

## 7. THE RESURRECTION

### A Longitudinal Study

*In abject exhaustion and horror, she danced into a forest where lived the town's executioner. And the ax on his wall began to tremble as soon as it sensed her coming near.*

*"Please!" she begged the executioner as she danced by his door. "Please cut off my shoes to free me from this horrid fate." And the executioner cut through the straps of the red shoes with his ax. But still the shoes stayed on her feet. And so she cried to him that her life was worth nothing and that he should cut off her feet. So he cut off her feet. And the red shoes with the feet in them kept on dancing through the forest and over the hill and out of sight.*

- *Women Who Run With the Wolves* (Estes, 1992: 216-219)

One year after the original workshop series, I was presented with the opportunity to work with the Y2 Kids again. Eight members of the group from the year before had moved on to become the senior company and I could take two three hour sessions for two Saturdays two weeks apart. They were: Participant P (Minazo, human servant to the Dekamon ambassador's concubine), Participant H (Murphy, the EECC pilot), Participant M (Toptee, the Dekamon's engineer), Participant Q (Amber, the pirate captain), Participant C (Hickley, the station's security guard), Participant I (Dr. Quinn, the EECC physician), Participant S (Handy, a pirate) and Participant L (Ford Prefect, aid to the Dekamon ambassador). According to the two directors of the company, this group of learners had become the core group of people who had grown and matured most during the 4 years of existence of the Y2Kids. Both directors had singled them out as being the ones with the most developed sense of critical understanding coupled with a sharp development of their performance or facilitation skills in drama. I was therefore very fortunate to have the opportunity to take the process one step further and not only complete the reflection process I originally planned for the sake of their own deepened understanding, but also this group would be able to supply me with articulate responses that could help me assess the success of the project. I wanted to use the opportunity to find out what they had retained from their previous experience, what they remembered and what they had learned that was lasting. I was also hoping to gain some insight into how the process had impacted on their own behaviour as individuals, how it had impacted on their immediate Y2Kids community and if it had any effect at all within their larger school or cultural communities. I still wanted to understand a little more clearly the relationship between individual and community regarding the critical interrogation of values.

The group had not solved their absenteeism problems yet. The first Session was attended by only four members and the second by six, but there were only two who attended both sessions. Still, each was fruitful in its own way. Clearly, part of my sacrifice would have to be my need for predictability. This need for fluidity was enhanced by the fact that I did not know what the participants would remember and how I would be able to use what they had retained for my research.

While much of the insight gained from this experience adds to the meanings and outcomes of the original programme, I had decided to keep it separate in its own chapter for two main reasons. The first is that I wanted to reflect on the impact that its chronological placement had on my own journey as a facilitator and researcher. It really did represent a kind of ‘resurrection’ for me in terms of a new found flexibility in my own facilitation, along with a certain relinquishing of control over the research outcomes. The second is that it brings a different, more positive perspective on the work. Where Chapter 6 focuses on how the planning and process could have been improved, the retelling of this follow-up encounter focuses more on the positive impact the process had and can have in future applications. With this positive perspective in mind, I will supply a summarised assessment of the project as a whole, i.e. main intervention plus longitudinal encounter, at the end of the chapter. Phillip Taylor (2000) provides three principles for assessing the success of a drama partnership in his book *The Drama Classroom*. I will use these as a guideline for the final assessment summary.

In keeping with my newfound flexibility and balanced sense of control, I have structured this account to reflect the flow of the events. It runs from plan through execution, reflection and analysis without rigorous separation of each phase or action as in previous chapters. Hence there are no subheadings apart from the headings indicating the two sessions. Enjoy the rollercoaster read.

From the outset, I anticipated that the nature of the follow up sessions would be reflective as they would refer back to the original process. With this in mind, I planned the sessions using my own suggestions of a structured reflection process as described in my analysis of the original workshop journey summarising it as shown in the table 7.1 on the next page. Taking into account what I wanted to know and what I expected from the group, I then translated the information into a lesson plan for the sessions. The following write up comes from my journal with some retrospective remarks added as I was writing this chapter.

