Student Engagement: Experiencing the Joy of Learning through, *Learning in Depth*

Research Study

Terri Zolob

Vancouver Island University

Master of Education in Educational Leadership

2014

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore through the lens of student engagement how engagement was experienced by students as they utilized the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) programme. More specifically, this study aimed to determine whether students experience joy in learning and if so, how do they experience it and when do they experience it? Two fundamental goals drove the collection of the data and subsequent data analysis. Those goals were: that participation in the *LiD* programme would increase student engagement, and further to that, that through increased engagement a sense of joy in learning would be experienced. The participants were from a convenience sample of 20 students in a kindergarten/ grade one class at an elementary school within school district 68. Of the 20 students fourteen were female and six were male, and all 20 consented to participating in this study. This qualitative descriptive, single case study design included the following instruments: student self-assessments/reflections, teacher observations/field notes, teacher check-ins, and a teacher interview. Verbal, physical and written/drawn data were coded for expressions of both positive and negative emotions.

The general conclusions drawn support this researcher's thesis question and hypothesis; that participation in the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) programme does support increased student engagement. In addition, there was also promising data to suggest that students also experience high levels of joy in learning when participating in the *LiD* programme. Furthermore, this data also put forward two additional outcomes that came about because of the *LiD* programme – a strong sense of classroom community and connectedness, as well as student pride, ownership and expertise.

Acknowledgements

I had no idea at the onset of this amazing journey how much personal learning and growth would take place. For each and every one of my cohort 5 friends and colleagues I am forever grateful for your stories, your experiences, your support and your friendship. You truly made this experience an unforgettable one. Additionally I would like to thank Rachel Moll for her grit, her focus, her wisdom, for the unending hours of editing and proofing, and her guidance throughout the ethics and thesis writing experience – you are amazing Rachel, and I am thankful for all you do!

I am also eternally grateful for Katherine Pepper and her unforgettable class. It was a class that challenged my thinking, and forced me to look deeply inside myself to explore areas that had long been sealed. It was through her class that the true beauty and meaning of Hummingbirds came to light for me and the impact they have and continue to have in my life. Thank you Katherine, may hummingbirds continue to grace your life as they have mine.

Finally, but more importantly, I realize that none of this journey would have happened if it had not been for my amazing, supportive, and loving husband and son. You both were always there for me when I needed a shoulder to cry on, eyes to proof and edit, technical support, and an unending cheering section. Your faith and support in me have upheld me through some of the most tumultuous times in this journey. If I have not expressed it enough, then I am truly sorry, please know that this work would never have happened if it were not for the two of you, and all you willingly gave and had to give up. My heart is full of unending love, gratitude, and thankfulness for the both of you. I love you both and thank you from the bottom of my grateful heart.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter One: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study

Through the lens of student engagement, the purpose of this study was to determine how engagement was experienced by students as they utilized the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) programme; more specifically, did students experience joy in learning and if so, how did they experience it and when did they experience it?

As a teacher, student, and researcher there are many values and theories that continue to guide and direct my practice. In the field of student engagement, Howard Gardner's ideas on multiple intelligences are important to bear in mind when working with all types of children but especially the idea he put forth was that education should be guided by three principals: truth, beauty, and goodness (Gardner, 1999). In other words it is about finding joy in what we do. Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's *Finding Flow: The Psychology Of Engagement With Everyday Life* (1997) completely redefined my understanding of 'happiness' and 'joy' and gave me a paradigm to work within. Finally, several of Kieran Egan's (2002, 2005, 2008, 2011) books, particularly his *Learning in Depth (LiD)* programme, fascinated me, intrigued me, and had me questioning what I did as a teacher. As well he had me rethinking how I could improve my own teaching to allow my students their independence, while at the same time stimulating their imagination and enjoying the pleasures of learning.

After reflecting on who and what I am as a teacher, student, and researcher it became even more important for me to begin to understand why so many of our students were not fully engaged in school. Why is it that the institution that we call school has hardly changed at all in more than 100 years? It leaves one wondering how these archaic structures and systems can possibly be exciting and engaging to 21st century students. They cannot! Today's schools are

destroying a student's spirit to learn, their sense of wonder, and their curiosity about the world (Robinson, 2012).

Dunning's (2008) haunting words confirmed this when she stated that students unfortunately "withdraw from the learning process, in body or in spirit, before they have achieved the level of knowledge and understanding needed to succeed as adults in today's world" (p. 3). Learning should be fun, exciting and intriguing. Students should want to learn for the sheer joy of learning. Children and young adults alike are fascinated and open to the wonders and complexities of life. School should be an extension of these experiences. Attempting to find happiness or joy is not a new thing; even Aristotle believed "that everything we do is ultimately aimed at experiencing happiness" (Csíkszentmihályi, 1997, p.18). Therefore, it was my belief that joy could and should play a role in keeping students engaged.

As a teacher I can say with absolute certainty that there are few things that equal the joy one sees when a student's face lights up with excitement and understanding, exhibiting that they have finally made the connections or discovery that allows all the pieces to come together for greater understanding. It is usually this greater understanding which further ignites their interest and thirst for more knowledge. As educators we have the responsibility not only to educate but to inspire the whole (mind, body, and soul) of a child to allow them to experience more joy in learning and being at school. With that in mind, it was my belief that Egan's *LiD* programme (2011) could facilitate and possibly fulfill some of my objectives, thus the purpose of this study was to explore students' engagement and their joy in learning as they participate in the *LiD* programme.

Justification of the Study

Alexander Pope stated nearly two hundred years ago that, "a little learning is a dangerous thing" (2010, p. 18). Pope's words still ring true today as much, if not more so, than when he

originally wrote them. Currently many of our students are leaving schools without the skill sets they need to be independent thinkers (Egan, 2011). Rather, we have a system where students are not engaged and do not need to think for themselves. As one academic student succinctly put it, "I didn't think a thought in the whole of school…I just regurgitated" (Barman, Sutherland, & Wilson, 1995, p. 119). Gardner (1999) would agree with this student, as he claims that "an individual with a keen memory might well understand a topic; however, it is also plausible that he or she merely remembers the information and has not a clue about how to use it appropriately"(p. 119). In most cases, students have "learned how to learn, but [have] never actually learned" (Egan, 2008, p. 111) anything significant or relevant.

It has long been recognized and argued that many of our students are not fully or actively engaged in the process of learning. Hence, they are leaving our school system ill-equipped and without the basic skill sets to understand any concept in great depth or even the knowledge and understanding to become lifelong learners (Gardner, 1999). In many of our current Canadian schools (and arguably worldwide) we are facing what appears to be an inescapable and dire situation with regard to student engagement (Hart, Stewart, & Jimerson, 2011; Zyngier, 2007, 2008). A poignant question that Sefcik (2012) asks is, "[a]re students just 'doing' school or are they engaged with their studies?" (p. 1).

Years of research has repeatedly shown that student engagement leads to academic success and contributes to the students' social development in all grade levels (Nese, 2006). According to Kidwell (2010), engagement does not only increase academic success, it is often "the missing link to providing a stimulating and challenging education" (p. 28). Countless studies have been conducted worldwide to determine students' success rates in school as well as their school completion rates. The research has discovered a definite correlation between student

success and student engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004; Parsons & Taylor, 2011; Vibert &

Shield, 2003).

Engagement is, in essence, "active learning" (Kidwell, 2010, p. 30) where students invest

effort that is directed toward learning, "understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or

crafts" (Vibert & Shields, 2003, p. 224) needed to succeed in a school environment. More

specifically, it is

> …the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes,
>
> have a sense of belonging at school, participate in academic and non-academic
>
> activities, strive to meet the formal requirements of schooling, and make a
>
> serious personal investment in learning (Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009).

To that extent Willms et al. (2009) have appropriately named these constructs "social

engagement", "academic engagement", and "intellectual engagement" (p. 7). As is apparent,

engagement does encompass many if not all aspects of a student's life.

Numerous research studies have shown how student engagement is linked to motivation

and creativity. Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, and Vincent (2003) along with Collins and Amabile

(1999) both suggest that creativity and motivation are "associated with high levels of interest,

enjoyment, and curiosity" (as cited in Beghetto, 2005, p. 258). For the purposes of this study

motivation and creativity were used as a partial working definition of joy. What was uniquely

interesting about many of the articles that discuss student engagement and its relation to and/or

with motivation or creativity (joy) is that these concepts are hard to define as they vary for each

student. However, authors do agree that it is about the students' perception of how they interpret

and understand the messages they receive (Beghetto, 2005; Dolezal et al., 2003; Klem &

Connell, 2004; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012) which determine whether they experience joy or not.

When looking locally at the *District Achievement Contract (2010-2011): Success for All* for School District 68 (School District 68, 2011a) it is disheartening to realize that there are very few instances where student engagement is mentioned unless referring to high risk or vulnerable students and then it is only in terms of "re-engaging" (p. 8) them back into the school system. The district does have goals to improve student achievement but there appears to be little, if any, recognition of the relationship between achievement and engagement, or for that matter, motivation with regards to the way student engagement was defined for this study. Delving further into the district's website reveals only a few places where student engagement is mentioned and appears to be a closer fit to the working definition used for this study; for example, a school trustee's campaigning information sheet stated that she wanted to ensure that programmes were maintained that promoted "creativity…learning capacity…and positive school memories" (November 2011b). In the district's Strategic Plan (School District 68, 2012) there is positive mention of student engagement in their mission statement and again in the values that they hold for the district. However, it is apparent that there is very little local information on student engagement in terms of how students experience joy in learning. Therefore, it is important to try and bring some data to our district on student engagement which may reflect students' personal experiences through the joy of learning.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Given that student engagement is an issue that is affecting both students and schools worldwide, and that it was very difficult to find anything that refers to it locally, this study set out to explore how engagement was experienced by students as they utilized the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) programme, and more specifically, did students experience joy in learning and if so, how did they experience it and when did they experience it? It was hypothesised that the *LiD*

programme would promote students' engagement in learning. Furthermore, it was also believed

that as students became engaged in their learning that they would also experience joy in learning.

Definition of Terms

I came to this study with a bias that in general, most of the learning that takes place in

schools lacks true joy. This bias was further substantiated in much of the literature that was

surveyed for this study (Gardner, 1999; Egan, 2011; Rantala & Maatta, 2012; Saeed & Zyngier,

2012; Wolk, 2008). I did believe however, that students can and do experience joy in learning at

school and that joy and learning are not mutually exclusive of each other. Given the right

situations I believed that students could and would experience joy in learning. Much of the

research that was gathered for this study was done under my interpretation of Mihály

Csíkszentmihályi's theory of flow and is therefore, skewed to that context. In addition, Kieran

Egan's theories and ideas also played an important part in formulating my understanding

regarding how students think and learn. For example, the *Learning In Depth* (*LiD* pronounced

like the noun 'lid') programme created by Egan and his Imaginative Education Research Group

proposes "that this process of learning in depth has the potential to transform the schooling

experience of nearly all children by transforming their relationship to, and understanding of the

nature of knowledge" (Egan, 2011, p. 215-216). Egan (2011) further clarifies the term *Learning*

in Depth to mean "knowing something in depth is like knowing it from the inside, where the

student gains expertise, and comes to recognize from one area studied in depth something about

how knowledge works in all areas" (p. 8).

There are many definitions and aspects of the term student engagement but for the

purposes of this research study only two aspects were used-- social and intellectual. The social

aspect of student engagement refers to the relationships that the students have and experience on

a daily basis that can influence their involvement in and/or with school. These relationships

could have come from a variety of sources such as: other students, their friends, their teacher(s), or their family members. Intellectual engagement refers to the degree of on task behaviour that was academically meaningful and worthwhile to the student. The operational definition of joy used in this research study refers to any positively expressed emotions as they referred to the students' learning these could be expressed either verbally, physically, written, or drawn. In addition to these working definitions it was also this researcher's intention to determine if joy played any role in the students' social or intellectual engagement as defined above.

For the context of this study the term experiences refers to the accumulation of knowledge and/or skill(s) gained through personal participation or observation as well as an emotional feeling about a particular event. Closely aligned with experiences is the word perception, which was understood to be the way in which one develops meaning from their own experiences and how they report out those meanings. Csíkszentmihályi (1997) has been widely used and cited for his studies, and he defined *flow* as a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at even great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it (p. 28-34). Almost synonymous with Csíkszentmihályi's term of *flow* is the word joy, which was used in this study to refer to the idea of being intrinsically motivated to experience emotion(s) of great delight or happiness caused by something good, creative, or satisfying and like *flow,* "results from the long-lasting and learner's own active functioning"(Rantala & Maatta, 2012, p. 89). Both flow and joy are further intertwined through one's perception; furthermore, within the confines of this research study the researcher would be looking for *flow* as evidence that the students were engaged, motivated and ultimately experiencing joy.

Brief Overview of Study

This qualitative study was conducted mainly in my own primary classroom in School District 68. The data obtained from this study consisted of observations and detailed notes containing: date, time, who took part in the interaction, what was said by the student(s), and how long each interaction was. In addition, student drawn pictures were utilized to glean a richer representation of the students' experiences. Other valuable data was obtained through the students' own voices as they personally reflected on their own learning and experiences by completing a student self-assessment/reflections sheet after each *LiD* session.

Teacher conducted student 'check-ins' were also utilized as a check-in to help determine where the student currently was in their learning journey. For example, the check-ins further clarified how students felt while doing *LiD*, what interesting facts or information the student had discovered, created, or gathered about their topic. In addition, the student also shared what further questions or areas they hoped to explore on their *LiD* topic before the next teacher check-in. Additionally data was also collected in the form of an interview with another teacher who teaching *LiD* to glean the teacher's experiences in teaching and utilizing the *LiD* programme.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review explores the three dominant themes of the research question: firstly, it begins with how the literature to date has and continues to define and redefine the term 'student engagement', and further to that, suggestions around how to re-engage students into the school environment. Next, this review looks at the theme of joy, and how it is related to motivation, and creativity. In addition, this review will justify joy's importance or significance in student engagement. Finally, this review will situate and support Kieran Egan's *Learning In Depth* programme within the literature.

