

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Laughter is the sun that drives the winter from the human face.

Victor Hugo 1802-1885

Humour is what makes us human. No other species has the capacity for laughter and smiling. Human communication relies on the ability to engage other humans and there is evidence that a sense of humour goes hand in hand with popularity and personal power. Yet schools have made little use of this capacity in teacher student communication with teachers being advised to avoid humour as it could spell a loss of control. Studies in the field of positive psychology and recent developments in neuroscience research point the way towards a more positive framework for educators to engage with students. This has prompted a move away from the deficit model which has characterised past thinking especially with the education of students with challenging behaviours.

This pilot study looks at training teachers to develop and include more humour in their communication with students. The student cohort of interest in this study is students with challenging behaviours, particularly those students that are at risk of school exclusion for their aberrant and anti-social behaviour. The study examines the non-verbal communication repertoire of teachers and aims to produce positive affect in the students and engagement with their learning. A valuable by-product of this equation is building stronger relationships between students and the school community, in particular the subject teachers. These relationships, enhanced by humour, can increase connections which may, in turn alter the life trajectory for disengaged students, many who may have mental health issues. Assisting teachers to engage these challenging students through use of humour comes at a time where there is increased focus on effective teacher practices.

Background to the study

The interest in this topic stems from the researcher's 30 years of working with students who display challenging behaviours in special schools for emotionally disturbed (ED), conduct disordered (CD) and behaviour disordered (BD) and having worked as a support teacher for teachers and parents of those students in mainstream classes. Over the past 30 years of such work, personal experience indicates that those teachers best able to engage and manage these students are the teachers who have a lively sense of humour and regularly display positive affect (Arnold, 2005). The facial expression which is of most interest is the expression termed by the researcher, 'Warmth Behind the Eyes' (WBE). Successful teachers of the most challenging students are flexible and tend to be able to negotiate an outcome that increases student engagement rather than setting up power plays or further disengaging the student that can lead to inappropriate student outbursts, violence or oppositional and defiant behaviour (Hodgson, 2007).

From personal experiences and observation, effective teachers in these special behaviour schools often use novelty and play to teach and foster student engagement and this has a reciprocal affect as it builds resilience and increases staff ability to cope with emotional outbursts from students. Coercion does not increase compliance in these situations and many of these students have accomplished behaviour repertoires for dealing with coercion and overtly or covertly resist teacher coercion. These students are interesting in their ability to move most benign communications towards conflict which, for them, is a familiar behavioural pattern (Dodge, 1986).

Schools are the one institution through which the entire population of Australian children must pass. This provides us with a unique opportunity to assist those students whose home

lives are troubled, dangerous and neglectful however the research suggests that teachers are often unable to engage this cohort and many young people end up leaving school early and ill equipped for life in society (Hodgson, 2007).

Many behaviour management programs require extensive training and are costly to schools and teachers. The use of humour by classroom teachers may be an innovative and cost effective way of engaging with the disengaged adolescent. In this study, humour will be examined, the various functions and effects of humour will be explored and the dangers of using humour which can produce negative affect will be noted. The Positive Education Framework (Noble & McGrath, 2007) and moves towards Emotional Literacy (Arnold, 2005) provide the theoretical underpinnings of this study which supports positive educational experiences through humour use.

Teaching is a stressful job and many high school teachers cite classroom behaviour as a major concern (Little, 2005). The researcher's experience indicates that almost universally graduate teachers speak of the challenging nature of behaviour management (Huntly, 2008) and the challenge to engage students with both "classroom management" and "engaging with students" underrepresented in pre-service teacher training courses (Lovat, 2003; Richmond, 2002b).

The Problem

Schools struggle to deal with school violence (Weatherburn, Grunseit & Donnelley, 2005) and challenging behaviour from students uses a large percentage of teacher time (Little, 2005) and remains a key factor contributing to teacher stress and burnout (Independent Education Union, 2002) and school suspension (Department of Education Science and Training, 2008). Disruptive behaviours are one of the leading mental health problems faced by young people in Western society (Wheatley, 2009) yet teachers continue to use aggressive discipline techniques (Sidman, 1999; Roache, 2008) which serve to increase aggression and disengagement in students (Barrowman, Nutbeam & Tresidder, 2001).

Much conflict could be resolved before escalation (Little, 2005) with effective teacher communication (Arnold, 2005) including humour that alters the path of conflict (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006; Smith, Harrington & Neck, 2000). With teacher enjoyment and confidence highly correlated to student engagement (Martin, 2006), teachers would require highly developed social skills (Hargreaves, 2000) and a sense of humour (Arnold, 2005) which could have a positive impact on student challenging behaviour.

Training teachers to use humour may be an innovative, rewarding and cost effective way of increasing student engagement (Munns, Arthur, Downes, Gregson, Power, Sawer, Singh, Thisleton-Martin & Steele, 2006), diverting conflict (Smith, et al., 2000) and providing quality educational experiences (Sousa, 2008). Judicious use of classroom humour may be an excellent tool for teachers to improve outcomes for students with challenging behaviour.

Promoting positive affect has advantages for engagement (Noble & McGrath, 2007) and humour increases the repertoire of responses available in crisis situations where fight or flight were the previous options (Fredrickson, 2001). This pilot study examines if training teachers in the use of humour can be useful in engaging challenging students. Arnold (2003) identifies

the importance of teacher displays of positive effect on student engagement. Students respond to teacher flexibility and sensitivity to learner response (Arnold & Ryan, 2003).

Aims of the study

The research project seeks to explore two issues: The use of training to develop humour in teachers and how humour may influence student engagement. In conjunction with this, in-depth interviews with participating teachers, explore the issues and challenges of introducing humour use in pedagogy.

Contributing research questions

- Does training using video recording in the use of humour increase its use by teachers as they interact with their students?
- Does the use of humour by teachers decrease challenging behaviour in students?
- Can teachers be assisted to use humour when they reflect on their teaching after viewing videotapes of their lessons?
- What impact does the use of teacher humour have on managing challenging behaviour and increasing student engagement?
- What are some of the challenges experienced by teachers who use humour with adolescents with challenging behaviour?

This pilot study seeks to examine whether training teachers to include humour in their communication with students with challenging behaviour could increase the engagement of those students. The study examined the humorous non-verbal communication repertoire of teachers to increase positive affect in the same students and increase their positive engagement in the classroom. A valuable by product of this equation is building stronger relationships between students and the school community, in particular the subject teachers.

These relationships, enhanced by humour, can increase connections which may in turn alter the life trajectory for a disengaged students, many who may have mental health issues.

Assisting teachers to engage these challenging students through humour use comes at a time where there is increased focus on effective teacher practices.

Conceptual model for examination

The theoretical underpinning of this study incorporates the positive educational practices framework (Noble & McGrath, 2007) which draws on the field of positive psychology (Seligman, 2005) and promotes optimism as a means of building capacity in students to enable them to engage with the school. This framework has four basic tenets: the promotion of positive emotions; use of skills to develop mastery; engagement through working with strengths and developing a notion of purpose and meaning in education (Noble & McGrath, 2001). This framework seeks to energise and build enthusiasm in staff and students. The provision of enjoyable educational experiences is advocated with specific references to fun and humour. A shift in thinking away from traditional practices of focussing on deficits and problems that need remediation distinguishes the approach. The focus is on how to build on strengths in order to allow individuals to flourish. The contagious nature of positive emotions is acknowledged (Goleman, 2000) and school leaders who model positive educational practices can predict beneficial student outcomes (Noble & McGrath, 2007).

A greater focus on whole school wellbeing can contribute to greater productivity (Fullarton, 2002) and better learning. The studies (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Fredrickson, 2001; Taber, Redden & Hurley, 2007) in neuroscience underpin the promotion of positive experiences. Positive affect can broaden a person's repertoire of responses and assist them to thrive. This has implications for students with challenging behaviour who may be at risk of early school dropout (Anderson, Kerr- Roubicek & Rowling, 2006). Humour, at the core of

these positive experiences, has the capacity to reframe situations so they appear less threatening (Geisler & Weber, 2010).

Positive educational practices have gained currency since the launch of positive psychology by Seligman (1998). This new approach asks different questions in order to build sustainable wellbeing. Rather than examining what is wrong the question is asked: what is working (Noble & McGrath, 2007)? Humour in teaching is advocated by proponents of Positive Educational Practices as it assists in building relationships with students and can be utilised in promoting fun and enjoyment in the classroom.

Deriving from this line of thinking is teaching practice and research on the use of humour in managing student problem behaviour. This study therefore is an attempt to contribute to expanding literature seeking to provide a better understanding of the role of humour in managing problem behaviour in schools.

Organisation of Chapters

Chapter two is a review of the literature, chapter three is about the methodology, chapter four covers results. Chapter five focuses on the discussion of the findings, the limitations and the conclusion is in chapter six.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The teaching and engagement of students in the educational system of New South Wales is becoming more difficult than ever before. There are a number of reasons for this not least being: an increase in challenging classroom behaviour (Department of Education Science and Training 2008); and an increased accountability of teachers for student outcomes exacerbated by the school leaving age for students being raised to seventeen (Michail, 2011). The focus of educators to find effective engaging tools to address these issues is paramount. This review explores studies that demonstrate the role of humour as one such effective tool for educators (Martin, 2006).

The literature reveals a body of evidence to suggest a link between employing humour in the classroom and an ability to positively engage with adolescents with challenging behaviour (Stephenson,A. 2011). These behaviours can impact on the learning outcomes of other students (Edwards in cited in Vinson 2002; Esson & Johnson 2002; Little 2005; Clayton, Stephenson & Carter, 2008, p.21; Sela-Shayovitz, 2009) and consume a great deal of resources within schools and education departments. Moreover the review examines the various aspects surrounding the education of students who exhibit challenging behaviour in mainstream classes. The research implications regarding best practice and the role of the classroom teacher in effecting desirable outcomes is discussed.

The studies explored in this review confirm the benefits of the application of humour in teaching. This view is strengthened by studies in the field of neuroscience (Fredrickson, 2001; Taber, Redden & Hurley, 2007) relating the benefits of programming for positive affect. The role played by the teacher and the array of communication styles, in particular non-verbal communication is a key focus of this review.

Research into teacher effects and student outcomes (Hattie, 2003) advise training teachers as a solution to student disengagement. There are suggestions that professional development for teachers could increase positive student outcomes in line with best practice (Ingvarson, 2005; Lovat, 2005; Shaddock, Smyth King & Giorcelli, 2007) and a suggestion that a range of communication strategies (Richmond & McCroskey, 2004), including humour can be applied, in teaching, rather than the prevalence of punitive and coercive tactics (Roache, 2008).

In this review, the few studies that examine humour training are discussed along with what is considered best practice in teaching students with challenging behaviour. Studies in effective in-service training for teachers concur on the efficacy of training which takes place on location and includes the teacher's own reflection as an integral component. Training which adheres to learning theory (Guskey, 2002) can change teacher behaviour. As teachers include new strategies learned from training, the change in student behaviour has the effect of causing changes in teacher behaviour and attitude. The literature on this topic explores an historical overview of humour study and the themes: humour and its functions, challenging behaviour, student engagement and teacher training.

An historical overview of humour research

The study of humour can be problematic due to its many constructs (Lefcourt, 2001) yet humour is at the core of the human experience and can support endurance in certain difficult situations. Humour's ability to "tear holes in our usual predictions about the empirical world" (Critchley, 2002, p. 1) provides a rationale for considering the use of humour pedagogy.

Taking an historical perspective, the study of humour began with Aristotle (348 BC) and the notion that the roots of laughter lie in mockery and ridicule over those we view as inferior (Keith-Spiegel, 1972). This provides the basis for the superiority theory of humour. A third

group of early theorists, the release theorists see humour as a relief from constraint. Freud (1905), the most eminent of the release theorists, believed that laughter represents a saving in psychic energy (Freud, 1905 cited in Keith-Spiegel, 1972). This identifies humour's adaptive value: "Humor refuses to be hurt by the arrows of reality or to be compelled to suffer, it is impervious to wounds dealt by the outside world, in fact, these are merely occasions for affording it pleasure" (Freud, 1905 quoted in Keith-Spiegel, 1972, p.28).

The use of humour and sarcasm in teaching explored by Socrates and Aristotle is explained by The Superiority Theory where laughter's chief use was ridicule and to promote triumph over ludicrous inferior wits. Hobbs (1651) describes this 'sudden glory' we achieve when we compare ourselves with the infirmities of others (Hobbs, 1651 cited in Keith-Spiegel, 1972).

Humour, which arises from disjointed concepts paired together, is the foundation of incongruity theories. Incongruity theories (Kant, 1790; Schopenhaur, 1819 in Keith-Spiegel, 1972) posit that humour is the result of unexpected connections (Cornell, 1986) which are cognitively based. The pairing of disjointed concepts is known as bisociation (Lefcourt, 2001). Humour and joking are modern linguistic triggers of laughter, products of 'recently evolved cortical bells and whistles superimposed on laughter's ancient neurological core' (Provine, 2001, p. 190). Indeed, the past hundred years have seen increasing scientific studies of laughter. One study revealed the contagious nature of laughter when an epidemic of laughter forced the closure of a missionary boarding school in Tanzania in 1962 (Provine, 2001).

This tendency to produce unpredictable effects may explain why classrooms have previously been viewed as too serious for the inclusion of humour. Many educators were warned not to smile until Easter by which time the class ought to have an understanding of just how serious school is (Wallinger, 1997). The notion of humour use to increase class cohesion and make

mundane tasks more appealing describes the teacher as ‘the architect of the class’ (Wallinger, 1997, p.28). Korobkin (1989) identified humour in pedagogy not as entertainment but rather ‘a variable that could be accommodated, understood and applied’ to teaching (Korobkin, 1989, p.155). As studies were emerging in this new area, the benefits of humour to learners were identified: increased retention (Garner, 2006), student teacher rapport, (Fovet, 2009) attentiveness and engagement (Hackathorne, Garczynski, Bankmeyer, Tennial, & Solomon, 2011), playfulness and positive attitude, productivity, creativity and divergent thinking (Ziv, 1983) and a decrease in academic stress and anxiety, monotony and dogmatism (Korobkin, 1989). More than 20 years later the benefits of humour to educators continue to emerge.

The cognitive functions of humour are considerable and include fostering divergent thinking, increasing creativity (Ziv, 1983) and memory retention (Garner, 2006). Humour use was found to have an impact on student performance in exams particularly on knowledge and comprehension tasks. A study of social psychology students investigated humour use. In this study students were exposed to social constructs taught either with or without humour and found those taught with the humour content to have increased learning on comprehension and understanding (Hackathorne , Garczynski, Bankmeyer, Tennial & Solomon, 2011).

Keeping people thinking and enhancing divergent thinking and creativity became the focus of two experimental studies by Avner Ziv (1983), one of the key figures in humour research on the use of humour in pedagogy. Ziv discovered a high correlation between a humorous atmosphere and divergent thinking. The four features relevant to the findings are that a playful mood, incongruity, the contagion of laughter and the effect of humour give permission for playful behaviour. Ziv (1983) posits that formal education triggers convergent thinking almost exclusively and for many students with challenging behaviour; this has translated into early school dropout.

The history of humour research spans many disciplines from anthropology (Martineau, 1972) and psychology (Lefcourt, 2001) to neuroscience (Taber et al., 2007). Societal changes have seen a rise in humour as a positive communication device (Morreall, 1983) that can be utilised in pedagogy where previously educational practice warned against friendly teacher behaviour. Empirical evidence (Garner, 2006; Geisler & Weber, 2010; Ziv, 1983) indicates there are benefits for student learning through humour inclusion.

The social function of humour

To fully understand student engagement it is crucial that we explore the social functions of humour more broadly. Laughter plays a role in social bonding with group members and those with whom we laugh (Provine, 2001). Radcliff Brown (1965) explored the social control functions of humour in tribal societies and found humour to be a necessary tool for reducing tension between individuals with competing interests in order for their cooperatives tasks to proceed (Radcliffe Brown, 1965 cited in: Martineau, 1972). The power of humour as a tool to promote socially appropriate behaviour is explored in the context of joking relationships between two persons in which one is permitted to tease or make fun of the other who is subsequently required not to take offence. The joking relationship is a combination of friendliness and antagonism (Martineau, 1972) and acknowledges humour's historical links to aggression.

The social functions that promote acceptable group behaviour through humour are further examined in Fovet's (2009) study on establishing relationships through humour in teaching students with behaviour disorders. Mixed methodology was utilised to study humour as a means to establish social order and negotiate power. Canadian and American adolescents acknowledged a willingness of teachers to build relationships with students with much of the humour generated by the students. Teachers rated their own humour use using a scale from

‘sombre’ to ‘hilarious’. Most teachers chose ‘witty’ or ‘smiling’ with humour used for diverting conflict identified as ‘appeasement humour’ (Hill, 1988 quoted in Fovet, 2009, p.279). The teachers who used humour were able to establish reciprocity and display a willingness to place themselves on par with the student.

Norrick and Spitz (2008) explored humour and conflict to reveal that humour has the power to mitigate the hostility in arguments. Using interactional linguistic techniques the processes involved in arguments were examined. The social power relationship between participants and the willingness of participants to accept humour attempts were contingencies in humour production. The trajectory of the interaction is determined by the power the participants have to influence the other. Studies linking humour and alternative conflict resolution strategies (Smith, Harrington & Neck, 2000) explore humour use with diverse community groups. Employing Blake and Mouton’s (1964) grid, the decisions to use humour and the factors driving that decision are examined. Humour use was found to be greater between individuals of similar cultural groups and was effective in building social cohesion.

Links between performance and teaching demonstrate that metacognitive signals of play open up learning possibilities allowing for a reconstruction of concepts (Pineau, 1994). A productive learning environment is one free of threat (Jensen, 1998) with connections between happiness and trust well documented (Winston, Strange, O’Doherty & Dolan, 2002 cited in Sousa, 2008).

The ability of humour to produce a threat- free learning environment is articulated in Bateson’s (1953) description of ‘the play frame’ where participants know from speech and action signals that there is a departure from the mundane. For a play frame to be established there must be collaboration between participants (Bateson, 1953, cited in Coates, 2007, p.29). Play is well recognised as a vehicle for learning through practising skills and building

resources (Diener & Biswas- Diener, 2008). Play regulates the stress response and modifies the brain areas for social competence (Pellis & Pellis, 2009).

Teases may be constructed within this play frame by questioning, in a playful manner, what was said or done whilst indicating that the interpretive challenge is not to be taken seriously (Drew, 1986 cited in Mulkay, 1988). A study in an adult education setting found that teachers attempted to create a warm and friendly environment by facilitating the expressions of class clowns and nicknames. Senior (2001) used open ended interviews with 27 English language teachers to find an explanation for why some teachers felt exhilarated whilst others felt drained at the end of class (Senior, 2001). Gentle teasing featured once familiarity was established and teachers got a sense it was harmless. In the study teachers placed great value on the use of humour to develop class cohesion. These uses of humour included using expansive gestures and exaggerated use of intonation and smiling. Gentle teasing also can be effective in controlling student behaviour in the classroom. Teasing has characteristics that distinguish it from sarcasm and hurtful humour. A primary function of humour in pedagogy is the creation of a friendly learning environment thus relieving stress and gaining the students' attention (Webb-White, 2001). In this study humour is conceptualized as a form of immediacy behaviour, a quality of teacher communication with high correlates to student engagement (Martin, Marsh, MacInerney, Green, & Dowson, 2007). The use of gentle teasing as means of modifying behaviour has links to earlier studies in anthropology (Martineau, 1972) and is the basis for humour use that establishes a playful atmosphere (Coates, 2007) and facilitate reciprocity (Fovet, 2009) in the relationship.

Humour use has been established in the field of medicine and nurse education with the focus on the social functions of humour. Nurse training involves navigating difficult social interactions often in life and death situations. In two qualitative studies (Nahas, 1998; Ulloth, 2003), humour is conceptualized as an important aspect of healthy human behaviour. Nahas

(1998) identified theme clusters for humour use which included the ability to recognise personal limitations and admit to making mistakes. Ulloth (2003) describes the personality of the nurse educators as they include humour in teaching. Examples of humour application included educators laughing and dancing to the use of funny voices. These studies recognise the personality of the teacher as a variable in humour expression and note that humour is not a substitute for good teaching as but rather as an element of a larger repertoire of teaching skills.

Implications of humour use for teachers of challenging adolescents are clear with emerging studies (Dahl, 2004; Fuller, 2010) pointing to the connection to school and the relationships with teachers. These can counter negative impacts associated depression, homelessness and crime. The large number of students with mental health issues typically means that teachers will need to provide some positive educational experiences (Noble & McGrath, 2007).

Threat in the learning environment provides a significant barrier to learning (Geisler & Weber, 2010; Jensen, 1998; Sousa, 2008) with coercive and aggressive disciplinary practices exacerbating any existing conditions (Roache, 2008). Emotional disturbance is one of the most under- identified clinical problems relating to young people (Reddy & Richardson, 2006). Students with challenging behaviour due to mental illness frequently have issues related to attachment as a result of inconsistent and chaotic parenting (Anderson et al., 2006).

The use of humour by teachers in the classroom may help diminish the student behaviour associated with these issues.

Release from tension through humour has long been used by teachers with the belief that laughing is preferable to crying (Mawhinney, 2008). Teaching places demands on teachers to the point where they can keep their emotions in check. This behaviour is not unique to teachers. A comparison is made with airline stewards who must also mask their feelings in the line of duty. This is explained by Hochschild in the 'Theory of Emotional Labour'

(Hochschild, 1983 as cited in Mawhinney, 2008, p.194). There was a high correlation between whole class laughter and a positive classroom atmosphere. Through the use of smiling, using exaggerated intonation patterns and expansive gestures, the eight participating teachers worked to establish a cheerful and friendly classroom atmosphere which typically was not present prior to the training.

As a method of engaging students, humour is useful in teaching English as a second language since it is largely communicated through language and is able to be assimilated in the instruction of related language skills. For instance the social circumstances that promote laughter and smiles are similar to those that favour talking (Coates, 2007). Skills such as word play, content related jokes and puns can facilitate teaching linguistics and the social use of language. It also has been beneficial in developing student sensitivity to phonological and syntactical differences (Ziyaeemehr, Kumar & Abdullah, 2011). Studies of humour use in college classrooms (Garner, 2006; Torok, Mc Morris & Lin, 2004) found increased retention and increased enjoyment in classes.

Emotional literacy is gaining currency (Roffey, 2007) in developing relational values such as inclusion, compassion, respect and fairness. In a qualitative research project in Australian schools, principals were surveyed about teacher qualities and noted sense of humour as a desirable quality in teachers (Roffey, 2007). Key to developing emotional literacy is positive discourse which can be facilitated when leaders model high expectations for intrapersonal behaviour, including smiling and joking.

Empirical studies in education (Arnold , 2005) articulate the need for teachers to have exemplary social skills and a lively sense of humour to better understand underlying situation. Of understated benefit is the ability not to take ones' self too seriously. A curriculum which promotes positive affect underpins the 'values education' policies (DEST,

2005) and has the potential to positively transform student lives (Roffey, 2007). In a study on developing capacity in emotional literacy, positive discourse was identified and at the core of these interpersonal capabilities, humour; "It makes you feel comfortable if your teachers are funny, it makes you want to go to school more because you know you're going to have a great day" (Roffey, 2007, p.23). However for 'values education' to be successfully embraced, Lovat (2005) advises teachers to develop their inter-relational capacities and use self-reflection towards engaging students. Utilising this inter-relational capacity is viewed as being positive for teacher student relationships and is integral to successful teaching (Riley, 2009) with humour playing a key role in this dynamic (den Brok, Brekelmans, Levy, & Wubbels, 2003) and the implications of this can be utilised for students with challenging behaviour.

The risk for teachers who are unwilling to build friendly relationships with their high school aged students (Shaddock et al., 2007) is that they neglect to harness the power of the affective domain and emotional literacy in learning (Roffey, 2007) which can alter the trajectory for students with challenging behaviour. The theme of power sharing which can be applied through the use of humour can involve establishing some reciprocity in teacher-student relationships (Fovet, 2009). The role of dominance as an evolving aspect of this relationship and the effect of students wielding power over ineffective teachers has implications for humour use in behaviour and on-task learning (Winograd, 2002).

In summary, the social functions of humour have been widely documented in the fields of health and education. Empirical studies (Coates, 2007; Fovet, 2009; Senior, 2001) suggest that humour is useful in fostering social cohesion and communicating difficult subjects (Nahas, 1998; Ulloth, 2003). Arguably then, the ability of humour to divert conflict and reduce tension (Norrick & Spitz, 2008; Smith et al., 2000) has applications for teachers.

Studies from neuroscience

The study of the adolescent brain has implications for teachers of students with challenging behaviour. Adolescence is a time where the brain is undergoing changes and studies reveal the importance of the amygdala, an area of the brain which processes emotional information, to influence decision making and compromise judgement in adolescence (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). These changes could inform curriculum implementation to include more novelty and fun (Pellis & Pellis, 2009) to maximise or increase student engagement with classroom learning. Humour has been found to be a useful tool for regulating emotions (Aultman, Williams, Johnson & Shultz, 2009). This has particular relevance for the engagement of adolescents in learning environments as the emotional centres of the brain process information (Sousa, 2008). If incoming information is delivered in a boring or threatening manner it may not be retained by the adolescent (Carr-Gregg, 2006).

Magnetic Resonance Imaging has made possible research on the effect of humour on the brain. In particular, studies on the adolescent brain (Giedd, 2004) highlight the importance of the emotional centre of the brain. Essentially the effective engagement of adolescents depends on activity in this region of the brain (Dahl, 2004). The literature reveals (Taber et al., 2007) that humour can build personal resources and reframe situations to diminish threat (Geisler & Weber, 2010).

There is empirical evidence that humour causes a cognitive shift and a reframing so that things don't appear so threatening (Geisler & Weber, 2010). In two studies, humour is explored as a state resulting from appraising a situation as both acceptable and harmful. Humour was seen to increase positive affect through producing a cognitive shift which made things seem less threatening. This concurs with Kuiper and Martin (1998) who examined the role of laughter in moderating stress and further consolidates the notion that humour plays a

role in the mechanism that influences emotional regulation. The cognitive shift which occurs with the presence of humour makes events appear less threatening (Geisler & Weber, 2010; Kuiper & Martin, 1998). Studies have shown this can have a major impact on student learning and connection to school especially for indigenous students (Lillemyr, Sobstad, Marder, & Flowerday, 2010).

Neuroscientific studies suggest humour as a useful tool during adolescence, more specifically how it could be particularly useful for adolescents who have suffered trauma (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). A greater emphasis on social, emotional and cognitive development may have a positive influence on appropriate behaviour.

Smiling is a universal indicator of humour (Ekman, 1997) and can be contagious as the discovery of mirror neurons has established (Iacoboni, 2008). The peculiar nature of mirror neurons provides insight allowing the emotional states of others to be experienced simply by observing facial expressions and body language. This is at the core of developing empathy and understanding of others (Frew & Vallance, 2007). Observing the actions of others causes the activation of mirror neurons which can facilitate modelling as an effective teaching strategy. This relates to the student understanding the intention of the teacher by their actions and expressions and in particular the use of humour (Sylwester, 1994).

Adolescence can be a high risk time for the onset of mental illness (McGorry & Killackey, 2002) and positive relationships with teachers and connection to school can protect against adverse outcomes (Anderson et. al. 2006). In the field of behaviour disorders, the beneficial role of humour is further illustrated in studies with patients who have a psychiatric illness (Higuera et al 2006, as cited in Fovet, 2009, p.276). There was a noticeable decrease in challenging and aberrant behaviour in the groups where humour was used. This view is in

unison with Jewell (2005) who explores power sharing and the role of the class clown in navigating the teacher- student power balance.

Neuroscientific studies have shown that humour can be used to create a playful and threat-free atmosphere to enhance social cohesion. This environment is explored in the use of humour with patients with a psychiatric illness. The inclusion of humour in the regime of psychiatric patients worked towards broadening the repertoire of responses from fight/flight. The cohort of patients who had been exposed to humour displayed a marked decrease in disruption (Taber et al., 2007). Fredrickson's Broaden and Build Theory is used as a departure point. Empirical evidence supports the role positive emotions play in assisting people to flourish (Fredrickson, 2001). The generation of positive emotions increases the thought and action repertoire away from fight or flight responses. This subsequently builds personal resources. There is a 'flourishing' experienced by individuals when positive affect is present. Emotion is one of the important regulators of learning and memory. The release of neurotransmitters which lead to positive emotions including serotonin and dopamine can link areas of the brain that stimulate memory (Argyle, 2001). These neuroscientific findings have implications for engaging students with challenging behaviour who may have suffered trauma.

In summary, studies in neuroscience (Fovet, 2009; Fredrickson, 2001; Roffey, 2007) suggest that best practice in educating students with challenging behaviour who may have suffered trauma and are at risk of mental illness includes promoting positive educational experiences (Noble & McGrath, 2007). This has the ability to broaden a person's repertoire of responses from fight or flight and to build personal resources (Fredrickson, 2001). Teaching with emotional literacy (Arnold, 2005) can foster connections between students and the school community (Anderson et al., 2006).

Humour, positive affect and the importance of the smile

The face is the primary display of affect for humans (Ekman, 1997) and the smile is typically an indication of good humour and assists teachers to build class cohesion and rapport with students (Roffey, 2007). Therefore smiling and positive affect are key components in fostering humour. Affect can be defined as the ‘biological portion of emotion’ (Nathason, 1992, p. 49). Tomkins (1961) used the term ‘affect system’ to describe the mechanism that directs emotional behaviour. One emotion can be linked to another and the related vocal qualities and facial expressions form the basis of communicating positive or negative affect (Ekman, 1997). Teachers who understand the power of classroom climate (Sousa, 2008) to deal with the happiness and engagement of students, successfully minimize threat and are able to build relationships with their students (Hamre, 2007).

