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# **An investigation into early childhood art education in two Shanghai kindergartens**

A thesis

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## ABSTRACT

Historically, art practice in Chinese preschools was dominated by giving children a skill-based sense of achievement which was roundly criticized by Western art educators for stifling children's *personal* expression and creativity. Chinese policy makers promoted a renewed early childhood art curriculum which draws heavily on conceptual and practical model of art education from abroad while still valuing aspects of past traditions. The objectives outlined in the revised early childhood art curriculum speak not only to an older Chinese emphasis on children's early acquisition of art skills and the quality of work of art, but also to an overriding new emphasis on creative self-expression, co-constructing art learning, and art appreciation.

Changes in the principles of early childhood art education have taken place since 2001, so what has changed in implementation? Using a qualitative, case study methodology, this study set out to address the following research questions: What are common rituals of practice that are typical of art education praxis in two contemporary Shanghai kindergartens? What do teachers reveal as their rationale for their approach to teaching art? How do children's actions, artworks and speech represent their art learning? In what ways do teachers and children's responses reflect the way that art education has been represented in current kindergarten policy guidelines and historical reforms?

Examining what teacher and children did and said about art revealed commonly shared experiences. It appeared that a predetermined, teacher-directed style of teaching still dominated many preschool art sessions. Influenced by cultural factors, there was a widely shared commitment to the significance of teacher authority in 'regulating' children's art experience, and the idea of skill progression drives the emergence of creative expression. The teaching of practical skills via modeling dominated even though policy shifts indicated to the value of emotional enjoyment. Teachers tried to adjust their tight control over children's art-making, as evident in their endeavor to develop alternative rituals of practice to enhance children's engagement with work of art. Nevertheless, changes in ideas, particularly the corresponding practice presented a challenge to teachers who had never seen these multiple perspectives demonstrated in a pragmatic manner. Teachers perhaps were not equipped with sufficient knowledge to effectively combine these opposing messages into effective practice. Constraints such as tight schedules, large class sizes, parents' expectations for observable outcomes of

children`s learning, and more importantly, the lack of effective professional development further contributed to the perpetuation of a teacher-directed art practice.

Indicated by this study, there were themes warranting further investigation: the tension between Chinese tradition and contrasting Western views of creativity and expressiveness; the constraints in practice that reinforce teacher-directed pedagogy; and effective interventions that support teachers to make significant changes in their own art pedagogical practice in kindergarten art

Key words: early childhood art education, China education, curriculum implementation, hybrid curriculum

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 My interest in this topic

When I began my four-year study on Bachelor of Teaching (early childhood), I had been on full range of preschool teacher training courses. The learning programs had enriched my theoretical knowledge, but it was challenging to put theory into practice when I started to work as an intern in two of the top public kindergartens in Shanghai, China. The work there gave me a clear perspective of the requirements for being a preschool teacher, including: conducting classroom observations, implementing learning activities, recording reflections, renewing classroom environments.

Influenced by my father who has been committed to art, I received explicit art instruction at a relatively young age, and now enjoy drawing as a hobby. Not surprisingly, teaching art came to the fore when I planned for learning activities. My internship experience offered me unique opportunities to watch demonstration lessons taught by experienced teachers, and to engage in the teaching of art. Working alongside children always brought me great joy. Their concentration and engaged commitment to art remained fresh in my memory. In particular, I was fascinated by the artworks they created, the pride they showed in their works of art, and the keen desire they demonstrated to communicate with others their thoughts and feelings.

My postgraduate study in New Zealand has given me a different perspective on early childhood education. Indeed, a wide range of reading has so far opened my eyes and expanded my understanding. What has surprised me, however, is a characteristic portrayal of art practices in Chinese schooling deriving from existing Western literature (Kessen, 1975; Lowry & Wolf, 1988; Gardner, 1989a, 1989b; Winner, 1989; Maureen et al., 1999; Piscitelli et al., 1999; Wright, 2003). From Western outsider viewpoint, also the outsiders of Chinese culture, these scholars attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of the face of art and the teaching of art in Chinese schooling at the primary and preschool level.

In a particularly detailed account, Kessen's group (1975), for example, reported their observations of art activities in the kindergartens they visited in China. Although there were some variations observed in the pedagogical approaches adopted among different kindergartens, the overall mood and tone appeared to be similar. Teaching typically consisted of inculcating practical skills, directing children through a step-by-step sequence of instructions towards the development

of art competency. Winner (1989) too, investigated the rationales and emphasis of Chinese art education in preschool and primary settings. She noted that a taught art curriculum was regarded highly in Chinese schooling. Attention was given to the teaching of stereotyped formulae for representation.

It must be emphasized, however, that this historical representation of Chinese kindergarten art practices might be in need of review. Since the early 1980s when China has made itself open again to the outside world, foreign preschool (art) theories and practices become popularized among Chinese kindergarten practitioners (Liu & Feng, 2005). Progressive ideologies such as those of Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky, as well as various curricula such as those of the ‘Project Approach’, the ‘Reggio Emilia Approach’, the ‘Developmentally Appropriate Practice’ approach and Multiple Intelligence have been advocated, adopted and localized (Hsueh et al., 2004; Tobin et al., 2009; Zhu & Zhang, 2008; Zhu, 2002, 2009, 2010). Two published policy documents *Regulations for Kindergarten Education (Trial Version)* issued in 1989, and *Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (Trial Version)* issued in 2001, epitomize these official efforts to promote a more child-centered, integrated-day and play-oriented curriculum, for the purpose of educating well-rounded and lifelong learners (Zhu & Zhang, 2008; Zhu, 2002, 2009, 2010).

The change in the rationale for early childhood education calls for the reshaping of pedagogical practices in the field. Shanghai, as a city in which there is more penetration of Western ‘progressive’ thinking about preschools, always goes further in its implementation of the core values and practices called for by the national *Regulation and Guidelines* (Hsueh et al., 2004; Tobin et al., 2009).

Using a qualitative case study methodology, this study sets out to explore the current pedagogical orientations of art education in Shanghai kindergartens. This snapshot of practice occurs after thirty years of numerous reform efforts described in the literature. The author writes from the perspective a Chinese cultural insider, whose knowledge about early childhood education was largely constructed in Shanghai, China, during my four years of college life. Yet my two years’ postgraduate study in New Zealand has revealed a number of Western visions of art education both theoretically, and to some extent, in practice. These Western constructions I now recognized embedded within the curriculum reforms undertaken in China. Therefore, accompanied by the lens of Western art education theories and practices I am further empowered to examine Chinese art pedagogy

that has been adopted in contemporary Shanghai kindergartens. The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What are common rituals of practice that are typical of art education praxis in two contemporary Shanghai kindergartens?
2. What do teachers reveal as their rationale for their approach to teaching art?
3. How do children`s actions, artworks and speech represent their art learning?
4. In what ways do teachers and children`s responses reflect the way that art education has been represented in current kindergarten policy guidelines and historical reforms?

By examining the current instructional trends and approaches embraced in art education in Shanghai kindergartens, and gathering teachers` as well as children`s perspectives around their art teaching/learning experiences, this study may contribute to an understanding of early childhood art education in the current Chinese context. It may also provide an expanded culturally informed dimension to the existing Western literature. Hopefully through this study, readers will be alerted to changes that early childhood curriculum reform in China from the 1980s to a contemporary insight to art education in some Shanghai kindergartens.

## **1.2 Structure of thesis**

In this chapter, a brief introduction of my interest in the research topic is offered, including the purpose of this research study and the key research questions to be addressed.

This is followed by a review of the Chinese preschool art education pre-1980s` reforms. It then moves on to explore the reform of Chinese preschool (art) education from the 1980s to the present. Curriculum policy is examined by exploring the concepts informing the revised art curriculum. The relationship to this curriculum in some Kunming kindergartens (Yunnan province, China) is also documented in the literature and offers an opportunity for comparison.

Following the literature review, the chapter on methodology explains why interpretive theory offers the best orientation for this study. A qualitative case study methodology has been chosen to present the principles for the design and implementation of this study. The details about the data collection and analysis process are described. Consideration of translation issues inherent in this study and related ethical considerations are discussed.

Following the design and implementation of this study, I will present the observed

practice, interview data and children`s voices collated from four Shanghai kindergarten classrooms. Children`s actions, artworks and speech are shared to further investigate children`s perceptions of on their own learning experience, and triangulate these with the teachers` intended and described journey of teaching art. The themes evolving out of the data highlight tensions among the intended, the implemented, the experienced and the hidden curriculum. The literature review is drawn upon for comparison and contrasting viewpoints.

In conclusion, the findings of this study are summarized and the directions for future research are discussed.

A formatting convention issued in this study: Throughout this study, teacher and child participants` voices are both indented and italicized to emphasize their importance and uniqueness,. Direct quotations from literature sources are either indented or use quotation marks in the usual manner.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, a brief overview of the Chinese early childhood art education pre-1980s` reform is offered. This is immediately followed by an in-depth examination of the post-1980s kindergarten (art) curriculum reform. The diversity of perspectives informing the constructions of curriculum policy is traced. The possible issues that might arise from the integration of divergent visions are highlighted. Scholarship related to the delivery of this revised preschool art curriculum in other parts of China is presented to further inform this research study.

### 2.1 Early childhood art education in China, pre-1980s` reform

In this paragraph, early Western scholars who have described their perceptions of Chinese early childhood art education pre-1980s` reform are explored.

Chinese early childhood art education seemed to have different view over the educational importance of art education and how art should be taught to young children to those of Western art education. In Chinese preschools, art and art education was endowed for its value of cultivating children`s aesthetics<sup>1</sup> and morality, rather than fostering their personal expression and cognitive flexibility (Winner, 1989). In terms of the way to teach art, Kessen (1975) and Winner (1989) noted that one-way transmissive styles of teaching were often evident, even dominant in art sessions in many Chinese preschools. Art was treated as instruction centering on step-by-step-procedures, whereby children, following precise directions for art, learned to master prescribed ways of making art in an air of quiet concentration, rather than spontaneously creating their own art in a lively manner. Emphasis was given to the inculcation of practical skills, instead of the development of artistic ideas. All of these exemplified a skill- and representational-oriented focus of art education. Considering that a Western audience might be unfamiliar with the cultural context of art in Chinese preschools, I therefore include an extensive rich description by both Kessen (1975) and Winner (1989). This is to provide a benchmark for comparison with later observations from contemporary fieldwork.

The following vignette illustrated how art activity was implemented in a kindergarten in Guangzhou, China, which considered by Kessen (1975) to be a

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<sup>1</sup> Aesthetic education is translated as beauty education in the Chinese context.

prototype:

The task for the children was to color with pencils a trolley bus, the outlines with which had previously been duplicated and distributed to the children. On a display board at the front of the room the teacher had placed a previously colored model slightly larger than the one the children were to color. The children were seated on opposite sides of a long table, facing the teacher. On the table by each child were the picture of the trolley bus and the colored pencils (yellow, blue, and black) he would need, lined up precisely at the back edge of the paper. Material and children on both sides of the table were perfectly aligned. Each child's chair was placed at a right angle to the edge of the table, and each child faced the teacher and listened intently as she spoke.

After talking for a fairly long time about what the children were to do and how they were to color their pictures, the teacher took one of the duplicated designs, clipped it to the easel beside her, and began to color it as a model not only of the structure but of procedure. Not a child touched pencils or design as the teacher colored her drawing and made suggestions about how the children were to proceed. When she finished, there were two models on the easel, the one previously prepared and on a slightly larger scale than the one to be completed by the children, and the exact model. Then, on a signal from the teacher, each child stood up, turned his chairs around ninety degrees, picked up the yellow pencil and began to color that part of the trolley bus. The children worked very slowly and carefully. I drifted in and out of this classroom two or three times and found some of the children still carefully working on their drawings some twenty minutes later, with not a deviant color used and hardly a stroke out of place. The ones who had already finished sat patiently and waited for the others to finish (p. 93).

Winner (1989) too provided a detailed description of a "drawing a penguin" lesson she watched during her visit in Nanjing, China, which echoed the observed practice described in the work of Kessen (1975):

The class began with a color videotape of penguins in their natural habitat. Children were then asked to do a one-minute sketch of the penguin's environment as background for their pictures. Then the 'real' class began. 'Today,' The teacher said, 'you will learn how to draw a penguin.' She showed how to block out the oblong shape of the body. 'First make two

points on your paper showing how tall it should be, then two more for the width, then connect the four points with a line.’ Next she showed how to make the head, and how not to make it. The correct way is to fuse the head into the body. A circle sunk into the body is considered incorrect. Next to the incorrect sketch she drew a big X to remind children not to draw it in this way. Children were then told to locate the position of the eye. The teacher drew the eye, then the wing and feet. Next, she showed how to color in the black parts...Children also had their textbooks open to the penguin lesson. The book provided a step-by-step method for drawing a penguin, identical to the one that the teacher had demonstrated (p. 54-55).

From the description of Kessen (1975) and Winner (1989), we can gain insight into the common rituals of practice and overarching goals of art education in Chinese preschools prior to the 1980s` reform in China. Frequently, completed models would be shown, graphic techniques would be demonstrated. The form of interaction occurred throughout the process was highly routinized, typified by a teacher-led whole class interaction. The main emphasis of art education was on skill proficiency and representational quality. However, this historical representation of Chinese kindergarten art practices might be in need of review.

## **2.2 Early childhood art education in China, post-1980s` reform**

In the past 30 years, the introduction of foreign preschool theory and practice has encouraged new conceptual and practical models for understanding early childhood education, including my particular focus on art education. In very general terms, instructing children in skills of representation as advocated practices becomes less central in art education policy. Facilitating children`s emotional enjoyment and creative expression through art is now emphasized at the core of preschool art education (Ministry of Education, 2001). In order to gain a more thorough understanding of art education in the present-day Chinese preschools, we need to look into it within the context of kindergarten curriculum reforms since the 1980s.

### **2.2.1 Curriculum policy and theoretical underpinnings**

Since the early 1980s when China has made itself open again to the outside world, preschool theory and practice from abroad have become popularized among Chinese kindergarten practitioners (Liu & Feng, 2005). Progressive ideologies

such as those of Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky, as well as various curricula such as those of the ‘Project Approach’, the ‘Reggio Emilia Approach’, the ‘Developmentally Appropriate Practice’ approach and Multiple Intelligence have been receiving a great amount of attention (Hsueh et al., 2004; Tobin et al., 2009; Zhu & Zhang, 2008; Zhu, 2002, 2009, 2010). Exposure to these educational ideas and curriculum models has led to a rethinking of Chinese existing epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices in early childhood education which emphasized a teacher-directed, subject-based and skill-focused teaching mode (Liu & Feng, 2005; Pan & Liu, 2008; Zhu, 2008). To overcome the perceived shortcomings of this traditional education paradigm, and to catch up with international educational developments, the Chinese government launched a large-scale reform in early childhood education. In 1989, the National Education Committee issued *Regulations for Kindergarten Education (Trial Version)*, which legitimized the conceptual ideas of ‘respecting children’, ‘active learning’ and ‘play-based teaching and learning’. In 2001, the Ministry of Education issued *Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (Trial Version)*, which offered guiding principles for the practical application of *Regulations*. This revised early childhood art curriculum<sup>2</sup> is defined within the national *Guidelines* (Ministry of Education, 2001).

Aiming for developing a modern preschool system with Chinese characteristics, not just mimicking those of the West (Tobin et al., 2009, 2011), the Chinese government has integrated a diversity of perspectives (indigenous and abroad) into the national *Guidelines*. This ultimately gives rise to what Tobin et al (2009, 2011) call, a hybrid curriculum that combines both Chinese and Western pedagogical notions. The construction of early childhood art curriculum was no exception to this trend.

Jolley and Zhang (2012) describe the emphasis of this revised early childhood art curriculum. In their view, it is inspired by the ideal of expressive art-making, with overriding emphasis given to the children’s expression of creativity (thoughts and feelings), their enjoyment of art learning, and the value of artistic process (Jolley & Zhang, 2012). As one translated section reads:

Children should be provided with the opportunity for self expression. They should be encouraged to freely express their own feelings, understandings and thoughts through different artistic ways. Each idea and creation of the

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<sup>2</sup> This key document will be referenced with the text as (Ministry of Education, 2001) to avoid confusion.

young child should be respected. Their particular perception of aesthetics and their own expressive way should be valued. Their happiness deriving from artistic creation should also be shared (Ministry of Education, 2010, as cited in Jolley & Zhang, 2012).

Along with the expressive function of art making, the documents also highlight the value of art-making process, emphasizing that,

The process itself is an important opportunity through which children can act out their own thoughts and feelings (Ministry of Education, 2001, as translated by author).

For children to enjoy their art learning through expressive art-making, teachers have been admonished to eschew “overemphasizing skill-building and stand-requests” :

...to avoid the tendency of just valuing the product of expressive skills/art activities, and the tendency of neglecting children`s emotional expression during the process of art making (Ministry of Education, 2010, as cited in Jolley & Zhang, 2012).

Given the great attention that the document gives to expressive art-making, it is not surprising that art is endorsed for its value of emotional catharsis:

The emotional function of art education should be fulfilled to facilitate young children`s development of healthy personality (Ministry of Education, 2001, as translated by author).

While increased emphasis has been placed on children`s self-expression through art making, Jolley and Zhang (2012) continues by reminding that the necessity for teachers to instruct children in technical skills and offer technical assistance has also been specified in the documents:

On the one hand, children should be supported and encouraged to take part in various art activities and to express their feelings; on the other hand, their skills of artistic expression should also be enhanced (Ministry of Education, 2010, as cited in Jolley & Zhang, 2012).

They then go to conclude that the revised art curriculum is made to facilitate children`s creative self-expression in an atmosphere of enjoyment, the ideals of which closely parallel those of Western art education, while not eschewing the traditional value of art competency and performance (Jolley & Zhang, 2012).

It is worth noting that Jolley and Zhang (2012) open up a theme concerning a tension between a skill-oriented and expressive-oriented art education. They

suggest that there is a simultaneous goal of skill acquisition against a goal for art education based in expressive purpose. They link Chinese notions of what creative expression is and how it should be nurtured in young children and inside a Chinese context.

There are indications that the Chinese view of creativity differs significantly from how Western nations perceive ‘creativity’. As Leong (2011) writes, creativity in Chinese culture is conceptualized as “a re-interpretation of ideas”, rather than “a break from tradition” (P. 58). At the heart of Chinese creativity is *continual transformation* (Rudowicz, 2004; Leong, 2011), where creativity is perceived to be:

ever-renovating and producing, or as unexpectedly developing into various genuine entities, no matter they are new or not (Niu & Sternberg, 2006, p. 29).

That is to say, Chinese creativity ideals do not necessarily involve producing radical novelty (Gardener, 1989a, 1989b; Rudowicz, 2004; Leung et al., 2004; Niu & Sternberg, 2006; Leong, 2011). As Rudowicz (2004) further reminds,

elements of *invention* and *novelty*, a willingness to *reject tradition*, orientation on *self-actualization*, celebration of *individual accomplishment* and concentration on the *future* are almost inherent to a Western conception of creativity (p. 59).

Compared to Western creativity’s willful quest for ‘deviant from tradition’, the Chinese concept of creativity focuses more on “rearranging the pattern or make a modest alteration to *existing* knowledge and practice” (Rudowicz, 2004, p. 62). It demands ‘bringing forth new ideas out of old’, rather than ‘the originality of ideas’. Confusing it might be to Western minds, originality or novelty is not considered as the fundamental hallmark for determining Chinese creativity. Gardner (1989b) described this conceptualization of creativity as “approved creativity” (p. 55), where individuals are allowed some flexibility in re-combining the acquired forms, so that the product comes to be only slightly deviating from the prescribed canon.

