my research question. These early observations helped me understand the occurrences in the MAD Programme and also guided me 'to ground the specifics on a firm contextual base' (Hatch 2002, p. 80).

The *voice as witness* to document the field realities and using *voice as interpretation* to interpret the participants' responses and their actions in the first phase of observations gave me a focus for my next observations (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997). These voice modalities also allowed me to interpret the group actions and see their closeness or departure from my theoretical perspectives. This round of observations facilitated the use of *voice as a preoccupation* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) making an allowance for my theoretical orientations to study the specific groups from my particular theoretical positioning in the next set of observations. It also allowed me to use *voice as discerning other voices* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) to identify some new phenomena of interest and the participants' perspectives on them by asking relevant informal questions. Besides, it helped me gather the participants' specific viewpoints around the theoretical focus of my observations. These focused observations were done by keeping the theoretical criterion of the learners' engagement with their work in mind. The aim was to select some Immersion groups that worked along the continuum of their learning engagement.

Once such learner groups were identified through focused observations, more selective observations were conducted to see how these diverse groups interacted in the programme context. While the typology of *voice as discerning other voices* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) necessitated an attention to the specific groups for getting their individual perspectives on the context actions, the *voice as preoccupation* with its theoretical specification determined the structure of these selected observations. Initially, during the design stage of my observations, I decided to use theoretically informed checklists to study the participants' actions. The creativity checklist involved documenting the participants' creativity based on their curiosity, high levels of engagement, enjoyment, willingness to take risks, sense of humour, tolerance for ambiguity, a wide range of interests, persistence, self-expression, playfulness, openness, kindness, teamwork, flexibility, self-doubts, desire for self-recognition, humour, focus, motivation, engagement, and conversations (verbatim) (Collins & Amabile in Beghetto 2006; Brinkman 2010; Glaveanu & Tanggaard 2014).

The student engagement checklist considered the students' input, their careful listening and expression of their preferences; suggestion-offering and contribution; and question-asking and communicating what they are thinking and needing. The checklist also looked at the students recommending a goal or objective to be pursued; communicating their level of interest and seeking ways to add personal relevance to the lesson; and asking for a say in how problems are to be sought and seeking clarification. Other checklist observational items included the students' generating options and requesting assistance (modelling, feedback, tutoring, background knowledge, or a concrete example of an abstract concept); their on task behaviour and off task behaviour; and finally, their enjoyment in learning something new and their hard work (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle 1988; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch 2004; Vile Junod et al. 2006; Jang, Reeve, & Deci 2010; Reeve & Tseng 2011; Reeve 2012; Fredricks & McColskey 2012; Reeve 2013; Reeve & Lee 2014; Veiga et al. 2014).

However, during actual fieldwork, rather than sticking to these theoretical perspectives and monitoring the participants' closeness or departure from them, I used a more descriptive approach to register the participants' actions. These theoretical perspectives, nevertheless, served as a good background to focus my attention on the field life. But the core descriptive focus enabled me to register other phenomena of interest as well. In more specific observations, nonetheless, I used a time sampling (Event & Time Sampling 2000) technique to observe the specific groups for a specific period of time, for instance, fifteen minutes. During these specific timed moments, I even followed up the topics of interest with certain groups through informal interviews. Also, I kept a record of my personal impressions that helped me reflect on the day's events and bring to the field a new focus or questions that I would explore keenly the next day.

3.3.3.1.3   The researcher's participation and responsible conduct

In designing my observational studies, I thought a great deal about developing my role as an observer and forging relationships with the school actors due to

controversy surrounding this question. Diverse research traditions attach diverse meanings to this research activity ranging from the classic ethnographic tradition of complete immersion in the native culture to complete observation (Patton 2002). While portraiture design framework views the relationships with others central to knowledge construction, it also establishes their active role in negotiating access, establishing connection, building trust and intimacy, and establishing responsibility and reciprocity (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997). Above all, it recognises relationships as complex and fluid not as vehicles in attaining the research goals; rather, 'central to the empirical, ethical, and humanistic dimensions of research design, as evolving and changing processes of human encounter' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 138). This had several implications for the practical conduct of my research which established the *goodness* of the voice modalities framework. At the most rudimentary level, the documentation of actors' voices through diverse typologies of voice was an attempt to empower people who rarely get a chance to enter public discourses about schools (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1986).

Furthermore, portraiture voice modalities yielded a framework guiding me to gradually move from a complete observer to moderate and reasonable participant in student activities over a period of time and develop more meaningful and sustainable relationships with the research participants. Many eminent researchers allow the strategic decisions of shifting roles and rapport building (Hatch 2002). Consequently, during my initial observations, I chose to be a complete observer not disturbing the ongoing activities taking place in the Immersion space. Perhaps, what reinforced this stance pragmatically was when I first started my fieldwork. The students were so immersed in their projects and their work that I found little or no opportunity to interact with them. This stance, however, was effective as well since the students were so busy doing their work in groups, it was easy for them to ignore my presence. Nevertheless, as time passed, I started approaching the groups rather than observing them at a distance. Initially, I would go to them and seek their permission to sit with them, taking notes on the ongoing discussion. However, my later observations included asking them informal questions and taking interest in what they were doing.

Though full fieldwork participation is preferred by many anthropologists to get firsthand experience of how participants experience their native culture (Hatch 2002), the use of moderate participation helped me address other issues of missing valuable data while participating or rapport-building. Hatch (2002) also questions the researcher's role to act as a complete participant. In educational research, according to Hatch (2002), the researcher's impossibility to act as young participants and the time restraints present the researcher's difficulty of developing a full participant role. There are some problems associated with developing a role as a teacher or an assistant to the teacher as well, because the participants may think of researchers as teachers, and this might affect their behaviour and actions. The solution that Hatch (2002) offers to the researcher is to act as a researcher. What helped me establish my role as a researcher was a constant disclosure of my reason for presence at the scene and the assertion of my identity as a researcher. By asserting my researcher identity, I consolidated the relationship between the participants' research work and my work as a researcher. The fact that some students approached me to take my feedback on their survey questions and their revision of survey questions in light of my feedback indicates that the students not only understood my role, but also benefited from it meaningfully.

Such meaningful relationships with the participants also helped me find my research participants' goodness, communicate empathetic regard, and develop 'symmetry, reciprocity, and boundary negotiation' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 141). During such encounters, although brief, I established a significant role for the participants by communicating to them how I viewed them as 'knowledge bearers, as rich resources, as the best authorities on their experience' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 141). It was through building this dialogic relationship and finding goodness in my study participants that I was also able to access 'the expression of vulnerability, weakness, prejudice, and anxiety' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 141). Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 139) calls such moments 'the moments of surprise' and advises portraitists to be always 'ready for moments of revelation, insight, and vulnerability that suddenly transforms the discourse and leads to unanticipated rapport and intimacy'. Intimacy and trust developed through frequent

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encounters is not a guarantee for such moments to happen; brief interactions also contain the potential for developing deep connections (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997).

I attended to such moments by responding responsibly when the participants expressed their vulnerability. For instance, on a Friday, as part of the City Excursion, the students who teamed up as research survey groups were to conduct their surveys. The fact that I approached them from my researcher position to establish a common ground resulted in unanticipated warmth. Understanding the research dynamics, I volunteered as the first participant for some student surveys which gave the Immersion students confidence to get started. I also approached some lonely students, who were hesitant to approach the strangers, to conduct surveys and shared my experiences from my research and student life. I also discussed the inhibitions that I faced during the course of my research with them.

After sharing my personal stories, I then offered to accompany these students to the 'stranger interviewees' and supported them initiate a conversation and then left them silently when a dialogue was established. It was during such moments that some students declared how vulnerable they felt doing that task. But instead of leaving the participants feeling bad about their exposure of vulnerability, I stayed focused on my research questions 'guiding the actor away from the emotional minefields that will dilute or distort the inquiry, or that will evoke feelings of vulnerability' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 153). This was my effort to draw boundaries during such moments and to 'protect the vulnerability and exposure of the actor' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 152). As a responsible researcher, I was able to build meaningful relationships with the participants which made them feel being respected, valued, and comforted.

3.3.3.2 On conducting interviews

Although I triangulated interviews with observations for my research, interviews can be used as a sole research method. Also, depending on my study purpose, inquiry questions, and my constructivist stances of making meaning and understanding situations along with the participants (Hatch 2002), I used both formal and informal interviews. Generally described as special interactional

conversations of varied structures and lengths; 'social encounters' constructing knowledge (Holstein & Gubrium 2003, p. 4); or purposeful conversations (Berg & Lune, 2017), interviews are extensively used in qualitative research to 'capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn *their* terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of *their* individual perceptions and experiences' (*Italics in original*; Patton 2002, p. 348). The basic assumption behind using interviewing in my study was my belief that the *others'* views and perspectives are useful, valuable, can be known, and made explicit (Patton 2002; Marshall & Rossman 2006). These *others* for my research were the school children whose perspectives I wanted to know by listening to their often unheard voices.

Portraiture methodology also defines the portraitist's role as the one that seeks to document, interpret, and reveal the voices and visions; perspectives and experiences; and knowledge, authority, and the wisdom of the inhabitants' of the school settings (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1986, 1997, 2005). This desire to access the participants' perspectives makes the use of interviewing necessary (Hatch 2002). The use of interviews (both formal and informal) in my inquiry allowed me access to the participants' thoughts, feelings, and motivations; helped me know the meaning of behaviours and actions in creativity and critical thinking skill development context that I could or could not observe; and allowed me to access their inner worlds (Patton 2002) and the 'meaning structures … often hidden from direct observation and taken for granted by participants' (Hatch 2002, p. 91).

3.3.3.2.1   Informal interviews

During my fieldwork, informal conversations with the teachers or the students took place many times. However, these conversations were not random and without any purpose. I used them strategically by employing Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) diverse voice modalities to get them to express their thoughts and feelings and to explain their actions that I happened to observe. I used informal interviewing as an opportunity to employ these voice modalities as well. To begin with, I used the modality of *voice as a witness* to get information for bridging any information gaps that I happened to notice during my fieldwork. For instance, in order to get some

understanding of the programme context and the missed programme information, which resulted due to my mid-term entry to the field, I used this voice modality to establish my newcomer and 'outsider's stance' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 87) by asking questions about the nature of the students' projects, the ways the students made their teams and did their day to day activities. The questions asked ran like this:

- Since I am new to this project, could you please tell me what this project is?

- What would I see you doing while I walked through the doors?

- What are you working on today?

- How did you choose your topic?

- How did you choose your group?

I also asked the students questions about what made them passionate about the project, and how they chose their projects as this was the missing part of information and observation which happened before I started my fieldwork.

During my initial observations, I happened to observe the students' strong preoccupation with thesis writing which was a major component of the MAD Programme. I wanted to know what a thesis meant to the Immersion students. At the same time, I also was interested in knowing what held more importance for the students: doing a thesis or doing their self-chosen projects. Consequently, my questions became more interpretive in nature closely corresponding to the modality of *voice as interpretation* where I tried to make sense of meaning of 'action, gesture, or communication to the actors in this setting?' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 91):

- How do you find doing a thesis compared to working on a project?

- What is more challenging: the thesis or the project?

- What makes you passionate about doing your thesis and the presentations?

- What did you enjoy doing more: executing your project or doing your thesis?

- What happens when you do not submit your thesis?

- What will happen if you execute your project but do not do the thesis?

Also, the newly field-discovered topic of interest or some interesting phenomenon that caught my attention during my field work led me to talk to the participants to get their perspectives on the discovered phenomenon. For instance, during my fieldwork when I observed that the students regularly took breaks from their work and either moved to other groups to talk to, watched something on their lap tops, or talked to their own group members, I wanted to know the students' perspectives on these phenomena, so I asked interpretative questions:

- I have seen a lot of free student movement in the class for the past five minutes. How would you comment on it?

Also, during my observations, there were some groups that were extremely committed to their work. I was interested in knowing what kept them so engaged with their work, so I asked them:

- What keeps you motivated to do your work?

- Why is this work important to you?

I also asked students what kept them going:

- Were there any times when you felt bored? Or lost interest?

- What keeps you going during the times when you get bored?

Sometimes, my informal interviews included some probing questions asked in response to the participants' already given responses. These questions were framed to discern other voices — also called the voice modality of *listening for voices* — where I focused on the particular participant voices listening for their story (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997). Davis (1997) also explains her own practice of listening for this voice as paying attention to the interviewee's words, recognising

the tension, and probing it more. I effectively employed this practice when I asked the groups about how they chose their particular projects. Furthermore, during my field work I heard one group member saying passionately, "I really wanted to work on bees" and mentioned that she could not pick it up because this project was already taken up by another group, and that her friends wanted to do another topic. I followed up her response by asking:

- How does that make you feel about your project?

- What keeps you doing it now?

In the second case, such informal conversations were approached in a more planned way (Hatch 2002) where I would note down the questions that I wanted to ask after informal conversations with the participants and approach them accordingly.

3.3.3.2.2 Formal interviews: some operational considerations

Given that during the fieldwork informal interviews emerged as 'sidebars to the real action' (Hatch 2002, p. 93) and related closely to the participants' field actions, they acted as a secondary source of data (Hatch 2002). Consequently, the need still remained to deal with my theoretical interests and perspectives (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997) and to 'address broad, structural issues' of the students' understanding of the programme, its expectations, the challenges they faced, and the creative solutions they came up with (Hatch 2002, p. 97). Such identified issues could adequately be addressed through the modality of *voice as preoccupation* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) in 'more formal interview settings' (Hatch 2002, p. 97) with structured or semi-structured approaches to interviewing. However, quite contrary to the structured interview that uses only predetermined questions asked using the same wording and order to compare all information systematically (Hatch 2002, p. 96), I used formal interviews because they were flexible, followed the participants' lead to digress in the areas of their interest, and allowed room for using probes or follow up questions to 'go deeply into the

understandings of the informants' (Hatch 2002, p. 94) which precisely was the leading purpose of my study.

a) *Determining interview duration and time*

Though according to Hatch (2002, p. 94), 'there is a set time established for the interview', the issue of length of interview is still debatable. For Berg and Lune (2017), the length of interviews is relative to topics which may require long or short answers, or is style-specific, based on developing meaningful relationships with interviewees through their interpretive or interactive underpinnings, or relates back to the specific research questions. The interview duration may range from 60 to 90 minutes; however, Hatch (2002) recommends an hour interview in educational settings based on children and educators' busy routines. Depending on my research purpose, which required in-depth responses from the participants on their experiences, my research design initially included two sets of in-depth interviews with a time frame of 45 minutes: one to be conducted at the beginning of the programme and the other nearing the end. However, my access negotiation with the School Principal and the Programme Coordinators, and my initial limited access to the research setting significantly impacted my original research design for the number as well as the length of interviews.

In addition, another deliberation, which also significantly affected the designed length of interview, was my consideration of the interviewee's interests during the interview. Despite Berg and Lune (2017, p. 77) maintaining that the lengths of the interviews do impact the quality of interview or the interviewee's interests in interview, they do not regard them as 'binding rules or even terribly viable guidelines'. In my interview study, however, my sensitivity to the children's age and needs and my understanding of their short attention and engagement spans (Marshall & Rossman 2006) led me to appreciate that young people felt more comfortable with their teammates in brief group interviews. Such a consideration of the participants' needs coupled with the requirement from the teachers and the Campus Principal not to exceed twenty minute interview, led me to go for twenty to twenty five minute group interviews. Though in one or two instances, there were

some exceptions when the students themselves approached me and preferred the 'intimacy of one-to-one interviews' (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p. 107). This modified plan of group interviews was effective, because it offered diverse participant-perspectives within the same time slot, provided ease to the students, and gave them the comfort of being in the company of their teammates along with supplying the desired group information and dynamics closely relevant to my inquiry. Other studies also support using a 20-25 minutes timeframe to effectively interview school children who are more fluent in their responses (Patton 2002).

The decisions about the length of interviews also helped me tune into a feasibility-based approach to conduct interviews with young adolescents by considering the participants' availability and willingness for formal and informal interviews (Hatch 2002). This approach prompted me to become less intrusive while the students were busy doing their routine class work and to take care of the informants' confidentiality and time (Hatch 2002). The use of the feasibility approach, on the one hand, granted my research design flexibility; on the other, it helped me become more aware and considerate of the students' class work requirements and their willingness to participate. Resultantly, I approached different students at different points in time depending on their availability. Also, I actively negotiated interview times with them based on their availability and willingness.

For informal interviews, I observed and waited until the students finished their work or were on a break, and then I sought their permission to ask them one quick question at a time. If the participants showed any reluctance, I would withdraw immediately telling them that I would approach them later. This situation, however, hardly occurred and all students welcomed any questions that I had without any hesitation. Before conducting formal interviews, I approached diverse student groups and asked them to contact me during the class time if they were willing for interviews after they finished their class work. I happened to interview the students who contacted me and showed willingness for interviews. Also, the fact that the students contacted me in different sessions and at different times was indicative of their independent decisions without any teacher or researcher influence. Hatch

(2002) regards feasibility approach helpful for determining the kinds of interviews as well, because it allows the participants freedom to decide which interview type they want to go for. In my case, negotiating interviews was not a problem as generally the students who consented to the research were willing to take both formal and informal interviews.

b)   *Determining the interview population*

As discussed earlier in this section, the purpose of my study to examine the students' creative expressions and the meaning that they attached to their engagement experiences in a creative and critical skill development programme significantly impacted the kinds of interviews I was to use for the inquiry. Once I decided to use both formal and informal interviews, the decisions of the number of interviewees and the questions to ask followed (Hatch 2002). For informal interviews, since I asked questions related to the participants' actions, there was no special sample considerations in place. However, for formal interviews, the selection of the interview participants was strongly determined by the participants' willingness and availability to participate, their ability to 'make good informants' (Hatch 2002, p. 97), their capacity to communicate in the language of that context (Hatch 2002, p. 98), and their ability to meet the criterion of maximum heterogeneity to share their different perspectives on the same phenomenon' (Hatch 2002, p. 98).

The basic criterion determining interview population was the students' diverse levels of engagement with their projects. My focused observations indicated that there were at least eight different groups in the programme that could be categorised on the basis of their engagement on the scale of one to three: one being highly engaged with their work; two being the ones who would work yet moved around; and the third being the ones who found difficulty getting engaged with their work. Based on the students' informed consent, I conducted five student group interviews, one individual participant interview, and two interviews with the teachers.

3.3.3.2.3   Voice as a framework for interviews

In portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) describes six voice modalities that portraitists' use to develop the text. As discussed earlier (sections 3.3.8 & 3.3.9), these modalities use *voice as a witness*, *interpretation*, *preoccupation*, *biography*, *discerning other voices*, and *in dialogue* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997). In my physical interaction with the research participants, I used these modalities of voices as interview techniques in addition to employing them as observational strategies to gather the study participants' valuable perspectives.

a)   Using voice as interpretation as an interview strategy

Since in my research, I interviewed the participants only once, I used carefully considered research questions which were similar to 'one-shot' interview questions (Hatch 2002, p. 102) in a sense that they were ordered with an intention to cover all significant theoretical areas to address the students' perspectives. They, however, differed from one-shot interviews in allowing the participants space to take a lead in their responses. If the diversity of questions helped capture the participants' diverse perspectives on diverging topics, the open-ended nature of questions encouraged them to discuss their experiences and their understanding of such experiences on their own accord. Since I could only interview once, the final formal interviews for me became 'an opportunity for member checking, giving participants the opportunities to react to tentative findings generated by the researcher' (Hatch 2002, p. 101).

However, during these interviews, I used *voice as interpretation* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) as an effective strategy to periodically ask questions based on the interviewees' earlier responses. But far from checking the reliability of the students' responses, I used this strategy to see if the meaning that I was getting from the respondents was understood properly. In addition, during my interviews, I used an interview guide for guiding questions to cover all areas, but I did not follow the structured questions in a strict order and deviated when I needed more details. My interviews, as Hatch (2002) reminds his readers, had a proper introduction where I

told the interviewees about the nature of my research, explained to them how important their contribution was, and that whatever they shared was extremely confidential. This was followed by background and other necessary questions which then transitioned towards the closure by giving some verbal cues, for instance, this is my second last question; this is the last question; or asking participants:

'Is there anything you care to add that can tell me more about your experiences in this programme?'

This was soon followed by thanking the participants for their honest responses, their contribution towards helping me understand a particular phenomenon, their time, and a reaffirmation of the confidentiality of information.

b)   *Using voice as witness*

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) classification of the voice into six modalities facilitated my interviews to 'draw out the most complete story about various subjects or situations under investigation' (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 73). These voice modalities find their interesting parallels in Berg and Lune's (2017) four categories of interview questions that include essential, extra, throw away, and probing questions and Spradley's (2016b) interview taxonomy centred on descriptive, structural, and contrast questions. Berg and Lune's (2017) throwaway questions generally begin the interview with a purpose of building rapport between the interviewees and the interviewer; or provide a break when the interview becomes 'intense or tedious' (Hatch 2002, p. 103); or include information about background, context, and demographics (Hatch 2002, p. 102). Berg and Lune (2017, p. 74) further regard throwaway questions invaluable for 'drawing out a complete story from a respondent' but irrelevant to the information required for study.

However, according to Hatch (2002), since the information gathered through throw-away questions is important not only as an icebreaker and background information, but also for enhancing the quality of formal interviews, he uses the

term background questions for such questions which put the respondents at ease by eliciting familiar information and initiate the interview process. These types of questions are similar to Patton's (2002) knowledge-based questions which are asked at the beginning of the interview to get the knowledge and information to which the participants are familiar with, and which do not require any significant thinking (Patton 2002). The use of *voice as witness* helped my outsiders' position (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) and provided me with essential background information. It also set the tone of interview by initiating rapport building with my interviewees. Though the interview questions can be asked in any sequence, for the ease of the participants, I asked background questions first that dealt with the MAD Programme context. The formal interviews that I happened to conduct during the fieldwork operated within the time constraints. Here instead of exploring the participants' demographics which were not useful for the study and could cause confidentiality issue, I asked questions related to the programme background or context. The background information, which was generated as a result of such questions, illuminated the nature of the projects that the participants were doing.

c)   *Using voice as discerning other voices*

While conducting formal interviews, there came some points when the participants' responses were either short, explanations inadequate, or they had not reflected on the meaning of the events they described (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 74). In such situations, using *voice as discerning other voices* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) as a strategy to probe further, helped me 'draw out more complete stories from subjects' (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 74) by digging deeper in to the topics that emerged from the participants' responses. The fact that these probes cannot be anticipated meant that they were not a part of my interview guide. However, when needed, the following questions served as useful structures that I could use in my interview to elicit more information from respondents:

- Could you explain a little bit more to me?

- Could you tell me more about that?

- What did you mean by…?

Given that I was looking for the participants' insightful yet in-depth information in specific areas, I felt the need to return to the main topics from a 'slightly different angle' (Hatch 2002, p. 102) by changing the wording of questions. Though some researchers (e.g. Berg & Lune 2017) call them extra questions that provide a reliability of information check or help detect the influence of change of wording, for me, the need for 'going more deeply into areas of importance' (Berg & Lune 2017) could be addressed by using the *voice as discerning other voices* strategy. Asked from different angles, these questions introduced the missing aspects which the participants did not discuss during interview conversations:

- Have you ever thought of dropping out of this programme?

This question was later on followed by:

- Were there times when you or your group members lost interest in this programme?

- Tell me about the things that you wanted to do, but you couldn't?

- How did you feel about it?

- Was there anything that didn't go according to your or your group mates' expectations?

- How did you feel about it?

- What helped?

d)   *Using voice as preoccupation*

While both *voice as witness* and *voice discerning other voices* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) provided some significant information to enhance the quality of the interview by indirectly targeting the research topic, *voice as preoccupation* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) like essential questions, directly targeted the 'central focus of the investigation' (Hatch 2002, p. 102; Berg & Lune 2017, p. 73), generated 'central data of the study' (Hatch 2002, p. 103), and provided me with a

theoretical lens to see, interpret, and document the actions (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997). In my study, my theoretical perspectives shaped my way to examine how the students approached and experienced the creative and critical skill development programme, and how they became creatively engaged with what they were doing. Consequently, my questions reflected my *voice as preoccupation* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) when I wanted to know how the students understood the programme and its expectations, the ways they participated in this programme, interacted with their teachers and peers, made groups, the things they learnt from this programme, the decisions they made, frustrations and challenges that they experienced, and the solutions they came up with. For instance, one set of questions was to get the participants' perceptions about the programme requirements:

- What are you looking forward to in this programme?

- List three things. What do you want to achieve before the programme ends?

In order to know the students' creative input during the project one essential question recurred frequently:

- Please describe a time in the MAD Programme when you really became enthusiastic about your ideas or things that you made. When do you think this was? Describe in as much detail as possible.

Later on, to know the challenges that the participants faced during their projects and the solutions that they came up with, I systematically asked them about the things they wanted to do and how they felt if they could not do them. Another regularly scheduled interview question that dealt with the students' disengagement with the programme and their solution was about the times the students lost interest in this Programme and the things they did afterwards.

e) Using voice as interpretation

In addition to sharing some features in common with Berg and Lune's (2017) classification of questions, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) *voice as interpretation* shares similarities with the descriptive and structural questions from

Spradley's interview model (2016b). I resorted to use descriptive questions to get an understanding of the MAD Programme from the students' perspectives and the things that they do and are required to do. My interview questions were descriptive in nature when I asked of the participants about their projects, the way they participated in the programme, and the times when they became enthusiastic about their participation in the programme.

Closely linked with the descriptive questions were the structural questions as a way of knowing 'how individuals make sense of the social phenomena under investigation,' or make a sense of what they do (Hatch 2002, p. 104). This type included questions, for instance, about knowing what the participants thought of the project, its requirements, their understanding of the input required, and the things they learnt about the self and the others. In some questions, I embedded the structural element with the descriptive one 'for going beyond descriptive information into exploring what relationships informants see in their cultural experiences' (Hatch 2002, p. 105). This entailed the questions about the participants' part in their projects and a description of the diverse ways they choose to participate in the programme.

For my study, I found including contrast questions also relevant, because not only did they provide an alternative angle to approach the respondents' perspectives (Hatch 2002), but also helped me examine the ways the respondents made meanings in the social context of the MAD Programme by contrasting objects or events with one another. In this context, I included contrast questions to understand how the students found the MAD Programme different to their routine classes. This approach called for the students' unique perspectives on classroom phenomena which is similar to the meanings that the modality of *voice as discerning other voices* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) evokes:

- List any three elements of this programme you would like to see included in your regular school classes.

- List any three things that you did in this programme that you have never done before.

f)   ***Reflecting upon the nature of questions***

During fieldwork and while conducting informal interviews, I also came to know of the significance the appropriate wording of interview questions had. I realised during my informal conversations with the respondents that some questions when asked, would produce little or no response; however, when I changed their wording, they produced quite a detailed response. While Berg and Lune (2017, p. 74) call questions 'invitations to the informants to speak their minds', they suggest interviewers ask questions in a way that encourages respondents to answer fully. For me, this meant telling the informants consistently before I began each interview that their views were extremely valuable. I also used encouragement and gratitude while ending the interview by thanking and telling the respondents that their responses were extremely supportive in shaping my understanding of the MAD Programme.

In order to get detailed responses from the participants, Berg and Lune (2017) further suggest using language which the respondents can understand. In my study, the use of the special participant-language, which I became familiar with during my field observations, proved very effective in producing rich respondent responses. This also included my effort to keep the questions simple by avoiding asking affectively worded questions, for instance, asking *why* questions that evoke a negative response. However, instead of avoiding *why* questions altogether, I made them neutral by changing them into elaborate questions, for instance, 'why do you say that?' which then served as useful probes (Hatch 2002). During my interviews, I also avoided complex and double barreled questions that by including 'two issues in a single question' (Berg & Lune 2017, p. 76), confuse the participants and produce a superficial response. Pretesting the interview questions with a former MAD Programme student helped me considerably to further refine my questions into simple, more comprehensive, and evocative questions.

Though Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 200) believe, 'the wording of a question can inadvertently shape the content of an answer … ', they advocate the use of leading questions, because through verifying the reliabilit**y** of interviewee's

answers and checking the interviewers' interpretations, leading questions enhance the interview quality along with providing the readers with an opportunity to determine their influence on the research findings and helping them assess the validity of inquiry findings. For Hatch (2002), however, questions should be neutral, because the use of leading questions to check the reliability of the interviewee's answers undermines the researchers' role. It is also disrespectful of informants and produces 'bad data' (Hatch 2002, p. 106) that favor the researchers' perspectives. Despite that the leading questions co-produce significantly new, worthwhile, and trustworthy knowledge, which is closer to the constructivist paradigmatic assumptions (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015), I avoided them for different reasons. Perhaps the leading cause for avoiding them was my topic and purpose of inquiry.

During fieldwork I noted if I asked the students direct questions about their disengagement from their work, they became defensive and uncomfortable. In order to put them at ease and show them that my role was not to judge them on the basis of their disengagement, I asked them indirect questions about the phenomenon rather than directly questioning them on that. Since Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 200) admit the downside of the leading questions that they may 'close off the range of potential answers'. This was against my methodological and philosophical stance of getting the students' voices heard. The use of open-ended questions instead, provided informants with an opportunity to take a lead, thereby making interviewing a collaborative enterprise. Also, the nature of my research topic was complex and needed some prior explanation before getting a response, but the time restraints did not allow such explanations. Consequently, instead of asking what their creative engagement with their work meant, my subsequent questions asked the participants about their understanding of the programme, its expectations, the students' creative ideas, the challenges that they faced, and their ability to find the solutions.

g) *Using voice as autobiography*

During my informal and formal interviews, there came some points when I shared my personal experiences with the interviewees. In Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997, p. 95) words, it was more like dealing with *voice as autobiography* where I brought my 'own history—familial, cultural, ideological, and educational — to the inquiry'. However, self-disclosure is regarded as problematic in qualitative interviewing (Hatch 2002), and its criticism holds common grounds with criticism of leading questions to favour the interviewers' perspectives. Moreover, with sharing of personal information further ethical dimensions are added. Personal disclosure concerns the researchers' access to sensitive participant information by building trust and rapport which makes the participants vulnerable to the researchers' exploitation for getting their benefits. On the researchers' part, there also arises the dilemma of how much personal information can be shared (Hatch 2002). Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997, p. 95) modality of *voice as autobiography* works on a balancing principle: it grants the portraitists the necessary freedom to bring in their experiential knowledge but requires wisdom to use such knowledge for developing understanding, 'connection and identification with the actors in the setting'. At the same time, it also encourages the portraitists to use experiential knowledge judiciously not letting 'autobiography obscure or overwhelm the inquiry' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 95).

For Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997), such a balance can be achieved through self-criticism and self-reflection. I agree with Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) that sharing my personal stories and information did improve my rapport with the students, and this sharing also coincided with my constructivist philosophical orientations of co-constructing a research narrative by mutual interaction and co-sharing of information with the participants. However, these were not the sole factors to determine the use of personal stories. Rather than making the participants vulnerable to any exploitation, I shared some stories from my student life to make them comfortable when I felt that some questions on the student engagement could evoke defensive responses due to their specific connotations in educational context.

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For instance, during my informal interviews, I observed that there were some moments when the students took breaks from their work and moved to other groups or watched something on their laptops. In educational settings, these self-breaks are generally regarded as acts of disengagement. There was a possibility that if asked them questions about these breaks, the participants would become defensive and may not open up about it. In such a situation, before asking questions, I shared with them my story that being a PhD student, I work long hours, and I quite often take breaks from my work to break the monotony of the task. Then I asked them questions about what these breaks meant to them. However, I used this strategy quite sparingly.

h)   *The use of voice modalities and responsible conduct*

The questions in both formal and informal interviews, on the one hand, provided the participants with an opportunity to reflect on their own actions and construct their working subjectivities (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015); on the other, they required me to reflect on my role as a researcher and a reflective practitioner. Hatch (2002) differentiates between formal and informal interviews on the basis of the relationship that the interviewer develops with the interviewees. While the informal interviews help develop the relationship with the interviewees over a period of time and the quality of interview depends on the nature of relationship, formal interviews rarely provide an opportunity to develop relationships. Rather, they require certain skill sets and considerations prior to or during interviews which determine the quality of the interviews (Hatch 2002, p. 107). Generally identified characteristics of a successful interview include interest and attention in the participants, respect, and encouragement of the participants' (Bogdan & Biklen; Seidman, cited in Hatch 2002).

To this list, Berg and Lune (2017) add further characteristics that include warming up through chatting at the beginning of an interview, remembering the purpose of interview to avoid any distraction, remaining relaxed and natural, becoming an alert hearer, dressing appropriately, using a comfortable place for interviewing, getting more when having short answers, and respect, practice, and appreciation of the

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interviewee's in-put. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 166) discuss ten qualities that every 'interviewer craftsman' possesses and exhibits during every interview. Kvale and Brinkmann's (2015) craftsman interviewer is knowledgeable, structuring, and clear; is gentle, sensitive and open; is steering, critical (tests the reliability and validity of what the interviewees tell), and remembering; and finally, is interpreting (the meanings of the interviewee's statements which may then be disconfirmed or confirmed by the interviewee).

The framework of questions that I derived from Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) voice modalities and their framework of developing relationships with the participants helped me immensely to determine my interview practice and to develop the desirable interviewer qualities. Central to the ethical framework of relationship building is a 'search for goodness', 'empathetic regard,' and 'the development of symmetry, reciprocity, and boundary negotiation with the actors' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 141). To exercise empathetic regard and to search for goodness during interviews, I tried to understand the participants' perspectives and adopted the stance of 'acceptance and discernment, generosity and challenge, encouraging actors in the expression of their strengths, competencies, and insights' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 141). I further made sure that I took interest in my participants and was respectful, encouraging, and appreciative. I communicated my respect and interest by beginning with a note of thanks to the interviewees for their time to share their extremely valuable views. The search for *goodness* ensued when during interviews, I clearly conveyed to the respondents the purpose of my research. According to Witz (2006), if the participants understand the nature of research and their value in inquiry, they contribute their experiential knowledge freely. As a result, cooperation develops naturally and the participants become allies and co-contemplators (Witz 2006).

In my research, I also explained to the participants the reason for my interest in them, in their experiences, and in their views that stemmed from their power to educate me on the topic of my interest. By talking to me during interviews, they could educate me on how they viewed a certain phenomenon or what meanings

they assigned to their actions. This clarity of purpose allowed them to know that there were no right or wrong answers, and no one was judging them on their answers. I also shared my expectations of getting their honest responses. In such a situation, this communication of expectations also required of me to understand my responsibility as an interviewer. For Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997), the empathetic regard constantly demands self-reflection and self-analysis. I knew that my conversations with the participants were not just conversations; rather, they were conversations with a specific purpose where the sole purpose of striking these conversations was to get the participants' perspectives. This awareness made me approach the field with a sound knowledge of my research topic which in turn determined, though flexibly, the nature and kind of questions I wanted to ask. Moreover, this helped me structure my interview well by first introducing background questions and then gently coming to more focused questions rather than randomly proceeding with my interview.

During my interviews, there came many points when I used probing questions (discussed earlier in this section) to get more elaborate answers from the informants; however, I made sure that I also conveyed my respect, interest, and gentle approach towards my interest in them as interviewees. My body language communicated that my probing or other questions were not to challenge them for their answers; rather, I was genuinely interested in knowing what they thought on a certain topic. Also, during my interviews, I gently steered my interviewees to the topic of my interest by using the interview guide and by asking focused questions. At times, I also used critical interpretation to interpret the respondents' answers; however, far from using it as a reliability check, I used interpretive and extra questions to gather in-depth information on the topics of interest or to check the correctness of the meaning that I grasped from the conversation.

i)   Voice in dialogue and the issue of power dynamics

The dynamics of the power relationships get played out nowhere more clearly than during interviews and selection of sites for conducting interviews. These power dynamics give rise to ethical dilemmas. I particularly found researching children

immensely challenging due to my role as a researcher and the power dynamics associated with this role. Portraiture research, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot (1986, p. 26), by 'giving voice to those who rarely get a chance to enter into public conversation about schools', empowered my research participants. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) description of *voice in dialogue* also addresses such power concerns: it 'chronicles' the evolving relationship between the researchers and the researched (Hill 2005, p. 103) as well as helps develop symmetry in relationship.

Also, not only does this approach 'hear(s) the voices of the researcher and the actor in dialogue', and feels the 'symmetry of voice' in meaning making and expressing their views, (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 103), it also challenges the power associated with the researchers' role to conduct research by requiring researchers to reconsider their relationship with the respondents and the interview process (Gubrium & Holstein 2003). This approach is similar to what Gubrium & Holstein (2003) called an altered approach to interviews that is sensitive to the notion of agency, reflexivity, authority, and representation. This altered approach also views interviewing as a mutual knowledge production process. However, Gubrium & Holstein (2003) view some epistemological issues attached to this approach which require the researchers to probe into their own and their interviewees' diverse subjectivities.

According to Gubrium and Holstein (2003, p. 20), this epistemological issue of the constructed subjectivities further raises the questions of who does the constructed knowledge belong to or whose 'voices we listen to'. Gubrium and Holstein (2003, p. 23) further ask, 'Can we ever discern ownership in individual terms? And how does this relate to respondent empowerment?' By seeing subjectivity in an active process of construction during interview, ownership of the interview becomes a joint working enterprise. This means a shift from giving the respondents communicative tools to express their stories to recognising the unlimited possible stories to tell and the responses to collaborative activities. However, the children's active participation in research is not less problematic and gives rise to the issues

of representation of children's voices (James cited in Powell et al. 2012). For Morrow and Richards (1996), this entails finding a fine balance between acknowledging children's competencies, researchers' role to protect the vulnerable participants from harm, and a realisation that final power of interpreting children's views rests with researchers. The modality of *voice as a dialogue* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) attains this balance by establishing a symmetrical dialogue where the portraitist by asking questions, appreciating responses, offering interpretations, and accepting the participant perspectives gets engaged with the participants in mutual meaning making process.

In addition to viewing the interview process as an active interplay of power dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee, interviews sites, particularly schools, are also seen as the 'redolent of power hierarchies' where the power dynamics between the researcher and the practitioners, and the researcher and the participants get played out (Edwards & Holland 2013, p. 44). Drawing on the interview scholarship, Edwards and Holland (2013) suggest great care should be given to the selection of the site due to the importance and impact that they have on the generation of data and findings; however, following other researchers Edwards and Holland (2013) also admit that all sites have their own dynamics. Such recognition prompts Edwards and Holland (2013) to consider the contextual relevance of site that is:

> Surrounded by the material culture of their created space, and possibly interacting with others in that space, offers a wealth of information beyond that obtained, and possibly obtainable, in an interview (p. 45).

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) also establishes the importance of a familiar site and context necessary for generating rich information. Being extracted from the context, a participant may yield little information due to the discomfort that they might feel. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 42), a familiar setting with familiar people gives participants confidence: 'Surrounded by a familiar place; rich in memories, cues, and experiences, he becomes the authority. He becomes more perceptive and expressive; he is free to be himself'.

With a detailed discussion on observations and interviews, I now turn to the next section explicating the analysis and representation processes.

3.4   Portraiture as Analysis and Representation

This section taps into the processes of data analysis (section 3.4.1) and data representation (3.4.2) that helped me manage my data and represent it effectively.

3.4.1   Data analysis

The transformative process of qualitative data analysis that reconstructs raw data into findings and knowledge (Patton 2002) has been aptly described as a challenging yet exciting (Spencer et al. 2014a), 'messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating (process). It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat' (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p. 154). Mostly, analysis process is regarded as 'continuous and iterative' (Spencer et al. 2014b, p. 296) that is seen to begin as soon as the field work begins (Patton 2002).

3.4.1.1 On-going data analysis

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 185) binds the aesthetic production of a portrait to the rigorous and disciplined process 'of description, interpretation, analysis, and synthesis'. Like Patton (2002), Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) do not view the process of data gathering as distinct from data analysis; rather to them, data analysis is deeply engrained in the field work. The first phase of data analysis, out of their self-categorised two-phase data analysis process, occurs even before the data collection process formally begins. It is here the portraitists' record their 'intellectual, ideological, and autobiographical themes' that shape their perspectives (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 186). Closely following portraiture methodology — in this before-entering-the-field phase — I recorded some 'anticipatory themes' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 186) by writing memos to myself. These themes not only guided my fieldwork, they were flexible enough to get changed through the complexities of the fieldwork. In other words, this approach helped me avoid imposing my dominant theoretical perspective on to the

field realities — all the while allowing me to attend to the diverse fieldwork realities.

As soon as data collection started, I kept an impressionistic record (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997) for the fieldwork activities. This impressionistic record documented my interpretive insights gained during my stay in the field encompassing my reflections on the newly discovered phenomena, changes in my perspectives, dilemmas that I experienced, and the things to focus on during my next visits. In many ways, my on-going data analysis process became akin to Marshall's (1979) research process that encapsulated data organisation, transcription, and analysis 'in a single operation' (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p. 152).

