THE IMPACT OF IMPROVISATION TRAINING
ON TEACHERS’ SENSE OF SELF EFFICACY

by

Patrick Alan LaPolice

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Patrick Alan LaPolice

Approved by the Master’s Project Committee:

Ann Diver-Stamnes, Major Professor

Patty Yancey, Committee Member

Eric Van Duzer, Graduate Coordinator

Jena Burgess, Vice Provost
ABSTRACT

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PATRICK ALAN LAPOLICE

This study examines the impact of theatrically based improvisation training on teachers’ sense of self efficacy. Teaching has often been described as a type of performance whereby teachers are expected to present information to an audience of observers in an effort to share ideas and enrich the lives of the participants. With this paradigm of teaching as performance, I developed a workshop designed to teach theatrically based improvisation techniques to a group of public education teachers. I used a series of pre- and post-workshop surveys as well as a follow-up discussion session to gauge what effect, if any, improvisation training had on the self-efficacy of teachers seeking professional development. The hypothesized result was that following the workshop, teacher confidence would have been enhanced as recorded by the surveys and conversations in the discussion session.

The results I obtained from the workshop, the surveys, and the discussion session were coded and analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative measures. Areas of particular interest were classroom management, teacher expectations of what students could achieve, particular activities most appropriate for engaging students, and teachers’ overall confidence in their own abilities.
The workshop consisted of 7-hours of professional development in which improvisation techniques and games were explored. The types of behavior under investigation related to issues of confidence, e.g.: classroom management techniques, repetition of instruction, stuttering, body language, eye contact, responses to questions from students, and any other observable actions/behaviors that gave insight into teacher confidence.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a unique vocation, especially in the areas of primary and secondary public education. In California, it is a profession that requires individuals to have completed a professional graduate level training program. However, unlike other professions, once employed, teachers are largely left in an isolated situation having little contact with colleagues in the field and even less direct oversight from supervisors. Expectations are high in that they are responsible for disseminating vast amounts of information to an often unreceptive audience of students who have their own sets of demanding circumstances. Since the rapid increase in standards-based instruction, teachers are required to teach more material to more students in less time with increased performance expectations. They are required to accomplish all of this in what has become an increasingly demanding, sometimes dangerous environment, and they are compensated at a fraction of what other similarly trained professionals can expect to earn.

Some of the expectations of teachers, particularly the dissemination of information to large groups of participants and the need to keep that group engaged, are quite similar to the expectations placed upon stage performers. It is with this concept in mind that I proposed to marry the two vocations of teaching and performance in an attempt to determine if techniques used to increase self-efficacy in performers can be applied to teachers with similar results.
Overview of Thesis

The research in this thesis considers teachers’ sense of self-efficacy both before and after a professional development workshop designed to expose them to various theatrical improvisation techniques. Chapter Two consists of a review of the literature relating to teacher training, teacher efficacy, child development, and theatrical improvisation. This chapter also touches on how improvisation is currently being employed in classrooms. Chapter Three describes both the methods used and the methodology that has gone into the development of the research.

Chapter Four presents the results of the research which were gathered from the pre-workshop survey, the workshop, a follow-up discussion session, and the post-workshop survey. Chapter Five presents the analysis of these data broken down into sections labeled characteristics of the participants, efficacy in the classroom, influence on teacher efficacy, and levels of participation. Chapter Six provides conclusions drawn from the research, an explanation of the limitations of the study, and an overview of implications for future research.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following review of the literature is broken down into four major sections. The first section reviews teaching as a profession with emphasis on initially becoming a teacher and then facing the realities of the classroom. The second section breaks down teacher efficacy in terms of its history, its importance for both teachers and students, and its development in teachers over time. The third section focuses on child development in the classroom by first looking at play generally, then improvisation as a form of play and as a tool in the classroom. This section reviews the history of improvisation, its potential in the classroom, and how it is currently being applied for educators. In the final section, the metaphor of teacher as performer is considered and how the preceding chapters apply to this metaphor.

Teaching as a Profession

Recognizing the importance of a properly educated citizenry, many Asian and European nations have taken considerable measures to improve the quality of teacher training (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Brint, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2005). In France, prospective educators must first complete an undergraduate degree and then compete for highly selective two year graduate programs (Darling-Hammond, 2005).
The programs teach them about instructional methods, curriculum design, learning theory, and child development, during which time, they are assigned to practice teach in an affiliated school (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Teacher candidates are paid government stipends during their training and in their final year, they receive a full salary while teaching under supervision in a manner similar to doctor residency programs (Darling-Hammond, 2005). In countries like Japan and Taiwan, prospective teachers are given an intensive one-year internship to university training in education which is paid predominantly by government subsidies and upon completion, assigned to schools where they are paired with a master teacher (Brint, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2005).

Teachers’ status in society has a direct effect on how they teach and what expectations they have on their students (Brint, 2006). In Germany, opinion polls place teaching in the top 11 occupations deserving of respect (Bailey, 1995). Japanese refer to teachers as sensei, a term implying tremendous respect and in France, secondary teachers are referred to as professeurs (Brint, 2006). In Japan, teachers by law must be paid 10 percent more than other civil servants of the same seniority level, a salary comparable to professional engineers (Darling-Hammond, 2005; White, 1987). In Germany and Switzerland, teachers are paid at the same level of high-ranking civil servants and their pay is supplemented with allowances for spouses, children and housing (Bellinger 2004: NCES 2001). In these countries,
secondary teachers in the middle of their careers earn 85% of the salary of an average engineer (Bellinger 2004; NCES 2001).

In the U.S., teaching is a respectable career, but it does not have nearly the prestige of most other professional occupations (Brint, 2006). The average secondary teacher in the U.S. earns less than half the average engineer’s salary (Costlow, 2001; NCES, 2001). K-8th grade teachers in the U.S. will earn on average $40,000 annually which is nearly the lowest compensation of any professional occupation in the U.S. (Brint, 2006).

Beginning teachers in Japan, by law, receive at least 20 days of in-service training in their first year and 60 days of professional development on topics like classroom management, teaching strategies, and counseling methods (Darling-Hammond, 2007). In many of these Asian and European countries in-service teachers typically spend 15 to 20 hours per week with their students in the classroom and the remainder of the time on collegial work and planning, visitations to other classrooms, and demonstrating effective teaching strategies to each other (Darling-Hammond, 2007). By contrast, teachers in the U.S. are given almost no time for professional learning or collegial work with nearly all professional development time held after school, on weekends, or during a very limited number of professional development days (Darling-Hammond, 2007). It is in these professional development experiences that in-service teachers acquire further knowledge about
teaching, pedagogical practices, and the art of learning which is far more important than simple subject matter knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

_Becoming a teacher._

Teacher requirements vary state to state with some states having very rigorous standards and others less so (Brint, 2006; Green, 1988; Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2007; Kramer, 1991). To earn a preliminary single subject teaching credential in California, a candidate must first complete a baccalaureate or higher degree, then satisfy a basic skills proficiency exam requirement, and complete a commission-approved teacher preparation program (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), 2011). Prior to being accepted into an approved teacher preparation program, prospective teachers must verify subject matter competence by completing an approved subject matter program, referred to as the waiver major, or by passing the appropriate subject matter examination (CCTC, 2011). They must also complete a U.S. Constitution course or pass a constitution exam as well as complete foundational computer technology coursework (CCTC, 2011). Once in their credential program, they must satisfy a developing English language skills requirement that includes “the systematic study of phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding; literature, language and comprehension; and diagnostic and early intervention techniques (CCTC, 2011, p. 2).

California Senate Bill 2042 was enacted in 1998 to ensure that multiple pathways existed for California teachers to meet a uniform set of standards prior to being issued a teaching credential (CCTC, 2011; Kornfeld, Grady, Marker, &
Since July of 2008, California statute has required all candidates for both the preliminary multiple and single subject teaching credential to pass one of three Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs) from a Commission approved teacher preparation program (CCTC, 2011; Kornfeld et al., 2007). The TPAs are designed to measure the prospective teacher’s knowledge, skills and ability in relation to California’s Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) which are 13 Commission standards expected from potential teachers (CCTC, 2011). In an effort to uphold rigorous state standards but also to maintain some local control over content, three different TPAs have been created and approved to assess pre-service teachers (CCTC, 2011). The California Teaching Performance Assessment (CalTPA) was created by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), the Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers (FAST) was developed using a Title II grant for use at CSU Fresno, and the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) was developed by 8 University of California institutions and 4 additional California universities (CCTC, 2011). Each of the three assessment models require the prospective teacher to complete defined tasks relating to subject-specific pedagogy, designing and implementing instruction and student assessment and a culminating teaching event or experience (CCTC, 2011).

The PACT model in particular uses a portfolio style evaluation which was modeled after the Connecticut State Department of Education’s Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and is similar to the
approach used by the National Board that certifies highly accomplished teachers with advanced credentialing (CCTC, 2011; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2011). All three models use a final culminating teaching experience (CalTPA), event (PACT), or project (FAST) which utilizes video recording of actual instruction by the candidate which is assessed by trained evaluators from the candidate’s institution (CCTC, 2011). Completion of PACT, FAST, or CalTPA signals to the CCTC that a teacher candidate has both the skills and the experience required to teach in California (CCTC, 2011).

Within 5 years, this provisional or preliminary credential must be upgraded to a clear credential by completing an additional professional teacher induction program (CCTC, 2011).

Becoming a teacher requires a long term commitment to a profession that in recent years has been under attack by various legislators, some media outlets, and public action groups (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Ravitch, 2010). The following section will review the actual expectations of new and veteran teachers as well as document the persistence rates of educators.

**Expectations of the effective teacher.**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was the signature school reform of the second Bush Administration (Ravitch, 2010). It stemmed from the standards movement and an effort to elevate and unify core educational standards across the U.S. but ultimately became an accountability movement holding teachers and administrators
responsible for student and school achievement (Ravitch, 2010). It states that every child in American schools will be proficient in English and math by the year 2014, an impossible goal that has only served to demoralize and debilitate teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). Under NCLB, teachers are expected to meet the demands of high stakes testing as well as teach to all state standards, effectively manage classroom behavior and discipline, educate on ethics and social expectations, and maintain safe and healthy learning environments (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

As a part of NCLB’s requirement that teachers be highly qualified as determined by each state, the California Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) are a series of 13 teacher standards that each candidate is expected to master (CCTC, 2011). They are grouped into the following 6 sub-categories: making subject matter comprehensible to students, assessing student learning, engaging and supporting students in learning, planning instruction and designing learning experiences for students, creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning, and developing as a professional educator (CCTC, 2011).

Teachers are expected to teach to multiple cultures, across disciplines, to students of multiple languages (Brint, 2006). They are expected to act as policymakers, managers, and community liaisons in addition to their teaching role (Pineau, 1994). They are expected to do all this with limited resources, shrinking
budgets, growing class sizes, increased school violence, and continuous attacks on their profession (California Educator, 2002; Ravitch, 2010).

Since NCLB, teachers have been burdened with the challenge of bringing up scores for all students on high stakes testing while facing threats of their school being placed in state receivership, having their school reconstituted, and ultimately having their positions taken away (Darling-Hammond, 2002, 2005, 2007; Olsen & Sexton, 2009; Ravitch, 2010). Many teachers have been forced to abandon teaching in a manner which seeks a deep understanding of a limited set of topics in favor of a superficial drill and kill method of teaching only topics to be covered on the high stakes multiple choice assessments (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). Resources needed to strengthen teacher preparation and professional development that would produce high quality teaching are being redirected to high stakes test preparation and implementation (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

To meet the demands of NCLB and the additional Obama legislation, Race to the Top, administrators in many large districts have invested huge amounts of time and money into comprehensive educational programs known as Scripted Learning (Ravitch, 2010, California Educator, 2002). Scripted Learning, sometimes referred to as canned curriculum, is the implementation of blocks of instruction in which all teacher dialogue has been pre-designed, pre-approved, and pre-scripted (Painter, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). Scripted learning directly shifts teaching from a professional job which encourages a broad skill set, independent thinking, and autonomy, to a
technician’s job which requires none of this (Brint, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Ravitch, 2010). Scripted, pre-packaged learning formats undermine the initiative and autonomy of teachers by determining and organizing lessons for them (Brint, 2006). Teachers cannot successfully educate children to be independent, free thinkers if they themselves are not treated as professionals capable to of independent, free thinking (Ravitch, 2010).

*Teaching assignments.*

Teaching assignments are typically granted based on seniority, with the least desirable positions given to the newest, least experienced, and often least capable teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Guarino, et al, 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Often, initial teaching assignments are not in close proximity to new teachers’ families, friends, colleges, or any other supportive network that they could rely on during the first, most difficult year (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). New teachers, burdened with college debt often find that they cannot afford to buy housing in the district they are assigned to based on the entry level wages offered and the lack of permanence afforded to new teachers (Gabriel, 2011). To keep up with state requirements of highly qualified under NCLB, teachers, upon being given initial assignments are being asked to acquire additional training and certification in areas such as language acquisition and working with special education inclusion students in order to keep their assignments (Gabriel, 2011).
Teaching assignments are becoming even more challenging in light of the current economic crisis (Gabriel, 2011; Kleinbaum, 2009). Urban poor schools are facing the most difficult challenges where in schools like Fairfax High in Los Angeles, teachers are expected to teach classes with more than 50 students (Kleinbaum, 2009). Many states now have proposed legislation that would end teacher unionization and collective bargaining rights, reduce funding for teachers’ benefits, and restructure retirement plans (Gabriel, 2011). Current union policies demand that during reductions in force, newer teachers are terminated before senior teachers without regard to ability or effectiveness Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gabriel, 2011).