It is crucial to make a distinction between the various types of smiles. Ekman (1982) lists various smiles used to mask other emotions, such as miserable smiles and insincere smiles which are used in social situations to signal a smile in spite of conflicting emotion. The true smile is known as the Duchenne smile and involves the use of the orbicularis oculi muscles, the tiny muscles around the eye (Ekman & Friesen, 1982). This smile was first identified by the French neurologist Duchenne de Boulogne (1862). The neurological pathways are different for true Duchenne smiling and false smiles (Taber et al., 2007) with only the true smile producing a flourishing of positive affect.

The generation of positive affect has been extensively explored by Lyubomirsky (2005) who describes the manner in which happy people tend to preserve self-esteem by reinterpreting events whereas unhappy people ruminate and perseverate on the same unproductive thought patterns. Lewis (2004) examined teacher support for social and emotional wellbeing of their

students, extolling goodwill and found a strong correlation between less abusive teacher behaviour and student engagement.

As mentioned earlier, teachers require a level of emotional intelligence to engage students. Hargreaves (2000) explored, through interviews with teachers, that emotions were viewed as an intrusion in the high school classroom. Primary education accommodates emotional well-being whilst secondary teaching was characterized by professionalism and emotional distance. This study argues that this emotional distance threatens the understanding upon which high quality teaching and learning depends.

Damasio (1999) explains the activation on the brain of emotions such as happiness and sadness and the role that emotion plays in shaping thinking and behaviour which can result in approaching or avoiding subjects according to their emotional component. This dynamic between thinking and feeling is explored by Arnold (2005, p.12) as the underpinning of ‘empathically intelligent pedagogy’ which has the ability to be transformative.

The current study explores training teachers in the use of facial expressions and other non-verbal forms of communication in order to convey a sense of good humour and to determine the impact on student behaviours and on-task performance. (Arnold, 2005; Jensen, 1998). Fleeting micro-expressions are read often without the sender being aware of their transparency. Ekman (2003) found that even the slightest expression of disgust or contempt was able to be detected despite the overall expression appearing benign. Research (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993) has demonstrated that it is possible to accurately predict teacher effectiveness through viewing small video samples of their non-verbal communication. The ecologically valid criterion comprised students, peers and supervisors all rating the teacher’s non-verbal communication. Using video clips of only ten seconds taken from different stages of a lesson indicated accurate predictions of teacher competence. The researchers suggest this

is important information for teachers especially as affect displays were the most accurately predicted types of communication (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993). This is in unison with Martin et al. (2007) who found that teachers who smile and display enjoyment in teaching produce higher levels of student engagement. There is more support for this view with discoveries that eye contact and smiling were the non-verbal behaviours highly correlated to increased student learning (McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond, & Barraclough, 1996). This research could have application in classrooms where students have challenging behaviour.

Further evidence of the positive impact of humour was detailed in a recent study of foster parents in Oregon where changes were found in children's cortisol levels after foster parents became more responsive to the children's emotional cues (Tough, 2011). A Delaware study looked at the relationship and emotional attachment of children and foster carers. There was a significant effect on cortisol levels in the children who had stronger emotional attachment (Helliwell, 2011).

These studies point to the possibility of the positive impact of teacher communication and displays of affect. Teachers aiming to increase student engagement would need to be aware of emotional leakage (the unintended display of negative emotion). This has implications for teachers of students with challenging behaviour and confirms what many have long suspected: good teachers smile more (Richmond, & McCroskey, 2004). Smiling is an indication of good humour (Ekman, 2003) and a study of science teachers as early as 1928 discovered increased student outcomes for teachers who smiled more (Barr 1928 cited in Richmond, & McCroskey, 2004).

Humour is conceptualized as a form of immediacy behaviour, in a study of the quality of teacher communication including non-verbal behaviour such as smiling and facial

expressions (McCroskey et al., 1996). With reference to Coates (2007) the notion of play is at the heart of humour. The contextual cues signalling collaboration between participants are largely determined by the speaker's intention.

In summary, studies (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993; Richmond, & McCroskey, 2004) demonstrate that displays of positive affect are communicated through a teacher's non-verbal communication. Emotion is displayed on the human face and is transparent and impossible to mask (Ekman, 2003). Only the true smile, the Duchenne smile conveys positive affect and is linked to positive student outcomes (Anderson et al., 2006; Fovet, 2009). Research (Martin, 2006; McCroskey et al., 1996) confirms that teacher communication has an impact on the learning outcomes of students. Displays of smiling and laughter are elements of humour which serve to increase the repertoire of a teacher's communication skills.

Power, control and the inappropriate use of humour in teaching

There is much to be gained from applying humour to increase social cohesion, make social situations less threatening and include people in groups. Yet "laughter is the harlequin with two faces; one smiling and friendly and one dark and ominous" (Provine, 2001, p.2). The links between humour and aggression must be acknowledged. Collinson's (2002) study of the control functions of humour cites examples of humour and aggression throughout history. Regimes based on power and control, fear the expression of humour and its power to undermine authority. No other human trait has been associated with so many vices (Morreall, 2010). Morreall explores the paradigmatic shift from negative associations to today's more positive correlations of humour use and concludes that this is evidence of a more humane social understanding of humour.

As mentioned earlier, display of power over others is the guiding principle of "The Superiority Theory of Humour" (Keith-Spiegel, 1972). Many inappropriate forms of humour

use are governed by this principle (Morreall, 2010). The historical examples of bans on the expression of humour were related to The Superiority Theory where laughter and smiling was the domain of the powerful (Morreall, 2010). History is littered with examples from medieval monks to Nazi bans on humour expression. In the 1930s the Ford Motor Company banned laughing as it believed it decreased productivity and was in opposition to their work ethic (Collinson, 2002). A recent study (Huuki, Manninen, & Suninari, 2010) of gender and power found the violent use of humour to be an organizing principle in negotiating status and control. Humour use by boys was a means of constructing masculine identities which has relevance to the school classroom.

The dual nature of humour has been described by Meyer as ‘a double edged sword’ (Meyer, 2000, p. 310). Meyer bemoans the inadequacy of the ‘triad’ of humour theorists: release, incongruity and superiority, to explain the power of rhetoric in humour and devises a classification of four functions as an alternative view namely: identification, clarification, enforcement and differentiation. The two former functions unite the recipients and the two latter tend to highlight differences and serve to divide and exclude. This is a useful delineation for identifying inappropriate and harmful humour.

Studies have examined inappropriate classroom humour and acknowledge that humour research is equivocal. Students identified inappropriate teacher humour which included disparaging humour targeting students and offensive humour (Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk & Smith, 2006). There was considerable overlap in appropriate humour with that which was deemed inappropriate humour. Teasing was one such type. Prior teacher relationship with the student and teacher’s intention, acts to delineate between appropriate and inappropriate use of teasing.

These inappropriate uses of humour can be perceived as aggression. The link between aggression and humour emerges in anthropological studies where it is thought that the smile is a descendant of the aggressive facial expression of baring of teeth (Martineau, 1972). McGee (1979) found a high correlation between displays of aggression and humour use in child development. This supports Meeus and Mahieu (2009) who examine humour use in children seeking boundaries for their behaviour. The teacher is the target of the 'boundary seeking humour' especially those teachers with poor classroom management. The cognitive and creative aspects of humour are evident in disruptive class clowns on the one hand and amusing humourists, on the other, who possess a high degree of empathy in navigating this dichotomy on the other (Jewell, 2005). This dual nature of humour is examined in the context of social and emotional development. The class clown sets about casting the teacher in the role of the 'red faced clown' (Jewell, 2005, p.204) where a power play ensues and the teacher is required to be embarrassed. This is an opportunity for the teacher to harness the power of the class clown and to divert conflict through humour, by refusing to play the red faced clown.

Humour which serves to exclude others and make them feel inadequate or shamed can be detrimental to the overall well-being of an individual yet it was common practice in the past (Morreall, 2010) as exemplified by The Superiority Theory. The engagement of students with challenging behaviour is best achieved by producing positive learning experiences (Noble & McGrath, 2007) and employing humour to affect a playful frame of mind (McGhee, 1979).

As these studies (Collinson, 2002; Keith-Spiegel, 1972; Morreall, 2010) reveal the past traditions of humour use emphasise links between humour and aggression. In child development humour use is an expression of power and a means of seeking boundaries for behaviour (Jewell, 2005; Meeus & Mahieu, 2009). Appropriate teacher humour must avoid

abusing power to exclude or shame students (Wanzer et al., 2006) as this is unlikely to build connections between students and school (Meyer, 2000).

Challenging behaviour

Challenging behaviour is defined in this study using a functional rather than a categorical approach in line with Clayton et.al (2008). The definition of challenging behaviour was further refined after consulting the school welfare data base for evidence of recurring behaviours that pose challenges for staff and students. The following criteria identify challenging behaviour in students as those:

1. who have been withdrawn from class more than three times per term.
2. who exhibit behaviour that provides a threat to their learning and the learning of others as made evident by incomplete work, class disruptions and aggressive behaviour.
3. who continue behaviour that has been pervasive for at least six months (Clayton, et al.2008).

Disengaged youth and disruptive classroom behaviours were dominant themes in a report on public education in New South Wales (NSW) by Vinson et al. (2002) which recommended including planning for more effective ways of engaging students with challenging behaviour. The extent of the problem and the nature of behaviour disorders are discussed here along with examples of existing approaches to remediate the situation. The role that humour may play in the repertoire of teacher communication skills is introduced.

Challenging behaviour demands enormous amounts of teacher time. A Western Sydney study found an average of \$200,000 per year per school was spent on executive teacher time in dealing with challenging behaviour (Clayton et. al., 2008). The study found teachers were more likely to use in school support to deal with problem behaviour and the impact of violent

and criminal behaviour by students was significant. Suspension statistics reflect these trends (DEST, 2008). One of the largest studies of its kind to be conducted in Australia (Weatherburn et al., 2005) to improve the evidence base for school violence prevention policy found a high correlation between positive student and teacher attitudes towards classroom environment and decreased student violence. Moreover challenging student behaviours are having an impact on teacher stress and burnout (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Novice teachers cite behaviour management, typically challenging behaviour, as a major source of difficulty and many feel unprepared and unsupported (Huntly, 2008). In the Hunter region of New South Wales recent statistics reveal high numbers of graduate teachers leaving the teaching profession citing behaviour management as a major reason for their decision (Page, 2011).

The literature reveals gaps between research and practice in programming for students with challenging behaviours (Hattam & Prosser, 2008; Hodgson, 2007). In a study that examined The Funds of Knowledge Approach, it was revealed that the secondary curriculum has little relevance in the lives of many students and the authors argue that pedagogy and curriculum need to consider the lives and subjectivities of students (Hattam & Prosser, 2008). The lack of curriculum relevance coupled with the teaching approach used was found to contribute to students exhibiting challenging behaviours. Roache (2008) found that secondary teachers were more likely to use aggressive techniques such as yelling and belittling students and were less likely to reinforce positive behaviour which had a negative impact on the students' behaviour. Furthermore links have been found between aggressive teacher management styles and student disengagement (Lewis, 2004).

This trend is noted by Wheatley et al (2009) who acknowledge the unique social processing displayed by students with Oppositional Defiant Disorder as first identified by Dodge (1986) and later reviewed to better articulate the needs of these students (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

This review revealed the memory deficits displayed by these students and their hostile bias which perceives conflict where none exists. These students regularly manipulate often benign interactions into aggressive disputes (Wheatley et al., 2009). Implications for teachers are clear. This specific cohort of students poses a risk to themselves, their peers and teachers (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Weatherburn, Grunseit & Donnelley, 2005). Although this cohort of students is further along the spectrum of challenging behaviours there is relevance in the pedagogy that teachers could use to reduce the challenging behaviour including humour.

Many students with challenging behaviour have mental health issues (Wheatley et al., 2009). Although the study undertaken in this research does not focus specifically on behaviour disorders several including oppositional defiance disorder (ODD) is characterised by a persistent pattern of hostile defiance towards authority figures (Wheatley et al., 2009).

Although students with challenging behaviour may not have a specific disability those who have an identified disability the Australian Disability Standards of 2005 makes it clear that all students, notwithstanding their complex additional needs, must have access to the curriculum 'on the same basis' as those students without a disability (DEST, 2005). This has implications for students with challenging behaviour as they require a positive teaching approach that may assist them to remain connected to school. Curriculum differentiations that include activities that are fun and inspire curiosity are advocated by Jensen (1998). Humour has a role to play here especially in building relationships between teachers and students (Fovet, 2009).

Effective intervention with students who have challenging behaviour currently includes a holistic approach factoring in the family and community (Roffey, 2007; Wheatley et al., 2009) with clear and enforceable discipline policies as the centrepiece (Weatherburn, 2005) of treatment. Effective treatment of these behaviour disorders includes small group training in

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy as Wheatley's (2009) study of students in a school dealing specifically with behaviour issues found. It is problematic to cater for these students in mainstream classes however it is possible for teachers to build connections with these students to facilitate positive school engagement.

Early intervention in remedial programming for anti-social behaviour is also considered to be an effective intervention (Smart, Vassallo, Sanson, & Dussuyer, 2004). The need for schools to have a well-articulated discipline policy is explored by Jones and Jones (2001) who found that an overemphasis on punishment can be detrimental to motivation and engagement.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and social cognitive approaches therefore, have been favoured in treating students with challenging behaviour patterns. Studies have concluded that these youth have difficulty interpreting the social actions of others (Dodge, 1980) and will frequently view facial expressions and actions of others as hostile. Teacher talk emerges as (Rowe, 2003) a technique which is ineffective for challenging students who have suffered trauma and or have receptive language delay (Crick & Dodge, 1994). To effectively manage challenging behaviours, the strong correlation between violence and aggressive and hostile disciplinary practices must be considered (Weatherburn et al., 2005).

Teacher enjoyment of teaching and evidence of humour in pedagogy has a high correlation to student outcomes (Anderson et al., 2006). The issue of control and management causes teachers to examine aspects of their teaching style. How friendly or firm and how to communicate these aspects of self is paramount for teachers, especially new teachers (Gore & Parkes, 2007). High school teachers are less likely to adapt their practice to cater for students with additional needs in comparison to their primary school colleagues (Shaddock et al., 2007) and one suggest reason for this is the inconsistency of contact with the students in secondary settings as opposed to a consistent/sole teacher in primary school.

In summary, the literature reveals that students with challenging behaviour are both costly (Clayton et al., 2008) and difficult to manage in mainstream classes. There is evidence (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Roffey, 2007; Wheatley et al., 2009) that changing teacher behaviour to assist these students will assist in attendance at school, will develop positive school engagement (Fullarton, 2002; Martin, 2006) and may alter the negative life trajectory for these students (Hattam & Prosser, 2008; Hodgson, 2007).

Teacher effects and student engagement

Much of the discourse around challenging behaviour in students has laid the blame on the students' families (Hattam & Prosser, 2008; Slee, 1993). Yet studies on the source of variance in student achievement (Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003) reveal that it is the teacher that makes the difference. However many teachers lack training in behaviour management techniques (Richmond, 2002b) and remain ill equipped for the challenges of the classroom. Novice teachers who have studied behaviour management as part of their accredited pre-service training report difficulties when confronted with challenging behaviour in the classroom (Huntly, 2008). Richmond. (2002a) found that teachers who began with ineffective communication skills were at risk of over managing behaviour, a theme picked up by Hart (2001), who found much of the teacher discourse around discipline to be managerial and lacking flexibility. The issue of control and management can form the basis of the techniques developed by a teacher where curriculum and behaviour management are viewed as separate entities and not in relationship. Teachers underestimate the role played by the learning activities on classroom success and failure of students (Gore & Parkes, 2007).

Studies reveal that inappropriate student behaviours demand teacher time before escalation into more challenging behaviour occurs (Little, 2005). Training teachers to increase their repertoire of communication skills to include humour could assist. Evidence suggests that

effective teachers working with Aboriginal students used humour regularly to minimize conflict (Harslett, Harrison, Godfrey, Partington, & Richer, 2000). Given the range of factors impacting on learning, the study by Harslett et al (2000) highlighted that positive teacher engagement of students was crucial. A sense of humour was noted as a key characteristic of effective teachers including the ability to joke and share a joke.

As mentioned previously, there is certain symmetry in the relationship between humour and conflict. A recent study (Norrick & Spitz, 2010) examines the interplay between the two. This adds weight to the argument for humour use in classroom interactions with students who have challenging behaviour. The surprise element and the incongruous elements of humour tangibly change the energy and power play in situations (Lefcourt, 2001). It is the dynamic created by the interplay of these two elements which can be employed when dealing with challenging adolescents. However, Morreall (1983) claims humour use must be judicious if it is to promote positive effect on students in the classroom. Evidence suggests that people respond best to the humour of those they trust and perceive as fair (Smith et al., 2000).

Over the last ten years there have been many studies examining the role schools play in developing resilience in young people (Bernard B., 2000; Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; De Jong & Griffiths, 2006). Resilience and the ability to succeed academically despite social and emotional trauma has become the centrepiece of many schools' social emotional curriculum. For the cohort of challenging students with high mental health needs the degree to which an individual feels connected to their environment is an indicator of their mental health (Anderson et al., 2006).

The impact of challenging behaviour is complex and numerous (Smart et al., 2004) with early intervention widely acclaimed as the most effective strategy (Sherrod et al., 2009; Weatherburn, 2004). Rethinking discipline and welfare can amount to navigating a

continuum of practices between autocracy and democracy (Richmond, 2002a). Coercion, the control of behaviour through punishment, has long been a key feature of our society. As a management tool in schools it can produce problematic side effects and fails to teach replacement behaviour (Sidman, 1999).

Programs such as *You Can Do It* (Bernard M., 1995) and *Tribes* (Gibbs, 2001) focus on fostering positive educational experiences for students and stress the importance of specificity in teacher feedback. The *Bounceback Program* (McGrath & Noble, 2003) contains ideas and activities, including a large component of humour for teachers to build resilience in their students. The *Fish Philosophy* is another approach adopted by some schools and advocates play and “make their day” as key attitudes (Lundin, Christensen, & Paul, 2002).

Teacher resilience is a key factor in developing positive attitude in students and there are high correlates between laughter and resilience (Kuiper & Martin, 1998). A sense of humour can indicate strong resilience in teachers (Bobek, 2002; Kuiper & Martin, 1998) which in turn has benefits for students (den Brok et al., 2003).

Teaching that avoids conflict whilst enforcing clear and firm boundaries to behaviour is more likely to promote positive student engagement (Noble & McGrath, 2007; Sousa, 2008). Over the last twenty years the many studies examining the role of neuroscience in student engagement support the notion that threat poses one of the biggest barriers to learning (Fredrickson, 2001; Jensen, 1998). Indeed, some of the hallmarks of this approach include respecting the students’ personal space (Richmond & McCroskey, 2004), modulating voice tone using calm repetitive instructions and not responding to objections (Sousa, 2008).

The Positive Educational Practices Framework articulated by Noble and McGrath (2007) places much emphasis on the generation of positive emotions such as: satisfaction, pride and enjoyment. This framework has its roots in the positive psychology movement (Seligman,

2005) and represents a change from past practices of focusing on problems that need solving and deficits that need addressing.

In summary, studies (Gore & Parkes, 2007; Slee, Weiner & Tomlinson, 1998) indicate the separation of pedagogy and management practices highlight the divide between student and teacher effects. Empirical evidence (Smart et al., 2004; Weatherburn et al., 2005) suggests that rethinking discipline and welfare to include positive educational experiences for students could build resilience (Noble & McGrath, 2007) and increase engagement (Martin, 2006). There is evidence of this as best practice in indigenous education (Harslett et al., 2000; Partington, Waugh & Forrest, 2001).

Deficit thinking of teachers and poor student outcomes

The mindset of teachers that students need to be dominated has long characterised teacher-student discourse (Hart, 2001). This has serious implications for one group which is over represented in suspension statistics (DEST, 2008; Partington et al., 2001) namely indigenous students. Sarra (2006) in his overhaul of Cherbourg School in Queensland, as a part of the Stronger, Smarter revolution in Aboriginal education, stressed the importance of relationship building with students with humour named as a cornerstone of this practice (Harslett et al., 2000).

Suspensions offer respite to the school community yet the efficacy of this as an agent of behavioural change is much disputed (Muscott et al., 2004 cited in Sherrod, 2009). Recent reports of the increase in suspensions of 33 per cent in the past five years highlight the need for some changes in practice (Stephenson, 2011). Over represented in these statistics are indigenous students. Those with challenging behaviour are at risk of negative health and social outcomes unless positive school engagement increases (Chen, Matruglio, Weatherburn & Hua, 2005).

As discussed previously, studies of teacher effects place the teacher as a primary variable in school efficacy (Hattie, 2003). In the past the deficit model of student aetiology has focused on pathology more than practice (Slee et al., 1998) yet advocates of best practice speak of the need for teacher reflection. Much is at stake as students who fail to complete compulsory schooling are over represented in youth crime statistics (Hyman & Perone, 1998; Weatherburn et al., 2005).

There are substantial links between a teacher's capacity to build strong relationships with students and their students' subsequent academic performance. Riley (2009), examined attachment theory and found that the quality of the relationship between student and teacher can actually protect against academic failure. This close relationship between teacher and student was uncovered in a study of the attachment styles of 291 pre-service teachers (Riley, 2009). Teachers who chose teaching in order to correct an emotional deficit, are particularly vulnerable to and dependent upon student acceptance.

To summarise, there is empirical evidence (Gore & Parkes, 2007; Hattam & Prosser, 2008; Hodgson, 2007) that teacher deficit views of students and coercive practices (Roache, 2008) contribute to school disengagement. Teacher displays of humour and friendliness, on the other hand, can facilitate resilience in students (Kuiper & Martin, 1998) and assist their vulnerable students to reframe negative situations and increase engagement (Geisler & Weber, 2010). This has particular implications for our indigenous students who are over represented in school suspension data (Lillemyr et al., 2010; Stephenson, 2011) and who respond positively to humour inclusion in teaching (Harslett et al., 2000; Partington et al., 2001).

Student engagement and the use of humour in teaching

A significant barrier to engagement may be boredom (Hackathorne et al., 2011) with an increasing pressure on teachers to spark interest for learning in their students. Students are demanding a different pedagogy from past styles of didactic teaching (Rowe, 2003) and chief amongst these demands is a sense of humour (Lake, 2006) and a humanistic approach (Krishnaveni & Anitha, 2007). Humour is a powerful tool towards this end. Engagement has emerged as a variable to be considered (Zyngier, 2004) as schools face increased accountability and students are required to remain in school until 17 years of age in New South Wales. Engagement forms one of the pillars of Quality Teaching (McCleod, Hinde & Reynolds, 2007) yet defining engagement is problematic and is further explored in the next section on school climate. What follows is an overview of the literature on student engagement and pedagogy with references to the use of humour.

Martin (2006) sees motivation and engagement as integral parts of a positive orientation towards school and identifies teacher creativity as a key element in this dynamic.

Recognizing that schools operate through a discourse of power Munns et al. (2006) make a connection between boys' cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes and the cultural dynamics in which they operate in society.

The interaction between student engagement and teacher response is one where negative student behaviour elicits low teacher response (Martin, 2006). Moreover the positive relationship between socio-communication styles including humour and non-verbal communication is of interest. Studies show high correlates between immediacy and student learning (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). The teacher's liking of a student has high correlation with student engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This is hardly surprising yet it is this dynamic which leaves many students marginalized (Roache, 2008). Zero tolerance can often

equate to exclusion (Martinez, 2009) and increase the risk factors for student wellbeing (Hodgson, 2007).

In these studies the teacher's role remains central to the engagement of students. For those students that may be identified as 'at risk' of school failure due to challenging behaviour, the teacher can play a crucial role (Martinez, 2009). A New South Wales action research study examined engagement in schools from lower socio-economic demographics. A broad definition of engagement was employed that stated schools and education had relevance for students (O'Brien, Weir & Johnson, 2004). The findings place emphasis on teacher reflection and planning tasks for students and the useful connection this made to their lives. This supports the self-determination theorists (Assor, Kaplan & Roth, 2002) who identify three categories of teacher behaviours that affect student feelings towards engagement: autonomy support, competence support and relational support. Teacher behaviours may include providing choice and encouraging initiative and minimizing controls (Assor et al., 2002).

Teacher behaviours that correlate with student engagement are confirmed in a comprehensive Australian study on engaging boys in middle school (Munns et al., 2006). These behaviours include high expectations, friendliness and an ability to develop interesting learning experiences. This Australian Government (2006) report on evidence based teaching practises to increase engagement and motivation examined the practices across 15 boy's schools which had demonstrated achievement in learning outcomes for students. Motivation and engagement were seen as two parts with engagement being the 'flow on' effect (Australian Government, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, teacher creativity was identified as a key indicator of effective practice towards engagement (Munns et al., 2006) and given the links between humour, creativity and divergent thinking (Ziv, 1983); teacher humour could have a role to play in this dynamic.

Participants in a study on humour use in English as second language classes (Ziyaeemehr et al., 2011) responded that humour helped them to listen, to ask questions and increased the enjoyment of lessons.

A rigorous study on student engagement and teacher perceptions, Martin (2006) outlines a scale of ten items denoting engagement and motivation. These ten facets of motivation and engagement were explored amongst a sample of 1,019 teachers. The scale consisted of an adaptive cognitive dimension (self-efficacy), an adaptive behavioural dimension (planning), an impeding dimension (anxiety) and the maladaptive dimensions including self-handicapping (Martin et al., 2007). The adaptive measures were more highly correlated with enjoyment of teaching than impeding or maladaptive dimensions. In a later study Martin et al. (2007) looks at relationships between teachers and students, with good relationships providing a buffer to stress as a critical factor in school engagement.

In summary, the literature (Martin et al., 2007; Munns et al., 2006; O'Brien et al., 2004) reveals that student engagement is affected by teacher behaviours that promote autonomy, indicate friendliness and provide interesting learning experiences. Studies (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999) indicate that teacher humour is viewed as an immediacy behaviour which can issue feedback to students and increase engagement.

School climate and student engagement

A positive school climate is a cornerstone of engagement especially for males (Fullarton, 2002). Fullarton looks at engagement through the lens of Finn's (1989) taxonomy of engagement based on participation in extra curricula activities offered by the school. Students who strongly identified with the school culture have greater participation levels and were more connected to the school community. Those students with professional parents were generally happy with school and learning and were intrinsically motivated with high levels of

school engagement (Fullarton, 2002). This finding highlights the gap between students with challenging behaviour, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, and their more socially connected classmates.

Finn (1993) identified that students who displayed high levels of engagement also participated in extra curricula activities. Yet for students who have been identified as ‘at risk’ of school dropout this is especially important. In an Australian study, Thomson (2005) explores the same theme using questionnaires with teachers and students to measure a sense of engagement. Engagement was defined in terms of participation in school community activities such as clubs and sporting events. Socio economic factors contributed to the level of engagement with students from wealthier backgrounds accessing more extra curricula activities.

It is useful to refer to Munns et al. (2006) multidimensional focus on engagement “where the behavioural, the emotional and the cognitive come together powerfully” (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004 quoted in Munns et al, 2006, p. 28). Engagement must not be confused with compliance (Zyngier, 2004,) and merely the following of rules. The tendency in the past for a discourse of deficits to describe the student needs is viewed as no longer productive. Advocating a pedagogy underpinned by social justice, accessible to all students, he explores the debate around whether engagement must be linked to academic achievement or a bigger picture where engagement, more than doing well, can form the basis for social, cultural, political and intellectual life.

Certainly, engaging students at risk in the school community can alter the risky trajectory of their lives (Bernard, 2000). Making connections between behaviour, learning and social justice Zyngier (2004) advocates a transformative engagement where students see themselves represented in a curriculum that promotes equity between social groups. This concurs with

Newmann's (1996) three components of student engagement: construction of knowledge, disciplined enquiry and production of a discourse about that learning that has value beyond school (Newmann, 1996 cited in Zyngier, 2004).

Finn (1993) proposes a model which looks at engagement containing a behavioural component manifested as participation and a psychological component related to identification. Lack of interaction with the teacher and inappropriate teacher responses contributed to lack of engagement. The reciprocity which characterizes student motivation and teacher behaviour is articulated by Skinner and Belmont (1993) who emphasize providing optimal structure and autonomy support as crucial for engagement.

Student feelings of acceptance in class are strongly associated with cognitive and behavioural and emotional engagement (Cornell & Wellborne, 1991, as cited in, Martin, 2006, p.75). This is an illustration of Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden and Build Theory which proposes that positive emotions provide the potential for an individual to increase their momentary thought action repertoires. This speaks for the need to address teacher communication since it is primarily through the skill of teachers that schools can make a difference (Rowe, 2003), thus these findings have much to offer on the subject of engagement.

As a by-product of engagement with the curriculum, building relationships with teachers serves to build links with the learning community and provides students with mentoring which can, for students at risk of retention, build resilience (Dyson & Zink, 2007; Lake, 2006). A four year project looking at teacher and student communication in the United Kingdom found that a sense of fun and enjoyment was as important as effective cooperative learning experiences (Wall, Higgins, Glasner, Mahmoud & Gormally, 2009).

The symbiotic relationship between student and teacher communication is explored by Riley (2009) who looked at attachment styles of pre service and experienced teachers. In the

teacher-student dyad, the teacher is dependent on the student response in order to develop; rejection of the teacher by the student can provoke aggressive responses in teacher behaviour.

In summary, the literature (Fredrickson, 2001; Noble & McGrath, 2007) supports the notion that the effective engagement of students is supported by positive educational practices.