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), Marshall's (1979) engagement with fieldwork was initially directed by her theoretical framework. However, Marshall's (1979) use of constant comparative method, her data management, and her selection of conceptually strong parts from audio-taped conversations, which linked either to her theoretical framework or the emergent patterns from her previous data analysis, led her to build on the theoretical framework that she initially used. This whole process resulted in developing a new grounded theory. Not only that, this initial data analysis process also 'increased the efficiency of data analysis' and 'moved the study forward efficiently' (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p. 153). By drawing on Marshall's (1979) vignette, Marshall and Rossman (2006) further conclude that the qualitative studies build a coherent interpretation through an active interplay between data collection and its analysis. This interplay, Marshall and Rossman (2006) maintain, necessitates a shift from the researchers' initial conceptual underpinnings on the basis of the understanding that they develop through this ongoing data analysis.

Given the similarity between Marshall's (cited in Marshall & Rossman 2006) research process and what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) proposes, it is not hard to suggest how keeping impressionistic records helped me improve the quality of my data as well. To me, documenting my fieldwork impressions was an activity similar

to Marshall and Rossman's (2006) analytic procedure of writing memos: both procedures require writing and reflections which help generate 'the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative' (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p. 161). Drawing on emergent themes gleaned from the impressionistic records, I brought the emerging questions to the field for further exploration which greatly refined my fieldwork focus, modified my research design and made me discover more emerging patterns and themes leading to develop my ideas further (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997). 'The iterative *and* generative process' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 185) of ongoing data analysis also granted my research process a greater flexibility allowing me a greater freedom to discover the 'potential sources of bias, and (to) surface … incomplete or equivocal data that can be clarified next time out' (Miles & Huberman cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 188).

3.4.1.2 Post-data collection analysis

After the completion of fieldwork and 'ongoing coding' which is a 'form of early (and continuing) analysis' (Miles and Huberman cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 188), post-data collection analysis process began. This stage began by organising data (Marshall & Rossman 2006) into different folders by creating diverse folders on observations and interviews arranged into subfolders according to dates. As interviews were audio recorded, an interview transcription software was used to transcribe the interviews. The transcribed interviews reproduced all spoken words; however, the repetitions, cut offs in speech, gurgles (mm, umm), hesitations or gaps were indicated through three full stops in a row '…' (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2012). Braun & Clarke (2006, 2012) view this level of transcription sufficient for conducting thematic analysis.

3.4.1.2.1 Employing a six-phase thematic analysis approach

As a next step for engaging in this demanding phase of intellectual rigour and deep rumination, I employed Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase approach of thematic analysis in conjunction with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) typologies of

analysis. Behind this approach was my understanding that portraiture allows its researchers a freedom to experiment with its form. During the first phase of post data collection analysis, also called immersion in data (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p. 158) or familiarisation (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2012; Spencer et al. 2014a, 2014b), I became deeply familiar with data through listening to the interview audio recordings several times and through repeated readings of interview transcripts and observations. As I was in the process of becoming familiar with the content of my data, I also started making notes electronically on the margins of my word documents. These notes were 'observational and casual rather than systematic and inclusive' marking the phenomena of my interest (Braun & Clarke 2012, p. 61).

This phase then led to more systematic analysis of empirical data through initial code generation (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2012) — also called labelling or indexing (Spencer et al. 2014a, 2014b). In this process, I first electronically collated the interview data cross-sectionally, putting large data chunks from different participant interviews and observations under broad descriptive or interpretive codes in separate word documents. The descriptive codes through summarising the content of a portion of data or describing the participants' meanings stayed 'close to content of data and to the participants' meanings' (Braun & Clarke 2012, p. 61). The interpretive codes also indicated my interpretation of data sections. After organising data into different broad codes, I printed all interview data on A3 paper and observations on A4 paper with broad margins. Then, I thoroughly read these data chunks to manually code every data item before moving to the next code (Braun & Clarke 2012). This detailed coding produced a rich set of diverse codes in margins along with the relevant data extracts next to the labels. In order to attain rigour, I revisited all the relevant coded data extracts and modified the existing codes to better fit all the relevant content. A worked through example of interviews is presented in thesis Appendix (p. xxxix).

When all codes were written, the search for 'patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 82) began. The identification of themes was done on the basis of finding 'coherent and meaningful pattern(s) in data' (Braun &

Clarke 2012, p. 63). Braun & Clarke's (2006, 2012) theme-searching approach is very close to that of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) approach of the identification of emergent themes. However, what makes Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) approach distinct is that their portraitists' employ five typologies of 'synthesis, convergence, and contrast' (p. 193) to find the 'clustering codes that seem to share some unifying feature together' (Braun & Clarke 2012, p. 63). These typologies include attention to repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, institutional and cultural rituals, triangulation, and revealing patterns. The portraitists' attention to these typologies shows a strong urge to portray life in all its complexity by giving due importance to diverse voices and perspectives.

3.4.1.2.2   Using repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, and institutional and cultural rituals

The use of repetitive refrains helped me identify the repeated articulations, expressions, and practices of the participants' ideologies, the meaning they gave to themselves and their actions, certain phenomena, and the values they held (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997). For instance, I noticed a large number of codes clustering around the Immersion Programme. On further examination, I identified that these codes or repetitive refrains either expressed institutional vision of Immersion Programme, the reasons that brought it into being, the teachers' understanding of it, and the programme procedures and assessments; or the students' responses to this programme and its difference to other regular school classes. I then constructed a theme that included the institutional perceptions and the students' understanding of the Immersion Programme as significant sub themes.

Another typology dealing with 'metaphors, symbols, and vernacular of the actors' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 198) also helped me identify significant patterns across the data. Deeply embedded within the institutional culture and values and the experiences of the participants who also give them an expression, these metaphors were imbued with meanings. It is interesting to see how both typologies dealing with metaphors and repeated refrains also are akin to Patton's (2002, p. 457) description of 'indigenous typologies' where the participants, through their

specific use of language, reveal what was important to them. While analysing data, I was particularly intrigued by one of the teachers' remarks: 'students do something *mad* in this programme', and 'we are back, and the madness continues'. Madness, thus, became a working metaphor and a uniting force that bound all themes together. Also, one of the Programme Coordinators saw the MAD Programme as an *opportunity* for the year nine students. This also became one of the subthemes.

For constructing some other emergent themes, I also took into account the rituals and ceremonies that intersperse the community or institutional life (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997). This typology bears resemblance to what Patton (2002) calls as 'indigenous concepts and practices' that help explain people's worldviews. During my observations, I could identify the programme procedures and assessments as rituals that signified the organisational purpose and revealed the values, priorities, and the tales of an institutional culture. Rituals, as seen by Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 201), are not only 'an aesthetic, ceremonial expression of institutional values, they are also opportunities for building community, for celebrating roots and traditions, for underscoring continuity and coherence'. These recurrent observations helped me identify and place the programme procedures and assessments and the Immersion rituals into two different subthemes that signified institutional perspectives on the Immersion Programme and student experiences of this programme.

3.4.1.2.3 Employing triangulation and revealing patterns

While taking an account of the institutional rituals as an important part of pattern finding, the use of observations along with interview data, called triangulation (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997), also proved to be a useful way to trace the emergent themes. The different layers of data — made through observations and the participants' spoken words meeting at the crossways — gave rise to some significant themes.

Finally, the classification of the Revealing Patterns helped me to incorporate my interpretive insight in bringing discordant pieces of information together to

discover the ways divergent information can be interconnected (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997). Similar to Patton's (2002, p. 458) analyst-constructed typology that implies the researchers' constructed meaning, in revealing patterns, the portraitists' ask of themselves, 'is there a coherence underneath this seeming chaos?' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 209). In this discerning of emergent patterns, the researchers' hands bring 'order to the chaos' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 209). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 210), since these patterns emerge through the portraitists' interpretive and discerning capacity resting on 'some distance and some dispassion', it is probable that the actors may not be able to discover such connections by themselves. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997), revealing patterns also emerge when the portraitists interpretively reflect on the actions and words of the participants — discovering the links and connections between diverse actions and words. For instance, both the observational and interview data revealed diverse codes clustering around helping community and working with others (teachers, teams, community) to accomplish the project purpose of raising awareness or raising money. I brought these different ends together by generating subthemes: engaging with group members and engaging with the broader community. These subthemes then led to one major theme: MADness, community, and collaboration.

3.4.1.2.4 Constructing a thematic framework

After searching themes, I constructed an initial thematic framework outline (Spencer et al. 2014b; Table 3.1). Then, I started reviewing the potential themes for quality checking. This process involved checking themes in relation to data and my supervisors' feedback. In this 'recursive process' (Braun & Clarke 2012, p. 65), I merged some themes recognising their overlap and refined them further by checking their breadth and inclusiveness, boundaries and evidence, and coherence (Braun & Clarke 2012; Table 3.2). One final review of the coherence of themes in relation to the entire data set also was done to check the meaningfulness of themes in relation to the research question and their ability to tell a 'coherent overall story about the data' (Braun & Clarke 2012, p. 66).

Initial Thematic Framework

1. **A Method in MADness:**

   1.1   Alternative program for student engagement

   1.2   Making a difference

   1.3   Skill development

   1.4   The MAD space

   1.5   Programme procedures and assessments

2. **The MAD Becomings: Balancing freedom against the constraints**

Freedom, enjoyment, risks taking, managing challenges, The Creative MADness

   2.1   Choosing MAD Project- becoming 'agentic'

   2.2   Engaging in programme and project activities

   2.3   The Immersion Rituals

   2.4   Taking risks

   2.5   Managing challenges

3. **MADness, Community, and Collaborative Engagement:**

   3.1   Engaging with teams

   3.2   Engaging with broader community

   3.3   Extending beyond self- reaching out to others

4. **Meaning Making from Creative MADness:**

   4.1   The meaning of success

   4.2   Learning about self

   4.3   Learning about others/ Community

Table 3.1 *A list of initially found themes in data analysis*

Revised Thematic Framework

1. A Method in MADness

1.1   The MAD space

1.2   MADness as an *opportunity*: the institutional vision for Immersion Programme

1.3   Student empowerment

1.4   Measuring MADness: the programme procedures and assessments

2. The MAD Becomings: Balancing Freedom against the Constraints

2.1   Student choices and decisions — becoming 'agentic'

2.2   Experiencing creative MADness and creative engagement

2.3   Taking the plunge

2.4   Managing challenges

3. Making Meanings: MADness, Community, and Collaborative Engagement

3.1   Making a difference to self

3.2   Extending beyond self — engaging with group mates

3.3   Engaging with broader community: making a difference to the community

4. The Meaning of Success — Diverse Perspectives

4.1   The institutional vision of success

4.2   Learning from students — an alternative perspective on success

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Table 3.2 *A list of revised themes*

Since the final product of portraiture analysis is an aesthetic whole — a narrative that is a document woven by a researcher, the concerns about validity and reliability are sure to arise. For Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. 247), in portraiture validity and reliability are replaced with authenticity which is gained when a researcher creates a portrayal which is 'believable, that makes sense, that causes that "click of recognition" … a resonance'. The richness of the final portraiture:

> Will have resonance (in different ways, from different perspectives) with three audiences: with the actors who will see themselves reflected in the story, with the readers who will see no reason to disbelieve it, and with the portraitist herself, whose deep knowledge of the setting and self-critical stance allows her to see the "truth value" in her work' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 247).

3.4.2   Representation

In the introduction to *The art and the science of portraiture*, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) effectively describes the role of portraiture in generating contradictory feelings of similarity in strangeness through her use of the metaphor of looking in the mirror of one's image. The experience of beholding their image is deeply revealing as well as unsettling for a person, because their mirror image unearths their essence along with the contours of their image. Portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) claims, performs the same function.

3.4.2.1 The analogy of mirror-raising

Portraiture, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p. xvii), raises the mirror through the research process and representation 'hoping with accuracy and discipline — to capture the mystery and artistry that turn image into essence'. The metaphor of the mirror reappears later in Lawrence-Lightfoot's reflections on portraiture where by relating her personal experience of being painted, she encountered her image that struck a note of familiarity, yet it was something that she 'resisted mightily' (2005, p. 5). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005, p. 5) further describes that image to be 'probing, layered, and interpretive'. The metaphor of

glass finally appears in Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) book *The art and the science of portraiture* when Davis talks about the transformation that the readers of portraiture experience in term of viewing their lives through the lens that the portraitist provides:

> This expanded vision allows the subject to continue to learn from the glass that is held to experience—from the telling of one's own story through another's voice and from the clarity that can be gained from artistic perspective (p. 36).

The analogy of mirror-raising or 'glass' to human experiences, with its associations of the act of seeing and being seen, becomes problematic when the concepts of authenticity and authority are considered. As opposed to reliability and validity, portraiture methodology advocates 'authenticity, capturing the essence and resonance of the actor's experience and perspective through the details of action and thought revealed in context' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 12). Though the final product of research might appear to be different to the readers, they agree 'Yes that is us' (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997, p. 173). The portraitist's task then is to construct a story that is credible and has a resonance with the actors, the readers and with the portraitists' themselves simultaneously (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997).

3.4.2.2 Portraiture re-envisioning — responding to portraiture critiques

As a portraiture researcher, however, Brooks (2017) brings up the limitations of portraiture authenticity and authority in its search for essence and the communication of the ultimate truth which lead portraiture to the postmodern critiques of voice-centred research. While the voice-centred research critique, Brooks (2017) holds, challenges the power differential in narrative representation, its argument for opening up meaning rather than foreclosing it by challenging the dominant authorial voice is equally powerful. Brooks (2017) further maintains that given the fieldwork requires the portraitists to engage in interpretation, there is a strong possibility for foreclosing meaning and giving readers a very narrow choice for an alternative reading. However, Brooks (2017) argues, portraiture's

requirement of the portraitists to provide lengthy descriptive information facilitates the readers' alternative interpretation. Hence, portraiture 'escapes the critique of voice-centred research' (Brooks 2017, p. 2240; also section 3.2.4 for a detailed discussion on how the other portraiture researchers have responded to these portraiture critiques). But for Brooks (2017, p. 2240), this escape remains partial or narrow making her wonder: 'If I account for its (portraiture) limitation, is that enough?'

The supporters of portraiture have addressed these post-modern critiques diversely (section 3.2.4). For instance, a majority of researchers have countered the charges against portraiture theoretically by questioning the lack of evidence and limited understanding of portraiture on the critics' part (Bloom & Erlandson 2003; also section 3.2.4) while the others empirically establish value, goodness, and quality of portraiture as an alternative qualitative research method through their re-interpretation and re-envisioning of portraiture methodology; hence, they effectively counter the criticism raised against it (Muccio, Reybold, & Kidd 2015; Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2011).

Brooks' (2017) re-envisioning of portraiture methodology gathers its force from her observation of portraiture's narrow escape from the post-modern critique of the authorial presence, the difficulties that she faced due to a lack of opportunities in getting a research training to incorporate the aesthetic elements of research in her doctoral studies, and her specific personal background of being a disadvantaged youth where she as a minority experienced silencing. Brooks' (2017, p. 2240) re-envisioning of portraiture then becomes an effort to avoid the perpetuation of 'historical silencing' by giving too much power to the authorial voice. Consequently, Brooks' (2017) final research product is a compromise: she reports her findings in a traditional way by using a critical theory lens to avoid simplicity of interpretation and presents two portraits of white teachers (Brooks 2018). Brooks (2017) concludes her argument:

I did not attempt to create an authentic portrait of teachers within the AVID[1] program, but rather … a re-envisioned portrait, one that does not centre voice, but examines the multiplicity of structure, subjectivity, power, and voice. All of these elements intertwine in the creation of an ever-changing portrait, one that does not assume the centrality of voice (p. 224).

While for Brooks (2017), her personal and research background led her to counter the centrality of the authorial voice and presence in her re-envisioned portraits, for me, the reasons for re-envisioning my portraiture representation are diverse and wide-ranging.

3.4.2.3 Reflections on employing re-envisioning as a representation strategy

My re-envisioning of portraiture does not stem from its structural, methodological, or representational limitations as I would argue in line with many portraiture researchers who have adequately responded to the post-structuralist critique of portraiture (section 3.2.4). It rather stems from my desire to make creative use of the interpretive freedom that portraiture authors (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) and portraiture researchers (Muccio, Reybold & Kidd 2015) claim portraiture methodology allows to its researchers. As a portraiture researcher, I find this freedom quite enticing in stirring my curiosity and compelling me to be an endeavouring researcher. Drawing on Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) affirmation that portraiture allows boundary crossing, my researcher curiosity compels me to further stretch portraiture representation boundaries to establish how flexible portraiture methodology is in responding to the challenges of interpretation.

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[1] Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is an education programme designed to enhance the academic results of students regardless of their background or disadvantage.

I have used my reading and interpretation of portraiture to test the creativity inherent in portraiture design framework and have willingly directed this re-envisioning towards finding answers to portraiture criticism. Hence, my re-interpretation of portraiture representation as it appears in the next two chapters is to find *my take* and *my answer* to the problems of reflexivity and desire for presence. But far from letting this perspective-finding to signify another variation of the desire for my authorial presence in the final representation, this act of re-reading and re-interpretation centres on reclaiming my right as a researcher — a point discussed in detail below.

Like Gaztambide-Fernández et al. (2011), I believe that the pedagogic opportunities of portraiture methodology are immense (section 3.3). Portraiture process also offered me a chance to question my very *presence* as a researcher in the research context. The section (3.3) also elaborated on how the research process disrupted my voice and vision giving me an opportunity to allow and involve other voices through the course of my research. Consequently, the voice and vision that emerged during and after the research process did not belong to me solely; they, rather, were compromised involving and incorporating many other voices as well. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1986, p. 26) likens the whole research process to the researcher's becoming wise, 'more worldly, more complicated, more generous and less arrogant'. Later, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) description of voice modalities shows how fieldwork as well as data analysis becomes an iterative process where each stage benefits from the subsequent stage and each voice absorbs the others. Consequently, it can be argued that portraitists do not promote their singular voices; the voices that find expression in the final portraits are already altered through an active iterative process of voice production.

This altered voice has a potential to answer the problem of reflexivity and the researcher presence. While I found the description of the compromised voice during the fieldwork relatively easy, showing the collaborative and authoritarian aspect of

voice in the final representation turned up to be more challenging. Though portraiture authors, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) description of the way the six modalities of voice ensure that the participant-voice is not silenced, the final portraiture representation is often mistaken for a single authoritarian voice and presence. Since the iterative process of voice production often happens during the fieldwork or at analysis stage, the wider public and readers may not be aware of what goes in the making of the final representation: how voice works and what other voices co-join the seemingly dominant singular voice. The readers simply cannot identify the multiplicity inherent in the narrative voice when they read the portraits. Even the critics of portraiture mistake the author's narrative voice for a single authoritarian voice, failing to appreciate its plurality in the process of its production and generation. My re-envisioning particularly targets this area of vulnerability where the chances of misreading and misinterpretation loom higher. Therefore, I have juxtaposed mine as well as my research participants' voices in two separate chapters as a strategy to ease that muddling understanding.

b)   Re-envisioning as a way of voice improvement

Furthermore, this re-envisioning aims to extend Gitlin's (2012) argument for *making voice better* by avoiding the pit falls of promoting certain disadvantaged voices while neglecting the others and by balancing the power imbalances between the powerful and the powerless (discussed in section 3.2.2). As discussed earlier (section 3.2.2), Gitlin (2012, p. 528) further uses the metaphor of 'working the borderlines' to suggest the ways voice can be made better, effective, and just. Gitlin (2012) argues for using an alternative vision and language along with employing alternative ways to create a balance in representation of knowledge. Somerville (2012) also suggests 'working the boundaries of in-between' as an alternative metaphor to deal with the problem of representation (Somerville 2012, p. 539). In practical terms, for Somerville and her research students, this metaphor implied their reflexive attention to use of the literary forms or bending of artistic forms to suit the research process. However, rather than experimenting with diverse textual forms or bending them, I endeavour to make voice *effective* and *just* through voice-

juxtaposition. In order to do that, I promoted rather than silenced other voices whether they be of the teachers', the students', the readers', or the researcher's. This act of voice representation by working the boundaries of in-between improves the quality of voice in my research project.

Further, like Somerville's (2012) students', my re-envisioning of portraiture is very much embedded in how I experienced myself as a researcher in allowing the research significant *Others*, that is, the school stakeholders to alter my research plan and process. The final representation of the project then becomes an expression of the fragmentation or the dilemmas that I experienced both as a researcher and a subject to the research process. The re-envisioning of portraiture to me offers a creative freedom to express that lingering in-between which is one of the central themes of this research project.

But more than a reading aid to counter the charges to author's imperial presence (English 2000), my re-envisioning of portraiture has a social justice resonance. This research project gives voice to the voiceless at diverse levels: it not only registers the learners' voices by documenting their schooling and learning experiences, it allows equal freedom to the person conducting this research and the people reading this study. Smyth and McInerney (2013) acknowledge the potential of portraiture in representing the points of views of the least powerful. The methodological design of portraiture facilitates this process through its voice modality framework (discussed in section 3.3.8). Subsequently, a new space is opened and the vulnerable are empowered whether they be the research participants, the researcher, or the readers. As a researcher, this new space also allows me to interrogate my own desire for presence. Consequently, I attempt not to silence other voices, but allow and support them to be heard — sometimes to the extent of compromising my own voice and vision. This research project then becomes the very ground where social justice works to *make the voice better*.

My use of the voice-juxtaposition as a re-envisioning strategy to represent the research findings further broadens this space. It brings to the surface the students' spoken words in one chapter and brings my voice back as a researcher in the other;

thereby, supporting me in reclaiming my right as a researcher. Both of these partners in research face vulnerability and risk while working together. This juxtaposition of the research partners' voices works through two separate chapters that is, the *Portraits* chapter and the *Illumination* chapter.

The *Portraits* chapter represents the participants' voices that increasingly become strong and independent while the researcher's authorial voice recedes to the background, dispersing as the chapter proceeds. The use of a rigorous thematic analysis process for the generation of prominent themes helps manage large amount of data and ensures that the researcher focuses on not silencing the participants' voices in theme generation. Further, the representation of the participant voices in the *Portraits* chapter shows a minimal use of the researcher's interpretation allowing the readers an alternative reading experience. However, the researcher's analytic role and presence in sifting themes cannot be fully eliminated and brings portraiture representation debate back to the much-acclaimed concept of the *politics of representation* (Denzin & Lincoln 2018). Finally, this representation of the study findings in the research participants' own voices makes it accessible to the wider audience and has ability to engage them into action and change (section 3.2.4).

The following chapter on *Illuminations*, on the contrary, presents the researcher's sharp analytical voice. This representational arrangement is an attempt to provide a scholarly perspective to the practitioners on the specific research issue. Furthermore, this chapter provides the readers with a new and alternative reading experience where they have a freedom to construct their interpretations by juxtaposing two voices: the researcher's as well as the participants'. Additionally, this calling on the readers for their interpretation brings the reader empowerment into play where they can exercise their freedom to imagine and to interpret. The reading process becomes akin to signifying a 'crucial dynamic between documenting *and* creating the narrative, between receiving *and* shaping, reflecting *and* imposing, mirroring *and* improvising … a string of paradoxes' (Italics in original; Lawrence-Lightfoot 2005, p. 10). The final representation of my research

findings, hence, establishes a dynamic interplay between the research participants'
and the researcher's voices later conjoined by the readers as well.

c)   *Re-envisioning as a way of mirror-raising*

The final representation of my research in two chapters, thus, becomes analogous
to Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) description of *mirror-raising* described earlier in
this section. In juxtaposing the participants' voices along with the researcher's in
two subsequent chapters, that is, the *Portraits* and the *Illumination* chapter, the two
chapters can be interpreted as raising mirrors to each other. This mirroring of voices
becomes similar to De Freitas and Paton's (2009) method of collecting her research
participants' responses by taking their photographic portraits in order to explore the
tension between the humanist 'I' and the non-humanist 'I'. In De Freitas and Paton'
(2009, p. 487) study, the photographer takes the photos of the participants'
reflections in the mirror with a purpose to make the participants 'consider the
artfulness of self-study and simultaneously to cause some discomfort regarding the
nature of self-knowledge'.

In a similar fashion, the mirroring voices presented in two separate yet subsequent
chapters create 'a double-image, (and) the representation of a reflection' (De Freitas
& Paton 2009; p. 487) for the readers as well as the researcher and the participants.
Consequently, the creation of the double-image highlights the researcher's
(partial?) absence in the *Portraits* chapter and her strong analytical voice and
presence in the *Illumination* chapter. This act of mirror-raising also puts the
researcher's and the participants' presence at risk by making their vulnerabilities
and biases visible. De Freitas and Paton (2009) regard the participants' examination
of their own reflection as a disruptive act of self-study and explain it with Paul De
Man's concept of *Prosopopeia* (cited in De Freitas & Paton 2009) that grants voice
and face to an absent subject. De Freitas and Paton (2009) argue how the
autobiographical *Prosopopeia* comes to signify a paradox as well: in giving face
and voice, it disfigures and defaces. De Freitas and Paton (2009) conclude their
argument:

When we gaze inward, or onto our own reflected faces, we witness the delay, the repetition, the many substitutions that interfere in the process of reflection, and we learn to doubt the transparency of the image, although unable to abandon the hope that it might return to us (p. 497).

The *Portraits* chapter in this thesis while foregrounding the participants' voices, shadows the researcher's voice. The chapter, by portraying the participants' voices, underlines the return of the researched in research: a return that De Freitas (2008; discussed in section 3.3) argues, questions the presence of the researcher in their research — all the while making the researcher's vulnerability and risk of erasure visible. The participants' portraits also illumine the researcher's biases or specific perspectives that colour the research findings.

This voice-juxtaposition, by raising mirrors not only improves voice representation, but also makes this me-researcher *strange* when I gaze at my reflection in the chapter. My experience becomes similar to that of Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) in experiencing a peculiar feeling of *similarity in strangeness* in looking through the mirror and in beholding her portrait. It is here that the metaphor of mirrors extends to embrace the concept of *making the familiar strange* or *strange familiar* as drawn from Delamont (2012).

The final portrait did not mirror Lawrence-Lightfoot as she imagined how she looked; rather, it captured how the artist saw, recognised, and understood her (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1997). The final portraiture, through juxtaposition of voices, also holds a mirror to this me-researcher evoking the same feeling of *strangeness* that results from seeing my altered voice. The finished product through mirroring generates a paradoxical experience of meeting someone *strange but familiar* and helping me recognise my *indwelling* in the *third or in-between space* (Gitlin 2012; Somerville 2012; Flewitt et al. 2017; Flewitt & Ang 2020). Also, this expanded vision allows the research subjects and the readers to 'continue to learn from the glass that is held to experience — from the telling of one's story through another's voice' (Davis 1997, p. 36). This is the pedagogic possibility of portraiture, a presentation of multiple competing truths (Hackmann 2002), and an act of justice

to the research participants, the researcher, and the readers that are at an equal risk of erasure or damage in this research process.

3.5   Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief introduction to this chapter closely followed by the sections that detailed the researcher's paradigmatic and methodological orientations leading her to choose the design framework of portraiture. The whole chapter has three major divisions: section (3.2) illuminates how portraiture came to signify the research orientations guiding this investigation; section (3.3) focuses on the research procedures and illuminates how the use of portraiture methodology guided these research processes; and finally, section (3.4) dwells on discussing how the methodological framework of portraiture informed the research analysis and representation. The chapter concluded with the last section (3.5) summarising the key arguments of the chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PORTRAITS

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the portraits of the five Immersion groups. Far from neatly drawn portraits where the strong authorial voice gives an impression of its singularity and strong presence, this section makes the multiplicity of voice visible by representing the participants' diverse and as possible untainted spoken words. This re-envisioning not only presents my interpretation of portraiture methodology, but is also true to the purpose of this research that aims to hear the voice of the often unheard students. This chapter, thereby, deals with a thematic presentation of the participants' spoken words in their own voices. Although in drawing the themes, the researcher has resorted to a rigorous and research intensive process of data analysis, the analysis process has fully attended to and represented the participants' voices that not only resonate with each other, but also show dissonance with others at some points. These portraits are represented thematically through four main sections (4.2, 4.3, 4.4, & 4.5) and their subsections. The portraits conclude with the researcher's final comments in section (4.6).

4.2   A Method in MADness

They *all* call it *MAD*. The Immersion Programme for year nines at Elan High school is an alternative school programme designed by a working party in 2015 to 'help engage students' targeting 'the lower results in stimulating learning and teacher effectiveness in the student attitudes to school survey' (Mr. Oscar, pseudonym, Programme Coordinator). This Immersion Programme is alternatively called MAD. MAD is an uncanny word in terms of its associations with mental health and illness. However, in the Immersion context, MAD is an acronym for 'Making a Difference. Ms. Audrey (pseudonym, programme co-coordinator), the tall energetic PE teacher who is teaching Immersion for the first time this year, describes Immersion

enthusiastically as an *opportunity* for students to do something 'Mad' to make a difference in the community. After recess or lunch break, you would often hear Ms. Audrey's joyful voice echoing through the spacious Immersion Halls cheering the students up and inspiring them to keep pursuing their passion: 'We are back again and the *Madness* continues'. Her clever wordplay about madness hints at the creative freedom that it offers to the students and her perceived difference between this programme and other school classes in its capacity to allow the students to pursue their passion. The word MAD in Immersion, thus, signifies an opportunity to make a difference, the freedom to pursue one's passion, and the freedom to break free from the school routines that the students experience relentlessly. More philosophically, at the heart of this madness is 'the very principle of movement, in an endless metamorphic transformation' (Felman 1975, p. 227) which also serves as the aim of this programme to bring change in the students through development of their skills.

4.2.1   The MAD space

The spirit of MADness prevails everywhere from the Immersion community that constitutes year 9 students and teachers to the Immersion space. It is a short but revitalising walk from the reception area to the Immersion Halls situated on the first floor of the main building. While making my way through the Atrium, which is a wide covered space, to the main building where the Immersion Halls are, I can see numerous students standing in twos or threes talking loudly, or making their way towards their classes in different directions. Despite the cold and freezing winter mornings, the school corridors radiate warmth and comfort. As I go up the stairs that lead to the Immersion Halls, I can hear a loud noise reverberating in the stairway. On further ascending, I see the Immersion students standing in front of the glass doors busily talking to one another or to the students from other two classes on the same floor. All students are waiting for their teachers to open their respective classrooms. The Immersion students' keen interest to occupy the blue raised area for taking teachers' instructions, as they enter the Immersion space, exhibits another interesting feature of this space (*Figure 4.1*).
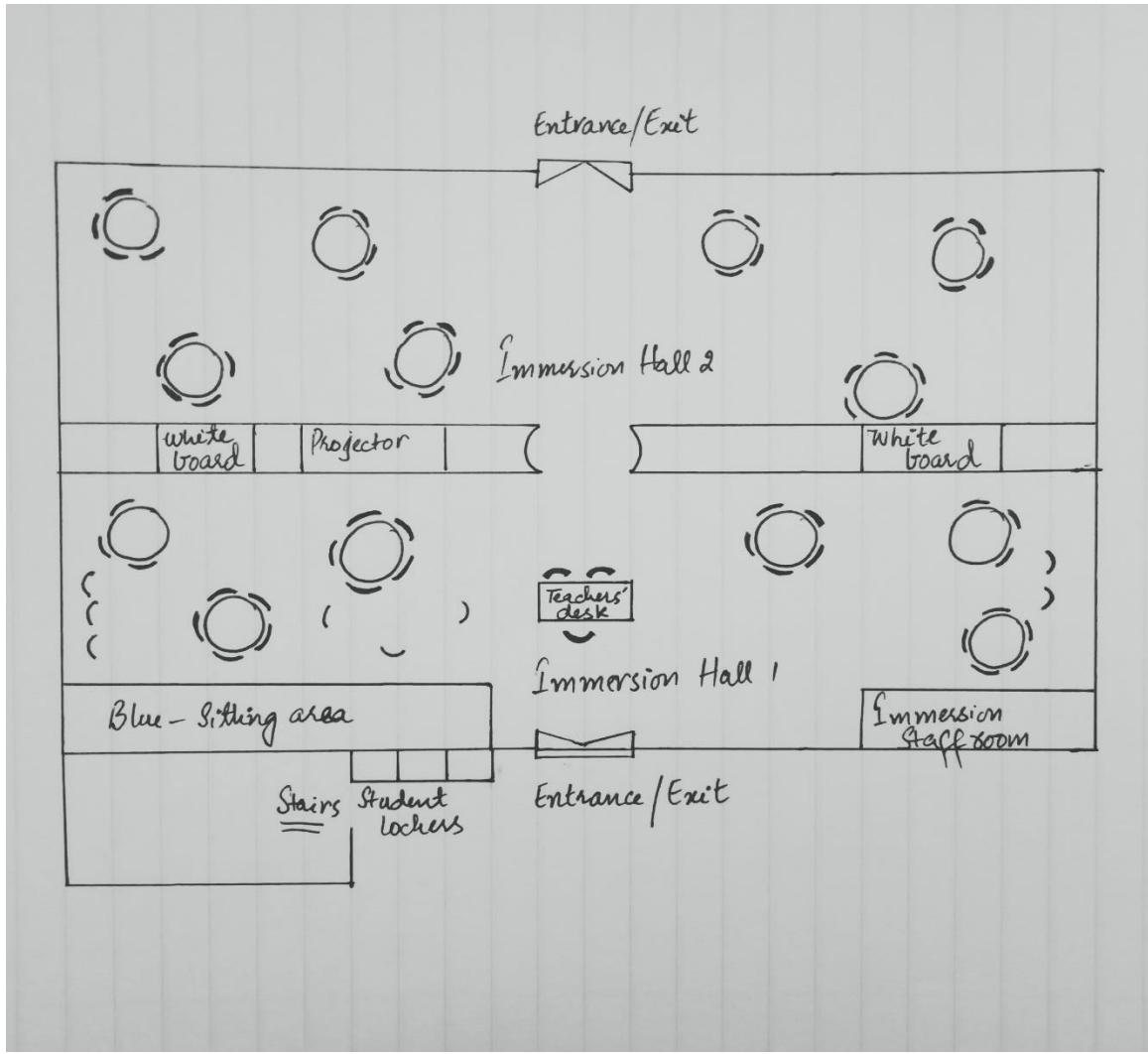
Figure 4.1. A site map for the Immersion space

As soon as Ms. Audrey unlocks the glass doors, the view at the front also becomes clear. It is a big open space which is conjoined with another big hall. The thick grey and black carpet gives this room a dark look; however, the powerful lighting arrangements in the Halls counter this darkness. Also, on the right and left of the Immersion Hall walls, are small windows which allow sun to enter the rooms whenever it is sunny. Unlike the straight rows in other classes, the tables in the Immersion space are surrounded by red chairs and are scattered throughout the Hall space. As soon as the students enter the halls, one student Jacob says, 'It's cold

here'. Ms. Audrey is busy turning the lights on. Right in front of the central opening to the next Hall is written 'MAD' in green, blue, and red colours which is further surrounded by the student photos from the previous Immersion sessions. These words on the inner walls of the Halls, in point of fact, mirror the words written on the main glass door explaining that MAD stands for 'Make a Difference'. Further down the wall, one can read the programme motto, *be respectful*, *be a learner*, and *be safe*. Right across the second Hall opposite to the middle opening is another glass door providing the students with an alternative access or departure point.

Though this place might hold various meanings for the people who inhabit this space for a term, its spaciousness is the first architectural feature that totally engages the students with this space. For the students, this place becomes the central generative principle for varied possibilities by accommodating a wide number of people together working on diverse projects. Kelly describes the Immersion space:

> So it's like a place where we can like come together as a big group and talk about the different … projects that we're doing but also … it has enough room in the classroom to go off into our groups and … I suppose there's … whiteboards … there's bit of tables so that we can kinda … spread-out.

The openness of the space and the arrangement of furniture allows maximum movement — along with granting the students the freedom to sit wherever they like:

> You don't really feel like you're all cramped and can sort of do anything … you don't have to feel worried about people I like how its windows are … I feel like sitting next to the windows because it's kind of gloomy in other places but yeah it's nice sunny with a sunshine I get to look on to the ocean over there as well (Eva).

Jack — working on a website design project to help protect people's private information — describes this space as an efficient work place 'where we can just get stuff done like we're laid back and relaxed but still it has rules … so just a work

space a really efficient work space'. The major reason that brings Jack back to this space every time is 'the fact that we work on the project that'll make a difference'.

Jade also echoes Jack's interest in staying connected to this space. It is Jade's desire to make a difference which pushes her to put more effort in this programme. Jade's description of this place as 'really a good space to work in' and in which 'everyone is on task' holds particularly true when you enter this space in the midst of the Immersion activities. The raised blue sitting area, right to one's left as one enters through the main glass doors, perhaps is the favourite gathering spot for the Immersion students to sit and listen to their teachers' instructions. At other times, the students sit at their separate tables as groups of three to five students. Their tables stand aloof from other tables — looking like small islands in deep waters. The distance between tables is reasonable, and the neighboring groups generally stay undisturbed by the presence of the other surrounding groups.

A quick tour of the Halls reveals quite different uses of this wide space: at one table one can glimpse a student group silently working on their lap tops with little or no interaction taking place between them while at the other, one can observe, group-mates are actively communicating project information with one another. At this table, the students look at their lap tops in front of them, but also involve their peers by directing their attention to their laptop screens. A glance at the blue sitting area makes one notice many students lying down there and doing nothing. Moving to the other big Hall, one can also catch a glimpse of a knot of students sitting on the floor bonded together with their shared hand free sets and looking keenly on shared lap tops. Near the Hall windows, a cluster of students can be seen playing music on their laptops and working on their projects. Sometimes, however, one would come across a handful of students watching videos or playing games on their lap tops. But such instances are relatively rare, and mostly students are actively exchanging and sharing information related to their projects.

Perhaps this meaningful interaction with others is the core reason that brings the Immersion students back to the Immersion space: 'I guess (what brings me here is the) people who rely on me' (Karen). However, what brings Jade here is the absence

of other alternatives: '(I come here because) I don't have other classes' during this time. For Grace, this place means a 'sort of just school' and she is here 'to get good grades'. This sense of compulsion to attend the Immersion classes presents a contrast with the institutional vision of viewing it as an *opportunity* for everyone to make a difference. Kelly's reply and her group-members' amused laughter in response to my question of what brings her to this space every day, clearly indicates the obviousness of the answer: 'It's our timetable that brings us here' (Kelly; Laughter).

4.2.2 MADness as an *opportunity*: the institutional vision for Immersion Programme

Like the Immersion students' varied associated meanings and attachments with the MAD space, the students' understanding of the MAD Programme offers a range of perspectives. Some students hold that this programme is about 'making a difference' (Amelia, Chloe, William, & Henry) by 'raising awareness' (Ivy, Lily, Isla, Henry). For others, this programme is about 'educating people' (Ivy, Lily) through posters, movies, and information. What makes students feel accomplished, 'proud,' and good is not just doing something that will make them proud or educating them about the worldwide problems, but also 'giving (people/community) another side and perspective' (Kate). One of the Programme Coordinators, Mr. Oscar, likens the Immersion Project to an 'action research project'. To students, this programme is 'teaching us about real life a bit more than regular classes would' (Kate). Certain students equate the Immersion Programme with a schedule enabling them to participate in a myriad of activities, for instance, 'going to city to get people's views (on their topic)', and 'it was fun surveying' (Kate). As a part of this programme, the students also take part in community service once a week. Additionally, the students choose a topic for their project on 'what we think needs to change' (Jade). Some students view the Immersion Programme as 'an important subject', because it informs them about 'issues in everyday life', guides them to 'help others in need', and 'replaces 'Math, English,

and Humanities' (Henry). This semester they are doing MAD which is twelve periods a week.

It is not hard to see how the students' understanding of this programme resonates with the institutional aspirations of this programme. The MAD Programme is deemed as an *opportunity* for students 'to come in and work on a project-based learning in … project-based learning environment and that's different from their mainstream classes' (Ms. Audrey). In offering an *opportunity* to the students to pursue the topics of their interest, this part of the curriculum design is like many other 'Big Picture schools' where the students might opt-in to engage 'whereas here every student has the opportunity to be in this programme' (Ms. Audrey). Though Mr. Oscar is not sure of any specific parallels to the Immersion Programme in other schools, he identifies some year 9 programmes in other schools called 'City experience' that involved doing on-site city surveys as a part of a Humanities class and producing a report.

> When I say similar I don't think it's greatly similar to this I'm not sure about thesis and everything they (that school) might create a hypothesis and then survey people and they might do a report on it also those classes probably have less periods to work on this.

Ms. Audrey the programme co-coordinator and teacher, also views this programme as an *opportunity* for the student to do 'something MAD to make a difference to the community'. She further depicts another distinct feature of this programme that is its difference from regular school classes:

> Yeah so I guess we're not traditionally teaching the things that would be explicitly taught in those subjects in the traditional way so we're looking at graphing we're looking at data analysis and we're looking at surveying and we're looking at … the writing of a thesis document and you know we're doing all those things but in a way that's different to how they've done it before so hopefully they're coming in with some basic skills and then we are allowing them to transfer those skills … from the traditional class and see how the things that I'm learning in Science about writing up a scientific

report and the things I'm learning in Humanities about surveying and collecting data linked together in and then things that I'm learning in English about like writing and you know topic sentences and you know a persuasive writing and all of those things can come together and how they work together rather than always seeing them as separate entities and not understanding … how they can be together.

Mr. Oscar also asserts this programme's links to the school curriculum.

It encompasses areas of Science Humanities and English curriculum and students work also on developing skills interpersonal skills collaborative skills teamwork skills … problem-solving skills in this environment.