Chinese and Western policy holds different conceptions of creativity. There is an inherent tension between skill-oriented and expressive-oriented pedagogical practices. The dominant position in Chinese preschools is for teacher-directed art. We can question the implementation of policy documents that appears to advocate movements toward child-centered, expressive-oriented focus for art education.

In addition to the need for children`s self-expression, emotional enjoyment and the value of artistic process identified by Jolley and Zhang (2012), the revised early childhood art curriculum, also appears to have integrated other varying visions of art education advocated in Anglo-American contexts, such as discipline-based art education`s (DBAE) notion of art appreciation, as well as postmodernist theories` emphasis on organizing learning through children`s lived experiences, the integration of arts with other learning domains (more highlighted in Shanghai`s local pedagogical practice), and a social constructionist view of learning.

This revised art curriculum does not specifically explore DBAE` notion of art appreciation, but traces of it could be located in the following wording:

Children are able to preliminarily experience and *appreciate* the beauty in environment, in life, and in the arts (Ministry of Education, 2001, as translated by author).

More explicit statement about DBAE could be found in a local (Shanghai) instructional material written by Lin and Zhu (2006), in which they detail the content for art appreciation, such as the beauty of nature, surrounding environment, works of art (referring to masterworks, or visual imagery produced either by peers or adults, teachers). They also formulate a set of goals in relation to one`s art appreciation abilities that most children are expected to attain at different ages. It writes for example, that:

Up to age 6, children are able to understand artistic style, and expressive intention to works of art; to discern symbolic and implied meaning behind; and to hold views and express their own feelings about other`s work when doing appreciation and making judgment (Lin & Zhu, 2006, p. 109, as translated by author).

The statement that “Children should be guided to make good use of things or recyclable materials around them to make crafts and toys so as to beautify their life or to carry out other activities” (Ministry of Education, 2001, as translated by author) echoes what Hertzog (2001) observed in Reggio Emilia.

There is also a renewed emphasis on the importance of acting, thinking and progressing with others in terms of appreciating works of art. As one translated section reads:

The conditions of displaying children`s artworks should be provided so that children can be guided to communicate with each other, appreciate each

other, and improve together (Ministry of Education, 2001, as translated by author).

This emphasis on a community of inquiry, as I see it, embodies one of the key principles of the Reggio Emilia approach: valuing “interactive–constructivist views of learning” (Malaguzzi, 1993, p.10). This is echoed in Shanghai’s local pedagogical practice—an integrated theme-based practice. Suggestions to co-constructing learning are obliquely expressed in instructions to teachers:

teacher should listen to children’s voices respectfully, study children by communicating with children, question and challenge children when it is appropriate (Zhu, 2002).

The teacher’s role, it is suggested in the revised early childhood art curriculum and also Shanghai’s local pedagogical practice, is a significant variable. Teachers are encouraged to be instructors/guiders, to be supporters/facilitators, and to be collaborators/co-constructors of knowledge.

This diversity of influences complicates a simplified story Jolley and Zhang (2012) told in their articles. McArdles and Piscitelli (2002) use the term ‘palimpsest’ to describe the phenomenon in which multiple forces have impacted on the shaping of views in relation to the face of art and teaching of art. A palimpsest, as McArdles and Piscitelli (2002) explain, refers to:

the way in which the ancient parchments used for writing were written over, but new messages only partially obliterated the original message beneath (p. 11).

This concept is, to some extent, akin to Tobin et al’s (2009, 2011) concept of “a hybrid curriculum and pedagogy”. The challenge inside the literature is for subsequent research to reveal the continuities and discontinuities of different traditions.

Clearly, the construction of the revised early childhood art curriculum has been informed by varying theories, each carrying its own assumptions about epistemology, curricula and pedagogy. Before proceeding to examine the delivery of this revised art curriculum, I feel the necessity to first provide an overview of alternative visions of art education (external ideas such as expressive-oriented art education, DBAE, postmodernist theories). Expounding of points of focus, areas of difference, and the limits of the each will be beneficial to the understanding of some explicit and implicit choices emerging from these visions. These possibility unconscious choices appear to determine what and how teachers teach art—and

how children learn to make art. This study uses a framework constructed by Efland (1990) where he summarized three dominant visions of Western art education which have also had an impact on the construction of Chinese preschool art curriculum: ‘the expressivist tradition’ which favored child-centered art pedagogy, ‘discipline-based art education’ (DBAE) which prioritized formal teaching of artistic inquiry, and ‘postmodernism’ which promoted socio-centric art pedagogy. Viewing art primarily as a means for emotional expressiveness, the expressivists see art education as an avenue for children’s emotional health, and adopt a hands-off, non-interventionist approach to teaching art (Efland, 1990, 2004). In considering art as a discipline, advocates of DBAE position art education as a subject inquiry, emphasizing the teaching of art to be approached in ways similar to those of sciences (Efland, 1990, 2004). Conceptualizing art as a tool for social reconstruction, postmodernist theories place art education in the service of transforming individuals and society. Emphasis is given to learning within a social context, which gives rise to diverse sets of contemporary approaches, such as community-based art education, integrated arts curriculum (Efland, 1990, 2004). From the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, all these three visions have become increasingly influential in preschool and primary settings, each having its contemporary advocates who present the teaching of art in ways that expand the traditional notions of art and art education (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). The next section will discuss these three visions of art education respectively.

### **2.2.1.1 The expressivist tradition and child-centered art pedagogy**

In this paragraph, the origins, advocacy and critique of the expressivist tradition and child-centered art education are discussed.

The expressivist tradition has its roots in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romantic theory and receives its scientific sanction from psychoanalytical psychology (Efland, 1990; 2004). Educators adopting the expressivist view see ‘the child as a natural artist’ whose inborn creativity will guide his artistic expression, and is therefore best left to unfold in a natural progression (Efland, 1990, 2004; Kindler, 1996; Barnes, 2002; Jolley & Zhang, 2012). Along with the notion of ‘natural unfolding’ behaviors, there is a persistent belief about the cathartic process of art experience (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Efland, 1990, 2004; Siegesmund, 1998; Kindler, 1996; Barnes, 2002). So long as the child is allowed to release emotions through

art positive developmental growth can be fostered. As an advocate of this view, Lowenfeld (1947) writes:

The child who uses creative activity as an emotional outlet will gain freedom and flexibility as a result of the release of unnecessary tensions. However, the child who feels frustrated develops inhibitions and, as a result, will feel restricted in his personality. The child who has developed freedom and flexibility in his expression will be able to face new situation without difficulties. Through his flexible approaches toward the expression of his own ideas, he will not only face new situations properly but will adjust himself to them easily (cited in Siegesmund, 1998).

Structured around the ideas of ‘natural unfolding’ and ‘free expression’, nurturing the expressive life of children is considered to be the primary aim of art education; achieving expressive freedom is the desired outcome (Efland, 1990; Siegesmund, 1998). Art education focusing around ‘creative self-expression’ calls for pedagogy strategies with “fewer social constraints and expanded possibilities for personal expression” (Efland, 1990, p. 260).

Typical for the expressivist view is a child-centered art pedagogy which is proposed by Franz Cizek, and further developed by Viktor Lowenfeld (Efland, 1990, 2004; Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Brown et al, 2009). In child-centered art education, children are placed in a central position in art teaching (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002). They are viewed as dynamic beings, constantly growing and changing (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Art, from a child-centered perspective, is a powerful vehicle through which children can express their growing awareness of themselves and their interactions with the world at their own levels of development (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Just as there is no two children developing at the same pace, so too is the child’s artistic expression which grows out of, and is a reflection of the child’s developmental level (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Since no two children express themselves entirely alike, encouraging children’s ‘free expression’ is therefore important as it brings out individual differences. This recognition of difference is evident in the unique and original products of such teaching.

Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) also express strong beliefs in the priority of process over product. Immersion in the process of art making enables children to make sense of the world through their senses—the eyes, the ears, touch, the body;

and represent their understanding through the creative manipulation of artistic media. It is through the exploration of the art medium, children`s creativity and sensitivity are enabled to be evoked, stimulated and developed. Therefore, allowing children to `play with` art materials is particularly important. Accordingly, children`s art should be measured by their engagement with the creative process rather than just the outcome of that process—the final tangible product. Concerning itself with artistic process, the child-centered art pedagogy promotes active participation in art activities; physical engagement with art materials; self-directed learning through sensory experience; and spontaneous creativity derived from art experiences (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Artistic expressions are believed to be catalysts as well as indications of children`s emerging abilities in many areas including: motor skills, sensory perception, symbolic representation, spatial orientation and aesthetic sensitivity (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987).

Through a close examination of children`s art making, Lowenfeld also observed a continuum of children`s artistic growth. He determined that children would naturally progress towards creative composition through predictable ways. He proposed a series of developmental stages that children would pass through, beginning with scribbling <sup>3</sup> Lowenfeld believed that children`s artistic development ended when passing through the reasoning stage and it was at that time children should be assisted with acquisition of practical knowledge associated with formal art practices.

Lowenfeld`s ideas fitted well with the kindergarten movement, thus have informed the teaching of art in Western preschool settings for many years. Teachers embracing this vision share the view of `children as artists` whose capacity to create graphic symbols will evolve independently of directive teaching. They are squeamish about intervening in children`s art making. They give children freedom to explore independently with less pressure on the completion or quality of work. This non-interventionist attitude toward children`s art is best epitomized by Read et al (1993),

We do not give the child directions or set any kind of pattern. And it is important the child is free to express himself without interference from

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<sup>3</sup> These stages include the Scribbling Stage (2-4 years old), the Preschematic Stage (4-7 years old), the Schematic Stage (7-9 years old), Drawing Realism (9-12 years old), Reasoning (12-14 years old), and Decision (14-17 years old).

adults (cited in Jolley & Zhang, 2012).

The desirable role of the teacher, from the expressivists` view, is as a facilitator. As Hendrick (1980) elaborates, teachers need to:

make ample materials freely available and cultivate her ability to stand back and let the child explore and utilize them as his impulses and feelings requires (cited in Kindler, 1996).

This is consistent with the view expressed by Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) who claim that,

probably the biggest role a preschool teacher can play is a supportive one in the children`s development of self-awareness and in the joy and pleasure they get from their environment (p.132).

Teachers working within this *laissez-faire* style framework have been admonished not to `teach` art, but simply to provide an array of art materials and a supportive environment, and at best offer some encouragement. Any involvement by the teacher is thought of as contamination of children`s symbol making, and is therefore discouraged. As Morgan (1988) explains, “We consider children`s symbolic imagery to be sacrosanct in early years...and therefore teacher intervention is inappropriate” (cited in Kindler, 1996).

Expressivist child-centered art education is concerned fundamentally with the originality of children`s *personal* expression. Engaging in art is seen as intrinsically good for individual growth. Anything outside of children`s own expression, and in particular the teacher`s involvement, is viewed as inappropriate influence, possibly retarding children`s personal artistic growth. Therefore, teachers embracing this vision prefer to provide the materials, and then stand well clear, leaving children to discover.

While self expression in art provides opportunities for children`s cathartic relief, there are those who question the idea of art to be simply taught as a form of expression. Some educators have pointed to the potential pitfalls of this unclear epistemological justification for art and the underestimation of the cognitive functions of art (Siegemund, 1998). While art is only seen as a cathartic unloading of feelings that cannot lead to measurable outcomes, art education risks remaining a marginalized field of inquiry in schools where outcomes-driven agendas are currently dominant.

In fact, the idea that “art is intrinsically a cognitive concern” has been advocated

by a growing body of research theoretically and empirically (Barnes, 2002; Efland, 2002; Lim, 2005; Tishman & Palmer, 2006; Fraser et al., 2008; Jeanneret, 2009; Wright, 2003, 2007, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Wright (2012b) finds that it is commonly the children`s disposition to move across a range of symbolic modes when composing in art:

Children selectively and frequently move from one mode to another to represent and re-represent what they know most effectively. They may choose to draw, to tell it, to sing it, to show it through their bodies or to combine these modes. This is a discourse using the mixed media of image-making, music-making, language, and graphic and physical action. Through this discourse, children become authors of integrated texts, purposely bringing shape and order to their experience (p. 211).

This purpose of bringing meaning to experience is in sharp contrast to cathartic release. It suggests that art has the capacity to involve children as active participants in multimodal meaning-making experiences that engage both their minds and bodies. Children tap into both their thinking and feeling when engaging in art. This reveals a process that is capable of generating both cognitive and affective learning. Such integrated experiences, as many art educators point out, are essential to cultivate fluid intelligence and cognitive flexibility (Efland, 2002; Fraser et al., 2008; Jeanneret, 2009; Wright, 2003, 2007, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Doing art in this sense can significantly encourage children`s meta-cognition.

Numerous researchers have also questioned the solo emphasis given to children`s spontaneous creativity through free exploration (Kindler, 1996; Anning, 1999; Barnes, 2002). By doing this, they do not mean to undervalue children`s capacity to determine the direction of their learning, but rather, they try to remind the vital role that teachers and peers can play in children`s art, and the necessity for children to be taught requisite practical knowledge so as to achieve creative self expression. Burton (2001) adds support to this point by articulating,

We sometimes forget that we are not born knowing how to get ideas into materials, or how materials can be manipulated to shape ideas and create meaning; these are constructs of the human senses and mind, and needed to be nurtured in a thoughtful and disciplined way (p. 41).

Bresler (2002) too, alerts that merely enabling children`s deep-rooted creative impulses to unfold is an insufficient condition for enhancing children`s flexibility in expressing ideas:

Expression in child art is complex process, involving more than the use of artistic materials and the permission of spontaneous creativity. Expression requires attention and involvement as well as sophisticated knowledge of some technical issues and some formal skills. Without knowledge and personal investment, artwork was dutiful at best, sloppy and meaningless at worst, and its expression was symptomatic rather than artistic (p. 174).

Without teachers` skillful guidance, those who are lacking the practical skills to achieve the results they want are likely to become frustrated and soon abandon art as an alternative mode of meaning-making and communication. Seen in this light, teachers` resistance to offer scaffolding for understanding somewhat deprives children of the opportunity to advance in artistic learning. Accumulating evidence now leaves the art education community with a revised vision of the organizational role teachers can play in children`s art, and the value of guided participation in enhancing children`s artistic growth (Kolbe, 1993; Anning, 1999; Hertzog, 2001; Bae, 2004; Lim, 2005; Rinaldi, 2006; Rose et al., 2006; Fraser et al., 2008; Fraser & Price, 2011; Vecchi, 2010; Huntsinger et al., 2011; Wright, 2012b). Instead of observing children`s artistic learning from a distance, teachers might need to be aware of the positive influence of adult intervention in scaffolding children toward more complex forms of symbolization and manipulation. Although the issue of what is, and is not, good practice remains contentious, what has been commonly accepted is that art activities should now strike a balance between child-centered, open-ended learning and teacher-led skill-based instruction. The attainment of practical knowledge on the one hand is advocated alongside the flourishing of spontaneous creativity on the other hand. Overall, this model appears to favor the conscious building on a learned and discovered repertoire by the child for skills and ideas. The following paragraph will introduce disciplined-based art education.

#### **2.1.1.2 Disciplined-based Art Education**

In this paragraph, the origins, advocacy and critique of disciplined-based art education are discussed.

A shift in the views of art and art education surfaced in the USA during the 1960s when educationists sought an epistemological base for all learned knowledge and in our particular case for art and art education (Efland, 1990, 2004). Art becomes defined not as an expression of feeling, but as a way of knowing with its own

methods for conducting inquiry and forming judgments (Hausman, 1987; Siegesmund, 1998; Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Dobbs, 2004). Since art contributes to an essential aspect of knowledge that is intellectually demanding, artistic inquiry therefore should be positioned as an integral part of the curriculum and structured in ways identical to other academic subjects (Hausman, 1987; Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Dobbs, 2004). This school of thought shifted the role of art education from a focus on the child to a focus on art as a field of study, giving rise to the emergence of Discipline-based Art Education (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002, Dobbs, 2004).

Discipline-based Art Education (DBAE) is a comprehensive approach. It integrates content of art education from ‘four parent disciplines’—studio art (art making), art history, art criticism and aesthetics, all of which are seen as equally important and necessary for art learning (Hausman, 1987; Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Dobbs, 2004). *Studio art/art making* refers to the process of creating art, how to combine varied components—subject matter, medium, and form—together into artworks. *Art history* refers to the historical contexts within which art has been created. *Art criticism* refers to the criteria for judging art. *Aesthetics* refers to the conceptions of the nature of art. By studying works of art through all these four lenses, children are able to engage in critical thinking and inquiry processes, and ultimately achieve a more authentic understanding of art (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002).

Twigg and Garvis (2010) ascribe the popularity of DBAE in preschool settings to its close alignment with the tenets of ‘developmentally appropriate practice’ (DAP) promoted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Professed by many educators to be best practice for teaching young children, DAP emphasize the importance of directive teaching on facilitating children’s learning and development (Lubeck, 1998). In order for the children to learn and develop optimally, teachers are being asked to shape the content for instruction based on their perceptions of children’s readiness. For teachers to instruct ‘properly’, NAEYC formulated a set of guidelines for teaching practices (Lubeck, 1998).

Teachers adhering to DBAE share the view on the significance of formal teaching and ‘proper’ instruction in orienting children towards the acquisition of competency. They maintain that children need to be taught an organized body of

art knowledge so as to acquire artistic achievement (Hausman, 1987; Dobbs, 2004). They project a linear, sequentially-based series of activities from which children can acquire an ordered artistic knowledge. It is evident that in discipline-based art education, teachers are instructors, rather than facilitators.

Disciplined-based art education (DBAE) is concerned fundamentally with children's increased understanding of art. This suggests a structured progression of acquired concepts and skills. Related to this is the idea of 'art is a subject area in and of itself', where art is endorsed for its value as a body of knowledge in its own right. Teachers embracing this vision favor a more systematic approach to 'teach' art so as to maximize the cognitive and aesthetic development of young children.

Considered within art policy and practices in USA, DBAE is an accepted paradigm. However, it has also faced challenges from the art education community.

Those who believe in the value of art making express dissatisfaction with DBAE's diminished emphasis given to studio art (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Dobbs, 2004). With reduced attention or time allocated to hands-on art activities, children have limited opportunities to exercise their own agency over thoughts and feelings. The expressive aspect of art experience becomes gradually ignored. This trend seems to be unavoidable when art education is put on a parallel journey with other academic subjects. As subject inquiry, art education has gained certain academic respectability. It has been required to maintain this legitimacy by contributing to 'high order thinking' that can be evaluated by measurable outcomes (Hickman, 2005). Considered to be a part of content that is too esoteric to teach and too difficult to access across the whole schooling process within the entire curriculum, the studio component of DBAE risks being supplanted by art appreciation. Such goals can be easily checked off under whole class instructions.

The quest for specified competencies and outcomes also preoccupied teachers with prescribed teaching plans/written curriculum to teach art, plans/curriculum that includes:

- a clear statement of the learning idea or behavior on which the lesson is focused, a rationale that describe the significance of what is to be learned, basic questions that might be asked about it, and alternative learning activities to fulfill the lesson (Dobbs, 2004, p. 707).

