A Study on the Relationship and Program Development Between Schools and Theatre for Young Audiences

By

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Abstract

Arts organizations outside of schools are expanding their roles in arts education. This is due in part to the cuts and constraints in arts education that many schools face. This research study gives insight into how a Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) company is contributing to school programming and theatre education in their communities. The main research question is: How do different adult stakeholders in the context of TYA school programming impact student experience with professional theatre? The research was conducted with a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews. The programming studied establishes that through the collaborative efforts of a TYA educational department and school educators there is high potential for a positive relationship and successful outcomes for both the schools and the theatre company.

Key Words: Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA), theatre education, school programming
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I dedicate this research to all the educators who spark student interest in theatre. It makes a difference, thank you.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research in Context

“Some of you may be familiar with the characters you are about to see and you may feel the urge to help them tell their stories. That will be fine, because this is a ‘non-shushing’ show” (Gleave, 2014). These are some of the first words children hear when they see a show by Mermaid Theatre. Before the show even begins, the audience is told that they can be expressive and that they are in a welcoming space: a theatre.

Do you remember your first theatre experience? I clearly recall mine. I was five-years-old, sitting cross-legged in a black box theatre in Ottawa. I remember the smell of the grey carpet and the vastness of the empty dark space surrounding me. Never before had I been in such an odd place, and I was concerned that the lights above me seemed very heavy. I do not remember what the show was about, just the space and that intense feeling of excitement and anticipation of what was to come of this experience. Many children like myself are brought to plays by their schools when they are young, and for many that is their introduction to live professional theatre.

Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) is a specific type of theatre dedicated to creating plays for children and young people. For countless young people their first and sometimes only familiarity with theatre is when they see a play with their class. Schools and TYA companies work together in order provide young people with access to and an understanding of live theatre.

This research focuses on one TYA company in Toronto (referred to as ‘The Theatre’) and, specifically, the programming it does with schools. The Theatre was established in 1966. It is the oldest not-for profit theatre in Toronto, celebrating its 50th
season in 2015/6. Like all theatre companies in Canada, The Theatre is focused on sustaining a vibrant audience and growing its reach. The Education and Participation Department at The Theatre introduced a long-term program initiative in 2011 to work with schools. I will refer to this initiative as ‘The Program’.

The Program aims to establish deeper relationships with schools attending plays. The Program is a multi-year partnership with select schools centered on the experience of attending live, professional theatre. The Theatre creates a tailored program for each school which increases school attendance at The Theatre and enrichment for both students and teachers. In turn, The Theatre benefits by having a committed group of schools to work with annually and the opportunity to build stronger relationships with those schools.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study was to learn about the various adult stakeholders’ experiences with The Program developed by The Theatre. While exploring and learning about this program, I looked closely at the impressions both teachers and principals have of The Program. I also interviewed various staff members from The Theatre who worked on the development of The Program and are involved in its management.

This research is timely and has significance in part due to the place of the arts currently in education in Ontario. The arts curriculum is often pushed aside in schools due to overwhelming curricular requirements and the fact that teachers are not trained properly or capable of teaching students visual art, music, drama and dance (Johanson & Glow, 2011). Doyle (1993) noted that some educators have a perspective that the “arts
are usually viewed as enrichment activities and they are the first to be excluded when national educational paranoia calls us back to basics” (p. 45).

A negative attitude to the arts and specifically theatre can be endemic amongst teachers and schools and has the power to destroy the opportunities that theatre can bring to students. Davis (1981) reminds us of the power of theatre and how similar it is to simply being a child. Davis (1981) stresses “the exercise of the imagination is much the same in the child’s creation of play and in the creation of the theatre. Even the same means and conventions are used” (p. 198). Furthermore, research has shown that lifelong engagement in the arts is dependent on early exposure to the arts (McCarthy, 2004).

Using theatre is of value to educators and has the ability to help students in many ways. For instance, educators claim that students involved in theatre over time develop intellectually and emotionally because it stimulates “logical and intuitive thinking, personalizes knowledge, and yields aesthetic pleasure” (Doyle, 1993, p. 51). In addition, it helps students develop a social awareness and empathy (Doyle, 1993).

While researching TYA, theatre education and the benefits of theatre for children, I found much of the theory-based resources originate from the United Kingdom. Studies of TYA in Canada only began in the early 1980s (Davis, 1981). Fortunately, there are scholars at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), such as Gallagher (2003) and Swartz (2003), as well as scholars from the Toronto region including Adamson (2011) and MacLauchlan (2009) whose extensive research on theatre education in Toronto and their findings are of utmost significance for my local research.

One way that theatre is initiated in schools is through professional theatre created specifically for youth. TYA is a growing form of theatre in Canada and lives within two
worlds - theatre and education (Davis, 1981). Theatres working with schools need strong advocacy from an educational and artistic standpoint. From my research and discussions with these scholars and educators working in the theatre community, the gap existing in the research is how TYA companies are strengthening their relationships with schools.

1.2 Research Questions

The opportunity to work with a local TYA company led me to research its multi-year programming with schools. My key research question for this study is: How do different adult stakeholders in the context of The Theatre’s Program impact student experience with professional theatre? To support that leading question, I also present these sub-questions: What experiences have educators had with being in The Program? In what ways does The Program position teachers as leaders? What types of outcomes have been observed in the The Program?

In order to pursue answers and findings to these questions the present study employs a qualitative case study method. It is a within-site study (Creswell, 2013) focusing on the work of The Theatre’s Program with a select number of schools in the Toronto area.

I have an intrinsic interest in this specific school program and how it works within the school model (Stake, 1995) because of my involvement in both theatre and education. My research includes multiple sources of data including observations gathered at live performances, as well as semi-structured interviews and scholarly sources. Due to the variety of sources it provides “thick description” (Merriam, 1988) of how The Program functions. My objective is to take a holistic look at this specific case study by including various stakeholders who contribute to the theatre experience for students.
1.3 Positionality of the Researcher

I always explain to people that theatre runs in my veins. As an active child I needed many outlets for my energy. I found theatre to be the most effective avenue for quenching my need for creativity while being active and involved with others. For a long time, it felt like the only thing I was actually good at and what made me stand out from my peers was performing in theatre. I studied in drama camps and performed in my first professional production when I was eleven years old. In my middle school years I began taking extracurricular classes because no drama taught in my school. I then went to Canterbury High School in Ottawa specifically for its theatre program. I completed my high school International Baccalaureate degree with a higher level credit in theatre, and then majored in it at Dalhousie University, performing in professional plays and films.

When I moved to Cairo, Egypt, I was able to join an English-speaking theatre company and perform in plays there. I had the opportunity to direct a children’s play and see first-hand the positive effects of TYA. Working as an elementary school teacher in Cairo, I often integrated drama into my classroom. It was a way for my students to deepen their understanding of various subjects, and more importantly to gain confidence and have fun while learning. Theatre has always been something I could rely on and has led me to new experiences that I otherwise would have never considered. The world of theatre has always been an enjoyable, creative and accepting environment for me to grow in. I hope to extend this love and passion for theatre to students in the future.

The underlying approach that I took in this study is a social constructivist approach, an understanding and clear articulation of the fact that my beliefs and experiences inform my research findings. I perceive social constructivism as similar to
audience members’ participation in a play; although the entire audience is seeing the same play, each individual is taking a different message and understanding from it. We all perceive a play in different ways and therefore the reality of the play is subjective. Similarly, this research is co-constructed between the researcher and the participants and will be shaped by individual experiences (Creswell, 2011). I find the social constructivism approach to be inclusive of my participants and takes their individual experiences into account. I include several different kinds of stakeholders in this research, including teachers, principals, education managers and artist educators because there are many ways in which social/theatre culture is constructed (Willing, 2008).

1.4 Overview

This paper is organized into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction and purpose of the study, the research question and why I chose TYA as my topic of study. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on the topic of TYA’s role and involvement with education. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and a description of how I conducted this case study using the information from my sample participants and data collection instruments. Chapter 4 goes deeper into the study and identifies the findings and describes the data as it addresses the research questions. Chapter 5 includes the implications and recommendations based on the study. References and a list of appendices follow at the end.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Research into TYA is for the type of scholar “…whose interest lies at a uniquely rich cusp of art and pedagogy, here indeed exists a robust field of enquiry” (MacLauchlan, 2009, p. 125). While TYA has existed in Canada for half a century, the field itself is “fraught with myths and axioms perpetuated through history in various cultural and sociological contexts” (van de Water, 2011, p. 277). Only in the last 40 years has TYA coalesced into a loosely unified field (Bedard, 2011). While these performances take place and companies celebrate milestones, children’s perceptions of theatre and their audience experiences have scarcely been investigated. (Reason, 2010). We need much more research to be done on TYA in Canada.