Teachers today face an attack on public education that stems from an aging, shrinking, credit burdened, Caucasian voting population that no longer sees public education for all as economically viable (Glass, 2008). Public school teachers in many states must now contend with school of choice or open enrollment policies that allow students to leave their assigned schools for charter schools that often draw out the best and brightest students (Ravitch, 2010).

**Teacher persistence rates.**

As many as 50% of new teachers leave the occupation for good within the first 5 years of selection (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Hafner & Owings, 1991; Huling-Austin, 1990; Murnane, Singer, Willet, Kemple & Olsen, 1991; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004;). In the 2007-2008 school year, of the 3,380,300 working public
school teachers, excluding those who retired, 270,000 left the profession (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). One estimate of the cost of replacing public school teachers who leave the profession places the amount at $2.2 billion per year, and when coupled with the cost of teacher transfers to different schools, the estimate is $4.9 billion annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

The primary factors in teacher attrition are low pay, student discipline, and lack of support from administration (Ingersoll, 2003b; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). New teachers are overwhelmed by the realities they face in the classroom that they did not expect prior to being hired, realities like an overwhelming workload, frustrations with classroom management, difficulties in planning engaging lessons, and working with unsupportive parents (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). Teachers are also challenged with creating their own unique teaching persona and then making that persona work in relationships with students, fellow teachers, administrators, and parents (McCann & Johannessen, 2004).

Teaching is a profession in which the employee is expected to have intensive interactions with multiple students, yet it is done largely in isolation from colleagues, mentors, and supervisors (Ingersoll, 2003a; Johnson, 1990; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Without a support network such as a mentor teacher or an induction program, new teachers are placed in a situation where they are both expected to teach and to learn
how to teach alone in a sink or swim fashion (Guarino, Santibanez & Daley, 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Well conceived and well implemented teacher induction programs, including professional development opportunities, are successful at decreasing new teacher attrition rates as well as increasing their sense of efficacy, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Teacher induction programs and professional development strengthen a teachers effectiveness as well as their sense of self efficacy (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990) The following section will look into teacher efficacy, instruments used to measure it, its importance, and its development in pre-service, in-service, and veteran teachers.

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is defined as the extent to which teachers believe they have the capacity to affect student performance (Ashton, 1985; Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Teacher efficacy has been specified as having two distinct dimensions: General Teacher Efficacy and Personal Teacher Efficacy (Ashton, Olejnik, Crocker, & McAuliffe, 1982; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, Hoy, 1998). General Teaching Efficacy (GTE) is a teacher’s personal beliefs about the general relationship between teaching and learning, and corresponds to what Bandura (1997) calls Outcome Expectancy. A teacher with a high level of GTE believes that environmental factors overwhelm any power that the
teacher can exert in the classroom, factors such as family educational levels, poverty, ethnicity, gender, violence and conflict at home, as well as other extrinsic factors (Tschannen-Moran et al, 1998). Teachers with a high level of PTE believe that their own teaching skills, training, experience, confidence, and other intrinsic factors can overcome the obstacles for learning in their classroom (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teachers may be convinced of their own ability to teach (PTE) but doubtful about their students’ ability to learn (GTE) and vice versa (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).

The development of teacher efficacy instruments.

The first significant research done on teacher efficacy came about in 1976 when the RAND Corporation added two specific questions to their evaluation of innovative educational programs funded by the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Armor, Cox, McDonnell, Pascal, Pauly, & Zellerman, 1976; Berman et al., 1977). The questions targeted teachers' efficacy by computing a total score for their responses to two, five-point Likert scale items: (a) "When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment"; and (b) "If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students" (Armor et al., 1976, p. 73).

The expected outcome of certain behaviors has an impact on the motivation of people to engage in that behavior (Rotter, 1960). Motivation is determined by peoples’ judgments of their capability to execute particular courses of action.
(referred to as efficacy expectations) and their beliefs about the likely consequences of those actions (referred to as outcome expectations) (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

Teachers’ sense of self-efficacy can be measured by these outcome expectations and by efficacy expectations (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Teachers with high scores on both what they can do and what students can do have more intrinsic or internally oriented scores for both student success and student failure (Rose & Medway, 1981). Teachers with low scores on both what teachers can do and what students can do may have significantly higher levels of stress than other groups (Greenwood, Olejnik, & Parkay, 1990).

*The importance of high efficacy in teachers.*

Self efficacy has to do with one’s perceived level of competence and effectiveness, not one’s actual level of those traits (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Despite rigorous training programs, teachers typically over- or underestimate their own capabilities, and this may influence how well they use the skills they possess (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). "A capability is only as good as its execution. The self-assurance with which people approach and manage difficult tasks determines whether they make good or poor use of their capabilities. Insidious self-doubts can easily overrule the best of skills" (Bandura, 1997, p. 35).

Children with higher sense of self-efficacy outperform children with the same level of skill development in mathematics but lower sense of self efficacy (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parents, & Larivee, 1991). Higher efficacious children more consistently
and effectively apply what they know, are more persistent with problems, and ultimately are less likely to prematurely reject a correct response (Bouffard-Bouchard et al. 1991). Slightly overestimating one's capability, in most cases, has a positive effect on one’s actual performance (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Teacher efficacy and the behaviors associated with a confident teacher are directly related to students’ academic achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Greene, Anderson, & Loewen, 1988; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990b; Soar & Soar, 1982). More efficacious teachers, relative to their less efficacious peers, also are more likely to adopt change proposals associated with formal innovations and staff development programs (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Guskey, 1987; Poole, Okeafor, & Sloan, 1989; Rose & Medway, 1981; Smylie, 1988). High teacher efficacy has also been linked to more parent involvement in school activities (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). Teachers with higher levels of both General Teacher Efficacy and Personal Teacher Efficacy should persist longer in their careers, provide a deeper academic focus in their classrooms, expend more effort in the face of obstacles, implement more innovative structures in their classrooms, criticize students less for failure, and provide better feedback to their students than teachers with lower levels of GTE and PTE (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). High efficacy teachers are also more likely to divide students up into smaller groups for individualized instruction as opposed to instructing the class as a whole (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).
Teachers having a higher level of General Teacher Efficacy have a direct impact on their students’ increased interest in school and their perceptions that what they are learning is important, and teachers having a higher level of Personal Teacher Efficacy results in students giving a more positive evaluation of their teacher (Woolfolk, Rossof, & Hoy, 1990). Higher teacher efficacy, both PTE and GTE, contribute to the overall health and success of the entire school organization (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).

*Self efficacy development in teachers.*

A mastery experience is by far the most influential source of efficacy information because this experience contains the most authentic evidence as to whether mastery can be obtained in subsequent tasks in related domains (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Britner & Pajares, 2006; Hampton, 1998; Klassen, 2004; Lent, Lopez & Bieschke, 1991; Lopez & Lent, 1992; Usher & Pajares, 2006a, 2006b, 2008). The perception that a particular performance has been a success has the effect of raising teacher efficacy which leads to notion that the performance will be successful in the future, while the perception that it has been a failure has the effect of lowering teacher efficacy, thereby leading to the notion that future performances will all be failures (Bandura, 1986). Social persuasions from a peer or supervisor such as a pep talk can boost a teacher’s efficacy enough to contribute to a successful performance and although not permanent, can lead a person to initiate a task, attempt new strategies, or simply try hard enough to succeed (Bandura, 1982). Vicarious
experiences such as watching others teach successfully, especially admired teachers, leads to the understanding that the task of teaching is manageable, and the resources are available which increases a teacher’s sense of self efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Teacher coursework and professional development opportunities provide teachers with additional tools, strategies, and methods to teach effectively, although these do not increase self efficacy until they have been implemented successfully in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Positive feedback from supervisors, other teachers, parents, and students about how a teacher’s skills are ample for meeting the challenge of teaching is an extremely strong source of teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Teacher efficacy and levels of experience.

College coursework and vicarious teaching experience have an impact on General Teacher Efficacy (Watters & Ginns, 1995), while actual student teaching experiences have a greater impact on Personal Teacher Efficacy (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990a). When student teaching experiences are moved into slowly and manageably, efficacy tends to rise, but when student teachers are suddenly immersed in the complexities of teaching with little support, efficacy declines (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teacher preparation programs should give pre-service teachers more opportunities for hands-on instruction in a variety of contexts with multiple levels of complexity and challenges in order to provide more mastery experiences with quality performance feedback (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Usher & Pajares, 2008). An
ideal situation would be apprenticeships where variables could be more controllable such as smaller class sizes with higher performing students (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

When novice teachers arrive at their first teaching assignment, they are often set back by the reality of the complex nature of teaching and overwhelming aspects of the job (Weinstein, 1988). Often, in the first year of teaching, GTE will decline (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990a) and in-service teachers typically will have lower levels of GTE than pre-service teachers (Pigge & Marso, 1993). Efficacious in-service teachers have a more positive reaction to teaching, experience less stress, and rate their level of preparation much higher than less efficacious teachers (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). They attributed much of their positive reaction to supportive supervisors and fellow teachers (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

For the experienced veteran teachers, efficacy seems to be stable, even after teachers are exposed to workshops and new teaching methods (Ross, 1994). Veteran teachers’ self efficacy can be changed, but less dramatically than newer teachers and new skills and techniques are not as effective in changing efficacy until the new skill or technique has been fully implemented and the veteran teacher’s ability to incorporate it has been proven (Bandura, 1997). Change for a veteran teacher is typically gradual and requires support, encouragement, and feedback to get past an initial decrease in confidence which then goes up once the teacher witnesses the effectiveness of the change and its impact on student learning (Guskey, 1989).
Veteran teachers who already have a good sense of efficacy may also be resistant to new ideas and change since they already feel confident in their own skills (Guskey, 1984, 1989).

Teacher efficacy plays a considerable role in the outcomes of the students (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Greene, Anderson, & Loewen, 1988; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990b; Soar & Soar, 1982). Teachers with high levels of self efficacy are able to exert greater effort and apply new strategies in the classroom, which leads to higher levels of student participation, which in turn leads to success for both students and teachers and a higher sense of self efficacy which becomes a cycle of success (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

As teachers become more experienced, they actively seek out these new strategies to further engage students (Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2007; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). One strategy for greater student participation and an important component of child development is play (Duckworth, 2006; Glasser, 1992; Jenkinson, 2001; Montessori, 1972; Nachmanovitch, 1991; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). The following section looks into play as both a natural component of child development as well as a means for student engagement and active learning.

**Play and Child Development**

Play, including improvisation, invention, and any other creative act, is essential to the human growth cycle (Nachmanovitch, 1991). Play is foundational to nearly every strain of child psychology, pedagogy, cognitive theory, and
developmental theory. It is the primary focus of Piaget’s *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* (Piaget, 1962). According to Piaget (1962), play is an integral part of children overcoming egocentrism, or the notion that they alone have a point of view relating to the world. In Piaget’s theory (1962), he also suggested that play is part of a child’s assimilation, imposing an existing schema on the world, imitation is a child’s accommodation, modifying that schema to fit the world, and development is driven by the continuing equilibrium between the two. Vygotsky (1978) further examined the nature of play and noted that it is through play that children begin to create and understand the rules that guide society. To the child, these rules are not formulated in advance and change during the course of play, and they are based on observations of the world as the child understands it (Vygotsky, 1978). Play is required during the transitional stage, usually between pre-school and elementary school, when a child is asked to shed the actual meaning of objects and apply symbolic meanings (Vygotsky, 1978). It is at this time that actions begin to be determined by ideas rather than by the objects themselves (Piaget, 1962, Vygotsky, 1978). It is “through play the child achieves a functional definition of concepts or objects” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 99). At this stage of development, a child’s greatest achievements are only possible in play, achievements that will become the foundation of future action and morality (Vygotsky, 1978).

Collaborative play is essential in the normal development of a child (Duckworth, 2006; Glasser, 1992; Jenkinson, 2001; Montessori, 1972). Play makes
children smarter, better adjusted, and less stressed (Wenner, 2009). Play is so important for children that the American Academy of Pediatrics published a study entitled *The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds* in which they report that "free and unstructured play is healthy and – in fact – essential for helping children reach important social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones as well as helping them manage stress and become resilient" (Ginsburg, 2007). Play has been mandated by the United Nations, when in 1990, they adopted *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 31 of which states:

1. Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2. Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

(Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1990, pg. 9)

Historically, play has been present in nearly all schools in the U.S. in the form of recess (Brint, 2006; Ginsburg, 2007; Jenkinson, 2001; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009; Trickey, 2006; Wenner, 2009). Up until middle school, children are typically allotted one hour of unstructured play either
outdoors on a playground or indoors with limited to no instruction (Brint, 2006; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). This element is typically removed around the sixth or seventh grade and sometimes returns in the form of a free period in high school, but it loses the essence of recess (Brint, 2006). Since No Child Left Behind, (school accountability legislation passed in 2002 under the Bush administration) many schools have reduced or removed recess from the grade school curriculum in favor of more instruction on standards in preparation for state and national testing (Ravitch, 2010; Trickey, 2006). A side effect of reducing the time for play in school is the increase in the average weight of American students and the diminished sense of self esteem (Ginsburg, 2007; Trickey, 2006; Wenner, 2009).


Improvisation

Improvisation simply put is to create a response, a solution, an invention, or an environment in a specific moment, without a script, and as required by the situation (Book, 2002; Lobman 2011; Spolin, 1999). It is the combination of active listening, effective analyzing, and appropriate responding to specific stimuli (Spolin, 1999; Thies, 2010). A salesman may improvise a tactic to complete a sale, a doctor...
may improvise a treatment for a specific emergency, or a speaker may improvise a clear response to an audience question (Thies, 2010). Improvisation is an activity in which humans engage when a pre-existing response is either unavailable or does not yet exist (Thies, 2010).