Mr. Oscar also explains that this programme 'runs for 12 periods a week whereas … most … core subjects run for five or six' (periods a week).

The Immersion students experience a great 'level of independence' (Jade) and enjoy 'helping people because you don't do enough of that' (Olivia). The MAD learners link regular classes to rigorous testing: 'Yeah it's just I think a lot of it is testing that we do … it's just reviewing the content where we could be reviewing the content well but like applying it to something … applying it to something that matters' (Ava). In the MAD Programme, the students do 'a lot more group work' (Grace) or extended group work which they also deem good. However, some students are aware of difficulties with team work: 'but also it might not be favourite thing for everyone' (Ava). Thesis writing is also another different yet challenging aspect of this programme that the Immersion students do for the very first time. Some students see the programme difference more in terms of the self-selected activities, they choose to do as a part of their project: 'I guess making websites and filming videos is something we cannot find in our regular school classes (Jack)'; or, "Well a community service … never done that before during high school (William)."

Also, the Immersion Programme activities are different from regular classes, because the Immersion students have an opportunity to talk to 'to strangers in the

city during city surveys' (Isabella). Further, 'there's a lot more group activities and like activities that had to go on for longer so there was a lot more time to do but they were much bigger … projects' (Henry). For Henry, the programme implies something more:

> It's more serious real life like as a person like everyone should want to make a difference in a positive way and I think all schools should be learning something like this so then they can make a difference and then the next person can make a difference and so on so forth … make the world a better place.

4.2.3   Student empowerment

The Immersion Programme Coordinator Mr. Oscar — a keen advocate of this programme being an *opportunity* for the students to engage with their learning — regards the development of student agency being the most distinct feature of this programme:

> But probably … the biggest difference at the moment is that it promotes student agency and while that's the strategic plan going now and partly inspired by the Immersion Programme success so other subjects are now incorporating more student agency but at the moment Immersion's certainly seen as the bastion of that … it's a place where students get more choice perhaps than any other subject arguably though that's existing elsewhere too but it may not be documented or publicised as much but I think that's the biggest difference at the moment other subjects you know might have very I can put it another way I guess restricted content or opportunities to explore student voice and agency.

Ms. Audrey also explains what student agency means:

> So I think student agency is … about allowing students that opportunity to think freely and solve problems and be assisted and given tools in doing that but also to have their own choice … it's a bit … more open and free and they feel like there's that ownership on them rather than the ownership being

with the teacher so it's and I think that's really … important in keeping that we're not saying this is our topic and this is what you must do and everyone's going to do this it's about students engaging in something that they are choosing and leading in a way that they want to yeah right does it make sense?

It is this aspect of the student empowerment that makes this programme successful:

I think that it's the opportunity to do something that is of interest to them and inspiring to them not that you know hopefully … the things that we're doing in our mainstream curriculum are not only interesting and inspiring for students but I think that opportunity for student agency and choice that the immersion programme brings is what helps it to be successful and that students feel that they have a level of responsibility and sort of the opportunity to try something in their own way without those stringent guidelines from the teachers … there are guidelines and there are things that need to be done in ways that we asked them to be completed but however students go about that is up to them and their group in collaboration and I think that's the one thing that makes it really successful is that it's of the students' choosing and therefore they've already bought into it because it's something that they're interested in (Ms. Audrey).

The student surveys, conducted at the end of the Immersion Programme, indicate student satisfaction with this programme as well.

While this programme is different from other regular school classes in terms of embodying student agency, it is setting a precedent for other regular school classes to include student agency as a part of the routine classroom procedure too. Mr. Oscar also highlights his recent training sessions where he trained the school teachers to include more student agency in their regular classes.

4.2.4 Measuring MADness: the programme procedures and assessments

Despite promoting student agency, the teachers also feel bound to report on student learning 'So that's the purpose I guess in terms of the legal purpose of those things' (Mr. Oscar). Ms. Audrey enumerates the assessment requirements of this programme which include the completion of the thesis project, oral presentation, and reflection tasks. Thesis writing further requires the Immersion students to complete surveys and graphs 'but the two main things that are sort of submitted as their endpoints are the oral presentation and the thesis' (Ms. Audrey). It is also worth noting that despite the programme Coordinator, Mr. Oscar's, frequent reiterations about the core programme expectations of the students to 'undertake a project which attempts to make a difference,' the formal criterion for measuring the student success is different. The programme assessments require achievable, measurable, specific, and timely Smart Goals worked out as a team. However, Mr. Oscar affirms that there is no mandate for success:

> If their project is unsuccessful they still need to write their thesis reflecting on that and they still would do their presentation later on so we do really encourage success and efforts along the way we have checks in place to assist that … we do have situations where students don't have a huge impact but they still can achieve success in terms of what the subject requires of them.

Moreover, Mr. Oscar identifies the institutional purpose behind designing project-based learning centred Immersion Programme. It is designed to:

> Allow students to develop something that's going to be of a higher quality than they could maybe do on their own so to ask a student in the time frame that we have to complete the project in on an individual basis would be not possible but obviously they're able to do something … of a higher level as a group in the time that they have and to see something really worthwhile achieved.

Similarly, the assessment of oral presentations that requires the students' parents to be present during individual presentations, also offers an opportunity to engage with the school community:

> Then I guess the oral presentation really allows them to reflect on what has happened … and engage with their families because at high school it's not that often that parents get to come in and see what's going on and have that kind of dialogue with their children and so they get to come in and really see what's been going on especially in a programme where you know people might be apprehensive because it's a whole term where you're not doing your traditional … mainstream subjects you know so I think to be able to have that opportunity is really important as well.

4.3   The MAD Becomings: Balancing Freedom against the Constraints

The MAD procedures enable the students to balance their agentic freedom with the official and institutional requirements of the programme. The following subsections (4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, & 4.3.4) elucidate in the students' own words how the process of the 'MAD becoming' works.

4.3.1   Student choices and decisions — becoming 'agentic'

No doubt, the Immersion space is also a place for the *MAD Becomings* where the year 9 students exercise creative freedom to engage with their projects to help the community. The creative element of engagement lies with:

> The aspect that they're not told what to do they have to think of a way that they can solve their problem and I think often in education we say here's the problem and here is how you solve it and let's all do that same thing together but it's like here's a problem … there's a whole myriad of solutions but what do you think would be the best solution for you to help to make a difference with this problem and I think it's about thinking outside the square of ways to engage other people because the whole premise is to make a difference (Ms. Audrey).

The students' exercise of creative freedom to complete their individual projects according to their personal inclinations starts very early in the programme — probably as early as the identification of problems and issues plaguing the world, community, or individuals. The concentric circles on the wall — indicating the students' categorisation of both the self and the group-identified issues in the 'Me', Community, and the World — is a visual representation of the active individual and collaborative process of issue exploration and identification *(Figure 4.2)*. The teachers employ a range of activities to help the students identify the global, communal, and personal issues or problems; choose the topics or issues in which to make a difference; finding 'who wants to do this with me?' (Mr. Oscar); and design the group project activities to carry on their projects through mutual decisions.

> I think it definitely encourages students to think outside the square and just you know not do the things that they've always done and have that leadership aspect and that individual flair being able to come through in their work so it's not that everybody's doing an essay on this topic or everyone's presenting an information booth or you know everyone's doing an informative video it's completely up to you … and if you choose to use those mediums that's awesome and we support that but also you know if you want to I don't know go and do something within the local community and spread awareness that way we'll try and make it work (Ms. Audrey).

Figure 4.2. The concentric circles representing me, community, and global issues

Apart from that, engaging with people also requires creative ideas:

> Probably another … thing that encourages creativity is our five-week
> community service programme where students could visit a series of
> different sites including primary schools, hospitals, Op-shops that those sort
> of settings in those spaces and like the nursing home setting for example we
> ask students to come up with the programmes what they will do when they
> are … at the venue so if you're at a primary school they (students) have to
> engage young children in activities and if they are going to the nursing home
> or the hospital they have to create conversation with the elderly patients
> there so we have a sort of those opportunities but we also have activities in
> class which encourage creativity … but it also occurs on out in the field on

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the Melbourne Street Art Tasks that we've designed asks students to interpret the art as well so and there's no wrong answer but we look for answers with depth and we are also measuring the Intercultural Capability … so that actually contributes to that task and so yeah probably a series of tasks … throughout the unit probably contribute to the cultivation of creativity (Mr. Oscar).

4.3.1.1 Experiencing constraints

However, despite the programme's proffered creative freedom to the aspiring students, the students undertaking their projects experience certain restraints in project execution. For instance, although the common trend indicates the students mostly choose local levels at which to make an impact, there are some practical difficulties conducting global and individual projects:

We have had groups in the past focusing on helping the individual as well and then there are usually education campaigns too which we did have this time global level's a bit harder but we do get that we get a connection to that … we have had contributions made to Global Charities as well … overseas. We've had a challenge with that though because of Bank fees for Bank transfers to overseas Charities they just take up so much of the money the kids make so we've been finding it's better to donate to Australian charities that have a connection overseas and they can contribute to overseas cause via Australian charities that's interesting so you know we have sort of … economic limitations and systemic limitations to how they can contribute and money is not the only way of course when we have some of the … girls who have created the resource packs in the bags you know for some of the projects and that's difficult probably to send overseas probably easier to use here so they make decisions about … all of those things … in part … that are a part of the process is that a part of it? (Mr. Oscar).

Also, apart from experiencing those sociopolitical and economic restraints, there are other considerations as well. For instance, the projects need to be realistic. The teachers' task here is to act:

Being a filter you know when we get the first proposals we talk about the realistic … the possible reality of the situation being a smart goal being carrying realistic goals so they've gotta be creative but may be not too outlandish with their aspirations but sort of encouraged at the same time but it's gotta be realistic too (Mr. Oscar).

Also, they have to observe the school guidelines:

We have some guidelines around the fact that the school only allows a certain amount of fundraisers or certain topics need to be for example if it's maybe something to do with mental health or something like that we need to have some guidelines around how that might look in terms of sharing information with different groups of students and there is sensitivity around certain topics … but generally if a student has an idea that is unique and creative and exciting we want to try and help them in any way to be able to complete that project in the scope of the programme and the parameters that we have (Mr. Oscar).

Additionally, despite the fact that all Immersion groups aspiring to organise a fundraiser, there is only a limited number of fundraisers (up to three approximately) available to the students. This limitation of number of fundraisers has some implications, particularly if the students do not succeed in being accepted to run a fundraiser, it impacts their engagement with the projects. Henry and William's frustration (discussed in section 4.3.4) epitomises that.

Working in groups, sometimes, also acts as a constraint to what the students individually want to achieve. To work in teams requires the Immersion students to make compromises in order to come to mutual decisions. Oftentimes, even the very decision of making groups follows the desire to be nested together with close friends rather than pursuing what appeals to the students personally. This drift, in some cases, leads to poor choices resulting in student disengagement. Additionally, sometimes, one group has to drop the project topic, they are interested in, because another group is already working on the same topic:

Thomas: Yes the school system but then we changed it because another group was doing that.

Jack: And we didn't have much evidence to support our topic so we changed it up to something that had a bit more evidence and that was still a big issue.

The Immersion students employ different strategies to make their group decisions which is covered in more detail under the heading *Managing Challenges* (section 4.3.4).

4.3.2   Experiencing creative MADness and creative engagement

According to the Programme Coordinator, Mr. Oscar, the past official survey results on student engagement and satisfaction for the Immersion Programme have indicated high levels of student satisfaction and engagement and again this term, he is very hopeful of the 'positive affirmation about that'. No doubt, the student enthusiasm and involvement with their work can be seen through their project execution. The MAD students are very explicit in communicating what makes them excited about their work. For instance, for Mia it is 'working on of course that we actually care about and are passionate about'.

For Henry, it is learning something new, some skill and helping others that make him feel better. Some students find the early time of the programme when they were in the process of forming groups quite enthralling because:

We were … full thinking of different ideas of what we could do … how we will do our things we had a lot of space to kind of … choose what we wanted to do we could kind of think of anything so right at the start of the term was probably very exciting time (Ella).

Some students even enjoyed the process of getting to work within a group and 'getting to know each other more' (Chloe). It was a time of great learning where 'we learnt about their … our … strong points and weaker (sic) points' (Chloe). However, though getting to know each other more might be an exciting thing to do for some, for others it was not (Ava).

4.3.2.1 Learning as an embodied act

For some students the embodied act of doing something was exciting:

> When we actually had to fundraise … because things were actually happening we felt we were doing something good because people were actually buying stuff and we were giving it to charity (Amelia).

This embodied act of making things happen incorporated many project activities, for instance, doing a sausage sizzle or doing sales which also allowed the students the freedom to 'do things they wanted to do' (Grace). This was, in a way, an approach towards active resolution of problems which also had another dimension to it. It broadened the students' understanding of people's openness and willingness to support a cause. For the students, it came like a surprise: they realised that they were not alone in eliminating communal problems:

> For me it was when we were holding the petition and we realised just … how many people coming up and wanting to sign it and for me that's what made me really happy and I was like surprised and … (Ava).

Also

> I was just surprised how many donations we got in total, and it was really good because in the first week like we just kept getting like rubbish and I thought we were not gonna make it … but then we got a lot of donations and stuff that was good (Chloe).

Some students also recognise planning and implementing fundraisers to be a great opportunity to help others through donations. Apart from the recognition of opportunity for helping others, there is an element of pride associated with fundraising as well on winning a special task that does not come everyone's way:

> That was a special task that was also a very big opportunity to raise money I think the fundraiser gave us that opportunity (Emily).

For Jack, the very excitement of his work emerges from gaining new knowledge of what can be beneficial for making a difference.

I'm just reading about the raw statistics of what goes on and what cannot go on in a way like to make lots of different things safer and more accessible to people it was one of the main factors that was very exciting for me.

For other students, for instance Isla's group, the acquisition of new knowledge came through active interaction with people during city surveys. This also allowed them to view the scope and impact of the looming issue of domestic violence, they were investigating and trying to resolve.

Lily: I reckon after the city surveys …

Isla: Yeah because we learnt about how serious our topic was … like it can affect anyone … you can't just affect a certain person because the way they act or anything … it can be anyone … it can be anyone at all like and that really scared … I think it's scared all of us into … putting the most effort into our project to …

Ivy: Chances are … since it's one in three women that's like out of my grandmother my mom and I (one of us) have been affected or going to be affected (by domestic violence) which is crazy I don't want anyone I love and care about to be affected by this sort of thing.

This understanding expanded the students' vision and knowledge which was very exciting and made them approach their topic from a new perspective:

Well in the beginning like we were looking at and we wanted to raise awareness but after our city surveys a lot of people were aware of domestic violence and we realised that not many people knew where the nearest shelter was … or how to get themselves out of the situation if they needed to who to talk to and so we really wanted to like educate people on that so with our home group lessons we had lots of information to educate like people around the school as well different year levels about like where the nearest shelter is (Ivy).

Ivy's group was able to share and educate others on their newly acquired knowledge. They were also ready to benefit from such knowledge themselves if any such need arose.

Though for the other students, as Isabella stated, the obvious reason to enjoy city excursions was missing a day at school, the different nature of learning experiences was also what deeply enthralled them:

> It was just like the weather wasn't so good but everyone was … happy on the day obviously they were missing a day out of school but … it was still kind of at school like we were learning things and especially the first experience when we were like talking to people we obviously … had never talked to people before which is the point of it and we were asking questions about our topic and seeing … this that what they knew about it and what they didn't and obviously … their opinion and then the second time we went to the city it was more about asking … different things that other people had done and I think that kind of related to not specifically our topic but to the Immersion Project in general (Isabella).

To some aspiring students, excursions allowed freedom to make decisions for themselves in their teachers' absence which was a way of 'preparing ourselves for the future projects that we might do at school like outside of school' (Isla). Amelia liked excursions because they gave her an opportunity to hear other people's opinions on their project topic. For Amelia's team member Charlotte, the fact that the Immersion went for one whole term 'and we got the whole term to fully finish it … I liked the result … better than getting a mark because we actually did something'. Some students liked the simplicity of this programme while others liked it for different reason:

> Chloe: I quite liked it as I didn't have to do Science Humanities and English. (Laughter).

> Ava: And there's … little such stupid things like not having to take your books everywhere like basically we just need to think and not talk.

Zoe: I like how simple it was it wasn't really complex.

4.3.2.2 Challenges to student engagement

Given that the Immersion adopted an unconventional approach towards curriculum subjects that is, Humanities, Science, and English, some students felt quite apprehensive about not doing the traditional subjects:

Ivy: This programme overall was really good but I'm also nervous about since we're not doing English Humanities or Science this whole term I'm nervous about like getting back into it next term after forgetting everything.

All students: Yeah exactly.

Isla: I think my English skills have gone down a little bit.

Lily: Same …

Zara: I keep calling people different names and I think that's memory not … (in audible).

Isla: (Laughing) Yeah I think I'm just a stupid already.

Zara: stupider?

All laughing: Yeah.

For William and Henry, however, the reason was losing a group member which allowed them to work more on their topics to make up for the loss. This also engaged them more with their project:

William: Well after the City Excursion we lost like one of our group members … and we actually had to do a lot more work and we got like more intrigued and more wanting to do more and we just done a lot of research on our presentation we found out how fascinating this topic actually is so yeah.

Some students, for instance, Jack and Isabella were thrilled by doing their project activities that they had not done before, for instance, making videos, websites,

doing sales and so on. Thomas from their group found even the community service and city excursions enjoyable as he got to know about people's stories and their perspectives which was quite fascinating:

> And they told like a lot of interesting stories and stuff about the point of views and opinions of people that were maybe born like 20 to 50 years ago 80 years ago (Thomas).

However, Isabella wanted to have more time and freedom to finalise her team members:

> Well I liked most of it … it was good probably I would have liked to spend some more time to like discuss groups instead of just we had I think the first week doing individual things … maybe teamwork I think it was and then on the Friday it was like OK you are making the teams now and you have to stick to them obviously I didn't get to stick to one because there was some stuff happened but yeah that was it.

Jack also linked the time restraint to their inability to 'do all that we wanted to do and that was we could get to spend a bit more time on our thesis'.

Isabella added:

> And probably we didn't have a lot of time for like the oral presentation either probably only about a week isn't it? Three periods after this may be a bit more time for that.

Like Isabella and Jack, Henry and William also experienced time constraints:

> William: Well I reckon it (the programme) should give us a bit more time like with our thesis I didn't like they only gave us two weeks to do it and finish it but besides that I think well done.

> Henry: Maybe just the thesis just take your time for the thesis and that's about it I think it was well done.

As opposed to Isabella, Jack, Henry, and William who felt the time constraints, Isla's group members disliked Fridays because of the amount of time they had to spend in the Immersion class:

Zara: On the other side I didn't really enjoy Fridays.

Isla: Because there were six periods.

Zara: Six periods of one subject I would have like preferred maybe even doing the subjects that we miss.

Silence.

Ivy: Yeah just sort of it was a bit much for like six periods a day (inaudible) every Monday with the same people yeah (Laughter).

Researcher: Okay any changes you would suggest? First not six periods may be.

Ivy: I feel like more city excursions.

Researcher: More city excursions?

Isla: I feel like we should have gone outside yeah.

Ivy: I think on Friday's …

Isla: We were cooped up.

Ivy: Our workspace yes like outside.

Isla: I just said that.

Ivy: Like we cooped up … the only time we could go outside was recess or lunch and I'm like that's a …

Isla: You said the exact same thing.

Ivy: You said outside lesson.

Isla: Yeah outside yeah.

4.3.3 Taking the plunge

Despite modern-day education in schools being risk-aversive (Harris 2014), many Immersion students relate their pursuit of passion through project activities to risk-taking. For instance, the group working on women's sanitary products (Ava's group) came up with the idea of collecting bra and tampon donations. For that purpose, they installed donation boxes at different spots within the school premises. According to Mia:

> Personally I think doing the donation boxes was a bit of a risk because … I've heard … that lots of people laughed at it and didn't feel like comfortable donating their bras and tampons because they think it is a sensitive topic … which it shouldn't be.

Similarly, for this group the very idea of taking action against the GST by signing a petition for tax removal was not that easy. Being females, the group advocating for that purpose felt quite vulnerable at that point, open to receive all sort of criticism against their purpose:

> It was just sort of standing up for myself because I have trouble doing that and yeah like … I suppose it's more also standing up to … for women as well like when people would say … stupid things about it and just saying … that's not right like if you don't think this is something right then you shouldn't be here like just talking to us (Ava).

One group associated risk-taking with their pancake sale for fundraising because of uncertainty relating to the amount raised. Similarly, for the group doing a sausage sizzle as a fundraiser the risk was associated with investing money on the sizzle and less surety to get all the money back. Also, the students were not sure how much money they wanted to raise. For the students, mostly involved with raising awareness, risk-taking was different in nature. For instance, Jack's group, working on cyber safety, put it this way:

> Or we could also say most of the things that we did was like a risk because obviously in making our website we didn't like know if it was going to work

so we might have been working on something … for the whole term and then if it didn't work obviously we're going to be like damned because that's the biggest part of Immersion but yeah everything worked out well too and everyone's happy about that (Isabella).

It is only when the students were able to get some positive response on their efforts from the target audience, they felt safe. However, in the midst of all these perspectives, there were some groups that did not see any risk-taking associated with their projects. For instance, the group working on the war project to raise people's awareness could not identify any risk-taking:

William: Risks it probably …

Henry: Not not really.

William: Not really we didn't take many risks not really

4.3.4 Managing challenges

While undertaking the individual projects not only involved a bold approach towards taking risks, there were times when the year 9 students faced some challenges which involved challenges pertaining to creative ideation (sub-section 4.3.4.1) as well as challenges against self and in working with others (sub-section 4.3.4.2).

4.3.4.1 Challenges with idea-generation

The Immersion students felt challenged when their expectations were thwarted. For instance, Amelia was one of the students who came to the Immersion with very high ambition to do something really great; however, neither she nor her group members could find an idea that could help them make a huge difference:

We wanted to do a bigger part of (raising awareness) it was easier to like just do something where people like gave money … so we wanted to try and raise awareness more … (Amelia).

This group could not come up with any solution to this problem:

When we were discussing what we wanna our project to be we could not like think of anything that would work (Amelia).

Similar to Amelia's group, Isla's group also joined the Immersion with high expectations:

Isla: We had very high ambitions.

Ivy: Yeah like we were hearing about when girls who had previously done this project and they were on the news and we were like whoa we should try and make a difference that big but then we were thinking what can we actually do to get that much recognition …

Isla: Yeah.

Ivy: And we couldn't think of something.

Isla: So we started small I feel like …

Lily: Sausage sizzle was kind of our first big step that we took yeah …

Zara: We did have like a different project idea like maybe using a video put it on YouTube like raising awareness …

Isla: Yeah we were making a video to like raising awareness getting their opinions on domestic violence.

Zara: But then we just thought we will just try to work on the (inaudible) stuff …

Isla: And it was also like getting people's consent for it and it just would have been too much work …

Lily: Like we wanted to do it with our city surveys that we did in the city but then like we would have to fill in a whole lot of speech …

Zara: And we wouldn't have enough time there anyway.

Ivy: There were demographic questions too and the questions we were wanting to ask were more open-ended like opinion-based.

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Lily: Probably, more personal as well.

Ivy: Yeah.

For Lucy and Isabella, the challenge was that they could not work on the topics of interest, for instance, working on bees and feminism. On the other hand, for Ava's group the challenge was to get enough donations despite their inability to hold bake sales or fundraisers. Similarly, due to the structure of the Immersion, 'the teacher kind of said they're going to have to do this' (Ella) as another group was doing that. Ella's group could not do a sausage sizzle. They ended up with a pancake sale. However, far from being disappointed, the group commented:

Emily: Like we run in three groups that got to do a fundraiser so we were like kind of … we might as well do something yeah because not everyone else is doing it yeah ….

Grace: But it was fine.

Tom: Yeah, still worked though.

For Ella's group, there was another challenge though: there was an unexpected change in their schedule to conduct the pancake sale. The group members felt:

Grace: A bit disappointed but we did have a back-up plan in case yeah in case it did fall through.

Ella: Yeah and it was like time was a big pressure … we sort of had to just move on.

William and Henry's group also experienced frustration when they could not run a fundraiser. However, far from the structural limitations of the programme, it was more of a personal limitation at a group level. Henry and William could not send their email off on time. Consequently, they had to go for a presentation to raise awareness instead of raising money.

William: We were all pretty mad….

Henry: A bit disappointed but it's what it is there are still … other ways to share our information and make a difference.

4.3.4.2 Facing self

While undertaking the Immersion projects, some students came face to face with their own selves. Thus, their challenges were more of a personal kind. For instance, some students found it hard speaking to strangers and acknowledged that it required immense confidence to talk to people: 'While surveying … I was a lot more nervous than I thought' (Amelia). Ivy and Isla's group members found their multiple rejections from the interviewees very intense and embarrassing. Zara claimed that it required 'confidence to go up to someone'. Likewise, most of the group members coped with this challenge by recognising the necessity of doing the task. For some students, the personal challenges involved overcoming their bias:

> Isla: I just feel like … we didn't educate the amount of like people that we could have
>
> Other students: Yeah …
>
> Isla: We because like we said no to speaking to another class on the first day that we did a presentation but I feel like because of the amount of information that our PowerPoint had we I think we educated them well enough … to like use that prior knowledge … if they were ever in a situation like that to get themselves out of something they know.

Further for Isla, her personal challenge was fighting against boredom that she frequently encountered while working on her thesis. Amelia and her group also found thesis 'tedious and long'. For Mia, to meet the boredom of doing a thesis was her persistence:

> Yeah. I found the thesis conclusion a bit time consuming and I just wanted to stop but then I just decided to keep on going …
>
> Ava: Yeah we had to hold on to group …

Mia: Because I don't want to let anyone down in a group because it is marked as a group and so like you have to pull your part.

Ava: Yeah … I was doing the results and also the abstract like it was just sort of how I spoke to myself … I wanted to do at it at the end so I felt like I wasn't actually doing much in class and then … I found it hard … it was confusing to me once I started to do it but … they helped me work it out like how to do it.

Ella also kept lingering on writing the thesis: 'I didn't really want to start did not really know heaps about what I was actually doing so I feel like if we had a bit more help on what each of our sections were at it would have been much easier to begin …' For Amelia, thesis was the most boring part that took the most amount of effort. However, it was not impossible and her group 'got over it because we had to and we all worked together pretty well' (Amelia). Grace found the teachers' help very useful in accomplishing that tedious task. Apart from the tedium of writing the thesis, the practical challenge in group situations was coming round to a unanimous decision. Isla and her group adopted the following approach:

Isla: I feel like just getting everyone's opinions on the issue yeah we need like someone's idea to start off like the solving of the problem but with all our friends' input like we get the best outcome …

Ivy: We just needed to ensure we communicated.

Isla: Yeah because if all of our opinions were put across that would help us.

For Henry and William their overall involvement as a group was an issue:

Henry: Probably our involvement as a group like we had one of our members who had to leave at the start of our …

William: Project.

Henry: Project because this wasn't working out we weren't really prepared for that we all thought like even though we're all good mates we'll still get

the job done but obviously that didn't work out but we made the most out of it and came through.

Jack's group faced the challenge of a lack of organisation and lack of focus that came in their way to finish their thesis. For Isabella, one way of lack of focus was dealt through collaborative work:

> Some of it (effort) was more individual but … when it needed to be worked in like as a team we thought okay so everyone stopped doing what they were doing and we worked together to finish this and then we went back to like what we were doing beforehand.

Jack also found the lack of data on which to base their website challenging. In order to find a solution, they decided to make some videos to put on the website, which Thomas found a bit overwhelming: 'the script reading was a little bit difficult because it was not to say it was rushed but it was kind of here's script … read it … read it'.

Ivy and her group mainly struggled with technology, communication, and time management:

> Zara: We ran out of time with a lot of things….

> Ivy: Like sausage sizzle crept up on us we didn't realise the sausage sizzle was a week away.

> Isla: Yeah and mainly the technology and also the home group we didn't realise how close they were.

> Ivy: I also believe … communication like Zara had been organising all of the home groups …

> Isla to Zara: You get thrown under the bus.

> Ivy: We weren't all aware of when the classes were and the day that we had a class. Zara was absent so we were not sure what rooms we were …

> Isla: We were freaking out.

Ivy: (Continues) Meant to be in helping we resolved that because Ms. Audrey kept a copy of our time tables right?

Isla: And also thanks to me.

Apart from these situational challenges, there were some distractions that Ella and her group members experienced from another group. They had to involve teachers to reduce such distractions. Emily experienced a similar situational challenge when her group wanted to raise more money to contribute more, 'but we could not really control that situation'. Likewise, Jack wanted to interview more people, but there weren't many people around.

4.4 Making Meanings: MADness, Community, and Collaborative Engagement

Working on the MAD project to help community, in fact, is a collaborative task that requires partnerships at different levels. Given that the school has designed the Immersion Programme in a certain way where group work yields more productive results, the final product of the students' projects is 'more than the sum of individual efforts' (Ms. Audrey). Consequently, the individuals collaborate with one another to make a difference. The most basic and integral form of collaboration begins through the group work. The students' very decision of choosing a topic of their interest and finding a group to meaningfully engage with the topic of mutual interest shows a spirit of collaboration. The students choose to engage with the project through diverse project activities. Amelia and Olivia's group 'wanted to have a fundraiser and donate money to the charity we had chosen'. For that, the group 'had brochures', and the group members 'wanted to raise awareness for the issue too'.

Ava's group project was 'to get the GST removed off sanitary products and help women in need who do not have access to sanitary products and bras'. Emily's group aimed to raise money for Starlight Foundation by 'holding a pancake sale on 4th June and we have raised 300 dollars and all the money that we have raised will go to the Starlight Foundation'. Isabella and her group:

Decided that we are from the social media we decided obviously we were going to do like social media security and we decided that not a lot of people like knew about it so we thought we would like make a website and then we can either put it on the school bulletin or we can make a website and then email it to the students directly … We ended up emailing it to them directly and we got like a lot of hits we'll just check now how many and yeah it worked out well and everyone did their part.

Researcher: And what makes you think that it worked out well?

Isabella: Well there was (asking Jack: How many? Jack: Wait a second. 79)

Isabella: 79 people was it out of the 200?

Jack: 200

Isabella: That we emailed yeah … which is quite a bit of people yeah.

Isla's group worked on domestic violence:

Our project is about domestic violence so we like just want to educate people that we're close to … youth especially to just let them know what domestic violence is about and how they can get themselves or someone out of a situation if they feel that they're uncomfortable or anything and …

Ivy: Raising awareness yeah …

William's group:

William: So we chose war we like chose this topic because we wanted to go into a nuclear warfare and the effects … that it has on people and countries and the world.

Henry: We wanted to have like an effect and our project was to raise awareness and give others our knowledge on the dangers and all the possibilities.

These groups participated in this programme in different ways. For Amelia, participation in the project meant working together: 'But we worked together'

(Amelia). Ava's group, working towards GST removal 'made donation boxes' and 'held a petition to get GST off the sanitary products' (Mia). Ella from Emily's group described her participation as:

> Yeah so different ways I have participated in this programme was like I went to the city and the Big Issue class which was something different we've had a couple of guest speakers which is really cool to have participated in … there's been so many great opportunities and I was like learning a bit more about like our city and other stuff when we went out because I never go into the City and you know it's good … I don't know

> Grace: We also do community service which is where we go and we help … we do things in the community.

> Grace: Yes like for example I went to Elan Primary School (pseudonym) just down the road from here and we like played sport with the kids there that's something that we do as a part of our project.

Isla's group thoroughly described their group participation:

> Isla: Sausage Sizzle.

> Ivy: We raised a lot of money for the Big Issue.

> Isla: Yeah.

> Ivy: To buy yearly subscribe …

> Isla (cuts in): It's a 12 months yeah 12 month subscription.

> All students: Yeah.

> Isla: To the magazine yeah.

> Ivy: The Big Issue for the school.

> Lily: We went to the Big Issue there was a woman who was a guest speaker and she had a domestic violence like in relationships so we thought that was a good idea and Ms. Audrey suggested that we did something to help them

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and raise money because they also have women that feel like uncomfortable to sell the magazine on streets come in and do another programme with them at the Big Issue so we thought like it would be good to raise money for them as well.

Isla: Yeah because the women who are uncomfortable …

Ivy: In working on the street they're employed online they sold the online subscriptions so every subscription that is purchased a few women are employed so we just really wanted to be able to help out with the women who have been affected too.

Similarly

Henry: Our main one was raising awareness and we went into a class and we gave a presentation about the Warfare and information on that topic.

Henry: We also went to the city and we conducted a survey on how much people knew about our topic and our results were pretty good a lot of people knew about our topic and it was a fun day.

Further

Henry: When writing up our thesis we had … to write different areas so I had to write the results like the methodology and the bibliography and we all had to write our own areas in it and then at the end we all combined our work and made the group thesis …

Researcher: And what was your part in thesis?

William: Well, my part … I've done the … the abstract the statement of purpose and I've done the conclusion and I was going to do the bibliography I'd half started it and then our other group member wanted to finish it off because he … (Henry cuts in but is inaudible) and we finished.

However, working in a team in the Immersion Programme for a common purpose is:

Different … from what they've had before a lot of structured collaborative work in classes says that … one person will take this role and that role means they do this and then you know you'll be this person and you'll do this whereas in this programme here's your team (Ms. Audrey).

More emphasis on team work also implies a change in the teacher's roles:

You know it's all about the teachers in regular circumstances do this do this do this these are your tasks you must you know do this and we are saying the same thing but we are saying what you actually go to do is to make the decisions about your learning and the way you are going to learn, and the content of your learning so I think that's the biggest challenge of getting used to that but happily I can say that most groups really take it up with great enthusiasm which is really pleasing we do see confusion from some and when we have got such students we help them (Mr. Oscar).

The development of the student agency begins when students:

Need to decide as a group what are people's roles what are their strengths and we talk about that we talk about we look at different types of learners and different types of personality traits and how they work together to make a successful group … and then students from there sort of start to work out okay where do I fit in this team? And they come to challenges and they butt heads and they have disagreements and initially we ask the students to work through those and hope that they do and if they don't then we can step in and mediate where we need to but I think that's one of the really big learning points from this programme … I think that the project is just the tool for all of the other amazing learning that happens in terms of collaboration and problem-solving and I think that's what's so great about this programme … the project is just the tool for all the other learning here (Ms. Audrey).

Engaging with group members for a common purpose, thus, is quite challenging. However, once the students:

Have the opportunity to work through a problem then they're more confident when the next one arises because lots of little things come up throughout but I think once they have had that opportunity to say or face the conflict and confront it and work through it then they realise 'hey this is just what happens when you're working in a team' … people always aren't going to agree on what happens and they work out ways to go about fixing those problems (Ms. Audrey).

Some students, however, never take this challenge of reaching out to others to form the teams and prefer to go into friendship groups which later on poses some challenges of its own kind:

Yeah so I think one of the big challenges that we face in this programme is that they will get into a group with their friends and then they become distracted by that group and a lot of the feedback from the students when they do their individual presentations when they reflect on their time in the programme is that they say, I wish I didn't go in a group with my friends or with all of my friends because they know … that's a challenge for them and they find that difficult … that ability to say Okay right now we're not … talking about what happened on the weekend we're talking about our project and I think that's one of the main challenges they find (Ms. Audrey).

4.4.1   Making a difference to the self

This sense of responsibility towards a broader purpose helps the students resolve any issues that arise among the group members. Also, there is another level of responsibility that pushes the students to feel responsible towards their group members and makes them perform their assigned tasks and roles. Further, working in a team implies foregoing self-centred behaviour:

Ella: I would probably say I've never really worked in a team for … a whole term before so it was pretty cool to …

Tom: Yeah.

Ella: Learn how to like control myself (laughs) yeah.

Tom: I've got to make new friends that I talk to now.

The ultimate self-satisfaction emerges out of doing something purposeful for the community: the students feel great about doing something good. 'It was a nice feeling … we were doing something that was purposeful' (Charlotte). Inevitably, this feeling is linked with doing something for the community:

Mia: I found it good helping people in need and yeah …

Ava: And ... we were communicating with ... the kids at the school ... which we hadn't before and ... they were asking questions about it and we felt ... we were just helping make a difference ... change...

The students also learn about what it takes to make a difference in the community. Everyone can reach out to others:

Grace: I think it makes you realise that ... even though ... we visited a local primary school it's ... people like same things as we can do ... the amount of opportunities that we get given to be able to do different things to benefit other people that's pretty good that's nice.

Emily discovers, 'there's a lot of ways we can make a difference in our community or in our world' while for Ella 'maybe I didn't know all the little things you can do to make a difference'. Isabella also realises: 'we just had people and stuff but then it just opened our mind to think although that is a bit bigger than all of us but (sic) we still can do something to fix it'. The students' recognition of their actions being embodied is worthwhile as well, because it makes the students feel good about themselves: 'we were happy that we'd actually done something and not failed at our project' (Amelia).

Ava: (Our) sanitary petition was so successful yeah ... like we were doing what we were trying to do.

Mia: Yeah we all had a part which we all did successfully and it turned out with a good result which is always a good thing.

However, the success of achieving what they wanted to attain, in fact, stimulated the learners to desire for more:

> Thomas: I think that if we had more time we could have achieved something more (sic) greater but given the time frame we kind of had to rush a little bit and I think if we were given more time we could have done something a bit better.

Working in teams helps the students discover their abilities as well:

> Chloe: I learnt that I have the capability to help others like it's easy to help others even if it's just in small ways it's really easy.

> Mia: I learned that I never thought I was a good public speaker it turns out I actually can talk to people and yeah in public when we were doing City surveys I've actually talked to people and yeah ... with petition I talked to people and ...

> Ava: I am not sure ... really (Laughter) I think maybe this was more on a like English kind of ... just from what we're doing today I've learnt that I'm actually all right at editing like editing work yeah I just think I have improved my skill on that ...

Similarly

> Henry: I felt pretty proud that a lot of people went home knowing a lot of knowledge about war and a kid in the class actually has been studying this topic for three years and he was very smart as well yeah we shared our knowledge, and he also taught a lot of the other people a lot more.

4.4.2   Extending beyond self — engaging with group mates

In working for the broader community, the students have also learned to work with the team mates:

> Ivy: Well working together...

> Isla: We are all very strong-minded.

All students: Yeah.

Ivy: We all have very...

Isla: We are strongly opinionated.

Ivy: So that was hard.

Isla: That's what we've learnt to come to a conclusion with everyone's opinions into one like answer so that we can incorporate everyone's ideas to ... benefit the project.

Lily: Yeah we have also learned like for each individual everyone has similar strengths but they are different too some of us are strong leaders some of us are very creative some of us very practical it's really different and it's good when we all kind of work together and...

Ivy: What I've learned about this group is we've all kind of got the same goal and so we all end up agreeing on what each other have to say like on how to help because it's all for the greater cause

Lily: Yeah...

Ivy (Continues): Just learned that all of us will take other people's opinions into consideration.

Learning about others also involved discovering others' strengths and weaknesses:

Ella: Tom plays soccer he's really famous I have learnt that we all have different characteristics in the team that I didn't know we had like yeah Emily is a really good leader which I didn't actually know ... but she's quite perfectionist.

Grace: (Laughing): She's very bossy.

Ella: No I know Emily is such a good leader I have kind of learnt these new personalities and people I guess you could say I think it's pretty good.

For Henry, learning about others involves getting to know about people's knowledge and understanding of the topic, War that Henry and William are working on:

> Henry: We wanted a lot of other people had shared a knowledge on our topic they understood the devastations of the possibilities of this.

Learning about the self further entailed:

> William: If we actually all engage into a topic we can do a lot more work than we thought of we could do...

> Henry: Some times that we can't always work with our best friends sometimes we need to just put our head down and do our work with other people so that might be the best option.

It is also worthwhile to note that the students are at risk of becoming disengaged due to the learning challenges which arise from working collaboratively. For instance, some groups find the challenge of working with their team mates quite intense — to the extent of wishing to drop out of the course had there been such an option. However, due to the teachers' support and their own self-realised solutions, they keep their interest intact which has important implications for their collaborative learning. All this working with others (team mates) to work for others (the broader community) has made a difference to the students at diverse levels. For Isla's group, this difference is in terms of construction of new knowledge and acquisition of new learning and related skills:

> Lily: I feel like I didn't know a lot of things about domestic violence before we did the whole project and doing the Cornelle notes especially like reading everybody's like questions and their answers and like the starts and all people that can help I didn't know that there was that many people ... got affected ... all that many people can help you so like learning new things about stuff you didn't know really intrigued me and made me feel like I made a difference with myself and others around me.

Zara: For me it would be mainly like organisation with the sausage sizzle like something really serious you have to take really well and just be really organised to deal with whatever happens and like we had to sign lots of papers and I didn't realise how serious it was.

Isla: I forgot the question (Laughter)

Researcher (laughing as well): How has this programme made a difference to you?

Isla: Oh it's made me realise that because when we're all in a group when everyone who can support each other or in a group it makes such a big difference to the amount of people that you impact or the amount of knowledge that you put out into the world so I feel like because we were working together and we got an impact and like helping other people like other women other men who have gone through this I feel like it's just made us all very aware of the whole world and like stuff that happens.

