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The Price of Performing Arts Education in England: Power, Privilege and Social Justice in Drama School Training

By Lauren Pitt

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Dedications

To my Children, you are my inspiration for wanting to achieve more, and strive to be a better person. Your dreams are within your grasp if you just believe.

This is for you.

Abstract

This thesis explores how structural social formations, contemporary education policy and the practices of drama schools interact to form barriers to educational opportunity in the arts and create problems for social mobility. Data collected from drama students in the North East of England, UK drama educators and UK trained actors are explored in conjunction with policy documents, literature on theatre and drama education. Using Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital and habitus, this thesis unpicks the relationship between the systemic/structural conditions and specific local practices. In so doing, this thesis explores how ruling/middle class values are naturalised and universalised through the discourses of public institutions (such as drama schools) and how the naturalisation of these values creates barriers to social mobility and the inability to accommodate cultural differences in areas such as class, race, and disability. It challenges the conceptualisation of education in economic terms as a marketplace endeavour and site of preparation for work rather than as site for exploring human potential, analysing social possibility, or better fostering equal opportunities. It concludes by asking how perceived barriers to educational opportunity and social mobility might be overcome.

Key words: Social Mobility, Education, Drama School, Habitus, Cultural Capital

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Thank you.

Glossary of abbreviations

ALRA	Academy of Live and Recorded Arts
Arts Ed	Arts Educational School
BCU	Birmingham Conservatoire
BOVS	Bristol Old Vic Theatre School
GSA	Guildford School of Acting
GSMD	Guildhall School of Music and Drama
LCM	Leeds College of Music
LIPA	Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts
LAMDA	London Academy of Dramatic Art
MMU	Manchester Metropolitan University
RADA	Royal Academy of Dramatic Art
RCSSD	Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
RCS	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
RWCMD	Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
BAME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BIPOC	Black including People of Colour
FDS	Federation of Drama Schools
CLC	Cheltenham Ladies College

Tables

1 Table of Federation of Partner Schools
2 Available maintenance loans 2018/2019
3 Application deadline for maintenance loan support
4 Example of costs of one audition
5 Employment opportunities post training
6 Social Mobility Hotspots
7 Structure of the national curriculum
8 Eton College's A Level options
9 A Level Provision in three state schools from each county of the North East in areas of low deprivation.
10 A Level Provision in two state schools from two of the least deprived areas in the United Kingdom.
11 Independent Schools North East
12 CLC Lower College Curriculum
13 The Provision offered at The Professional Guidance Centre at Cheltenham Ladies College for sixth form students
14 Top five Universities for upward social mobility
15 Bottom five Universities for social for sixth form students
16 Bottom nine Universities on the social mobility index
17 Tuition fee comparison table 2018/19 – 2023-24

Figures

1	Drama school locations
2	Universities which offer acting and musical theatre courses
3	Access rate of students from disadvantaged backgrounds into university type.
4	Fees at Cheltenham Ladies College
5	GCSE and A level attainment for CLC
6	CLC sixth form provision
7	Access rate of students from disadvantaged into university type
8	Bourdieu's theory of practice
9	The sequential exploratory design within the mixed-method methodological paradigm
10	Data and analysis process
11	Other funding sources for drama school training
12	Grounded theory: Theoretical model
13	Decline in Arts and Entertainment output.

Contents

Table of Contents

DEDICATIONS 2

ABSTRACT 3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4
GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS 5
TABLES 6

CONTENTS 8

INTRODUCTION 13

PART 1 20

POST-16 VOCATIONAL ARTS EDUCATION IN CONTEXT 20

CHAPTER 1: DRAMA EDUCATION 21

INTRODUCTION 21
1.1 FURTHER EDUCATION PERFORMING ARTS (ACTING AND MUSICAL THEATRE) 21
1.2 DRAMA SCHOOL VS UNIVERSITY – HOW TO CHOOSE? 25
1.2.1 THE HISTORY OF DRAMA SCHOOLS 26
1.2.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISPERSION 28
1.3 THE APPLICATION PROCESSES 31
1.4 HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING 32
1.5 UNIVERSITY 34
1.6 TYPES OF DRAMA SCHOOL 36
1.6.1 DADA AWARDS 37
1.6.2 FEES AND TRAVEL COSTS 38
1.7 UNIVERSITY VS DRAMA SCHOOL – EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES 40
SUMMARY 41

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ARTS EDUCATION: A COMPARISON OF PRIVATE AND STATE PROVISION 44

INTRODUCTION 44
2.1. SOCIAL MOBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN 44
2.2 MERITOCRACY: A MYTH? 47
2.3 STATE OF THE NATION: LEVELLING UP, FUNDING CUTS AND STEM 50
2.3.1 THE LEVELLING UP AGENDA 50

2.3.2 School funding cuts and STEM in state schools 51
2.4 Social Mobility in Education: Examining State and Private Education and Arts Education 58
2.4.1. Social Mobility in Arts Education 62
2.4.2 Co-Curriculum: An insight 67
2.4.3 Higher Education Arts Funding Cuts 81
Summary 91

CHAPTER 3: PIERRE BOURDIEU 94

3.1 Cultural Capital 94
3.1.2 Cultural Capital forms: Objectified, Institutionalised and Embodied 97
3.2 Habitus 99
3.3 Field 101
Summary 103

PART TWO 105

THE PRICE OF ARTS EDUCATION: DOES IT PAY TO BE PRIVILEGED? 105

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY 106

4.1 Positionality and reflexivity 106
4.2 Mixed-methods design 110
4.2.1 Timing 113
4.2.2 Weighting 114
4.2.3 Mixing 114
4.2.4 The overall mixed-methods design 116
4.3 Grounded Theory design 116
4.3.1 The arrival of grounded theory 117
4.3.2 Grounded theory and symbolic interactionism 118
4.3.3 Constructivist grounded theory 119
4.3.4 Choosing a constructivist grounded theory approach 120
4.3.5 Utilisation of grounded theory as a method 122
4.3.6 Theory generation 124
4.3.7 Sampling and participants 125
4.3.8 Recruitment 126
4.4 Methods 127
4.4.1 Survey 127
4.4.2 Interviews 129
4.4.3 Case Study 131
4.4.4 Analysis of the data collected 131
4.5 Ethical Considerations 134
4.6 Summary 136
4.7 Methodological reflections and acknowledgement of research limitations 136
4.7.1 Reflection as a mixed-methods researcher 137

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS 139

5.0 An introduction to the findings 139
5.1 Systemic Racism 140
5.2 Finances 161
5.2.1 The cost of auditioning 161
5.2.2 The cost of training 165
5.2.3 Post-Training Opportunities 174
5.3 The influence of Class 177
5.3.1 Elitism 181
5.4 Mental health and well-being 187
5.5 Disability 190
5.6 Summary 194

CHAPTER 6 196

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION. 196

6.0 Introduction to the chapter. 196
6.1 Generated theory and general outcomes 197

RECOMMENDATION 1: INVEST IN PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION TO WIDEN PARTICIPATION 202

6.1 Performing Arts in Further and Higher Education 202

RECOMMENDATION 2: ENSURE ADMISSIONS DATA IS TRANSPARENT TO REVEAL POTENTIAL DISCRIMINATION 206

6.2 Drama School entry by Social Class, Gender, Ethnicity 206

RECOMMENDATION 3: REDUCE OR REMOVE DRAMA SCHOOL AUDITION FEES 208

6.3 Drama school: the audition process 208

RECOMMENDATION 4: ADDRESS ELITISM IN EDUCATION POLICY 212

6.4 Elitist education policy 212

RECOMMENDATION 5: MAKE HE MORE ATTRACTIVE TO STUDENTS FROM POORER SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS AND RECRUIT MORE WORKING-CLASS STUDENTS 213

6.5 University provision and access 213

RECOMMENDATION 6: INVEST IN POORER REGIONS OF THE UK 214

6.6 Government spending 214
6.7 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the performing arts 214

6.8 Suggestions for future research 215
6.9 Overall Conclusion 216

References 222

APPENDICES 241

Appendix 1 - The Principals and Values of the Federation of Drama Schools 241
Appendix 1.1 - Alumni Table 242
Appendix 1.2 - Drama schools with regional auditions 244
Appendix 1.3 - The audition process 245
1.3.2 Monologue choices 247
Appendix 1.4 - DaDA Application process 249
Appendix 1.5 - Drama school fee table of all 22 FDS schools 250
Appendix 2 - Academic offer for Eton College students 253
Appendix 2.1 - Barnard Castle School Provision 254
Appendix 2.2 - Barnard Castle school timetable. 255
Appendix 4.3.7 – Participant Demographics 256
Appendix 4.4 – Quantitative Survey 257

SO, DRAMA SCHOOL? 257

1. How do you identify? * 257
2. What is your ethnicity? * 257
3. Have you trained, are training, or been accepted into drama school? 257
4. How many schools did you audition for? 257
5. What year did you audition? 258
6. What was the audition process like on the whole? 258
7. Which schools did you audition for? 258
8. How many schools did you apply and audition for? Why? 259
9. If you have completed your training, do you think it has benefitted your career? Why / Why not? 259
10. If you are training, what is your experience like? 260
11. Have you faced or do you face any challenges whilst being at drama school? 260
12. Did / do you feel that your training provider was / is inclusive in their practice? 260
13. If you have been offered a place to train at one of your selected schools, are you able to fund your studies for the full duration of the course? 260
14. If you have completed your training or are currently in training, were / are you able to fund your studies? 261
15. How did you support / are you supporting yourself through training? 261
16. Do you have any comments about drama school, the audition process, or life post drama school? 261
17. If you consider yourself to be part of a class system, where would you put yourself? (The answer options are the current five main groups in the UK class system) * 261
Appendix 4.4.2a - Drama School Interview Questions (Group A) 263
Appendix 4.4.2b - Student Interview Questions (Group B) 264
Appendix 4.4.2c - Actor Interview Questions (Group C) 265
Appendix 4.5 - Ethics application form 266

APPENDIX 5.2.1 - ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS 267
APPENDIX 5.3 - TRANSPARENCY DATA 268
APPENDIX 6.3 - NEW AUDITION PROCESS AND FEES 269

Introduction

I have worked in performing arts education for the past 15 years at both the further education (FE) and higher education (HE) levels, where I have trained people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Increasing concerns regarding access to and success within drama school admissions and training first surfaced whilst educating students from working-class origins and individuals from BIPOC[1] communities. The explanations cited are either that they are unable to pay for auditions and / or training, or that the institution they applied to demonstrated some form of prejudice. Notably students under my tutorage who were from middle-class or upper-class backgrounds, alluded to experiencing no challenges at auditions or with financing their studies at drama school, if offered a place.

Upon my employment in 2013 at a midlands FE college, I started to notice this pattern. The performing arts course students came from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and the majority of them claimed that they experienced some sort of discrimination due to their accents and/or class at the audition stage. After two years, I returned to the North East in late 2015 and started working at a college and university centre where many of the students were either working-class or middle-class. During my time at this college, the trend worsened, with working-class students struggling to afford audition fees and experiencing discrimination because of their class; whereas their middle-class counter parts were able to audition for six or seven schools. My middle-class students experienced less discrimination, unless they had a broad accent, and did not seem to encounter the same challenges as their working-class peers. It became clear that various people faced difficulties entering and succeeding in drama school training based on their racial background and socioeconomic status. These patterns served as the impetus for this study.

There is currently widespread concern that access to, and success within, the British acting profession is increasingly dominated by those from privileged class origins (Friedman et al, 2016). Friedman argues that actor training is very much skewed towards the privileged as most training routes into the acting profession are

[1] Black including people of colour

limited, especially since the demise of the repertory theatres, which used to provide an alternative vocational training route for actors.

Presently, drama schools (vocational institutions which focus on professional training in Acting, Musical Theatre and Dance, also known as conservatoires), are the predominant route into the industry. Existing research suggests that working-class applicants face a cost barrier to participation, with some drama schools in the UK charging above the national fee cap of £9,250 (OFFA, 2018). In addition, applicants must pay an audition fee between £40- £80 depending on the drama school and the time of year. For example, before the 11th of December 2019, RADA charged £46 for an audition and £76 after December 11th. Furthermore, travel and accommodation costs are also incurred, which can be anywhere up to £300 for one audition, depending on geographical location. With over 20 drama schools in London alone, students from poorer communities are forced to choose their top one or two choices for financial reasons. Some institutions waive the audition fee for those from lower income households, but this formal courtesy is not extended to all of those who apply or by all drama schools. For example, Guildhall School of Music and Drama only offers this to partner schools and youth theatres with whom they work closely (The Guardian, 2018).

Many high-profile figures have spoken out against the excessively high price of drama training, such as Dame Judi Dench[2], Tom Hiddleston[3] and Julie Walters[4]. Andrew Lloyd Webber also spoke out in the House of Lords stating that '*enormously*' expensive fees mean talented students [are] '*slipping through the gap'* (The Stage, 2018) and with fees being so high, drama schools run the risk of alienating those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition to the high fees, the demands of drama school training (i.e., a full collaborative approach with long days 08.15 – 18.00) mean that students are unable to gain employment along with their studies. In a report by Labour's Shadow Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport, Tom Watson, he stated:

[2] https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/sep/13/judi-dench-actors-held-back-by-wealth-divide-drama-school

[3] https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/tom-hiddleston-high-tuition-fees-put-off-poorer-students

[4] https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/12/05/julie-walters-working-class-actors-privilege_n_6274612.html

Students from poorer backgrounds are priced out at the very first stage, without even getting a foot in the door. These high fees are a barrier to opportunity and a barrier to access. The audition process is as vital to drama schools as it is to prospective students, and it is not clear why the cost of the process should be passed on to the students (Tom Watson MP, 2018).

Over the past ten years, British acting and musical theatre have made the headlines[5] with regard to social mobility and barriers to access and success within drama school training for those from minority groups, such as the working-class, people with disabilities, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) [6]professionals. Each headline, article and journal on British Acting and Musical Theatre, has led to concern about the diversity and openness of the profession. Furthermore, these concerns have brought about this inquiry and this study asks:

1. How do structural social formations, contemporary education policy and the practices of drama schools interact to form barriers to educational opportunity in the performing arts and create problems for social mobility?

[5] **The Creative Industries' recovery must prioritise Social Mobility**
https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/creative-industries-recovery-must-prioritise-social-mobility
Why working-class actors are a dying breed
https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/may/08/working-class-actors-disappearing-britain-class-privilege-access-posh
Theatre and the working class
https://cherwell.org/2020/07/09/theatre-and-the-working-class/
Class in the drama class: Acting and privilege
https://www.counterfire.org/articles/opinion/18849-class-in-the-drama-class-actors-and-privilege
UK actors face widespread institutional racism at work, survey finds
https://www.screendaily.com/news/uk-actors-face-widespread-institutional-racism-at-work-survey-finds/5162676.article
Institutional racism entrenched in UK entertainment industry
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/institutional-racism-british-entertainment-survey-b1907936.html

[6] The term BAME was started in the 1960's as a way of labelling and grouping people who were not white. This terminology has recently been discussed as having negative connotations due to the Black Lives Matter movement. The reference of it in this thesis is with regards to social mobility and not intended to offend anyone who is from black or Asian descent.

2. How might these barriers be overcome?

The issue of social mobility and diversity within the cultural and creative industries has been gaining attention for several years, with reports from The Theatre workplace review (2017), Society of London Theatre (SOLT) (2017) and Labour's Acting Up Report (2017). Literature around the subject of social mobility in the acting industry specifically is sparse, and there is a conspicuous lack of empirical research on the social composition of British actors. This study is therefore one of the first of its kind and valuable to the progression of British acting and UK's creative economy.

To answer the research questions, this thesis explores data collected from drama students in the North East of England, UK drama educators and UK trained actors in conjunction with policy documents, literature on theatre and drama education. Using Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital and habitus, this thesis unpicks the relationship between the systemic/structural conditions and specific local practices. In so doing, this thesis explores how ruling/middle class values are naturalised and universalised through the discourses of public institutions (such as drama schools) and how the naturalisation of these values creates barriers to social mobility and the inability to accommodate cultural differences in areas such as class, race, and disability. It challenges the conceptualisation of education in economic terms as a marketplace endeavour and site of preparation for work rather than as site for exploring human potential, analysing social possibility, or better fostering equal opportunities. It concludes by asking how perceived barriers to educational opportunity and social mobility might be overcome.

The theoretical framework to support this research draws on Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) social reproduction theory, particularly his concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field. In so doing, this thesis asks if drama education and actor training transmit values that normalise the unequal opportunity for actors' career advancement. These interviews explore the extent to which cultural capital and habitus impact aspiring actors, i.e., are they are being inducted into existing social class divisions in the acting profession, or are they being made critically aware of social injustice and encouraged to challenge it?

Research participants were informed of their right to anonymity. I am grateful to the actors who asked to be named in this thesis in the hope that this might help

me to attract a wider audience for the dissemination of my findings and thereby raise awareness of the problems around social mobility in their profession.

It is hoped that this research can spur social change in the arts, especially with regard to vocational training at tertiary level. As previously mentioned, the literature in this area is sparse and what literature there is does not focus solely on higher education drama schools, their audition processes, the cost of tuition fees, or why these schools are different to studying acting or drama at university. As a result, academic work surrounding this topic is not available in the UK. Drama schools provide the UK economy with the tools to generate £13 million per hour, but despite UK drama schools, being recognised as world class training providers, they have not been explored academically; especially as concern over social mobility in the arts has received media coverage for almost a decade. The global pandemic as well as the Black Lives Matter movement, have pushed the UK to assess the importance of the arts and their impact on the UK economy. Social mobility within drama schools, along with barriers to access and success within drama school training have also become an important area of discussion. This research examines these barriers and proposes solutions to develop social change within drama schools and their training.

There are two parts to this study: **Part One** provides contextual information on post-16 and higher education in performing arts and examines how power and privilege have impacted social mobility and justice within this area of education. **Part Two** presents the findings from the survey and interviews using grounded theory methodology. This section seeks to evaluate the impact that habitus, field and cultural capital have on students progressing from further education performing arts programmes to higher education and beyond. It also analyses the barriers to access and success within drama school training and provides recommendations on how to overcome the barriers presented within this study. Furthermore, the discussion chapter presents a grounded theory theoretical framework for drama schools to implement during the application / audition stage through to the final year of training.

The present study focuses on the North East of England for three reasons: (i) it is the only part of the UK which has zero hot spots for social mobility and various cold spots that fall in the worst performing 20% of local areas in the UK (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2021); (ii) It provides limited opportunities for taking a vocational qualification in the performing arts: of the 25 colleges in the North East, only 11 offer a BTEC in Performing Arts Acting, and just five offer

musical theatre (Association of Colleges, 2021). Discussion of the North East is therefore highly pertinent to this thesis' exploration of equity with regard to performing arts education and employment; (iii) Due to my employment at a college in the North East, I have first-hand knowledge of the challenges faced by performing arts students in the North East and their career aspirations; I was able to conduct interviews with them as part of my data collection.

The thesis is presented as follows:

Part 1: Post-16 Vocational Arts Education in context

Chapter 1– This chapter explores Drama education, both in further and higher education settings. It focuses on performing arts provision at Drama school and University and in turn asks who has access to this education. Furthermore, it examines funding offers for those wanting to study performing arts at tertiary level.

Chapter 2- This section examines social mobility in contemporary Britain and offers a comparison of private and state arts provision. This section will look at whether the narrow choice of the state curriculum helps or hinders social mobility in education.

Chapter 3 – This chapter considers Pierre Bourdieu's social reproduction theory and how it links to the aims of this study. This section focuses on Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field and how they are applied as a lens for this study's analysis.

Part 2. The Price of Arts Education: Does it pay to be privileged?

Chapter 4 – This chapter discusses the methodology and methods used within this study to collect and analyse the data. It explores the sample and how they were recruited, along with the data analysis and further ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 – This section contains the presentation and analysis of key findings of this thesis. It explores 5 main themes which emerged from the data analysis as well as answering the research questions of this study.

Chapter 6 – Discussion of the analysis and key findings along with the thesis' conclusion is within this chapter. Recommendations for the 5 main themes presented in this study are also offered within this section alongside a generated grounded theory framework.

Part 1

Post-16 Vocational Arts Education in Context

Chapter 1: Drama Education

Introduction

The financial barrier to access for students wanting to study a vocational degree at drama school has been particularly hard to navigate and understand, whereas studying a performing arts course at university is relatively straightforward, i.e., students receive a loan for their fees for the full duration of their course along with maintenance grants or loans, depending on their household income. If they cannot cover living costs with a grant or loan, they can get a job because the hours spent studying are compatible with part-time work. Normally, depending on the course, a student will study between 10 and 15 hours a week. At drama school a student is in the classroom for 32 hours a week and barely has time to get a part-time job. This highlights an issue of how accessible drama school training is to those from working-class backgrounds, and this issue presents itself as a major theme in this research.

This chapter examines drama education in further education[7] (FE) and higher education (HE), asking who has access to this education.

1.1 Further Education Performing Arts (Acting and Musical Theatre)

At post-16, further education (FE) providers such as colleges and some schools across the UK offer vocational training programmes known as BTECs instead of the traditional 'A Level' pathway. There are Level One, Two and Three programmes available in most subjects, including apprenticeships. Levels One and Two are foundation years for students who did not achieve their GCSE Maths and English, so they study their main subject and Maths and English at the same time to prepare them for Higher Education. A Level Three programme is equivalent to three A Levels. A Levels prepare students for academic courses at university, whereas FE courses focus on the practical elements of a subject. According to Key Further Education Statistics, 2021, there were 244 colleges in the UK from 2019 – 2020. According to suggested data, there is a downward trend from 2018/19 and 2016/17,

[7] Further Education (FE) includes any study after secondary education which does not form part of Higher Education. It is not an undergraduate or graduate degree. https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses

when there were 257 and 325 FE Colleges respectively. One of the key indicators for why colleges have closed over this four-year period is financial difficulty. According to the Education Policy Institute 2019, real terms funding per student in colleges between 2010/11 and 2018/19 has declined by 16%, from £5,900 to £4,960:

> *16-19 education has been the biggest real terms loser of any phase of education since 2010/11, but it has also suffered from a long run squeeze in funding: 30 years ago, 16-19 funding was far higher (almost 1.5 times) than secondary school funding but is now lower.* (Education Policy institute, 2019)

This squeeze in funding has meant a reform of post-16 qualifications at Level 3 and below, which has impacted a variety of subjects. For this study, the focus will be on the performing arts.

According to the *Consultation document – Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3*[8] "There are more than 12,000 different qualifications funded in England at level 3 and below" (ESFA, May 2019; Department for Education 2021). This is an exceptionally large number and highlights the number of opportunities for students wanting to study a specialist subject such as performing arts. However, that looks set to change by August 2025, when the opportunities for students wanting to do performing arts vocationally will diminish. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills and Apprenticeships, Gillian Keegan MP (2021), has called for a review and reform of post-16 learning. Technical Level qualifications have been created that require each student to spend 315 hours a year in their chosen field, alongside their classroom learning. These qualifications have begun to be rolled out across the country already. This works well for various subjects but does not bode well for specialist subjects such as the performing arts and sport due to the hours that must

---

[8] *Review of Post-16 Qualifications at level 3: Second stage - Department for Education - Citizen Space* https://consult.education.gov.uk/post-16-qualifications-review-team/review-of-post-16-qualifications-at-level-3/

be spent in a working environment. In the North East of England, employment in the performing arts is especially hard to secure for working actors and musical theatre specialists, as there are simply not enough theatres or media outlets to cater for all students studying on performing arts programmes in the region.

Currently, performing arts programmes are split up into separate pathways such as: Acting, Musical Theatre, Dance and Music. The BTEC provision is split into two years and students study 18 modules over the two-year period. These modules are generic so that they can be used across all three pathways, for example students will look at modules such as Performance Workshop,[9] but they are tailored by the teaching staff to focus on specific subjects. The breadth and depth of this programme is extensive and designed to prepare the student for tertiary education and a career in the arts. Keegan states:

> *Our ambition is for everyone to achieve their full potential and have access to the best quality education, with technical education provision available in areas that meet the needs of the economy* (Keegan MP, 2021)

Unfortunately for students who wish to train vocationally in the arts, this does not seem to include them. Later in the review document, Keegan (2021) states that specialist subjects, such as the performing arts, will be '*a small, performance focused qualification*' that will be '*taken alongside a student's main study programme*', graded from 6-8, suggesting an overhaul of the current BTEC in performing arts landscape. To contradict her previous statement, Keegan (2021), goes on to say that these specialist subjects will be excluded from further consideration for defunding[10] for the reasons outlined below:

> ***Performing Arts graded qualifications****: these are small, performance-focused qualifications. They must be in the area of music, dance, drama & communication, and musical theatre. These qualifications confer a mastery*

[9] Performance Workshop - This unit allows learners to explore the process of making performance and to experiment with and try out performance ideas in practical workshop situations. https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/BTEC-Nationals/Performing-Arts/2010/Specification/Unit_1_Performance_Workshop.pdf

[10] Defunding in this case means to have funds withdrawn from specialist subjects

> *of practical performance skill in defined stages that is recognised by specialist institutions in the fields of music, dance, drama & communication, and musical theatre. High-quality arts education should not be the preserve of the elite, but the entitlement of every single child. Maintaining the availability of these qualifications will support a broad and balanced education that will help young people to learn creative skills, widening their horizons. (Keegan MP, 2021)*

Keegan evidences the importance of the arts here and how exposure to these subjects may help improve social mobility. However, there is a lack of clarity as to what the programmes will look like and what they will offer future students. If the BTEC model is to be changed and run alongside another qualification, the foundation of what they will learn may not be sufficient to prepare them for tertiary education. Not only this, but a BTEC is equivalent to three A Levels; will the new, smaller qualification also be the equivalent? This is an area which needs further research and discussion.

The arts have been under the microscope for decades, yet slowly they have been pulled from education despite government rhetoric over the value of the arts, as in the example of Keegan (2021), cited above. The Shadow Schools minister Peter Kyle states in an interview with The Guardian[11] (2021) that there has been a *'decade of failure on schools' arts'* and the Conservative party *'are out of step with [parents'] priorities'*. Speaking about the pandemic, which will be discussed later in this thesis, he says that the '*government's refusal to back school arts threatened children's recovery from the pandemic and the country's future prosperity'.* The arts have been reduced in primary and secondary education, and FE performing arts looks set to bottle neck even further, in turn reducing the opportunities of young aspiring performers. FE performing arts prepares students for vocational degrees and the world of work; it hones skills required to succeed in the arts, whereas A Level Drama focuses more on theory and does not explore the subject in as much of a practical context. By diminishing the BTEC qualification, the government risks extinguishing opportunity for those who are less academically driven. Furthermore,

[11] https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jul/15/creativity-crisis-looms-for-english-schools-due-to-arts-cuts-says-labour

the new BTEC provision irradicates training at foundational level for those from working-class backgrounds due to the lack of HE performing arts courses; which in turn detrimentally impacts social mobility within the arts for those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, thus contradicting Keegan's (2021) statement.

Ultimately, the future of the Performing Arts BTEC is uncertain. This includes what the qualification will look like; what the impact of changing it will have on students wanting to study acting and musical theatre at a vocational level both at FE and HE, and what this means for the future of social mobility in performing arts education, especially within poor socioeconomic regions such as the North East. In the book *Culture is bad for you: Inequality in the cultural and creative industries*, Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor write '*who consumes culture reflects social inequality*' (p.9) which reinforces how cultural capital[12] is further limited for those from working-classes if FE performing arts is taken away as an educational opportunity.

1.2 Drama School vs University – How to choose?

A drama school is an institute of higher education which offers vocational training for individuals who wish to pursue a professional career in acting, musical theatre, directing and Technical Theatre. A university is also an institution of higher education but offers academic degrees. There are many schools, colleges and universities in the UK who claim to offer vocational training into the acting and musical theatre industry. This study will focus on the top 22 higher education institutions which are globally known for their vocational training.

Literature surrounding drama school admission is sparse, so my discussion draws on the book *Getting into Drama School* by Nick Moseley, published in 2019, which is the most up-to-date and accurate representation of how to get into drama school. Moseley is a specialist in conservatoire actor training and a writer on methods of acting (see for example, his book *Getting into Drama School: The Compact Guide*, published in 2019).

[12] Bourdieu's capital theory, the many capitals that people hold may affect how they are positioned within the social structure and how they behave in general. There are three different types of capital: economic, social, and cultural capital.

1.2.1 The History of Drama Schools

In 1833, the actress Frances Maria Kelly managed the Royal Strand Theatre where she funded and operated a drama school, the earliest record of a school of this kind in England (Burwick, 2015). The next to follow, and the first fully established institution to offer Acting tuition, was London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) in 1861, shortly followed by The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 1847, which offered only music classes until the introduction of Drama in 1886: all other schools opened post the turn of the 20th century. The most recent school to open is The Emil Dale Academy in Hitchin, which offers vocational training in Musical Theatre. It opened its doors in 2009 and won best course provider for Musical Theatre in 2017. The top 22 drama schools in the UK are part of the newly reformed Federation of drama schools which originally formed in 1969 and was known as The Conference of Drama Schools. It was an organisation which enabled its members to be accredited by the National Council for Drama Training. As Mosely (2019) reports, accreditation by this organisation was the most reliable way of '*kitemarking*' the schools offering high-quality, comprehensive training that could launch new actors into the industry. In 2012, these two bodies merged to form Drama UK and in 2017, this organisation dissolved, and the Federation of Drama Schools (FDS) was created (federationofdramaschools.co.uk). Unfortunately, the FDS does not monitor quality nor accredit its member schools unlike its predecessors. In light of this:

> *[…] Equity, the trade union for actors and backstage staff, stepped in [in 2017] with a series of criteria through which it could seek to identify bona fide acting courses, effectively replacing Drama UK benchmarking with a simpler but broadly similar system.* (Mosely, 2019)

The importance of Equity putting these criteria in place is (i) to ensure parity for students across all courses in drama school settings; (ii) to ensure that drama school graduates are eligible for Equity and Spotlight membership[13]. The criteria which Equity have put in place are as follows:

[13] Spotlight connects performers with roles in theatre, television and film productions around the world. Casting professionals choose Spotlight to cast their projects because performers on Spotlight are recognised as the industry's best. Spotlight is at the heart of the performing arts industry and is the best way to promote yourself as a professional performer and get noticed by casting directors. (spotlight.com)

- Vocational training courses for performers – practical rather than theoretical.
- Equivalent to NQF level 4/SQF level 6 qualification issued by a recognised body.
- Contact hours in excess of 36 hours per week.
- No more than 22 students in a class, and 30 weeks in a year of instruction.
- Courses that offer a professional showcase opportunity, attended by industry.
- Courses that offer professional development programme with industry engagement
- Access to professional facilities.
- Clear commitments on safeguarding, bullying and harassment, and diversity.

(thestage.co.uk 2017)

It is important to note that post training, Equity can assist members in acting on both individual and group concerns at work, such as discrimination and challenges with holiday pay. Every member of Equity has access to their member advantages, including Public Liability Insurance and business savings, and Equity also offers legal counsel. The FDS partnership schools all abide by Equity and Spotlight criteria so that their graduates are eligible for membership. Partnership schools with FDS share a common core set of principles and values (**Appendix 1**). This is so that affiliate schools can develop discussion, strategy and projects around shared challenges, and to communicate to prospective students the options within and value of their training approaches. The partner schools with FDS are as follows:

Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA)	London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA)
Arts Educational School (Arts Ed)	Manchester School of Theatre
Bristol Old Vic Theatre School	Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts
Drama Centre	Oxford School of Drama
Drama Studio London	Rose Bruford College
East 15	Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA)
Guilford School of Acting (GSA)	Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD)
Italia Conti Academy	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)
Liverpool institute for Performing Arts (LIPA)	Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD)

Table 1 – Table of FDS Partner Schools

The aim of the FDS (The Federationofdramaschool.co.uk) is to:

- Engage in activities, projects and discussions collectively and individually that enable diverse groups of people to receive excellent training for the contemporary profession in all its aspects.
- Work with other schools with shared vision, values and approaches in the training to share current best practice and identify opportunities for change and enhancement in the future.
- Work with the industry and professional stakeholders to ensure that the training experiences provided allow graduates to enter and sustain professional careers with a current, adaptable and expert skillset.
- Be an identified presence in public discussion of both the challenges and values of conservatoire training.

If other schools wish to be a part of the FDS and follow the Equity and Spotlight criteria, they need to contact FDS and begin conversations with them for this to be a possibility. Most applicants apply to the institutions affiliated with FDS based on their reputation, alumni and employment rate after graduation. Reputation and alumni are the biggest draws to these schools, see **Appendix 1.1**.

Musical theatre students typically choose to apply to schools which have a high graduate employment rate, such as Arts Educational School (Arts Ed) and Mountview. Dance schools like Laine, Bird and Urdang have extremely high rates of employment within the West End because of their reputation and training. It is important to note here that both Arts Ed and Mountview are privately funded and do not have state funding, although they do offer loans of up to £6,000 and DaDA awards. This is something which will be discussed in later in this chapter. The geographical dispersion of drama schools is now discussed.

1.2.2 Geographical dispersion

Most drama schools in the UK are based in London which poses various barriers to those from more difficult socio-economic backgrounds. Below is a map which highlights the geographical dispersion of the 22 schools discussed in this study:

Figure 1 – Drama school locations

As the map highlights, there are very few drama schools based outside of the capital: there are no vocational schools between Leeds and Glasgow and none up the east coast of the country. To train vocationally as an actor or musical theatre performer you have little choice but to move to London. Most elite drama schools are located in and around London and people come from all over the world to train there. With this comes the issue of the cost of living as drama school training is intense with very long days, making working while studying very difficult.

With university courses, it is easier to work part-time as the contact hours per course are much less than that of drama school. At university, there are specific contact hours per course and a curriculum footprint to adhere it. Normally, there are 11 contact hours in the first year, 10 in the second and nine in the third. In the United Kingdom, there are 51 Universities which offer acting and 45 which offer musical theatre: these figures include the vocational training providers which are applied to through UCAS such as, RCSSD, Guildford and LAMDA, to name just a few. There are university courses which offer drama, but these courses are not actor or musical theatre training. The map below not only shows the geographical placement of drama schools but also the universities which offer musical theatre courses (blue) and acting courses (orange).

Figure 2 – Universities which offer acting and musical theatre courses

It is evident that the further away you travel from London, the fewer opportunities there are to study performing arts, especially in the northern part of the UK.

1.3 The application processes

There are three routes of application for drama school. The first is through UCAS, the second is via the UCAS Conservatoire application route and the third is

directly through the institution's webpage. UCAS is the main admission service for universities and drama schools which are state funded. The applicant has one application with one personal statement and reference, but they can apply to five different institutions. It is always advisable that students choose similar courses to make the personal statement applicable to all courses applied for. Drama schools such as ALRA, Arts Ed, Mountview, Oxford School of Drama, LAMDA and Guildhall are all accessed directly through their website. All others can be found either on UCAS or UCAS Conservatoires page. When applying through UCAS, the applicant has a lot of information to enter from personal details, GCSEs and any other qualifications to volunteer work and employment. To apply to one institution, it costs £20 and £25 for multiple courses. Each application route is a lengthy process. If an application is made directly to the school's website, then an audition fee will be asked for, unless the applicant qualifies for a fee waiver. Many drama schools offer a fee waiver scheme for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds to help improve social mobility in the arts. For example, in 2019, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama awarded over 1,200 free audition vouchers which enabled more applicants to attend auditions and access specialist drama training (cssd.ac.uk).

As well as a fee waiver, various institutions also offer outreach auditions all over the country, see **Appendix 1.2**. However, only 55% of drama schools in England and Wales offer regional auditions which makes the audition process (**Appendix 1.3**) harder for those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

1.4 Higher education funding

In 2018, the House of Commons published a review looking at the history of university tuition fees, which showed the rise in cost since their inception in 1998. At that time, fees were £1000 per year and students paid these fees in full at the start of the academic year. Fees were raised to £3,000 in 2006, along with a new system of variable deferred fees and tuition loans[14]. Following an independent assessment of the student financing system by Lord Browne, tuition fees rose steadily by inflation until 2012, when they were raised to £9,000 per year under the Coalition Government. Higher Education and student funding have changed greatly over the

[14] https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8151/

years due to various funding pressures within higher education and government. It is important to note that although most drama schools adhere to the current fee cap of £9,250, there are some private drama schools which charge £15,295[15] and £15,995[16].

In 2019, the Augar review, a major review of post-18 education in the UK, recommended cutting the student fee cap to £7,500 a year from 2021. The aim was to halve student debt and break the barrier to access for many students across the UK. The fees would be frozen until 2023/24 and then increase in line with inflation (Times Higher Education, 2019). Countering the Augar review were academics and unions who, despite being supportive of a reduction in fees, voiced their concerns regarding the negative impact this may have on funding for teaching and learning. For example, Newcastle University Student's Union (NUSU, 2019) argued that the government must fill the funding gap created by the reduction in fees. In 2019, the Minister for Universities, Chris Skidmore, gave a speech opposing various recommendations of the Augar review:

> *Indeed, even before the report was released, I made clear my concerns over some of the initial leaks, such as the speculation over a three-'D' threshold to enter university. And I'm pleased to see that proposal didn't make the cut. If it had done so, it would have been completely regressive, and would have shut the door on opportunity for so many people whose lives are transformed by our world-leading universities and colleges…*

Skidmore (2019) believed that the Augar review would negatively impact the Arts and Humanities, and he stressed their importance to the UK:

> *Although some people around us may argue that the contribution of these disciplines to society may be less tangible, their influence is all around us …Without people who can think outside the box or challenge ideas. All this comes from the critical thinking that knowing about different cultures,*

[15] https://www.mountview.org.uk/courses/course/ba-hons-performance-musical-theatre/#fees

[16] https://artsed.co.uk/course/undergraduate/undergraduate-musical-theatre/

philosophies and languages provides us…What might be 'low value' to one man, might to others represent money well spent on acquiring knowledge for its own sake, expanding one's cultural horizons, learning to empathise and reflect upon the human condition, applying it to the challenges for the future.

Despite its purported aim to improve social mobility and access for those from more disadvantaged areas, the Augur review sought to (i) extend the student loan repayment period from 30 to 40 years, and (ii) reduce the repayment threshold from £25,000 to £23,000, leading critics such as Tim Blackman (2019), the Vice Chancellor of The Open University, to describe the report as a disappointment[17]. According to Blackman et al (2021), although the Augur report contains some radical ideas, such as new entitlements to free level two and three learning and replacing loans for studying qualifications with loans for studying module-by-module, it is technocratic rather than visionary and provides protection against further cuts for STEM subjects, whilst promising a bleak future for the arts.

1.5 University

Funding for university is different to most drama schools as all university places are funded by The Students Loan Company (SLC). Each student is eligible for a loan of £9,250 per year from the government to pay for their tuition fees and this can be applied for through the government website[18]. A student may be asked to provide details of their household income, and this determines if that student is eligible for a maintenance loan or grant. A loan must be paid back whereas a grant does not. There is a student loans calculator to estimate what the maintenance loan might be.

Below is a table which demonstrates the funds available for a maintenance loan in the UK and it shows funds available over a two-year period, this is for a full-time student only:

[17] https://wonkhe.com/blogs/augar-is-a-disappointment-for-higher-education/

[18] https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/apply

Full-time student	2022 to 2023 academic year	2023 to 2024 academic year
Living at home	Up to £8,171	Up to £8,400
Living away from home, outside London	Up to £9,706	Up to £9,978
Living away from home, in London	Up to £12,667	Up to £13,022
You spend a year of a UK course studying abroad	Up to £11,116	Up to £11,427

Table 2 – Available maintenance loans 2023/2024

(www.gov.uk 2023)

The government also offer a special support fund as well as various grants and loans to those who are on any of the following:

- Income Support
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- the housing element of Universal Credit

The special support grant is also available for people who are lone parents or have certain disabilities. If you apply for a Maintenance grant (which does not need to be paid back), then your grant may impact your maintenance loan and result in a lesser amount being loaned to you. The Special Support Fund, however, does not affect your application for a Maintenance loan and you are eligible for the full amount. Many students opt out of applying for extra funding and decide to get a job to subsidise their outgoings. Student finance is available up to nine months after the start date of the chosen course, if the student needs to apply for any additional funding or help from the government. The table below shows the deadline for Maintenance Loan / Grant or Special Support applications. This information is important for students wanting to apply for student funding, as if these deadlines are not met, then students will not receive government funding for their studies for the

academic year they wish to study and may have to postpone going to university for another year:

Course start date	Apply by
Between 1 August and 31 December	31 May after your course started
Between 1 January and 31 March	30 September after your course started
Between 1 April and 30 June	31 December after your course started
Between 1 July and 31 July	31 March after your course started

Table 3 – Application deadline for maintenance loan support

(www.gov.uk, 2023)

Each university also has their own funding for students. The main bodies of funding are:

- Hardship Fund (England)
- Discretionary Fund (Scotland)
- Financial Contingency Funds Scheme (Wales)
- Support Fund (NI)

(Disabilityrightsuk.org, 2019)

Priority of these usually goes to mature students, part-time students, students with children or students with disabilities.

1.6 Types of Drama School

There are three different types of drama school: (i) state-funded; (ii) premium-funded; (iii) privately funded.

The state-funded drama school receives its funding from the government, so students do not pay more than the national fee cap of £9,250. The next type of school is the premium-funded school. This school receives a substantial premium from the state, topping up their income from student fees (Moseley, 2019). As all drama schools must adhere to Equity standards and certain regulations to be classed as a drama school, they must offer longer hours and contact time than a university course and they receive various state funds to supplement the costs

incurred in providing this level of contact time. Lastly, there is the privately funded drama school. These schools are known to charge up to £18,000 per year. The state offers up to £6,000 per student per year and then the fees on top of that are the responsibility of the student. Schools which tend to be privately funded also offer a Dance and Drama Award (DaDAs) which, in some cases, will cover up to 100% of the fees for the duration of the student's study. There is only a limited number of DaDAs available, and they can only be applied for when the student is in receipt of an offer.

1.6.1 DaDA Awards

The DaDA scheme offers income-assessed support for tuition fees and living costs to 16–23-year-olds studying Dance and Drama at a higher education vocational school. Not all drama and dance school offer it, however. Each institution can apply and only when their application has been successful can they administer the award. How the award is administered and to whom is down to each respective institution. Students are selected at audition for a DaDA if they show enough potential and talent to succeed in their chosen industry.[19] In order to avoid bias, when auditioning students, institutions must implement the code of practice for auditions and interviews produced by the Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre (CDMT)[20]. Institutions must set out the procedures that students must follow to audition for a place and DaDA funding (Dance and Drama award guide, 2020-2021). Students must express an interest in a DaDA award when applying for the school they wish to audition for. The process of application and award can be seen in **Appendix 1.4**. It can take some time for the award to be processed, and in the meantime, the student must accept their offer of a place and pay a deposit to secure it to potentially be in receipt of a DaDA. The deposit can vary from £50 to £500. This highlights a barrier to access for students from a lower income household. Of the 22 drama schools discussed in this study, only 4 offer a DaDA Award for the academic year 20/21:

[19] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dance-and-drama-awards-guide-2020-to-2021-academic-year#dada-funding-in-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year

[20] https://cdmt.org.uk/images/RA_SUpporting_Documentation/Code-of-Professional-Conduct-for-Teachers-2017.pdf

- ALRA (Academy of Live and Recorded Arts)
- Arts Ed London
- Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts
- The Oxford School of Drama

The reason for only 4 drama schools offering DaDA awards is because they offer Trinity College London Diplomas[21] as an equivalent to an honour's degree. Trinity qualifications focus on enhancing performance by '*developing communicative and performance skills'* and to '*help equip people with the transferable skills they need for life in the 21st century*' (trinitycollege.com, 2021). The diplomas are:

- Level 6 Diploma in Professional Acting (3 years)
- Level 5 Diploma in Professional Acting (1 year)
- Level 5 Diploma in Professional Dance (Classical Ballet or Contemporary Dance) (2 years)
- Level 6 Diploma in Professional Dance (3 years)
- Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre (3 years)

Institutions whose provision is assessed as Outstanding (Grade 1) or Good (Grade 2) at Ofsted inspection will be eligible to offer DaDA funding (Dance and Drama award guide, 2020-2021). These awards are competitive and there are only a few available at each institution; it is recommended to apply for drama school early if the student needs a DaDA to undertake training.

1.6.2 Fees and travel costs

Drama school and university places are applied for via three separate routes. The first is UCAS, the second is UCAS Conservatoires and the third is directly through the drama school website. To apply for a drama school place through UCAS, there is usually a one-off fee of either £20 or £25, depending on how many courses are applied for. If an application is made through the UCAS Conservatoires or directly on their website, it tends to be an audition fee of £45. There can sometimes be an additional admin fee on top of this and some schools, depending on time of year, charge more; RADA for example charge £76 instead of £45 when an

[21] https://www.trinitycollege.com/about-us/recognition

application is made after Christmas. **Appendix 1.5** is a fee table of the 22 drama schools, their audition fees and any additional charges. The first stage is making the application and paying the audition or UCAS fee. Universities do not tend to charge any additional fees on top and then it is the cost of travel to the university interview and you will find out on the day or, in most cases, one to two weeks after the interview has taken place. However, there are no more recall rounds thus no more fees are incurred. For a drama school audition, you have the audition fee, then the cost of travel (depending on distance), subsistence and accommodation. Below is an average costing for one adult going to an audition in October, based on travelling from Newcastle and an application to a drama school whose audition fee is £45 (prices correct at the time of writing 2023):

Audition fee	Travel costs (Return from Newcastle)	Accommodation (Premier Inn / Travelodge)	Subsistence (based on two days)	Total (One audition)
£45	£157 (Train) £5 (Fuel to train station)	£150	£75	£400

Table 4 – Example costs of one audition

There are 22 top drama schools in the country and Moseley (2019) advises a student to decide on around six schools and apply to those. To audition once for those schools could cost roughly £2,400 if travel and accommodation are included, so it can be a very expensive process. That cost does not include any recall auditions. Some of the cost could be brought down if an applicant decided to apply to a school which does outreach auditions and then wait until the auditions come to their region of the UK. Cost wise, that is much more affordable, but it does diminish one's chances of gaining a place as most outreach auditions do not come to the north of England until February/March. By then, over half of the places on a drama school course will have been taken. As well as this, if a student puts on their application that they will need a DaDA to fund their place, then the chances of gaining a place on the degree course diminish even further, due to the drama school only having a certain amount of money from the government to spread equally

across students who most need it. As mentioned earlier, the criteria are strict so unless that applicant possesses those qualities, the likelihood of them gaining a place and being awarded a scholarship is low.

1.7 University vs Drama School – Employment Opportunities

Universities tend to offer broader programmes of study than drama schools, so students can choose the modules they want study and combine drama and theatre with other subjects such as film studies, theatre design, English or creative writing. The employment opportunities are wider for students at a university because the degree is less practical and more academic, but it is more difficult to make it as a jobbing actor or performer in the West End as university graduates do not have drama school training on their CV. Many acting/musical theatre university graduates go on to do a postgraduate course at drama school to enhance their chances of moving into professional acting or musical theatre.