Evidence (Dyson & Zink, 2007; Murray Harvey & Slee, 2007) is unequivocal of the teacher's power to influence student outcomes through building relationships. Outmoded practices such as excessive 'teacher talk' (Rowe, 2003) are no longer producing the levels of student engagement previously seen in classrooms. Studies (Fullarton, 2002; Zyngier, 2004,) indicate student engagement is served by a social justice model an equality of educational experiences.

Training and professional development: an overview

Teaching is a complex craft (Lovat, 2003) and teachers require a high degree of social skills in order to successfully engage their students (Arnold, 2005). With teacher factors accounting for a substantial percentage of effects on student outcomes (Hattie, 2003) training is crucial. Placed in the context of a teaching standards act and performance linked remuneration training teachers to improve student outcomes is a mutually beneficial priority in changing pedagogical practice (Lovat, 2005; Martin et al., 2007; Wall et al., 2009).

The current trends and government imperatives including studies on best practice and training which involves change in teacher attitude and beliefs are explored. There are few rigorous studies on training people to use humour yet there is an emergence of websites encouraging business to increase humour use in the workplace (Miller, 1996).

One -off in-service training has little effect on sustainable change in practice (Richmond, 2002a). The work with teachers in training for Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) noted that one- off training was viewed with disdain by experienced teachers as it lacked context and

on-site support for intervention (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2010). Sherrod, Getch and Ziomeck-Daigle (2009) examine Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) in the context of a structured approach to teacher training. Integrating outcomes and systems in a measured framework had the effect of decreasing behaviour referrals in elementary school. Students were reminded of the rules and were encouraged to brainstorm effective strategies.

The increase in funding for teacher in-service training in the last ten years has seen the emergence of a plethora of courses claiming to have all the answers in dealing with challenging student behaviour. One such trainer Rogers (1998) is known for his wry sense of humour. Rogers has long been advising teachers to alter the path of classroom conflict by employing humour. Training that encourages teachers to change poor practice is characterized by systemic changes to whole school culture (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

In the Western Australian Getting it Right (GiR) program (Ingvarson, 2005) teachers are involved in working shoulder-to-shoulder with specialists and researchers gathering and analysing data on student performance. Tracing the effect of training on student outcomes is problematic as there are many variables at play in the equation. Few are grounded in rigorous research (Ingvarson, 2005). One exception is Hawley and Valli (1999) who list characteristics of professional development in a Hawaiian study. These include outcomes for student learning, identifying teachers' learning needs and building the training into the school day. Effective training is collaborative and problem solving and is connected to a comprehensive change process related to student learning (Hawley & Valli as cited in Ingvarson, 2005, p.65).

Few studies exist that examine humour training. One of these, Franzini (2001) conducted a study on training therapists in humour use. The components of humour training are outlined: discussion of major theories of humour, available research, risks of misuse, sense of humour building, how to heighten sensitivity to stimulus and the role of timing. A recent work by

Paul McGhee (2010), a veteran humour researcher, is the developer of a humour training manual based on evidence and outlines a seven step program including cultivating a playful attitude to cope with life's stress. A Canadian study looked at using humour to teach business ethics to salesmen (Lyttle, 2001). The links between persuasion and humour were consolidated in this study which found humour to have the following uses: improve credibility, remove counter arguments and increase trust.

Training teachers to increase student engagement includes a teacher's ability to effectively observe engagement behaviours. In a study of pre-school teachers, video recorded observations of children were examined to determine the level of engagement. A high degree of success was established when observers were trained to view children participating in activities (Kishida & Kemp, 2010). Modelling the skills of observation in the workplace was beneficial. Four types of engagement were observed: active, passive, active engaged, active non engaged. This process is problematic given the busy and often chaotic climate of the school classroom.

Training teachers to display enthusiasm has some links to training for humour use in its focus on teacher communication. A study by Bettencourt Gillet, Gall and Hull (1983) used video taped segments of teacher communication before and after training. Enthusiasm was measured according to: vocal quality, eyes, gestures, movement, facial expression, words and ideas expressed as well as energy level. Increased enthusiasm was found to gain and hold student attention, yet the researchers found there may be limitations to the study when applied to experienced teachers and those suffering burn- out.

Teacher reflection is an integral component of changing practice to increase engagement. Lingard et al.(2003) found a tendency in teachers to avoid self-reflection when attempting to make changes to practice but warns that there needs to be systemic and structural changes

that support teachers (Lingard, 2003 cited in Blood & Thorsborne, 2005) in attempting to change school culture to including more restorative practices. Muir, Beswick and Williamson (2010) examined the role of teacher reflection in a study looking at evidence based reflective practice. Video-taped lessons were used to stimulate recall and encourage productive reflective practice in a primary school study. Teachers' beliefs about themselves were found to inhibit changes in classroom practice. When teachers are supported in their implementation of changes in practice there is a greater rate of success (Fullan, 1992, cited in Muir et al., 2010).

Giovannelli (2003) supports this view and found links between reflective disposition in teachers and student outcomes. In reflection, teachers gain a sense of the cyclic nature of planning, review, assessment and future planning (Schon, 1983, cited in Newman, 2000). Training teachers to include more reflective practice is one way of assessing the level of student engagement through a dialogue with students (Loughran, 2010). Triggers can be examined through the use of anecdotes that capture daily practice (Van Manen, 1986 cited in Loughran, 2010, p.188) or when problematic issues arise (Romano, 2006).

Training that involves a teacher's mannerisms, such as gesture, posture and vocal quality, as opposed to content, is useful in changing inefficient teacher practices. Bettencourt (1983) looked at training teachers in expressing enthusiasm. This study featured beginning teachers and used video footage. Enthusiasm indicators were: vocal delivery, eyes, gestures, movement, facial expression, word selection, acceptance of ideas and feelings and energy level. Results indicated changes in practice following training and an increased ability to hold student attention. Bettencourt asks the question: "How would burnt out teachers respond?" (Bettencourt et al. 1983, p.442).

To summarise, research (Lovat 2005; Martin et al. 2007; Wall et al. 2009) demonstrates that teacher behaviour has a direct impact on student engagement and student outcomes. Training that is collaborative and involves reflective practice is central to quality teaching (Giovannelli, 2003; McLeod Hinde & Reynolds, 2007). Studies that examine training that targets teacher behaviour (Bettencourt et al., 1983; den Brok et al., 2003) and humour expression (Franzini, 2001; Mc Ghee, 2010) could affect outcomes for students who display challenging behaviour.

Conclusion

The literature reveals that humour has proven useful to our species in surviving often unbearable circumstances through humour's reframing capacity. Moreover, there is much to recommend humour inclusion as a vehicle for increasing teachers' capacity to engage students. Therefore the ability of a teacher to diffuse an escalating drama with humour thus diverting the path of conflict is worthy of study.

Improving outcomes for students with challenging behaviour means rethinking pedagogy.

There are sufficient studies to suggest that the teacher plays a pivotal role in student engagement and motivation. The studies from neuroscience confirm that a threat free classroom environment and one where a playful atmosphere exists can have a positive effect on the engagement of students and their brains.

The evidence from neuroscience also suggests that humour use increases a person's capacity by broadening the range of options available rather than confining response to fight or flight during conflict. With the introduction of national teaching standards (Ingvarson, 2010) it seems evident that pedagogy could benefit from increased communication skills training for teachers. Teacher ability to adopt reflective practice would mitigate against inappropriate uses of humour and an increase in awareness of the power of non-verbal communication.

Challenging student behaviour in our schools proves costly both for students and teachers. Humour is well placed within the framework of positive psychology and could be utilized to a greater extent. Even the simple indication of a teacher's good humour, the smile, has been linked to increases in student retention of information. The neurological pathways for the true smile and laughter differ from that of a smile generated for politeness (Taber et al., 2007). Smiling is of relevance to this study as it is the first signal that there is no threat from the teacher to the student. The face "a marquee advertising one's emotions" (Richmond & McCroskey, 2004, p.71) is readily viewed by the student and is the beginning of the interaction. Training teachers in appropriate humour use and communication that produces a 'flourishing' could have far reaching benefits. Studies indicate the benefits of humour to brain function, social cohesion and creativity and fostering a student's ability to learn in a threat free environment. This approach has few costs and the literature reveals benefits for teacher wellbeing, a beacon in a stressful workplace.

This review of the literature indicates humour as a powerful social moderator with its ability to reduce tension. The attendant cognitive capacity of humour to increase memory retention, increase divergent thinking and foster creativity has major implications for educators. This body of evidence confirms the hypothesis that training teachers to use humour could be an effective way of engaging adolescents with challenging behaviour. Teachers are often the deciding factor in students retaining connections to the school community and the use of exemplary communication skills, including humour by teachers can ameliorate many difficulties. The studies on teacher effects confirm the power of teachers to make a difference notwithstanding a student's socio economic background.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Methodology and Design

This study uses a *mixed-model* (mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches within or across the *stages* of the research process) approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) rather than a *mixed method*; the inclusion of a quantitative *phase* and a qualitative *phase*, in an overall research study. With similarities to Fovet (2009), this mixed method approach is dominated by the qualitative phase. The study of humour, as in the Fovet study, is best captured in the voices of the participants through interviews.

This approach was chosen to respond to the nature of the inquiry and its complexity. Seeking to capture the dual elements of teacher humour and student engagement it was necessary to use quantitative measurement of the teacher behaviours to examine the impact of the training. A deeper insight into the process of training and implementation of ideas was best explored through interviews. These approaches occur sequentially in response to the research question: *Can training help teachers include humour to engage adolescents with challenging behaviour?* In this way it is possible to understand the issues and challenges experienced by teachers of students who endeavour to engage adolescents with challenging behaviour.

The rationale for this approach is that a key element of a mixed modal approach is its methodological pluralism which can result in superior research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The strengths in this approach acknowledge that qualitative approaches are useful for when there are a limited number of participants as in this study *and* can be useful for studying complex issues such as the use of humour by teachers with students who have challenging behaviour. Other features include, “providing understanding and description of people’s personal experiences of phenomena” (i.e., the “emic” or insider’s viewpoint), it can describe, in rich detail, phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts. In addition the

researcher can study dynamic processes (i.e., documenting sequential patterns and change) and can be responsive to local situations, conditions, and stakeholders' needs (ibid, p. 20).

Considering the theoretical paradigms this research project will incorporate the positivist perspective (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) of quantitative research particularly given that social phenomena (Babbie, 1989) has an objective reality and their meanings are constructed by the people involved in using them, rather than being external objects existing independently of them (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Constructivism as a theoretical basis for educational improvement places importance on the roles of reflection allowing teachers to re think and re- frame their ideas about learning and participation To borrow from Le Cornu & Peters (2005) there exists a 'constructivist epistemology' (ibid, p. 65).

Considering the social phenomena, the qualitative approach will be used to gather data from interviews with teachers. Interviewing will be unstructured with pre-established open questions to understand the complexities of behaviour (Fontana & Frey, 2000). With reference to Malinowski (1967), the researcher is reminded to avoid allowing personal feelings to influence the interview process.

A quantitative approach is used in observations which measure frequency of teacher and student behaviour through direct observation of video footage. This will add rigor to the study through establishing baseline data from which to measure engagement and signpost the success of teacher interventions by the evidence collected. The qualitative approach will allow themes to emerge in this project.

Studies of the use of humour in pedagogy reveal mixed methodologies from the experimental quantitative studies (Ziv,1983; Garner, 2006) to the qualitative studies on the role of humour

in building class cohesion and increasing engagement (Senoir, 2001; Torok, 2004). Fovet (2009) used mixed methodology in the study on humour use with students with behaviour disorders. The mixed methods approach allows the examination of humour use in the classroom context (quantitative) and the teacher reflection of this strategy (qualitative). Criterion sampling was utilized to explore the phenomenon of training teachers in humour use with a select group of students. The students are a cohort that fulfils the established criteria for 'challenging'. Only teachers of these students were selected in the study.

Collective case study is used to chart the experiences of the participants undertaking the training and as they adjust their practice to include humour and reflect on the process. These case studies are instrumental as they allow greater insight into the use of humour in pedagogy. Instrumental case studies can be used to test a theory or to gain a clearer understanding of an issue (Stake, 1995). Case studies can employ many methods including interviews and observation. The benefits of using case study in this project include the ability to explore the holistic nature of the phenomenon in the natural setting and to provide 'thick description' (Guba & Lincoln 1995). This method has been selected to look at what is the common experience between participants and what differs. Through the experiences of the participants it is possible to articulate the issues and challenges raised by the training and subsequent use of humour.

This study takes place at a junior high school (year 7-10) campus in a metropolitan area of the Hunter Valley and Central Coast district. This junior high school is one of three schools forming a larger college. There are 911 students and 64 full time teaching staff members at the junior high school. The indigenous student population forms 8% and students from non-English speaking backgrounds form 10% with some refugees amongst this population. Students with intellectual disabilities are present in the mainstream classes under study.

Participants

Participants (5) were selected from teaching staff at the school. The researcher provided staff members with information about the project at a staff meeting and invited them to participate in the project. Eligibility to participate was determined by a. willingness to participate in the study and b. having at least one student in their class who fulfilled the criteria established for ‘challenging behaviour’. The pilot study originally comprised of six teachers but following collection of baseline data one of the participants broke her arm and had to take leave from school. The project continued with five teachers, four females and one male. The participants are described in more detail in the case studies.

Participation in the study consisted of attending five training sessions after school, being filmed in the classroom and later watching the video footage and reflecting on the process. The interviews were then conducted at the conclusion of the training and filming.

Challenging behaviour has been conceptualized for this study with reference to Munns et al., (2006) and is a functional rather than categorical definition:

- a. Students who have been withdrawn from class more than three times per term.
- b. Student’s whose behaviour provides a threat to their learning and the learning of others as evidenced by incomplete work, class disruptions and aggressive behaviour.
- c. The student’s behaviour has been pervasive for at least six months

It is possible that some targeted students of teacher-participants would not be diagnosed with a behaviour disorder according to the DSM IV, however the above criteria would indicate that the student’s behaviour could provide a barrier to learning and may be an indication of future disengagement from school.

An independent observer joined the researcher in conducting a trial of observation of humour incidents using footage taken independently of the sample. This was used in establishing clarity of what to observe and so there could be inter-rater reliability. Both observers viewed footage of teacher behaviour, freeze framing evidence of each category as it emerged to gain an accurate picture of what behaviours to count. In this manner a high inter-rater reliability was established. Particular attention was paid to the evidence of 'warmth behind the eyes'. This took place prior to the commencement of the teacher training. Any evidence of humour provoked by the researcher's presence (e.g. smile to camera or a joke made to the researcher) was not to be tallied. The study then progressed through the following stages:

- Baseline data was taken for each teacher by filming them for 15 minutes prior to the training.
- Training commences after school once a week for five weeks.
- Teachers are filmed for 15 minutes to collect samples of teaching from varying times during the one hour lessons.
- Teacher aides observe student during the lesson and record the level of student engagement.
- Teachers are interviewed at the conclusion of all the training sessions.

The research instruments:

Five research instruments were used in this study:

1. Observation checklist for teacher humour
2. Observation checklist for student engagement
3. Video footage
4. Humour training manual (devised by researcher)
5. Interview questions

The instruments are described:

Observation checklist for teacher humour (Appendix iv)

This checklist was developed by the researcher and consists of eight humour communication items. These humour communication behaviours were chosen as a mixture of non-verbal communication indicating humour (Ekman, 2003) and promotion of positive affect (Afifi, 2007). It was used as the main teacher humour behaviour measure. Teachers were rated 1 for evidence of the behaviour in each minute. A sum of individual scores on this measure yielded total humour score.

- a. Warmth behind the eyes (WBE): this is evident in the use of the orbicularis oculi muscles, the tiny muscles around the eye, and results in a threat free, friendly appearance. This expression can be demonstrated to observers and training can assist teachers in determining the use of these eye muscles.



When accompanied by other communication behaviours, such as posture and gesture it can signal a 'play frame' (Mulkay, 1988).



b. Gestures: These behaviours are non-verbal and denote a positive signal e.g. thumbs up or a playful hand gesture.



c. Smile: only smiles which occur with WBE are tallied



d. Joke: here the category can include a play on words or a traditional joke; the joke behaviour can also be teacher instigated joke telling by students. Inappropriate jokes or sarcasm are not included and will not be tallied.

e. Sotto voice: this category is for those communication behaviours which are said under the breath and meant only for the targeted student and the use of a funny voice, Ekman (2003) notes the voice is the primary signal for happy emotions.

f. Story: any story told by the teacher promoting positive affect or causing laughter in the students

g. Gag: physical slapstick usually involving a dramatic gesture, body posture

h. Ha: a laugh

Observation checklist for student engagement (Appendix iii)

This checklist was developed by the researcher and consists of four items indicating engagement. Engagement was narrowly defined for the study using Finn's (1989) taxonomy of student engagement. The lowest level of the scale of school engagement is compliance and participation (Finn, 1989) and the highest level is involvement in extra curricula and after school activities. A criterion with low level indicators for engagement was selected to accommodate the cohort of students with challenging behaviour for which attendance is often problematic (Anderson et al., 2006; Barrowman et al., 2001) an observer (teacher's aide) observed the students during the time that the teacher was filmed. They looked for signs of student engagement and students were rated 1 for evidence of each item in each minute according to the following criteria:

1. Attendance & turning up to class on time and remaining in the room for the entire lesson
2. Contributes to class discussion, answers questions
3. Works independently on task
4. Completes work (Finn, 1998)

Teacher's aides are regularly in classrooms and students were not aware that their behaviour was being recorded this facilitated a naturalistic setting for the study. Initially the students

were interested in the presence of the video camera but this subsided after a few minutes. Following commencement of training, three sets of similar data, as described above, were collected using student observations.

Video footage

The researcher took 15 minute video clips of participants teaching. These clips were then copied to DVD and distributed to the participants for them to view. The video clips were taken at various times during the lesson so that it was possible to view the beginning, middle and end of lessons. Only the teacher was filmed.

Humour training manual (devised by researcher) see Appendix vi

This training package has its rationale in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training (NCI, 2002) which aims to train professionals to safely manage disruptive and violent behaviours. The emphasis on non-verbal communication and vocal qualities are at the basis of the humour training package. The theoretical underpinning for the training owes much to Gusky's (2002) model for teacher change. It assumes that teachers will accept changes in practice after implementing ideas learnt in training and viewing the effect of those changes on student behaviour (Guskey, 2002).

Interview questions (Appendix vii)

Unstructured questions were utilised (Fontana & Frey, 2000) in order to avoid a limiting categorisation of responses and to gain an understanding of the complexity of the behaviour of people (Punch, 1998). Open ended questions such as "In what ways have you included humour in the classroom?" and a mixture of closed and open questioning "Have you used humour to de-escalate conflict? Tell me about that." Interviews were recorded in order to maintain the voice of the participants in the naturalistic setting (Van Manen, 1988, cited in Fontana & Frey, 2000) in responding to the research question: What are some of the

challenges experienced by teachers as they include humour in teaching adolescents with challenging behaviour?

Training for the participants: Rationale

There is a scarcity of studies on humour training and those that exist focus on tension reducing benefits wholly for the participants (Lowis, 1997). This study examines the effects of teacher humour on students, following training. The nature of the student cohort and their attendant deficits in social emotional development were considered in the training design. McGhee's (1979) work on humour development in children outlines the stages of development commencing with an appreciation of incongruities and in the final stages a more sophisticated appreciation of figurative language and multiple meanings (McGhee, 1979). It was assumed that training teachers to build a strong and trusting relationship with students through a friendly human approach would build a base on which to explore humour rather than teaching stand up comedic styles which can exclude through misinterpretation (Wanzer et al., 2006).

This training package aims to establish a clear and productive communication style which will produce positive affect in both the students and teachers. There is evidence to suggest that effective teachers smile more (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993) and communicate in a friendly yet assertive manner (den Brok et al., 2003). This training aims to increase the awareness of teachers on their non-verbal communication and to include humour as a means of building rapport and to increase the social cohesion in their classes. Teachers of students with challenging behaviour need to be aware of their non-verbal communication and this package refers to Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training (NCI, 2002) with its emphasis on educating professionals in communicating safely. Goals for the training include: reducing teacher stress, increasing student engagement and reducing non-compliant student behaviour.

The participating teachers attended an **introductory** training session which presented findings on the benefits of the use of humour in the classroom and the overall rationale for the study. The teachers then attended four subsequent training sessions of 20 minutes duration after school. The **second** session explored aspects of interpersonal communication including non-verbal communication; kinesics (body language) and proxemics (personal space). Teachers were able to view (in their own time) the footage taken as baseline data and reflect on aspects of their interpersonal communication in the light of the second training session.

The **third** session explored non-verbal aspects of communication with a particular focus on facial expression. The concept of 'warmth behind the eyes' (WBE) was introduced.

The **fourth** training session included various techniques for including humour in pedagogy. Teachers were given some resources to access (Done, 2006; Girdlefanny, 2004; Hellman, 2007). Information on the nature of reflection (Carroll, 2009) was also provided to teachers. Teachers were given access to the footage taken from their lessons.

A **fifth** session was held a month later to gain feedback on progress and reflect on any changes in practice. These sessions were interactive with opportunities for teachers to reflect on past practices and share ideas on humour use. During this session teachers viewed the footage from the classroom and reflected on what they observed about student engagement and their own teaching style.

The researcher as trainer has a 30-year background of working with students with severe behaviour disorders: Conduct disorder (CD) Emotionally Disturbed (ED) and Behaviour Disorders (BD), across all settings from special classes, special schools and mainstream classes. She has worked extensively with staff to increase their ability to manage these students and has used humour in working with students, parents, teachers and community

members. Humour has been used by the trainer in teaching students with challenging behaviours in a variety of ways which include developing and undertaking whole school novelty events e.g dress ups, spot the song lyric and hilarious tabloid sports events; training in the use of friendly open body language; smiling and promoting student expressions of humour as explored by Jewell (2005). Humour is also a regular method for diverting conflict (Harslett et al., 2000) such as feigning misunderstanding of abusive hand gestures and gentle teasing. Years of practice has alerted the researcher to the need for reflection (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Le Cornu & Peters, 2009) and observation of student response. Only humour which promotes positive affect in students was used in the training of participants. Studies reveal humour types deemed inappropriate for teacher use (Wanzer et al., 2006).

DATA COLLECTION

Observation and filming of teaching sessions

After the training program, the researcher observed teachers between three and five times in their classrooms. The number of observations was contingent upon teacher willingness on the day. Filming of the participating teacher and observation of one student in the class who fulfilled the criteria for ‘challenging’ was made post training using video recording at 15 minute intervals during lessons over a period of six weeks collecting at least four observations of each teacher in total. Teachers were given feedback following lessons recorded allowing them to reflect on the type of humour used and the suitability to a particular group. Lessons are 1 hour in duration which provided possibilities to sample beginning, middle and end of lesson.

Teachers were encouraged to reflect on their practice (Le Cornu & Peters, 2005) as they viewed the footage. A follow up session with participants was held two months after the intervention. At this session data were collected in the form of interviews. The interview

questions explored the teacher's experience in all aspects of the project from the training and the filming during their lessons through to their experience of viewing the footage. These experiences were all examined in the context of humour use and increased attention to non-verbal communication.

As in Ulloth's (2003) study of nurse educators which describes teacher using humour in the classroom, this study retains flexibility to allow for teacher creativity and individual taste in humour inclusion. One of the educators in the Ulloth study used novelty items and music where another used laughter and funny stories. The nature of humour prevents too much planning as many humorous incidents rely on the element of surprise or a play on words. Where humour involves incongruities there is some scope for planning.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

The data were collected on the teacher observation sheets (Appendix iv) during observation of the video clips by the two raters. Initially the data were subject to SPSS analysis but it became clear that the sample size and data sets were too small to use the software. Despite this limitation, it is important to observe that the use of graphs is common in behavioural studies and although the researcher would have wished for other forms of data analysis, the size of the sample did not allow for this to occur. The observations from both raters were then averaged and entered onto an excel spread sheet. Graphs were generated to illustrate the frequency and types of humour use displayed by the teachers.

The student data were collected by an observer in the classroom during the time that the teacher was filmed. The student data was entered onto the student engagement observation form (appendix iii). Graphs were then generated to illustrate the level of student engagement and then, the relationship between student engagement and the teacher humour. The time

frame for these observations ranged from pre training (baseline) and across the 3 subsequent sets of data corresponding to the training.

The following codes were used:

H1= First data following training

H2= Second data following training

H3= Third data following training

Qualitative Analysis

Given the relatively small amount of data from the teacher interviews, it was decided that manual analysis of the qualitative data was expedient. The data was coded according to the type of humour used and the function of humour in pedagogy in light of the research questions:

- Can teachers be assisted to use humour when they reflect on their practice after viewing videotaped lessons?
- What impact does the use of teacher humour have on managing challenging behaviour and increasing student engagement?
- What are some of the challenges experienced by teachers who use humour with adolescents with challenging behaviour?

The humour used by teachers as reported in interviews was coded into types from which a table was generated depicting the frequently used humour types and examples.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Results of the study are presented with reference to the research questions in general terms and then examined in more detail in the case studies. The humour use is explored according to the eight indicators of teacher humour and the relationship that teacher humour has on student engagement.

The qualitative and quantitative data support the hypothesis that training teachers to include humour has a positive impact on student engagement with students who display challenging behaviour.

Pseudonyms are used in the discussion of all results in the study. The five teachers each had four data sets. One set was baseline data then 3 subsequent post training sets collected over the period of the study. Each data set was from observations taken after the training sessions and was numbered accordingly Humour 1 (H1) Humour 2 (H2) Humour Three (H3). Data were coded according to eight indicators of teacher humour: Warmth behind the eyes (WBE), gesture (G), smile (S), joke (J), voice alteration including sotto voice and funny voices (SV), stories, physical gags (Gag) and laughs (Ha). Data were collected on years of teaching experience which has some correlation to humour use (Figs 1&2). Indeed the participants with the highest humour use were those with the greatest teaching experience.

FIG 1: Graph of Participant's Years of Teaching Experience

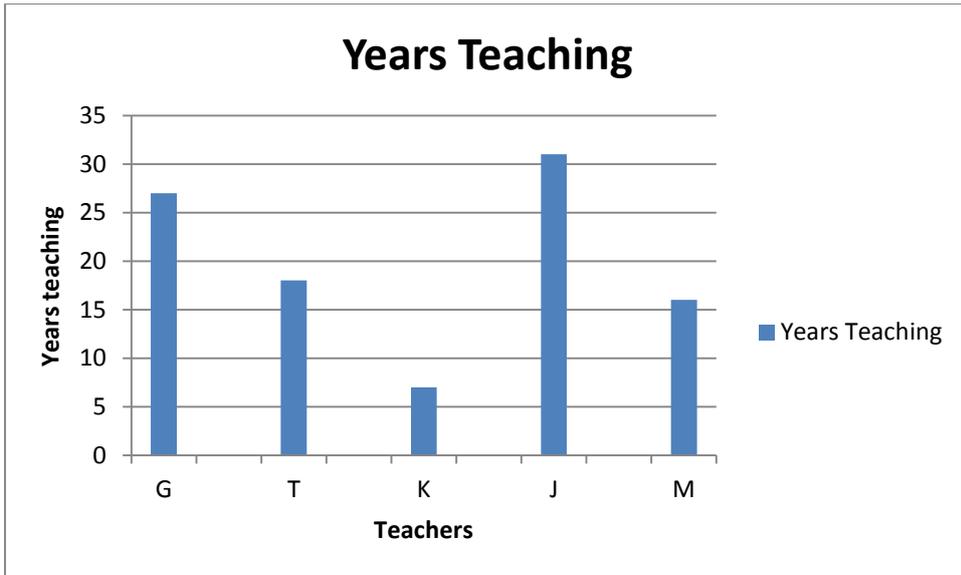
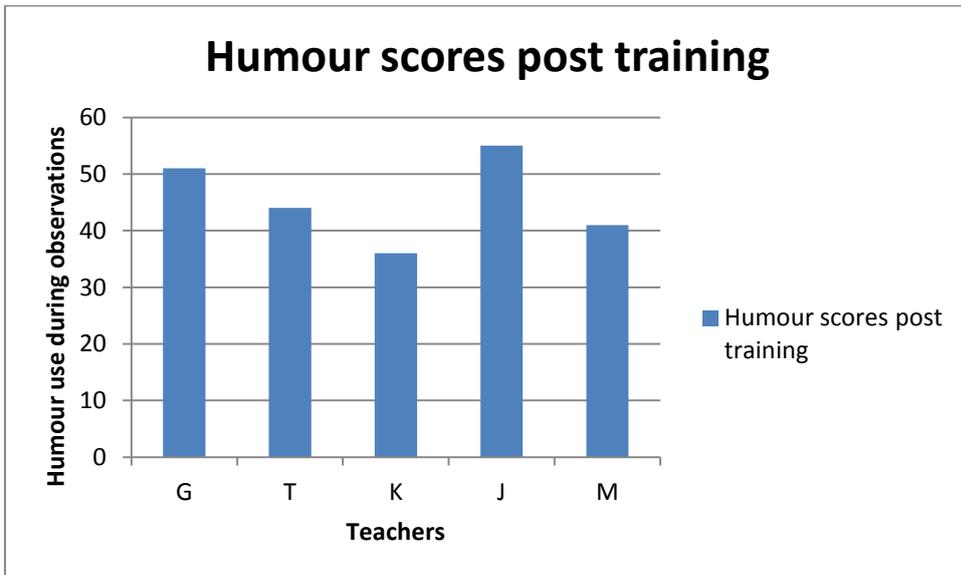


FIG 2: Graph of Teacher Humour Scores



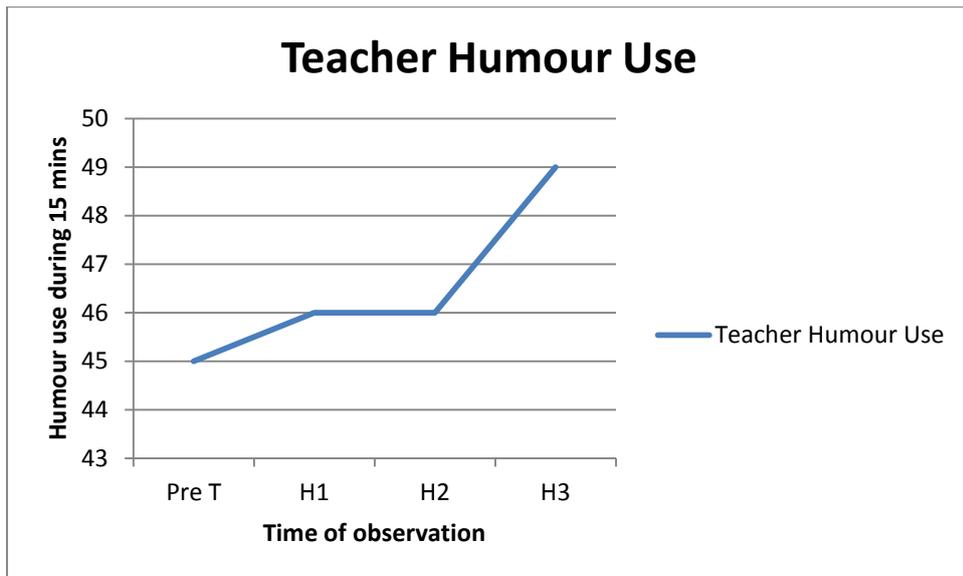


FIG 3: Graph of Occurrence Teacher Humour

The quantitative data is summarised in Fig.3 shows the total humour scores for all five of the teachers from the pre training though to the last data collected for all groups. The steady increase in teacher humour is an indication that the training had an impact on humour use.