Lily: I think it's kind of upsetting when you read about all the statistics about like one in three women and then one in five men are abused ... but then also just like being able to tell just making one other person aware of that and showing one other person what it's like for someone to go through that and then also telling them how you can get out of that situation kind of makes you feel good because you're helping someone else ... so it's good effort and it kind of makes me feel happier.

Ivy: I believe it really taught me to be independent it was very self-motivated (sic) well and I learned a lot about the topic as an individual like I didn't realise how little I knew on it so that's it.

Also

William: Well me alone I've learnt a lot about War and what it can do to us and do a lot like to the world yeah and how much it means and how many problems are in now in the world ... that everyone faces every day.

Henry: Same as William but also I learnt a lot about working in a group environment and working with people had my friends or the people that I need in this so not just trying to always be joking around.

Henry's group also aspired to do many things differently provided they got an opportunity to do things again:

William: Probably l'll choose join a different group

Henry: Join a group that are more dedicated in learning yeah probably just try to find the best options for learning in this project.

William: And yeah probably just going in a group ... without my friends because it just doesn't work sometimes a lot of the time it doesn't work.

4.4.3   Engaging with broader community: making a difference to the community

The students' engagement with the broader community happens during their community service work, while conducting their city surveys, and during their engagement with the school community for raising awareness. The students reportedly have enjoyed their experiences with other people, because it helped them expand their vision and gave them some new ideas as well. They were also pleasantly surprised to see how people shared the same perspectives and values as them, and how open the people were to the topics that they were working on. However, some groups also acknowledged difficulty interacting with people due to a lack of confidence, and due to lack of people's interest in their topic. Ava and Mia's group particularly reported what they discovered:

Mia: I found that some people aren't very caring and a bit selfish when we're doing the petition I found lots of people didn't really want to sign the petition because it's they say didn't affect them but overall it does affect them and it affects yeah mainly males because it does affect the people they know and love be their sisters their mothers and their aunties it affects everyone.

Ava: And also yeah from doing the petition ... because we had chocolate as thank you for signing for the petition lots of people we found were signing the petition for chocolates which was to be to be expected but ... we would just sort of ... hope that people would want to do it from ...

Mia: Of course!

Ava: The point of trying to make a difference ... trying to change the things.

While interacting with the broader community, the students are excited when they learn about the broader views that actually confirm their perspectives and expand their understanding. However, they become disappointed when they have group conflicts and their ideas get shut down. The students also do not like it when they find opposition, but they are happy when they see a room for improvement:

Jack: I guess this made us realise that a lot of people are open to a lot of things we wouldn't normally think they would be open to I hope that makes sense? Yeah so like ... they are a lot keener to get involved than we anticipated.

On the whole, working with others was a transformative experience in terms of broadening the students' knowledge on their topics and other people's topics (Amelia, Ava, Isabella) and in acquiring a certain set of skills:

Amelia: I mean I know more about our topic I guess...

Charlotte: and I think yeah ... we are just more like aware about the topic...

Amelia: And other people's topics like because you hear what other people are doing and you ... like ... think about it...

For Ava's group:

Chloe: I learnt a lot more about how much other people are struggling...

Ava: And about how much the GST makes from sanitary products which was like 55 billion or something which is a ridiculous amount.

Mia: I found I'm more confident...

Ava: I feel like my learning skills have improved.

The Immersion Programme has made a difference to Emily's group as well:

Emily: I guess just like we can actually do more do something about the problems ... solve them.

Ella: I don't know...

Grace: I guess it's a good thing that you get to do something other than old student work which is a nice part.

Isabella's group comments on their Immersion experience as following:

Jack: Well...

Isabella: Kind of I guess it opened all of our minds to not only our topic but everyone else's topic that I've talked to because we did have a couple of lessons where they spoke about their topics or someone performed for us something like that where they spoke to us about it and what it was and we just had people and stuff but then it just opened our mind to think although that is a bit bigger than all of us but we still can do something to fix it.

Researcher (to Jack): Would you like to add something?

Jack: I guess it's just it's given us a new skill-set like writing thesis writing again website creating I think a little bit more teamwork and leadership skills.

Isla and Ivy's group describe their learning from Immersion (also discussed earlier) involving gaining an insight into their topic that is domestic violence, the scale of its impact, the support available along with Lily's feeling of accomplishment in being able to make a 'difference with myself and others around me'. Zara learnt how to organise events through sausage sizzle and the amount of paper work such events required. For Isla, it was a learning about working as a group to support each other and to make 'such a big difference to the amount of people that you impact or the amount of knowledge that you put out into the world'. Their collaborative

work on the social issue also 'made us all very aware of the whole world and like stuff that happens'. Ivy learnt to be independent and 'self-motivated' along with realising 'how little I knew on (the topic)'. Also, William has learnt about the impact of war while Henry knows the demands of 'working in a group environment and working with people' and 'not just trying to always be joking around'.

4.5   The Meaning of Success — Diverse Perspectives

This section presents diverse perspectives on the meaning of success. The Immersion students and their teachers' views are very informative.

4.5.1   The institutional vision of success

When asked by the Programme Coordinators what the Immersion students are supposed to achieve before the project finishes, Ms. Audrey viewed student achievement more in terms of what can be reported and measured:

> So I think so tangibly they are supposed to complete their thesis project and then their oral presentation so these are the two assessable items that they are reported on and then there's other things throughout they complete reflection tasks they complete ... surveys they complete graphs there's a number of little tasks that make up to those things but the two main things that are sort of submitted as their endpoints are the oral presentation and the thesis.

Mr. Oscar approaches the issue of student achievement and student success as follows:

> Yes student success in this programme is being able to identify ... an issue that they're passionate about and then joining a team to engage in teamwork so those I guess those interpersonal skills and intrapersonal skills that they need to access and build and develop. ... we also measure the success by how well that project is reported and reflected upon in the thesis so in many ways what they're doing is effectively an action research project we don't label it like that but for the thesis they produce has to reflect all the sections

of other regular theses at University level ... of course it's scaffolded differently and we have templates and everything for them to look at and guidance in each of those sections in their thesis but it's also then their ability to reflect individually upon the whole projects and the whole term of immersion during the oral presentation so if a student has been a part of a team, tried to make a difference to a cause recorded the journey in a thesis and an oral presentation and reflected upon that and considered how to improve then they have had success.

Given that the students work in teams, according to Ms. Audrey, there is least likelihood of the students not completing their projects:

So I don't think that ... we don't really have that happened as such because they're working in a group you know it would be very unlikely that a group wouldn't get to that end point but obviously we can see where students have not engaged as much as other members of their group and they're assessed individually on certain aspects of their engagement and completion of the group task you know that there obviously will be opportunities for students to have extra time if necessary because we want everyone to be able to finish the process and to achieve success ... there's been groups that haven't completed their actual project and therefore they had to complete their thesis basically writing about what they intended to do and then why it didn't work because you know in life things don't always work and so we've got to be able to reflect on why they didn't work and consider what we would do differently with our time next time yeah.

The school encourages student success and offers many alternatives for students to succeed:

So they're expected to undertake a project which attempts to make a difference the success of the projects has to be measured as well so we told them about Smart Goals and they need to make a smart goal as a team so it's gotta be specific it's gotta be measurable achievable and it's gotta be timely as well because we're only limited to the one term subject so they

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have to do that but to rate the level of success ... there's no mandate for that if their project is unsuccessful they still need to write their thesis reflecting on that and they still would do their presentation later on so we do really encourage success and efforts along the way we have checks in place to assist that we do have situations where students don't have a huge impact, but they still can achieve success in terms of what the subject requires of them (Mr. Oscar).

Further

So we have some alternative projects for them to complete if a student had difficulty because they're away or because they weren't comfortable to be in a group we have some alternative tasks and they focus on aspects of the course that ... we use in the major projects and the mainstream projects so one of the alternative tasks for example is to undertake an investigation of an issue research into the issue just like the other teams do but also requires some surveying at the local level school-based surveying and then making some conclusions just like in the mainstream project but we also have alternative oral presentation settings as well in fact, some of those were enacted just recently when students weren't able to give a presentation in front of the regular audience so yeah did I answer the question alternatives provided? (Mr. Oscar)

The students in the Immersion Programme go for alternatives only under special circumstances:

Not ... to say by choice it was by choice but not because of any modification because of ... any sort of disability, nothing like that we did have some students who couldn't make their oral presentations due to time constraints we had one student who in the last minute was very uncomfortable and felt unprepared wanted some more time so then the setting became a small room with one parent one teacher and one student and more casual ... no projector just the machine to present the presentation however to sit down and stand up however they wanted to do and ... we also worked out that will be helpful

if I made it conversational so I then I asked questions later on in the presentation to prompt some ideas (Mr. Oscar).

The oral presentation is to involve parents in the process as well: it engages the students with their families by establishing a kind of dialogue with them and provides the parents with an opportunity to remove their apprehensions of the programme that does not do the 'the three mainstream subjects' for a whole term (Mr. Oscar).

4.5.2 Learning from students — an alternative perspective on success

The students' views on their project success offer an interesting alternative perspective. For instance, Amelia's group was quite satisfied with their project performance: 'We did pretty well ... we have done everything that we could have' (Amelia). Ava and Mia are also proud of their group performance. Knowing that other groups have been struggling and having conflicts in their respective groups, and that they worked really well as a group and on the success of their project, Mia rates her group performance really high. For Emily and Ella, their great work as a team together, and their accomplishment of a lot of stuff, for instance, completing their thesis count towards their success. However, Ella still thinks they could have probably performed better:

> Ella: It could have been a little bit more productive in class which was ... in this semester space with 50 kids it's a kind of hard to concentrate.

For Jack and Isabella's group, their good ideas, their ability to 'get some work done' (Jack) which included working with the thesis, on the website, and on the documents that they needed contributed towards their achievement. For Isla and Ivy, their performance is:

> Ivy: I'd say we did really well we got our message across very well and we raised money and got our message across and we've learned stuff ourselves which was really the main goal.

For Henry:

I think our group and me personally I think we tried a lot pretty hard and we've done well enough I think everyone did well we all put in time and effort with our theses (sic) because they're not easy to do they're pretty hard so I think we've all done well.

The students' concept of achievement includes raising money for their cause: 'We already kind of achieved it we wanted to raise money for the charity and we did so we kind of accomplished this' (Amelia). For Ava and Mia, the concept of what they wanted to achieve during the programme included getting donations, helping people in need, and trying to get GST removed off the sanitary products by filing a petition against GST. Emily and Ella also maintain that their group has finished everything to a 'high standard' (Emily).

Ella: Yeah and yeah definitely we've kind of already done it but you know raise some money and help the child's life.

For Jack and Isabella's group their achievement pertains to 'helping out members of our school and community ... by protecting their private information' (Jack) and 'making sure that because there's one of the main ways people bully other people is by finding out photos ... all kinds of stuff like that and we're trying to aim to stop that from happening' (Jack). Isabella's aim is to 'Just get as many people to see the website and just get as many accounts as we can save so no one gets bullied or anything or no private information gets stolen which is our main goal'. For William and Henry, their achievement pertains to educating people on the effects of war if it happens any time in future:

Henry: They (people) get a better understanding of the topic and can understand even though they might not be physically ... control over the nuclear war what's going on there but at least they can have their opinion they can voice their opinion on to the next person and so on so forth.

William: And if they want they can raise money for the cause we've got a few good War Charities that are helping out a lot of countries in need and yeah...

4.6   Conclusion

This chapter presents the perspectives from five, year 9 student-groups, on their creative learning and engagement experiences in their own words. The thematic organisation of the students' perspectives, arranged into four main sections (4.2, 4.3, 4.4, & 4.5) shows the students' clear insights into the ways they experience and display their creativity and learning. These student portraits also invite readers to interpret the students' learning experiences. The next chapter on *Illumination* presents the researcher's strong critical voice which will be juxtaposed against the participants' voices in this chapter to introduce readers to a different reading experience.

CHAPTER 5

ILLUMINATING PORTRAITS: THE RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

5.1   Introduction

The Italian playwright, Luigi Pirandello's (1921) play, *Six characters in search of an author*, opens with The Manager and The Actors present on the stage to rehearse a play. However, their work is interrupted by the arrival of six people who call themselves 'really six most interesting characters' (The Step-Daughter; Pirandello 1921). The character of the Father tells The Manager and The Actors that they are looking for an author who can own them. Perceiving the ridicule and incredulity of their pursuit by The Manager and The Actors in an intense moment, The Father expresses his and the other accompanying characters' passionate desire to live and play out their drama:

The Father. It is in us! [*The* ACTORS *laugh.*] The drama is in us, and we are the drama. We are impatient to play it. Our inner passion drives us on to this (Pirandello 1921).

While drama resides with and within the characters despite The Father's serious assertion, 'we bring you a drama, sir,' they need an author for recording their drama. The dialogue runs like this:

> **The Manager**. Yes, that's all right. But you want someone to write it.
>
> **The Father**. No, no. Someone to take it down, possibly, while we play it, scene by scene! It will be enough to sketch it out at first, and then try it over.
>
> **The Manager**. Well … I am almost tempted. It's a bit of an idea. One might have a shot at it.

The Father. Of course. You'll see what scenes will come out of it. I can give you one, at once ….

The Manager. By Jove, it tempts me. I'd like to have a go at it. Let's try it out. Come with me to my office (Pirandello 1921).

This dialogue between the prospective author, The Manager and The Father, if on the one hand, illustrates the relationship between an author and characters; on the other, it can serve as an extended metaphor for the relationship between a researcher and research participants. Although the characters claim to have a life of their own, they want to be discovered and owned by someone for living eternally. The characters act out their drama which lures any author to draw the sketches of this drama as it gets played out and then transform these sketches into detailed scenes by filling out the details. Given that the job of a researcher is more rigorous than that of an author's, authenticity and credibility win over pure imagination.

In the context of my research, the previous chapter (Chapter 4) presents the sketches, the way the characters or the research participants play out their drama. Also, the last chapter is an instance of my willing suspension of disbelief, where I willingly surrender my critical faculties to believe in and represent something that has a life of its own ─ not necessarily a surreal life. However, my human and researcher limitations come in the way of conceiving this drama (in its entirety and totality) and representing it without my scholarly imprints and purpose. The purpose of this research from the outset, that I return to now, has been to examine the operationaliaation of current neoliberal discourses of creativity in Australian secondary school settings through creative and critical skill-development programmes. This study also explores secondary school students' creative engagement experiences and considers alternatives to what the current neoliberal discourses of creativity promote. To address this overarching question, there were the following guiding questions:

1. What is the relationship between students' creative learning and student's creative engagement?

2. What is the relationship between student voice and student's creative engagement?

3. What is the relationship between student voice and students' creative learning?

In order to achieve this goal, this study employed a Portraiture methodology to weave a narrative of the MAD project. However, as discussed earlier (Chapter 3), Portraiture methodology has been critiqued for the researchers' powerful influence in painting their research portraits and for their presence in their research narrative. The previous chapter tries to counter these charges by showing my minimised influence, as a researcher, on the research representation despite my belief that every research from the point it is conceived to its execution retains the writer's imprints. The writer's presence and influence then becomes a matter of degrees. The presence of a researcher cannot be completely eliminated from any research because the characters (the researched) do need authors and want to *live in them* and *through them*. The previous chapter is an instance of reducing the impact of the researcher's determining hands, to the extent of merely organising information and not constructing a narrative out of it as portraitist-researchers would normally do. Portraiture methodology, as asserted by its originators Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), and many succeeding researchers who have used it, allows such freedom (e.g. Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2011; Muccio, Reybold & Kidd 2015; Brooks 2017).

My attempts at re-envisioning portraiture, while trying to minimise my influence on the student voices, try to maintain their rights. These attempts protect the presence of a researcher too which is equally at risk of harm or erasure in this process (De Freitas 2008). While the previous chapter may still indicate my presence in terms of how the sketches have been organised thematically, in a similar way, the participants' presence finds its way into this chapter. This participant-presence influences the way I now look at the research question that originally drove this research project and that has been transformed in the light of my interaction with the research participants and the research context. Given that this

Illumination Chapter brings my strong and critical voice back as a researcher, it also extends the analysis of the learning taking place in the MAD Programme and offers my understanding of the students' perceptions of their creative learning and engagement experiences. This chapter synthesises the findings discussed in the last chapter by situating them and extending them to the existing body of relevant literature. This is an end to my willing suspension of disbelief and a conscious and research-based 'try(ing) it over' of the 'six characters'' drama (Pirandello 1921).

Organised into four discrete sections (5.2, 5.3, 5.4, & 5.5), each section in this chapter draws on a detailed discussion of the themes discussed in the previous chapter in light of my research focus.

5.2   The MAD Learning and Students' Creative Rendezvous

This section explicates the creative elements that bring the MAD learning closer to creative learning. Though the contemporary scholarship on creative learning defines creative learning both as a pedagogic style as well as a form of learning (section 2.4 Chapter 2), the distinction between both terms remains quite hazy and probably left relatively unexplored. Given that the students' perspectives on their learning experiences are vital for improving their learning engagement and schooling experiences (section 2.4 Chapter 2), it can be argued that a focus on creative learning as a student-directed pedagogic style and a form of learning allows the researcher to approach this concept from learners' perspective. Further, if students' perspectives on their active contribution to their learning are documented adequately, they can have fruitful implications for enhancing their future learning.

The first section, therefore, draws a distinction between creative pedagogy and creative learning as a helpful way to understand student-initiated learning processes. Although the scholarship (e.g. Jeffrey 2001) identifies the characteristics of both creative teaching and creative learning to be the same — both involve relevance, ownership of learning, control, and innovation — this study takes a point of departure in establishing creative learning as a student-directed pedagogic style where students manage their own learning by assuming an autodidactic role.

Concurrently, this section examines creative learning as a mode or form of student-directed learning within the specific MAD pedagogic context. In order to form the argument, this section mainly draws on the concept of agency that is held as an integral principle of creative learning (Jeffrey 2006; Jeffrey & Craft 2004) for supporting student engagement. Approaching creative learning from this angle underscores differing connotations of the term agency in both pedagogic as well as learning contexts which further brings out the clear distinction between its relative uses in teaching as well as learning contexts.

In addition, this section establishes that agency is used as a pedagogic tool by the practitioners for invoking student interest, excitement, and joy. This concept is closely related to the principles of relevance and ownership in letting students creatively manipulate diverse forms of freedom related to their learning as the scholarship on creative learning notes (section 5.2.1). At a student level, the conscious employment and wielding of agency signifies an active exploitation, utilisation, engagement with, or enactment of this pedagogic principle — individually or collaboratively — for making learning favourable and worthwhile. This perspective on student agency signifies the students' conscious awareness as well as acceptance of the proffered choices, and their active manipulation of creative faculties to respond constructively to all learning challenges. The MAD pedagogy employs student agency as a pedagogic tool for enhancing student learning; however, the way the students deploy this agency to enhance their learning is purely these learners' reserve which makes it quite distinct to its use as a pedagogic principle on the teachers' part. The employment of agency then comes to signify the students' willingness to engage it and embed it in their learning processes through its active enactment.

The section (5.2.1) also details the challenges to the use of agency that impact student engagement with their learning and diverse ways the students play upon agency to own and improve their learning. Becoming engaged with learning through this agentic performance not only displays diverse characteristics of

creative learning, but also exhibits close affinities with varied aspects of student engagement as this study argues**.**

The subsection (5.2.2) maps out the nature of the relationship between creative learning and student engagement and argues how students' active engagement with learning — brought about by the use of agency — corresponds to their creativity in learning. To do this, the section establishes the links between creative learning, agency, and engagement by approaching the students' creative learning from cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and agentic aspects of engagement.

5.2.1   The MAD learning

Drawing on the MAD Programme students' learning experiences, this section establishes creative learning as an autodidactic learning style that gathers its force from the promotion of student agency**.** The principle of relevance is also integral to this notion of student agency. The relevance principle is further combined with creative problem solving and skill development in collaborative context to enhance students' creative learning.

5.2.1.1 The promotion of student agency — a characteristic of learner-inclusive creative pedagogy

The MAD Pedagogy, in order to stimulate student learning and to help engage the year nine students, 'promotes student agency' (Mr. Oscar, the MAD Programme Coordinator) which stands distinct from the regular classroom teaching practices that offer 'restricted content or opportunities to explore student voice and agency' (Mr. Oscar). Student agency in the MAD Programme, as the other programme co-coordinator Ms. Audrey elaborates, is enacted when the students are given the:

> Opportunity to think freely and solve problems and be assisted and given tools in doing that but also have their own choice ... it's more open and free and they feel like there's that ownership on to them rather than the ownership being with the teacher.

The idea of promoting student agency — to 'help engage' (Mr. Oscar) the *at-risk* year 9 adolescents in the MAD Programme — brings MAD pedagogy closer to creative teaching practices that are centred on learner-inclusiveness (Jeffrey & Craft 2003, 2004; Craft & Jeffrey 2004) and deploy agency for enhancing student creativity and learning (e.g. Jeffrey 2001, 2006; Craft & Jeffrey 2004; Jeffrey & Craft 2004). Jeffrey's (2006) study establishes the co-existence of a pedagogic discourse common across European research partners that is 'used by those concerned to engage the agency of students creatively in their own learning. This pedagogy reflects the characteristics of creative learning' (Jeffrey 2006, p. 413).

Since the research scholars identify a similarity between the characteristics of creative teaching and creative learning (Jeffrey 2001, 2006; Jeffrey & Craft 2003), creative learning has come to be seen both as a pedagogic style and a form of student learning. Even in scholarly writings, the use of the compound term creative teaching and learning (Jeffrey 2006) further emphasises the affinity between the terms to the extent of creating a lack of distinction between them and their respective processes. However, as argued earlier, a distinction between both the terms is necessary, especially, to understand the processes and products of student learning. In doing so, this study builds on Jeffrey and Craft's (2004) argument of holding the relationship between creative teaching and learning important for the study of creative pedagogies. This study particularly focuses on establishing a distinction between creative teaching and learning processes with a view to develop a broad understanding of student-led creative learning processes as well as to inform the teaching practices that have a potential to influence such learning processes.

Taken as a pedagogic style, creative teaching and learning deploy relevance, control, ownership of learning, and innovation (Jeffrey 2006). It is not hard to see how the MAD pedagogy employs these principles to engage students with their learning (I will return to this point in the next paragraph). Also, this pedagogic style has been seen to allow the students 'autonomy and ownership of their learning' (Lassig 2012b, p. 12), to allow playfulness (Lin 2011), and to give students freedom

to pursue their interests and strengths (Dusseldorp Forum cited in Lucas & Anderson 2015).

5.2.1.2 The development of agency and the principle of relevance

For developing student agency in the MAD Programme, the pedagogic principle of relevance (Woods cited in Jeffrey 2006) — which views the meaningfulness of learning to the interests and needs of students (Jeffrey 2006) — is adopted. Relevance in the MAD pedagogy is invoked, as Ms. Audrey explains, when the students get 'the opportunity to do something that is of interest to them and inspiring to them'. Having freedom and opportunity to pursue one's interests is what makes this programme a success as well — the programme co-coordinator Ms. Audrey claims. The students also regard the freedom to pursue their passion in doing things as the most enjoyable experiences in the programme. Mia, a student from Ava's group, admits that she and her team mates enjoyed 'working on things that we actually care about and are passionate about'.

Mr. Oscar also holds that as the MAD Programme Coordinators and teachers, they happen to witness student enthusiasm throughout the term. The Student Survey results, Mr. Oscar maintains, also demonstrate high levels of student engagement and satisfaction. In order to exercise agency, choice, and control, the students are asked to identify personal, local, or global issues they are interested in making a difference to, to find team mates who share the same interest with them, to decide the project activities the way they want to, and to come up with creative ideas to do the community service at their selected places. Consequently, the Immersion groups' selection of topics, for instance, shows an interesting array of the topics of their interest. Amelia, Olivia, and Charlotte have decided to work on Eating Disorders. They aim to fundraise for the Butterfly Foundation. On the other hand, Ava, Mia, Chloe, Zoe, and Sophie are interested in the issue of the affordability and provision of sanitary products for impoverished females. In order to support the needy women of the community, the group has fixed donation boxes around the school to collect bras and tampons. Emily, Ella, Grace, and Tom want to support

sick children. For that, they plan to fundraise for Starlight Foundation. Isabella, Jack, Thomas, and Lucas have chosen Cyber-safety as their Immersion project and are making a website and videos. Domestic Violence is the topic that Isla, Ivy, Lily, Zara, and Lucy are interested in working on. Finally, William and Henry want to raise awareness about the disastrous impacts of wars.

It is important to note here that the element of intellectual inquiry (Jeffrey 2006) — that entails finding problems along with seeking solutions to the intellectual inquiries — is integral to the MAD pedagogy. Jeffrey (2006) identifies student engagement with intellectual inquiry to be the characteristic creative learning response of the learners to the creative pedagogy used. The pedagogic strategy of requiring learners to identify issues and solve them, in other words, also acts as a 'discrepant stimuli' that Beghetto's (2016, p. 10) Process Model of Creative Learning holds to be an external source to initiate the learners' interpsychological (learning-in-creativity) and intrapsychological (creativity-in-learning) processes of learning. While Beghetto's (2016) Creative Learning Process Model operates within formal instructional discussions based K12 teaching and learning contexts exploring the nature of creative learning processes can also be worthwhile when the learning context allows more freedom and agency to students.

5.2.1.3 Student agency and collaborative work — challenges and skill development

To extend that discussion, I now return to the concept of agency in the MAD teaching and learning context that thus draws on the principle of relevance and further enables students to think freely and solve problems ('thinking outside the square' as Ms. Audrey comments later on), having choice in decision making, and having desired assistance and tools available in executing the process (further discussed in sub-section 5.2.2).

However, the principle of relevance alone to effectively engage students with their learning does not suffice where students work collaboratively on the projects they are so passionate about. Even though the transition research views the use of creative approaches as offering students opportunities to 'control their environment

and the context of their learning' (Jindal-Snape 2012, p. 234), working in group situations where students share the same interests and passion to make a difference to the community sometimes poses grim challenges. These provocations pertain to how students exercise control over their own learning processes which impacts their engagement both with learning (intellectual inquiry) and with the people they work with (social problem-solving). The MAD students lose a part of this control when they have disagreements (Emily, Isabella); when all team members do not take up their roles in the group (Emily, Isabella); when they have to make mutual decisions (Isla, Ivy); when they get peer feedback on their ideas (Zara); or when teachers assume the traditional power-based role that denies them opportunity to do things on their own (Ava). It is during such situations that the students report a loss of interest in their work. They feel like dropping out of the course, had there been such an option:

> Emily: Really ... sometimes but that's when it gets like really hard and you just want to like scream.
>
> Tom: A lot of stress yeah...
>
> Grace: But you can't drop out ... yeah.
>
> Emily: Yeah, you can't drop out of it.

It is worth pointing out that even though the students generally report great excitement in having their ideas and understanding expanded by the general public's views on their topics during city surveys and positively receive their teachers' feedback, they find it onerous to accept the critical feedback from their peers. Lassig's (2012a) research conducted with young adolescents seeking their perspectives on creativity also reports young adolescents' aversion to peers' critical feedback. Lassig (2012a, p. 89) argues, while the absence of 'a positive group dynamic' makes it hard for adolescents to work collaboratively, acceptance of others' positive and negative feedback can be developed by the adolescents' 'focusing on completing the task and not being personally attached to their ideas'. Also, the adolescents' ability to perceive the direction of criticism towards their

ideas or creations not on them 'as creators' (Lassig 2012b, p. 119) helps them improve their creativity by accepting and using such critical feedback. Clapp's (2017, p. 186) theory of participatory creativity also advocates shifting the emphasis of creativity away from the individuals to the ideas, because it enables all young people to participate in creativity 'in ways that most naturally suit their talents, skills, background experiences, and cultural perspectives'.

Reflecting on her group work in oral presentation, Zara illuminates that their group could have done a third presentation to the school community to raise awareness about domestic violence; however, they eschewed it because they thought people in their second presentation were being judgmental. Disassociating herself from her group, Zara comments on her group: 'They should have risen above that thinking to educate more people'. Though Zara appreciates the efficiency of their group work, she also points towards their inability to seek peer feedback: We 'could have double-checked our work and could have given it to others for their feedback'. Zara's comment, '(We) could have worked as a team more instead of shutting down others' ideas', also underlines her group members' personal attachment to their ideas (Lassig 2012a) to the extent of not welcoming any other ideas whether it be a new idea or feedback on the existing ideas.

Ms. Audrey, the programme co-coordinator, views such group conflicts as a normal course of the MAD events — calling it a characteristic head-butting and having disagreements that the students resolve 'with teachers' assistance or by developing their creative 'problem-solving skills'. Working in a team requires 'developing skills interpersonal skills collaborative skills teamwork skills problem-solving skills in this environment where they do something *MAD* to make a difference in the community' (Ms. Audrey). It is here that the skill development becomes crucial to staying engaged with learning along with the freedom to pursue things of interest (that is, relevance). The following discussion delves into establishing the strategic processes of skill development that the students agentically and consciously forge to stay engaged with their learning.

Mia's group develops a group-compromise strategy that works on a 'majority rules' principle. When decision-making processes became onerous due to differing opinions, they 'talked it over and came to a final decision that suited everybody so that we could be happy with what we were doing' (Mia). Also, their optimistic approach helped: 'I think we came into this pretty optimistic knowing no matter what we're going to be making a difference and it is important to remember that it's not just about ourselves it's about helping other people' (Chloe). For Emily and Ella's group, team work, collaboration, and problem-solving skills are exercised in deciding to follow their group leader's (Emily's) lead who came up with their project topic to support sick children at hospitals and was 'most passionate about it there's she ... kind of knew what she wanted to do ... we all supported her which was good because we all felt the same yeah' (Ella). Zara's group-mates, Isla and Ivy, admit their group's initial strong headedness in their opinions; however, their group outgrew this by learning to take all views into consideration:

> Isla: I think we all just shared our opinion a little earlier on how we came to best conclusions and if we couldn't figure out then we would all like we try to combine the things and see if that would work ...

> Ivy: Yeah we will like take the average opinion ... combining all of our opinions and seeing what most likely relates to all of ours ... opinions and we just make a bit of a compromise for it.

5.2.1.4 Further dilemmas to the effective use of agency

It is interesting to note that an understanding of the demanding nature of the collaborative work with unfamiliar people — despite their mutual interest in the same topics and the comfort of being in the company of friends — compels many students to group with their own friends. While working with close friends may help develop positive group dynamics in some cases, for instance, in Amelia, Ava, and Isla's groups; in others, for instance, Emily and William's groups respectively, it posed serious challenges to students' learning engagement. Ms. Audrey also notes that the (major) challenge in getting teamed up with friends is to remain undistracted by the group members. Not only do the students find it hard to tell their

friends to concentrate on their work, they find the allocation of roles difficult too. Emily's group was able to resolve the role-allocation challenges with their teachers' help; however, the unresolved issues in other cases led to a disbanded group, resulting in added workload for the rest of the group members. Henry and William explicate how their involvement as a group did not live up to their expectations:

> Henry: Probably our involvement as a group like we had one of our members who had to leave at the start of our...
>
> William: Project...
>
> Henry: Project because this wasn't working out we weren't really prepared for that we all thought even though we're all good mates we'll still get the job done but obviously that didn't work out but we made the most out of it and came through.

Ms. Audrey elaborates on such points of conflict resolution or having an experience of it as:

> One of the really big learning points from this programme ... the project is just a tool for all of the other amazing learning that happens in terms of collaboration and problem-solving and I think that's what's so great about this programme that really the project is just the tool for all the other learning here.

Conflicts and disagreements are sure to arise in collaborative work. Sefton-Green et al. (2011, p. 5) hold the emphasis on developing 'habits of curiosity, collaboration and cooperation in group work' central to the paradigm of creative teaching and learning. Chappell and Craft (2011) as well regard conflict and difference as a necessary part of their *humanising creativity* framework. This framework of creativity views creativity as happening 'individually, collaboratively and communally' (Chappell & Craft 2011, p. 365), and accepts the inevitability of conflict and difference in collaborative processes. Also, this characterisation, if on the one hand, emphasises empathy, compassion, and shared

values; on the other, it greatly values both communal and individual advancement (Chappell & Craft 2011).

The collaborative work becomes complex and challenging when other collaborative voices are silenced. The democratic spirit of the 'collective' or humane creativity (Chappell et al. 2012, p. 3) recognises the presence of many other voices that 'may otherwise be silenced to have active voice' and considers listening to other multiple voices a 'key to negotiating conflict as part of the creative process'. As discussed earlier in this section, some groups in collaborative work experienced this silencing of voices or shutting down of their ideas which led them to lose their interest in their learning. It is here that empathy, compassion, shared values, and both personal and communal advancement become important parts of learning.

In addition to student disagreements and conflicts that impact their engagement with learning, the students' lack of opportunity to employ their agency in regular school classes poses 'the biggest challenge' to student engagement in the MAD learning context (Mr. Oscar). Mr. Oscar holds that when given an opportunity to work agentically in the MAD Programme, the students do not know how to make use of it (Mr. Oscar). During my fieldwork, I could see one group remaining particularly distraught. Ms. Audrey commented that since it was the students' first day of unstructured activities, some students could not 'plan ahead'. They should be able to see and know what to do next by themselves. Mr. Oscar elucidates this situation as:

> You know it's all about the teachers in regular circumstances do this ... these are your tasks, you must, you know do this, and we are saying the same thing but we are saying what you actually got to do is to make the decisions about your learning and the way you are going to learn, and the content of your learning so I think that's the biggest challenge of getting used to that but happily I can say that most groups really take it up with great enthusiasm which is really pleasing we do see confusion from some and when we have got such students we help them.

The dilemma of effective employment of agency has been underscored by Lin (2014) in her study on the use of creative drama pedagogy in traditional Taiwanese classrooms. The student 'resistance'— that Lin (2014, p. 52) encounters in some cases in her use of creative pedagogy — reflects the student subjectivities formed in traditional Taiwanese schooling context. But far from taking this resistance as rebellious, Lin (2014) views it as pointing towards a need to establish a dialogue. Keddie (2016, p. 118) links students' internalisation of the performative neoliberal discourse to the production of neoliberal subjectivities which conform to neoliberal ideals of accountability, perfectionism, competition, testing and performance, responsibilisation, and individualism: all inevitably contributing to the construction of 'good' or 'successful' student identities (discussed in Chapter 2).

5.2.1.5 Balancing agency with performative culture — creation of 'hybrid spaces'

Though both Ms. Audrey and Mr. Oscar's regular classroom reminders to the students about their upcoming assessments and the strategies that can help them earn 'top mark' on them (Mr. Oscar) constantly punctuate the programme's agentic underpinnings, the students' responses towards an uptake of such performative roles and values are diverse. During my fieldwork, I happened to meet some students who conformed to neoliberal ideals of responsibilisation that Keddie (2016; Chapter 2) explicates as signifying an internalised neo-liberal responsibility for showing competence and performance.

These specific Immersion students' interest in their work, as Grace from Emily's group revealed, was for getting good grades; hence, all their academic effort was directed towards constructing the identities of what Keddie (2016) calls as *good* or *successful* students. Even their attachment to the MAD space was subject to seeing compulsion and necessity for their presence in the space. Although the Immersion students liked coming to this space, as it offered them freedom to make a difference, students mostly pictured it as an efficient work space — with specific rules (Jack) and with an element of compulsion to be there (Kelly). However, far from totally identifying with the neoliberal subjectivities as identified by Keddie (2016; also

Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion), these Immersion students showed an equal interest in making a difference to the community (Grace) which stood distinct from neoliberal ideals of performance and competition (Keddie 2016).

Ms. Audrey's description of the Immersion Programme as an *opportunity* for every year 9 student to be in this programme, if on the one hand, sets it apart from similar programmes at other schools where 'students opt-in to engage' (Ms. Audrey); on the other, it alludes to the gap in institutional and learner understandings of the programme being an *opportunity*. What the teachers put forward as an *opportunity* for the students is perceived as a necessity and compulsion by the students. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that such a felt-compulsion to come to this space or the necessity of working towards getting good grades does not cause among the students a deep aversion or disengagement from their work and learning in the Immersion Programme — as it reportedly does under high stake testing circumstances (e.g. Carey 2019; Voigt 2019). One explanation for students' engagement with the programme activities can be that this programme offers an equally powerful incentive to enact agency and make a difference to the community. These differing students and teachers' perspectives on the use of opportunity, agency, and performativity also allude to the possible existence of, what Lin (2014, p. 53) calls 'hybrid spaces'. These spaces, according to Lin (2014), signify dialogue, negotiation, compromise, and hybridity when the culture of performativity confronts the culture of creativity.

Jeffrey (2006) argues that in learning contexts where learners have limited or no control 'over a sense of place' about their learning environment' (p. 410) and where the major concern is 'to increase achievement productivity levels' (p. 411), the students use their creativity instrumentally to respond to the teachers' demands. This situation also greatly determines the nature of their relationship with the institution and education in terms of working together for performance enhancement. In the MAD learning context, where the students have a considerable freedom of choice, the coexistence of their sense of responsibilisation along with the freedom to be agentic indicates the students' past schooling into the dominant

culture of performativity; or the fact that the culture of agency, ownership, and control in learning spaces is 'not so common yet' (Mr. Oscar).

Apart from developing passion among the students due to relevance, the 'opportunity for student agency and choice' in the programme also promotes student responsibility (Ms. Audrey) which counterbalances the culture of responsibilisation discussed above. The principle of experimentation and inquiry in Tanggaard's (2014) Situated Model of Creativity and Learning also generates a sense of responsibility for learning among the learners. While Tanggaard (2014, p. 111) links the happening of experiments to the breaks, spaces, or zones at work or at school, the element of time to 'play feely with materials and make their own projects and design-ideas work' also promotes a spirit of experimentation and responsibility.

5.2.1.6 The issues around the execution of agency and assessment practices — a need for dialogue

When asked the reason for working so diligently on their projects, a majority of the Immersion students commented that they do their work because they do not want to let their group members down. The sense of responsibility (Tanggaard 2014) and ownership (Jeffrey 2006) is also evident when the Immersion students own the project activities that they themselves design; however, they distance themselves from assessment activities which mainly include thesis writing and oral presentations. Their detachment, for instance, from their writing of a thesis is quite evident when an Immersion student Kate remarks: 'To us it is not important. To teachers it is because it helps them understand and recognise that we have done something'. And on this basis they can 'mark us equally' (Kate).

The way the students approach thesis writing, presents their interesting perspectives around the assessment activities. Many students link their failure to submit a thesis to, 'get (ting) in trouble' (Jade); not being able to be part of accelerated learning (Sophie); having made a difference but not submitted (sic) it' (Georgia); failing the subject (Emma); and not getting anything written on the report (Ruby). When I probed further by asking why getting something on the report is important Sophie

replies: 'getting something on report is important,' because it shows 'how much you have learnt'. Georgia also commented, '(by doing thesis, we) get more out of it'. (It's like) Icing on the cake'. It 'documents your learning and presents it'.

Some students even expressed their dislike for doing the thesis, and found it intimidating (Kate). When asked what made them keep working on it, it was the compulsion of doing it: 'We got over it because we had to' (Amelia). This willy-nilly approach towards the completion of learning tasks can be an instance of what Macfarlane (2015, p. 347) calls 'inauthentic behaviour' (discussed below). This behaviour also exposes the characteristic tension between the assessment of creative learning and the current organisation of schools (Sefton-Green, Parker & Ruthra-Rajan 2008). Tanggaard (2011, p. 231) also alludes to the current systemic demands on teachers for conformity and to brace themselves for the real life challenges of nurturing students as ones who 'dare to take risks, challenge the existing order and create something new'. Tanggaard (2011, p. 231) maintains that tests do not hinder creativity; however, she deems the nature and form of tests have a huge impact on the learning process:

> If tests are to facilitate pupil creativity, they must, somewhat radically expressed (sic), measure and evaluate the abilities of pupils to change the existing order, and, one way or another, create something new.

Further, the students' attitude towards assessments goes against Woods' (1993, p. 359) description of 'real' learning that considers 'person development or pure education' and avoids 'peripheral, instrumentalist structure of it'. The specific assessment requirements of the programme hint at the instrumental use of student learning where the students were to complete their assessments, that is, a thesis and oral presentation. These assessment tasks led the students to lose their interest in their learning pointing towards the relative absence of the *real learning* in doing assessment tasks. For instance, Amelia found the thesis 'tedious and long'. Ava, working on the results and the abstract sections, found thesis writing quite 'confusing' and 'wanted to do at it at the end' demonstrating an avoidance

behaviour. From Emily's group all members unanimously declared that they found thesis writing to be hard. Ella was more vocal in expressing:

> I literally left that till today doing it now though I had the whole term it was like ... I'd never really done it before ... I didn't really want to start did not really know heaps about what I was actually doing.

Some students even lost their interest to the extent of thinking of dropping out of the project. For instance, Isla and Lily from Isla's group wished to drop out of the Immersion Programme because of their unpreparedness for the upcoming presentation:

> Zara: Right now when we are all preparing our oral presentation that is not something that I like to do...
>
> Isla: Not public speaking.

Apart from distancing themselves from the forms of assessments, the students' description of success and achievement differs remarkably from neoliberal ideals of competition, success, and responsibilisation (Keddie 2016; discussed earlier in this section). The students liked it when they did not get a mark for the project:

> It went for the whole term, and we got the whole term to fully finish it ... I liked the result ... better than getting a mark because we actually did something (Olivia).