Below is a table of employment opportunities post-university and drama school training, using RADA, one of the world's elite drama school providers as an example and York St John University, chosen at random:

Drama School (RADA)	University (York St John)
West End Productions	Actor
London Theatres and Companies	Community Arts Worker
Regional Theatres	Theatre Director
Television	Theatre stage Manager
Film	Drama therapist

Table 5 – Employment opportunities post training

RADA has a 75%[22] success rate of employment within 15 months of graduation, while the BA(Hons) Acting course at York St John is 85%[23] as of 2022. Both offer

[22] https://discoveruni.gov.uk/course-details/10009292/BAACT/FullTime/

[23] https://discoveruni.gov.uk/course-details/10007713/U1BAACTGS/FullTime/

good employment opportunities but if you were to study at York St John on their Acting degree, as a graduate you will earn an average of £18,000 (discoveruni.gov.uk, 2020) 15 months after graduating. Although the data for RADA on the average graduate earnings is not available, looking at the career outcomes at RADA, it can be surmised that the average salary would be higher than that of the university graduate. One thing to bear in mind when comparing employment opportunities at any university or drama school is the region's job market. Will there be a need to relocate? What is the cost-of-living, subsistence, travel, and social mobility within the area? Yorkshire and the Humber have no social mobility hotspots at all and are in the lowest 11% in the country for poor social mobility. RADA, however, is located in the London borough of Camden and is in the best performing 20% of local authorities for social mobility hotspots, ranking 19th of 65:

Region	Social Mobility Hotspots		Social Mobility Cold spots	
	Top 10%	Top 20%	Bottom 10%	Bottom 20%
London	72%	94%	0%	0%
Yorkshire and the Humber	0%	0%	14%	33%

Table 6 – Social Mobility Hotspots (Social Mobility Index, 2020)

If a student were to graduate from York St John with a BA(Hon) in Acting, that individual would struggle to convert this into success as a graduate because the employment prospects outside of London for jobbing actors are poor. They could, of course, relocate to London, but unless they are able to financially sustain living there without a job so that they can attend auditions and casting, the likelihood of success is minimal.

Summary

On May 25th 2023[24] the DfE published the latest update regarding the reform of post-16 level 3 vocational qualifications in England, stating that Performing Arts

[24] https://www.pearson.com/uk/campaigns/L3-Review-Updates.html

BTECs will become academically focussed by 2026[25]. Performing Arts qualifications do not have a Technical Level alternative and the DfE (2023) have stated that any remaining Performing Arts qualifications that have not been reapproved for funding are being defunded for both 16-19-year-olds and adults beginning the academic year 2026/2027. Performing Arts BTECs are ideal for working-class or non-academic students because of their creative and non-academic nature, yet it is apparent that they are being squeezed out. Just two months prior to the announcement of its reforms to the Performing Arts BTEC, the government released an update via the Office for Students (OfS) [26] declaring that a funding boost of £9.6 million will be implemented to improve teaching and access to performing arts courses at specialist higher education providers across England. This funding is only allocated to specialist higher education providers, and itis important to note that the specialist schools are elite training providers which are only dance and drama schools[27], and not university performing arts courses – which is where the funding is needed and where most working-class performing arts students end up studying. It seems, then, that it is the government's intention to favour middle-class and elite students with regard to performing arts education. This attack on social mobility has not gone unchallenged: in a speech given by Baroness Bonham-Carter on 28th June 2023 at the Westminster Education Forum, she highlighted the necessity for access to performing arts for the working-classes:

> *The inevitable consequence of this disparity between the access of creative subjects for children in state schools, and those in fee-paying schools, is a pipeline of talent that has become ever more dependent on*

[25] https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/campaigns/L3consultation/btec-l3-review-quick-guide.pdf

[26] https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/funding-boost-puts-performing-arts-and-degree-apprenticeships-in-the-limelight/#:~:text=The%20funding%20for%20performing%20arts,£1%20million%20per%20annum.

[27] The 15 specialist higher education providers that have been allocated funding are ACM Guildford Limited, Backstage Academy (Training) Limited, British and Irish Modern Music (BIMM) University Limited, The Central School of Ballet Charitable Trust Limited, Chicken Shed Theatre Company (Chickenshed), Court Theatre Training Company Limited, ICMP Management Limited, Lamda Limited, Leeds Conservatoire, Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA), National Centre for Circus Arts, Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Point Blank Music School, Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, and Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance.

the affluence of parents. Research by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre has found people from more privileged backgrounds are twice as likely to be employed in the cultural sector, and this means less diversity in every sense.

As explored in chapter 10 of *Culture is bad for you: Inequality in the cultural and creative industries*, titled *'What about the men?*' by Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor (2020), they discuss the cultural industries' resistance to change and how they may, in part, be attributed to the acceptance of the beliefs of social mobility and meritocracy. This is true notwithstanding the ongoing political debate over equality. It further mentions how senior white males realise societal and cultural disparities in cultural occupations, but they do not link structural factors to their personal lives. Using the 'gentlemanly motifs' of luck and humility, they hide their own privileges while discussing their own professions. The way disparities in the cultural sector are normalised is by placing a strong focus on chance, personal initiative, ability, and mobility.

As discussed throughout this chapter, the funding required to study vocational performing arts at HE level is something only afforded to the wealthy and making a career in the performing arts is difficult for poorer students – this is explored further in the next chapter on social mobility.

Chapter 2: Social mobility and arts education: a comparison of private and state provision

Introduction

This chapter examines social mobility in contemporary Britain, with a focus on the value and importance of the arts and their impact on students' holistic growth and life chances. It is divided into the following sections:

(i) Social mobility in contemporary Britain – This section looks at what social mobility is and it explores the factors which encourage and prevent social mobility in the UK.

(ii) Meritocracy: a myth? – Section 2.2 offers a brief discussion of meritocracy and whether it exists in contemporary Britain, or if it is being used to legitimise social inequalities.

(iii) State of the Nation- Section 2.3 focuses on the levelling up agenda, school funding cuts and the focus on STEM in state schools.

(iv) Social mobility in education: examining both state and private education. This section will look at whether the narrow choice of the state curriculum helps or hinders social mobility and whether a co-curriculum, defined as a balance of academic study, sport, drama and outdoor education (Eton College, 2023), improves a child's life chances post education.

2.1. Social mobility in contemporary Britain

Social mobility is understood to be the movement, either upwards or downwards, of individuals within a country's social stratification. Currently, there are a variety of factors which are said to measure social mobility, such as education, socio-economic status at birth, the economy and parental income. The concept of social mobility has emerged as one of the most prominent themes of the present political era, with politicians on both sides of the fence supporting it as a vital policy goal (Payne, 2017). Despite it being one of the UK's main priorities for the past ten years, very little has changed with regards to improving social mobility (Social Mobility Commission, 2019)

Since the early noughties, social mobility in the UK has been measured on outcomes (such as graduate employability) rather than the drivers of relative social

mobility[28]. By adopting this approach, social mobility rates are not captured in the moment but reflect what was happening ten years ago; as Nick Clegg said in the 2011, *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers* report, improving social mobility and ensuring we have an '*open and socially mobile society'* is a '*long term undertaking'*. He also says there is 'no magic wand we can wave to see [an] immediate effect'. Under this model, the impact of recent changes to the BTEC will not be apparent until employment data is available in approximately 10 years' time. In 2020, The Global Social Mobility Index (GSMI)[29] was introduced. It is a new index which measures social mobility of countries in the moment by '*considering what a country can do holistically to foster relative social mobility for all citizens*' as opposed to other methodologies which compare children and parental income across the generations. It uses ten pillars, which in turn are broken down into five determinants of social mobility – health, education, technology access, work opportunities, working conditions and fair wages and finally, social protection and inclusive institutions.

The GSMI's review of policies, practices and institutions has enabled comparisons throughout regions and generations. One of the key findings from this report is that only a small number of countries adopt the holistic approach to social mobility, including Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden who occupy the top four positions in global social mobility rankings[30]. Using the Nordic countries as an example, Denmark is a market economy. It is a democratic nation, where multiple parties co-exist and compromise with each other regularly. Denmark is ranked number 1 in the world for social mobility, closely followed by Norway, Finland and Sweden measuring an index score of 85.2, 83.6, 83.6 and 83.5 respectively. The UK is ranked at 21 with 74.4% social mobility. According to the Visual Capitalist (2020), countries with lower levels of inequality exhibit lower levels of income inequality and provide equal opportunities for their citizens across the country. Using the GSMI

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28 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61964/opening-doors-breaking-barriers.pdf

29 https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-social-mobility-index-2020-why-economies-benefit-from-fixing-inequality

30 http://reports.weforum.org/social-mobility-report-2020/social-mobility-rankings/?doing_wp_cron=1636371796.3909330368041992187500

model, we can see that the Performing Arts BTEC provides a route into the acting and musical theatre profession for economically and socially disadvantaged students who are otherwise excluded, thereby contributing to social mobility.

The World Economic Forum released an insight report into global social mobility in 2020[31] and identified social mobility as a key priority for many countries around the world. The report says:

> *The Global Social Mobility Index shows that very few economies have the right conditions to foster social mobility and consequently income inequalities have become entrenched.*

One of the greatest challenges to improving social mobility is child poverty (The Social Mobility Commission, 2021). Unfortunately, with various schemes set up during the Coronavirus pandemic coming to an end, including the £20 per week uplift in universal credit[32], child and adult poverty is set to rise over the next couple of years. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, this means that an estimated extra 500,000 people including 200,000 children, will be in poverty.[33] The Resolution Foundation also states that over the course of this parliament, child poverty will have risen from 30.9% to 33.7%[34] According to the Social Mobility Commission (2021) in the North East of England alone, child poverty rates have risen sharply by around 11 percentage points in five years (from 25% to 37%). They are now close to the London rate of 38%. Thus, reiterating that whilst child poverty still exists, and is heightened in poorer socioeconomic areas due to inflation, rising housing prices and poor job markets, upward social mobility will always be harder to achieve across the country when wealthier households have more life opportunities as well as better educational prospects.

Previous governments have committed to reducing socio-economic inequalities that lead to poor social mobility with tag lines such as ‘levelling up’

[31] https://www3.weforum.org/docs/Global_Social_Mobility_Report.pdf

[32] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/la-welfare-direct-bulletins-2021/la-welfare-direct-82021

[33] https://www.jrf.org.uk/universal-credit-cut-impact-constituency

[34] https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-outlook-2021/

'opportunity for all' and 'build back better'[35]. They have pledged to create a fairer, more equal society where everyone has the opportunity to be upwardly socially mobile, a meritocratic society where talent and skill help you move up the professional ladder, and not allow your birth and privilege to dictate what job you end up with. However, up to now the UK has been living in an age of austerity which has prevented this from happening and has had a detrimental impact on those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds[36].

2.2 Meritocracy: a myth?

In 2016, the Prime Minister at the time, Theresa May, had a vision for the United Kingdom, one of meritocracy:

> *I want Britain to be the world's great meritocracy – a country where everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and their hard work will allow* (May, 2016).

In this meritocracy, effort and talent would ultimately allow for upward social mobility by enabling those from even the poorest socioeconomic backgrounds who have skill, talent, and work hard, to achieve their dreams. The integrity of this vision is challenged by Jin Jin and Stephen Ball in their 2020 article *Meritocracy, social mobility and a new form of class domination*, in which they argue that many governments employ meritocracy as a means to represent social fairness and legitimise class inequalities. In Jo Littlers' (2018) book *Against Meritocracy: Culture, Power and Myths of Mobility*, Littler claims that the idea of meritocracy has become a key means through which plutocracy – or government by a wealthy elite – perpetuates, reproduces and extends itself. Littler (2018) discusses the nature of a functioning meritocratic society as being one which:

[35] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/an-analysis-of-2-decades-of-efforts-to-improve-social-mobility

[36] Department for Education, improving social mobility through education: unlocking talent, fulfilling potential, 2017.

…endorses a competitive, linear, hierarchical system in which by definition certain people must be left behind. The top cannot exist without the bottom.

If only a small fraction of society can be upwardly socially mobile, does meritocracy truly exist or is it a term invented and used by the upper classes to make the majority of society believe we do in fact live in a fair society?

Meritocracy is presented by politicians as a 'ladder system' which individuals can climb and improve their social standing, in turn bettering social mobility. In 2013, at the Conservative Party Conference, David Cameron said '*you help people by putting up ladders that they can climb through their own efforts*' which further demonstrates meritocracy as being individual and competitive in nature. The idea offers the opportunity for those in society to climb, but as Raymond Williams (1958) points out, '*It is a device that can only be used individually'* (Littler 2018: Williams 1958: 331) as we must pull ourselves up, with no apparent obligation to help others on the ladder. This confirms what Littler said, regarding meritocracy as plutocracy. The idea of a ladder system does not take into account those who are already at the top because of their social standing, location, family and wealth. Ultimately, meritocracy promotes a socially corrosive ethic of competitive self-interest which both legitimises inequality and damages community (Littler, 2018).

In his 1958 book *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, Michael Young coined the term meritocracy as a derogatory term to warn against a concept that explains and legitimises class disparities by implying that those distinctions are based on merit or aptitude. It was written as satire but has ended up being implemented as a social system for upward class mobility. Education has been at the centre of policy reform on social mobility for the past 50 years and is considered to be the primary conduit for upward mobility. However, there are many other factors to be taken into consideration when focusing on improving social mobility and the idea of meritocracy. For UK society to be truly meritocratic, there needs to be equal access university – all types of universities including Russell Group and elite institutions – as well as employment and affordable housing. Professor Diane Reay, a visiting professor at the London School of Economics (LSE) AND Emeritus Professor of Education at Cambridge University, argues that meritocracy is an illusion in contemporary British society, which ultimately leads to greater division and prejudice.

In Professor Reay's 2017 book *Miseducation: Inequality, education and the working classes*, she discusses why the working classes are still faring so much worse than the middle and upper classes. She argues that the government's standpoint of social mobility is *'incessant babble'* and the idea of meritocracy in wider society and education has made things worse for working class children, with *'more segregation and polarisation'*. The wealth disparity has widened significantly since even 30 years ago, and society has become even more unjust. Instead of continuing down the path of austerity, which appears to be hurting the poor, the country must turn back (Reay, 2017).

The Social Mobility Strategy (2011) acknowledges that more can be done to improve social mobility, but it states that personal characteristics, such as talent and hard work, make the main difference in determining life-chances in today's Britain. One's motivation and drive to improve one's circumstances plays a vital role in the success of bettering one's life chances but as discussed previously, the environment you are nurtured in and the opportunities available to you play a pivotal role in one's upward social mobility. Not every child who works hard and has talent will be upwardly socially mobile because there is not equal access of opportunity for all children. Therefore, meritocracy does not and cannot exist in poorer regions of the country when investment is not made for economic growth. What is more, after Brexit and the Coronavirus pandemic, there is a rise in food and fuel prices, living costs and energy prices as well as the rise of inflation, yet there is not a rise in salaries. The North East is one of the poorest socially mobile regions in the UK, measuring in the bottom ten per cent, especially for post-16 and adult life chances, so with everything rising apart from one's salary, it becomes even more difficult to expect the region to become more upwardly socially mobile. The concept of meritocracy is one of the key ideas supporting the Conservatives' narrative of Britain. You can do anything if you simply work hard enough. It is the assurance that if you follow the rules, you will be rewarded. Any exceptions to success are readily attributed to individual failure, rather than reflecting systematic - and as discussed in this study so far, often quite deliberate- inequities. The idea of a meritocratic society only exists if equity and parity exist at every life stage so that everyone has the same opportunity to climb the ladder, and as Brook et al (2020) state '*this is one reason why change is so difficult*' (p.19)

2.3 State of the Nation: Levelling Up, Funding Cuts and STEM

On 2 February 2022, the Government published its long-awaited Levelling Up White Paper, presenting an ambitious, decade-long policy agenda to change the UK's economic geography and narrow the country's regional inequality. (CentreforCities.org, 2022)

2.3.1 The Levelling Up agenda

While talent is distributed evenly throughout the UK, access to opportunity is not. Levelling up is a mission to tackle and address the imbalance and levelling up suggests allowing everyone to flourish. It means that people throughout the UK will be living longer, and leading more fulfilling lives, benefiting from rising living standards and well-being (gov.uk, 2022).

According to the *Levelling Up Executive Summary* published by HM Government in February 2022, the recipe for a new Industrial Revolution in the 21st century relies on a variety of interventions and energising a variety of industries. To level up, the government states they need to do the following:

1. *boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging.*
2. *spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.*
3. *restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost; and*
4. *empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.* (gov.uk, 2022)

This paper highlights that levelling up needs to take place across 4 key areas which are skills, health, education and well-being. According to the government (2022), by focusing on these areas all regions will be able to realise their potential. In doing so, regions can build on their distinctive strengths, expand possibilities for individuals and businesses, and celebrate the culture of every city, town, and village. This will develop, equalise, and strengthen the economy, as well as lengthen and improve people's lives.

Two years on from then PM Boris Johnson's introduction to the levelling up campaign, Erica Roscoe, a senior research fellow at IPPR North, discussed the levelling up campaign saying:

> *It was good rhetoric but two years later, our fundamental divisions between and within regions are widening, and places like the north are still waiting for the powers, resources, and transparency that they require from government*[37] (The Guardian, 2021).

It seems, therefore, that Johnson's pledge that people from all backgrounds will have the opportunity to 'level up' by learning specific skills that help the regional economy grow is a broken promise.

2.3.2 School funding cuts and STEM in state schools

In the 2021 policy paper on the government's plan for economic growth[38] post pandemic, Rishi Sunak, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that giving people the skills they need to succeed is the most effective method to improve their life chances, and that the government was investing heavily in further education as a means to improve upward social mobility. However, educational reforms in state education over the past 50 years have not made a difference to social mobility because governments have focused on the STEM subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths as opposed to nurturing a co-curriculum including arts and sport, which are aligned with broader opportunities for employment. Johnson states in the 2021 Build Back Better plan[39], that the '*formula for [our] success can be seen in the collaboration between industry, science and government'* he continues by saying:

[37] https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2021/jul/15/boris-johnsons-speech-on-levelling-up-decried-for-lack-of-substance

[38] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth-html

[39] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth-html

> *We will level up our country, so the map of our whole United Kingdom is lit up with competitive cities and vibrant towns that are centres of life – places people are proud to call home, with access to the services and the jobs they need to thrive*. (Johnson, 2021)

In a report published in 2017 by the Social Mobility Commission titled, *State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain*[40] old industrial, mining regions such as the North East, have poor social mobility in general. Despite the North East being the second-best performer on social mobility indicators during the early years and primary school, it is the second worst performer on indicators for youth and working lives (State of the Nation, 2017). In fact, the region has the largest disparity between outcomes for disadvantaged people during the school years and afterwards. This means that early educational successes often go to waste, partly because high-quality job opportunities are more limited than in other areas. Thus, suggesting that to be more upwardly socially mobile you would have to move away from the region to secure higher paid employment. Promoting STEM in education does not address employment cold spots and regional disparities regarding employment opportunities in STEM.

The 2007 report *Recent Changes in Intergenerational Mobility in Britain,* written for the Sutton Trust by Jo Blanden and Stephen Machin, discusses how one's social strata and economic privilege impacts on one's attainment in early years education. Access to early educational opportunities does have an impact on one's social mobility trajectory. This section will look at social mobility in further and higher education performing arts and will not focus on primary school level, but it is worth noting that '*disadvantaged pupils in primary schools are now seven months behind their privileged peers'* (State of the Nation, 2021) and this has only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has added a further month on top of this. The Education Policy Institute (EPI) estimates that by the age of 16, disadvantaged pupils are at least 18 months behind their more affluent peers, and this was prior to the pandemic[41]. The stalling of the gap has all but eradicated the last decade's

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[40] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf

[41] Education Policy Institute, Measuring the disadvantage gap in 16-19 education, 2021.

progress and in turn highlights poor policy making, implementation and lack of progress. It is unsurprising that schools in areas of poor social mobility, such as the North East, and with more disadvantaged students, suffer greater losses with regard to the attainment gap. According to the pupils' progress report 2020-2021 from the Department for Education[42] the North East has almost double the learning loss than its southern counterparts. The 2020 annual report by the EPI states that:

> *Pupils living in persistent poverty (who have spent more than 80% of their time in school on Free School Meals) are a shocking 22.7 months behind non-disadvantaged pupils on average* (Education Policy Institute, 2020)

Boris Johnson's plan to 'Build Back Better' highlighted funding to be given to the lifelong learning sector to improve social mobility and encourage more people to work by opening up better job opportunities within every region in the UK. Yet, a child's development and education between the ages of 0-5 is a crucial time, and as claimed by a 2020 report from the Centre for Educational Neuroscience, this age impacts a child's future outcomes[43]. Therefore, if a child from a disadvantaged area is educationally behind at every stage of their life, they will never be on a level playing field with their advantaged counterpart. What would encourage progress and a closing of the attainment gap, would be to invest in early educational opportunities for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds and improve state curriculum to reflect a more holistic approach to education; a blended curriculum which embraces STEM, sport, the arts and humanities to give all children across the UK access to various skillsets, which will equip them for further and higher study and future employment. As the 2021 social mobility report, *State of the Nation*, highlights, '*high quality and accessible early years education is essential in ensuring the developmental gap is closed'.* If a child is brought up in poverty, their parents are more likely to be out of work, thus resulting the child not being able to access the

[42] Department for Education, Understanding progress in the 2020/21 academic year, Complete findings from the autumn term, 2021.

[43] Centre for Educational Neuroscience, Most learning happens within the first 3 years, 2020.

high-quality early years provision because of how much it costs (ibid). The report suggests:

> *…the wealthier a child's family is, the more likely that child will start school at a good level of development (81% for the wealthiest vs. 64% for the poorest) (State of the Nation,* 2021)

The North East, which is in the most deprived 0-10% of regions in the UK, has one of the highest rates of poverty in the UK, and is one of the poorest in the country for social mobility, especially post-16 education. North East children born into poverty are likely to continue the cycle of disparity and the developmental and educational attainment gap will remain stagnant or continue to widen. Investment must be made in various areas – as mentioned earlier in the chapter – in order for social mobility to upwardly improve, child poverty must be reduced.

In the *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers* report of 2011, the government's strategy focuses on education as the main driver for change. There have been many educational reforms over the past 50 years, and according to a 2011 report[44] by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the expansion of education has contributed to a fundamental transformation of societies. Higher education was a privilege for the few in 1961, and in many nations, even upper secondary school was forbidden to the mass of young people. Today, most of the population has completed secondary school, one in every three young adults has an undergraduate degree, with half of the population in some nations soon to have one. However, it has not always been easy to quantify such changes over time: during the better part of the last half-century, a lack of consistent data made tracking the rate of change nearly impossible (OECD, 2011). The British government are yet to improve the education gap. If anything, the most recent reform has widened the educational attainment gap between rich and poor. According to the *Education in England: Annual Report 2020*[45], since 2011, there has been less progress in closing the gap for persistently disadvantaged pupils and more recently, increases in persistent

[44] https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/48642586.pdf

[45] https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EPI_2020_Annual_Report_.pdf

poverty among disadvantaged pupils have contributed to the halt in progress for the wider disadvantaged group**.** The government's most recent educational reform will focus on boosting the national economy following the Covid-19 pandemic and according to the Department of Education (DfE) outcome delivery plan: 2021 to 2022[46] this will be achieved by four strategic outcomes:

(i) Improving the skills pipeline, levelling up productivity and supporting people to work.
(ii) Level up education standards so that children and young people in every part of the country are prepared with the knowledge, skills and qualifications they need.
(iii) Support the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people through high-quality local services so that no one is left behind.
(iv) Provide the best start in life through high-quality early education and childcare to raise standards and help parents to work.

This strategic plan highlights vocational skills and education to be accessible for all and the key focus on improving the economy and social mobility, but it is not much different to what then deputy PM Nick Clegg suggested in 2011. If education is considered the key focus on improving social mobility, the wealth and opportunity gap will continue to stagnate or widen. Education on its own cannot address social justice. There are other contributing factors to one's level of social mobility which include affordable housing, access to healthcare, diet and poverty and geographic location. Government policy has been based on the idea that those from weaker economic areas who want to have a successful career, would need to move away in order to achieve this goal (Sociology e-review, 2016). With the rise in taxation, living costs, fuel prices, housing, and especially with the interest rate on student loans possibly rising from 4.5% to 12%[47] from September 2022 it is unsurprising that some individuals from deprived backgrounds do not want to go on to tertiary education.

In *Poorer Children's educational attainment: how important are attitudes and behaviours?* Alissa Goodman and Paul Gregg (2010) say that only one in five young people from the poorest families achieve five good GCSEs […] compared with three-

[46] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-outcome-delivery-plan/dfe-outcome-delivery-plan-2021-to-2022

[47] https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2022/04/student-loan-interest-rates-to-rise-in-september/

quarters from the richest families. Other factors are key in one's educational success and, as Clegg mentions in the 2011 report, both class and parental income play a large role in determining if a child will gain the necessary qualifications to enter higher education. As is demonstrated in the graph below, from the 2021 Sutton Trust report, it is evident that access is the largest barrier to meritocracy and social mobility within Higher Education, and further reinforces the notion of meritocracy being a myth; especially when it comes to Russell group and elite universities.

Figure 6. Access and success rates by university type

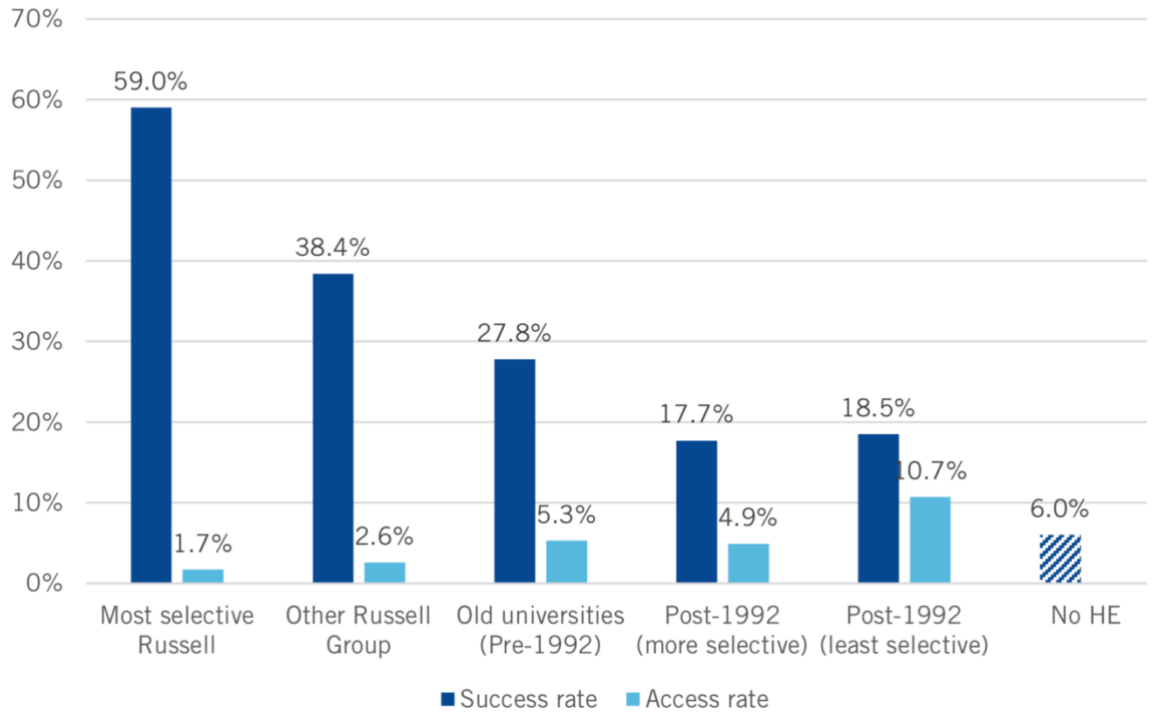

Figure 3 – Access rate of students from disadvantaged backgrounds into University type (TheSuttonTrust.com)

The report by The Sutton Trust measured cohorts of students over a 20-year period, so despite it being the most accurate and recent measure of social mobility in the UK, it is already outdated. It highlights social mobility over that period but it not a true reflection of current absolute social mobility. It is worth noting that this measure of mobility highlights that 13 in every 1,000 students entering University since the mid 2000's is from disadvantaged backgrounds, who ultimately go on to be socially mobile. What is concluded from this most recent report is that if there were equal access to university, and everyone who attended had an equal chance of labour market success, the rate would be 4.4% (The Sutton Trust, 2021)

What enhances the inequalities, not only in education but in our society, and the pushing of meritocracy to be thought of as a myth, is the government's campaign to deliver a yearly increase in pupil funding from 2021. Albeit a great idea to improve meritocracy in our nation, it is not wholly transparent. Each secondary school will get a minimum of £5,150 per learner, while each primary school will receive a minimum of £4,000 per pupil. The National Funding Formula, developed by the Department of Education, is used to determine funding allocation to local areas (NFF). According to the 2019 EPI report *Analysis: 'Levelling up' – what it really means for school funding*[48], schools:

> *…do not have the characteristics associated with additional funding under the NFF... schools without high levels of disadvantaged pupils, that are serving more affluent communities, those without large numbers of pupils with low prior attainment, and those without pupils for whom English is not their first language, would benefit the most. In a nutshell, institutions with less difficult admissions…*

According to the study, primary schools with less than 5% of pupils eligible for free school meals would see an average rise of £271 in per-pupil funding, while schools with a higher proportion of free school meals students would see a decrease. According to the proposal:

> *A child eligible for free school meals would get an additional £56 under this proposal, while a pupil not eligible for free school meals would receive an additional £116.*

Overall, the Institute for Fiscal Studies' assessment indicates that these initiatives will leave schools in poorer circumstances in 2022-23 than they were in 2010. Attempting to equalise funding ignores the fact that the obstacles faced, as well as the opportunities provided, in different places and to different students, are simply not similar. Aside from London, the North East would receive the least increased

[48] https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/analysis-the-prime-ministers-promise-to-level-up-school-funding/#_ftn6

funds under this approach. While many schools are having difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers, poor schools are having the most difficulty (EPI, 2019).

Education is about challenging what is assumed to be true and attempting to perceive the world as it truly is: *'Education is not preparation for life; education is itself'* (Dewey, 1897: p.78). The Conservatives have confirmed what education means in this country: passive absorbing of information, cramming of facts for constant tests, and, most significantly, ranking and grading in which a certain number of people must fail, more often those from underprivileged areas. Education has been utilised as a tool for freedom, division, and silence throughout history. It is far from passive; it is a force to be reckoned with. It is ultimately about who gets to write the story, who gets to speak up, and who does not. The lack of equal opportunity within education therefore proves that meritocracy is a fallacy. It is individualised and self-centred and glazes over systemic problems within wider society to make the nation believe that the UK is truly a meritocratic nation (meridian-magazine.com).

2.4 Social Mobility in Education: Examining State and Private Education and Arts Education

Entrepreneurship is about creativity and using one's imagination[49] which is not necessarily nurtured in current state curricula but rather in private education. The importance of having a holistic co-curriculum which focuses on nurturing the individual, is vital to most private schools in the country. For example, Eton College is a "*progressive school*" which is committed to nurturing "*independent thought*" (Eton College, 2022) As Eton suggests, they have '*always been about more than a narrow educational experience'* which takes place in state schools, and they believe that:

> *[the] co-curriculum ensures that [pupils] develop a clear sense of values, are taken outside their comfort zone and leave the school with a range of competencies which will allow them to lead fulfilled and effective lives.*
> (EtonCollege.com, 2022)

[49] https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1170170.pdf

A co-curriculum is not afforded to children in state education across the country. As a result, the wealthy will always be more upwardly socially mobile as they have access to more experiences and opportunities, both in and outside of education, than a child from a disadvantaged economic area and background.

The Sutton Trust (2009) states in a report focusing on *The Educational Backgrounds of Leading Lawyers, Journalists, Vice Chancellors, Politicians, Medics and Chief Executives*, the majority of those at the top of the leading professions are educated in independent fee- paying schools, which remain largely closed to most of the population. Those from poor socio-economic backgrounds are unable to attend fee-paying schools because of their social class and income and those who attend a state funded schools are at a disadvantage as they do not have access to a co-curriculum that allows for a holistic education[50]. An independent school has the freedom to offer a variety of subjects and allow for smaller classes so that students feel better supported. At a state school, there is a set curriculum[51] as outlined by the government and there might be up to 32 students in a classroom to one teacher. Whereas a public school caters for both the academic and pastoral needs of a student. Using Eton College as an example, where both Prince Harry and William attended, as well as Boris Johnson, David Cameron and Eddie Redmayne, Eton has two extensive curriculums: academic and the co-curriculum. The academic curriculum at Eton is broad and offers '*28 subjects, including 10 modern and classical languages*'[52] giving every boy the best opportunity to discover his passion. At a state school, this simply cannot happen due to funding, curriculum and staffing restrictions. Eton has a co-curriculum which:

> *…combines the best in academic education with a holistic co-curriculum designed to challenge our pupils and develop values and competencies to sustain them for life* (Eton College, 2022)

[50] Holistic education **instils curiosity and develop better communication and social skills**. Holistic approach encourages children to make connection in a subject, using their creative skills. Develop psychological, social, and emotional growth. Make learning natural and engaging

[51] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum

[52] https://www.etoncollege.com/inside-the-classroom/the-academic-curriculum/

The co-curriculum offers practice in sports, music and drama which ultimately allows the pupils to be able to participate in as wide a range of activities as possible so that they do not experience 'a narrow programme'. As well as this, by giving equal importance to the arts, students at Eton become practitioners. According to their website, their drama curriculum aims:

> *to facilitate a learning experience in all aspects of current theatre arts – encouraging them to discover who they are, and who they could be, as artists and practitioners. The most fruitful path to this is via active participation: by trying things out themselves, by making creative mistakes, and through the art of collaboration* (Eton College, 2022)

A private education at Eton College costs just short of £15,000 per term[53], a sum which can be one family's household income for the year, especially in more socio-economically deprived areas which experience the worst social mobility in the UK, and these high fees enable the school to provide arts education that is beyond the reach of state schools. As Brook et al (2020) discuss, the problem of social mobility and meritocracy also lay within '*inequality of consumption'* (p.19), which is demonstrated in the difference between educational provision of private and state funded education. As such, most state funded schools are only able to offer drama and the arts as an extra-curricular activity, which can result in a child from a disadvantaged background, who does not have exposure to theatre because of their social strata, not showing an interest in drama. This ultimately causes these students to not learn the same competencies as privately educated students, which results in a skills shortage that impacts social mobility and widens the wealth divide. Eton does offer free places every year, but like drama schools, it is exceptionally difficult to gain a place.

Dr John Goldthorpe, a sociologist at the University of Oxford, whose work on class has had a considerable impact, argues that nothing has changed in British society since WWII, owing to more advantaged families' use of their economic,

[53] https://www.etoncollege.com/admissions/fees/

cultural, and social advantages to keep their children at the top of the social class ladder. Goldthorpe states:

> *Successive governments, committed to increasing mobility, have regarded educational policy as the essential means to this end. Yet despite all this expansion and reform, inequalities in relative mobility chances have remained little altered* (The Guardian, 2016)

Governments, according to Goldthorpe, must focus on measures that go beyond simply encouraging economic growth if things are to change. New measures to expand investment for research and development, strengthen the country's infrastructure, and improve the quality of public services would be among them. In a lecture at the British Academy in March 2016[54], Goldthorpe argued that what can be accomplished through educational policy alone is restricted - far more so than politicians want to believe. He continues by saying that:

> *To look to the educational system itself to provide a solution to the problem of inequality of opportunity is to impose an undue burden on it. Rather, a whole range of economic and social policies is needed.* (Goldthorpe, 2016)

An individual who comes from an affluent background has access to opportunity due to their economic circumstances, whereas a person from a poor socioeconomic background does not. A child who is in poverty, poor housing and an unstable home is unlikely to succeed at a state school that is woefully underfunded compared with private schools such as Eton. Furthermore, there is evidence of a north/south divide in employment prospects after school, regardless of academic prospects. As mentioned previously in this chapter, education, as Goldthorpe states, is only one aspect of a person's ability to improve their social mobility and unless these other elements are addressed, the gap and divide between north and south will only widen.

[54] https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/1060/05_Goldthorpe_1825.pdf

2.4.1. Social Mobility in Arts Education

A holistic education recognises the significance of a child's social, physical, emotional, and spiritual development and the student and the curriculum are seen as interconnected and not independent of each other (Marshman, R, 2010.) A holistic approach is a more effective way to address the social mobility gaps in the UK but if education continues to be the driver of government policy, then levelling up education would be a place to start. Sir Ken Robinson (2015) says: *'Imagination is the source of all human achievement'* and if the national curriculum emphasises Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) but subjects such as the arts are allocated less hours on the curriculum, or removed altogether, then one's imagination and creativity is not being nurtured; this results in many children not fulfilling their potential because they are being educated out of creativity (*Sir Ken Robinson*, 2015). Access to an arts rich curriculum enables students to be exposed to higher levels of culture and as Brook et al (2020) states '*culture captures what people make, what they participate in, and what they attend. Culture is a central part of what it means to be human'*; and by excising students' rights to a holistic and culturally rich arts education, they are in turn not being given the same tools as their affluent peers to succeed and thrive in life.

Subjects such as the arts stimulate the mind by imagining situations and living through simulated experiences, and private schools are afforded the privilege of a co-curriculum which embraces this approach. Cultural education is handled differently in the private and state sector. The private sector understands the advantages of a co-curriculum as it is a proven fact that schools offering high-quality cultural education achieve higher academic performance overall, and it gives the individual access to culture (Baroness Bonham-Carter, 2023).

Institutions such as Eton believe an arts education is imperative to developing one's skills and preparing the students for later life. Cheltenham Ladies College (CLC) also have a co-curriculum, like Eton, where girls are '*encouraged to express [themselves] creatively and learn to work collaboratively*' (https://www.cheltladiescollege.org 2021) through the Arts, Music and Sport. CLC believes that the arts, specifically, *'help to develop essential skills and self-*

confidence' along with offering students Alexander Technique[55] to '*help with their general well-being'*. For state-educated students, this provision is only available at Further Education level when students study performing arts, or if they study drama at GCSE, they may do a session on the Alexander Technique but nothing more. Private education embraces and recognises the importance of the arts and understands how the arts can be a positive force for one's individual growth and life chance progression. In a paper published in 2019 by the Cultural Learning Alliance[56], titled '*The Arts for Every Child: Why arts education is a social justice issue*', it states how the arts empower children and:

> *They contribute to the development of all aspects of a child's potential and personality: studying the arts fosters creativity, innovation, empathy and resilience* (culturallearningalliance.org.uk)

This is confirmed by the important integration of a co-curriculum in the private education sector. This immediately highlights a class barrier which just '*reinforces the inequality in the education system and in society more widely'* (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2019). Independent schools realise the positive impact and value the arts have on the well-being and growth of their students. The UK government is dominated by the privately educated elite who go on to send their own children to independent schools that are rich in the arts while denying the state sector the funds to provide an equivalent education for poorer children. As Baroness Bonham-Carter (2023) says:

[55] The Alexander Technique is a skill for self-development teaching you to change long-standing habits that cause unnecessary tension in everything you do. Whatever your age or ability, the Technique can help boost your performance in any activity and relieve the pain and stress caused by postural habits, like slouching or rounded shoulders.

[56] https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Arts-for-every-child-CLA-Social-justice-briefing.pdf

If arts subjects aren't included in the Ebacc[57], schools won't stop doing them overnight. But there will be a corrosive process, they will be gradually eroded. By default, resources won't go into them

Bonham-Carter goes on to highlight how that is what has happened since the Ebacc was introduced; compared to 2022, entries at GCSE have fallen in:

- Arts & Design by 3.3% (this includes Design & Technology)
- Drama by 7.4%
- Music by 11.8%
- Performing and expressive arts overall by 16.4%

And also, compared to 2022, entries at A-Level have fallen in:

- Art & Design by 2.8% (this includes Design & Technology)
- Drama by 6.7%
- Music by 6.8%

Bonham-Carter has argued for '*STEAM not STEM'* as '*STEM ignores the fact that there should not be a choice between Arts and Science'* when in fact '*they are symbiotic'*. Moira Sinclair, chief executive of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, said in the 2019 *Arts for Every Child* report that there is:

…a wealth of research [which] shows that children with an arts deficit experience disadvantages educationally and economically, while their more fortunate peers are more resilient, healthier, do better in school, are more likely to vote, to go to university, to get a job and to keep it.

The impact poverty and poor social stratification has on a child's mental and physical well-being, along with poor life chances post-16, is bad enough, and a disadvantaged child is already developmentally behind in comparison to their affluent peers; so, if participation in the arts can fuel social mobility – as many independent establishments allude to - equality of access should be afforded to all and unaffected by class, income, race, disability, or location. Sinclair goes on to say that for many children:

[57] The English Baccalaureate (EBACC) is a performance measure for schools in England, first applied in the 2010 school performance tables. It measures the achievements of pupils who have gained key stage 4 (GCSE level) in English, Maths, Science, A language and History or Geography.

…school may be the first and only place that they are able to access arts, so it is critical that we remain vigilant in protecting this right for all children.

In order for this to happen, the government needs to focus on funding the arts at grass roots level and incorporating a holistic co-curriculum in primary and secondary state education so that access to the arts and culture is available from early years through to GCSE. As discussed, there is a distinct difference between state education and an independent curriculum. Below is the structure of primary and secondary national curriculum in state schools, according to the DfE 2014:

	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3	Key stage 4
Age	5 – 7	7 – 11	11 – 14	14 – 16
Year groups	1 – 2	3 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 11
Core subjects				
English	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foundation subjects				
Art and design	✓	✓	✓	
Citizenship			✓	✓
Computing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design and technology	✓	✓	✓	
Languages[4]		✓	✓	
Geography	✓	✓	✓	
History	✓	✓	✓	
Music	✓	✓	✓	
Physical education	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 7 – Structure of the national curriculum

It is worth noting that the national curriculum in the UK has not been updated since 2014, and in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit, it would be prudent to do so; especially in light of Johnson's statement in the 2021 Build Back Better agenda where he believes *'high quality education and skills training play a vital role in sustaining productivity growth' as well as 'creating opportunities to improve the skills of people in all regions'.* The investment being made in Further Education, as

discussed in chapter one and below, should not be the only solution to '*levelling up opportunity'* (Johnson, 2021); it is imperative that equal opportunity begins at the start of a child's life, irrespective of their social stratification. In a 2014 report titled *Stand Up for Education*, Dr Terry Wrigley, a visiting professor for Northumbria University, stated that the national curriculum demonstrates:

> *…centralised control, a lack of civilised aims and values, rigid subject divisions, a lack of breadth and balance, and (last but not least) targets which are inappropriate to the age and development of younger children…*

Wrigley discusses the extremely prescriptive nature of ex-secretary of state for Education, Michael Gove's curriculum and how, during his four years in office, *'[Gove] alienated his panel of curriculum experts by disregarding their advice'* which ultimately led to their resignation. Gove's narrow and streamlined curriculum was considered '*fatally flawed'* by one of the four experts called in to advise on the reform. Andrew Pollard, a senior academic at the Institute of Education and author, told The Guardian in 2012[58] that the '*overly prescriptive'* curriculum would generate *'widespread failure'* and would have a detrimental impact on a child's school experience as the proposed curriculum lacked '*breadth, balance and quality'*. Since the rollout of the 2014 curriculum, social mobility in state education has neither improved nor narrowed the attainment gap amongst advantaged and disadvantaged pupils; as discussed early in the chapter, the gap has in fact widened. This reform had a significant and profound effect on the arts and humanities in education when its provision was drastically cut in 2014, and to current day the effects are still felt along with further cuts to FE and HE arts and humanities provision. The government's reluctance to reform education to include a balanced and holistic curriculum which caters for all children, adults and learning styles makes their professed support for social mobility (see, for example, May, 2016) appear naïve or dishonest.

[58] https://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/jun/12/michael-gove-curriculum-attacked-adviser

2.4.2 Co-Curriculum: An insight

This section will provide examples of different curriculums available at four independent schools. Two schools are based in the South of England and two in the North. Included are Eton College for boys and Cheltenham Ladies College, alongside Barnard Castle School and Newcastle High School for Girls GDST. The curriculum at Eton college can be seen below:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Chapel / Assembly	Chapel / Assembly	Chapel / Assembly	Tutor	Chapel / Assembly	Chapel / Assembly
1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
Chambers	Chambers	Chambers	Chambers	Chambers	Chambers
4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	
Boys' Dinner	Boys' Dinner	Boys' Dinner	Boys' Dinner	Boys' Dinner	Boys' Dinner
Activities / Sport	Activities / Sport	Activities / Sport	Activities / Sport	Activities / Sport	Activities / Sport
6	Activities / Sport	6	Activities / Sport	6	Activities / Sport
7	Activities / Sport	7	Activities / Sport	7	Activities / Sport
Quiet Hour	Quiet Hour	Quiet Hour	Quiet Hour	Quiet Hour	Free

Table 8 – Eton College Curriculum[59]

At Eton College, there are five blocks of academic study Monday-Friday and four on a Saturday morning. Each afternoon consists of co-curricular activities and sport alongside two more schools. An Etonian day begins with breakfast at 7.30 followed by three 40-minute '*schools*' (lessons) then they have their morning break which is known as '*Chambers*'. They have two more schools followed by their lunch at 1.15pm. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, there are no more schools, and the afternoons consist solely of activities or sport. Once they have their tea, they have a '*quiet hour'* completing work in their room from 6.15 – 7.30 when they will have supper. Every evening, including weekends, there is a wide range of society meetings, concerts, plays and other events. Eton believes that by offering these extra activities the '*boys learn to plan their work around these to take full advantage of what is on offer'*. Bedtime routines start from 9.30pm. The sports on offer vary each term. The winter, or 'Michaelmas' term, offers Soccer, Rugby, Elite Rowing; spring 'Lent' term offers Eton Field Game, Hockey, Elite Rowing; and the summer

[59] https://www.etoncollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Admissions-Booklet.pdf

term offers Athletics, Cricket, Tennis, Rowing. These sports are known by Eton as 'major sports' and other 'minor sports, games and clubs' are also on offer[60] throughout the year. Alongside sport, there are further creative opportunities which students can take part in, such as Art and Design, Computing and Music, where students can take part in choirs, orchestras, rock bands, Jazz ensembles and military bands, all of which have concerts throughout the year. Drama and Theatre studies forms part of the academic curriculum, but it is offered as part of the co-curricular too. The school has three theatres including The Farrer Theatre, which seats 400, the Caccia Studio about 100 and the Empty Space between 50-80. There are 20 productions each year with major school productions in October and May: the students are encouraged to produce independent plays also.

Eton's academic curriculum is built on a principle of '*progressive and increasing choice'* (Eton College, 2020) where they believe no boy '*is required to make hasty or ill-judged decisions that might have serious consequences later'*. The first three years at Eton are known as '*The Non-Specialist Years'* which comprise of '*F to D Blocks'*. F block is in year 9, E is Year 10 and D is Year 11: furthermore, the academic offer for Eton boys can be seen in **Appendix 2.**

As can be seen in comparison to the National Curriculum, Eton College has a huge breadth of subjects available to its students during their time in secondary education. When they reach 'The specialist years' in Year 12 and 13, they have a range of subjects to choose from which include, Economics, Government and politics as well as creative subjects. The full list of subjects can be seen below:

Year 12	Year 13
• English Literature • Mathematics (Single or with Further Mathematics) • Biology, Chemistry, Physics • Ancient History, Latin, Greek • French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish,	Boys will continue to study three subjects; some will study four.

[60] Badminton, Basketball, Bridge, Canoeing, Chess, Croquet, Cross Country, Dragon Boats, Eton Fives, Eventing, Fencing, Golf, Martial Arts, Mountaineering, Polo, Rackets, Rugby Sevens, Sailing, Shooting, Skiing, Squash, Sub-aqua, Swimming, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Wakeboarding, The Wall Game, Water Polo.