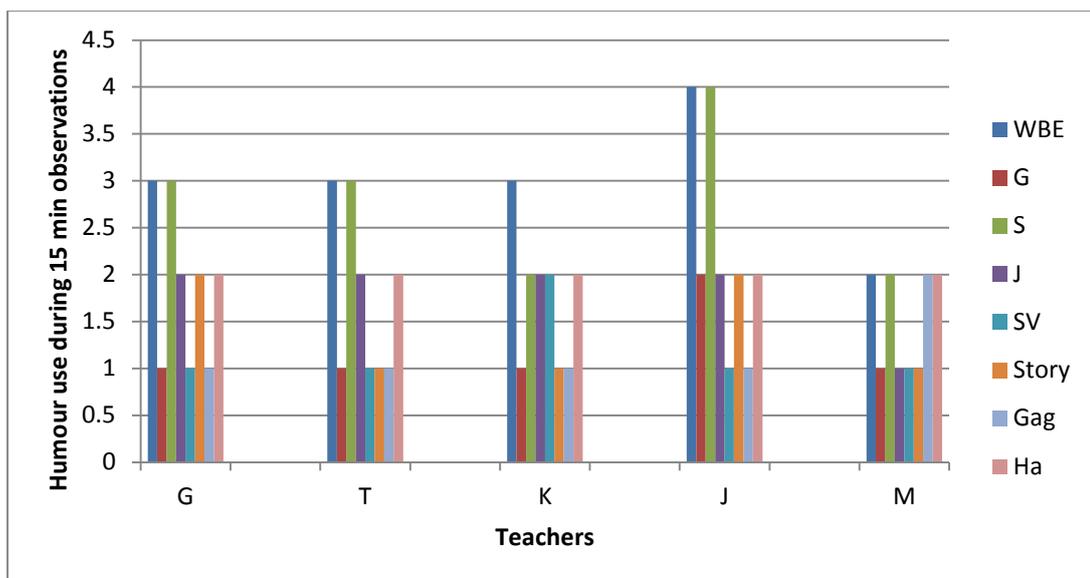
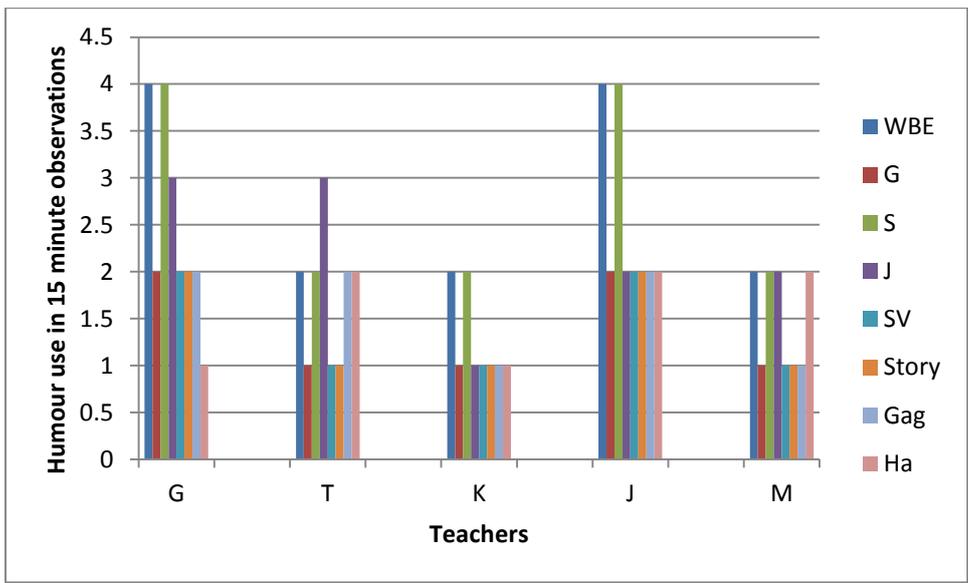


FIG 4: Teacher Humour Types before Training

Fig 4 shows the type of teacher humour use before training. These humour expressions are as follows: WBE: Warmth behind the eyes; G: Gestures; S: Smile; J: Joke; SV: Sotto voice; Story; Gag and Ha: laugh. Using the key in the table, use of jokes (J) in teaching was the humour type showing the largest difference before and after training. Individual variations are seen in types of humour used. There was little use of slapstick and physical humour. The use of gestures (G) increased for two of the teachers. Two teachers, (Maureen & Kati) made little difference in their use of humour before and after training. Maureen had a slight increase in use of jokes and all teachers maintained or increased the use of smiling. Geoff increased his use of stories and jokes and Julie maintained high scores for Warmth behind the eyes (WBE) and jokes (J). Kati had a slight decline in humour use which is explored in the discussion chapter. The two teachers who showed little increase in humour use after training (Maureen & Kati) are the two teachers with the least years teaching experience. These results are discussed in greater detail in the case studies.

FIG 5: Teacher Humour Types after Training



After analysing the qualitative data from the interviews with the teachers the following humour types and functions emerged (Table 1). All teachers reported using more humour in their classroom following the training.

Table 1: Humour types and functions emerging from teacher interviews.

Humour Type	Teacher reported use	Humour Function
Using a friendly facial expression including 'warmth behind the eyes' and smiling.	4	Relationship building Social cohesion and positive class atmosphere
Gentle teases	3	Diffuse tension and de-escalate conflict
Dramatic and expressive gestures		Create interest
Daggy jokes	1	De stress
Cartoons and humorous pictures	1	
A friendly classroom atmosphere produced by in- jokes Novelty and variety in lessons (Jill)	3	
Joke and storytelling	3	
Incongruous use of words to describe something simple	2	Reframe concepts
Sarcasm	2	Teach a concept

Table 2: Feedback from teacher interviews on the value of the training

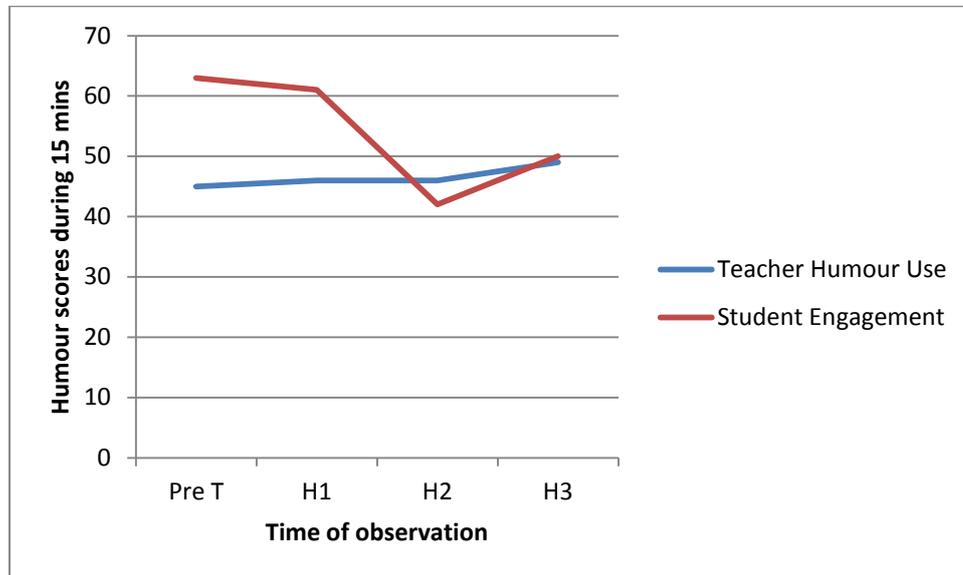
Training Outcomes	Positive Responses to this aspect
Increased awareness of non- verbal communication especially warmth behind the eyes (WBE).	5
An interest in humour research literature	2
Feedback from video footage, increased awareness of effective teaching	4
Collegiate support in training sessions and awareness of different teaching styles, especially where there was a common challenging student.	2

The research question: What impact does the use of teacher humour have on managing challenging behaviour and increasing student engagement?

The qualitative data provides a clearer picture of the impact of teacher communication and student engagement with all participants reporting an increase in use of the friendly facial expressions. Humour is difficult to capture in a limited number of video recordings and the mixed method approach is utilized to add more detail about the process through interviews. This study has an emphasis on the promotion of a positive class atmosphere, evident by smiling and student interaction and in this all participants reported the value of humour in providing a friendly environment yet engagement was more problematic to measure. The use

of humour to create this atmosphere and to divert conflict and tension are teased out in greater detail in the individual case studies.

FIG 6: Relationship between Teacher Humour and Student Engagement



This graph (Fig.6) is the graphic representation of the teacher scores for humour use and the level of student engagement. This graph was generated by converting the teacher and the student scores into percentages as there were eight humour indicators for teachers and four engagement indicators for the students. Engagement was narrowly defined using the indicators: turning up to class, contributing to discussions, attempting the work and completing the work. The individual teachers had varying levels of engagement in relation to humour use and are explored in the case studies.

The data show some positive correlation between teacher use of humour and student engagement overall. The dip in student engagement is attributed to school suspensions in the student cohort. The focus students for two of the teachers: Julie and Maureen were suspended at times during the study. This is dealt with in more detail in the Discussion chapter.

Can teachers be assisted to use humour when they reflect on their practice after viewing video -taped lessons?

Studies on enthusiasm training with trainee teachers demonstrate viewing video footage as a catalyst to reflection (Bettencourt et al., 1983).

The results here are mixed. With consideration to teachers viewing the video footage in their own time as an intrinsic component of the training, the participants who reported viewing expressed more awareness of non-verbal communication and had higher scores for humour use than participants who did not view themselves teaching. This is explored in the case studies in more detail. Quantitative methodology was not used here as there were no measures for viewing of lessons and subsequent impact on teachers due to the intimate nature of self-reflection. Indeed Dottin's (2009) study on teacher reflection suggests that disposition is linked to this quality in teachers.

What impact does the use of teacher humour have on managing challenging behaviour and increasing student engagement?

Relationship building is the most dominant theme to emerge from the qualitative data (Table 1). The flow on effects from this is an increase in a positive classroom atmosphere. Effects could be more positive classroom behaviour from students. Teachers reported using humour to stop conflict or tension "if your antennas up and you see things aren't going right, if there's a build-up or something you can get in early and diffuse it."(Geoff). Teaching experience may be another variable at work here as Julie and Geoff regularly displayed the ability to divert conflict through blending the skills of organisation and fast paced curriculum implementation.

What are some of the challenges experienced by teachers who use humour with adolescents with challenging behaviour?

The challenges which emerged in the study were both teacher effects and systemic issues.

The teacher's mood emerges as a possible barrier to humour use as teachers felt unable to put aside feelings often generated away from school. During the study teachers reported not being able to use humour due to stress and pressure; "I'm not resilient enough to smile today!" (Tania). The teachers with the most teaching experience were least likely to inhibit humour use. As one participant says "If you can't laugh about it you might as well give the job away!" (Julie). This phenomenon raises questions about whether training can increase effective teacher communication or whether teacher effects mitigate against change and is explored in the Discussion chapter.

Systemic issues can have an impact on a teacher's ability to be more light-hearted in the classroom. One of the participants was in dispute with executive teachers about her supervision within the faculty and this caused a deal of stress and was reflected in low scores for humour use. Another challenge for teachers is the type of humour used and the student responses.

Some of the teachers commented on humour use which produced a negative effect. The mimicry and teasing of students was an issue reported by participants as humour they had used in the past. Three of the teachers used this style of humour in the study as they identified it as part of their teaching repertoire. It was interesting that the more experienced teachers in this study did not report this but rather used gentle teasing which produced positive affect. This is evident in the short clips in the case studies of Geoff and Julie.

Sarcasm was also popular with the less experienced teacher participants. The needs of students with disabilities, especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorder were mentioned by participants as a consideration for humour use. The literal thinking of students with this

disability makes sarcasm difficult for them to process. There were no negative effects reported in the use of the WBE and smiling. A summary of these are in table 3 below.

Humour effect	Reported incidents	Details
Mimicry & teasing	2	Negative affect produced in student
sarcasm	3	Negative affect produced in student
Chaos	1	Playful teacher behaviour compromised class control
Student effects	1	Students with disabilities (Aspergers) misinterpreted teacher humour.

Table 3: Negative humour use

In conclusion the indications from the pilot study are that training teachers can have an impact on their humour use and that this can have an effect on the level of student engagement. The awareness raising aspects of the training emerged as a key benefit with all participants noting the power of non-verbal communication as a consideration in student engagement. The benefits for teaching produced by humour use include an increase in a positive classroom atmosphere which has implications for educating students with complex additional needs especially those with challenging behaviour.

The case studies

Tania

Tania is a 40 year old Mathematics Head Teacher with 18 years teaching experience. She has been at the current school for 3 years. The study takes place at the end of semester one and the beginning of semester two. The class is an all-boys year 8 Maths class with several students who fulfil the criteria for ‘challenging behaviour’.

Tania has a no nonsense approach to teaching and in the pre training her chief humour behaviours are smiling and WBE. Tania has a confident and often imposing countenance and body language. She has high expectations of her class and moves around the room constantly giving feedback and praise “nice one.” She tends to ignore the silly comments of the students but is aware of exactly where everyone is up to. She will occasionally use a comment with a funny voice “cool”.

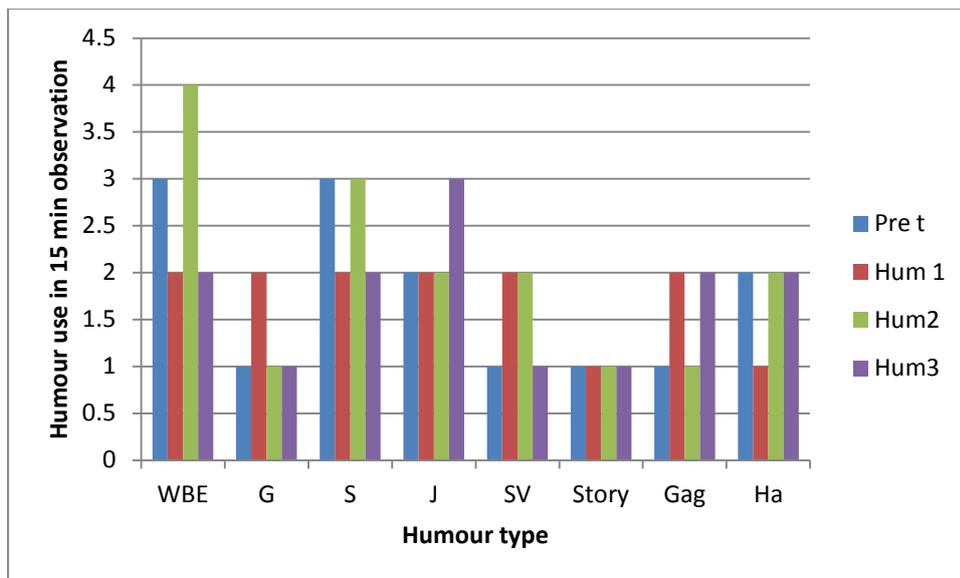
Tania is able to engage some of the most difficult students at the school. She negotiates with them on the use of listening devices, eating in class and wearing hats in class. Tania’s teaching style revealed many aspects which led to high levels of student engagement. Her organisation and use of technology were two strengths she displayed revealing the complex nature of teacher effectiveness and its relationship to student engagement.

“It was a year 8 class and it was stage 5 work and I linked Geogebra to ‘Angry Birds’.
Geogebra is a specific graphing package but they were looking at different things and we were talking about impacts on graphs and changes to equations and they were incredibly engaged”.

Tania is highly attuned to her students and is constantly checking their work and giving feedback and stimulating student discussion which are teacher behaviours highly correlated

to student engagement (Wall et al., 2009). She displays an understanding of the reciprocity which Fovet (2009) found to be highly correlated to engagement of students with behaviour disorders (Fovet, 2009).

Fig 7:



In H2 (refer to methodology pg 65) she deals expertly with a computer maths class, circulating and giving praise and feedback. When a student knocks over a monitor she gives him a signal to move and when dealing with him following two minutes time out she uses WBE and re directs him to work. She is businesslike and never raises her voice. In response to swearing she says “Languoise, please!”

In H3(refer to methodology pg 65) her scores are higher and she delivers a lesson on algebra on the Smart board. Her use of gentle teasing “I didn’t think we’d get that far into the lesson before you started whingeing!” has hints of sarcasm, which she says is a favourite tool.

However the use of WBE sends a signal that there is no threat of humiliation here. She jokes with the students in response to their banter and when one is out of his seat she postures with

hand on hip and a smile” What are You doing?” and “ I know you’re super cool but back to work.”

She was reluctant to have the video footage recorded on four occasions with the following excuses: “Not today, they’re feral!”, “You can’t come in today I’m going to be really tough on them.” and “I can’t be filmed today, I’m not resilient enough to smile.”

Tania attended four of the training sessions and was interested in the research findings on retention and divergent thinking in humour use. She told of the difficulties of keeping these challenging students in class and working and found it hard to include humour. I explained to her to focus on the facial expressions. Tania experienced some challenges as her classroom management practices were at odds with the school’s policy of “no ipods, hats phones and eating in class.” As a head teacher she is under increasing pressure to fall into line with the other staff members and she was experiencing some stress around this during the time of the study. The issue of power sharing and establishing reciprocity with students is documented in the literature (Fovet, 2009; Jewell, 2005)

Can teachers be assisted to use humour when they reflect on their practice after viewing videotaped lessons?

Tania was reluctant to view the videotaped lessons following the training. She commented on the baseline film “it was very confronting”. In the interviews Tania relates how she structures her lessons to increase student engagement. Her use of 20 minute activities with negotiation available to those who have complied with the lesson’s requirements is a feature of her ability to adapt and change curriculum implementation according to student needs. This ability indicates use of reflection despite her unwillingness to view the videos.

Tania showed a greater use of WBE and smiling than other humour types. Following the initial training and viewing of the baseline data there was an increase in the use of jokes, stories and voice related humour. Her ability to raise one eyebrow was counted as a gag and was immensely popular with the students.

In terms of the impact of humour on managing problem behaviour ,some of the humour used by Tania was a type of gentle teasing “take your hat off so I can see your beautiful hair “and if there was a fight outside the room before class “we don’t really like public displays of affection boys.” Tania admitted that sarcasm was one of her favourite tools but was aware of the danger of misusing this.

Hum 1 shows relatively low scores and this corresponds to low student engagement.

Some of the challenges preventing humour use involve the profile of the class which includes five students who are regularly suspended and truant in other classes. During filming in H1 the targeted student arrived late due to a detention with another teacher to resolve a previous incident.

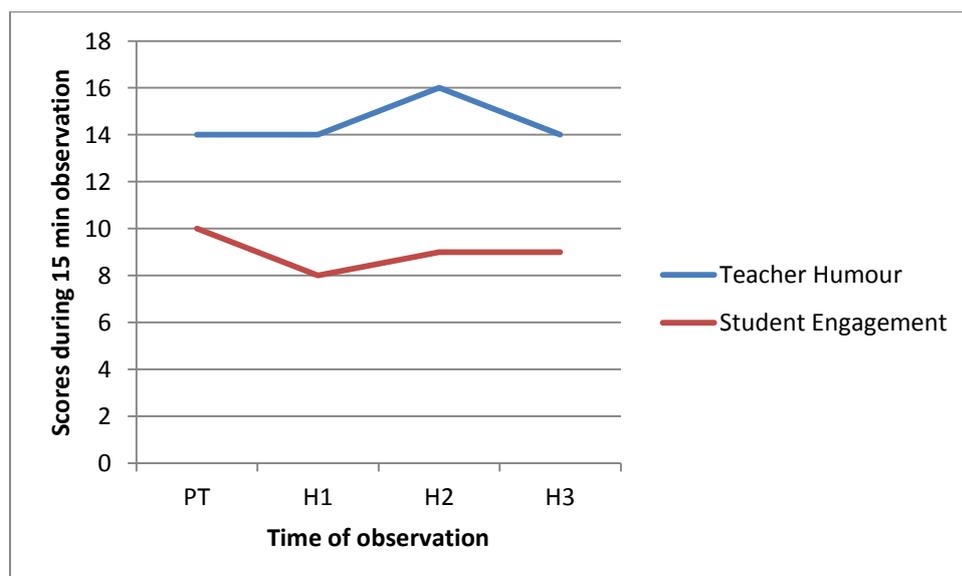


Fig 8 Tania’s Use of humour and its relationship to Student Engagement.

Tania's humour use shows some relationship to student engagement (Fig 8) with not a lot of deviation in scores. The low student engagement reflects the difficult nature and the prevalence of the challenging behaviour in the students. Indeed this class is well known to staff as a major challenge. Despite this there are high attendance levels and Tania reflected on an interesting conversation when students had announced that she was the only teacher who liked them.

Tania reflected on humour as a useful tool for engagement and had several ideas, including embracing technology, for continuing to include humour in her teaching including the bulletin board with maths related cartoons on it at the rear of the room.

Geoff

Geoff is a 53 year old teacher who has taught at 6 different schools across several regions of NSW. He has been at the current school for 7 years. He teaches science and is a popular member of staff. Geoff said that he “was always considering student engagement” in his teaching and thought that this study was a great idea.

Geoff has a friendly and relaxed teaching style and his classes are lively and often noisy. Geoff reflected on this and even said to his class that what he noticed about the video footage was the deafening noise of ‘you lot’. Geoff has a commanding and resonant voice and is easily able to gain his students’ attention. He is unconcerned about the noise levels in the room and has a good grasp on who is working as he weaves around the room.

In the pre training footage Geoff is teaching his students about the moon landing and space exploration. He uses a personal connection by saying “Now I think I’ll send H D & B to Mars, now you’re going to have to think about what you’ll say when you land. You won’t be able to use ‘One giant step’ because that’s been done”. Later when the students are asked what they will say one student responds with: “Ah here we are now I’ll have a Mars bar”. This produces laughter in both teacher and students and a good example of reciprocity and power sharing (Fovet, 2009).

In H2 Geoff settles the class with a quiz as he marks the roll. He uses a funny voice “Who’s here and Whooooo’s not?” He is able to diver conflict between two students with some mild teasing after one complains of being hit: “When Spring comes along we often notice people wanting to cuddle each other.”

He rocks in time to the music as he tells a girl to turn off her ipod. When constructing a pie chart to depict the earth’s atmosphere he asks the students to guess the percentage of Carbon

Dioxide. He uses a story about asking the teachers the same question and how everyone overestimates this and how we'd all be dead if it was a high percentage and then starts singing a "dum- de-dum" death song.

In H2, a practical lesson Geoff uses a lot of gentle teasing with comments like "someone told me you already had 2000 matches Sam, is this true?" said with the use of the WBE and smiling.

In H3 when a student says "I'll be famous Sir" Geoff replies "As famous as you can be in D5 (a classroom). The level of classroom noise is high and Geoff reflects on this to his class. "I'm trying to get over the top of your noise and it's like climbing a mountain as I try to get to the top."

One of his other humour tools is the use of the silly voice. As he marks their work he says "Where's your response? Aaaaaagh! I can't find it!"

In the interview Geoff reports that he has always used humour in his teaching and it was obvious from the observations that he has an excellent rapport with the challenging students. He places a high importance in building relationships with his students "I try not to get angry with them so when they want to make you angry you can use humour... you're not going to go down the path of disciplining them it's almost as if you've got your hands up saying 'it's all OK' and if they're going to have a go at you they've got to try hard"

And "I'm pretty well down the food chain if it comes to teachers kids will complain about."

The impact of humour use on managing problem behaviour and increasing student engagement seems to be largely in the friendly classroom atmosphere. He favours gentle teasing as a means of management, yet the noise levels in the room indicate a level of chaos

that may not be commensurate with student engagement. This can be seen as a challenge and a possible negative aspect of humour use.

In terms of diffusing tension and diverting conflict he describes how the targeted student was complaining and Geoff responded: “Ooooooh Sam that’s the wooorst thing in the world.”

This teasing is typical of Geoff’s style from the data collected.

Another reframing technique is used was when a student asks Geoff if you could eat snot.

Geoff replied “Well it is a mucipoly-saccharide and it’s got all these Blah blah” and it caused the discussion to head off in another direction. This is also an example of reciprocity and power sharing. “When you use humour it’s that thing, it’s interaction between you and the other and they can feel that.”

Geoff found the collegiate sharing aspect of the training useful and lamented the solitary nature of teaching. “I think the ones that use a bit of humour are the ones the kids don’t have too many problems with.”

Geoff was happy to view the footage and was amazed at the level of noise in the room.

Geoff’s laconic style imparts its own form of humour. In one of his classes a girl was ‘planking’ (lying on a desk). He continued on with the lesson asking occasionally if she felt up to joining them in an upright position. This tolerance is not consistent with the teaching style of the other participants and during the training this was evident in comments made about the need for control.

During the study Geoff was interested in the findings and as we discussed the complex craft of teaching he noted that engagement was always a ‘work in progress’. “I think that humour is always my default mode of trying to engage with the content.”

Geoff's targeted student is a year 7 boy from recently divorced parents. He lives with his dad who works full time. He has been suspended and has numerous school discipline and welfare data base entries.

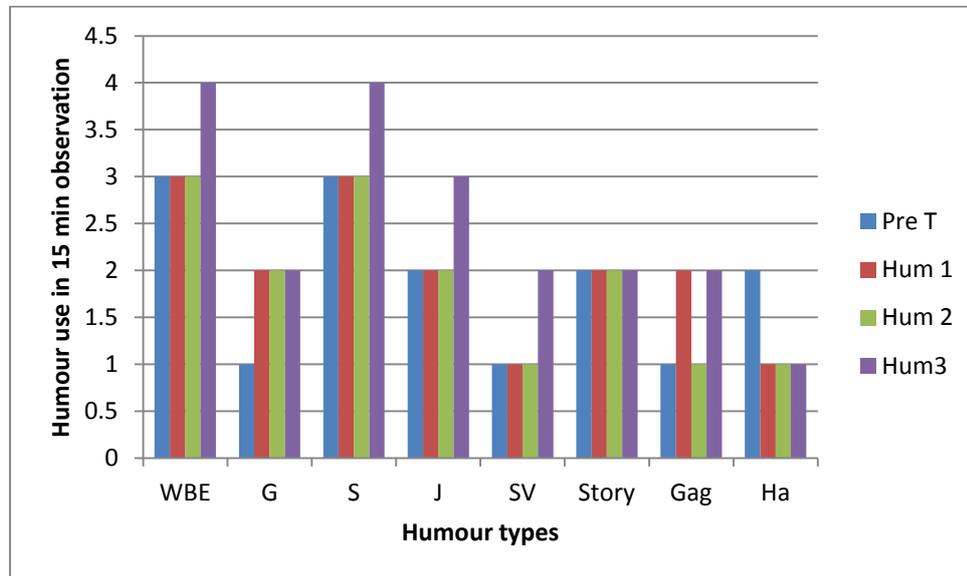


Fig 9: Geoff's humour use

Post training humour scores (Fig 9) show an increase for all the humour types, in particular those non- verbal friendly facial expressions. Geoff speaks in his interview about the need to build relationships with the students, a point reflected in his scores. Laughing was the only humour behaviour to regress and given the spontaneous nature of laughter, this is understandable.

Geoff had some ideas on how the training could include more collegiate sharing in the form of viewing other participant's videos.