Improvisation training has been applied to the medical field to teach communication skills for physician-patient interaction with first year medical students (Hoffman, Utley, & Ciccarone, 2008). The Fuquua School of Business at Duke University offers a course as well as intensive workshops on business and managerial improvisation to their MBS students (Berk, 2009). Developed by adjunct professor Robert Kulthan and Craig Fox, the course is designed to build trust, foster teamwork and brainstorming, improve communication and presentation skills, promote creative problem solving, respond rapidly and decisively to unanticipated challenges, think critically in real situations and recognize opportunities as they arise, increase comfort levels with change and risk taking, and manage change while promoting a supporting improvisational corporate culture (Berk, 2009).

Improvisation history.

American theatrical improvisation, or improv, was established by Viola Spolin in the 1940s (Bebb, 1988). The initial idea for a series of creativity games came from Spolin’s early work with Northwestern University sociologist, Neva Boyd at Chicago’s Hull House School (Bebb, 1988). In the school, Boyd employed traditional game structures to promote unity and positive social behavior in
immigrant and inner-city children (Bebb, 1988). The games were meant to promote creative expression through self discovery and personal experiences between children with extremely diverse backgrounds (Bebb, 1988; Thies, 2010). Spolin then developed a series of games to prepare children and young adults for work on film and television productions. The games helped young actors to respond effectively in the moment during auditions and filming (Bebb, 1988). She brought the craft back to Chicago in the mid 1950s where her son employed these techniques in his newly created Second City Theatre Company (Bebb, 1998). In 1963, she published Improvisation for the Theater which has become the seminal textbook for anyone seeking to employ the techniques of improv (Bebb, 1998; Book, 2002; Lobman, 2007, 2010; Thies, 2010). The opening lines of the book speak not only to actors seeking to improve their craft but to anyone wishing to be more effective at the art of improvisation:

We learn through experience and experiencing, and no one teaches anyone anything. This is as true for the infant moving from kicking and crawling to walking as it is for the scientist with his equations. If the environment permits it, anyone can learn whatever he chooses to learn; and if the individual permits it, the environment will teach him everything it has to teach. "Talent" or "lack of talent" has little to do with it. (Spolin, 1999, p. 3)
**Rules of improvisation.**

The seven most commonly accepted principals of improvisation are trust, acceptance, attentive listening, spontaneity, storytelling, nonverbal communication, and warm-ups (Berk, 2009). Some variations of these principals include mirror, in which participants are encouraged to either copy what they see or compliment it in some way; give and take, in which communication is shared equally among all participants; explore and heighten, in which all information is deemed valid by participants then built upon to develop into a new level; and transformation, in which combining all aspects of the work creates a transformation of shared information into an entirely new creation (Thies, 2010). Common to all variations of improvisation is the basic principal of acceptance, often referred to as Yes, and..., in which participants are forbidden from denying or saying no to any situation or bit of information offered by other participants (Bebb, 1998; Berk, 2009; Book, 2002; Johnstone, 1981; Lobman, 2005, 2007, 2010; Sawyer, 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Spolin, 1986, 1999; Thies, 2010).

Improvisation has become a highly respected tool for not only actors, but also directors, psychologists, and educators (Book, 2002; Lobman, 2010; Spolin, 1999). Recognizing the value of improvisation for the traditional classroom environment, Spolin (1986) published a teacher’s handbook entitled *Theater Games for the Classroom*, which describes in detail how to apply theatrical improv to traditional curriculum. Many researchers have since drawn the parallel between expert teaching
and improvisation (Baker-Sennett & Matusov, 1997; Borko & Livingston, 1989; Lobman, 2010; Yinger, 1980, 1987). The next section will look at ongoing research in training educators to use improvisation as an effective means of instruction.

*Improvisation for educators.*

For many students in the U.S., especially students in urban centers with concentrated poverty, schools offer few opportunities to engage in activities that foster the kind of creative, risk-taking, and group learning that supports overall human development (Davis, 2005; Eisner, 1998; Holzman; 2009; Lobman, 2010; Nachmanovich, 2001). One tool that has both been able to provide these creative opportunities for students as well empower teachers to create more developmental learning environments is theatrically based improvisation (Lobman, 2010).

Improvisation, like other creative activities, allows the ensemble to develop and create without knowing exactly what is being created prior to starting (Lobman & Lundquist, 2007). Improvisation is a form of play that has a structure well suited to the classroom (Lobman, 2007; Spolin, 1986). The participants are allowed to create together using the rules and strategies of improv as a framework for the creativity (Johnstone, 1981; Lobman, 2010; Sawyer, 1997b; Spolin, 1999). “This combination of structure and emergent activity is critical for teachers who are working inside schools because it provides a way to play within the constraints of the school environment” (Lobman, 2010, p. 9). The structure of improvisation allows students to actively connect with each other while engaging more fully with the
material they are expected to learn (Sullivan, 2010). The improvisation exercises are simple, requiring little additional training for instructors, but more importantly, teachers are allowed to act as guides, rather than experts and “help students to take risks, increase their confidence, and demonstrate the critical-thinking skills and knowledge of concepts needed for the course – while having fun learning together” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 68).

The Developing Teachers Fellowship Program.

The Developing Teachers Fellowship Program (DTFP) was created in New York City in 2006 by the East Side Institute, an independent non-profit organization, in an effort to develop non-traditional approaches to teaching and learning (Lobman, 2007, 2010). The DTFP is a long term research experiment which uses professional development training of improvisation techniques to gauge their impact on teachers and students of New York City’s public school system (Lobman, 2007). Participants, referred to as Fellows, are credentialed teachers currently working in public schools in the New York City area (Lobman, 2010). Fellows are required to attend bi-weekly workshops, to receive monthly on-site mentoring from a trained East Side Institute instructor, and to demonstrate a final in-school project which implements the training (Lobman, 2007). The workshop activities serve at least four purposes:

1) building the ensemble of the Fellows in the workshop and creating a supportive learning environment; 2) teaching the skills of improvisation that
are key in building the learning environment in the classroom; 3) giving teachers improv activities that they can use in their own classrooms; and 4) drawing attention to teaching and learning as performances that can be developed (Lobman, 2007, p. 4).

At the core of the program is the understanding that teaching is similar in form and practice to theatrically improvised performances as well as pretend play, a concept which is heavily influenced by the work of Vygotsky (Lobman, 2007). According to Vygotsky (1978), children are able to perform at levels that are developmentally above where they currently are. Due to the complex relationships between the rules of the play and imaginary situations created for the play, “A child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). This notion that play allows children to perform above their level of development is a central tenet of Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The DTFP applies this concept of the ZPD by training educators to create environments in which students can take risks, make mistakes, and support each other in learning to do that which they do not yet know how to do (Lobman, 2010).

The program currently trains a small number of educators each year and is ongoing; it makes no claim to effect system-wide changes (Lobman, 2010). However, many of the teachers who have completed the program claim to be dramatically affected by skills, techniques, and concepts acquired during the
fellowship (Lobman, 2007, 2010). Fellows report that the training has a powerful effect on the positive learning environment, their classroom management skills, their understanding of how students approach learning, their roles as educators, and most recently, ways to work within a standards-based framework (Lobman, 2010). The Developing Teachers Fellowship Program teaches practical tools as well as new understandings of how to challenge the existing methodology of most schools which is based on learning as a linear and sequential acquisition and demonstration of knowledge (Lobman, 2010). By linking learning with development and viewing teachers as performers who create a playful, improvisational, and fun environment where children want to learn, the DTFP seeks to draw attention to new approaches that support academic achievement without sacrificing creativity and playfulness (Lobman, 2010).

Much has been documented on classroom improvisation in terms of its benefits to learners (Baker-Sennett & Matusov, 1997; Borko & Livingston, 1989: Lobman, 2005, 2007, 2010; Sawyer, 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Spolin, 1986; Sullivan, 2010; Thies, 2010; Yinger, 1980, 1987). Aside from the DTFP, little documentation is available to demonstrate the benefits improvisation has on teachers. In order to fully understand how improvisation skills may benefit teachers, it is useful to understand how teachers already employ such techniques. The following section looks at how teachers already behave similar to performers and utilize similar techniques.
Teacher as Performer

The comparison of effective classroom teaching to theatrical performance has a well established history (Baker-Sennett & Matusov, 1997; Lessinger & Gillis, 1976; Lobman, 2006, 2007, 2010; McLaren, 1986, Pineau, 1994; Rubin, 1985; Sarason, 1999; Sawyer, 1997, 2004; Timpson & Tobin, 1982). The metaphor of teacher as performer encourages teachers to think of themselves as actors on stage performing for the benefit of the students (Lessinger & Gillis, 1976; Rubin, 1985; Timpson & Tobin, 1982). This metaphor suggests that the skills of a teacher are the same as those of the performer: presentation, delivery, voice, movement, and timing (Sawyer, 2004). The expectation of a teacher is to perform like an actor in a play, to interpret and present the material in an interesting fashion, not to actually write the script (Viadero, 1999). In crowded urban school districts, scripted curricula have become increasingly prevalent, and although their usage works to de-professionalize teachers, this format draws even more parallels within the metaphor of teachers as performers (Ravitch, 2010; Sawyer, 2004). As teachers gain experience over time, many develop various performance techniques such as improvisation and theatricality to creatively repeat instruction which has become routine (Berliner, 1987; Berliner & Tikunoff, 1976; Borko & Livingston, 1989; Moore, 1993; Yinger, 1987).

The concept that the core of teaching naturally should be a type of performance is both self-evident and oxymoronic (Pineau, 1994). “As a colloquial
expression, the performance metaphor is readily acknowledged by seasoned educators who recognize that effective teaching often relies upon ‘theatrical’ techniques of rehearsal, scripting, improvisation, characterization, timing, stage presence, and critical reviews” (Pineau, 1994, p. 4). However, the notion of performance generally retains a largely pejorative identity in American cultural psyche (Pineau, 1994). Most educators firmly believe that teaching is too functionally utilitarian an activity and that it is far too important a discipline to be considered an art form (Reitman, 1986). Because of its very nature, performance is associated with pretense, artifice, deception, affectation, and entertainment, all concepts educators seek to avoid (Pineau, 1994). References to performance based teaching and theatricality in the classroom typically are quickly dismissed as non-educative and “attest to how deeply ingrained and fiercely maintained our antitheatrical prejudice becomes when performance impinges in any significant manner on the very serious business of education” (Pineau, 1994, pg. 5).

Research literature on the metaphor of teacher as performer mostly suggests only the meager benefit of enhancing instructional communication (Pineau, 1994). A potential reason for some of the resistance to this metaphor may lie in the perception of a potential for effective delivery of instruction without a deeper understanding of the meaning of the information (Sawyer, 2004). An example of this notion of superficiality is the Dr. Fox Lecture where a professional actor delivered a well rehearsed, enthusiastic lecture that was intentionally meaningless
which had been strung together using impressive, academic sounding phrases to three separate groups of trained psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychiatric social workers and to educators and administrators at a university and was ultimately given high marks by the audience (Naftulin, Ware, & Donnelly, 1973). The researchers based the study on the hypothesis that student ratings of educators depended largely on personality variables and less on educational content, or rather style over substance (Naftulin, Ware, & Donnelly, 1973). The researchers ultimately concluded that personality and performance must be a factor in learning if even professional educators could be effectively convinced that they had had a learning experience from an effective but meaningless performance (Naftulin, Ware, & Donnelly, 1973).

Another reason for the resistance to this metaphor lies in an impoverished concept of performance where the perception of acting a lesson conjures the notion of merely speeding up the delivery and being enthusiastic and theatrical (Sarason, 1999; Pineau, 1994). This not only is a poor interpretation of the nuances of performance, but it also diminishes the complexity of educational interactions (Sarason, 1999; Sawyer, 1997a; Pineau, 1994).

Despite the stigma, some educators have begun to view performance as both an instructional metaphor (Lobman, 2010; McLaren, 1986, 1989b; Sawyer, 2004) and as a pedagogical method (Fuoss & Hill, 1992; Harrison-Pepper, 1991; Pineau, 1994). Interdisciplinary exchange between performance scholars and education scholars offers a new paradigm for conceptualizing educational culture, the dynamics
of instructional communication, and methods of teacher training as well as methodological procedures for participatory, kinesthetic learning strategies in the classroom (Pineau, 1994).

Performance-based storytelling can be used to create the content and syllabus of a course on interpersonal communication (Pineau, 1994). Student responses to this process are favorable both because they can recognize the connections between theory and practice and because they are able to assume responsibility in creating the content and structure of the course (Pineau, 1994). Performance also increases the speed with which students grasp ideas, the depth to which they can internalize them, and the consistency with which they will hold themselves and other students accountable for their actions (Pineau, 1994).

Summary

To become a credentialed teacher in the United States requires a substantial amount of time and dedication for compensation and recognition that does not equal that of other professions (Brint, 2006; Costlow, 2001; Green, 1988; Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2007; Kramer, 1991; NCES, 2001). Once credentialed, initial assignments are likely to be less desirable than positions held by senior teachers and placement is often in schools that are themselves struggling both financially and academically (California Educator, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). The expectations on the new teachers will be high, professional development and collaborative support are likely to be minimal, and retention in initial
assignments will statistically be low (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ingersoll, 2003a; Johnson, 1990; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Guarino, et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2007). In order to feel effective in these circumstances, a host of conditions and variables must fall into place and when they do not, within five years, there is as much of a chance that new teachers will leave their chosen careers as there is that they will stay to become efficacious, veteran teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hafner & Owings, 1991; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990a; Huling-Austin, 1990; Murnane et al.; 1991; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

A method to promote student learning and development while increasing teachers’ confidence is collaborative play (Duckworth, 2006; Glasser, 1992; Jenkinson, 2001; Montessori, 1972; Nachmanovitch, 1991; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). One form of collaborative play that has proven results is classroom improvisation (Book, 2002; Lobman, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2011; Pinaeu, 1994; Sawyer, 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Spolin, 1986, 1999; Thies, 2010). Since the profession of teaching shares many of the same expectations as theatrical performance, a paradigm of teacher as performer has been suggested (Baker-Sennett & Matusov, 1997; Borko & Livingston, 1989; Lessinger & Gillis, 1976; Lobman, 2005, 2007, 2010; Sarason, 1999; Sawyer, 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Spolin, 1986; Sullivan, 2010; Thies, 2010; Timpson & Tobin, 1982; Yinger, 1980, 1987). If the paradigm of teacher as performer can be accepted, and if improvisation in the classroom has significant
benefits to both teachers and students, training new and even veteran teachers as
performers using theatrical improvisation techniques holds the potential for
increasing teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and in turn might both increase retention
rates of teachers as well as improve classroom instruction for students.