In the current literature, there is room for expansion and further development of ideas. One of the main debates within the field is the question of whether it can or should be a theatre form with both educational and artistic qualities. The intersection of arts and education is fascinating as it seeks to find a balance within TYA.

In this chapter I discuss TYA’s role in education, the educational outreach programs, the teacher’s role within TYA and finally, benefits to students through TYA and programming. I utilize the theoretical work of several scholars and professionals as well as case and ethnographic studies researching the work between schools and TYA companies in order to give a well-rounded discussion on this subject. Finally, I discuss how my research fits into the current literature and where I hope to contribute to the discussion.
2.1 TYA’s Role in Education

Throughout the literature, the purpose and role of TYA is disputed. Perhaps it is difficult to define because, as Adamson (2011) explains, drama in the world of education plays several roles. For instance, it is not always acknowledged as being, “academically legitimate, socially and pedagogically powerful” even though it does produce a combination of those qualities (Adamson, 2011, p. 26).

Scholars are not in agreement in terms of TYA’s purpose within the world of education. Adamson (2011), Omasta (2009) and Jackson (2005) view educational aspects of TYA as contributing factors to the art form. Omasta (2009) states that TYA companies serve as pedagogues because they are teaching children about theatre and aesthetics. Further, they are contributing to children’s social development and incorporating links to the curricula (Omasta, 2009). Jackson (2005) adds that in order for theatre to educate the aesthetics needs to be in place to entertain, they are “interdependent” (p. 106).

While these scholars cited above see TYA as a multifaceted form of theatre that involves a combination of education, theatre and aesthetics, other scholars are cautionary about the harm of the educational side becoming a dominant factor of TYA. More specifically, they worry about the impact of educational institutions’ involvement in TYA. Ardal (2003) van de Water (2011) and Ewing et al. (2014), argue that schools tend to dominate and make theatres conform to their standards. One concern is the involvement with educational institutions includes teachers, other adult stakeholder, who bring with them additional expectations (Ewing et al., 2014). Certain TYA companies have developed completely into a “pedagogical tool” using aesthetic representation as a means rather than an end (van de Water, 2011, p. 280). Adamson (2011) counters by
raising the point that the belief education hinders TYA creates a “narrow and rather limiting conception of what constitutes education” (p. 26).

Interestingly, the term “pedagogical tool” is deemed detrimental by to van de Water (2011), while the scholars Gallagher and Service (2010) use the term as a positive asset to TYA. According to them, TYA can be seen as a “pedagogical tool” when it is used as a “new way of communicating” with students (Gallagher & Service, 2010, p. 248).

Throughout analysis and various viewpoints of the role of TYA, its purpose and how it is used, it is important not to perceive the discussion as binary. Bedard (2003) and Johanson and Glow (2011), explain that this viewpoint oversimplifies the discourse – the art versus education binary. What the discourse in the literature raises is how TYA works within theatre companies and schools, two different institutions, and how this relationship is constantly being advanced and negotiated. This development will be discussed in the next section in terms of educational outreach departments in TYA companies.

2.2 Educational Departments in TYA

Numerous arts organizations are expanding their education outreach programs and departments. There are several factors for that expansion, it is in part due to the cuts and constraints in arts education that many schools face. Also, several funding opportunities for arts organizations are dependent on the inclusion of educational programming. In Ontario, The Ontario Arts Council notes the educational services that arts organizations offer as “an important funding component” (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 117). This steers arts organizations in the direction of supporting arts education in their
mandates in order to receive support and funding. Funding organizations play a strong role in what types of programming are emphasized.

Therefore, arts organizations, outside of schools, are now expanding their roles to better serve children in arts education. Scholars such as Greene, Hitt, Kraybill and Bogulski (2015), and Bedard (2003), have researched the work of organizations, such as TYA companies, in expanding their educational responsibilities. TYA companies have a role in developing educational outcomes (Greene et al., 2015), and meeting important arts education needs (Bedard, 2003).

Therefore, in response to the decreased support and funding in schools (People for Education, 2004) and the increased focus by arts funding organizations there has been significant growth in educational outreach programming. One of the positive outcomes of these departments expanding has been the Performing Arts Organization Network for Education (PAONE). PAONE was founded in 1992 when 8 professional arts educators came together to discusses their work and challenges they face when establishing education programming in their arts organization (PAONE, 2011). It is now a collection of 45 arts companies that support professional arts experiences, making them accessible and integrated into the lives of young people (PAONE, 2011). This expanding network is a result of the arts companies’ increased educational programming.

While these companies are developing their educational departments with a primary goal of involving students in the arts, there is also a cautionary aspect to this development. MacLauchlan (2009) fears that this work done outside of schools by TYA companies may run the risk of “masking and/or exacerbating existing arts education problems in Ontario” (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 123). This point adds to the already multi-
faceted discussion of TYA and schools because while in some aspects these companies are contributing wonderful opportunities they are also taking on, in McLauchlan’s opinion, the responsibilities of schools.

2.3 TYA Educational Outreach with Schools

In response to the expansion of education departments in TYA companies there are now more outreach initiatives with schools. The relationship between TYA companies and schools is not widely discussed amongst scholars. Bedard (2003) explains how TYA companies find schools a “necessary audience” (p. 97). This relevant in Ontario where 90% of TYA patrons are from schools (McLauchlan, 2009). This relationship between theatre and schools, however, is at times described as not being egalitarian between the two parties. Omasta (2009) stresses that there needs to be a renegotiation so that voices and needs are equally heard (p. 105). This section discusses the challenges and benefits of TYA programs working with schools.

Based on the opinion of van de Water (2011), an over-reliance on school audiences means that TYA companies are forced to “conform to school ideologies and notions of appropriateness if they want to keep these audiences and forge any kind of partnerships with educational institutions” (p. 279). By adding additional criteria from the schools it becomes a struggle to concentrate on the artistic merit of theatre (Schonmann in Reason, 2010, p. 13).

On the other hand, McLauchlan’s (2009) study conducted on TYA companies in the Toronto region stated that their primary focus is still “aesthetic excellence” (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 122). McLauchlan’s (2009) finding is consistent with The Performing Arts Education Overview (2011) findings which were: ensuring exposure to
the arts, building audiences for the future and community building. This echoes what Jackson (2005) stated about how aesthetics and the educational needs of TYA are “interdependent” and therefore are still the main focus of theatre makers (p. 106). This contradicts van de Water (2011) who cautions against the control teachers/schools have on the companies and shows how it is not the case for all. In order for the educational teachings to be effective they must be based on strong aesthetics, which many TYA companies continue to make a priority.

There continue to be challenges and successes in the relationships of TYA companies and schools. Notable challenges are: creating reliable links of communication with educators, gaining funding for education resources, and justifying TYA within the full curriculum (McLauchlan, 2009).

The successes that are discussed in the literature are based on work done by Adamson (2011) on Young People’s Theatre (YPT) in Toronto. YPT became the first professional TYA company in Canada with a permanent playhouse (Doolittle, 1979). Many aspects of their work with schools in the community have been a success, for instance, YPT works hard at providing resources and workshops for teachers in order that they can better serve their students (Adamson, 2011).

Another important component to how YPT builds strong relationships with teachers is how they “integrate educative values and practices in ways that go beyond simple curriculum connections so as to both extend and interrupt school pedagogy (Adamson, 2011, p. 116).

Adamson (2011) states that teachers are aware of YPT’s “non school formatted style of learning” (p. 118). As YPT’s Artistic Director, Allen MacInnis, explains “… we can’t
just have singular kind of learning outcomes. That’s not our role. We have to open it up and they [children] find some their own” (Adamson, 2011, p. 118).