Table 7.1

<b><i>The Phases of Reflection</i></b>	
<b>Seizing the Reward</b> – resolving the story: Do they get the guilty one? Do they retrieve the stolen goods?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an opportunity for characters to vent their emotions, using dramatic media such as movement, voice and rhythm to express the feelings they have.</li> <li>• Discuss how each character would like to end the story so that these feelings will be resolved.</li> </ul>
<b>The Road Back</b> - taking knowledge back to the real life experience first of the character and then of the participant. Such knowledge comes from understanding the link between the cause of the eruption (the deepest desire symbolised by the Hero's arch enemy) and the underlying value (the value object that is seized).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the causes of the feelings (of character merged with participant) linking them to primary needs. Categorise them into:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ causes arising from the story, that relate to the character's own feelings,</li> <li>○ causes that arise from the role-play and how it is working or not working,</li> <li>○ causes arising from a connection the feeling makes between the character and situations where the same emotion erupts in the participant's everyday life.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reflect on the underlying value (of character or participant) that is exposed by the behaviour, or by the strength of feeling.</li> </ul>
<b>The Resurrection</b> - the realisation that the personal need for e.g. respect should be sacrificed in order to gain the greater good e.g. respect for everyone else, including oneself. I expect these phases should first be played by the characters and then reflected upon by the participants, one at a time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relate this value to values that communicate the greater good for the community, those values that were originally identified such as tolerance and respect for all. Again this can be discussed in terms of :               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the character and the story,</li> <li>○ the respect the participants have to show each other in role-play and improvisation,</li> <li>○ in general, respect people have to show each other in everyday life and in the specific lives of participants in particular.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify potential situations that may ask the participant to make such a choice and play it out in improvisation/forum theatre.</li> <li>• Ask participants to try it in a real life situation over a period of time and to give a report back after that time.</li> </ul>
<b>Return with the Elixir</b> - the participant gains self-understanding and sees what the character has taught her.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report back on the experience and discuss difficulties.</li> <li>• What can the participant learn from the solutions her character came up with in the drama?</li> </ul>

## **7.1 Longitudinal SESSION 1 – August 28, 2004**

*I am expecting the group to remember very little, apart from the big climax. It will be very interesting to see if I am right. I expect this because this was the moment of maximum engagement. I am, however, curious to see if they have gained anything lasting from our reflection session afterwards, even though it was so incomplete in my eyes. They may even come up with things they have learnt that I have not foreseen. I must be very careful not to impose my expectations on them and close the doors to such other insights.*

*In addition, I want to see if it is at all possible to milk any further understanding out of the experience, even at this late stage. It may be a futile exercise, but I was so unfulfilled last time, that I really need to try, even at the risk of failing miserably. The problem is that the exercise may well be too cognitive once again, but at this point, I don't really see another way. I will, however, be open to steer the whole process in a completely different direction from the planning below, should the inspiration, or impetus from the group be there and I can see how to use it.*

### **Objectives:**

- *To ascertain how much the group remembers of the process one year later.*
- *To find out if they were able to apply any of the insight they gained about values in the context of their immediate Y2Kids community or in their respective cultural communities.*
- *To assess whether or not it will be useful to complete the reflection process at such a late stage.*

Focus	Activity (Play for them)	Strategy (Play for me)
<b>Remembering</b>	<p><u>Questioning in group:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the most prominent memory you have of the process? Why do you think it is that?</li> <li>• Can you remember how the story ended for your character?</li> <li>• What can you remember of what you have learnt about drama? And about life?</li> </ul> <p><u>Sharing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you share 3 events since the process when you remembered something about it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To confirm the expectation that they will remember the Ordeal the best because of the amount of emotion that it triggered.</li> <li>• To assess whether or not obvious long term learning had taken place in any form, in spite of the lack of time we had to unpack the experience.</li> </ul>
<b>Seizing the Reward - resolving the conflict</b>	<p><u>Question:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you remember how you felt? (Read your journal entries to help you.)</li> </ul> <p><u>Images and sound:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each take up a position that communicates the overriding feeling they recall.</li> <li>• A group member places them in relation to one another in a tableau. They evaluate and reshuffle if someone is not satisfied.</li> <li>• Each person finds their next movement and a corresponding sound.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rekindling the feelings.</li> <li>• Steering the process in a new direction to see what else can be learnt.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The facilitator touches them to see these and then allows them to create a moving sound-scape of feelings by repeating or intertwining the movements as they wish.</li> </ul> <p><u>Questioning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would your character have liked to do about the situation, if the others were not interfering? What would they have liked to gain/achieve?</li> </ul>	

<p><b>The Road Back</b></p>	<p><u>Group discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the primary needs of the character that would be satisfied by this outcome?</li> <li>• What are the values that underpin this need?</li> <li>• How much of yourself was also feeling those things?</li> <li>• Categorise the causes of the feelings into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ causes arising from the story, that relate to the character's own feelings,</li> <li>○ causes that arise from the role-play and how it is working or not working,</li> <li>○ causes that arise from a connection the feeling makes between the character and situations where the same emotion erupts in the participant's everyday life.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do you then have some of the same needs and values as the character?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking the feelings to underlying values of both characters and participants.</li> <li>• To show the link between the characters and their players.</li> <li>• To help players learn from characters.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Resurrection</b></p>	<p><u>Group discussion continues:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What about other values, values that communicate the greater good for the community, those values that were originally identified (read the list that was compiled during the previous process).</li> <li>• Apply them to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the character and the story,</li> <li>○ the respect the participants have to show each other in role-play and improvisation,</li> <li>○ the respect people have to show each other in everyday life in general, and in the specific lives of participants in particular.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What difficult choices does this conflict in values imply and how do we make them without being totally overwhelmed by our emotions?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting the group to rediscover the conflict of values that was so prominent during the process.</li> <li>• Making sure they understand the difficulty of making such choices when emotions are deep and real.</li> <li>• Finding strategies to make difficult choices in spite of overwhelming emotions without denying those feelings altogether.</li> </ul>