Efland (1990) questions the appropriateness of prioritizing a scientifically-driven discipline-oriented curriculum initiative upon an epistemological shift in art education:

This shift to pre-established instructional objectives changed the view of knowledge. Knowledge became something already known by the teacher rather than something that can be the result of the student's own intellectual activity. Educational success was defined by how much of the teacher's knowledge was passed on to the student, not by the insights, inventions, or discoveries of the students (p. 262).

This didactic approach to teaching art has to face its tendency to overlook children's natural inclination in artistic learning. Rooted in the notion that: "Art should be taught by means of a formal, continuous, sequential, written curriculum in the same way as other academic subjects" (Greer, 1984, cited in Hausman, 1987), discipline-oriented art education tends to preprogram children's acquisition of sophisticated knowledge of art in steps graduated at a set rate. In this situation, children are expected to achieve artistic attainments in a straight forward linear progression, regardless of their own predispositions. However, it must be emphasized that art engagement, whether referring to its production or appreciation, is also something personal. It involves particular ideas and values derived from individual children. As Fraser and her colleagues (2008) elaborate,

Children bring to the arts their existing knowledge, preference, and interests beyond the classroom...Sometimes children brought to their lessons particular cultural expressions, images from popular media, or their own arts knowing (p. 9).

This also is consistent with the view expressed by Papert (1980) who argues against focusing almost entirely on *disciplined* behavior to teach art:

This is something that one cannot be reduced to purely 'cognitive' term. Something very personal happened, and one cannot assume that it would be repeated for other children in exactly the same form (cited in Hausman, 1987).

Acceptance of children's individual differences means we cannot say that there would be a precisely prescribed sequence which can be applied to the teaching of art across age levels. It ignores children's varying interests, experiences, and the development of their ability to be inventive. In order for the children to feel empowered to create their own art, Hausman (1987) suggests to teachers, "We

need to balance the skills of planned and predictable actions with those of improvisation and creative adaption” (p. 58).

It is worth noting that DBAE, as a fairly recent development of approaches to art education, has not received too much attention in preschool settings. As Wong (2009) writes, DBAE “is designed to be taught by art specialists” (p. 12). It makes high demands for preschool teachers` re-requisite knowledge of art history and art criticism. This makes it difficult and unlikely to become viable models for teaching young children by generalist preschool teachers.

Overall, this model appears to prioritize formal teaching of structured art knowledge based on a gradual understanding of adult roles and decisions in the art world. The following paragraph will introduce postmodernist theories and socio-centric art pedagogy.

### **2.2.1.3 Postmodernist theories and socio-centric art pedagogy**

In this paragraph, the origins, advocacy and critique of postmodernist theories and socio-centric art pedagogy are discussed.

With postmodernism evident as a trend since the 1980s, socio-centric art pedagogy has begun to take hold (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). Grounded in the pragmatist movement, this vision invests its philosophy and theory in the power of art and art education to enliven individuals and society (Efland, 1990, 2004; Siegmund, 1998). An early indicator of this position was John Dewey who describes art as an aspect of community experience capable of bringing forth individual and social changes (Efland, 1990; Lim, 2004). In Dewey`s description, the world of ‘art’ should not be confined only to the world of ‘fine art’ but seen broader as lived experiences permeating one`s entire life (Lim, 2004). Learning in art should therefore focus around the resolution of daily problems (Efland, 1990; Lim, 2004). This school of thought challenged the idea of art as a subject for study and emphasized instead the study of art in society. Advocates of this vision argue the need for the integration of art into other curriculum areas (Siegesmund, 1998; Ulbricht, 1998). As Stuhr (1995) explains,

Art taught in an interdisciplinary fashion is better able to reflect and create understanding about the social, cultural, and political conditions that it is part of (cited in Siegesmund, 1998, p. 204).

In order for children to learn within meaningful socio-cultural contexts, art is properly used as an interdisciplinary tool of analysis to explore wider social issues

within an integrated curriculum framework (Efland, 1990; Siegesmund, 1998). Accordingly, the role of art education can be subsumed into enhancing children`s learning in other areas of the curriculum.

In the field of early childhood education, the ‘Reggio Emilia Approach’ can be considered representative of this approach. Within the Reggio approach, *poetic languages*<sup>4</sup> and communication networks are highly valued (Malaguzzi, 1993; Hertzog, 2001; Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001; Rinaldi, 2006; Vecchi, 2010). Art in Reggio educators` terms is a ‘visual’ language which can be used to satisfy children`s expressive and communicative needs when words are either inadequate or unavailable (Vecchi, 2010). Through the use of different media and symbolic systems children are enabled to depict their understanding in an imaginative way. This process is considered by Reggio educators as integral to the development of one`s cognitive capacity (Vecchi, 2010). A good example of this can be found in the study of ‘the city of Reggio Emilia’ in which Reggio children were expected to graphically represent how is the city related to their own lives (Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001). With scaffolding from teachers and support of peers, children began to seek relationships between concrete knowledge (e.g. facts that shaped the development of their city) and their life world (Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001). They progressively changed and re-defined their perceptions of the city and its relationship to their daily living which were manifested in their gradually refined artworks (Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001). It is through the process of active and ongoing engagement with representing, expressing and communicating, by self and with others, children`s thinking was brought to reflect critically and dig deeply. Seen in this light, art making *does* facilitate the *quality* of thought. It is not surprising also that Reggio children are offered opportunities and sufficient time to ‘play with’ variable art media (Hertzog, 2001). They are encouraged to explore the rich structure and expressive possibilities of symbolic languages via a shared artistic inquiry (Malaguzzi, 1993; Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001). The importance attributed to the more co-constructive patterns of interaction and the role of significant others in enhancing children`s artistic growth is not to undervalue children`s personal inclination. Children, it is argued, still have every right to intuitively express themselves in many different ways, but collaborating with

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<sup>4</sup> *Poetic languages* refers to “forms of expression strongly characterized by expressive or aesthetic aspects such as music, song, dance or photography” (Vecchi, 2010, p. xviii).

others drives and extends this learning (Malaguzzi, 1993; Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001). Teachers in Reggio Emilia are not just instructors, but yet are positioned as more than facilitators. They take on a role as ‘co-learner’ who learns *with* children, and co-constructs knowledge with the children in a climate of cooperative learning. As Vecchi (2010) claims,

Teachers should not merely transmit circumscribed ‘truth’ in various disciplines, but rather to stand by children’s sides together constructing contexts in which they can explore their own ideas and hypotheses individually or in groups and discuss them with friends and teachers (p. 28).

By observing what children actually do when engaged in art, and talking with them about their art making or artworks produced, teachers can not only sustain and extend children’s interests and involvement (Bae, 2004; Wright, 2012b), but also learn more about the children (Fraser et al., 2008; Vecchi, 2010; Wright, 2012b). As Fraser et al (2008) put it,

Only when teachers get closer to children’s thinking, processing and decision making, can he/she adapt and refine lessons to take cognizance of children’s ideas, needs and interests and address the problems they are grappling with (p. 11).

Postmodernist theory in art education is concerned fundamentally with the resolution of daily problems via a community of inquiry. Related to this is the idea of ‘art as a means to an end’, the end being individual and social change. Teachers embracing this vision see their role as ‘co-constructors’ who work *alongside* children. By co-constructing a range of understanding on an equal basis, both teachers and children are able to refresh and extend their existing skills and knowledge.

Although socio-centric approaches to art education have enjoyed increasingly popularity, there are those who have pointed to the possible disadvantages. Eisner (1988) for example, questions the idea of conceptualizing art as an instrument rather than a discipline: When art is used primarily as a tool to carry out inquiry, rather than a subject matter of inquiry, it loses its status as a ‘legitimate’ discipline (cited in Siegesmund, 1998). Smith (1985) too, argued that the unique qualities of art, its history, standards and forms of evaluation can be ignored when art is only used as a vehicle to facilitate teaching across disciplines (cited in Ulbricht, 1998). It is because of this concern Smith (1985) insisted that art should remain as a

discipline.

Overall, this model appears to emphasize a collaborative construction of knowledge within a social context.

This review of influential visions of Western art education indicates a conceptual and practical diversity. Varying theories and practices sometimes complement yet sometimes directly challenge each other. Multiple forces pulling in different directions can result in ambiguity and uncertainty, leaving teachers struggling with where to stand, let alone bringing together principles and practices into a cohesive praxis (Kindler, 1996; Barnes, 2002; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002).

Even so, teachers still have every right to determine what they think is important for their students. The differences each teacher ‘sees’ in curriculum not just reflect the variety of interpretations that can be achieved. It also indicates to teachers’ own priorities and values, which invariably affect their practices in classrooms. Nuthall (2002) uses the term ‘rituals of practice’ to describe these teachers’ taken-for-granted practices (cited in Fraser et al., 2008). Fraser et al (2008) add support to this notion by reminding that, “these unconscious rituals of practice can either support or constrain what happens when children are learning through and in the arts” (p. 15).

All of the above-mentioned indicate the complex dynamic among contrasting perspectives: policy makers (the intended<sup>5</sup> curriculum), teachers (the implemented<sup>6</sup> curriculum), learners (the experienced<sup>7</sup> curriculum), and perhaps parents and other influential factors (the hidden<sup>8</sup> curriculum). Considering similar incongruities in the revised art curriculum—the intended curriculum, the question must arise of what emphasis is interpreted and placed on the curriculum during implementation.

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<sup>5</sup> The intended curriculum refers to the aims and content enacted in some formal documents (International Bureau of Education, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> The implemented curriculum refers to what is actually carried out in classroom practices under the local schools or teachers’ interpretation of what is required by formal documents—the intended curriculum (International Bureau of Education, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> The experienced curriculum refers to what is actually experienced by learners (International Bureau of Education, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> The hidden curriculum refers to influences coming from other parts like parents, their impact on the conduction of the intended and implemented curriculum (International Bureau of Education, 2013).

### **2.2.2 Curriculum policy and its delivery**

In this paragraph, the implementation of the revised early childhood art curriculum is examined. This will begin by probing the work of Jolley and Zhang`s (2012) in which they investigate how drawing is currently taught and learnt in their sample of Chinese preschools. The study focuses mainly on a developmental perspective embedded in a preschool teacher`s account who described the pedagogical approaches adopted in Kunming kindergartens (located in Yunnan province, China).

According to this teacher, children as young as 2-3-year-old are first instructed to practice drawing lines and then to draw more controlled shapes and enclosed forms before moving on to combine these elements. Topics such as drawing raindrops would be introduced, perhaps serving to bridge the gaps between drawing skills and children`s lived experiences. This is followed by drawing representations of prescribed subject matter. The process usually involves the joint efforts of teachers and children. Children learn to represent subject matter initially from their own exploration before moving on to develop a composition by copying a set of designs offered by teachers. As their drawing repertoires gradually expand, children are then asked to add their own additional motifs into their copied pictures. By that time, they are usually 4-5-year-old. When arriving 5-6 years old, children are encouraged to develop their own symbols for the expression of meaning, a stage named ‘drawing imaginatively’. Finally, they move into drawing expressively. During this stage, children are expected to break some of the conventions and paint out their ideas, feelings and experiences in a more creative manner through an additive process, such as adding wings to an elephant, or drawing a girl with two heads.

It is evident that at the primitive early stages of drawing, emphasis still tends to be placed on skill-building (e.g., making a control over the drawn lines), representation (e.g., building a repertoire of graphic schemas) and copying models provided by teachers, although not in such a step-by-step and line-by-line manner. This traditional-oriented ways of art learning can gradually give way to expressive and creative art-making so long as teachers are convinced that children have grasped skills and are ready to be ‘creative’.

Jolley and Zhang`s (2012) work provided a window into the teaching and learning of art in Yunnan kindergartens, which may differ from those in Shanghai kindergartens. Accepting that China is a vast country, with regional diversity

exemplified in multiple cultures and different levels of economic development, there is no doubt that schooling could be varied (Tobin et al., 1989, 2009; Hsueh et al., 2004; Jolley & Zhang, 2012).

Shanghai, the most cosmopolitan city of central China, has played a leading role in carrying out the reform movement (Hsueh et al., 2004; Tobin et al., 2009). A year before the publication of the national *Guidelines*, Shanghai had already promoted its own guidelines, a document while consistent with the new direction recommended by the national *Guidelines* moves much further in how to implement such change (Hsueh et al., 2004; Tobin et al., 2009). An integrated theme-based approach is fruit of such reform and development (Zhu, 2002, 2009, 2010). It features “taking children`s development as its foundation”, “balancing teacher-directed instruction and child-initiated actions” “integrating all subjects”, “adopting process assessment” and “implementing flexible curriculum that are situationally appropriate” (Zhu, 2002). Considering that Shanghai holds a leading position on the early childhood curriculum reform, and that the delivery of the revised art curriculum in Shanghai kindergartens is a largely unexplored area, my study therefore raises the following questions:

1. What are common rituals of practice that are typical of art education praxis in two contemporary Shanghai kindergartens?
2. What do teachers reveal as their rationale for their approach to teaching art?
3. How do children`s actions, artworks and speech represent their art learning?
4. In what ways do teachers and children`s responses reflect the way that art education has been represented in current kindergarten policy guidelines and historical reforms?

### **Summary**

This chapter has discussed the Chinese preschool art education pre-1980s` reforms and post-1980s` reform in detail. Based on the work of Jolley and Zhang (2012), this study finds that the revised early childhood art curriculum has been informed by varying visions of art education, other than the simply expressivist values and the Chinese traditional values identified by Jolley and Zhang (2012). It highlights the differences between Chinese and Western views of creativity, which indicate to the potential difference between both parts in *how* to foster creativity. It also explains the need to examine the delivery of this intended curriculum in Shanghai kindergartens. The following chapter will explain the methodology and

method used to address the key research questions. It will also discuss the translation issues and ethical considerations related to the study.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

In this chapter, a rationale for the design and implementation for this study is presented. The particular application of research methodology and methods to address the following key research questions is described. Ethical issues related to this study are also discussed.

1. What are common rituals of practice that are typical of art education praxis in two contemporary Shanghai kindergartens?
2. What do teachers reveal as their rationale for their approach to teaching art?
3. How do children`s actions, artworks and speech represent their art learning?
4. In what ways do teachers and children`s responses reflect the way that art education has been represented in current kindergarten policy guidelines and historical reforms?

### **3.1 Interpretive theory and qualitative research**

Interpretative theory provides the baseline paradigm for this study and informs the methodology and methods selected. The study seeks to explore what is the art practice like in the present-day kindergarten classrooms in Shanghai. It examines why teachers teach children to make art in the way as they do. The study is situated within the context of kindergarten curriculum reforms explored in chapter two. Since the main emphasis is on understanding the meanings ascribed by the teacher and child participants through their actions and reflection, using an interpretive theory is most relevant.

Arising out of the criticism of positivism, interpretivism theories how individuals make sense of their social world (MacNaughton et al, 2001; Markula & Silk, 2011). For interpretivists, the social world is continually constructed and re-constructed by the participants involved as opposed to being interpreted in the form of universal laws (MacNaughton et al, 2001; Markula & Silk, 2011). Each person, it is argued, “continually makes sense of the world within a cultural framework of socially constructed and shared meanings, rather than simply perceiving them” (MacNaughton et al., 2001, p. 35). Conducting inquiry under an interpretive theory means that this study is tailored to involving teachers and children in reflecting on their own art teaching and learning experiences, rather than simply gathering observed facts and description.

Qualitative research fits within this interpretive positioning. Qualitative research

is concerned with providing an in-depth picture of a central phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2005). It usually involves participants' experiences and features a small sample (MacNaughton et al., 2001; Markula & Silk, 2011; Creswell, 2005). This study focuses on a handful of kindergarten classrooms and aims to understand in-depth the topic being studied. Therefore, adopting qualitative approaches to conduct this inquiry is most relevant.

### **3.2 Case study methodology**

A qualitative, case study methodology was used and comprised a multi-case study approach. Case studies were chosen as a research methodology for this study because it allowed for an in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon within its natural context (Burns, 1997; McMillan, 2012; Creswell, 2013). This made it especially suitable for gathering rich description of art teaching contexts supplemented by semi-structured interviews.

Types of case studies vary and for the purpose of this study, I chose a multiple case study design in order to facilitate comparison with not only each site but provide comparative data to historical rich descriptions from historical literature shared in chapter two. A two-site case study was employed to explore the current pedagogical orientations of art education in two Shanghai kindergartens. In the first case study, two kindergarten classrooms were investigated which included a class of 4-5-year-old and a class of 5-6-year-old respectively. This distribution of ages was chosen for the second case study to facilitate between site comparisons. As its name implies, the multi-case study usually involves comparing the data collected and analyzed across a collection of cases, other than focusing on a single case (Burns, 1997; McMillan, 2012; Creswell, 2013). I chose a multi-case design for the reason that it helped to ensure the credibility of the findings. A study of current art pedagogy adopted in Shanghai kindergartens is context-dependent. The instructional context of kindergartens is specific, and influenced by the general ambience of Shanghai education practices. Doing a case study of a single kindergarten classroom to examine how art activities were implemented and what teacher and children said about their own art experiences would produce an in-depth description and understanding of that particular classroom only. As McMillan (2012) reminds, "In education, it is not feasible to find a single exemplar that is representative of others" (p. 280). In order for the evidence to be more compelling (Burns, 1997), using a multiple case study approach seemed

most apt. However, the conduct of a multiple case study was not without its problems. Creswell (2013) explains that there is always a compromise: “the more cases an individual studies, the less the depth in any single case” (p.101). For this reason, this study only explores two kindergarten sites but observations were taken in two classrooms in each school. Before comparison, data was collected and analyzed from each site using different perspectives to ensure triangulation of direct observational approaches with interviews revealing teachers` and children`s comments. By this means any observer bias or misunderstandings could be challenged.

Consistent with the multi-case method for data generation, the study selected the possible candidates for their theoretical value. For instance, kindergartens either public-owned or university-affiliated were considered good candidates for this study because they were required to comply with the direction called on by the national and local *Guidelines*. No private kindergarten was taken into consideration because they are allowed more leeway in carrying out policy and practices recommended by the *Guidelines*. Generalist preschool teachers were selected as prospective participants given that they were actively involved in the process of implementing art activities. Their prior art teaching experiences: what they teach, how they teach it, the goals they follow, the meanings they ascribe to their teaching actions and their insights into the influences behind their decision making are of primary interest for this study. A direct focus on what sense children made of art activities they experienced was important given that art education praxis is a dynamic process involving both teachers and learners. To examine the meanings the children make of their art learning experiences potentially yields data useful in informing further pedagogical practice (Wong, 2007; Fraser et al., 2008). Considering children`s art-making and their voices around art also assisted with triangulating the teachers` journey to teaching art. A range of data collection methods were also utilized within this study including non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews and artwork analysis. The artwork was used as a parallel prompt for discussion and also a record for between child and any teacher exemplars. As both intentions and outcomes might vary through individual differences it was important to have a range of student work. In so doing, I could investigate the topic at both macro and micro level. This embodies a complex weaving together of curriculum policies and socio-cultural beliefs about teaching art to young children. The individual practitioners` beliefs and pedagogy are

supplemented by learners' views of their own art experiences. The details of sampling and data collection are outlined below.

### **3.3 Sampling**

#### **3.3.1 Settings**

Two Shanghai kindergartens were recruited for this study. Kindergarten A was public-owned and assessed first-class by Shanghai Education Commission (the ranking and categorization information is explicated by Tobin et al., 2009, p. 36), Kindergarten B was university-affiliated. Both kindergartens aligned themselves closely with the direction called for by the national and local *Guidelines* as required by the funding agencies for public institutions.