By Including TYA outreach programming in schools it involves different artists working with students for instance, Artist Educators. Key benefits of including Artists Educators as stated by McLauchlan (2009) are: teachers learning and treating Artist Educator instruction as professional development, students learned specific arts-related skills and vocabulary, high-level of student engagement, students were involved in communication, expression, collaboration, concentration, risk-taking and self awareness, and teachers learned more about their students through their participation.

Currently in Ontario there are several positive outreach initiatives by TYA companies. As a continuation of this discussion, the following sections are about teachers’ roles in TYA and the benefits for students when involved in TYA.

2.4 Teacher Involvement in TYA

Teachers are important in linking TYA outreach initiatives to their main audience members: children. This section discusses the lack of support teachers have in their training for arts education and their potential role when working with TYA companies.

Since 1998, the Ontario Ministry of Education mandated drama education for Grades 1-8. Problematically, the numbers of arts specialists/teachers/consultants in schools have decreased. Not only are the teachers in schools not supported by the school, but pre-service teachers have limited opportunities to study drama (McLauchlan, 2009). Outreach coordinators and arts education administrators in McLauchlan’s study expressed “deep empathy for teachers who lack knowledge about the basics of drama education” (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 122).
Teachers can experience anxiety when faced with teaching drama. In a national survey done in 2005, “97.5% of teachers felt that the arts are important but only 41% implement arts activities in their classroom” (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 123). The main reason given for less than half of these teachers implementing any arts activities in their class is a feeling of being ill-equipped and lacking knowledge and the skills in the subject matter (McLauchlan, 2009).

Similar to the ways in which TYA education outreach programs are filling a void in arts education in schools, they are also supplementing and supporting teachers who do not feel prepared to teach a mandatory component of the Ontario curriculum (Reason, 2010). Therefore, McLauchlan (2009) argues that TYA companies’ main target audiences are teachers because they have the ability to gain professional development while they bring student audiences to TYA performances (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 116).

In turn, TYA outreach departments show teachers how TYA fits into the curriculum (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 119). McLauchlan discovered within their research that study guides are the most frequently created type of resource (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 119). These study guides are highly valued because they can “direct class attention to universal abstract themes and provoke discussion beyond the regular school curriculum” (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 125). The outreach departments stated that by finding connections to curriculum and providing teacher resources and workshops they are “stressing the utilitarian benefits of the art form as an instructional aid” (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 120). This shows a need within schools for the support of theatres to fulfill their curriculum expectations. For teachers wanting to engage with theatre companies both institutions can
greatly benefit from this collaboration (Ewing et al., 2014). Teachers are “conduits”
through which many children learn about theatre (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 116).

The role teachers have and the impact they have on students is not just positive
and McLauchlan (2009) discusses aspects of a teacher’s role that could be harmful. One
cautory point is that by involving teachers they become the adult mediators of
children’s theatre experiences (McLauchlan, 2009). Teachers can also distort student’s
meaning-making experiences as audience members with their personal perceptions and
attitudes (McLauchlan, 2009, p. 116). However, McLauchlan (2009) concludes by stating
that in practical terms and based on the examples they explored in Ontario during their
research TYA organizations and teachers “potentially benefits everyone involved” (p.
125). Further, Adamson (2011) describes teachers as being “courageous to make the
choice to include field trips in their educational repertoire” (p. 89).

2.5 Student Benefits from TYA and Education Outreach Programming

When discussing student benefits and gains it is important to point out how there
are challenges to assessing outcomes to students’ experiences with drama. It can be a
“very imprecise art form itself” (Gallagher, 2010, p. 9). Gallagher (2010) explains it well
when suggesting that “we engage dramatically through our imagination; an accurate
measure of the imagination, however, is beyond our reach” (Gallagher, 2010, p. 9). While
students are generally in large groups, experiencing theatre is also a “deeply individual
experience” (Gallagher, 2010, p. 9).

Gallagher (2010) cautions arts scholars who make claims about the outcomes
children have with theatre because those claims can be impeding on their experience.
Which means, at times it is tempting for arts scholars to make claims about how children
benefit from drama because generally the arts are in a position of defense (Gallagher, 2010).

While Gallagher (2010) focuses on overall challenges of assessing outcomes of students’ experience with drama, there are scholars who still state findings about the benefits of theatre for children and students. For instance, in Greene et al.’s (2015) research the data shows that students gain new knowledge and academic content from theatre (Greene et al., 2015). Also, the students’ tolerance increases or develops because they are exposed to different cultures and acknowledge others’ peoples’ feelings and thoughts (Greene et al., 2015).

Work by Adamson (2011) discusses the benefits for students as a “mutually constructed learning opportunity” (p. 123). For example, when students see the same play, they can all contribute to the discussion and experience (Adamson, 2011). When students participate in TYA and its programming, it can “elicit reflection, initiate discussion and encourage new insights…” (p. 170). Another common element to TYA performances are a Question and Answer session. These give students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge about the play and to ask some of their unanswered questions (Adamson, 2011).

2.6 Choice of Space

Another reason why teachers bring their students to TYA is the experiential learning opportunities offered (Adamson, 2011). Teachers noted the importance of students leaving their school environment and having a “continuous learning process that occurs both inside and outside the school” (Adamson, 2011, p. 90).
For professional practitioners like Ardal (2003) and scholars like Doyle (1993) removing students from their school environment should bring them into another realm instead of their school life following them. Ardal (2003) argues that when companies come to schools they are guests within the “education world” (p. 192) while Doyle (1993) says the plays “replicate the social order” inside the school environment (p. 46). For example, fairytale reenactments are a staple of touring companies which perform in schools because they are well known to schools and comply with their norms. It is important to note the difference between students going to a theatre and a theatre company coming to them. The choice of space makes a difference to the learning outcomes and aesthetic experience for the students.

2.7 Conclusion

This discussion surrounding the many roles that TYA plays is complex but it is not intended to create a “binary opposition between educationalists and artists” as that would simplify the depth of this matter (Johanson & Glow, 2011, p. 69). What the discourse in the literature raises is how TYA works within theatre companies and schools and how they work together.

This literature review looked specifically at TYA’s work with educational institutions and how its role is growing given the underfunding and lack of support of arts education currently in schools. It also helps support teachers who are ill-equipped to instruct and include drama education in their teaching. While there are challenges in maintaining a balanced relationship with TYA education departments and schools the many benefits far surpass the struggles. What teachers and students gain from experiencing live theatre and the additional outreach support is key to their theatre
education. As stated in the The Performing Arts Education Overview (2011) there is no baseline knowledge of how educational programming contributes to arts education in Toronto other than their work. More work needs to be done on how practically they are working together and what the next steps need to be in developing programming to benefit and support everyone.
Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the research methodology of my project. I begin by reviewing the general approach, procedures and data collection instruments, before elaborating more specifically on participant sampling and recruitment. I explain data analysis procedures and review the ethical considerations pertinent to my study. I then identify a range of methodological limitations and strengths. I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of the key methodological approaches and my rationale for their use, given the research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

This research study was conducted using a qualitative approach involving a literature review and semi-structured interviews with teachers, principals and The Theatre staff members. The literature review I conducted included discussing the notable research in the field of TYA specifically in Canada. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the findings from the literature review are that TYA is a fascinating form of theatre given that it lives in the world of both the arts and education. The literature review looked specifically at what role TYA plays in education and how it can possibly affect educational outreach programs, teachers and students.

The value of conducting this research as a qualitative study is that I spoke directly to teachers for in-depth personal opinions on my research topic. Scholars, such as Stake (1995), discuss the value in qualitative research and how the researcher has a sincere interest in the subject matter and the people involved. Most importantly, that the researcher is willing to “put aside many presumptions while [they] learn” (Stake, 1995, p.
1. When conducting qualitative research the researcher must spend time in the field making observations and then synthesize their new knowledge (Stake, 1995). The researcher is aware of their biases and knows that the findings are never objective.

### 3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection in the study was the semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity to hear about participants' lived experiences (Creswell 2007). The semi-structured format allows for the interviewer to design and plan an interview that attends to the research focus and questions, while leaving room for participants to elaborate and possibly redirect attention to areas previously unforeseen by the interviewer.

There is great value in performing semi-structured or ‘unstructured’ interviews in comparison to structured interviews. Firstly, if the interview is not working or if new issues arise that the researcher did not foresee it can be changed (Stake, 1995). It also gives the opportunity for the subjects to “freely express their thoughts around particular topics” (Bogdan, 2003, p. 3) instead of feeling tied to certain subject matter.