	<u>Forum Theatre:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify potential situations that may ask the participant to make such a choice.</li> <li>• Create short improvisations where the character/participant makes the wrong choice by responding badly to overwhelming emotions.</li> <li>• Let others then come and try to change it, without making the solution 'magical', or ignoring the depth of feeling.</li> <li>• Discuss the outcomes, are they realistic? Is it hard to do? What makes it hard? Etc.</li> </ul>	
<b>Homework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask participants to look for such volatile situations, in the news within their own circle of acquaintances or in their own personal lives, over the next two weeks. Can they see what the parties need to do to make the right choices? Were they themselves able to do so?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking participants to apply their understanding.</li> </ul>

*The session went well, except for the fact that I expected 8 participants, but only 4 showed up. This meant, however that I could spend more time on individuals and they were more open to sharing in such a small group.*

*I was wrong about most remembering the big climax. Only Participant S listed it as her primary memory. The others all remembered other things (Appendix 3). What was interesting, though, were the reasons why they remembered these things. This anticipation of mine was half correct: firstly, they remembered the things because of strong feelings associated with it. Secondly, however, they remembered the things that left the most vivid image or picture in their memories or some physical object reminded them of it. So, for instance, Participant S remembered the feeling of tension and anger during the peace talks and then the trial of the thieves and Participant P remembered the excitement and adventure of the actual LARP enactment. Participant Q, on the other hand, most clearly remembers the 'flux generator' because she thinks of it every time she sees a tap of that kind (the 'flux generator' that we played with was an old style tap that we used as a prop). We talked about this for a while remembering still more details and events from the game.*



When four more memories were added during the second session, my expectation about the climax being a primary memory for most was once again confirmed. Even here in the first session, I could link some memories to *The Ordeal*. The flux generator, for instance, was the pirates' valuable object and in this way has direct bearing on the central value struggle. My interview with Peter Mitchell (see Appendix 4), one of the directors of the company, also confirmed the impact the *Ordeal* had on the participants. Both the most negative and the most positive points of feedback he mentioned seemed to me to point to that experience. On the negative side, he said they did not understand what the experience had to do with drama because so much of their own personal concerns were evident. Things that were happening between them in their real context as a group, were now showing up in the drama. This was by virtue of their engagement in the conflict after the valuables were stolen. Some of the responses there also alluded to this overlapping of personal and role agendas (p.184). To me this was not negative at all, it was part of what I wanted to bring out.

The positive comment he mentions, having come from the group, also relates to this and points to how they had used the experience to learn about themselves and one another. He relates how they declared they would remember what had happened at the climax of the process and take steps to prevent it from happening again. They had seen how a conflict of interests can derail the original task and have learnt to address the symptoms before the outburst occurs.

...as we were rehearsing or as they were working on another project, it would just come out and they would say "Remember in Petro's thing where we did such and such and such and such, you said... and you did...and we thought about yadadadada...and now we are not going to let that happen again, so we are going to sort this out before we go on (Mitchell, 2006, Appendix 4)

I was thrilled with this story because I had not anticipated this kind of outcome. It was completely of their own making and showed how the process impacted on their immediate Y2Kids community and their interactions amongst each other. It proved to me that, while the experience was frustrating, it was most fruitful in its potential for affecting understanding and learning.

*I then asked them to identify the feelings they associate with those memories. I said they could divide it into characters feelings and their own feelings. Some used this distinction, while others did not think there was a difference (Appendix 3). From their answers, I could go straight to the needs hidden behind those feelings and the values attached to them. This was because some of them had already included these as part of their answer about feelings. Participant P said, for instance, that his character felt frustrated because she needed safety and had no way of creating it for herself, and so felt out of control. Participant M said she remembers her character wanting power and so the feelings of having information that others didn't was a good feeling and it made her also feel secure in her position as deceiver of the humans.*

*I then asked them if they thought that their characters (and themselves) had the same values as themselves and they all agreed. So from there we started talking about characters and participants as interchangeable. We did not even need to categorise the feelings and their causes formally, it happened by default. This more or less covered the Seizing of the Reward and The Road Back as described above. The only thing that was not so clear was what they perceived the reward to be, either as characters, or as participants. I decided to take this up immediately after the break.*

It was important to me that each character and then each participant would be able to clearly articulate their deepest desires. By naming the desire and recognising its power to influence and even dictate their behaviour, they prove that they have indeed seized the sword (Reward). I wanted to help them get this clarity through dramatic means, since talking did not provide it.

