



# Robyn Ewing

*"Change takes time. Any researcher attempting to valorise their work should ensure that the impact of the research is evaluated from the beginning of the project, and the outcome should then be refined over time."*

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Initially a primary teacher, Professor Emerita Robyn Ewing has a background in Teacher Education and the Arts. She is also a Co-Director of the Creativity in Research, Engaging the Arts, Transforming Education, Health and Wellbeing (CREATE) Centre which is at the University of Sydney..

Robyn has always had a passion for the role of the Arts in learning. When she was working in primary school classrooms, she developed a co-mentoring project that would help other teachers use the Arts to teach English and Literacy.

In 2009, she entered a partnership with the Sydney Theatre Company in order to spread the teaching method to schools across Australia. Thus, the School Drama programme was created.

# School Drama – Improving pupils' English and Literature skills through the Arts

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School Drama started out with Robyn Ewing's intentions to improve teaching practices in schools in order to enhance pupils' literacy development. She had seen how creative, drama-rich pedagogies helped pupils to learn and understand concepts related to English and Literature and wanted to valorise her work by bringing it to a wider audience.

She then started a collaboration with the Sydney Theatre Company which enabled the creation of 'School Drama', in partnership with The University of Sydney. In the program, Teachers work with actors from Sydney Theatre Company and over seven weeks they co-teach pupils in classrooms.

The pedagogy has improved students' abilities in English and Literacy and has further been elaborated and adapted for other contexts: Secondary schools, pre-schools, juvenile justice, adult and refugee learners of English.

Implementing an initiative such as School Drama takes a large amount of time and it can be difficult to see effects of one's work immediately. Robyn also had to face critics that said it was not possible to see pupils progress in only seven weeks, and policymakers often requires a "one-size-fits-all" solution, which is not possible as each student and school is different. In this context Robyn notes, that the ability to persevere and be resilient when working with innovation is required. Also, conducting continuous research on the program, evaluating and providing evidence have been important factors in the success of the program.

Along the way, the program has been constantly improved and refined, and both students and PhD students have researched it from different dimensions. It has been spread across Australia and New Zealand, and since 2009, over 35.000 pupils and teachers have participated in the program.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

## & ADVICE

**Be Patient!** Change takes time and it can be difficult to see effects of one's work immediately.

**Believe in your work and provide research evidence.** This can help overcome the doubts of others. The ability to persevere and be resilient when working with innovation is required.

**Evaluate the impact** of the research from the beginning and refine the outcome over time.

**Valorisation is a process.** Learning along the way entails continuous adaptations, improvements and refinements.