As was introduced in Chapter One, many of our students are not fully or actively engaged in schools, or in the process of learning. For example, Dunning's (2008) unforgettable words stated that students "withdraw from the learning process, in body or in spirit, before they have achieved the level of knowledge and understanding needed to succeed as adults in today's world" (p. 3).   Also, as both Gardner (1999) and Egan (2008) stated, "…even the best students in our best schools do not understand very much of the curricular content…Despite years of schooling, the minds of these students remain fundamentally unschooled" (Gardner, 1999, p. 120). In most cases, students have "learned how to learn, but [have] never actually learned" (Egan, 2008, p. 111) anything significant or relevant. What Egan is suggesting is that students have developed ways to succeed within the confines of the current school structures such as routine assignments, homework, and assessments measures. Additionally Egan believes that due to the lack of engagement students are not developing the skill sets that are needed beyond the institution of school. Unfortunately, this means that our students are leaving our school system ill-equipped and without the basic skill sets to understand any concept in great depth. Sadder yet, many do not have the basic knowledge or understandings to enable them to become lifelong learners (Egan, 2010; Gardner, 1999). Our current Canadian school systems are doing today's

students a disservice, and if we cannot find some way to address and correct the errors of our ways then we will inevitably continue to face the inescapable and dire situation we are already facing with lack of student engagement (Hart, Stewart, & Jimerson, 2011; Zyngier, 2007, 2008).

In essence, it became even more important for this researcher to understand why so many of our students were not fully engaged in school. In a recent key study on student engagement by Willms and Friesen (2012) it was pointed out that student engagement has been an educational issue for several decades. Historically, student engagement has been predominantly about increasing academic achievement; although currently, it also involves increasing a student's sense of belonging within the school community, as well as, increasing their positive behaviours. (Hart, Stewart, & Jimerson, 2011; Parsons & Taylor, 2011; Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009). According to Parsons and Taylor (2011), the "shift in purpose, and …in definition" (p. 9) of student engagement started in the 1980's and has continued through to 2010 and arguably to current date [noting that their article was published in 2011]. Willms and Friesen (2012) also agree that specific focus toward student engagement started in the 1980's with phrases such as, "the Excellence Movement …[and]…the Restructuring Movement …" (p. 10).

Student engagement continues to be a complex issue that is affecting schools worldwide (Hart, Stewart, & Jimerson, 2011; Zyngier, 2007, 2008). At its core, engagement is in essence, "active learning" (Kidwell, 2010, p. 30) where students invest effort that is directed toward learning, "understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts" (Viebert & Shields, 2003, p. 224) needed to succeed in a school environment. More specifically, it is

> …the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes,
> have a sense of belonging at school, participate in academic and non-academic
> activities, strive to meet the formal requirements of schooling, and make a
> serious personal investment in learning" (Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009).

The majority of the literature written on student engagement speaks to more than one aspect of engagement and as suggested above, engagement can and does encompass all areas of a student's life making it even harder to characterize and study. For example, Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) note that engagement can be defined in three ways: behaviour, emotional, and cognitive (p.62). Agreeing with Fredricks et al. (2004) are Willms, Friesen, and Milton, (2009) however, they categorize these constructs into 'social engagement, academic engagement, and intellectual engagement' (p. 7). Willms et al. (2009) define *social engagement* as, "[a] sense of belonging and participation in school life"; they see *academic engagement* to be, "[p]articipation in the formal requirements of schooling", and *intellectual engagement* as "[a] serious emotional and cognitive investment in learning, using higher-order thinking skills (such as analysis and evaluation), to increase understanding, solve complex problems, or construct new knowledge" (p. 7). For the purposes of this research paper Willms et al.'s definitions set the ground work for the working definitions of these terms within the context of this research.

Therefore, as was stated earlier in chapter one, student engagement is an issue that is affecting our students locally and worldwide, it was this researcher's belief that the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) programme would promote student engagement in learning. Furthermore, it was also believed that as the students become engaged in their learning that through their engagement they would also experience high levels of joy in learning.

Disengaged Students

One of the key studies that influenced and supported this research study was done by Willms, Friesen, and Milton in 2009, and was the first national study of its kind on student engagement. Their study entitled "*What did you do in school today?: Transforming classrooms through social, academic and intellectual engagement*" encompassed data collected from 32,322 students in grades five through twelve in 93 schools from 10 different school districts across

Canada. Willms et al.'s (2009) study was interested in finding out from the students' perspective how involved the students were in three specific areas (social, academic, and intellectual) of their schooling life. Using surveys designed specifically for the students the information Willms et al. sought included: the students' sense of belonging to a particular school, their participation in both academic and non-academic activities, and finally, how invested the students were in making academic gains while in school. In addition, Willms et al. also hoped to further "understand how these processes of engagement occur, and whether all three forms of engagement… are the result of the same dynamics, make the same contributions to learning, and are equally important for all students" (p.6).

Their findings concluded that in order to maintain student engagement three aspects need to be addressed; the first of which is the importance of school policies, practices, and especially school climate for determining whether a student is likely to be engaged or not. Secondly, high student scores do not necessarily translate to high levels of social or academic engagement. Finally, they found that students need to feel that the work being given is sufficiently challenging while at the same time within the students' own abilities to complete the task. Their three findings have helped to establish and "confirm the value of exploring student engagement as a core idea for improving the quality of teaching" (Willms et al., 2009, p.41) and have helped guide this researcher's understanding of student engagement.

As Willms et al. (2009) succinctly state, "[t]he dimensions of engagement, whether considered alone or together, draw attention to the importance of students' experiences in school" (p. 39). Unfortunately, the reality for most students is that their experiences and their levels of engagement more appropriately reflect Dunning's (2008) haunting words mentioned earlier in this chapter. The disheartening commentary on today's schools reveals that many students are in fact disengaged. One of the most significant factors of student disengagement that

the majority of researchers agree on is that our school structures and systems are archaic. Our

school systems were originally built for an industrial model more than a century ago, and

unfortunately little has changed in the past 100 plus years (Gardner, 1999; Hunt, 2005; Parsons

& Taylor, 2011). Sir Ken Robinson (2010), states "that our current educational system was

designed, and conceived, and structured for a different age…it was conceived in the intellectual

culture of the enlightenment, and in the economic circumstances of the industrial revolution,

…and driven by an economic imperative of the time"(1:48 – 3:30).

In addition to our schools' system and structures being inadequate and antiquated

researchers also agree on the very real and challenging role that 'equality, or rather inequality'

plays in student disengagement. For example, students that are further disenfranchised often

come from poverty, have some form of a disability, or they come from an ethnic minority group

(Dunleavy & Milton, 2010; Parsons & Taylor, 2011; Willms et al., 2009) which usually puts

them at a higher risk for student disengagement even before they have a chance for some

measure of success. Zygnier (2007, 2008), Parsons and Taylor (2011), Dunleavy and Milton

(2009) along with Willms, Friesen, and Milton (2009) suggest that another reason why students

disengage themselves is because they are treated as a commodity and not seen as the young

adults, or the valuable and rich source of data that they are. Charles Leadbeater (2009) suggests

that we should engage our students in the conversations by asking them questions about their

educational needs. He further goes on to suggest that if we truly listen to our students and invite

them to share their own perspectives in addition to considering, honouring, valuing, and possibly

implementing some of their contributions, then they are more apt to stay engaged rather than the

alternative that we currently face today.

Offering a slightly different view of disengagement is Trout (1997). Although his article

speaks to mainly post-secondary education, what he puts forth and argues is a systemic problem

that he notes starts much earlier in students' educational journey. Trout (1997) argues several

possible reasons for students' lack of engagement including: entitlement, the "dumbing down"

(p. 48) of the curriculum, or what he more accurately refers to as the "strip-mining of the

academic landscape" (p. 49). In addition, he faults administrators and the whole system for

allowing schools standards to fall and be swept into what he calls the "consumer model" (p. 50).

In other words, Trout is arguing that education is being driven by the uninformed consumers –

students, their parents, and the general public, rather than the other way around. Trout further

argues that if education continues on this slippery slope that we have, in principle, done a

disservice to our young people. He states that;

> …we have failed to socialize many young people to understand and experience the
>
> personal and social benefits and pleasure of learning. We have not successfully
>
> conveyed to them that it is more fulfilling to be skilled than unskilled, to know than
>
> not to know, to inquire than to be self-satisfied, to strive than to be apathetic, to
>
> create than to be fallow. We have failed to socialize many of them into taking
>
> responsibility for their own intellectual development, or even to care about it. (p.
>
> 52).

Trout's strong and pointed words offer another lens through which to view dis-

engagement, and consider the possibility that our students are just reflecting what society

has provided them with.

It is more than time for educational systems to be restructured so that our students

want to become more engaged in learning and enjoy the benefits of becoming a lifelong

learner. If society continues to "process and produce students" (Gilbert, 2007, p.6) like

they have been doing for more than 100 years then inevitably students could be graduating

incapable of, or unprepared for the rigors and requirements of society. Additionally, these

negative consequences that stem from lack of engagement in learning could have lasting effects through generations to come. Parsons and Taylor (2011) sum it up succinctly when they say, "[i]f we fail to make changes to our pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment strategies, we fail our students and jeopardize our futures" (p. 4). This researcher did not want to '*fail her students or jeopardize their futures*' that is why she sought to determine if the *LiD* programme would enable students become engaged with their learning rather than the alternative.

Engaging Students

Authors and researchers throughout the literature consistently agree that today's students have changed and are 'different' in their needs and in the ways they learn (Dunleavy, Milton, & Willms, 2012; Egan, 2005, 2008, 2011; Gardner, 1999; Parsons & Taylor, 2011; Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009; Zygnier, 2007, 2008). However, in Parsons and Taylor's (2011) in-depth review paper entitled *Student Engagement: What do we know and what should we do?* they point out that there are still some critics who continue to believe that students have not changed and they believe that this current generation of students "do not require special educational concessions: …[rather], they believe [that] …we are…coddling an entire generation" (p. 4). Zyngier (2008) also cites some critics who similarly believe that students have not changed, sadder still, these critics according to Zyngier regard the students as the 'problem' further feeding into the negativity that marginalizes and objectifies them even further. Regardless of the few critics who refuse to acknowledge that our students are and continue to change there is sufficient evidence to prove that students have changed; however, what needs to be addressed is how do we engage these students so that they become and stay further engaged in their learning throughout their schooling and beyond.

Willms et al. (2009) repeatedly state throughout their many reports that in the students'

own words they,

>...do not want learning made easy, they want it to mean something. They want to
>
>feel something, to be moved by what they learn; they want to connect deeply with
>
>things that matter to the world and matter to them; and they want the chance to
>
>make a difference (p. 5).

Zyngier (2007, 2008), supports Willms et al. (2009) and takes it a step further when he

suggests that when students feel that they are being heard and that what they are saying

actually has an impact on teachers' teaching practices, then they will be more likely to

engage in the process of learning.

For example, in Zyngier's (2007) research he is seeking to better understand the

importance that the students' voice plays in further engaging the students in their learning. He

also wants to understand how both teachers and students define student engagement, and further

to that, how student engagement unfolds in classroom settings. His research included 800

students and their teachers from a public school in Melbourne Australia, in grades eight through

twelve in a low socioeconomic community. Both student and teacher data was collected in either

small focus groups, interviews, or surveys. The main results of Zyngier's study emphasise that

teachers must change their pedagogy to include student voice in order to deliver authentic

teaching and learning opportunities for all students. The students repeatedly commented that

when they felt that they were being heard and that what they said actually had an impact on

teachers' teaching practices that they were more likely to engage in the process of learning.

Zyngier's research proved a viable resource for this research project in that it supports some of

the claims made by Willms et al. (2009) such as the importance of positive relationships between

students and teachers and the value of the students' own voice.

Building on Zygnier's (2007, 2008) and Willms et al.'s (2009) ideas of keeping students engaged through their own voice, is the notion that students also need clear and concise objectives coupled with high expectations from their teachers (Csíkszentmihályi, 1997; Dunleavy et al., 2012; Willms et al., 2009; Zygnier, 2008). For example, Klem and Connell (2004) state that, "students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear, and fair are more likely to report engagement in school" (p. 262). Furthermore, "[s]tudents who describe their classroom disciplinary climate as positive are one-and-a-half times more likely to report high levels of interest, motivation, and enjoyment in learning" (Willms et al., 2009, p. 35). Zygnier (2008) reminds us that in addition to having high expectations students need three additional things to be engaged in their learning and they are: being able to connect with, identify with, and finding relevance in the topic being taught. Moreover, they also want to be in charge of directing some of their own learning. He further states that "what is needed to engage students is not necessarily learning that is fun, but learning over which they [students] have ownership" (p. 1771).

The Canadian Education Association has repeatedly shown that students want tasks that require and instil deep thinking, that connect to the world outside the classroom, and that have intellectual rigour, as well as being involved in thoughtful conversations (Dunleavy & Milton 2009; Dunleavy, Willms, Milton, & Friesen, 2012; Willms et al., 2009). Therefore, it follows that when students have clear objectives with high expectations, and they are able to take ownership over their learning they are more likely to be engaged. It is hoped that the *LiD* programme combined with this researcher's personal pedagogy towards teaching and learning which have clear objectives and high expectations will provide exactly the type of learning

environment that is needed for the students to engage with their learning as well at the same time experiencing high levels of joy in learning.