Their sense of personal achievement and success is bound with making a difference to the community, working effectively with team members, in raising money for the needy, and in raising awareness against the forms of social exploitations which are very different from the ideals that the culture of performativity promotes.

If the students' disassociation with the forms of assessment and their description of success and achievement are taken into account, a case can be presented for Macfarlane's (2015, 2016) argument against the performative turn in student assessment of learning. Macfarlane (2016, p. 851) contends that the present university assessment practices fail to evaluate 'individual intellectual

understanding'. This is true of the present-day secondary school assessments in Australia as well — for instance The National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) — which are argued to be providing insufficient data to inform pedagogic interventions for improving student learning (Val & Wyatt-Smith 2012). Further, this high-stake testing regime, that is, NAPLAN, has also been seen as distorting teaching practices, constraining the curriculum, and narrowing down students' educational experiences (John, Suzanne & Nicole 2014).

Macfarlane (2015, 2016) further argues that the constrained nature of assessment weakens students' freedom to make decisions as learners and encourages 'inauthentic behaviour as individual endeavour to conform' (2015, p. 347) or 'game playing behaviours' (2016, p. 851). Though Macfarlane (2015, 2016) argues for allowing students' freedom to choose their learning preferences in order to return the students' rights back to them, in the present programme context when the freedom to pursue their passion stays with the students, a call for their rights gets translated into allowing them freedom to choose the forms of their assessments as well.

Though MAD pedagogy does offer, as the Programme Coordinator Mr. Oscar identifies, alternative project options or alternative oral presentation settings, these alternatives generally are limited to some specific circumstances. Mr. Oscar does admit that in the past the students went for such alternatives after failing to submit their original assessment tasks; however, far from ascribing these alternatives to some individual learning weaknesses, the Coordinators link these alternatives to the school efforts to maximise student success ('we want everyone to be able to finish the process and to achieve success' Ms. Audrey); or to some special situations when the students 'weren't comfortable to be in a group'; or 'weren't able to give a presentation in front of the regular audience' because of time constraints (Mr. Oscar). Such specific contexts for assessment alternatives illuminate their rather constrained nature.

The use of student agency in the MAD learning context works in complex ways, and it often stands distinct to what the pedagogic practices promote as discussed

above. Closely linked with the notion of agency is student engagement which I now wish to explore in the next subsection.

5.2.2   Creativity in student engagement

As mentioned earlier in section (5.2), this subsection establishes the links between creative learning, agency, and engagement by explaining creative learning not only as entailing cognitive engagement aspects, but also involving emotional, behavioural, and agentic dimensions. Creative engagement, with its diverse dimensions, is employed here to further explain the distinctive nature of student-led creative learning that in some respects stands distinct to the pedagogic practices used.

5.2.2.1 When the challenges loom higher

If the pedagogic principles of relevance, ownership (Woods 1993), and agency (Craft 1999, 2005; Jeffrey & Craft 2001) increase the Immersion students' interest, enjoyment, and engagement with their learning and lead them to contribute to their learning creatively (Jeffrey 2006), challenges and problems arising from the lmmersion students' self-designed projects also characterise another dimension of their creative learning experiences that require of them to creatively and agentically engage with their learning contexts. Since challenges and problems are central to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996, 2008) flow theory and framework of optimal experiences (eds. Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 1992) as well, it is worthwhile to juxtapose the Immersion students' creative learning experiences with Csikszentmihalyi's optimal experiences and flow theory to fully understand and explicate the Immersion students' creative engagement with learning.

Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory and framework of students' optimal experiences regard concentration, interest, and enjoyment — that occur concomitantly — to be necessary for student engagement (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Shernoff et al. 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura 2014). The conditions of flow also require a match between the existing skills and challenges, clear proximal goals, and immediate feedback about the progress that is being made. The situations where

there is a mismatch between skills and challenges, flow does not occur and boredom, lack of attention, or anxiety is experienced (Csikszentmihalyi 1977; Whalen 1998; Whalen 1999; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2009, Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2014; Mao et al. 2016, Csikszentmihalyi, Latter & Weinkauff Duranso 2017).

Where flow or an 'optimal state of immersed concentration … and enjoyable give-and-take with his or her activity' (Whalen 1999, p. 161) stops due to the challenges exceeding the students' capacities or vice versa, or due to the implicit nature of, an absence of, or generation of challenges by the students themselves, learning may still happen. Apart from the MAD students' engaged interest and enjoyment in facing challenges, which is closer to Csikzentmihalyi's theorisation of optimal experiences, there arise situations when the students face discomfort or aversion from the challenges that arise in their learning situations.

However, far from refusing to face them, the students creatively and agentically find ways for overcoming such provocations. The nature of these challenges is diverse, ranging from the problems arising in working with others (Ms. Audrey) to getting used to making decisions about learning (Mr. Oscar). The MAD learners also lose interest in learning, for instance, due to the teachers' authoritarian role at the beginning (Ava, Mia, Chloe, Zoe, & Sophie) which slowed down students' performance of learning (Grace); due to difficulty in allocation of roles and tasks within the groups (Isabella) and the stress experienced (Emily); due to group disagreements (Ivy); and due to feeling unprepared for the assessment tasks (Zara & Isla).

Further, the Immersion students feel lost or frustrated due to things not going according to their expectations. For instance: Henry and William felt quite 'mad' when they could not run a fundraiser which they had hoped for. Emily and Ella's group felt disappointed when they could not have a sausage sizzle and when their alternative plan for the pancake fundraiser also was postponed. Further, Amelia and Isla's respective groups wanted to do a 'bigger part of raising awareness' (Amelia) but could not come up with any ideas.

Ava's group also experienced disappointment because they wanted to do a fundraiser, but due to a limited number of fundraisers available, they could not to do it. Alternatively, they came up with the idea of placing donation boxes at school. Further, the students also felt disappointed in themselves when during the city survey's they were a lot 'more nervous than (they) thought' (Amelia). Almost all the students from the studied groups found assessment activities hard and tedious. Emily's group was disappointed with the amount of money they raised. Emily's group members were also frustrated owing to being distracted by some other groups. Isla and her group were disappointed in themselves for not being able to educate a wider number of people. Finally, for Henry and William's group, their 'involvement as a group' did not live up to their expectations.

Given that the flow experience works on the principle of balance between skills and challenges, the flow framework cannot be used to explain the situations where challenges surpass the existing skills. The Immersion students' ability in overcoming the contextual learning challenges to re-engage with their learning and arguably, again attain the state of flow invites an alternative interpretation of the students' distinct learning situations and experiences. That alternative explanation can be offered by using student engagement as a lens to explore the students' creative expressions in these specific learning contexts (further discussed in the next section).

It can be argued that the learning that takes place in such situations revolves around finding creative solutions to the problems by taking agentic initiatives. This characteristic of learning brings it closer to the frameworks of creative learning and agentic engagement (discussed below) rather than theorisation of flow or optimal experiences. It is quite interesting to note that while the flow theory equates a lack of balance between skill levels and challenges to absence of flow, boredom, lack of attention, or presence of anxiety, there is a gap in explanation as to what happens to student learning. Does it stop as the flow stops?

5.2.2.2 The flow of learning in the face of challenges

It is worthwhile to examine what happens when such feelings are experienced in learning contexts where the students also feel ownership of learning, relevance, and agency. Csikszentmihalyi's description of highly creative people — having the ability to effectively 'turn challenges into Flow' (Whalen 1999, p. 162) — hints at a possible explanation for that scenario. However, approaching that situation from creative learning and agentic engagement perspectives offers a fuller explanation of what happens when challenges exceed the existing skills and the kind of learning takes place in such circumstances.

One possible explanation comes from Tanggaard's (2014, p. 111) creativity and learning model that views resistance (from material) as 'an opening of creative chances'. Tanggaard's (2014) model of creativity and learning works on the relationship among three principles that include the learners' immersion in the topic of interest and the knowledge of the subject matter; their aptitude for experimentation and inquiry; and their experience of resistance from the material of interest. While explicating the relational nature of a creativity phenomenon as based on the creator's active engagement with the materials that lead to creation, Tanggaard (2014) explains how materials often invite or resist the creative processes. The resistance thus faced often leads the creators to 'the experience of being lost, of being disoriented, of being held back, or simply of being frustrated (and) can prompt a creative opportunity to arise' (Tanggaard 2014, p. 111).

In the face of the above-mentioned challenges or forms of resistance, the Immersion students come up with different agentic as well as creative solutions. For instance, Ava's group 'compromised as a group ... talked it over'. Emily's group chose a group leader to sail through the group processes smoothly. When Isabella's group realised that another group was doing the same 'bullying in school' topic that they were initially interested in, and that they didn't have much evidence for the topic, they chose a different topic for which they had 'a bit more evidence and was still a big issue' (Jack). Similar to Ava's, Isla's group also used 'taking an average opinion' as a group compromise strategy. For William and Henry, it was

communicating with all group members about 'what was best for us as a group' (Henry).

Further in the face of getting demotivated to the extent of dropping out of the project, Ava's group's optimism that 'no matter what we're going to be making a difference and it is important to remember that it's not just about ourselves it's about helping other people' (Grace) helped them re-engage with their learning. Emily's group navigated that complexity by re-orientating themselves to 'work for the team' (Ella), actively seeking help from group mates as well as teachers, and helping each other (Ella). Also, when Isabella's group was having difficulty understanding their group roles, the group dynamically 'worked through what was wrong and then you know we were all good for the rest of the time'. Ivy learned to become keener on resolving conflicts with others and to lower her high expectations in order to get connected with the group members:

> In the beginning whenever we had first few disagreements I wasn't too keen on resolving it because I didn't really want to back down ... now right now ... I realised I can get around it with other people and its fine.

The difficulties that the Immersion groups faced, in addition to the discussed above, also included the things that the groups wanted to do, but they could not do them for certain contextual limitations. In order to cope with these challenges, Amelia's group learned to be more realistic in the execution of their project rather than doing 'a bigger part' of raising money and awareness (Amelia). Ava's group learned to accept the fact that they could not do the bake sales as another group was doing it and came up with an alternative plan to collect bras and tampons as donations. Emily's group wanted to do a sausage sizzle. Since another group was doing it, they modified their fundraiser plan to do the bake sales. Isabella learned to put off the topic of her interest, that is, feminism 'for another time' and worked on cyber safety. Isla's group also learned to lower their high ambitions to make a big difference (Ivy) and learned to 'start small' (Isla).

Additionally, Amelia's group believed that despite certain parts of learning such as thesis being 'the most boring ... and took the most amount of time' (Amelia), they

were not 'impossible'. They were able to face this challenge because they knew that they 'had to, and (they) all worked together pretty well' (Amelia). Emily's group members found the teachers' support very helpful to deal with the challenges they faced. Isla's group learned to counter the challenge of shutting down each other's ideas by 'getting everyone's opinions on the issue' (Isla).

The above instances (also section 5.2) establish the Immersion students' agency to overcome their challenges which is a characteristic of Csikszentmihalyi's highly creative adults (Whalen 1999) who agentically re-create flow by overcoming their challenges. Such close encounters in the students' MAD experiences and the resistance experienced in learning processes, in Tanggaard's (2014, p. 111) words, offer 'an opening of creative chances' where the MAD students extend their skill sets by taking agentic initiatives and by creatively engaging with the learning and the challenges that it puts forth.

While the previous section (5.2.1) establishes how agentic the MAD students are, the above line of argument demonstrates their ability for creative engagement along with their tenacity to learn new skills and reengage with their learning — despite larger challenges and threats of disengagement. Following this assertion, it can be safely established that the learning that takes place under such circumstances exhibits creative and innovative ways of meeting learning challenges which is a distinct characteristic of creative learning processes (explained in the next section). The following section, by exploring the ways creativity in learning relates to engagement with learning, extends the above line of reasoning that holds student creativity in learning challenges helps students (re)engage with their learning.

5.2.2.3 The diverse patterns of students' (creative) engagement

In order to understand the relationship between creativity and student engagement, it is important to use student engagement as a lens to study the relationship between creativity and learning. This can be established by underlining how the scholarship on creativity views creative learning and its relation to student engagement. To describe creative learning, Jeffrey (2006, p. 407) applies the principle of differentiation: *being creative* implies 'being innovative, experimental and

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inventive' whereas the *learning* aspect in the term 'creative learning' deals with the students' engagement with knowledge inquiry. Jeffrey (2006, p. 407) further breaks intellectual inquiry down into '*possibility thinking* and *engagement with (knowledge-based) problems*', which shows how intellectual inquiry is linked to engagement. Jeffrey's (2006, p. 408) study also indicates that the students' engagement with knowledge inquiry leads the students to engage productively with it — where students are 'focused intently on the process of their activities and the production of their products'.

Earlier Jeffrey (2001) used the observation of the learners' physical engagement with learning as providing evidence of their creative learning. The use of engagement as a methodological tool also gave Jeffrey (2001, p. 4) 'insight into what enthuses, excites, commands attention, stimulates and preoccupies children in creative teaching and learning sessions'. While the present study is similar to Jeffrey's (2001) in employing student engagement as a methodological tool to gather evidence for the learners' creative learning, as a point of departure, it deploys students' creative engagement as an active component of the learners' creative learning processes that further serves to enhance student-led creativity and learning.

Given Jeffrey's (2006) description of creative learning, it is not hard to establish the relationship between creative engagement and learning through the Immersion students' active engagement with creative learning in their projects. While it is the structural requirement of the Immersion Programme that the students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as become more engaged learners (mentioned on the school website), the MAD students actively engage with knowledge inquiry by choosing to solve knowledge-based problems during their project processes which is a staple part of creative learning (Jeffrey 2006). However, it is important to note that the students' choice and attitude to solving other contextual problems embraces dimensions of engagement other than the cognitive (intellectual).

This attitude extends the relational aspect of the students' engagement with learning beyond mere cognitive involvement to include behavioural and emotional aspects.

The scholars on student engagement characterise both aspects as significant dimensions of student engagement (Fredricks, Blumefeld & Paris 2004). The MAD students' investment in their projects, their creative problem-solving, and self-regulation, general excitement of the project processes and experiences, and their involvement and lack of disruptive or negative behaviour (Fredricks, Blumefeld & Paris 2004) adequately tap into behavioural, and emotional dimensions of engagement, in addition to their cognitive involvement.

5.2.2.4 On exploring agentic engagement

Given that the section (5.2.1) of this chapter illuminates the role agency plays in helping the Immersion learners to take ownership of their learning, the relevance of the student agency to their engagement with learning also becomes worthy of exploration due to diverse learning contexts and the varied challenges they pose. The student engagement scholars, Reeve and Tseng (2011) identify agency as the fourth aspect of student engagement during students' learning activities. Reeve and Tseng (2011, p. 258) define agentic engagement as 'students' constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction they receive'. This process-based approach identifies students' proactive approach to 'personalize' and 'enrich' their learning and the learning context 'as they not only try to learn and develop skills, but they also try to create a more motivationally supportive learning environment for themselves' (Reeve 2013, p. 593).

It is noteworthy that in Reeve and Tseng (2011) and Reeve's (2013) agentic engagement framework, students' proactive and agentic approach to engagement is responsive to the teaching contexts. As such, the teaching contexts encourage student-contribution and even modify instructional styles on the basis of student-contributions. However, the concept of student agency that these teaching contexts offer is constrained in its nature. Student agency in this framework is the students' personal initiative and contribution to improve learning conditions for themselves. The MAD context offers a more expansive concept of student agency in terms of allowing the students freedom to pursue their passion in varied aspects such as project planning and execution. Hence, the study of agentic aspects of engagement

— as proposed by Reeve and Tseng (2011) and Reeve (2013) — in the MAD context comes to signify the ways the students engage with and personalise their learning with their team mates and broader community.

Reeve and Tseng (2011) describe students' agentic engagement in terms of their expressions of preference, suggestions, or contributions; their communication of ideas, interest, or likes; and their request for clarification, assistance, or feedback along with asking questions, generating options, adding personal relevance to the lessons, and offering their part in problem-solving. The structure of the MAD Programme, as it is explained below, allows the students to exercise all of these aspects while doing the project activities that involve brainstorming, smart goal setting, project planning, and surveying people. Consequently, most students report excitement and enjoyment doing activities which allow them to utilise the elements from Reeve and Tseng's (2011) agentic engagement framework. For instance, the students report enjoying brainstorming project ideas, because it not only allowed them 'possibility thinking,'— which is a necessary part of intellectual inquiry (Jeffrey 2006) — but also the freedom to communicate their ideas.

> It was right at the start of the term ... right at the beginning of our project when we were ... like ... full thinking of different ideas of what we could do ... how we will do our things we had a lot of space to kind of ... choose what we wanted to do we could kind of think of anything so right at the start of the term was probably very exciting time (Ella).

Ella's very mention of great exuberance in tapping into the mental space and discovering exciting possibilities of ideas may well be explained through Boden's (2001) concept of exploratory creativity which is a 'type of thinking (that) investigates the possibilities inherent in the space' (Boden 2001, p. 96). However, Boden's (2001) further description of exploratory creativity makes it a reserve of professionals who have a solid knowledge of their field along with a knowledge of relevant rules. Therefore, Crafts' (2001) concept of 'possibility thinking' may adequately account for the excitement that the students, like Ella, experience in their discovery of limitless thinking possibilities. Jeffrey and Craft (2003, p. 1)

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further describe the potential of 'possibility thinking' in becoming a 'creative habit' and call it a 'language that stimulates creativity and is used to translate learning experiences into creative learning'.

The MAD students also report great excitement during City excursions. They state the reason as not only having a freedom to move about freely, but also a freedom to communicate their ideas, asking questions, and getting the feedback on their topics from the general public in the city as well. Isabella richly paints the students' excitement during city excursions:

> It was just like the weather wasn't so good but everyone was happy ... on the day obviously they were missing a day out of school but ... it was still kind of at school we were learning things and especially the first experience when we were talking to people we obviously ... we had never talked to people before which is the point of it and we were asking questions about our topic and seeing this that what they knew about it and what they didn't and obviously ... their opinion.

5.2.2.5 Further characteristics of agentic engagement

However, the MAD students' agentic engagement while working with others far exceeds these dimensions to include some other characteristics as well encompassing embodied action, risk-taking, creative problem-solving, and expanding the concept of self and personal learning as discussed below. It is here that agentic engagement seems to assert the autodidactic element of creative learning and merges into a more expansive framework of creative learning as form of learning as well as a pedagogic style to help explain such characteristics.

While describing their moments of intense excitement, enjoyment, and engagement in their creative ideation, the research participants particularly reported those moments as significant where 'things were actually happening we felt we were doing something good because people were actually buying stuff and we were giving it to charity' (Amelia). *Doing something good* (for others), which Csikszentmihalyi (1996) holds as closely linked to creativity phenomenon,

happened again for Amelia and her group mates when they organised a fundraiser. For Ava's group, it was holding a petition (Ava). For Grace in Ella's group, it was 'for our sale because everyone liked doing things they wanted to do'. For Ivy in Isla's group, it was a sausage sizzle while for Isla, it was city surveys. Ava views 'doing something (good)' to be the distinct feature of the Immersion Programme which makes it different from the regular school classes:

> Yeah it's just I think a lot of it (in regular classes) is testing that we do it's just reviewing the content where we could be reviewing the content well but like applying it to something ... that matters.

It is noteworthy that Ava also reported a loss of interest during the programme when the teacher assumed the traditional despotic role, and the students did not have the opportunity to make things happen their way.

Although many schools are risk-aversive (Harris 2014), the opportunity to promote student agency makes risk-taking an integral part of student engagement and learning. In fact, the students view it as a part of their creative ideation. Mia and Ava's group working on getting the General Sales Tax removed from women's sanitary products came up with the idea of collecting bra and tampon donations from the school community. According to Mia:

> Personally I think doing the donation boxes was a bit of a risk because ... I've heard ... that lots of people laughed at it and ... yeah and didn't feel comfortable donating their bras and tampons because they think it is a sensitive topic ... which it shouldn't be.

Similarly, for this group the very idea of taking action against the GST by signing a petition for tax removal was not that easy. Being young girls, the group advocating for that purpose felt quite vulnerable at that point — open to receive all sorts of criticism:

> It was just sort of standing up for myself because I have trouble doing that and yeah I suppose, it's more also standing up to ... for women as well when people would say ... stupid things about it and just saying ... that's not right

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like if you don't think this is something right then you shouldn't be here like just talking to us (Ava).

However, this group was pleasantly surprised to see the turnout of people:

Ava: How many people coming up and wanting to sign it and for me that's what made me really happy and I was like ... surprised and...

Zoe: I was just surprised how many donations we got in total and it was really good because in the first week we just kept getting rubbish and I thought we were not gonna make it but then we got a lot of donations and stuff that was good.

Emily's group associated risk-taking with doing a pancake sale for fundraising. The fundraiser involved risk because the group was uncertain if the sale could yield sufficient money. Similarly, for Isla's group, spending money on a sausage-sizzle was risky as they were not sure if they would get all that money back or would raise an adequate amount for their cause. For the students who mostly involved with raising awareness, the nature of risk-taking was different. For instance, Jack's group working on cyber safety puts it this way:

We could also say most of the things that we did was a risk because obviously in making our website we didn't know if it was going to work. So we might have been working on something that was ... what we were doing for the whole term and then if it didn't work obviously we're going to be like damned because that's the biggest part of Immersion but yeah everything worked out well too and everyone's happy about that (Isabella).

It is only when the students were able to get some positive response on their efforts from the targeted audience, they felt safe and self-assured. However, in the midst of all these perspectives, there were some groups that did not see any risk-taking associated with their projects. For instance, the group working on the war project to raise people's awareness could not identify any risk-taking:

William: Risks it probably...

Henry: Not not really.

William: Not really we didn't take many risks not really.

The students' risk-taking attitude in such instances is illustrative of their active use of agency and creativity to make a worthwhile difference.

5.2.2.6 Agentic engagement and the evocation of student creativity

Besides the above discussed instances of acting creatively and agentically, the five-week community service element of the programme — as Mr. Oscar explicates — also requires the students to engage with the local community at primary schools, hospitals, opportunity shops, and nursing homes. The students design a programme to engage with the community members at those places. In addition to this engagement with the community, other activities requiring the students' creative ideas include the students' reflective feedback on the Melbourne street art tasks which requires the students to interpret the street art by using their 'intercultural capability' (Mr. Oscar).

In the MAD Programme the fact that the 'option of how (the students) complete their project is completely up to them' (Ms. Audrey) also evokes student creativity. The 'students are not told what to do' (Ms. Audrey) leading them to find an issue which equals finding a problem (Jeffrey 2006) and solving it. The added layer of pursuing one's passion and individual flair conjoins 'thinking outside the square of ways to engage other people because the whole premise is to make a difference' (Ms. Audrey). Creativity comes in the very idea of engaging with people while pursuing one's 'individual flair' (Ms. Audrey).

During the projects, the students engage with their team mates and with the broader community to make a difference to community issues. This collaborative work of engagement with people from the broader community helps the students discover and develop new relationships with self and the others and leads to what Woods (1993, p. 359) defines as 'real learning' which is about personal development and

'pure education'. Along with personal development, engagement with others also involves gaining a:

> New understanding of others, and from others they develop new conceptions of their own selves. Though the learning experiences might be reckoned in individual terms, the major accomplishment is a collective one (Woods 1993, p. 362).

During collaborative work, many demanding situations require the students to come to a consensus. The Immersion students in this process develop creative and new ways of working with their team mates. This sometimes even requires taking effective action to reduce disruption, or coercing others to work for the group if they are not working adequately (section 5.4 for more discussion).

At a personal level, for some students, this collaborative work means learning to control oneself when experiencing a range of emotions. For instance, Ella 'learnt 'how to control myself' while working with others. In a similar vein, Grace discovered the existing possibilities for making a difference in the community in working with others:

> I think it makes you realise that ... even though ... we visited a local primary school it's ... people like same things as we can do ... the amount of opportunities that we get given to be able to do different things to benefit other people that's pretty good that's nice.

The students also discovered the accessibility of such possibilities: 'We just had people and stuff but then it just opened our minds to think although that is a bit bigger than all of us but *(sick)* we still can do something to fix it' (Isabella); and discovering ones' individual potential of making a difference: 'I guess there's a lot of ways we can make a difference in our community or in our world' (Emily), and 'Maybe I didn't know all the little things you can do to make a difference' (Ella). Discovering that making creative and agentic contribution was within the reach of everyone also led students to have a sense of gratification and satisfaction: 'I found it good helping people in need and yeah ...' (Mia). Working in teams helped

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students discover their hidden abilities and skills as well. For instance, Chloe discovered her 'capacity to help others' and recognised the unassuming ways that could lead to helping others; Mia recognised her public speaking skills; Ava discovered her editing skills in English; and Henry recognised his ability to educate people on his project topic.

Given that there are certain guidelines regarding the limited number of fundraisers and the type of information to be shared with others, generally this programme encourages students to 'think outside the square and ... not do the things that they've always done and have leadership aspect and that individual flair being able to come through in their work' (Ms. Audrey). Mr. Oscar also shares the past experiences of the groups that tried to work on helping individuals and making a difference at a global level. However, economic and systemic limitations came in the aspiring groups' way to contribute to global charities. Mr. Oscar describes this process as:

> They (students) also have a look at whether they want to try to make an impact on an individual local or Global level and there are challenges of course with all of those so we seem to get a trend moving towards it's like the local level mostly ... we have had contributions made to Global Charities as well ... overseas we've had a challenge with that though because Bank fees for Bank transfers to overseas Charities they just take up so much of the money the kids make so we've been finding it's better to donate to Australian charities that have a connection overseas ... so you know we have a sort of economic limitations and systemic limitations to how they can contribute and money is not the only way of course so (students) make decisions about all of those things ... in part ... that are a part of the process.

Despite these programme limitations that expand the students' understanding of real-life limitations, generally, what evokes student creativity is the 'option of how they complete their project is completely up to them' (Ms. Audrey).

5.2.2.7 On relating student learning with agentic engagement

Though as mentioned above, Jeffrey (2006) separates the *creative* aspect from the *learning* aspect in students' creative learning, in the MAD learning context, the students' collaborative learning dissolves this distinction by embracing both creative as well as agentic aspects of learning. This also has implications for the students' engagement with learning that now assumes agentic as well as creative dimensions (*Figure 5.1*). Creative pedagogy scholar Lin (2011, 2014) views learners' active and creative engagement along with their spontaneous learning integral to creative learning. Mortimer et al. (2011) further define creative engagement as an effective pedagogic tool — based on the use of imagery, ownership, and feedback — to keep students creatively engaged in dance-related practices.

Creative
Learning

Creative
Engagement
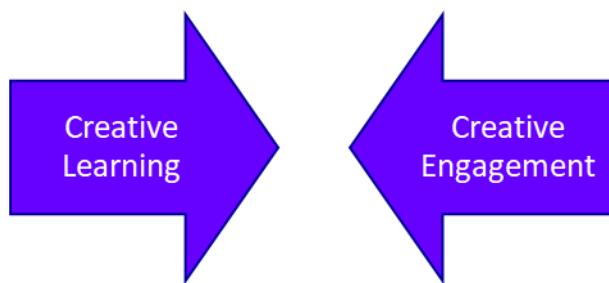
Figure 5.1. Relationship between Creative Learning and Creative Engagement

However, creative engagement can also be explained from the students' perspective in underlining the students' deliberate attempts to find ways to constructively engage with their learning. To me, creative engagement is the learner's autodidactic pedagogical approach towards their learning. The autodidactic aspect involves the learners' active and creative use of agency to solve problems other than intellectual in their learning processes. Approached this way, creative engagement extends beyond engaging with the inquiry intellectually — that Jeffrey (2006) considers integral to creative learning — to embrace creative, social, and humane dimensions.

In summary, this section explores the complex interplay of cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and agentic dimensions of student engagement in the MAD Programme right from the point the Immersion projects are conceived to their execution. The

concept of relevance may account for the students' excitement, joy, their ownership of learning and innovation; hence, their cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and even agentic engagement with their work. However, some situations — where challenges are greater than the existing skill sets — may require more emphasis on the agentic and creative dimension of engagement. This dimension helps explain students' risk-taking and choice-making behaviours while interacting in social situations. The relationship between creative learning and agentic engagement then offers a framework for further explicating students' effective dealing with the challenging learning contexts and informs the processes of creative learning that stand distinct from creative teaching.

5.3   Student Voice and the MAD Learning

This section delves into explaining the relationship between students' creative voice and their creative learning.

5.3.1 On listening to student voices

Yazzie-Mintz (2007) and Yazzie-Mintz along with McCormick (2012) in urging the aspiring researchers to investigate the nature of the *engagement gap* (Yazzie-Mintz 2007, p. 8) by 'finding humanity in data' (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012, p. 745), lay strong emphasis on promoting student voices that are absent in becoming part of school 'conversations about school reforms and school improvement' (Yazzie-Mintz 2007, p. 1) and often go neglected in the field of research. Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick (2012) further argue that the students' full participation in the school community relies on having their voices and beliefs made a part of the school conversations and decisions pertaining to school structures, policies, teaching and learning practices.

While describing student voices on their perceptions of their schooling experiences essential for measuring their learning engagement, Yazzie-Mintz (2007, p. 1) further holds how student voices on their schooling experiences establish a working relationship with 'the school community: the people (adults and peers), the structures (rules, facilities, schedules), the curriculum and content, the pedagogy,

the opportunities (curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular)'. The fact that the school context plays an important role in student engagement or disengagement, takes the responsibility of the disengaging behaviour away from the individual students (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012).

5.3.2   The coupling of student voice with agency

Mr. Oscar, in describing the MAD Programme, explains that the MAD pedagogy promotes student agency and student voice which other regular school classes fail to promote due to their restricted curriculum. This coupling of student agency with voice and their relationship to pedagogy requires a fresh perspective on approaching and interpreting the relational nature of student voice and their learning. Sefton-Green et al.'s (2011, p.1) view of 'putting young people's voice at the heart of learning' as integral to being creative in educational contexts supports the relational nature of student voice and creative learning. However, the evidence coming from the student voice literature (discussed below) in suggesting the complexities associated with the concept of voice in educational settings, if on the one hand, makes us wary of taking the dynamics of voice in simplistic terms; on the other, it further calls for a more systematic approach to explore the relational nature of the above concepts in the classroom teaching and learning practices and processes.

By problematising the construct of student voice, the scope of the term can be broadened to include the social justice approaches of the learner inclusiveness which can have long term impacts on social justice practices of schools (discussed later in this section).

5.3.3   The concept of pedagogic voice

This study recognises the complexity and limitations associated with the concept of voice and shifts the focus away from voice itself to a more complex notion of student voice called 'pedagogic voice' which signifies students' influence over 'the context and content of their learning' as Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016, p. 128) indicate.

Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills' (2016) concept of pedagogic voice is an extension and expansion of Arnot and Reay's (2007, p. 323) concept of pedagogic voice that is created through pedagogic encounters, signifies language of learning created by school pedagogies, and 'is spoken by pupils as pupils'. When this pedagogic voice is heard by researchers and teachers, it improves learning and teaching while reducing gender, class, and ethnic inequities in student learning.

In the MAD context, the agentic opportunity to make a difference in the community helps develop the students' pedagogic voice that Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016) regard necessary for student engagement in learning as well as for their civic engagement. The democratic aspects of teaching practices in Elkhorn Community College (ECC) visual arts programme, as Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016, p. 137) identify, enable 'teachers to both 'find out' and to be surprised by' the capabilities of all their students. The democratic pedagogy in the ECC Visual Arts Programme helps cultivate certain student practices that reveal the students' developed pedagogic voices — including empathy, respect, ownership of learning and place (community membership) — and decision making in curriculum choices along with the use of their personal strengths and individual interests in the school environment (improved engagement) (Baroutsis, McGregor & Mills 2016).

5.3.4 The pedagogic encounters and the promotion of students' pedagogic voice

Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills' (2016) study, as the above discussion establishes, presents a case for the democratic aspects of teaching practices sparking pedagogic encounters that develop and promote students' pedagogic voice. Research on student transition can also be used to further extend this argument. The student transition research establishes the role creative teaching approaches can play in promoting student voices during student transitions (Jindal-Snape 2012). Jindal-Snape's (2012) study argues that student voice — promoted through creative approaches — can help improve existing transition practices and identify new transition practices in addition to helping children and young people to manage changes (Jindal-Snape 2012). More specifically, creative approaches increase

children's emotional intelligence, self-esteem, agency, and resilience (Jindal-Snape 2012).

The fact that the MAD students are adolescents and are passing through a period of transition makes the use of creative pedagogy more relevant for making their voices heard. Rather than viewing agency as a product of the process — as transition scholarship does (Jindal-Snape 2012) — it can be held that both the MAD teachers and learners use the principles of autonomy, control, agency, and ownership of learning as a way to support the learners' learning processes. Taken specifically in the context of student learning, it can be argued that the students' voices can be heard when the students have pedagogic encounters with diverse aspects of the MAD pedagogy. The pedagogic encounters along with the learners' active and agentic responses to them, hence, signify their creative learning and their developed pedagogic voices.

As discussed in section (5.2), the opportunity to exercise agency in the MAD Programme brings student learning closer to creative learning along with allowing such pedagogic encounters to happen.

5.3.5 The diverse dimensions of pedagogic voice

It is worthy to note that the pedagogic voice that emerges out of the MAD pedagogic encounters is different from and is bigger than the individual voice. The MAD pedagogy particularly is interested in promoting collaborative teamwork and aims for the students to achieve something of 'higher quality' and bigger than 'they could, may be, do on their own' (Ms. Audrey). In order to work for others (community), the students learn to work with others (team members and teachers). The MAD students take on this opportunity very well to work with likeminded people and to attain a common goal that makes a difference to the community problems. The personal dimension of pursuing one's passion and individual flair is combined with 'thinking outside the square of ways to engage other people because the whole premise is to make a difference' (Ms. Audrey).

In fact, the MAD students display a strong tendency to transcend the individual and to embrace the collective. This inclination is played out in the students' attempts to expand the notion of personal self by gaining an awareness of and by overcoming personal impediments or inhibitions that get in the way of accomplishing the group goals. For Ella from Emily's group, this means to 'learn how to control myself (laughter)' by mastering her emotional reactions to diverse situations. For Tom, this implies extending friendship to others 'to make new friends that I talk to now'. Ella also has learned about different characteristics and strengths of other group members. For Chloe, from Ava's group, this implies knowing about 'their ... our strong points and weaker points'. For Isla's group, it means transcending their strong mindedness and opinionated natures to consider everyone's opinions to benefit the project.

Ivy also admits the personal nature of her challenges which arose because she 'wasn't working with the group properly', and she didn't want to back down whenever the group had any disagreements. However, she soon realised that she 'can get around it with other people and it is fine'. Ava also shares a similar experience:

> I know ... in the middle ... may be for a couple of discussed things I started to get ... very stressed out ... and I just learned ... I needed to be a little bit more relaxed ... like everyone else I was probably ... like ... we needed to be on the same level.

The pedagogic voice also emerges strong and overpowering when there is a discovery of or acquisition of personal capacities and skills. For Chloe, this implies her personal discovery of her 'capability to help others it's easy to help others even if it's just in small ways it's really easy'. Mia learns, 'I actually can talk to people'. For Ava, this discovery is related to her editing skills: 'I've learnt that I am alright at editing ... like ... editing work'. Emily's findings pertain to the discovery of her personal agency and of innumerable existing possibilities: 'I guess there's a lot of ways we can make a difference in our community and our world'. For Emily, this implies: 'I guess ... we can actually do more do something about the problems ...

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solve them'. Mia finds out that she has become more confident while Ivy has become more independent and self-motivated.

The MAD pedagogy, if on the one hand, helps the students to discover and acquire a new set of skills; on the other, it allows the students to build on the skills they already possess. During her interview, Ms. Audrey explains how the students build on their prior skill-sets:

> Yeah so I guess we're not traditionally teaching the things that would be explicitly taught in those subjects in the traditional way so we're looking at graphing we're looking at data analysis and we're looking at surveying and we're looking at ... the writing of a thesis document and you know we're doing all those things but in a way that's different to how they've done it before so hopefully they're coming in with some basic skills ... and then we are allowing them to transfer those skills from the traditional class and see how the things that I'm learning in Science about writing up a scientific report and the things I'm learning in Humanities about surveying and collecting data are linked together ... and then things that I'm learning in English about like writing and you know topic sentences and you know a persuasive writing and all of those things can come together ... and how they work together rather than always seeing them as separate entities and not understanding how they how they can be together.

Ava's awareness of her possession of and an improvement of editing skills, as discussed earlier, reflects well what Ms. Audrey has mentioned above. However, the scope of the students' acquired skills far exceeds academic skills to include a wide spectrum of other skills. Also, the students' rejoicing of the fact that they are not doing Humanities, Science, and Math this term (Chloe), demonstrates the programme's success in seamlessly integrating curriculum with making a difference to the community and illustrates the students' acquisition of a broad skill set which might include academic skills but may not be restricted to what is a part of the traditional classrooms. Isla's group lists a wide range of their skill capital that they employed and developed during this project. They have learned to work

together, to compromise, to take others' views into account, learnt about the personality differences, learnt to work with different people on the same goal, learnt to educate others for raising awareness, and learnt to get information.

The group's other acquired skills include communication, organisation, independence, decision making, and time management skills. They have also learnt to be realistic in expectations, to run a sausage sizzle, to raise money for a communal purpose, to work in an organisation, and to speak with general public — just to name a few. However, it is interesting that despite their interplay with a wide spectrum of skills, the students express a desire to study the traditional subjects: 'I would have preferred maybe even doing the subjects that we miss' (Zara). The group feels lack of confidence:

> Ivy: This programme overall was really good but I'm also nervous about since we're not doing English Humanities or Science this whole term I'm nervous about getting back into it next term after forgetting everything.
>
> Isla, Lily & Zara (together): Yeah exactly.
>
> Isla: I think my English skills have gone down a little bit.
>
> Zara: Same...
>
> Lily: I keep calling people different names and I think that's memory not ... (inaudible).
>
> Isla: Laughing: Yeah I think I'm just a stupid already.
>
> Lily: Stupider?
>
> All laughing: Yeah.

It is worth noting, as I will argue later in this section, Isla's group shows great empathetic understanding of others and their problems, a sense of responsibility, and consideration of a multiplicity of perspectives. From Craft's (2006) Wise Creativity framework, the expression of these traits brings this group closer to what Craft (2006) calls 'wise people'; however, judging themselves by the traditional

academic standards makes these students feel 'stupid' and creates in them a desire to be in touch with the traditional subjects to feel academically sound and secure.

This dilemma invites attention to the deeper question of compatibility between creative learning and the current school organisation that alludes to many unresolved systemic issues (Sefton-Green 2008). Sefton-Green (2008) argues, the emphasis on teaching for assessment along with large class sizes and non-individualised projects, weakens the impact of creative learning. Sefton-Green (2008, p. 11) further explains the impact of this dilemma of compatibility:

> Not only … the current approach to valuing learning in mainstream education may inhibit the development of learning in general (in that it sways how schools set their priorities), but … it may also have the effect of deskilling teachers (and students) from understanding how other kinds of learning might be valued and developed.

Isla's group clearly indicates this dilemma of compatibility that gives rise to their lack of understanding to value other kinds of learning, and the skills these various kinds of learning may impart.

If the notion of expanding the self 'in' and 'with' relation to others, makes the students' pedagogic voice bigger, the expressions of empathy and kindness to others also make the notion of voice strong. The students' pedagogic voice is also empathetic, kind, and considerate when the students show a remarkable responsibility towards their groups and work diligently, because they do not want to let their group down. For Isla, 'getting' the end results' keeps her engaged with her work; for Ivy, the reason lies in not 'let (ting) other group members down because everyone is doing their part'. This empathy also helps Mia to keep on going when she 'wanted to stop,' 'because I don't want to let anyone down in the group because it (thesis) is marked as a group and so you have to pull your part' (Mia). Ava also noted her group members' empathetic attitude towards her:

Yeah ... I was doing the results and also the abstract ... I found it hard ... it was confusing to me once I started to do it but ... they helped me work it out ... how to do it.

The feeling of empathy then transforms into offering active support to each other whenever there is a need. Isla from another group explains:

When we're all in a group when everyone who can support each other or in a group it makes such a big difference to the amount of people that you impact or the amount of knowledge that you put out into the world.

Their empathetic behaviour is also expressed in considering everyone's view point for a mutual benefit of the society. Chloe's, from Ava's group, appreciation of the Immersion Project as 'not just about ourselves it's about helping other people' also exhibits a variation of the same empathetic assertion. Empathy is also expressed through understanding others' problems deeply and personally. Chloe, from Ava's group, also communicates her newly discovered insight: 'I learnt a lot more about how much other people are struggling'. Mia too learns about the struggles of homeless women. This knowledge creates fear:

Mia: It's sort of scary how they told us how easy it is for someone to become homeless it could happen to anyone of us and that's something.

Chloe: That's sad and scary.

Isla and Ivy's experiences are similar:

Isla: Yeah because we learnt about how serious our (topic is) like it can affect anyone like you can't just affect a certain person because the way they act or anything it's just it can be anyone at all like and that really scared I think it's scared all of us into making like putting the most effort into our project to...