*Once they were back, I gave them the instructions for the moving tableau. We started with some of the negative feelings they wrote down. Most of them were in character, but Participant M said that her negative feelings fell outside the game, so she took up an abstracted position of insecurity. They added sounds and movements. I helped them to make it bigger and more abstract and to listen to each other as they*

*presented it as a moving, sounding tableau.<sup>1</sup> Then they each found a positive, and in most cases an opposite, feeling. We repeated the exercise, but extended the tableau so that they moved from the first into the second and back, in and out, in and out. It was quite a powerful exercise.*

The power was located in the authenticity of the emotions that were displayed. It was my intention to use the sound and movement to help participants give their emotions an artistic, dramatic form so they could experience the emotion as opposed to ‘putting it on’ (Bolton, 1986). It was in the transition between emotions that the dynamic and power lay. The replacement of the negative yearning with the positive achievement of satisfaction created a release of energy that was almost tangible. From the experience of the emotion, I wanted them to then voice the event that would create that for their character. I got it right at last! Instead of starting with the cognitive and trying to create drama from there, we could now use the emotion from the dramatic form to lead us to reflective engagement.

*I then asked them what their characters would have liked the outcome of their stories to have been. Here is what they said:*

Table 7.2

<i>Name</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Participant P	Minazo	If she could just get home and live a normal life and not to be a slave.
Participant Q	Amber	To feel like she had sold the flux generator to the right person.
Participant M	Toptee	To know everything. I want to sit there and just see what the problem is.
Participant H	Murphy	To sort out the conflict and for everyone to get along and to go forth and live life.

---

<sup>1</sup> The image on the title page is a still photograph (freeze frame or snap shot) taken from the video of this session. From left to right: Participant P, Participant M, Participant H, Participant Q.

*It seemed to be the general consensus that if only they got home, sold the FG, know everything or solved the conflict, they could all “go forth and live (a normal) life”. We went back to the black board, where I had made notes about the previous discussion on memories and feelings of characters. I started talking about their own lives. Did they also think that once certain things are in place they could really start living? They agreed that this was so. I asked them what would happen if they never reached that point, if it were always deferred? They responded with distress. I then asked them about their own missions as people and to use the values they have identified earlier and write down what they think their life quest is: what they are striving toward (see Appendix 3).*

*Table 7.3*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Quest</i>
Participant P	“From this, and what relates to my life, it seems when I am scared or need safety I will strive for that safety/control until I get it. ‘Cause once I have it I can live comfortably.”
Participant M	“My life quest is to find a secure place in (sic) regards to my family life, to be powerful over my own circumstances and to have a choice/a say in how my life plays itself out.”
Participant H	“My life quest is to form strong bonds with people and form strong relationships so that I can live a life of happiness. I want to succeed in what I do so I can live my life. I want to be secure in my life and also make sure that I live my life to the fullest. I also want to find a place where I can be myself completely.”
Participant Q	“From this it seems that my life quest is to control everything that forms a part of my life and in doing so be in control of my life.”

This clear articulation of personal desires, to me represents the seizing of the sword. They were now really facing their deepest desires, or Reward values, and they were ready to learn to manage these strong needs and to balance them with Elixir values. In retrospect, I think it would be advisable to concretise this acknowledgement with a symbolic object or act, as is suggested by the idea of ‘seizing a sword’. In future, I can, for instance, ask them each to find an object for themselves that would symbolise their core value, or draw a picture, or stick up the written version on a board. All we did here,

was talk some more, but we never felt frustrated by the talking or that it was leading nowhere as we did in the original process, so I had no cause to do anything differently to what we were doing, i.e. talking and discussing.

Something that worried me was the apparent belief that was being communicated that every person had one single quest and goal for their lives. This notion is highly essentialist and somewhat oversimplified. I needed them to see that life was less about a single person's journey and more about the network of journeys that impact upon one another. It was just as much about context and community as about individual desires. Fortunately the very communal activity of process drama was already one way of learning this. I was hoping to see evidence of this in the subsequent discussions where we would talk about the *Elixir values* and each individual's interpretation of these for their life story.