Motivation, Creativity, and Joy

An intricately important part of engagement is motivation, as Saeed and Zyngier (2012) have stated, "[m]otivation is seen as a pre-requisite of and a necessary element for student engagement" (p. 252). However, Saeed and Zyngier recognize that motivation cannot stand alone to induce student engagement, rather, it has to be coupled or grouped with other 'elements' in order for it to elicit the desired response. Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, and Vincent (2003) along with Collins and Amabile (1999) have linked motivation with creativity by suggesting that creativity and motivation are "associated with high levels of interest, enjoyment, and curiosity" (as cited in Beghetto, 2005, p. 258). Csíkszentmihályi (1997) acknowledges that motivation is an important factor for engagement because it is uniquely tied to our emotions. He further argues that when these emotions are engaged and motivated that they can create positive and energized feelings which he asserts and has coined as the term -- '*flow*'. One of the hallmarks of *flow* as Csíkszentmihályi claims is the feeling of -- joy.

Taina Rantala and Kaarina Maatta (2012) in their interesting study on the *Ten Theses of the Joy of Learning at Primary Schools* point out that "[t]raditionally, emotions have been kept separate from learning or considered understated although actual learning in the absences of any contact with the learner's emotional level is not likely to occur" (p. 88). Their ethnographic and observational study of nineteen students (five girls and fourteen boys) in first and second grade in a primary school in Finland wanted to explain how the emotion of 'joy' was experienced through learning. They also wanted to find out if there were ways to encourage or elicit more joy in learning within a classroom setting. Their data was gathered over 18 months through the students' own expressions of their feelings and experiences, as well as video and still

photographs taken to depict emotions. Rantala and Maatta explain in depth why they chose to incorporate video and photographs into their data collection and ultimately it was to offer a more fulsome view of their data. For instance, they state that, "filming [and photographs] produces a lot of opportunities to understand the research target…the non-verbal language in a picture [or frame] is a language that is understood both within and between cultures" (p. 91). They further go on to say that both video and photographs "provide plenty of information through both verbal and non-verbal communications [allowing for] social relationships…[to] be expressed for instance, by people's distance from each other …[m]ovements, expressions and gestures often tell about the unconscious factors related to social relationships" (p. 91). Rantala and Maatta (2012) acknowledge that "emotions in the school world have been studied surprisingly little…[and] negative and declining emotions have been more researched than the positive ones" (p. 87). They concluded that joy is a 'multidimensional' concept and gave ten examples of how they perceived the joy of learning within the confines of their study.

Much of the research on emotions and its relationship with student engagement proves to be a difficult task because each student's experiences vary. Rantala and Maatta (2012) have encapsulated the problem with trying to define emotional states when they said that "[t]he conceptualisation of emotions is challenging as there is the danger of losing a part of the evocative and real emotions when defining them" (p. 88). Gardner (1999), Csíkszentmihályi (1997) and Rantala and Maatta (2012) all agree that "the elements of emotional experience are similar all over the world, but emotional experiences are not…the joy of learning manifest themselves as little pieces, we just have to be able to recognise them" (Rantala & Maatta, 2012, p. 89, 101). Even though it is difficult to define emotional concepts authors do agree that it is easier to report on students' perception of how they interpret and understand the messages they

receive (Beghetto, 2005; Dolezal et al., 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012)

which can ultimately determine whether they experience joy or not.

      Learning should be fun, exciting and intriguing. Students should want to learn for the

sheer joy of learning. Children and young adults alike are fascinated and open to the wonders

and complexities of life. School should be an extension of these experiences. Attempting to find

happiness or joy is not a new thing; even Aristotle believed "that everything we do is ultimately

aimed at experiencing happiness" (Csíkszentmihályi, 1997, p.18). Rantala and Maatta (2012)

along with Gardner (1999), Egan (2005, 2008, 2010), Csíkszentmihályi (1997), Wolk (2008) and

Nichols and Berliner (2008) do not just agree on the importance of experiencing joy in learning,

they see it as an essential part of the learning process. For example, Egan (2005) in a tongue and

cheek manner states that, "[s]tudents don't need a throbbing passion for learning algebra or a

swooning joy in learning about punctuation, but successful education does require some

emotional involvement of the student with the subject matter." He goes on to say, that,

> [a]ll knowledge is human knowledge and all knowledge is a product of human hopes,
>
> fears, and passions. To bring knowledge to life in students' minds we must introduce it
>
> to students in the context of the human hopes, fears, and passions in which it finds its
>
> fullest meaning (p. xii).

In other words it is about our emotions, and more specifically, it is about experiencing joy

in and through learning. Therefore, in the current study joy was examined as students were

engaged in the LiD programme.

Learning in Depth **Programme**

      As mentioned in the previous chapter and throughout this chapter student engagement is

an issue that is affecting both students and schools worldwide. Kieran Egan (2010) has

developed a programme called *Learning in Depth* which this researcher believes has the

potential to engage students in their learning in ways that they never imagined possible, and through that engagement experience the joy in learning.

Egan (2010) explains the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD)* programme as building on the premise that "knowing something in depth, is like knowing it from the inside, where the student gains expertise, and comes to recognize from one area studied in depth something about how knowledge works in all areas" (p. 8). Egan claims that the *LiD* programme can enable students to become an 'expert' on a given topic. Although there is no empirical studies on the effectiveness of the *LiD* programme to date, Egan further claims that the *LiD* programme draws on what research is available to suggest, that this process of learning something in depth has the potential to transform the schooling experience of nearly all children by transforming their relationship to and understanding of the nature of knowledge (Egan, 2010). Egan fully believes that when students (or anyone for that matter), understand something in depth that they not only gain greater knowledge, but that they have a greater sense of purpose and are more likely to be informed and active consumers of that knowledge and in turn, more informed and active citizens in society (Egan, 2008, 2010; Gardner 1999; Willms et al., 2009).

Egan (2010) acknowledges that there could be push back from educators regarding the plausibility of a programme like *LiD* and playing 'Devil's advocate' he sets up an argument (with himself) for just such a case within chapter three of his book *Learning in depth: A simple innovation that can transform schooling* (see pages 56-60). Within these pages he seeks to answer and explain how there is "adequate research basis for the proposal" (p. 56) of a programme like *LiD*. Although Egan lacks a definitive response to substantiate his claim for there being 'adequate research' for the *LiD* programme within the chapter he does pose several questions that can be used to validate and assess the results of the programme. He also refers the reader to an appendix where he claims he "will return to this issue in greater length" (p.58).

Throughout the chapter three section (and arguably the book), Egan tries to play with the reader's emotions in hopes of winning them over; for example, he uses grandiose and far reaching statements such as:

> *Learning in Depth* is not some claim to be more efficient at reaching some agreed aim in education, but rather a proposal for changing the meaning of "education" a little. It is an attempt to generate an image of how we might achieve a more adequate form of education (p. 59).

It is in the appendix where Egan further clarifies, justifies, and situates his programme within educational theories and literature. However, he starts the appendix by first admitting that the appendix exists only at the suggestion of contemporaries and colleagues "who asked for something more in the way of support for the idea" (p. 191). Throughout the appendix Egan valiantly, if not long-windedly, justifies and bases the concept of *LiD* within theories such as the progressivism, traditionalism, as well as situating areas of the programme in some of Vygotsky's and Piaget's beliefs and theories. He does warn that when we try to justify and see the world through theories that the "…theories we adopt—…serve us like lenses on the world, and after a while we forget we are using lenses or theories and assume we see the world as it is" (p. 203). Regardless of how Egan justifies his programme, there is ample evidence to support a programme like his, to help students become further engaged in their schooling.

Howard Gardner (1983) who completely reconceptualised education by suggesting that there were several intelligences that any one person can learn through argues that "…education remains mired in the parochial" (Gardner, 1999, p. 15). Furthermore, he criticises traditional education for being too broad and "…covering as much information [as possible and] conveying as many truths, as possible." He further goes on to bluntly state that he "…favour[s] depth over

breadth…" (p. 36-39). By doing this he is justifying how Egan's *LiD* programme could work. Gardner (1999) later states that in-depth knowledge does allow that,

> …most students [will] have attained deep – or at least deeper—understanding.
> And…equally important, they will have a sense of what it means—of how it
> *feels*—to understand consequential topics. They will have at least a taste of a
> disciplined mind (p. 245).

Also speaking to a disciplined or focused mind is Csíkszentmihályi and his idea of *flow*. Flow, is described as a "deep absorption in an activity that is intrinsically interesting. Individuals in a state of flow see the activity as worthwhile even if no further goal is reached" (Willms & Freisen, 2012, p. 8). Finding flow is exactly what happens when students are intellectually engaged in and with their learning. It is also what several of the authors agree is needed to keep students engaged (Viebert & Sheilds, 2003; Willms & Freisen, 2012; Willms, Freisen, & Milton, 2009; Zyngier, 2007). *LiD* does have the very real possibility of having students become so deeply absorbed in their learning that they experience 'flow'.

As stated in previous sections above students want learning that is both challenging, and requires them to be deeper thinkers, as well as being connected to their world. Egan's *LiD* programme "…is educationally important for all students…[because] learning in depth goes to the heart…of education" (Egan, 2010, p. 18). Parsons and Taylor's (2011) comprehensive literature review described how Carie Windham (2005) recognized that in order for education to be engaging for today's learners it needs to address six main areas some of which are: "interaction, exploration, relevancy, multimedia and instruction" (as cited in Parsons & Taylor, 2011, p. 36). Many of the concepts and ideas that Windham proposes are exactly what students would be doing during *LiD*, and are further supported by authors such as Willms et al. (2009),

Dunleavy and Milton (2009), and Zyngier (2007, 2008). In Egan's (2010) own words his

programme proposes to address all of Windham's suggestions and more by stating that,

> *LiD* encourages active engagement, provides opportunities for uncoerced learning,
>
> involves exploration driven by the students' own interests, allows individual
>
> learning styles and stages of development free rein in influencing students' research
>
> of their topics, and builds students' confidence as learners (p. 205).

Education along with student engagement is not a given, it requires active and continual

involvement. Egan (2010) reminds and warn his readers that:

> …there is no knowledge in a library; there is no knowledge on the internet…Knowledge
>
> exists only in living human tissue, in our brains. And the hard trick of education is to
>
> transform the codes and symbols into living knowledge (p. 214).

He further goes on to say that when students only have " to replicate the code and symbols they

have learned, there is no incentive to ensure that students manage the crucial transformational act

of bringing the symbols to new life in new minds" (p. 214). When we do this, Egan believes that

we create a "parody of education" (p. 214) and we do it and our students a disservice. The

essence of the *LiD* programme is to "… bring knowledge to life in a way that will encourage

something of genuine educational value for all …students …" (p. 214).

As this chapter has tried to reveal there is and continues to be ample literature to support,

define, and advise the research of student engagement. Additionally, rationalization was also

given to support the importance of researching the emotion of joy within the confines of student

engagement. Furthermore, also provided within this literature review, were theoretical and

literary supports that not only helped to situate and justify the programme created by Kieran

Egan they also further clarified and qualified the use of it within this study. Due to the lack of

empirical work to support Egan's *LiD* programme it is this researcher's hope that this study will

be able to make a small contribution to the literature base for future researchers. Finally, given the research which shows the implications of student disengagement and how students would like to be engage, the current study examined the impact of the *LiD* programme on students and their experiences of joy in learning.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

Description of the Research Design

The problem the current research sought to address was why so many of our schools today have unengaged students who are just 'doing school', furthermore, through their lack of engagement, students are also missing out on the joys and wonders associated with learning (Egan, 2010). Therefore, using student engagement as the lens the purpose of the current study was to determine how engagement was experienced by students as they utilized the Learning in Depth (*LiD*) programme; more specifically, did students experience joy in learning and if so, how did they experience it and when did they experience it?

In order to examine how joy was experienced in learning in the context of a specific programme (*LiD*) the methodology employed was a qualitative descriptive, single case study. This method was chosen for three reasons; first, because it supports the constructivist theory that humans want to create meaning from the world and context around them (Egan, 2005). Another advantage for this type of approach was, as Crabtree and Miller (1999) stated, that it allowed for "the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories…through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants' action" (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). Finally, this type of research according to Baxter and Jack (2008) described an "intervention" (the *LiD* programme) and the "real-life context" in which it occurred (the classroom).

Description of the Sample

The current study took place in a kindergarten/grade 1 primary class in the Nanaimo/Ladysmith school district which was located on central Vancouver Island in British Columbia. The population of the primary class was 20 students that ranged in age from four to

seven. Although the students came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, the majority came from mid-socioeconomic homes. The predominantly homogenous group of white students was made up of six males and fourteen females. The sample was chosen as a sample of convenience as it was the class that the researcher was teaching at the time of the study and included all students where parental consent was given. In addition to the student sample further information was gathered and obtained from another teacher in the same school district that was also teaching the *LiD* programme in her primary/intermediate class. The teacher selected for this interview was selected for three reasons; firstly, she is one of the few primary *LiD* teachers in SD68 and this is her second consecutive year of 'teaching' *LiD*. Secondly, she also structures/teaches her *LiD* programme similar to how this researcher did. Finally, she kept the *LiD* concept as organic as possible and as closely aligned with the original intent as set out by Egan and his colleagues (Egan, 2010).

The *LiD* programme is a programme developed at Simon Fraser University's Education Faculty by Keiran Egan and his *Imagination Education Research Group* (ierg). In essence, it is a programme that enables students to become an 'expert' on a given topic. The programme proposes and draws on research that suggests that when given the opportunity, the process of learning something in depth has the potential to transform the schooling experience of nearly all children. Furthermore, by engaging students in this programme they begin to understand the relationship and nature of knowledge (Egan, 2010). To implement the *LiD* programme children are given a topic randomly (in this case it was determined by drawing the topic out of hat) and are engaged in research and activities around that topic for the entire school year, in some cases over several years.