Ivy: Chances are ... since it's one in three women that's ... out of my grandmother my mom and I one of us have been affected or going to be

affected which is crazy I don't want anyone I love and care about to be affected by this sort of thing.

With this knowledge and fear comes a realisation of the impending nature of danger and a dislike for a disconcerted attitude of others as well:

> I found that some people aren't very caring and a bit selfish when we're doing the petition I found lots of people didn't really want to sign the petition because it's they say didn't affect them ... but overall it does affect them and it affects yeah mainly males because it does affect the people they know and love be their sisters their mothers and their aunties it affects everyone (Mia).

In standing up for the cause of others, Ava experiences the ultimate extension of self to the others, to the extent of becoming one with them or at least identifying strongly with them: 'When we moved into petition it was just a sort of standing up for myself ... and it's more also standing up to ... for women as well'. In addition to being empathetic, the students' pedagogic voice is respectful too. It is respectful of others' opinions and of their roles. In this regard, the students show a lot of understanding and respect for their teachers' roles. Ms. Audrey's description of her teaching responsibility holds that:

> So basically ... I think that we are here to guide and inquire and question in a way that makes students think a little bit more deeply and just take it from the surface to take their ideas and their experiences ... at the moment they're thinking and it doesn't quite engage so just getting them to engage at another level and obviously you know another teaching aspect of setting out the curriculum and ... but it goes further than that and I think that's really powerful in terms of what we can do to help students to further their learning in the collaborative and teamwork sense and the leadership sense in Immersion.

Given that the teachers' role is very close to McWilliams' (2009) description of a 'meddler' who invokes in the learners' problem-solving capacity by presenting

them with a problem or challenge, it is very well accepted by the students as well. Most of the students are happy with their teachers' present roles and appreciate all their guidance and feedback that comes while they are working on their projects. However, the MAD students become extremely critical of their teachers when the teachers assume the traditional authoritarian role and silence students' agentic pedagogic voice in the beginning of the programme. This situation also contributed towards losing their interest in their work:

> Ava: I feel ... the teachers they unnecessarily ... talked about things and stuff that we understood and they were just and it might just be ... home group ... who don't understand so they could just talk to them instead of wasting our time.

Grace, from Emily and Ella's group, also recalls a time in the beginning of the programme which was less interesting — where they were listening more than doing:

> It's like at the start it's not as interesting because you are not doing most of the things ... but like when you get started with your project it becomes a lot better because we are doing things.

The Immersion students' pedagogic voice also indicates the students' ownership of learning and their decision-making in their project activities (section 5.2). The voice that owns learning finds its expressions in the students' risk-taking behaviour, their decision-making, management of challenges at a personal and group level, and through their description of personal achievement and success (section 5.2). Also, the students' interest and engagement with their work and their joy and satisfaction from their work contributes towards making a voice that owns learning (discussed in the previous section). The pedagogic voice that characterises ownership of learning further reveals the students' active use of personal strengths and individual interests in the Immersion Programme context to make a difference to the community (section 5.2).

5.3.6 Ownership of learning in relation to the ownership of place and time

All the above-mentioned dimensions of students' pedagogic voice align well with Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills' (2016) framework of the developed pedagogic voice. Though Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016) couple ownership of learning with ownership of place, the MAD students reveal an ambivalent attitude towards their ownership of space. Jeffrey (2006) regards the creative use of space, through the alterations and appropriation of its spatial as well as temporal boundaries as necessary for ownership by students. Jeffrey (2006) is also aware of some students' inability to make use of creative space for their creative learning that he links to the absence of conducive study environments at home or to students' lack of experience in any discrete study programmes. The MAD teachers (Mr. Oscar) also allude to some students' inability to monitor their own learning as the students' lack of initiation in the culture of agency, which to the Immersion teachers, poses the biggest challenge to becoming engaged with their own learning. However, these instances are only few and most of the students take up this challenge with great enthusiasm (Mr. Oscar).

It is also discussed elsewhere (sub-section 5.2.1) that some students' descriptive ambivalence towards the MAD space indicates the possibility of a *hybrid* or *third space* (Lin 2014) where the students are trying to manage performative values along with agentic values and which opens up a discussion for the possibility of coexisting performative and agentic values. Additionally, Jeffrey (2006, p. 405) links the spatial alterations and appropriations to temporal appropriations and regards them as necessary for augmented commitment and interest in creative learning. The fact that the students in the MAD Programme are having twenty-four periods a week with six periods on Fridays, allows them a lot of temporal flexibility to do their learning which is not possible in their routine school classes. However, quite interestingly, many students still complain of the shortage of time for their major assessment tasks, that is, their thesis and oral presentations. For instance, Jack expressed what he did not like about this programme was the fact that 'I guess we

didn't have enough time to do all that we wanted to do and that was we could get to spend a bit more time on our thesis'. Alternatively, her group-mate Isabella says:

> And probably we didn't have a lot of time for the oral presentation either probably only about a week isn't it? Three periods after this may be a bit more time for that.

Woods (1993) links creation of time integral to students' enthusiasm for learning. Woods' (1993, p. 367-368) study establishes where there was a strong motivation, high levels of awareness, and full engagement of senses, execution of creative talents, deep personal involvement, 'time was invented' and 'owned'. Woods (1993) argues that this created time was marked by structured actions and diverse activities crammed into a given slot of time. However, where there was lack of interest or motivation, the students tended to waste time or complained that there was not enough time (Woods 1993).

The Immersion students Henry and William also experienced a shortage of time and expressed it as something that they disliked about this programme:

> William: I reckon it should give us a bit more time with thesis I didn't like they only gave us two weeks to do it and finish it but besides that I think well done.

> Henry: Maybe just the thesis just take your time for the thesis and that's about it.

If the notion of time in this instance alludes to a need for acquiring some time-management skills; in other, it might allude to the need for the flexibility of space. Spending a lot of time in one space also proves to be boring:

> Isla: Yeah just sort of it was a bit much for like six periods a day (inaudible) every Monday with the same people yeah (Laughter).

Ivy also feels 'cooped up like the only time we could go outside was recess or lunch'. Consequently, Ivy suggests changes to involve more excursions and 'outside lesson'.

The need for flexibility in spatial settings as this dialogue indicates alludes to Woods' (1993, p. 359-360) assertion that 'real learning … is holistic' with no distinction 'drawn between school and non-school areas, work and time. The world, city or village is the school'. Isabella's rich yet meaningful speech is restated here to reveal the student-interest in learning in non-school settings, for instance, during the city excursions:

> It was just like the weather wasn't so good but everyone was ... like ... happy on the day obviously they were missing a day out of school but ... like ... it was still kind of at school we were learning things and especially the first experience when we were talking to people we obviously ... had never talked to people before ...

5.3.7 Anti-pedagogic propensities affecting pedagogic voice

Coupled with the students' ambivalent attitude to the ownership of place and time are some anti-pedagogic propensities that sometimes stifle or silence the pedagogic voice. It is worthy to note that the voice becomes devoid of empathy when others' opinions are not taken into consideration. Isla's group, as discussed earlier in this chapter (sub-section 5.2.1), initially struggled with accepting each other's views; however, they were able to overcome that state of inertia by learning to consider all opinions. The weakening or silencing of the pedagogic voice also happens when the individual voices become so overpowering that they do not allow other voices to have pedagogic encounters. This happened at the beginning of the programme when the teachers assumed the role of an authoritarian teacher delivering 'scripted instruction' which turned students into 'passive, observing audience' (Sawyer 2004, p. 13).

5.3.8 The proactive voice

During my fieldwork, the voice of the student Lucas particularly struck me when he walked to Mr. Oscar very upset and complained about some student who was disturbing him again. Rather than regarding this voice as aggressive and complaining, to me this voice appears to be quite proactive in actively seeking ways

to reduce the distractions. In doing so, this voice shares several commonalities with many other voices as well. Lucas' voice is not different from Emily and Ella' group voice that experiences difficulty in concentrating on their work because of another group. They consider the other group as friends; however, they report to their teachers about that group's distracting behaviour. Emily and Ella's group is quite vocal in expressing that their productivity could have been improved, had there been less interruption and distraction from their peers. Another variation of the students' proactive voice is when group members coax their other members to take up the group roles and do their work responsibly in witnessing a lack of interest in group work. While doing so, they are eager to offer any help when their group members share any problem. For instance, Jade explains how she or her other group members get the non-cooperative students do their work:

> I would tell them they need to get it done or that doesn't work ... I will get teacher involved in this to try to really help them or motivate them to do it ... yeah ... tell them if they don't do it ... it affects everyone's mark and they'll be disappointed in them.

This facet of pedagogic voice, in fact, reveals its agentic dimension where the students are quite vocal about or are proactively removing the impediments that come in the way of their engagement with learning. This proactive voice also becomes visible when the students take regular breaks to reduce boredom or proactively ask teachers or group members to help them through an issue. For instance, when I asked Isla's group about the moments when they experienced any lack of interest in their work, Isla replies: 'working all the day and same thing every day' makes them lose interest. Additionally, 'we've been in the same class for the whole day'.

For treating boredom, Isla turns to other group members for a chat. Ivy 'doodle(s)' while Lily does 'quizzes'. The group further opines, it is an individual effort to entertain themselves; however, 'sometimes they sidetrack someone else' (Lily). When the students are asked what brings them back to their studies, Lily laughs and says, 'Oh I've wasted a lot of time,' now 'get back to work'. For Isla it is when, the

'teacher told us not to waste time'. For Ivy, it is when 'sometimes I get bored of being bored and often go and do something'. The Immersion learners' attitude towards the moments of respite is similar to Tanggaard's (2014) research participants' expressed attitude during their experimentation and inquiry phase of learning. Tanggaard (2014, p. 111) terms it as 'fooling around' which occurred 'in breaks or in zones and spaces in the workplace or at school when they had time to play relatively freely with materials and make their own projects and design-ideas' and when something needed to be fixed. However, far from being an aimless activity, the learners' 'fooling around' was their way of responding to the situations in a new way. Also, it was an expression of their 'responsibility for their own learning, learning what was needed to be done and what needed to be fixed' (Tanggaard 2014, p. 111).

5.3.9 On exploring the characteristics of pedagogic voice further

Given that the agentic scope of the students' actions in pursuing their passion is broad, it may well be argued that the students' developed pedagogic voice also exhibits some other characteristics in taking risks, working collaboratively, using diverse mediums, and discovering their roles and responsibilities as well.

Along with students' risk-taking and collaborative work which have been discussed elsewhere in detail in this chapter (section 5.2), the MAD pedagogy also allows the students to complete the project their way which allows them a freedom to use diverse mediums that brings 'individual flair' in their work:

> So it's not that everybody's doing an essay on this topic or everyone's presenting an information booth or you know everyone's doing an informative video it's completely up to you ... and if you choose to use those mediums that's awesome and we support that but also you know if you want to I don't know go and do something within the local community and spread awareness that way we'll try and make it work (Ms. Audrey).

The programme format also brings in an inter-disciplinary approach by integrating Humanities, English, and Science and requires the students to build on their skills

from these areas by transferring their traditional knowledge and basic skills 'from the traditional class' and traditional subjects to their projects of investigation (Ms. Audrey). This approach also helps them understand 'how they can work together' (Ms. Audrey).

Apart from holding the students intellectually engaged in their project inquiry, the students' collaborative work requires an assumption of new roles and responsibilities of the Immersion students. Ms. Audrey keenly describes the nature of teamwork:

> Here's what you have to do but you need to decide as a group what are people's roles what are their strengths and we talk about that we talk about we look at different types of learners and different types of personality traits and how they work together to make a successful group ... and then students from there sort of start to work out 'okay where do I fit in this team?'

The students come up with their own ways to do the collaborative work. Some choose group captains, for instance, in Emily's group, Emily has been chosen as a group captain while in others, it is a more democratic and open process (discussed in section 5.2.1). However, the students generally understand their responsibility towards their work. If such responsibility is not present, it impacts the overall group dynamics, resulting in dysfunctional groups.

5.3.10 The MAD learning in relation to the pedagogic voice

Taken in the context of the MAD learning, the students' pedagogic encounters reveal their confidence, their enterprising spirit, their empathy, their agency, their ability to engage with the world, and their ability to do collaborative work. These characteristics not only correspond closely to the features of the pedagogic voice described by Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016), but also fit into the framework of creative learning in describing the learners' 'making of certain kinds of subjectivity' and their 'ways of framing a new place of authority and knowledge within learning' (Sefton-Green et al. 2011, p. 2). Also, this form of learning

signifies a form of pedagogy where the students' responses to the learning processes are well-considered and allowed.

Though the characteristics of creative learning are wide-ranging because of the varying definitions, I only draw upon the characteristics that are common within the scholarship, or that closely correspond to the MAD pedagogy. The characteristics of creative learning drawn from distinct scholarship include risk-taking and being enterprising (Woods 1993; Robinson & Dusseldorp 2015); collaboration (Lin 2011); development of imagination and possibility thinking (Jeffrey 2006; Lin 2011; Lassig 2012b,); seeing age-old problems in new light, to pursue interests and strengths, and to apply mixed mediums and interdisciplinary approaches (Dusseldorp Forum cited in Lucas & Anderson 2015); freedom to grow new roles and responsibilities (Jeffrey 2006); and allowing students to practice language and express identities in diverse ways along with the freedom to engage with the world (Robinson & Dusseldorp 2015).

In addition, Jeffrey (2006) holds creative learning as involving active engagement with intellectual inquiry, a productive engagement with work, and an appreciation for product construction and process reviews. In allowing students the freedom to respond to pedagogic practices, the MAD pedagogy presents a close interplay among the diverse elements of creative learning during project activities.
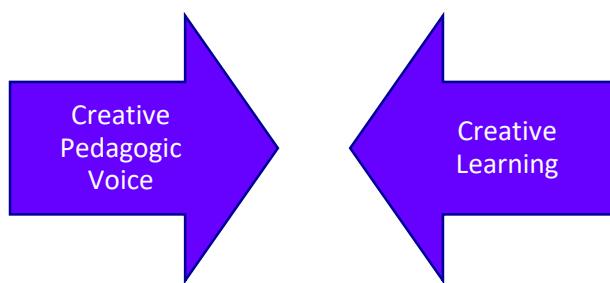
*Figure 5.2* Relationship between Creative Pedagogic Voice and Creative Learning

In the light of the above discussion, it can be established that the learners' active use of agency and decision making helps produce strong pedagogic voices that support their creative learning (*Figure 5.2*). Alternatively, the students' creative learning can serve as an effective vehicle to let their creative pedagogic voices out.

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Thus the research findings imply that the interdependent relationship between the learners' pedagogic voices and their creative learning is a way to enhance student creativity and learning.

5.4.   The Students' Creative Rendezvous and Creative Pedagogic Voice

This section establishes the relationship between student voice and student engagement.

5.4.1   Using student voice as a lens to study student engagement

As discussed in the previous section (5.3), the literature on student engagement generally reports student voices missing from their schooling experiences due to a strong culture of performativity (Yazzie-Mintz 2007; Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012). Consequently, students can feel estranged from their own learning. While using student voice as a lens to investigate student engagement, Yazzie-Mintz (2007) and Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick's (2012) studies establish the need to make student voices a part of school reform conversations to engage students more with their learning. The recent developments in student voice research also link students' improved engagement with their developed pedagogic voice (Baroutsis, McGregor & Mills 2016). In addition, the research on student transition also indicates the use of creative approaches promoting student voices and helping them through their transition experiences (Jindal-Snape 2012). Given that the research studies from student engagement and student voice literature establish a strong link between student engagement and student voice to improve their schooling experiences, it can be argued that the students' pedagogic voice (Baroutsis, McGregor & Mills 2016) developed through pedagogic encounters contains great affinity with students' creative engagement and has the potential to improve students' schooling experiences.

The previous section (section 5.3) explores in great detail different ways the MAD pedagogy, through its focus on agency and collaboration, creates opportunities for pedagogic encounters that inevitably lead to the development of the pedagogic voice. The pedagogic voice that results from such encounters is voluminous,

resourceful, curious, creative, agentic, and empathetic. It emerges from meaningful interactions with others whether they be the team members or the broader community. However, the section (5.3) also evidences the instances where the pedagogic voice is weak or gets stifled.

5.4.2 Strong pedagogic voice leading to strong student engagement

Given that student voice has a strong link to student engagement (Yazzie-Mintz 2007; Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012), it can be argued that the stronger and the more developed the students' pedagogic voice, the stronger their engagement with others and with their own learning. Ideally the students come to the MAD Programme with an optimistic mindset of 'making a difference' and an appreciation that 'it's not just about ourselves it's about helping other people' (Chloe). However, in working collaboratively, the students 'come to challenges and they butt heads and they have disagreements' (Ms. Audrey). Such challenges require the development of creative problem-solving skills. It is during such tough times that the students choose to take into consideration their and their team mates' roles and responsibilities, exhibit an expansion of self, consider their coexistence with others, and have a positive impact on their group dynamics. The empathy and respect directed towards the group mates during such tough times gives rise to positive group dynamics which leads them to keep their interest intact.

Contrary to the above-mentioned approach is the stifling or shutting down of others' ideas which inevitably leads students towards losing their interest in their work. Disagreements are sure to arise during such situations that invite the students to be agentic and creative despite feeling stressed out and frustrated. Isla and Ivy's group presents a case study for such disagreements that soon display the agentic dimension of the group's engagement and eventually lead to a compromised yet strong pedagogic voice (section 5.2).

The above instance is also illustrative of the need to come out of the individualistic voice to accept a more democratic and collaborative spirit. Isla and Ivy's group again is illustrative of this and is able to develop a robust pedagogic voice that reveals empathy and respect for each other's ideas. In group situations, all

individuals want their voices to be heard, recognised, and acknowledged. Therefore, in group situations, where empathy is exercised, for instance in Isla and Ivy's group, the students are willing for their voice to be modified (section 5.3). These values are very much a part of the humanising concept of creativity (Chappell 2006, 2011, 2012, 2017) as discussed earlier (section 5.2). Also, in learning crises, the agentic students do not hesitate to involve others to solve their issues. The students actively involve teachers if they experience the potential sources of disruption and try to remove them to actively engage with their learning. Also, the students seek help from their group mates whenever they experience anything that comes in their way of engaging with learning (discussed in section 5.3).

5.4.3   Frustrated and reactive voices as disengaged voices

However, it is noteworthy here that not all groups actively engage in agentic behaviour to resolve the conflicts or actively seek help from others when needed. For instance, Henry and William's friendship-based group happened to lose one of their group members due to unresolved group work issues. Moreover, during my fieldwork, I happened to witness this group's withdrawn behaviour many times. The teachers ascribed their withdrawn behaviour to the characteristic problem of not knowing how to use their agency in their routine-based academic culture that stifles student voices. Such constantly stifled and silenced voices find expression in chatting to others aimlessly without pursuing their own goals and interests.

On another occasion, both Henry and William accounted for their withdrawn behaviour as the result of their failure to organise a fundraiser which made them quite frustrated. They did not know what to do next until one of the teachers advised them to write an email to a year 7 class teacher arranging a time for their presentation to the class. Henry and William's retrospective comment brings this realisation home that there are multiple ways of raising awareness and making a difference:

William: We ... wanted to do a fundraiser ... sausage sizzle to raise money ... but we weren't allowed to do that as I said our email didn't get sent through on

time and we had to do a presentation we had to raise awareness ... we were all pretty mad.

Henry: A bit disappointed but it's what it is there are still there are still other ways to share our information and make a difference.

Henry and William's frustrated voices failed to self-soothe when disappointment was experienced and needed the teacher-initiated assistance to help them re-orientate. Consequently, the teachers advised both of them to work in an altered direction. This was then their plan B. In William and Henry's case, it is also noteworthy that despite their constantly withdrawn behaviour, the group complained of the shortage of time in accomplishing what they wanted to accomplish (section 5.3). Their failure to *invent* and *own* time (*Italics are mine*; Woods 1993; section 5.3) alludes to the absence of creatively and agentically engaging with their learning which is a characteristic dilemma in learning contexts. Ava's group also gets caught up with a similar situation when their plan to hold a fundraiser through a bake sale could not work because another group was doing it; however, their ability to come up with a plan B indicates their resilient voices. Similarly, Emily's group also wanted to do the sausage sizzle rather than a pancake sale. Still, their failure to do that did not disengage them from their work. They motivated themselves by appreciating:

Emily: We run in three groups that got to do a fundraiser so we were kind of … we might as well do something yeah because not everyone else is doing it.

Grace: But it was fine.

Tom: Yeah still worked though.

The above instances establish that the reactive or disappointed voice stays disengaged while the resourceful, agentic, and creative voice manages to get productively engaged.

5.4.4 Superficial engagement and inauthentic voices — a need for dialogue

So much so, the framework of voice also establishes a need for dialogue. This is particularly true of situations where apparently engaged students, on further probing, attributed the reason for doing work or thesis to getting it over and done with. This superficial engagement in doing things that the students might not be interested in doing shows that they do not really engage with their work at deeper level. Still, they find their way around doing such work, because they have to do it to get marks (Macfarlane 2015, 2016; Woods 1993). The previous section (5.2.1) establishes how the students define their personal success and achievement which differs remarkably from the neoliberal ideals of success and achievement. There are, however, some students who still embody the neoliberal spirit of success and competition, but far from working solely from the neoliberal standpoint, their voice comes closer to *hybrid* voices that want to be true to both (Lin 2014).

This extrinsic motivation and engagement with learning, by Woods' (1993, p. 359) standards is against the very spirit of 'real' learning. Csikszentmihalyi also regards the extrinsically motivated learning as useless for learners' future as 'it's not something that (the learners) would internalise, appropriate, and feel ownership over' (Whalen 1999, p. 164). This extrinsically motivated behaviour also becomes an instance of what Macfarlane (2015, 2016) calls 'inauthentic behaviour' which is also visible through the students' attitude towards the assessment tasks. The pedagogic voice that avoids such pedagogic encounters with the assessment activities may well be called an 'inauthentic voice' that reveals the Immersion students' neoliberal subjectivities (discussed in section 5.2.1). This also is the voice that interprets success differently, is hybrid in nature, and is expressed through the students' doing of assessment tasks, yet disliking them, finding them to be hard, and disassociating from their own final products, that is, the thesis.
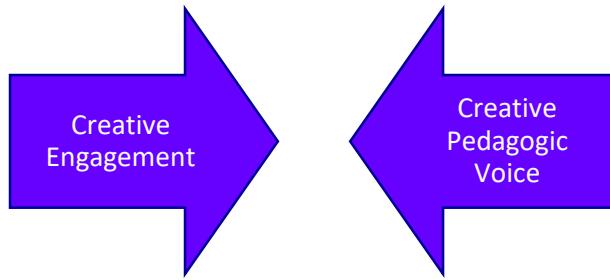
Figure 5.3. Relationship between Creative Engagement and Creative Pedagogic Voice

In the face of the above instances, it can also be argued that the more creative and agentic the students' engagement with their peers and the broader community, the more robust their pedagogic voice. Figure (5.3) demonstrates the relational nature of the constructs of creative engagement and the pedagogic voice. This approach requires viewing what helps the students' pedagogic voice in becoming larger than individual voices and what stifles it. However, this also works the other way around. As it has been discussed throughout this section, the more powerful and robust the student voices, the stronger student engagement with their learning. Hence, the use of a pedagogic voice framework particularly becomes helpful in explaining the use of creative learning to improve student engagement in teaching and learning situations.

5.5 Relationship among Student Learning, Student Voice, and Student Engagement

The above discussion establishes the specific aspects of the Immersion student experiences, that is, creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogic voice, as dynamically interrelated. The Figure (5.4) shows the relationship among the individual elements as already showed in sections.
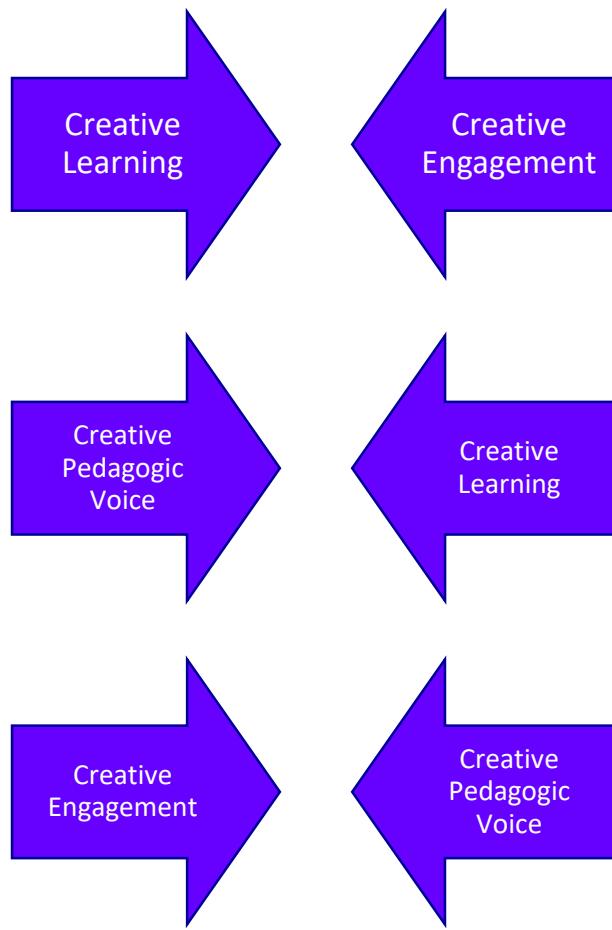
Figure 5.4. The interactional relationships among Creative Learning, Creative Engagement, and Creative Pedagogic Voice

5.5.1 The Interactional model of student-led learning and creativity

On the basis of this discussion, an Interactional model is constructed that takes these distinct features of the students' creative responses as its constituents working in close collaboration to enhance student learning and creativity. The figure below shows an Interactional model of student learning and creativity that works on the interplay among these integrant elements.
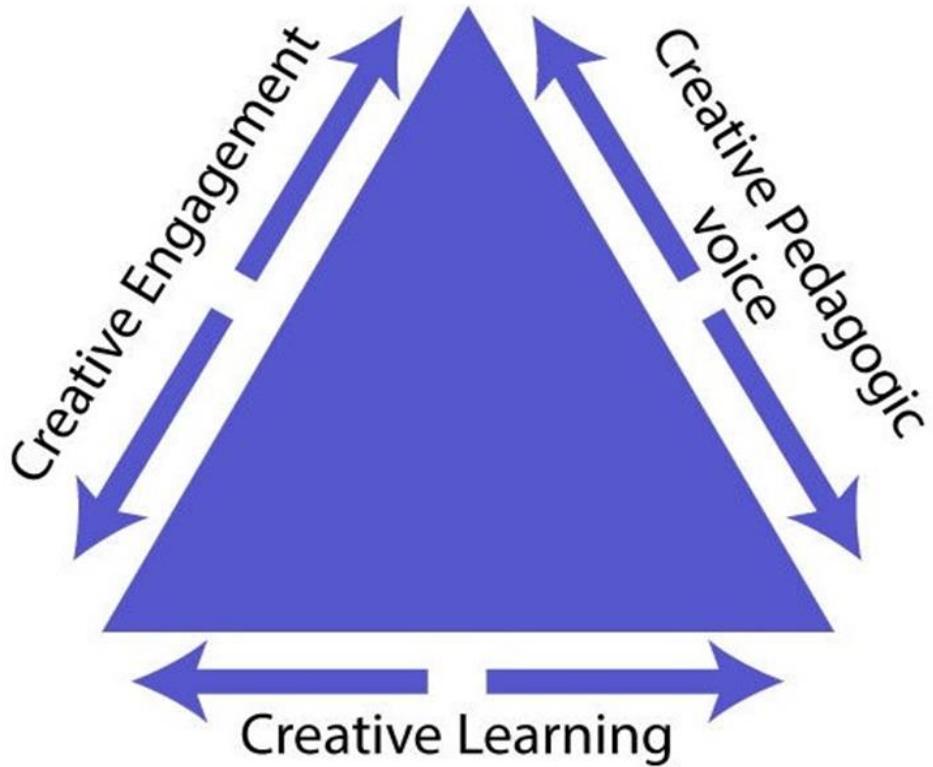
Figure 5.5. The Interactional Model of Student-led Learning and Creativity

The active interaction among the constituents of this Interactional model also shows the interdependence among the constituents of this model — where each element gets strength from and gives strength to the other elements in return. This model also suggests that the Interactional relationship among its constituent elements has practical implications for students' learning as well as creativity-enhancement.

5.5.2   Defining creative learning, creative engagement, and creative pedagogic voice

It is important to state that this model offers a specific perspective on its constituent elements and defines them on the basis of the students' responses to pedagogic practices and the relational nature of these constituents.

Consequently, by placing a particular focus on creative learning, the proposed Interactional model establishes it as a student-directed form of pedagogy where students assume an autodidactic role to direct and own their own learning. Agency is the most prominent aspect of this constituent. Although agency is used as a pedagogic tool by the teachers for invoking student interest, excitement, and joy, the students' conscious employment, active exploitation, utilisation, engagement with, or enactment of it as a pedagogic principle to enhance their learning makes it purely these learners' reserve. This perspective on learners' agency makes it quite distinct from its use as a pedagogic tool employed by the teachers. Likewise, creative pedagogic voice is the language spoken by learners during their active negotiation with creative pedagogic practices. It emerges through a dynamic interplay between creative learning and creative engagement. It is creative and agentic as well as engaged. It is collaborative, respectful, and resilient too. The third integrant of this model, that is, creative engagement is an active learning principle that has cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and agentic dimensions. It works collaboratively with creative learning and creative pedagogic voice to enhance students' autodidactic learning and their creativity.

5.5.3   Creative learning — a student-directed form of pedagogy

Approached and defined this way, creative learning as a pedagogic form stands distinct from the existing pedagogic practices. The current teaching practices mostly use creative pedagogy to meet the demands of performativity (Jeffrey, Troman, & Zezlina-Philips 2008) or reduce creativity teaching to a script (Sawyer 2004). In that, creative pedagogy just becomes an aid to the performative pressures in achieving what dominant performativity culture requires of schools — ignoring students' creative learning altogether (Lin 2011). The creative learning facet of this Interactional model draws on the recent creative learning scholarship in putting a strong focus on the notion of student agency and ownership of learning (Jeffrey 2006; Lin 2011; Lassig 2012b; Robinson & Dusseldorp 2015) which the script-based approaches to teaching creativity fail to promote (Sawyer 2004, 2006, 2011).

Also, the model's emphasis on the students' creative learning as a necessary pedagogic principle — that allows the students freedom to use their agency and autonomy — not only helps to propagate student creativity in schools (Lucas & Anderson 2015), but also employs creativity as a *method* or process to aid student learning (Cropley 2012).

Thus focused creative learning as a student-directed pedagogic form and as a form of learning further involves the learners' active use of agency and acquisition of skills to balance diverse learning challenges and engenders excitement and joy of learning (section 5.2.2.1). Csikzentmihalyi's flow theory (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2014) regards attaining a joyful and engaged flow-state in learning as a necessary outcome of a balance between skill levels and challenges. However, there arise many challenges in the specific learning contexts of the Immersion Programme where problems are bigger than the existing skill sets and require development of problem-solving skills for (creative) learning to take place. In such situations, a creative learning dimension coupled with the creative and agentic engagement element of the model offers an alternative explanation for students' re-engagement with learning under such challenging learning contexts (discussed in section 5.2.2.1).

In addition to enhancing student creativity and accounting for the students' re-engagement with learning, creative learning within the present Interactional model also helps promote students' creative pedagogic voice. The present research findings suggest a complex notion of student voice as discussed in student voice literature (sections 5.3 & 5.4; also Chapter 2) and establish it as an active relational and interactional principle in the student-led model of creativity and learning. In highlighting the students' creative pedagogic voice as an integral element of the student-led creativity triad, the Interactional model answers the scholarly (e.g. Yazzie-Mintz 2007; Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012) calls to listen to student voices around helping them stay attached to and engaged with their learning. Additionally, the developed creative pedagogic voice is necessary for improving

the educational processes from a social justice point of view (e.g. Baroutsis, McGregor & Mills 2016).

Approaching student creativity through creative learning that signifies a student-directed pedagogic form is useful for fostering student creativity; however, as discussed above, the present Interactional model of student-led creativity frames creative learning along with two other founding elements and establishes student creativity co-produced in an active interactive process.

5.5.4   Student engagement — an active learning principle

While the creative learning aspect of the Interactional model takes student agency, autonomy, and ownership as its fundamental principles effective for enhancing student-led learning and creativity (section 5.2.1), the other combinative element of the model, that is, students' creative engagement also exhibits an array of varying dimensions, that is, cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and agentic engagement which closely correspond to many characteristics of creative learning (section 5.2.2).

The Interactional approach that the research findings present, foregrounds the learners' responses as alternatives to the current creativity enhancing efforts and practices in classrooms. Although the student responses to creative pedagogy have already been explored (e.g. Jeffrey 2001 & 2006), the previous studies employ student engagement as a methodological tool to gather the evidence of students' creative learning (Jeffrey 2001). The present study takes this as a point of departure to problematise the concept of student engagement in their creative responses and establishes its presence as an active learning principle that interpedently works with creative learning and creative pedagogic voice to enhance students' autodidactic learning and their creativity.

It is worth pointing out here that the focus on student engagement in this triangle returns the attention back to the process-based approach to learning which the eminent scholarship on creativity up-holds as necessary for creativity to thrive (Cropley 2012). A strong attention to viewing creativity as a '*method* or pedagogy'

(Cropley 2012, p. 10) rather than a result asserts its value as a 'pedagogical measure for improving all learning' (Cropley 2012, p. 22). Similarly, creative engagement through its processual contribution to improving student interest in learning comes closer to Cropley's (2012) call to pay attention to the educational processes rather than results.

By advocating the value of creativity as a *method* or pedagogy, Cropley (2012, p. 22) emphasises 'its application to creative learning through creative pedagogy'. A pedagogical approach towards creativity shifts the focus away from its utilitarian value for the national achievements to a more humane approach that considers promoting a congenial social environment 'favourable attitudes to school, positive self-image, acquisition of general skills, positive knowledge development and similar things' (Cropley 2012, p. 15). By working in close collaboration with creative learning to enhance student-led creativity, creative engagement comes closer to the pedagogic approach that pays attention to learning processes to benefit the learners. However, what these learning processes deliver as an outcome—in this case the learners' enhanced creativity — is far from using an instrumental approach to get such outcomes.

The emphasis on a learner-centred approach to enhancing student creativity as well as improving learning processes also brings this Interactional model to Fielding's (2007) research in that it urges the educationists to move to new educational futures where students' functional role and value to improve the institutional performance and image gets coupled with the personal development of wise persons. Additionally, the process-based approach to creative learning that this Interactional model advocates, is in line with Craft, Chappell, and Harris's line of argument that takes issues with the present-day narrow conceptualisation of creativity (Craft 2006, 2008; Chappell 2006, 2011, 2012, 2017; Harris 2014, 2016).

5.5.5   Creative pedagogic voice — creative, agentic, and engaged

The third constitutive element of the Interactional model, that is, students' pedagogic voice further aids learning processes.

The Immersion students' pedagogic voice emerges strong when the learners take ownership of their learning and the principle of relevance couples with the development of creative problem-solving skills. The pedagogic voice becomes vigorous when (creative) learning takes place both at an individual and communal level (Chappell & Craft 2011); when the artificial binaries between knowledge and creativity get dissolved (Boden 2001; Cropley 2012; Cross 2012); and when cross-disciplinary creativity wins over the siloed approach to creativity (Harris & Ammermann 2016). The pedagogic voice is robust and resilient when the students work agentically; however, it gets stifled when the students lose control over their own learning as I have explained above.

The pedagogic voice also sheds light on students' creative engagement. As I demonstrated earlier, it is engaged when empathy and responsibility are exercised (sections 5.3 & 5.4). The strong pedagogic voice emerging out of the pedagogic encounters not only is a result of student engagement, but also engenders student engagement. It impacts student learning as the students become more enterprising, creative, risk-taking, and agentic in their learning processes. Creative learning in this Interactional model holds a great potential to develop pedagogic voice through pedagogic encounters. Consequently, the developed pedagogic voice becomes a common 'language of learning created by school pedagogies' 'that pupils as pupils speak' (Arnot & Reay 2007, p. 323). This enhanced voice also has the likelihood of being heard by teachers and researchers for improving teaching and learning and to reduce class, gender, and ethnic inequities in student learning.

Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016) advocate finding young people's pedagogic voice as necessary for redressing the long term socially unjust outcomes of schooling and education created by students' disengagement from learning. While the pedagogic voice developed through creative learning here is in line with Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills' (2016) framework of pedagogic voice in showing the students' influence over 'the context and content of their learning' (p. 128; section 5.3), it builds on this framework in directly corresponding to the characteristics of creative learning and creative engagement. Consequently, the

pedagogic voice that emerges through a dynamic interplay between creative learning and creative engagement is creative and agentic as well as engaged.

5.5.6   The Interactional model — a discussion of significance

The present research as well is in line with past research on student-led learning, for instance, John Dewey's experiential learning (1934), Vygotsky's constructivist approaches to learning (1962), and Bruner's discovery-based learning (1986). Even in the contemporary world, various pedagogic philosophies of creativity, for instance, Wood's (1993) critical incident, Jaffrey's (2006) concept of creative learning, Craft and Chappell's (Craft 2006, 2008; Chappell 2006, 2011, 2012, 2017) concepts of wise and humanising creativity particularly operate from within the field of creativity yet are strongly situated in child-centredness, collaboration, and action-oriented approaches to learning.

Running parallel to the ideological approaches on student-led learning are the practical instances of participatory pedagogy (eds. Banaji et al. 2019), Big Picture Schools (Bonnor & White 2015), and the Reggio Emilia approach (Rinaldi 2006). These approaches put 'students at the centre of decisions around what, how and when they learn' to nurture the upcoming generations of engaged independent learners (BPEA n.d.), attend to the pedagogy of listening (Hay 2017), and develop students' voices through action-based participatory research projects (Flewitt et al. 2017; Simpson 2018).

In the midst of already existing teaching and learning philosophies, what this research aims to accomplish through this Interactional approach, is to situate student-led creativity and learning in the present Australian educational context. The contemporary educational scene is informed by and operates from all the contemporary educational debates on the effective implementation of creativity and registers concerns with marketised creativity, the pressures of performativity, accountability and achievement, and the resultant neoliberal subjectivisation of students (Craft 2008; Harris 2014, 2016; Keddie 2016). While the technocratic approaches to creative and other skill-development in education have been challenged (Morton & Moore 2017), the present research renders the student

perspectives on their schooling experiences in a learning context that promotes creative and critical thinking and develops a certain form of subjectivity which is an outcome of the creative learning of the learners (Sefton-Green et al. 2011). In doing so, the present research has perspectival implications of operating from a *third space* or *hybrid space*, as Lin (2014) would call it, which gives due importance to the pressures of global competitiveness, accountability, performativity, and achievement while holding the idea of personal development and becoming equally real and powerful. This research approach, thus, advocates for improving the educational processes which is in line with Cropley's (2012) argument about creativity as an approach and *method* rather than a result as discussed earlier.

The Interactional approach, proposed by the present research, also comes closer to Keddie's (2016) recommendations to counter the culture of performativity and responsibilisation that leads the students to craft their competitive and performative identities. Keddie's (2016) recommendations suggest a broad structural and policy change to undermine the vigour of neoliberal discourses. At student level, Keddie recommends to:

> Foster students' critical thinking about the narrow vision of ideal student hood and citizenship in which they are compelled to engage if they are to be seen as 'successful'. *Such critical thinking will be requisite to supporting children of the market to imagine creatively different ways of being that are less about competition, individualism and personal gain and more about collaboration, creativity and social responsibility.* (Italics are mine, p. 120).

The interaction and dynamic interplay among all the constituent elements of this research model — that include, student learning, students' creative engagement, and students' pedagogic voice — have a potential to challenge the constrained vision of successful student and offer freedom to develop an alternative vision of creativity that works in collaboration for greater creativity and social responsibility.

This Interactional model, that the research findings suggest, also works on the principle of 'radical collegiality' which, according to Charteris and Smardon (2019, p. 93), positions students as active partners along with their teachers in knowledge

construction and decision making in schools. The interaction among the students' creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogic voice creates a learning context that challenges the traditional hegemonic pedagogical practices critiqued for silencing student voices at diverse design and systemic levels (Charteris & Smardon 2019). The scope of this model, however, remains limited to classroom procedures and activities where students' decision-making and co-construction of knowledge relates only to the project activities.

Constructed out of year 9 students' creative educational experiences, the student-creativity and learning model ensures that it attends to young adolescents' concepts of creativity and learning — claimed to be missing from the creativity debates (Lassig 2012a). Further, the student-led model of creativity that the research findings propose presents interesting parallels with Lassig's (2012a, p. 280) conception of adolescent creativity that Lassig calls as *ed-c or educational creativity.* Developed through grounded theory, Lassig's (2012a, p. 281) concept of ed-creativity exemplifies the individual's efforts to 'perceiving and pursuing novelty for learning achievement in formal educational environments'. The ed-c also works within the bounds of the learning contexts in terms of task requirements, assessment criteria, or teachers' instructions. The final outcomes of the creative processes are judged by teachers through formal assessments, or through peers in peer-assessed tasks.