*We then talked about the general things that get in the way of those missions and they mentioned two things: people, especially ones in authority and those trying to get authority; and fate, related things that happen that you cannot control.*

*Next I took out the summary of the values (professed communal values - Elixir values) that they all wrote down in Questionnaire 1 during the process (Appendix 1). And I showed them how for each of them, their own values as identified in their quest statements, are placed above those values. That, if a conflict arises, people choose their own quest values above those they profess. I asked why they thought this was so. They said it was because of the strong emotions connected to them. I agreed. I then arranged the papers with all their personal mission statements on one level next to each other above the sheets with the general values they said they believed in, and asked them if they could see that really, viewed from the outside like this, everyone's set of personal values is equal to everyone else's. They agreed. They also saw that the values they claim to profess really only express those things they would like other people to do in order that they themselves may be free to achieve their own goals. Then they grasped the fact that general societal values are there precisely so that people can give each other the same space they want for themselves: Love your neighbour as yourself.*

Again I think that it would have been instructive if we could have concretised some of these communal values by an object or act that could signify our ‘magic boon’. It would have been possible then to compare the two symbols or symbolic acts. As it was, though, we had the summary of the questionnaire values to work from and the visual arrangement of all the physical sheets of paper, and that was enough for this group to understand it, although internalising the understanding was another matter. I liked the way in which the arrangement of the pages demonstrated the complexity and interrelatedness of people’s value systems with one another and the need to somehow navigate one’s own journey through it, or in cognisance of it.

*I was extremely pleased with this discussion. They understood so clearly. It was almost frightening. I was very impressed by how fast they caught all of it. One of them even remarked how amazing it was that you could learn all this about yourself by taking part in a drama process, and I glowed.*

*Next I asked them, how one then deals with situations where your emotions threaten to cloud your better judgement in situations where you really ought to listen to one of the Elixir, values. “Does all this mean you always have to control your emotions with your mind?” Participant M said it was a nice ideal, but she knows she is powerless against her own feelings. The bitter divorce of her parents had taught her that. So I asked them what they propose as the solution. They did not know and I admitted that neither did I. Would giving yourself time to gain a little distance be a wise thing to do? Thinking about it, using the insight they have now about their own desires may help, Participant P said. I agreed.*

*Then I asked them to create two short little improvisations that illustrated a conflict of values. They were not allowed to show any kind of resolution, though. Participant M and Participant Q showed a situation from Participant M’s life where her mother comes up to her and breaks the news that she was leaving her and her father. The scene ends with Participant M in emotional disarray. Participant P and Participant H showed a scene between a “druggie and a friend (Duggy and Fred). Fred is confronting Duggy about using drugs and wasting his life. Duggy maintains that Fred does not*

*understand. The conflict is clear and it ends with Fred losing his patience. I asked them to look out for more examples of such value conflicts over the next two weeks and to come up with various solutions for their interactions: how the characters should deal with their feelings. There was no time to run a Forum, and I thought they needed more time to think about possible ways of dealing with such situations.*

I liked that the first story came from one of the participants' lives. It could lead to the kind of moral debate I was looking for where people will be able to compare their own values with the communal values by exploring them in the context of a story and finding out how difficult it is to balance the one with the other in real life situations. I was not sure if the second story was that 'real' to those taking part in it, but they assured me that it was.

Overall I was satisfied that we had reached our main objectives. Not only did they remember the significant events, but they were able to recall enough of the feelings to warrant a continuation of the reflection process. I was anticipating the next session with great excitement, because I would get to the personal elixirs at last. I was beginning to see how they were finding individual and specific meanings and understandings for their life stories, something that was not that clear after the original process. Little did I know, that this need for elixirs that would satisfy my own description was precisely the thing I, myself had to sacrifice.

## **7.2 Longitudinal SESSION 2 – Sep 11, 2004**

*Since we only created very short scenes the last time, I am going to try and build them out a little so that their climaxes are clearer and the dilemma for the protagonist is obvious. Thereafter, I will ask about ideas of how the protagonist should deal with the massive emotions that are being awakened.*

### **Objectives:**

- *To clarify short scenes where value systems clash.*
- *To come up with practical solutions from their lives.*

Focus	Activity (Play for them)	Strategy (Play for me)
<b>Developing the scene</b>	<u>Scene work:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the protagonist?</li> <li>• Show us the extent of emotion that is building up as a result of the conflict.</li> <li>• Stop the scene at its climax.</li> </ul> <u>Developing the scene using Forum Theatre ideas:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What usually happens in a situation like this? Play it out in the scene.</li> <li>• What other solutions do you have? Again try it in the scene.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remembering the work done in the last session.</li> <li>• Building on it so that it can be used for Forum and then for analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>The Elixir</b>	<u>Discussion:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name the core value/desire each character is exhibiting.</li> <li>• Which of the solutions work the best and why?</li> <li>• How can we use what we have learnt in the future?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying the knowledge to real life situations.</li> </ul>

*Well, the whole plan proved useless once again. Only two of the previous week's participants were there, along with 4 others, all of whom attended the first process last year, but did not have the exploration and reflection we did two weeks ago. It was impossible to just carry out the plan. I tried to explain quickly what we were doing and asked the two who were up to date to summarise where we were at. However, the new one's did not quite get it that quickly and kept interrupting for explanation or to agree with and flesh out some point by including their own views. I realised soon that the material was important and engaging to them and so we ran the rest of the session as a group discussion. This amounted to a kind of repeat of the work already done, but with less dramatic work.*