During this research project *LiD* took place every Wednesday for about a 45 minute block of time; which was in keeping with Egan's intent that the *LiD* programme happen on a

weekly basis at a dedicated time and for a specific amount of time. It was during these blocks of

time that the students primarily directed their own learning by looking at books and magazines

and shared interesting pictures or details each other. Sometimes the students would cut out and

keep some of the pictures they found in the magazines to be used in a variety of ways, such as

sorting, classifying, trading with their friends, or to be used in a *LiD* art project. Students

regularly drew and coloured pictures of their topics, as well as creating three dimensional

representations using *Play Doh*, *Lego*, or blocks. A few times in the early stages of the *LiD*

programme, the students would have their "Big Buddies" from another class come in and read

some of the non-fiction *LiD* topic books to help the kindergarten and grade one students better

understand their topic. In addition to the self-directed learning there were a few teacher initiated

activities that included: watching a couple of videos that incorporated several of the class's *LiD*

topics, going on a *LiD* hunt in our classroom to find items related to our *LiD* topics, learning

more about the school library and where they could find information on their topics, and a formal

LiD presentation by each student after three months of learning about their topic.

Description of the Instruments Used

This study used four different instruments to gather the data which included: teacher

observations/field notes, student self-assessments/reflections, teacher check-ins, and a teacher

interview. The main source of data came primarily from the students' self-

assessment/reflections, teacher observations and the teacher interview.

Teacher observations in the form of field notes (Appendix A) were recorded. These

observations were of a general nature and consisted of the date, time, how many students

appeared on task as well as engaged and how many appeared 'happy' or experiencing joy as it

related to their learning. For example, during an observation any variety of things could have

happened such as: the sharing of resources or knowledge, seeking advice/help, or working

together on a common goal. As a way of documenting and coding these interactions a tally system was used that paid particular interest to any interactions that involved any emotional cues such as: their demeanour, a laugh, a smile, or any words that were connected with experiencing 'joy' as it related to their learning. To validate this research project it was also important to document when, the opposite emotions were exhibited during *LiD* classes. The student self-assessments (Appendix B) were designed and used as a way to glean more information from each student about how they personally felt about what they had learned, heard, saw, discovered, experienced, or connections that they had made during each *LiD* class. These self-assessments were used once a week at the end of each *LiD* class. On the student self-assessments designed for this research project, the number one, or a 'sad/unhappy' face represented that the student experienced 'no joy' in that particular *LiD* class at that time. Conversely, the students could choose up to a number four or a 'wow' face which represented that the student had experienced 'big joy' during that *LiD* class. During the self-assessment process the students were asked to circle the face that depicted as closely as possible their feelings at the time. There was also a space provided on the self-assessment for the students to voluntarily write (or have scribed) words, phrases, or sentences to further clarify their feelings and experiences. In addition to writing words, students were also given the opportunity to draw a picture that could also offer more information on what they were experiencing; realizing that students' drawings are a common way for primary children to communicate and demonstrate their feelings, learning, knowledge, and understanding of the topic.

Another valuable tool that was employed was informal teacher 'check-ins' (Appendix C) with the students. This too is a regular process while engaged in the *LiD* programme. The teacher casually checks in with a few students during each *LiD* time until she has met with the entire class, after which she repeats the process until the end of the year. Each check-in would last for

about five minutes and was used to determine the following: how the student was doing on their topic, what interesting fact(s) they have recently discovered, and how they have been feeling while in the process. The teacher documents and dates all that the student says and shares, which will be recalled the next time they meet. These check-ins offered valuable authentic data, since they were an expectation and regular event during the *LiD* programme and because the teacher/researcher met with all the students regularly, she was able to examine the sentiments of the whole sample for similarities and/or differences.

Finally, a teacher interview (See Appendix D for interview protocol and questions) was also conducted to further enable triangulation of study data. The interview questions were designed to offer this researcher a brief glimpse into another teacher's experiences of 'teaching' *LiD*. For example, this researcher wanted to know *'how the students responded to the LiD programme'* more importantly; she wanted to know the following two specific things: were the students in the interviewee's class more engaged when doing the *LiD* programme, and what feelings did the interviewee observe of her students while they were engaged in the *LiD* programme. The responses from the interview offered this researcher a better understanding of how students respond to *LiD* in a different environment and grade level as well as a comparison against her own class data.

Explanation of the Procedures Followed

As part of the *LiD* programme, there are celebratory 'kick-offs'. Prior to that however, parents, guardians, school administrators, secretaries, and librarians had an information letter and pamphlet sent to them briefly informing them about the *LiD* programme and how it will be implemented in the classroom. A date for the celebratory kick off was set for October 16th 2013. Invitations (Appendix E) were sent welcoming and encouraging all parents/guardians and any family members, community members, as well as school personnel to attend the celebration. A

pot-luck style luncheon was then enjoyed by all, prior to the students learning which topic they would receive and be learning about for the remainder of the school year. After the luncheon, the researcher outlined to the students and all other guests in attendance the objectives and expectations of the *LiD* programme. Since the programme is predominantly student directed there were only a few expectations such as, the students would be responsible for three presentations throughout the year and that some of their learning was expected to take place at home. The first presentation would take place in approximately three months and it was expected that each student would share one thing that they found interesting, challenging, funny, and a question they still had which would serve to further their research. Each presentation was not to last for longer than five minutes. The following two presentations would take place later in the year with the third being another celebration of learning and would follow a similar format to the first but unique to each child's individual talents and passions. Finally, as had been clearly outlined to students and guest prior to the celebration, the assigning of topics to each student was a random event and occurred by a student pulling their topic out of a hat.

After the researcher's presentation about the *LiD* programme she shared with the parents/guardians in attendance about her research project (see Appendix F *Student Data Recruitment Script*). After reading the script she also shared her thesis statement and her hypotheses that she believed that, '*the LiD programme would promote students' engagement in learning and further to that, that as students became engaged in their learning they would also experience joy in learning*'. The final stage of informing the parents included giving them a consent letter (Appendix G) which was given to all parents/guardians in attendance. The consent letter sought permission for their child's work to be used as data in the current study. Those unable to attend the luncheon were hand delivered the consent letter by the researcher at the

parent teacher interviews that took place a week later. Returned parent/guardian consent letters were collected and stored in a locked filing cabinet by the researcher.

Data was collected on all students with signed permission forms from the end of October 2013 through to the end of January 2014 (after the student's first *LiD* presentation). In order to further protect the identity of the students when direct quotes were utilized the student's *LiD* topic name was changed and a pseudonym used in its place. All additional data were then analysed. Qualitative data which came from all four data sets (field notes, teacher check-ins, student self-assessments/reflections, and the teacher interview) was coded and put into emergent themes, while the quantitative data such as, the students' self-assessment/reflections, were put into graphs. The completed and compiled data were stored in locked and secure cabinet at the researcher's office.

Discussion of Validity and Reliability

Internal validity was taken into consideration by the researcher in regards to both the *LiD* programme and in determining how students experienced joy. Attempts were made to address and minimize threats to internal validity where possible. For example, due to the age and stage of all the students that participated in this research it was important to understand the egocentricity and flippantness of this age group, and that they are often moved by their emotions, which can be determined by a variety of things such as: being hurt/encouraged by a friend, being chosen first/last, whether things at home are stable, whether they are sick, hungry or tired. Therefore, it was realized that some of the students' self-assessments and teacher check-ins may reflect these extraneous and confounding variables. Another threat to this study which is related the previous variable was maturation; as the students progressed through school, so too did their skills and abilities, which could have affected their confidence and emotions throughout the data collection

process. Due to the small sample size and case study nature of this particular action research study the external validity is weak and therefore is not generalizable unless reconstructed.

To increase the validity of this research triangulation was used; by utilizing multiple sources of data to record students' feelings and emotions as they participated in the *LiD* programme. Also a rich description of students' experiences was constructed and drawn upon over a three month period from which conclusions were made.

It was also recognized that the researcher brought to this study her own personal biases that also could have affected the validity of this study. However, recognizing and being aware of these enabled the researcher to make attempts to minimize these wherever possible. For example, the researcher assumed from the onset of the study, that students would and could experience joy in learning while engaged in the *LiD* programme. Therefore, it became equally important to document the opposite experiences of joy (frustration, unhappiness) and compare and contrast the frequency of each emotion as it was exhibited while engaged in the *LiD* programme. This enabled the researcher to have a richer understanding of how students experienced their emotions in learning situations and the parameters involved around those experiences.

This researcher also realized that her personal biases may still have played a part in the unconscious distortion of data that was collected, and analyzed. Specifically, it may have shown itself in the phrasing of questions, or in using different ways for different individuals, and possibly asking leading questions. Attempts were made to standardize the procedures by utilizing a teacher check-in template which tried to ensure that the questions were asked of all participants in the same way.

Data Analysis

The data compiled during this research study was done in order to determine how engagement was experienced by students as they utilized the Learning in Depth (*LiD*)

programme; more specifically, did students experience joy in learning and if so, how did they experience it and when did they experience it? This data was collected for three consecutive months from the mid October 2013 through to mid-January 2014 and consisted of eight weeks of student self-assessments, combined with numerous field notes, teacher check-ins, and an interview.

Data from the students' self-assessment instrument provided both quantitative and qualitative data. Some of the quantitative data analysed included how many times a particular face was chosen to depict a certain level of joy experienced by the students. As well as how many times a positive or negative emotion was depicted in drawing or written format. Both of these quantitative measures were calculated and put into a graph format for ease of reading. Additionally, the self-assessments were also used as a rich source of qualitative data, as another way to represent the students' emotional and intellectual involvement while engaging in the *LiD* programme. Many of these data were further substantiated and triangulated with the teacher check-ins and teacher observations.

Data gathered from the teacher interview, further substantiated many of the claims and assertions made above. The teacher interview also brought an interesting perspective to this research in that she was truly able to step back and be the advisor and observer in her classroom in a way that the researcher was not able to, which could account for a more valid interpretation of her experiences. In other words, because the researcher for this study was also the teacher in the classroom where she was gathering the data she may consciously or subconsciously miss important details, data, and/or information that a regular classroom teacher without the added burden of trying to gather research may see, experience, and report on.

By utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data measures, the findings in this research study further strengthened and supported the hypothesis posed in chapter one. Chapter four presents those findings in more detail.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

In this chapter the results of the data analysis are presented. The purpose of this study was to explore, through the lens of student engagement, how engagement was experienced by students as they utilized the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD* pronounced like the noun 'lid') programme; more specifically, did students experience joy in learning and if so, how did they experience it and when did they experience it? Two fundamental goals drove the collection of the data and subsequent data analysis. Those goals were: that participation in the *LiD* programme would promote student engagement, and further to that, that through high engagement a sense of joy in learning would be experienced.

The research took place primarily in the fall of 2013. The participants were from a convenience sample of 20 students in a kindergarten/ grade one class at an elementary school within School District 68. Of the 20 students fourteen were female and six were male, and all 20 consented to participating in this study. This descriptive, single case study design included the following instruments: student self-assessments/reflections, teacher observations/field notes, teacher check-ins, and a teacher interview. Verbal, physical and written/drawn data were coded for expressions of both positive and negative emotions.

Student Self-Assessment Data Results

All students who participated in this study completed self-assessment/reflection sheets in order to glean information from each student about how they personally felt about what they had experienced during each *LiD* class. The self-assessments (Appendix B) were based on a four point marking schema where the number one, or a 'sad/unhappy' face represented that the student experienced 'no joy', during that *LiD* class, up to a number four or a 'wow' face which represented that the student had experienced 'big joy' during that particular *LiD* class. Additional space was provided on the self-assessment for the primary students to voluntarily

draw, write (or have scribed) words, phrases, or sentences to further clarify their feelings and experiences.

The student self-assessments/reflections became a rich source of information in determining, from the students' perspective, their emotions and thus level of engagement. In total there were 89 self-assessments/reflections completed and as represented in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below, some of the most significant findings were that most students perceived experiencing 'normal' to 'big' joy more than 90% of the time (in six cases, six different students choose more than one face to express their feelings at the time). In addition, when students voluntarily added additional emotional values or expressions to their self-assessments/reflections approximately 71% of those expressions were positively expressed emotions with words such as: "happy", "joy", "like/liked", "love/loved". In contrast, the only negatively expressed emotion documented was the word "sad" and it was expressed 3% of the time.
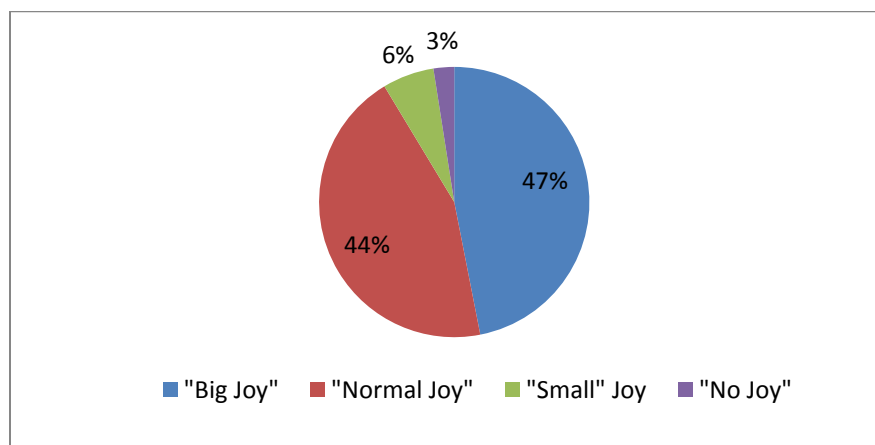