The present Interactional model of creativity — like Lassig's (2012a, 2012b) ed-creativity — accepts constraints of the educational contexts and directs the students' creative processes and products towards externally defined formal task demands. Yet, it departs from ed-creativity in allowing student agency and letting students follow their passion to do social good as well. Consequently, the outcomes of creative processes, that the Interactional model suggests, far exceed the performative notion of individual success and individualised learning achievement to encompass constructing new knowledge or acquiring diverse skills for doing the communal and social good and becoming *successful* in a different sense of word. The focus on the use of creative learning instead of a more generalised notion of

creative pedagogy along with the emphasis on students' creative engagement and students' pedagogic voice places the much-aspired processes of 'student becoming' (or student personal development) in a collaborative context.

It is also significant to note that the present research model supports Simpson's (2018) research findings. Conducted at a primary school through action research project, Simpson's (2018) study establishes how by enabling student agency, through a freedom to make pedagogical choices for their learning, leads students to take the ownership of learning and impacts their voices and engagement. My study by providing empirical evidence for the relationship between creative pedagogy, creative voice, and creative engagement at secondary school level supports and extends that line of argument. However, as a point of departure, my study situates student voice and engagement in the field of creative teaching and learning.

The creative pedagogy scholarship often emphasises the importance of the relationship between creative teaching practices of the teachers and creative learning of the learners significant for the study of creative pedagogies (Jeffrey & Craft 2004), with many scholars exploring the interdependent relationship between learning and creativity (Beghetto 2016), or identifying the distinct processes of creative learning (Tanggaard 2014; Beghetto 2016). This study broadens the scope of debate by identifying the other co-existing relationships that interdependently work with creative learning to enhance student creativity. Additionally, it can be argued that an awareness of these relationships can further inform the study of creative pedagogies (Jeffrey & Craft 2004).

In summary, the present Interactional model underscores that an interaction among its constituent elements is necessary for enhancing student learning as well as creativity.

5.6   Conclusion

This *Illumination* Chapter presents an International model comprised of the three major integral elements from the students' creative responses to creative pedagogic contexts. Including creative learning, creative engagement, and creative pedagogic

voice, the Interactional model explains the pedagogic processes that are responsive to student voices and help improve educational processes in general and student engagement in particular. At the core of the cultivation of student led-creativity and learning — that this Interactional model proposes to enhance — is the creative pedagogy that gives a due allowance to student agency and ownership of learning and is called 'creative learning' by creativity scholarship more specifically. However, the students' input as agentic and creative learners, who creatively and agentically engage with diverse learning situations, also becomes crucial for effective student learning to take place. This dynamic interplay, that the Interactional model suggests, also assumes importance for learning processes, because it gets informed by the students' pedagogic voice that further impacts the dynamics of student-led creativity and learning.

By situating the research findings in the existing body of creativity literature, this study reveals that the proposed Interactional model comprehensively captures the dimensions of student experiences that generally get over-looked within the dominant culture of creativity cultivation with an equally strong emphasis on performativity, accountability, and achievement. Construction of this Interactional model suggests a new way of approaching the cultivation of creativity efforts in schools. While the current culture of creativity enhancement in schools is critiqued for ignoring students as the centre of all learning, this study contributes to the present discourse of creativity in brining students back to the learning frameworks.

The Interactional model suggested by the research findings is not prescriptive; rather, by underscoring the distinct facets of the learners' creative experiences, it tries to unravel the core principles and values that drive the students' learning experiences in creative pedagogic contexts. The suggested model, besides developing a better understanding of the specific field of activity, has a potential to open up challenging yet positive new spaces for both teachers and learners. Such possible openings are linked to a further interrogation and explanation of the key integrant elements of this model and the nature of interactional relation among them. Thereby, this study brings together the diversely located discrete concepts in

literature on student voice, on creative pedagogy, and student engagement. Although the exiting body of research on creativity, creative pedagogy, or creative learning establishes some links between creativity and engagement, this research is unique in bringing the students' creative learning and creative and agentic engagement in an active interaction with the students' pedagogic voice that still remains a rarely explored area in creativity research. The three interactional and relational elements of the model; however, have been discussed extensively in their subsequent research domains, for instance, in literatures on creativity, student engagement, and student voice.

Finally, this chapter, with all its discussion on the students' creative learning, engagement, and creative pedagogic voice, returns the focus on the researcher's active co-construction of the research participants' experiences. In *illuminating* the research participants' learning experiences and constructing a new knowledge out of them, this chapter, exhibits the researcher's active construction of a research narrative from the drama of the *real-life* research characters that they happen to play out in the creativity-infused educational arena.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

6.1   Preamble

The wheel of this research has turned full circle, and I return to the same old *familiar* space of the grade six class, where this research project was conceived, by invoking an all-too-familiar memory (Chapter 1, section 1.1). Both this research and thesis began with a peculiar classroom observation. My grade six class students' creative and engaged use of unstructured time — in pursuing activities of their interest — brought home to me what rarely gets expressed and taken notice of in these learners' routine classes.

Now, my study nears its completion along with its co-constructed research findings. Once again, I experience an irresistible urge to go back over the classroom observation that has been revisited numerous times through the course of this research project. By evoking this memory, I can clearly glimpse the spectacular life, vitality, and fervor on the students' faces as well as in their actions. I can also witness my students laughing, talking, and moving about freely: all busily playing games or doing things that interest them in the free and unstructured time I allowed them. I, also, spot myself withdrawn to a corner, occupying minimal space, but looking at all this exuberance — that sowed the very seeds of this research project — with curious amusement.

Yes, I lived that scene once as a teacher. However, in finding *unfamiliar* creative responses of the students within a *familiar* and mundane classroom routine and in making a problem out of that *unfamiliar* phenomenon, I *chose* the path of an educational researcher and traveler, that Delamont (2012) calls the *Lebanon or West Gate* researcher (discussed in Chapter 1). The *Lebanon Gate* researcher, as Delamont (2012) explicates and is described in more detail in the Introduction (Chapter 1), leaves the academic arena through the risky *Lebanon* or *West Gate* to

meet perilous challenges, and if succeeds, finally attains enlightenment and wisdom through an intellectual metamorphosis marked by the construction of new knowledge.

As it is, my return to this educational scene is more than a casual return to a wistful memory. It is a return with a purpose, not only to pay homage to all my past returns to this *unfamiliarly familiar* educational scene during this research process, but also to help explain the intellectual metamorphosis of an educational researcher acquiring wisdom and enlightenment through the construction of (new) knowledge. In attending to this important memory, I at once identify myself with the class teacher but also stand apart from her as a researcher. I can observe my students' excitement, joy, their engaged use of free and unstructured time outside of the routine classroom activities, and their decision making in choosing the games they wanted to play. I can also *now* explain how this engaged yet creative learning shares many aspects in common with the grand historical lineage of significant educational concepts on student learning, creativity, student engagement, and student voice.

However, just situating that experience within the existing body of literature was not sufficient, and as a characteristic *West Gate* researcher traveler, I was bound to go further ahead in actively constructing knowledge and attaining enlightenment in collaborative encounters with my research participants and research context. The fact that this research was conducted under the shadows of Melbourne's West Gate Bridge may sound merely coincidental; however, the selection of the research participants in their potential to contribute to this *West Gate* research was well thought out and carefully considered. The creative learning experiences of my research participants in the MAD Programme clearly echoed the same spirit of agency, engagement, and interest that marked the creative expressions and experiences of my grade six class students.

The creative learning for my research participants also entailed following their passion for making a difference to the community by raising money for the socially disadvantaged people or by raising general awareness for the troubling social issues. In the MAD Programme, an active interaction between the pedagogic

practices, environmental conditions, and dispositional factors supported or inhibited the students' ability to express their creativity. In both observations, the students were able to communicate their understandings regarding their experiences — both through their words as well as their actions — and helped me attain the enlightenment and wisdom that characterises the *West Gate* educational researcher and traveler (Delamont 2012). By adopting the persona of a researcher traveler, who is a craftsperson, a yarner, and an interpreter as described by Delamont (2012) and Brinkman and Kvale (2015), I not only encouraged my research participants to tell the stories of their actions in their meaningful worlds, but also co-created with them an alternative educational narrative with a new frame of reference which is 'believable, that make(s) sense, that cause(s) that "click of recognition" … a resonance' (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997, p. 247).

6.2   Introduction

This conclusion underscores the major findings by returning to my research questions and the way portraiture research design helped me address these questions (section 6.3). The methodological and theoretical contributions of this research have also been discussed (section 6.4), along with its implications for the field of education including teacher practitioners and education policy (section 6.5). Sections (6.6) and (6.7) acknowledge the limitations of this research and suggest future directions for research respectively. This conclusion chapter finally summarises the importance of the students' creative expressions as an alternative to the dominant neoliberal spirit of creativity cultivation and closes with the researcher's reflective insights gained from the research experience (section 6.8).

6.3   Addressing the Research Questions

This study examined the high school students' learning and engagement experiences in a creative and critical skill enhancement programme with a particular focus on their ingenious responses to creativity focused pedagogy. An arts-based constructivist research design, called Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997), was employed which included observations and group interviews. The data was first organised thematically as Portraits (Chapter 4) which were then

rigorously analysed and synthesised in the *Illumination* chapter (Chapter 5). The key question being addressed was to explore the students' ingenious responses to creative pedagogy in a creative and critical skill enhancement programme. More specifically, this study aimed to consider the students' thinking outside of the box ways — that served as alternative expressions — to negotiate with the creative pedagogical practices to enhance their creativity within the current culture of accountability, performativity, and standardisation.

The research process led to the presentation of an Interactional model that emerged out of the researcher' co-construction of the participant experiences. The constituting elements of the model, that is, students' creative learning, creative and agentic engagement, and students' pedagogic voice emerged to be the most significant aspects of the students' learning experiences. This triad of the interacting elements was also integral to explaining the nature as well the development of student creativity (section 5.5, Chapter 5).

The following sections present the research sub-questions and will explain how the study findings contribute to answering them:

1.   What is the relationship between students' creative learning and students' creative engagement?

2.   What is the relationship between student voice and students' creative engagement?

3.   What is the relationship between student voice and students' creative learning?

The study findings propose an Interactional model for promoting student creativity by drawing on important aspects of the learners' creative responses to their creative pedagogic experiences. An attention to the interplay between the constituting elements of the model offers a more inclusive approach for developing student creativity that can fruitfully contribute towards the efforts to foster creativity. With this view, I now turn to discuss the research sub-questions. It is important to note

here that the research sub-questions were developed and redefined in light of theory and data.

The first sub-question one was addressed by exploring the terms 'creative learning' and 'engagement'. A distinction between creative learning as a pedagogic style and a form of learning was deemed essential for presenting student perceptions of their learning experiences and for improving their future learning. Student agency was characterised as fundamental to creative learning and was diversely employed and expressed by the MAD learners. The varied expressions of agency involved choosing topics of interest and team mates, making decisions about the project activities, risk-taking, and solving problems. A focus on the manifold individual as well as collaborative expressions of agency in the MAD Programme helped derive a more specific working definition of creative learning from the learners' perspectives which addressed the research focus on registering students' responses to creative pedagogy too.

Also, the focus on the students' creative engagement was a point of departure from the current creative learning theorisation. Although the scholarship on creative learning holds engagement as a necessary part of creative learning, the present study departs from such a view point to embrace creative engagement as an active learning principle that not only is integral to the learners' autodidactic learning, but also works interdependently with creative learning to enhance student learning and creativity. Even though Jeffrey's (2001) study does consider student engagement while examining the students' creative expressions to creative pedagogic practices, student engagement in Jeffrey's (2001) study is mainly used as an observational tool to record students' creative learning. Such instrumental use of student engagement falls short of appreciating it as an active principle in student learning and as an agentic act that the learners' purposefully employ to generate meaningful learning experiences. This approach towards students' creative engagement draws on the body of research on creative engagement.

The first sub-question was further explored by establishing the links between creative learning, agency, and student engagement (sub-section 5.2.2). Creative

learning, in this process, was seen not only as entailing cognitive engagement aspects but emotional, behavioural, and agentic dimensions as well. Together, the subsections (5.2.1 & 5.2.2) in chapter 5 explain in detail the diverse ways the learners engaged in their creative learning (to make their learning meaningful).

The second sub-question examined the intersection between students' creative learning and student voice by following a line of argument that suggested an inextricable link between student voice and the ways students exercised their agency. The student voice that manifested itself through the pedagogic encounters exhibited multiple characteristics ranging from ability to transcend the personal to embrace the collective and the ability to discover and acquire new capacities and skills. The students' pedagogic voice that arose out of their pedagogic encounters also demonstrated empathy, kindness, responsibility as well as perspective-taking, and respect for others. Further, the pedagogic voice of agentic and creative students took ownership of their learning and used diverse personal and individual strengths during the course of learning events. In addition, the learners' voice included an ability to take risks, make decisions, and manage challenges. This voice also featured proactive tendencies by reducing distractions and handling boredom. This line of argument further explored the anti-pedagogic propensities that served to weaken this voice by ignoring others' perspectives and by avoiding responsibilities. The contention concluded by stating that the breadth of the agentic scope of students' actions — which is a staple part of creative learning — provides a wide spectrum of characteristics that make the pedagogic voice complex. Also, the students' pedagogic voice works interdependently with creative learning in order to be expressed.

The third sub-question looked at the relationship between student voice and student engagement. This question was addressed by arguing that the students' developed pedagogic voice has a great potential to improve the students' schooling experiences and learning engagement. The section 5.4 (Chapter 5) explains in detail what makes the pedagogic voice strong, and how this well-developed pedagogic voice helps keep the learners' interest intact. This line of reasoning also explored

the dynamics of engagement with learning by studying the instances where the learners fail to engage deeply with their own learning. The argument concluded by stating both the students' pedagogic voice and the student engagement as dynamically interrelated.

The Interactional model that emerged out of the researcher's active co-construction of students' experiences underpinned a dynamic interplay between students' creative learning, pedagogic voice, and creative engagement as necessary for implementing and promoting student creativity in high schools. The Interactional model is replicated below:
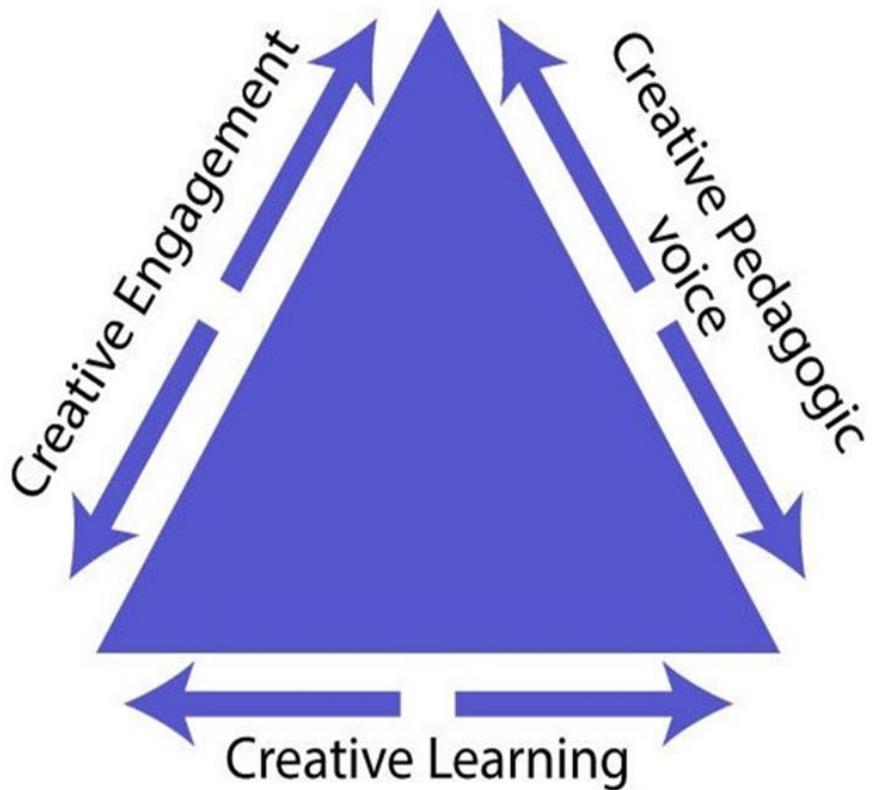

Figure 6.1. The Interactional Model of Student-led Learning and Creativity

Approaching creative learning as a form of student learning, this Interactional model established this concept as students' active contribution to their learning and

the ways students' creative contribution to creative pedagogy significantly impact their pedagogic voices and their engagement with learning. Finally, the proposed model advocated an active interplay between creative engagement, creative learning, and students' pedagogic voice necessary for implementing and enhancing student creativity.

6.4   Contributions of the Study

Given that the present discourse on the implementation of creativity in schools grapples with the idea of creative practices within classroom, the present research contributes to this debate by presenting an Interactional model that takes students' creative learning along with students' pedagogic voice and creative engagement as its constituent elements working in close collaboration to enhance student creativity.

The Interactional model for promoting student creativity helps elucidate the dynamic interaction between diverse aspects of students' learning experiences underlining their import for students' effective learning. The present Interactional approach explains the manifold learning opportunities that the learners create for themselves by agentically mobilising the major elements of their learning and engagement experiences for their effective learning to happen. This occurs in response to creative pedagogic practices used in specific teaching and learning contexts.

While the present discursive focus of the creativity debates centres on creativity implementation efforts in educational institutions through creative pedagogical practices, the present research findings situate the fruitful propagation of creativity in the field of creative learning, creative engagement, and creative pedagogic voice in an Australian secondary school context. In doing so, this research offers important insights into creative learning, creative engagement, and creative pedagogic voice scholarship at diverse levels.

To begin with, in establishing the significant role of creative learning in enhancing student creativity and learning, the present study contributes empirically to the body

of creative learning research that claims creative learning is necessary for the propagation of student creativity. Further in this direction, this inquiry addresses the question of uneven focus of creative pedagogy scholarship on teacher education as necessary for both teaching for creativity and creative teaching. The study underscores creative learning of the learners important for enhancing learners' creativity and learning both. Furthermore, given that the creative pedagogy scholarship considers teachers' awareness of student needs of learning to be necessary for student learning, this study by documenting the aspects of student learning experiences — most responsive to creative practices — can contribute to teacher development.

Although some research scholars have established the relationship between teachers' creative practices and students' creative learning as necessary for the study of creative pedagogies (Chapter 2), this study extends this debate by identifying the other coexisting relationships that have pedagogic importance for enhancing student learning and creativity. These relationships exist between creative engagement and students' creative pedagogic voice embracing creative learning as an active pedagogic principle. The awareness of such co-existing relationships can inform the study of creative pedagogies in opening up new avenues for further research and discussion.

The Interactional approach that the research findings present, taps into the learners' responses as alternatives to the current creativity-enhancing efforts and practices in Australian classrooms. Although student responses to creative pedagogy have already been examined (e.g. Jeffrey 2001, 2006), the earlier studies deploy student engagement as a methodological tool to gather the evidence of students' creative learning (Jeffrey 2001). The present study takes this as a point of departure to problematise the concept of student engagement within student experiences and establishes it as an active learning principle that works interdependently with creative learning and creative pedagogic voice to enhance students' autodidactic learning and creativity as discussed above.

Further, even though some scholars claim a lack of distinction in the processes of creative learning that makes it an unhelpful construct, while others have defined the processual nature and characteristics of this construct, this study responds to the former claim and adds to the latter by presenting the broad-based processes of students' creativity and learning in Australian learning contexts. This approach towards creative learning takes it as a pedagogic tool as well as a form of learning that is centred on enhancing student learning along with their overall development. These findings also bring this study closer to the research discourse that calls for scholarly attention to the use of creativity for improving educational processes by regarding creativity as a *method*.

Despite the fact that Csikzentmihalyi's flow theory (eds. Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 1992; Csikszentmihalyi 1996, 2008) is helpful in explaining students' creative experiences as flow experiences that happen as a necessary outcome of a balance between skill levels and challenges, there is a gap in explanation as to what happens when problems are bigger than the existing skill sets. By examining the specific learning contexts of the Immersion Programme where some problems are bigger than the learners' existing skill sets, this study explicates the kind of learning that takes place under such circumstances and the role the learners play in enabling such learning to happen.

In addition to expounding the nature of students' re-engagement with learning, the creative learning aspects within the suggested Interactional model also help enhance the students' creative pedagogic voice. The present research findings promote a complex notion of student voice — as discussed in the student voice literature (sections 5.3 & 5.4; also Chapter 2) — and establish it as an active relational and interactional principle in the student-led model of creativity and learning. In underlining the students' creative pedagogic voice as an integral element of the student-led creativity triad, the Interactional model even answers the scholarly calls to listen to student-voices for helping them stay attached and engaged with their learning. This approach is important for improving educational

processes from a social justice point of view as well (e.g. Baroutsis, McGregor & Mills 2016).

In underlining creative learning, this study also departs from a more generalised approach towards creative pedagogy that serves the neoliberal agenda of performativity and accountability. By regarding elements of agency, ownership of learning, and collaboration integral to this form of creative learning pedagogy, this study examines how creative learning as a pedagogic style and a form of learning fosters and embodies an alternative understanding of creativity that stands opposed to competition-based economic and individualised concepts of creativity. This study, hence, contributes empirically to the research discourse that questions the notion of current commoditised creativity and the teaching practices that contribute towards its enhancement.

It is also noteworthy that this research does not dismiss the present-day economic challenges as unreal. It, in fact, situates the students' creative responses to pedagogical practices within the broader school curriculum structure that conforms to the policy level understanding of and efforts to foster student creativity and student success. The research findings suggest the students' active teasing out of the possibilities of working within both spheres successfully — also called the hybrid spaces — by being true to the school expectations as well as to their passions and interests. The exploration and critical examination of this tension extends the line of argument that investigates the possible compatibility between policy level interpretation and propagation of creativity and a scholarly concern with highly individualised, competitive, accountability, outcomes, and performance-based concepts of creativity. This study builds on this argument by registering the high school students' efforts to work through the present performative pressures that are unique to Australian education contexts. These issues further open up many avenues for future study that I intend to explore in my post-doctoral research.

This inquiry, in attending to the students' experiences in a creative and critical skill enhancement programme, *hears* the student voices (Hymes 1996) as an act of *legitimating* them as valid voices (Bartlett 2012). Thereby, this study documents a

success story in the midst of a dominant creativity-enhancing culture that has been critiqued for silencing student voices due to pressures of performativity and culture of accountability, competition, and achievement. The absence of student voices from students' learning experiences, as the scholarship on student engagement holds, results in their disengagement from learning as I have shown above. This investigation — with a due emphasis on registering students' voice — contributes to the research on students' active engagement. In actively exploring the relationship between creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogic voice, the present research model extends the concept of pedagogic voice to creative pedagogy and responds to the scholarly calls to address the engagement gap and to find humanity in data by listening to otherwise silenced student voices.

The Interactional model with its focus on students' creative and pedagogic voices also serves to critique the hegemonic purpose, appropriation, and implementation of the apparent emancipatory voice-based schooling practices. The pedagogic voice of students in this Interactional model serves as evidence for the conception that regards students as active partners along with their teachers in knowledge construction and decision-making processes. This approach brings this study closer to the principle of 'radical collegiality,' which according to Charteris and Smardon (2019), stands counter to the traditional hegemonic pedagogical practices silencing student voices at many design and systemic levels. Given that the recent scholarship on student voice advocates to explore the concept of radical collegiality in school practices, this Interactional model establishes how the enactment of students' pedagogic voice coupled with students' creative learning and creative engagement can promote the emancipatory voice-based schooling practices and benefit the Australian education system.

Though the current scholarship on creative learning holds creative learning as essential for students' active construction of their knowledge experiences, this field of research mainly remains an under-researched and underdeveloped area in the Australian educational research context. The focus of this research on creative learning as an indispensable component of creative pedagogy establishes the active

role creative learning as an autodidactic pedagogic style plays in empowering learners through their legitimised voices. In that, it underpins enhanced student creativity and the other broader benefits related to students' creative learning, engagement, and pedagogic voices.

The constituent elements of the Interactional model, that is, the creative learning, creative engagement, and students' pedagogic voice draw upon and benefit from the literature on creative learning, student engagement, and student voice. These bodies of literature often stand as discrete units of research. The Interactional model of student creativity brings these units of research together with future research potential. Furthermore, this study, with its Interactional model, presents students' perspectives, voices, and responses to the creativity-focused pedagogy along with situating student-led learning within the present discourse of creativity. Just as the current creativity discourse is informed by a range of debates on the effective implementation of creativity, it also problematises the growing commodification of creativity and the students' internalisation of neo-liberal performative pressures (Craft 2008; Harris 2014, 2016; Keddie 2016). A constructivist approach to conduct this research has allowed the emergence of a model that reveals the dynamic interplay between the significant aspects of students' responses to creative pedagogy. The constructions of Interactional model from the students' learning experiences also contributes towards the research originality.

The Interactional approach that this research investigation foregrounds, works along with Keddie's (2016) recommendations to counter the culture of performativity and responsibilisation (Chapter 5 for explanation). The focus on creative learning allows students to follow their passion and help them redefine what achievement and success means to them. The interaction between all the constituent elements, that is, student learning, students' creative engagement, and students' pedagogic voice have the potential to challenge the constrained vision of what constitutes a *successful student* and offers freedom to develop an alternative vision of creativity that works in collaboration to yield greater creativity and social

responsibility. Also, the study findings illuminate the making of the students' specific subjectivities in specific learning contexts.

While this study set out to look at the students' engaged resourcefulness in responding to creative pedagogic practices, it has revealed much more than what was anticipated. This project, with its findings, taps into and contributes constructively to the field of education and has a wide appeal to educational research that is faced with the *familiarity problem* (discussed in Chapter 1). This study, in problematising a classroom observation, was a step towards making a *familiar* educational setting 'anthropologically strange' (Delamont 2012, p. 7). In doing so, it challenged the dominant research trends that do not question the dominant status quo of the current educational policies and hardly benefit the research participants directly (Delamont 2012). Separating itself from educators' subculture that dominates the present educational research failing to problematise the education system (Delamont 2012), this investigation was a step in the direction of doing research about education rather than about schools (Varenne 2007). This research thus fought the *familiarity challenge* that Delamont (2012) urges educational researches to address, by using some of Delamont's (2012, p. 13) strategies which include studying teaching and learning in formal education in other cultures and taking the standpoint of the researcher who is 'other' to view the educational processes. As an immigrant and a former teacher, I chose to study teaching and learning in a formal education context in Australia. This outsider standpoint also allowed me to act as 'other' to view the local educational processes (discussed below).

Apart from these strategies, the use of methodological design framework of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) helped me work around the four types of sociological and anthropological 'disconnects' (Delamont 2012, p. 9) existing between the specific areas of expertise and the mainstream disciplines of education, that the present-day educational research suffers from as Delamont (2012) identifies. In educational research, Delamont (2012) further argues, these *disconnects* exist because of the *familiarity problem* and the failure of educational

researchers to draw on the mainstream discipline of education and challenge the status quo in the field of education. These *disconnects* then become visible in four domains of educational research, that is, methods, analytic concepts, theoretical frameworks, and rhetorical, textual strategies. In documenting success(ful practices) rather than registering failure and employing rhetorical textual strategies for writing and representation, this study counters the educational research *disconnects* and the *familiarity problem*. Also, the research findings with their practical implications are of immediate use to students, teachers, policy makers, and researchers as the section below establishes.

Additionally, a methodological contribution of this research is to use the voice-juxtaposition as a re-envisioning strategy to represent the research findings (section 3.4.2, Chapter 3). Working along the concept of *mirror-raising* (section 3.4.2, Chapter 3), the research findings are represented in two subsequent chapters (Chapter 4 & 5) where the participants' as well as the researcher's voices have been juxtaposed for creating a mirroring effect. This mirror-raising works as a re-envisioning strategy to make a creative use of the interpretive freedom that portraiture methodology allows to its researchers. While the voice-juxtaposition works as a methodological strategy to open a new space to empower the research participants by letting their voices be heard, the social justice bearings of it are also underlined in bringing my voice back as a researcher who is at an equal risk of erasure and damage in the research process. Also, this methodological strategy provides the readers with a new and alternative reading experience where they have a freedom to construct their interpretations by witnessing the juxtaposition of two voices: the researcher's as well as the participants' arranged in two mirroring subsequent chapters (Chapters 4 & 5). Additionally, this calling on the readers for their interpretation brings the reader empowerment into play where they can exercise their freedom to imagine and to interpret.

Further, this research nears its closure amidst another fresh outcry at the education policy level, which has surfaced in the recent National newspapers, about the year 9 students' poor test performance at National level assessment again this year and

an insistence on taking more potent measures to address this ongoing issue (Carey 2019). The current education policy leaders explain the year 9 students' lack of engagement and connectedness to the schools in Victoria (Carey 2019) to be the major reasons for poor test performance. The news report also claims that the students do not regard NAPLAN as relevant (Carey 2019). Another news report contends that NAPLAN

> Is a waste of time and that's why year 9 students can't be bothered with it. This is also why Australian parents are pulling their children out of the tests in spiraling numbers (Voigt 2019).

To me, such conflicting viewpoints hold great research potential for exploring the current situation. If taken from the policy makers' and educators' perspective, the issue invites researchers to find an effective solution to the existing performance enhancement problem. However, adopting an alternative path shifts the research focus away from surface to a deeper level. This alternative perspective challenges the very purpose of education by inquiring what students regard as relevant to their lives and their learning, and the ways the findings to such investigations can be implemented within such an intense culture of performativity.

There is strong research evidence that suggests the devastating impacts of high-stakes testing to student interest and motivation (Carey 2019). This attestation counters the upended approach of the policy makers and educators to link the good test performance with increased confidence, motivation, and learning performance (Carey 2019). The news article author, Voigt (2019) who is a former school principal, also suggests the root of the problem lies within a strong culture of publication of data:

> We publish data. This creates an environment of competition and fear across our education sector running schools into unhealthy competition to improve their results rather than improving education.

The Department of Education and Training's (DET) State of Victoria's Children Report (2017), indicates year 9 students' consistently below average performance

in the areas of wellbeing and school engagement. The reports further indicate that at the secondary school level, maintenance of high levels of health and wellbeing becomes more challenging. In such research-based reports (e.g. DET 2017), findings also call for a paradigm shift from a mere collection and publication of data (Voigt 2019) to a need for humanising data by giving a voice to students' schooling experiences (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick 2012) for improving the quality of their learning.

My research falls into the corpus of educational research that investigates the value of education (Delamont 2012). This research — by examining the students' responses to pedagogic practices — brings to the surface their voices, engagement, and their creative learning that has an immense potential to improve the educational processes of teaching and learning and to counter the challenges identified in the DET report (2017). Further, this research follows the research tradition committed to documenting the pedagogies that focus on child-focused processes of learning, value collaboration, and respect children's ideas (Hay 2017). Finally, it is anticipated that redirecting focus on education as a process rather than a means to an end helps promote student confidence, engagement, motivation, and overall wellbeing — outcomes that the present performance-based culture is ineffectually trying to attain through improving results.

6.5   Implications of the Study

This study has implications for students, teachers, teacher education, policy, and critical and creative skill enhancement school programmes. Since this study aimed at exploring students' perspectives on their particular learning experiences in specific pedagogic contexts, the implications of this study for students, therefore, warrant attention. This study constructs an Interactional model (as shown above) from the significant aspects of student responses to their pedagogic contexts; therefore, the drawn facets are the ones that most relate to students' effective learning. Also, this research registers student voices that are reportedly missing from their schooling experiences and empowers them by documenting the impacts of the interaction among creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogic

voice on their overall learning. This study also advocates what works best for the students' creative and critical skill development when learning is collaborative and operates from the systemic and curriculum design restraints.

The research findings suggest students as active partners in creative learning working towards a change. Mostly, they are creative, agentic, and engaged learners defining personal success and achievement in terms of making a difference to the community problems. These findings, therefore, present the student population as empowered — rather than disempowered and in unequal power-relations — working in close collaboration with teachers to have an impact. By presenting the success stories of the agentic and creative learners, this study contributes towards transforming the student image from passive learners to active agents of change. The research, on the whole, underpins a representation of success rather than of failure and sets a precedence for future student readers of this research to be inspired, creative, agentic, and engaged learners.

Conducting a study that considers students' perspectives on their learning, in fact, has far reaching implications for their future learning experiences as well. It is quite noteworthy that the study problematises the notion of voice in light of specific readings from student voice literature. In doing so, this study brings complexity of voice to educational settings where students' voices are often ignored, are used instrumentally, or are understood too simplistically. The pedagogic voice networking with creative aspects of learning and engagement, as the study findings suggest, hence, can become a *lingua franca* or a bridge language. This mutual language can be heard and understood by different stakeholders and has the potential to improve both teachers' and students' teaching and learning experiences when heard by practitioners and researchers. Once found or heard or given due importance, this pedagogic voice can be developed to effectively reduce the long-term impacts of socially unjust schooling practices which have been scrupulously critiqued for silencing student voices and in turn, alienating them from their learning experiences (Baroutsis, McGregor & Mills 2016). Alternatively, teachers

can design and implement pedagogic practices that promote students' pedagogic voice (discussed below).

For educators and practitioners, the Interactional model with due attention to its constituting elements, not only provides empirical evidence for the aspects of student experiences that are most responsive to pedagogical practices in effectively enhancing student creativity, but also serves as a framework for reaping some practical benefits. For instance, the attention to listening for the students' pedagogic voices in the present Interactional model is significant for improving student engagement with learning along with enriching the educational processes in general. While the programme pedagogy employed student agency to arouse student interest and ownership of learning, the freedom to choose their research project topics and activities led students to engage effectively with their learning, their peers, and with the broader community. The educators and practitioners can capitalise on copious expressions of agency, as exhibited by the MAD learners, in their creative teaching and learning practices. Consequently, the teachers can consider encouraging risk-taking, interest, and creative problem-solving to effectively execute student agency. Taking and managing challenges with teachers' support can make the learners' creative learning and engagement powerful.

The pedagogic use of students' creative learning, with its particular focus on student agency, also helps develop students' strong pedagogic voice. The Immersion students' enhanced pedagogic voices — developed through their encounters with the creative teaching and learning practices — are respectful, kind, and compassionate. The Immersion students' pursuance of their personal interests along with meeting the programme success criterion establishes their ability to find a balancing *third space* (Lin 2014). The student voices here, far from sounding inauthentic, can well be called 'hybrid voices' or voices from the 'third space'. The students' voices, however, become insincere and inauthentic in the instances when their teachers assume the conventional authoritarian roles or when the students do not get any choice in pursuing their passion (discussed in section 5.2.1 in Chapter 5). An instance of the latter is the students' honest responses to how they describe

the programme assessment activities as tiring and boring. The MAD students detach themselves from and disown their theses by establishing the thesis as an assessment document that is only required by the teachers to mark the student learning. The students maintained that they just wanted to get it over. Further, the students' description of their personal success and achievement that mostly related to their personalised project aims and outcomes ran counter to the institutionally prescribed notion and criterion of success.

Benefitting from this study findings, the teachers and the programme coordinators can design assessment activities that allow students more choice and create more interest in their assessment experiences leading them to own their learning through to the end. Giving more freedom and choice in assessments can engage students more and make their voices powerful and authentic helping them balance the performative pressures. These findings also support the practitioners to approach success from students' perspectives. These findings also help the practitioners construct a new assessment criterion that has a wider appeal to the students and their parents who regard the current assessments, for instance The National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) as a waste of time (Voigt 2019; section 6.4).

The voices that emerge through an active interaction between students' creative learning and students' engagement are mostly powerful and establish students as active and equal partners in knowledge construction. However, the execution of student agency in the Immersion Programme is only limited to choosing their project activities — a participation that Simpson (2018, p. 6) calls as 'surface participation'. The programme structure generally escapes student influence, because it is a coordinator-designed programme. Although the student satisfaction surveys — conducted at the end of the Immersion — consider and improve the Immersion Programme structure through student feedback, the students' direct involvement in this programme design still remains an under-practiced area.

Despite the limited execution of student agency, the freedom given to the Immersion students to pursue their interest by using agency helps establish the

Immersion space as a living dialogic space (Chappell & Craft 2011) where the culture of agency and student voice can build up. The Immersion space can then become a training space for students — whose agency and voice remains underdeveloped in their regular classes (Mr. Oscar) — to initiate them and get them accustomed to the concept of agency and voice. This can help students become further involved with the school reforms and curriculum design. The scope of these dialogic spaces can then be broadened to include students in addressing the broader leadership issues and school reforms.

By capitalising on the creative learning aspect of creative pedagogy, this inquiry shapes a framework that can help teachers as well as creative and critical skill development programme coordinators understand what aspects of creative pedagogy inhibit or support student learning experiences. Working as co-partners in the knowledge construction and skill acquisition, teachers can ascertain when a group problem causes frustration and leads to student disengagement. It can be very helpful to provide students with support and tools (coping strategies and skills) to deal with the group and learning problems effectively through diverse mediums and activities; to intervene at appropriate points before the problem becomes too stressful for students to lose their interest in their learning; and to support students to explore their agency and creativity in face of demanding situations.

Although this study advocates orientating teaching for creativity and teaching creatively to much neglected dimension of students' creative learning, it benefits in-service and pre-service teacher education as well. An understanding of the Interactional model can support both in-service and pre-service teachers in recognising the centrality of learners in the learning context. Consequently, both pre-service and in-service teachers' choice of pedagogy can take into consideration the possible student responses to it in terms of their engagement or disengagement. Also, focusing on the particular elements of this Interactional model, they can recognise how the interaction between diversely pronounced aspects of student experiences can enhance their learning responses. This recognition also can help

both aspiring and practicing teachers create effective learning contexts and spaces to promote students' creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogic voice.

Additionally, since the Interactional model offered by this research places students at the centre of learning process, this can adequately help bridge the gap between the policy level emphases on creativity and the actual creativity implementation efforts. This Interactional model — by underscoring significant aspects from students' responses to creative pedagogy — can help the educational stakeholders understand the impact of creativity implementation efforts, particularly creative pedagogy, on students, from the students' perspectives. This aided understanding can also assist the implementation of an informed curricula and a consistent policy that capitalises on students' creative and agentic learning, engagement, and pedagogic voice to promote student creativity and learning.

Lastly, the wide-ranging implications of this study and the relationship among the interacting elements of the Interactional model, that is, students' creative and agentic learning, engagement, and pedagogic voice hold a great potential for future action-based research projects as well that I intend to explore further in my future research publications.

6.6   Limitations of the Study

This research, with a flexible constructivist research design, was conducted within a specific time frame and research context restraints. As a researcher, I was not only responsive to the specific research aims, but was also receptive of the demands, needs, and concerns of the stakeholders and the research participants. Consequently, during this research process, I modified my research design several times to meet the needs and concerns of the school administration, teachers, and students. This section addresses the limitations of this study that pertain to the research process and the applicability of this study to other learning contexts and cultures.

To begin with, one basic limitation of this study relates to the issue of employing voice as a methodological and epistemological orientation. There is a growing body

of research that acknowledges children's rights in learning as well as in research by engaging them in research as collaborators and partners. This research orientation has deep implications for their voice development. The present research does not succeed in embracing that specific revolutionary research orientation due to some limitations experienced (Chapter 3). However, by establishing its status as locale where this researcher has developed her voice as well as identity as a researcher and has gained confidence, this research opens new avenues for the researcher to be a part of action-based participatory research projects in future.

The next limitation relates to the selection of the site and student population. It was expected that the research would be conducted at the very place where the seeds of this research project were sown. However, a changed research focus guided by readings in the relevant field as well as the identification of substantial research gaps in studying creativity at secondary school level necessitated the selection of a site in a high school setting rather than a primary school. The altered research focus from a primary to secondary school context also resulted in an active search for a research locale that was closer to the core observation initiating this project. Characteristically, the existing research on creativity offers a lot of research potential for researchers in documenting a strong culture of students' schooling to conformity that results in students' reduced creativity and in identifying a dearth of research on creativity at a secondary level (Harris 2016b; Lassig 2012a). The rarity of research in this contested space enticed me to contribute to the existing knowledge in the field theoretically; however, contrasting this situation was the fact that practically, the prevailing strong culture of conformity made it hard for me to find the research contexts where creativity was encouraged. Despite predominant policy level emphasis on enhancing creativity at schools, there were fewer options available to study the formal learning contexts where creativity was invigorated. Also, the proximity criterion of a potential research site to be closer to the core observation resulted in further narrowing down of research context choices.

In these limiting circumstances, Elan High School Melbourne (pseudonym) with its creative and critical skill development programme, came out as a potential site

for the availability of an appropriate student population and a high possibility of data which directly related to my research question. Even so, not all features of this learning context corresponded to my research focus. For instance, initially, my research aim was to examine students' alternative creative expressions in a performative and marketised creativity driven schooling context. However, the creative and critical skill development programme at Elan High school, also called Immersion Programme, with a pronounced emphasis on student agency, appeared to counter the dominant performativity and accountability-based cultural narrative of marketised creativity. This characteristic programme feature did impact the research question changing it from a study of students' alternative creative expressions in contemporaneous culture of creativity to an examination of students' ingenious responses to creativity-based pedagogy that allowed the students freedom, ownership, and agency. Nevertheless, this changed research focus on studying students' creative responses to creative pedagogy proved to be another worthwhile research dimension leading to an examination of how the Immersion Programme balanced the pressures of performativity while allowing a free rein to student agency.