In order to gain a more holistic understanding of the topic I intended to explore, I felt it necessary to visit more than one site. Considerations of managing the research project within time constraints were important factors in determining the number of classrooms to be observed and the scope of each. To be manageable, I initially approached approximately 5 Shanghai kindergartens to elicit their interest in participants. As Creswell (2013) suggests, "in conducting a multi-case study, the researchers typically choose no more than four or five cases" (p. 101). Access to the site had been negotiated with these kindergarten principals respectively. Phone calls were made and then a brief meeting scheduled. During the initial meeting the principal was provided with a letter of invitation (Appendix 2.1), including information about the purpose of the study and what participation would entail. As Cohen et al (2007) remind, "Researchers cannot expect access to organization as a matter of right, they have to demonstrate that it is worthy" (p. 55). Having explained the possible mutual benefits of the study, two kindergarten principals signaled interested and permitted me to carry out the intended work in their kindergartens during agreed time frames.

Classes in both kindergartens were arranged into three levels: senior class (5-6 years old), middle class (4-5 years old), and junior class (3-4 years old). Each class was assigned two teachers and a caregiver to 25-30 children. Teachers were responsible for the learning programs usually with one in charge of the morning sessions and another in charge of the afternoon sessions. The caregiver was responsible for children's meals and snacks throughout the day but took no part in the wider program.

Both kindergartens were organized around four predictable daily routines so

children of all three levels were involved in: structured learning, sports, free play, and required activities such as lunch and rest. The timing of these activities was dictated by school-wide schedules. Traditionally in Chinese preschools, structured learning is considered most important and is usually scheduled in the morning when children are more energetic and are more likely to show high level of concentration. Structured learning in the kindergarten curriculum consists of five key learning areas including: Health, Language, Social Studies, Science and the Arts. Art takes its place under the umbrella term of the Arts.

These two kindergartens employed a thematic approach in their curriculum planning and delivery. Teacher chosen themes were changed on a monthly basis. Following from the development of ideas foregrounded in a theme, teachers designed theme-related activities, and thus the art activities. The themes encountered during the data collection phase included: 'Animals' (Zhen *laoshi*), 'I love my family' (Li *laoshi*), 'Myself' (Yan *laoshi*), and 'Food' (Yu *laoshi*).

### 3.3.2 Participants

This study involved a class of 4-5-year-old and a class of 5-6-year-old from each participating kindergarten. No 3-4 year-old class was recruited. I was particularly mindful of the importance of negotiating access with children for their participation in research. Older children were recruited because they were more likely to understand research procedures and their ethical rights as participants (Hurley & Underwood, 2002; Mukherji & Albon, 2010), and may be more able in expressing themselves in interviews.

The prospective teacher participants who taught middle and senior classes were offered a letter of invitation (Appendix 2.2). This formally indicated their acceptance or decline of the invitation to be involved. The teacher participants (under pseudonyms) involved in this study were Zhen *laoshi*, Li *laoshi*, Yan *laoshi*, and Yu *laoshi*. *Laoshi* is the respectful title of teacher in Mandarin. These teachers were varied in their own arts background and expertise, personal commitment to art, years of art teaching experiences and personal confidence in the teaching of art.

**Kindergarten A:** Zhen *laoshi* is an experienced teacher who has been teaching in preschools for thirty-odd years. In the early years of her career, she emphasized a special confidence in music. She is now responsible for the entire learning programs of a senior class

(5-6-year-old).

**Kindergarten A: Li *laoshi*** has been teaching in preschools for about 8 years. In the early years of her career, Li *laoshi* was confident in the teaching of language and dance. Then she was asked to additionally teach art to extend children`s experience across the team teaching. She is now responsible for the entire learning programs of a middle class (4-5-year-old).

**Kindergarten B: Yan *laoshi*** has just graduated from university and has only been teaching in preschools for about two months. Because of personal interests, she had attended some art courses during her time at university. She has part responsibility in a team of two for the learning programs of a senior class.

**Kindergarten B: Yu *laoshi*** is also a beginning teacher who has been teaching in preschools for one year. She is now part of the team responsible for the learning programs of a middle class.

The selection of the potential child participants was first discussed with each consenting classroom teacher. It was my original intention to purposely select child participants in terms of their interests and motivation in art-making. The intended sample was thought best to include: the child who showed a strong desire to initiate and make art, the child who tended to learn from others, and the child who did not show great interest in art-making yet complied. However, this intended selection was both impracticable and in the end unnecessary. When engaging in art activities, children would be organized into groups by the teacher that reflected their varied abilities in and commitment to art. There was a possibility that any of the prospective preselected child participants might be placed at different tables, which made it difficult to closely observe and richly record each child`s art-making behavior. Therefore, I decided to observe an existing group of children who usually sit at the same table when making art. This allowed for easefully recording the diversity of their graphic actions, social interactions, or verbal communications occurring during the process of their art-making. Implications for gaining both parental and child consent process, see 3.7.1.

### **3.4 Data collection**

The period for data collection for this study was from mid November, 2012 to mid

January, 2013, across two months. Two Shanghai kindergartens were recruited. The number of class involved and length of time spent on fieldwork was discussed further with each kindergarten principal after the oral and written consents were formalized. In each participating kindergarten, I visited two classes, one class of 4-5-year-old and one class of 5-6-year-old. Each class was observed across consecutive days.

### **3.4.1 Consideration of translation and interpretation issues**

Prior to the data collection and analysis process was an exposition of translation and interpretation issues for this study. Consideration of the impact of translation was vital to this study given that the study was conducted in Shanghai, China, a city in which the language spoken and the culture embedded differ widely from those of Western nations. I communicated with my research participants in Mandarin, my first language, also a dialect used by most of the Shanghai schooling. Understandably, all the individual interviews were conducted in Mandarin, because both the participants (teachers and children) and me, the researcher felt comfortable in this language. The same was true of the recording field notes of art practices which was written down in detail in Chinese. All the transcripts were first collected in Chinese and were then *fully* translated into English by me the researcher. The acts of both transcription and translation provided a careful viewing of data in which some initial coding themes were noticed. However, it must be acknowledging that issues arose from translation that included the loss of nuanced meaning and the possibility of misinterpretation by other readers (Maclean, 2007). I was particularly mindful of these potential issues. To mitigate the impact of translation, the study was therefore tailored to explicate how teachers made sense of their art teaching actions and what factors contribute to their decision making within the context of Chinese kindergarten curriculum reforms, rather than focusing merely around describing observed (culture) experiences. The transcripts in Mandarin were signed off by the teachers which was a validation for their intended meanings. However, in translation for a wider English speaking audience one must consider that researchers are challenged to open up an avenue for inter-cultural dialogue. The understanding of the culture rather than merely the translation of an observation needs to be contextualized and conveyed to such an audience (Maclean, 2007). This alerted the author to the effects of translation. In order to establish credibility, the following actions were

also taken:

1. In the analysis stage, I chose to work with *both* the translated data in English and check nuance and meaning in original Chinese during the process of coding the data.
2. Using English translations of documents if Mandarin official documents if translation has already been published in academic literature. An example of this would be the use of Jolley and Zhang`s (2012) work in which some parts of the national *Guidelines* have been translated from Chinese into English by the joint efforts of a Western scholar (Jolley) and a Chinese scholar (Zhang).
3. Paying particular to the ‘register’ of language and uniqueness of each voice. For example, the translation of formal kindergarten curriculum documents needs to reflect the formal tone of this document, “The emotional function of art education *should* be fulfilled to facilitate young children`s development of healthy personality” (Ministry of Education, 2001, as translated by author). The translation of child participants` transcripts however, needs to reflect colloquial natural speech patterns of children in parallel yet contrasting cultures. For example, a literal translation may sound overly formal where in fact it was colloquially delivered. Take the translation of Zhu`s transcripts for example (two selected excerpts):

**Table 1.** Transcripts of translation from English to Chinese

Original Mandarin	<p>(我：为什么给这只小鸟涂了3种颜色?)</p> <p>朱：因为郑老师说可以用渐变色，所以我就用了这3种蓝颜色。</p>	<p>(我：这只小鸟很特别，你还用黑色的蜡笔给它勾了轮廓线，为什么?)</p> <p>朱：因为郑老师说，如果不用黑的勾线，小鸟看上去就不神气了。</p>
Literal translation sounding stilted in English	<p>(The researcher: Why use these three colors to color the bird`s body?)</p> <p>Zhu: Zhen <i>laoshi</i> says we could use gradient to do coloring, so I use these three types of blue.</p>	<p>(The researcher: This bird looks a bit different; I notice that you have added a black outline around it, why?)</p> <p>Zhu: Because Zhen <i>laoshi</i> says if birds are not outlined with black lines, they would not look vigorously.</p>

I adjusted translation to keep the feeling of a child speaking in vernacular English	Zhu: Zhen <i>laoshi</i> says to use light and dark colors to do coloring, so I used these three blues.	Zhu: Because Zhen <i>laoshi</i> says if we outline birds black, then they would stand out.
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4. Checking with a native English speaker to identify where English speech sounded unfamiliar in tone, stilted or awkward helped identify where direct speech was communicating poorly.
5. Retranslating the selected excerpts which were likely to be quoted determined to be reported back into Chinese was also used as a test for the authenticity of both tone and meaning if the speaker.

Translation necessarily changes subtle meaning. As Spivak (2007) claims, “any subtlety, ambiguity or metaphor could be lost in direct translation” (cited in Maclean, 2007). The impact of translation cannot be eliminated completely. However, the adoption of above-mentioned measures was helpful in mitigating its effects and strengthened the researcher’s familiarity with the data and the quality of the data analysis process.

### 3.4.2 Method

A variety of data collection methods were utilized. In this study, non-participant observation, semi-structured interview with both teacher and a group of children, and artwork comparisons between children’s responses and adult exemplars were undertaken. On-site observation provided a window onto the teaching and learning of art in the preschool classroom. Individual interviews provided the participants a platform to express their own perspective on art teaching or learning experience. Comparative analysis of visual responses was used to supplement these accounts. The negotiation of three roles was required by the researcher: observer, interviewer and collaborative audience with children. Each role was accompanied and assisted by a change of space. The space change signals to all of the participants including the researcher that a role has changed. A discussion of the each of the data collection method follows.

#### 3.4.2.1 Observation

Observation was chosen as one of the primary modes of data collection. As this

study focused on the teaching of art in the preschool classroom, I felt it was important to find out exactly how teachers implement art activities in the everyday context of their classroom practices. On-site observation made this possible. As Rolfe (2001) highlights, observation is particularly useful when the researcher attempts to understand the course of action people adopt and examine the effect of some factors on people's everyday behavior (cited in Mukherji & Albon, 2010). Cohen et al (2007) too, claim that the observational data,

enables the research to understand the context of programs, to be open-ended and inductive, to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations, to move beyond perception-based data and to access personal knowledge (p. 396).

Observation can be carried out in many formats. For the purpose of this study, I chose non-participant observation, that is, stay as a remote observer. By taking on more of an observer role meant that I did not take part in the activities or the group being observed at all (Mutch, 2005; Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Menter et al., 2011; McMillan, 2012). Burns (1997) emphasizes the establishment of this non-participant status if the researcher was impossible to be a member of the case study group. My circumstance fit within this non-participation positioning. I clearly was not a five year old but I also wished to avoid being assigned a role as 'teacher' with my presence in the classroom. As a researcher, I was briefly introduced to the whole class by the classroom teacher, but I could tell that many of the children kept thinking of me as another teacher. At the very beginning, they were curious about my presence. Some of the children tried to talk to me and when they did that, I would smile politely and then referred him/her to the classroom teacher. To avoid getting involved, another strategy I used was to sit/stand at the back of the classroom/playground when children were engaged in their daily routines. For the group of child participants I intended to observe during the art session, I would occasionally speak to them but usually after the activities were over. These children came to recognize me as a familiar but unobtrusive figure. In this space, I established myself as an observer, not a teacher figure.

Non-participation observations were conducted in each participating kindergarten classroom over two consecutive days in the fall semester, 2012. The class was observed for a maximum of three hours during the course of each observation day,

beginning at the start of the school day and focused on the art sessions. Individual's attention capacities are limited, and to avoid observer overload, observation sessions should not last too long (MacNaughton et al., 2001; McMillan, 2012). I mainly used pen and paper to write down what I observed, complemented by photographic images. In particular, the implemented process of art activities was recorded in detail. These written field notes were later coded with the research questions in mind to guide the unfolding direction of the study. Mukherji and Albon (2010) indicate to the possible disadvantageous of this non-participant status by reminding that "the information obtained will lack the insider's point of view" (p. 107). This would be mitigated as much as possible by the complement of other research methods.

#### **3.4.2.2 Interview**

To supplement my non-participant observation, I conducted semi-structured with both teacher and child participants to seek clarification of their actions. Interviews were used as a data collection strategy for this study because of its allowance for greater depth and richness of information (Menter et al., 2011). As Spindler and Spindler (1987) put it, interview enables the researcher to "collect and elicit the native views of reality and the native ascription of meaning to events, intentions and consequences" (cited in Bae, 2004).

For the purpose of this study, I chose semi-structured interviews. I formed question prompt lists to use during the individual interview with teacher and child participants (Appendix 1). These were trialled and refined with the help of external audits<sup>9</sup>. This assisted with the validity of the data collection processes. These question prompts also acted as a common set of reminders for important topics I hoped the interview would cover. Though selected in advance and specific in intent, they were open-ended and responsive to the participants, allowing for probing, follow-up, and clarification. At each interview, concrete examples were sought to make clear the meaning and the idiosyncratic of the interviewees. In addition, participants were also encouraged to introduce additional information they saw as relevant both at the time and when approving the transcripts. It must be emphasized however, that neither did these questions and prompts have to be

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<sup>9</sup> One was the researcher's university classmate who has now taught in a Shanghai kindergarten, the other was the researcher's mentor during the period of education practice. Neither were participants in this study.

asked in a particular order nor did all of them have to be covered at every interview. Decisions about the sequence and wording of questions were adapted to suit what the participants were saying. When the participants' talk was spontaneous, I remained silent to let it flow. When they grew silent, I used prompts to further interrogate what was going on. The pre-established set of question prompts was used to maintain the conversation throughout the interview. Particularly for the child participants, their own artworks were used to initiate discussion, engage interest, and foster thought and reflection. The presence of artwork served to validate my interest in them and their work and as a narrative cue for children's re-storying of the work, post-event.

#### **3.4.2.2.1 Interviewing teachers**

The post lesson individual interview with the teacher was conducted on the same day and took place in the classroom when the children were having their nap. Here, I took on a role as a direct interviewer interrogating the teacher's rationale for her approach to teaching art. Due to work commitments, the individual interview with one teacher participant was unable to be completed on the day. I made arrangements to go through the interview with her at a subsequent appointment.

Individual interviews with four teachers varied in duration from 30 minutes to an hour. These conversations were tape-recorded and fully transcribed afterwards. Transcripts were e-mailed to the participating teacher for confirmation or amendment and returned back to the researcher for subsequent analysis.

#### **3.4.2.2.2 Interviewing children**

In each participating kindergarten classroom, individual interviews with children were conducted right after they finished their art-making. I asked politely if the child would have the time to come to a quiet corner in the classroom and tell me a bit about the artwork he/she had created. I made it clear to each child that our talk was an occasion when I would like them to tell me about their art experience, so I could record it down and think about it.

I encouraged the child to discuss his/her drawing with me seated in parallel with his/her artwork in front of us. Here, I took on a role as the first interested adult in the child's artwork. This is more like being an interested parent or relative. We collaboratively constructed a range of responses through this journey of joint

discovery. In doing so, power relations were flattened, trust and rapport were built upon. This strengthened the quality of data collection process. Such conversations, it is argued, is also helpful in clarifying the meanings conveyed in children`s drawings (Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Menter et al., 2011). As Mukherji and Albon (2010) reminds, “drawing might be open to multiple interpretations” (p. 173). In order to avoid misinterpretation, children should be given the opportunity to discuss their drawings with the researcher (Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Menter et al., 2011). This assisted with the credibility of both the data collection and analysis process.

A few questions were further provided to explore in-depth children`s views around their art. It usually started with: “Could you tell me about your drawing?”, then “What did you enjoy most when making art?”, then “What was new for you today...that you learnt?” then “Do you draw at home? Tell me a bit about the art that you do at home, what kinds of things, stories or materials?”, and lastly “What might you call your artwork?” The use of titling by the student may provide a summarizing statement that captures their key commitment to the drawing. Impressively, all the children were delighted to talk with me about their drawings. Even the most reticent child Huang was interested to share with me the details of her artwork. She showed great pride in a dancing eggplant she had drawn and kept talking with me how she decorated it. My study confirmed that the use of the drawings was able to involve children talking about their ideas in a more engaging way (MacNaughton et al., 2001; Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Menter et al., 2011). Each child was interviewed individually for approximately 5 minutes. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed directly afterwards. The transcripts were finished on the same day. Short interviews were then able to be conducted to seek confirmation or amendment from the child participants. I read to each child participant their own transcripts to ask for clarification: “These are the notes I have made about your art learning, have I got your story right?”, “Is there anything you would like to change?”, “Is it all right if the copies of your artworks to be shared with other teachers and researchers?” The artwork was digitally recorded and originals returned to the child participants.

### **3.4.2.3 Artwork analysis**



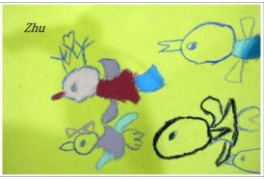











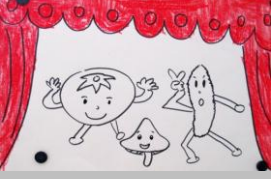



Artwork analysis was employed as the third method of collecting data for this study. Reviewing these visual ‘texts’ was utilized within this study because it

“allows participants to share their perspective in unique ways, providing data for which participants have also had significant and thoughtful input” (McMillan, 2012, p. 296). This is particularly pertinent to research questions 3.

However, the use of artwork analysis has both strength and weakness. McMillan (2012) warns us to be careful here because, “Data may be difficult to understand and code” (p. 296). Yet in the case of these artwork comparisons it becomes very obvious that a high degree of conformity were achieved between the teacher model, and the children`s attempts at copying (see Table 2). Differences where they did occur were often minor variations of color, decorations, or placement. A good example of this conformity can be seen in the artworks from *Zhen laoshi`s* class. Within these four drawings, *all* the drawn birds had very similar flight patterns; *all* the lead bird wore a crown. Given such conformity, it is worth noting that a few individual children showed an interest in taking the models shared into new directions. Impressively to me is Huang`s drawing (see figure 16). The child, through individual exploration, drew a dancing eggplant with a bottom-twisting movement, the movement of which fitted nicely with the curved body of the eggplant.

These visual ‘texts’ do not involve language, but still have the power to ‘give voice’ to the children`s perceived influence of adult intervention. Reviewing them assisted with the credibility of the data analysis process.