Figure 4.1. Results of student self-assessment/reflections (N=89) – (6 students choose more than one face to express their feelings at the time.)
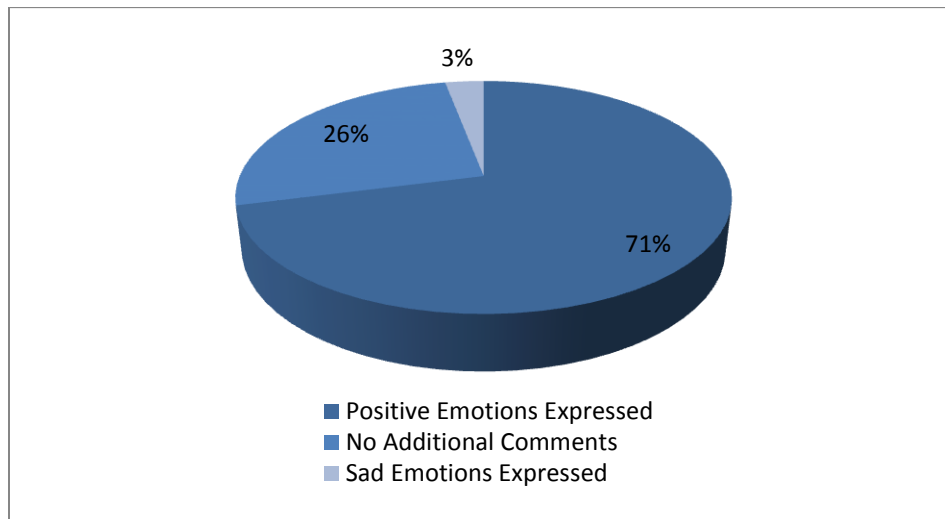
Figure 4.2. Results of voluntarily added emotions from student self-assessment/reflections (N= 49)

In all cases the additional voluntary emotions expressed by the students corresponded with the face that the student chose to depict as the level of joy they had experienced during the class, which further emphasised the emotions they experienced. Figure 4.3 below is an example of a child who self-assessed themselves on that particular day as experiencing 'big joy' by circling appropriate face, and further voluntarily added the illustration of a big happy 'self-portrait' to further clarify how she felt during *LiD*.
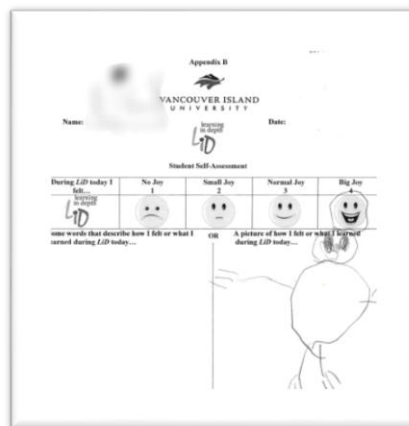

Figure 4.3. Example of student self-assessment/reflection

With the 71% levels of positive voluntary emotions expressed the results would imply that these primary students perceive themselves to be experiencing joy in their learning at high levels while participating in the *LiD* programme.

Observational and Field Note Data Results

Additional sources of data came from this researcher's own observations and field notes. The cumulative results of those data sources also supported the students' perspectives on levels of engagement and the experiences of joy in learning. It also strengthened and made it clearer as to how some of the students' expressions and experiences of 'joy' were exhibited while participating in the *LiD* programme. Additionally, it was through these data that the unexpected emergence of enhanced classroom community and connectedness began to reveal itself.

For the purposes of this research the word engagement encompassed two aspects, social and intellectual. *Social* engagement was defined as the many and varied relationships that students experience on a daily basis that can influence their involvement in and/or with school. *Intellectual* engagement referred to the degree of on task behaviour that was academically meaningful and worthwhile to the student. *Joy* was also defined in this study as being intrinsically motivated to experience emotion(s) of great delight or happiness caused by something good, creative, or satisfying.

During the duration of this study *LiD* took place on most Wednesday afternoons and was always depicted by its initials (*LiD*) on the shape of the day. Often when students would come into the classroom at the beginning of the day they would 'read' the shape of the day to get a sense of what they would be doing that day. On Wednesdays you could often hear exclamations of "*Yeah we have LiD today*!" or "*Yeah it's LiD day*!" these exclamations of delight were often accompanied with smiling faces lit up with excitement and anticipation. For example, one

morning two students, a boy in grade one and a girl in kindergarten, came into the class just before 9:00 am they read the shape of the day along with three other students and the boy and girl began to jump up and down with excitement as they both said separately to their parents and classmates in proximity "*we have LiD today*!" Additionally, on a separate day another grade one boy announces to the class that "*Yeah after recess, it's LiD time*!" These positive expressions of emotion occurred regularly and demonstrated that students were excited and happy to participate and they physically and verbally expressed their emotions of joy in *LiD*. These emotions also demonstrated that the students were anticipating and cognisant of the time when *LiD* would occur in their day.

Throughout the data collection this researcher was intrigued to recognize two things that were delicately tied to the data. Firstly, that included in the joy of learning was a sense of pride, ownership, and expertise that accompanied each student with their unique *LiD* topic. Secondly, that the *LiD* programme brought a sense of community and connectedness to the classroom. Although this researcher never set out to determine the possibility or likelihood of these two discoveries they became an integral part of how this researcher perceived the students' experiences and their levels of joy in learning.

Following are a couple of examples of how pride and ownership were expressed in our classroom during *LiD* time. On one particular day the researcher was reading a story to the class when she instructed the students to "*listen for and find connections to other [LiD] topics that we have in our class.*" Before even reading the title she holds up the book and the students start squirming and vibrating with excitement as they forget the classroom rules of putting up your hand to answer questions and start yelling out, "*hey, my topic is* an animal *and that's* an animal – *I already know it's my topic*", "*my topic is* aquatic animals…*and bears eat my topic*!", "*my topic is* watery *and fish are in the* water *so it's probably related to my topic too.*" "*****'s topic is* an

insect *and I know that bears eat* insects*…like Bubba Bear*" [from the class's *Zoophonics* programme that they have been learning]. The connections continue to be shared, shouted, and stated out even before the teacher has started the book. Once the book has started the students regain some measure of control, their eyes are wide and focused on the book to listen for and see more connections to their own topic and the topics of their classmates. The hum of learning, engagement, pride and ownership that the students felt, and expressed during this lesson were palpable.

One particular event that specifically demonstrates a sense of pride, ownership, joy, and expertise with *LiD* happened after the students had done their first formal presentation on their *LiD* topic. The formal presentation had the students share four things: one fact that they found interesting about their topic, where they retrieved the information from (book, magazine, website), a question they still had about their topic, and a picture that they drew or found on their topic. One of our animal experts was sharing her information about kangaroos and koalas and was showing the picture that she drew of a kangaroo, when another student commented, "*I really like your drawing, you draw good kangaroos.*" To which she responded with an air of pride, expertise and acknowledgement, "*Thanks, it's because I am* an animal *expert!*" No one was offended, it was stated and accepted as a fact and the two went off to do another *LiD* related task.

An example of where a sense of ownership is embedded within a sense of connectedness occurred during another *LiD* class, when the students were waiting for the librarian to hand out books to each of them on their specific *LiD* topic; the Librarian was calling out the topics and the students knew exactly who was the *LiD* expert for that topic. As the teacher and researcher, it was amazing that not only had the students learned their own topic but they had learned the *LiD* topics of all of their fellow classmates, and they were starting to see how connected those *LiD* topics were to one another. For example, one of the students was constantly reminding the class

'that it is because of my topic that everything on the earth grows!' she says these statements with

an air of authority and pride. Usually, it is comments like this that will engage other students into

the conversation as well, for example one of our insects expert chimed in with "*well it is because*

of insects *that the plants and flowers grow and we eat plants and flowers.*" This good natured

bantering challenges and encourages the students' learning and adds to the sense of community,

pride and ownership that the students feel in our classroom.

Examples of community and connectedness often arose when the students were involved

in art related activities around their *LiD* topic. For instance, a group of students were

collaborating at the *Play Doh* station when they created a scene at a pond that included several of

the students' *LiD* topics within that scene demonstrating that they understood the relationships

between the topics. Another instance that illustrates that the students were a community of

learners was when the students were looking through magazines for anything related to their own

topic and happened to come across something that belonged to a topic of one of their classmates;

often they would cut out the item and take it to their friend to be used at a later date. One

particular student actually took it a step further and brought some magazine cuttings from home

that she had found on a couple of our topics, to give to our experts. These demonstrations of

community and connectedness were so intertwined within the classroom atmosphere and

especially at *LiD* time that it became almost impossible for this researcher to separate them and

say what actually came first: being a community of learners in *LiD*, or becoming a community of

learners connected through the *LiD* topics.

Teacher Check-Ins Data Results

The teacher check-ins were a procedure where by the teacher would meet with one or two

students in the class individually to find out what they had learned about their *LiD* topic to date.

In addition, the teacher would also try to establish where the students might want to explore next

and something that they found interesting. It is noteworthy to mention that this particular part of

the data collection did not go as originally intended or proposed. For example, it was this

researcher's intent to meet with at least one or two students every class for their individual

teacher check-in time; however, this was not possible due to the high demands on a teacher's

time in the early stages of the school year in a kindergarten/grade one classroom where the

students lack and have not been taught or had modelled the necessary independent learning skills

that are needed in order for the individual teacher check-ins to happen. Therefore, it was

impossible in the early stages of the data collection to find the private and undivided time to

meet with the students.

Nonetheless, meetings did begin to take place near the end of fall 2013 and continued

into and throughout January 2014. The teacher check-ins which were documented in writing,

were coded for expressions of emotion, and tallied. To illustrate an example of how the coding

took place the researcher asked students who were having their check-in that day '*how they were*

doing with their LiD topic' and '*what they had learned or found interesting so far*' to which

many of the students' first response was to reply with "*good*" or "*I like it*". These expression

words, were not coded unless they were accompanied with a real expression of emotion

exhibited on their face in the form of a smile, or sparkling eyes of excitement, or they were so

excited to share that they could not keep their bodies still until they shared their stories. An

example of this can be seen in a teacher check-in with the student whose *LiD* topic was

"*Watery*"

> **How are you doing with your LiD topic**? "*It's good*" (she says just as a
>
> matter-of -fact). **What have you been learning about or found interesting in**
>
> **your *LiD* topic so far?** "*I am learning about the Ocean and Dolphins eat flying*
>
> *fish…at least they might, 'cause they fly – they also eat shrimpy like things – I*

want to learn more about dolphins.” **What feelings are you experiencing**

when you are doing *LiD*? “*I like that it makes me feel good when it is LiD time,*

it makes me happy and good.”

In the above teacher/student exchange the first question was not coded for emotion words,

because there were no additional emotions expressed with it, it was the researcher's belief that

the word was used to indicate and state a fact rather than any emotional value. However, because

the final question specifically asks the student to use words that they believe describe their

feelings and experiences during *LiD* these emotion words were coded and tallied in the data

results.

There were in total 20 teacher check-ins, which represented one check-in for each student

in the class during the data collection phase of this study. Figure 4.4 below demonstrates that of

the 20 check-ins there were, in total, 54 expressions of emotions. Of those 54 expressions of

emotions 46 or 85 % were positive expressions such as: *fun, joy, like, happy, smiling, good,* and

exciting. For example, the student quote below used at least three positive terms for emotions

during her check-in as seen in the following reply to the question posed:

What feelings are you experiencing when you are doing *LiD*? “*I feel like*

jumping for joy [with a smile on her face and physically jumping to emphasise

her meaning] *I really like LiD, it's fun and exciting learning about ….*”

In this response the words '*joy*', the second instance of the word '*like*' and '*exciting*' were coded

as examples of positive expressions of emotion. In contrast to the 46 positive expressions of

emotions there were only six out of the 54 or 11% expressing negative emotions such as: *sad,*

bad, boring, and *not fun*. In addition, there were two examples or 4% of neutrality where the

students admitted that they did not feel happy or sad, these were expressed physically by one

student as she shrugged her shoulders and another student drawing a face with no expression just a straight line for the mouth to which she further expressed that "*it's just normal.*"
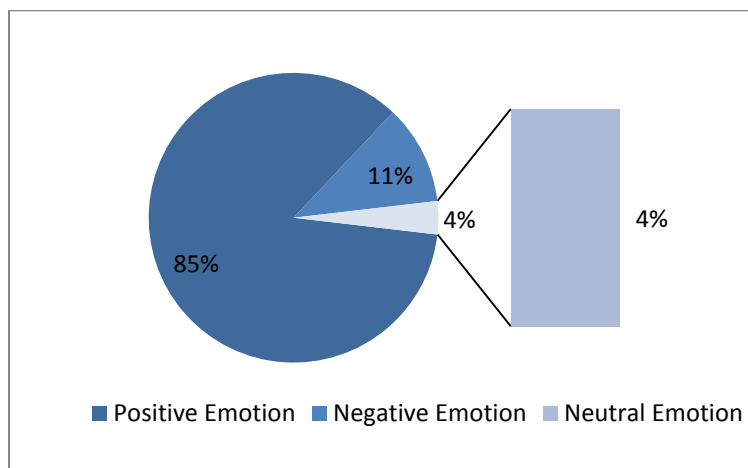

Figure 4.4. Emotions expressed during teacher check-ins (N=54)

When assessing these expressions of emotions they again confirm and support what has already been established; and that is, that when students participate in *LiD* they tend to experience high levels of joy in learning.

Teacher Interview Data Results

As a means of offering further triangulation to this research a teacher interview was conducted. This teacher was selected for three reasons; firstly, she is one of the few primary *LiD* teachers in SD68 and this is her second consecutive year of 'teaching' *LiD*. Secondly, she also structures/teaches her *LiD* programme similar to how this researcher did. Finally, she kept the *LiD* concept as organic as possible and as closely aligned with this researcher's interpretation of the original intent as set out by Egan and his colleagues (Egan, 2010). The ten interview questions (Appendix D) were designed to offer this researcher a brief glimpse into another teacher's experiences of 'teaching' *LiD*. Furthermore, it offered this researcher a better understanding of how students respond to *LiD* in a different environment and at the grade 3 / 4 level.

Data gathered from the teacher interview, further substantiated many of the claims and assertions made throughout this chapter. When the teacher was asked:

How have the students responded to *LiD* ? She replied with, "*I would say that they have responded positively and enthusiastically for the most part; although, motivation for a few of my students is an issue, and LiD is a bit more of a challenge for those that lack the focus, direction, and motivation.*" Her comments throughout the interview reflect very closely what has been reported on in this researcher's class.