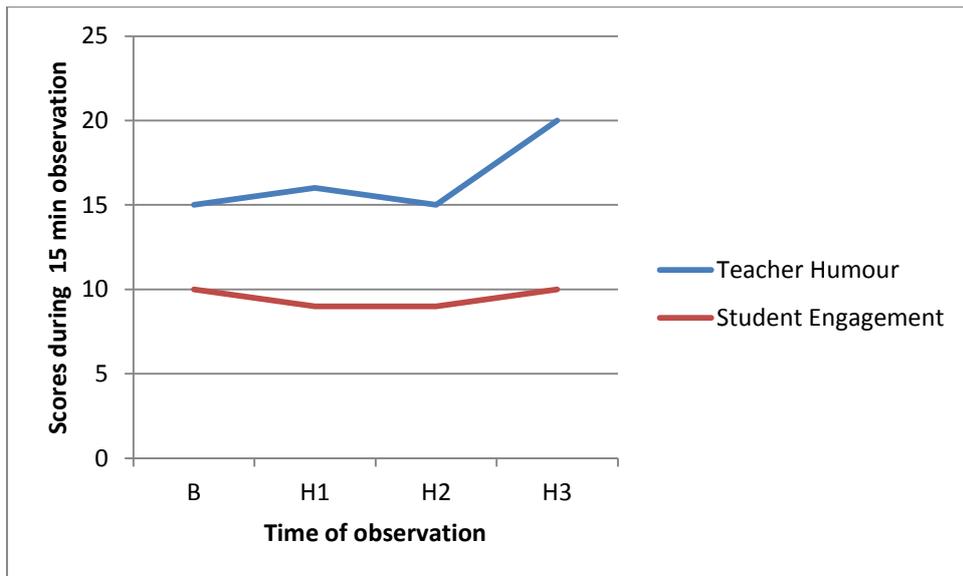


Fig 10: Geoff's use of humour and its relationship to Student Engagement.

Fig 10 illustrates the level of student engagement as steady and shows a slight upward trend so there are indications that teacher humour is having an effect on student engagement. Geoff's enthusiasm and obvious enjoyment of teaching are factors that are also at work on engagement levels.

Geoff's years of teaching experience need to be considered when making assumptions about the outcomes of the study. He has a love of teaching and regularly attends professional development courses and keeps up to date on trends in science teaching. Geoff also mentors graduate teachers both in his faculty and across the school.

Kati

Kati has been teaching for 7 years. She has worked previously as an IT consultant and a nurse. Kati's scores for humour use and student engagement were higher in the baseline data and failed to increase during the study. Kati's targeted student is a refugee from Iraq. The study takes place as her ESL class is learning about Australia.

Her major humour behaviour was the WBE and the use of smiling. In the pre training data there are several moments where humour could have been used with a student acting as a clown and calling out. Kati responded with a stern expression and there were few incidents of smiling or reciprocity. This could be linked to the years of teaching experience. In H 2 students were engaged in book work and Kati had an altercation with a student about his need to leave the room. There was a perceptible shift in power here and several students sided with the protagonist. There was little evidence of humour following this incident.

In the interview Kati spoke about her humour use in class and said that she enjoyed making little jokes with the students citing an example of a boy who had hiked his shirt up at the beginning of class and she'd remarked "Oh are you going to do a strip tease for us today?" She spoke about the positive effects of using the WBE. Despite this disclosure the video footage didn't reflect much use of this expression.

Despite attending 80% of the sessions as she did not watch the video footage she was unable to accurately reflect on her practise. At the time of filming there was ongoing difficulties within the faculty about her which head teacher would provide her with supervision and she and expressed a feeling of being unsupported. There were also family concerns which caused her some anxiety and for which she was seeking counselling.

This phenomenon reflects the complexities of humour use in teacher communication and indicates the number of other variables impinging on teacher behaviour. She commented on the benefits of humour: “when I get tense and stressed with them that makes it harder but normally when you just relax and use your humour with them that’s a useful tool but it’s also to de stress yourself that’s the main thing for me.”

Kati’s experiences during the study highlight the need for any changes to school culture to be implemented at all levels of communication (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). She spoke during the training sessions about the need for students to show respect for teachers and felt that some teachers who were more relaxed in their pedagogy and willing to let students express opinions and have some freedom, made it difficult for teachers like her who needed more control in the room.

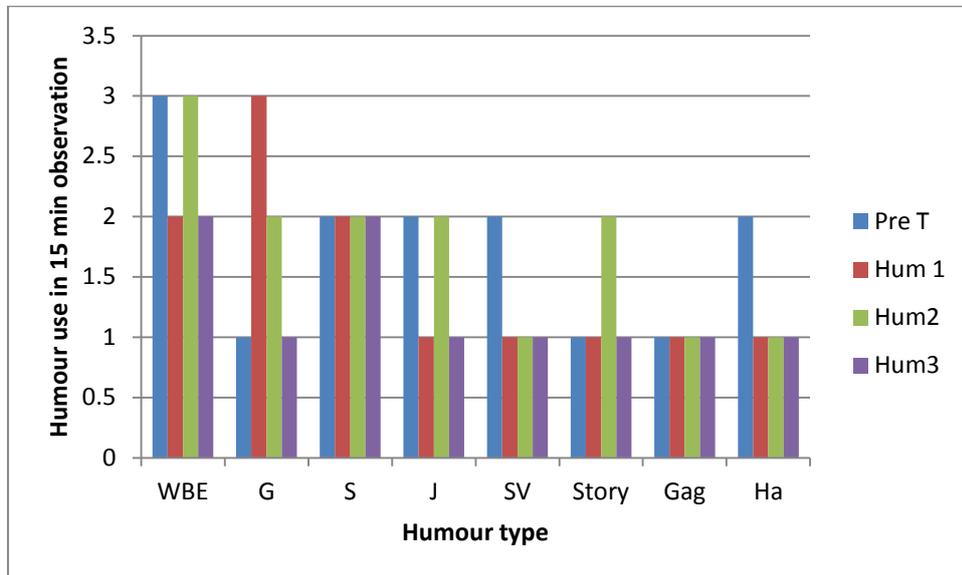
Kati regularly confided in the researcher that she found the stress benefits of humour to be quite remarkable but wasn’t able to implement many of these strategies as she was attempting to gain management of the group. This perceived incompatibility between management and humour is further explored in the discussion.

From the outset Kati expressed an interest in the power of facial expressions with particular interest in ‘warmth behind the eyes’, the use of the orbicularis oculi muscles and the ability to convey safety and lack of threat. This has implications for her classes that contain refugees from Sudan and Iraq.

Kati was reluctant to view the video footage “I don’t want to see that, I was there and I know it was awful?” In this case it is not possible to make a deduction about the effect of training on humour use as the video feedback was integral to the training. It was necessary for the researcher to employ bracketing during the study as Kati would regularly seek reassurance about her methods of classroom management. Additional coaching for her from the

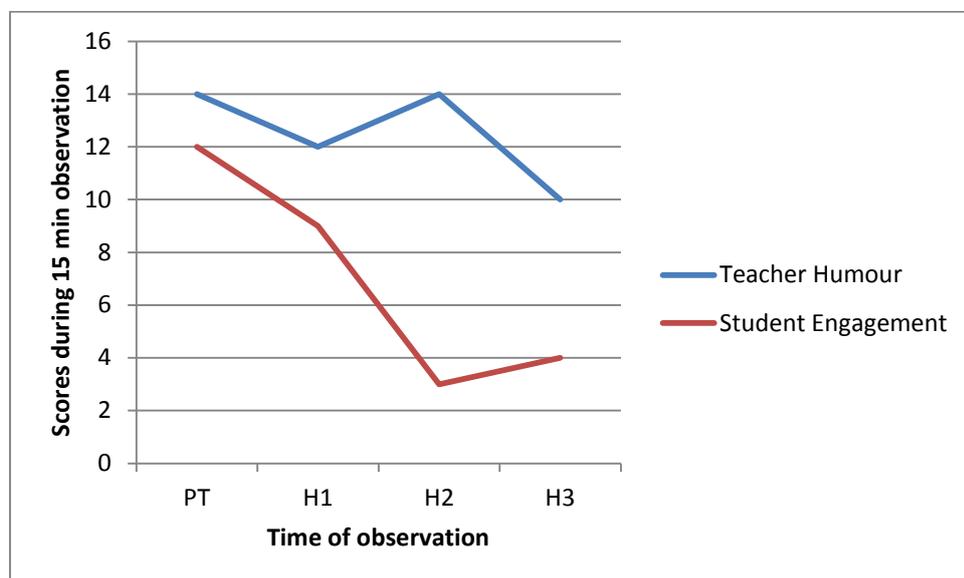
researcher/ colleague could have added another dimension to the study and possibly compromised the results.

Fig 11 Kati's Humour Use



There was an increase in the use of stories and the scores for smiles remained constant throughout the study (Fig 11). Her use laughter decreased during the study. Of all the humour types laughter is spontaneous and cannot be scripted. Kati did not fully participate in the training.

Fig 12: Kati's use of humour and its relationship to Student Engagement.



The correlation between student engagement and teacher humour shows a downward trend with a slight indication of upward movement of student engagement which can be explained by the indicators chosen as measures of engagement in the study. Kati's students were often compliant but more data would be required to establish true engagement. This is explored in the discussion chapter.

The drop in student engagement following baseline data may be attributed to the limited styles of humour used. It isn't possible to establish a causal link with such a small sample. There was no evidence of a 'play frame' or any of the gentle teasing and relationship building techniques displayed by other teachers. The power sharing and reciprocity that ensues from these practices could have an impact on student engagement. There were many missed opportunities to use the class clown to better effect but the spontaneity required for this is difficult to teach.

Julie

Julie is a year 52 old head teacher who has been at the current school for 3 years and has been teaching for 31 years. Julie is a science teacher and her love and enthusiasm for teaching is evident in her prominent use of smiling and WBE. She has an easy rapport with her students addressing them all by name and giving them regular eye contact as she moves around the room. Her lessons are highly structured at the beginning giving students an overview of what is to follow. She uses lots of quizzes and repetition of safety procedures and important facts. Her students are highly engaged and ask lots of questions and interject regularly. Julie is able to dispel the irrelevant injections and respond to those that have meaning. She regularly shares the stage with her students getting them to write on the board and providing them with the spelling where needed. The classroom atmosphere was cohesive and productive with no evidence of conflict. Julie seems to be everywhere weaving in and out of the benches.

In the pre training footage her ability to build rapport with the students is evident with such actions as the presenting the class with a wedge of blue vein cheese to illustrate mould. As she brought the cheese into the class it was clear that she had warned the students about the smell. Many of these students had never experienced this type of cheese before and the engagement levels were high (see scores for Pre T) as they smiled at Julie's antics of waving the cheese about and telling them some people loved eating such things.

Julie disclosed before one lesson "I can laugh with them now because I've got them where I want them". This indicates a sense of timing and developing ground rules along with rapport.

Julie has had an extremely busy second semester and has only managed to attend 3 of the five training sessions.

She has several humorous tools in her repertoire chief of which is her warm and friendly facial expression which is evident in this short clip. She establishes a playful work atmosphere with her students and responds to their banter without threats. As she was prompting one of the boys yells out “Aw Miss you made me stuff it up!” Julie’s response was to make a dramatic gesture with her arms saying “Who me?” and at his fake angry response “Yeah you!” she utters a wail and retreats towards the tissue box saying “Oh I’m just going to cry”.

Julie is also willing to disclose aspects of her own life such as a partial deafness in one ear, telling the students “remember I can’t hear you in this ear.” From this interchange she made a segue with a little song and dance action moving arms in and out: “Cmon...gotta get this work done!!”.

In H2 Julie is doing an experiment and asks students “Who’s brave? How brave? Big brave?”

A girl who volunteers then smells the substance (ammonia) and Julie asks what it smells like and a discussion about hair colour composition engages the group. Julie’s willingness to share the power with her class enables them to see links in their life and school learning.

In H3 we see further evidence of Julie’s engaging style of teaching where she is writing up the results of an experiment with carbonates. One of the students class out: “what about Lithium?” to which she replies “Yeah Lithium wasn’t really going off was it? It was a bit like me in the holidays” She then went on to describe her own holiday habit of sleeping.

In the interviews Julie describes another favourite humour technique: “My best friend forever”. In this he would utter this phrase as she sat next to the student with a playful expression on her face and offer to tell them all the answers. This was a regular occurrence and she would often abbreviate it to my BFF. Other playful teacher behaviours were used

such as sitting up the back pretending to be the student. Julie was increasingly busy as the semester progressed and noted that this school was busier than most as there are so many extra projects occurring. Consequently she only attended three of the training sessions.

The impact humour has on managing problem behaviour and increasing student engagement must be viewed in the context of other strategies employed by Julie. She reported that whilst humour was a useful tool in engagement it was necessary to use novelty and to pace the lessons so that interest was sustained. “They tend to like variety and a lot of change, they like patterns and organisations so I find humour only one aspect.” One key factor in teaching these challenging students was for Julie the need to be organised and to make transition between activities smooth. In terms of communication, she found the training and involvement in the project gave her a greater awareness of facial expressions and keeping the mood light and friendly. Julie’s humour scores reflect this, especially the use of WBE and smiling.” All the teachers should be doing this” she said at the training.

Julie’s humour (Fig 13) use shows a preference for the friendly facial expression.

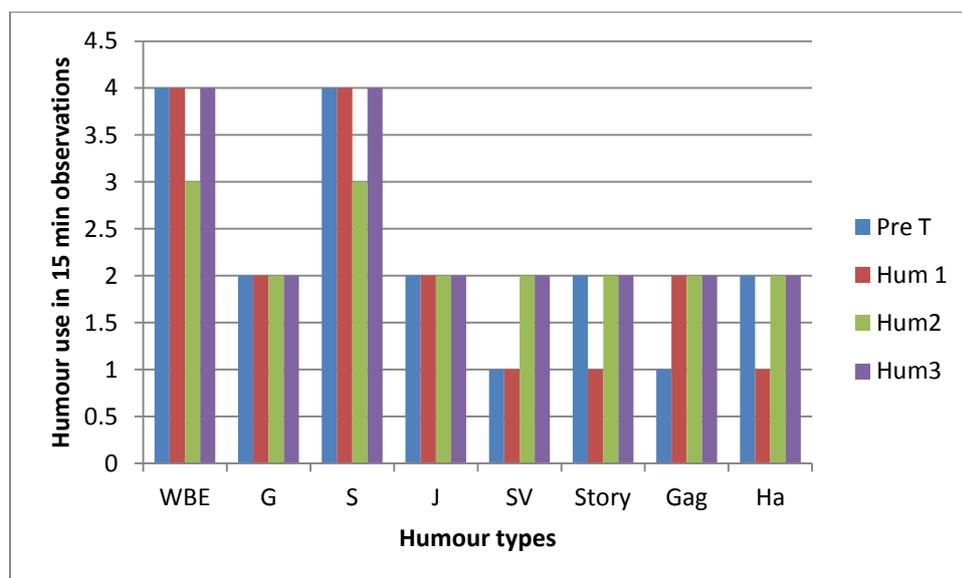


Fig 13 Julie’s humour use

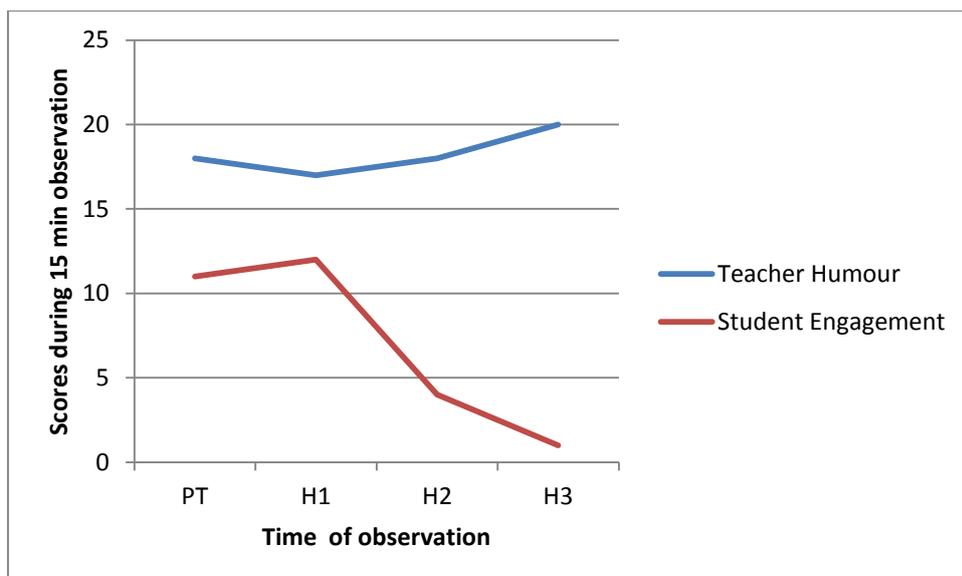


Fig 14: Julie’s Humour use in relation to student engagement

Julie’s use of humour and its correlation with student engagement must be viewed in context.

Julie’s student is an indigenous boy in year 10 who was facing expulsion and during data collection had a period of exclusion from school. This explains the drop in engagement following H2. The complex additional needs of students with challenging behaviours are best served with a range of approaches. The low scores for student engagement reflect the other factors impacting on this Julie’s targeted student’s life. When present his engagement was high and his obvious liking for his teacher was reflected in his classroom behaviour. Many teachers have previously escalated conflict with him and his chaotic home life has left him ill equipped to cope with any aberrant behaviour from peers.

Julie’s understanding of these students is evident in her implementation of a rich and diverse curriculum with a focus on variety and change. Chalk and talk is kept to a minimum.

Julie’s main response to viewing the footage was to comment on how awful her voice sounded. She was able to reflect on her practice despite this, gaining some insights about how to make the transition from one activity to the next.

Julie spoke about the complex issue of student engagement in her interview and the role that humour could play to this end. “I think the theory behind it is interesting but I think there are far broader applications, it’s just one tool.”

Maureen

Maureen is a 40 year old who has been teaching for 16 years. This is her fourth school and she has worked in several remote regions of New South Wales. This is her third year at this school. During the data collection she was working on clowning with her year 9 drama students. None of the smiles or laughter designed to model clowning behaviour was counted in the data. Whilst an evidently humorous subject may seem to skew the data unfavourably in Maureen's favour, there would be many lessons with this group which would not contain that subject matter.

Maureen embraced the training enthusiastically especially the unit on facial expressions. She admitted "I'm the drama teacher and I'm rubbish at this!" Throughout the study Maureen was enthusiastic in noting the effect of humour on her targeted student, taking full advantage of content of the drama curriculum. She reported finding value in viewing the video footage and reflecting on her humour use and teaching style.

Maureen's targeted student was facing expulsion and during the data collection was absent due to suspension. He is from a troubled home and frequently truants. He is fond of Maureen and when he attends his engagement levels are high.

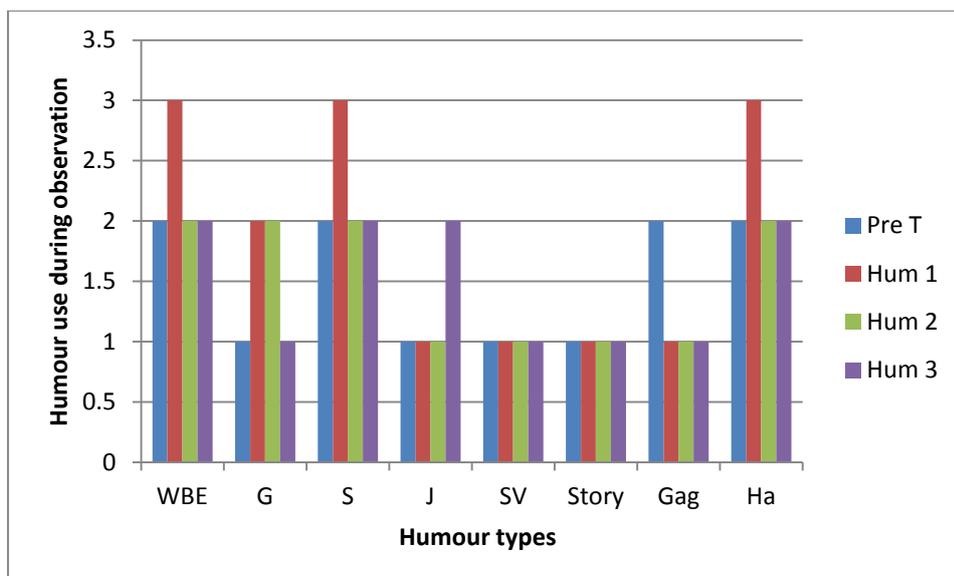


Fig 15: Maureen’s humour use

The quantitative data shows little increase in the type of humour used with a preference for WBE, smiling and laughing as seen in the baseline data (Fig 15). Megan. As the drama teacher, she has a noisy and often chaotic room as students were rehearsing their performance pieces. She was involved in ‘directing traffic’ as they worked in their groups to coordinate their music and performance. The high noise levels in the room are not indicative of disengagement as students scramble to find costumes and players. Maureen uses some sarcasm as he says to a group “was I interrupting you, I’m terribly sorry.” This causes a laugh but was not indicative of humour producing positive affect as it was unaccompanied by WBE. This is followed by another humorous incident where she says to a student in a wig “The wig not maketh the clown.” The student replies “English please Miss.” She then goes on to explain the meaning behind the comment. This is a possible example of superiority humour but without more feedback from students it’s difficult to say if they felt excluded by the remark. It was flippant and aimed at ensuring students had given thought to their performance rather than the costume.

Regarding the use of humour to increase student engagement (Fig 16), Maureen’s primary use of humour is smiling and laughing at the student’s antics as they performed, demonstrating high levels of engagement. As most of the data collection was during the performances and rehearsals there was little scope of a broadening of teacher humour types. Student engagement shows a steady rise with an upward trend.

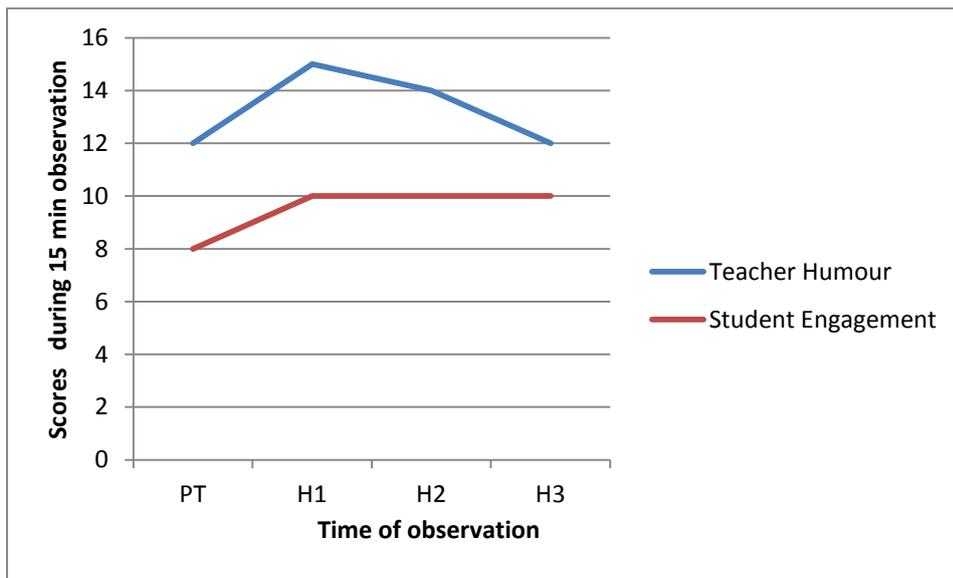


Fig 16: Maureen’s humour use in relation to student engagement.

She continued to have high levels of engagement despite the fact that the targeted student was facing expulsion for his aberrant behaviour in other classes and on the playground.

Can teachers be assisted to reflect on their practice when viewing videotaped lessons?

Maureen was enthusiastic about viewing the video tapes. “I’m not aware of a lot of what I do in the classroom so watching it on the video you just go: Oh is that what I look like to them because I have one idea of what my face looks like but it’s totally, I think different”.

The power of this can be carried into her work as a drama teacher: “Facially they’ll look at you and they’ll mimic what you’re doing.” She also reported being better able to read their facial expressions.

Megan's overall scores and responses indicate a positive result from humour inclusion. Some of the challenges include managing the use of sarcasm and using only humour which promotes positive affect.

What impact does the use of humour have on managing problem behaviour and increasing student engagement?

Maureen reports one incident of using humour to distract students from their conflict:

"They were about to punch each other and I proceeded to tell them a story when I had tried to punch one of my friends that I had at school and it ended up with bags in trees and running away from security guards in a shopping centre you know and it was quite humorous for them as they stopped what they were doing to listen." This story, showing the teacher as an adolescent student adds a human touch to the student/teacher relationship.

"If you can get them to laugh ...they stop for a moment and think about what the two of them were fighting about."

There were some benefits from the use of humour as students reported to Maureen that "you don't seem as stressed out and we like hearing you laugh."

Maureen reflected on these students in the interview as she recounted the events around a school drama production as a transformative experience. "For an hour and a half she was able to forget ..." Maureen's recount of the experiences of her students speaks of deep engagement considering it was an extra curricula activity.

Some of the challenges experienced by Maureen in humour inclusion are about the use of sarcasm "I tend to use sarcasm but you've got to pick the right time and unfortunately the kids riled me up and I've used sarcasm and they get offended."

Following the training Maureen spoke about how committed she was to the idea of weaving a friendly classroom atmosphere with the use of humour. She said that the study had made her reflect on her teaching and which aspects of pedagogy she was passionate about. Promoting both creativity and divergent thinking were such aspects and Maureen had many ideas for continuing her use of humour to promote these ideas.

Conclusion

The mixed methodology of this pilot study has yielded results that tend to support similar conclusions. There is sufficient evidence to assume that training teachers to include humour in their pedagogy is useful.

There is support for promoting positive affect in students with challenging behaviour, through the use of humour. Benefits that are evident from the data are the relationship building potential, tension reduction and promotion of social cohesion that humour creates. The prevalence on the non- verbal aspects of good humour in the training has been reflected in an increase in these behaviours in the results.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

The exploration of whether training can help teachers to include humour to engage adolescents with challenging behaviour has raised many issues. This small study noted an increase in positive student behaviour where humour was present confirming findings in studies in the field of neuroscience and positive psychology (Fredrickson, 2001; Taber et al., 2007). The highly subjective nature of humour makes its study problematic and the results from this pilot study highlight this. The study also exposed the vulnerabilities of students with challenging behaviour who are at risk of school disengagement. A positive classroom atmosphere was conducive to student engagement with particular reference to the teachers' ability to communicate friendliness. Teacher effects were described in the case studies of the participating teachers and issues were raised and challenges presented by changing practice towards more effective pedagogy for these students. This study found that the use of humour could assist teachers to build rapport with students who have challenging behaviour however caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the data obtained as there are many factors influencing student engagement including curriculum, environmental factors and student personal factors which limit the ability to make inferences about the role of humour in increasing student engagement. This study acknowledges the danger of humour which can serve to alienate and the critical role of teacher reflection to ensure any changes are positive. There are limitations to the scope of this study including size of sample, single site application, cultural aspects of the school site, trainer known to staff and interpretation of what was recorded on video. As a pilot study, however, it has been possible to identify encouraging trends and themes which can inform further research.

Whilst there have been many studies on humour use in pedagogy there have been few on the impact of humour use on students with behaviour disorders, and none that this researcher found on training teachers to include humour. Therefore this study finds a gap in the

literature. To fulfil the criteria teachers had to have a target student whose challenging behaviour had resulted in removal from class more than three times per term, whose behaviour threatened their learning and the learning of others due to non-compliance and aggressive behaviour. These behaviours also needed to be persistent for six months. This pilot study aims to discover if training could assist teachers to increase their communication repertoire specifically including humour and whether this had a positive impact on engagement of adolescents with challenging behaviour. Results are positive yet must be viewed as an exploration of the issues involved rather than established evidence. Central to this study was whether the use of teacher humour can have a positive impact on students with challenging behaviours and or identified disabilities that can lead to challenging behaviour. Results suggest that the emphasis on nonverbal communication in the training assisted teachers to use the humour behaviours taught as a focus for the study. The rationale behind advocating use of the Warmth Behind the Eyes (WBE) was based on past experience of the researcher in many years of implementing non-verbal communication as well as considerable years successfully teaching students with behaviour disorders. This facial expression, when used in conjunction with vocal qualities that suggest friendly non-threatening intent was observed to be a powerful teaching tool. Indeed the researcher has found frequent use of this facial expression (WBE) essential when establishing rapport with students with challenging behaviour. In the study there was an overall increase in the use of WBE and smiling by the teachers. All participants commented during training on the benefits of this training knowledge and felt more adept at interpreting their students' facial expressions. These humour characteristics can assist teachers in building relationships with students who have high emotional needs. The findings are consistent with Anderson et al. (2006) who found a high correlation between flexibility and humour in staff and their ability to connect with

students with high mental health support needs which subsequently manifest in higher student engagement levels.

The interviews with teachers revealed relationship building with students as a primary function of humour use in the study which concurs with studies citing teacher- student relationship factors as key components in promoting on task performance in students with challenging behaviour (Anderson et al., 2006; Bernard B., 2000; Hamre et.al, 2007; Krishnaveni & Anitha, 2007). The findings of this study support the notion that a friendly non-threatening learning environment is vital and supports the work of Sarra (2006) whose dramatic results in lifting engagement levels in indigenous education was due in no small way to the establishment of good relationships which he maintains, teachers are being paid to foster.

Geoff, the only male teacher participating, speaks of the need to lighten up the atmosphere when students were experiencing difficulties “I try to be a bit more understanding...you think Oh God, you’re having a bad day AND you don’t have a pen”. The many aspects of humour which help us to reframe and divert thought were evident in the case studies. Julie’s use of friendly banter with her students with a hint of mock outrage and displays of reciprocity are good examples of ‘the play frame’ (Bateson in Coates, 2007). Julie’s high scores for laughter may be an indicator of her resilience (Kuiper & Martin, 1998). There was no significant increase in other humour types such as slapstick gags or jokes which reflects the emphasis placed on the training for facial expressions. There is scope for further work on developing the humour expression of teachers given the pleasing indications from the pilot. This use of humour in building positive affect is essential in establishing reciprocity in teacher student relationships where teachers are willing to share power with students (Fovet, 2009).