### 3.3 Participants

Here I review the sampling criteria I established for recruitment, and I review a range of possible avenues for participant recruitment. I also include a section where I introduce each of the participants.
3.3.1 **Sampling Criteria.** For my research I decided to look at The Theatre’s Program at two schools, allowing me to interview various stakeholders who are part of running The Program. Therefore, I needed not only teachers but also principals who could provide information and their different perspectives on The Program. My criteria for teachers required that they be:

- involved in The Theatre’s Program and willing to speak about their class’s participation with The Theatre and involved in the programming outside and inside their classrooms.

My criteria for principals required that they be:

- involved in The Theatre’s Program and leaders who connected The Theatre and their school.

My criteria for The Theatre staff required that they be:

- active in creating and developing The Theatre’s Program or
- active participants with The Program at The Theatre or at the schools themselves.

3.3.2 **Sampling Procedures/Recruitment.** To recruit participants, I collaborated with the Education Manager at The Theatre to discern which schools have been part of The Program for at least three years and would be willing to work with a student researcher. I then contacted the designated principal and teachers and provided them with an overview of my research study, inviting them to participate.

I am aware that because I am immersed in The Theatre community and also have existing networks with teachers that I am using convenient sampling. Stake (1995) describes the benefits of convenient sampling when he states that research can be challenging and having access to time and the right people is always limited. Therefore, it
is important to pick feasible fieldwork that is “hospitable to our inquiry” (Stake, 1995, p. 4). I used my contacts and my previous knowledge to help benefit my research and stated my biases in my work in order to remain neutral and honest.

3.3.3 Participant Bios. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants they were given pseudonyms based on their job position for the remainder of this study.

The Teacher

This participant has been an elementary school teacher in the Toronto area and in 2015 moved to a new middle school. They have been working with The Theatre since before The Program was established and have continued to contribute to its development. While their current school is not yet part of The Program, they plan on starting it there in the upcoming year. The teacher was previously at another school where The Program was running.

The Principal

This participant was an elementary school teacher who became a principal seven years ago. Having attended a play at The Theatre as a high school student they were reintroduced to The Theatre upon becoming a principal. Their current school is their second assignment as a principal.

The Education Manager

This participant is a MA graduate from OISE and conducted extensive research on The Theatre. Following graduation, they began working at The Theatre as an Education Manager. This participant began developing The Program with other staff members and is the key person who now manages it. They are in communication with all schools participating in The Program and also conduct some of the workshops at the
schools and at The Theatre.

**The Artist Educator**

This participant is an actor, clown, educator and writer. They have worked at The Theatre in several capacities multiple times, including as an artist educator, actor and assistant director. They have worked with schools which are part of The Program and have done project-based work with classes over the course of the school year.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis of the interviews conducted was managed in several steps. Once the recorded interview was completed, I immediately did some personal journaling. By doing this I was writing down and keeping my first thoughts and impressions of the interview and what was shared. I then completed a full transcription of each interview. I listened first to the interview as a whole and then when listening the second time I began transcribing. I decided to keep a natural form of transcription where I included the “ummmms” and pauses. The sentences at times are longer because the participant had a long train of thought.

After transcribing each interview I listened to the interview once more to insure it was properly done. My criteria for knowing that the interview was sufficiently transcribed is when I replayed it, I could follow along easily with my transcription. After transcribing fully, I did another round of personal journaling in order to record my thoughts having listened to the interview multiple times.

From there, I began my first cycle of coding. On the subsequent read through I conducted a second cycle of coding. I used a variety of styles of coding including in vivo and descriptive coding depending on the subject matter being discussed.
Once I was satisfied with the codes I used my research questions as an interpretive tool in order to pick up categories. I placed the categories into a table format in preparation for developing my themes once all my interviews had been conducted. After that, I looked more closely at each category to identify themes within them. Once I identified them all I read them all to see how I could synthesize the concepts and bring them into conversation with one another. It is at that point that I looked for meaning behind the data by identifying what had not been mentioned before in my research and my topic.

Not only am I looking for support within my data but also for divergences. I reminded myself throughout to consider the null data, which is what participants did not speak to, and why that matters.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

In order to complete this study, I collaborated with professionals working with children in schools or theatres. My ethical considerations focused mainly on ensuring that my participants were comfortable and safe. Participants were asked to sign a consent letter (Appendix A), which gave their consent to be interviewed as well as audio recorded. This consent letter provided an overview of the study, addressed ethical implications, and specified expectations for participation. There were minimal risks associated with participation in this study. However, given the research is about experiencing theatre it's possible that a particular question could trigger an emotional response from a participant, thus making them feel vulnerable. I minimized this risk by reassuring them in the consent letter that they had the right to refrain from answering any question they did not feel comfortable with, as well as restating their right to withdraw
from participation. All participants were assigned a pseudonym and any identifying markers related to their schools or their students were excluded from the study. All data, including audio recordings, were stored on my password-protected laptop and will be destroyed after five years. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts to clarify or retract any statements before data analysis.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

There are limitations within my research that are important to note. The scope of the research is small because of time constraints and the limitation that only adults could be interviewed. I have had to position my research in terms of the view of teachers and their part in The Program rather than students’ experiences because we cannot speak directly to students. The sample size in this research is small because it deals with only a handful of adult stakeholders.

That being said, the small sample size is also a strength within the research. It means that my specific research and interviews within schools gives The Theatre a clear idea of how they are operating. It also allows for in-depth interviews with the educators that would not have been feasible in larger scope research. These interviews not only benefit my research but also allow for the educators to reflect on their work. It gives them time from their busy workday to take a step back and speak about what matters to them and how to reach those goals. This validates their experience and gives a space for their opinions and beliefs to be heard and broadcast. I hope that this research allows educators the time to reflect and contemplate the topics we discussed in our interviews.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

Thus far, this study has presented a review of the literature, a description of the methodology and a brief description of the four participants. In this chapter, I report and discuss the findings of my research and their connections to the literature. I interpret my data in order to develop my findings and relate them to the literature and theories of other scholars (Bogdan, 2003).

This chapter reports the main significant themes that came out of the discussions of The Program from the perspectives of the adult stakeholders involved. The three main themes that are discussed in this chapter are: (1) Belief in Theatre, (2) Leadership Development, and (3) Outcomes and Benefits from The Program.

This chapter is organized through the main themes as well as subthemes appearing as subheadings. As previously mentioned, it is also important to note that when referring to the specific children’s theatre company that uses a school program, they are The Theatre and The Program. When discussing any of the participants, I refer to them by their job titles. They include: Principal, Teacher, Education Manager and Artist Educator.

4.1 Belief in Theatre

A major factor that stood out during the interviews was the appreciation for the arts shared by the Principal and Teacher. Their intrinsic belief in the value of theatre and their work in a supportive workplace affected their attitude toward The Program.

Both educators explained at the beginning of our conversations how they were involved with theatre and the arts. The Principal “grew up knowing a lot of live theatre
through secondary school.” The Teacher considered themselves “a huge advocate for the arts.” The case of The Principal’s experience growing up with The Theatre affirms the claims made by Ewing et al. (2014) about how inspirational the role of teachers can be for students. The Principal as a student was introduced to theatre, and now as an adult is inspiring a younger generation. This is consistent with McCarthy’s (2004) work on how lifelong engagement in the arts is very dependent on early exposure during childhood which is what happened to the principal.

From the start these educators had a pre-existing appreciation for theatre. For The Principal it was considered a requirement. They explained that:

You have to have enthusiasm. You have to have a real belief that theatre, that that experience that [The Theatre] creates, […] is valuable in the school. If you don’t have that intrinsic belief, I don’t know how you can be part of this [Program].

Interestingly, both educators said their appreciation grew significantly because of their involvement with The Theatre. Their growing appreciation was thanks to the students. The Teacher said, “Just seeing how the kids interacted with [The Theatre] and with the programs and how that transitions into their other subject areas and their own personal confidence just made me…I was completely sold.”