When all emotional expressions were coded from the interview it revealed that there were 28 total expressions of emotion of which 82% or 23 words were positive emotions. Some of these words were similar to what has already been recorded above; however, there were some new additional words such as: *proud/proudly/pride, enjoy, engaged,* and *wonderful*. Leaving 18% or five negative emotion words expressed and they were: *frustrated, squelched* and *boring.* The following quotes give an example of both positive and negative words that the teacher shared about what she has observed her students doing or saying during their *LiD* time; *"I wanted to change my topic, but my parents persuaded me to keep it and I'm glad I did!"* to which another student replied *"Yes, I thought bats was kind of boring but now I don't think so."* The teacher further went on to say that, *"However, only 1 student last year 'shut down' and refused to continue with his topic."*

Additionally, when asked: **Can you give any specific examples of where you have noticed or observed students engaged in their learning so that they experienced 'joy' 'excitement' or 'flow'?** Her response included three separate events that truly capture the essence of joy, excitement, and flow being experienced:

"There was a wonderful time when we were in the computer lab everyone

appeared engaged and working on their topic, when all of a sudden one of my

students whose LiD topic is musical instruments starts playing Beethoven's

Symphony, there was a lovely relaxing, engaging sense of purpose during that

particular class."

"During another class one of my students suddenly announces with an air of

pride that 'now I've got enough for 3 years now that I have found this website!'

On several other occasions, the students have been so engaged in their work

that when I have to end the class there have been audible sounds of 'awww', or

students seeking just a little more time to finish what they were doing."

It became apparent through analysis of the teacher interview that many of the experiences that

this researcher witnessed and reported on from her own classroom were also experienced in a

similar way in her colleague's grade 3 / 4 classroom.

Conclusion

There appears to be enough consistency in the data to draw general conclusions that

support this researcher's hypothesis. It would appear from this data that participation in the

Learning in Depth programme does promote high levels of joy in learning. Additionally, because

the students were experiencing high levels of joy in learning this researcher inferred that the

students also experienced high levels of engagement as well. Furthermore, this data also

suggested that two additional outcomes came about because of the *Learning in Depth*

programme and they were: a strong sense of classroom community and connectedness, as well as

student pride, ownership and expertise surrounding their *LiD* topics. These two outcomes are

closely connected to engagement and will be further discussed in the next chapter. Chapter 5

will also further summarize and make suggestions for further research on this topic.

Chapter Five: Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and discuss the current study's results and suggest possible recommendations and additional research. The first section of this chapter will discuss the objectives of the research and the methodology used to accomplish the analysis, followed by a summary and interpretation of the major results. The second part of the chapter will discuss implications of the current research and propose recommendations for teaching practice and further research.

Discussion of Findings

The two objectives that this study sought to examine through the lens of student engagement were: how engagement was experienced by students as they utilized the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) programme and more specifically, did students experience joy in learning and if so, how did they experience it and when did they experience it? To that end this study utilized a descriptive, single case study in a primary K/1 classroom with 20 students (fourteen girls and six boys) where data was gathered throughout the fall of 2013 and continued into the first two months of winter 2014.

The general theoretical literature on the subject area is wide and varied in regard to student engagement, however, that is not the case for empirical information focused specifically on positive emotions such as joy. Originally, at the onset of this study this researcher was naïve enough to believe that there would be substantial empirical evidence to support both the hypotheses stated earlier in Chapter One; 'that as students became engaged in their learning that they would also experience joy in learning'. Unfortunately, this researcher soon discovered that there is, and still remains, a significant void of empirical research in regard to positive student emotions, such as joy while in a learning environment, that would help support her ideas.

Leading her to believe that there remains much potential and opportunity in the area of studying and researching positive emotions in a learning environment.

There have been several studies that speak to the connection between motivation and positive emotions, but very few speak specifically to just positive emotions and the role they play in engaging students in their learning. Tiana Rantala and Kaarina Maatta (2012) noted that, "[i]n the field of educational psychology, research on feelings is lacking, and the little that does exist has focused more on negative rather than positive feelings" (p. 87). As was stated earlier in Chapter Two several authors and researchers (Csíkszentmihályi, 1997; Egan, 2005, 2008, 2010; Gardner, 1999; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Wolk, 2008) note the importance of experiencing joy in learning, in fact, they see it as an essential and integral part of the learning process and that emotion and learning cannot exist separately (Rantala & Maatta, 2012, p. 87-89). This researcher shared those beliefs, and found them to be true in her own research.

Emotions - an integral part of learning.

When looking at the students' own responses in their self-assessment/reflections the students overwhelmingly confirm that they experienced 'normal' to 'big' joy in learning 90% of the time. This fact coupled with the voluntary additional expressions of emotions that were either drawn by the students such as: happy faces, self-portraits of the student jumping or being happy, along with written or scribed words such as: "happy", "joy", "like/liked", "love/loved" also confirm that the students experienced high levels of joy in learning during their *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) time. In fact, students voluntarily added more positive emotional information to their self-assessment/reflections 71% of the time. This also supports what Rantala and Maatta (2012), along with the other authors listed above, say in regards to emotions being an integral part of learning. Additionally, authors such as, Dumont, Istance, and Benavides (2012) state that "emotion and cognition operate seamlessly in the brain to guide learning" (p. 4). They further go

on to comment that "[l]ike emotion, the presence of positive motivation towards a learning task

markedly increases the likelihood that students will engage in deep learning" (p.4). From this

data then, it would appear that the students in this research were engaged in their learning, and

while doing so experienced joy a significant amount of the time. Furthermore, if these primary

students can document experiencing positive emotions like joy more than 90% of the time and

additionally add more positive emotions to their own reflections it would strongly suggest that

emotions, particularly positive ones, are an essential part of the learning process while

participating in the *LiD* programme.

   As was already established in Chapter Two of this research paper, there are elements of

emotions that are similar all over the world such as a smile, or a frown, but not all emotional

experiences are easy to interpret (Csíkszentmihályi, 1997; Rantala & Maatta, 2012). For

example, according to researchers Gordon, Lahelma, Hynninen, Metso, Palmu, and Tolonen

(2000), "[y]ou can attain and understand only a fraction of those truths that are within reach" (as

cited in Rantala & Maatta, 2012, p. 101). In other words, even though this researcher reported

out on what she saw and witnessed as accurately as she could, she realized that there could still

be a more significant portion of the experienced reality that was not visible, understandable, or

recordable.

   With that above understanding in mind, the results from these data also seem to suggest

that students do experience joy in learning in correlation to the *LiD* programme. As commented

on and reported in Chapter Four there were both instances of spontaneous joy and moments of

slow and sustained joy. The slow sustained moments of joy are reflective of what

Csíkszentmihályi (1997) has coined '*flow*' where the students are fully engaged in the moment

and with purpose, direction, and focus so as not to be aware of the passing of time. For example,

on many occasions, when *LiD* time was about to come to an end, the teacher would announce

and direct the students to their next task, after which, a collective sigh of disappointed "*awww's*"

could be heard from several of the students as they verbally voiced their displeasure in stopping

the task they were doing. This same comment was often heard and observed in the classroom of

the interviewed teacher. These slow sustained moments of *flow* or 'joy' happened more

frequently in both classrooms than the spontaneous expressions of emotions. It is this

researcher's belief that those moments of slow sustained joy were more powerful, and

meaningful to the students overall, rather than short exuberant expressions of emotion, because

the students were completely engaged both physically and mentally with their task. When

students were completely engaged they were focused and appeared to have a sense of purpose

and a sense of enjoyment as reflected in the expression of "*awww*" when told that *LiD* time was

over.

Author and scholar Moniqe Boekaerts (2010) suggests in her literature review study

entitled, *The Crucial Role of Motivation and Emotion in Classroom Learning* that the students'

responses may have more to do with the established environment within the classroom.

Boekaerts (2010) states that, "…students come to understand and integrate learning strategies

through observing and participating in social learning activities" (p. 105). She further goes on to

explain that, the teacher plays a significant role in designing and structuring the social

environment, and therefore, the responses that the students document may just be a reflection of

what they have come to learn to do. However, Rantala and Maatta (2012) along with Varila and

Viholainen (2000) suggest that when students reflect joy in learning it can be done either

passively or actively in a cognitively slow progressive way, or in a physiological way with quick

experiences and expressions of emotion (p. 89). From the self-assessments/reflections referred to

above and described in Chapter Four it is this researcher's belief and interpretation that those

data demonstrate that the students were exhibiting slow progressive and cognitive emotions of joy, and were not reflections of learned behaviour from their environment.

Supporting this researcher's beliefs about the effects of slow sustained moments of joy are Varila and Viholainen (2000), who found that when students are active in their own learning they tend to experience more joy, which according to their research can manifest itself either 'cognitively' or 'physiologically' and in both cases the experience is valid and real. However, in the cognitively active phase the results to the student are longer lasting (p. 67), suggesting that when students are actively and thoughtfully engaged with their learning they are more likely to experience positive emotions and enter the state of '*flow*'. Evidence to support this researcher's understanding of emotions being tied to the students being 'cognitively active' can be found when looking at the student self-assessment/reflection sheets; there the students were asked to 'think' about their feelings and then record it, which they did, and many took it a step further and added additional comments or drawings to support their choice. Also, during the teacher check-ins the students were asked about their feelings in regard to *LiD* to which they first had to think, and then respond.

Csíkszentmihályi (1997) would suggest that the 'cognitively active phase' or slow sustained moments of joy or '*flow*' that the students experienced were because the right balance between challenge and skill level had been achieved (p. 31). Additionally, Vygotsky (1978) notes that, "when children are presented with tasks that are slightly more challenging than they can do independently — that is, they require some adult guidance or collaboration with able peers — they are in their 'zone of proximal development'" (as cited in Willms & Friesen, 2012, p. 2). The evidence combined with what this researcher experienced in her own study led her to conclude, that the *LiD* programme can and does provide the delicate balance of challenge and skill level to actively engage students and have them experiencing the joy of learning.

Adding a slight twist to emotions being integral to learning came from an interview conducted with a primary/intermediate teacher. Her comments and responses further substantiated what has already been established; that students do experience high levels of engagement and joy in learning when utilizing the *LiD* programme. However, she made an interesting comment when she was asked to reflect on her own personal experiences of what she had witnessed and experienced in her classroom with her students in regard to the *LiD* programme. She commented that "*…it is about the quality of enthusiasm for learning that is important."* She further went on to say*, "Also, I wonder if we (*teachers, school system structures, & society*) squelch the natural curiosity of children in school."* Her intriguing question about '*squelching*' curiosity piqued this researcher's interest for two reasons, first, it had not occurred to this researcher that our current learning environments could to some degree be '*squelching*' our natural human tendency toward curiosity. Secondly, that as this researcher has always been a lower primary teacher herself, where students are always naturally curious, and excited to learn she never noted the likelihood that those tendencies appear to dissipate with the progression in years through school, at least in the current learning structures that exist. This little but significant piece of data is yet another valid reason and further support the implementation of a learning environment such as *LiD*.

The second interesting point raised in the interview surfaced after analysing and coding the responses given from the interviewee. Although the data supports and suggests that the students in the interviewee's primary/intermediate class still experienced high levels of joy there were more expression of negative emotions as compared to the researcher's K/1 class a difference of just two and three grades. Some of the comments expressed by the interviewed teacher were:

"*I would say that they* [the students] *have responded positively and*

enthusiastically for the most part …I have already mentioned the frustration and

explained why…; although, motivation for a few of my students is an issue, and

LiD is a bit more of a challenge for those that lack the focus, direction, and

motivation… sometimes I think that LiD might offer them too much

independence and therefore, they can't figure out a starting or a focus point.

However, only 1 student last year 'shut down' and refused to continue with his

topic."

The slightly more negatively expressed emotions observed and commented on by the

interviewed teacher suggest that the sense of joy in learning was not as strong in the

Grade 3 /4 classroom as it was in the researcher's K/1 class. Which raised two questions

for this researcher: if we (teachers, education, the systems) are in fact '*squelching*'

students' curiosity, is it in any way linked to the disengagement that students are

currently facing that was discussed in Chapter One of this research paper? Secondly,

does the disengagement coupled with the '*squelching*' continue to rise with progression

in each school year as is suggested by the comments given by the interviewee about her

Grade 3 / 4 class?

Educational research in the area of emotions, particularly positive emotions like

'joy' and its relation to student engagement and enjoyment in learning are lacking

(Boekaerts, 2010; Ranatla & Maatta, 2012). However, this current study does appear to

support the theories and findings expressed by Csíkszentmihályi (1997), Egan (2010),

Gardner (1999), Rantala and Maatta (2012), Willms, Friesen, and Milton (2009) and

others, regarding how high student engagement coupled with a sense of flow appears to

lead to students experiencing high levels of enjoyment in their learning.

Experiencing joy in learning brings a sense of pride, ownership, and connectedness.

This study also revealed two unexpected findings. The first finding was that included in the joy of learning is a sense of pride, ownership, and expertise that appears to accompany many students with their unique *LiD* topic. As was commented on in Chapter Four the students displayed their sense of pride, ownership and expertise in a variety of ways such as; making comments about their specific topic in relation to the other topics their classmates had. A common example was when one of the students would state a fact with an air of authority and pride, such as, '*that it is because of my topic that everything on the earth grows!*' A comment like this was usually followed up by other students displaying their knowledge and understanding of their topic in relation to hers, such as when an insect expert retorted to the above student that, "*well it is because of* insects *that the plants and flowers grow and we eat plants and flowers.*" These examples of students taking pride, ownership and displaying their expertise of how their topic connects with others were common daily occurrences within this researcher's classroom. Gardner (1999) also witnessed and documented similar experiences when he was observing a primary school in the small village of Reggio Emilia in Italy. He comments that "…the daily interactions …and the regular give-and-take …invites children to explore, in multiple, comfortable ways, the physical world, the biological world, and the social world…" (p. 91). Rantala and Maatta (2012) further clarify how a sense of pride and ownership create a sense of community, again emphasising the connection between the two themes, when they state;

> [b]ecause the joy of learning is connected with matters that are of great
> importance to a student, those things should be shared with others. The
> experiences of the joy of learning then become integrated with social
> relationships as well as emotional and communication skill (p.98).