Mandarin, Arabic • History (medieval, early modern or modern) • History of Art • Geography • Design • Art • Music • Theology • Theatre Studies • Economics • Government and Politics • Music Technology • Computer Science Boys take four academic subjects, each leading to an A level or Pre-U qualification the following year. **Most will also follow a programme of non-examined general study and take a course in religion, current affairs, ethics and philosophy to encourage thinking beyond the confines of their subjects.**	

Table 8 – Eton College's A Level options

In order to gain an understanding of the state education provision for A Levels, a table below compiles A level provision in three of the best performing state schools, in the North East of England – excluding North Yorkshire – one from each county. It is worth noting here that each county has areas of low and high deprivation, but the North East in general has very poor social mobility and scores high as one of the UK's most deprived regions.

Durham Johnston (County Durham)	**Queen Elizabeth High School** (Northumberland)	**Kings Priory School** (Tyne and Wear)
Art and Design Biology, Chemistry, Physics	Applied Human Biology, Biology, Chemistry, Physics	Art Biology

Business	Business Studies	Business Studies
Computer Science	Classics	Chemistry
Economics	Creative Digital Media	Computer Science
English Language and Literature	Design and Technology	Design and Technology
Ethics and Philosophy	Drama	Economics
French, German, Spanish	Economics	English language, English
Geography	English Literature	Literature
Government and Politics	Fine Art	French, German, Spanish
History	French	Geography
Latin	Geography	History
Maths, Further Maths	Graphics	Maths
Media Studies	Health and Social Care	Music
Music	History	Physics
PE	IT	Psychology
Product Design	Maths, Further Maths	Sports Studies
Psychology	Philosophy	
Sociology	Photography	
	PE	
	Psychology	
	Sociology	
	Sport and Physical Activity	

Table 9 - A Level Provision in three state schools from each county of the North East in areas of low deprivation.

As can be seen from the table, there is a good range of A Level provision in these schools, which include some creative subjects, with only one school offering drama. It is worth noting here that these schools are the best performing schools from each region and despite the counties all having areas of high deprivation, these schools are specifically in areas of low deprivation; that said, they attract students from all over the county from a variety of different backgrounds.

The Emmbrook School ***The Second most advantaged region in the UK** (Wokingham)	**Chiltern Hills Academy** ***The third most advantaged region in the UK** (Chesham)
Biology, chemistry, Physics	Art and Photography
Business	Biology, Chemistry, Physics
Computer Science	Business

Criminology	Construction
Economics	Dance
English Literature	Drama
EPQ	English Literature
Fine Art	Financial Studies
Geography	Food Science and Nutrition
Graphic communication	French and Spanish
History	Geography
Maths and Further Maths	Health and Social Care
Media Studies	History
PE	Maths
Politics	Media
Psychology	Music
Sociology	PE
	Philosophy, Religion and Ethics
	Psychology
	Sociology
	Travel and tourism L2+3

Table 10 – A Level Provision in two state schools from two of the least deprived areas in the United Kingdom.

It is important to note that the most advantaged region in the UK is Hampshire Hart and due to the schools in that area being independent schools, it was not possible to include an A level list from that region for a state funded school. What is interesting is how the provision does not vary much between the schools depending on the area of deprivation, or North/South divide. If anything, there are more choices available to those from the North East state schools than the south, that said, there are more independent schools in the two southern regions presented within this table, with very few state funded schools in the same areas, this would suggest that students in these areas are more likely to attend fee paying schools.

To gain a clearer picture of the North/South divide in education, it would be best to look at the two, arbitrarily chosen, northern independent schools and see if there is a difference in provision offered; both with the state sector in the north and compared with the southern independent schools. The first selected is Barnard Castle School (**Appendix 2.1**) year seven to nine has a more flexible approach to

curriculum with the importance of a co-curriculum so as to enhance the skills they learn in class, but to also '*develop creative skills, resilience and independence'* (barnardcastleschool.org.uk) which is echoed in the ethos of many independent schools. Years Ten and Eleven are more prescriptive due to the nature of GCSE's, but the options are more limited compared to those at Eton College. The school days are shorter than those of Eton, but they do have classes on a Saturday too, (**Appendix 2.2**).

One difference between both institutions is that despite the co-curriculum being of equal value and importance, the school day and week at Barnard Castle school is considerably different to that of Eton College. Activities and the co curriculum do not take up much of the students' school day, and there are no specific afternoons dedicated to sports and activities unlike the curriculum at Eton. There are other private schools within the North East which do emphasise the arts and their value more, such as Newcastle High School for Girls (NHSG), Royal Grammar School (RGS) Newcastle and Yarm School. Each curriculum includes a heavy emphasis on the arts as well as the humanities, sciences, languages, and sports. A significant characteristic is the breadth and depth of intellectual challenge at these institutions. The co-curriculum at NHGS, RGS and Yarm school is rich and varied, providing a wealth of opportunities for all (Yarmschool.org) as well as this, the co-curriculum runs two afternoons a week, into the evenings, weekends and during the holidays. The main aim of these three schools is the same, they want to provide a well-rounded education for all students, which not only encourages them to maximise their academic abilities but also to acquire skills, hobbies, and interests that will serve their pupils well into adulthood. Something which is not replicated in state education. It is evident that independent schools develop soft skills, empathy, teamwork, leadership, and confidence, and because of the variety of experiences available, everyone is able to develop their abilities. What is interesting to note is that these three schools are the top performing independent schools within the North East out of 28. Below is a table of 10 independent schools in the region with their fees and UK rankings. Eton College and Cheltenham Ladies college are also included along with the top performing independent school in the country. The best performing schools in the table have an arts rich and varied curriculum which is also integrated within the weekly curriculum, whereas the others do not have as many subjects available at GCSE and A Level, alongside a less varied co-curriculum. St

Paul's Girl School, the top performing private school in the country believe that '*engagement outside the classroom is an integral part of every student's time at St Paul's*'. The aim is to provide all students with a rich and rounded education, '*full of opportunities to find new passions, forge friendships and broaden their horizons*' (spgs.org).

Independent school	School Type	Age range	Fees per annum	Number of pupils	UK Ranking
North East Independent Schools					
Barnard Castle Senior School	Co-Educational Day and Boarding	11-18	**Day Fees** £14,202 **Boarding Fees** £25,653	715	**GCSE** Not Available **A Level** 329th
Dame Allan's Sixth Form	Co-Educational Day	16-18	£13,569	200	**Not Available**
Durham High school for Girls	Girls' Day	3-18	£4,020 - £12,735	421	**GCSE** 295th **A Level** 152nd
Durham School	Co-Educational Day	3-18	£8,268 - £15,993	560	**GCSE** 347th **A Level** 284th
Longridge Towers School	Co-Educational Day and Boarding	3-19	£10,170 - £14,550	313	**GCSE** 426th **A Level** 279th
Newcastle School for Boys	Boys' Day	3-18	£10,359 - £15,264	Not Available	**GCSE** 404th **A Level** 313th
Newcastle High School for Girls GDST	Girls' Day	3-18	£8,658- £13,410	700	**GCSE** 176th **A Level** 121st

Royal Grammar School	Co-Educational Day	7-18	£13,875	1,325	**GCSE** 53rd **A Level** 57th
Teesside High School	Co-Educational Day	3-18	£4,350 - £13,215	350	**GCSE** 403rd **A Level** 374th
Yarm School	Co-Educational Day	3-18	£5,232 - £12,888	Not Available	**GCSE** 155th **A Level** 91st
Eton College and Cheltenham Ladies College					
Eton College	Boys Boarding	13-18	£42,501	1,311	**GCSE** 15th **A Level** 13th
Cheltenham Ladies College	Girls Day and Boarding	11-18	**Day** £25,740 **Boarding** £38,340	845	**GCSE** 27th **A Level** 36th
Top Independent School in the UK					
St Paul's Girls School	Girls Day	11-18	£25,887	759	**GCSE** 1st **A Level** 3rd

Table 11 – Independent Schools North East

It can be determined from the rankings that the presence of a varied co-curriculum is a key contributing factor to the highlighted school's success and upward social mobility. It goes without saying that these fee-paying schools do cut out those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, but it is not the fault of the private schools that this happens, rather that of policy makers and government.

Both Eton College and Cheltenham Ladies College (CLC), are the most expensive of boarding schools within the UK, not only due to the breadth of the co-curriculum and extra-curricular activities, but also due to the institutions' reputation. Comparing the day fees of St Pauls girls' school with the likes of Barnard Castle school, there is not a great deal of difference in the day fees, but there is a great

variance in curriculums, ethos and values – which ultimately impact the mobility of each school's students. As can be seen below, CLC fees are almost eight thousand pounds above the national average for independent schools, again due to the extensive curriculum provision, which is looked at in further detail below:

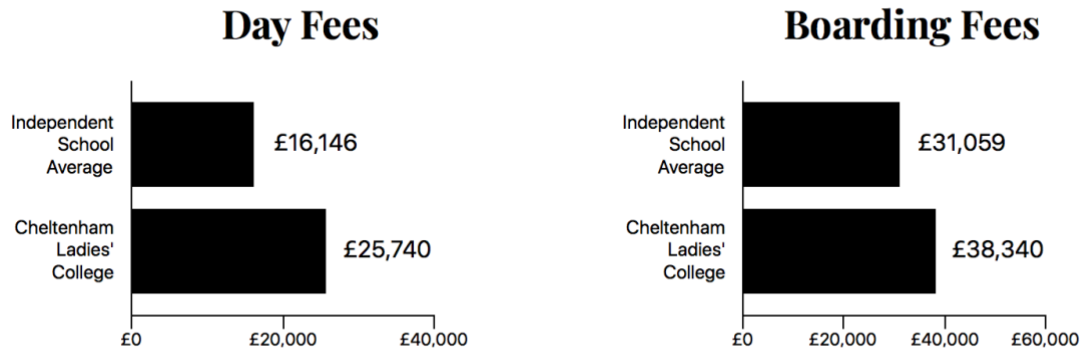

Figure 4 – Fees at Cheltenham Ladies College

Student attainment at GCSE is almost double the independent school average and their A Level attainment is almost thirty per cent above the independent school average. It can be determined that the results are reflected in the school's fees and reputation.

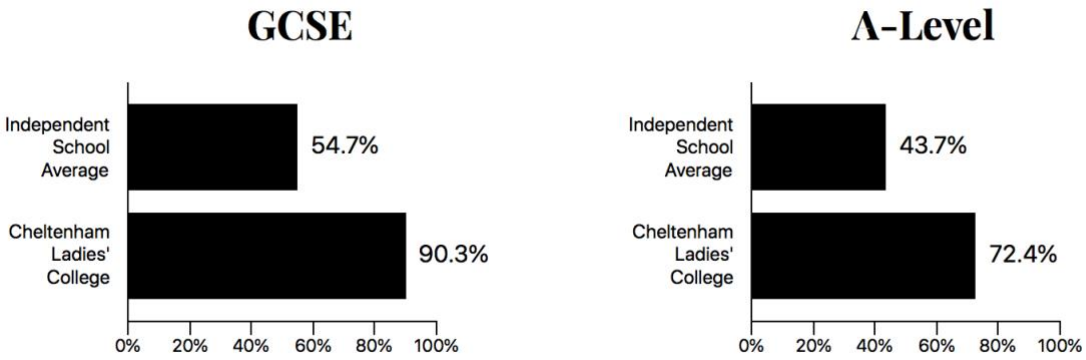

Figure 5 – GCSE and A Level attainment for CLC

There are various other factors to bear in mind with regards to the price of fees, attainment at GCSE and A Level, such as the regional economy and level of deprivation amongst students, as well as the provision on offer at each school.

To understand the attainment and fee cost at CLC, it is prudent to understand how the school is structured and its provision. CLC is split into two sections, Lower College and Upper College, then sixth form provision after that. Lower College consists of LC1,2 and 3 which make up Year 7-9 and Upper College which is U1 and U2 and they are Years 10 and 11. Like most independent schools in the UK, there is an academic curriculum and a co-curriculum at CLC. All girls in the lower college study the following subjects:

Academic Curriculum	Co-Curriculum
Maths, English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Computing, History, Geography, Religious Studies, Classics and at least two modern languages. The Arts are seen as a fundamental part of CLC life with, Music, Drama, Art and Design, and Engineering, Enterprise and Technology (EET) also a part of the academic curriculum.	In Lower College, the pupils enjoy a wealth of experiences and opportunities, including a range of co-curricular clubs and activities. The varied curriculum and co-curricular schedule provide girls with a stimulating and extensive programme of study, laying valuable foundations for the GCSE years and beyond

Table 12 – CLC Lower College Curriculum

The broad Lower College curriculum, according to CLC[61], offers "*pupil's enrichment in their learning*" and also aims "*to inspire each girl to explore her individual interests and develop her creativity*". This curriculum prepares them for Upper College, Years ten and eleven, and will form the basis of their GCSE choices. Most girls will take ten GCSE subjects, which include Maths, English Language and Literature. They are then required to take a minimum of two separate Sciences and at least one Modern Language. The pupils then have a variety of options to choose from but are encouraged to maintain a broad curriculum whilst tailored to their individual strengths and interests. They can also undertake a design-and-make project to develop their creative, technical and practical skills through a Higher Project Qualification. Having the opportunity to choose what they want to study from lower college enables the

[61] https://www.cheltladiescollege.org/academic/lower-college-curriculum/

students' freedom and independence which in turn will allow them to enjoy their studies.

At CLC, they have an extensive sixth form provision which has been designed to provide a:

> *…good balance of activities that will equip students with a range of experiences, which will enable [them] to meet the challenges of university and the professional world with confidence.* (Cheltladiescollege.org)

The model is not prescriptive and is divided into segments. The young ladies need not take part in everything from the segments, but they are encouraged to balance the academic with the co-curricular so as to better prepare them for the outside, modern world. Below is the model which is proposed by CLC and the activities under each heading in the framework diagram are only a selection of those available in the Sixth form.

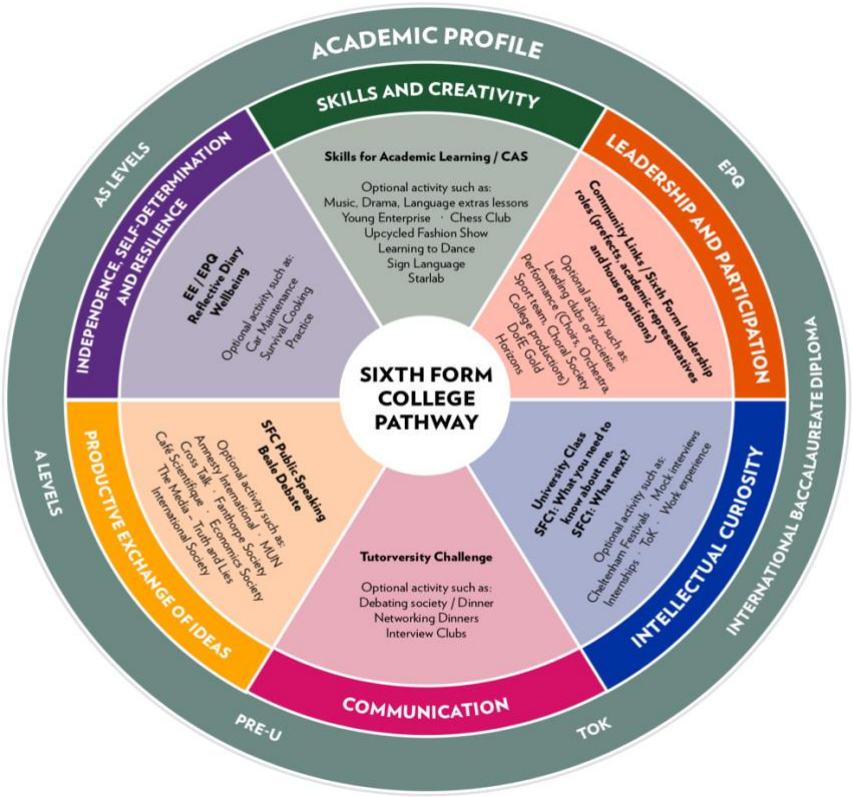

Figure 6 – CLC sixth form provision

This model, albeit different to that of Eton College, still holds the same values and encourages the same principles as those of Eton. The core aim is to create opportunities for the students to become fully, well rounded individuals, by taking part in a variety of activities which nurture them holistically as well as academically. At CLC, they run extra activities every evening and, on a Sunday, as well as providing the students with unlimited access to The Professional Guidance Centre. According to CLC's website (2021) the aim of the Professional Guidance centre (PGc) is to "*deliver a dynamic and responsive service, providing students with informed support and guidance"*. This enables students to make "*emboldened, informed decisions about higher education, work experience and careers"*. Below are workshops which the PGc offer to their students throughout the year:

Table 13 – The Provision offered at The Professional Guidance Centre at Cheltenham Ladies College for sixth form students.

Extra classes are also available in interview technique and practice which are chargeable. They can be taken as an individual or as part of a group. There is a dedicated team which run the PGc and all information, workshops and classes are stored to the school's dedicated SharePoint page, which is accessible to all students at CLC.

The freedom of choice during all years at CLC paired with strong guidance and extra opportunities for students to develop their skills in every way possible,

enables CLC to provide the very best in education for their students. The national curriculum and state schools do not afford their pupils the same luxury, neither during years 7-11 nor in sixth form – irrespective of the plethora of choices they may have at sixth form centres in state education. It is not only the academic which needs to be nurtured but the holistic side too, so that all skillsets are developed and enhanced. According to a paper titled *A narrowing pathway to success? 16-19 curriculum breadth and employment outcomes* conducted and published by The Education Policy Institute (2021) whilst some state schools have a range of subjects available post-16, the breadth of the national curriculum at A Level has in fact narrowed by eighteen per cent since 2010, with a 13% fall between 2016 – 2019[62] alone. Alongside this, state school funding per student has fallen by 9% over the past decade, whilst private school fees have risen by 20% (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2021). This only confirms the widening resource gap between the majority and the privileged few which obliterates any progress for social mobility. The IFS found that the gap in spending is particularly acute in sixth forms, where state funding has nosedived in recent years with private sector fees more than three times higher than day-to-day state funding per pupil. In an interview with The Guardian (2021) the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, Paul Whiteman, said 'adjusting for inflation, spending per pupil has fallen from £8,000 in 2010-11 to £6,900 in 2019-20'. In the same article, The Labour's shadow education secretary, Kate Green said:

> *[State] school budgets have been hammered over the last decade, which is holding children back. As state school class sizes have soared and enriching activities – art, sport, music, drama – have been cut back, the gap with private schools has grown ever wider.*

To address this, Green believes Labour's recovery plan would:

> *…extend the school day for new activities for all, and by ending private schools' tax exemptions we would invest in state schools with 6,500 new*

[62] https://royalsociety.org/news/2021/09/diversity-a-level-subjects/-/media/news/2021/EPI-Royal_Society-16-19-report.pdf

teachers, and careers advice and work experience so every child gets an excellent education that sets them up for life.

This is Labour's solution to improving social mobility in education, which allows an even platform for all children from all socioeconomic backgrounds to succeed both academically and holistically. Whether this would be realistic is yet to be seen. Under Johnson's 'Build. Back. Better' initiative, the plan was to strip away more funding from holistic education and the arts, both at Further and Higher Education level to streamline and narrow the state curriculum further, so as to support the government's plan to become a country which is a '*science and technology superpower*' (Boris Johnson, March 2021).

As part of the government's plan to give funding to state schools, Johnson wanted to transform Further Education (FE) by rolling out Technical Levels, also known as T Levels[63], at FE. This would be in no doubt a great thing for industry and for the regeneration of the economy post pandemic, but the roll out comes at a cost, and that cost is a loss in funding for vocational, holistic BTEC qualifications such as Performing Arts. There are 24 T Levels which will gradually be made available up until September 2023 and they will run alongside A Levels, but there are no qualifications in the arts. In April 2021, the DfE proposed to include some '*small qualifications in performing or creative arts*' but they are described as being '*academic*' and must have value to a Higher Education provider. Aside from this, there will be no funding for creative subjects unless a college is able to fund the provision itself, which will not be possible for state funded institutions. Therefore, taking away access of a holistic education from 94% of the country by reducing the opportunity to study, train and work in the arts. In turn, only allowing the 6% of privately educated children the chance to learn invaluable and essential skillsets: ones such as, creativity, confidence, focus, perseverance, collaborative development and problem solving, which provide students, as Eton College 2021 say, with '*key*

[63] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-t-levels/introduction-of-t-levels
T Levels are new courses which follow GCSEs and are equivalent to 3 A levels. These 2-year courses, which launched September 2020, have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work, further training or study.
T Levels offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days).

values and competencies to sustain them for life' (https://www.etoncollege.com). Furthermore, the Warwick Commission (2015)[64] found that the wealthiest, best educated, and least ethnically diverse 8% of the population are the most culturally active. The Sutton Trust[65] (2016) found that 42% of British BAFTA winners attend fee-paying schools while only 7% of the population receives private education. This presents greater class barriers within primary, secondary and post-16 education. This can only lead to more disparities between the rich and poor and advantaged and disadvantaged pupils, thus impacting any growth or progress with regards to social mobility within education itself, let alone in arts education.

2.4.3 Higher Education Arts Funding Cuts

Higher Education seems to present better opportunities for those who want to go on to study a career in the arts with the variety of universities and specialist schools offering degrees in Drama, Acting, Dance and Musical Theatre. That said, and as discussed in chapter one, there is very little vocational provision for the arts in the UK but there are over two hundred universities which offer a degree in Theatre, Drama, Dramatic or Performing Arts. According to The Art Newspaper[66] 2021, the then education secretary Gavin Williamson approved plans to cut funding for HE arts courses by 50%. The Office for Students (OfS) – the independent regulator of higher education – confirmed that the subsidy for each full-time student on an arts course would be cut from £243 to £121.50 for the 21/22 academic year, in a bid to save around £20 million and redirect the funds into STEM subjects. The University and College Union (UCU) wrote on Twitter in early 2021 that students across 13 subject areas would be affected including art, design, music, drama, dance, media studies and journalism. These courses face a 50% cut to their studies, which will make many unviable, forcing them to close. This is currently evidenced in strike action[67] taking place at 58 Universities across the UK to prevent major loss losses

[64] https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture

[65] https://suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Leading-People_Feb16.pdf

[66] https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/07/22/uk-government-approves-50percent-funding-cut-for-arts-and-design-courses

[67] https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/12178/UK-universities-to-face-five-more-days-of-strike-action-before-Easter

in the arts, humanities and administration roles. In an open letter[68] to the prime minister signed by various unions for creative artists and by UCU, the general secretary for Equity, Paul Fleming, indicates that the decision to cut funding in the arts at HE level is based on class discrimination. Fleming (2021) states:

> *…the only way to get authentic, diverse, working class voices into the creative industries is by supporting quality HE provisions as part of the training ecosystem.*

As already highlighted in chapter one, arts training in the UK is made up of two pathways: university provision and vocational training. Vocational training can be expensive and above the national fee cap which presents barriers to applicants from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds. Therefore, the only way forward is through a university degree course. Now that arts funding is set to be cut in HE arts provision, it seems that the government believe creative, professional jobs in the arts are for the wealthy 6% and that it is acceptable that those from working-class backgrounds are denied access from the very start of education: only confirming what has been discussed in this chapter so far. Cuts to arts provision disable~~s~~ social mobility completely and devastate higher education arts provision. According to *Arts Professional* (2022) there are worries that theatre and performance studies are under "existential threat" as a result of university announcements of course closures and employment losses. A total of 138 courses at the University of Wolverhampton, including 19 performing arts courses at its School of Performing Arts, are not accepting new students from September 2022 and Roehampton University are also consulting on ceasing new enrolments to some courses in their School of Arts also[69]. Other HE arts provision includes the University of Huddersfield, where 30 academics, including professors and lecturers, and seven technical employees, are at risk of being made redundant from the school's School of Arts and Humanities, according to the local University and College Union branch. The university is consolidating five

[68] https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/11634/Stop-devastating-arts-cuts-unions-tell-prime-minister

[69] https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/performance-studies-threatened-proposed-university-cuts

departments into three: linguistics, English, drama, fashion, and textiles. The reason given by the university is that there is a budget shortfall at the institution (Timeshighereducation.com). De Montfort University in Leicester proposes to eliminate up to 58 positions in their school of arts. What is worth noting here is that the institutions most susceptible to these cuts are those with a higher number of under-privileged students. Professor of government practice at the University of Manchester, Andy Westwood (2022) believes the government's failure to completely replace EU structural monies through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, decreased levels of research income, and forthcoming regulatory action against 'poor quality' courses all have an additional negative impact on modern institutions. The government's decision to decrease repayment levels and lengthen the repayment time on student loans, along with its plans for minimum admission standards and student number limitations, deters students from enrolling to higher education courses. Also a former adviser on universities and skills in the last Labour government, Professor Westwood argues that in light of the fact that many modern universities are situated in areas where the government has made it a priority to 'level up', he cautioned that *'pulling institutional capacity, human capital, decent jobs, networks out of places – which is what happens when you reduce courses [or] staff at universities',* will mean *'you reinforce downward economic spirals rather than the opposite effect'* (Timeshighereducation, 2022).

The UCU general secretary, Jo Grady, says in the open letter that the proposed cuts are '*one of the biggest attacks on arts and entertainment in English universities in living memory*' and as world leaders in arts and entertainment, we are no longer protecting the livelihoods of the UK's creative workers and narrowing opportunities for future generations (UCU.org.uk, 2021). UCU's regional official for the West Midlands, Anne O'Sullivan also expressed concerns about the cuts to university arts courses and says:

The plans to hit mainly arts and social science subjects looks like a crude attack on the arts and humanities, which is becoming endemic across the sector[70]*.* (timeshighereducation.com, 2022)

The *Universities and Social Mobility*[71] report published in November 2021 by The Sutton Trust, argues that HE is a key driver of social mobility in the UK and students from more disadvantaged backgrounds who attend University, become more upwardly socially mobile than their non-university attending peers.

The cuts highlight both class and financial barriers to access, which immediately target those from working-class backgrounds and detrimentally impact intragenerational social mobility. The *Universities and Social Mobility* report highlights that many of the top-ranking Universities for social mobility are those which are less selective, while those who rank the lowest are highly selective. Below are two tables indicating the top and bottom five performing UK Universities for social mobility. It is important to note that the data collected for this report is the percentage of students formerly eligible for free school meals who were admitted to a university and later obtained jobs paying in the top 20% nationally. It is calculated as **Access rate (% disadvantaged students) x Success rate = Mobility rate** (Suttontrust.com):

Rank	University	University group	Access rate	Success rate	Mobility rate
1	Queen Mary, University of Lon..	Other Russell Group	16.1%	42.2%	6.8%
2	University of Westminster	Post-1992 (least selective)	22.5%	25.0%	5.6%
3	City University	Old Universities (Pre-	15.0%	35.1%	5.3%
4	University of Greenwich	Post-1992 (least selective)	20.0%	24.8%	5.0%
5	London South Bank University	Post-1992 (least selective)	25.7%	18.0%	4.6%

Table 14 – Top five Universities for upward social mobility

[70] https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/arts-and-humanities-cuts-becoming-endemic-warns-uk-union

[71] https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Universities-and-Social-Mobility-summary.pdf

100	Bath Spa University	Post-1992 (more selective)	3.1%	13.2%	0.4%
101	University of Bath	Old Universities (Pre-	1.0%	36.8%	0.4%
102	University of Winchester	Post-1992 (more selective)	3.3%	10.7%	0.4%
103	University of Exeter	Other Russell Group	1.2%	28.4%	0.3%
104	University of Newcastle Upon ..	Other Russell Group	1.2%	26.2%	0.3%

Table 15 – Bottom five Universities for social mobility

From both set of rankings it is clear to see that Russell Group Universities, along with Post-1992, are more selective with regards to how many disadvantaged students they allow into their institutions. This reemphasises the hypothesis and questions in this body of research, that most selective universities i.e., Russell Group and Post-1992, enforce barriers to access, such as class discrimination, and have not made much attempt in the past decade to break down those barriers to access for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. That said, there are exceptions to the rule, such as Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), which is the only member of the Russell Group of elite universities with proven success of both accepting and helping students who received free school meals advance their careers and close the class pay gap. More selective universities provide the best probability of becoming a better earner, even when prior qualities of their students are taken into account, as well as a narrower 'class pay gap' between its graduates. In the previous two decades, access to these institutions has improved, but some selective institutions with high mobility rates illustrate that more can be done (The Sutton Trust, 2021) According to the research, increasing access has no significant detrimental impact on labour market success, so there should not be any reason as to why other HE institutions within Russell Group or Post-1992, cannot do more to improve upward social mobility within society. What is worth highlighting here is that the bottom nine Universities on the social mobility index do in fact include some drama schools:

Rank	University	University group	Access rate	Success rate	Mobility rate
105	Conservatoire for Dance and D..	Post-1992 (more selective)	4.7%	6.3%	0.3%
106	Liverpool Institute for Perform..	Post-1992 (more selective)	3.5%	8.3%	0.3%
107	Central School of Speech and D..	Post-1992 (more selective)	3.1%	8.3%	0.3%
108	York St John University College	Post-1992 (more selective)	2.3%	10.4%	0.2%
109	Rose Bruford College	Post-1992 (more selective)	2.3%	10.0%	0.2%
110	Arts Institute at Bournemouth	Post-1992 (more selective)	2.4%	7.7%	0.2%
111	Trinity LABAN Conservatoire o..	Post-1992 (more selective)	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
	Leeds City College	Post-1992 (more selective)			
	Royal Agricultural College	Post-1992 (more selective)			
	Harper Adams University Colle..	Post-1992 (more selective)			

Table 16 – Bottom nine Universities on the social mobility index

Trinity LABAN Conservatoire, Arts Institute Bournemouth, Rose Bruford College, CSSD, LIPA and CDD are the lowest ranking in the country for social mobility. As discussed in chapter one, most of these institutions, although they may have student loans available for all prospective students that fall within the national fee cap of £9250 for tuition fees, are evidently quite selective and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are not being offered places. Drama schools are already elite training providers with very few slots per the number of students who apply, so the barriers of classism, elitism, racial discrimination and financial barriers are all present within their institutions - this will be analysed in further detail in the data chapter – so, other than holding elitist views with regards to one's social stratification, there is no reason why these institutions do not allow more disadvantaged students on to their courses. It is worth bearing in mind that Drama school provision makes up just a fraction of training providers within the UK – there are only 22 providers – which put them into the elite category of HE institutions. It can be seen that selective and elite HE institutions uphold the barriers to access, by not allowing access to those from less privileged backgrounds, thereby confirming that social mobility through education is a myth.

The 2021 report by The Sutton Trust is one of the most recent, up to date studies of intragenerational social mobility. It follows cohorts of students over the past two decades to measure educational and employment success and the impact it has on their upward social mobility. It confirms that 22% of graduates from underprivileged backgrounds (qualified for Free School Meals) earned in the top quintile of the population by the age of 30 and those individuals are more likely to be upwardly socially mobile due to the opportunity's university has afforded them. This was just 6% for individuals who did not attend university, demonstrating that

graduates are nearly four times as likely than non-graduates to become socially mobile. Therefore, universities need to do more to improve access for those from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Despite this study following and tracking one's intragenerational mobility, which highlights some improvements in overall mobility in the UK, a new index should be used to monitor social mobility in real time, such as the social mobility index which uses ten specific pillars to measure mobility – discussed earlier in the chapter- which countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden follow. If government and policy makers do not change their view on social mobility or improve circumstances and opportunities for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, the measure of intra- and intergenerational mobility will always be one from a rear-view mirror. By continuing to correct where policy went wrong a decade or two decades ago, current real time problems will not be addressed until another decade passes, and the education, attainment and poverty gap will continue to widen and get further entrenched.

The Sutton Trust issued a report in 2017 titled '*Life Lessons'*, which discusses the importance of arts subjects in schools and higher education and how they are key to improving social mobility, especially amongst disadvantaged youths. The report explains how arts access and the lack thereof in state schools and sixth form provision, immediately locks out those from disadvantaged backgrounds and this can lead to a skills deficit in our labour market. The reason being that essential life skills like confidence, drive, resilience, and communication have been linked to improved academic performance and job prospects, and their importance is being emphasised more as the labour market shifts. This is emphasised by private schools and the value they put on the arts and sports as well as other activities such as debating and volunteering. In *Social Mobility: And Its Enemies* (2018) Lee Elliot Major and Stephen Machin stated that there is mounting evidence that acquiring necessary life skills, as well as social and cultural capital, is critical to one's future life prospects. In the 2017 *Lessons for Life* report, Sir Peter Lampl also stated the need to narrow the gaps in access, so life skills can be harnessed as a driver of social mobility. As discussed within this chapter, education is not the sole driver of social mobility, but an arts education is beneficial and influential for so many reasons. Having access from the very early years will make the difference for any child, as proven by those studying at independent schools, but even more so for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who are

unable to access arts and culture provision outside of education due to their circumstances.

Social mobility is not just about improving life chances for those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, it is about economic growth; it is imperative the government take stock of the importance of an art's rich curriculum and the benefit it has on society at large. There is a significant economic growth imperative: the creative economy employs one in every 11 people in the UK, and the creative industries generate roughly £101 billion each year, accounting for more than 5% of the UK economy (DCMS, 2018). This is larger than the combined sectors of automotive, life sciences, aerospace, and oil and gas. According to research, 87% of creative sector employment are at no or minimal danger of automation, compared to 40% of other jobs (Bakhshi, et al. 2015). If poor students have the creative talents that an arts-rich school provides, they will be more equipped for the future labour market. What is more, if we are to provide every child and young person with a broad and balanced curriculum that fulfils their potential; the skills required by employers for a 21st-century labour market that places a high value on creativity and a cultural education – it is imperative to act now to reverse the decline of arts education in schools, FE Colleges and HE institutions. For this to happen, likewise with improving social mobility, everyone must work together. Policymakers, schools, teachers, artists, and cultural organisations need to collaborate to ensure that every child and young person has access to a comprehensive and balanced curriculum that allows them to reach their full potential and equips them with the skills they will need in the future. Otherwise, the arts will be limited to those who can afford them (Cultural learning Alliance, 2019).

This is never more evident than in our educational system (TheMeridian.com, 2020). Education, as seen from government policy on social mobility from the past forty years, is still considered to be the best pathway to social mobility as it provides some semblance of meritocracy. Research shows that is not the case and the divide between rich and poor in society, not just education, is even more stark now more than ever. What is more, the proportion of state school students attending Russell Group universities and Oxbridge, although steadily increasing, prove that the country's education system is a long way from fair and 'levelled-up'. Oxford's

entrants in 2020 shows that 68.6%[72] were from state schools but considering that only 6.5%[73] of children in the UK attend independent schools, and 40% of their intake are students from that small selection, the figures speak for themselves. As is demonstrated in the graph below, from the 2021 Sutton Trust report, it is evident that access is the largest barrier to meritocracy and social mobility within Higher Education, and further reinforces the notion of meritocracy being a myth; especially when it comes to Russell group and elite universities.

Figure 6. Access and success rates by university type

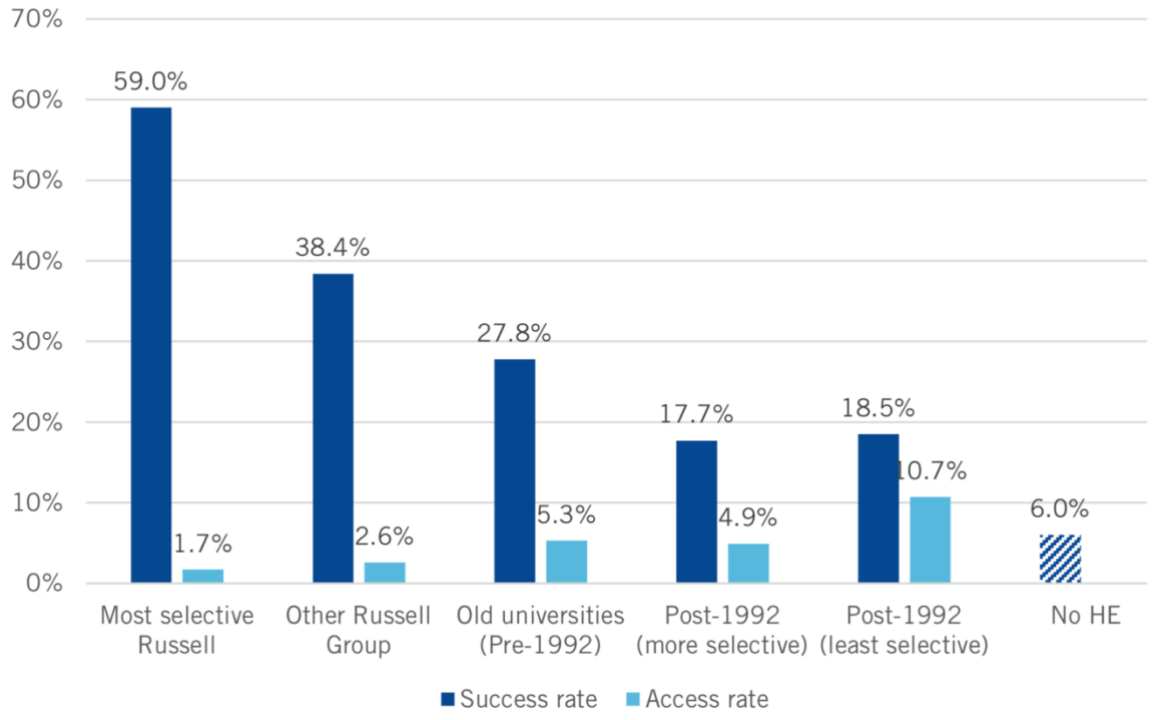

Figure 7 – Access rate of students from disadvantaged backgrounds into University type (TheSuttonTrust.com)

The report by The Sutton Trust measured cohorts of students over a 20-year period, so despite it being the most accurate and recent measure of social mobility in the UK, it is already outdated. It highlights social mobility over that period but it not a true reflection of current absolute social mobility. It is worth noting that this measure of mobility highlights that thirteen in every thousand students entering University

[72] https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/admissions-statistics/undergraduate-students/current/school-type

[73] https://www.isc.co.uk/research/

since the mid 2000's is from disadvantaged backgrounds, who ultimately go on to be socially mobile. What is concluded from this most recent report is that if there was equal access to university, and everyone who attended had an equal chance of labour market success, the rate would be 4.4% (The Sutton Trust, 2021)

The government's initiative to provide an annual increase in pupil spending beginning in 2021 contributes to the inequities that already exist in our society and in education, as well as to the attempt to dispel the idea of meritocracy. Albeit a great idea to improve meritocracy in our nation, it is not wholly transparent. Each secondary school will get a minimum of £5,150 per learner, while each primary school will receive a minimum of £4,000 per pupil. The National Funding Formula, developed by the Department of Education, is used to determine funding allocation to local areas (NFF). According to the 2019 EPI report *Analysis: 'Levelling up' – what it really means for school funding*[74], schools:

> *…do not have the characteristics associated with additional funding under the NFF... schools without high levels of disadvantaged pupils, that are serving more affluent communities, those without large numbers of pupils with low prior attainment, and those without pupils for whom English is not their first language, would benefit the most. In a nutshell, institutions with less difficult admissions…*

According to the study, primary schools with less than 5% of pupils eligible for free school meals would see an average rise of £271 in per-pupil funding, while schools with a higher proportion of free school meals students would see a decrease. According to the proposal:

> *A child eligible for free school meals would get an additional £56 under this proposal, while a pupil not eligible for free school meals would receive an additional £116.*

[74] https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/analysis-the-prime-ministers-promise-to-level-up-school-funding/#_ftn6

Overall, the Institute for Fiscal Studies' assessment indicates that these initiatives will leave schools in poorer circumstances in 2022-23 than they were in 2010. Attempting to equalise funding ignores the fact that the obstacles faced, as well as the opportunities provided, in different places and to different students, are simply not similar. Aside from London, the North East would receive the least increased funds under this approach. While many schools are having difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers, poor schools are having the most difficulty (EPI, 2019). It is evident that the state education system and wider society – especially in poorer regions like the North East – do not truly represent the majority, and the colonialism of the state curriculum is not meant for equality of opportunity. This emphasises the lack of meritocracy and further entrenchment of a plutocratic society. The Conservatives have confirmed what education means in this country: passive absorbing of information, cramming of facts for constant tests, and, most significantly, ranking and grading in which a certain number of people must fail, more often those from underprivileged areas.

Summary

This chapter began by asking what social mobility is and how it is measured in contemporary Britain along with seeking to understand whether education is a conduit for upward social mobility, and if an arts education positively improves a child's life chances. By looking at private and state education side by side, along with comparing both sets of educational provision in the North and South of England, we have been able to determine large disparities in the educational offer for state and independent school children, along with a stark divide between the rich and poor in the North and South. The chapter also briefly examines the pretence of meritocracy in British society and has determined the consequences of this to be hyper-competition (Reay, 2020), which further enhances social inequalities and the negative consequences for the working classes, both in education and wider society. As Professor Reay says in the 2020 article *The Perils and Penalties of Meritocracy: Sanctioning Inequalities and Legitimating Prejudice*, the pretence of meritocracy exacerbates societal differences by increasing suspicion, prejudice, jealousy, anger, and disdain among various social groupings.

What can be determined is how the working and also middle classes still fare so much worse than the upper classes in education (Reay, 2017) as well as the opportunities afforded to them in wider society. The government's plans to improve social mobility within all regions of the UK and provide jobs to boost regional economy are fruitless especially given the lack of funding given to the poorest socially mobile areas; the North East being the worst hit by government funding, both economically and educationally speaking. In 2004, then PM Tony Blair stated that social mobility had remained relatively stagnant for almost thirty years[75] and so he wanted social mobility to 'rise again'. To do this he wanted to extend choice in the public sector and abolish the British class system. Then in 2010[76], in successor Gordon Brown wanted 'to unleash the biggest wave of social mobility since the second world war', followed by Cameron in 2013[77] 'wanting to see a more 'socially mobile Britain'. Improving social mobility is the government's responsibility, but it is also a collective effort, and this cannot be done through the idea of a meritocratic society. It should be done by raising the aspirations and expectations of the people of the country – working together to make a fairer, more just society. This is where the pretence of meritocracy falls in. Those from disadvantaged regions, like the North East, need to see investment not only in the local economy and education but in the people. If the majority are afforded parity of opportunity in salary, employment, education and housing, we would be living in a much more upwardly mobile society.

Unfortunately, as can be determined from the research in this chapter, certain educational and life opportunities are afforded only to the affluent and privately educated. That is not to say that private education should not exist, in fact, it should be the model used for state education also. Therefore, it raises the question as to why the national curriculum is so narrow, prescriptive and does not value the individual when those who are privately educated experience a broad, arts-rich curriculum which '*values and nurtures the whole individual'* offering them an '*education for the future'* (EtonCollege.com). By enforcing the pretence of

[75] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/oct/11/labour.uk

[76] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/jan/15/gordon-brown-labour-middle-class

[77] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/14/david-cameron-social-mobility-major

meritocracy and an individualistic culture, along with the ‘idea’ of a more socially mobile country, the UK will never achieve a fairer system.

Chapter 3: Pierre Bourdieu

> *The point of my work is to show that culture and education aren't simply hobbies and minor influences. They are hugely important in the affirmation of differences between groups and social classes and in the reproduction of those differences.* (Bourdieu,1984)

Introduction

The first aim of this study is to understand how structural social formations, contemporary education policy and the practices of drama schools interact to form barriers to educational opportunity. This aim aligns well with Bourdieu's work as it emphasises structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources based on class, gender, and race. The second aim of this study to identify how to overcome barriers to access and success within drama school training presented within the study, and this aim is met using Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field.

Bourdieu is a well-known sociologist and academic who contributed significantly to general sociological theory, conceptualising the link between education and culture, and the connections of education, taste, and class. Bourdieu believed that one's education and exposure to culture from a young age determine one's social class and life chances. Some critics have argued that Bourdieu's analysis of social mobility is under theorised (Bennett, 2007; Lawler, 2009) and that he is overly pessimistic about the possibility of social mobility (Goldthorpe 2007; De Landa 2006; King, 2000). In order to further problematise the concept of social mobility, explored in the previous chapter, this chapter explores Bourdieu's key concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field. In so doing, it considers the value of Bourdieu's theory as a theoretical lens for the empirical study presented in this thesis.

3.1 Cultural Capital

In Bourdieu's (1984) broader theory of social reproduction, cultural capital is an important concept that seeks to explain how someone's class of destination tends to reflect their class of origin. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, Bourdieu's 'culturalist' perspective was well received as an alternative to theories that had

previously focused on differences in family economic resources, such as Bernstein's (1960) theory of working-class language deficiency. Cultural capital – Bourdieu's 'signature concept' - is one of the leading theoretical contributions to the explanation of educational inequalities (Lareau and Weininger 2003) through consideration of how class-based differentials manifest in specific forms of culture (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Bourdieu used the term to describe how children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from cultural advantages that extend beyond their economic circumstances. Children with higher levels of parental cultural capital are exposed to a variety of experiences, such as trips to the museum, the theatre and private lessons in music, art and sport. These activities, which cost money, are not as easily accessible for those from working class backgrounds due to the cost of each activity. Bourdieu argues that middle class parents provide these kinds of activities, and that education admires and rewards the kind of 'middle class knowledge' that certain children possess as a result of these activities. Working class children are not, according to this theory, less intelligent than middle class children. But, because they do not possess the 'right' kind of cultural capital, they often fail to do well at school. Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction states that those who have a lack of cultural capital due to their class origins go on to struggle to achieve educational success which in turn restricts access to high paid jobs, whereas their affluent counterparts subsequently gain positions of high occupational prestige.

In 2018, the Sutton Trust published a paper titled *Parent Power 2018* which examines how parents use financial and cultural resources to boost their children's chances of success:

> *This report shows how these financial and cultural resources can influence a child's path through education. From choosing the best school to attend, buying homes in the catchment areas of good schools, using private tuition, paying for expensive out of school extracurricular activities, and providing support with their post-18 educational choices, we see how middle class and professional parents gain an advantage for their children at every stage. It is of course natural that parents want the absolute best for their children. But the problem lies in the vastly unequal resources available to families in achieving that goal*. (The Sutton Trust, 2018)

Bourdieu adapted the economic notion of 'capital' to culture, saying that *'cultural capital is like money in that it can be saved, invested, and used to obtain other resources (such as access to economic position*s)' (Kingston 2001: p.89). Capitals are defined as a '*set of actually usable resources and powers'* (Bourdieu 1984: p.114), and '*market worth*' in the contest for privilege (Kingston 2001: p.89) *'is subject to hereditary transmission which is always heavily disguised ... It thus manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition'* (Bourdieu 1997: p.48). Different types of knowledge are considered more or less 'rich' in culture; knowledge is considered an '*asset*' when it is culturally suitable, in the same way that economic theory assigns value to financial capital. The cultural system assigns more value to certain things than others, as Robbins, D. (2000: p.32) states in *Bourdieu and Culture*:

> *We are not intrinsically altered by preferring Mozart over Morrissey or Manet over Man Ray, but the judgements of value made between our preferences ... have consequences for both our economic and our social position taking.*

The middle and upper classes take their children to the theatre, museums or places of historical interest and whether inadvertently or not, they are socialising their children into the world of 'highbrow' culture. Discussing politics, the arts or other intellectual content, innately instils cultural awareness and develops the child's ability to assess different viewpoints, their critical thinking skills and their understanding of the world around them. These are strategies implemented by the elite classes to better prepare their children for educational and economic success, something which could also be used by working-class parents but typically they are not adopted. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is ultimately the possession of the elite in society because it is only really valuable to those who have ingrained in them an aptitude to appreciate and appropriate it for themselves (Winkle-Wagner 2010). A recent study[78] looking into the influence of cultural capital and its ability to improve children's life chances found persisting disparities between children from wealthy and poor families. The study measured activities which include leisure reading, library

[78] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/01425692.2022.2045185

visits, and book discussions at home, and found that engaging “in two or three reading activities, on average, increases the pupil’s GCSE score by between seven and nine points”. From this we may surmise that children who are exposed to a lot of cultural capital from birth have an advantage over children from poorer backgrounds.