At this point I had to give up my plan for the most part and sacrifice two things. Firstly, I had to let go of the need to end up with clearly defined and articulated personal elixirs. I knew there was no time to complete the death and resurrection and return without a clear seizing of the sword for all participants, and that in itself would take at least as long as the previous session. Along with this, however, I also gave up my insistence on dramatic means of exploration and decided only to pursue it if the group suggested it. I kept watching for hints or opportunities, but none arose. I do not know if this was good or bad, only that I felt it was necessary. I wanted to give up all control and truly let the group lead, forcing me to become flexible and fluid - hence, the spirit of this chapter. All I did was ask questions to guide the discussion, but even the questions themselves were prompted by what the participants had to say.

*The first question I asked the new group was what they remembered of the previous process and interestingly enough, they all immediately zoomed in on the crisis point and the conflict that ensued. This then confirmed my expectation of the first week that the majority would remember that. Of the 8 that I have now asked this question, 5 first jumped to that moment in the process. We then discussed several questions:*

**1. What caused the conflict?**

*They basically agreed that the cause was that everyone wanted to be heard and no one was willing to give others a chance. Everyone wanted the power/space to impact the situation.*

**2. Why were we unable to organise the conflict so that everyone could be heard?**

*They agreed that it was for two main reasons: people did not want to listen to each other and people were unable to separate their own feelings from that of their character, so it became personal and hard to just let it go.*

**3. What other situation in your everyday lives remind you of that kind of conflict?**

*Two stories took up most of the conversation. N4 said he likes to dress up with his friends in full Gothic gear (piercings, black clothing and black makeup) and go out at night. Yet, they are kicked out of most of the clubs in town because they look like 'trouble'. One of*

*his friends even got a speeding fine for over R1500 just because of the way he was dressed. People look at you funny. I pointed out to him that he would change his behaviour if he did not get a kick out of those funny looks and the reactions he gets and he agreed. I asked him what desire of his is fed by those reactions and he said quite simply: power and control.*

*Participant M is frustrated because her black friends and family say she is a 'coconut'<sup>2</sup> and her white friends treat her as black. When she is with family, she needs to conform to traditional black, Christian customs; when she is with black friends, she needs to conform to their expectation of her being a 'coconut' or she must try to fit in with them, and then, when she is at school, she is someone else again. Why can't she just be herself? I asked her to answer that question. She said it was easier to simply conform. Still, society should be more accepting, then she could just be herself. I asked her if that was her biggest desire: acceptance. She agreed.*

*We spent most of our time on this question, because every time someone told a story, someone else could identify with some aspect of it and they wanted to understand why society and individuals act the way they do in the stories. It was a very fruitful conversation in terms of them discovering things about themselves and others. However, I kept looking for a story we could dramatise, but it never presented itself clearly. They were far more interested in why things happen than in how they happen. I just let them talk, very conscious of their engagement in the discussion and not wanting to usurp that by forcing them to physicalise it.*

Throughout this section I kept hoping a drama would erupt, but it did not. In retrospect it would have been possible to use either *Participant L's* or *Participant C's* stories for a forum theatre exploration, but I did not want to interrupt the flow. By now I had all but completely let go of the idea of structuring the reflective process in a particular way. I was taking the path of least resistance. All in all I was very pleased with the two

---

<sup>2</sup> The term 'coconut' refers to someone who has a black skin, but acts as though they are white. It is a derogatory term used by other black people to refer to those that they feel are compromising their African heritage by conforming to western ways of doing and thinking.

stories, not only did they illustrate the multicultural nature of the participants real life contexts, but it also made for excellent material for talking about personal values versus other values that exist in society, whether these were connected to the constitution or not. I missed an opportunity here to implement some of the kinds of suggestions Sharon Grady (2000) makes in her book on *Drama and Diversity*. She suggests that one should actively draw attention to cultural conflicts and differences and interrogate such interactions. Both these stories were rich in possibilities for such an interrogation. This is especially true in the light of my own expressed desire to learn to understand the relationship between individual and cultural values more clearly. I could just as fruitfully have linked these stories to questions about how we view 'the other', drawing on our own space age drama where the aliens were depicted as dark, violent, aggressive and greedy while the humans were portrayed as far less stereotyped with aspects of good and evil. I could also have drawn attention to the obviously oppressive gender roles taken by alien women while the females of the EECC were far more empowered and balanced. Sitting with the participants in our circle talking, I knew when I let this opportunity pass. It was just before and as I asked *Participant C* to take her focus away from what she thinks society ought to do and focus on what her experience tells her about herself. I did this with the question: Is that your biggest desire: acceptance?