The next chapter presents the methodology I used in researching the impact
of improvisation training on teachers’ sense of self efficacy.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Throughout my adult life, I have pursued two vocations: education and performance, and I have consciously strived to keep the two separate. It was significant to me that so little research had been undertaken in merging the two and analyzing the results. In researching the literature, I discovered limited research on the topic undertaken by only a handful of scholars in the area of my particular question of performance training, or more specifically, theatrical improvisation training and its impact on teachers’ sense of efficacy. Yet throughout the process of conducting the research for this thesis, in conversations I have had with professors, colleagues, and participants, people have been unanimous in the notion that combining these two vocations seems both obvious and exciting.

Armed with the information from my review of the literature, I undertook a pilot study to help develop my methodology and my method. I selected two participants, one distinctly from the field of education and one distinctly from the field of improvisation. It was not my intention to choose the two based on similarities or differences, but rather on level of achievement in their chosen vocations. The teacher was a colleague of mine with several years of classroom experience and a current assignment in teaching in an Education department at a
small rural university. The performer was a stage actor and improviser currently
guest-teaching performance classes at a nearby performing arts college. Neither
would be considered novices in their respective fields, nor would they be considered
veterans. With their full permission, I observed both of them in their respective
classrooms, taking field notes which I coded and analyzed. I then interviewed both
using the same questions about their training and experience. Again with their
permission, I recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed the interviews. What
became apparent early on in the pilot were the striking similarities in the two
subjects’ approaches and abilities. Both were very comfortable in front of their
students. Both were highly engaging. Both were deep in the process of developing
their own unique pedagogies. Both were working with college students not much
younger than themselves, and both were quite confident with that population.
Neither had come to their current positions actively; rather they both had stumbled
into them and had strong opinions about what their professions were and what they
were not.

Although it was only a small qualitative pilot study, the conclusion I drew
from my research was that to some degree teaching is a type of performance.
Effective teaching typically incorporates improvisation skills as an effective
technique for engaging the students and communicating the lessons, including the
use of improvisational humor. A final discovery from my pilot was that of self-
labeling. The teacher in my study did not consider himself a performer and
downplayed the role of improvisation experience in his formal training while the performer, despite actually being commissioned as a teacher, did not consider himself an actual teacher and downplayed the role of pedagogy in his formal training. While the Education teacher focused far more on formal training and college coursework, the improvisation teacher focused far more on experience and was dismissive of his formal education. Upon being pressed, the teacher revealed a much deeper connection to performance experience and to improvisation training. He ultimately revealed the experience he had of teaching an acting/improvisation class at a local middle school which he had previously failed to mention. Conversely, upon being pressed, the performer revealed far more formal training in Education and a number of teaching experiences that had not previously been mentioned. The performer also noted that both of his parents are college educators, and, in his opinion, neither would consider him to be pursuing teaching.

Some of the conclusions I drew from this, which appear to be backed up by the literature, are that although teachers use performance techniques, they do not consider themselves performers, just as performers are reluctant to consider themselves teachers, even when employed as such. This may be due to the years of time, training, and experience that have gone into their chosen professions, and it is merely a preference to be labeled by that chosen vocation. It may also be that teachers believe their profession to be an interaction between teacher and students which does not fit their definition of the one-way exchange between a performer and
audience. More specifically, it could be that progressive teachers consider
performers to be too behaviorist and prefer to be viewed as guiding student learning
rather than simply delivering instruction, their conception being that performance on
a stage inherently distances the performer from the audience. Conversely,
behaviorist teachers may consider the labeling of teaching as performance too
progressive and in opposition with their view of a traditional learning environment.

The conclusions drawn from my pilot and the questions that arose have
helped me to narrow my research question for this thesis and develop an instrument
to measure it.

Development of the Training

In order to assess if performance training, specifically improvisation training
could have a measureable impact on teacher efficacy, I needed some form of
treatment to be administered to a sample group. I was interested in a using
phenomenological approach in which I could study any response teachers might have
to the use of improvisation. From early on, I had anticipated developing some type
of improvisation training workshop to be offered to voluntary participants and to
conduct a pre- and post-test to see if the workshop had an impact on their teaching or
sense of self-efficacy. I made the decision to separate myself from the position of
presenter after a discussion with some colleagues about bias. We determined that
there was a risk of participants responding to questions both during the workshop
and on the surveys in a manner that they perceived that I would like if I were the
presenter. I invited my own improvisation mentor to assist me in developing the workshop, and we ultimately decided that he would present the workshop himself while I would remain a neutral observer. The presenter had been teaching improvisation technique to students for nearly twenty five years and was the founder of a successful improvisation training school in a large metropolitan area known for the performing arts.

The presenter and I collaboratively created a syllabus containing what we felt were the key components of improv training, particularly geared toward classroom teachers’ needs. We did not alter drastically from what he would typically teach to performers or any other group of students who would enroll in one of his regular improvisation classes. However, we did condense what would normally be taught over the course of several weeks into one succinct seven-hour workshop. We determined that seven hours could be too little time for a serious impact, and so we created a series of assignments to be given as homework to increase their exposure to the material. In order to comply with the Salary Point Commission, 30 hours of homework were required. Homework consisted of three optional readings which were used in this research and cited in the literature review. Homework also consisted of five optional in-class improvisation activities that were taught and practiced during the workshop. We included two follow-up discussion sessions to be proctored by the presenter and myself in which participants could discuss and share stories and ideas that arose from the training.
I thought that providing participants the opportunity to earn one salary point towards step advancement on the school district’s pay scale or professional development hours towards credential renewal might further entice their participation in the study. To that end, I presented a proposal to the school district and teachers’ union which was immediately and unanimously approved.

The final factor to consider in the development of the workshop was the location in which to hold it. We discussed in detail the benefits of having it in a school setting where the participants would feel most comfortable and be able to see in practice exactly how to execute the activities in the environment for which they were intended. However, we decided that the performance nature of the topic outweighed the need for site specific training, and the benefit of situating the exercises in a space clearly designated for performance would help to unite the themes of performance and education.

*Development of the Research Instrument*

I intended to create an instrument relying on mixed measures of research. I wanted some of my data to be quantitative in nature to give me measurable information to analyze confidence levels and teaching prerogatives. However, since a key element of this study is something typically considered a performance art, I felt the need for detail rich qualitative data as well. Consequently, I developed two online surveys as my research instruments and administered them through a Survey Monkey account. The surveys were developed around four main themes; student
engagement, instructional strategies, teaching expectations, and confidence as an instructor. With the theme of student engagement, I was most concerned with how teachers dealt with difficult students, how they motivated all students, and how they promoted success in a group of diverse learners. With the theme of instructional strategies, I was most concerned with what techniques teachers used for lesson planning, how teachers crafted appropriate questions during instruction, how they implemented alternative strategies when necessary, and how they dealt with the unknown or unexpected. With the theme of teaching expectations, I was most concerned with the participants’ definition of the ideal learning environment, their perceptions of their own limitations in their teaching abilities, the expectations they had for their students, and the expectations they had of themselves. Finally, with the theme of confidence as a teacher, I was interested in observing how all the methods that teachers applied in and out of their classrooms were met with the realities of the occupation.

*Pre-workshop survey questions.*

Participants were asked to complete a pre-workshop survey that was made available online two days prior to the workshop. The pre-workshop survey consisted of two brief background information questions and an anonymous identifier question to be used in matching the results with the post-survey responses. This was followed by a series of 26 response items consisting of multiple-choice, short answer, and short essay-style questions. The first two survey questions asked respondents to
describe familiarity with and utilization of stage improvisation. An example of this type of question is “Have you ever used improvisation in the classroom?” Respondents were asked to rate their familiarity with stage improvisation and describe any history with the application of improvisation in their classrooms. All other questions were developed with the main research themes in mind.

For the first two themes of student engagement and instructional strategies, I included elements of an existing instrument with well-developed construct validity, factor analysis, and subscale scores. Every fifth question on the pre-treatment survey was taken with permission directly from the Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) long form developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk. The questions I chose load into two moderately correlated factors: Efficacy in Student Engagement and Efficacy in Instructional Strategies which have both been discussed in the literature review. The mean (M) score on the TSES, according to Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), for both categories is 7.3 with a Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.1. This instrument uses a nine point scale whereas my instrument used a five point scale. To compensate for the difference in mean scores, I analyzed my scores with my own mean scores as well as one that correlates with the TSES scale. On my survey, the first three questions are in the Efficacy in Student Engagement category and the last two are in the Efficacy in Instructional Strategies category.

In addition to these five questions, I developed 18 questions for further analysis. Although many of the questions overlap more than one theme, each
question fits directly into a primary theme and indirectly into an additional theme or themes. In the theme of student engagement, I asked questions such as “What are some techniques you currently employ to engage all students in classroom discussion?” Another question was “What percentage of the time do you feel you have effective control over the students?” For the theme of instructional strategies, I asked questions such as “How do you respond to questions in your classroom to which you do not have the immediate answer?” Another question asked “What techniques do you currently employ to stimulate students to further investigate lessons in and out of the classroom?”

The next theme I sought to analyze was teaching expectations. I included a series of questions aimed at determining the existing teaching practices of the participants and their perceptions of ideal teaching styles. With the knowledge of the many factors that go into defining a teaching style and the complex natures of progressive and behaviorist teaching, I attempted to create a very basic set of characteristics for each participant to choose from, thereby roughly defining them as Progressivism (P) leaning or Behaviorism (B) leaning. In its simplest terms and for the purpose of this research, (P) leaning teachers would consider themselves a guide in each student’s learning experience. This teacher would favor a room that was flexible where students could interact and collaborate, and all participants would actively ask questions and explore together (Duckworth, 2006; Freire, 1970; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). (B) leaning teachers would consider themselves more of an
expert in the learning process. This teacher would favor a room with desks that are facing forward, and in which students learn by acquisition or by the transmission of information in one direction, from the teacher to the student (Gillen, 2000; Skinner, 1968).

Several of the questions attempted to define these teacher styles and practices. For three of the questions, I created a ten point scale. Responses were valued with a point per selection that indicated either teaching style. An example of one of these types of questions is “How important is it to affirm or reward a student’s original conclusion or idea?” A large part of this score came from a question asking participants to “describe the ideal classroom.”

The final theme that I looked for in the survey had to do with current confidence in teaching practice. For example, one question asked “How do you respond to questions in your classroom to which you do not have the immediate answer?” Another asked how confident respondents felt as teachers. Participants were given a five point scale, ranging from no confidence yet to extremely confident. In another question, respondents were asked to give their opinion of what were the greatest threats to their confidence as educators. They were given the ability to select as many options as they preferred. Finally, I posed two additional questions, one relating to confidence and one to interest. One question inquired how comfortable respondents were at exploring topics outside of the teacher’s content area. This question used the same five point scale with responses ranging from not
comfortable at all to very comfortable. The other asked participants to describe their interest in improvisation training for educators. (See Appendix A for a copy of the complete pre-workshop survey.)

*Post-workshop survey questions.*

The post-workshop survey was made available beginning two weeks after the workshop and left open a full seven weeks after the workshop. Participants were asked to attend an additional discussion session three weeks after the workshop, and participants of this session were encouraged to add to or alter their responses based on themes discussed in the session as well as any additional discoveries made while they continued using the improvisation exercises in their classrooms.

The post-workshop survey consisted of that same matching identifier from the pre-workshop survey and several questions asking if and to what extent the teacher had implemented techniques and improvisational exercises from the workshop. The survey included the same five questions from the TSES and two new essay style questions asking respondents to document improvisational activities attempted and the impact they perceived they had on instruction. For the remainder of the questions, I focused on the four main themes of my research, but rather than ask the same indirect questions from the pre-workshop survey, I altered the questions to be more direct in relation to my research. A typical post-workshop survey question was “Do you feel your confidence has improved as a result of improv
A total of 16 questions were included in the post-workshop survey. (See Appendix B for a copy of the complete post-workshop survey.)

Recruitment and Procedure

Advertising for the workshop was done by both the district and the union on their respective websites publicizing pre-approved salary point/step advancement courses. (See Appendix C for a copy of the Improv for Educators Flyer.) In an effort to remain neutral and unbiased in the recruitment of participants, I chose to do no further advertising. This would later prove to be an error in judgment. The date of the workshop was scheduled for Sunday, November 13, 2011. The date was chosen based on what I considered to be an optimum day for teacher participation and the availability of an ideal theatre space in which to work.

Twenty-three teachers inquired about enrollment via e-mail and telephone. Thirteen teachers confirmed they would attend. Five teachers asked about the possibility of rescheduling or attending any future workshops. Three teachers asked if this was comedy training and upon hearing the nature of the workshop, one ultimately was unavailable, and the other two said they would try to attend but could not confirm. The remaining two teachers failed to reply after the initial e-mailed inquiry.

On the Friday prior to the workshop, an e-mail went out to all confirmed participants. It thanked them for their interest, explained the research aspect of workshop, and asked for voluntary participation in the online pre-workshop survey.
It was very clear that participation in the survey was voluntary and not in any way a requirement of the workshop or the receiving of a salary point. Prior to the workshop, four participants completed surveys and all others completed surveys immediately after the workshop.