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly for teachers, students, and administrators, was the sense of community and connectedness that the *LiD* programme brought to this researcher's classroom. Again, as was commented on in Chapter Four the sense of community and connectedness became apparent through the students' own interactions with each other through their *LiD* topics. These interactions became the basis for the sense of community that the class continued to experience throughout the study. For example, repeatedly during story time the students would not only make personal connections with the story being read but would also point out and make connections to other students' *LiD* topics and how they related to the story or their own *LiD* topic. Additionally, during different times throughout the day students could be heard and seen going to confirm or seek advice on a certain aspect of their learning with the student who was the *LiD* expert on that topic. A particular example can be seen when on one occasion we were discussing about the different types of bats there were in the world, when one student asks the appropriate expert – "*Are bats birds?*" To which the expert responded, '*No, bats are mammals,… birds are not mammals because they have feathers not fur.*' This researcher was astounded by two things; first, that the student would seek information from the person he perceived as the expert versus asking the teacher. Furthermore, it also confirmed that the students perceived and believed that they had a community of learners and experts from which to draw knowledge from rather than just relying on the teacher as the sole source of information. It was through these casual, factual, and unobtrusive interactions that this researcher believed a sense of community began to emerge and was further fostered through the *LiD* process.

Barron and Hammond (2010) state that, "students learn more deeply when they can apply classroom-gathered knowledge…[and] inquiry-based approaches [like *LiD*] are important ways to nurture communications, collaboration, creativity and deep thinking" (p. 199). Moreover, the Canadian Education Association has been conducting nationwide studies for over five years and

during that time they have found significant data that supports the link between engagement and cohesive and collaborative learning environments. In one of their latest studies entitled *Report Number Three: Trends in Intellectual Engagement* authors Dunleavy, Milton, and Willms, (2012) comment that, when students are "… interested, curious, personally invested in the quality of their work, and connected with others in setting and achieving learning goals…they noticed major differences in teacher/student and peer relationships both inside and outside of classrooms" (p. 8).

Furthermore, Csikszenthihalyi (1997), Egan (2010), and Gardner (1999) would all agree that the sense of community and pride experienced in this researcher's classroom was a result of the positive emotions that were experienced by the students. Boekaerts (2010) recognises that "positive emotions energise students because they direct attention towards relevant cues in the task and the learning environment" (p. 100). In other words, when the students are experiencing positive emotions such as joy and pride it is likely that their positive energy will spread out into the classroom environment creating a sense of community and connectedness. This thought is supported by Schutz and DeCuir (2002) when they acknowledge that "[b]ecause of the contagion of emotions and shared feelings, emotions represent a social experience in the classroom context" (as cited in Rantala & Maatta, 2012, p. 98). Furthermore, Rantala and Maatta (2012) stated that, "[t]he experiences of the joy of learning …[become] integrated with social relationships as well as emotional and communication skills. The joy experienced together, and shared, adds up to even more joy" (p. 98). Moreover, the sense of community experienced within this classroom is reflective of the social engagement definition given at the onset of this study which suggested that a, *"[a] sense of belonging"* (Willms et al., 2009, p. 7) was necessary for engagement to take place. Therefore, one can infer that because a sense of community was created it also implies that the students were engaged with their learning.

Again, this current research study, supported by the empirical data suggests that not only could *LiD* promote high student engagement and students' joy in learning but also that *LiD* could contribute to creating a more cohesive learning environment that could be beneficial in all areas of the school environment. These findings in and of themselves were significant in that it was not something that the researcher set out to discover, but it became an integral part of how she interpreted her findings. Moreover, these findings are important because they can inform teachers' practice and offer another possible element of the learning environment to be explored.

Limitations

This study, which was ultimately designed to examine if and how students experienced joy in learning within the confines of the *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) programme, did encompass several limitations. Although, the researcher was able to include all of her students in the research study, the results from this particular case study remain limited and difficult to generalize to other schools or school districts.

One of the most substantial limitations of this study was the maturation of the students because as the students matured in age so too did their abilities and skills which could have skewed the results. As commented on earlier in Chapter Three students enter school with varying degrees of abilities; however, most students usually experience some level of personal, social, and/or intellectual growth even in the few short months that this research took place, which could possibly have impacted the results in all of the data collection sets. Although the reverse is also true that over time the novelty of school and *LiD* may have worn off, yet, as this research has already demonstrated, the results indicate fairly constant or possibly increasing amounts of joy throughout the study period. Additionally, the students' maturation could also have played a part in the sense of community that was developed and created during the research time. However, it is this researcher's professional opinion and experience that although a sense of community

would naturally have occurred within the confines of a regular classroom structure, she believes

that through the *LiD* programme a particularly strong sense of community occurred. It is also

this researcher's belief that it was the interconnectedness of the *LiD* topics themselves that

enabled students to make personal and real connections between topics. The interactions that

occurred naturally strengthen our sense of community. For example, students that might not

necessarily have much in common or seek each other out as playmates were on a level playing

field when engaged in the *LiD* programme. In other words when they were learning about their

own topic they could make connections to someone else's topic which they would want to share,

through that sharing of information the students learned more about their topics, their classmates

and how we are all connected in some way.

In addition to student maturation, two more notable limitations in this study were, the

possibility of teacher/researcher bias, whether conscious or subconsciously influencing the data

and data collection. Also, as was discussed earlier in this chapter the teacher may have

inadvertently created an environment that was reflected back through the students' experiences,

reactions, and responses.

In regard to teacher/researcher bias it is this researcher's belief that the interviewed

primary/intermediate teacher added a perspective that was not possible to this researcher because

of the dual role the researcher had to perform, being both researcher and teacher in the

classroom. The Grade 3 / 4 teacher was truly able to step back and be the advisor and observer in

her classroom in a way that this researcher was not able to, which could account for a more valid

interpretation of her students' experiences. In other words, because this researcher was both the

conductor of the research as well as the classroom teacher, it may have consciously or

subconsciously blurred the lines which may have caused important details, data, and/or

information to be missed or misrepresented. Another classroom teacher, without the added

burden of also conducting and gathering research may see, experience, and report on events more accurately and with less bias. Thus, incorporating this element into the data collection was one way that the research attempted to mitigate the issue of teacher/researcher bias.

Another important limitation that may have also influenced the data for this research is the 'power-over' possibility. As these students were only in kindergarten or grade one, and as such have had very limited experience in a school or learning environment, they may have responded to certain questions or activities in a way that they might perceive the teacher (and in this case also the researcher) wanted them to rather than what they truly felt, experienced or believed. If this study was to be reconstructed or attempted again, one way to mitigate this issue would be to collect multiple data sets over a longer period of time. Due to the time restraints and the age of the participants the researcher was only able to do one teacher check-in with each student. Collecting multiple teacher check-in data points on each student would more accurately represent what the students felt and experienced as they began to feel more comfortable with the process. However, the researcher was able to collect multiple self-assessment/reflections from all of the students. The answers given by the students on their own self-assessment/reflections may more accurately represent what they experienced versus perhaps what they thought they should say during the teacher check-ins.

One final limitation that is noteworthy to the overall results of this study is the location where this study was conducted. As this study was conducted in a close-knit community, the parents may have played a bigger part in the overall effectiveness and "buy-in" from the students. This particular community of parents is actively involved in many of their children's school and extra-curricular activities and therefore, they may have inadvertently skewed the children's experiences with how *LiD* was talked about and/or supported at home. Therefore, this study is not generalizable unless reconstructed in a very similar context.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Currently, in British Columbia, there is a wide spread push toward 21st century learning which is in essence, the ability "to apply knowledge to new situations, analyze information, collaborate, solve problems, and make decisions" (Government of British Columbia, 2013) in hopes to meet the educational needs of our learners. In a publication, that is supported by the British Columbia Government together with the Ministry of Education, five ways education can be transformed into a 21st century style are outlined by describing the following shifts: "*From Learning Information to Learning to Learn, From Data to Discovery, From One Size Fits All to Tailored Learning, From Testing to Assess to Assessing to Learn,*[and finally]*, From Classroom Learning to Lifelong Learning*" (Premier's Technology Council, 2010, p. 2-3). All five of these ideas are the basis for the *Learning in Depth* programme and therefore the *LiD* programme, could be beneficial to both the teachers of School District 68 and the Ministry of Education by extension.

Additionally, it is this researcher's recommendation, based on what she has learned about positive emotions and students' experiences in learning from her examination of the literature, coupled with her own research, that educators be encouraged to try to bring the fun and enjoyment back into the learning practices; and further to that, that these experiences should carry throughout the learner's lifetime, not just in some stolen moments in a primary classroom setting. After experiencing *LiD* through both perspectives, of a researcher and a teacher, the value of positive emotions in learning and the effect the *LiD* programme had on students' social and emotional learning as well as their cognitive learning; this researcher can wholeheartedly recommend the *Learning in Depth* programme to any teacher willing to relinquish a bit of control in the classroom in favour of the students becoming more engaged and passionate about

their learning, which in turn, as has been stated earlier in this chapter, can lead to a more connected and cohesive learning environment.

It goes without saying that this researcher has been forever changed through both the processes of conducting research and implementing *LiD.* As is alluded to in the above paragraph this researcher will continue to utilize the *LiD* programme and promote its benefits to every school she happens to work at. Furthermore, she will continue to embrace *LiD* as part of the 21st century learning style that it is.

Recommendations for Future Research and Conclusion

One must remember that as Rantala and Maatta (2012) have stated; "a school's most important task is not teaching but learning" (p. 102). They further go on to explain that, although "it is important to establish emotions as a research subject equal with information," they warn however, that there can be "danger of over interpreting: so that every phenomenon of the school world would be explained by emotions or lack of them," which is why they stress that, "in order [for the student learning to] succeed, [it] requires both information and emotion and, most of all the new research results of emotions at school" (Rantala & Maatta, 2012, p. 102). To that end, the first recommendation for future research would be to determine if the emotion of joy could offer any significant advantage or aid to learning? This research has shown in a very limited capacity that when students experience joy in their learning that they are highly engaged, would the same hold true in a different grade level, a different elementary or high school setting, or even in a different school district, and furthermore, does this type of engagement lead to academic success?

Continued studies of students' experiences of joy in learning in correlation to the *LiD* programme would also be recommended, to see if as Egan (2010) claims, the skills that students learn while engaged in the programme are transferrable to other subjects, and experiences. Other

considerations and questions are: is it the joy of learning that is experienced by students reflective of the learning environment(s), or are there other factors at play? Furthermore, how can teachers ensure that they are providing students with positive emotional experiences in their learning, and what opportunities could teachers provide to enable the joy of learning to be experienced?

Finally, if it is true as reported in the literature that only a very small portion of the entire emotional experience is capable of being reported, the question then becomes; how can we learn to report out on more of what is actually happening (not just the 'tip of the ice berg' and the visible parts)? Additionally, what role do those emotions and experiences play in engaging students with and in their learning? This researcher realizes that these two questions are well beyond the scope of this paper, but are considerations for future research.

This study has confirmed the original hypotheses that students do experience high levels of joy in learning especially when they are engaged in the *Learning in Depth* programme. Moreover, this paper has also shown that there remains a significant void in the world of research in regard to positive emotions such as joy, and its effect on students' learning. Therefore, in conclusion the last words go to Rantala and Maatta (2012) as they boldly and succinctly state, "It is time to establish emotions in the school world as a research subject" (p. 102).

References

Barman, J., Sutherland, N., & Wilson, J. D. (1995). *Children, teachers and schools in the history of British Columbia*. Calgary, Alta: Detselig Enterprises.

Barron, B. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). Prospects and challenges for inquiry-based approaches to learning. In Dumont, H., Istance, D. & Benavides, F. (Ed.), *The nature of learning: Using research to inspire practice* (pp.199-215). OECD.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544-559.

Beghetto, R. (2005). Does assessment kill student creativity? *The Educational Forum, 69*(3), 254-263. doi: 10.1080/00131720508984694

Canadian Education Association. (2009). *What did you do in school today? Frequently Asked Questions.* Retrieved from http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/cea-ace.ca/files/cea-2009-wdydist-faq.pdf

Csíkszentmihályi, M. (1997). *Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Dolezal, S. E., Welsh, L. M., Pressley, M., & Vincent, M. M. (2003). How nine third-grade teachers motivate student academic engagement. *The Elementary School Journal, 103*(3), 239-267. doi: 10.1086/499725

Dumont, H., Istance, D. & Benavides, F. (Eds.) (2010). *The nature of learning: Using research to inspire practice*. OECD.

Dunning, P. (2010). Teaching for learning: What do we know? *Education Canada, 48*(5), 3. Retrieved from http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/cea-ace.ca/files/EdCan-2008-v48-n5-Dunning.pdf

Egan, K. (2002). *Getting it wrong from the beginning: Our progressivist inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Egan, K. (2005). *An imaginative approach to teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Egan, K. (2008). *The future of education: Reimagining our schools from the ground up*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Egan, K. (2010*). Learning in depth: A simple innovation that can transform schooling*. University of Chicago Press.

Fredricks J.A., Blumenfeld, P.C., & Paris, A.H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59-109. doi:10.3102/00346543074001059

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1999). *The disciplined mind: What all students should understand*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Gilbert, J. (2007). Catching the knowledge wave: Redefining knowledge for the post-industrial age. *Education Canada, 47*(3), 4-8. Retrieved from http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/cea-ace.ca/files/EdCan-2007-v47-n3-Gilbert.pdf

Government of British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2013). *21st Century Learning*. Accessed at: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/21century_learning.htm

Gordon, T., Lahelma, E., Hynninen, P., Metso, T., Palmu, T., & Tolonen, T. (2000). Koulun arkea tutkimassa – kokemuksia kollektiivisesta etnografiasta [Researching the everyday life of school – Experiences about collective ethnography]. *Naistutkimus* [Women studies], *13*(1), 17–31.