For the umpteenth time through out this study, I made the conscious choice to focus on values from the perspective of the individual and not from the perspective of social norms. This is in spite of my own understanding that really the two are intricately connected into a complex network of relationships. I do not see the worth of complaining about other people's reactions and responses, if one is still not aware of one's own within a particular situation. Whether my choice of focus has to do with my own western whiteness, is another question altogether, albeit a very real possibility. For now in the instance of this enquiry, I can only say that I accept that a further exploration of cultural values and how they hang together is necessary, for my own benefit as well as for participants', - but in a different study. As it was, we were in the last session of a very long and fruitful process and I wanted to keep the focus on what was already on the table

without beginning a different, complex investigation, I drew the discussion back to where it began with my next question.

***What, in your opinion then, is the relationship between The Ordeal in our story and the ordeals we have now talked about that you face in real life?***

*This discussion took the longest. It was interesting how they kept talking about the relationship between role and themselves. There were two main opinions. Firstly, that just like in the drama, people play different roles depending on their contexts. Yet, in all such circumstances one ends up being oneself when one's core values are threatened. The other opinion was that people who cannot separate their characters from themselves were unable to just play the game and leave it behind once it was finished. We agreed that, in fact, such people were the ones who felt that their core values were threatened and that stepping away from the game would not remedy this. While those who were able to disconnect did so with ease because in so doing their core values would be adhered to, e.g. the core value of wanting peace and no conflict, would be served by seeing the game as just a game that can be left behind and relationships restored. However, if the core value of needing respect was threatened, ending the game could not fix it if the participant still felt disrespected by their friends. Therefore, even the act of switching roles, in drama or in real life, is dictated by the core value. This interested them and they realised how we are controlled by our deepest desires as opposed to us controlling them. They asked how one should handle such emotional situations then? I answered that this was probably the core question. I asked for suggestions, but they did not know. We ended, therefore, at the same place as the previous week and indeed the same place as where we ended the first process.*

In a final desperate attempt to extract an elixir for them to take to their real lives, whether or not it could be connected to a communal value, I asked the last question:

***4. In a nutshell, what have you gained from today's discussion?***

*Here are their answers as quoted from the video of Longitudinal Session 2, 2004:*

Table 7.4

<i>Name</i>	<i>Quest</i>
Participant Q	“I now recognise my core emotions and core feelings and I can sort of (sic) and I can now step back from that when conflict arises and think about others for a change.”
Participant P	“I have learnt a lot about function in society to achieve who I am and to find out who I am and how to morph, basically.”
Participant I	“I need to know my core something. I know it is there now.”
Participant F	“Just like C2, I need to find out, you know, what my core value is and understand my way of thinking.” (She then describes how that would help her to switch roles from school to home and back, without carrying emotional baggage from one to the other.)
Participant C	“I just want people to like me for who I am.”
Participant L	“I now have a heightened awareness of everything that goes on in and out of society.”

Of the six, Participant Q is the only one who seems to have connected her understanding to a general communal value: thinking about others for a change. Participant P, Participant C and Participant L had all managed to spell out their Reward values and doing so seized their swords: Participant P the week before, Participant L in his story earlier and Participant C here in her last statement. Participant P and Participant L both express an understanding of society, but have not yet articulated a corresponding value. Participant I and Participant H understand the need for finding theirs, now that they know it is there, but they have yet to verbalise them. Still, the insights, as articulated above, show that they all have at least something with which to enrich their lives and start a process of self awareness. They all had gained a boon of some description, even though it does not take the form I envisioned. All of them wanted more as we broke up the discussion, but we were over time already. The final paragraph of my journal summed up what the longitudinal study had shown:

*The discussion was very interesting and pointed to the same conclusion as the one I reached at the end of the previous process. The process was highly successful in*

*creating a values conflict where higher values came into conflict with personal desires. Such a climax to a story creates a very rich experience for reflection and analysis in order for people to gain insight into themselves because of the level of identification with their characters. Yet, it needs a structured and just as intensive dramatic process to extract these meanings and apply them to real life. Even now the latter aim was still not completely satisfied.*

I still dream of a complete process where the Elixirs get as much attention as the Rewards. I wanted this second group to get the opportunity to see the complexity of value systems in the way in which the first four were able to see it with the arrangement of papers on the same level. Now they were left with the belief that they are about only one thing, one core value that drives their actions and emotions as opposed to a network of values that hang together to make up a complex self. This is what the elixir values were supposed to do: complicate and balance the picture. Yet, what they had was a snapshot, one piece of the puzzle, one flash of understanding that could motivate further critical thinking and interrogation, and that after all, is a very important objective to have reached. In fact, a messy outcome, as O'Toole (1992) and others suggest, can even be desirable for the very reason that it leaves room for further interrogation. For this particular journey I had to respect the participants for what they could give me and look carefully at the elixir, or perhaps complex network of elixirs and meanings, that *I* was taking home myself.