In government education policy, the concept of cultural capital has become increasingly prominent, with Ofsted inspectors now considering the extent to which schools are preparing children with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life when assessing the quality of teaching at a school[79]. In order for working class children to ‘catch up’ and close the gap between rich and poor pupils, schools need to provide trips to museums, theatres and libraries (although, as noted in the previous chapter, there are limited funds to do so).

Bourdieu explains his theory by describing the concept of cultural capital in three ways: objectified, institutionalised, and embodied, discussed below.

3.1.2 Cultural Capital forms: Objectified, Institutionalised and Embodied

Bourdieu claims that culture can be “*objectified in material objects and media, such as writing, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc”* (Bourdieu 1997:50). This implies that material possessions and goods can be culturally appropriated, including literature, art, education, classical music etc: anything which can convey or transmit status symbolically can be termed objectified capital. Bourdieu (1984) writes extensively on the subject of ‘taste’, arguing that particular ‘items’ are associated with dominant class consumption patterns, which are driven by a taste for aestheticism rather than necessity, and certain objects have become indicators of one’s social standing as a result. For example, theatre director John McGrath (1989: p.3) argues that ‘*different theatrical values and expectations’* have been consigned to the ‘*critical dustbin’* by ‘*universalizing white middle-class sensitive but sophisticated taste to the status of exclusive arbiter of a true art or culture*.’ To have an ingrained appreciation of things 'high cultured,' to engage in activities such as the arts, opera, dance, or theatre with ease and enjoyment, and to be largely comfortable with distinguished forms of consumption, elaborate and articulate linguistic structures,

[79] https://www.trueeducationpartnerships.com/schools/what-is-ofsteds-cultural-capital/

and all things in general that are aspects of 'highbrow culture,' is to embody cultural capital.

Institutionalised cultural capital tends to lend itself by way of academic qualifications. Bourdieu perceives educational establishments as encompassing value systems, and '*by bestowing titles and awards on individuals they appear to be giving expression to the differences between those individuals'* (Robbins 2000: p.35). According to this theory, the academic qualification functions as a certificate of cultural competence that confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture (Bourdieu 1997: p.50–51). Institutionalised cultural capital is therefore an acknowledgement of academic and cultural proficiency, and this has a *'universally recognised value in the labour market'* (Weininger 2005: p.104).

Bourdieu (1997) conceptualises external wealth that has been incorporated into part of the individual as '*embodied capital'*. A specific form of embodied capital relates directly to verbal capital which is defined by Dogaru (2008) as the '*mastery of and relation to language'*. As can be understood from chapter two, one's level of education and the school attended, whether it be state or independent, has a direct impact on the language used and learned by the individual. Students from more affluent backgrounds tend to be more language rich than their working-class counterparts. In addition to being talked to less frequently, children from poorer socioeconomic origins and whose parents have less formal education take longer to internalise complicated syntactical patterns[80]. Linguistically, students from affluent backgrounds are more at balance with their teachers as conversations are more fluid and expressive. As Bernstein (1971) puts it, those who are more '*elaborate*' with their linguistic structure are functioning at an academic advantage, and as a result they are seen as more privileged, '*highbrow*' and culturally aware by their peers and society. For Bourdieu, however, language is just one constraint on the individual: rather than address it as a deficit that might be *'overcome'* through education, Bourdieu locates it within an interlocking system, or habitus, that overpowers any single attempt to elevate one's social status, discussed below.

[80] https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/04/170414105818.htm

3.2 Habitus

In Bourdieu's 1977 book, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu presents a framework for understanding how cultural settings (re)produce the means of their own production, as well as for analysing the impact of this (re)production on the specific subjects of a given 'habitus'. The term habitus, according to Bourdieu, refers to the collective body that establishes and reproduces dominating social and cultural conditions. He states that habitus is:

> *…a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class.*

These internal structures and paradigms of perceptions shape a person's view of the world and their comprehension of the world in which they exist. One's own habitus characterises one's personality and sets specific expectations and ideals, which are shaped by one's life experiences.

For Bourdieu (1984) habitus ingrains a worldview in individuals by placing cultural value on things, whether that be material or otherwise. Habitus posits and bestows specific properties, even with regards to a person's body. For example, some of these properties are seen as 'good' while others are seen as 'bad', such as one's beauty, size or strength. Bourdieu theorises that habitus seeks to enhance value and status by valourising certain attributes, which come to represent cultural capital, which ultimately affects how social and cultural relationships are made, with and by whom. Habitus assimilates a sense of power relations, as individuals innately position themselves in the social hierarchy, reinforcing class structure. It is here that Bourdieu believes that habitus begins with the family environment and is later integrated through institutions such as education and employment; confirming Bourdieu's theory of habitus being conferred through its institutions in the form of institutionalised cultural capital. It is through these institutions that a person's original view of culture and society are reinforced or altered, depending on what is propagated.

It is worth noting here that according to Thatcher, Ingram et al in *Bourdieu: The next Generation* (2015) habitus is perhaps one of Bourdieu's '*most contested and critiqued concepts*' due to the element of choice being removed from the human

experience. The idea of habitus being *'systems of durable, transposable dispositions*' (Bourdieu, 1977) formed in an individual's early life, it does not leave much room for agency. However, Bourdieu argues:

> *It is not so much that the habitus is void of choice but rather the range of choices and attitudes will be influenced by social structures leading him to also define the habitus as a 'socialised subjectivity' (2015: p.92)*

Habitus is believed to highlight social inequality and an individual's opportunity of access, choice and life chances; therefore, it can be said that the most important aspect of habitus in relation to social inequality is that:

> *…people internalise basic life chance available to their social milieu – what is possible, impossible, and probable for people of their kind. Chances of success or failure are internalised and then transformed into individual aspirations or expectations ... In other words, much of people's everyday practices, Bourdieu suggests, are self-fulfilling prophecies.* (Swartz 2002)

According to Bourdieu, an individual subliminally internalises the "*objective chances"* of their social strata by observing what others in their socioeconomic group, primarily family, have achieved previously. He continues by discussing that one's habitus is shaped according to *'the conditions associated with a particular class of conditions of existence'* (Bourdieu 1990) suggesting that habitus is dictated by what each family has by way of economic, social and cultural capital. Bourdieu also suggests that individuals from middle and upper classes have a '*propensity to consent to the investments in time, effort and money necessary to conserve and to increase cultural capital'* (Bourdieu 1977).

Habitus not only bestows unequal amounts of socio-cultural advantage on certain people (through the bestowal of cultural capital), but it also conceals this privilege. When members of the elite, such as former PM David Cameron (2013) talk about people climbing up ladders (as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis), they are not talking about their own social class, for whom there is nowhere higher to climb. According to Bourdieu's theory of habitus, the elite can exercise their power merely by being themselves and adhering to existing social conditions. It is only those from

the lower classes who must 'break out' of their habitus in order to change their life chances by becoming 'socially mobile'. Simply put, those with more capital – socially, economically or culturally, can just 'be' whereas those with less capital have to work harder before they are 'seen'[81].

3.3 Field

Habitus comes hand in hand with Bourdieu's final concept of field which can be read as *"an active and dynamic site in which habitus and capital interact"* (Thatcher et al, 2015). Bourdieu developed the concept of field to explain the relational context in which the different kinds of capital acquire their value, and in which the effects of cultural capital and habitus take place (Robbins 2000). The concept of a 'field' is defined as:

> *…a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations, they impose upon occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situations ... in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) where possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field* (Bourdieu, cited in Gewirtz et al 1995)

Thompson (2008) cited in Thatcher et al (2015), highlights Bourdieu's use of *Le Champ* which translates as battlefield as opposed to just 'field', calling attention to the environment in which individuals must navigate their habitus and cultural capital, implying the conditions of the 'field' are aggressive, fierce and competitive. The notion of field acknowledges the importance of the wider context (Reay 1998). It is an arena in which an individual uses their capital and habitus and the degree of congruence between the two determines success in the field, according to Bourdieu (1986), and in turn it can result in social (dis) comfort, ease or difficulty. As an example, children from the middle and upper classes are expected to thrive in an environment that is natural to them and familiar to them, such as education. Schools are understood to be middle class 'fields' and as a result, middle-class students are

[81] https://criticallegalthinking.com/2019/08/06/pierre-bourdieu-habitus/

more likely to attend school already familiar with grammatical structures, hierarchy of authority, forms of independent learning, and established social standards. For them:

> *…neither the content of what they are taught (syllabus) nor the manner in which they are taught (pedagogy) are likely to appear strange to them* (Goldthorpe 2007).

Bourdieu claims that middle-class children *'move in their world as a fish in water'* (1990b: p.108). In contrast, those with a working-class habitus are likely feel out of their comfort zone. They are anticipated to feel uneasy, apprehensive, and unsure of how to behave, resulting in them being unable to thrive in the school setting. The interpenetrative relationship (Thatcher et al, 2015) between capital, field and habitus is mapped out in Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) as (Habitus x Capital) + Field = Practice. Practice, in this formula, translates as social practice and with regards to the above example of education, social practice equates to educational success. A more detailed framework of Bourdieu's social reproduction framework can be seen below:

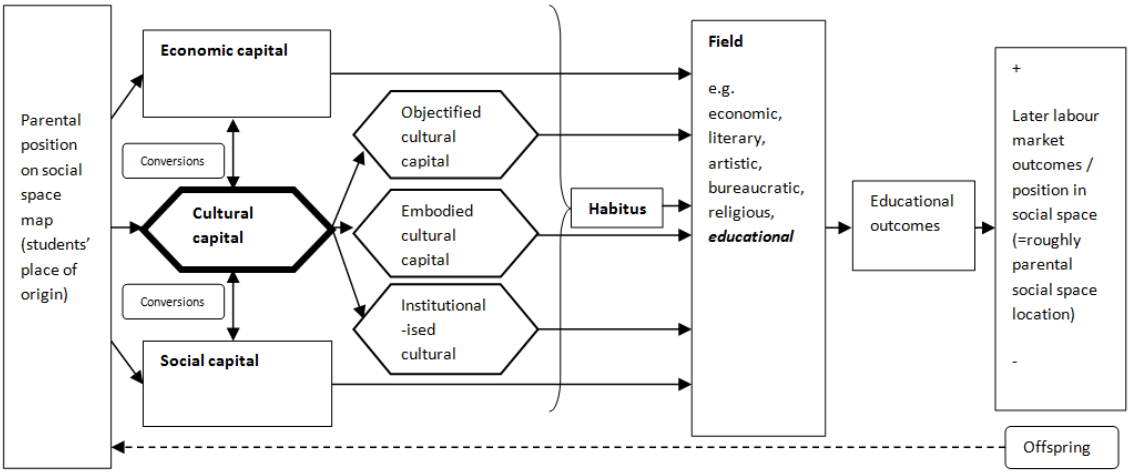

Figure 8 – Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu claims that one's life chances and success (practice) depend on an individual's habitus, which is created by the amount of fundamental or 'inherited' capital they have from their parents (social space) and how they 'are' and 'interact' within different environments (fields).

Summary

Bourdieu's theory of intergenerational (inherited) forms of capital and educational outcomes offers very little hope for social mobility, as it implies a stagnation in an upwardly mobile working class, with the elite accumulating further capital thus keeping them at the top of the social order. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: p.223) observe how those with strong foundations of economic, social and cultural capital are *statistically bound to accumulate further* forms of capital. Wacquant (2013) notes that the 'scaffolding' of one's habitus takes place in early childhood, therefore suggesting that when one has limited capital, one also has limited opportunity to change one's habitus. More recently, this conjecture was confirmed by Thomas Piketty (2014: p.571) in his book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, in which he argues that the inherited wealth of the global elite is enabling them to accumulate more and more capital, thereby impoverishing an ever-greater percentage of the world's population: as he puts it, "*The past devours the future"*.

To add to this bleak picture, Bourdieu's (2005) theory implies that our efforts to 'climb the ladder' may lead to an internalised struggle, known as a habitus clive, or cleft habitus. According to Friedman (2016: p.130), when attempting to change social class:

> *…a person's conditions of existence' change so dramatically over the course of their life that they feel their dispositions losing coherency and experience a sense of self torn by dislocation and internal division.*

In other words, individuals who attempt to 'climb the ladder' may discover that they have failed to obtain the embodied capital to 'acculturate' (Thatcher et al, 2015) into the elite, but no longer experience a sense of belonging to class from which they came.

Bourdieu's theory invites us to ask not, 'How might we help people climb the ladder?', but 'How are the elite ensuring that their position at the top of the ladder is both concealed and maintained?' Bourdieu's theory helps us to understand how the changes to the Performing Arts BTEC, explored in Chapter Two of this thesis, sit – seemingly incongruously – with government rhetoric on levelling-up. Seen through the lens of Bourdieu's theory, it is apparent that the withdrawal of state support for educational programmes that cater to socially and economically disadvantaged

pupils and political speeches on social mobility, made by politicians such as former PM Theresa May (2016), are part of the same agenda to consolidate and obfuscate the elite appropriation of capital in the UK. This phenomenon is explored by Banks and Oakley (2015) in their critique of the demise of the UK Art School. According to Banks and Oakley (2015: p.177), under UK PM David Cameron, the government's response to 'rising youth unemployment, declines in social mobility, and low pay or unpaid work in the cultural industries' was to provide a non-graduate route into the cultural sectors for working-class students through the provision of '*apprenticeships offering below-minimum wage work*' partially funded by employers. Banks and Oakley describe as '*bizarre*' (ibid: p.178) the government's call for 'altruism with regard to youth unemployment' (Creative and Cultural Skills, in Banks & Oakley, 2015). Bourdieu's theory, however, serves to remind us that it is not 'bizarre' but wholly understandable: removing working-class learners from HE enhances the prospects of elite students, and only the most altruistic members of the elite are likely to willingly undermine these prospects by helping working-class students enter the cultural sector. The government's use of the word 'altruism' betrays their intention to permit the past to 'devour the future' (Piketty, 2014: p.571) whilst appearing to support social mobility.

Using Bourdieu's theory, Part Two of this thesis presents an empirical study of the elite appropriation of vocational HE training in the performing arts.

Part Two

The Price of Arts Education: Does it pay to be privileged?

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods used in the design of this research, its philosophy, research type and strategy, the time horizon for data collected, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis techniques and methodological limitations.

This chapter will begin by discussing my positionality leading up to this doctoral study and my interest in the research area (**4.1**). In section **4.2**, a detailed justification of the selected methodological approach will be given, and the purposive and snowball sampling techniques, as well as participant characteristics, are described in section **4.3**. Data collection methods are outlined in section **4.4**, which include surveys (**4.4.1**) Interviews (**4.4.2**), and finally case studies (**4.4.3**). In section **4.5**, ethical considerations are acknowledged, and section **4.6** summarises the chapter. The chapter concludes with section **4.7** which shares my methodological reflections and further acknowledgement of the research limitations.

4.1 Positionality and reflexivity

I am a thirty-six-year-old, white, British female born in a small rural town in Warwickshire, England, UK. My family is predominantly working-class, however, due to various familial circumstances, we acquired more economic, cultural and social capital growing up which left a disjuncture between my own habitus and particular social fields like a fish out of water (Bourdieu, 1990).

I started my nursery and pre-school education at a private school in Warwickshire where I could do dance and singing, and this ignited my passion for the arts. At the age of 5, my mother separated from my father and moved myself and my brother to the North-East to be closer to my mother's side of the family. It was there that I attended a small village primary school from 1992-1998. Unlike the school I had left, dance and singing were not part of the curriculum, and the only access to the performing arts was through the use of drama in our English class. This enabled me to take part in various drama exercises and games, acting out scenes from various books, to performing in yearly nativities and carol services, but there was not enough of a creative output for me. My mum qualified as a

Physiotherapist and met my stepdad who owned his own business, so we were able to take part in more extra-curricular activities growing up. I asked for extra lessons in dance, singing and acting, which culminated in going to *Stagecoach*[82] every Sunday from the age of 8 to 16. Unfortunately, once I started secondary school in 1999, apart from Stagecoach, there was very little opportunity to pursue any interest in the performing arts as it was not available on the school curriculum, something which is explored in detail in chapter 2. I had friends who attended private school and they had time within their academic curriculum to play sports and explore the performing arts and even at that age I noticed the disparity between state and private education and found it unjust. By the age of 15, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in performing arts education and to bring it into the wider community, so I set out a 10 – 15-year plan for progression towards the completion of a PhD. This began with the completion of General Certificate(s) for Secondary Education (GCSEs), which included English Literature and language but not drama, so I continued with performing arts as an extra-curricular activity; this was followed by Advanced Level(s) (A-Levels) in English, Art and Spanish, and then a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Theatre, Film and Television at York University. There was a 10-year break in my education whilst I worked nationally and internationally on TV and Film sets alongside working on European theatre tours and Theatre in Education (TiE) projects in Spain and the UK.

Upon returning to England in 2013, I secured a position as Head of Drama at a 2-18 years' grammar school in Staffordshire. During this time, I completed my MA in Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick University. This had been my first experience as head of a department and due to my desire to move back home, I decided to apply for a performing arts role at a college and University centre in the North-East, for which I was successful. I stayed in this role until 2016 when I applied, and gained, a head of performing arts role at a different college and university centre which focused more on Higher Education (HE); I began my PhD whilst working here full time.

[82] At Stagecoach Performing Arts we teach children and teenagers how to sing, dance and act, not only to perform on stage but also, more importantly, to perform better in life. We help them blossom into well-rounded individuals, ready to embrace life and all its opportunities.

According to Sachs (2003b), my positionality can be described as an "activist professional," and by continuing in my position in Higher Education (HE), I hope to change the lives of the students I teach, assemble knowledge from a variety of sources, and carry out research that keeps me informed about the ongoing work of teachers (Day, 2012). Therefore, research that focuses on practise and practitioners is what interests and motivates me. Obstacles have been present throughout my career thus far. Despite the fact that the world of education and teaching is continuously evolving and can occasionally be difficult, I have vowed to keep up my drive to teach to the best of my ability throughout my career (Day, 2012).

My positionality is formed by the many aspects of my professional context, background and worldview and how information is acquired (Gallais, 2008), and as such, may impact the choices I make as a researcher as I position myself within the research process. These professional experiences may have impacted the way my research questions were developed as well as the research paradigm I voluntarily adopted (Cohen et al., 2018). My positionality as a former teacher who is now a lecturer has changed from that of an insider to that of a relative outsider to the teaching profession since the start of my PhD studies (Gallais, 2008). There were a number of academic roadblocks encountered throughout my transition from secondary and Further Education (FE) to HE (Boyd and Harris, 2010). The greatest academic hurdle was caused by issues I had with my own sense of self. Whilst completing this research, I was able to increase my reflexivity by assessing my positionality in terms of insider-outsider relationships (Hellawell, 2006). It is possible to determine the relationship between my positionality and any observations that may be formed as a result (Gallais, 2008). In order to be open and provide some degree of reflexivity, the following are positive factors of my 'insider-ness':

- Experience of performance-based work in theatre, film and tv, as well as being head of drama and teacher/lecturer of performing arts and the fact that these positions allow me to ‘fit in’ sooner;
- *shared* similar teaching experiences; I hold a sense of sameness with all three groups of participants (Jenkins, 2000), which means I hold awareness of performing arts teaching and teaching in general (Merton, 1972; Viskovic and Robson, 2001);

- my habitus may impact my responses to situations during data collection due to my familiarity with the topic and trying to understand others from the viewpoint of my own experiences (Hockey, 1993);
- a sense of empathy for the participants (Hockey, 1993) and my shared understandings (Gallais, 2008); and,
- the participants' life histories may be similar to my own.

In addition, there are important elements connected to my 'outsider-ness', such as:

- the capacity to draw from my own classroom experiences while adopting an objective, reflective perspective on the research being conducted;
- my capacity for critiquing the subject and research (Gallais, 2008);
- no conflict regarding the 'dual role of investigator and employee' as I am not employed by the schools I will be visiting, nor are the participants employees of my own (Morse, 1998, p.61).
- avoidance of 'restricted vision' or 'over-rapport' (Hong and Duff, 2002, p.194); and,
- the extent to which participants are ready to express their ideas honestly throughout the data collecting procedure may be influenced by my positional power as a former teacher and current lecturer.

Overall, because I had experience as a teacher and I am still active in the educational sector, I cannot pretend to be a complete outsider to this research. My insider/outsider status fluctuated a little bit during this research since I was learning and I still am, and as a result, my analytical lens may have altered (Hastings, 2010; Kerstetter, 2012). Since some of the early participants were people I knew before the research, the sampling approach may have also affected my positionality. In conclusion, to label me as a complete insider or outsider would be to acknowledge both ideologies as distinct dualisms. Because I cannot be entirely one or the other in the context of my research, taking a pragmatist approach seems more and more appropriate.

4.2 Mixed-methods design

Quantitative and qualitative research approaches are associated with two distinct research perspectives (Sale, Lohfled and Brazil, 2002): quantitative methods are based on positivism and focus on numerical data analysis, whereas qualitative methods are based on interpretivism / constructivism and utilise narrative data analysis such as interviews, photos, films, and artefacts (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Gay & Airasian, 2000; Creswell, 2003). Both systems have advantages and disadvantages. In the human and social sciences, such topics continue to spark debate. According to some academics (Lincoln & Guba, 2003), the paradigms of quantitative and qualitative techniques are incompatible. Others (Reichardt and Rallis, 1994) argue that both strategies can build a long-term partnership since their underlying ideals are sufficiently comparable. The former viewpoint is mostly focused on the two methodologies' differing theoretical perspectives, whilst the latter emphasises the two research methods' compatibility. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have their benefits and drawbacks, and both have a role in educational research (Slavin, 1992; Gay and Airasian, 2000). The various labels for both of these paradigms have different meanings. However, the differences often tend to be ‘glossed over by the implicit assumption that there are only two basic types of research’ (Wood and Welch, 2010: p.56). The notion of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches has been more and more popular in recent years due to the growth in understanding that ‘both styles of research may have a contribution to make’ (Wood and Welch, 2010, p. 56). It was decided that a mixed methodological approach would be the most effective for addressing the objectives and issues that guide this study. As a mixed methodologist, I follow the ontological and epistemological tenets of the mixed-methods paradigm. A mixed-method approach not only aids in determining the data's authenticity and trustworthiness, but also adds to our comprehension of the topic under inquiry. Methods should be complementary to one another rather than adversarial. Instead of relying on a single approach, researchers can utilise whatever method is best for the study or a combination of both.

Symonds and Gorard (2010: p.1) define mixed-methods as the term increasingly used in social science to describe the class of research where the researcher ‘mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study. In agreement with

Wood and Welch (2010), this study supports the idea of interpreting research in a more flexible way, where the approach:

> *takes the qualitative end of the 'human interests' pole (so these are 'the main drivers' of research), and the quantitative end of the other dichotomies.... This would be hard, objectivist research, but driven by what people need to know.* (Wood and Welch, 2010: p.58).

Mixed methodologists value any approaches for collecting and analysing data rather than subscribing them only one way (quantitative or qualitative) (Creswell, 2009: p.11). Pragmatism opens the door to '*multiple methods, different world views, and different assumptions as well as different forms of data collection and analysis'* (p.10-11). It has been viewed as a new orthodoxy based on the idea that combining methods from various paradigms of research is not only permissible but also desirable because good social research will almost always require to use both quantitative and qualitative research to adequately address a research question. (Greene, Kreider and Mayer, 2005; Rocco, *et al.,* 2003). There may be times when these two approaches do not complement one another, so by integrating the data, correlations or contrasts between data can be identified. Those aspects of the data which indicate similarities across several methods as part of this study have been highlighted and deemed as significant findings, but the contrasting data was also interesting as it brought to light aspects that present clashes of compatibility. The adopted approaches, whether they are qualitative or quantitative, may deal with such paradigm concerns by: (i) being aware of the issue; (ii) preserving their separation (which was done during data collection and analysis); and (iii) adopting the above-described pragmatic ideological viewpoint (Bazeley, 2018). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) go into detail on how integrating approaches permits some

acknowledgment of the following areas of fundamental agreement between opposing perspectives in order to further minimise conflict between the paradigms:

- the theory-laden nature of facts — our experiences, beliefs, and prior knowledge all influence what we perceive and see;
- what appears reasonable is relative, i.e. it can vary across persons;
- more than one theory can fit a single set of empirical data;
- A hypothesis cannot be fully evaluated in isolation since testing requires making a number of assumptions, which implies that other possible explanations will still exist;
- The researchers are embedded in and impacted by the attitudes, values, and beliefs of their research communities because of the social aspect of the research industry; and
- the value-laden aspect of inquiry, influences the topics we choose to look into, the things we observe, and the things we understand.

Greater rigour for the study approach chosen is made achievable by recognising these areas. In this situation, using a mixed-methods design can aid in gaining fresh understanding of the processes, social dynamics, and results (Creamer, 2018). Due to the calls for more sophisticated research methodologies (Calderhead, 1996; Dyson, 2014; Greene, 2015; Kirk, et al., 2006; König, 2016) and the complexity of the research topic I chose to explore (which included structural social formations, contemporary education policy and barriers to educational opportunity), I needed complex and open research questions (Creamer, 2018). Due to the intricate nature of the research questions, I had to look beyond methodologies that would not be adaptable enough to answer and address them. The holistic perspective regarding barriers to access and success within the performing arts would not necessarily have been possible had I adopted a solely quantitative or qualitative approach. Utilising a mixed-method design in this instance can help gain new insights into processes,

social dynamics and outcomes (Creamer, 2018). Furthermore, quantitative and qualitative methods do not have to be conflicting, in fact, they complement each other in terms of scientific progress (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Sale et al, 2002). The mixed-methods used in this study consisted of (i) primary research data collected using surveys, one-to-one interviews, and case studies; and (ii) secondary data compiled from a mixture of academic literature and media reports so as to fully answer the research questions:

RQ1. How do structural social formations, contemporary education policy and the practices of drama schools interact to form barriers to educational opportunity in the performing arts and create problems for social mobility?

RQ2. How might these barriers be overcome?

As a mixed methodologist, 'Timing, weighting, mixing, and theorising' are the four factors Creswell (2009: p. 206) recommends taking into account while constructing mixed methods operations. Each of which will be explored in turn.

4.2.1 Timing

Timing relates to how the researcher gathers, examines, and analyses the data and whether data are gathered simultaneously (concurrently[83]) or in stages (sequentially[84]). Because timing affects 'the order in which researchers use the data' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p.81), it is crucial to take it into account The intended and sequential order of data collection in this study is depicted in **Figure 9**. The same structure was also used for analysis and interpretation. The sequence in which the data were gathered is shown by the numbers in the diagram. The fact that each of these data collecting techniques was used independently before being combined for analysis is what ties them all together.

[83] Concurrent timing – 'when the researcher implements both quantitative and qualitative methods during a single phase of the research study... which includes collecting the quantitative and qualitative data, analysing and interpreting it... at (approximately) the same time' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p.81

[84] Sequential timing – 'occurs when the researcher implements the methods in two distinct phases, using (collecting and analysing) one type of data, before using another data type' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p.81)

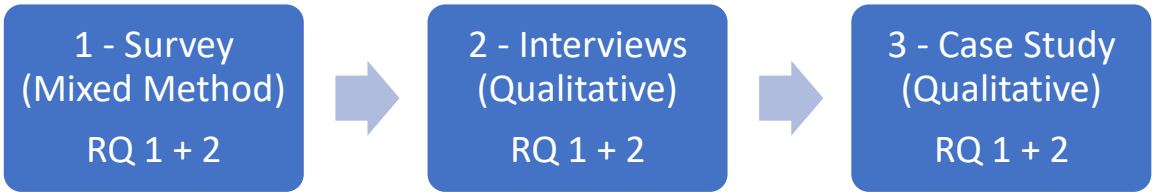

Figure 9 - **The sequential exploratory design within the mixed methodological paradigm**

This figure also shows which elements of my research design were inspired by the research questions.

4.2.2 Weighting

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), the weighting component relates to the requirement for researchers to 'consider the relative weighting (or emphasis) of the two approaches (qualitative or quantitative) in the study' (p.81). To guarantee that the research questions have been addressed, a specific weighting may be prioritised. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), weightings are often categorised as ‘equal’ or ‘unequal’ (p. 81). Given that both the quantitative and qualitative data are crucial to answering the research objectives, the current study is regarded as having equal weighting. Overall, there are more qualitative data than quantitative data, although both types of data are considered to be equally important. The pragmatic theoretical/philosophical impetus described previously in this section was also taken into consideration when deciding on equal weighting (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). When one is trying to confront what are thought to be sterile and unproductive dualisms (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; 2003) some mixed-methods researchers prefer a search for common ground, some compatibility, between the "old" philosophies of research. The middle ground is consequently supported by this design's weighting.

4.2.3 Mixing

This decision relates simply to considering how the quantitative and qualitative data will be mixed (or in this case, integrated); which when explicitly stated distinguishes a multi- method study[85] from a mixed-method study and ensures

[85] A multi-methods study includes both quantitative and qualitative methods without explicitly mixing the data derived from each (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p.83)

its rigour (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). A multi-method study may also be purely qualitative or purely quantitative, whereas mixed methods research needs both types of data and to involve a strategy for 'mixing'. There are three potential strategies for mixing the two data types:

- - They can be merged;
- - one can be embedded within the other; or,
- - they can be connected.

(Creswell and Clark, 2007, p.83).

The current study connected the data throughout analysis by using a fully integrated mixed methods design after deciding on an equal weighting. Each dataset could then be evaluated and utilised to compare, support, or contrast results from one approach to another by selecting to link the data. This allowed for the integration[86] of the data during analysis and interpretation, which led to connections. This is confirmed by Bazeley's (2018) assertion that:

> *the different data converge to complement or extend each other, allowing the analyst to develop a richer, more analytically dense, more complete and confidently argued response to their research question(s.)* (p.12)

While multiple data sources may work well together in this case, it was crucial to recognise that there may also be 'conflicting or unexpected' discoveries (Bazeley, 2018, p. 13), which might even take the researcher in an unanticipated direction (Caracelli and Greene, 1993; Rossman and Wilson, 1985). Overall, the advantages of combining approaches are found in their ability to provide more robust conclusions and understandings (Bazeley, 2018, p. 11). Key justifications of its adoption included:

- *Increasing confidence in results that are supported by multiple sources of evidence;*
- *designing better instruments and samples;*

[86] 'Integration is defined in terms of the relationship between methods in reaching a common theoretical or research goal... purposeful interdependence between the different sources, method or approach used is the critical characteristic that distinguishes integrated mixed methods from a mono-method or even a multimethod approach to research' (Bazeley, 2018, p.7).

- *increasing the depth or breadth of a study;*
- *providing a more complete or comprehensive understanding of the topic; and,*
- *initiating free insights through contradiction and paradox.*

(Bazeley, 2018, p.12).

4.2.4 The overall mixed-methods design

For this investigation, a sequential, exploratory, and integrated mixed methods approach was used. The following sections of this chapter depict the data gathering, analysis, and integration methods which makes the precise sequence of the stages pertaining to each technique of data collecting easier to understand. This thesis formed a piece of 'research that involves multiple sources and types of data and/ or multiple approaches to the analysis of those data' (Bazeley, 2018, p.7). The timing of integration is addressed by Bazeley (2018) in that:

> *the integration of data and analyses occur prior to drawing the final conclusion about the topic of investigation. Integration asks about the relatedness or degree of mutuality of key findings occurring between the different components of a mixed-methods study.* (p.7)

According to Bryman (2007), interdependence refers to 'a conversation or debate between findings' that results in a *'negotiated account'* (p. 21) as well as 'a meaningful two-way exchange of information and inference between varied types of sources gathered and/or analytic strategies employed during the design and analysis processes of a study' (Bazeley, 2018: p.8). Therefore, while remaining true to the unique analytic strategies that are supported by the methodologies used, a hybrid mix (Bazeley, 2018) of qualitative and quantitative sources and procedures has been employed. I will now detail the research methodologies used for the current study and then describe how each approach will be independently analysed before integration.

4.3 Grounded Theory design

Like other qualitative methodologies, grounded theory is focused on how the subjects of the study perceive and interpret their social environments (Bryman,

1988). The fundamental ideas of grounded theory are outlined in this section before its philosophical foundations and background are discussed.

According to Glaser (1978), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory is a methodology that aims to develop theories about topics that are significant in people's lives. Instead of narrowly circumscribed, preconceived assumptions, grounded theorists start with broad research questions, and ‘use their emerging theoretical categories to shape the data collection while in the field as well as to structure the analytic processes of coding, memomaking, integrating and writing the developing theory’ (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1162).

As Charmaz (1990) demonstrates, sampling in grounded theory is motivated by issues arising from preliminary analysis rather than by efforts to be representative of the population (Clarke, 2003). Grounded theory is emergent in this sense since the creation of theory is its primary objective (Charmaz, 2008).

4.3.1 The arrival of grounded theory

Sociologists Glaser and Strauss collaborated to study how people died in hospitals in the 1960s, which led to the development of grounded theory as a formal approach to qualitative inquiry. The grounded theory approach developed by Glaser and Strauss brought together the breadth and depth of Strauss' experience in qualitative research with Glaser's knowledge in quantitative survey research (Walker and Myrick, 2006). Together, these scholars created an organised, iterative research methodology for gathering, interpreting, and producing theory from evidence. Glaser and Strauss are sometimes referred to as first generation, or classic grounded theorists (Birks and Mills, 2007), despite the fact that sociologists were already undertaking fieldwork with the intention of generating theory and writing about social process (Morse et al, 2009).

According to Fassinger (2005), the purpose of grounded theory is to develop a theory that is "grounded" on evidence gathered from participants based on the complexity of their lived experiences in a social context. Through an iterative process of data collecting, coding, conceptualising, continual comparison, and theorising (Cutcliffe, 2000; Fassinger, 2005), Glaser and Strauss' (1967) theory are formed inductively. According to Lingard, Albert, and Levinson (2008), grounded theory is useful when studying social interactions or

experiences attempts to explain a process rather than test or validate an existing theory. Furthermore, in traditional grounded theory, existing literature is not looked into until data collection has begun (McGhee, Marland, and Atkinson, 2007).

The rise of classic grounded theory questioned the artificial separation of theory and research, the widespread belief that qualitative methods were impressionistic and unsystematic, the division of the data collection and analysis phases of the research, and the notion that qualitative research only yielded descriptive case studies (Walker and Myrick, 2006; Charmaz, 1996 and 2014). Pragmatist and symbolic interactionist assumptions are echoed by grounded theory methodologies (Fassinger, 2005; Clarke, 2003; Charmaz, 2015).

Pragmatist and symbolic interactionist assumptions are echoed by grounded theory methodologies (Fassinger, 2005; Clarke, 2003; Charmaz, 2015). Pragmatism being a philosophy which views reality as fluid and open to multiple interpretations, and symbolic interactionism, a theoretical perspective influenced by pragmatism that assumes society and self are constructed through interaction (Charmaz, 2006).

4.3.2 Grounded theory and symbolic interactionism

The premise of symbolic interactionism is that people make the world they inhabit. They do this by responding in accordance with the significance that various things have for them (Charmaz, 2006). Like Charmaz, Denzin (1992) asserts that meanings are shaped by the self-reflections each individual brings to their circumstance and emerge via interaction. The active individual is therefore conceptually at the centre of a symbolic interactionist approach (Klunklin and Greenwood, 2006). This indicates, according to Klunkin and Greenwood (2006), that objects lack intrinsic meaning. The interactions between individuals and groups form society. Meaning is generated from how other people interact with objects, and these meanings are symbolically expressed in language and behaviour.

To understand how the participants under inquiry produce and execute meaning, grounded theorists look at symbolic interaction from a variety of angles. It is a theoretical framework that guides the conceptualisation and comprehension of truth. Researchers can better grasp the complex world of

lived experience by adopting a symbolic interactionism approach, according to Schwandt (1994). Grounded theory continues to be supported by symbolic interactionism and function as a theoretical framework even as the approach diverges from its traditional origins. The following discussion will concentrate on this adaptation of the traditional grounded theory formulation.

4.3.3 Constructivist grounded theory

The constructivist grounded theory developed by Charmaz (1990, 2006, and 2015) is a modern variation on the grounded theory approach. Charmaz places research in relation to its broader historical, cultural, and social context. In addition, Charmaz's grounded theory method takes into account the viewpoints and positions of both the researcher and the subject of the study (Charmaz, 1990; 2006).

Constructivism as a paradigm of inquiry is reflected in constructivist grounded theory. Constructivism, according to Guba and Lincoln (2005), is ontologically relativist, epistemologically transactional, and methodologically dialectical. This indicates that a constructivist grounded theory assumes an active, rather than a neutral, observer whose choices influence both the research's process and its outcome (Charmaz, 2009). It is thought that realities are multifaceted and complex rather than unifying and self-evident (Pidgeon and Henwood, 2003).

Additionally, constructivist grounded theory sees the categorising process—which involves developing themes—as dialectical and dynamic (Charmaz, 1996). Additionally, Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory disproves the notion that there is a universal truth that can be quantified or discovered through scientific inquiry (Crotty, 1998).

Constructivist grounded theory highlighted new challenges including reflexivity and participant representation. According to Charmaz (2015), grounded theorists like many qualitative researchers, ‘had not examined their assumptions about data collection, themselves as observers and writers, and the situated nature of their studies’ (p.404) prior to the constructivist shift. Such methodological issues are significant and have an influence on how constructivist grounded theory was applied in this work.

4.3.4 Choosing a constructivist grounded theory approach

Berger and Luckman's (1967) writing on the sociology of knowledge served as the foundation for my original justification for using constructivist grounded theory. They wrote that ‘what is 'real' to a Tibetan monk may not be 'real' to an American businessman’ (p.15). They proceeded by saying how the 'knowledge' of the criminal and the criminologist are two quite different things. It follows that certain collections of ‘reality’ and ‘knowledge’ are related to particular social settings, and that an acceptable sociological study of these contexts must take these links into account.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), Berger and Luckman (1967) take a relativist ontological stance. As a result, ideas like truth and reality must be seen in the context of a particular social setting (Bernstein, 1983). The examples provided by Berger and Luckman (1967) prompted me to consider the potential social circumstances in which the participants in this study are situated. The lives of my participants were impacted by their habitus, cultural, social and economic capital and the field in which they navigated. As a result, it was certain that the participants had knowledge sets that were distinct from mine. I was able to investigate the many meanings, constructions, and interactions present in the worlds of the participants using social constructionism as an ontological lens since it recognised this diversity. The constructivist grounded theory of Charmaz acknowledges both societal and individual diversity.

The constructivist grounded theory of Charmaz acknowledges both societal and individual diversity. The method also recognises that people perceive their various constructs as reality and that they are neither inventions nor fabrications (Charmaz, 1990). The contrary is true: ‘*People's constructions reflect their understandings of their experiences as well as the diverse situations in which they have them*’ (Charmaz, 1990: p.1161). In order to understand the obstacles to entry and success in drama school training, it was the ideas, assumptions, and ideologies (Cresswell et al., 2007) as well as the understandings and perceptions of reality (Charmaz, 1990) that I sought to record as part of this study.

According to Charmaz (2015), grounded theorists become more sensitive to looking under the surface and examining what transpires among various research participants when they are aware of the diversity of viewpoints and

realities. In light of this, ‘grounded theorists are poised to construct useful theories...that offer conceptual handles on specific issues and may generate persuasive changes in policy arenas’ (Charmaz, 2015: p.406). The constructivist method of grounded theory was therefore appropriate.

Charmaz’s flexible approach to the research process allows researchers to follow data, and to adapt to and change questions as dictated by collected data. Although it could be argued that Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) and Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) method are also directed by data, constructivist grounded theory is less restricted by coding frameworks (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; 1998) or on the focus on the discovery of reality (Glaser, 1978).

Furthermore, Charmaz's conceptualizations of the study's results diverge from earlier use of the methodology. The theory provided in this thesis places more emphasis on understanding than on explanation, in contrast to conventional definitions of theory, such as those proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which claim that theory must anticipate and explain conduct. According to Charmaz's (2006) interpretive theory, which is in accordance with social constructivism, indeterminacy is permitted rather than causality, and patterns and connections are preferred to linear thinking. According to Breckenridge et al. (2012), constructivist grounded theorists should, as suggested by Charmaz (2003), attempt to build a "picture that draws from, reassembles, and renders subjects' lives" (Charmaz 2003, p. 270).

Since my study topic was wide, I expected to uncover more than one primary issue in my data. As a result, a constructivist method was successful since it allowed me to offer facts that reflect processes and knowledge of the barriers to access and success within drama school training rather than a theory built around a single central issue.

As it promotes reflection, recognises the researcher and participant as co-constructors of knowledge, and aids researchers in comprehending and examining perceptions and constructions of phenomena, the constructivist approach to grounded theory is the one chosen for this study. In order to accommodate the many voices, perspectives, and visions of everyone participating in the research process, Charmaz (2006) recommends researchers employing constructivist grounded theory to give voice to their participants. Giving voice to participants is especially important within this study as working-

class people, women and the BIPOC community have historically been excluded from drama school training.

4.3.5 Utilisation of grounded theory as a method

The method of grounded theory makes use of a theoretical sampling strategy. Theoretical sampling is a particular kind of non-probability sampling that is motivated by developing theory (Strauss, 1987) (Mays and Pope, 1995). Theoretical sampling is starting with data, developing rough hypotheses about that data, and then theoretically sampling to gather data to support the categories already in existence (Charmaz, 2006). Data collection and analysis are both steps in an iterative methodology process, and each one informs the other.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) specifically discouraged performing a literature study before starting the data collection process. An early review of the literature was discouraged for the following reasons: to avoid generating a focus from the literature rather than from the emerging data; to avoid recognised or unrecognised assumptions; and to avoid restricting, contaminating, or inhibiting the researcher (McGhee et al., 2007). Charmaz (2006) supports deferring a formal academic literature review, just as Glaser. With respect to the tabula rasa approach to inquiry advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Charmaz (1990) concurs, writing that:

> *reading and integrating the literature later in the research process is a strategy to prompt exploring various ways of analysing the data...delaying the literature review decreases the likelihood that the researcher will already be locked into preconceived conceptual blinders upon entering the field and interpreting the data* (Charmaz, 1990: p.1163)

Charmaz (1990) is as explicit as Glaser (1978) that this refers to postponing the literature review, not ignoring or neglecting to use it.

Although I have followed Charmaz's (2006) methodological procedures throughout the research process thus far, I approached the literature in a different way than Charmaz does. I employed the theoretical agnosticism of Henwood and Pidgeon (2003) and Thornberg (2012) rather than delaying the literature in its

entirety. The idea behind theoretical agnosticism is to approach any existing ideas and conceptions that one is aware of or may come across as provisional, debatable, and adaptable. This method avoids imposing certain frameworks that can force the researcher to see data through a particular theoretical lens rather than advocating that the researcher disregard theories (Dunne, 2011).

Theoretical agnosticism is a pragmatic approach to the literature that is appropriate for this study. The first reason being that I have prior experience assisting students in getting ready for drama school training and working in the performing arts. As a result, I anticipated what I may discover in my data. Before starting my PhD or thinking about my grounded theory method, I also quickly surveyed the literature and discovered little discussion on barriers to entry and success in drama school training. It would have been challenging to ignore this knowledge both before and during the data collection process. Theoretical agnosticism accepts that existing theories and notions could help researchers highlight potentially important characteristics (Thornberg, 2012) therefore, I critically examined the papers that were published in the field during the duration of my PhD.

I am aware that I have strayed from Charmaz's constructivist technique, but I could not have prevented or avoided being exposed to the literature before the study began. I further contend that previous to data collection or analysis, my knowledge of access to and success in drama school training was constrained by the paucity of studies on the topic. Thus, the development of the conclusions offered in this thesis drew on the body of current literature. But like Henwood and Pidgeon (2003), I continued to be critical and interested in this material. The literature was then utilised to position my findings and examine how my theory was both similar to and distinct from the current understanding of drama school training, in keeping with Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory.

Throughout the analysis process, although this study used a constructivist grounded theory approach, I also opted to use the three-stage coding process of Glaser and Straus (1978)[87]. A mixed-method approach of Charmaz's techniques for identifying concepts and similarities by labelling each bit of data according to what it

[87] https://delvetool.com/blog/openaxialselective

indicates, along with analytical memo writing[88] and the three-stage coding process, allowed for a nuanced and detailed analysis of the extensive data collected. Coding matrices, while useful appear inflexible and prescriptive, when looked at with a constructivist lens. They also reflect Strauss and Corbin's (1990) prescriptive approach to the grounded theory method, which also emphasised coding frameworks. In spite of this, the frameworks added a needed structure for the development of theory within this study. Furthermore, what was useful when using prescriptive coding came from what Charmaz (2006) advised regarding asking questions like '*what does the data suggest?'* or '*from whose point of view*?' in place of predetermined questions that are part of a coding framework (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) or matrix (Scott, 2004). Charmaz (2006) proposes asking, '*How does the participant act while involved in this phenomenon?*' while finding links and processes. (p.212). Charmaz's (2006) inquiries seek understanding rather than explanation, which is consistent with constructionism.

4.3.6 Theory generation

Arguably, the goal of grounded theory research is theory creation. A 'theory that is generated in the course of the close inspection and analysis of qualitative data' (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992: p.103) is referred to as a grounded theory, or the outcome of a grounded theory research. While many researchers who claim to use grounded theory methods do not actually present an eventual theory (Templeman, Robinson and McKenna, 2015; Plakas, Cant, and Taket, 2009; Mossin and Landmark, 2011), the literature does acknowledge that theory generation is the result of a grounded theory research project (Wacker, 1998; Myrick and Walker, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1990).

There are a few grounded theorists that have made an effort to fill the gap in the literature despite the fact that there isn't a wide-ranging discussion of theory generation (Charmaz, 2015; Scott, 2004; Whetten, 1989).

It is helpful to define a theory initially before investigating the process of theory production in a grounded theory research. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the roles of sociological theory include enabling behaviour prediction and

[88] Memo writing is the writing down of ideas generated while the researcher analyses the data collected, reflecting their thoughts and ideas.

explanation, being valuable and usable in practical applications, offering a perspective on conduct, and directing and providing a style for study on certain behavioural domains.

In Charmaz's conceptualisation of theory, comprehension is prioritised over justification. According to the constructivist approach, theory is interpretive and abstract rather than linear (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivism is a philosophy that, according to Charmaz (2006), 'assumes emergent, multiple realities, indeterminacy... truth as provisional, and social life as processual' (Charmaz, 2006: p.126). Therefore, I will use Charmaz's (2006) notion of grounded theory in my discussion of theory development, which can be seen in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

It may be challenging to define the process of theory development, and after creating my own theory and writing this portion of the thesis, I have a better grasp of why some scholars would choose to omit or restrict their discussion of theory production in grounded theory. However, I was able to develop my theory, which is presented in my findings chapter, by developing hypotheses and testing them with participants, asking questions that examined process and understanding, using coding matrices, constant comparison and memo writing, and remaining reflective throughout my data collection and analysis.

4.3.7 Sampling and participants

Sixty respondents took part in the online survey and 33 people were interviewed; **8** notable actors including a casting director; **15** students and **10** of the 22 drama schools in the FDS, of which are mentioned in **chapter 1**. **Appendix 4.3.7** indicates the participant demographics of both the survey and interviews.