Hart, S. R., Stewart, K., & Jimerson, S. R. (2011). The student engagement in schools

    questionnaire (SESQ) and the teacher engagement report form-new (TERF-N):

    Examining the preliminary evidence. *Contemporary School Psychology, 15*, 67-79.

Hunt, T. C. (2005). Education reforms: Lessons from history. *The Phi Delta Kappan, 87*(1), 84-

    89.

Kidwell, C.F. L. (2010). The impact of student engagement on learning. *Leadership, 39*(4), 28.

Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student

    engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 262-273. doi:

    10.1111/j.1746-1561.2004.tb08283.x

Leadbeater, C. (2009). TedTalks (uploaded June 2010). *Education innovation in the slums*.

    Retrieved from http://ventureneer.com/tedcom-charles-leadbeater-education-innovation-

    slums on October 20, 2013.

Nichols, S.L. & Berliner, D. C. (2008). Testing the joy out of learning. *Educational Leadership,*

    65(6), 14-18.

Nese, J. F. (2006). *Early elementary influences on student engagement in learning*. Retrieved

    from ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing. (1439176).

Parsons, J. & Taylor, L. (2011). *Student engagement: What do we know and what should we do?*

    University of Alberta: University Partners. Retrieved at

    http://education.alberta.ca/media/6459431/student_engagement_literature_review_2011.p

    df

Pope, A. (2010). *An essay on criticism: With introductory and explanatory notes*. Waiheke

    Island: Floating Press. Retrieved from

    http://ezproxy.viu.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&Auth

    Type=ip,cookie&db=nlebk&AN=330762&site=ehost-live

Premier's Technology Council. (2010). *Premier's technology council: A vision for 21ˢᵗ century learning*. Accessed at:

http://www.gov.bc.ca/premier/attachments/PTC_vision%20for_education.pdf

Rantala, T., & Maatta, K. (2012). Ten theses of the joy of learning at primary schools. *Early Child Development and Care, 182*(1), 87-105. doi: 10.1080/03004430.2010.545124

Robinson, K. (2010). TedTalks, RSA. Animate, *Changing Education Paradigms*. Retrieved at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U

Robinson, K. (2012). TedTalks, *Do schools kill creativity.* Retrieved at

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sir-ken-robinson/do-schools-kill-

creativity_b_2252942.html

Saeed, S., & Zyngier, D. (2012). How motivation influences student engagement: A qualitative case study. *Journal of Education and Learning, 1*(2) doi: 10.5539/jel.v1n2p252

School District 68. (2011a). *School District 68 District Achievement Contract 2010-2011*. Retrieved from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/sdinfo/acc_contracts/2011/68.pdf

School District 68. (2011b). Trustee Campaign Information Sheet – Sharon Welch November 2011. Retrieved from http://www.sd68.bc.ca/Documents/Candidate%20Profile-Welch.pdf

School District 68. (2012, November). *Strategic Plan: Draft One – School District 68*. Retrieved from http://www.sd68.bc.ca/Documents/StratPlanNov28-12.pdf

Schultz, P., & DeCuir, J. (2002). Inquiry on emotions in education. *Educational Psychologist, 37*(2), 125-134.

Sefcik, M. (2012). What did you do in school today? Latest insights into student' intellectual engagement. *CEA Research Series. Report number one: The relationship between student*

engagement and academic outcomes. Toronto: ON. Retrieved from http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/cea-ace.ca/files/cea-2012-wdydist-summary.pdf

Trout, P. A. (1997). Disengaged students and the decline of academic standards. *Academic Questions, 10*(2), 46-56. doi:10.1007/s12129-997-1067-3

Varila, J., & Viholainen, T. (2000). The joy of working to the target of research. *Research Reports, 79*, 67-129. Joensuu: University of Joensuu.

Vibert, A. B., & Carolyn Shields. (2003). Approaches to student engagement: Does ideology matter? *McGill Journal of Education, 38*(2), 221.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Willms, J. D., Friesen, S. & Milton, P. (2009).*What did you do in school today? Transforming classrooms through social, academic, and intellectual engagement.* First National Report. Toronto: Canadian Education Association. Available at http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/cea-ace.ca/files/cea-2009-wdydist.pdf

Willms, J. D., & Friesen, S. (2012). *The Relationship Between Instructional Challenge and Student Engagement. What did you do in School Today*? Research Series Report Number Two. Toronto: Canadian Education Association. Available at http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/cea-ace.ca/files/cea-2012-wdydist-report-2.pdf

Wolk, S. (2008). Joy in school. *Educational Leadership, 66*(1), 8-14.

Zyngier, D. (2007). Re(c)onceiving student engagement: What the students say they want. Putting young people at the centre of the conversation. *LEARNing Landscapes. 1*(1), 93-116.

Zyngier, D. (2008). (Re)conceptualising student engagement: Doing education not doing time. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(7), 1765-1776. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2007.09.004

VANCOUVER ISLAND
U N I V E R S I T Y

Appendix A: Field Notes Form

Field Note #   Date:
Location:
Occasion:
 	
                 Description
	Time Start:
	Time Stop:
	
	       Interpretation
		Concepts/Themes/
		Thoughts
			Emotional
			Cues
			Tally

Additional comments:

Appendix B: Student Self-Assessment Form

VANCOUVER ISLAND
U N I V E R S I T Y

Name: _____   learning in depth   **Date:**
                                          LiD   _____

During *LiD* today I felt…	**No Joy 1**	**Small Joy 2**	**Normal Joy 3**	**Big Joy 4**
learning in depth LiD				
Some words that describe how I felt or what I learned during *LiD* today…	**OR**	**A picture of how I felt or what I learned during *LiD* today…**		

Appendix C: *LiD* Teacher Check-in Form

Check-in #	Date:	Student:

How are you doing with your *LiD* topic?

What have you learned or found interesting so far? (Ideas, facts, pictures, concepts etc.)

What feelings are you experiencing when you are doing LiD? (e.g. confused, happy, lost, excited, frustrated…)

Additional comments:

Appendix D: Teacher Interview Questions

Principal Investigator: Mrs. Terri Zolob, Teacher, School District 68 – Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Supervisor: Dr. Rachel Moll, Faculty of Education, Vancouver Island University (250)-753-3245 local 2161

Purpose of the study:
The purpose of this study will be to determine how engagement is experienced by students through the Learning in Depth (*LiD*) programme; more specifically, do students experience joy in learning and if so, how do they experience it and when do they experience it?

Introduction:
I will remind the participant prior to officially starting the interview that s/he can withdraw at any time and for any reason. Also I will remind my participant that their participation is voluntary, thus they can refuse to answer any question, at any time, for any reason. I will assure the participant that their data will remain as confidential as possible. In addition, I will also remind the participant to refrain from saying anything that could identify themselves (their name, the names of their students, colleagues, or school) during the interview process. Before commencing the interview I again will explain the purpose of the research and, define the operational terms used within the study such as: *engagement, experiences, joy, flow*.

Procedures:
I will ask my interviewee, 'with his/her permission, if can I audio record the interview?' The audio recording will only be used to verify the accuracy of my written notes. After my notes have been transcribed the audio recording will be deleted.

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and volunteering to be interviewed about your experiences teaching *LiD*.

1. Can you please tell me generally about the make-up of your class, first, how many students do you have?
2. How many of your students are boys and how many are girls?
3. What is the approximate age of your students?
4. What grade are you teaching this year
5. How long have you been teaching *LiD* for?
6. What about *LiD* did you find interesting enough to want to bring it to your classroom?
7. How have the students responded to *LiD*? Tell me about what you have noticed as a teacher in a classroom regarding students' behaviour and or feelings associated around *LiD* or student engagement?

8. Can you give any specific examples of where you have noticed or observed students engaged in their learning so that they experienced 'joy' 'excitement' or 'flow'?
9. Can you give any specific examples of where you have noticed or observed students experiencing negative emotions while they were participating in *LiD*?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experiences or your students' experiences around the *LiD* programme?

Thank you again, for your time. When I have your comments typed up, I will give you a copy to read through to ensure that I have represented your intent.

*Post interview I will transcribe the audio-taped interview, and ensure the interviewer receives a copy to verify and validate the documentation and intent of the interview.

Appendix E - Invitation

VANCOUVER ISLAND
U N I V E R S I T Y

learning
in depth
LiD

You are invited to join us for our LiD Celebration <u>POTLUCK Lunch</u> (students are asked to bring something to contribute to our potluck style lunch).

We will be learning what our LiD topic will be and would be honoured to have you join in the festivities and celebrations with us. In addition, Mrs. Zolob will briefly inform you about the current research project that she is doing as part of the Master's programme that she is enrolled in at Vancouver Island University (VIU). She will also be seeking your permission to possibly use some of your child's work with LiD as part of that research project.

Time: 12:00ish (eating from 12 – 12:45ish) Discovering our LiD topic 12:45ish – 1:30

Place: Our Grade 2 Classroom

When: Wednesday, October 2nd , 2013

RSVP: In your child's planner (tonight) if you can come and if you can contribute to our potluck. Thank you from all of us we are very excited☺!

Appendix F: Student Data Recruitment Script

Principal Investigator: Mrs. Terri Zolob, Teacher, School District 68 – Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Supervisor: Dr. Rachel Moll, Faculty of Education, Vancouver Island University (250)-753-3245 local 2161

Purpose of the Study:
In addition to being your child's teacher, I am taking a Masters of Educational Leadership programme at Vancouver Island University. This programme requires me to gain applied experience in designing and conducting research. As such, the research that I have chosen to examine is a programme called *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) that will be implemented in my K/1 class this year. Through this programme my research will endeavour to discover if and/or how students experience joy in learning. The purpose of this study will be to determine how engagement is experienced by students through the Learning in Depth (*LiD*) programme; more specifically, do students experience joy in learning and if so, how do they experience it and when do they experience it?

Procedures:
All students will be going through the same learning experiences and completing self-assessments (engagement rubrics and reflection journals) as well as teacher check-in's, as part of the requirements of their regular class programme. The research component requires no extra work, activities, or time commitment on the part of the students. I am only seeking your permission on two things; to use your child's engagement rubrics and reflection journals, as well as the teacher check-in's in my research. Whether your child participates in this research or not will have no impact on your child's treatment or progress at school. You may choose to withdraw your child from the research portion at any time for any reason without explanation and without consequences.

There are no known harms associated with your child's participation in this research. Your child's participation is completely voluntary and confidential.

It will not be possible for your child to remain anonymous in this research simply because, as your child's teacher, I am familiar with his or her work. However, please be assured that whether or not your child participates in this research or not will have no impact on how I teach or grade your child. You may choose to withdraw your child from this research at any time without explanation and without consequences. Should you choose to withdraw your child please contact me directly.

Please note that should you choose to withdraw or not give your consent for your child to participate in the research portion, they will still be participating in the regular Learning in Depth classes, only their data will be withheld from the research.

Please return all signed consent forms to myself, or the locked box provided at the office for your convenience on or before October 15th 2013.

Appendix G: Parent/Guardian Consent Form

"Student Engagement: Experience the Joy of Learning, through *Learning in Depth"*

Principal Investigator: Mrs. Terri Zolob, Teacher, School District 68 – Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Supervisor: Dr. Rachel Moll, Faculty of Education, Vancouver Island University (250)-753-3245 local 2161

Purpose of the study:
In addition to being your child's Kindergarten/Grade 1 teacher, I am taking a Masters of Educational Leadership program at Vancouver Island University. This programme requires me to gain applied experience in designing and conducting research. As such, the research that I have chosen will examine a programme developed at Simon Fraser University called *Learning in Depth* (*LiD*) which I will be using in my classroom. My research will endeavour to explore if and how students experience joy in learning. The results will be used in my graduate thesis, as partial requirement for the Masters in Educational Leadership from Vancouver Island University.

Procedures:
All students in my class will be going through the same learning experiences and completing student self-assessments (engagement rubrics and reflection journals), and teacher check-in's as part of the requirements of their regular class programme. The research component requires no extra work, activities, or time commitment on the part of your child. I am seeking your permission and consent for two things; to use your child's self-assessments (engagement rubrics and reflection journals) and teacher check-in's as part of my data set for this research study. In addition to class work, I will also be keeping field notes of a general nature while students participate in *LiD* activities. I will also be interviewing another teacher in the school district who teaches the *LiD* programme for additional data.

There are no known harms associated with your child's participation in this research. Your consent for me to use your child's *LiD* work in my research is completely voluntary and confidential.

It will not be possible for your child to remain anonymous in this research simply because, as your child's teacher, I am familiar with his or her work. However, please be assured that whether or not your child participates in this research or not will have no impact on how I teach or grade your child. You may choose to withdraw your child from this research at any time without explanation and without consequences. Should you choose to withdraw your child please contact me directly.

Please note, that should you choose to withdraw or not give your consent to have your child participate in the research portion of the *LiD* programme, they will still be participating in all regular *LiD* classes, only their data will be withheld from my research.

After the research has been completed, all paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the principal investigator's office and shredded after 3 years (January 2017). Electronic data and results of this study will be stored on a password-protected files and password-protected computer with access restricted to me, and my research supervisor.

Please return all signed consent forms to myself, or the locked box provide at the office for your convenience on or before October 15th 2013. After October 15th the consent forms will be collected and stored in my home office in a locked filing cabinet.

If you have any concerns about your child's treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at (250) 753-3245 (ext. 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information please feel free to come to the classroom, or contact me.

Terri Zolob
Masters of Educational Leadership Student,
Vancouver Island University

I have read and understand the above information.
☐ Yes, I consent to allow my child's *LiD* classwork to be used as data in this research study.

☐ No, I do not consent for my child's *LiD* classwork to be used as data in this research study

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

_____
Child/Student name (Please print)
*Please keep a copy of this consent form for your own records