The decision to conduct educational research, particularly in a high school setting, also meant accepting additional limits to research design and research processes. Gaining access to the research site and student population required me to alter and modify my research design in the light of the stakeholders' communicated expectations to impact students' activities as little as possible (discussed in Chapter 3). Initially, my research design included two rounds of one on one in-depth interviews with individual students, entry and exit activities, and students' journal writing as well. However, my revised research design plan, approved by the school staff, included less intrusive methods, that is, classroom observations and 10 to 15 minutes interviews. This somehow compromised the use of diverse data collection methods other than observations and interviews that Delamont (2012) advocates for enhancing educational research. Going beyond the limited data collection methods of semi-structured interviews and observations to include arts-based

research methods and affective methodologies (Chapter 3) can further help enhance the quality of educational research (Delamont 2012).

In addition to that, the restricted access that the school allowed — in terms of what the school planned was an appropriate time of my entry — also impacted my research timeline, my fieldwork participation, and my research design. It also had an impact on how I constructed my understanding of the programme that heavily relied on taking students' perspectives on how they made sense of the programme rather than understanding it through my observations.

As discussed in the previous section, this research contributes to educational research in viewing the educational processes from the viewpoint of the *other* (section 6.4). In this research, taking the standpoint of the *other* implied being an outsider to the educational processes. This happened when I chose to investigate a research problem from the standpoint of an outsider researcher rather than an insider teacher and selected an *unfamiliar* secondary school setting instead of the *familiar* or same primary school setting. Apparently, in choosing an unfamiliar secondary school setting, rather than returning to the same school, I evaded the methodological and ethical complexities associated with the position of an insider researcher, or what Perryman (2011, pp. 857-58) calls the position of a 'returning native; doing research neither from inside nor as a complete outsider'. However, what I was not aware of was the fact that as a returning native to the same school, where I had previously worked or working as an insider-researcher, could have helped me gain an easy access to the site and to pull out valuable data as well.

Also, outreaching to an unfamiliar setting as *other* proved far from being simple. My past teaching background of working as a university lecturer back home; my migration to Australia to study and work as a teacher in a new teaching and learning context; and finally, my decision to be a student-researcher — all implicitly worked towards establishing my opaque status as an *outsider* or the *other*. Therefore, I find the metaphor of working from a *third space* or *in-between space* (Gitlin 2012; Somerville 2012; Flewitt et al. 2017; Flewitt & Ang 2020) more relevant conceptually to elucidate my conflicting and fluid identities (discussed in Chapter

3 section 3.2.2). This working from in-between spaces also informed my researcher subjectivity and led me to choose a research design that directly corresponded to my diverse identities. However, far from being dictated by my diverse selves, the choice of portraiture design framework adequately helped me work through these complex identities and address any biases that could impact this research project.

While the above mentioned research limitations deeply coloured the selection of my research design and my research procedures, the attempts to adopt the standpoint of the *other* as a researcher and the efforts to *make problems* rather than taking them from educators made my research display the true spirit of educational research that Delamont (2012) so avowedly advocates. However, judging this research from the criterion set by Delamont (2012) for conducting the *Lebanon Gate* educational research also underpins its limitations. This research, in conducting research at most researched sites (mainstream schools) and populations (that include students and teachers), demonstrates an inability to research beyond what is fashionable and what is most researched. Consequently, there still remains the need to conduct educational research in informal settings and with under-researched populations (Delamont 2012). It is worthwhile to mention that I have referred to Delamont (2012) extensively while describing my research. The view point of the educational research critic Delamont (2012), which I have quoted frequently in my thesis, constitutes an important aspect of the theoretical as well as the methodological grid of my educational research. A comprehensive understanding of Delamont's (2012) view on conducting educational research in educational settings and her conceptualisation of *familiarity challenge* helps clarify the readers' understanding of my research purpose and process in many ways (elaborated in Chapters 1 & 3).

In addition, the Interactional model that this research offers, was developed from the data that was co-constructed with research participants within a limiting research context. The model also relates to a specific pedagogical context that generates favourable teaching and learning conditions for students. These pedagogical contexts support students' creative expressions through their learning

experiences and thereby, assist possible understandings of what enhances their participation in learning creatively. For the readers of this research project, the interpretation of the project findings guided by a consideration of the study contexts and a comparison of the study contexts to their own specific contexts can be fruitful.

Also, the present Interactional model presents students' creative engagement as a function of an active interplay between pedagogic voice and creative learning. No doubt, the concept of student engagement that this model presents characterises learners' behavioural, cognitive, and agentic engagement. However, this research adopts a more qualitative and fluid stance in describing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation which are two extensively researched areas in student engagement. Consequently, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are more fluidly discussed under the terms ownership, interest, and relevance along with discussing students' or stakeholders' performative interest in student success as the drivers of student engagement.

Moreover, instead of regarding extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as the sole drivers of student engagement, this model conjoins them with much emphasised and broader concepts of students' creative learning and their pedagogic voices. This qualitative bearing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation might appear to be less rigorous from quantitative standards; however, it offers an alternative and extended perspective on both concepts which have been extensively researched in the student engagement area. Finally, given that the model works best in a cross-disciplinary and project-based learning context, it is anticipated that this model cannot be used extensively in curriculum or within individual curriculum domains due to time and curriculum restraints.

6.7   Future Directions

This study presents an Interactional model of student creativity that offers an integrated approach towards understanding the significant aspects of students' responses to creative pedagogy supporting and enhancing student creativity in light of such responses. This model was co-constructed with five significant participant

groups in a Melbourne secondary school. This section discusses the possible research directions for future research in regard to these research findings.

The present Interactional model, co-constructed with a specific student population and specific learning environment, offers a potential for future research to explore the diverse aspects of students' creative responses to creative pedagogy in different educational contexts, learning environments, and cultures. Given that the definitions of creativity and the related terms abound, a focus on student responses to particular pedagogic practices within specific learning contexts can help both the researchers and the teachers identify and implement effective practices.

The pedagogic voice that networks with creative aspects of learning and engagement in the Interactional model — if given due importance and is heard — offers a great potential for further research to explore its potential benefits to improve both teaching and learning experiences and processes. Future studies can be conducted to view the ways teachers design and implement pedagogic practices that promote students' pedagogic voice and the potential implications of such practices. As the study findings suggest ways of empowering students' creative learning and engagement, the ways for educators and practitioners to capitalise on the diverse expressions of the pedagogic voice can also be studied as future projects. Another worthwhile area of exploration is the ways the pedagogic voice, interacting with creative learning and creative engagement, can be developed by the practitioners to effectively reduce the long-term impacts of socially unjust schooling practices.

Further studies can also be conducted to investigate how more freedom and choice in assessments can engage students more and make their voices powerful and authentic — helping them to balance the performative pressures. It is also worthwhile to examine the implications of the practitioners' practice of approaching success from the students' perspectives and their construction of a new assessment criterion that has a wider appeal to the students and their parents. Also, the study of how the understanding of the Interactional model can inform both pre-service and in-service teachers' choice of pedagogy to create effective learning

contexts and spaces — which can promote students' creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogic voice — can be a worthwhile area of exploration.

Particular to the Australian context, research in this direction can help ascertain and document the success stories of effective implementation of creativity in schools and identify the pedagogical practices that inhibit an active interaction among the significant aspects of student experiences including creative learning, creative engagement, and students' pedagogic voice. Possible future research findings in this direction could also help develop a policy level consistency in creativity implementation efforts with a particular emphasis on creative pedagogy.

The fact that this study was conducted for a specific and limited period of time may also offer another potential area of research to conduct longitudinal studies that can investigate the long-term impacts of students' creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogic voice on students' learning and wellbeing as well as their overall impact on the educational processes in general. Similarly, conducting cross-sectional studies with younger and older students in diverse settings can also offer a rich potential to explore the applicability of Interactional model across diverse research populations and age groups.

Given that this research employs a portraiture research design that documents the stories of success while registering the participant voices, other potential research avenues can open up by using other research designs and data collection methods. Studying student responses by using a critical theory paradigm that uses voice framework to strongly advocate a social justice approach for marginalised research populations, or employing a grounded theory approach for creating a new theory for creative learning, or using phenomenology for eliciting and documenting students' in-depth responses to the creative teaching practices — all can be worthwhile research endeavours in this field.

The data collection methods can also go beyond semi-structured interviews and observations to include arts-based research methods that will further help enhance the quality of educational research (Delamont 2012). The data could also be analysed by using critical theory or by employing some significant theory from

sociology of education as Delamont (2012) suggests. The concept of social justice and inclusion can become more solid while studying student populations that are disadvantaged in diverse ways. Again, returning to Delamont (2012), alternative educational settings, for instance, informal educational settings or technical education settings can also offer significant research potential.

The interrelationship between creative learning, creative engagement, and students' pedagogic voice in the Interactional model invites future researchers to further appraise the ways to support an understanding of student creativity and learning as well as to help create effective learning contexts for cultivating creativity in schools. The relevance and contribution of the present model to diverse bodies of literature, for instance, literature on creativity, creative pedagogy, creative engagement, student voice, and creative learning calls for further joint research-ventures in these areas.

This study was conducted in a team-based and project-based learning environment, and the freedom to pursue one's passion was bound to teaming up with peers to make a difference to the community. The fact that students were able to harness their creative potential to make a difference to community brought it very close to wise or humanising creativity frameworks (Chappell et al. 2017, 2012; Craft 2014, 2006; Chappell 2008, 2006; Craft, Gardner & Claxton 2015). It would be a worthwhile research endeavour to explore the nature of creativity that develops within various other pedagogic and learning contexts. Further research can also study the interplay of the constituent elements of this Interactional model in situations where learners' creative pursuit for individual success is set against the desire to benefit the community. Also, although the concept of radical collegiality (Charteris & Smardon 2019) has been explored by discussing students' agency and choice in regards to their classroom activities, it is also worthwhile to explore the interrelationship between creative learning, creative engagement, and pedagogical voice when students are made partners to impact the curriculum decisions.

Furthermore, this study deals with Hymes' (1996) one facet of voice, that is, the freedom to make ones' voice heard. As a future project, in line with what Flewitt

et al. (2017) suggest, many participatory research projects can be initiated as a process of developing student voices along with a view to develop teachers professionally through action-based research projects (Davies et al. 2014). Additionally, taking this research project as a site for developing my voice as a researcher along with establishing the validity of student voices expressed through their own experiences, I aim to direct my future research endeavours towards conducting more action-based research projects to help develop the voice of disadvantaged others in educational settings.

In summary, this inquiry has built on and expanded through findings the research in creativity, student engagement, and student voice. It offers to explore both the theoretical and practical avenues in the direction of future research. This research has the potential to enrich this field by offering promising future directions for endeavouring researchers to improve the Interactional model. While the Interactional model presented through the findings contributes constructively to the research on creativity and more specifically, on creative pedagogy, it also has a potential to invite researchers from diverse fields to explore its workings — both theoretically and practically — across diverse populations, cultures, age groups, and learning contexts.

6.8   Concluding Remarks

This research project set out to explore the learners' responses to creative pedagogic practices in a specifically designed secondary school programme. However, the insights gathered along the whole research process have revealed much more to me about the specific contributions of this study to the field of creative pedagogy as well as its broader appeal to educational research in responding to the challenges facing it, and the epiphanic discoveries about myself as a researcher and the research process. Central to gaining insights as a researcher was my recognition of the paradox lying at the very heart of my epistemological orientation — the paradox of working with the voices of disadvantaged others while having a compromised and disadvantaged voice myself. The design phase of this research itself became a process of acquiring epistemological balance by choosing to register the voices of

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the disadvantaged as opposed to giving voices to the voiceless. The choice of a portraiture research design greatly helped me navigate that complexity and enabled me tame or counter any biases that I had.

Like Juffermans and Van der Aa (2013, p. 117), I also came to recognise that my voice — as a writer and as a researcher — was plural and was 'institutionally negotiated and collaboratively shaped'. Like Juffermans and Van der Aa (2013, p. 117), I came to know of my voice — as a non-native writer of academic English — as a struggling voice striving to manifest its agency in the research discourse. In this regard, the act of writing this thesis in English language as a non-native writer of English in itself became an agentic act of developing as well as making my voice heard. Here my research process together with this thesis becomes a metaphorical *third* or an *in-between space* (Flewitt et al. 2017; Flewitt & Ang 2020) where many other voices join this venture to make this researcher-voice better and powerful by validating it and by helping to develop it.

This altered approach to viewing my research and the product of this research, that is, the thesis has also led me to regard this thesis as a complex creation where every succeeding chapter challenges the authorship of the preceding chapter yet closely holds hands with what comes before and after. In this regard, it becomes similar to Mahy's (1996) five paper-doll sisters who sequentially acquire their faces and identities with every succeeding adventure and who are joined together by their hands and never let go of each other. Like these dolls each chapter in my thesis is entangled with others.

Further along the way, I have discovered that the research path was far more convoluted and complex than I had anticipated. My research focus and aim was just one facet of this constantly unfolding research process. I had yet to understand that the research process had a life and vitality of its own — having a great potential to impact the initial research plans of this endeavoring researcher. The background processes of gaining approval from the ethical review board at my university and my negotiation for access and entry to a secondary school, not only taught me that the ethics of responsible research hold very strong grounds in conducting research

with human participants, but also made me understand how to harness my own imagination and bring it close to what is real and practical.

This research process was illuminating as it brought me face to face with my own vulnerabilities, fears, inhibitions, and limitations as a learner and a researcher and helped me learn and grow both personally and professionally. Diverse learning as well as research challenges that I faced during my research process required creative and exuberant attitude that helped me solve these issues. Like my research participants, who used creative learning to respond to their challenges in learning, I creatively found ways to counter the constantly unfolding challenges to my own learning. On one plane, this creative and playful attitude helped me to devise alternative research procedure — when faced with practical limitations — to construct new knowledge through a reflection on my research actions, methodological procedures, and the ways I could present my research findings. On another, this exuberance came into play while dealing with more personal learning challenges and led me to find alternative and creative ways to break the drudgery of my learning routine.

It was during such times, I tried out new cooking recipes, hung out with my friends, watched funny and random videos on You Tube, did creative projects with my daughters, or went on a holiday break to visit my family overseas. This playful and comic attitude to work out different possibilities by finding the creative solutions not only gave me respite, but also provided me with an opportunity to work from a moderating *third* (Lin 2014) or *in-between space* — necessary for knowledge generation (subsection 3.2.2, Chapter 3). As a student researcher, just like my research participants, this attitude supported me to reconcile the standard expectations of this degree with the passion that drove this research project along with the limitations experienced during the research process.

This research contributes to the field, both theoretically and practically, by foregrounding a learner-centred approach towards enhancing student creativity which has practical implications for improving both teaching and learning processes. Through its practical and theoretical contributions, this research opens

up new vistas for further research and practice that I intend to explore in my future post-doctoral research along with many other interested researchers.

Though the final value of this thesis rests on the construction and formal documentation of new knowledge, to me the tale-telling aspect of this thesis holds equally powerful grounds. The latter perspective transforms this hardbound thesis into a living document — telling numerous untold and hidden tales of my research journey and registering every transformation that I underwent at every new phase of this journey. In this way, this thesis demands an alternative reading of its chapters, because here every chapter of this thesis tells a tale. Here, even analysis becomes a story — a narrative generated by the author through 'creative analytic practices' (Richardson & St. Pierre cited in Watson 2012, p. 462) to examine and represent her research findings (Chapter 3 section 3.2.3). Further, the thesis tells the tale of an inexperienced researcher choosing the risky *West Gate*, acquiring the wisdom and scholarship of an experienced researcher, and finally, contributing to educational research with her research findings and insights.

As this research tale nears its end, I also feel as a changed person: this documentation and the research on the students' learning experiences has altered my relationship with teaching, learning, and research permanently — making me more aware of the learners' needs and the complexity of research process and representation. Like Leavy (2014, p. 1), I have come to believe that all qualitative researchers are fully enmeshed in their projects, located within, and constantly 'shifting within them'. This mutual and close entanglement also illuminates the ways the researcher and the research affect each other. Therefore, it no longer remains a:

> Question of separate entities (methods, researchers, experiments, and instruments) meeting and interacting with one another. Rather, methods, researchers, experiments, and instruments are already closely entangled in a very constitutive way (Staunæs & Kofoed 2015, p. 50).

This thesis, while presenting a detailed account of this research, epitomises such deep entanglement between the researcher and her research.

To conclude, this thesis presents a research narrative similar to the fantasy tale of the five-paper sisters (Mahy 1996) who transform others and get transformed by others in the process of acquiring their faces and identities. Like the five sisters' final journey to the sea island — which always allured them — this thesis is now ready to embark upon a *new* journey to a *new* destination in the arena of educational research where it will stand independent of its creating hands. Like the first-drawn paper-doll sister Alpha, this thesis is ready to shout, 'off we go. Yo ho ho!' (Mahy 1996, p. 80), and departs with a hope to find on the promising island 'pirates and buried treasure', 'forests and fairy tales', 'sea of tears' and joy, and 'holding on and letting go' (Mahy 1996, p. 78).

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Appendix

Worked-through interview coding example

Handwritten margin notes (top): how to stud. passion is used in institutional context. · Soc. vision: raising awareness — how to operate in a context · May be this concept of develop'g creativity — seen in the third space or the space in between · How schools use teamwork for their instruction vision —

MAD Program	What is MAD	• Teacher #1: So just like sort of an overview. Yeah, so students have the opportunity to come in and work on a project based learning in ... project-based learning environment and that's different from their mainstream classes. And the idea is that it encompasses areas of the science Humanities and English curriculum and students work also on developing skills: interpersonal skills, collaborative skills, teamwork skills, umm... problem-solving skills in this environment where they do something 'mad' to make a difference in the community and we look at number of issues that are relevant and topical in the community whether that be the school the local the global Community. Students then form groups based on their interests or passions. And we do a lot of brainstorming and information seeking before they form these groups and then they basically devise a part project and follow that through to completion where they complete a thesis in their group and then they'll do an individual oral presentation to show their findings to their families. • Teacher: #2: The MAD program is it stands for make a difference. It's also known as the immersion program and it's the year 9 alternative program the school introduces in response to lower results in stimulating learning and teacher effectiveness in the student attitudes to school survey. So a working party got together in 2015 and over the course of the year and met several times to work on a way to design a program which would help engage students, year 9 students in particular and and then change that data from the student attitudes to school survey. A method in madness: School vision for this programme: An opportunity to work in teams in a learning environment different to regular school classes. Links to curriculum Skill development Do something mad to make a difference Alternative programme for student engagement Programme procedures and assessments	Seen as an opportunity to work on Project based learning... different to regular classes. Encompasses science and English curriculum Skill development Do something mad to make a difference Look at the topical and relevant issues Group formation on the basis of interests and passions Devise a project Complete a thesis and presentation T2: make a difference Alternative program Working party to engage students
	What is your (student) project	• We wanted to have a fundraiser and donate money to the charity we had chosen. • Had brochures: wanted to raise awareness for the issue too. • #2: is to get the GST removed off sanitary products and help women in need who do not have access to sanitary products and bras. • #3: And a part of our project is that we raise money for them by holding a pancake sale on 4th June, and we have raised 300 dollars and all the money that we have raised will go to the starlight foundation. • #4: Student A: Well, we decided that we ... we are from the social media, we decided obviously, we were going to do social media security, and we decided that not a lot of people knew about it, so we thought we would ... like... make a website and then we can either put it on the school bulletin or we can make a website and then email it to the students directly. We ended up emailing it to them directly, and we got a lot of hits ... ummm... we'll just check now, how many and yeah, it worked out well and everyone did their part. • And what makes you think that it worked out well? • Student A: Well there was (asking student B: How many? Student B: wait a second. 79) • Student A: 79 people. Was it out of the 200? • Student A: 200. • Student A: that we emailed yeah... which is quite a bit of people. Yeah. #5: Student A: Our project is about domestic violence. So we just want to educate people that we're close to of youth ... youth especially to just let them know what domestic violence is about and how they can get themselves or someone out of a situation if they feel that they're uncomfortable or anything and (student B) raising awareness. Yeah, • #6: Student A: So we chose war we chose this topic because wanted to go into a nuclear warfare and the effects on it that it has on people and countries and the world. Student B: we wanted have an effect and our project was to raise awareness and give others our knowledge on the dangers and all the possibilities. What stimulated MAD becomings: *The Mad Becomings (ways to make a diff.)* • *raising awareness* • *raising money* • *participation in MAD space activities.* • *agency*	Wanted to have the fundraiser Raise awareness Get GST removed and help women Raise money for foundation Going to do social media security not many people know about it Emailed to students and got a lot of hits Quite a bit of people Worked out well as we got good response from students Educate young people about domestic violence and how they can get themselves or others out of this situation. Raising awareness To educate people of the effects of nuclear war now and future Wanted to have an effect. To give others knowledge and raise awareness of the dangers and possibilities.
	What makes students creative	• Teacher 1: Well, I think it's the aspect that they're not told what to do. They have to think of a way that they can solve their problem and I think often in education we say here's the problem and here is how you solve it and let's all do that same thing together, but it's	Aspect: not told what to do. Think to solve problems

Handwritten note (bottom, green highlight): • Students are not told what to do — There is a tension here about the structured and unstructured activities — this challenges the teacher's role in such places ---

Handwritten margin notes (right side): Different to regular classes but still have links to curriculum — Skill development doing something mad (but how mad) — teachers afraid / to make a difference (fake freedom or responsible freedom)

Key requirement to look at the issues and find solutions by helping others ... for creative problem solving — How school fosters community service & help agenda?? · program targets student passion and interest.

· How thesis becomes incorporated with this agenda of community help — stu. respond this is for teacher — students may not own it — may not relate to it.

· This programme also operates in broader school and government context — the program has been designed to engage the disinterested students — alternative program — designed by working party — (no student voices — but now modifying it according to student survey results) — stu. walk on a tight rope trying to balance their passions and the expectations of the context — The broader sociopolitical context constrains the prog.

· is raising money for a purpose / charity ways to raise awareness

· action oriented approach — touching the boundaries of laws. (a petition)

· action stems from a passion to help women

· integral part of this project is to hold a pancake sale for raising money.

· proud to have raised a certain amount of money / money for charity

· chose a topic not many ppl knew about — raising awareness on a much neglected issue — providing safety — internet — making a website to save ppl from abuse.

· worked out well — got a lot of hits — is happening at school — emailed it to 200 ppl — ppl's responses are imp. in making them feel it worked out well (need for validation) raising awareness is bound with the feedback / response / raising money is also linked to how much feedback do they get. "It is quite a lot of people."

· educating ppl as to how to get out of a sit. by knowing about it and by knowing about the shelter. want assumption that others will help others as well. — raising awareness.

· wanted to raise awareness & give our knowledge (vision??) on dangers and all possibilities.

(raising money and awareness — masks for self-validation — a part of self gets validated when one's purpose has been supported by wider public)

①

	like here's a problem. There's a whole Myriad of solutions, but what do you think would be the best solution for you to help to make a difference with this problem and I think it's about thinking outside the square of ways to engage other people because the whole premise is to make a difference. So how do you make a difference and what kind of things can you do to engage people and each students' individual flair has come through in each project, you know and their passion and you know for music or arts or for language, you know or whatever it is in the groups, they're able to engage in something that inspires them and is interesting for them in a way that they want to learn rather than being told. You must do a essay or you must do a poster or you must whatever do a three minute presentation or whatever it is, it's like we want you to help to make a difference in some way but that way is of your choosing as a group.	Do it together. Choose one solution out of different to make a difference...it is about 'thinking outside the square of ways to engage other people because the whole premise is to make a difference.' Make choices to engage people Students' individual flair a part of the project Able to engage in something that inspires them ... want to learn rather than being told.
	• Teacher #2: Yeah. It's a great question. So I think firstly those two ... that I've mentioned. 13. Probably, another ... another thing that encourages creativity is our five-week community service program where students could visit a series of different sites including primary schools, hospitals, Op-shops that those sort of settings. In those spaces and like the nursing home setting for example, we ask students to come up with the program's what they will do when they are at the... at the venue. So if you're at a primary school, they have to engage young children in activities and if they are going to the nursing home or the hospital they have to create conversation with the elderly patients there. So we have we have a sort of those opportunities. But we also have activities in class which encourage that creativity including ... including ... in class, 13: 50. But it also occurs on out in the field on the Melbourne Street art Tasks that we've designed, asks students to interpret the art as well. So and there's no wrong answer but we look for answers with depth and we are also measuring the Intercultural capability so that actually contributes to that task. And so yeah, probably a series of a series of tasks throughout the unit probably contribute to the cultivation of creativity. • And even like if they are finding solutions to certain problems then that is also that also makes them may be creative. • Absolutely, and the way that they make a difference and anyway, the discussions, the brain storms, the... the vetting through the teacher, the teacher being a filter, you know, when we, when we get the first proposals, we talk about the realistic... the possible reality of the situation, being a smart goal, being carrying realistic goals, so, they've gotta be creative but may be not too outlandish with their aspirations, but sort of encouraged at the same time, but it's gotta be realistic too so. Madness and agency- a paradox?	They can choose to do the things that they want to do but the way is of your choosing as a group. T2: community service program: students are asked to come up with activities and ideas to engage for instance young students or to create conversations to engage elderly people. Interpretation of art. There is no wrong answer. We measure intellectual capability. The way they make a difference Discussions, brain storms Teacher being a filter to check the realistic plans and goals... can be creative but not too outlandish with their aspirations.
	Dealing with students creative engagement :- creative madness' ?? *The creative madness :- MADness, community & Collaboration* *• taking risks* *• challenges* *• managing challenges — Learning from creative MADness : Meaningful making from creative Ma* *• Boredom*	
Any similar program me in other schools?	• Teacher 1: But I think lots of schools do similar things. I'm not sure. I think there's a lot of schools there are some school that I know of that are called Big Picture schools and all of their learning is in this way. So its their students can pick topics that are very interesting to them and they do all of their different learning as based around that topic. So if they're doing math equations and and sport is their interest then all of their maths might be related to sport for example, so if they're learning area, they might be using dimensions of fields or things like that. So I know if things like that I know that there's other schools who are doing similar similar programs to us and some that do that are opt-in. So whereas here every student has the opportunity to be in this programme where as other students might opt in to engage and yeah I know that they did a lot of research when they started this program here and went to some schools and saw what other people were doing. Yeah, but I think it's becoming more common this project based learning especially at this year nine these demographic of students.	Big picture schools use the same kind of learning Students choose to engage with their topics Project based learning becoming popular Role of working party in doing a lot of research T2: aware of city experience to survey people. They have less periods to work on

Handwritten notes (right margin):

• Students come up with best solutions but they have to be approved or have to go through the reality check
• thinking outside square to engage other ppl. making choices to engage ppl.
- Students individual flair comes through in each project — and are able to engage in that that inspires them :- a project
• Student engagement with others on the basis of their passion + flair or willingness to learn (ref. wanted to learn about their fellows more)
The idea of students engaging with others
• we want you to make a diff. institutions imperative for making a difference — the way is of your choosing as a group.
:• how creativity is encouraged and made an imperative — choices given, ideas need to be appraised.
• engaging with kids in through activities us (engaging with ppl. through their cause— interaction becomes meaningful.)
→ interpreting art — measuring intercultural capability — (ref. one stu. tally about we deal with what others have done and give feedback / interpret d)
→ ref. street art — discussing group ideas — similarities.
→ the way they make a diff. is a creative act — in this process they engage with others and their own selves at various levels.
• diff. prog. activities promote creat. but creativity has to be grounded to in reality — 'harnessing creativity' how creativity becomes useful (ref. wise creativity) measures for making it realistic) (restraints??)
MADness & agency — a paradox ??

Big Picture schools — students pick the topics of their interest — choose to engage with the topics — and do all sorts of learning —

opt-in to engagement.
engagement opportunity for all students — (but how students take it when they feel stressed)
the How students take up this year 9 — concept.

xl

2

		Teacher #2: I am only aware of ... aware of something called the city experience... some schools at year nine level do a city project... yeah they do a city project, I know, where students go to the city and they might actually survey people, but I think we are talking about... look from my knowledge which is probably limited about this, they probably have less periods to work on this and it might be a part of humanities class. I do... I am aware of another one, that involves, incorporates more subject areas, so there's another school, so yeah, there's another school that has something similar, but it's ... when I say similar I don't think its greatly similar to this, I'm not sure about thesis and everything. They might create a hypothesis and then survey people and they might do a report on it. I've heard of that. I haven't seen anything that does it to this degree. But I'm also aware of the schools that have other year 9 or 10 year programmes, I know of other schools that do gardening and .... But my knowledge is a bit limited in that though I would love to know. I think the working party that created this programme, they visited other schools and they did have a look and also got some resources. They created their own (22:04) after that. Yeah.	it. Might be a part of humanities class Another program do a hypothesis, survey and write a report Gardening Reference to working party.
The ways they participate in this programme	• I don't know. I can't. • But we worked together • #2: made donation boxes • Held a petition to get GST off the sanitary products. • #3: Student B: Yeah, so different ways I have participated in this program was I went to the city and the big issue class which was something different. We've had a couple of guest speakers which is really cool to have participated in. There's been so many great opportunities, and I was ...like... learning a bit more about ... like... our city and other stuff when we went out because I never go into the City and you know, it's good.... I don't know. • Student C: Umm.... we also do community service which is where we go and we help... ummm... we do things in the community. • Okay. • Student C: Yes, like for example, I went to Williams town Primary School just down the road from here and we played sport with the kids there. That's something that we do as a part of our project. #5: Student B: in the beginning we were looking at statistics from our teacher in our home group class and one in three women experience some form of abuse like in their lifetime which is a really high like turn out (student C) and like that can be physical mental verbal, it's any of (student A cuts in) it could be any of us. All Yeah. Student B: So we were thinking we want to help reduce that number (me: OK) and so we just wanted to help others around us. Yeah. • Student A: sausage Sizzle. Student B: We raised a lot of money for the Big Issue (student A) yeah, (student B) to buy yearly subscribe (student A cuts in) it's a 12 months. Yeah, 12 month subscription (all students) yeah. (Student B) to the magazine. Yeah, (student B) the Big Issue for the school. Student C: we went to the big issue. There was a woman who was a guest speaker and she had a domestic violence like in relationships, So we thought that was a good idea and Ms X suggested that we did something to help them and raise money because they also have women that feel like uncomfortable to sell the magazine on streets come in and do another program with them at the big issue. So we thought it would be good to raise money for them as well. Student A: Yeah, because the women who are uncomfortable, (student B) in working on the street, they're employed online. They sold the online subscriptions. So every subscription that is purchased a few women are employed. So we just really wanted to be able to help out with the women who have been affected too. • #6: Student B: Umm... Our main one was raising awareness and we went into a class and we gave a presentation about the Warfare and information on that topic. • Student B: We also went to the city and we conducted a survey on how much people knew about our topic and our results were pretty pretty good. A lot of people knew about our topic and it was a fun day. • Student B: ummm... different when writing up our thesis, we had . . . to write different areas. So I had to write the results the methodology and the bibliography and we all had to write our own areas in it. And then at the end we all combined our work and made the group thesis ... • And what was your part in thesis? • Student A: Well, my my part... I've done the... I've done the abstract, the statement of purpose, and I've done the conclusion and I was going to do the bibliography. I'd half started it and then our other group member wanted to finish it off because he ... (student B cuts in but is inaudible) and we finished.	G1: I don't know. Worked together Donation boxes Held petition Went to city and big issue class So many opportunities and learning a bit more about city and other stuff Do community service where we do things in community Played sports with the kids Got to know of the statistics and wanted to reduce the number of people being the victims of domestic violence. Wanted to help others. Doing sausage sizzle Raised a lot of money for Big issue Went to big issue, learnt about the topic. Teacher's idea to help raise money for big issue women. #6: main concern: faising awareness. Gave a presentation to a class on warfare Went to city to conduct surveys. People knew about our topic and it was a fun day It was different when writing up our thesis. Combined individual parts to make thesis.
Does this program me	Teacher#1: Yes. So, yes. So, I think basically, the ... the option of how they complete their project is completely up to them. We have some guidelines around the fact that the school only allows a certain amount of fundraisers	T1: option of how they complete their project is

Handwritten notes:
how this programs link to others
School programs –
how unique this prog is –
how diff this prog is –
• it gives all students an oppo to engage with this programme
• it is for more time, per one term
• a part of humanities class only – while this covers diff. – domain specific concept of creativity –
• thesis part is unique –
• gardening –

• Some stu. don't know how they participate in this program.
• participation bound to working with others
• doing project activities –
• programme activities – (great learning oppor.)
• Community service. engaging with kids – as a part of our project –
• for some participation actually means doing something on an issue of interest of helping ppl around them.
• raising awareness also a form of participation?? went to classes for presentation –
conducting city surveys –
a lot of ppl knew about our topic (again need for validation??)

• how their engagement with thesis was diff – did their parts separate – and then combined them to make a document.

• no freedom to complete this project
• limited amount of fundraisers
•

require students to come up with new ideas?	or certain topics need to be for example, if it's maybe something to do with mental health or something like that, We need to have some guidelines around how that might look in terms of sharing information with different groups of students and there is sensitivity around certain topics, but generally if a student has an idea that is unique and creative and exciting, we want to try and help them in any way to be able to complete that project in the scope of the program and the parameters that we have. But yeah, I think it definitely encourages students to think outside the square and just you know, not do the things that they've always done and have that leadership aspect and that individual flair being able to come through in their work. So it's not that everybody's doing an essay on this topic or everyone's presenting an information booth or you know, everyone's doing an informative video, it's completely up to you. And if you choose to use those mediums that's awesome and we support that but also, you know, if you want to, I don't know, go and do something within the local community and spread awareness that way we'll try and make it work. How was the people's response #2: very positive a lot of people donated and turned out for petition...then the description of number of donations...	completely up to them. Teachers' guidelines: limited amount of fundraisers and sensitivity around certain topics. We support unique creative and exciting ideas and help them complete it within the parameters of this program. Engcourage students to think outside the square, do things differently and let their 'individual flair come through in their work.' Choice of mediums is students and teachers would even support them reaching out to the community. People' response to petition: a lot of them donated and turned out for petition... description of number of donations.	

Handwritten notes (right margin):
- justification for teachers' guidelines.
- Supporting creative ideas within the parameters of this programme
- individual flair is allowed to come through
- encourage students to think outside the square
- choice of mediums for making a diff in students
- help them to reach out to community
- positive people response — a lot of them signed up for petition

Students come up with decisions or ideas?	• teacher 1: So basically very very early on with students, we run through a series of activities that look at what is an issue, what makes it an issue, how do we find out about different issues in society or different topics that are that are things that like how do Things become topical. and we do a lot of brainstorming around those kind of things and then students do some individual Research into things that might have be of interest to them and they narrow that down until they find an area of interest that they would like to further further research and then they find people who have like interests and they formed their groups based on that but there's a lot of different activities that we do in the first three weeks of the program that allows students to understand what might be a current issue that be an issue for them in the school community and their individual community and their local community in the world and then they go from there. • Teacher #2: Yes, so they made decisions about the range of issues that would be available to them to choose from. They ... they... they came to that, you know, decision via a particular classroom activity we have where we have to research headlines, editorial, and opinion piece headlines from reputable newspapers, like the age or the guardian. We encourage them to stay away from the Tabloid newspapers. We try to ..... Now everyone has some sort of qualities in terms of the Articles, they research, they don't have to read those articles in depth but they're there we encourage them to but they actually identify a series of contemporary issues from ... from contemporary headlines in reputable newspapers. So once they do that we get our list of ... of issues, then categorize them into whether they are individual, local, or Global issues, I wish you could record our circles out there, concentric Circles. • Yes, I yeah did that, • So we use that as our visual guide and everyone's got a go and post up their issues in the concentric circles. • Yes I took a photo of that. • Great ... great. Yeah, so it's sort of like then they categorize the issues and then they work out after that. The decision they are going to make after that is which issue do I want to try to make a difference to? Which one can I make a difference to? • Who wants to do this with me? Which group can I join to do that or who can I join up with? But then after that, they also have a look at whether they want to try to make an impact on an individual local or Global level and there are challenges of course with all of those. So we seem to get a trend moving towards it's like the local level mostly. We	Knowing about the issue, doing research on what interests them, narrow it down to find one area of interest, choose people of the same area of interest, form groups, do a lot of activities to help them understand the issues. and then they go from there. T2: came to decisions through class activities.... to choose from the current me community and the world issues. Choose issue where they want to make a difference to. Then choose group members. Where do they want to create their impact? Students opt for local issues mostly: (students mostly go for donations to the charities) Global is hard.	

Handwritten notes (right margin):
- activities for issue finding
- how student decisions arise out of such activities —
- (reference to brave new world — does this concept tell you to resume submissive???)
- where students choices are made:
  ① doing research on the topic of interest
  ② choose ppl. of the same area of interest —
- class activities help them come to decision —
- instead of choosing the issues, it choose local issues —

④

global issues are harder —

		have had, certainly, we have had groups in the past focusing on helping the individual as well. And then there are usually education campaigns too which we did have this time. Global level's a bit harder, but we do get that we get a connection to that via, … we have had contributions made to Global Charities as well … overseas. We've had a challenge with that though because Bank fees for Bank transfers to overseas Charities, they just take up so much of the money the kids make so we've been finding it's better to donate to Australian charities that have a connection overseas. And they can contribute to overseas cause via Australian charities, that's interesting. So, you know, we have a sort of a sort of you know, sort of in economic limitations and systemic limitations to how they can contribute and money is not the only way of course. When we have some of the girl girls who have created the resource packs in the bags, you know for some of the projects and that's difficult probably to send overseas probably easier to use here. So so they make decisions about all of all of those things . . . in part… that are a part of the process. Is that a part of it?	
How does student participation in this program me affect them?	• Teacher 1: So I think that being in this program allows students to learn to work in a team, in a different sense from what they've had before. A lot of structured collaborative work in classes says that you know one person will take this role and that role means they do this and then, you know, you'll be this person and you'll do this. Whereas in this program, here's your team. Here's what you have to do. But you need to decide as a group what are people's roles, what are their strengths and we talk about that we talk about we look at different types of learners and different types of personality traits and how they work together to make a successful group and then students from there sort of start to work out: okay, where do I fit in this team? And they come to challenges and they butt heads and they have disagreements and initially we ask the students to work through those and hope that they do and if they don't then we can step in and mediate where we need to but I think that that's one of the really big learning points from this program is you know, I was I think that the project is just the tool for all of the other amazing learning that happens in terms of collaboration and problem solving and I think that that's what's so great about this program, that really the project is just the tool for all the other learning here. • Teacher #2: Yeah. Well interestingly. We hope we are doing the survey today and well we see enthusiasm throughout the term, we also see that drop as well and up and down and but the survey probably tells us the most at the end of the term. We learn that often, I mean the results have been mostly positive so far, so hopefully the same today when we get the results back, but we see that engagement appears to be high and there's a level of satisfaction that appears to be high also. Does this answer your question? • Yes, how does this affect them, so you told me that level of satisfaction so definitely that answers. • Yes. So we have a question there about whether Immersion makes them feel happy to come to school and often we see some positive results for that question. You know, we also ask the question: Are you proud to be in immersion? We also can we see we see some we see mixture of results there, they say yes or sometimes they say the same or no. Yeah, I can't relate the figures right now, but we probably are getting some positive affirmation about that and we also have the questions about us as teachers, so Ms X and myself. There's a question like: does your teacher support your learning? Does your teacher know how you learn? Does your teacher… does your teacher …. (There is a background noise and Mr Y addresses the boys: Guys, sensible, sensible). Yeah, I can't recall anymore but we have a series of questions related to our teaching and the things that we want to measure are related to teacher effectiveness. We've been getting good results there	Learning to work in a team… different… decide the group roles. Some guidance is provided… decide where do I fit in this team. Challenges… disagreements Ask students to work through those and if they don't… we mediate… But this is where big learning takes place… about collaboration and problem solving. Project as tool for all the other learning here. T2: student engagement is really high. Survey results. Student satisfaction. Immersions makes them feel happy to come to school Are you proud to be in immersion Other questions.	
Some of challenges that students face? What are some of the challenges that students face getting	• Teacher 1: Yeah, so I think one of the big challenges that we face in this program is that they will get into a group with their friends and then they become distracted by that group and a lot of the feedback from the students when they do their individual presentations when they reflect on their time in the program is that they say, I wish I didn't go in a group with my friends or with all of my friends because they know that that that's that's a challenge for them and they find that difficult that ability to say. Okay right now, we're not we're not talking about what happened on the weekend, we're talking about our project and I think that that's one of the main challenges they find. I think also that conflict resolution initially is quite challenging but once students have the opportunity to work through a problem once, then they're more	Forming friendship group: get distracted… find it a challenge to tell their friends to focus on their work Conflict resolution is also challenging. But an opportunity to solve it makes it become more confident and they know it happens	

• Stu. learn to work in teams: You decide as a group your roles —
∴ where do I fit in this team —
• challenges — disagreements —
• This prog. a tool for collaborative learning + problem solving —
• engagement appears to be high —
• immersion makes them feel happy.

Getting into friendship groups — distracted —
• dealing with a problem makes them skillful in handling others.
• Conflict resolution with friends is challenging.