**Table 2.** Comparative table of children and teachers` artworks

Teacher`s model	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4
<p><b>Figure 1.</b> Zhen`s example</p> 	<p><b>Figure 2.</b> Lin`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 3.</b> Zhu`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 4.</b> Wu`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 5.</b> Yi`s drawing</p> 
<p><b>Figure 6.</b> Li`s example</p> 	<p><b>Figure 7.</b> Cheng`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 8.</b> Qian`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 9.</b> Zhang`s drawing</p> 	
<p><b>Figure 10.</b> Yan`s example</p> 	<p><b>Figure 11.</b> Tian`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 12.</b> Wang`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 13.</b> Liu`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 14.</b> Hong`s drawing</p> 
<p><b>Figure 15.</b> Yu`s example</p> 	<p><b>Figure 16.</b> Huang`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 17.</b> Zhang`s drawing</p> 	<p><b>Figure 18.</b> Shao`s drawing</p> 	

### 3.5 Thematic analysis

Consistent with a qualitative, multiple case study design, the study lend itself to an inductive analytical process. Thematic analysis was employed as an inductive approach to interrogate emergent findings. The techniques and procedures of this approach allowed me to approach the data with an open mind (Mutch, 2005), while not lose sight of the active role me a researcher could also play in selecting, editing, deploying the gathered evidence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This meant that throughout the analytical process, I stayed close to the gathered evidence all the time, constantly comparing and repeatedly review data items in an iterative manner. In doing so, I could locate the emergent themes linked to the research questions.

I began by browsing *all* the written and visual transcripts several times so as to familiarize myself with data items. As mentioned earlier the act of transcribing and translating the data gave multiple opportunities for viewing preliminary coding already. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is important for the researchers to be familiar with *all* aspects of his/her data, as “ideas and identification of possible pattern will be shaped as the researchers reading through” (p. 87). This was indeed a time-consuming process. Considering the time and efforts would be spent on formally coding data, I therefore employed a two-site case study so as to be manageable.

In order to get a better feel for what they contained, I made some initial groupings within *all* participants` transcripts. For instance, teacher participants` comments were clustered by the source of the data as follows: classroom observation of teachers, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and teachers` comments on the artworks produced. I began to read across each cluster more closely. Common words and repeated incidents were highlighted, and so too were the contradictions within and across data items. As Braun and Clarke (2006) remind, “No data set is without contradiction...It is important to retain accounts that depart from the dominant story” (p. 89). An example of such an inconsistency was that most of the teacher participants in the interview reflected their valuing of a child-centered, expressive-oriented art education although the observation of their art practices revealed that little actual cognizance was taken of this approach.

This initial open coding phrase was followed by the development of themes. Under the classification of teacher participants` transcripts, incidents that appeared conceptually similar were grouped together, and those particularly

relevant to the research questions were developed into a theme. As Braun and Clarke (2006) write, the criteria for determining a theme depends more on whether it capture something relevant to your research questions, rather than on quantifiable measures. Particularly in my study, for instance, it appeared that all the teachers` prioritized cultivating children`s skills and then subsequently creativity. This was particularly pertinent to research question 2. Therefore, any such teachers` concepts were themed under “the prioritizing of skills”. However, this did not mean other parts of data were not important. They could be used further to support or provide contrary some evidence so as to explicate hidden tensions.

These procedures were also applied to the coding of child participants` transcripts. After that, themes and sub-themes from these two bodies were considered alongside each other to check for consistency and resonance. This assisted with attesting the validity of the formed themes (Mutch, 2005; Braun & Clarke, 2006). For instance, by comparing data from both teacher and child participants, I found that there was a shared concern between these two parts on the influence of time limitation on the development of an art project. This is congruent with other research findings coming from the field of arts education (Hertzog, 2001; Bresler, 2002; Wright, 2003; Fraser et al., 2008; Sinclair, 2009).

Finally, quotations were selected and checked in Mandarin from the original data items or literature to exemplify these themes.

The whole data analysis process involved constant comparative coding procedures. Incidents in the data were constantly analyzed and compared in an iterative manner across the study of four art sessions until the themes felt comprehensive and saturated. Theoretical connections and confirming insights from the literature were extracted. The validity of codes attained through triangulating data items within and across participants is outlined below.

### **3.6 Triangulation**

To establish credibility, multiple triangulation procedures were employed to access the sufficient of the data collected, and to ensure that reliable inferences were derived from reliable data. Triangulation occurs when more than one research strategy is used within a study, comparing information collected and analyzed from different sources and methods to determine corroboration (MacNaughton et al., 2001; Mutch, 2005; Creswell, 2005; Mukherji & Albon,

2010; McMillan, 2012). In this study, the observations were checked against the perceptions of two participant groups—both teacher and a group of children, semi-structured interview with both teachings and children. The artwork analysis was enriched through interview data. A comparison between children`s response and adult exemplars was made from photographs to see if different perspectives or data items corroborate each other.

For example, my observation of *Zhen laoshi`s* and *Li laoshi`s* art teaching practice indicated a teacher-directed approach to art teaching. However, these two teachers in the interview claimed that they valued children`s self-expression through art. To validate findings, children`s voices and their artworks from these two classes were used to triangulated with the observed practice and teachers` own accounts.

The use of such triangulation procedures strengthens the quality of both the data collection and analysis processes. In using triangulation, the strengths of one research method can counterweigh the weaknesses of another. In addition, using triangulation also enabled me to reduce my observer bias in the analysis of data. A parallel check for avoiding bias also exists in the ethical procedures described below.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Various ethical concerns need to be considered for any research. By taking the following ethical issues into consideration the researcher seeks to maintain the legitimacy of this study.

#### **3.7.1 Informed consent**

*All* the people involved in the study gave their personal consent. Upon signing a consent form, the participants not only gave their consent to being a participant but also fully understood their research rights, including the right to voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time, the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, and the use of data.

The teachers were initially invited to participate via a letter of invitation (Appendix 2.2) which was sent to them and later retrieved by me. Once they had expressed interest in becoming a participant in the study, an information sheet (Appendix 3) was sent to them to further inform what participant would entail. After reading information sheet those teachers who chose to participate were

given a consent form (Appendix 4.1).

Subsequently, letters of invitation (Appendix 2.3) and consent forms (Appendix 4.2) were distributed to *all* the child's parents in the classroom informing them about the purpose of the research and the conditions of the child's participation, while seeking parents' permission for their children's participation. Owing to the limited understanding, young children might not fully understand every aspect of the research and their rights as participants, and seeking parental consent is therefore imperative (MacNaughton et al., 2001; Mutch, 2005; Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Menter et al., 2011). Gaining the consent of the child's parents is one of the important ways to protect vulnerable children (MacNaughton et al., 2001; Mutch, 2005; Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Menter et al., 2011). Parents' consent forms were retrieved by me during the daily arrival or departure times. In each participating kindergarten classroom, there were parents who forgot to return back consent forms. A quick contact would be made with parents through Wechat or mobile phones to ask about their opinions. Majority of the parents agreeing by signing consent forms while a few gave their written or oral consent either from Wechat or mobile phones. In Chinese culture, it would be usual for parents to give their agreement so long as the researcher's presence had already been approved from both principal and classroom teacher (which means I would be do no harm to their children).

The child's consent forms were discussed with the selected group of children for their permission. The difficulties of seeking informed consent from children are discussed elsewhere (MacNaughton et al., 2001; Hurley & Underwood, 2002; Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Menter et al., 2011). However, given that art teaching and learning are inextricably linked, and that children might also have useful information to inform this process, their ideas therefore should be taken seriously. Considering the unique position of the children, I therefore adapted the consent forms for this age group. The child consent form was formed by simple wording, complemented by the use of corresponding pictures (Appendix 4.3). Having the consent forms in their hands, children had further explanation on the nature of participation, including: what they would be asked to do if agreeing to participate, their rights to withdraw and what would happen to the information collated. At any stage of the study, direct consent was further sought from each child participants to ensure they were able to understand what was being asked of them and their right to say "No" if they did not feel like participating any longer.

### **3.7.2 Confidentiality**

Maintaining participant`s confidentiality is an important ethical principle where researchers take every possible step to protect participant`s right to privacy. However, as Menter et al (2011) note, there can be no absolute guarantee of complete confidentiality when the participants were taken from a relatively small participant pool, such as the preschool teacher body at a specific kindergarten. Therefore, the limits of the confidentiality should also be clearly identified in consent forms. The participants in this study were given information about confidentiality during the initial phase of the data collection period and were assured that all possible steps had been taken to maintain confidentiality. Data collected was locked in a secure storage, only the researcher and supervisor were privy to the data. In addition, appropriate pseudonyms were utilized and no other identifying information such as specific names of people, places of work, or other personal details are included in the published research.

### **3.7.3 Potential harm to participants**

Given the possible power relationship between the kindergarten principal and the teachers, it could be that the teachers might feel some pressure to agree to participate in the research. This was mitigated as much as possible by involving teachers in decision-making. Teachers were given an expression of interest which they returned via a letter either accepting or declining the invitation to participate. This eliminated any potential harm to teachers who decided not to be involved from the start. The teachers who had participated in this study were reassured their involvement had no impact on their personal performance evaluation of working as a preschool teacher.

Likewise, parents were also freely to determine whether allowing their children to participate in this study, so too were the prospective child participants. Those who were invited to participate but chose not to be part of the study were not be disadvantaged by their non-interest in participation. At any stage of the study, direct consent was sought from each child participants. If some days they might not feel like participating and that was respected.

Participants (both teacher and children) were encouraged to express their ideas, positive or negative. If the participant made a negative comment, he/she was not disadvantaged in any way. All of the input was confidential and valued.

Appropriate pseudonyms were utilized.

### **Summary**

This chapter gave a detailed description of the design and implementation of this study. It defends enquiry through an interpretive-based, qualitative case study methodology. Particular issues arising with translation have been explored and mitigated. The chosen data collection and analysis processes presented are linked to both the research questions and associated ethical considerations. The following chapter will present descriptions of contrasting field observations triangulated with the interview data collected from both teacher and child participants.

## CHAPTER 4 OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW

In this chapter, a brief vignette of each class summarized from rich field observation is offered. This is immediately followed by a summary of the teacher responses from interview. The use of children`s artworks and responses are then shared to investigate both the children`s emergent perceptions of their own art learning experiences and the experienced curriculum.

### 4.1 Kindergarten A

#### 4.1.1 A senior class, taught by *Zhen laoshi*

##### 4.1.1.1 Observed practice

The following description is based on my recorded observations of one art session in a class of 5-6-year-old. It illustrates how *Zhen laoshi*, an experienced teacher, implemented the art activity planned under the theme of ‘Animals’.

**Preparation phase:** Two square tables were put together to form a large rectangular table. Each rectangular table had about 4-6 children seated around facing the easel placed at the front of the classroom. At the center of the table was a set of forty-eight different colored crayons the children could select from. After the children were seated, *Zhen laoshi* clapped her hands to attract the attention of the children for the start of the class.

**Introduction phase:** *Zhen laoshi* started the class with a story, and here was the gist of it: The weather is getting colder, and leaves begin to turn yellow, winter is just around the corner. Many birds are not adapted to the cold weather. Therefore, they would migrate south, where climate is warmer, to spend the winter. They fly across the mountains and rivers. They travel while marking as they would fly back in spring.

**Appreciation phase:** Next, *Zhen laoshi* placed a drawing she had previously drawn and colored on the easel. Four flying birds with varied dynamics were executed in vivid colors. A flight path and trees trunks were added as background. She then directed the children to describe what they saw: “What are these birds doing?”, “Where have they been?” She drew the group`s attention to the birds in flight. One child chanted out, “There is a bird wearing a crown!” Hearing this response, *Zhen laoshi* nodded approvingly, “The crown-bird will guide the other birds to find the way home.” She further explained, “These white circles represent wind...and these white lines are the flight path birds follow.”

This was followed by the distribution of sandpapers, the color of which varied. “Have you ever touched it? How does it feel?” Zhen *laoshi* asked the class. Children volunteered: “Rough,” “like sands,” She listened to different answers elaborating in a pleasant voice “Though it feels rough, it has a beautiful name called ‘colored sandpaper’, because it is covered with sand, and it has varying colors.”

Zhen *laoshi* continued by reminding the children of the need for contrast, “When getting a sheet of light-colored sandpaper, you should choose dark-colored crayons to draw, and vice versa. Otherwise, you would not see what you have drawn on the paper. ”

**Demonstration phase:** Then, Zhen *laoshi* moved on to demonstrate the procedure of drawing the figures. As she made suggestions about how the children were to proceed she actually drew on the black sandpaper sketches of birds in a white crayon. She talked out the flight patterns of the birds while illustrating some possibilities, one looking back and calling out friends to catch up, another soaring up into the sky. The children were told that they could draw any dynamics they want on the paper, and use any colors they like to do coloring. She also outlined some tree trunks and asked what if the trunk met the bird, children chanted out, in union, “Avoid!” “When birds fly away home, they would follow certain flight path,” she drew while suggesting, “The path could be straight or curved...and you could design it on your own.” “First, draw birds. Also you could dress the birds up. Then draw the trees, and finally the flight path.” Zhen *laoshi*, summarized, ending the conversations. Till then, there were two pictorial models on the easel, the one Zhen *laoshi* previously prepared and the exact model she has just finished.



**Figure 19.** Zhen *laoshi* is modeling

**Practice phase:** The class then moved into their main task: To draw birds with different flight patterns.

**Evaluation phase:** After ten minutes of working, Zhen *laoshi* announced that it was time to move on to the next session. She selected two drawings and encouraged children to offer feedback, beginning with the question, “What do you think of this drawing?”

In regard to the first artwork, one child said, “I think it is awesome. Because he uses the black crayon to sketch out the outline of the birds.” Zhen *laoshi* commented approvingly to the class: “The birds stand out after being outlined in black lines.” She asked the class to applaud the author and learn from his artwork. In considering of the second artwork, some of the children expressed some concern at its messy composition. “Draw figures one by one. In doing so, your work would not look messy.”

Though most of the children had not got their work completed yet, Zhen *laoshi* reassured them that they would have opportunities to work on it on next work period.

#### **4.1.1.2 Teacher interview**

##### **▪ Approaches to teaching art**

Zhen *laoshi* reflected her tendency to provide teacher demonstrations and adult artworks, clarifying the function of these model drawings, “*They are the tools that teachers can use to help children consider the aesthetic qualities in art.*” As she further explained:

*Sometimes, I would prepare up to four model drawings. In so doing, children would have the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of aesthetic qualities the use of colors (warm cold colors, color contrast, color gradient), the depiction of dynamics, the development of composition and so forth. When detailed model drawings are available, teachers do not necessarily need to do too many demonstrations. Children could adjust these models to something very different.*

I asked Zhen *laoshi* what if she removed model artworks before engaging children in making their art (practice phase), she told me that children would be at a loss for what to do.

*I have done it several times before, however, it did not necessarily turn out to be the way I expected it to—Children could make art automatically and do art with remarkable confidence.*

Zhen *laoshi* further emphasized to me that children came to the classroom with

varying funds of knowledge and could be on such different developmental levels. Some were with the high art-making self-efficacy, whereas others were not. When asked to explore freely, there would be the ones who know clearly what they want to do and how to do it. There still would be the ones who really do not know what is going on and they need a bit more guidance, perhaps some ideas to start with or something to follow.

*I show models and demonstrate basic ways of manipulation in order to give children some starting points for further thinking.*

When asked whether there was a time she did not give any teacher demonstrations and artwork models, and what happened, Zhen *laoshi* told me that a week before, the class had worked in art on a topic of ‘drawing’ proverbs (under the theme of ‘Animal’):

*I picked out some particular proverbs that mention animals such as “an ass in the lion’s skin”, “a Triton among the minnows”, “kill two bird with one stone”... I briefly explained each one’s meaning and then the children was free to choose one of most interest to him/her. Those who chose the same were encouraged to work in pairs, so as to negotiate understandings, explore possibilities and make decisions about how to represent their chosen proverb...*

Based on the negotiation results, those kids were expected to *visually* interpret their chosen proverb in a co-operative manner. The resulting artworks, in the words of Zhen *laoshi*, were “*Impressive!*” In addition to Zhen *laoshi*’s comments, I see in this ‘drawing’ proverbs art activity a good example of co-constructing learning, and also of the integration of art and literature. The same is true of another concrete example she provided:

*I remember we have worked in art on a topic of...its main objective is to make children imagine the narrative and “tell” the subsequent story in the form of drawing. One day, a fox had a quarrel with a cat...what will happen next? Opinions varied. Indeed, the possibilities for the outcomes were limitless. So I encouraged the children to draw the following plots. The results are in so many different variations.*

However, Zhen *laoshi* continued by emphasizing that, there were those who did not know how to depict the dynamics of these two animals.

*Some of the children even whispered to me: “I could not draw well,” “It does not look good”...*

She then went on to conclude that: “*Children`s representational skills still need to be improved.*”

I asked Zhen *laoshi* to further explain her thoughts about the relationship between skill-building and creativity, she reflected:

*Children need to be helped in developing requisite skills so as to express themselves. Lack of skill lessens their expression of creativity.*

According to Zhen *laoshi*, the cultivation of skills is primary. Only when children grasp requisite skills are they able to express themselves better. However, solely training children`s technical skills could make children become uninterested in art. In order to motivate the children, Zhen *laoshi* therefore, continuously applied new materials to the class:

*Materials themselves will be enough to start children off. Children are enthusiastic about exploring different materials and enjoy discovering what various materials could do.*

Zhen *laoshi* believed that through the manipulation of a rich variety of art materials which were developmentally appropriate and aesthetically stimulating, children`s interest in art tend to become tenacious inquiries.

#### ▪ **Assumptions about art education**

Examination of Zhen *laoshi`s* pedagogical beliefs revealed that facilitating children`s skills of art expression as well as their enjoyment of art-making, as she considered, were the emphasis of art education. As she went on to conclude:

*No matter whether their grasp of skills is great or not, as long as they enjoy their art-making, and experience the joy of self-expression through art, then the goal of art education is attained.*

#### ▪ **Understanding of art**

Zhen *laoshi`s* understanding of the purpose of doing art somewhat originate with her belief that: “*Art provides a means for emotional expressiveness.*” As she elaborated:

*For children, the process of making art is a kind of emotional release. Making art enables them to express their feelings, and therefore they enjoy art-making.*

In addition to the release of emotions, another good reason for doing art, to Zhen *laoshi* eye, is for children to enhance their *creativity* and imagination.

Unlike those who say of art-making as an individual endeavor, Zhen *laoshi* argued that, ‘*Art is better to be done as a collective construction*’. She valued dynamic interactive experience, claiming that social exchanges, particularly peer mediation, facilitates children`s art explorations:

*Peer interactions enable children to come up with more ideas related to the topic of day. By reddening help/support to each other, children can solve problems jointly and progress together towards artistic growth.*

Zhen *laoshi* liked to place children in small groups (consisting of 4-6 members) involving those who with the higher self-efficacy in art-making, and those who are not. This arrangement, given Zhan *laoshi*`s view, were more likely to initiate a process of co-learning and co-construction where children could refresh each other, and foster cooperativeness; “*Children do delight in communicating ideas to peers*” highlighted Zhen *laoshi*. Therefore, she encouraged children`s social exchanges within a group so long as their interactions do not interrupt other groups.

Given what children can learn from the process (e.g., feelings could be released through art-making, and peer mediation accompanying art exploration was likely to spark new ideas) was more important than the product, Zhen *laoshi* therefore believed in the value of process over product.

