

## **Drama Australia – Project Snapshot**

**Title:** Artistry, identity and the drama teacher: a case study using performance ethnography as mode of enquiry

**Institution:** The University of Melbourne

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**Snapshot:** Drama is a compulsory subject in secondary schools in Victoria, Australia, with a rich history of dedicated and passionate educators. Despite this, little research has been done that investigates the professional lives of these drama teachers, and even fewer studies use drama as a method through which to do so.

This study sought to interrogate the lived experiences of drama teachers using the language they know best – performance. The thesis presents the results of a qualitative case study, which investigated the experiences of seven secondary drama teachers who engaged in a process of ethnographic performance making about their professional lives, drawing on their own lived experiences as data. A range of data were analysed to interrogate the responses and reflections of these

teachers as they undertook a process of generating, analysing and presenting their lived experiences through performance.

This research project reveals that drama teachers often experience feelings of being perceived by others as teaching a subject which is inferior, and whose value to schools lies more in extra-curricular activities than in the academic realm. This can result in teachers who are marginalised, yet whose time outside of the classroom is in demand.

Findings from the case study suggested that the process of ethnographic performance-making was invaluable to these teachers, bringing them to new understandings about their professional identity, as well providing insights into the context of their work. The process gave them agency; the audience gave them impetus and commitment to truth; and, the access to a voice gave them a moral and political desire to continue to promote their work despite sometimes challenging circumstances

Thesis currently under examination

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