The second impact that supported their belief in theatre education was that both were introduced to The Theatre through highly supportive school leadership. The Principal’s predecessor stressed that, “If there is any relationship that you should value it is this relationship with [The Theatre].” That decision to continue The Program, therefore, was “easy to make. Not even make but continue with.” And for the Teacher, their first school was “already heavily involved with [The Theatre].”
For both the Principal and the Teacher, surrounding themselves with advocates for the arts allowed them to create their own personal relationships with The Theatre. The Principal explained the growth and development as “… a culmination of several years of relationship-building and a comfort level of teachers being able to take kids there…”.

This coincides with the Education Manager’s goal of “making a partnership active and meaningful” and focusing on the “depth of engagement.” Educators involved in the programming create deep ties with this theatre organization because of their strong beliefs. Those beliefs are then enriched and validated as they become advocates over time. The Principal humorously explained how they “make sure I am always talking the talk.” And by keeping it “at the forefront and showing its value” it makes it clear to the school community that it is important.

Despite both the Principal and the Teacher having changed schools since starting with The Program, they continued a strong relationship with The Program, each bringing it with them and introducing it into new schools. The Teacher explained that in their old school they introduced The Program and “it evolved and grew into something really fantastic for the kids.”

Not only were these educators including new schools in The Program but they were also making plans for the future. The Principal explained that given their jobs:

Chances are I won’t be here too much longer and I’ve already said this to the [Education Manager]. I have probably one, two or three more years at this school and then I am going to go somewhere else and guess what!? We’re going to do this all over again in another school!
That enthusiasm for starting again is proof of a strong base of appreciation for what The Program sets out to accomplish.

4.2 Leadership Development

Throughout the findings, the concept of developing leaders for The Program within schools was discussed. The jointly created programming calls for the inclusion of other adult participants, and more specifically, a leader. Depending on the school, the leader can be a principal or a teacher. Because these leaders are included in the programming and development, the Education Manager believes it can “influence their kind of leadership more broadly and not just in relation to The Program, but how others see and respond to them at the school” The fact that the programming is jointly developed between the schools and The Theatre supports what Omasta (2005) emphasized, which was that every stakeholder needs to be heard equally.

The school participants, the Teacher and the Principal, are considered the leaders of The Program in their schools and they discussed the qualities they needed to help with their leadership development. I found the participants discussing their role in the programming and what they did to further engage themselves and their school community. The two main factors that compelled The Principal and The Teacher to become leaders were the partnerships educators formed and communication with others.

4.2.1 Through Partnership. The concept of partnership was seen among many groups of people. This subtheme will discuss three different partnership formations that were observed and contributed to leadership development. Those partnerships were between the Theatre and the leader teachers, the leader teachers and their staff at the school and the third was between staff and artist educators.
It was made clear that support was needed by many adult stakeholders in order for the programming to function. The programming itself is always adjusted and developed differently for each school. The Education Manager discussed the reasons for that choice:

One thing that we return to a lot with [The Program] is – oh it would be so much easier if we just put in a set program. But then it would not be as successful or as dynamic as it is.

The partnership between The Theatre and the school leader is important because it sets the tone for the other relationships that form and develop within The Program. This partnership is the one that starts the earliest and is maintained through frequent meetings and discussions (referred to later in 2.2 Communication).

The Program is an example of how two separate institutions are partnering to co-develop programming. This well-balanced relationship is an example that contradicts van de Water (2011), who claims certain TYA companies have developed completely into a “pedagogical tool” (p. 280). This research shows that the partnering established at the start of The Program at a school creates a balanced, respectful relationship where the interests of both institutions are valued.

Following the establishment of a relationship, the leader then needs to transmit information and enthusiasm to other staff in the school. The leader may face certain challenges and risks when getting involved with additional school programming. The Education Manager described how teachers position themselves as leaders when they start advocating for The Program in their school. They also receive validation once the school attends a performance that has a positive impact on students.
As The Program is about whole school engagement, it is important for a lead teacher or principal to get other staff members included and involved. The Principal explains how important it is to take that risk and show staff members The Program’s potential in order to gain partnerships within the school:

A principal can only drive a program so much by themselves. It really… they’re sort of your grassroots, people in the trenches, your teachers if they haven’t bought into it, a principal can be trumpeting as much as they want…it will just remain an isolated field trip if teachers haven’t bought into and caught that sort of excitement.

The Principal was aware that principals themselves are not always the best transmitters of enthusiasm and energy. That role is the teachers’ since they spend the most time with students. The Principal is aware of the need to find support and aid in their promotion of anything that happens within the school. For instance, they said, “It’s one thing for me to catch the attention of the students but if I haven’t caught the adults in this building? Then I am not going to be that successful, in lots of ways.”

Once a partnership is developed in a school with the staff there are more opportunities for The Theatre staff to work closely with them. The Artist Educator remarked on how much they and the teaching staff trust one another while working in the schools:

I would say some teachers you work with really closely will say, “Oh, [Artist Educator] will make it happen,” or “Oh, I know she can have a way of doing this.” There is a lot of trust implied and respect implied here.
Thanks to teachers developing a partnership with these other educators, more can happen within their classroom. This specific finding is similar to the benefit that MacLauchlan (2009) discussed with having artists educators work in the classroom. Teachers are gaining professional development by having these educators in their room.

A partner in encouraging interest in schools is also The Artist Educator. The Artist Educator explains how they contribute subject matter for teachers to further their lessons and continue exploring once they have completed their workshops. The Education Manager describes it as helping their partnered teachers “grow in terms of their pedagogical capacities with regard to arts education.” These findings are consistent with Ewing et al. (2014) that teachers benefit greatly when they collaborate with others to strengthen their class instruction.

4.2.2 Through Communication. In order for teachers and principals who are members of The Program to develop as leaders, within the strong partnerships there needs to be strong communication skills. Communication emerged as a priority in multiple ways during interviews with different adult stakeholders. This subtheme discusses the three major ways communication played a role in leadership development: how communication contributed to The Program, how communication happened within the schools and the power of feedback within The Program and The Theatre.

Because the programming is “co-developed” between the Education Manager and the schools, there is discussion takes place to ensure it fits the needs of that school. The process of planning, in the case of the Principal, began by meeting with The Artistic Director of The Theatre and the Education Manager and discussing what would work for this particular new school they were working with.
For the Education Manager, one of the most important aspects of making The Program effective for schools is communication:

We talk about expectations in the beginning in a formal way and then in the middle of the year formally and at the end of the year formally. While we create a three-year partnership agreement, specific programming changes year to year. So, we talk about what really worked this year, what didn't, what was missing. What do we really want to focus on. That's partly too because our season changes every year, the shows, the themes we're looking at. Of course, there's connections and continuity but that changes. I think that it's about that ongoing development of a specific relationship by being quite responsive.

By responding to the needs throughout the process, the Education Manager allows the school staff not only voice their concerns but also discuss their ideas and hopes. The open communication gives them a voice in the programming that ensures a good fit.

The lead teachers are able to introduce parts of their school work into the programming thanks to the open communication that is set up from the start. For instance, The Principal discussed with the Education Manager their school themes:

In year two our [school] theme was “Who We Are” so we looked for performances that [The Theatre] had similar themes going through, around identity and advocacy and social justice. The associated workshops would be tied into those sorts of themes as well.

By communicating the school’s themes to the Education Manager, the Principal was able to enrich the overall programming for students. This was important for the Education Manager and Principal to discuss in meetings because they had been working together for
several years. The Principal raised questions such as, “How can we continue to keep this fresh? Keep the kids interested? Many of them will have done this for three years now.” This self-reflection and communication with the other adult stakeholders helps strengthen how they communicate with one another and support The Program. Not only that, but by including the school staff in The Program development they have more ownership of the decisions made and therefore more of a leadership role.

These leader teachers and principals have responsibility to communicate their plan with other staff members. The staff involved contributes to the planning of The Program in their schools. They discuss in meetings with their lead teacher/principal the content of the workshops and classes. In doing so, they are aware of what is being included and taught to their students.

Another important trait of communication is the feedback that is given and received. The staff members are also communicating with their lead teachers/principals and also with The Theatre staff about how to make the programming better. The Principal states that, “The continuing evolution of the relationship with [The Theatre] here at this school has been successful and continues to be valuable because I am open to feedback.”

The Education Manager also values feedback from teachers to lead teachers/principals because it helps “distill” the information and helps them “advocate” for what they want. Giving feedback and directing it to the right people saves time, keeps communication open and gives each member of The Program a voice.