*Pre-workshop survey participants.*

According to responses on the pre-workshop survey, one participant was a high school English teacher with eleven years of teaching, four were English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers with between eight and seventeen years of teaching experience (one response indicated a lifetime of experience which cannot be accurately translated), one was a third grade charter school teacher, and two were fine arts teachers. Of the last two, one had been an acting teacher for fourteen years and the other an improvisation teacher with five years teaching experience.

The day of the workshop proved to be challenging. I received three e-mail responses of cancellation due to various personal issues. The weather made it even more difficult with heavy rainfall throughout the night prior to and during the entire morning of the workshop. Rainfall in this metropolitan area is infrequent and often results in traffic delays and challenging road conditions. People are likely to avoid non-essential travel on days of inclement weather. The workshop also occurred the weekend prior to the Thanksgiving holiday which may have also had an effect on attendance.
The workshop took place in a mid-sized theatre in the heart of the city’s theatre district. It had approximately 100 seats positioned on a downward slope towards the flat stage. There was no proscenium or any type of separation between the seating area and the performance area. The stage was approximately thirty feet wide and twenty feet deep and was on the lowest level of the seating. At approximately 9:15, the workshop presenter stepped onto the stage and began the session. At the commencement of the workshop, the presenter first explained the nature of the workshop as well as the nature of the research and asked if all participants were comfortable with me documenting the events. All agreed, and the presenter asked for the participants to give a brief description of themselves and the reasons they were attending the workshop.

*Workshop participants.*

All names of participants are pseudonyms.

Jason was a European American male in his late thirties. He stated that he taught various subjects and made a reference to his dislike for ninth and tenth grade students. He admitted to not initially intending to be a teacher. He said that he had given up a lifelong dream of being an actor, and that many years prior, he had attended an actor training class at the school that the presenter operated. He also stated that he was participating in the workshop to explore the possibilities of implementing improvisation techniques in his classrooms. He said that he was
interested in the salary point as well and that his experience with the presenter’s school was purely coincidental.

Jennifer was a Jewish female in her early forties. She did not initially mention what subject she taught but from later discussions, I determined that she was an ESL instructor. She stated that she had previous experience with acting and that to some degree was still a performer. She described an affinity with kinesthetic learning, and she saw the value in implementing improvisation techniques in the classroom. She then stated that despite her beliefs, she was severely restricted by her administrators on what she was allowed to do in her classroom.

Sonia was a Latina in her mid-forties. She had a noticeable accent, and she mentioned that she was very eager to try any option to increase student learning. She stated that she had personal knowledge of my teaching style and that this was an important factor in her decision to take this workshop. She also mentioned that she had not initially set out to be a teacher. She said she moved to the United States from Guadalajara, Mexico, when she was nineteen to be a nanny in Los Angeles. Eventually, her love of helping people prompted her to get a teaching credential, and now she was teaching advanced level ESL classes.

At this point, Lisa arrived apologizing for her tardiness, explaining that despite great difficulty in getting there, she was excited to explore the work. Lisa was a European American woman in her late twenties. She stated that she taught third graders at an exclusive Los Angeles charter school at which she ended up quite
by accident. She admitted that her primary purpose in attending was the salary point offered and that of all the district salary point classes offered, this by far sounded like the most interesting one. She also stated that she loved her job as well as her students. She said she had always wanted to be a teacher and had no experience with either improvisation or with performance. She brought with her a stack of homework that she had intended to grade during the workshop, but she never got the opportunity to start.

The remaining three participants did not take the time to introduce themselves other than stating their names. Arnold was a European American male in his early forties. Peter was a European American male in his late thirties, and based on his comments he had a strong background in music. Lisa was a European American female in her mid-thirties and gave every indication of being intent on participating in all activities. Each time an exercise or game was introduced, she was always the first up to participate.

*Exercises.*

Of the exercises taught and practiced, I labeled them as Warm-up, Give and Take, Explore and Heighten, and Transformation. A Warm-up exercise would be any group activity that the presenter employed to stimulate blood flow and energy in the participants. It can also serve as a vocal warm-up to get participants engaged in communicating verbally as well as physically. A Give and Take exercise would be any activity between at least two participants where the emphasis is to promote
active listening and thoughtful responding from each individual. The key to a successful Give and Take exercise is ensuring that no one voice dominates the exchange. This kind of exercise can consist of as few as two participants engaging while the rest of the class observes, or it can consist of up to the entire class participating at once. An Explore and Heighten exercise would be any activity in which the emphasis is to thoroughly investigate all information presented by participants and then constructively build upon that information. This type of activity shares the basic premise of Give and Take but promotes the deeper exploration of information and the continuous addition of new information upon which participants can explore. A Transformation exercise would be any activity in which participants are encouraged to combine aspects of all other exercises in an effort to create a new outcome as a result of transforming ideas into something entirely different. In this type of exercise, participants work together using a collaboration of unique individual ideas in an effort to produce a group idea that is not dominated by any one participant’s input, but rather is a fully shared, fully realized new idea. (See Appendix D for detailed explanations and directions for each exercise.) All exercises were based on the improvisational rule of Yes, and… which enforces that notion that participants must not deny any statement or concept given by another participant and must subsequently add something to it.

Workshop conclusion.
Despite the low attendance, energy throughout the session was high, participation was strong, and participants seemed eager to learn the material. The presenter covered various aspects on the nature of improvisation, its history, and its current applications. He repeatedly brought either the entire group or subsets of the group up on stage to learn and practice many different improvisation exercises and encouraged questions and discussions on the exercises’ applicability in various classrooms for various subjects. Each teacher was given the opportunity to perform collaboratively with other participants using several improvisational techniques.

Upon completion of the workshop, a homework sheet was given to each participant. (See Appendix E for a copy of the Homework Assignment Sheet.) Students were asked to include comments about the homework in the post-treatment survey. The workshop ended, and although there seemed to be a general sense of enthusiasm and accomplishment, there was also a noticeable sense of exhaustion. Participants shared personal information amongst themselves and after some brief discourse and praise for the instructor, everyone left. Throughout the workshop I took detailed field notes which I later coded and analyzed for major themes. I determined a major theme to be any event or topic that occurred on multiple occasions.

Discussion session.

Three weeks after the initial workshop, all participants were asked to attend at least one follow-up session to discuss their implementation of the training into
their classrooms. Although two were initially planned, only one occurred due to participant scheduling issues. The discussion session was held at a coffee-shop not far from the theatre space. It lasted four hours and was proctored by the workshop presenter and me. The entire session was openly recorded, and I took field notes. I later transcribed the recording and coded and analyzed both the field notes and the transcription.

Summary

A small group of teachers participated in a workshop on using improvisation in the classroom, taking a pre- and a post-workshop survey, as well as participating in the post-workshop debriefing meeting. I took detailed field notes, and I provided an overview of how I extracted the data from the surveys and discussion session, coded them and analyzed them. Results of this research are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the pre- and post-workshop surveys as well as the results for the workshop and discussion session described in the previous chapter. As mentioned before, I used a mixed-measures approach in this research, and the data come from both qualitative information as well as quantitative data sets.

Pre-workshop Survey Responses.

On the first two questions of this survey, I asked respondents to rate familiarity to stage improvisation and describe any history with the application of improvisation in their classrooms. Of the respondents, 57% were somewhat familiar, and 24% were very familiar. All of the respondents in this research claimed to have at least some experience with theatrical or stage improvisation. Seventy-one percent had used improvisation in the classroom. Of the respondents that said yes, Kurt claimed to “have used it to be able to shift away from my prepared material to meet the needs of the classroom. I also use improvisation to create and develop new curriculum.”

As stated in the last chapter, every fifth question on the pre-workshop survey was taken with permission directly from the Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) long form developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy. The first three questions are in the Efficacy in Student Engagement category and the last two
are in the Efficacy in Instructional Strategies category. The mean (M) score on the TSES for both categories is 7.3 with a Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.1 (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This instrument uses a nine point scale whereas my instrument used a five point scale. On my scale, participants were asked how much they could do in response to the question with a selection of “nothing” receiving a score of 1 and “a great deal” receiving a score of five. To compensate for the difference in mean scores, I analyzed my scores with my own mean score as well as one that correlates with the TSES scale. Table 4.1 below presents the mean scores of the participants to the five TSES questions.

TABLE 4.1

Pre-workshop Responses to TSES Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Q5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Workshop Mean</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSES Mean Score</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 1 asked, “How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?” Question 2 was, “How much can you do to help motivate students who show low interest in school work?” Question 3 asked, “How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?” Question 4 was, “To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?” Question 5 asked, “How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?”

With the next series of questions, I aimed to determine existing teaching practices and ideal teaching styles of the participants. Using the scoring system described in the previous chapter, I tried to define the participants based on their tendencies to be leaning more toward Behaviorism (B) or Progressivism (P). I asked respondents to describe the ideal classroom. Table 4.2 below depicts the descriptive options for responses and the rates at which they were selected. Respondents could select as many options as they liked.
### TABLE 4.2

*Describe the Ideal Classroom*

I used a scoring system that combined questions in order to get a rough idea of participants’ philosophical idea of effective instructional strategies. The nature of this research involves teachers using collaboration, multiple voices, and affirmation regardless of accuracy. Table 4.3 below presents the participants’ scores in terms of leaning toward behaviorism or progressivism in their teaching and teaching philosophy.
TABLE 4.3

Behaviorism Versus Progressivism

The majority (86%) of the respondents in this survey tended to lean toward progressivism with an average ratio of five points on the P scale to every two points on the B scale.

The final theme that I looked for in the survey had to do with current confidence in teaching practice. I asked “How do you respond to questions in your classroom to which you do not have the immediate answer?” The majority (57%) of respondents said they explore the questions with the students. A smaller percentage (29%) stated that they tell the students they will get back to them on the answer, and 14% stated that they tell the students to explore the questions on their own. I then asked how confident respondents were as teachers. Given a five point scale, ranging from no confidence yet to extremely confident, the average rating for responses was

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Behaviorism</th>
<th>Progressivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clifford</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhona</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokey</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Points Out of Ten
3.7. I asked the respondents to give their opinion of what were the greatest threats to their confidence as educators. Respondents were instructed to select as many options as they preferred. Student disengagement received the most selections (57%). The teacher not understanding the expectations required of them was the second most chosen response (43%). Students not meeting expectations and classroom management were selected by 29%, and not enough training, time management, and being personally challenged by students were selected by 14% of respondents. None of the respondents selected not knowing the answer.

Next, I asked how comfortable respondents were at exploring topics outside of the teacher’s content area. This question used the same five point scale with responses ranging from not comfortable at all to very comfortable. The average response score to this question was 3.3 with the majority (57%) of respondents choosing moderately comfortable. I also asked how the respondent felt at the end of the day. Seventy-one percent of respondents stated that they felt exhausted but in a very positive way.

I also asked participants what types of training they would consider useful in making them more effective teachers. Respondents again were given the option of selecting multiple responses. Seventy-one percent chose communication skills, working with diverse populations, and team building training. The next highest types of training selected were improvisation skills, performance skills, and leadership skills.
For the final question on the pre-workshop survey, I asked respondents to take a moment to describe their interest in the workshop *Improvisation for Educators*. Respondents mostly described their interest in terms of how it could help with student motivation, lesson planning, or general effectiveness. Kurt stated, “I am fascinated by the subject of improvisation training for educators. I believe it is the type of skill set that helps create engaged teaching, a strong collective atmosphere, active listening and strong student expression.” Laura responded, “I am interested in this training because I feel that there is always room for improving myself in any positive way. I also believe this is a very good opportunity to gain knowledge from the experts. I feel that every teacher has used improvisation in his/her class, but good improvisation will make a positive impact in our students. And that’s what I want to do with my students.”

*Post-workshop Survey Responses*

On the post-workshop survey, I asked respondents to provide the name that they used on the pre-workshop survey. The only responses that matched names provided on the pre-workshop survey were Ann, Laura, and Clifford. This does not imply that other respondents were not the same individuals from the previous survey; it merely demonstrates that I could not accurately match all respondents’ pairs of surveys. Because this was an anonymous survey, respondents may have forgotten the initial name they gave, and no further means of tracking respondents was used.
On the first question, I asked if the respondents had used improvisation in the classroom to which 100% said yes. I then asked if the respondents believed that improvisation could be a valuable tool in the classroom. Sixty percent responded with, “I think it is extremely beneficial, and I am using it a lot.”

Next, I asked respondents to take a moment to document which games they had used and make observations about their reception. Laura responded with the following:

The students' response was positive, and I could tell that they really enjoyed the exercises because they asked for more practice of this kind. I also did the mirror game to teach occupations. Students loved it because they were able to stand up and run a little bit in the classroom as they were able to learn more occupations. I try to simplify all the exercises as much as possible since I, myself, had experienced the exercises at the workshop. There, I was put in the student's position. I was anxious to get my pencil and notebook to take notes because I was afraid that I was going to forget part of the information taught at the workshop.

Most of the respondents described using Warm-up games that involved the entire class in a physical activity. When asked which games or types of games were most effective, all respondents listed the Warm-up exercises. Give and Take exercises and Explore and Heighten exercises were mentioned by all but Lauren. Transformation exercises were only mentioned by Laura and Clifford, with Clifford
commenting that transformation exercises were fun but that the students were warming up to them more slowly.

As in the pre-workshop survey, the five questions from the Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) long form were included on the post-workshop survey. Just as before, the first three questions were from the Efficacy in Student Engagement category, and the last two were from the Efficacy in Instructional Strategies category. Table 4.4 below shows both the pre-workshop mean scores to these five questions as well as the post-workshop mean scores.