▪ **Personal experience that shapes Zhen *laoshi*`s perspective on teaching art**

As an experienced teacher who has already taught art in preschools for twenty-odd years, Zhen *laoshi* by her own admission however, was not an expert in the field she teaches (visual art). At the very beginning, she taught music and that was what she was good at. Afterwards, she was required to additionally teach art to extend the children`s experiences. This was a challenging transition for her:

*At first, I had no ideas about what and how to teach art to young children. Given the fact that I had just switched to teaching art and did not have any experience in this field, it seemed natural that I followed art teachers around in the choice of topic and materials to plan and implement art activities.*

In explaining how she improved her approaches to teaching art, Zhen *laoshi* told me that she drew from the *practical knowledge* presented in art activity books or shared in workshops to bolster her art teaching. In terms of the books, those offering practical guidance for the selection of content, introducing the use of art

techniques and materials, or providing concrete examples of different ways to teach art were her favorite. In addition to extensive reading, she has also attended a workshop on a regular basis. People involved generally were the art specialist teachers across different grade levels in XX district:

*On the workshop, we exchange ideas and share experiences; we discuss innovative approaches to teaching art, examine their effectiveness and provide improved suggestions.*

As Zhen *laoshi* emphasized, it was because of her ongoing commitment to reflective art teaching either by means of extensive reading, or by means of communicating the ideas of teaching art with others that she became increasingly confident in teaching art and was willing to try out new ideas.

#### **4.1.1.3 Children`s involvement in art**

##### **▪ Children`s artistic behaviors**

Observation of a group of children`s art-making processes revealed that children learned to make art from a range of sources: from a range of sources: the teacher`s guidance, subject matter (visual imaginary placed on the easel), self-learning as well as co-learning with their peers.

When composing through art, a group of children (Lin, Zhu, Wu, Yi) closely followed Zhen *laoshi*`s instructions, first drew birds, and then tree trunks, and finally flight path.

Influenced by teacher demonstrations, they *all* drew a crown on the bird leader`s head.

Not knowing how to depict flight patterns of birds, they copied directly from the examples their teacher finished in front of the group.

.....

Lin, through self-exploration, drew a bowtie around the bird`s neck which was later praised by Zhen *laoshi* for its originality.

Inspired by Lin`s ideas, Zhu further drew a purple bowknot to decorate one of her birds` head.

##### **▪ Children`s ideas about their art**

Examining what children`s said about their art revealed that children worked without *personal* purposes, but simply to recount their teacher`s story. A good example of this can be seen in Lin`s transcript:

The researcher: Could you tell me a bit about the drawing you make?

Lin: *I draw this bird first (The bird with yellow head and blue body).*

The researcher: What is this bird doing?

Lin: *It is following its leader.*

The researcher: What are they going to do?

Lin: *They are flying away to the warm place... the south for winter.*

This was also evident in Zhu`s case:

The researcher: Why use these three colors?

Zhu: *Zhen laoshi says to use light and dark colors to do coloring, so I used these three blues.*

The researcher: I notice that you added a black outline around this bird, why?

Zhu: *Cause Zhen laoshi says if we outline birds black, then they would stand out...*

Clearly, art, in these children`s eyes, was a task that the teacher set for them. The purpose of doing art was to get things right in the teacher`s eye, rather than `acting out` their own thoughts and feelings.

#### ▪ **Children`s choices and meanings**

Regardless of the restriction of the task, children used color to express personal preference.

The researcher: Why did you color this bird`s head yellow?

Lin: *Because I like yellow.*

The researcher: I notice that you colored the bird`s body blue, why?

Lin: *Because I think blue and yellow look pretty together.*

.....

The researcher: The color of the bird`s body seemed to be different from that of the leader, why this color?

Zhu: *It is lavender. I used it to do coloring because it made the bird look prettier.*

#### ▪ **Children`s awareness of the boundaries of time**

Children were also aware that lack of time challenged their expression of ideas. Here is an example from Wu`s transcript which is representative of this awareness.

The researcher: Why didn`t you color this bird`s body?

Wu: *The time was up...I was also going to draw a straight flight path.....But there was no time left...*

#### **4.1.2 A middle class, taught by Li laoshi**

##### **4.1.2.1 Observed practice**

The following description is based on my recorded observations of one art teaching and learning session in a class of 4-5 years old. It illustrated how Li *laoshi* implemented the art activity planned under the theme of ‘I love my family’.

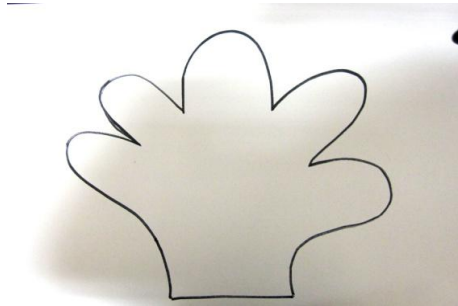
**Preparation phase:** The children broke into two groups. One group stayed in the classroom, and the rest of the class was taken to another room by a second teacher. Two square tables were put together to form a large rectangular table. Each rectangular table had 4 children seated around. On an easel at the front of the room Li *laoshi* had placed four pictorial models, *all* drawn and colored by other children. On each picture was a hand-shaped figure, with every finger drawn the images of different family members.

**Review phase:** Li *laoshi* started the class by evoking children`s memories of making puppets, “Remember the paper puppets? Did you make them yesterday? With whom did you make it?”. Children volunteered: “grandfather,” “grandmother”. “What if these paper puppets are connected together...”As Li *laoshi* spoke, she lectured to the children on the kinds of things that they would draw today (four model drawings on the easel), “It would look like these!”

**Appreciation phase:** After giving children several seconds to contemplate these works, Li *laoshi* then guided them to describe their seeing, “Who did you see on this picture?” One child replied, “Sister!” The child was encouraged to point out the figure he thought stood for sister. “Could you tell me why this figure represents sister?” Li *laoshi* further asked. “Because this person has two pigtails” responded the child. The process continued as Li *laoshi* asked the group, “Have you seen anyone else on this picture?” Another child relied, “Mom”. The child then came to the front and pointed at another figure. When asked the reasons for this, the child immediately said, “Because this person gets curly hair.”

**Demonstration phase (by teacher):** After some minutes of ‘appreciation’, Li *laoshi* moved on to demonstrate how to proceed. She showed a picture of

blank hand-shaped figure, asking, “Look at this, which finger would you choose to represent father?” One child replied, “I will choose the sturdiest one to represent my daddy, because my daddy is tall and strong.” Following a linear sequence, Li *laoshi* drew this ‘father’ figure’s facial features, beginning with the hair. All the children watched attentively as she demonstrated. Li *laoshi* did a second demonstration of ‘mother’. Layers of multiple loop lines was drawn as mom’s hair, then were the eyes, nose and other facial features.



**Figure 20.** A blank hand-shaped figure



**Figure 21.** Li *laoshi* is modeling

**Demonstration phase (by children):** Followed by Li *laoshi*’s demonstration, children were then encouraged to give it a try, “We already have father and mother, is there anyone else you want to draw?” One child replied, “Baby!” Given a marker, the child then drew a baby on the smallest finger, short hair, smiling face which was identical to that of father.

**Demonstration phase (again by teacher):** “Once outlining is done, you also can decorate your picture with any patterns you like.” As Li *laoshi* suggested she actually drew a set of graphics at the center of the hand-shaped figure. After illustrating some possibilities, Li *laoshi* summarized, “Yesterday, you all have made small puppets with your relatives; Today, I will invite all of you to make bigger ones. Figure out which family members you want to draw on these fingers.” Then a blank sheet of paper puppet and a marker were distributed to each child.

**Practice phase:** For the next ten minutes, children were engaged in drawing. Li *laoshi* moved around, offering guidance if necessary.

**Evaluation phase:** Li *laoshi* announced it was time to move on to the next session as she began to collect the children`s drawings. Some were pleased because they had already completed their works completed and grow a bit restive, whereas others felt reluctant to hand in their unfinished works. Li *laoshi* then reassured these children: What they did not finish now they could continue to do it during individual learning period.

Li *laoshi* selected one work and invited the author to talk about it. The child rushed up towards the front. “Let`s look at his picture and hear what he is to say, Okay?” Li *laoshi* stepped in to amplify the child`s voice. The child steadied himself, facing the teacher, and then began to talk about his drawing: “On the leftmost is the baby. Next to the baby is mommy, she has curly hair. On the middle, I have drawn daddy, then the sister. On the rightmost is my father`s friend. He had visited us once before.” The class watched and listened attentively as the child spoke. After the presentation of this child`s artwork, the art session was coming to an end.

#### **4.1.2.2 Teacher interview**

##### **▪ Approaches to teaching art**

During the interview Li *laoshi* told me that most of her art classes involved providing teacher demonstrations and adult artworks, the ratio being 7 out of 10. I further asked Li *laoshi* whether she thought her demonstrations and artworks constrained children`s art-making, Li *laoshi* acknowledged that all that happens if children had been imposed an on adult concept of art was that they would repeat the stereotype, other than creating something original. “*But this does not mean teacher`s explicit instruction is unnecessary*” she continued by emphasizing that:

*Particularly for those children who might not be with high art-making self-efficacy, and are likely to say: ‘I cannot make it, could you draw/do this for me?’, they need something visual to achieve an authentic understanding of the content. Without seeing examples of artworks done by others, demonstration of procedure made by the teacher, these children could either be at a loss for what to do, or have no idea where to start.*

Directive teaching, from Li *laoshi*`s view, was undoubtedly advantageous in facilitating children`s art learning. The real problem lied in how to avoid the

danger of being over-directive. Li *laoshi* told me that at the very beginning, she focused almost entirely on providing teacher demonstrations and adult artworks. It turned out that a large majority of the children tended to copy directly from the given examples. Not surprisingly, the resulting artworks looked very similar to one another. Exposure to this problem led her to rethink her approach of teaching art.

*I could not help but wondering how could I inspire the children`s motivation to do art in their own way while do not lose sight of the concern that some of the children do need much clearer guidelines. I turned to those experienced teachers for help, and was told that the demonstration session could probably be implemented by the joint efforts of the teacher and the children.*

She took the advice, tried it out in her class, and was surprised to find that children were eager to share their ideas in front of the group, and that the artworks produced were more diversified. When asked the reason for this, Li *laoshi* explained:

*Just as children think very differently from adults, the visual experiences they undergo might also differ from those of adults. An adult`s concept of art sometimes could have as little relation to a child`s experience as the child`s art does to us adults. This is somewhat ameliorated by deferring enquiry to child `experts` and using children`s artworks as example of expertise. Because peers are usually at relatively similar levels of development, therefore they can interpret art skills and ideas in ways that are accessible to other children.*

According to Li *laoshi*, involving peers as teachers was helpful in preventing art practices from being pre-empted by direct instructions. It was also help in widening children`s thought by giving them some ideas to start with or something to follow. Through learning from teachers as well as their peers, children were enabled to better engage in the exploratory process and develop towards diversified artistic outcomes.

Promoted by Li *laoshi`s* words, I was interested to know what would happen if children were given more freedom over what or how to make art, independently from the influence of teacher demonstrations and adult artworks. She gave a concrete example of it:

*I remember we have been working in art on a topic of "The fancy dress*

*ball”... Children were encouraged to make whatever animal headdresses they wanted out of the materials available. The materials available varied in forms of complexity including colorful twisted sticks, colorful papers, colorful ribbons, and so forth. Throughout the class, neither did I provide the completed models, nor did I model ways of doing. The resulting artworks however, were in so many different variations.*

I promoted Li *laoshi* with my hunches about children`s capacity for making art even without the provision of teacher demonstrations and adult artworks, she reacted, “*This art activity was implemented in a class of 5-6-year-old, whose grasp of skills, on average, are much better.*” When I asked Li *laoshi* to explain more about the role of skill-building in children`s art learning, she reflected:

*After the curriculum reform, teachers are not allowed to directly instruct the children in their art skills. However, according to my own teaching experiences, children need to be helped in developing requisite skills in order to better learn the required content. The acquisition of basic skills supports rather than thwarts children`s art learning.*

“*There were a variety of ways to implement today`s class*” Li *laoshi* declared. She told me that she could ask children to draw family members on the paper puppets she had previously prepared. She also could ask children to tear colorful papers into any shapes they want and then imaginatively combined these torn slips of paper into the images of family members. However, she emphasized that:

*What and how I teach depend on the readiness of individual children. If children do not grasp the skills such as holding a pen, tearing, gluing...how is he/she able to express himself through art!*

It was evident in Li *laoshi*`s words that in order to express creatively, children needed to firstly be technical-skilled.

#### ▪ **Assumptions about art education**

The tenets set forth by Li *laoshi* made clear assertions about the need for ‘*the cultivation of basic skills*’. Considering her explicit valuing of skill-building, it is stunning to note that the fundamental criterion she claimed to determine the success of an art class was, not so much what children learned, but rather their level of enjoyment,

*Children`s enjoyment of art is more important. So long as they could enjoy their art-making, the class is successful.*

### ▪ **Understanding of art**

Consistent with her understanding of the role of art education, art, to Li *laoshi*'s eye, was essentially a form of self-expression.

*Making art enables children to act out their inner thoughts and feelings, and therefore, they are always in high spirit when art activities are coming.*

Given the purpose of doing art is for children to intuitively express themselves, Li *laoshi* therefore insisted that it would be better for children to focus on *solo contemplation* and *independent exploration* when engaging in art-making:

*The aim of the practice phase is to offer children the opportunity to engage in self-discovery. Peer interactions could somewhat squeeze out those important uninterrupted moments.*

### ▪ **Perceived factors that constrain art practice**

When we look further into the implication associated with the belief that “*art is better to be done in a solitary fashion*”, it is worth noting that Li *laoshi* raised the concerns of many Chinese preschool teachers facing—large class sizes. According to Li *laoshi*, peer support was in itself valuable to children's art learning, whereas its occurrence in a large-group size (30 children) within a 15 minutes time slot (practice part) could be a very different matter. The chaos squeezed out the time children spent on self-inquiry, and it was because of this reason she demonstrated relatively negative attitudes toward peer interactions accompanying art explorations.

In spite of the issues raised by large class size, Li *laoshi* also mentioned of tight schedule as a constant challenge to her use of art as well as the children's creation of art. She told me that in the kindergarten, children's activities were dictated by school-determined schedules. In a class of 4-5-year old, the art activity usually took place for 20-25 minutes.

*I do feel the pressure to deliver the required content in such a limited time, and children feel the same...As you can see, some of the children are unwillingly to hand in their unfinished drawings. They want more time to work on their artworks even I reassured them that they could continue to work in the next work period.*

She then gave me another example which indicated to the impact of tight schedules on children's immersion in art learning. In that art session, the children

were asked to imaginatively combine colorful torn papers into the image of a people. The class began around 9.30 and was supposed to be finished at 10.00. *“However, the whole class was so delightfully engaged in experimenting with their own ideas that none of them was oblivious to the distractions of the time”* emphasized Li *laoshi*. It was not until about 11.00, the activity came to an end. But this was in conflict with school-wide schedule.

Li *laoshi* also described difficulties in accommodating the enthusiasm of parents who demonstrated high demands for observable outcomes of their children`s learning. In the word of Li *laoshi*, many of the parents did not care much about the *process* of art-making. Instead, they *did* pay much more attention to the *product* of art-making:

*For parents, the tangible product is often the proof that children in fact did learn something, and they value the ‘observable’ art skills and techniques children learnt. Some parents even think that art is not really important or necessary compared to other learning areas like language, science, etc. Therefore, children should not spend much time on art learning.*

With limited opportunities and support (time, materials and space), children`s interest and involvement in art are unable to sustain.

▪ **Personal experience that shapes Li *laoshi*`s perspective on teaching art**

At the very beginning, Li *laoshi* was specialized in the teaching of language and dance in preschools. Afterwards, she was additionally asked to teach art to extend the children`s experiences. By Li *laoshi*`s own admission, she never really had direct teaching and training experience in the area (visual art) she switched to teach. Surprisingly though, she sank easily into the task of teaching art. Li *laoshi* further explained that, *“I learn how to implement art activities by observing my cooperating teacher.”* She has been given the opportunity to attend some professional training programs organized by local education bureau. These training courses usually involve observing demonstration lessons and then offering critical commentary. Li *laoshi* said of these professional development experiences, *“They are helpful because they offer some practical teaching methods that I can use in my class.”*

Limited art background, coupled with the inexplicit cultural practices passed on via an apprenticeship model or professional training, perhaps resulted in Li *laoshi*`s pedagogical style.

### 4.1.2.3 Children`s involvement in art

#### ▪ Children`s artistic behaviors

Observation of a group of children`s (Cheng, Qian and Zhang) art-making process revealed that children learned to make art through copying the given examples, or self-discovery, or imitating each other`s work.

Influenced by Li *laoshi`s* demonstration, Cheng and Qian, drew layers of multiple loop lines to represent that the ‘mother’ had curly hair.

Cheng and Zhang drew on the paper a ‘sister’ having two pigtails, a certain schema copying from the pictorial models placed on the easel.

By copying the model drawings, Zhang used graphic patterns as decoration, yet via self-exploration, he also used numbers to do decorating.

Cheng learned to use numbers to decorate his drawing from Zhang.

#### ▪ Children`s ideas about their art

Examining what children said about their art revealed that art was a task Li *laoshi* set for them, and that they should closely followed the teacher`s instructions. For example:

Nearly all the drawn ‘mother’ had curly/wavy hair (at least in the group I observed). It was a schema children copied directly from Li *laoshi`s* design, as being verified from the following dialogues:

The researcher: What are these multiple loop lines?

Cheng: *They are mum`s hairs.*

The researcher: Does your mother have curly hair (in real life)?

Cheng: *Nope. My mum has long straight hair.*

.....

The researcher: I noticed that you drew...what are these (I pointed at those multiple loop lines)?

Qian: *They are mom`s wavy hair.*

The researcher: Does your mother have long, wavy hair?

Qian: *...(The child became quiet and did not respond)*

In addition, these children also drew on the paper a ‘sister’ having two pigtails, another schema copied directly from the model drawings.

The researcher: Do you have a sister (in real life)?

Cheng: *Nope*<sup>10</sup>.

▪ **Children`s choices and meanings**

Although the task was constrained, some children claimed their agency on art, either via introducing new characters that were personally meaningful to them; or through using new graphic patterns differed from the prescribed ones to do decoration.

For example, Qian drew a ‘grandmother’ figure on the paper:

The researcher: Who is this?

Qian: *She is my grandma!*

The researcher: Your grandma seems to have a different hairstyle...

Qian: *Yeah! Her hairstyle looks like mountains. She has white hairs.*

Liu drew two ‘father’ figures, one standing for his own father, another referring to a friend of his father:

The researcher: Who is this? (I pointed at the figure in the middle...)

Cheng: *Dad...*

The researcher: And this one? (I pointed at the figure in the rightmost...)

Cheng: *Another kid`s father, he has come and visited us once before.*

When asked why using numbers to decorate the drawing,

Cheng: Because father is strong, so I write down ‘0005’ to show that (Liu tended to use numbers—five thousands to symbolically represent that his father was strong).

## **4.2 Kindergarten B**

### **4.2.1 A senior class, taught by Yan *laoshi***

#### **4.2.1.1 Observed practice**

The following description is based on my recorded observations of one art teaching and learning session in a class of 5-6 years old. It illustrated how Yan *laoshi*, a new teacher, implemented the art activity planned under the theme of ‘Myself’.

**Preparation phase:** The children broke into two groups. One group stayed in the classroom, and the rest of the class was taken to another classroom by a

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<sup>10</sup> China has adopted one-child policy and it is natural that the child is raised up without siblings

second teacher. At each table sit four children facing the easel placed at the front of the classroom.

**Introduction phase:** Yan *laoshi* started the class with questions, “Are boys and girls alike?”, “What’s the different between boys and girls?” Several children raised their hands and Yan *laoshi* asked for their ideas one at a time—some saying “Face,” others “Hairstyle” which was further elaborated on, “Girls are with pigtails and boys are not!”