The survey sample consisted of 31 (52%) females, 26 (43%) males, 1 person identified as non-binary (2%) and 2 (3%) preferred not to say. Forty-eight of the 60 participants shared their ethnicity with 62% being white, 13% BIPOC and 5% Asian. The remaining 20% replied with comments such as '*British'*, '*Irish*' and '*Scottish born and bred'*. These responses demonstrated the participants' nationality, but their ethnicity was unclear and therefore could not be counted in the responses.

The ages of participants varied with the youngest being 17 and the oldest 68. Thirty-five of respondents (**58%**) auditioned during the years 2010 and 2022 and were aged between 17 and 30, with **2%** auditioning between 1950-1960; **7%** 1970-

1980; **7%** 1980-1990; **5%** 1990-2000 and **21%** 2000-2010. The total years of participants auditioning for drama school spanned 70 years.

The second phase of sampling was part of a longitudinal study through the use of interviews. Due to the nature and notoriety of those involved within the interview process, the interviews took place over a period of two years. When the pandemic impacted the country, some interviews took place online or were cancelled.

The interview sample consisted of 24 (73%) males and 9 (27%) females overall, of whom non identified as non-binary or preferred not to disclose their gender.

- **Group A** (drama school principals) **9** males and **1** female;
- **Group B** (student interview) **9** males and **6** females;
- **Group C** (actor interviews) **6** males and **2** females.

Each group shared their ethnicity with **A** - 100% white; **B** - 13% BIPOC and 87% white; **C -** 13% BIPOC and 87% white. During this chapter, each group is referred to by their letter i.e., Group A, B or C.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) social reproduction theory, particularly his concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field, were used as a lens through which to study the survey data and develop questions for the one-on-one interviews with established actors, drama school principals and students in the second phase of this study. Triangulation is a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Stake, 2005), and the mixed-methods approach adopted in this study enhanced both the scope and depth of the research (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009).

4.3.8 Recruitment

In order for the sample to be recruited it had to be done in three stages due to the length of time it would take to conduct the interviews. Sampling began in January 2018 by emailing the personal assistants and managing agents for the actors and casting agents who had an interest in this topic. This was done first as I knew it would take a long time to secure interview dates and times and ultimately, this took up to 2 years to finalise due to actors' and casting directors' schedules.

The second stage, which commenced in March 2018, was connecting with drama school principals which took up to 6 months to confirm and organise interviews; the last interview taking place in October 2019. The sample size was expected to be bigger but there were a few schools who stated they did not want to take part in the study, and they did not wish to say why. The final stage was emailing and calling other colleges in the North East and getting in touch with the Performing arts department to see if their students would like to take part in the interviews and survey. Interestingly, by the time it came to conduct the interviews, many of the students from the other colleges were studying on the degree programme at the college I was teaching at, which made it easier to collect the sample. By contacting all three groups of participants, snowball sampling began to take place. Word of mouth meant more people wished to take part in the study both at interview and with the survey.

The sample was widespread and mostly representative of the population under scrutiny, however, to gain a deeper understanding of the views of drama schools, it would have been more beneficial to the study to have had more of the principals take part.

4.4 Methods

4.4.1 Survey

The survey was written and made available to the public in 2018 and even though the majority of the data collection took place throughout that year and 2019, it ran until 2021 to gather as much data as possible to ensure a widespread analysis, especially considering the performing arts landscape during the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey focused on drama school training, the audition process and opportunities post education. The reason behind this was due to previous, albeit sparse, research which portrayed these elite institutions as the 'gatekeepers' to the industry and the reason as to why there is a lack of diversity within British acting (see for example The Acting Up Report, 2017: Blackstage.com, 2021 and atscouncil.org.uk, 2022[89]: and artsprofessional.co.uk, 2022[90]). Current literature also

[89] https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/diversity

[90] https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/pulse/survey-report/pulse-report-part-1-diversity-arts-workforce-what-needs-change

discussed that without this kind of training, you would find it very difficult to succeed in becoming a professionally trained actor or Musical Theatre performer (see for example *The Importance of Training as an Actor* by Bernard Hiller)[91] thus highlighting the gap in literature and the need to examine social mobility within vocational arts education further.

The survey was created using mainly open-ended questioning to gauge the most prevalent themes and challenges facing higher education vocational actor training. and the survey design, administration and analysis were informed by *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (2006) by Glaser and Strauss. Although Glaser and Strauss (1999: 87) argue that most researchers using grounded theory will opt to analyse 'previously collected data', the lack of such data made it necessary for me to collect my own survey data to 'generate theory'. The survey was posted on arts Facebook pages, websites, and forums and yielded 60 responses. The responses included students, professional working actors, and actors who have retired. The youngest respondent was 17 and the oldest 68. The main purpose of the survey was to find and understand key problematic areas such as barriers to access and success within the performing arts, discrimination and inclusion (see for example, creativefuture.org.uk, 2015[92] and museumsassociation.org, 2022[93]). From here, responses were collated and categorised to inform questioning for face-to-face interviews with drama school principals, notable actors and casting directors. This allowed for further investigation into what challenges aspiring actors face and what can be done to break down barriers to access.

The survey consisted of 18 questions with opportunities to comment further (**Appendix 4.4**). These predominately open-ended questions were developed after reading the findings from the Acting Up Report (2017) and Friedman's *Like skydiving without a parachute': How class origin shapes occupational trajectories in British acting* (2017), which both examine themes such as class and discrimination within British acting. Both studies were the first of their kind within the field of British acting

[91] https://bernardhiller.com/the-importance-of-training-as-an-actor/

[92] https://www.creativefuture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/CF-Report-DIGITAL.pdf

[93] https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/opinion/2022/01/barriers-to-equity-and-diversity-must-not-be-rebuilt/#

and uncovered deeply entrenched issues within the industry, but they did not identify where the problem stems from. The studies suggested that the problems lie with drama schools as 'the gatekeepers' but chapters one and two of this thesis highlight that it is not as straight forward as to blame one set of people for a whole industry failing to represent and offer parity for those who work in it. This is further analysed in the discussion chapter. The survey questions, therefore, were created to ascertain where the issues raised in both previous studies originate, and to understand what challenges drama schools face. This was to better inform the interview questions.

As with all methods, the survey has its advantages and disadvantages. They tend to be easier to arrange and are more economical, yet some of the questions in this survey proved frustrating for respondents and therefore deterred some of them from answering (Denscombe, 2003). It is also possible that the respondents were not truthful in their response and the survey offered the researcher little opportunity to verify them. The validity of the survey was dependent on the wording of questions, the structural design and the length of it (Grey, 2009). The wording and instruction of each question in the survey were structured so as to draw out recurring themes in the participants' answers. In light of Bourdieu's (1979) theory, it was hypothesised that themes such as finances, discrimination, class and diversity would be apparent upon analysis of the data; the results of which were transferred to graphs and charts in the findings and analysis chapter.

4.4.2 Interviews

The interviews took place during 2019 and they were extended up until 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Most interviews took place in London throughout 2019 and then via Skype from 2020. Three sets of interview questions were created based on the data collected from the survey responses. The reasoning behind this was primarily to triangulate the data to safeguard the reliability of the findings (Patton, 1999). It was apparent from the data collected that the respondents had trained over the course of a 50-year period, so it was important to ensure the interview questions reflected their age, year of which they studied, where they are now professionally and also bear in mind the political influences and changes in arts education over the past 50 years. This made the data collection from the interviews easier to categorise and analyse, as the themes were naturally placed in specific time periods over the course of 50 years. Upon analysis, there were 8 interviews with

notable actors and a casting director; 15 students and only 10 of the 22 drama schools in the FDS agreed to take part in the study (largely for reasons unknown); yielding a total of 33 interviews.

Interviews were carried out with Heads of Drama Schools in the UK, notable actors, casting directors and FE/ HE students studying acting and musical theatre with the aim of progressing to drama school. These interviews began after the results of the survey and themes were presented, and this allowed for the interview questions to be streamlined. The sample was broadly representative in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, age and location. The interview questions did vary depending on the subject, so as to follow a grounded theory approach. Heads of Drama School were asked about the practises and policies of each school (**Appendix 4.4.2a);** students were asked about their experiences attending auditions at each school; their time during their period of study and life post drama school (**Appendix 4.4.2b**); actors were asked about their experiences in the industry, how they gained access to the sector and their opinion on actor training, both when they started and now (**Appendix 4.4.2c**).

The interviews consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions to offer flexibility in analysing the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This method of analysis allows for a broader understanding of people's views and opinions on drama school training. One disadvantage of using semi-structured, open-ended questioning was ensuring the person being interviewed answered the question fully, which was a challenge when interviewing in all three groups of participants. The validity of the interview method was addressed through the use of interview questions that were directly related to the research aims (Gray, 2009), and included questions informed by literature on performing arts education and the survey findings (Arksey & Knight, 1999). As Denscombe (2003) explains, interviews are particularly good at producing data which deal with topics in depth and in detail. Denscombe (2003) also shares several disadvantages of using interviews as a research method including the time-consuming nature of the data collection. Having to transcribe the data and code it 'is a major task for the researcher' (Denscombe, 2003: p190) as well as maintaining objectivity and consistency, which Denscombe describes as being 'hard to achieve' (Denscombe, 2003: p190). As some of the interviews took place in various locations around London, Manchester and the North East, some of the locations were noisy, which made it difficult to transcribe the audio verbatim. It is worth noting here that

these locations were by choice of the actors, and even though they were noisy, we were in secluded and cordoned off areas so as to protect their anonymity and to safeguard themselves.

4.4.3 Case Study

A case study was undertaken with a cohort of FE students based at a college in the North East of England. This method of research was chosen to allow for further exploration and understanding of access to performing arts education, as it is considered a robust approach, especially when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required. The role of the case study method in research becomes more prominent when issues are raised with regard to education (Gulsecen & Kubat, 2006), sociology (Grassel & Schirmer, 2006) and community- based problems (Johnson, 2006), such as socioeconomic barriers, class structure and diversity (Zainal, 2007). In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study. Yin (1984: 23) defines the case study research method as:

> *[…] an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.*

The use of a case study within this research was thought to present more opportunities for closer analysis as most students within this region were affected by one of the aforementioned variables. Unfortunately, due to the global pandemic this was unable to be completed.

4.4.4 Analysis of the data collected

A qualitative technique was used to examine the survey results, and further categorisation took place as it allowed constructs and components to be grouped together based on how similar they were. This was done in order to find groups of data that stood out as being particularly similar to one another whilst also being able to be relatively easily separated from other groups of data (Fromm and Paschelke, 2011, p. 81). This analysis allowed themes to emerge which then informed the line of questioning for each group of interview participants.

This method provided information about where associations and patterns existed in the data. Categories such as gender, ethnicity and class stratification were identified. After these categories were created, it was easier to manually code responses for each question during open coding and analyse for themes. Once themes were categorised, the next stage in the coding process enabled further examination of the data to uncover subthemes. The findings from the research allowed for a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the type of questions to ask each group of interview participants. The survey and interviews were coded manually during open coding.

The survey was coded once it had closed to the public in 2021 and the coding of interview groups A and C (Drama School principals and actors) were analysed after each response due to the lengthy timeframe between each interview. This allowed for any clarifying questions to be added and codes and themes to be identified early on in the process so as to avoid problems with managing the data later on. Details of additional questions can be seen in **Appendix 5.2.1. Group B** were analysed as a group once all interview data were collected.

Each participant transcript was manually coded after each interview using open coding to identify themes. Then each group were analysed separately to identify further axial codes. All three groups were then cross analysed to identify further links and commonalities. The constant comparative analysis techniques are critical to grounded theory methodology. This process made it easier to consistently emphasise key points when coding. The open coding results for the surveys and interviews are presented within each theme due to the volume of codes found.

Categories emerged from the shared characteristics in the open codes during the subsequent analytical phase of axial coding. A mind-map was created out of all the vignettes and open codes using mind-mapping software. The data and analysis procedure for open, axial, and selective coding are summarised in **Figure 10**.

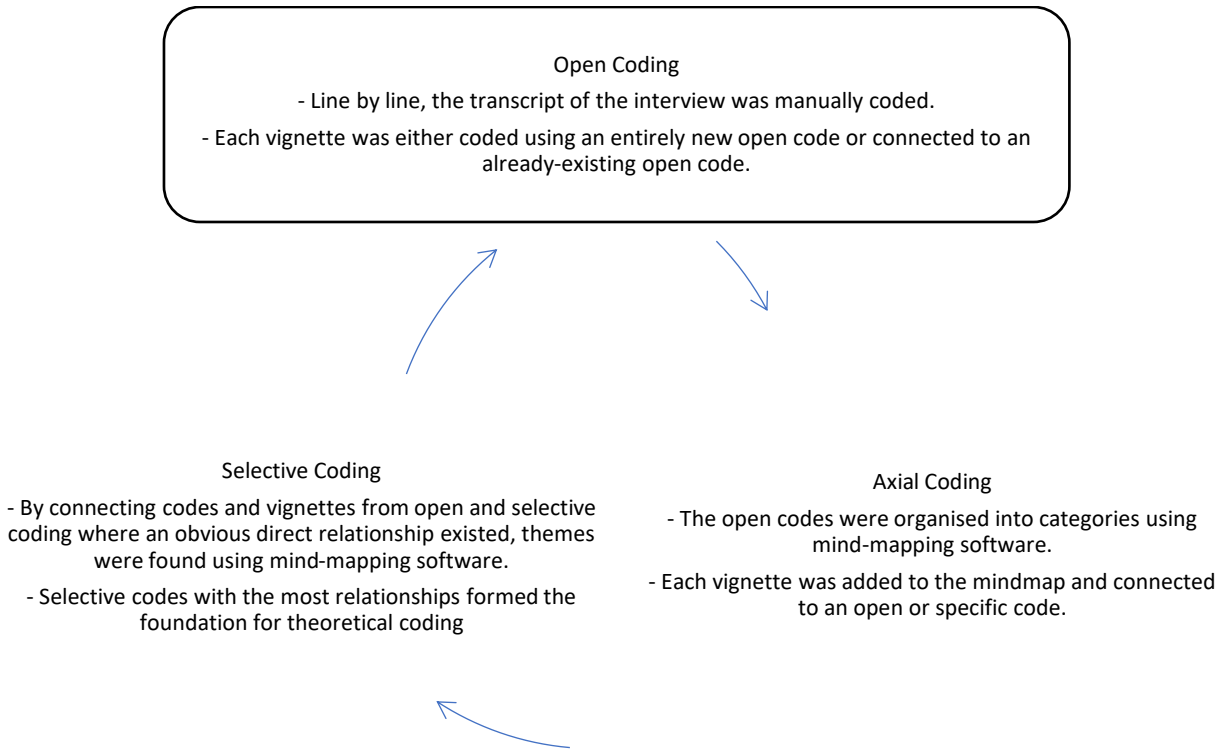

Figure 10 – Data and Analysis process.

During the second stage of the process, word-count frequencies were used in discovering axial codes from the data. After analysis of the depth of codes, which included the number of vignettes given to a set of codes, or the grouping of open codes, axial codes emerged from the data. The definition of depth for this study is when a code has been assigned to 10 or more vignettes.

The links between and across the open and axial codes led to selective coding. This analysis was made easier by the use of mind-mapping software. The mind-map was used to investigate relationships between the various axial codes. Every time a vignette was directly linked to a code during the mind-mapping process, the vignette was examined for relationships with other codes. The codes were linked together with an arrow if there was an association. The axial codes with the most relationships formed the start of selective coding.

Following a grounded theory approach, some participants were asked certain questions whilst others were not. To make sure that additional weight was not applied on a per-code basis, constant comparison was used. For example, every participant was asked the year in which they auditioned at drama school, but not every participant was asked about post-training support and employment opportunities. The latter was only asked to some of the interview participants, i.e., 6

of group A; 8 of group B; and all of group C. Multiple levels of coding were employed to the survey and interview findings and the data were inductively evaluated using a qualitative technique. relate to '*the explicit or surface meaning of the data'* where 'the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written' (p.84). The latent theme relates to '*looking beyond what has been said'* (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017: p.3353) to '*identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations and ideologies that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data'* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.84).

This framework gave the study of the interviews and surveys a structure. The data was 'read, re-read, and reflected upon' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 645) as part of the preparation for analysis and write up. The integrated mixed methods design adopted required me to consider how 'the data were linked or related' (within and across methods) and as a result, the 'key points which arose from the data' were established (Cohen et al., 2018, p.645). Furthermore, each group of interviews were transcribed and coded manually. This took an enormous amount of time and not to mention the piles of post-it notes, and three extra-large whiteboards mounted on my dining room walls. Upon reflection, it would have been a better use of time to have chosen from a range of 'computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software' (CAQDAS) programmes that have been developed to aid the analysis of data (Denscombe, 2017, p.309). In this case, NVivo 11 was an option to facilitate 'advanced coding' techniques (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019, p. 102), yet due to full-time work in Newcastle and familial responsibilities, attending a course in how to use the software was not possible as each time it was available, the dates clashed.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The empirical study complied with BERA's (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, and ethical approval was given by the University's Ethics

Committee on 5th January 2018 (**see Appendix 4.5).** Entry to the relevant field locations was arranged once this procedure was finished. This means that this was seen as the beginning of an ongoing commitment to the study's participants, one that relied on my positionality and reflexivity (Etherington, 2007) as the cornerstones for determining what was morally acceptable at each stage of the research process (Brooks et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Along with obtaining ethical permission, my goal was to uphold one of the core principles of ethical research: personal accountability for choices made about issues of ethical significance and the related actions (Brooks et al., 2014; Denscombe, 2017). According to BERA (2018), ethical standards are supposed to serve as a moral compass, but in practise, researchers must make their own judgements and assessments in order to apply the principles in different situations (Hammersley, 2015). As a result of the fact that my investigation produced a piece of social research that needed interaction with individuals in order to gather data, it was necessary for me to maintain an awareness of moral integrity in my work (Hesse-Biber, 2010). These kinds of research raise conflicting issues between the need to produce new information and the responsibility towards, care for, and connection to participants (Etherington, 2007). In order to ensure 'reflexive relational ethics', a balance had to be maintained (Etherington, 2007, p.614).

To handle the study's ethical considerations, two guiding principles were selected:

- *Social researchers should 'protect the interest of participants'.*
- *Social researchers should ensure 'that participation is voluntary and based on informed consent' and 'operate openly and honestly with respect to the investigation'.*

(Denscombe, 2017, p.341)

Participants in all phases of the study were fully informed of the purpose of the research and what their involvement would entail. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study prior to the anonymisation of the data, after which point it would not be possible to identify and retrieve their data, and that they did not need to provide a reason for withdrawal. Data were anonymised at the earliest opportunity

and were stored on a password protected computer. Participants were informed of their right to anonymity. While the majority remained anonymous, some notable actors chose to be named in this study in the hope that their professional prestige might help with the dissemination of my findings. These actors were informed of their right to withdraw from the study or have their names redacted prior to the submission of the thesis.

4.6 Summary

Overall, I adopted an equal status, sequential and exploratory mixed methodological approach, which covered all aspects of the study and allowed for the integration of findings. The methods used in this study were chosen to offer comprehensive insight into drama school training, processes and attitudes to those auditioning, as well as to identify barriers to access and success within HE vocational training. I offer some comment on the methodology used, along with its advantages and drawbacks from a theoretical and methodological standpoint, before closing the chapter.

4.7 Methodological reflections and acknowledgement of research limitations

Through the adoption of a mixed methodological, pragmatic approach to the research, the data were the starting point, and ideas were developed from those data (Creamer, 2018). Some researchers have criticised this approach for sustaining more of a binary logic deriving from positivism (Giddings and Grant, 2007; Sandelowski, 2014). The proposed binary logic particularly links the pragmatic method of constructing research questions in the search for 'truth' or a *'focus on the problem to be solved'* (Feilzer, 2010: p.8) to the positivistic ontology that reality is singular and that appropriate answers are sought (Creamer, 2018). As mixed methods research can be defined as the *'combination of qualitative and quantitative data'* (Creamer, 2018: p.218), instead of being considered a paradigm in its own right, some critique it for further reinforcing this (quantitative/qualitative) binary (Sandelowski, 2014). The juxtaposition that results from combining methodologies with quantitative and qualitative data is possible. When the data are presented *'totally or largely independently of each other'* (Bryman, 2007: p. 8) mixed approaches may fall short of overcoming the forced dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative methods. In defence, the sequential design of this study facilitated the

data to be first collected and analysed in accordance with their paradigmatic traditions. The dilemma of letting one binary paradigm gain a more conventional precedence over the other was avoided by using an integrated method to evaluate the data analyses (Creamer, 2018). Due to the equal standing given to the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this potential flaw was also minimised. These methods made it possible to present nuanced and robust findings presented through themes in chapter 5 that have contributed value (Bazeley, 2018; Creamer, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2010; Clark and Ivankova, 2016) to the understanding of access to and success within the performing arts. Therefore, the results might be seen as a *'complementary argument'* (Creamer, 2018, p. 5). It is possible to 'offset the weaknesses inherent in any method' (Creamer, 2018, p. 5) and *'avoid the biases intrinsic to the use of monomethod design'* (Denscombe, 2008, p. 272) through the combination and integration of methods.

There are two main limitations to this study: (i) the low response rate from Heads of Drama Schools resulted in minimal empirical data regarding drama schools, their processes and policies, audition entry and life post training, and (ii) it was not possible to interview every group due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the surveys, interviews and literature offered insight into all elements of drama school training and post training employment opportunities, the study would have been more robust if more interviews had occurred and if more Heads of Drama Schools had been willing to participate; along with the case study taking place. This is something that might be addressed in future studies.

4.7.1 Reflection as a mixed-methods researcher

According to Creamer (2018), the quality of the quantitative and qualitative strands contributes to the quality of mixed methods research, hence understanding both paradigms is thought crucial. This was one of the most difficult aspects of doing the study since it required me to play a variety of roles, including *'statistician, interviewer, non-participant observer, pollster, and pragmatist*' (Feilzer, 2010, p. 13). It required the ability to work with *'soft data'* in addition to the need to *'number crunch'* (Feilzer, 2010, p. 13). It took longer than I had expected for me to reacquaint myself with pertinent quantitative methods, data, and analyses, but in this instance, the advantages outweighed the drawbacks (Hesse-Biber, 2010). That said,

gathering, organising, and managing such a large amount of data required a high level of management. This issue was even more difficult when juggling a full-time job because the research demanded extensive one-on-one interaction with individuals. It was a significant endeavour to conduct this study alone because mixed methods investigations typically require a team of researchers. The administration of the procedures and a thorough investigation of each individual approach required time after the design. This also required me to work hard to maintain participants' attention across all techniques.

This research required me, as the researcher, to make a variety of decisions and overcome a number of new challenges. First, having to create all of the research tools by myself posed a significant obstacle. Prior to all phases of the data collection, the literature had an impact on all of the design decisions. In addition to developing a far better and ongoing professional awareness of the intricate structure of the performing arts world, this was a significant strength of my study. My growth as a researcher was slow, which I partially attribute to the use of mixed techniques and the in-depth, open-ended research questions I had created. This necessitated me making decisions as the research unfolded.

My capacity to triangulate in many ways has been another important aspect of my study. My results have more validity and dependability as a result. I have been successful in ensuring that basic biases brought about by the employment of a single approach could be avoided by combining ideas, methodologies, or data points. I discovered that this may be readily avoided, despite the fact that methodological purists would hold that a researcher should choose between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Ultimately, when they are properly merged, their strengths can be maximised, and a design can be built with non-overlapping weaknesses. This is done by acknowledging that both may be utilised to provide meaning to data. Methodological triangulation is the term for this (Creamer, 2018). Triangulation also became a key strength of the findings to follow in **chapter 5**. The chapter to follow begins by sharing this integration and presents findings through the themes which emerged consistently through the analysis of all each stage of the data collection.

Chapter Five: Findings

5.0 An introduction to the findings

This chapter contains the presentation and analysis of key findings of this study. Methodological integration was adopted as an analytical technique to answer the research questions:

> RQ1. How do structural social formations, contemporary education policy and the practices of drama schools interact to form barriers to educational opportunity in the performing arts and create problems for social mobility?
>
> RQ2. How might these barriers be overcome?

This chapter also includes discussion that the analysis conducted was consistent with a grounded theory approach and how the analysis ties back to the research questions. This chapter goes into detail about how the survey and 33 individual interview transcripts were analysed to find codes and themes. This was done by using three levels of analysis: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding, consistent with grounded theory. Constant comparison was used to further reduce the data at each level of analysis until patterns started to emerge. The chapter also includes tables and graphs to present codes and themes, as well as vignettes from the survey and interviews. Transparency data collected from drama schools is also analysed and used to triangulate the themes emergent from the survey and interviews.

The chapter begins by introducing the five key themes emergent upon analysis of the data. The chapter continues with the first theme of systemic racism **(5.1)** within drama schools and the wider performing arts industry; financial barriers to access **(5.2)** follows as theme 2 and discusses both the cost of audition, training itself and post-training opportunities. In section **5.3** theme 3, the influence of class, is analysed alongside elitism. Theme 4 **(5.4)** looks at mental health and well-being within drama school training and the performing arts industry and in section **(5.5)** disability is also presented. The chapter concludes with section **5.6** which summarises the findings and data collected.

The following subheadings are the **five** key themes to emerge from the coding process of the data, they were, **systemic racism**; **finances**; **the influence of class**; **mental health and well-being** and **disability**. Sub themes are presented within each relevant section.

5.1 Systemic Racism

Systemic racism is the first selective code which emerged from the open and axial coding process. Racial discrimination was the first open code within this study as it first presented itself during the collection of the survey data. Racial discrimination is used in this thesis as an umbrella term to describe feelings of inadequacy and non-inclusive practise due to the colour of one's skin, being treated unfairly and excluded from the audition process. There were 20[94] open codes assigned to the blanket term of racial discrimination. For this superset to apply, 87% of participants cited at least four of these categories.

Three participants who identified as BIPOC on the survey captured the essence of what respondents shared when asked if they faced any challenges whilst training at drama school. One pointed out how 'There were no BAME[95] people on the course then. I was the only one and I wasn't really paid attention to. It was as though the teachers didn't know what to do with me'. (**Participant 37**)

Another participant mentioned that she was part of a minority ethnic group and female, however despite feeling included in her first year, in the latter part of '*year 2 and 3, I felt a bit isolated. I can only say that was down to my race and gender and I didn't fit the lead roles'* (**Participant 34**)

Other respondents shared further detail on their struggle during training due to the colour of their skin with one participant stating how they felt that:

> *because of the colour of my skin, I was treated differently by some teachers. I would always land an ensemble role and be with a group of white lads painted as black slaves.* (**Participant 17**)

[94] non-inclusive practise, colour of my skin, feeling inadequate, treated unfairly, treated differently, excluded from the audition process, racial profiling, racial discrimination, bigotry, prejudice, race, racism, black, BAME, N*****, narrow-minded, biased, xenophobic, 'a mouth full of chocolate' and 'painted black'.

[95] BAME and BIPOC are terms which have been used repeatedly and interchangeably throughout this study as they both represent black people, people of colour and minority ethnic communities.

It is important to note that **participant 37** trained in the early noughties, whilst **respondent 34** and **17** trained between the years of 2010 – 2020. Their responses highlight the change in drama school training over the course of 10-15 years but also demonstrate the 'field' in which they had to navigate, not only regarding their habitus but that of their peers and lecturers. As discussed in chapter 3, Bourdieu's use of *Le Champ* the 'battlefield' as opposed to just 'field', is applied here as these responses from the survey call attention to the environment in which they were studying, and they imply that the conditions of the 'field' are aggressive, fierce and competitive.

Upon analysis of the interview data, although racial discrimination was the umbrella term, due to the responses given from all three groups of interview participants and the open and axial codes found upon analysis, it soon became apparent that systemic racism was the motivating selective code for this theme.

During the interview process for both group **A** and **C**, over 20 vignettes were associated with this theme which elevated this code to a category and axial code. Vignettes on racial discrimination were compiled within group B's responses, however, it was not the primary open code to come out of their data set; finances and class discrimination were most prevalent. This is discussed later in sections **5.4** and **5.5**.

Upon analysis of the interview data for groups A and C, it transpired that racism was not only an issue within drama school training but also within the wider performing arts industry. In an interview with a leading industry casting director, they were asked question **5** from the drama school interview questions which was **'*acting has changed because Britain has changed' – inequality, privilege and class is at the heart of it. How far do you agree with this statement and why?'***. They said:

> *The UK industry is dictated to by the US market. If they want films like Downton Abbey, or Harry Potter, then that's what we have to cater for. I might see two hundred black actors but unfortunately, we can't use them. Since Bridgerton came out on Netflix we have some movement on who we cast because it is not historically accurate. However, there is public backlash from it as you just didn't see black people in positions of social*

power in that era. At the end of the day, it is all about money and as casting directors, irrespective of what we may want to see on TV and in Film, we have to go with where the money is.

This question was asked not only to remain consistent with grounded theory methodology and to triangulate data by generating further axial and selective codes, but to also uncover thematic similarities and differences between **Group A** and **C**. Upon answering this question, **DS5** (drama school principal 5) said:

Black students are just not in great need. It is middle to upper class white males we need to be pushing through the doors. It is shocking to say it, and it is not from my mouth but our principal, who believes black people are brought on to the courses to just tick boxes – a token gesture – so he says.

When **DS8** was asked the same question, they replied:

I think the answer to this is complex and hard to simplify. However, when the BBC or any other production company stop producing Downton Abbey, and stuff set in the Edwardian era amongst fighter pilots, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, which require young men of a middle-upper-class ilk and social class, and the public stop devouring it, then we won't need actors like that anymore, or not so much. Part of the reason they make these, the kind of Merchant Ivory style, middle-class, wasn't it wonderful when the servants and masters knew who was who, and which was which. Part of the reason they do that is because the American market loves it…they want to buy it, and money talks. So, those are the type of actors that you need, and the young men and women who have been to private schools will get snapped up, whether they've been to drama school or not.

It is observed from these responses that not only does racism stem from the wider industry, but that inclusion was a selective code across interview responses, especially within **groups A** and **C**. One participant from **group C**, who shall be named **Actor 1,** trained in the 1990's and was the first black actor on his course at drama school, he said:

It has taken 50 years for drama schools to enrol people of colour. 50. There was no inclusivity back in 1977. No groups were equally represented. Drama school is and has always been a rich boy's game...What would be interesting is to see how many black people make it on to the courses, complete their training and even make it into the industry…There is no way I could have been as successful as I am if I had trained in this day and age. Just no chance. I was a poor boy from a town in the middle of rural nowhere. It is shocking to see how the industry is run. I do what I can to support some students through their training, but it will never be enough.

Prior to starting this research, systemic racism was alluded to in various interviews with the press. Both the Acting Up Report (2017) and the national The *Panic! It's an arts emergency* survey[96] which took place in 2015, compiled by Goldsmiths University and published by The Guardian, highlighted themes which included diversity and inclusion, classist and elitist attitudes as well as racial discrimination. Up until 2015 there had been no previous '*comprehensive and detailed'* research on diversity in the cultural and creative sector (The Panic! Survey, 2015). The survey stated:

The findings provide hard evidence for the common impression that the arts sector is a closed shop where most people are middle class and it also made revealing discoveries about how gender and ethnicity can affect a career in the arts. (The Panic Survey, 2015)

This statement confirms what Friedman (2017), Gardner (2019) and The Acting Up Report (2017) have said with regard to the arts only being accessible to those from a white, middle-class background. It is worth noting here that of the **8** survey respondents who disclosed their ethnicity as BIPOC, **88%** stated they were working-class, with **1** participant identifying as being middle-class. Six of the 8 BIPOC respondents and the three Asian participants, felt that either they were racially

[96] https://createlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Panic-Social-Class-Taste-and-Inequalities-in-the-Creative-Industries1.pdf

discriminated against, others on their course were or that their teachers and institution was systemically racist. One respondent who studied at RADA in 2012 said '*there was one black man in my class, and he wasn't given the lickings of a dog'* another BIPOC participant stated, '*back then and still today actors of colour are immensely underrepresented*' (**respondent 7**).

Transparency data[97] were analysed from the 22 FDS drama schools mentioned in this study (see chapter one) to triangulate how many white, BIPOC and minority ethnic students applied, were offered a place and accepted onto the course of their choice. The theme of racism that emerged from the 10 drama school interviews was cross examined with the transparency data to ensure further triangulation. Upon analysis, there is no transparency data available for any of the 10 drama schools regarding ethnicity or socio-economic background of the students who applied, offered a place or accepted their place on a course post 2019. The current 2022 data which is available has been suppressed[98] and it only demonstrates the degree awarded and no information regarding applications: however, 2019 transparency data, regarding ethnicity, from 9 of the 10 drama schools in this study can be seen in **appendix 5.3.**

This data highlights that although there are significantly less BIPOC applicants than there are white applicants, it was an almost 50/50 split of white to BAME applications that received an offer. Further questions around this data presented themselves regarding if there were more applicants from BAME backgrounds, would it still be a fair split of offers between both white and BAME applicants. The question which arose from the transparency data, which was later added to future interviews was,

Why are there significantly less BIPOC applicants than white applicants?

DS9 was the first respondent to be asked this question and their response was '*It is to do with their culture, their environment and ultimately social class'.* This response connects with what was discussed in chapter three regarding Bourdieu's

[97] As higher education providers registered with the Office for Students, drama schools are required to publish particular information about their student body in the spirit of transparency.

[98] Where the numerator or denominator rounds to 20 or less, the data are suppressed with an "N".
"N/A" is displayed where there is no provision in a given mode or level.
"DP" indicates suppression for data protection reasons. This is applied where the numerator is two or less or differs from the denominator by no more than two students.

belief that habitus begins with the family environment and how many routine behaviours are manifestations of our personal expectations: one's own habitus prohibits one from navigating different cultural fields.

DS7 stated how for BIPOC students '*in most cases, it's a financial thing*' that BIPOC students either do not apply or do not accept their offer of a place, indicating that most BIPOC students who apply come from less privileged backgrounds. **DS10** was asked whether they thought it was a financial decision for BIPOC students to either not apply to drama school or to not take up their place and they commented that there were less applications from the BAME community because:

> *1 of 2 factors. Their culture and their social standing. Their culture doesn't allow for the freedom to explore the arts as much as some would like and if they are working-class, they see acting as something the rich do'.*

DS10 was asked whether they were aware of the socioeconomic background of the BAME students who applied prior to audition stage and despite saying that they are *'not supposed to have raw data'* regarding the socioeconomic status of applicants, they *'need to try and get a more diverse cohort'.* **DS10** went on to say how:

> *I just got an email from the head of college just a couple of days ago, saying there's a data set available which is to do with BIPOC communities in different areas of the country, where there's much lower levels of HE participation and that therefore, if we get an application from that person, we should perhaps give that person the benefit of the doubt. And perhaps put them through to recall, when perhaps we maybe wouldn't have done, in other circumstances.*

After comparing the transparency data and the responses from three drama school interviews and two acting interviews, an axial code was created which was 'less privileged background'. This axial code also formed relationships with not only the theme of racial discrimination, but also finances and class. The data emerging from each interview and the results from the survey highlighted themes which were strongly interconnected and complex.

As further interviews took place, other notable actors came forward to discuss the racism they endured whilst training at drama school, this only reinforced the theme of systemic racism within drama school training. An article, published in June 2022[99], spoke of Guildhall school and how one of the acting teachers there racially abused Paapa Essiedu (the Royal Shakespeare Company's first black Hamlet) and Michaela Coel (*I may destroy you* and *Chewing Gum*). The teacher referred to them using the N-word and spoke derogatorily about their enunciation and how it was as though their mouths were '*full of chocolate cake*' (The Guardian, 2022). Guildhall responded by issuing a public apology and said:

> *We have undertaken a significant redevelopment of our acting curriculum, including a departmental staff restructure, so that our teaching and learning culture prioritises inclusivity, representation and well-being. We understand that this work is long-term and will require sustained commitment to build a culture that is inclusive and equitable for everyone* (Guildhall, 2022)

Shanique Okwok discussed the racial abuse she suffered whilst training at RCSSD in an interview with The Guardian (2023). Okwok claimed she was told to embrace her "inherited trauma" and was instructed by her teacher to accept the idea that she was a "slave in chains" because of the way she was walking and how close her hands were to her body. Okwok further went on to say that despite the complaints against RCSSD after the rise of BLM, their efforts to 'decolonise' the curriculum and rid itself of systemic racial prejudice were "performative"[100]. A study which looked at the representation of the BIPOC community titled *Panic! 2018 - Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries* by Orian Brook, David O'Brien, and Mark Taylor (2018) found that the arts were not diverse in terms of ethnicity. Various sectors have particularly low numbers of BIPOC workers: museums, galleries and libraries have **2.7%**; Film, TV, video, radio and photography, **4.2%**; and Music, performing and visual arts **4.8%**. The data from the *Panic! 2018* report along with the qualitative data in this study has found that systemic racism, especially within drama

[99] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/10/top-drama-school-apologises-paapa-essiedu-michaela-coel-appalling-racism-guildhall

[100] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/23/shaniqua-okwok-london-drama-school-told-her-act-like-slave-in-chains

school training is a leading barrier to access for the BIPOC community which in turn means BIPOC are largely underrepresented in the industry. Respondents of the survey, both white and BIPOC mentioned the lack of representation of BIPOC students on their courses and how their treatment was different from their white counterparts '*there was only one black lady on the course and both her and myself were treated differently to the others*' (**respondent 2**).

It is worth noting here that during the group B interviews, 93% of these students were white and 7% BIPOC. The students involved were from two large colleges in the North East who had been on the Acting and Musical Theatre courses when this research was taking place, and there was only 1 BIPOC student during the time of this research (5 years): racism was raised as being an issue during their audition period and during their drama school training and other barriers to access were also presented such as, finances and class.

One student who took part in the survey and interviews was in their second year of training at **DS3** in 2019 and said:

> *For my school, equality and pushing diversity into the industry is a massive message. My school holds workshops and works closely with the community around Peckham which is heavily diverted and works with them…*

He stated he was a working-class white boy from the North East and was proud to announce how diverse his school was and how hard they push to try to end racism in their drama school training. He went on to say:

> *…my year is very diverse. With people all over the country and world. Which is probably one of the most diverse year to some of the other first years I know from different drama schools!*

This response triangulates with the transparency data in **Appendix 5.3** which highlights three drama schools that push for higher representation of BIPOC students. These schools are **DS1, DS3** and **DS4**. Upon interview, these three schools were the only schools to be asked why they push for higher recruitment of BIPOC students than any other drama school in the country. **DS1** replied with '*we*

need to push for diversity and inclusion more so than other schools. Other schools get up to 200/300 BAME students apply, we don't.' **DS3** said they wanted *'to actively promote diversity and inclusion by representing our communities through the cohorts and staff we have at our school'*. **DS4** was asked the same question and replied:

> *Our country is made up of 82% white people and 18% BAME people. It isn't fair if we recruit 10% white students and 10% BAME students, especially when we only receive 200 or so applications from the BAME community and over 2000 from white applicants. It should be representative of the country's cultural make-up. Really though, every school should be working hard to do outreach programmes to help those from more socially deprived areas of the country. This does, undoubtedly, present other barriers to performing arts training though, such as whether those from quintiles 1 and 2 – where most BAME students apply from – can actually afford the training on offer. That is another conversation to be had.'*

The collective similarities between these three drama schools and their push to represent the BIPOC community more within their schools was evident in the transparency data and interview data collected from students, actors and the principals themselves. After further research, **DS3** and **DS4** were two of the few schools, who during the **Black Lives Matter**[101] campaign of 2020 received no backlash from students with regard to racist attitudes and views. Although other interviews with drama school principals highlighted that racism was not tolerated in their institution, during an interview with **DS7**, the principal was asked the question: **As an institution, how is racial discrimination dealt with?** and they responded:

> *[…] We have been around for over 50 years, so I am sure you can understand that changing thought processes and views is a challenge in itself. Being inclusive is important but we cater for an industry which is currently dominated by period dramas. We are not going to start casting BAME professionals in period dramas when it would not give a proper*

[101] Black Lives Matter (BLM) is an international activist movement, originating in the African - American community, that campaigns against violence and systemic racism toward black people.

reflection of society at that time. The only black actors which would be successful in these dramas are ones who are cast as the help or slaves. It is difficult because we have quotas to fill by our governing university body to be more diverse but at the same time, we must provide what is demanded by the industry. That said, we offer places to black students and the majority are unable to take up their place due to finances or their families frown upon them studying to be "an actor". It isn't seen as a proper education to people of colour, so I suppose it has something to do with their upbringing and social circles. Racial discrimination is a problem within our society, and it works both ways – up and down the class structures.

This statement highlights bias and prejudiced views against BIPOC students, whether consciously done or not, and it also highlights the important matter surrounding social mobility and Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus, as discussed in chapter 3. **DS1's** response to the institutional racism at their school demonstrates the impact of their habitus and how their own internal structures, and paradigms of perceptions shape their view of the world and their comprehension of the world in which they exist. This individual's response to racial discrimination calls attention to specific values and attitudes demonstrative of middle-class society. The disclosure that racial discrimination is part of DS1's institution despite offering *'places to black students …the majority are unable to take up their place',* highlights the dismissive attempt to try to improve inclusion. This is followed by the principal mentioning how acting *'isn't seen as a proper education to people of colour, so I suppose it has something to do with their upbringing and social circles'*. By further saying how discrimination takes place up and down the class system, the blame is being placed elsewhere, almost giving justification as to why DS1 has not done more to tackle the problem of racial discrimination within its institution. This is further discussed in more detail under the sub heading of 'Class'.

Various schools within the Federation of Drama Schools did not take part in the interviews and either did not respond to the interview request or they stated how they did not wish to be a part of the study, with no reason given. It could be perceived that they did not want to be a part of this study as it forced them to reflect on their own organisational and pedagogical structures and practices. It is worth noting that **65%** of these schools were later forced to address the issue of racism

within their own institutions[102]. The catalyst for admitting accountability was due to the responses they received to the statements they released during the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020[103]. Many drama schools posted images and words of support on their social media pages such as **#solidarity #blacklivesmatter** and **#systemicracism**; most of these institutions received extensive backlash from alumni and present students for their hypocrisy and their own inherent racism. Establishments such as LAMDA, CSSD, RCS, RWCMD, East 15, Guildhall and RADA were the top schools within the federation to be mostly criticised. It is worth noting here that the aim[104] of the FDS is:

> *To engage in activities, projects and discussions collectively and individually that enable diverse groups of people to receive excellent training for the contemporary profession in all its aspects.*

and:

> *To work with other schools with shared vision, values and approaches in the training to share current best practice and identify opportunities for change and enhancement in the future* (Federationofdramaschools.co.uk)

It raised the question, considering systemic racism was the main theme to emerge from the data in this study and evident within 65% of the drama schools in the FDS, whether there were any repercussions or stipulations post BLM that the schools had to adhere to with regard to maintaining their partnership moving forward. This is a recommendation for further study as currently there is no data available to properly answer this question.

In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, on the 2nd June 2020, RADA posted the following:

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[102] https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/drama-school-racism-students-call-out-top-schools-and-reveal-stories-of-abuse

[103] On May 25 2020, 46-year old George Floyd died after being restrained by police in Minneapolis, his death sparked a global protest movement

[104] https://www.federationofdramaschools.co.uk/about-us

Black Lives Matter

A message to all our students, staff, graduates, supporters and friends. We offer our support to all black students, colleagues and friends of RADA, to the wider community of theatre-makers, creators and technicians of colour, and to everyone fighting against racial injustice, oppression and radicalised violence in the USA, the UK and throughout the world. RADA has a commitment to nurturing and supporting the voices of black artists. We know there is still a lot for us to do at RADA in this regard. We are hugely indebted to the advice and support our black colleagues have given us in our development as an Academy. We hope that now, though we cannot come together in person, they will welcome our solidarity with them.

To which they were openly called out for the pain that they, as an institution, inflicted on their black students during their training. Some of the comments in response to RADA's social media post read "*Hilarious"* and "*Who do I speak to get monetary restitution for the racism that I suffered being at RADA?"* with more lengthy responses including:

Really? Because my semester abroad at RADA was an absolute nightmare. Racist white teachers and administrators who admitted that they didn't like me because of the colour of my skin. Nothing "nurturing" or "supportive" about that. **Kimrie Lewis, who plays *Poppy Banks* on the ABC comedy *Single Parents***

And:

I'm sorry, your company has killed the dreams of many black children whose only escape out of the systematic racism they've grown up in is acting. Just in case you are not aware, the boy's and girl's dreams of acting you have ruined, many have turned to drugs and street life, most of the black boys who your company turned away simply because of the way they speak […] So frankly, this post is an insult to black lives. Black dreams, black ambitions and inspirations. This post is completely disrespectful.

The Black Lives Matter movement was seen as an opportunity by drama schools to show their solidarity, but it is evident that this backfired and furthermore, they were not ready for the responses they received. **RADA** admitted accountability and replied:

> *We are aware that RADA has been and currently is institutionally racist. We are profoundly sorry for the role we have played in the traumatic and oppressive experiences of our current and past black students, graduates and staff […] RADA needs radical change and must work together as a community to achieve it. We are committed to working with students, staff, graduates and the industry to create an anti-racist culture and institution.*
> **June 2nd, 2020**

One of the notable actors who took part in group C's interviews, known as **Actor 2** in this study, trained at RADA and he claimed that as a black actor studying at RADA in the early noughties, he '*had an A Typical journey and he had a very easy time'*. Although he was one of very few black actors at RADA at the time. **Actor 2** said '*when I was there [RADA], there was one [BIPOC] in the year above me and another in the year above that'* they went on to say:

> *To be honest, I had very little expectations, back then there was only ever one black person in a class, I mean five years after I left there were four or five in a class at RADA, I was like oh shit, you know […] I was a little brown boy not expecting to get in, so I had very little expectation.*

Despite not having really '*heard of RADA before'* Actor 2 knew he wanted to go to drama school and only auditioned at RADA and RCSSD, due to affordability. This response was coded during selective coding as 'affordability' which became part of the finances theme, discussed in section **5.4**.

Actor 2 was asked **What challenges did you face whilst training at RADA?** he responded with how his challenges were more internal ones, he went on to say how one of his challenges was '*of maintaining a work ethic in the face of low odds statistically. I guess what I would say is that I was on free school meals, from a single parent household, I'm also from an ethnic minority'.* This response highlights

how his perception of his own habitus was influenced by his surroundings and what his family had by way of economic, social and cultural capital; however, his work ethic is what pushed him to change his circumstances.

Actor 2 continued by discussing the lack of representation within the wider industry when he graduated:

> *When I first graduated it was somewhat challenging. When I first graduated in 2001, there was not one black actor that was known in America. Not one black British actor, not one. That is a weird set of circumstances to come out of drama school and be like there is no one on the worlds stage who is anything remotely like me.*

This response highlights the improvement in diversity and inclusion within the industry, in contrast to his previous statement regarding *there only ever being one black person in a class* at RADA even in the late nineties and early noughties. This is still the case now in 2023. During the interview with **actor 2**, he was very careful not to mention racism and when he mentioned the lack of representation of black actors back in 2001, he quickly proceeded to state how he '*should say upfront*' how his journey at RADA was '*A-Typical'* and went on to say that he '*came out [of RADA] with more money than when [he] went in*' and '*it didn't cost [him] any money because [he] was given grants, people gave [him] free money*'. **Actor 2** sponsors one student a year to attend RADA and is often there as a guest speaker, so it could be understood that he did not want to admit that racism was a problem at the school, or it is possible he was lucky enough to not experience it. That said, by being the only BIPOC actor in his year, and from his responses in the interview, it can be deduced that despite not directly discussing racism as a problem at RADA, he was aware of it and that it existed at the school at that time. His responses also demonstrated a shift in his habitus and field from when he was a child to present day. It could be said that despite actor 2's habitus characterising his personality and how it set specific expectations and ideals when he was a child, he was able to challenge his own habitus and perception of what he was capable of by navigating different fields and acquiring more capital through accumulation of fame.