By having a leader in the school who promotes feedback, the programming becomes better suited to the needs of the students. The Principal expressed this clearly:
[The Theatre] wouldn’t know unless…who’s with the kids all day? The teachers, right? So there’s this cycle of, we do something, teachers report back to me and give me feedback, this worked… this didn’t work or “Hey, we barely broke the surface on this we want to keep doing that again.

This finding is significant because even though there is a lead teacher/principal who distills information to The Education Manager about what they need, the information is coming from multiple sources. This type of communication is helping transform The Program in order to increase the students’ benefit from it.

### 4.3 Outcomes and Benefits of the Programming

Throughout discussion with the participants, there were numerous remarks concerning the benefits and outcomes of being members in The Program. This theme discusses the ways in which the programming benefits students, educators and learning spaces.

#### 4.3.1 Benefits and Outcomes for Students.

Discussion of how students benefit from the programming in their schools and The Theatre, it is important to mention that this is from the perspective of adult stakeholders. The comments came from the educators’ observations of students, discussions with them and from working with them.

Students involved in The Program were taking part in it over the course of several years. The Artist Educator noted “…the students take a lot of pride in that… in that relationship of being in [The Program] and their knowledge of the theatre.” The pride that they mention took time to build up over the course of visits, plays and workshops.

The Principal described one play the whole school saw that did not have any dialogue. They proudly spoke about how the students were ready for this; there was a
scaffolding of information through workshops and communication that prepared students to engage in a performance of this kind. That same play used masks during the performance and therefore the workshop for students centered on the use of masks and what they represent. This finding is similar to the results by Greene et al. (2015) of students gaining new knowledge because of their experiences with TYA.

Adult stakeholders also noticed student confidence increased through being participants in The Program. The Teacher described what happened in their classroom:

I mean I know that many kids start out... they don’t want to do drama, they aren’t comfortable speaking in front of other kids. They are withdrawn and then I’ve never, in the time I have been part of [The Program], had a kid who wasn’t comfortable standing up in front of the group by the end of the year. Not one […] Every single one of them by the end of the year and I feel like a huge part of that goes to participating in [The Program]. Every single kid would stand up at the end and stand with confidence and speak.

The effects on their students in the classroom were not just tied to drama. The students changed throughout the year in ways that were not directly related but were believed in part due to their involvement in The Program. The Teacher depicted the students’ benefits as “uncanny really how profound the changes are with some of the kids.” The Artist Educator also noticed the increase in the students’ confidence. They explained how the students began to “take ownership and see that there are other possible ways to tell stories and be invested in ideas and issues.”

The Teacher’s and Artist Educator’s observations on students’ confidence affirms the claims made by Doyle (1993). Doyle argues that students develop intellectually and
emotionally by participating in theatre (Doyle, 1993). The students involved in The Program are demonstrating just that.

Some outcomes and benefits for students did not happen immediately or within their school year. The Principal remarked how they observed former students volunteering at The Theatre. The Principal was impressed by the fact that a student’s “experience first was as a student, then they volunteered and then had a position.” The continuation of their connection with The Theatre is lasting and an example of the type of long-term impact it has on students.

Another outcome of The Program was that it introduced students to career options. On a class tour, students went backstage to different workspaces in The Theatre including the prop shop, costumes department and set building shop. In each room, they were introduced to staff members who worked on building and creating props, costumes and sets for the plays. It was often noted by adults that this could be their job someday. The Principal described it as showing students “different pathways to the job world, to being an adult.” They believe that the benefits of The Program could be extended to a student’s career as an adult.

An artistic benefit that the Education Manager and Artist Educator observed with their students is how they were developing artistic taste. The Education Manager remarked that some of these “taste-makers” (students) have seen more plays at The Theatre than they themselves. After hearing students discuss a play two years after seeing it, The Artist Educator noted that it is important for The Artist Educator and Education Manager to witness the students’ discussion of their preferences and their critique of
plays. The Artist Educator was proud to state that, “To be able to say, ‘Well this is my favorite play’ when you’re eleven years old is really such an amazing thing.”

These “taste-makers” are deepening their knowledge about preferences and aspects of the arts that they appreciate. Involving students at a young age in discussion is significant for them to becoming long-term supporters of the arts, and not only as supporters but leaders for the arts in their communities. This development with students through The Program affirms the claims made by Johanson and Glow (2011) and Jackson (2005) about the significance of children’s aesthetic value in TYA and not just educational values. These students are developing their taste and the significance of this is not diminished. It is important to note, however, that taste is developed over the course of many years of students consistently coming to The Theatre.

The final benefit to discuss is The Education Manager’s development of Relaxed Performances for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) based on a discussion with a principal participating in The Program. Relaxed Performances are performances with adjustments to sound and light cues, support pre, during and post show, a relief area outside of the mainstage and additional support for young people with ASD. These performances not only benefit students who are part of The Program but also the general audiences who attend The Theatre. This equitable consideration for students with ASD is new to venues in Toronto.

The Education Manager discovered through their meetings with one participating school that some of the school’s students with autism were having some challenges in attending The Theatre. The principal voiced this concern and the Education Manager began developing Relaxed Performances to better meet their needs. The Education
Manager explained how they developed these: “We worked in partnership with them [the school] and their primary autism teacher consulted with us. We worked with a [specialist] in Special Education at the Toronto District School Board to help us with particular questions and approaches.” Now students with exceptionalities like ASD can participate in The Theatre more comfortably thanks to feedback given to The Program. Since then, Relaxed Performances are open to other schools and families on the weekend.

4.3.3 Educators’ Benefits. It is important to note that not only were the teachers and principals benefitting from The Program, The Education Manager, Artist Educator and other Theatre staff members benefitted. The Education Manager expressed how The Program helps with the Theatre overall because:

It also reminds us who we are making this work for. We are lucky to really know who our audience is and to get to know them better through [The Program].

By extending their relationship with schools and getting to know the staff and students they are creating better work for their audiences. Some examples of how The Theatre and The Program have benefitted are the new programs developed and how other theatre staff were involved with the students.

One initiative developed through The Program was The Action Research Project in which a class participated with the Artist Educator and other members of The Theatre staff. This developed when The Teacher expressed interest in how their students could learn more about how a play development. As a result, the students developed their own play collectively.

Intriguingly, it is not just the staff members that work directly with students at The Theatre who benefit from The Program. Other staff members are now working
closely with students and this experience has been viewed by all participants as a highlight of the programming. The Education Manager describes one example where students were involved in a media literacy project where the Head of Marketing at The Theatre worked with a group of 6th Grade students.

The Principal and The Teacher both shared their appreciation for the work of these staff members with their students because it creates “authentic learning.” And for the staff members it reminds them, like the Education Manager described, for whom they are creating these productions and educational programming.

The Artist Educator remarked that it is helpful for teachers to have them work with students so that the teacher can observe their students. They pointed out that teachers “see other aspects of all the students” and noted the teachers’ surprise when certain students got involved in ways they were not expecting. MacLauchlan (2009) spoke of that very benefit for teachers in their research on the benefits of working with Artists Educators. The Principal also observed how certain students who are generally disengaged from school were excited and joining in on discussion about the play they saw as a class. These educators in the schools are learning more about their students and seeing different facets of their personalities thanks to The Program.

The Education Manager also noted how the workshops they lead at The Theatre help “contextualize” the play for students. This supports The Teacher when they go back to the class to discuss “particular themes” that could be hard to frame for students. They see how to frame it or what their students are interested in discussing. By involving other educators in the discussion, it supports the teacher and relieves them from being the sole adult these students can discuss subject matter with.
A scholar expressing strong opinions about teachers’ perceptions of TYA is Bedard (2011). They claim that TYA challenges what is suitable for students to see in plays and that the agents of change are the artists (Bedard, 2011). However, what was discovered through these findings is that there are other adult stakeholders who are welcoming the challenging topics in plays. Both The Principal and Teacher shared their appreciation of The Theatre’s discussion of significant issues in their plays and that the teachers are discussing them further in their classrooms.