**Figure 22.** Yan *laoshi*`s art session

**Appreciation phase:** This was followed by the appreciation of an illustration placed on the easel (The illustration used was an instructional material taken from the textbooks. It consisted of five pictures depicting different images of boys and girls. Two of them were the reprints of Western masterworks, while the rest of three were drawn by Chinese adult artists). Then the discussion turned to questions: “Which pictures do you like most and why?”

**Practice phase:** After some five minutes of appreciation, the class moved into their main assignment: to create their own versions of boys or girls. Yan *laoshi* further specified, “If you are a boy then draw boys, and if you are a girl then draw girls”. Then a set of twelve felt pens and a sheet of A4 paper were distributed to each child. The children began to work in an air of relatively quiet concentration. Yan *laoshi* moved around, offering encouragement at times, while specifying instructions at other times.

At one table sit four children, one boy (Wang) and three girls (named Tian, Liu, and Hong respectively). They all chose black felt pens to do outlining.

At that time, Yan *laoshi* come over to this group and praised Hong`s work, “The girl you draw looks pretty.”

Then she turned to Liu, commenting, “Liu also draws very well. I know she is drawing herself once I see it.”

Yan *laoshi* got confused after seeing Wang`s work, “Why do you draw

yourself so long and thin?”

“I am growing up!” Wang responded with excitement.

...

Noticing that some children were looking at the work of their peers, or whispering to their deskmates, Yan *laoshi* told the class, “Look at your own work/be quiet. There is no need to look around/talk while drawing.”

**Evaluation phase:** With five minutes before the end of the art session, Yan *lasoshi* announced to the children that it was time to hand in their drawings. There were some of the children who had already completed their works, sitting quietly; and still others whose work remained at least partially uncolored. She selected two artworks from a stack, commented, “This work looks good, isn’t it? This child had drawn two girls on her picture, herself and her friend.” She then picked up another work, continuing, “This one also looks very excellent.” After briefly evaluating two children’s artworks, the class moved on to the lunch as suggested in the schedules.

#### 4.2.1.2 Teacher interview

##### ▪ Approaches to teaching art

Yan *laoshi* was preoccupied with directive teaching to deliver the art curriculum. Much of her teaching behavior was characterized by well-rehearsed, time-worn rituals, as evident from her detailed explanation of how art activities were implemented at other times:

*The art classes usually begin with a lead-in activity, taking the form of situational questions, or story-telling that related to children’s lived experiences. This is followed by appreciating adult artworks. Provocative questions are then asked to stimulate children’s thinking and enhance understanding. Sometimes, specific art skills are demonstrated and explained. After this, children would be offered the opportunities to experiment with their own ideas. The class concludes with peer-group or teacher’s feedback on work.*

Interestingly in my observation of this art class, neither were the basic steps of art project shown, nor was the specific skill or certain formula demonstrated. During the interview, Yan *laoshi* told me that avoiding teacher demonstrations was perhaps the biggest change she had made in the way of teaching art among these two months of teaching career. When asked reason for this, she explained that

*Based on my previous teaching experience, I find some children tend to copy directly from the exact model I finished in front of them. In order to reduce the influence of teacher demonstration over children`s composition, I therefore shorten the time spent on demonstrating.*

Teacher demonstrations, to Yan *laoshi`s* eye, constrained children`s expression of ideas. In order for the children to give free rein to their imagination, she therefore avoided adult demonstration. It is worth acknowledging that the desire to safeguard children`s expression and creativity might not be the only reason Yan *laoshi* eliminated demonstration session. The consideration of children`s greater grasp of skill, as she implicitly mentioned later, was perhaps another contributory factor leading to this decision:

*In general, 5-6-year-old children`s skill development is better than those of 3-5-year-old. Therefore, they are more likely to express freely through art.*

Compared to those junior or middle class`s children, who might still need to see skills or techniques demonstrated, senior class`s children have already grasped requisite skills. For this reason, they should be given more freedom to express ideas on their own.

#### ▪ **Assumptions about art education**

Given the efforts Yan *laoshi`s* made to encourage children`s self-inquiry, it is not surprising that the fundamental criterion she claimed to determine the success of an art class was, not so much related to what practical knowledge children learned, but rather related to whether they were offered the opportunity to develop their own message in art.

#### ▪ **Understanding of art**

Yan *laoshi`s* emphasis on children`s self-expression through art is inextricably linked to her belief that, “*Art is a form of self expression. Children make art to work out their inner world of thinking and feeling.*” Viewing art as an avenue for children`s *personal* expression, Yan *laoshi* therefore did not like to show the children how to make art, but preferred to offer guidance if necessary. Her guidance acted either as a form of encouragement, letting children know what they were doing was valued and should be continued, such as “The girl you draw looks pretty.”; or as a form of instruction directing children`s decision-making, “Do this first, then this...”; also as a form of management strategy, when she told

the class to 'keep still' during the art-making process.

Though fostering children's creative expression was an intent in Yan *laoshi*'s teaching, she harbored a stronger concern for maintaining classroom order, as evident in her reliance on teacher-directed whole-class interaction and teacher-led individual exploration to guide class operation. She showed greater frustration when there was a breach of discipline than when children failed to spark new ideas from a community of inquiry. This can be seen from her restricted views toward peer interactions accompanying art explorations:

*I think it would be better if children work intently on their own artworks. Too much peer interactions would interrupt children's self-exploration and self-discovery. It would also make the whole class deteriorate into chaos. Children could share their ideas, feelings and experiences in the sharing session.*

Not surprisingly, Yan *laoshi*'s devaluing of peer mediation accompanying art explorations, added by her idea of 'Art as a language of expression', reinforced her belief that, "Art is better to be done in a solitary fashion", and as such, children need uninterrupted time to work independently.

Considering that 'art as a means of self-expression', 'art as a solitary experience', and 'the superiority of process over product' are phrases commonly associated with one another (Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1987; Kindler, 1996; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002), it is stunning to note Yan *laoshi*'s explicit valuing of both the *process* and the *product* of art. Both the artistic process as well as the finished product was an equally important part of art experience. "I feel very delight when children could focus on their art-making and get their work done." When asked to further explain her thoughts about the relationship between process and product, Yan *laoshi* said:

*Art experiences need time and only when children are given sufficient time to concentrate and be involved in making art, could they make impressive artworks.*

#### ▪ **Perceived factors that constrain art practice**

Yan *laoshi* saw lack of time as severe limitations to the kinds of materials she often used. According to Yan *laoshi*, there were unified daily schedules to dictate the timing of children's activities. In the senior class, structured learning (art activity was a component part of structured learning) usually began around 10.15

right after the free play period and took place for about 30-35 minutes. She needed to get all the necessary preparation work done such as determining classroom organization, distributing necessary materials in a very limited time available. *“This is very challenging for me”* Yan *laoshi* emphasized. In addition, messy materials such as watercolors, painting and others were not without their problems: Firstly, children were not able to quickly clean everything up well; Secondly, given that *the* space available for the manipulation of materials was limited, children could be mess about with these materials: paints either fall on the ground, or spill on the clothes. *“Parents and caregivers would not be very happy about it”* Yan *laoshi* told me.

*Therefore, I often use crayons, watercolor pens and construction paper. Because for me they do not cost too much time to prepare, and for children they are easy to operate.*

#### ▪ **Personal experience that shapes Yan *laoshi*’s perspective on teaching art**

As a new teacher who has just taught in preschools for two months, Yan *laoshi* did not yet have the opportunity to join the professional training. Nor was she able to engage in extensive reading in relation to teaching art when faced with day-to-day business of planning purposeful learning. The roots of her perspective could probably be traced to her undergraduate days. *“I have attended art courses in the spare time when going through university,”* She said, *“I dabble in drawing as a hobby.”*

The lack of necessary training (Bresler, 1994, 2002; Kindler, 1996), added by the conception of art as a personal matter perhaps, resulted Yan *laoshi*’s desire for little ‘intervention’ in children’s art. However, it is worth acknowledging that structure and order, coupled with her emphasis on skill-building (implicitly) and the completion of work (even while recognizing the value of process), is also an important aspect in her art pedagogy.

#### **4.2.1.3 Children’s involvement in art**

##### • **Children’s artistic behaviors**

Observation of a group of children’s art-making processes revealed that children learned to make art from a range of sources: the teacher’s guidance, subject matter (visual imaginary placed on the easel), self-learning as well as co-learning with their peers.

Wang`s drawing actions were largely self-directed. He concentrated on the traces he made on the paper and continually talked to himself: “*I am drawing sun, flowers and grass.*” “*I will color the sun red.*”....

....

Three girls (Tian, Liu and Huang) however, looked at each other`s work, discussed the figures to be drawn and the colors to be used. For example, Liu and Hong drew 2 girls on the paper, an idea learnt from Tian. Tian learned to paint the clothes colorfully from Liu.

#### ▪ **Children`s ideas about their art**

Examining what children`s said about their art revealed that they drew to tell their own stories.

Wang: *I drew a smiling sun...These were colorful flowers...I grow up and become a PLA man.*

Tian: *I drew myself, a butterfly...and my good friend...I was also going to draw a skipping rope to show that my friend and I were jumping rope on the grass...*

Liu/ Hong: *My friend and I were playing together on the grass.*

Here, art is used as a vehicle for personal expression by which children could bring their own experiences to the task at hand. Particularly for Tian, art also has the function of cathartic release:

Tian: *No other thing makes me feel happy except drawing.*

The researcher: Why do you think like that?

Tian: *Because I do not have friends, except Liu. We always play together.*

The researcher: So when making a drawing, you could draw on the paper that Liu and you are playing together...?

Tian: *Umm...*

#### ▪ **Children`s choices and meanings**

Children`s accounts of their own art-making experience revealed that that they used various elements such as form, space, color to convey the meaning and express personal preference.

Wang exaggerated the size of the drawn figure to indicate emotional significance:

Yan laoshi: “Why do you draw yourself so long and thin?”

Wang: “*I am growing up!*”

Tian and Liu placed two drawn figures in close proximity to each other to indicate meaningful relations—that is, these two girls were good friends.

Tian: *The girl (drawn figure) beside me is my good friend...*

Liu and Hong also used color to express personal preference.

The researcher: You used different colors to color the clothes...

Liu: *Yeah, I colored my clothes colorfully, and my best friend's too (the drawn figure beside her).*

The researcher: Why did you use a variety of colors to do coloring?

Liu: *Because it looks beautiful, I like it!*

...

The researcher: Who did you color your skirt pink?

Hong: *I like pink!*

#### ▪ **Children's awareness of the boundaries of time**

Children were also aware that lack of time challenged their expression of ideas. Here is an example from Tian's transcript which is representative of this awareness.

The researcher: You had two pigtails, and it seemed that you were raising your arms to the sky...What were you doing?

Tian: *I was going to draw a skipping rope to show... But there was no time left for me to do that.*

.....

The researcher: Why didn't you color your butterfly?

Tian: *The time was up and I could not continue to work on that.*

### **4.2.2 A middle class, taught by Yu laoshi**

#### **4.2.2.1 Observed practice**

The following description is based on my recorded observations of one art teaching and learning session in a class of 4-5-year-old. It illustrates how *Yu laoshi*, a beginning teacher, implemented the art activity planned under the theme of 'Food'.

**Preparation phase:** The children broke into two groups. Half of the class followed a second teacher to outdoor play, the remaining 9 children sit in a half circle, facing a media display screen hung up on the front wall of the

room (some children were absent that day). Right next to the display screen was an easel on which Yu *laoshi* had placed a previously prepared semi-finished picture.



**Figure 23.** Yu *laoshi*'s art session

**Introduction phase:** Yu *laoshi* displayed a color image of a stage as she stimulated a discussion among the children regarding the usefulness of the stage. Children volunteered: “dancing,” “singing,” “performing.” Yu *laoshi* listened to the answers elaborating in a pleasant voice, “You could dance, sing or perform on the stage.” As she continued, “What would you like to perform on the stage?” One child shouted loudly, “I want to dance!” Yu *laoshi* then invited the child to perform a movement; and the child, facing the audience, did a spilt on the ground.

“Today, I have also invited a group of special friends,” she spoke while displaying a picture with varied vegetables. This was followed by a picture drawn three dancing vegetables (maize, cabbage and tomato). “If you were a vegetable, what movement do you want to make?” Yu *laoshi* then asked the group, and several children raised their hands. Being encouraged by Yu *laoshi* to give it a try, these children coming to the front participated as performers, while the rest sitting on their chairs watched as viewers. There were some who did movements spontaneously. Not knowing what to do, there were still others who looked at the examples on the screen and copied it, or imitated their peers. After some minutes of performing, these children returned to their seats whereas the rest, in turn, came up to do performing. Noticing that one body stood still, Yu *laoshi* then modeled ways of doing by putting her hands over a boy's hands and assisting him to do an movement. The children watched attentively as she demonstrated.

After this, Yu *laoshi* drew the children's attention back to the screen, on which a picture of a child twisting her hips, with hands on her waist appeared.

Accompanying by some brief oral explanations, *Yu laoshi* demonstrated this movement. As she performed, she also encouraged the children to do it together. The process continued as two more movements were displayed and demonstrated.

**Demonstration phase:** After introducing the new project of the day, *Yu laoshi* moved on to demonstrate how to draw movements for vegetables. She drew children`s attention to the previously prepared picture on the easel. In middle of the picture was three vegetables. From the left were a tomato, then a mushroom and finally a cucumber. A child was invited to perform a movement while *Yu laoshi* according to the presented posture, drew a movement for the tomato. She also directed the class to have a close observation of how the hands and feet look like as the child acted. The demonstration concluded with *Yu laoshi*`s instructions, “Draw vegetables first, including their facial features, eyes, nose, and so forth. Then draw movements for vegetables.”

**Practice phase:** On a signal from *Yu laoshi*, children stood up and walked towards the back of the room. At the back of the room placed 5 square tables and each had about 2 children seated around. On the table by each child were a marker and a sheet of A-4 picture. On the picture was drawn stage finished by the children themselves ahead of time. Two previously drawn and colored models were placed in full view of the class (one drawn a variety of vegetables; another drawn a dancing bamboo shoot and a cabbage, decorated with graphic patterns).



**Figure 24.** A picture of varied vegetables



**Figure 25.** A picture of dancing vegetable

Children began to use markers to do outlining while Yu *laoshi* circulated through the classroom providing suggestions for improvement or additions to be made.

“Well done! You also have sketched in the fingers and toes of the vegetables,” Yu *laoshi* praised Shao for his attention to detail and further suggested, “You could draw more vegetables, filling your stage with these dancing ‘performers’.”

Shao nodded, having a glance at the models, and then worked intently on his work....

Noticing that some of the children might have difficulty in adding movements to vegetables, Yu *laoshi* thus set up a rolling display of the images, “If you do not know what movement to draw, you could have a look at these examples.”

.....

The pace of working was different from child to child. Noticing that some children had already completed outlining, Yu *laoshi* suggested, “When finishing up outlining, you could do coloring”. Children were also told that they could use any patterns they like to make stage decorations. Then a set of 12 crayons was distributed to each child.

“You probably could draw some other vegetables, with different colors, such as green, brown...” Yu *laoshi* suggested when she found some children only drew tomatoes. “Try to draw different vegetables, filling your stage with dancing vegetables.” She told the whole class.

A minute or so later, Yu *laoshi* displayed the background music in an attempt to make the atmosphere lively.

After ten minutes most of the children had completed their drawings. Yu *laoshi* suggested, “You could take along your drawings, walk around the room, and have a look at each other’s works”.

**Evaluation phase:** Several children were invited to introduce their

drawings—one at a time following the questions: “Could you tell us a bit about the drawing you make (what vegetables have you drawn)?” “What movements have you added to your vegetables?” The children stood facing the audience with his/her work holding in their hands, while Yu *laoshi* sitting beside to amplify the children`s voice. The audiences were also welcome to offer their comments. In response to the question of “which part do you like most about his drawing”, one girl announced, “I like those colorful spots on the stage. They are pretty!” The process continued as four more children came up to the front to talk about their artworks. Also, the class was directed to appreciate their peers` works, following the questions: “What is new on his/her picture? Has he/she drawn a new vegetable, or a new movement?”

#### 4.2.2.2 Teacher interview

- **Approaches to teaching art**

To Yu *laoshi*, providing teacher demonstrations and pictorial models was a necessary teaching strategy. When asked reason for this, Yu *laoshi* explained:

*Sometimes, children need to see new art skills or techniques demonstrated so as to achieve a more authentic understanding. For children with relatively low art-making self-efficacy, teacher demonstrations and pictorial models can give them some starting points for further thinking; for those gifted ones, good artworks could also inspire and enlighten them.*

I asked Yu *laoshi* what if she removed pictorial models before engaging children in making art (practice part), she told me that, “*Children would be at a loss for what to do, and some would only draw what I have demonstrated earlier in the class.*”

Although pictorial models were shown just for the purpose of motivating the children, Yu *laoshi* acknowledged that it was not without its problem. Allowing children to copy the given examples somewhat held them back from intuitively expressing themselves, “*What children draw on the paper are the formulae picking up from me, not the expressions of the way they themselves develop.*”

According to Yu *laoshi*, showing pictorial models had both its pros and cons, and so too was the provision of teacher demonstrations: “*If I model ways of doing, some of the children would copy directly from the given examples.*” She gave a concrete example of it:

*When composing through drawing, some children first drew a tomato*

*waving hands on the paper (a demonstration provided by her), some even kept drawing tomatoes and did not try to draw other vegetables.*

As she continued, she also expressed some concern about completely avoiding teacher demonstrations: “*If I do not provide demonstrations, some of the children would have no idea where to start.*” Therefore, she had been constantly struggling with the idea of how to strike a balance between teachers` direct instruction and children`s open-ended learning. When addressing the issue of mitigating the effects of teachers` influence, supporting children`s overall participation turned out to be desirable practices. Yu *laoshi* believed that involving children as *active* participants deepened the initiative of children. An example of this can be seen in her provision of encouragement to children`s performing in the front:

*Encouraging children to actively engage with their bodies and to express their ideas through movements could enhance their interests in art and this will further form a driving force for their art learning.*

Yu *laoshi* reflected that if she was to teach this class again, she would also give children the opportunity to do demonstration. When asked reason for this, Yu *laoshi* explained that:

*Understanding of what children already know and what they are grappling with enable we teachers to decide what they could be motivated to explore further.*

The involvement of children as *active* participants (or ‘experts’), given Yu *laoshi*`s view, had benefits for children and teachers alike. For children, it cultivate their positive dispositions toward art learning; and for teachers, it offer them the opportunity to adapt art teaching to take cognizance of children`s *actual* needs. The same was also true of encouraging children`s explanation of their works of art.