Another institution that admitted accountability for institutional racism is CSSD. On the 3rd June 2020 they released a statement saying:

> *We are deeply sorry. Central has been complicit in systemic racism. We recognise that we still have a long way to go and a lot of work to do. We understand that our community of students, staff and alumni need us to continue to listen to and learn from their experiences, and to make changes to support them. We will – and must- do better.*

Prior to this statement being released, a student in group B, referred to as **S1**, was interviewed about his audition process at the schools he chose to apply for and described the process as '*disgustingly snobby'* due to how he was treated. **S1** went on to say, '*the room was a mix of white and BAME students and they were treated as though they shouldn't even of [sic] been there'*. **S1** further discussed that the teachers who were auditioning them '*didn't have any time for the BAME students or us working-class lot*'. **S3** who also auditioned at CSSD is the only BIPOC student within group B and they said:

> *I arrived, and I wasn't even acknowledged. No name tag like the others and then my speech got cut off after two lines and I was told to sit down. Nothing else was said. It was really upsetting. All of the white candidates were auditioned properly but those of us who were black or mixed race were totally dismissed.*

CSSD was not alone with accusations of systemic racism: LAMDA came under scrutiny too. Sarah Frankcom, LAMDAs [then] newly appointed director, went on to release a statement[105] also on June 3rd, 2020, which admitted to offering '*no defence'* for the racism students had endured in the past and how *'[our] silence in both past and present makes us complicit'.* Frankcom proceeded to say:

> *[…] we need to create change and a plan of action for our school in order to address bias and racism - to see it, name it and accept responsibility for it and dismantle it. This will require honest and difficult examination and I hope*

[105] https://www.lamda.ac.uk/life-lamda/news/sarah-frankcom-statement

the whole school, teachers, students and support staff, will want to be a part of it. **June 3rd, 2020**

Unfortunately, since Frankcom's appointment and in the wake of BLM and Covid-19, her '*radical solutions'* (The Stage, 2020) to improving diversity, decolonising the curriculum, and eradicating the systemic racism at LAMDA, have proven difficult to implement. In Frankcom's address, she clearly states the intention to dismantle the racism in the school and how examining teachers and practices will be the best way forward (LAMDA, 2020). It was not long after this that staff redundancies took place and a restructure happened, both to cut costs due to the pandemic but also to initiate change toward breaking down barriers to access and success within drama school training.

Of learning of Frankcom's appointment as LAMDAs new director various trustees, notable actors and playwrights openly stated their joy and relief of having Frankcom in such a powerful position[106]. Simon Stephens, a well-known playwright said in a press interview for The Guardian in 2019:

The appointment of Sarah Frankcom to lead the acting school at LAMDA has the potential to be one of the most significant appointments in actor training and in the broader theatre ecology of recent years. I am as fascinated by what Sarah will achieve at LAMDA as I am thrilled by this visionary appointment.

Benedict Cumberbatch, LAMDA president and alumni, was also among those to voice his excitement in a press article in The Guardian (2019):

This is going to be a very exciting next chapter for LAMDA and hugely exciting for the incredibly talented students who will now have the chance to train under Sarah's leadership. I am thrilled at the prospect of working with Sarah, who I know has a passion for finding the best talent from whatever background and increasing diversity on stage and screen. Sarah has an

[106] https://www.lamda.ac.uk/life-lamda/news/sarah-frankcom-new-director-lamda

incredibly strong reputation, and I am sure her leadership at LAMDA will be a performance to truly grip the industry.

It, therefore, came as a surprise that Frankcom had stepped down as LAMDA director, especially considering what she wanted to achieve, her vision for the future and the drive to bring the school into the 21st Century. It is worth noting here that the board of trustees at LAMDA released a statement saying:

[we] wanted to put on record [our] appreciation and recognition of Sarah's hard work during an unprecedented time for Lamda as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic […] Frankcom has helped change and reorganise the school addressing diversity at Lamda as a training organisation and successfully moved the exams business online – **(The Guardian, 2021)**

An article in The Guardian (2021) about Frankcom's departure from LAMDA after just two short years mentioned Frankcom's conduct and management style and how they were "*called into question due to complaints from a small number of past and present colleagues*". In response to this, the board of trustees opened an investigation into the complaints, of which Frankcom stated she '*welcomes the investigation and respects the confidentiality of the process*' (2021). It could be determined, therefore, that the racism present within the school is still present in the staff who work there. It is possible that the radical change of organisational and pedagogical structures did not sit well with past and present employees, which implies just how difficult it can be to implement such change in an inherently racist institution. It could be said here that the fields in which Frankcom was trying to navigate, not only with her own habitus but those of others, demonstrate how culture and education are hugely important in the affirmation of differences between groups and social classes and in the reproduction of those differences (Bourdieu, 1984).

In an interview with **Actor 6**, who studied at LAMDA in the 1970's, he mentioned the '*lack of diversity and obvious racism'* in the school at the time. In response to the question **What challenges did you face whilst training at LAMDA?** he said:

None, personally. I am a white, upper class male who was 'on an adventure' prior to embarking on a law degree in America. I can say the only challenge for me was seeing a black classmate being treated less than fairly. He struggled greatly. Not just because of his skin colour but also because he was working class and he also worked in a kitchen cleaning pots and pans. He was treated with contempt by all those who taught him. It was disgraceful and shameful.

This response highlights how racism reaches back at least 50 years within some drama schools and if it has not been addressed until 2020, it would therefore be a much greater inherent problem within the ethos of drama school training.

RCS, RWCMD, Guildhall and East 15 also came under fire from alumni and students after the release of their BLM statements on social media, receiving responses such as '*Disgusting – treat your black students with respect and fire your racist staff*', *'I assume this means you won't be hiring a certain sight-reading teacher anymore?'* with lengthier Twitter responses like:

If this is the case then why is it that out of 60+ students across 4 years of undergrad and post grad, only one is black?

Do not even try it!! You must be joking?!! The amount of microaggression and racism in this school. When I attended, not one of the teachers, directors were of colour. No plays with POC writers […] you even corrected an afro Caribbean student on their pronunciation of the word 'bwoi' and told it was 'bwah'. Fix your institution from the inside out and support and listen to your black students. Employ black people, learn, research and perform black material.

And:

As an alumni [sic] I would love to know the specific commitments [RCS] is committing to in order to support black students and POC […] After last Octobers panel, it was clear that the black and POC students still felt incredibly unheard […] It would be great to see that there is a public commitment to giving staff and students the anti-racism materials they need

to better navigate racism and micro aggression. To see black / poc staff within the structuring of faculty.

Having a more diverse staff base would help towards combatting systemic racism and Frankcom had the right idea when she said change must come from within and be tackled at staff level. In an interview with **DS2**, barriers to access and success at the audition stage were discussed. In response to the question, **do any barriers to access exist at the audition stage?** he stated: *'I'm not bothered about coloureds, tattoos, piercings or make-up. If they gain a place these will be addressed during training'.* It is understandable addressing piercings and make-up, but it was unsettling when this principal addressed BIPOC in this manner. This person's flippancy regarding categorisation of BIPOC applicants with tattoos, piercings and make-up demonstrated unconscious bias and elitist views. If this is the thinking of the head of an institution, then it could be ascertained that racism is inherent within that institution through the staff. As can be seen from the multiple statements released from so many drama schools.

Actor 5 in **Group C** who is BIPOC, trained at **DS2,** and said how this institution '*normalised racism*' and how even his peers would '*join in with the 'banter' about BIPOC, gay and disabled students'.* He was told he would not make a career as an actor which ultimately '*destroyed his confidence'* so he decided to study a masters and become a director instead. **Actor 5** has demonstrated in these statements his difficulty in navigating other peoples' habitus and the meeting of theirs with his own in different fields he is not accustomed to. **DS2** used their capital and habitus within the field of the drama school to assert their authority and power, which in turn, resulted in actor 5's social discomfort, and difficulty during their training (Bourdieu, 1986)

Actor 5 believes he now has the upper hand because he attends third year final shows at multiple drama schools and the school, he studied at is one of them. Upon his return a few years ago, he said the staff were *'overjoyed'* to see him and how the principal even put his name and photo up in the school corridor. This experience is the same as a well-known West End star, **actor 7** in this study, who although not subjected to racial discrimination, was told she had no talent and would not progress in her career. Now she is cast in lead roles and the same happened to

her, the drama school which *'left [her] to her own devices with no support because of her social class'* has her photo up as a successful alumnus in their corridors.

According to ITV news[107] in September 2020, ALRA – also a member of the FDS- was accused of *'normalising racism'.* British-Gambian actor Lamin Touray, who studied at ALRA North, endured comments such as *'white people are the reason black people are not slaves'* and that *'black men should cross the road late at night for a white woman because our race is associated with crime'.* Another student Chay February, who also studied at ALRA but a different campus, encountered an incident with a teacher who handed him a brown stick and said, *'a brown stick for a brown boy'.* He is another young BIPOC actor who says the experience *'broke him'* and '*They'd be days when I'd come home, and I'd cry*'. What can be determined from the data so far is that not only is systemic racism a real problem within drama schools in the UK, but it seems to go hand in hand with privilege and power. Staff have the power to crush or build a person's confidence, dreams and aspirations and some – not all- non BIPOC students have the privilege to not be on the receiving end of the racist comments. The habitus of each individual drama school interview and the cultural capital they have acquired is apparent through the responses highlighted above. The responses from drama schools have highlighted social inequality and an individual's opportunity of access, choice and career chances within drama school training. The drama school principals seem to bestow unequal amounts of socio-cultural advantage on certain people (white and the affluent), but at the same time they try to conceal this privilege by pushing for more diverse cohorts even though recruitment of BIPOC students is mainly a 'tick box' exercise.

Further change has taken place with new director appointments such as Orla O'Loughlin at Guildhall and Julie Spencer at Arts Ed in a bid to tackle the issue of racism and to bring about change in their respective institutions. Edward Kemp, RADA's principal of 14 years, has also decided to step down and has released a statement[108] where he states that "*now is the right moment to pass to someone else the privilege of guiding the future of this remarkable institution*" but no mention of an apology or response to the racism at RADA

[107] https://www.itv.com/news/london/2020-09-10/it-was-normalised-drama-school-accused-of-systemic-racism

[108] https://www.rada.ac.uk/about-us/news-and-press/edward-kemp-step-down-director-rada/

under his guidance. Royal Central's principal Gavin Henderson has also stepped down but issued an apology where he said:

> *I apologise unreservedly for the lived experiences of students of colour during my time as principal of Central. Our systems failed and I must take ultimate responsibility for that.*
>
> *The comments I made at the Dear White Central[109] event in 2018 have undermined the credibility of Central and the action plan made after that event and caused lasting pain and damage to the community. I accept that they were racist, and this I will regret forever. I do not expect forgiveness or understanding but I apologise from the bottom of my heart.*

Findings from the survey respondents when asked, **Have you faced or do you face any challenges whilst being at drama school?** discussed how they felt *'discriminated against by their teachers and principal because of their race'.* Comments such as the one Henderson made at the Dear White Central event in 2018, and the one against a student who was told not to grow a beard by his acting tutor because *'it would make him look like a terrorist'.* He went on to say how a white colleague of his stood up to the teacher, and the teacher said, *'Freedom of speech dear boy'* and carried on the class as if nothing had happened. It is worth noting that to be a teacher at a drama school you must have extensive training and experience within the industry, or you will simply not be employed. Therefore, the habitus and cultural capital teachers have at these institutions are being employed to use their power negatively and have authority over the students. Furthermore, due to the majority of applicants being middle and upper-class, the students and teachers are navigating fields and forms of cultural capital that they are accustomed to, and those with a working-class habitus are likely to feel out of their comfort zone (Bourdieu, 1990). Perhaps, therefore, drama schools feel that they can 'get away with' being

[109] Dear White Central was an invitation to an open discussion about the issues of equality and racism at CSSD. It examined what had changed in the year 2018/19 and how the students could productively continue to challenge CSSD for more change. There were anonymous testimonies from students of colour and discussions were held regarding specific issues students face with regard to their training and curriculum in order to begin to consider possible solutions.

complicit in this racism as it is their habitus which they have known since being a child. The incongruence between fields highlight how inherent racism is within drama school training and the need for further work to be done on breaking down this barrier to access for applicants from BIPOC communities.

5.2 Finances

The second theme to emerge from the data collection is that of finances. Fifteen open codes[110] were generated upon analysis of both the survey and interview data which elevated codes to categories and axial coding; furthermore, three categories were created and as such, they are discussed under their own subheading within this theme. Section **5.4.1** is *the cost of auditioning* and **5.4.2** is *the cost of training and section* **5.4.3** is *Post training Opportunities*. More than 40 vignettes were assigned to the axial code of '*unable to fund drama school training or auditions'* which became the umbrella term in this study to capture participants' views on audition costs, tuition fees at drama schools and any other perceptions on financial barriers to drama school training. Further analysis across axial coding meant that 'Finances' was the motivating selective code for this theme.

5.2.1 The cost of auditioning

Question 8[111] of the survey presented the first open codes for this theme. **Respondent 55** commented by saying the reason they only applied to four drama schools was because they '*couldn't afford to pay more in audition fees*' whilst **participant 52** '*wanted to apply to more than 4 but it was too costly. Especially with travel and accommodation'.* **Respondent 49** also commented with how they wanted to apply for more drama schools so as to increase their chances of gaining a place, but they *'also couldn't afford more. It cost just over £1200 for those four. I had to travel from Lancashire, so the cost of train fare and hotels was expensive'*. **Respondent 20** discussed how *'several schools told us the odds of us getting in before we auditioned, but after paying the audition fee'* and they went on to add how *'one school sent me into an interview about how I would pay fees before I was allowed to take part in the audition!'*

[110] Too expensive, unaffordable, funding, wealthy, sponsorship, cost, pay for, save up for, means to pay, financing, not able to afford, cash, need a part-time job, Dada, part student loan and family money.
[111] How many schools did you apply and audition for? Why?

There were respondents which highlighted a different attitude to the cost of auditioning with **respondent 2** saying they applied to *'2 and they were the elite'* and **participant 53** with '*Just the two. I wasn't too bothered about getting in and just wanted to try it out really'.* **Respondents 57** and **3** had similar responses with '*I applied for 1. I wasn't sure if I wanted to go to drama school and was pushed to audition for this one'* and '*Only 1. I had no need to apply elsewhere, I wasn't too bothered with getting in. I only auditioned as my parents told me to give it a go'.* There were many similarities amongst the responses saying that auditioning for more than 4 *'would have been too expensive'* and '*it was too costly. Especially with travel and accommodation on top'* but differences also emerged from the survey responses as shown with **respondents 57** and **3.** Each response highlights what both families have by way of economic, social and cultural capital because of their investments in time, effort and money towards having their child audition for drama school. In turn, the respondent is increasing their own cultural capital by auditioning and potentially training at drama school. Upon further analysis of the survey data, both **respondent 57** and **3** commented on their social class in question 17 as being from the middle and upper classes.

There was contention throughout the interview data, between group **A** and **C**, upon analysis, but the similar perspectives throughout group **C** remained consistent. **Actor 1** discussed how the cost of audition fees were *'prohibitive to those applying from working-class backgrounds',* **actor 4** said how '*applicants from poorer backgrounds were priced out at the first hurdle because of how expensive auditions, travel and accommodation were'* and **actor 8** replied:

> *There are many obstacles to pursuing higher education when you come from a low-income family in 2018, but the prohibitive fees imposed on budding drama students, for the privilege of auditioning for a place, seem uniquely skewed towards those who can afford it.*

Group C were all of the mindset that audition fees were priced too high and reinforced financial barriers to access and success within the performing arts for those from working-class backgrounds. **Actor 6** applied for drama school for three years in a row but was unsuccessful and he believed that because '*people don't pay for job interviews or university interviews'* then *'why are drama schools making us*

pay between £30- £80 just for an audition where you're not even guaranteed a place?' **Actor 6** went on to say that '*either those fees need to be scrapped or it should be one price across the board and refunded for unsuccessful applicants'.*

It is true that audition fees are expensive for those from working-class backgrounds, along with the cost of travel and accommodation for those outside of London (**see chapter 1);** however, **DS3** explained what the cost of auditions pays for, he stated:

> *it's actually quite an expensive business, because most drama schools are quite small organisations. So, we have a school of 400 students and about 40 full time staff, but that includes administration, registration, programme management, communication, marketing, design, so, that's over and above teaching. So, albeit those numbers sound quite big, compared to a university, they're tiny, tiny, tiny numbers. So, we're like a little cottage industry really.*

DS3 continues by breaking down the audition fee, which is a one-off fee of £45 and they hold a first round followed by two recalls. **DS3** explains how the £45 fee for the audition process is spent:

> *The monies that come in effectively underpin the registry department and the work of the registry department, who are the people that process all the applications, allocate them to time, to slots and to days and each and every single person will need to have an audition. Now, we are very proud here that we also feel that we give tremendous value for money. You come along at nine o'clock, you'll be with us through to about two, three, four o'clock in the afternoon. So, it's a fairly full day experience. Your speeches will be seen, your song will be heard, and you will have done a dance workshop and you will have had a Q&A during that time. So, during that day we would have had to have paid two repertoire pianists, and six members of staff, two for each room, so, there's eight people employed just by way of the actual audition panels on a given day. So, probably 12 to 14 people are involved in regard to the processing of that day. And then the administration etcetera. I think that for each individual, it's really important for us, that we give good*

value for money, because I think if you went to the Drama Centre, for a day of class, it would cost you a little more than that.

DS4 also discusses what the audition fee is spent on and states:

The reason that we charge a fee at all is very simple, is that the sheer volumes of numbers are completely unmanageable unless you recruit extra staff to help with auditions. And the audition fee offsets the cost of the staff that we recruit in order to make the selection.

The analysis of this data demonstrated a gap in communication between drama schools and applicants. Before now, there has been no data to explain why audition fees were charged in the first place or why they were so expensive.

In the wake of the Acting up Report (2017), Tom Watson, the shadow culture secretary, wrote to leading drama schools, asking them to consider abolishing the fees altogether. Watson proceeded to say how:

The audition process is as vital to drama schools as it is to prospective students and it is not clear why the cost of the process should be passed on to the students.

ALRA responded[112] to Watson and explained clearly why there was a need to charge audition fees saying how '*unlike universities, drama school auditions are hugely over-subscribed and are costly to run',* confirming the responses from **DS3** and **DS4**. A recommendation from The Acting Up report (2017) was suggested by reforming the application process and it stated how the '*application and audition fees can be prohibitive and are not justifiable'* and to counter that they thought *'a centralised UCAS based process should be introduced for degree awarding institutions with a flat application fee'.*

In the interview with **DS2**, the recommendation by The Acting Up report (2017) was discussed. **DS2** disputed the recommendation and talked about the

[112] https://alra.co.uk/news-events/news/audition-fees-for-drama-school

income revenue streams of their school. They stated that they could not hire many staff with them being such a small school and '*despite being affiliated with a university, funding does not come through them*' and how most drama schools '*are singular entities within their own right*'. **DS2** did use schools RADA and LAMDA as examples of large income streams to support bursaries, the ability to hire more staff and alternative ways to increase diversity through the extra funding they receive. He said:

> *RADA gets the royalties for Pygmalion. They've had many, many successful alumni over many decades, who make contributions to the school […] my old school, LAMDA, have been extremely proactive in funding. They've got people who work full time on it, and they've got a very active alumni network. So, they raise a lot of money. We just don't have the infrastructure to do that. So, although some individual alumni have made incredibly generous donations, to be honest, that money does get eaten up quite soon, even very substantial amounts of money can get eaten up quite quickly. You need money on a certain scale so, you can invest it and use the interest to actually lower audition costs and provide funded places.*

State and privately funded drama schools are both able to offer scholarships and bursaries, but this depends on their history and reputation. The older the institution, the more opportunities for funding. The prestige of these schools due to their long standing, demonstrates the level of cultural capital they have acquired as institutions. Furthermore, it highlights their habitus as an institution and the habitus of those who teach within it along with the field in which they navigate. The habitus of the drama school assimilates a sense of power relations, as individuals innately position themselves in the social hierarchy and as a result, reinforce class structure. Ultimately, according to responses in the data, reinforcing middle-and-upper-class structures, presenting barriers to access and success within the performing arts for those from working-class backgrounds.

5.2.2 The cost of training

During the second phase of coding, individual participant responses highlighted a difference between respondents' backgrounds, the amount of cultural capital they had, their habitus and how they viewed drama school training and

education on the whole. **Respondent 40** replied to **Q11** regarding experiencing any challenges at drama school by saying they '*didn't face any challenges. In fact, I found it rather easy. It may be because it was my second degree'*. Whilst other respondents such as **participant 30**, said:

> *Money! It is very hard when you can't get a job to support yourself at drama school. I'm from a lower income household but not so low that I get maximum loan, and the support for this section of people is non-existent.*

These responses highlight a different attitude towards money and therefore upon further analysis, demonstrates a difference between the habitus and acquired capital of these two respondents. **Participant 40** is training at an elite vocational school and also on their second degree, whilst **respondent 30** struggled financially to get through the training. If **respondent 40** went to university first, they may have received a loan of some kind, which means they would not have been eligible for a loan for drama school. Unless they had the finances to not get a loan at all, this is not clear in their response. This respondent is able to afford a second degree and pay for the tuition fees and accommodation without a loan. This demonstrates he is of either middle- or upper-class status. Furthermore, his attitude towards a second degree also confirms what Bourdieu (1977) said, that individuals from middle-and-upper-classes have a willingness to make the time, effort and spend the money required to protect and build cultural capital. Whereas **participant 30** is not able to think of building capital because of their financial worries.

Of the survey respondents, **10%** said they were from the upper-class; **47%** middle-class and **43%** working-class. **Respondent 40** is the only person to mention education further by way of a second degree. Other respondents who said they faced no challenges either said *'not really'*, '*none, I loved it'* or '*no, it was fairly straight forward'*. These responses also highlighted their level of capital because they experienced no challenges, whereas the other **90%** of students mentioned they experienced a challenge of either, racism, class discrimination or funding issues.

It is important to note here that some of the respondents who considered themselves middle-class had difficulty with funding similarly to their peers from working-class backgrounds; however, a working-class student with a DADa is still not as advantaged as a middle-class student who has no funding. As discussed in

chapter 3, middle-class and elite students, always have an advantage over working-class students, due to the amount of cultural capital, habitus and field available to them.

Upon further analysis, **89.3%** of survey respondents were unable to fund the training and they needed to find funding in different ways. In **figure 11**, a breakdown of how students were able to fund their training was collated.

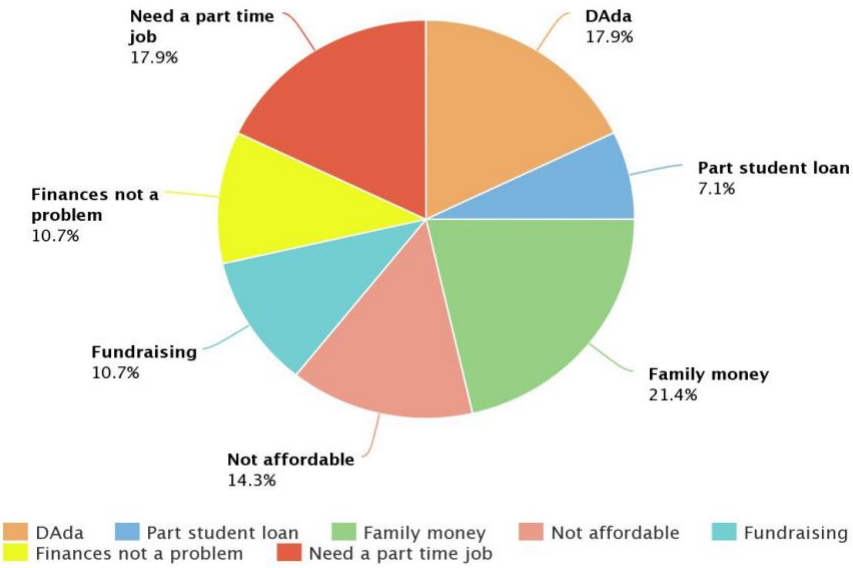

Figure 11 – Other funding sources for drama school training

Over 10% of students had no problems with funding their studies and 21.4% had access to family money. Those from working-class backgrounds did not have access to family money so either needed to find a part-time job, fundraise or training was simply not affordable to them.

During the second phase of coding of the interview and survey data, relationships were drawn between when people auditioned and whether or not drama school training was affordable. Responses such as '*In 1980 you were able to get a full grant for my course, so I was very fortunate'* **(actor 7)**, '*I had a full scholarship back in the 90's, money wasn't an issue back then. The scholarship covered my fees and my living costs'* **(actor 1)** and '*Money was given to us then to train but shortly after was the devolution, so the arts declined in schools and in importance'* **(DS3)** and **actor 2** from **group B**, who was on free school meals said:

I got funding from the National Lottery, the Wall trust and I was sponsored by my sociology teacher at school. My grandma gave me £100 a month towards living costs, so yeah, to be honest, it really wasn't a hardship. I worked through the summers, I painted at RADA and I washed dishes in the canteen with the American students who had come, I didn't work during term time. The fees were £9000 a year back then, 15/20 years ago, it was a lot of money, but I didn't pay any of it.

These responses demonstrate that the availability of funding for those applying to drama school has changed considerably over the last forty years. Along with that change has been the increase of inflation which in turn has increased housing and subsistence cost, impacting drama school applicants' ability to afford to study and live in London without a job whilst training. **DS8** stated:

The problem is whether a student can afford it when they are here. It costs a fortune to live in London these days, even I find it difficult – I commute in every day. As an example, one student struggled terribly throughout his 3 years here, so much so he was brought to us by the police because he had been caught shoplifting food! He couldn't even afford to eat and that was with him having a job!

This demonstrates the financial barrier to and success within drama school training, more so for those from working-class backgrounds.

Actor 2's comment highlighted that state-funded drama schools, like RADA, have kept their tuition fees in line with the national fee cap[113]. For the purpose of this study, **Figure 5.5** demonstrates the tuition fee costs of privately owned drama schools in comparison to the national fee cap. The fees shown are from the start of writing this study in **2018-2019** to the upcoming academic **2023-24** year.

[113] As of 2023, tuition fees are capped at £9,250 for universities in England. This cap has remained the same since it was introduced by Theresa May in 2017. https://wordsrated.com/uk-university-tuition-fee-statistics/

Drama School	Tuition Fees (Per Annum) (Undergraduate only)	
Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA) **Private funded. *** Now closed ***Students loans of up to **£6,000** per year towards tuition fees. (gov.uk)	**2018-19** **North** £9,300 **South** £12,885	**2020** **North** £10,500 **South** £13,900
Arts Educational School (Arts Ed) **Private funded. ***	**2018-19** **MT** £15,360 **Acting** £14,910	**2023-24** **MT** £16,630 **Acting** £16,300
Mountview Theatre Academy **Private funded. ***	**2018-19** **Acting** £13,695 **MT** £14,410	**2023-24** **Acting** £14,385 **MT** £15,750
Oxford School of Drama **Private funded. ***	**2018-19** £16,890	**2023-24** £18,200

Table 17 – Tuition fee comparison table 2018-19 to 2023-34

During the interview phase of this study, two of the drama schools in **table 17** were asked why they charge above the national fee cap when students are only eligible for the basic £6,000 government student loan. **DS2** responded:

> *It is similar to the reason why we charge what we do at audition, the extra tuition fees go towards the staff, guest lecturers, and the contact hours which students have.*

And **DS3** stated:

> *We only receive some DaDA funding from the government and a reduced amount of student loan. The students who come here are not eligible for a full £9,250 per year student loan, they may receive up to £6000 maximum,*

and that depends on their household earnings. So, we need to make up the difference somehow.

The responses from **DS2** and **DS3** reinforces the theme of finances as one of the principal barriers to access and success within drama school training and being able to enter the performing arts industry. Applicants from working-class backgrounds would not be able to afford to pay £30,000 for a 3-year training course, resulting in them being *'priced out before even applying'* (**Actor 8**). The fee presented is the tuition fee and does not take into account further course fees for materials, uniform, books and then accommodation and subsistence on top.

The survey data highlighted that **26** respondents applied and auditioned at Mountview and **21** of those respondents also auditioned at Arts Ed. It cannot be seen from the data if those participants were successful at gaining a place at either school, if they could afford the tuition fees or whether they needed a job to fund their studies, or if they were middle or upper class. Yet, during the student interviews, **47%** auditioned at both Arts Ed and Mountview and they all identified as being middle-class. One student wanted to apply for Mountview but said '*I can't afford the tuition fees so what's the point of applying?'* he also said:

there's only a handful of places in the country that do Musical Theatre and they all charge more than a student loan. No matter how much I try to raise and find the money, I wouldn't be able to pay the difference every year.

When asked if he would apply anyway to see if he would get a DaDA scholarship he responded '*I'd rather not waste my audition money. It's taken me a year to get money together to pay for all of my auditions, travel and hotels. There's no point'.*

DS7 was asked why privately owned drama schools charged above the fee cap and they commented how '*The extra funds are still needed to be put back into the school, for running costs, maintenance, catering, workshops – it all adds up*' and **DS10** responded:

State funded schools get extra funding for day-to-day costs, we don't. We are a registered charity, don't get much by way of government assistance, just the DaDA and we do lots of charitable and outreach work, so those costs need covering, there's the hardship fund and enough money for the upkeep of the school.

Open codes such as '*hidden costs'*, '*materials'* and '*deposits*' emerged from the initial analysis of the survey data. To gain a clearer understanding of what that data meant, students within **Group B** were asked what they knew of the additional costs associated with drama school training. Twenty-seven percent of the group did not know of extra costs; **47%** acknowledged the costs and **26%** knew of the costs but were unhappy with them. **Student 3** said:

If you are offered a place on the course, you have to secure it. Saying yes isn't enough, you have to pay registration fees, sometimes anywhere up to £400! How can I afford that? Unless I am well off, which I'm not, I will then lose that place and they give it to someone else. After all of that work to get an offer in the first place. It's demoralising.

Student 11 countered with '*If you know about it in advance, you can save for it'.* **Student 3** responded *'Not everyone can do that. I can barely afford to save the money I have for auditions and travel etc. I don't have a spare £500 quid lying around'.* It is worth noting here that **student 11** is middle-class whilst **student 3** sees themselves as working-class. This exchange demonstrated what Swartz (2002) regarding Bourdieu's concept of habitus and how people internalise basic life chances available to their social milieu – what is possible, impossible, and probable for people of their kind. It could be said that **student 3** is restricting what they are or are not capable of achieving based on their life experiences as a working-class person. **Student 11** is demonstrating a middle-class habitus due to the time and money needed to invest in achieving their goal and this is down to their habitus and their family environment and existing social conditions. This short two sentence exchange highlights social inequality within the group of students, who are studying on the same course, and demonstrates an individual's opportunity of access, choice and life chances because of their

difference in habitus. Furthermore, it also demonstrates how one's chances of success or failure are internalised and then transformed into individual aspirations or expectations. In other words, much of people's everyday practices, Bourdieu suggests, are self-fulfilling prophecies (Swartz, 2002).

Drama schools were asked about the extra costs incurred upfront or during training and **DS1** responded with '*it is used to discourage students accepting a place when they are unlikely to register'* as they believe *'another applicant will unnecessarily miss out on gaining a place on the course'* if the place is offered to an applicant who will not be able to fund their studies. This response was echoed throughout all of the drama school interviews.

Students are asked to pay a small fee as a deposit which is '*later deducted from their tuition fees'* (**DS8**) with some schools asking for more than £500 deposit. There are further fees for uniform, headshots, showreels, trips and Spotlight[114], which range between £300 and £650 over the course of the three years. Some schools provide this information upfront, giving students time to save the money needed, but other schools do not.

Group B discussed how some of them were offered a place on the foundation course at the schools they applied for. It is important to note that most drama school foundation courses cost a minimum of £10,000 with no student finance available and they run for a period of six months. They do not come with a certificate of diploma, so are paying for the privilege of the course. **Student 14** said '*why would I take the foundation? I want to do a degree, I'm better than a foundation course*' whereas **student 2** said '*I would take anything from a school of my choice, you stand a better chance of moving onto the degree course without an audition!'*. **Student 15** responded:

[114] Spotlight connects performers with roles in theatre, television and film productions around the world. Casting professionals choose Spotlight to cast their projects because performers on Spotlight are recognised as the industry's best. With studios in London's famous West End, and partners across Europe, America and Australia, Spotlight is at the heart of the performing arts industry. Spotlight is the best way to promote yourself as a professional performer and be seen by casting directors. https://www.spotlight.com

I don't think I would want to spend some of the money saved for my degree on a foundation which has no certificate with it. You are paying for the experience, I guess.

When asked why foundation courses were available at some drama schools, **DS7** stated *'Honestly? It is to make extra money for the school'.* **DS6** and **DS9** both said it was '*to accrue extra funds for the outlaying costs of running the courses'* and '*To ensure funds are in place to ensure all outgoing expenses are paid'.* whereas **DS1** said:

It is there to offer talented students the opportunity to hone their acting skills before they embark on a degree programme. It gives them an advantage for when they reapply the following year.

It is not promised that the following year foundation course students will make it on to the degree programme. This happened with one student at Drama Centre, and he said:

I am gutted and feel a bit cheated. I worked my ass off for the past six months and what for? I thought I would get a place on the degree but instead I am looking elsewhere. Some of the other schools aren't impressed with the fact I have already done a foundation course and one school even said to me at interview that they thought it would actually hold me back because they would need to undo certain practices which I had learned. So yeh, I am pissed off because I feel like I have wasted time and a lot of money which I could have used towards another drama school.

The Interviews with all three groups and the responses from survey participants did not present many findings with regard to foundation courses. The only data collected was that they were not funded and therefore not accessible to those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

The survey and interview findings highlighted relationships between financial barriers to access and success within drama school training and working-class applicants. The cost of audition fees, tuition fees at privately

owned drama schools, along with the cost of living and subsistence when studying at state-owned drama schools, calls attention to financial barriers to access and success within drama school training, primarily for students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

DS10 discussed financial barriers and said they wanted 'to *create greater opportunity'* and how discussions surrounding '*removing barriers to students from challenging and low-income backgrounds*' have been at the fore for too long, it was time to take action.

Further analysis of finances highlighted further relationships between applicants who struggle financially, are successful at audition and class discrimination, which is discussed in section **5.5**.

5.2.3 Post-Training Opportunities

Post-training opportunities presented itself as an open code and was elevated to an axial code through the mind-mapping process as it was heavily linked to themes of finances and class. Over 10 vignettes were linked to the selective code of *Post-training opportunities*. Post training support also presented itself as an open code and highlighted in participants' responses.

Analysis of both the survey and interview data found that '*even though getting into drama school was hard, it was after drama school that was the hardest'* (**Actor 1**). Upon answering Q9[115] of the survey regarding whether drama school helped participants' career there were responses such as '*Yes. 38 years working and still active*' **(Respondent 16),** '*Yes. I have worked professionally for 20 years'* **(Participant 55), '***I believe so. I have worked consistently in theatre since I completed my studies. Back then it wasn't a degree however'* ***(Participant 42)***. and '*Yes, I've been working since I graduated'* **(Respondent 47).** Upon coding of these vignettes, it was found that these respondents were from upper-class backgrounds, graduated before 2010 and already lived in and around London. As well as this, data regarding older respondents who trained in the 70's and 80's highlighted different support mechanisms when starting their careers and 'this social safety net seemed to

[115] If you have completed your training, do you think it has benefitted your career? Why / Why not?

take responsibility for some of the risks and uncertainties of the cultural labour market' (Brook et al, 2020: p. 21) at that time.

During mind-mapping of the codes, responses regarding post drama school training came to the fore in **Group C's** interviews. **Actor 4** said '*the hardest thing was finding work afterwards'* mainly because they had *'to work. I don't have the flexibility to do multiple auditions'.* **Actor 7** stated:

> *It has been hard finding work post training. I have had to work in order to be able to audition and that's a catch 22 because I can't take time off to go to auditions. I do feel like the money for my training has been wasted.*

Lastly, ***actor 3*** *said:*

> *There was no support post training. I almost felt abandoned. We graduated and that was that. I know that is normal at university etc. But to go from training vocationally for 40 hours a week for 3 years to nothing, that was a big shock to the system. I had to go into full time work to live in London whilst I attended as many auditions as possible. I lost several jobs because I would call in sick on days where there were auditions. In the end I had to move out of London, but I still only have small roles in theatre from time-to-time.*

These comments demonstrated how one's level of cultural capital plays a large role with regard to furthering your career in the arts post training. Being exposed to various forms of culture from a young age, as well as living in London, where over 90% of auditions take place for Film, TV and Theatre, is going to give you the springboard needed to get a job in the acting and musical theatre industry.

Respondent 6 stated in the survey:

> *I have worked professionally in the West End and also been on European tours, so it was beneficial in that sense. That said, if it weren't for my family, I would have had no support post training. I had an offer of representation but no support from my school.*

Participant 16 *said how they had learned:*

> *some valuable techniques, but my family background and connections have helped me to progress further in the industry than the training. The drama school I went to didn't support me post training.*

Respondent 29 said:
I have a very supportive family of whom allowed me to enjoy my education and not have to work. It helps that they have supported me post training too so that I am able to get acting jobs in Theatre, Film and TV. If I had to be concerned about finances, I don't think I would have gotten so far in my career.

> As well as these statements, **actor 9** said in their interview that:
>
> *There is a reason we are seeing a homogenous group of people in acting at the moment, the support after training is non-existent. It is normal that the industry has no diversity, especially where class is concerned. How on earth can someone from a working-class background be successful in our industry, and in London, unless they had piles of money to attend auditions and not have to work?*

Alongside a comment from **actor 6** who said:

> *I had no support after I left drama school. I had an agent, but the school washed their hands of me. I was done with training and was no longer important to them. They are happy to put my picture on their walls now that I am well-known, but if I had no family or money behind me, I wouldn't have made it to where I am now. Our industry along with economy is so starkly different to the famous's who did or did not train 40 years ago. It was easier and simpler back then – and funnily enough, more diverse!*

After analysis of these responses, **6%** of overall participants in this study felt there was a distinct lack of support post-training which in turn '*impacted [my] mental health'* (**respondent 12)** and they *'did not have the funds to attend auditions, live in*

London' (**Respondent 36**). **Actor 1** said that '*going from so many contact hours to nothing is a culture shock'* for many students at drama school, *'especially when training was [my] life for three years.* This is an area of further study and a recommendation for drama schools to focus their attention on.

5.3 The influence of Class

As one's habitus assimilates a sense of power relations, it can be seen from the data collected on the previous two themes that individuals within drama schools innately position themselves in the social hierarchy, reinforcing class structure. As drama schools are elite training providers, principals of these schools are integrating class structures through their institutions; therefore, confirming Bourdieu's (1984) theory of habitus being conferred through educational establishments in the form of institutionalised cultural capital. It is through these institutions that a person's original view of culture and society are reinforced or altered, depending on what is propagated.

The influence of class is the third selective code which emerged from the open and axial coding process. The first open codes emerged from the survey data and they were *'arrogant and elitist attitudes'*, '*change my accent'*, '*poorer background'*, '*Looked down their noses'* and '*accessibility for those from working-class backgrounds'*. There were 23[116] open codes which elevated the codes to a category and axial coding. More than 48 vignettes were assigned to the axial code of '*class discrimination'* which became the umbrella term in this study to capture participants' views on attitudes towards those applying from working-class backgrounds and any other perceptions on class barriers to drama school training. Further analysis across axial coding meant that *the influence of class* was the motivating selective code for this theme.

The open code of 'class discrimination' came to the fore in multiple responses from the survey and out of the interviews with group **B** and **C**. Ninety-two percent of the participants who identified themselves as working class said they experienced class discrimination in auditions and/ or during their training. **Respondent 2** said of

[116] *'arrogant', 'elitist attitudes'*, '*change my accent'*, '*poorer background'*, '*Looked down their noses',* '*accessibility for those from working-class backgrounds', 'stripped down to basics', 'token working-class white boy', 'issues regarding accent', 'speak properly', 'snobbery at audition', 'typecast', 'working-class', 'class system', 'social strata', 'rank', 'redesign myself to fit in', 'southern wide boy', 'people of lower class were challenged', 'background', 'class status', 'prejudice', 'discrimination'*

three of the schools they auditioned for were '*arrogant and elitist in their attitudes at Audition. I was even asked if I would change my 'accent' so as to have a better chance at getting in'*, **respondent 13** commented how *'not everyone was seen fairly in the audition room. Wealthier students were given priority'* and **respondent 15** said how only one school made him feel welcome whilst '*the other two looked down their noses at me as though I wasn't welcome'.* Throughout the first 6 questions of the survey, class perceptions and attitudes towards working-class applicants were highlighted as beginning at the initial audition stage and continued throughout training with further responses such as *'I faced prejudice because of my background and class status'* **(respondent 19)** and the teachers '*were rude and treated me differently to my classmates. I am unsure as to why, but I did feel as though my peers, who were very affluent, got preferential treatment'* **(respondent 1)**.

During the interviews with **group A**, **DS9** said:

> *When understanding class structures, what must be taken into consideration is what constitutes 'working' and 'middle class', and how much the parameters have shifted over the past ten years. In my eyes, there is no difference these days. You either have the lower or the upper-class and when someone from the lower-class auditions, you know they cannot afford to train at the school. And yes, it does impact them receiving an offer to train because it pushes someone else out who can afford it.*

Whereas **DS3** discussed what they believe to be '*the middle-class squeeze'* and further responded with '*Everyone thinks it is the working-class students who suffer, it isn't. The middle-class ones are the ones with the real funding issue but that's never talked about'.* Participants of **group B** were unsure of their class status but initially, most identified as working-class. During the interviews, students were asked where they would put themselves in the class system; **student 3** said '*I think I am working-class; I mean my mum is a teacher and my dad works in IT'* another said, '*my mum is a nurse, and my dad is a store manager'* (**student 7**) and when some were asked what they believe working class to be they said, *'people who work for a living'*. The class structure was explained and **47%** realised they were actually middle-class rather than working-class. **Student 6** became defensive and stated '*I am not middle-class. I am very*

proud to be working-class' and he continued by saying '*My dad owns a factory company, and my mum works for him as a secretary. That means we are working-class'.*

Student 6 had subliminally internalised the objective chances of his social strata by observing what others in his socioeconomic group, primarily family, had achieved previously. This student believed himself to be working-class and disliked the idea of being a '*middle-class toff*' (**student 6**). This response demonstrates class prejudice up the scale as well as demonstrating certain ideals about another class of people. **Student 6** later explained how much he '*had changed'* because of the experience of training at drama school and how it made him reflect on his upbringing, the '*class band'* he '*thought'* he was a part of, and how '*naïve'* he was about *'it all'* before going off to study. These responses demonstrate the class structures propagated by the drama school he attended as well as highlighting the impact of becoming part of a different social milieu. **Student 6** later stated how he wishes he '*had known more about class structures and attitudes'* years ago as *'it may have prepared'* him for life at drama school. He believed he was *'narrow minded'* with regard to class, and it was not until he went to London that his *'eyes were truly opened about how the world works'.* He went on to say how *'it wasn't easy'* coming from the North East and he *'came up against discrimination from some teachers with regard to [his] accent'.*

Prior to drama school training, **Student 6** imposed the conditions associated with coming from the working-class on himself and although he struggled to fund his studies, he still had more capital behind him than a working-class student had. On the other hand, he experienced class discrimination because of where he came from and was asked to change his accent so that he '*would be offered more roles'*.

During **group B's** interviews, **student 14** said they automatically '*assumed [we] are working-class'* because they do not have '*the same level of opportunities'* within higher education arts training and employment as other people their age might have in different areas of the country. It is important to note that along with a lack of social, economic and cultural capital, which demonstrate their level of cultural capital, working-class applicants based in the North-East are detrimentally impacted by social mobility, both within arts education and within their family environment due to

the North-East being one of the poorest areas for social mobility within the country for post-16 education[117].

It is important to note that some parts of the North East have relatively good educational outcomes for young people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, due to the relatively weak local job markets, especially within the arts and even more so post-pandemic, it is difficult for these young people to translate good performance at school into a decent job and good standard of living as adults (Social Mobility Index, 2016). The findings from **Group B's** interviews show how little the students know about class structure, social mobility within the North East, the labour market and employment opportunities post education and training.

The data also highlights students' responses regarding being called middle-class, and how shocked and even upset they were by being put in the middle-class bracket. It was almost as though they were offended not be to from the working-class and that being middle-class was a slight on their heritage. **Student 6** said, *'my grandparents were working-class and came from pit families, I am proud of what they did to survive'* suggesting that by having upward social mobility was belittling the hard work they had achieved, but in turn not realising that it was due to their hard work that he, and his family, were able to move into the middle-class. A lack of education and knowledge regarding subjects like politics and economics demonstrate the impact habitus, field and cultural capital have on individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds. As discussed in chapter 3, discussing politics, the arts or other intellectual content, innately instils cultural awareness and develops the child's ability to assess different viewpoints, their critical thinking skills and their understanding of the world around them. These are strategies implemented by the elite classes to better prepare their children for educational and economic success; whereas those from the working-class are unlikely to implement these strategies due to not having been exposed that level of capital from a young age.

The survey and interview data for **group B** and **C**, found that despite some working-class students gaining places at drama schools 100% of those applicants experienced class discrimination of some kind. Survey **participant 13** said '*Because of how I looked and spoke, some places like LAMDA and RCSSD treated me like shit on their shoe. Totally not inclusive'* and **respondent 11** discussed how they

[117] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index

were given a *'strict dressing down'* during a workshop '*Infront of the rest of the class'* because they '*couldn't get the vowel sound right for a Shakespeare speech'* and they were '*made to sit in the corner, learning the sound over and over'* until the lecturer said to '*come back again'*. Actors from **Group C** discussed life post drama school and how it '*has been an eye opener'* because the '*lack of working-class inclusivity is rife within the Performing Arts industry in the UK and I don't see it changing anytime soon'* (**actor 3**) and **actor 8** said:

> *The hardest part is after training and securing an agent and job. It's too elitist now. Casting directors are more concerned about current trends then they are representing the country. Where are the women, the black community, disabled people, working-class etc. It's just the same group of people over and over. Until things like Bridgeton and Downton Abbey subside, we won't see an inclusive or diverse industry.*

As Friedman et al (2016)[118] stated, the '*class ceiling'* exists in British acting alongside the '*glass-ceiling'* of pay disparities within the performing arts industry. The findings in this section confirm the fears actress Julie Walters expressed in an interview with The Guardian (2015), '*the way things are now there aren't going to be any working-class actors'.* Furthermore*,* although discussion regarding the lack of representation of the working-classes in the performing arts industry has focused on the past 50 years, McGrath (1996) highlighted how '*middle-class theatre seems to have lost this tradition of variety round about 1630, when it lost the working class, and it has never rediscovered it'* (p54*)*; therefore, demonstrating the bourgeois' dominance of the arts and the '*slow excision of working-class actors'* from the arts (David Morrissey, 2016[119])

5.3.1 Elitism

During axial coding, and upon mind mapping the axial codes, elitism became a category which formed strong relationships and similarities to 'class discrimination'

[118] *Like Skydiving without a Parachute': How Class Origin Shapes Occupational Trajectories in British Acting* (2016) by Dr. Sam Friedman, Dr. Daniel Laurieson and Dr. Dave O'Brien

[119] https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/21000/Class_ceiling_stops_working_class_actors_from_getting_parts_PR280216.pdf?1462358408137

and ‘attitudes towards working-class applicants’. Over 20 vignettes were assigned to this category. The vignettes demonstrated elitist views held by **Group A. Groups B** and **C**, along with **43%** of respondents in the survey, highlighted being discriminated against because of their class, race or gender. It is important to note that a further **13%** of survey respondents also experienced elitist attitudes during audition, despite being middle-class, where the panel referred to students in ways which made them feel uncomfortable, inferior and that they did not deserve to be there.