Jackson (1993) affirms claims that theatre makes students question more. This, therefore, makes teachers help direct their students towards answers. This is consistent with Reason (2010), Jackson (1993) and Bolton (1984) who consider that you cannot remove education from a play. Furthermore, the viewpoints of Adamson (2011), Omasta (2009) and Jackson (2005) who described the educational values of TYA to be working in tandem with the aesthetics.

Both school educators also mentioned how they and other staff members use the online resources provided by the Theatre in their classes. They “connect to the shows and are always cross-curricular/interdisciplinary so that is a benefit and helpful.”

These resources are designed with students in mind. The Principal noticed in their school how once some teachers began using the online resources, they started to be shared more widely. They pointed out how “they [the teachers] heard it from each other, right? I think that’s the powerful piece.”

The fact that staff members were collectively discussing the benefits of the resources and The Program was for the Principal a “powerful” sign of how the adults in the school started to value and actively use The Program. The teachers’ use of additional
resources is confirming what MacLauchlan (2009) discussed as these being a pivotal tool to get teachers to value the relationship with TYA companies even more.

4.3.4 Benefits for Space. The Theatre in Toronto specifically does productions in their downtown theatre space. Workshops can however be held at the theatre and at schools. The Principal discussed the school space in detail and stressed how their school space benefitted from using The Program.

Being a school away from the downtown core poses challenges for the Principal. There are “geographic limitations” to consider when organizing The Program at their school. However, they found ways to adjust and change The Program to suit their school’s needs and it benefited not only the people in the school but also took advantage of the various spaces available in the school.

By having some workshops at their school and others at the theatre the students were using their school space for a new purpose. They held workshops in “the library, the gym and the classrooms…” The Principal noticed how valuable it was to have the workshops in “our environment” and so did the Education Manager. The Education Manager pointed out how they make a serious effort to be present at the school and make regular visits.

I spend a lot of time in schools. I am physically there quite often because I think it’s important that if they are visiting us that I am visiting them, getting to know their school and seeing the programming in action.

The students are not just seeing The Theatre staff in the theatre space but also in their school environment. This gives them more time to spend together and also creates a more vibrant school community and space. The Artist Educator expressed feeling
welcomed when they walk down the school halls because so many students recognize them and say hello. The Theatre becomes a natural and welcoming presence in the school.

This positive type of interaction in the school environment does not fit with claims made by Ardal (2003). They claimed that when companies come to schools they are just guests within the “education world” (Ardal, p. 192). It was not supportive of theatre companies using the school environment because of the control imposed by educational requirements. However, this research shows that in the case of The Program both environments are strengthened by including one another on their “home turf.” This shows adaptability and flexibility based on an equitable relationship.

4.4 Conclusion

Chapter 4 discussed findings from the interviews and related them to the scholarly research done on TYA. The first main theme was how teachers and principals require an “intrinsic belief in the value of theatre.” That belief in the value of theatre was something educators had long held. In the case of the Principal they developed it through their own schooling. Then, that belief flourished for both The Teacher and Principal when they experienced in their careers examples of a positive school atmosphere that not only appreciated theatre education but encouraged involvement with The Theatre. That gave The Teacher and Principal a foundation enabling them to become advocates themselves for theatre education in their ongoing work.

The second theme discussed was how these lead teachers/principals of The Program develop their leadership. Two main characteristics emerged on what impacted being a positive leader in their schools. The first was the partnerships lead teachers
developed with other adult stakeholders. Whether it be with staff from The Theatre or with teachers in their school, it is crucial to have the support of others. The final characteristic is the significance of communication. Having all adult stakeholders open to dialogue helps The Program grow and target closely the needs of individual schools.

The third and final theme discussed the many benefits and outcomes of The Program. First and most importantly was what the students gained. That included: being supported and noticed by their educators, new found confidence being developed, being introduced to new perspectives and future opportunities, developing into “taste-makers”, and students with autism being supported through newly developed programming. The outcome for Theatre Educators was the development of new research programming as well as having other Theatre staff take the opportunity to work with students. Teachers gained the opportunity to learn more about their students through observation, acquired new perspectives about their students, accessed new resources and found useful, teachable moments. The final subtheme to have benefited from The Program was school space, because it welcomed new community members and creatively repurposed use of spaces in the school.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the significance of my findings as a teacher for the educational field and more broadly for TYA research. I will also identify areas of future research and make recommendations as to how organizations and institutions could use these findings to better support teacher education.
Chapter 5: Implications and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

The study was developed and implemented to learn about the dynamic relationship between schools and the long-term educational programming of a local TYA company.

5.1 Overview of key findings and their significance

Through multiple interviews and participatory observations, an extensive analysis revealed three significant themes: (1) Belief in Theatre, (2) The Importance of Leadership Development, and (3) Outcomes and Benefits of Relationships Between Schools and Theatre Companies.

The first theme addressed the need of school educators to hold a profound belief in the impact of theatre. In order for these educators to join a partnership with The Theatre they needed to have an existing appreciation for the arts. That appreciation was strengthened throughout their relationship once they witnessed the impact TYA had on their students. This in turn encouraged The Teacher and Principal to advocate for the impact theatre education has in schools and continued their support for The Program even when they moved to new schools.

The second theme, Leadership Development, served to remind us how these lead teachers/principals of The Program became leaders of this programming in their schools. The two main characteristics that made an impact on the leaders were the partnerships they developed with other stakeholders and their support of open communication.

Finally, the third theme pointed to the benefits and outcomes of The Program. This theme was divided by ways in which stakeholders profited from The Program.
Students were given greater support by their educators, developed new-found confidence, were introduced to new perspectives and future opportunities while becoming “tastemakers”. Furthermore, students with Autism Spectrum Disorder were accommodated through newly developed performances. Theatre educators gained new research programming and other staff from The Theatre had the opportunity to work with students. Teachers gained new insight into their students through observation, new perspectives about their students, access to new resources and teachable moments. The final subtheme discussed regarding the benefits of The Program was the school space because it gained new community members and enriched different physical spaces in the school.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Broad: The Educational Research Community. The present study showed important implications for educational reform in theatre. This section discusses the following: (1) educational development and improvement of theatre education in Ontario schools, (2) a collaborative approach amongst educators when developing and implementing theatre programming, (3) greater inclusivity and opportunities for students. The first significant implication is how this research specifically demonstrates how theatre education can be acknowledged and valued as part of the curriculum, resulting in many positive outcomes for educators and students. When school educators make a point of including theatre education in their class in partnership with professionals and artists to support their curriculum, everyone profits. It also shows how school educators who have an appreciation for the arts are reaching out beyond their school to gain arts programming support. This demonstrates how community partnerships
with theatres, like The Theatre in Toronto, can contribute and fill a gap within school programming.

The second implication is the positive relationship between TYA companies and schools because of their collaborative approach. This implication does challenge parts of the literature on TYA in Chapter 2 of this research. Several scholars argue about the potential negative impacts schools or education in general can have on TYA companies such as how the union between the two is commonly not equal (Ardal, 2003; van de Water, 2011). These concerns and discussions are important to address because they are part of the literature surrounding TYA. However, there are approaches that TYA companies, are taking in order to work with schools while maintaining their arts integrity. For instance, the planning is done with both the school educators and The Theatre educators so that various stakeholders have a say in the program development. More specifically, the work that the Education & Participation Department does in order to establish and maintain a cooperative relationship with schools is the main reason for such positive outcomes. The education and outreach departments in TYA companies play a valuable role in bringing schools and theatres together. They maintain positive connections through their programming development and communication skills.

The third implication that resonates from the findings are the benefits, both curriculum and non-curriculum related, that students gained from being part of The Program. While TYA companies’ educational programming does valuable and needed work to make connections to the curriculum, these are not the only noteworthy outcomes. What stood out in discussions with participants were the benefits that students experienced and gained that are challenging to measure. This speaks to what Gallagher
(2010) expressed in their comments on the challenges of feeling pressured to discuss concrete outcomes of theatre education (p. 9). It also speaks to the benefits of a qualitative case study, such as this one, and how the participants were open to sharing their stories, thoughts, opinions and reflections. Through these shared personal sentiments, the findings highlight the community-building aspects that occurred as a result of being part of The Program. While the students were not directly sharing their own sentiments the enthusiasm that was shared during discussion with the educators speaks to how the school climate was positively effected.