TABLE 4.4

Pre- and Post-workshop Responses to TSES Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Q5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Workshop</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Workshop</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>7.56</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When I asked how fun students would rate them as teachers, respondents averaged 3.7 on the five point scale for the pre-workshop survey. For the post-workshop survey, I asked the exact same question, and respondents’ average rating increased by .1 to 3.8.
I asked respondents if they felt any change in control over classroom order as a result of improv training. The five point scale was modified here to a one being less control, a three being same level of control, and a five being more control as a result of the improv training. This was the only question to offer an option of decreased confidence as a result of the training. Sixty percent of the respondents rated having the same level of control while 40% chose the fifth option of more control as a result.

Returning to the theme of confidence, I asked a similar set of questions on the post-workshop survey that could be correlated with questions from the previous survey. I asked respondents if they felt their confidence level had improved as a result of improv training. On a five point scale ranging from a one being no improvement in confidence to a five being definitely more confidence, the average rating was 3.6. All respondents stated that the workshop made some improvement on their level of confidence, and Laura selected a five, the highest rating of improved confidence.

On the pre-workshop survey, I asked respondents how comfortable they were at exploring topics outside of their content area. On that same five point scale with one as not comfortable at all and five as very comfortable, the average rating for this question was 3.3. On the post-workshop survey, I asked, “Do you feel improv training has made you more comfortable at exploring topics with your students that
are outside of your content area?” On the same scale of one to five, the average rating was 3.8, an increase in confidence of .5.

When I asked a question about responses to textbooks discussed in the workshop, Lauren responded with,

I am excited to continue to incorporate improv throughout the curriculum because I feel that it can ‘grab’ students' attention who wouldn't otherwise be interested in school. This is especially true while teaching mathematics, as I learned while reading Chapter 5 in the text, *Unscripted Learning, Using Improv Activities Across the K-8 Curriculum*.

I concluded this survey by asking respondents to describe the effect, if any, that the *Improvisation for Educators* workshop had had on their teaching practice. Responses varied in detail with some being very brief like Lauren’s statement that, “The workshop was fun and enlightening, but I could really only implement a handful of techniques because of our intense placing plan and time constraints.” A more complex response came from Laura:

After this workshop, I can connect more with my students thanks to some of the above mentioned Total Physical Response Exercises. Personally, I didn't know exactly what to expect in the workshop. And as I was learning and participating I really wanted to take notes, which I couldn't do, because I wanted to remember everything that was going on in there. It was such a valuable workshop, that I was eager to learn as much as possible. I ended up
with a slight headache, since the class was packed with a lot of wonderful information. I think I really was exposed to what we sometimes do with our students. At some point of my teaching career some students have told me that they were learning so much that I gave them a headache. ‘In a good way.’ Now I believe that there is a more united group in my class thanks to this exercise. Students miss classmates when they are absent. Perhaps the most important impact here is that attendance has increased. I also can apply what I learned at the workshop in my daily lessons.

Workshop Themes

The following themes were developed from the most frequently occurring types of behavior from the participants as recorded in field notes from the workshop Improvisation for Educators. In no way did I try to document all activities that occurred in the workshop, nor could I have attempted to observe all unique responses to those activities. These are simply what I determined to be the major themes of the session.

Relating to practice.

Examples of the first coding theme arose shortly after introductions. The presenter asked all participants to gather onstage to learn and practice several Warm-up exercises. Someone referenced that this would be an excellent way to motivate their students when participation and energy levels seemed low. Several other participants eagerly agreed. Another participant stated how this could be effective
when transitioning from one lesson to the next whenever participation and energy levels were falling off. Again, there was unanimous agreement on how this could be applied to future instruction. Another example of relating to practice occurred during a Give and Take exercise when several participants mentioned that this particular exercise would be a very effective way of getting all students both to participate and to learn each other’s names. Since discussions such as these demonstrated participants’ relating the improvisation work to applicability in the classroom, but not something currently being employed, I gave them the secondary code of planned implementation.

An example of someone relating an activity to their current practice occurred when Lisa mentioned how the nature of these exercises closely matched a program at her school she referred to as Council. During her explanation of Council, Lisa became very excited relating the exercises from the workshop to the existing activities performed at her school. She was adamant about the benefits of Council at her school and stated that this work was a strong reinforcement of that belief.

_Eagerness to participate._

Throughout the workshop, levels of committed participation differed from participant to participant with those having familiarity with the exercises being more committed. However, all participants appeared to be eager to understand the rules and to practice most of the exercises. During an early Give and Take exercise, several participants that had up until that point been quite passive and disengaged
now appeared energized and excited, and the entire collective seemed eager to participate. Group discussions and questions became more prevalent at these times, and the general sense of pleasure derived from the activity seemed higher. This was one of many exercises that received the code eagerness to participate. In general, during Warm-up exercises and Give and Take exercises, participants seemed far more interested in participating. Also, during exercises in which the instructions were less complicated, full participation was more frequent and eagerly achieved.

Reluctance to participate.

An example of the code reluctance to participate occurred during a series of Explore and Heighten exercises, Sonia appeared extremely nervous when asked to perform the exercise in front of the whole group. The exercise involved two people alternating counting to three and subsequently replacing each number with a physical gesture. Sonia reluctantly executed the task and, upon what she perceived as a mistake, began laughing. All participants laughed with her and applauded the effort. The presenter then asked why she felt embarrassed to which she replied that she did not like to make mistakes in front of the group. The presenter explained that there was no such thing as a mistake in this work. He told her that the anxiety she felt was a product of self-censorship and that ultimately this would hinder her ability to further explore concepts with her students. Sonia took the note but clearly felt reluctant to proceed being the focus of the exercise. More examples of reluctance to participate occurred during Explore and Heighten exercises and especially during
Transformation exercises. These exercises generally did not involve all participants performing at the same time, and volunteers were asked to leave the seating area to be singled out on-stage.

*Questioning application.*

For the code of questioning application, there were many occasions in which participants asked how they might apply a particular exercise to a lesson in class. In the Give and Take exercise in which Sonia was reluctant to participate, another student asked how an exercise like that one could be effectively implemented into a lesson without following the rules laid out in the workshop. The presenter explained that there were no actual rules, merely guidelines in the execution of these exercises. He stated that in place of the numbers and gestures of the exercise, a teacher could substitute historical figures or events. To this, Lisa pointed out that she could substitute the times tables. Another participant offered the use of chemical bonds and the periodic table of elements. Yet another teacher suggested using this to recreate historical literature and characters. The room then became highly energized with participants pondering how they might be able to implement variations of this exercise in multiple learning situations.

*Discussion Session Themes*

The major themes that appeared in analyzing the transcriptions of this session closely matched the themes from the workshop. There were discussions of how eagerly students received each exercise as well as how reluctant they were to others.
In this session, one entirely new theme emerged which I labeled Struggling. An additional theme was brought up at the end of the session by the presenter which correlates with one of the survey themes: Teacher Confidence.

*Struggling.*

During the discussion, the participants wanted to know why they were not allowed to take notes during the workshop. Not wanting to give them an answer, I asked them to figure out why for themselves. Jennifer found a passage from the Spolin book *Theatre Games for the Classroom* and read it aloud. It was about intuition and the ways in which it must be taught. They both agreed that we, the instructors, did not want them to step out of the work to write down the notes as this would break the focus and the deeper goal of learning intuition. They were not completely satisfied by this, and Sonia went on to describe the headache she felt upon completion of the workshop:

I ended up with a headache after the workshop. I really enjoyed this, but there was so much. I learned so much, but I wanted to take notes. I was so eager to learn and memorize what I was learning. This is what the students feel. The student tells me, “Oh teacher, I have a headache from the learning.” And now, for the first time, I understand because I wanted to learn it all, I wanted to get it all in my brain. This was the first time I really felt the anxiety of learning. It was so good that I couldn’t afford to lose all that
information. And, I’m sorry, but I lost maybe half because I didn’t take notes.

(to Jennifer) I think they wanted us to feel like students. I went home with a headache. Now I know what my poor students feel like. Even after going home with a headache, I still wanted to have another workshop like this. I have been to maybe a hundred workshops, I have binders and binders. But this is very gratifying. This is one of the best workshops I have ever been to. This is the only one that gave me a headache. Of course. But I learned like a real student. And I really wanted to take notes, but no, they wouldn’t let me. Like this, you learn. Just get up and go do it. Aye, yi yi.

Jennifer agreed with this assessment but added, “Coming from a memory problem background, I didn’t remember all the games.” She conceded that even though we made it difficult to retain the details of the workshop without notes, the benefit was worth it. According to Jennifer:

To have that experience was more important, because…We are here right now; you improvised and worked it out. I find it so important to have that experience of being in the classroom as an adult, because as an adult, all of those confidence questions, all of that saving questions and fears as students. All of those situations that actually are more than what the outline of the workshop could have ever told us.

*Relating to practice.*
Participants provided several stories when discussing how they were implementing the work in their practice. They went into great detail relating how some exercises worked well, and others did not. In one of several apparent success stories from their classroom, Jennifer offered the following:

With these games, so many of them (the students) just want to talk. I feel that if I have them, even if they are embarrassed, every time we start an improv, this one girl has to go the bathroom. Every single time. But afterwards, and she came to my class with her head down not smiling. And every class she comes to now, she is smiling, and every class, she nods her heads and she got the highest, she got a 21 point gain on the WIA (test) and I see her having more eye contact and understanding more. And she wasn’t even following the lesson in the beginning. And she is really in it now. And getting her up, and this is the part that gets me teary eyed, getting her up and actually talking when she didn’t have any confidence before, and she still has low confidence but getting her up and having this improv, and I try, it is supposed bot be random, but I try to pair her up with someone who is going to be gentle and draw her out. And so just that is a success I think. At the beginning, she was coming once a week, and her friends don’t come every day, but she comes every single day, and those are the kinds of successes.

Both women agreed on the value of engaging students, especially the difficult to reach students, in particular those they described as at-risk. They discussed the
culture of failure they felt was currently surrounding education and the state’s requirement for high stakes testing. Jennifer stated,

On your feet you can’t lose. In a test, you can fail or lose. But in an improv, you the teacher are saying yes, and… and what better way to create success than saying yes, and! They are going to fail at those tests at some point, but I’m trying to expand those success rates and say yes, and… yes, and…, and giving them opportunities outside of the tests.

To this, Sonia added:

I’ll be honest with you…they (ESL students at a former school) would have loved these games. Especially because my classroom was so bad. I think my students would have seen another, a different technique of learning and I’m sorry that I didn’t give them that opportunity but truly, I was crazy. My new class though is benefitting. And that’s the reason too that I only lost like three or four students. Like from 30 the first two weeks, four is not bad. The retention now is better because I’m using these exercises and I’m focusing now on making the class more fun. I’m not sitting there and just talking, you know, instructing, it’s just: let’s play the games and doing the whole sentences yourself. In this case, the way they are learning, face to face, now they are forced to learn the material because they are on their feet and can see the learning. Definitely, it really helps.

*Questioning application.*
After the presenter arrived, the topic of discussion changed into questioning the structure of the workshop. There was much discussion about whether it was too long or not long enough, whether it should be broken down over more days or left as an intensive. Jennifer suggested that since she and several other participants had theatrical backgrounds, perhaps they were better prepared for that length and intensity. Sonia stated that despite her headache, she ultimately did not feel the session was too long. Tony agreed.

All of the participants agreed that a list of all exercises should be provided in lieu of having participants take notes. The presenter agreed and asked about the physical nature of the work. He mentioned that in the moment of physically absorbing the information, to stop that process in order to write down notes would separate the brain from what it is actually learning. Jennifer commented that it was essential, that all teachers should be focused on kinesthetic learning, but very few ever actually apply it. She stated that with teaching

You have to show them, you can’t tell them. And with this, you engage them and since you are not just telling them, you are showing and engaging them. Get rid of the fear and act in the moment. Physical learning bridges all languages. Students that don’t speak English can still participate in learning without words. Teachers that rely solely on their oral skills and their expert communication skills are at a disadvantage when the students don’t know what they are saying.
She went on to discuss further ways she was implementing more physical activities in her classroom and the benefits she claimed to see in doing so. She detailed how she was integrating the physical learning with the traditional way of learning and how making mistakes only enhances the experience.

*Teacher confidence.*

The final topic in the session was brought up by the presenter. He asked if the participants truly felt that the experience was beneficial to their classes. All participants enthusiastically agreed. He further pressed them to state whether they felt that their teaching practices had benefitted and specifically, had their sense of confidence as teachers increased. Jennifer eagerly responded first to this question:

> Since I took the workshop, my confidence has increased, yes. And I’ve always employed different modalities, but someplace in Spolin, it talks about the fact that the games are structured, the games, the improvs, the exercises are more creative. It is kind of like I was doing coloring by number, and now I don’t have to color by number anymore. It is freehand except there is a guide, and everything is now a Picasso. And part of it was because you told me to say yes, and… and my life is now yes and, and it is more exciting. This has helped tremendously, and I wish that you guys would offer another one. Maybe a sequel or a prequel.

Sonia and Tony also agreed with this statement and reiterated how both their students and they themselves had benefitted from the workshop.
Summary

These results came from my online surveys which were administered both before and after a professional development workshop. The results include responses to questions about existing teaching practices and ideal teaching styles of participants. I also included responses relating to teachers’ sense of confidence and techniques used for student engagement. I collected responses from the Teacher’s Sense of Self Efficacy Scale both before and after the workshop. From the workshop and the discussion session, I discovered major themes relating to this research which included relating to practice, eagerness to participate, reluctance to participate, questioning application, and struggling. Analysis of these results is presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE
ANALYSIS

Introduction

Throughout this study, I have attempted to determine what, if any, effect improvisation might have on teacher’s sense of self efficacy. This section offers analysis of the data drawn from the workshop, discussion session, and series of surveys that I administered both before and after the other two events. The analysis has been broken down into four sections I have labeled characteristics of the participants, efficacy in the classroom, influence on teacher efficacy, and levels of participation.