Indeed the aspect of humour central to this study is the notion of good humour. The many social functions and benefits of humour can be applied in the classroom. Humour aids common sense by providing distance from the issue (Critchley, 2002). This raises the question of whether humour is hardwired in the personality. Studies of humour development in children (McGhee, 1979) found high correlation between assertive personality types and humour use. The training regime had some impact on pedagogy yet there were some features of personality and disposition which impacted and are discussed later. This however does not preclude the efficacy of training in humour use. Franzini (2001) found it was possible to train therapists to use humour if there was an acceptance of maturity and flexibility. All participants had some increase in humour use following training and all commented on awareness- raising with respect to current research.

The non-verbal humour behaviours including friendly facial expressions were chosen as a focus for the study rather than a more sophisticated type of cognitive based humour. The thinking is that rather than training comedians the training in this study is rooted in good pedagogical communication and remaining mindful of the contraindications for humour use. Justified to some extent by Collinson's (2002) studies in humour in business whereby seeking to manufacture humour may minimise its expression. The risks of alienation through use of superiority humour are heightened with students whose social emotional development is delayed (Crick & Dodge, 1994). The development of humour is linked to cognitive development (Pagliano, Zambone, & Kelly, 2007) and in planning humour for students with social and emotional delay more sophisticated cognitive based humour may be inappropriate. Removal of threat in the learning environment aids identification (Meyer, 2000) through humour use rather than superiority governed wit which produces exclusion.

Teachers in the study with high humour scores as measured by the assessment tools in the study displayed humour behaviours which promoted high levels of engagement and

connection to school. Julie and Geoff consistently used the establishment of a 'play frame' (Coates, 2007) where the non-verbal communication removes the presence of threat from the learning environment (Jensen, 1998). The establishment of a playful atmosphere challenges established practices of control and coercion (Sidman, 1999) and relies on a structured approach that acknowledges the student needs (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Gentle teasing was one such strategy. This behaviour was counted as an example of humour as Drew, (1986) emphasizes teases are constructed with certain distinctive features that signal humorous intent (Drew, 1986, as cited in Mulkay, 1988 p.76). By playfully challenging the adequacy of what the student is doing it was possible to moderate student behaviour and increase engagement. Julie and Geoff, the two teachers with highest humour scores, make use of this dynamic in their teaching. Julie often employs self-deprecation in her teases thus ensuring reciprocity in the power balance. These teachers displayed a willingness to negotiate (Winograd, 2002) with students thus establishing reciprocity in the relationship, a favoured state for educating students with behaviour disorders (Fovet, 2009).

The video recorded teacher observations indicated a suite of teacher practices which produced high engagement levels in students. These included teachers who displayed flexibility and practices such as giving an outline of what is to take place in the lesson. Indeed Ambady and Rosenthal's (1993) study of effective teachers identified a need for more training in non-verbal communication. It is problematic to tease out the delineation between humour use and these effective engagement strategies but it is clear that good teaching is a complex craft weaving highly nuanced social practices with curriculum (Arnold, 2005).

Student engagement depends upon effective teacher communication in the form of feedback and immediacy which was evident in the study. Teachers with lower humour scores did not deliver as much positive feedback to the recipients. Although the present study did not focus on reinforcement it was evident from observations from the classroom interactions that this is

a powerful teaching tool. This is in accordance with work on links between student motivation and teacher behaviour which highlight the need for effective teacher feedback to counter the negative student effects (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). The current study found much to agree with Richmond and McCroskey's (2004) observation that teachers dull facial expressions can effect classroom management. Confidence in teaching and classroom management were also highly correlated in this study in line with Martin (2006).

Measure of student engagement for the study looked at lower order indicators such as attendance and on task behaviour. This was in line with the exploratory nature of the pilot study. That is not to trivialise the intricate nature of engagement which is a complex interaction between individual student motivation and the classroom processes and practices which work towards the student engaging with the content (Munns et al., 2006). As a pilot study the focus was more on the journey of the teachers in humour inclusion and further study could obtain more detail of the student factors in engagement. Student performance on standardised and teacher assessment tasks may be one measure that could be utilised.

The use of humour in pedagogy raises the issue of control and flies in the face of advice that was regularly meted out to pre service teachers "Don't smile until Easter" and is an emblem of the discourse around the regime of management (Gore & Parkes, 2007; Wallinger, 1997). Participants in the study had all received this advice during their training. One of the participants commented that she could now smile as she "had them where she wanted them." This comment reveals one of the established barriers to humour use in pedagogy, the historical precedent (Korobkin, 1989). The training component in this study aims to provoke mindfulness in teachers as they include humour to prevent any use of inappropriate humour including sarcasm or humour attempting to exclude students. The nature of humour, as Meyer (2000, p.310) dubs the "double edged sword", obviates the need to proceed with caution. In the interviews with the participants details of their experiences of previous humour use as

young teachers highlight this. Tania, one of the participants: “I mimicked this (effeminate) kid not occurring to me that for him, in a rural school it was a big deal and he stormed off. I found him later and apologised and (since) have been a lot more conscious of doing something like that”. The power of humour to unite or divide is acknowledged (Fovet, 2009) and only in teacher reflection can practice be changed (Hattie, 2009).

The current study examined how teacher emotional competencies are an important factor in student outcomes (Arnold & Ryan, 2003). A sense of humour is essential if teachers are to survive and flourish. However, as recent studies reveal that teachers view emotions as an intrusion in the classroom (Hargreaves, 2000) this can place limits on their capacity to build relationships with their students. An interesting result from the study was the high correlation between teacher experience and humour use (Heck, 2009). Displays of respect and enjoyment of teaching were more prevalent with experienced teachers and had a subsequent impact on student engagement particularly those students with challenging behaviours. As Geoff says “It’s a nice interplay between you and the other.” It’s difficult to establish causality with the small sample but there is an encouraging rationale for further training. Guskey’s (2002) model demonstrates the need for teachers to see a change in student outcomes after implementation before they incorporate new practice (Guskey, 2002, as cited in Coulson, 2005, p.31).

The study acknowledges the high correlation between teacher behaviour and student motivation and learning (Geving, 2007; Martin, 2006; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Weare, 2007). As the teachers attended the training sessions there were discussions about certain students and management styles to which they had responded. This collegiate sharing was one feature of the training that all participants appreciated. Given that the major form of support for teachers of challenging students is found within the school (Little, 2005), this is sustainable practice and does not rely on outside expertise.

The study exposed the vulnerabilities of students with challenging behaviour. These students require teachers who have a high level of emotional maturity (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006). During the study some of the low scores for student engagement were attributed to the student facing suspension and expulsion. That these issues were unrelated to the teacher participating in the study was demonstrated by one student being given leave to attend his drama performance despite facing reprimand for actions in another classroom. Further studies could examine the student factors in tandem with the teacher training to gain a more detailed picture. This is in unison with many recent studies (Dinham & Rowe, 2008; Hattie, 2003) which explore a pedagogy that addresses the various teacher factors influencing student outcomes. Moreover there are not merely implications for the cohort of whose challenging behaviour poses a risk to school attendance, inappropriate behaviour, there are implications for all students (Fovet, 2009). Indeed a report on recommendations to schools urges teachers to be mindful of the wide diversity of student needs when planning curriculum implementation (Shaddock et al., 2007). The maladjusted social processing which students with Oppositional Defiant Disorder exhibit and other students with disabilities that have an impact on processing information must be considered in any planning (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

The targeted students for two of the teachers (Julie & Maureen), in the current study, were facing exclusion from school and there were many issues that had an impact on the decisions which were unrelated to the humour study and the behaviour of the participating teacher. This can partly explain the lack of correlation between student engagement and teacher use of humour for Julie (see fig 13). The nature of the difficult relationship these students have with school meant that interviewing them may not be productive. These students harbour negative attitudes and are vulnerable to forces in their own domestic situations which can compromise clarity (Weatherburn et al., 2005). Yet encouraging signs emerged in Maureen's interview

where she related how one of the students facing expulsion attended an extra- curricula event. This is evidence of high engagement (Finn, 1993; Fullarton, 2002) with the clown workshops he had been attending in class. Maureen had given him feedback on his clowning abilities and commented to him: “You’re a natural”. There is scope for further study to examine the engagement of students with challenging behaviour in relation to teacher enjoyment (Martin, 2006) and enthusiasm.

The training in the study acknowledges the need to examine teacher communication as Loughran (2010) asserts that quality learning depends on the student’s consent. This requires an understanding of the adolescent thought processes (Dahl, 2004) and the role of emotion in adolescent’s cognitive processing. Educators who develop an awareness of when to ‘lighten up’ (Rogers, 1998) may be better able to sustain student engagement. Placed in the context of this knowledge, this study aims to raise the role of teacher communication and humour to centre stage. The training responds to a need for additional strategies to counter the complexities of teaching in times where students are remaining at school for longer.

One teacher in the study, Kati, has English as a second language and during the study cultural differences in humour use emerged which may have impacted on Kati’s ability to become more light hearted and playful with her students and her lack of teaching experience could also have had some bearing on this. This is an issue which needs to be considered in further studies on humour use. This echoes research on the use and non-use of humour in ESL classes which found teacher attitudes to humour in teaching and teacher personality had a correlation to humour use (Ziyaeemehr et al., 2011)

Sarcasm was a favourite humour device of two of the teachers in the study which echoes other studies on humour use in pedagogy (Wanzer et al., 2006) which also report teacher use of sarcasm. The teachers who had used sarcasm reported an awareness of its potential to

cause harm due to previous experiences. There were several incidents of sarcasm observed during the filming in the classroom and these were not counted as humour behaviours as they were deemed negative examples, unlikely to produce positive affect in the students. The need for teacher reflection is critical here given the temptation to ‘get even’ with a student by making a sarcastic comment displaying teacher superiority (Wanzer et al., 2006).

The current study’s focus on facial expression and non-verbal communication owes much to Ekman’s (1983) work on affect displays and the power of emotion (Ekman & Friesen, 1982). A dominant theme to emerge in the qualitative data was an increased awareness of the power of facial expressions, especially WBE. Taking Ekman’s view that emotions govern our lives (Ekman, 2003) a focus on the power of facial expressions could have positive impacts on changing school life for students at risk of disengagement. Indeed the theme of ‘faking’ emotion was raised in the training. Teacher participants told of the difficulty of putting their own emotion to one side when dealing with aberrant classroom behaviour. This echoes Hochschild’s (1983) Theory of Emotional Labour (Hochschild, 1983 cited in Mawhinney, 2008) where holding in check one’s own emotional state is a requirement of professional behaviour.

Challenges for teachers attempting to include humour in their teaching repertoire include systemic issues and those relating to school culture. One of the participants (Kati) was experiencing some difficulty relating to her supervision as a professional and was frustrated in her attempts to find support within her faculty with the use of humour. She was also experiencing some significant family problems which had an impact on her ability to apply what she had learned into the classroom situation. Changes in school culture to improve relationships, as this study does, are compromised by entrenched patterns and the avoidance of self-reflection in teachers (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Narrow minded and rigid thinking

is highly correlated with low incidence of laughter and lack of humour appreciation (Provine, 2001).

This study follows on from other studies examining teacher non-verbal behaviour (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993; Bettencourt et al., 1983; McCroskey et al., 1996) and effective teacher communication (den Brok et al., 2003). Effective teachers were found to be friendlier, understanding and allow the student more freedom. The ability to reflect on practice can't be overstated as many studies reveal (Dottin, 2009; Hattie, 2009; Le Cornu & Peters, 2005; Rowe, 2003). Yet the study found that some teachers were more willing to reflect on their practice than others. One instance in which the video footage captured a difficult moment the participant was unwilling to review her communication style and admitted feeling confronted by the situation.

Engagement is not to be confused with compliance (Loughran, 2010) yet this study has examined many indicators of student compliance as evidence of engagement given the limited sample size and the nature of the student cohort where attendance is an issue.

Loughran (2010) urges teachers to reflect on those moments in teaching that 'capture attention' as teachers examine their pedagogy. The findings in this study are consistent with Skinner and Belmont's (1993) work on the reciprocal relationship between teacher behaviour and student engagement.

The views expressed in the interviews were not attempting to be representative of the teaching population, but rather give a 'thick description' (Stake, 2000, p.444) of the process of introducing humour into teaching. Qualitative data revealed a complex set of issues around engagement, with humour being only one useful tool. Julie's case study reveals the weaving of structure, diversity in curriculum implementation (Gore & Parkes, 2007), friendly and playful communication style and power sharing (Winograd, 2002). This interrelationship of

emotional and academic content is consistent with findings on effective teacher practice (Murray Harvey & Slee, 2007) and the impact on school engagement (Martin, 2006; Munns et al., 2006).

This study places itself in the emerging field of positive educational practices (Noble & McGrath, 2007; Seligman, 2005) and the ‘transformative capacity’ of these practices (Arnold & Ryan, 2003). Positive education is an approach that moves away from more traditional approaches where student deficits were the focus. This approach has a focus on building on student strengths through the generation of positive emotions. The generation of positive emotions is undertaken by fostering enjoyment and fun in students along with feelings of pride and belonging (Noble & McGrath, 2007). Empathic intelligence in teaching acknowledges that learning is as much about the feelings and experiences as the content (Damasio, 1999). This occurs where teachers display expertise and empathy in the engagement of others to create a climate of mutual respect (Arnold, 2004). This approach can be transformative. Humour use is central to these two approaches both with its ability to increase social cohesion, foster positive emotions, reframe conflict (Smith et al., 2000) and increase divergent thinking (Ziv, 1983). The participants in the study acknowledged they had only scratched the surface and many had ideas on how humour could be included in their teaching.

This study touches on the issues for those students with behaviour issues and specific disabilities that can limit engagement in teaching and learning settings as well as little connection to the school community and raises questions about how educators make and develop collaborative partnerships between the families of these students and the school (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, & Beegle, 2004). Implications of the study suggest that teachers could play a key role in school engagement for adolescents with challenging behaviours, by the use of humour to build and develop relationships. Confirming

the role played by humour in communication in diverse contexts. A phenomenon explored by Smith et al. (2000) who stress the collegiate nature of change as teachers need the support of colleagues and the education system to facilitate improved communication.

Limitations

The evidence ascertained from this investigation has indicated some shortcomings that may warrant further examination. In particular the sample size does not enable any more than broad generalisations and further study with a larger sample would be beneficial. Despite these limitations there was enough evidence from the pilot study to warrant further study on humour use with this cohort of students.

The measures of teacher humour following training were inconsistent amongst participants and were not linked to the attendance rates at the training sessions. The aspect of the training which was difficult to measure was the reflection on practice after viewing the video footage. These viewings were left to a participant's own discretion and their professional practice was respected by the researcher. The participant with the lowest humour scores was reluctant to view the footage "I didn't really look at the videos much. The first few were OK then there was that one that I didn't want to look at because I'd talked about it and didn't need to see it." (Kati). Training raises the issue of teacher disposition and the ability to change practice (Dottin, 2009). The training component of this study had an emphasis on teacher reflection. There were limitations in this pilot study as teachers had to balance participation with their regular duties and professional commitments.

The training package had a focus on the links to research on humour use, respecting teachers' professionalism and was a prerogative of the researcher who had to play multi roles of researcher, colleague and trainer. It was essential in this process to employ bracketing, where the researcher must set aside beliefs in order to "view the how" (Schutz, 1970, cited in

Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p.488). To this end the researcher kept notes in order to reflect on the processes in the study.

The process of participants taking the information from the training and applying it to pedagogy is in line with Guskey's (2002) model of training for change which acknowledges that change is a difficult process for teachers or indeed most professionals and changing attitudes follows changing behaviour. Results show that the more experienced teachers had higher humour scores following the training which is in line with Carroll's work on the reflective practice of experienced practitioners who are able to draw on prior knowledge (Carroll, 2009).

The study highlights the barriers that prevent humour expression by teachers. Mood and disposition is one such barrier. Ekman (2003) noted that emotions rule our lives and once we are in a bad mood there is a tendency to seek out things to which we can respond with anger (Ekman, 2003). This is illustrated in a comment made by one of the participants: "I'm not resilient enough to smile today." Humour expression can also be hampered by non-assertive communication styles (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999) and humour requires a high degree of empathy and connection with the audience (Jewell, 2005). This has implications for teachers of students with challenging behaviours. These students utilise a unique social processing and will regularly find conflict in an interaction, where none exists (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

Narrow minded thinking is another barrier to humour expression and this can have severe impacts on pedagogy especially at times of stress (Lefcourt, 2001).

The study raises many questions about the communication style of teachers and how their relationships with their colleagues and students are shaped by the quality of this communication: Are teachers sufficiently aware of how they appear to their students and, are they concerned about this? Is thought given to understanding their students and how long

does it take to know their names? How much thought is given to planning activities that are fun and engaging for their classes and are attempts made to adapt the curriculum for students with disabilities? For students at risk of leaving school early due to challenging behaviour the ability of schools to communicate with the families of these at-risk students is called into question.

Directions for further study

A larger study over a longer period of time could establish some causal links between student engagement and teacher use of humour. There could be benefits to pedagogy with the inclusion of humour in the curriculum as studies show links to divergent thinking and retention. The many teacher behaviours evident during the study could inform further study such as: use of regular feedback and movement of the teacher around the room were evident in those teachers which produced high levels of engagement, (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993; Bettencourt et al., 1983).

Further studies including the use of an action research methodology could be valuable to support or refute that humour training for teachers' humour has benefits for students with challenging behaviour.

The inclusion of a humour training manual such as McGhee's (2010) recent work could add a useful dimension to further in-service training of teachers. This manual was unavailable to the researcher at the time of the pilot study's design.

Questions were raised in this pilot study about how teachers communicate. This seems relevant in the current climate of increased teacher accountability for student outcomes and competition in the workplace. As teaching is another human service industry, training teachers to have greater awareness of their non-verbal communication and increase their

ability to display humour in their teaching and work lives could benefit all in the wider school community.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The research investigation reported in this thesis dissertation has yielded some important evidence. In a rapidly changing world we are seeing more evidence of positive psychologies at work and a leaning towards happiness: the emergence of laughter clubs, happiness institutes, prisons reforming and collaborating with stakeholders towards wellbeing and even governments employing statisticians to measure a nation's happiness. Clown doctors in hospitals and now research into humour with dementia sufferers all point to the value, and indeed measure that value of promoting positive affect.

Training teachers to be more aware of their use of humour could have far reaching consequences. The benefits of laughter, smiling and displays of positive affect are numerous but for teachers teaching students with challenging behaviours, the consequences of a teacher's actions and communications could alter the trajectory of their students' lives. Increased evidence reveals the difference teachers can make. The onus is on teachers to view all aspects of their pedagogy as evidence of their professionalism. A sense of humour may be an indicator of empathy and highly developed social skills.

For governments and schools there is a high cost for educating students and even higher costs for students with challenging behaviour. Schools are required to educate all students including those for whom formal education appears to have no relevance. There are examples where humour has been employed to assist in closing the gap and where teachers and school communities are working in partnerships but for many school communities the 'us and them' boundaries persist.

The peculiar nature of humour, its ability to pair disjointed concepts and its ability to communicate difficult topics make it an excellent tool in dealing with challenging student behaviour. Practitioners who work with these students understand this and know when the

judicious use of humour is best employed. However it is the ability of humour as part of the repertoire of positive communication to build relationships and to make connections between this cohort of students and school that is of primary interest in this study. Teachers can and do make a difference. The challenge is to reverse the trend of encouraging students with challenging behaviour to leave school.

Humour has benefits for pedagogy is evident from the literature and begs the question: why not use humour? The many links between humour use and quality teaching must be acknowledged- amongst which are enhanced divergent thinking and creativity. Humour is a double edged sword and only humour which includes the recipient and promotes positive feelings is appropriate for pedagogy. The social functions of humour which include an increase in social cohesion are much in need in school communities where bullying and alienation is another sign of malignancy.

Teachers have long understood the need to share war stories and have a laugh with each other and the literature reveals a high correlation between the ability to laugh and the measure of an individual's resilience.

The links between a teacher's enthusiasm and love of teaching and student outcomes argue for teacher displays of humour. There is enough evidence in the literature to argue for a more playful and cheerful classroom atmosphere than is currently found in New South Wales high schools.

Recent teacher graduates leaving the profession in the first few years cite challenging student behaviour as one of the chief sources of stress. Their mentor teachers often place the need for control in the classroom over the need to communicate and engage. This continues the separation between pedagogy and behaviour management which has long characterised the deficit model of education where student pathology is seen as the cause of disengagement

from school. Humour as a tool for conflict management works on the function to reframe and divert. Teachers who display high levels of empathy with their students develop reciprocity in the relationship characterised by negotiation and power sharing. Humour is regularly a hallmark of these relationships.

Relationships with teachers are a governing factor in school connection and students at risk of disengagement from school. Building the capacity in this cohort of students to better deal with the struggles of life ought to be the focus of our public education system. The high correlation between low literacy levels and criminal behaviour is an indication that there is much work to do. Alarmingly we find these students and their families penalised and excluded from the education system through an escalating series of events. Poor communication between families of at-risk students and their schools is likely.

The role of emotion in learning has emerged and is a key consideration of the positive education movement. Acknowledging the power of emotion to govern our lives is to acknowledge the displays of emotion on the human face. The power of non-verbal communication has emerged in studies on effective and engaging communication. This is a form of communication which has power beyond words and is transparent and truthful. Even small samples of non-verbal communication speak volumes. Good teachers have always understood this power and use it to great effect. However with the current focus on teacher effectiveness much could be gained by reflective practice and turning the spotlight on classroom teacher performance.

The ability to further understand the human brain and the role played by positive emotion on learning and memory adds further weight to the argument for humour use. Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden and Build Theory of positive emotions recognises an increase in people's momentary thought- action responses in times of stress away from mere fight or flight. A

flourishing, due to increased positive affect, is manifest in more ‘approach’ behaviours. The studies of humour use with mental patients also speak of a reduction in aberrant and violent responses. Studies of humour use with challenging adolescents are not well represented in the literature but the few existing studies (Fovet, 2009; Smith et.al., 2000) point to benefits in the relationship building capacities which are enhanced through humour use. Laughter has been used as a measure of an individual’s resilience and with teacher stress a key factor in effective pedagogy an increase in humour use and expression could build resilience in teachers. The willingness of teachers to put themselves on a par with students establishes the reciprocity necessary for positive student outcomes.

All this bodes well for increasing the resilience of both teachers and students. Resilience features in many programs across New South Wales schools. The ability to succeed academically and socially despite trauma and social disadvantage is at the heart of many schools’ social curriculum. The links between humour expression, especially laughter, and resilience are well established. Yet old patterns characterised by coercion and restraint are the default position in busy high schools when dealing with challenging student behaviour. This study reveals the issues and challenges of changing from a negative mindset to a positive educational framework. Humour has much to offer teachers who experience stress in the workplace. The ability of humour to reframe issues and incidents so that they appear less daunting is a feature of humour’s unique capacities.

The solitary nature of teaching adds weight to the need for accountability of what occurs when the classroom door closes. This study has revealed the potential for further work to be undertaken on increasing school engagement through teacher use of humour. There is merit in training teachers to include more open displays of humour and positive affect and to increase their capacity to reflect on their practice. The value of video feedback towards this end is worth considering. Training that takes place in situ is of greater benefit and teachers

are more likely to adopt methods and strategies after successful implementation, which in turn may be shared amongst colleagues.

This study limited as it has been to a single secondary school has highlighted the value of training experienced teachers in the use of humour and its positive impact on engaging students with challenging behaviour.

Further study is required on a much larger scale including the resilience of teachers to sustain the use of humour in the classroom and whether this can have a positive long-term impact on students with challenging behaviour.

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Appendix i



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INFORMATION SHEET for TEACHERS

Research Project: *Can Training Increase Teacher Use of Humour to Engage Students with Challenging Behaviour?*

I wish to invite you to participate in my research on above topic. The details of the study follow and I hope you will consider being involved. I am conducting this research project for my Masters at the University of New England. *My supervisors are Dr Stephen Winn and Dr Bawa*

Kuyini-Abubakar of University of New England. Dr Winn can be contacted by email at

swinn@ [une.edu.au](mailto:swinn@une.edu.au) or by phone on 02 6773 3669. Dr Kuyini-Abubakar can be contacted by

email at kuyinia@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 3858 and I can be contacted by

email at gabrielle.mead2@det.nsw.edu.au or phone 0422255593.

Aim of the Study:

This study is designed to investigate whether training teachers to include humour can be a useful strategy to engage adolescents with challenging behaviour. Of particular interest in

this study is the power of facial expressions and body language to communicate humour and friendliness.

Studies show that student motivation and engagement is linked to teacher enjoyment and confidence in teaching and at this time where students are required to remain at school until 17 teachers may need to diversify their teaching practice.

The study will involve several stages:

- ❖ An initial survey of teachers who are interested in participating in the project
- ❖ An introductory training session (approx 30 mins)
- ❖ Classroom observations of teachers through video recording as they attempt to engage students by adapting their teaching to include humour.
- ❖ Four subsequent training sessions
- ❖ Ongoing consultation with the researcher during humour inclusion and reflection of teacher progress

What is involved?

- Six training sessions over four (4) weeks up to 30 minutes per session to explore humour use in pedagogy, communication skills and strategies for including humour in teaching.
- Video recording of 15 minute samples of teaching students with challenging behaviour at all stages of the project.
- An interview lasting approximately 20 minutes
- You have the right not to respond to any question that could be considered invasive.

Interviews:

There will be a series of open-ended questions that allow you to explore your views and practices related to teaching students with challenging behaviour. Following the interview, a transcript will be provided to you if you wish to see one. Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results. All names will be replaced by pseudonyms; this will ensure that you are not identifiable.

Participants will also be video-recorded whilst they are teaching to help the researchers understand how you use humour in your classroom to manage student behaviour. This footage will also be used in the interviews as a means of provoking teacher reflection.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent from the project and discontinue at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence if you decide not to participate or withdraw at any time.

The video recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's office. All other data will be kept in the same manner for five (5) years following thesis submission and then destroyed. Only the investigators will have access to the data.

Research Process:

It is anticipated that this research will be completed by the end of October. The results may also be presented at conferences or written up in journals without any identifying information.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No. HE11/100Valid to 31/5/2012)

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services

University of New England

Armidale, NSW 2351.

Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543

Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you.

Regards

Gabrielle Mead



HE10/0.....

Consent form for Teachers

Title of Project: Training for Humour Use to Increase Engagement

I have read the Information Sheet for Participants. All my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this activity. I realise that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that I will not be identified in any material based on this project.

.....

.....

Participant

Date

.....

Print Name

Appendix iii
 Student Engagement Observation Sheet

	Attends	On task	Cont to disc	completes	Non engaged	other		
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								

Appendix iv

Teacher Observation Sheet: This observation scale uses a one minute momentary time sampling. The target is to be observed during the minute and the behaviour recorded using the codes in appendix ii.

Teacher: Lesson: Date: Time: Raters:

	WBE	G	S	J	SV	Story	Gag	Ha	Other
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									

Appendix v

Humour Behaviours

WBE: Warmth behind the eyes this is evident in the use of the orbicularis oculi muscles and results in a threat free, friendly appearance

When accompanied by other communication behaviours, such as posture and gesture it can signal a 'play frame' (Mulkay, 1988).

G: Gestures: These behaviours are nonverbal and denote a positive signal eg thumbs up or a playful hand gesture.

S: Smile: only smiles which occur with WBE are tallied

J: Joke: here the category can include a play on words or a traditional joke, the joke behavior can also be teacher instigated joke telling by students.

SV: Sotto voice: this category is for those communication behaviours which are said under the breath and meant only for the targeted student **and** the use of a funny voice, Ekman notes the voice is the primary signal for happy emotions (Ekman, 2003).