In the survey questions, participants were asked what the audition process was like overall and **55%** said their experience was *good* or *excellent* whilst **45%** rated their experience *fair* or *poor*. Further analysis of the survey data demonstrated that those who rated the audition process as *good* or *excellent* attended auditions at drama schools Mountview, Arts Ed, Italia Conti, Emil Dale, Leeds Conservatoire and London college of Music. Those who responded *poor* or *fair* auditioned at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, LAMDA, RADA, RCSSD, Drama Centre, Oxford School of Drama, GSA and Guildhall.

Transparency data (appendix 5.3) highlighted the intake of students from different EIMD[120] quintiles into their schools in 2018/19, with only one drama school accepting more students from EIMD 1 & 2, than any other drama school in this study. The worst for accepting students from quintiles 1 and 2 were the schools previously mentioned as ‘*poor*’ or ‘*fair*’ during their audition process.

The findings in this chapter thus far highlighted the schools rated below average for their audition process and overall experience were the ones which have inherent problems with racism, class discrimination and propagate a set of specific middle and upper-class structures. **Participant 34** who trained in the 1970s said the audition process was ‘*totally different to what it is like now. Much more relaxed back then. Now the elitism is rife’*. Another response read how they ‘*felt belittled because of [my] Mancunian accent*’ (**participant 60**) whilst **respondent 12** said:

> *During [my] time at drama school, I was told to have extra speech sessions to ‘drive out’ my native accent because ‘you would never have a Manc accent at the RSC’.*

[120] EIMD quintile = English Index of Multiple Deprivation with Quintile 1 & 2 as most deprived and 3, 4 and 5 as least deprived.

Further participants commented with '*some schools felt degrading to audition for* **(respondent 4),** '*Judgemental. Asked inappropriate questions but took place as was desperate'* **(respondent 1)** with **respondent 18** stating**:**

> *I auditioned at RADA and Mountview and they couldn't be more different! RADA was snobby and made me feel inadequate to even audition and so I felt like an imposter. Mountview was welcoming, diverse and put me at ease immediately.*

and ***respondent 26****:*

> *Some schools were really welcoming but two were arrogant and elitist in their attitudes at Audition. I was even asked if I would change my accent so as to have a better chance of getting in.*

Question 6[121] was aimed at the audition process so as to better understand what barriers applicants faced at entry. These responses confirm what Morrisey (Friedman et al, 2020: 84) said with regard to the *'excision of the working-classes'* from the arts, as those who are working class or from socioeconomically deprived areas are discriminated against at the initial stage of interview and audition.

The next step of data collection was to see if these themes continued throughout a successful applicants' training. **Group C** were asked about their training and what their experience was like so as to ascertain whether or not these elitist views permeated through the school, or if they were the set of perceptions of only a couple of people. **Actor 4** describes it by saying:

> *[I] found training really difficult because you literally get stripped down to basics again. You think it's about learning new things but actually it's very much unlearning all your bad habits.*

[121] What was the audition process like overall?

During the interview with **DS1** they discussed what they perceive 'bad habits' to be and they responded:

> *The student is stripped back to basics. They unlearn bad habits as well as the accent they have inherited, the way they carry themselves, taking off make-up and piercings etc. – because that is all it is, an inherited part of their social structure. Especially when it comes to diction and using RP, it is a necessity not to have an accent, that is what we are looking for. If someone has an accent at audition, we will redirect them and ask that they reperform in a neutral accent. We do not want to hear where they have come from.*

The response from **DS1** demonstrated elitist views and class discrimination by way of wanting to strip the actor of who they were and all they had known. In turn, destroying their habitus and imposing a set of expectations and class structures on the actor which they do not know. One's habitus is who they are and by stripping someone of that is telling them they are not good enough. The views held by this principal demonstrated how middle and upper-class structures permeate the school and discrimination against those from working-class backgrounds is an inherent problem within the fabric of drama school training.

Further interview findings from several notable actors suggest that elitism is rife within many drama schools and how students are treated is based primarily on their cultural capital. **Actor 3** discussed his time during training in the late 1990's:

> *Back then it was a lot more open and free. It's a lot harder to access vocational training now and I don't think I'd get in now. I'm a Yorkshire lad with a strong accent and don't give a shit attitude, I'd not get past the snobbery at audition now.*

Actor 7 stated:

> *I trained in the late 2000's and elitism was a thing then, but we were told to 'suck it up' and assumed it was a part of how things were. Obviously upon reflection and from the years of professional work, that isn't how it should be. No wonder there are problems with working-class representation in the*

industry, especially if people are toffs on the interview panel- those from poorer backgrounds will never get past the gatekeepers. It's a power thing. If you think about it, I was told to speak "properly" and even then, they didn't like an accent. I tell you what though, it hasn't held me back.

Actor 3 spoke about their time at drama school in the 1960's and said:

When I went to RADA, I had a cockney accent and I remember one whole lesson of humiliation, they used to put a bone prop in my mouth to try and open up my vowels and I could not hear the difference between Door or 'Do-ar' and the teacher corrected my enunciation. Honest to God, and the whole class was laughing because they were all frightfully upper-class.

And lastly **Actor 8**:

I was the token working-class kid, got stripped down several times because of my accent. Then I got typecast as the "wide boy" in the final show. I wasn't challenged enough in class and some lecturers even thought I was dumb because of my Mancunian twang. I didn't mind too much as it has gotten me roles since, but I'm more than that. It's tiring.

The findings from **Group A**, **B** and **C**'s interviews confirm that elitism is an inherent problem within some drama schools. The survey data also highlighted elitism and class discrimination as a barrier to access and success within the performing arts with **respondent 13** saying how they *'faced prejudice because of [my] background and class status'. **Respondent 16*** commented with that not only did they need to *'redesign myself to fit in with my school'* and reassess who they were but how they needed to do it so as to *'not be type cast as the "northern working-class boy" based on my accent. Even though I'm not working-class'.* Further responses from **respondent 25** discussed that although she **'***was challenged being a woman'* and how *'those of ethnic minority and lower class, were challenged equally as much'* the male *'white privileged students, were not'.*

Other statements from the survey confirm elitism and class discrimination against those from a minority group, as can be seen from the response of **participant 22**:

> *I feel I was pandered to because of my privileged background and not pushed as hard as I could have been. My tutors were wary of what they said so that I wasn't offended or that I would take umbrage and leave. My counterparts were pushed harder and made to feel as though they didn't deserve a place at the school, therefore had to work harder to justify why they were there.*

This respondent was from an upper-class background but demonstrated empathy towards their peers in most answers throughout the survey, as did other middle and upper-class participants. Upon answering **Q10**[122], ***respondent 41*** discussed how he *'was the middle-class white boy from a wealthy background so I was ok, but some minority groups were always pulled apart. It was brutal to be honest'.* **Respondent 33** echoed **participant 41** by saying*:*

> *We were a bunch of white males. Some from less wealthier backgrounds and they seemed to bear the brunt of everything. I remember one gentleman getting berated by the head of year because he couldn't get the accent correct for a Shakespeare part. In the end it was given to someone else as he couldn't master the phonetics of the language correctly.*

And **respondent 57**, who attended drama school in the 1970's and now teaches at several drama schools said:

> *The school I attended was not overly inclusive. It hasn't gotten any better unfortunately. Some of the best drama schools have a deep-rooted problem with diversity and inclusive practice. This may be because of their rich history and British culture, where class dictates mobility- or maybe it is a*

[122] Did / do you feel that your training provider was / is inclusive in their practice?

power struggle. Keep top drama school's elite and the school maintains reputation. It is hard to get to the bottom of.

The data collected from the survey demonstrated that **53%** of participants said their training provider was not inclusive in their practice, as did **55%** of those from the group interviews. According to The Acting Up report (2017) drama schools are *'elitist, expensive, white and middle class'*. The findings in this section revealed that the majority of those who attend drama school are from white, middle-class backgrounds, and as can be seen from this study, racial and class discrimination are ubiquitous amongst drama schools.

5.4 Mental health and well-being

Open codes for mental health and well-being included 'thick skin', 'confidence', 'body-shaming', 'discrimination', 'challenging', 'useless', 'less of a human', 'worthless', 'the pandemic', 'Covid-19', and 'emotional abuse'. Most of the codes found for mental health and well-being were linked to the first three themes within the findings, which elevated this to a category and axial coding. Further relationships were made between the influence of class, discrimination and racism during the axial coding process and its impact on one's mental health. Over 32 vignettes were recorded for this theme. The detrimental impact of the first three themes on drama school applicants and trainees meant the only selective code to be established was that of *mental health and well-being*.

Mental health as a selective code was not discussed at length in the survey or during the interviews; however, due to the nature of the other challenges' applicants faced, mental health was a main link between all major themes within the research findings. Mental health and well-being were highlighted as main challenges applicants faced whilst auditioning and training at drama school with **22.5%** saying their '*mental health took a battering whilst training'* **Actor 2**. A further **8.1%** '*struggled with confidence issues*' during audition '*because of how [they] were treated*' (**actor 1**) and because they were '*body shamed in front of a mirror'* by a dance teacher in their ballet class (**Student 15**). It is worth noting that **17.1%** of participants in both the survey and interviews said they experienced *'no issues'* whilst training and a further **1.8%** did not respond.

22.5% of the total people who took part in the study said their mental health was impacted by how they were treated whilst auditioning and training at drama school because some were '*made to feel less worthy'* because of their '*lack of finances'* '*class-status'* and who they were '*as a person'* (**Respondent 25**). **Respondent 32** also said '*they gave me shit for my walk, my accent, how I had my hair. I literally was forced to become new person whilst I trained'*.

The breaking down of one's habitus by someone from a different social milieu meant that students felt '*judged*' (**participant 3**) '*degraded'* (**student 11**) and '*abused on so many levels. Like my heritage was worthless and that made me less of a human'* (**actor 7**). **DS9** discussed the need to '*break down an applicant, so that they can be shaped into what the industry wants'* and how '*you need thick skin in this line of work'.* **DS7** mentioned 'a student is never the same when they leave. They find it hard to go back home sometimes because they are a different person'. In pushing a person from working-class into a middle-upper-class environment and forcing them to become middle-upper-class, an internalised struggle known as habitus clive, or cleft habitus (Bourdieu, 2005) happens. Friedman (2016) said that when attempting to change social class, 'a person's conditions of existence change so dramatically that they experience a sense of self torn by dislocation and internal division' (p.130). In other words, individuals who experience this have failed to obtain the embodied capital to 'acculturate' (Thatcher et al, 2015) into the elite, but no longer experience a sense of belonging to class from which they came. This form of training adopted by drama schools is '*damaging to a person's mental health'* **(student 2).** It is worth noting that mental health and well-being of students is a prominent problem within higher education itself, especially in the wake of the pandemic, let alone in drama schools[123].

An article in the *Arts Professional*[124] online, published in March 2020, revealed that one of the drama schools in this study, Drama Centre London (DCL) closed after a major review revealed courses *'pushed students to the edge'.* The review, by an independent reviewer with over 40 years' experience in Creative Arts Higher

[123] The Guardian (2021) *'There was a distinct lack of help': can theatre clean up its act on mental health?* and The Stage (2021) *Mental health warning as theatre workers dip to 'lowest place psychologically'*

[124] https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/drama-school-close-after-review-reveals-courses-pushed-students-edge

Education, stated that following an investigation into the death of a student and concerns about the conservatoire's *'course culture and student welfare',* DCL closed its doors in 2022. McIntyre's review says students accused staff of racism and its affiliate university, University of the Arts London (UAL) investigated 19 formal complaints from individuals and groups between 2016 and 2019. UAL said its decision to close the courses was '*further informed*' by an unreleased investigation it conducted into the death of an MA Acting student. UAL stakeholders believed that DCL's pedagogy and values did not align with those of the wider University and they feared for the mental well-being of the drama school's students because they were unable to access counselling due to the intensive nature of DCL's courses. It is worth noting here that this is the conservatoire culture, and the 32 contact hour weeks push students very hard, both mentally and physically.

The article goes on to say how students were:

> *encouraged to build intensive relationships within the group and consider themselves as an ensemble of actors, and it was normal to work together beyond class hours into the evenings and weekends.*

In an interview with **Actor 4,** the intensity of drama school training and the impact it had on its students was discussed and as **actor 4** graduated fairly recently, five years ago, he said:

> *Drama school is taxing - you're worked very hard both physically and mentally. The hardest part is keeping energy up and trying to balance training with rest and relaxation time to ensure you are in a healthy state of mind for learning*.

The findings from this section highlighted the difficult nature of drama school training and **DS6** further discussed that '*most applicants are made aware years before applying for drama school'* so therefore they '*should be prepared for its intensive training'.* **DS6**'s attitude to the level of difficulty in drama school training demonstrated that students needed to accept this in order to be successful in their training. The data collected in this study also highlighted that the level of difficulty in

training '*is what drives most students to apply in the first place'* **students 6, 8** and **10**. **Respondent 11** said that their training was '*Excellent! it was mentally and physically draining every day but so rewarding for all students'* and **participant 7** said:

> *I love it, I think the training might not be for everybody. It certainly suits me, the long hours and effort you put in are rewarding. You can feel the changes in yourself as you progress.*

Twenty-one participants within this study noted a detrimental impact on their mental health whilst studying at drama school whilst 16 stated they faced no issues. Of the 16, **50%** demonstrated through their survey and interview responses that despite not facing any discrimination they witnessed '*others being discriminated against'* **(actor 3)** which subconsciously impacted their mental health, and this was seen in their responses and comments such as '*others were treated appallingly'* (**respondent 17**) '*it was hard to see how unfair the training was between different minority groups'* (**Actor 3**) and **respondent 20** said:

> *It seems tougher for those from a minority group. They tend to be treated differently; it is tiresome really. To clarify, they are not given the same guidance as myself or male counterparts. The three women in my class are pushed hard to examine themselves and their flaws so as to improve their acting. The 1 black student tends to be dismissed for his ideas and one tutor even said "what a ridiculous notion. You won't get far with ideas like that". I would say this school is a demoralising place to be if you aren't a person of wealth or male.*

5.5 Disability

The final theme to emerge through selective coding was disability. Thirteen open codes[125] presented themselves upon analysis of the survey and interview data, with the first codes presenting in question 6 regarding the audition process. Twenty-

[125] 'disabled', 'cerebral palsy', 'physical impairment', 'full cognitive function', 'condition', 'stroke', 'learning difficulties', 'special needs', 'incapacity to learn dance movements', 'anxiety', 'depression', 'eating disorder' and 'intellectual disability'

three vignettes were recorded through axial coding which elevated this theme to a category. The umbrella term through axial coding was 'physical disabilities' and as mind-mapping progressed other disabilities came to the fore that were more mental and emotional rather than physical; thus, resulting in the selective code 'disability' so as to encompass all physical, mental and emotional disabilities presented within the data.

In question 6 of the survey, participants were asked to discuss the audition process and **respondent 26** said '*I felt discriminated against because of my disability'* and **participant 28** stated that two places they auditioned for '*were terrible'* because the audition panel *'made it known [I] was not welcome on the course'* as they did '*not include me during a workshop in the audition'* they went on to further say *'I am disabled due to an illness as a baby which effects my speech and mobility'*.

During **group A's** interviews only one drama school, **DS3**, openly discussed disability and '*the present barriers to those who are disabled or physically impaired'*. **DS3** said they wanted *'to ensure that courses were available for those with disabilities'* and when asked about whether they would have students with disabilities on the degree courses **DS3** responded:

> *I would love to. It is something we are striving for, but we must change the module guidelines first. Some modules, especially Musical Theatre ones where the students must study all forms of Jazz, are not accessible to some individuals with disabilities. They are fast paced classes and highly demanding. It is something we are working on though.*

When other participants of **group A** were asked what their plans were to improve access for those who had disabilities, some refused to comment, and according to **DS1** it was a '*moot point'*. In their interview **DS1** said:

> *Having disabled actors in a drama school is difficult. We are an elite school, and we push the actors hard in every aspect. Someone who is disabled may not be able to withstand the rigours of the course and therefore raises the question 'Are we setting them up to fail in the first place by accepting them onto the course?' It is easier for schools who have disabled applicants wanting to go onto acting courses, but those who want to study Musical*

Theatre…is it right they should study Musical Theatre vocationally given the learning outcomes of modules and the expectations imposed on them from the beginning? Like I said, a moot point. We have a quota to fill for BAME, women, trans and disabled people but sometimes we just can't subscribe to the idea of it and need to not recruit.

***Int:** That is discriminatory though and makes you elitist in some respects.*

***DS1**: Yes, it is, and it does. But tell me what we can do about it? If we accept disabled students and they pay a fortune and fail because they can't achieve the module descriptors or keep up with the class– it is our fault for giving them false hope. If we say no to them at audition, it is our fault as we are not being diverse or inclusive enough in our practice- it is very difficult because we are caught between two stools.*

The lack of response from drama schools or responses such as '*I'm not getting into that'* (**DS8**), '*I am not willing to discuss disability at this time'* (**DS10**) and '*Next question please'* (**DS4**) with regard to access for disabled students, highlighted barriers to access and success within drama school training for those with disabilities.

Some respondents of the survey when asked what their training was like responded: '*I never got in because of my disability. I have cerebral palsy and I was told the course would be too much for me' (**respondent 49)**.* Other responses included *'I don't think I was given much leeway as a disabled performer. It's very hard to self-tape for an audition and very different performing in person'* (**respondent 7)** and **Participant 31** said '*I was told by each provider to look at a university course because I wouldn't manage the physical and mental challenges of a vocational course'.*

Question 12 of the survey focused on inclusivity within drama school auditions and training and **6%** of 48 respondents said their training provider was not inclusive for those with disabilities. **Respondent 40** said '*no. They said I couldn't get in because I was disabled. The course wasn't "right" for me they said'* another stated, *'The schools I applied for are elitist and non-inclusive of people with disabilities'* (**Respondent 14**) and **participant 11** said*:*

They need to be more inclusive of people with disabilities. All I was told was that I should look at a less physically demanding course and to try a university programme with less contact hours.

Group B and **C**'s responses regarding the representation of those with disabilities in the wider performing arts industry were unanimous. **Actor 3** replied:

the representation is appalling. I only know of a handful of disabled artists within the UK Film and TV industry, but all are trying to get into the industry. There are none on the mainstream UK theatre stage.

Actor 7 stated *'people with disabilities don't have a route into the industry'* and how *'Drama schools won't take people with disabilities onto their courses'* because *'vocational training is taxing even for those physically able'*. Further responses from **Group B** demonstrated that despite not having any disabilities themselves *'friends who have auditioned have been turned away because of their conditions'* **(Student 14). Student 5** said of the drama school she auditioned for that:

They didn't even try and hide their feelings about it though. One young girl struggled to keep up in the dance workshop and they told her to sit it out due to "her incapacity to learn the dance movements". She had special needs from a car accident when she was younger. She was all there mentally though! I cringed just watching how they treated her.

In the UK, **20%** of the population have identifiable disabilities and only **9%** of those work in the arts (theboar.org, 2020). **Actor 8** said this is due to *'casting directors not being inclusive enough in the practice'* and it is due to two factors (i) *'they are scared of casting someone who has not been professionally trained'* and (ii) *'it's all about money. New actors don't earn enough money. Established actors are reliable and you know they are going to make the most income'.*

DS3 said *'we are looking at creating a course for disabled actors so as to give them a platform into the industry'* however, this response demonstrated a

marginalisation of those with disabilities and highlighted a lack of inclusivity within drama school practices.

The findings from this study have highlighted not only discrimination against those with disabilities but how being disabled is a barrier to access and success within drama school training and the wider performing arts community. There are no disabled actors in the West End representing a disabled character. Musical theatre shows such as '*Wicked*' and '*Waitress*' have not cast a disabled person in the disabled characters' roles and when **Group C** was asked why this was, **actor 7** said:

> *it's to do with money and the American market. The West End is influenced by Broadway. Anything that is seen as "edgy" or pushing the mould is not wanted on the mainstream stage. It's just how it is and has always been.*

There have been plays where disabled characters were cast, such as '*Schism'* in 2016 by Athena Stevens. It was produced at the Finborough theatre in London and from that production, Stevens became the first actor in a wheelchair to be nominated for an Olivier award. Since then, there was no representation for disabled actors in theatre until Storme Toolis, who has cerebral palsy, was cast in the play *'A day in the death of Joe Egg'* in 2019, which is about a character who also suffers from cerebral palsy.

The data gathered in this study and other research call attention to how disability discrimination is pervasive within the British Acting and Musical Theatre industry.

5.6 Summary

According to Bourdieu's theory of habitus, the elite can exercise their power merely by being themselves and adhering to existing social conditions. It is only those from the lower classes who must break out of their habitus in order to change their life chances by becoming socially mobile. The findings of this study reveal that, drama schools' favour '*white, middle-class, wealthy applicants'* (**DS1**) to keep their '*schools running'* and humiliate BIPOC, disabled and working-class students who manage to secure a place in their establishment. The findings indicate that the discrimination experienced by BIPOC, disabled and working-class students is

justified by drama schools on the grounds that the “industry” wants middle-class white actors, and there is little evidence of drama schools seeking to challenge this bias. In so doing, drama schools enable the elite to continue to accumulate further capital, thus keeping them at the top of the social order. Chapter six provides the summary for the critical analysis and discussion on the five themes and answers **RQ2** by offering solutions and recommendations to overcome the barriers to drama school training.

Chapter 6

Discussion, recommendations and conclusion.

6.0 Introduction to the chapter.

In response to the claim that British acting and the musical theatre industry is dominated by those from privileged class origins (Friedman et al, 2016), this study aimed to explore how structural social formations, contemporary education policy and the practices of drama schools interact to form barriers to educational opportunity in the performing arts and create problems for social mobility. It also sought to explore how these barriers to access may be overcome. Using Bourdieu's (1977; 1984) theory of cultural capital and habitus as a theoretical lens, the data were analysed to unpick the relationship between the systemic/structural conditions and specific local practices that were said to present barriers to inclusion and social mobility. Having given an overview of the research aims and objectives (**chapter 1**), **chapter 2** examined social mobility in contemporary Britain, with a focus on the value and importance of the arts and their impact on students' holistic growth and life chances. It explored how government rhetoric on social mobility was shown to be dishonest: rather than help lower income people access the arts, policy makers who attended private schools have denied the benefits of the co-curriculum to state pupils. **Chapter 3** explored Bourdieu's key concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field. In so doing, it considered the value of Bourdieu's theory as a theoretical lens for the empirical data presented in this thesis. Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory was used to explain how elite culture has been naturalised as both the "best culture" and the property of the ruling classes, thereby limiting politicians' desire to extend it to working-class pupils. Instead, working class-pupils have been offered 'levelling up' through investment in STEM, as discussed in chapter two. **Chapter 4** covered the methodological approach and research design, as well as the ontological and epistemological positioning of the study. **Chapter 5** reported on the integrated analysis of data collected from the two research instruments. The data collection methods allowed an exploration and identification of barriers to access and success within performing arts education, specifically analysing propagating structural social formations and practices within drama schools. In section **6.1** of this chapter, I will

focus on my generated theory and general outcomes of the findings. Each section thereafter focuses different recommendations as a result of the findings, further implications of the research and overall conclusion.

6.1 Generated theory and general outcomes

Grounded theory methodology was used in this study to gain a deeper understanding of social processes within drama school training and wider arts education, but to investigate what happens and how people interact. This shows the influence of symbolic interactionism, a social psychological approach focused on the meaning of human interactions (Blumer,1969). This study sought to learn from participants how drama school processes work, especially audition processes and how they inhibit social mobility, and how each group of participants made sense of it.

The grounded theory I present has two components. The first being focused on the audition process to ensure parity for all applicants, including offering feedback for unsuccessful applicants. The other component of the generated grounded theory is about the way in which drama school training measures equality of opportunity in order to enhance social mobility within drama school practices, which is shown in how transparency data is generated and collected. The theory has been created to aid in the reshaping of perceptions and breaking down of barriers to access and success within drama school training. My theory has been presented as a theoretical model in **figure 12** and further discussed in **recommendation 2** and **6**.

Audition Process and transparency data collection to monitor equality of opportunity.

Phase 1

Online Audition - £15

Phase 2

Successful

Unsuccessful

If a third recall is needed, to be done online.

Recall
In person

Offer feedback to all unsuccessful candidates at every stage of the audition process.

Successful

Phase 3

Outreach auditions to all major cities to ensure those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds are able to attend audition.

Phase 4

Track all successful and unsuccessful applications to gauge a better understanding of applicant demographics. Follow up those who don't accept their place – reason for this. Use the following criteria:

Age – Gender – Ethnicity – EIMD

Phase 5

Termly check in with drama school students to monitor mental health and well-being; to identify any challenges / problems during training; and implement support where needed.

Phase 6

Create a 6-month post-graduate programme which supports new graduates in seeking employment within the wider performing arts industry.

In response to **RQ1**, the findings indicate that students face significant barriers to access and success within drama school training in the form of finances and discrimination arising from race, social class, physical and mental disability. The data collected in this study point to an unbroken cycle of inequality and a worsening pattern with HE-funding cuts and inflation of student finance. Findings indicate that working-class students struggle to afford the costs of drama school education right from the start of the audition process.

Rebecca Atkinson-Lord (2018), a British theatre and film director, describes why she believes working class actors are priced out of an arts education:

> *We, as a broadly middle-class arts community, don't really want working-class people to engage with the arts on their own terms. We want them to engage with the arts in order to make them become more like us; we want them to learn to be quiet and observe the social rules around behaviour and dress. We want them to engage in intellectual 'high art' that speaks to the traditional ideals of the upper classes in the hope that through some bright lights and pretty costumes we'll be able to trick them into bettering themselves. If we really wanted more of the white, working class in our theatres we'd be making work that bounced off the sorts of stuff they do flock to engage with: gaming, epic visceral drama, big narratives, sex, violence, death and adrenaline; familiarity, recurring characters, comfortable methods of access, the fairy-tale, the pantomime, the big and bold and tribal and gut-wrenching. But we don't. We revive Chekhov in translations by David Hare. We do not want working-class people as they are, so we do not really want them at all.*

Atkinson-Lords' comment demonstrates how those from the middle-and-upper-class navigate their habitus within the performing arts field and ultimately dismiss the working-class individuals unless they are willing to change their habitus to 'fit in'. Atkinson-Lord reinforces the findings of this study of how middle-and-upper-class social structural formations are propagated throughout society and how, in turn, they detrimentally impact performing arts education for those from working-class

backgrounds, hindering upward social mobility within the arts. *Brook et al* (2020) posit that absolute mobility has gone down, but also that the labour market has changed: there are less 'traditional' working class jobs now than there were in the 1960s, which means that relative mobility has remained the same. What has changed is that currently there is less government support and rents are much higher.

The findings indicate that drama schools attempt to '*strip students of their identities'* (**DS4**) by '*becoming a blank canvas'* (**DS7**) in turn confirming that the middle-and-upper-classes '*do not want working-class people as they are, so we do not really want them at all'.* The data from this study support what Atkinson-Lord says here: in order for middle-class taste makers to continue to produce the work that they do, they need vocational arts education to continue to be a closed shop at the top. Data from this study show that this exclusion is not limited to working-class students, but also includes discrimination against people based on their race or disability.

As mentioned in chapter 1 of this study, the way we define culture and who consumes it reflects social inequality, and middle-class tastemakers do not want the working-class to be a part of that cultural production or consumption; further demonstrating strong class divides not only within the creative industries but also within wider society. An example of this divide is how the minority of the population are the ones who '*attend artforms including theatre, classical music, opera, ballet, jazz, and exhibitions'* (Brook et al, 2020: p.2) along with participation in '*painting, playing instruments, singing, dancing, writing, and performing'*, they are only done by '*a minority of the population'*. The message from government, as well as arts and cultural organisations is how culture is good for you. It brings communities together and improves your education, which in turn gets you higher wages during your career. Culture will transform your village, town, or city for the better. Culture is what make countries successful (Brook et al, 2020: p.1). That in mind, with arts education and culture having such a positive impact on an individuals' circumstances, it must therefore be on offer for the majority to partake in and consume and not only a privilege of the middle-and upper-classes. **Recommendation 4** addresses the issue of elitism in arts education which, along with class discrimination, is a central theme within this study.

In response to **RQ2**, the findings of this study have informed 6 recommendations.

Recommendation 1 is regarding investment in performing arts education at FE and HE level, and the need to widen participation. The data collected within this study highlights a lack of funding and importance given to the performing arts and its impact on one's educational and holistic growth.

Drama school's admissions data is called 'transparency data', however it lacks transparency. To reveal potential discrimination against those from BIPOC and working-class backgrounds, **recommendation 2** is for drama schools and elite training providers to ensure the data is transparent and up to date; as can be seen in the data analysis, the last up to date transparency data was released in 2019. This has come from the data collected regarding barriers to access and success within drama school training and its lack of inclusivity towards BIPOC and working-class actors.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted drama schools' ability to be more flexible regarding auditions and auditions fees; this is demonstrated within the analysis chapter when discussing class and finance barriers. The data collected regarding these barriers along with the cost of audition fees and how they price out those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, has informed **recommendation 3**, which is to reduce or remove drama school audition fees.

Classism and elitist views held within arts education policy has been discussed at length within this study, both in chapter 2 regarding social mobility and arts education and also within the data analysis chapter. **Recommendation 4** is for government to address elitism in education policy. By only offering arts education within private school education whilst at the same time discussing the importance of an arts education on a student's holistic growth, only exacerbates the divide in educational offer for rich and poor students. By transmitting these values and within educational policy, it normalises the rich having open access and better opportunities in every aspect of life, such as education, cultural and social advantage, housing and employment opportunities.

Chapter 1 discusses the BTEC restructure and HE funding cuts to the arts, which, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, highlights how those from working-class backgrounds are those who are primarily affected. **Recommendation 5** is

regarding making HE more attractive to students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds and for elite institutions to recruit more working-class students.

This study has demonstrated that social mobility within the arts is a systemic problem, but it is also not the only reason why those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds have difficulty with improving their life chances. Education is not the sole driver of improving one's social mobility. **Recommendation 6** concerns the need for government to invest not only within the arts, but also to invest in poorer regions of the UK. As discussed in chapter 2, one's familial environment, cultural capital, access to early years education, affordable housing and the cost of living are all factors which need to be taken into account. Recommendation 6 discusses this in further detail.

Recommendation 1: Invest in performing arts education to widen participation

6.1 Performing Arts in Further and Higher Education

FE Colleges have recently been subjected to a process of area evaluations, which has resulted in college mergers to decrease duplication and boost efficiency. A government priority has also been placed on apprenticeship training, which has resulted in an increase in the amount of work-based learning. The extent to which the sector fulfils the demands of the larger economy has become increasingly important, with words like "clear line of sight to work" being used to describe how FE learning should connect to employment. There is also a greater emphasis on Math and English. Following a recent financial reform, all 16-19-year-olds are now required to pursue either apprenticeships or 'study programmes' (Education & Skills Funding Agency, 2021). Rather than being funded for individual qualifications, learners are now funded for a tailored package which includes:

- substantial qualifications or work experience
- Maths and English for students who have not achieved grade A*-C GCSE in these subjects
- high quality work experience or work preparation
- added value non-qualification activity that supports the students' goals and is integrated into the study programme. (www.feadvice.org.uk)

The emphasis on 'high quality work experience' has meant the demise of performing arts courses, especially in regions such as the North East. The new technical levels at colleges have resulted in a huge cut to arts provision, irrespective of the government saying that they will not cut Performing Arts BTECs if there is not an alternative available. Despite this, there are colleges in all regions of the North East which have reported negative effects since the implementation of the new T Level roll out since September 2020, due to changes at senior level in each college. Programme leaders and tutors from four colleges in Northumberland, County Durham and Tyne and Wear have spoken out and the main through line is consistent – performing arts do not play a role in each college's plan for the future and the local economy; unless recruitment is high on the Performing Arts course, they will be phased out by 2030.

Performing arts foster creativity and are the playgrounds in which students learn. It has been proven in previous research with the likes of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton whose focus was implementing drama in state school curriculums through a method named 'mantle of the expert', which aims to expand pupils' thinking about how they might operate in the world (Aitken, Viv, 2013: p34). This study has demonstrated that the privileged see the arts as integral to their own children's growth and success. St Paul's school, which is the top independent school in the country, places great value on creative subjects which are fully integrated into and enhance its academic curriculum (stpaulsschool.org.uk). Each one of the creative subjects, Art, Music and Drama, has its own designated building – a state school may not even have all three on the curriculum. St Paul's school believes that by each subject having its own building *'allows for complete synergy between academic study and practical creativity'.* It believes that drama itself:

> *…fosters community and facilitates communication; it breeds both self-analysis and self-discipline and allows the individual to integrate more fluently with the world around them.* (stpaulsschool.org.uk)

This shows just how important it is to foster creativity and how independent schools value the arts and stress the need for a co-curriculum for elite pupils in order '*to turn out well-educated, tolerant and intellectually curious young adults'* (www.brightoncollege.org.uk).

Failing to provide arts education to all pupils, rich or poor, is detrimental to the UK economy: Durham Commission on Creativity and Education (2020) argues that education needs to do more to meet the country's need for creative skills and enable the creative industries to be more diverse. Shortages of workers are forecast unless we can equip young people with the right skills needed to meet the changing work environment (Durham Commission, 2020: Edge Foundation, 2018). As confirmed in a 2021 paper called *Social Mobility in the Creative Economy: Rebuilding and levelling up?* conducted by Heather Carey, Dr Dave O'Brien and Dr Olivia Gable, if the creative industries were more socio-economically diverse, there would be 263,200 additional working-class people in the sector. If the majority of jobs which will be available in 2030 require the need for freedom of expression, tolerance, resilience, imagination and collaboration (The Durham Commission, 2021), then these skills should not be available only to the affluent few.

Further Education Performing Arts is a vocational training route which allows those who come from the state education system to train in something which they love and want to do as a career; by taking that only training route away, especially in culturally, economically and socially deprived regions, such as the North East, then the government implies that the youth of these regions do not deserve to enjoy the benefits of arts education that are available to more affluent youth. The levelling up campaign is meant to be about what is best for the people of the country and improving regional mobility, but instead all that can be seen is how 'build back better' is about keeping the rich, rich, and maintaining the door of access and opportunity firmly shut to those from the working and (even more so now) middle classes. Without training routes such as BTECS in Performing Arts, especially in regions such as the North East, the arts will cease to exist and diversity in the creative industries will remain stagnant and the class divide will continue to expand; further exacerbating the divide between rich and poor between the south and north of England.

Due to the restriction of contact hours for a degree programme, the majority of students at BTEC prefer to move away to attend drama school or change their line of study due to a lack of training provision in the performing arts in the North East. The closest vocational training route into the performing arts is a one-year course for 18-

25year olds with Project A[126]. It is a northern school for drama based at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle Upon Tyne and awards a diploma at the end of study. It was established for students to gain the skills needed to forge a sustainable pathway or career in the arts. Project A is a not-for-profit company, so all fees go back into delivering the course, of which is heavily subsidised to make it as accessible as possible to anyone who wants to train with them. That said, it only takes on small cohorts of 15 students, similar to a drama school, so each year it is very competitive and difficult to gain a place, along with an annual cost of £1665. The cost is much cheaper than any other vocational training provision and it can be paid in three instalments of £665, £650 and £350 respectively.

As discussed in **chapter one**, for those wanting to train vocationally at drama school, some funding is available through tuition fee loans and DaDA funding is available for those who are seen as 'exceptional', but those wanting to train in musical theatre can only do so at a handful of institutions all of which charge higher fees, narrowing who is able to study and train there. Ultimately, without outside funding vocational courses will cease to exist and considering the lack of funding the Arts Council receives for areas such as the North East, private or tertiary courses still have to run in order to offer any access to the arts at all. This narrows the playing field regarding who gains a place as it cuts out those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As Penny Mordaunt (2018) says in the DFID Education policy, having access to [arts] education transforms lives. It opens the door to greater jobs and well-informed health decisions for future generations. At its best, it improves the lives of disadvantaged and marginalised children and contributes to the development of more meritocratic communities. Echoing this and what was briefly discussed in **chapter two**, we do not live in a meritocratic society if equality of access to opportunity does not exist at the most fundamental level of a child's education. If the stark divide between rich and poor continues to widen, in turn increasing child and adult poverty, amongst the increasing cost of living, then it could be said that both UK social mobility and meritocracy are the greatest façades of the century.

[126] https://www.theatreroyal.co.uk/project-a/about/

Recommendation 2: Ensure admissions data is transparent to reveal potential discrimination

6.2 Drama School entry by Social Class, Gender, Ethnicity

The findings of this study highlight the 2019 transparency data for the 10 drama schools within this study, **see appendix 5.3**. Each school records the number of applicants, the percentage of applications that received an offer, the percentage that accepted the offer and then the percentage of registrations. An individual's characteristics such as their gender and where they sit on the deprivation indices[127] are also recorded alongside their ethnicity, so a detailed picture should be available for each drama school and university.

The key to understanding the data is generic, as the template is created by the Office for Students (OfS) and can be seen here[128]. As can be seen from the 2018/19 **DS8** entrants, 350 applicants were classed as 'white' whereas those from a BIPOC community were recorded as 'N' (fewer than 24 applied), yet 2590 applicants were recorded as having an 'unknown' ethnicity. This raises questions as to whether the data are a true reflection of applicants, offers and registrations, or whether the institute is discriminatory towards the BIPOC community. It could, however, simply be an error of how the data were recorded – yet all other data seem to have been carefully stored and analysed. This is contrary to other schools, such as **DS3,** who recorded the data clearly. This data demonstrated that the amount of BAME applications was considerably lower, yet the school made more offers to BIPOC applicants than to white students. Only 170 applications came in for BIPOC students with an offer of training for 17% of those applications, as opposed to 5% of the 1,460 applications from white applicants. Interestingly, 11% of the BIPOC students registered and began their training as opposed to just 3% of the white applicants. Furthermore, only 310 applicants came from areas of high deprivation with a 6% acceptance and registration rate compared to 1,200 from affluent areas with only a

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127 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/579151/English_Indices_of_Deprivation_2015_-_Frequently_Asked_Questions_Dec_2016.pdf

128

Key	
N/A	Not applicable as no applicants to this mode of study
N	24 or fewer students in this population
DP	Data suppressed for data protection reasons

5% and 4% acceptance and registration rate respectively. As can be seen, **DS4** is similar to **DS3** with regard to applications, offers, acceptances and registrations.

DS8 data highlights incompetence with regard to the collection and storing of data which can be a used as an example institution which upholds the barriers found in this study. The data for **DS3** demonstrates an attempt to level the playing field for those from poor socio-economic backgrounds but both **DS3** and **DS4** need to reduce their tuition fees to break down financial barriers to drama school training. The national fee cap is £9,250 and most drama schools in this study do not charge above that, yet **DS3**, **DS4** and **DS8** charge almost double. If an institution is already elite by reputation and accessibility, whether that be due to the audition processes or opportunity of provision, then they should make it a priority to change and break the financial barrier to access by charging the same as other schools because the competition for a place still exists and by imposing such high tuition fees of over £15,000 a year will only make them playing fields of the wealthy; thus, reinforcing social structures of the upper-classes making the habitus of the school upper-class.

As well as the race, class and financial barriers to access, discussed at length in this study, it is apparent that transparency data may not be collected correctly which presents another barrier of perception to this study. After having spoken with a variety of lecturers at these institutions, the data collected may not be a true reflection of the school, its practices and its students and unless collected and stored correctly, the data and the perception of the arts education landscape will continue to be skewed, in turn prohibiting the understanding of where the pit falls are and how to fully address the problems. The transparency data do not allow one to see whether those who registered stay on the course or their journey throughout training and their destination data upon completion; the attainment data are available, but more often than not I was presented with N/A or N as opposed to real time data. Having access to all drop out and destination data would help to monitor social mobility within arts training along with understanding the landscape of vocational arts training and its provision; therefore, enabling data to be monitored in real time, giving us a yearly overview of how to better improve provision and the barriers to access. The transparency data only show the number of applications, offers, acceptances and registrations and not the reasons why all offers are not accepted or followed through to registration– of course this would be down to the individual as to whether or not they would want to provide a reason why they cannot train vocationally- but it would

allow for trends and barriers to be identified and monitored more closely, allowing for policy to be more closely aligned to drama school needs.

Recommendation 3: Reduce or remove drama school audition fees

6.3 Drama school: the audition process

It is important to note here that what has come out of the study with regard to an arts education is split into two parts (i) access for all people to an arts education, irrespective of their socio-economic background and (ii) equality of access to HE vocational arts education. This sub section is focussing on the latter.

The findings from this study highlight financial and class barriers to access at drama schools which confirm the lack of working-class actors in the industry, as established by the papers cited in this study. A need to change the audition process and admissions policy is imperative. With class and money having been at the centre of debate over the past few years, great actors such as Dame Julie Walters have also campaigned for more working-class actors to be in UK theatres and onscreen. Walters (2015) says:

> *I was able to get my career started because I had a full grant to go to college, but kids now don't have those opportunities. If on top of that young actors are expected to work for years for free it shouldn't be a surprise that there aren't enough working-class actors.*

Some grants and scholarships are available to those from working class backgrounds, as discussed in this study, but only a small handful. Ultimately meaning that arts education continues to be a *'closed shop at the top'* (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014[129]).

Since the Second World War, the arts in general have been run by what Hassan Mahamdallie (2018), an arts policy maker and trainer specialising in diversity, who was the author of Arts Council England's The Creative Case for

[129] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/347915/Elitist_Britain_-_Final.pdf

Diversity, calls the '*middle class taste makers'*. When the Arts Council was created in 1946, arts policy was created by those from the middle class in turn marginalising those from poor socio-economic backgrounds, as Mahamdallie (2018) says:

> *…public subsidy was set up very quickly [and] became dominated by the middle classes and it was the middle classes who set the agenda for taste. That meant that the working-class was marginalised in terms of what kinds of art were seen to be valid and should be funded.*

He argues that this *'hidden hand of the taste-makers'* has shaped and promoted the funding and distribution of art considered to be valid, and marginalised other forms: so, opera has a higher status than ballroom dancing. As a result, not only is the rich cultural identity of large swathes of the population simply overlooked, but they are deemed to be under-engaged in the arts[130] (Gardner, 2018)

In the performing arts industry, it is an unspoken notion that doing unpaid work helps you establish networks and relationships with people and venues, which in turn opens up prospects for low-paid jobs. Nonetheless, unpaid labour and those low-paid occupations may or may not lead to greater chances in securing employment in the performing arts industry. Additionally, if you are from the working-class and lack access to financial safety nets, the benefits do not outweigh the risks.

As can be seen from the findings in **chapter 5** regarding post-employment opportunities, unless you '*have the family support that allows you to not work, attend auditions or work unpaid, it's almost impossible to build the levels of experience needed to gain employment in the wider industry*' (**Actor 3**). This echoes Mahamdallies' (2018) statement regarding the arts being governed by '*middle-class tastemakers'*, as those from middle-class backgrounds see '*unpaid work as an investment in their careers'* whilst their working-class counterparts see it as '*an unaffordable luxury*' (Brook et al, 2020: p.21). There is an associated prestige and social status which comes with working in the performing arts, yet it can be '*very low paid and highly precarious'* (Brook et al, 2020: p.16) however, they are still marked out as middle-class jobs.

[130] https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/lyn-gardner-is-british-theatre-guilty-of-failing-the-working-class

Findings in **chapter 5** demonstrate the need for financial barriers to drama school training to be broken down and a bridging programme to be formed during the first 6-months of post-training to ensure fair support for those from all socio-economic backgrounds going into employment. Mahamdallie (2018) posits that the only way to bring about change like this, especially for those from working-class backgrounds, is for big theatres to give up some of their funding so it can be directed towards young people at the grassroots of training and for '*working-class communities to build their own arts organisations'*. This is a bold idea, and arts patrons and organisations are unlikely to adopt it since doing so would mean renouncing control, influence and taste-making. As Mahamdallie (2018) says '*If you started to distribute art according to socio-economic equality, you would overturn the entire structure of the arts, how it is run*' and in turn changing who '*sets the agenda for taste'*[131].

The progress of diversity initiatives in the performing arts can be painfully slow when large organisations are left to implement change; so an immediate action needs to be focussed on to identify what can be done at a fundamental training level i.e., regarding drama school audition and fee policies. This recommendation pertains to the change that can be implemented now to support working-class students accessing drama school auditions and training. The Coronavirus pandemic was the catalyst for putting that change into motion. It has highlighted that drama schools have been *'slow to evolve'* and *'historic abuses have not been addressed quickly or effectively'* (Josette Bushell-Mingo, Principal of RCSSD, 2022) The impact of which will be discussed in the next sub section. For equality of access for everyone who applies to drama school, the audition process to get into drama school has to change. As **figure 12** demonstrated, a new audition framework alongside a one-off charge has been created with further recommendations for monitoring a students' training journey to counter any challenges or problems whilst at drama school, followed by the proposal of a 6-month bridging programme to support new graduates going into the performing arts industry.

The proposal was to implement one singular charge at the first stage of audition for all drama schools and this was suggested to the drama schools who

[131] Is British theatre guilty of failing the working class? [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/lyn-gardner-is-british-theatre-guilty-of-failing-the-working-class

were interviewed and at the time some schools dismissed the idea as *'not financially viable'* (**DS3**). Others were open to the idea, but it was not until drama schools were faced with the global pandemic that the real change happened. Everything went digital and so did drama schools. They were forced to change how they ran their schools, including auditions. The findings in this study highlighted how drama schools did not want to move out of their own habitus and comfort to change the audition process in order to be more accessible to all, as it was not in their best interest to do so. Nevertheless, they were forced out of their own habitus to ensure the security of their provision and employment. A new audition process has now been introduced by drama schools whereby the first round takes place online and the upfront costs have changed. Some schools now have a different process for auditions and with that comes reduced costs (**See Appendix 6.3**)

Drama schools have been forced to change how they operate, from their policy to pedagogy to auditions and registrations. Most schools have acknowledged their audition fees reinforced barriers to access and classed out actors at the initial stage in the process. Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) have not charged fees for their auditions during the pandemic and continue to do so, alongside Leeds Conservatoire who have:

> *…taken the lead in removing all of its audition fees to ensure that talented musicians and performers are not precluded from attending an audition due to their financial position.*

Leeds have gone one step further by offering:

> *…to refund travel expenses for applicants from low-income households, in order to reduce financial barriers within the application process.*

Professor Joe Wilson, Vice Principal & Director of Curriculum at Leeds Conservatoire, implemented this change from September 2020 and he believes that enabling access to all who want to study music and performing arts is a fundamental right and the audition stage is an:

> *…imperative part of the application process for our performance-based courses, and we do not want capable artists to be deterred due to a lack of financial support…[everyone] should be able to pursue their ambition based on their talent and creativity, without the cost of auditions being a barrier to success.*

83% of drama schools within the UK are associated with universities and charge the national fee cap, so they should be able to offer free auditions or auditions at a fraction of the cost. Even those which are privately funded have had to change their audition process and along with it the cost of auditioning, which highlights the ability to reduce audition costs.