Characteristics of Participants

A key component of this research was the characteristics of teachers who would gravitate to training on the use of improvisation as part of classroom instruction. I was interested in assessing the participants’ familiarity with theatrical improvisation and history of its application in the classroom. All participants had some familiarity with improvisation which may indicate that teachers who have some theatrical or improvisational experience may be more willing to or interested in workshops that would expand their current knowledge of its use as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. Conversely, it is possible that teachers who have no background in improvisation or theatre may be less likely to seek out the opportunity
to learn more about improvisation or less comfortable with the notion of participating in a workshop on its use.

All the participants actively engaged in the activities during the workshop, even in those which could have sparked some self-consciousness or embarrassment. This could be due to the facts that they all were experienced teachers who were accustomed to being in front of students on a daily basis, were acquainted with improvisation and/or theatre, and were familiar with the activities in the workshop. If the group had been composed of new teachers or credential candidates who had no experience with improvisation or theatre, the results may have been dramatically different.

Another interesting finding was the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers who participated in the research. This could be attributed to the nature of the subject they teach and its inherently interactive structure. In teaching students who do not speak the language of the class, teachers are constantly forced to improvise methods of effectively communicating the lesson. ESL students must converse with each other more frequently than students of other subjects as they attempt to learn a new language. It would be beneficial for teachers of these types of classes to be well experienced with improvising instruction to communicate the lesson as well as with techniques that continuously engage the students both with their instructor as well as with each other. This group of participants, being well aware of the nature of theatrical improvisation, would likely be familiar with the
highly interactive nature of improvisation techniques and as a result more curious to learn how to apply them to an ESL class.

Two disciplines not represented in the group were single subject math and science. Several teachers did not fully divulge their area of specialization, and at least one teacher, Lisa, referenced teaching multiple subjects, including math to third graders, but no participants specifically describe themselves as math or science teachers. In the development of this study, I had several conversations with colleagues who were single subject math and science instructors. They acknowledged the potential benefits of this type of training but explained almost immediately that their specific subject areas were not conducive to creative, playful activities like the ones I described. It seems that the more logic-based courses with more precise curricula and more frequent objective assessments may be less fertile grounds for improvisation exercises. It could also be that the instructors of those courses simply are less willing to apply strategies that seem so foreign from the standard curricula of the disciplines.

Perhaps more interesting to me than the specific types of teachers not represented in the research was the overall lack of interest in the workshop. I had planned for approximately 24 participants. I referenced in the flyer that was posted both on the district website as well as the local union website that it was a free teacher development class. The flyer appeared between many other workshop advertisements offering the same salary point at a cost of $150 on average. As
stated, teachers need salary point workshops and professional development opportunities to both renew their credentials and advance on the district pay scale. I booked a theatre that could accommodate up to 50 participants should the need arise. There were several factors I have previously referenced that may have affected turnout, but I hardly anticipated this limited lack of interest. It may be that teachers were not interested in the workshop because they perceived improvisation as being about comedy or entertainment rather than education. This reinforces a discovery I made in my pilot study in which I determined teachers are likely to not want to label themselves as performers in the same way that performers would avoid labeling themselves as teachers.

Despite being free and a requisite of salary step advancement or credential renewal, this workshop was ill-attended by professional teachers. The only teachers who would have come across the flyer for this workshop would have been teachers at that point in their careers when they needed to advance or renew their credentials. Perhaps the teachers in the circumstance of needing to attend a professional development workshop have the preconceived notion that this event should be a traditional, subject specific workshop, designed by the school district with a more specific purpose in mind.

The next section is an analysis of efficacy in the classroom, both the efficacy of the improvisation exercises as well as the teachers’ ability to effectively implement them.
Efficacy in the Classroom

Under the major coding theme of eagerness to participate, I discovered that the Warm-up exercises and the Give and Take exercises appeared to work better in the workshop. Based on responses in the survey, this was also true in the classrooms. It stands to reason that if the participants felt more comfortable doing those kinds of exercises in the workshop, that they would be more comfortable demonstrating and implementing them in their classroom. The Warm-up exercises were the first type of activity covered in the workshop, and the energy was highest at that point. They could also be described as the simplest and most generally applicable of the workshop exercises. The rules were the simplest, the level of difficulty was the lowest, and the implementation into the lesson-plan appeared to be more easily facilitated. Once again, this could be attributed to the types of teachers who participated in the research. This was the type of activity most frequently referenced as already being applied in the classroom. All effective teachers use some form of transition between lessons, and it was clear that this group, with its progressive pedagogy and its familiarity with theatrical improvisation, was more comfortable with that type of physical engagement between students with the teacher as a guide in the activity.

The Warm-up and the Give and Take exercises were also the types of activities which more closely aligned with existing progressive educational techniques such as Total Physical Response, kinesthmetic learning, constructivism,
and scaffolding. They were also the activities with which participants had the most fun. Knowing how important integrating humor and play into the curriculum is, this group of participants would be more drawn to activities which included these elements.

The exercises that did not fully engage the participants during the workshop were also the ones that were not referenced in the discussion session as frequently and were not listed as being effective on the post-workshop survey. Those were the Explore and Heighten and the Transformation exercises. The rules for those exercises were often more complicated, the level of difficulty was higher, and, according to discussions, the applicability in the classroom was far less understood. These activities were also presented in the afternoon when the participants’ energy was at its lowest and may not have been received as well due to the length of the workshop and the physical exertion required throughout the day. Even with their familiarity to improvisation technique, teachers coming to a one day professional development opportunity are probably not expecting highly transformative techniques for their classroom. All of the participants already had specific techniques for energizing and engaging their classes and were likely looking to enhance existing practice rather than replace it.

These types of exercises typically involved fewer students actively engaging at the same time. If the participants sought out training like this to actively engage all students, they would clearly favor activities that incorporated the entire classroom
simultaneously and spent less time breaking the class into smaller groups with some actively participating and some passively observing. The latter two types of activities would likely be quite foreign to the average student, and with teachers having limited experience utilizing this type of work, classroom management factors obviously could play a role. In most of the U.S. public education system, classroom sizes are increasing, expectations are getting higher, and standardization of instruction is becoming the norm. In this demanding environment, teachers are far more likely to continue using proven strategies with which they are most familiar rather than attempting a new strategy of which they are unsure.

Throughout the research, without ever directly informing participants of this, I attempted to determine what impact this training might have specifically on the teacher participants’ sense of self efficacy, and this is the focus of the next section.

**Influence on Teacher Efficacy**

An increase in teacher efficacy was indicated on four of the five questions from the Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale. The question that received the greatest upward shift in teacher efficacy was the fifth question in which I asked how well respondents could implement alternative strategies in the classroom. This was also the only question which fell well below the Mean score for the test and outside of the Standard Deviation on the pre-workshop survey. Possibilities for this initial low score could very well be explained by the age of the TSES. The original TSES assessment was developed in 2001, before the full effects of No Child Left Behind
could be felt. Since that time, high stakes testing and standardized instruction have increased substantially. In this climate, teachers are given far less autonomy in implementing alternative teaching strategies in the classroom, a theme echoed in the comments of participants. However, on this question, the greatest increase in efficacy occurred. This would suggest that on some level, despite the participants feeling that they were limited on the structure of their class by their administrators and the requirements of NCLB, that experiencing this type of creativity and flexibility in activities designed for classrooms increased their sense of efficacy in terms of instructional strategies. Perhaps, in relating certain activities to the structures that they already had in place, it simply gave them a sense of the possibility of alternative strategies that could still fall within the requirements of the job.

The second upward shift came from the third TSES question. This was the question asking how much participants could do to get students to believe they could do well in school. In teacher training programs, teachers are taught to validate all student learning in an effort to promote a positive response to the learning process. This is not the case in standardized instruction and assessment. In the zero-sum environment of high stakes assessments, teachers can over time begin to believe that answers are only right or wrong, and that students are limited in their capability. After a day of reinforcing the notion of saying yes to all student responses and then building on that yes, the participants appear to have left believing they could have
more influence on their students’ own sense of achievement. The teachers then applied that philosophy to their classrooms and documented success in its application, sometimes in emotional testimonials.

All other questions on the post-workshop survey relating to a change in confidence as a result of the workshop resulted in a moderate increase in the Mean scores. The teachers involved in this research both learned and implemented new strategies for student engagement and alternative instruction. With these new strategies, teachers reported more confidence in the classroom, more comfort in exploring topics outside of their content area, moderately more control over classroom management, and slightly more fun in their classrooms. This could be the case for any professional development opportunity for in-service teachers, but several of the responses attributed this impact directly to the improvisation training. The next section focuses on the impact of the teachers’ level of participation in the workshop.

Levels of Participation

The participants who committed the most time to this research appeared to have the most noticeable change in perspective as a result of the training. As with any activity, it is logical to conclude that the more exposure people have to it, the more confident they will be in performing it, assuming they see the benefit of it or simply enjoy it. The participants who attended the entire workshop, completed all of the homework, and participated in the discussion session were the ones who had the
most obvious identification with this training. This identification may have come in the form of direct experience with improvisation, or in the case of a teacher like Sonia, it may be that they are more likely to use improv if they have a colleague or colleagues in close proximity who use it successfully. As with any teaching method that is new, it helps to have an experienced mentor and a supportive collegial community. Over time, and with continued application in the classroom, these teachers become more experienced with the technique and develop a stronger appreciation for it. This will in turn translate into an increased sense of efficacy.

It seems that to be most effective, teachers must have either an existing appreciation for theatrical improvisation technique or an awareness of its application in the classroom for it to be a tool they would choose to use. Once they have gained a stronger familiarity with it and a clear sense of how to integrate it with their instruction, its impact can be most noticeable over an extended period of time with continued implementation.

Summary

The participants of this study all shared certain characteristics including a familiarity with improvisation and a progressive approach to teaching. The types of exercises that proved to be the most effective both in the workshop and in the classroom were the simpler, full group Warm-ups and the Give and Take exercises. The most dramatic shift in the teachers’ sense of self efficacy occurred in the areas of the teachers’ ability to implement alternative teaching strategies and the teachers’
sense of how much they could do to get students to believe they could do well in school. The participants who seemed to benefit the most from the training were the ones who had the most extensive involvement in the study.

The next chapter shares conclusions, presents the limitations of this study, and proposes directions for future research.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

Introduction

This project was chosen to determine the impact of improvisation training on teachers’ sense of self efficacy as well as to determine if improvisation techniques could have an overall benefit to instruction. My interest in this topic stems from my observations of the teaching profession and the current crisis in education. I do not believe this crisis stems from students not meeting desired proficiencies on standardized testing. Rather, I favor the notion that the standardization of the public education system and the de-professionalization of its teachers are at fault. My contention has been that educators must be given much more autonomy in the classroom as well the status of professionals who must be trusted with the basic structure of their classes. One particular method that I believe may give them the confidence to creatively structure their class around the needs of the individual students and still meet the goals of standardized assessments is theatrical improvisation training.

In reviewing the literature, I came across several scholars in the field attempting to demonstrate similar effects but none with this particular focus. I was surprised to find just how little attention had been paid to this topic. In order to be credentialed, teachers must go through a rigorous training program, but they are given few opportunities to creatively present instructional material and even fewer to
alter that material based on the students’ level of engagement. Once teachers are assigned to a school, they are expected to work in near isolation with only the occasional professional development opportunity. I undertook this study to determine if theatrical based improvisation training could impact in-service teachers’ sense of self efficacy and improve instruction.

To measure this potential impact, I developed a series of mixed-measures surveys to be given both before and after a workshop in which teachers would learn improvisation techniques. The teachers who participated in this study already had some familiarity with theatrical improvisation and some belief in its application in the classroom. Upon completion of the workshop, I did detect a noticeable increase in efficacy, particularly in the participants’ confidence in implementing alternative teaching strategies in the classroom. I discovered that the improvisation exercises that were most effective were the ones in which the instructions were simple, the integration into the traditional lesson plan was easily facilitated, and all students participated simultaneously. I also determined that the more participation the teachers had in the work, the greater the benefit they received from it. In short, I conclude that training in improvisation can have a positive impact on teachers, their sense of efficacy, and the instruction they offer their students.

Limitations of the Study

It is a common flaw in education to expect a single professional development event to have a significant impact on the abilities of individual teachers, especially
teachers who have already developed their own unique strategies in teaching. This training consisted of one seven-hour workshop, a few additional reading assignments, limited application in the classroom, and a single follow-up discussion session. The entire training series took place over a single month with little in the way of verifying the extent of each teacher’s application of the exercises. There was nothing developed to gauge any long term effect on the participants.

The sample size for this study was much lower than expected, far too low to draw any generalizable conclusions from the data. The training took place around the end of the year holiday season, a time which can be very demanding on classroom teachers, both professional as well as personally. I did little to effectively market the training, and prior to the study, I had little knowledge of whether it was marketable. Consequently, the participants were a relatively homogeneous group, not at all representative of the actual population I wanted to examine.

Participants all claimed initial familiarity with improvisation, and some even knew of specific exercises prior to the workshop. This population had a unique bias to the material. This could make them prone to biased responses which could invalidate the results.

**Implications for Future Research**

Training teachers to use theatrical improvisation techniques clearly has some benefits, not the least of which is that teachers who are confident in its merit will gain an additional tool to include in their portfolio of effective teaching strategies.
To better understand the other potential impacts it could have on teachers, much more research is needed. It seems that many of the concepts within improvisation are taught to some degree in teacher training and teacher induction programs. Since these concepts already exist in teacher preparation programs, much can be learned from offering more of these particular techniques to pre-service teachers. Information on the effect of this training could yield results from educators who have not already developed their own relatively fixed teaching strategies.