Story: any story told by the teacher promoting positive affect or causing laughter in the students

Gag: physical slapstick usually involving a dramatic gesture, body posture

Ha: a laugh

Appendix vi

Teacher Training

<p><u>Session One</u></p> <p>30 minutes</p> <p>Attendance:</p>	<p><u>Objective:</u></p> <p>To introduce the research findings and the rationale for the project</p>	<p><u>Activity</u></p> <p>Introduction and presentation (see attached ppt)</p> <p>Discussion</p>
<p><u>Session Two</u></p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <p>30 minutes</p> <p><u>19th July</u></p>	<p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <p>To explore aspects of interpersonal communication:</p> <p>To raise awareness of the power of non verbal communication by demonstrating :</p> <p>Kinesics (Body language)</p> <p>Proxemics(personal space</p>	<p><u>Activity</u></p> <p>Handout 1</p> <p>Researcher to model various examples of body language with the same verbal content: ‘get your books out’.</p> <p>Refer to Handout 5</p> <p>Teachers role play the various stances and discuss what message each sends.</p>
	<p>To identify the vocal qualities that signal threat and encouragement.</p>	<p>Paralanguage exercise</p> <p>Say the following as both a criticism and as praise using intonation</p> <p>“That is really something”</p> <p>“Are you ready?”</p> <p>Role play various scenarios</p>
	<p>To identify useful non verbal techniques which can de escalate challenging behaviour.</p>	<p>Model the open stance : legs apart and open palms</p> <p>Are there postures and gestures that communicate a playful atmosphere?</p> <p>(Handout 5)</p> <p>Role play scenarios from the teacher’s own experiences in the classroom.</p>

<p><u>Session Three</u></p> <p><u>Facial expressions</u></p> <p>20 minutes</p> <p>10th August</p>	<p>To raise awareness of the subtle shift of power in the room when the teacher is threatened by challenging behaviour.</p> <p>Explore facial expressions.</p> <p>To gain an understanding of teacher's eye behaviour and how it can be used to control and regulate interactions with students.</p>	<p>Introduce scripts for diverting conflict through humour (Handout 2)</p> <p>Discuss other examples and scenarios that could occur</p> <p>Researcher to model (Handout 3) the various expressions: fear, anger, disgust, contempt, surprise, sadness, joy and interest.</p> <p>After the modelling, teachers guess the facial expression?</p> <p>Role play using the various expressions</p>
<p><u>Session Four</u></p> <p><u>20 mins</u></p> <p><u>7th Sept</u></p>	<p>To introduce strategies for including humour in the classroom.</p> <p>To introduce the various humour theories.</p>	<p>Handout 4</p> <p>References (see procedure)</p>
<p><u>Session Five:</u></p> <p><u>Evaluation</u></p> <p><u>26/10/11</u></p> <p><u>Attendance:</u></p>	<p><u>Objective:</u></p> <p>To reflect on humour inclusion and identify specific resources and useful classroom strategies for including humour</p>	<p><u>Focus questions</u></p> <p>Do you feel more confident in the classroom?</p> <p>Have you noticed a shift in power when you use humour in the classroom?</p> <p>Are you able to read your student's body language</p>

The Use of Humour to Engage Adolescents with Challenging Behaviour

Training for Teachers

The traditional approach to change is to look for the

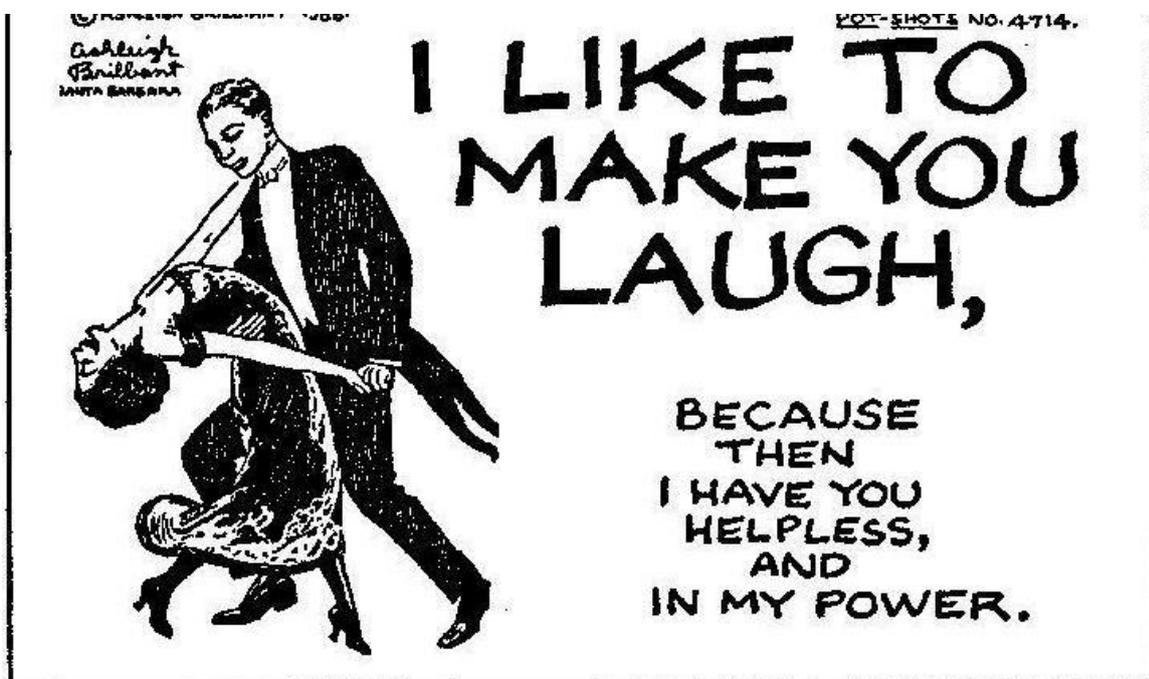
problem, conduct an audit of current practices, focus on what's going wrong, seek an explanation for what's not working and then find a solution Positive psychology on the other hand transforms the question to 'what's working' and draws on available research that shows how to build positive and sustainable conditions that allow individuals, groups and organizations to thrive and flourish.(Noble & McGrath, 2007)

Engagement is when the behavioural, the emotional and the cognitive come together powerfully (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris 2004.)

Studies on humour use in pedagogy

- In 1986 Anver Ziv, a researcher at University of Tel Aviv used an experimental method to study the links between humour and creativity. 78 adolescents were given a humorous film clip then given the task of providing captions for a cartoon. A creativity test was administered subsequently and the results found that there was a high correlation between creativity and humour. Humour was found to increase divergent thinking.
- A study of humour use in university (Webb White, 2001) found that students and teachers agreed that humour was able to relieve stress, gain attention and create a healthy learning environment. It was articulated that humour ought not to be used to embarrass or intimidate students.
- Studies (Senior, 2001; Nahas, 1998) found that the inclusion of humour increases class cohesion and produces a relaxed atmosphere where difficult and challenging subjects are more easily taught.
- One study from the 1920s (Barr) found that science teachers who smiled and laughed more achieved more favorable student outcomes.
- A study on the power of verbal communication (Ambady and Rosenthal, 1993) found that students were accurate at evaluating effective teachers. Good teachers tended to smile and walk around more the ineffective teachers sat and had more negative facial expressions. The student ratings of teachers correlated highly with expert colleague and administrator ratings.
- The discoveries of mirror neurons (Iacoboni, 2008) in the brain explain why yawning is so contagious and also explain why smiling, also contagious, may be an excellent idea when trying to create productive relationships for pedagogy.
- Humans prefer a happy face and a playful atmosphere encourages exploration. The primary functions of humour: coping, reframing, celebration, communicating ambiguity, expressing hostility (Morreall, 1983; Ziv, 1986)
- Humour use can divert the path of conflict and can promote individuals saving face (Smith et al, 2000).

- The large number of students with mental health issues require positive educational experiences (Seligman) to counter negative impacts such as depression, suicide, homelessness and crime (Dahl, Fuller)
 - Research on what assists students with mental health issues connect to school stresses the need for teachers to smile and create a positive classroom atmosphere (Anderson.)
 - Empathically intelligent people often display a lively sense of humour they can read the subtexts of situations and perceive incongruities and possibilities quickly and don't take themselves too seriously (Arnold).
 - Humour is a way of maximizing a lecturer's effectiveness H used as a clarifying device or as a way of breaking up serious presentation (Richmond)
 - laughter can moderate impact of daily life through : cognitive appraisal & emotion focused coping (Kuiper, 1998)
 - Humour use can increase retention and recall (Garner)
-
- Students who were generally happy with school and with learning were more engaged than those who were not (Fullarton, 2002).
 - Promotion of positive emotions broaden thought action repertoire and builds enduring personal resources (Fredrickson)



(Brilliant, 1990 pp. 23)

Handout 1

Communication method In a Classroom Context	Signal	Meaning
Posture	Feet apart Open stance Sitting at desk	Open to ideas Non judgmental Not engaged
Gesture	Emblems: specific verbal meaning e.g. Thumbs up Point Nodding Arms folded	Positive feedback Your turn I'm listening Defensive
Proxemics: How we use physical and interpersonal space	Moving in closely towards a disruptive student	I'm coming to get you
Paralanguage and Vocal characteristics Voice quality: <ul style="list-style-type: none">  tone,  volume,  pitch,  rate of speech 	1.Loud/soft 2.Whinge, pleading, shrill 3.Low pitched voice 4.Fast talkers 1.Anger, dominance subservience 2.I can't get your attention 3.I'm in control 4.can be persuasive	
Silence	Not participating	Time to think disapproval

Handout 2

In these scenarios the possible teacher quips given as examples have been successfully used by the researcher and colleagues. They are examples of incongruity humour where the pattern of discourse diverts from the normal teacher: student interaction.

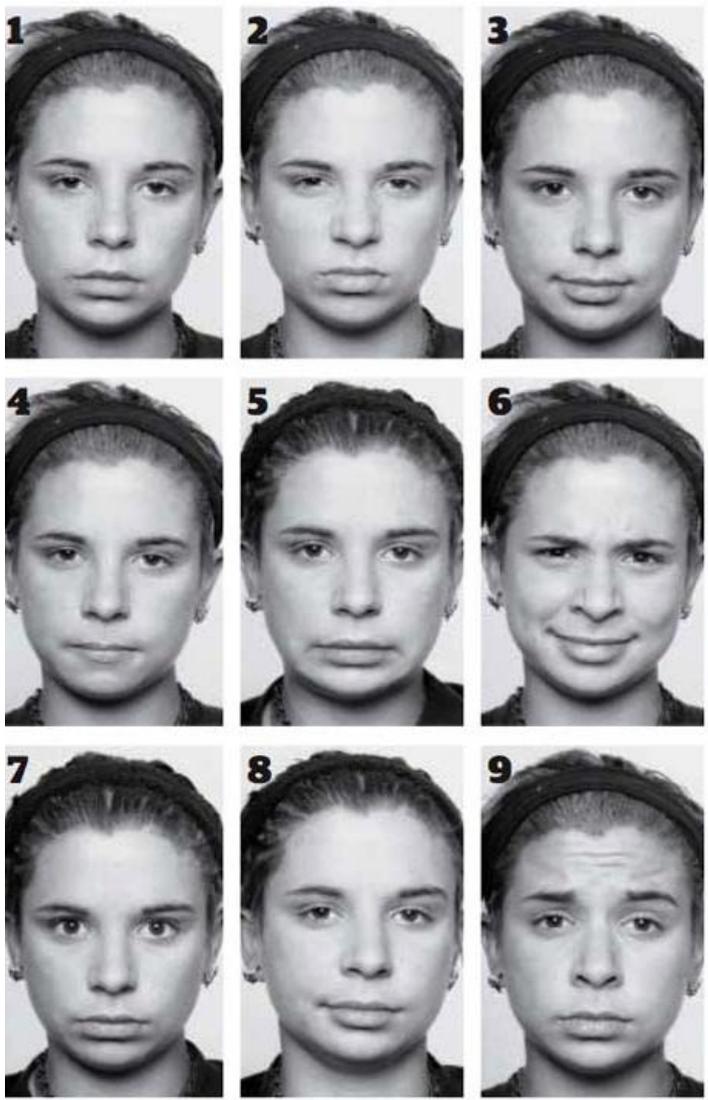
Reflective practice is essential here in the event that a student is offended. It's all in the timing which develops with experience and maintaining a sense of humour yet remaining focused on gaining attention.

Discuss possibilities.

Scenarios	Normal teacher reaction	What is communicated to the student	Possible teacher quips to divert attention
Jack throws a paper ball across the room and it hits Jai who yelps and is about to retaliate.	That's enough of that thanks. Next time you will be sent outside.	Student is able to get out of work if they misbehave again.	Teacher moves in close to the action: "OK lets zone in on the work now thanks Jack see if you can be as accurate with the work as you are with paper balls, are you OK Jai?"
Sheridan calls out some explicit personal details about the weekend.	Sheridan that's inappropriate!	Teacher is embarrassed by student.	"Sheridan it's lovely that you want to share and if we have time and the class agrees we might allow you some news time later as long it's inoffensive."
Shane yells "Get fucked!"	Get outside now or Get out now!!!	Teacher is offended/angry	Teacher: "How dare you tell me how to enjoy myself!" Or "There'll be no time for that now, we're busy"
English class is loud and unsettled and Dylan yells "Why do we have to do this crap?"	Sit down and be quiet and get your books out now.	Teacher needs to regain control of the group yet the group are disengaged Teacher is annoyed/angry	Teacher: I know you'd rather be listening to Lady Gi Gi Student: " That's Ga Ga" Teacher: "See how important spelling is!"
Stacey yells "Miss, Jai's hassling me"	"Jai go to your own seat and behave yourself."	Teacher has reached a conclusion based on one person's statement and has taken sides and is at risk of alienating Jai	Teacher "Stacey I'll stand here to protect you." Or "Jai how about hassling this problem here." (give him a

		without the benefit of his version of events.	problem to solve)
--	--	---	-------------------

Handout : 3



(Ekman, 2003: 229)

Answers:

<p>1. Slight Sadness</p> <p>Drooping upper eyelids, angling upwards of inner corners of eyebrows.</p>	<p>4. Slight or highly controlled anger</p> <p>Can be a warning of early anger</p> <p>Slight pressing and narrowing of the lips, other signs include tensed eyelids, eyebrows lowered</p>	<p>7.Fear/ Surprise</p> <p>Or rapt attention, In fear the lower eyelids are tensed and the eyebrows drawn together, not just raised as they are in surprise</p>
<p>2. Disgust</p> <p>Slight contraction of the muscle that wrinkles the nose and narrows the eyes.</p>	<p>5. Slight or highly controlled fear</p> <p>Commonly mistaken for disgust, the clue for fear arte slightly stretched lips</p>	<p>8.Contempt, smug disdainful</p> <p>The tightening of one lip corner signals this set of emotions</p>
<p>3. Slight enjoyment</p> <p>Cheeks are raised and eyebrows drawn down slightly</p>	<p>6. Masked anger</p> <p>Eyebrows don't match the smile, could either be an attempt to mask anger or amusement about being perplexed.</p>	<p>9.Worry apprehension</p> <p>This configuration in the eyebrows is a reliable sign of this feeling</p>

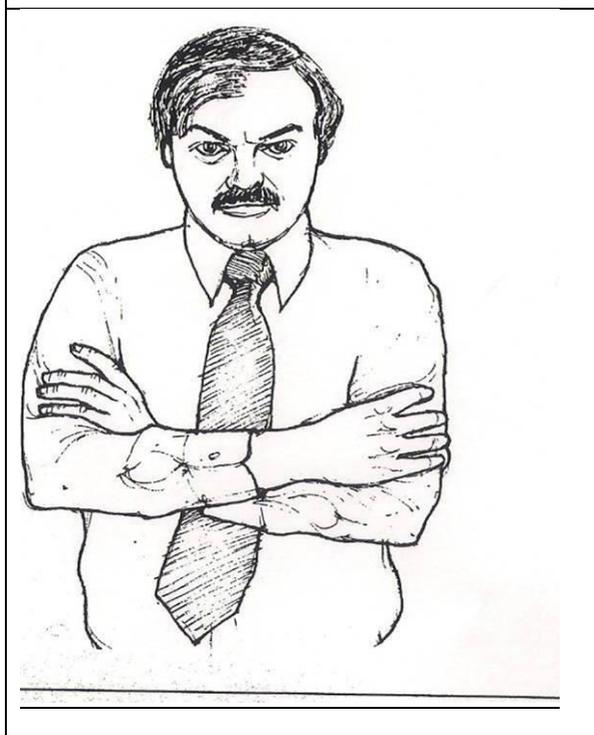
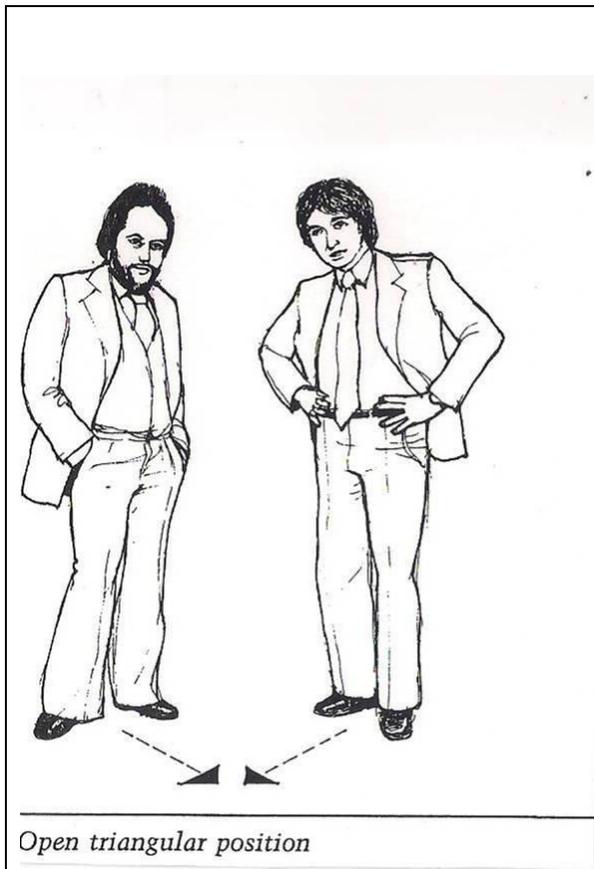
Handout 4

SOME IDEAS FOR INCLUDING HUMOUR IN THE CLASSROOM

- Bulletin boards with cartoons
- Funny resources
- Humour quotes
- Make funny noises e.g. clicks and buzzes for commas and full stops.
- Teacher trivia
- Have kids explain a concept as Elvis
- Hall of fame
- Awards
- Role play; rap songs
- Teacher self deprecation: This works really well when you want someone to explain something e.g. computer functions or popular taste
- Guerilla humour
- Oxymoron, alliteration and acronyms
- Mnemonic devices with a humorous twist
- Students joke telling
- Play dumb e.g. I'm sorry but WHAT is you tube?
- Use surprise as novelty as this creates a playful tone
- Quick hit and move on when using humour
- Extreme examples are remembered.
- More effective if not more than 3 'doses' of humour in one hour (Ziv, 1986)

Humour Theories

- ✚ **Incongruity:** This refers to the existence of two unrelated ideas co existing e.g A horse walks into a bar and the barman says " Why the long face?"
- ✚ **Release/ Surprise:** This type of humour is spontaneous and occurs when someone says something that relieves the tension.
e.g During Roll call a head teacher enters the room in a rage as he finds a student eating a sandwich. He grabs the sandwich and smashes it into a ball and throws it at the back wall as the class and teacher watch in disbelief. When he leaves a student raises his hand "Excuse me sir, was there a bin back there?"
- ✚ **Superiority:** The joke makes the teller feel superior to others
e.g. How do you keep a blonde busy all day? Put her in a round room and tell her to sit in the corner.



What are these gestures and postures communicating?

Appendix vii:



These questions are to be used as interview questions for the researcher once the teachers have completed the project.

- 1) In what ways have you included humour in the classroom?
- 2) Has the training been useful? What else could training offer?
- 3) Have you had an opportunity to use humour to de escalate conflict? Describe what happened
- 4) Have you experienced any negative effects in the use of classroom humour?
- 5) Have your students commented on any changes in your lessons? Describe
- 6) Have you noticed any change in the level of student engagement during the lessons where you include humour?
- 7) Describe some of the interactions you've had with some of your challenging students re engagement with the curriculum?

The Interviews

Interview Geoff

1. Interviewer	In what ways have you included humour in the classroom?
2. Geoff	Humour in the classroom is wide and varied sort of mix so what I try and do generally is that I try not to when kids get uptight or get upset about things I try to take that edge of their problem by trying to diffuse the situation with humour and trying to make it seem like it's not so important it's not such a big deal. I also try not to get angry with them as well so when they want to make you angry you can use humour there to try and keep them on track so they see that you're responding to what they're saying but you're not actually going to go down the path of disciplining them and doing those sorts of things you're coming from another path and it's almost as if you've got your hands up and you're saying "look it's all ok" and so if they're going to have a go at you after that they've really got to try hard
3. Interviewer	Laughs
4. Geoff	They've really got to want to do it so that's where I try to use it you get a kid who comes in they're a bit hot well just normal – things are going on someone takes somebody's pencil case one of those- if you can get involved in those sorts of situations with a little bit of humour of if you can um if you can detect if your antenna's up and you can see that the kids mmm things aren't quite going right or there's a build-up of something or other – if you can get in early and diffuse that – that's what I find very good
5. Interviewer	Fantastic! And how would you – with the training has it been useful and um so what else could it offer?
6. Geoff	The training's been good because you get to see what other people are doing and you get to talk about things that you do in isolation and unfortunately what we do in teaching we do tend to be a little bit removed from everybody you go to your room and you're doing your stuff and you haven't got a clue really what everybody else is doing um you've got a fair idea around the place who's ..the teachers I think are the ones that sort of use a bit of humour are the ones who the kids don't have too many problems with. Like I I tend to be one of those sorts of teachers I'm pretty well down the food chain if it comes to kids are going to complain about a teacher
7. Interviewer	mm
8. Geoff	Um that's not always necessarily a good thing I mean lots of people will have other reasons for being up on the kids radar

9. Interviewer	Mm
10. Geoff	But I'm not one of those I'm one of those who are down the radar if a kids having problems they're not going to have problems with Mr Lee because Mr Lee's sort of - I tend to give them a bit more leeway, I'm I try to be a bit more understanding it's a bit more parental I suppose when you've had your own kids you get into that zone when you think oh god you've had a bad day you've got no pens
11. Interviewer	Laughs
12. Geoff	All that stuff right it's been tough let's start again let's have a new day from what we've got from being together we've got some text and theory stuff that I haven't ever looked at before because you just do this stuff off your own bat that's interesting to have a look at and also to be able to see what other people do – how they use humour because they're not going to use it the same way I do you can see other people and you think “yeah that'd work for me, or no it wouldn't”
13. Interviewer	Yep – so what else do you think we could include if we were to do the training again or
14. Geoff	Oh if I was doing the training, if we were doing the training again what I would do I would use some of the video some of the footage we've got um and if we do it if we do it in a way where um after the initial part so some we've got a couple of observations under our belt people can observe each other
15. Interviewer	Nice
16. Geoff	Do some of that and just start to look at and they can you know not friendly critique um what other people are doing because I can see that um um some people use humour if different ways than I do and that while I'm not going to be happy doing that I can see what they're doing and there are somethings I can either pick up or they can pick up as well
17. Interviewer	Yeah
18. Geoff	I've got no idea how people assimilate the stuff do they osmose it or
19. Interviewer	Laughs exactly
20. Geoff	Do they? what happens
21. Interviewer	No no that's a fair point and also timing in terms of the training yeah?
22. Geoff	Timing's good no the timing's been fine
23. Interviewer	Um now have you had we're talking about de-escalating conflict

24. Geoff	Mmm
25. Interviewer	Um have you had an opportunity to use humour to stop some conflict in the room
26. Geoff	Well I try to do that all the time I try not to have too much conflict there are times where you do have to hammer kids just there'll be something that comes up and I try not to and everytime I do that I'll walk away afterwards and think ooh am I really
27. interviewer	Mmmm
28. Geoff	Happy with what happened there – you're never really happy with it but it's like the sometime you've got to reboot the machine
29. Interviewer	Laughs
30. Geoff	And humour's not going to re-boot it for you because it's going to keep going down the line I look at Sam – our friend Sam -
31. Interviewer	Yep
32. Geoff	Year 7 I've use it like he was getting hot the other day and there were a coupla things there where um you use that sort of taking things to their just extreme so he says something or other and you go "oh saaaam that's the wooorst thing in the woorld" you know that sort of stuff and then he goes "yeah you idiot" he doesn't say that but you can see that what you're doing is
33. Interviewer	Yeah
34. Geoff	And I'm I tend to try and diffuse things mainly with various techniques
35. Interviewer	Mmn
36. Geoff	Various things that we use
37. Interviewer	Laughs um have you had any negative effects from using classroom humour
38. Geoff	Yep I've been thinking some of the negatives if there are negatives the thing that I can see can happen and does happen sometime is the kids they get into a zone sometimes where- especially with me anyway – where it's fun and kids love fun and so what they'll do is they'll keep trying to draw the fun part out and I'm trying to draw them back over to some sort of you know part of the lesson um for example the other day we were talking with that my with that year 8 group that I've got and lovely kids the ones who were doing the filming for you. One of the girls said "can you eat snot?" and I said well "it's a mucy-poly-sacharite – it's got all these things blah blah blah so

	anyway then (laughs) we start talking about snot and it was way off what we were actually talking about but they're a good group you can extend them in lots of ways and I'm sure they take away lots more about that than they do about sexual a sexual reproduction which is sort of the dryer part of the topic but I can see sometimes with myself I tend to get a little bit drawn
39. Interviewer	Mm
40. Geoff	Because when you use humour its that thing its interaction between you and the other and they can feel that and they're happy they don't often get well they don't always get that
41. Interviewer	Mm
42. Geoff	And when they do they feel a bit empowered and they go "oh well what about this what about this what about this " and that's when you've got to draw back a bit and say "oohho – this is still school"
43. interviewer	That's nice that's nice
44. Geoff	There are still things that go on it's a nice interplay between you and the other
45. interviewer	It's a bit like what we were talking about with reciprocity
46. Geoff	Yeah
47. Interviewer	Yeah
48. Geoff	It's a big thing
49. Interviewer	Um now have any of your students commented there on any changes or things pretty much as they've always been
50. Geoff	It's pretty much the way I've always I haven't tried to introduce too much of the other stuff yet but that's in my next sequence ..
51. Interviewer	Mm mm
52. Geoff	.. Of events I suppose when we're we're gonna start producing lessons on the computer where the kids are gonna do their work on computer so there'll be some things like like cartoons and such that I can introduce in there as well and little video clips and things um but there more the humour to get you interested they're the ones that go bang gee wiz that's not the sort of way I would have thought that was, the way I'm using humour with kids again is that interaction humour is that " oh right so you really think ..you try always to draw a little bit more out of them and that's what they I think that's what they get out of my class anyway they'd say "Mr Lee well, you can talk to him, you know he's the sort of guy who's

	approachable
53. Interviewer	Great
54. Geoff	And that's what I'm after I think
55. Interviewer	Yeah yeah
56. Geoff	If that's all it does then that's ok
57. Interviewer	Um so again with this brings us to the next point of the change in the level of student engagement during the lessons where you include humour has there been much of a ..
58. Geoff	I think I find where you've got a test coming up and you've got that you've got a real there's a deadline when when I've got lessons like that you can get through it but you certainly don't get the level of engagement that you would because that's it's the standard sort of thing where kids are going to switch off for whatever reason you've got some kids who are going to listen they're always gonna listen but the kids who are on the border who are on the very edge of listening they're not gonna listen
59. Interviewer	Mm mm
60. Geoff	They're just gonna go off they're just gonna and I look at that and I think well I've delivered the content but who's actually grabbed the content
61. Interviewer	Mm
62. Geoff	Some of them will always a lot of them haven't so how do I try and hoodwink those kids into grabbing the content as well and I think that the humour stuff is always it's my default mode of trying to engage with the content
63. Interviewer	Yes
64. Geoff	Works like I'm happy with it by and large but there are still times when you just you're in a school its an industrial situation where we're churning out kids we're all that sort of stuff
65. Interviewer	Yep and lastly do you feel better able more recently to communicate with your students
66. Geoff	I don't think I'm better I've always done that that's the way that I've done it and I've been like you do in teaching you work on things and and after you've been doing it for a while you think like I'm a very different teacher than I was – day one, ok
67. Interviewer	Mm

68. Geoff	Similarly the the the general gist is there but the more I look into it now the more I see that if you don't get 'em onside somehow if you don't form some sort of relationship with them you're sorta lost everything is gone and even with young Sam I mean he did pretty well in this last test which I was surprised because I thought he'd do absolutely abysmally but he's OK intellectually he's not too bad but as we've said before he's got the little baby syndrome
69. Interviewer	Mm mm
70. Geoff	The whole lot of frustration he's got testosterone rushing round in him with him he's interested in girls and he's not and he's interested in football and he's not and he's you know he's interested in food and he's not all that sort of stuff you know
71. Interviewer	Laughs
72. Geoff	He wants to do a whole lot of stuff but if you approach it in the standard you know operational procedure you're going to alienate that kid and you're gunna alienate him every time if you can use something a bit different you can bring him onboard then you've got somewhere to go with him
73. Interviewer	Yep
74. Geoff	And with poor old Sam – he's a nice kid but where are you gunna go – if he's agin ya he's agin ya
75. Interviewer	Yep yep beautiful
76. Geoff	Mm
77. Interviewer	That's a wrap thank you so much

Interview Julie

1. Interviewer	How have you included humour in the classroom?
2. Julie	Oh one off remarks, jokes saying back what they say, keeping things light keeping them.. so ah fairly ongoing repertoire with the kids um that's about it
3. Interviewer	What about that hilarious thing you told me about sitting down in the seat
4. Julie	Oh seat my bfs "my Best friends forever"
5. Interviewer	laughs
6. Julie	And then they'd move and I'd move and I'd say "you're my best friend can I sit next to you, yeah"
7. Interviewer	laughs
8. Julie	And yeah (laughs) they like that
9. Interviewer	Now has the training been useful at all?
10. Julie	Oh I think from an awareness raising point of view, yeah, I like that and I like the um concentration on facial features and the significance that it may play in your classroom
11. Interviewer	Mm mm and what else, where else do you think we could go with the training
12. Julie	I think probably in handling adults as well as students as a head teacher I think that if you use that a useful tool um along the way
13. Interviewer	Yeah cool and um have you had any opportunity to use humour to de-escalate conflict?
14. Julie	Oh lots of time probably 10/ 8 more than anything um
15. Interviewer	Yeah? Just think of any incident in particular
16. Julie	Ahm. Pause oh pause oh with maybe Winston and um just do a little bit, come on it's not hard that type of thing
17. Interviewer	yeah
18. Julie	That type of thing
19. Interviewer	yep
20. Julie	Joseph ...smith when he was here he was a boy that my 'best friend for ever'