5.2.2 Narrow: My Professional Identity and Practice. Finally, it is important to mention the personal implications this research has had on myself as a teacher and researcher. This research aided me in becoming an even stronger advocate for theatre education and its promotion to all students. Through this experience I acquired new knowledge about theatre education, and professionalism and met educators who model how to make a positive impact on students through theatre. I had the opportunity to meet and make contact with other educators in the field who are passionate about theatre education and arts programming in schools. Lastly, while I began with a strong passion for theatre and the belief that it can make a difference in the lives of people who are exposed to its wonder and creativity, I am now even more in awe of the power of theatre.

5.3 Recommendations

The implications of the present study relate to the following four recommendations for teacher education programs, educators, and educational programs in TYA companies:
(1) Teacher education programs must start including substantial instructional hours for drama education in their programs. This echoes the sentiments of scholars such as McLauchlan (2009) who discusses how teacher candidates are not taught how to include the mandatory drama component in their training. By giving drama education its rightful dues while training teachers it will help support not only the educators who see the value in arts education but also the educators who are hesitant or unaware of its value. Not only should they include instruction in theatre education but also in arts programming within their communities that they could connect with and use. It is important to mention that OISE (one of many faculties of education across the province of Ontario) is moving in the right direction, as it will include Drama in its Master of Teaching program starting in the fall term of 2016 for all primary/junior teacher candidates.

(2) Elementary school principals need to schedule time for proper drama education whether it be in the school setting, going to see a performance, or a combination of the two. By making a specific time for drama in the school calendar it is acknowledging to staff and students at the school its significance and value. When this treatment of drama starts with the administrators it filters through the school and creates a positive mindset. In conjunction with this, administrators should seek out drama education advocates, whether they be staff or arts experts outside of the school, to help support them and help develop valuable theatre education programming. As noted, both The Teacher and The Principal in the study were already
advocates for The Program and were able to continue with it in their new schools because they promoted it and the new school responded positively.

(3) TYA companies need to continue to expand their outreach programming to communities and schools. Not only should they create and develop single events/workshops but also long-term programming that grows with the schools and forms deeper relationships with the staff and student body. The Program developed by The Theatre in Toronto is a wonderful example and could be shared with other TYA companies that have not yet started multi-year school programming relationships.

(4) Throughout the development of relationships between schools and TYA companies, it is important to keep in mind positive ways to communicate and develop respectful, meaningful relationships. Based on the findings of this research it is significant for educators to keep in mind that when developing programming there must always be open communication. This includes opportunities for feedback throughout the process. A variety of stakeholders should be welcomed into the planning process so that it is personalized for each school. This will not only help promote strong leaders within the school for the continuation of the programming but also ensures that both the schools and the TYA company are being heard.

5.4 Further Research

TYA research in Canada is still fairly new. Scholars continue to explain why it is needed and how it is a dynamic field of research. These explanations predominantly
discuss the fact that there are many perspectives and stakeholders that are included in discussions regarding TYA, and therefore more research needs to be done.

While this research focused on adult stakeholders and long-term program development between a TYA company and schools, it was a small-scale study. The field of TYA research would greatly benefit from researching the long-term initiatives between other TYA companies and schools. Also, a longer study that could follow the development of programming with a school or with a group of students moving from their elementary school to middle and high school would be valuable.

Most importantly, in future research endeavors, it is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed upon the voices and opinions of students. Interviews with students went beyond the scope of the ethics review process for the current study, and future research should seek to add the students’ voices to the conversation. It is a detriment to the discussion of TYA when students are not directly involved. More research needs to be done with students, given that the subject matter is Theatre for Young Audiences.

5.5 Concluding Comments

The present study is significant because it gives insight into how a TYA company, The Theatre, is contributing to school programming and theatre education inside and outside the classroom. The Program is an example for other arts companies and schools of how to extend student experience with theatre through a multi-year program. What The Program exemplifies is that through the collaborative efforts of a TYA educational department and school educators there is high potential for a positive, well-balanced relationship. This leads to a program that is specific to the needs of that student body and gives them opportunities to see live professional TYA in their city. While it
calls for added work by the educators to plan and discuss the programming, the outcomes and benefits for themselves, their students and the school space are significant. Proof is the fact that participants in this study continue to develop their multi-year programming with The Theatre’s educational department. Once again, this illustrates just how powerful theatre is for young audiences.
Appendix A don't know if I can change any of this, see below
Dear _______________________,

My name is Claire Hage and I am a second year student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on schools that are involved in Young People’s Theatre Member School Program. I am interested in interviewing teachers who are involved in the Member Program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or in a publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only people who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Dr. Kenneth McNeilly. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,
Claire Hage
mclairehage@gmail.com

Course Instructor’s Name: Kenneth McNeilly
Contact Info:
Consent Form
I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.
I have read the letter provided to me by Claire Hage and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: __________________________________________

Name: (printed) ________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________
Appendix B

Interview Questions for Teachers

Part I - Intro
(Insert name of participant) thank you for participating in this interview with me. I greatly appreciate it. The aim of this research is to learn about The Theatre’s Program from your perspective. The interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. I will ask you a series of 15-20 questions focused on your role as a teacher in The Program. I want to remind you of your right to choose not to answer any question or ask for clarification at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Part II Background
1. Can you tell me about your teaching career and how long you have been at this school?

3. What sort of experience and background do you have with theatre?

2. Why did you begin working with The Theatre? When did your school become a Member School?

Part III- Presently
4. What were your initial thoughts about The Program?

5. How would you define your role within The Program?

6. In what ways do you contribute to The Program?

7. What has been the greatest benefit of participating in The Program? For your teaching practice? For your students? For your school?

8. Has there been a change in the dynamics and relationships you have within your classroom and school because of The Program?

9. Are there specific memories you could describe that demonstrate how The Program experience has been for you?

Part IV- Looking Forward

10. What choices have you made within The Program for the benefit of your school or class?

11. What would you say those choices says about your teaching?

12. From a reflective perspective, in what ways have you grown as a teacher because of The Program?

13. How do you see your role in The Program developing in the future?
Interview Questions for Principals

Part I - Intro
(Insert name of participant) thank you for participating in this interview with me. I greatly appreciate it. The aim of this research is to learn about The Theatre’s Program from your perspective. The interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. I will ask you a series of 15-20 questions focused on your role as a principal in The Program. I want to remind you of your right to choose not to answer any question or ask for clarification at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Part II - Background
1. Can you tell me about your career in education and how long you have been at this school?
2. When did you join The Program?
3. Can you describe your previous experience and background with theatre?

Part III - Presently
4. What were your initial thoughts about The Program and how did you get introduced to it?
5. How would you define your role within The Program?
6. In what ways do you contribute to The Program?
7. What do you find your school has gained by participating in The Program?
8. Has there been a change in the dynamics and relationships with your peers or the students you have because of The Program?
9. Are there specific memories you could describe that demonstrate how The Program experience has been for you?

Part IV - Looking Forward
10. What choices have you made within The Program for the benefit of your school?
11. What would you say those choices says about your leadership style?
12. From a reflective perspective, in what ways have you grown as a principal because of The Program?
13. How do you see your role in The Program developing in the future?
Interview Questions for The Theatre Staff

Part I- Intro
(Insert name of participant) thank you for participating in this interview with me. I greatly appreciate it. The aim of this research is to learn about The Theatre’s Program from your perspective. The interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. I will ask you a series of 15-20 questions focused on your role as an educator in The Program. I want to remind you of your right to choose not to answer any question or ask for clarification at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Part II- Background
1. Can you tell me about your role at The Theatre and your main responsibilities?
2. What role did you have in developing The Program?
3. What were the reasons for the development of The Program and what did YPT (do you want to say YPT here?) have before this programming?
4. How were schools, teachers and principals involved with The Theatre prior to The Program?

Part III- Presently
5. Currently, what are the main goals of The Program?
6. In terms of promoting leadership for teachers and principals within their school why is that significant to you in the programming?
7. How do you think this leadership aspect is most promoted within the programming?

Looking Forward

8. How do you see the Programming developing and growing moving forward?
9. In terms of supporting the teachers and principals in the program, what do you find they need to help them become leaders in their schools?
10. What do you find The Theatre has gained from developing and working on the Member School Program?
11. Are there specific memories you could describe that demonstrate how The Program experience has been for you?
References