It would be valuable for future research to be done on the long-term effect this training has on in-service teachers. To increase the potential for change in this population, it would be highly beneficial to increase the overall amount of training given by both increasing the frequency of the sessions and the number of sessions offered. It would also be advantageous to market the training in the hopes of obtaining a larger, more diverse demographic of participants.

Since most of the data from this study came from the surveys, further research could be done using individual participant interviews, observations of the participants utilizing the strategies in the classroom, and even demonstrations in the classroom by professional improvisers.

From early on in this research, I have been interested in the self-labeling that teachers are prone to do. Despite overwhelming similarities to performance, teachers tend to not want to be described as performers. This notion of labeling what teaching is and what it is not is worth exploring in a separate study.
It would be useful to explore additional methods to improve the condition of public schools in the United States as well as those that might better equip our nation’s educators to successfully accomplish their professional goals. If our nation truly is at risk, it should be every scholar’s goal to preserve it.
REFERENCES:


APPENDIX A

PRE-WORKSHOP SURVEY

Improvisation for Educators Pre

1. Please provide the name of your high school best friend. (This information will be used only to label your survey and match it with your responses after the workshop.)

2. Briefly describe your current teaching assignment: (subject taught, grade or age of students, size of class...)

3. How long have you been teaching?
Improvisation for Educators Pre

2.

1. How familiar are you with stage improvisation?
   - ☐ Very familiar, I've both seen and done it.
   - ☐ Somewhat familiar, I've had some hands on.
   - ☐ Not very familiar, I've seen it done.
   - ☐ Unfamiliar, never seen it done.

2. Have you ever used improvisation in your classroom?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes

   If yes, briefly describe how.

3. How exciting do you consider your instruction?

   Choose one:
   - [ ] Not Exciting
   - [ ] Somewhat Exciting
   - [ ] Quite a Bit
   - [ ] Very Exciting

4. How do you respond to questions in your classroom to which you do not have the immediate answer?
   - ☐ Tell the students you will get back to them.
   - ☐ Tell the students to explore the question on their own.
   - ☐ Explore the question with the students.
   - ☐ Ignore the question and move on with the lesson.
   - ☐ Other (please specify)

5. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?

   Choose one:
   - [ ] Nothing
   - [ ] Very Little
   - [ ] Some Influence
   - [ ] Quite a Bit
   - [ ] A Great Deal

6. How confident are you as a teacher?

   Choose one:
   - [ ] No Confidence Yet
   - [ ] Moderately Confident
   - [ ] Extremely Confident
Improvisation for Educators Pre

7. What are some techniques you currently employ to engage all students in classroom discussion?

- Personalize the lesson
- Incorporate humor
- Utilize pop quizzes
- Call on quiet students for responses
- Circle up

Other (please specify):

8. When is it important to affirm or reward a student’s original conclusion or idea?

- When it is completely correct
- When it is on the way to producing the correct answer
- It is always important, even when the response is inaccurate
- It is not important at all

9. What, in your opinion, are the greatest threats to your confidence as an educator? (mark as many as you like)

- Students will not meet expectations
- Not having enough teacher training
- Classroom management
- Being personally challenged by students

Other (please specify):

10. How much can you do to help motivate students who show low interest in school work?

Choose one:

- Nothing
- Very Little
- Some Influence
- Quite a Bit
- A Great Deal
Improvisation for Educators Pre

3.  

1. How comfortable are you at exploring topics with your students that are outside of your content area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Comfortable at All</th>
<th>Moderately Comfortable</th>
<th>Very Comfortable</th>
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</table>

Choose one: 

2. How much time do you spend in your class on effective teaching and learning?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>0% None of my class</th>
<th>50% Some of the time</th>
<th>100% The entire period</th>
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Choose one:

3. Describe the ideal classroom. (mark as many as you like)

- Clearly defined roles for teacher and student
- Students constantly asking questions
- Students in chairs facing each other
- Students interacting with each other
- Only one voice at a time
- Students paying attention to lecture
- Discipline clearly understood
- Teacher is the expert
- Teacher is a guide
- Students in chairs facing forward
- Multiple voices
- Independence promoted

Other (please specify):

4. How fun would your students rate you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not fun</th>
<th>Somewhat fun</th>
<th>Always fun</th>
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Choose one:

5. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?

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<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some Influence</th>
<th>Quite a Bit</th>
<th>A Great Deal</th>
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Choose one:
### Improvisation for Educators Pre

6. What types of training would you consider useful in making you a more effective teacher? (mark as many as you like)

- Leadership skills
- Counseling skills
- Improvisation training
- Conflict management skills
- Communication skills
- Team building training
- Performance training
- Working with diverse populations
- Other (please specify)

7. What percentage of the time do you feel you have effective control over the students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choose one:</th>
<th>0% Never</th>
<th>50% Sometimes</th>
<th>100% Always</th>
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8. What techniques do you currently employ to stimulate students to further investigate lessons in and out of the classroom?

- Work that has a real world audience
- Research assignments
- Labs
- Work that is relevant to their lives
- Discovery learning
- Homework
- Other (please specify)

9. How much of your instruction comes directly from the textbook?

- I pull all of my lesson from the approved text.
- Much comes from the text but we explore some additional material.
- More comes from additional resources.
- Nearly all of my instruction is from outside the textbook.
- I rarely or never use the approved textbook.

10. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choose one:</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Not Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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</table>
11. What are some methods you currently use to increase classroom participation? (mark as many as you like)

- Cultural exchange
- Peer mentoring
- Total Physical Response
- Pair and share work
- Peer tutoring
- Music
- Games
- Project work
- Cooperative learning
- Role Playing

Other (please specify)

12. How much physical activity occurs in your classroom?

- Students remain in chairs the entire period.
- Students are active and moving only after the lecture.
- There is often physical activity throughout my class period.
- We are all up and active the entire session.

13. How confident are you with your style of teaching now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Very Confident</th>
<th>Somewhat Confident</th>
<th>Very Confident</th>
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<td>Choose one:</td>
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14. How do you feel at the end of the school day?

- I'm exhausted and ready for sleep.
- My energy is still pretty high.
- I'm exhausted but in a very positive way.
- Other (please specify)

- I can't wait for tomorrow.
- I am relieved to be done.
- I am shocked at how fast the time went by.

15. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not very well</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Choose one:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

16. Please take a moment to briefly describe your interest in Improvisation Training for Educators.
APPENDIX B

POST-WORKSHOP SURVEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvisation for Educators Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What was the name you provided on your pre-workshop survey? (It was your high school best friend’s name.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Improvisation for Educators Post

1. Have you used improvisation in your classroom since the workshop?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Now that you have completed the workshop, do you believe improvisation in the classroom can be a valuable tool?
   - I do not see it as being very important.
   - I find it useful on occasions.
   - I believe it has lots of applications in the classroom.
   - I think it is extremely beneficial and I am using it alot.
   - Other (please specify)

3. Take a moment to briefly document which games you've used and what observations you've made about their reception.

4. Which games / types of game do you find to be the most effective in your classroom?
   - Warm up game: Crazy 8s, Zip Zap Zop, Torpedoes
   - Transformation game: Shaping Space, Space Walk, Statues
   - Give and Take game: Mr. Know It All, Ad Erroe Game, One Word Story
   - Explore and Heighten game: Any Yes, and... game
   - Mirror Game: Any following or mimicking game
   - Other (please specify)

5. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark one:</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some Influence</th>
<th>Quite a Bit</th>
<th>A Great Deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. Do you feel your confidence level has improved as a result of improv training?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark one:</th>
<th>No improvement in confidence</th>
<th>I feel a moderate improvement in confidence</th>
<th>I am definitely more confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
16. Please document any reading that you have done from the suggested texts. Include the text, the chapters, the approximate amount of time spent on each text. Finally, indicate how this relates to your current teaching practice and how it could potentially impact your instruction. Give your general opinion of the work.
APPENDIX C

FLYER

Improvisation for Educators

‘a truly transformative workshop’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Spontaneity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give and Take</td>
<td>Yes, And...</td>
<td>Explore and Heighten</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One Salary Point

• Learn basic improvisation techniques for the classroom
• Adapted from the work of Viola Spolin and The Hothouse Theatre
• 15 hours of class time/professional development time
• Upon completion of class time and 30 hours homework - receive ONE SALARY POINT

Class Dates:

Saturday, November 20th 9:00am – 4:30pm
Hudson Theatre
6539 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90038

Additional Meetings:

Saturday, November 5th and 12th for 4 hours each – Time and location TBA.

Prerequisite: NONE

Cost: FREE

Registration Deadline: Friday, October 21st - Class size limited to 24

For additional information and to register contact Alan LaPolice, Teacher Advisor
patrick.lapolice@lausd.net or by phone at (323) 900-3501
Warm-up exercise - *Crazy Eights, Zip Zap Zop, and Kitty Wants a Corner.*

*Crazy Eights*: participants gather in a circle facing each other. They are asked to count backwards from eight while waving each appendage vigorously. They are expected to maintain eye contact with all other participants. The sequence goes from right arm to left arm then to left foot and finally to right foot. After completing the first cycle, they continue the countdown, each rotation removing one number from the sequence until they arrive at zero and ultimately run out of numbers and appendages. The purpose of this type of exercise, besides the obvious energizing of the body through activity and blood flow is to do an exercise where all participants are required to stay together and make a mental connection through eye contact and the shared experience.

*Give and Take exercise - Missiles, One/Two/Three, and Pass the Snap.*

*Missiles*: participants gather in a circle facing each other. They must go around the circle stating their names at least once. When ready, the initiator will look across the circle at another participant and state their name. Upon hearing their name, the new person must affirm this action by saying yes. Once they have said yes, the initiator then is free to begin walking towards this person. They have until the initiator arrives at their place in the circle to find another participant, state their name, and have them affirm this with a verbal yes. It is at that point that they are free to begin
movement towards this new person. It goes on in this fashion until someone does not get that affirmation prior to being physically displaced by the person who announced their name. The purpose of this type of exercise is to heighten the sense of communication in all participants through listening and cooperating in a healthy, equal exchange of ideas.

Explore and Heighten exercises - *The Ad Game and Mr. Know It All.*

*The Ad Game*: three to five participants on stage ask the audience to give an idea for a new product that could not possibly exist such as an instructional DVD on home appendix removal. The participants are then required to ‘pitch’ ideas on how to market and sell this product. In rapid fire succession, they should state their ideas, listening carefully to each other, and building upon themes that arise. After each idea, all participants must shout out “Yes!” This can also be done by the non-participants as well. The purpose of this type of exercise is to allow participants to give positive affirmation to each other while building upon ideas, exploring them to the fullest, and then adding to, or heightening those ideas.

Transformation exercises - *The Machine and Follow the Follower.*

*The Machine*: five participants are asked to systematically construct a machine with moving parts on the stage using their bodies. The first participant is asked to come to the center and start some repetitive motion. One by one, as other participants are added, they must complement this motion with another motion until the machine is built with all five participants. Upon completion, the audience must name the
machine. Then, one at a time, they remove themselves from the machine. This type of exercise combines elements of all other exercises and ultimately should result in the transformation of individual ideas into a new shared unique idea.
APPENDIX E

HOMEWORK

Homework for “Improv for Educators”

Homework for this course is optional. Completion of homework will not only benefit your mastery of the course content and improve your teaching practices; it will also earn you a salary point credit. The in-class portion of this course is worth 15 hours of professional development time for which you will earn a certificate of completion. Based on completion of homework, you can earn up to 30 additional hours which combined with in class time will earn you 1 salary advancement point.

Textbooks:
Theater Games for the Classroom, A Teacher’s Handbook, by Viola Spolin

Unscripted Learning, Using Improv Activities Across the K-8 Curriculum, by Carrie Lobman and Matthew Lundquist

Improvisation Technique for the Professional Actor in Film, Theater & Television, by Stephen Book

Assignments: Choose one of the texts. Read the following pages:


C: Book: Part Two – How To Improvise – Basic Technique of Improvisation, pages 19-217.

Any single text equals approximately 10 hours. A total of 30 hours may be accumulated with documentation of how the material may apply to your classroom practices or how you are already using some form of the concepts in the texts.
The following are assignments to be implemented in your own classroom:

1. Incorporate a Warm Up Game into your classroom (e.g.: Crazy 8s or Zip Zap Zop). Apply it prior to the core lesson of the day. Document the level of participation both during the exercise as well as any variation in participation during your core lesson.

2. Break up a lesson with a Transformation Game (e.g.: The Gift or Walking Thru Space). Pay close attention to participation levels before, during, and after the game. Document any change in energy levels immediately following the game.

3. End a class with a Give and Take Game (e.g.: The Expert or Advertising Executives). Suggest to the class that this is a reward for successful completion of a lesson or assignment. Make notes of both participation from non-players as well as commitment of on-stage players. Ask if this kind of reward is something they would want repeatedly.

4. Incorporate a game of any kind into the actual lesson plan itself (e.g.: any variation of a Yes, And…game). Pay particular attention to energy and participation levels leading up to the improvisation and moving forward with the lesson. Document whether the students become more receptive to new ideas. Pay attention to inter-student agreement.

5. Create an original improvisation game based on the concepts of games we’ve studied or games you’ve experienced in the past. Integrate it with an appropriate lesson either before (Warm-up), during (Collaboration), or after (Follow-up/Cool-Down). Bring the concepts of the game to the workshop forum section and share the results of your original game.

Including lesson-planning time, implementation time, and documentation time, any of these assignments are worth 6 hours. Any combination of the 5 can be used or all 5 can be applied for a total of 30 hours.

You may combine any of the reading with any of the games assignments to receive a maximum of 30 additional ‘homework’ hours. Again, the combination of 30 homework hours with the 15 in-class hours will earn you one complete salary point. Completion of only the in-class work will result in a partial point which will be documented by a certificate of completion.