21. Interviewer	laughs
22. Julie	He was um quite a difficult boy with a big record Juvie (juvenile) justice kid
23. Interviewer	Yeah
24. Julie	He'd been to Mt Penang (correctional facility) he's just oh just relating to him in a way he would talk about his nieces and his nephews that type of thing
25. Interviewer	Yep Building the relationship with him that type of thing
26. Julie	I think so yes
27. interviewer	Have you had any negative effects at all with humour use
28. Julie	Some students maybe um probably Aspergers kids don't take it as well
29. Interviewer	ah hmm
30. Julie	I teach Duncan and Duncan probably just doesn't get it
31. Interviewer	Mmm
32. Julie	Doesn't get it um and so you use different tactics with him
33. Interviewer	Because he takes it literally um ok
34. Julie	Yes
35. Interviewer	Have any students made any comments have they noticed anything different -
36. Julie	(interrupts) 'Ah you're happy today Miss'
37. Interviewer	Laughs
38. Julie	Laughs –no not really!
39. Interviewer	Laughs – oh that's gorgeous
40. Julie	You're in a good mood – no I'm really in a bad mood but don't worry about it
41. Interviewer	Laughs Have you noticed any change in the level of student engagement-
42. Julie	(interrupts) I think yes a lot
43. interviewer	During .
44. Julie	...of other factors are coming

45. interviewer	Mm , definitely
46. Julie	I think um Particularly for my students those classes) they tend to like variety, they tend to like a lot of change, they like patterns they like organisation so I find humour is only one aspect
47. Interviewer	Urhmm mmm
48. Julie	And I think you've got to have that sort of moving lots of change lots of organisation um can't sort of be unorganised
49. Interviewer	Um.. yes I've noticed that in your room you've got it all ...pretty tight ship
50. Julie	And you've got to know and you've got to have that change smooth change right we've finished that we're going onto this is what you need to do now
51. Interviewer	Yeah
52. Julie	And you have to go and get this equipment out now and then sit down and write up at home the same thing again, you've got changes and movement
53. Interviewer	Yeah
54. Julie	And I think movement helps those bottom levels
55. Interviewer	And did you pick anything up from the video footage about that particular aspect of it
56. Julie	Um, how horrible my voice is (laughs)
57. Interviewer	Ooooh
58. Julie	(laughs) um probably yes,the change probably some of the changes I didn't I probably didn't yes..oh
59. Interviewer	Ok
60. Julie	just
61. Interviewer	What about communication do you think there's any improvement or do you think it's pretty much
62. Julie	Probably a greater awareness of that you need to have that lighter side greater awareness that you need to make that facial contact yes probably the raising awareness was most of all stuff (unsure)
63. Interviewer	Ok Fantastic thank you so much any other any other thoughts
64. Julie	Oh it was enjoyable, having a look at it .. and I think the theory behind it is interesting and I think as you've discussed there's far broader
65. Interviewer	Yep
66. Julie	Implications – it's one

67. Interviewer	Yeah one tool
68. Julie	And with today with these students you needs lots of tools
69. Interviewer	Absolutely – thank you so much

Kati's Interview:

1. Interviewer	In what ways have you included humour in your classroom
2. Kati	Um pause long I had it all written down just making little jokes , telling little stories about what happens in your day someone else tell little stories stupid little things where someone is stupid for example a boy that's (pause) he managed to hijack half a class he had his shirt all up at the beginning of the class and I said "Oh are you going to do a strip tease for us today" and everybody laughs and that's the end of that one so..just little things
3. Interviewer	Yep has the training been useful in any way?
4. Kati	Um I didn't know well I did know but I didn't I've been using that little thing on your eyes that's really good because that's like um because you can use it for teachers and students alike
5. Interviewer	Absolutely
6. Kati	Which is helpful
7. Interviewer	yes
8. Kati	And um and it's just because teaching is such an isolated job it's good to talk to someone else about what you're doing and how you're doing it and that's been good
9. Interviewer	What else do you think we could do in the training?
10. Kati	Well we could do actually um well if you continue on what I just said it would be good to see other teachers doing it
11. Interviewer	Exactly
12. Kati	And just look at each other and just say do this and it's good to get feedback I think
13. Interviewer	Yeah so the videoing – was that?
14. Kati	Yes except I didn't really look at the videos very much the first few they were ok and there was one that I didn't want to look at it because I thought about it and talked about that one and I didn't need to see that anymore but I'd like to see the last one because I think that was really nice
15. Interviewer	Yeah absolutely -
16. Kati	So
17. interviewer	Ok in terms of de-escalating conflict have you had any opportunity to use humour to you know stop any conflict

18. Kati	It works well it works very well with
19. Interviewer	Yeah? Yeah ?
20. Kati	The kind of
21. Interviewer	You're right yeah (in response to interruption in recording room) sorry
22. Kati	It works very well with native speakers but not always so well as in the humour thing with ESL students and with there I use oh another thing I would do is like sort of um yell at them in Dutch sort of for fun or start singing at them like if you don't stop I'll start singing it works best with humour as such in terms of little things works best with native speakers but with no English speakers its more body language and you might pat them on the back or something or it's different kettle of fish I reckon
23. Interviewer	It is because you've got refugees and you know
24. Kati	Yes, I've noticed that in my ESL class it's very different – depending on what level of speaking they are
25. Interviewer	Absolutely
26. Kati	Coughs
27. Interviewer	Have you experienced any negative effects with using humour in the classroom?
28. Kati	You have to be careful you have to be careful I don't think I've done it but even when I said to the boy using an example doing that striptease you've got to be very careful, I don't like sarcasm personally um you've got to make sure you don't make jokes at the expense of the students but sometimes you do it to make them realise what they're actually doing then it's ok but you've got to be careful um they're only children and you've got to be careful what sort of jokes you use with them
29. interviewer	Yes absolutely um ok now um (pause) have any of your students commented on any changes have they noticed anything different about your classroom and your teaching?
30. Kati	Not really I don't think not so much in humour because I think that hasn't changed I've always done these things but what has changed for me is when I'm really tense I sometimes carry that to the classroom and if you're aware of that and don't do that it makes it easier for me and easier for the students
31. interviewer	Hmmm oh yeah
32. Kati	That's the biggest difference I've noticed
33. Interviewer	Totally – stress release

34. Kati	Yeah
35. Interviewer	Um and what about student engagement have you noticed anything different in the level of engagement in your classes
36. Kati	(Pause long) no English speaking classes I've always had them working when I want them to I walk around and make sure they do their work or do different sort of things like pair work or group work esl kids tend to be pretty much engaged – depending on how you motivate them or what the motivation is for that activity they're doing
37. Interviewer	Yep
38. Kati	Um and I had one problem boy – remember that one problem boy he's still a work in progress and he just yeah no not really I can't say
39. Interviewer	Yeah
40. Kati	Yes when I get tensed and stressed up with them that makes it harder but normally when you just relax and use your humour with them that's a useful tool but also to de stress yourself that's the main thing for me
41. interviewer	Yeah and I think it leads into the next question which is really do you feel that you are better able communicate with any of your students through using humour?
42. Kati	Pause mmmm pause what am I gonna say because it's your masters thesis
43. Interviewer	You say what's true for you
44. Kati	Um I think the use of humour is very powerful in the classroom
45. Interviewer	But for you personally is there any do you feel any better able to communicate with your students in that class that we've been looking at
46. Kati	Maybe not so much one on one but more to diffuse things in the classroom like some kids in the classroom there are different techniques but it's one technique that you use to help you know calm everyone or to just relax everyone and yes it's useful that way
47. Interviewer	Thankyou
48. Kati	Is that it
49. Interviewer	Your'e a darling
50. Kati	Hope that's alright
51. Interviewer	Yeah it's perfect

Tania's interview

1. Interviewer	Talk a little bit about how you've included humour in your classroom
2. Tania	Um in terms of discipline, in terms of the way I greet the children, in terms of the way I talk to the boys when they come into the room
3. Interviewer	Give me some examples of some of those
4. Tania	Um asking them about their day but not in a really serious way or asking stupid questions that
5. Interviewer	Mm
6. Tania	completely throw them off in a way
7. Interviewer	Mm mm
8. Tania	And if they're being silly outside use something a bit sillier to tell stop like they're wrestling you can give each other a cuddle later and you know we don't like public displays of affection and all that sort of stuff
9. Interviewer	Laughs
10. Tania	Um and then I started on the back board I've got some comments and some cartoons and they were already sort of floating around but I fished them out again and put them on an unused whiteboard at the back
11. Interviewer	Mm mm
12. Tania	And that made a difference but I also started adding um a weekly joke so usually very bad puns leading to bad dad humour
13. Interviewer	Half - laugh
14. Tania	And the kids some other years not so much this year but other kids added their own and the boys could see it was student hand writing that added that um
15. Interviewer	So what do you mean "bad dad humour" what's that
16. Tania	Um it's an example would be when you drive past a cemetery and dad would say every body's dying to get in there it's that kind of -
17. Interviewer	Daggy jokes
18. Tania	Yeah daggy jokes yeah I call it dad humour but um also plays on words and things like that so there's a bit of learning involved in that
19. Interviewer	Yeah

20. Tania	As well um bit of literacy stuff as well I guess that would be the main tool
21. Interviewer	Yeah
22. Tania	I guess in trying to just engage them so they come in in a little bit more positive frame of mind than they normally necessarily do
23. Interviewer	Yeah
24. Tania	Yep
25. Interviewer	Yep ok and then in terms of the facial expressions that are in the humour family
26. Tania	Like smiling at them
27. interviewer	Laughs
28. Tania	Sometimes you don't always want to because it's last period and you're wondering what they've got in store for you today but making sure that you're smiling at them and joking so trying to get them to do something but not using a really serious facial expression or like asking them to take their hat off because I want to see their beautiful hair and smiling at them
29. Interviewer	Yeah
30. Tania	At the same time and they roll their eyes and they take their hat off which is what you wanted in the first place laughs
31. Interviewer	I've noticed in some of the footage that you pull a face at them and one eyebrow goes up and you sort of (laughs)
32. Tania	(Laughs) the raising of the one eyebrow has become an ongoing joke they're very upset that they can't do it and they yell at me
33. Interviewer	Laughs
34. Tania	Don't do that we can't do it..
35. Interviewer	And what? (unclear)
36. Tania	And I raise my eyebrow again – it works a treat
37. Interviewer	Laughs tell me about the training has it been useful at all
38. Tania	Yes because I've probably already used humour a lot dealing with kids but only in that one personality base way I guess and to consider other ways of including it and whether it's within content on the walls um the way I'm actually teaching to say something you know in a completely different way um so definitely expanding the ideas of where I can apply it in the classroom but also thinking more carefully about timing and because sarcasm is one of my favourite tools

39. Interviewer	Mm
40. Tania	Just being a little bit more careful about how I use sarcasm I guess
41. Interviewer	Yeah
42. Tania	Is something I definitely need to do probably that just expanding the way that I can use it in the classroom would be the best
43. interviewer	Yes and I think you were pretty interested in some of the research that came up as a result of the training some of that stuff
44. Tania	Mmm
45. interviewer	Mm you were interested in reading that
46. Tania	I always like reading stuff like that Its interesting what people are looking into and stuff that doesn't always necessarily come to the fore that's not the stuff we necessarily hear about like there isn't a training day that says using humour in the classroom where I can take it you know like
47. Interviewer	yep
48. Tania	You're going to and having said that Bill Rogers – going to a Bill Rogers session he certainly uses it in the way he presents
49. Interviewer	mmm
50. Tania	and in the way he applies some of his stuff Humour is definitely central to the way he operates
51. Interviewer	Yeah absolutely
52. Tania	It's not explicitly taught like he could deliver a day on it I think you know what I mean
53. Interviewer	Yeah
54. Tania	Because he's using , probably referring to similar research I think but it's not at the front
55. Interviewer	No it's not and what else could we do in terms of the training where could we take it from here do you think
56. Tania	I'm a massive sharer
57. Interviewer	Yep
58. Tania	A big I'm on twitter I'm on facebook and some of the teachers sharing on twitter is massive' it chat ', talking to a lot of maths teachers a lot of other teachers um and just the sharing of ideas and a similar idea could come up through those – well not necessarily through those but through any method email, but the ongoing sharing of a quick ..and the other advantage of twitter is that it's usually a short snippet so you've only got a 140 characters

59. Interview	Mm
60. Tania	And you read what they've written and you go that's interesting and click on the link or you don't
61. Interviewer	Ahhh so when you're busy you can
62. Tania	I just scan and go oh that looks cool and go to that or you know and it's um
63. Interviewer	excellent
64. Tania	It's very well Even though it's busy it's very well structured
65. Interviewer	That could be something to think about for future training now um de-escalating conflict have you had any opportunity there
66. Tania	Laughs you remember laughs you saw me
67. Interviewer	Laughs tell me about it
68. Tania	Laughs I don't think it was even really I don't think I used humour though it was just more the facial expression though and the chat
69. Interviewer	Well that's humour
70. Tania	I shouldn't probably have said because the boy slammed the desk because he's want to do it knocked over the computer monitor in the library – lucky the librarian wasn't in there which allowed me to pull a face at him and point to the table and he it didn't he was already clearly visibly upset by it the consequences he didn't expect to you know lower the monitor
71. Interviewer	Laughs
72. Tania	He just was being an idiot and move the desk the monitor was on the desk laughs
73. Interviewer	It was deftly done it was beautiful to watch
74. Tania	Laugh
75. Interviewer	So but with between students have you had any opportunity you say 'no cuddling' when they're fighting anything else with the.. because you've got some volatile kids in there
76. Tania	Yeah um it's hard to think of a specific example but if I think they're firing up with each other then I'll certainly try and say something
77. Interviewer	Mmm don't go there
78. Tania	Either random or yeah something like that to try and de-escalate they actually tend to well in my room I know they don't necessarily all day but mostly if found they tend to go to their own corner
79. Interviewer	Mmm

80. Tania	Yeah but getting them to chill sometimes yeah you need to you I know I've yelled at them on occasion and as I'm doing it I know I'm wasting my time and yeah
81. Interviewer	Exactly
82. Tania	You still do it and yeah it's more about me than them
83. Interviewer	Ah /laugh
84. Tania	Laugh
85. Interviewer	Negative effects of classroom humour have you experienced any negative effects
86. Tania	Um not as part of this years ago I did in my first year so I learnt the hard way there was a student who was very effeminate out at a rural school
87. Interviewer	Mmm
88. Tania	And um he was talking to me about something and I'll mimic kids all the time I mimic a kid all the time if they're whining I'll mimic back at them so they how ridiculous they sound but I mimicked this kid not occurring to me that for him – especially in a rural school that was a much bigger deal
89. Interviewer	Mmm
90. Tania	Mimic an effeminate child and he stormed off – no surprise there and I found him later in the day and apologised he nearly fell over that I apologised but I said to him I do that all the time and that I was sorry I didn't think about it
91. Interviewer	Yep
92. Tania	So that happened a long time ago and I've been a lot more conscious of doing something like that – the technique works in terms of whining and if they're whining just do it back at them
93. interviewer	Mirroring
94. Tania	Mirroring them yeah in but in terms of that but that was in my first year of teaching so that was 17 years ago but it's certainly something that stuck in my head for good reason
95. Interviewer	Mm ok
96. Tania	But otherwise no the only thing, no the only thing I was going to comment but doesn't really fit in that would be about that level of resilience
97. Interviewer	Yeah go on
98. Tania	If you don't have if you're not if I'm not personally feeling resilient or maybe I've already had a bad lesson and I do think there's only a certain level of tolerance that you carrying with you

		in a particular day
99. Interviewer		You can't smile
100. Tania		No and I think I think one of the things about using humour is that it does require both resilience and tolerance because you are tolerating a little bit more from them rather than a straight shut down because you are a straight shut down is saying nup you can't do that
101. Interviewer		Yep
102. Tania		Whereas approaching it with a bit more flexibility and humour um you're being that little bit more tolerant of them
103. Interviewer		Exactly
104. Tania		And certainly I don't have it with adults I use it all up on the kids
105. Interviewer		That's interesting
106. Tania		But I'm very less tolerant than
107. Interviewer		Yep
108. Tania		Adults doing similar behaviour 'cause I just go nup I'm done laughs
109. Interviewer		Laughs that makes sense um and have the kids commented at all on you know changes that they've noticed
110. Tania		Laughs I was thinking about this and there was an interesting conversation last week with them where they announced I was the only teacher that liked them
111. Interviewer		Oh my...
112. Tania		And I don't know whether they've interpreted (changes voice) "you're like the only one that likes us"
113. Interviewer		Yeah?
114. Tania		(continued child's voice) "you seem to come in here all the others yell at us you're like the only one who seems to like us" and I said well I have fun when I come in here (laughs) and so I don't know whether
115. Interviewer		That's great

wer		
116.	Tania	Whether that's it or yeah certainly it was a lovely comment to make
117.	Intervie wer	Especially with those tough
118.	Tania	I know I'm putting on
119.	Intervie wer	They are tough and tough
120.	Tania	They are and so to hear that was lovely
121.	Intervie wer	Yeah
122.	Tania	And they're certainly um calmer
123.	Intervie wer	Yeah
124.	Tania	I'm getting way more work out of them
125.	Intervie wer	You are they're engaged I've noticed
126.	Tania	Mm
127.	Intervie wer	When I'm observing them they're engaged
128.	Tania	That's good
129.	Intervie wer	It's great and that leads us into that
130.	Tania	Leads us into that yeah
131.	Intervie wer	Student engagement so you'd notice particularly those students we're looking at specifically they're mostly working the whole period for you
132.	Tania	Oh ish.. yeah
133.	Intervie wer	Mmmm
134.	Tania	Um.. I'm

135. wer	Intervie	You're negotiating with them?
136.	Tania	Yeah absolutely negotiate last 20 minutes 15 depending on the substantive I took them over to one of the smaller rooms when it was hot so they could have air conditioning and gave them the laptops and we had probably one of the most substantive maths discussions
137. wer	Intervie	Mmm
138.	Tania	I've had with any year 8 class it was stage 5 work but they were in 'geo-gabra' and I linked it into 'angry birds' you know 'geogabra' is a specific graphing package but they were looking at different things and we were talking about impacts on graphs the changes to the equation and they were incredibly engaged but because it was hard core I stopped it at half an hour and I hadn't offered up any reward
139. wer	Intervie	Mmmm
140.	Tania	But at half past I went 'you guys have been unbelievable this has been year 9 work I reckon your brains must be tired off you go' and they'd go to core maths games for the last half an hour
141. wer	Intervie	Fantastic
142.	Tania	So its great
143. wer	Intervie	So it sounds like you're communicating
144.	Tania	Yeah that's the primary function I use it for
145. wer	Intervie	So the increased communication with humour
146.	Tania	Massive and just being able to get their guard down a little bit and they get a little bit more of me it's not quite quid pro quo it's not quite the right term but I think that if you expect them to give a bit of themselves the minute you come across a little bit more
147. wer	Intervie	That's it reciprocity
148.	Tania	You absolutely – and as the boss says (alters voice) "relationships relationships relationships laughs
149. wer	Intervie	And you've certainly built those because you've managed to keep them in the room

150.	Tania	Mmm laughs
151.	interviewer	Seriously I think that's great anything else you can think of that's come up during the study the filming I know you weren't a fan of the filming
152.	Tania	Laughs oh you caught me in a bad that was a resilience thing again I still haven't listened to myself teaching I haven't watched the films yeti watched the first one it was very confronting my husband goes (alters voice) "oh you're pretty funny" I'm the funny one around here
153.	Interviewer	You should watch the one with the monitor crashing down that was gold
154.	Tania	Yeah
155.	Interviewer	Well that was great thank you so much Tania that was fantastic
156.	Tania	That's alright
157.	Interviewer	

Interview Maureen

1. Interviewer	In what ways have you included humour in the classroom
2. Maureen	Well, I've used humour a lot to diffuse tension that happens as I seem to have the class with all the kids who love each other and hate each other at the same time, so yeah you have to laugh at them a bit yep
3. Interviewer	Yep
4. Maureen	To try and make them laugh at each other so yeah that's worked that's worked quite well
5. Interviewer	Yeah ok cool anything else about well we'll talk about the training has it been useful in any way ?
6. Maureen	Yep the training has been useful I'm kind of a bit more aware of trying to incorporate it
7. Interviewer	Yep
8. Maureen	As well in my classroom which has been really good for me and the kids as well and it's been so different instead of being I think when you're agro all the time they expect you to be so you go to ground in this dance in this little circle the same thing and then you do something that they don't expect like smile a lot more and laugh they can't help but do the same thing
9. Interviewer	Mmmm
10. Maureen	As well
11. Interviewer	Yeah yeah yeah
12. Maureen	So I think it finally works to get them around
13. Interviewer	Beautiful and what about the stuff I remember one of the training sessions I remember you spoke about "I'm a drama teacher and I'm rubbish at this facial expression" (laughs)
14. Maureen	Laugh
15. Interviewer	Laugh – talk about that – that was funny
16. Maureen	What when I was?
17. Interviewer	You know, your awareness of the facial expressions
18. Maureen	Oh of being not aware of my own

19. Interviewer	Reading it you know being aware of your own
20. Maureen	Well yeah I'm usually I'm not very aware of a lot of what I do in the classroom (laugh) so watching it on that video was really really interesting because you just go "oh! Is that how I look to them as... because I have one idea of what my face looks like but it's totally read I think a different way (laugh)
21. Interviewer	Laugh
22. Maureen	And that can I think can't help that I think because of a generation gap as well but (laughs)but um
23. Interviewer	Laughs
24. Maureen	Yeah But facially they look at you and they'll mimic what you're doing like this
25. Interviewer	I think that's very true
26. Maureen	Yeah
27. interviewer	I think that's absolutely true so that's good because you actually did get something out of the video footage which is part of the training that's great
28. Maureen	Oh yeah
29. Interviewer	Now you spoke before about de-escalating conflict tell me a bit more about that what happened – the incident you know
30. Maureen	Alright yes I was about to have a fight and that was chenell and jasmine , I'm not supposed to mention their names Student A and student b and of course now they're best friends but at the time there was this going
31. Interviewer	Laughs
32. Maureen	And they were about to punch each other out and I proceeded then to tell them the story that I had where I had actually tried to punch out one of my friends I had at school and it ended up with bags in trees and you know
33. Interviewer	Laughs
34. Maureen	Laughs running away from security guards in a shopping centre you know so you know it was quite humorous for them and because they stopped what they were doing and they were listening to this story 'cause I have to tell them lots of stuff and half the time I tell them crap (LAUGHS)
35. Interviewer	Laughs
36. Maureen	But it sounds good because I love embellishing the story for
37. Interviewer	Laughs

38. Maureen	That purpose of humour
39. Interviewer	Exactly
40. Maureen	Because if you can get them to laugh because when they are that stressed out and they've seen me really really stressed out and when I'm telling them these great stories and they're just listening I think I must perform them as well and use a few facial expressions
41. Interviewer	Laughs
42. Maureen	They stop for a moment and think about what the two of them are fighting about
43. interviewer	Hmmmm
44. Maureen	Which gives them time that cool down time
45. interviewer	Yeah
46. Maureen	Where you can start to think rationally again because when you get to that level
47. Interviewer	You can't think straight
48. Maureen	No they can't think straight and by then you've distracted them long enough so then you can use that and then what I usually do I use that as a class scenario for them to do oh I don't know some piece of drama
49. Interviewer	Oh nice play it forward
50. Maureen	Or something well yeah – but that's only because I have no real lesson plan in my head
51. Interviewer	Laughs
52. Maureen	Laughs don't make up
53. Interviewer	I love it – have you had any negative experiences through using humour
54. Maureen	Yeah – you've got to pick your moment like I tend to use it in sarcasm but I think you've got to pick the right times for sarcasm and unfortunately the kids riled me up I've used sarcasm and you know pissed off and he's riled me up and I've used sarcastic humour and he's then become really offended by and you just go
55. Interviewer	Laughs
56. Maureen	Ah yea you know no worries and they end up outside –like - cause I'd like to go outside
57. Interviewer	Laughs

58. Maureen	Maybe I should put them in front of the class here's something interesting that I thought I might do with this 9.7 class that's got Jess and some of those low ability Roberts is that his name ?
59. Interview	Mm mmm
60. Maureen	So I'm making them do a teach the teacher
61. Interviewer	Oohh
62. Maureen	They're all going to sit on the stage and I'm going to sit at a desk and I tell them they have to teach me how to open a facebook account you know or
63. Interviewer	Mmm
64. Maureen	Use some piece of technology but Daniel Roberts doesn't have technology so
65. Interviewer	No but he'd be able to teach you something
66. Maureen	He'd be able to teach me something I'm sure
67. Interviewer	Have any of the students commented on any changes they notice anything different about you?
68. Maureen	They think I'm a bit nicer and I think well I think last night – this whole performance night was sort of summed it all up
69. Interviewer	Mmmm
70. Maureen	Because of all this hard work that they'd done and me starting to inject some of that humour into that process that
71. Interviewer	Mmmm
72. Maureen	That into those you know last couple of months there it has made.. I said to them yesterday this has actually been one of those besides the fact that no other colleague would help do and you understand what it takes to put on a bloody show
73. Interviewer	I do I do
74. Maureen	Then um you know it was actually reasonably stress free the kids were the easy part to work with and I said to them you know it was actually this was I had so much fun doing it and I think laughing along with them played a huge role in that
75. Interviewer	Yeah
76. Maureen	So they said you don't seem as stressed out which is really nice and we really like hearing your laugh
77. Interviewer	Oh how gorgeous

78. Maureen	And yeah the fact is you should have seen them – they all got up and you know probably half of them hugged me you know there was probably 40 kids that gave me a hug last night
79. Interviewer	Sweet beautiful
80. Maureen	And they gave me a card and there were like 26 love hearts on it and you know that's the stuff where you just go you know I've and I have been so much more aware
81. interviewer	Mmm
82. Maureen	And it's also since doing a lot of stuff with um teaching comedy and stuff you do clowning and that's where I really got
83. Interviewer	Yeah
84. Maureen	Sean in with that and he you know to see him actually
85. interviewer	Flourish
86. Maureen	There's been a massive change in him
87. Interviewer	He was flourishing
88. Maureen	and that's got a lot to do with this (humour project)
89. interviewer	Exactly and that you've really answered the next question because you've got a high level of engagement – the fact that they would come
90. Maureen	Well they came
91. Interviewer	To something like that after school
92. Maureen	Yeah – out of their own time
93. interviewer	Yeah
94. Maureen	and particularly like that –jess doesn't actually live at home doesn't have anything at home she's god knows in her own world she – there were 11 performances last night
95. Interviewer	Mmm poor little thing
96. Maureen	And she did 5 and one of them was one of the main roles
97. interviewer	Wow
98. Maureen	What was it Thursday night last night the show was but on Wednesday she got the role because another kid in year 9 decided he didn't want to be there and she said "I'll do it", and I said you've got to be a boy – she played a boy better than any

		of the other boys
99. Interviewer		How good is that
100. Maureen		Yeah
101. interviewer		That's sort of you're much better able – sounds like you're communicating better with your students
102. Maureen		Well you can and you know I I really sort of thought about this last night that drama is such a unique kind of subject because I think that whatever those kids are going through
103. Interviewer		Yep
104. Maureen		The experience that they had to have – the cohesion there's not a teacher backstage there were 2 kids in charge and a handful of helpers and they all had to go on and off and be in the right places and do all of that stuff
105. interviewer		Mmm
106. Maureen		As 70 kids about 60 kids there were
107. Interviewer		Mmm
108. Maureen		They had to get it together and
109. Interviewer		Wow
110. Maureen		You know And they did you know it was just so extraordinary watching them – even down to bailey when his clown face painted with this Spotlight clown costume
111. Interviewer		Oh how gorgeous
112. Maureen		You know that's what I mean all these fantastic moments where you have these kids who are otherwise disengaged and quite highly
113. Interviewer		Mmmm
114. Maureen		And even if one of them who's in the class ended up just coming for the performance as an audience member still shows a level of cohesiveness
115. Interviewer		Absolutely
116. Maureen		With this class group
117. Interviewer		Yeah yeah
118. Maureen		Which is fantastic

119.	Interviewer	And it could just be the saving grace for them
120.	Maureen	Yeah and I think and I look at them and I kind of think a couple more of those a couple of those kids like jess for all the crap that she's going through there's that one moment for an hour and half last night out of their life she didn't have to think about that – she was switched onto what she was doing and she absolutely shone because of it
121.	Interviewer	Oh
122.	Maureen	You know And another girl who wrote this poem because you know I'd given her an opportunity you know because while she's not a star she feels like one in her eyes you know and stuff she did with Jen (chaplain) you know and I just and those little things it's not the really amazing performers you know
123.	Interviewer	Mmm
124.	Maureen	They're great too you know but that
125.	Interviewer	Yeah
126.	Maureen	Its' those kids you know that are out there on the periphery
127.	Interviewer	And even doing backstage
128.	Maureen	Well yeah
129.	Interviewer	And that sort of stuff
130.	Maureen	And you can pull them in just even for a moment I mean all of that stuff in the process is all really a part of that but that for them they have it at that time that belief in themselves that what they do because they completely make themselves vulnerable
131.	Interviewer	Mmm
132.	Maureen	I saw those high risk kids showing that vulnerability out there and just having this taking this leap of faith –which for me
133.	Interviewer	Mmm
134.	Maureen	That's what this job is you know is totally all about
135.	Interviewer	What a ??
136.	Maureen	It was – it was quite transformative actually and I was thinking because I knew we were going to be talking about this I was really thinking about this kind of stuff last night and really thinking

137.	Interviewer	Mm
138.	Maureen	Yeah how much has that affected the process and that's why I think this has been
139.	Interviewer	Mmm
140.	Maureen	A lot easier for me and so much more enjoyable yeah
141.	Interviewer	Thankyou