By having minimalised the stages of audition and costs attached it not only breaks down barriers to access for those from working class backgrounds, but it means that transparency data can be better streamlined to track and monitor social mobility; and also enabling drama schools to identify other barriers to access within HE vocational arts Education. A further recommendation would be for all drama schools to adhere to the national fee cap. World class drama schools such as Yale school of drama has now become '*tuition fee free*[132]*'* and Juilliard has plans to follow suit. If such elite drama school provision is becoming tuition fee free, then surely UK drama schools can too?

Recommendation 4: Address elitism in education policy

6.4 Elitist education policy

A broader educational offer at both primary and secondary level would allow students to learn holistically as well as academically. This in turn would benefit those with different learning styles as well as increasing opportunity of the arts at GCSE. As can be seen from secondary provision in the independent schools discussed in this thesis, the focus is on choice. Yes, there are set core subjects, but then students can choose from a broad range of languages, arts, sports and

[132] https://news.yale.edu/2021/06/30/gift-david-geffen-yales-drama-school-goes-tuition-free

drama – that level of choice is not available in state education because it has been trimmed down to suit government strategy and economic growth – which does not focus on the individual and immediately cuts out the element of choice. The Government's new 'Build. Back. Better' policy wants to overhaul Further Education and T Levels to upskill and retrain adults and improve life chances to help regrow regional and national economy, in turn hoping to improve social mobility. This injection of spending, albeit it partially necessary, does not fix the problem. The misdirection of spending, by cutting funding to HE arts provision along with slicing secondary and sixth form curriculum opportunities, only exacerbates the rich and poor divide, in turn, as Reay (2017) suggests, breeding further resentment amongst social class relationships. The proposals put forward in Boris Johnson's manifesto have proved to be nothing more than a sticking plaster and have failed to address more entrenched social inequalities between the classes.

Recommendation 5: Make HE more attractive to students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds and recruit more working-class students

6.5 University provision and access

Elite HE Institutions such as the Russell Group, Post 1992 and vocational arts schools need to address social mobility within their institutions and make higher education (a) more attractive to those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds and (b) break down barriers to access by taking on more students from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, their elitist views detrimentally impact social mobility in education and within vocational arts provision at HE. Again, re-enforcing that only those from affluent backgrounds are 'allowed' access to higher earning jobs and salaries enabling them to be more upwardly socially mobile. There should be no more cuts to HE arts provision, money needs to be injected into these courses to cater for those who work better vocationally and to continue providing our arts rich culture and creative industries with the world's best

actors and performers. In turn, this continues to boost the country's GDP and maintain the £100 billion income per year to our economy.

Recommendation 6: Invest in poorer regions of the UK

6.6 Government spending

Education is not the sole driver of social mobility and even Britain's leading sociologist, John Goldthorpe (2016), emeritus professor at Oxford University, believes that without substantial reforms it never can be. It is the difference in one's home environment and opportunity to access which makes or breaks social mobility within the country. Poorer regions of the UK, especially ones impacted and decimated by Thatcherism, need greater investment to create better jobs, salaries and housing to boost upward social mobility and improve the aspirations and life chances of their inhabitants. For example, and as previously discussed, areas such as the North East suffer greatly and receive the minimum funding, therefore individuals within the region either stay in poverty or move away to enhance their life chances and those of their children.

The following sections of this chapter explore (i) the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the performing arts and (ii) recommendations for further research.

6.7 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the performing arts

The performing arts sector was badly impacted by Covid-19 social distancing measures: theatres were closed, and some staff were put on the government's furlough scheme[133] while others lost their jobs. The arts and entertainment sub-sector saw a 60% decline in output during 2020, with very little recovery after the initial fall in output following the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 (see Figure 59). In addition, the global pandemic widened the gap between the rich and the poor: *Education in England: Annual Report* (2020) stated that the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers had stopped closing for the first time in over a decade. In light recent A Level results, Sir Kevan Collins said in a BBC News

[133] Government scheme which pays 80 per cent of employees' wages for the hours they cannot work in the pandemic.

interview (2021) that the *'educational legacy of Covid could be growing inequality'.* What can be seen is the widening gap of opportunities and attainment between private and state school students, but this is not new for drama schools[134]. Sir Kevan went on to say it '*is a deep problem in our system and one that seems to be growing'.* So, what does this mean for graduates of performing arts today? It is very difficult to gain employment in theatre, film and TV at the best of times, but in the wake of the pandemic with so many opportunities now greatly diminished, the future looks bleak. University students studying acting and musical theatre may have a better chance of securing work due to the academic nature of their courses, but students at drama school might find things much harder, as the performing arts sector will take a few years to recover from the pandemic.

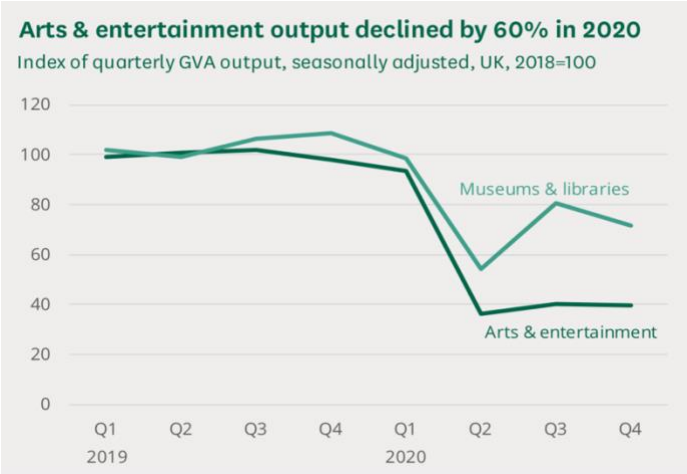

Figure 12 – Decline in Arts and Entertainment Output
Source: ONS, low-level aggregates, 30 September 2020, series KKB3, KKB7, KK05.

6.8 Suggestions for future research

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2016) conducted a study which said that the social background of those *'running Britain'* highlighted elitism which was so embedded in Britain that it could be called *'social engineering'.* It could be said that then PM Boris Johnson's 'Levelling-Up' agenda was a way to ensure that the privileged have sole access to the arts, thereby continuing to widen the gap between rich and poor.

[134] It is worth noting here that private schools maintained the arts on their curriculum and institutions such as Eton, design their week around the arts and sports, as can be seen in chapter two

Over the past decade, more and more barriers to access and success within the performing arts have presented themselves resulting in a narrower arts provision in schools and communities, making the arts the preserve of the elite. According to academic Sam Friedman, who has examined who gets to the top in professions from accountancy to acting in his book, *The Class Ceiling*, co-written with Daniel Laurison, he discusses the lack of opportunities – or simply a narrower stratum of opportunities for working-class actors – results in unsustainable careers. (Gardner, L, 2018). What is more '*those who get to stay on the tightrope are the ones who get to make sustainable careers*'. As presented in **chapter 5** and further discussed in **recommendation 3**, only those from affluent backgrounds can sustain a life in London without having to work or doing unpaid work. Further research is needed to create a bridging programme to analyse how students can be supported in their first 6-months or year after leaving vocational training. The programme would need to look at what each school could provide to help *all* students, with a primary focus on working-class undergraduates, gain employment in the performing arts sector.

6.9 Overall Conclusion

This thesis concludes that:

- The arts have been marginalised in state schools to make way for more STEM subjects that align with the government's 'Build Back Better plan' for a science-led Britain.
- Private schools understand the importance of the arts for personal and professional development, and therefore implement a co-curriculum.
- Research suggests that "*cultural programmes [help] in building young people's confidence and self-esteem"*[135] and that *"creativity, critical thinking, decision-making and complex information processing are going to grow in the coming decade"*[136] This confirms the need to ensure that the arts are accessible to everyone, irrespective of their socioeconomic background. It is proven that creativity, play and collaboration are key skills for future careers and for a better life for the children and people of the country (Durham

[135] https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/policy-practice-round-up-november-2021/

[136] https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/skill-shift-automation-and-the-future-of-the-workforce

Commission, 2020). In order for children to learn these skills, they need to be exposed to the arts and have them at the core of their learning on a daily basis. Making the arts a part of the curriculum will level up the playing field.

- Many private courses and HE education courses actively try to break down barriers to access but are ultimately governed by the funding they receive from patrons, the arts council and government, which means that they face discrimination and barriers themselves when trying to create equality of access. This has led to hundreds of job losses in HE performing arts departments.
- Most drama schools have been called out for being elitist, classist and propagating middle-and-upper-class social structural formations.

According to Alistair Smith, an editor of The Stage, in his article *Drama schools are central to theatres rebuilding programme (2021),* specialist drama schools have become outdated and exclusive institutions that are no longer training students for the reality of 21st-century workplaces, and this is reflected in the audition processes and what is expected of students in order to gain a place, as discussed in this thesis. The backlash drama schools received during BLM, pushed them to rethink their policies, internal structures and processes and audition fees. Since then, changes are yet to be seen regarding their policies and pedagogies, but some changes have been made regarding audition processes and costs. Robert Price, a teacher with extensive experience both at RADA and LAMDA believes the change in pedagogies *'raises questions around representation'* and even though he understands '*the development of inclusive pedagogies is necessary and valuable'* it shouldn't come with *'a disregard for expertise*' (Gardner, The Stage, 2021). The likes of Gavin Henderson, the ex-principal of Royal Central, believes by changing policies and implementing quotas they '*would reduce the quality of our student intake'* (Gardner, The Stage, 2021). This attitude reinforces the findings from this study and Friedman's (2017) view that drama schools are for the privileged few.

Price (2021) perhaps has a valid point when he states:

> *[I'm] not convinced the drama school model that has evolved over 120 years of continuous experimentation, and is considered to be world class,*

should be changed overnight and that moving swiftly without thought is useful. Why not build forward on the knowledge and expertise that has been gathered by a whole bunch of people over a long time, rather than try to reinvent acting all over again? (The Stage, 2021)

The same applies to all universities, whether they are Oxbridge, the Russell Group, or post 92: pedagogical and organisational restructure to address discrimination should be implemented across the sector thoroughly over time and not as a quick and tokenistic response to concerns over HE's public image. Only time will tell whether the changes made by drama schools will stick and be a positive change or whether these changes are merely a passing nod towards the concept of social mobility.

The government's '*lack of commitment to the creative industries pipeline through education, training and HE*' (Baroness Featherstone, 2021) echoes throughout this study and demonstrates the lack of importance given to not only the arts but moreover ordinary people of England. What would happen if these elite institutions became open to all who wish to train vocationally? Would that diversify our creative industries, which have shown '*the fastest growth of any sector*' (The Durham Commission, 2021) for the UK economy? If performing arts, specifically, were given the same importance and funding as STEM courses at universities, knowing that arts subjects would level the playing field, would that improve our economy and the social mobility of the country and provide equal opportunity for all? If vocational training in the arts and access to high culture and arts education remain available to only the wealthy, then our stage and screens will never be representative of our diverse country and there will continue to be '*a consistent, homogenous group of individuals dominating the arts*' (Nina Gold, 2017). This approach will also continue to hold the country to ransom by enforcing class inequalities, suppression of the majority so that the few can enjoy a rich and full life whilst the majority continue skinny living[137].

This present study comes in the wake of the Panic! 2018 project, which also investigated inequalities in the cultural workforce, and it released a paper titled,

[137] Skinny Living is a term that describes the financial reality and lifestyle of the working class. Hard graft on a low income with a lust for life, passion for family and an optimistic attitude about the future

Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries which was led by sociologists from the universities of Edinburgh and Sheffield (Createlondon.org, 2018). According to the paper, the arts are not diverse in terms of ethnicity, class and social mobility, and it finds that the music, performing and visual arts sector have particularly low numbers of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) workers at only 4.8% (O'Brien, D, Brook, O & Taylor, M: 2018). It also poses the question, *"To what extent is the cultural sector delivering on representing individuals, communities and the nation if Panic! data suggests its social networks are relatively homogenous and coherent?"* A question that since this paper was released in 2018, no further study has been able to answer. However, the interviews and surveys within this thesis seem to confirm the data provided within the *Panic! 2018* study.

The aims and objectives set out in this thesis have highlighted critical areas within state and private schools which need to be transformed, as well as drama school provision and admission policy. The contribution of this research focuses on drama school training and the availability of drama school provision, and future studies on HE vocational training will build on the findings of this present study. The data set gathered allowed for the completion of an original piece of work that will help shape public perception of drama school offerings. The results support the theory that poor upward social mobility in arts education is mostly due to access constraints within vocational performing arts training, although this study also identifies discrimination as a problem within this training.

One of the greatest constraints of this study has been the lack of empirical research on social mobility within performing arts education. There are no studies that concentrate on vocational performing arts training, notwithstanding Friedman's (2017) research on the class ceiling in British acting and the Acting Up report (2017) by the Labour government. Since the epidemic, most of the federation schools have come under scrutiny, and more research is needed to better understand the offerings of drama schools and the effects they have on their students and alumni. It would also be reasonable to claim that it would be worthwhile to collaborate with these institutions to provide prospective students with transparency and to dispel the misconception that most people have about the services they provide. By conducting further research in this area, solutions can be put in place to prevent drama schools from enforcing barriers to access and to monitor real time change.

This research has brought to the fore that no matter what injustices take place in society, education is not a tool used by government to 'level up' or improve social mobility, but in fact education is a tool wielded by the elite to control and enforce rules on the majority. The UK, especially England, has uncharitably repressed the life chances of its people by offering a stifling and ever more constricted curriculum in state schools to gain control over working- and middle-class children's access to cultural capital and to constrain their habitus.

This thesis highlights that (i) there are barriers to access and success within drama school training and the wider performing arts industry, not just educationally, but also socially, economically and culturally and (ii) social mobility is hindered because of these barriers but that other factors impact one's ability to be upwardly mobile in society, such as housing costs and employment cold spots, which are placed on the masses by governance – in turn reinforcing the lack of meritocracy in the UK and in arts training. It seems that with the current government agenda, only the privately educated are able to enjoy an arts rich curriculum and stand the best chance of being upwardly socially mobile. Lambrook school in Windsor, the school chosen by the Prince and Princess of Wales for their children, state:

> *Our rounded arts education offers our children a means for self-expression and a platform to build their confidence whilst at the same time; supporting and extending their academic studies…opportunities are continually sought for the children to rehearse and perform in music, dance and drama.* (lambrookschool.co.uk)

As Baroness Bonham-Carter (2023) states '*surely what is offered for Princes and Princesses should be offered to all*?' and the Baroness goes on to quote actor Mark Rylance (2022) who says:

> *If in modern day England, an institution like Eton deems drama important enough to have two theatres, why are we allowing government to cut arts education from the life of the rest of our young people?*

The answer would be to unite and fight against it. As Josette Bushell-Mingo, the new principal of RCSSD said in her keynote at the Future of Theatre conference (2022):

> *If arts training is to survive, we must come together to push back against government policy that threatens to push the life out of us and leave a few privileged institutions housing archaic and dangerous training…Can we do this together? The future of drama training is at the beginning or possibly the end.*

The End

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - The Principals and Values of the Federation of Drama Schools

The guiding hallmarks that underpin the training provided by partner schools are as follows:

- A clear demonstration of compliance with the Core Principles as appropriate to the specific objectives of each programme
- Can prove considerably more than 15 years of graduating 3rd year students on professionally oriented programmes, within an institution that is externally scrutinised by at least one independently constructed and authoritative body who is objectively able to adjudicate quality of provision
- At least one full 3-year performance/ production arts programme that offers a recognised UK qualification with at least 900 hours a year of contact time/teaching, and is validated/accredited according to external criteria that are professionally and vocationally scrutinised by an external body
- Can evidence that graduate destinations from all professionally configured programmes within the institution's provision demonstrate specialised professional employment credits, facilitate direct access to employment gatekeepers/bodies, contribute to substantial long term career trajectories and recognise the plurality and entrepreneurialism that are intrinsic to 21st century creative careers
- Able to prove a Faculty of Professionally experienced staff for the core Programme, who can demonstrate appropriate professional, vocational and academic skillsets according to their position and the specifics of the programme of study
- Able to demonstrate adequate and safe studying environment, which acknowledges the particular remits of creative performance.

Appendix 1.1 - Alumni Table

Drama School:	Notable Alumni:
Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA)	Dominic Burgess, Gaby French, Zach Hart and Sarah Parish.
Arts Educational School (Arts Ed)	Poppy Drayton, Laura Haddock, Mitchell Hunt. *Many others have gone on to star in top West End Musicals such as, Hamilton, Les Misérables, Wicked, Matilda, Dreamgirls, Aladdin, Fame etc.
Birmingham Conservatoire (BCU)	Jimi Mistry, Adam Lawrence, Dhafer L'Abidine.
Bristol Old Vic Theatre School	Daniel Day-Lewis, Olivia Colman, Jeremy Irons, Samantha Bond and Patrick Stewart.
Drama Centre	Tom Hardy, Emilia Clarke, Michael Fassbender, Colin Firth and Gwendoline Christie.
Drama Studio London	Emily Watson, Pip Torrens, Forest Whitaker and Leland Orser.
East 15	Annette Badland, Peter Armitage, Lee Armstrong, Blake Harrison and Ayoola Smart.
Emil Dale	Successful Musical Theatre graduates have gone on to perform in West End productions such as, Bat out of Hell, Kinky Boots, Sister Act and they have also worked for Disney, ITV and popular TV drama Call the Midwife.
Guilford School of Acting (GSA)	Emma Barton, Tom Chambers and Brenda Blethyn OBE.
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	Daniel Crag, Lily James, Ewan McGregor, Lesley Sharp, Jodie Whittaker, Dominic West, Damien Lewis, Sarah Lancashire and Hayley Atwell.
Italia Conti Academy	Russell Brand, Naomi Campbell, Kelly Brooke, Julianne Hough, Derek Hough and Patsy Kensit.
Leeds College of Music	N/A *New courses starting in Sep' 2019.
Liverpool institute for Performing Arts (LIPA)	Jamie Lloyd, Sandi Thom and Leanne Best.
London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art	Hermione Norris, Jonathan Bacon and Harriet Walter.

(LAMDA)	
Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)	Julie Walters, Steve Coogan, John Bishop, Richard Griffiths, David Threlfall, Amelia Bullmore and John Bradley.
Mountview Theatre Academy	Eddie Marsan, Sharon Small, Denise Welch, Callum blue, Louisa Harland, Amanda Holden and Brendan Coyle.
Oxford School of Drama	Claire Foy, Lee Boardman, Annabel Scholey and Catherine McCormack.
Rose Bruford College	Gary Oldman, Lake Bell, Stephen Graham, Michelle Margorian, Robert Pugh and Beth Goddard.
Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA)	Peter O'Toole, Alan Rickman, Vivien Leigh, Joan Collins, Kenneth Branagh, Ralph Fiennes, Gemma Arterton and Anthony Hopkins.
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD)	Riz Ahmed, Hugh Bonnevile, Rupert Everett, Patsy Rodenberg, Carrie Fisher, Dan French, Jennifer Saunders and Vanessa Regrave.
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)	Richard Madden, James McAvoy, David Tennant, Ruby Max, Maureen Beattie and Alan Cumming.
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD)	Kimberley Nixon, Anthony Hopkins, Dougray Scott, Lucy Gaskell and Aneurin Bernard.

Appendix 1.2 - Drama schools with regional auditions

ALRA	Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts
Arts Ed	Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA)
Bristol Old Vic	Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD)
Guildhall	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)
Italia Conti Academy	Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD)
LIPA	
LAMDA	

Appendix 1.3 - The audition process

1.3.1 Interviews, auditions and recalls

Receiving an audition for a drama school is exciting but daunting. Once an audition date has been secured, either the school asks the student to choose a date or they give one, and preparation then takes place. Due to the volume of applications, most schools run two to three rounds of auditions and some even hold four stages before making a decision on an applicant. During the first audition, they may offer a recall in the afternoon. The recall stages vary at all institutions. Generally, it is workshop based and a way to see if the person auditioning is able to work well with others; if they are able to respond well to redirection. It may be on the afternoon of the first audition or it may be on a different day; there may be one recall or there may be four. Doing research will help to prepare for when to expect each recall at each institution auditioned for. Remembering that the interview is always the last stage.

Many of these establishments receive between five and eight thousand applications a year so the audition process is a thorough one. The first round of auditions has a relatively large number of auditionees and, school depending, they may or may not offer workshops. Each school is different and where one may offer a dance, acting and singing workshop another may just want to see the student perform their prepared monologues.

For an audition, it is standard practice that the student learns at least two monologues; one from Shakespeare or from the equivalent time, and one from a contemporary play, generally post 1965. Each centre is different, and some may want them to be two minutes long, others just one minute. It is always best to check each institutions website for guidance on their audition standards. It is advisable that three monologues be learned in case the panel wish to see something else. For a musical theatre audition, one monologue is needed along with two songs, one contemporary (post 1965) and one ‘legit’. A legit song is a musical theatre song from what is known as ‘The Golden Age’ of Broadway, between 1943 and 1964. The reason for this is due to the two different genres of musical theatre, the traditional ‘legit’ song which uses traditional voice training methodologies and then the ‘contemporary’ developed voice training used today. It is imperative that each school’s requirements are adhered to and not altered in any way. That refers to what

clothing and footwear to wear, whether make-up is or is not acceptable, piercings, the length of monologues and songs, and what monologues and songs to have prepared. Moseley (2019) offers sound advice to those auditioning:

- Do not wear excessive make-up. The rule is, if we can see it's there, it's too much!
- Avoid jewellery of all kinds.
- Attend to personal hygiene. Stale body odour will be unlikely to count in one's favour.
- One of the most important things to remember is good timekeeping. Do not be late!

Being late in this industry will result in a person losing their job. There is a saying which is, if you are early, you are on time. If you are on time, you are late. And, if you are late, you are fired! The same applies to auditions. ALWAYS be early. If the audition is at ten o'clock in the morning in London and the applicant lives in Newcastle, then travel the night before and stay overnight. This allows for any possible transport issues and allows time to settle the nerves and prepare accordingly for the audition. The cost of applying and attending an audition can be costly if travel is involved, this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

For a university application, most want to see one monologue of the candidate's choice. It can be Shakespeare, a contemporary piece (this depends on the school) or even a one-minute monologue from a film. Normally, they will hear the monologue and then an interview with one or two members of staff on the course, will take place. This is much different to that of drama schools. At an audition at one of the 22 schools, there would not be an interview until either the third or fourth round, once auditionee numbers have depleted. At a university interview, there is an audition and then the interview and that will be it; the wait time to find out if successful, is much shorter than that of a drama school. The wait can be up to two weeks to find out if an applicant has received a recall whereas at university there is either acceptance on the day or an email and/ or post confirmation one to two weeks after the interview. The process of going to drama school is much more rigorous and intensive than that of a university as they have limited spaces and thousands of applicants.

1.3.2 Monologue choices

For the drama school audition, you should have prepared between one and three monologues. Choosing the material can be very difficult. Most schools wish for the contemporary monologue to be reflective of who you are but at the same time you need to be able to distance yourself from the material. Some schools state the earliest period from which you can choose your modern piece, whether it be 1960, 1970 or post 2000. Some give the precise date. Audition panels do not like monologues which have overly sensitive material with strong themes such as rape, violence or political pieces. Some schools want you to perform in your own accent, others prefer received pronunciation (RP). Most schools prefer pieces which are in the moment and reactive rather than reflective pieces. Learning several choices can be very difficult so it is best to choose schools which have similar audition guidelines. For instance, if three schools want to hear a Shakespeare monologue in prose[138] then you would choose those schools as opposed to three different schools who want one in prose and two in blank verse[139], or vice versa. It is also advisable to choose a Shakespeare monologue which is in your cast ability, one which reflects your age and gender. If you are an eighteen-year-old female, for example, you would not choose to be a character such as Caliban from The Tempest. This is a common rule for most drama school auditions. Each panel will have their variations of what they prefer and what they perceive to be a 'good' audition. Moseley (2019) has a list of basic rules for choosing pieces, for example, for a contemporary piece he has eight rules to follow, some of which include:

1. Avoiding 'confessional' monologues, or speeches whereby the character is giving the audience a 'sob story'. Emotional 'wallowing' is difficult for the panel to watch and they would prefer a character with a genuine dilemma.
2. Stay away from themes such as sexual abuse or rape. There is a risk that the subject matter will overshadow the character and performance.
3. If possible, choose a piece where you have a genuine connection. A good starting point for these speeches is where there is a cultural, ethnic or regional pull.

[138] Ordinary language, everyday speech, is known as prose. Language which does not have the metrical structure of poetry.

[139] Blank verse is the opposite of prose. it contains no rhyme but has a rhythm to it. Shakespeare favoured a rhythmic pattern known as the Iambic pentameter. A ten-syllable line with the accent on every other syllable beginning with the second one.

4. Do not use speeches which you have done previously, say at GCSE level or in a production. These performances will have been learned in a particular way and they are always more difficult to alter.

Ensuring that each set of audition guidelines is adhered to per school applied for, is imperative:

> *All drama schools will expect you to demonstrate your commitment and assiduousness by carefully reading and following precise instructions* (Moseley, 2019)

Their audition do's and don'ts are there for a reason. By not adhering to them you may be perceived as rude, unwilling and lazy and most likely, you will not be offered a recall audition.

When learning the audition material, it is important to ensure that there is clarity in performance. Mapping the character's journey when delivering your speech is very important. Keys things to remember when choosing to learn a monologue for audition are:

1- Choose a piece which has a journey. The panel will want to see a performance which highlights emotional shifts, changes in thought process and any dilemmas that the character is facing. Do your research!

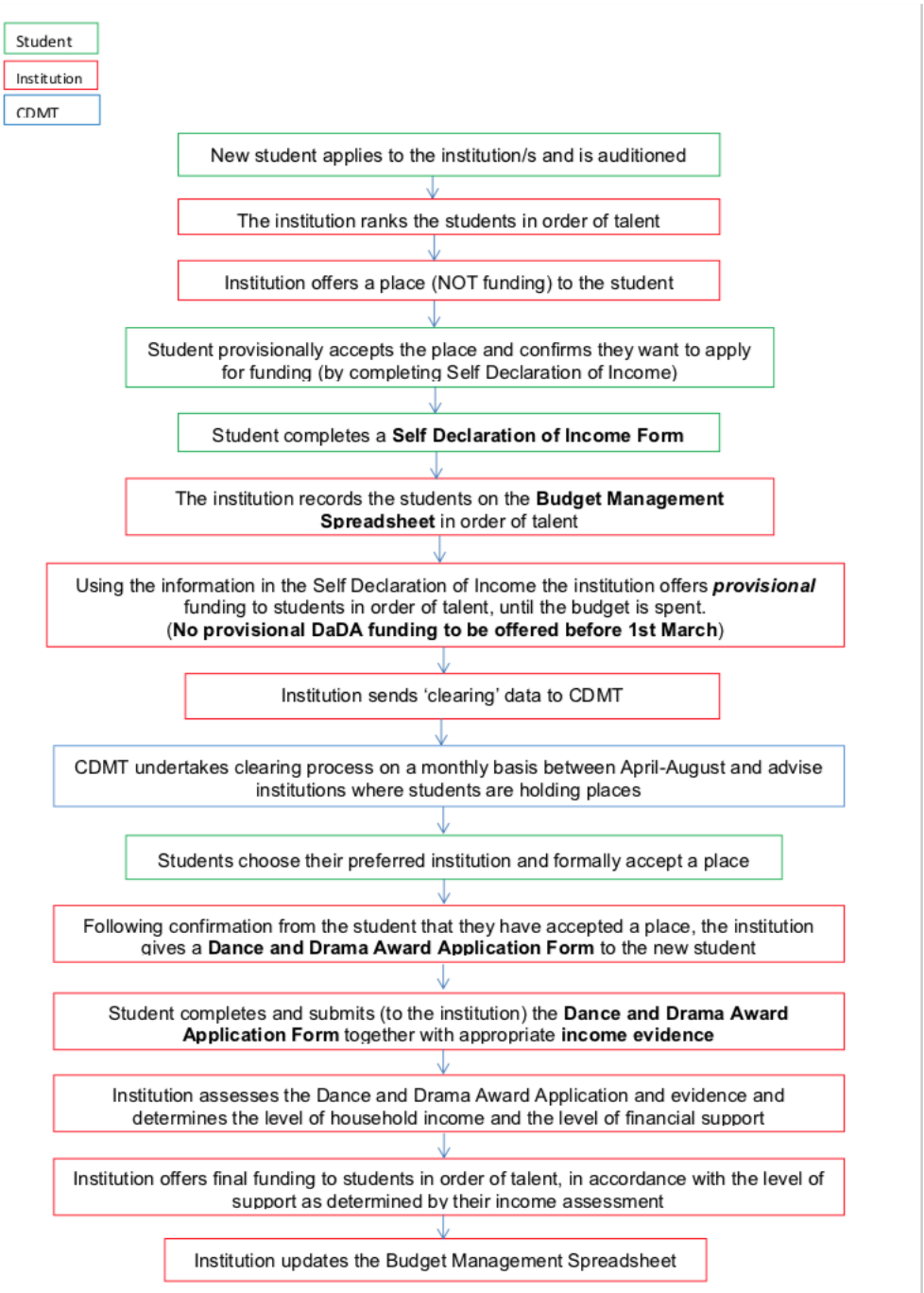
2- You MUST connect with the speech. Don't choose something which you feel will highlight your acting ability, forget acting, it is about becoming the character through doing; through feeling the words, thoughts and emotions.

3- It needs to be you who chooses the speech. No one else. Yes, by all means get advice along the way but as long as you have a connection with the piece and it is in your cast ability, then you are on the right track. REMEMBER, an audition is subjective.

4- When learning your monologue, consider who you are addressing. Never make eye contact with the panel. Always look above their heads or off centre. Think of the language of the speech, its pace, rhythm, tone and the emotion needed throughout. This will create a "vocal landscape" (Moseley, N. 2019) and add depth to your speech.

It is important to note here that the panel at any drama school are not looking at the speeches but rather at you. How you deliver your pieces, how well you work with others and how well you take direction are the key elements to any audition and understanding how those elements work can be a lengthy, but vital process.

Appendix 1.4 - DaDA Application process



Appendix 1.5 - Drama school fee table of all 22 FDS schools

Drama School	Audition Fees *Additional Fees	Tuition Fees (Per Annum) (Undergraduate only)	State or Private Funded. *DaDA's awarded
Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA)	£45 *Registration fees - £400	ALRA North - £9,300 ALRA South - £12,885	Private funded. * (Apply via their website)
Arts Educational School (Arts Ed)	£45 *Acceptance fee - £350	Musical Theatre -£15,360 Acting - £14,910 *Students are eligible to apply for student loans of up to £6,000 per year towards tuition fees. (gov.uk)	Private funded. * (Apply via their website)
Birmingham Conservatoire (BCU)	£46	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Bristol Old Vic Theatre School	UCAS fee *See UCAS guidance	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS Conservatoires)
Drama Centre	£50	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Drama Studio London	£47.50 *£1000 deposit, payable prior to course commencement.	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
East 15	* Additional costs for materials and field trips of up to approximately £650 per academic year.	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Emil Dale	£35	Musical Theatre - £12, 250	Premium Funded (UCAS)
Guilford School of Acting (GSA)	£45	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	£65	£9, 250	State-Funded (Apply via their website)

Italia Conti Academy	£45 *£250 (non-refundable before commencement, but returned in 2nd/3rd Year of programme)	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Leeds College of Music	N/A	£9,250	State Funded (UCAS)
Liverpool institute for Performing Arts (LIPA)	£45	£9, 250 * After you've been made an offer, they'll request a 25% deposit of your first-year tuition fee.	State-Funded (UCAS)
London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA)	£54	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)	£45	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Mountview Theatre Academy	£45	£14,410	Private funded. * (Apply via their website)
Oxford School of Drama	£45	£16, 890	Private funded. * (Apply via their website)
Rose Bruford College	£55	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA)	£46 for applications received on or before 13 December; and £76 for applications received from 13 December onwards.	£9, 000	State-Funded (Application via post)
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD)	£55	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS)
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)	£55	£9, 250	State-Funded (UCAS Conservatoires)

	*Application fee of £25		
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD)	£47 *Registration fee - £25	£9, 000	State-Funded (UCAS Conservatoires)

Appendix 2 - Academic offer for Eton College students

F Block (Year 9)	E Block (Year 10)	D Block (Year 11)
Everyone studies English, Mathematics, Latin, History, Divinity, Geography and all three Sciences, plus two modern languages chosen from French, German, Spanish, Russian, Japanese and Chinese. **Boys also follow a rotating programme involving Music, Art, Drama, ICT,** **PE and Design.**	**All boys** must study English and Mathematics, at least two of the three Sciences and at least one of the modern languages studied in F Block. The programme of ten GCSE subjects is then completed with choices as necessary from the other F Block subjects studied **plus** ***Classical Civilisation.**	The subjects chosen in E Block continue to GCSE or IGCSE, though some boys may reduce from ten to nine subjects. They are advised about possible implications for a balanced portfolio and university entrance.
Boys may also choose to study Classical Greek. They then choose their subject combination for E Block, in consultation with House Masters and Tutors.	A small number of Music Scholars and Exhibitioners may study nine rather than ten subjects. * Classical Civilisation is the **study of ancient Greek and Roman Civilisation**. It is the ultimate humanities subject, encompassing a huge variety of disciplines including literature, history, archaeology and art.	

Appendix 2.1 - Barnard Castle School Provision

Year 7 - 9	Year 10 - 11[140]
The Year 7 curriculum comprises of core and non-core subjects. Core subjects with the number of lessons allocated each week are: English with drama – 5 Reading – 1 Mathematics – 5 French – 4 Biology – 2 Chemistry – 2 Physics – 2 PSHE – 1 Two lessons per week are devoted to the non-core subjects of: Art, classics, computer science, design technology, geography, history, music, physical education and religious education. Year 7 pupils have five lessons of games per week and four sessions of independent, supervised study in the library or another classroom in which to complete prep, read or simply explore academic interests beyond the normal school curriculum.	All pupils study the following subjects: English Maths Biology, Chemistry and Physics One modern foreign language (two if a child excels at languages) Plus, three other subjects from the following list: Art Business Studies Classical Civilisation Computer Science Creative iMedia Design Technology Drama Geography History Latin Music Physical Education Religious Studies CoPE Award
There is a co-curriculum, known as 'Enrichment' which consists of: SPORT CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES CREATIVE ARTS CCF DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD	**Non-Examined Subjects and Lessons:** Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education (PSHCEE) Games Independent Study Periods

[140] https://www.barnardcastleschool.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/GCSE-Booklet-2021-2022.pdf

Appendix 2.2 - Barnard Castle school timetable.

Time	Monday - Friday
8.45	Pupils register with their tutor, usually in their house area.
8.55	Chapel or assembly, tutor time or house meeting
9.10	Morning lessons begin
11.30	Morning break
11.50	Morning lessons resume
13.00	**LUNCH**
13.50	Afternoon registration
15.55	End of teaching
16 – 17.00	Activities (Tutor time on Wednesdays)
17.10	End of school day
Time	**Saturdays**
8.45	Pupils register with their tutor, usually in their house area.
9.00	Morning lessons begin
10.20	Morning break
10.40	Lessons resume
12.00	End of school day

Appendix 4.3.7 – Participant Demographics

<table>
<tr><th>Instrument</th><th colspan="3">Sample</th></tr>
<tr><td>Stage 1: Survey</td><td colspan="3">Female – 31 (51.67%)
Male – 26 (43.44%)
Non-Binary – 1 (1.67%)
Prefer not to say – 2 (3.33%)

Ethnicity (48 / 60 respondents):
White - 37 (62%)
BIPOC – 8 (3%)
Asian – 3 (5%)
20% Did not disclose their ethnicity.

<u>Class</u>
Upper-class – 5 white
1 Asian

Middle-class – 25 white
1 BIPOC
2 Asian

Working-class – 19 white
7 BIPOC</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stage 2: Interview</td><td><u>Group A</u>
(Drama School Principals)
9 Male
1 Female

<u>Ethnicity:</u>
White - 100%</td><td><u>Group B</u>
(Student Interviews)
9 Males
6 Female

<u>Ethnicity</u>
White - 93%
BIPOC - 7%</td><td><u>Group C</u>
(Actor Interviews)
6 Male
2 Female

<u>Ethnicity</u>
White - 88%
BIPOC - 12%</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix 4.4 – Quantitative Survey

So, Drama School?

1. Social Mobility in British Acting and Musical Theatre

British Acting and Musical Theatre seem to be in the headlines a lot at the moment. Not just due to the pandemic and its impact on our industry, but also with issues surrounding representation.

Since 2014, the kinds of social groups which are excluded from Acting and Musical Theatre, have been major sources of media discussion. A research project conducted by Dr Sam Friedman, Dr Daniel Laurison and Dr Dave O'Brien highlighted issues within the Performing Arts industry and barriers to access; that said, the research conducted didn't penetrate drama schools and the reasons why barriers to access presented themselves, leaving many questions left unanswered.

This survey aims to delve deeper into issues raised from previous research and interviews with many top UK drama schools, notable actors and casting directors, to try to understand why there are barriers to access within our industry: is it a social mobility problem? or are the reasons much deeper rooted than we think...

1. How do you identify? *

- The picture can't be displayed. Male
- The picture can't be displayed. Female
- The picture can't be displayed. Non-Binary
- The picture can't be displayed. Prefer not to say

2. What is your ethnicity? *

3. Have you trained, are training, or been accepted into drama school?

- The picture can't be displayed. Yes
- The picture can't be displayed. No

4. How many schools did you audition for?

- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] 5
- [ ] 6+

5. What year did you audition?

6. What was the audition process like on the whole?

- [ ] Poor
- [ ] Fair
- [ ] Good
- [ ] Excellent

Comments:

7. Which schools did you audition for?

- [ ] Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- [ ] Arts Educational School
- [ ] LAMDA
- [ ] RADA
- [ ] LIPA

- [ ] Royal Central School of Speech or Drama
- [ ] Drama Centre
- [ ] Guildford School of Music and Drama
- [ ] Leeds College of Music
- [ ] Mountview Theatre Academy
- [ ] Oxford School of Drama
- [ ] Italia Conti Academy
- [ ] Guildhall School of Music and Drama
- [ ] Emil Dale Academy
- [ ] Bristol Old Vic Theatre School
- [ ] Birmingham Conversatoire
- [ ] ALRA
- [ ] East 15
- [ ] Other (please specify):

8. How many schools did you apply and audition for? Why?

9. If you have completed your training, do you think it has benefitted your career? Why / Why not?

10. If you are training, what is your experience like?

11. Have you faced or do you face any challenges whilst being at drama school?

12. Did / do you feel that your training provider was / is inclusive in their practice?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please give one example to support your answer:

13. If you have been offered a place to train at one of your selected schools, are you able to fund your studies for the full duration of the course?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not Sure

If you are not sure, please explain:

14. If you have completed your training or are currently in training, were / are you able to fund your studies?

☐ Yes
☐ No

15. How did you support / are you supporting yourself through training?

☐ Scholarship
☐ Student Loan
☐ Family
☐ Fund Raising
☐ DaDA
☐ Other (please specify):

16. Do you have any comments about drama school, the audition process, or life post drama school?

17. If you consider yourself to be part of a class system, where would you put yourself? (The answer options are the current five main groups in the UK class system) *

☐ Aristocrats
☐ Upper Class
☐ Middle Class

Working Class

Lower Class

If you feel you do not fit into these categories, please expand upon your answer:

Appendix 4.4.2a - Drama School Interview Questions (Group A)

1- Why do you charge audition fees?

2- Who devised the framework for auditions? are they reviewed and developed?

3- How much DaDA funding is allocated each year and what are the factors which determine how much is allocated?

4- Do many disabled students make it on to the Acting / Musical Theatre course and if so, are they able to be successful in gaining professional employment?

5- Nina Gold believes that 'acting has changed because Britain has changed' – inequality, privilege and class is at the heart of it. How far do you agree with this statement and why?

6- Current literature suggests that diversity within the industry lies solely with drama schools and access to drama school training – do you agree with this statement?

7- Where should changes happen in British Acting and Musical Theatre to help improve social mobility within HE performing arts training?

8- As an institution, what barriers to access do you face and how are they addressed?

9- How well structured is the collection of your transparency data?

Appendix 4.4.2b - Student Interview Questions (Group B)

1- Where have you auditioned / are you auditioning?

2- What were/ are the auditions like?

3- Were you given any feedback?

4- What advice would you give to those auditioning?

5- If you had to define your class status, what would that be?

6- What do you think are the biggest hurdles young actors face in the industry today?

7- Does your accent / gender / age / class restrict you in auditions or typecast you?

8- Do you still act?

9- Nina Gold believes that 'acting has changed because Britain has changed' – inequality, privilege and class is at the heart of it. How far do you agree with this statement and why?

10- All the world's a stage, but not all the players are equal' a strap-line from your documentary about working class actors – can you expand on this?

11- What is your view on Drama Schools?

12- What do you consider most challenging about acting?

13- What are some of your personal and/or professional goals for the future?

14- From a professional context, what do you feel your greatest weakness is?

15- When you suffer a setback, how does that emotionally affect you and your craft?

16- What were / are the biggest setbacks you have faced so far on your drama school journey?

Appendix 4.4.2c - Actor Interview Questions (Group C)

1- Have you trained professionally?
2- What do you think are the biggest hurdles actors face in the industry today?
3- Do you think that an actor's socioeconomic status dictates the roles they get?
4- Is it harder for actors from lower income areas to make it in the industry?
5- In your earlier career, did your accent restrict you in auditions or typecast you?
6- Have there been gaps in your career where acting was put on hold? If so, were you able to sustain a living without doing other work which is not acting related?
7- *Nina Gold believes that 'acting has changed because Britain has changed' – inequality, privilege and class is at the heart of it. How far do you agree with this statement and why?
8- *Nina Gold has discussed at length how working-class actors and variations of characters are missed in the industry today and how "there's definitely a big homogenous load of middle-class actors all quite similar to each other" what do you think casting directors and other industry professionals, including Drama Schools, can do to help make a change?
9- What are the best ways to get a job? How do you get your roles?
10- What do you consider most challenging about your line of work?
11- How is the job market now in the industry? Does it impact you in any way?
12- What is your view on Drama Schools?
13- Do you think Drama schools cater for the industry's needs? Is there a gap?
14 - How could we improve drama school education so that it is financially accessible for everyone? Is it needed these days to secure professional work?

Appendix 4.5 - Ethics application form

Durham University
School of Education

Shaped by the past, creating the future

05/01/2018

Lauren Pitt
lauren.c.pitt@durham.ac.uk

Dear Lauren,

Social Justice in Drama: The trajectories of students enrolled in Drama in Further Education

Reference : 2930

I am pleased to inform you that your ethics application for the above research project has been approved by the School of Education Ethics Committee.

May we take this opportunity to wish you good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nadin Beckmann
School of Education Ethics Committee Chair

Leazes Road
Durham, DH1 1TA
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Appendix 5.2.1 - Additional questions for Interviews

Group A

1- What support do you offer your graduates to bridge the gap between training and employment?

2- Do you help them with employment opportunities?

3- What more can you do to be inclusive of working-class applicants?

4- Do drama schools propagate certain social structures?

Group C

1 - *Nina Gold has discussed at length how working-class actors and variations of characters are missed in the industry today and how “there’s definitely a big homogenous load of middle-class actors all quite similar to each other” what do you think casting directors and other industry professionals, including Drama Schools, can do to help make a change?

2- Are there any other routes into the performing arts industry?

3- Do drama schools propagate certain social structures?

4- When you suffer a setback, how does that emotionally affect you and your craft?

Appendix 5.3 - Transparency Data

Transparency Data table

Drama School	Ethnicity	Number of applications	Percentage of applications that received an offer	Percentage of applications that accepted an offer	Percentage of applications that le registration
1	BAME	30	24 (80%)	24 (80%)	21 (70%)
	WHITE	280	196 (70%)	196 (70%)	168 (60%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	720	13%	8%	8%
	3 to 5	1640	13%	9%	7%
2	BAME	310	12 (4%)	9 (3%)	9 (3%)
	WHITE	2050	62 (3%)	62 (3%)	62 (3%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	570	7%	7%	7%
	3 to 5	1630	2%	2%	2%
3	BAME	170	29 (17%)	27 (16%)	19 (11%)
	WHITE	1460	73 (5%)	58 (4%)	44 (3%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	310	7%	6%	6%
	3 to 5	1200	5%	5%	4%
4	BAME	260	44 (17%)	26 (10%)	26 (10%)
	WHITE	2,000	160 (8%)	60 (3%)	60 (3%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	470	10%	5%	5%
	3 to 5	1600	9%	4%	4%
5	BAME	630	69 (11%)	38 (6%)	38 (6%)
	WHITE	4,130	330 (8%)	165 (4%)	165 (4%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	1230	9%	5%	4%
	3 to 5	3150	8%	4%	4%
6	BAME	380	38 (10%)	30 (8%)	23 (6%)
	WHITE	2,230	223 (10%)	156 (7%)	134 (6%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	610	10%	7%	6%
	3 to 5	1760	11%	7%	6%
7	BAME	450	14 (3%)	9 (2%)	5 (1%)
	WHITE	2570	51 (2%)	51 (2%)	26 (1%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	880	1%	1%	1%
	3 to 5	2230	2%	1%	1%
8	BAME	N	N	N	N
	WHITE	350	224 (64%)	214 (61%)	18 (59%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	940	9%	6%	6%
	3 to 5	1700	13%	9%	9%
9	BAME	5220	2035 (39%)	835 (16%)	731 (14%)
	WHITE	12660	5064 (40%)	2152 (17%)	1899 (15%)
EIMD quintile	1 & 2	6430	38%	16%	14%
	3 to 5	10780	41%	16%	15%

Appendix 6.3 - New Audition Process and fees

Drama School	First Audition	Cost	Recall	Cost	Recall Cost	Total audition Cost
ALRA **Shut down**	Online	£5 *Registration fee of £400	In Person	Free	-	£405
Arts Ed	Acting- Online Musical Theatre In Person	Free £25	In Person In person	£25 Free	- -	£25 £25
BCU	Online	CUCAS Fee £26.50 £35	Online	Free		£61.50
BOVS	Online	£25	In Person	Free		£25
Drama Centre **Shut down**	No longer exists	-	-	-	-	-
Drama Studio London	Online	£10	In Person	£35	-	£45
East 15	Online	UCAS Fee £22 £15	In Person	Free	-	£37
Emil Dale	Online OR In person	£10 £40	In Person In person	£20 Free	-	£30 £40
GSA	Online	UCAS Fee £22 £15	In person	£30	-	£67
GSMD	Online	£35	In person	Free	In Person (Free)	£35
Italia Conti Academy	Online	UCAS Fee £22 £45	In person	Free	-	£67
LCM	Online NO AUDITION FEE	UCAS Fee £22	In Person	Free	-	£22
LIPA	Online	UCAS Fee £22	In Person	£30	-	£52

LAMDA	Online	£15	In Person	£36	-	£51
MMU	Online	Free	Online	Free	In Person	Free
Mountview Theatre Academy	Online	£25	In Person	£20	-	£45
Oxford School of Drama	Online	£15	In Person	£30	-	£45
Rose Bruford College	Online	UCAS Fee £22	In person	£55	-	£77
RADA	Online	£34	In Person	Free	-	£34
RCSSD	£40	Online	In Person	Free	In Person (Free)	£40
RCS	Online	UCAS Fee £26.50	In Person	£45	-	£71.50
RWCMD	Online	UCAS Fee £26.50 £35	In Person	Free	In Person (Free)	£61.50

END