### **7.3 Assessment summary for the project as a whole**

In an attempt to draw the two phases of the project together, focussing on its achievements, I here provide an assessment of the learner-teacher partnership in achieving three main objectives as identified by Phillip Taylor (2000) in his book *The Drama Classroom*. The aim here is not to provide a detailed analysis or list of the project's outcomes, but to focus on the whole project and its main characteristics for an overall picture of its accomplishments. I also try to incorporate here not just the intended outcomes of my initial planning, but the unofficial meanings that came to the fore in my

interviews with the directors of the Y2Kids Youth Theatre Company. According to Taylor, successful partnerships:

- activate teachers and students to believe in their own worth,
- enable participants to reflect on the question, What is happening now?
- transform people's understanding of their world.

Taylor asserts that the most important aspect of a partnership that makes the participants feel their worth is when all participants' ideas are being acknowledged and implemented in the project. Evidence of how this was true for this study, is in the way in which I took great care in adapting the process to the needs of the participants. Their needs and values shaped the drama from the outset and it was their own theft of the valuables that drove the action to a climax. However, even more than the impact their responses had on the drama, it was evident all along that they were also teaching me about facilitation, about drama and about life. Like Taylor, I find myself thinking of Paulo Freire's concept of the dialogue between teacher and student where:

...the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teacher. The teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who, in their turn, while being taught, also teach. (Freire, 1970: 67)

For participants the process provided them with the confidence in their own critical ability and their own attempts to make sense of themselves, their fellow journeymen and their worlds. This is clear from the final responses of participants in both the original and the longitudinal study, but more so for those in the latter. As remarked on by both directors, this was the group that was already predisposed to critical thinking and the process, validated and strengthened their confidence. For me, the process did exactly the same: it gave me confidence to try and retry to make it work, but also to reflect, analyse and critically interrogate my own values and my own praxis which flows from these.

The clearest illustration of how participants were able to come to the point of reflecting on the question "What is happening now?" is the story that co-director Peter Mitchell related at the end of our interview as quoted earlier in this chapter. The

significance of the story is not so much in its relationship to the Ordeal of our drama, but in the way it empowered the participants to reflect on events in their real life story. Michell (Appendix 4) explains how they needed no structured intervention for reflecting upon conflicts that occurred among them during rehearsals after the project's completion. Taylor distinguishes the question, "What is happening now?" from the question, "What will happen next?" The first focuses on all the values, beliefs and factors that are influencing the action at the moment, while the second draws attention only to the content and events of the unfolding drama, be it fictional or real life drama. Instead of focussing on what should happen next, the Y2Kids would stop and ask, "What is happening now?" They would look at how it relates to what happened with the Meeting at Maverick 436, and try to address the conflict before they continued to what should happen next. For me, the critical analysis of the project, especially of The Ordeal and its confusion and frustration had greatly enriched my own practice and provided me with a number of tools for future processes to arrest the attention of the group and ask, "What is happening now?" Moreover, it taught me to stick with the mess until it is understood in one way or another, regardless of its difficulty, its emotional intensity or its chaotic potential.

As for the transformation in understanding the project instigated, there are numerous examples littered throughout. I will summarise by looking at the three spheres of impact I had identified earlier: individual, immediate Y2Kids community and wider cultural communities. On individual levels, every participant had some new understanding that he or she took from the project as summarised in tables 6.5 and 7.4. Yet I am sure there are ways in which their understanding of themselves had changed that was not reflected anywhere in this study, simply because there are so many things they could have learned that I had never asked them about, or that they had not committed to words to anyone else, or if they had, I did not ask the right people to get those responses. There would, in other words, be a myriad of unofficial personal meanings that participants had taken from the process that were not made evident through this research process. Evidence of how their understanding of their immediate Y2Kids community transformed was given by Mitchell, not only as he related how their interactions with one



another had been influenced by the increased understanding of conflict, but also by how they had said to him in so many words that they understand each other so much better after the project (Appendix 4). Apart from the few who had mentioned that their understanding of society had changed after the final discussion (Table 7.4), Baxter (Appendix 4) pointed to another outcome which I was unaware of. She mentioned how they had told her that their view of popular images, or role-models, had changed. I expect this was on account of how they learned to understand the Hero's Journey and use it as a tool for analysing media images and narratives. This was another unofficial meaning I knew was potentially there, but which I did not focus on explicitly.

I expect, though, that the most profound transformation occurred in my own understanding of myself, my praxis as facilitator and researcher, of my field of study, and of my world. Both Taylor (2000) and Grady (2000) assert that it is precisely this self-reflectivity of the drama practitioner that is the most fruitful. It is when teachers confront themselves that they, their practice and their students stand to gain the most. Perhaps this is also the most important contribution of this study: the way in which it tracks one facilitator-researcher's journey of discovery, learning and transformation. The following chapter attempts to recap the most important episodes of this journey.