*By communicating with others the details of their art, children are able to develop a visible memory of what they have done, and this facilitates their new perceptions of art learning...Importantly to children, there is also a sense of achievement, self-fulfillment and satisfaction deriving from seeing growth in their ability to make art.*

As she continued:

*Through such conversations teachers are enabled to know how children understand and what they emphasize. Having a better understanding of what children are capable of doing is essential if we were to know what can*

*be expected.*

Yu *laoshi* also pointed to the provision of a rich variety of art materials as an important way to motivate the children. Children in her class had already been confronted by a number of different media, including: crayons, felt pens, engraving, watercolors, sand painting, Chinese ink painting, and so forth. When asked whether there were challenges for presenting new tools or materials, Yu *laoshi* replied with a great deal of certainty, “*Absolutely!*” According to Yu *laoshi*, children generally found it difficult to manipulate a new art tool or material due to the following reasons:

*It could be inadequate development of children`s fine-motor skill...It could be that they do not observe carefully when teachers are doing demonstrations...It could be that children depend on teachers to make things for them...It could also be that the presented medium does not include children`s interests..*

Yu *laoshi* continued by giving a concrete example of it:

*When using brush to do drawing, children encountered a string of difficulties, such as unable to arrive at good force control; or dip the brush too much ink; or repeatedly daub on Xuan paper (Xuan paper is very flimsy), and the paper fell apart...Faced with these difficulties, some children lost confidence, and some even burst into tears...*

Yu *laoshi* then went on to conclude that, “*the cultivation of skills is still very important.*” In her response to the role of skill-building in children`s art learning, I heard a similar comment (as heard from the other three teachers):

*Without the development of requisite skills, children can hardly express themselves well through their art-making. Inadequate skill acquisition could also impact on children`s enjoyment of art-making. Therefore, skill development is still necessary and essential in children`s art learning.*

#### ▪ **Assumptions about art education**

Art education, given Yu *laoshi*`s view, should include skill-building but not be limited to skill-building. In the push to facilitate children`s skills of art expression, it is important to be aware that involving children and encouraging their decision making as well as enhancing their enjoyment of art experience should also be the emphasis of art education.

- **Understanding of art**

In response to my question about what art does for young children, Yu *laoshi* suggested a refusal to regard art merely as a way of illustrating facts, or a language of expression.

*Engagement with art also offers children the opportunity to confront the challenges of making art. It invites individual invention, aesthetic exploration, and problem-solving. Through art children are able to work through problems at hand, such as what graphic symbols to use to express their ideas, how to combine varied elements into their artworks.*

The nature of art-making thus becomes a cognitive activity rather than a mere emotional activity. For children to better express themselves or develop cognitively through art, Yu *laoshi* believed that “*Art is better to be done through a collective construction*”. According to Yu *laoshi*, children learn to make art not only through teacher demonstrations and pictorial models, but also through social exchanges with their peers.

*Through peer interactions, children are able to come up with more ideas related to the topic of the day and are more likely to try something new.*

Therefore, peer support and tutoring accompanying art explorations, were regarded in a positive light.

Like many of the teachers earlier in the chapter, Yu *laoshi* expressed strong beliefs in both the artistic process and the end product: “*They are equally valuable.*” As she further elaborated:

- **Personal experience that shapes Yu *laoshi*'s perspective on teaching art**

As a beginning teacher who has just taught art in preschools for only one year, Yu *laoshi*'s beliefs and pedagogy impressed me, and prompted me to seek a further understanding of her arts expertise. Surprisingly to me, she had only received two-years of art training in college. According to Yu *laoshi*, these art trainings just developed her some basic art skills, but did not prepare her fully for teaching art to young children:

*At first, I have no clear idea of how to implement an art activity. Generally, I would begin by showing a finished example I have made, and then demonstrating basic ways of manipulating, and finally having children practice these by drills. The resulting artworks always looked very similar...*

In explaining how she learned to teach art and refine her approach to teaching art, Yu *laoshi* pointed specifically to an apprenticeship model. It usually takes the form of observing demonstration lessons and then giving critical feedback. Lessons were implemented either by experienced teachers or by herself.

*I find this apprenticeship model to be the most helpful for enhancing my strategies in teaching art. I learn to defer enquiry to child 'experts', to play background music to liven up the atmosphere...almost from those experienced teachers.*

In terms of the professional development training she has attended, it is this way as well.

*We observe and evaluate demonstration lessons. We refreshed each other through this reciprocal critique.*

This process of observation and evaluation, to Yu *laoshi*'s eye, was a fruitful exercise,

*I have learned a lot from these training programs as their linkages to classroom practices are close and visible. There are some methods I could use in my own class after adjustment.*

Yu *laoshi* emphasized to me that there were various challenges teachers might encounter when teaching art, particularly as a beginning teacher, and certainly their first year. Although she also spent time reading relevant reference books (art teaching), it is mostly through the guidance of more experienced teachers, she built her confidence in teaching art.

#### **4.2.2.3 Children`s involvement in art**

##### **▪ Children`s artistic behaviors**

Observation of a group of children`s art-making processes revealed that children learned to make art from a range of sources: from a range of sources: the teacher`s guidance, subject matter (visual imaginary placed on the easel), self-learning as well as co-learning with their peers.

Huang through self-discovery, drew eggplant a bottom-twisting movement, and further dressed this eggplant up.

Zhang, influenced by Yu *laoshi*'s demonstration, first drew a tomato and a cucumber on the picture, yet via self-exploration, she further drew tomato father a black billycock, and cucumber mother a pink dance skirt...She also drew a pumpkin baby, a figure copying from model works.

Influenced by teacher demonstrations, Shao too, first drew a tomato on his picture, but he drew more details. He also sketched out fingers and toes. In addition, he used yellow, pink, and blue ‘lights’ to decorate the stage, the colors of which not only matched well with one another, but also consistent with the color he used to color the stage curtain.

▪ **Children`s ideas about their art**

Examining what children`s said about their art revealed that they drew to recount Yu *laoshi*`s story, rather than ‘show’ their own stories.

The researcher: I notice that there is a very big eggplant here.

Huang: *The eggplant is doing performances.*

The researcher: What performances?

Huang: *It is singing and dancing.*

.....

The researcher: Why did you draw a hat on this tomato`s head?

Zhang: *Because the tomato father was going to perform on the stage.*

*Having a hat made it stand out!*

Although the topic was constrained, children were allowed agency to imaginatively combine varied objects and context: vegetables and movements. A good example of this can be seen in Huang`s transcript:

The researcher: What an interesting movement!

Huang: *Yeah! My eggplant is twisting the bum!*

Clearly, art in these children`s eyes, was not just a task. Making art also invited their input and empowered them to adapt ideas in an imaginative way.

▪ **Children`s choices and meanings**

Children`s accounts of their own art-making experience revealed that they used color and graphic patterns to express personal preference. As can be seen from Shao`s, Huang` and Zhang`s transcripts:

In terms of Shao`s transcripts:

The researcher: What are these? (I point at those colorful strips)

Shao: *These are falling lights!*

The researcher: Why using these three colors, pink, blue and yellow?

Shao: *Because they look pretty together.*

.....

The researcher: What did you enjoy most when making the drawing?

Shao: *Drawing lots of falling lights.*

The researcher: Why?

Shao: *These lights made the stage look prettier.*

In terms of Huang`s transcripts:

The researcher: You did not color the cucumber`s body colored green...

Huang: *Because it wore a beautiful red dress.*

The researcher: The color of the eggplant`s clothes differed from that of cucumber...

Huang: *Yeah, the eggplant wore a pink skirt...I chose pink because I thought pink and purple look pretty together (Huang colored eggplant purple)*

In terms of Zhang`s transcripts:

The researcher: Other kids colored mushroom brown, but you colored it purple, why?

Zhang: *I think a purple mushroom looks prettier.*

The researcher: You also drew stars on the stage, right? Why?

Zhang: *Because these stars made the stage look much prettier.*

## **Summary**

This chapter has presented observed practice, interview data and children`s actions, artworks and speech collated from four Shanghai kindergarten classrooms. The following chapter will analyze themes emerging across the gathered evidence.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, themes emerging across four kindergarten classrooms are analyzed. There are six main themes that appear to mutually reinforce commonly observed rituals of practice. Vignettes of Chinese preschool art practice shared in the Literature Review are drawn upon for comparison.

In my observation of art classes in four kindergarten classrooms, I have frequently noticed teachers directing children through predetermined processes towards prescribed outcomes. These teachers are used to instructing children in art through teacher demonstrations and adult artworks. Considerable attention and time is given to the teaching of practical knowledge and skills. Clearly, the strategies of teaching art in kindergarten classrooms are still predominantly teacher-directed.

### 5.1 The role of the teacher

Most of the teachers in this study believed that children were naturally inclined to make art, but emphasized to me that it was their role and responsibility in ensuring that children were engaged in something worthwhile so that it promoted children's artistic learning, besides just being enjoyable. They described their role as continual guidance so as to scaffold children's competency, performance and idea development in art, as evident in Zhen *laoshi's* comments:

*Teachers need to anticipate children's moods and needs, and devise art activities that incorporate meaningful learning opportunities for children... Teachers also need to cultivate their capacity to be sensitive and be responsive to children's actual needs as they occurred during their art-making processes.*

In addition, teachers expected to offer and encourage comment on the appropriateness and effectiveness of children's artworks. In the words of Zhen *laoshi*: "Critical feedback helps children go a step further in their own art learning." To do so, teachers need to indicate something specifically relevant to the works of individual children, valuing what they do, giving attention to the shortcomings while providing suggestions for improvement. This emphasis on critical evaluation reflects a Chinese culturally implicit belief in the pedagogical value of *criticism* (Tobin et al., 2009). However, it is at variance with most Western visions of art education, and particularly expressivist values where *criticism* is considered more likely to erode children's motivation in art learning,

rather than enhance it (Barnes, 2002; Tobin et al., 2011). Interestingly, Zhen *laoshi* revealed an allegiance to expressivist values in her interview but this did not her use of criticism to ‘motivate’ children advance further in their proficiency.

We can see a more dramatic example of such inconsistencies in Yan *laoshi*’s case, who favored a minimal-intervention approach, yet demonstrated a commitment to teachers’ roles in the preparation and implementation of art activities for young children.

*Consistent with each month’s theme, I will carefully plan art activities ahead of time set learning objectives in light of the readiness of children. I will choose the topic that are relevant to children’s lived experiences, prepare relevant materials...I favor little explicit instruction, but will still offer technical assistance when it is needed...*

It was argued that teachers should retain overall responsibility for planning and *delivering* meaningful art experiences to children. The real power lies with teachers’ actions in determining what topic to explore, what stimulus to provide, what learning should take place, and what art material to make available in the light of the stills being pursued. It is believed that only when art is well-organized and purposefully taught, children, with the help of teachers, would then be able to create meaningful artworks with aesthetic qualities.

Although the national *Guidelines* has aligned itself with a more child-centered, expressive-oriented art education, art learning in Chinese preschools is not about children’s spontaneous construction of their own art knowledge through the exploration of various art media. Intrinsicly, it still appeared to be a matter of acquiring and accumulating predetermined *practical knowledge*, which seemed to have little to do with beliefs in child-centered expression, but have more resonance with disciplined learning behaviors.

This emphasis on teacher authority in *regulating* children’s art reflects the deference that Chinese culture gives to the role of the teacher (Vong, 2008; Huang, 2009). “Once my teacher, forever my father” (Huang, 2009, p. 93), “It is the laziness of the teacher not to strictly teach children” (Wang, 2001, cited in Tang, 2006) are oft-repeated Chinese sayings. Given the great respect that Chinese culture has afforded to the teacher’s role, and the emphasis on active teaching through critique, it is not surprising that teachers who grow up under the influence of this cultural force could not help but believe that if they do not ‘teach’ art in this manner, children would never learn how to make art. Art teaching, for this

reason, is usually of a predetermined, teacher-directed style where the old idea, “direct instruction drives the emergence of creative” (Rudowicz, 2004), still dominates teachers’ philosophies and classroom practices. Therefore, it is not unusual to see teachers who, while professing the *therapeutic* and *expressive* value of art, actually have children follow precise directions to produce art. Teachers wish to be seen to be aware of curriculum directives. However, these understandings are at variance with the culturally embedded historical practices observed in the classroom.

## **5.2 The provision of teacher demonstrations and adult artworks**

Along with the inherent model of *teacher authority*, there is an explicit belief in the value of providing teacher demonstrations and adult artworks. Emphasis on modeling is consistent with what Kessen (1975) and Winner (1989) observed from many preschools art programs pre-1980s’ reform. Although it contradicts many of the objectives enacted in the national and local *Guidelines*, this practice manifests itself with a stunning power in these preschool art programs. It suggests teachers’ lack of faith in children’s capacity to creatively solve new problems, as evident in their explanation of why they tended to provide demonstrations:

*“Children need to be demonstrated the basic ways to manipulate so as to achieve an authentic understanding...”, “if I do not provide demonstration, they would be at a loss about what to do...”*

In truth if children were consistently given such models then to remove them would likely cause confusion. However, this is not a truth about children’s creative capacity. This is a culturally sanctioned and learned behavior.

The same is true of showing model works (referring either to pictorial works made by children or to visual imagery produced by adults),

*“Children need to be given a start point for further thinking...”, “If I removed models, they would have no idea where to start...”*

According to the teachers in this study, expecting children to make art without allowing them to look at some reference or assisting them with skills that they have not yet developed was to ask a lot of them, particularly for children who are at infant stages<sup>11</sup>. In the absence of this ‘specific’ guidance, young children with low art-making self-efficacy are likely to be bewildered by not knowing what to

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<sup>11</sup> The infant stage closely parallels to junior, 3-4-year-old and middle, 4-5-year-old level in Chinese preschools.

do (or how to do it), and gradually lose faith in their abilities to make art. The purpose of art activities, as Yu *laoshi* reminded, “*is not to test children`s capacity to make art, but rather to nurture their interest in art-making.*” So long as children have been shown exactly how to make art, they would not likely become frustrated by not being able to think of more to do with their artworks, The given solutions in, say, teacher demonstrations and adult artworks, make the difficult look easy. As most of the teachers in this study said that, “*The sense of accomplishment will make children eager to continue their art involvement*”. Gardner (1989b) sympathetically conceptualized this approach,

In the best Chinese tradition, they were *ba zhe shou jiao*—‘teaching by holding the children`s hand’—so much so that children would happily come back for more (p. 55).

So via direct instruction, rarely through trial and error, children learn to master artistic media and develop competency in art.

There is value, for instance, in ‘*appreciating*’ adult artworks. As Zhen *laoshi* and Yu *laoshi* put it,

*Model work, which has flair and originality, is helpful in children`s consideration of aesthetic qualities in art, and their creation of artworks with stunning beauty.*

It is equally evident that the use of adult artworks could be reduced to children`s mindless copying (as evident in Zhen *laoshi* and Li *laoshi*`s class). Yet the ‘edificatory’ benefits of teacher demonstrations and adult artworks *had*, and *still have* enjoyed much more support in classroom practices. The lost opportunity is for teachers to deepen their knowing and understanding of what *individual* children might be capable of doing. Rather than relying almost exclusively on modeling, Barnes (2002) encourages teachers to discover ways of helping children to build up their own confidence by realizing that “they know a lot about it already, and a lot more than they thought they did” (p. 34) .

### **5.3 The prioritizing of skills**

There was a widely shared commitment to the prioritizing of skills among interviewed teachers, as manifested in their overriding emphasis on the teaching of *practical knowledge*. The necessity for children`s grasp of skills tended to take priority over their *active* discovery, or *collective construction* of understanding. “*Children need to be helped in developing requisite skills so as to better express*

*their ideas*” was highlighted by *all* the interviewed teachers. There seemed no apparent awareness that the opportunity for children to express their own ideas were quite limited.

To effectively orient children towards fluency with requisite skills, some understanding of children`s artistic developmental characteristic was considered essential. Knowing sequential stages, as it is argued (by Zhen *laoshi* and Li *laoshi*), offers teachers the opportunity to match art activities to what children are capable of doing, and avoid forcing on children the content for which they are not yet ready. In these teachers` judgment, progression in art is only possible if skills and ideas of art, explored by the teacher with children, are in a sequence. Again, a belief that has more resonance with disciplined teaching behaviors. As can be seen from Zhen *laoshi*`s accounts:

*Having a holistic understanding of children`s artistic development is essential if teachers are to scaffold children`s art learning in an age-appropriate manner.*

From Li *laoshi*, I heard a similar comment:

*I think if we teachers, were to know what can be expected from children, a good understanding of the characteristics of children`s artistic abilities at different ages is necessary. Knowing sequential stages can help me make appropriate teaching choices and I am still not good at it (knowing sequential stages)...*

It is worth noting that these teachers are not alone in embracing the priority of skill-building attitude in their classroom practices. As discussed in Literature Review, this explicit valuing of skill-building has been a consistent finding on the field of art education in Chinese schooling (Kessen, 1975; Lowry & Wolf, 1988; Gardener, 1989a, 1989b; Winner, 1989; Maureen et al., 1999; Piscitelli et al., 1999; Wright, 2003; Vong, 2008; Huntsinger et al., 2011; Jolley & Zhang, 2012).

It has also been testified that emphasis on the prioritizing of skills is inextricably linked to the Chinese notion of how ‘creativity’ should be nurtured in young children. As many researchers note, ‘skill progressions facilitate later creativity’ is an idea that characterizes many Chinese (preschool) teachers` attitudes toward the *relationship* between skills and creativity (Gardener, 1989a, 1989b; Winner, 1989; Maureen et al., 1999). The necessity for cultivating skills first and creativity subsequently has been underscored when Chinese teachers asserted that, “Children cannot be creative without first becoming technically skilled; otherwise

they have no way of expressing that creativity” (Maureen et al, 1999, p. 180). Foregrounding of children`s early acquisition of skills, to Gardener`s (1989b) eye, could also be understood in such a way that,

Chinese teachers are fearful that if skills are not acquired early, they may never be acquired; There is, on the other hand, no comparable hurry to inculcate creativity (p. 56).

This idea of ‘skill development precedes creativity’ is congruent with findings coming from the work of Jolley and Zhang`s (2012) and this study as well, where teachers reflected their tendency to impart skills to young children at junior and middle level, whereas offering them more opportunities for open-ended learning after they have acquired dexterity and artistic knowledge and skills, usually senior level. It was evident in these teachers` response to the question about whether there was a time they did not provide teacher demonstration or pictorial models, and what happened.

Indeed, the value of skill development is undeniable, “as great grasp of skills offers greater opportunity for exploration, refinement, and flexibility in expressing ideas” (Fraser et al., 2008, p. 16). However, Fraser et al (2008) continue by warning that,

Practical knowledge by itself does not take thinking very far, and too much practical knowledge can hinder and even annihilate thinking, if compliance to conventions becomes a paramount goal (p. 16).

When we look further into the implications associated with Fraser and her colleagues` thought, the question arises of what is meant by ‘creativity’ in idea development. Fraser et al`s (2008) words indicate that creativity is a break from traditions, which perhaps reflects a Western conception of creativity, not that of Chinese. As discussed earlier in Literature Review, people in Chinese societies and Western nations do not share one common understanding of what creativity is. Winner (1989) has noted that in Chinese (preschool) art education, creativity speaks more closely to “new ways of combining old schemas, rather than alterations of the form of the schemas themselves” (p. 59). This is compatible with my findings in the field. For teachers in this study, creativity referred to children`s ability to make minor adjustments to the ideas taught in the class. They maintained that if children had made/drawn something that they did not demonstrate or not shown in pictorial models, then this could count as creativity—for instance, as Zhen *laoshi`s* put it,

*I feel pleased when children could take my ideas, and acquired knowledge and skills off to create things...things that are a bit different from the demonstrations or pictorial models I provide...*

Yu *laoshi* too, saw the ability to extend what had been taught as a manifestation of creativity. As can be seen from the phrases she frequently used when talking about children`s finished artworks,

*Apart from my demonstration, this child is the first to draw... (the child added some interesting details on her/his artwork which was not shown in teacher demonstrations or pictorial models)...Only this child has drawn this on the picture...*

Quite outside any considerations of giving teacher demonstrations, Yan *laoshi* believed that creativity was about *achieving new ways of seeing*, an idea seemed to have greater resonance with Western notions of creativity. Nevertheless, her tendency to structure art, coupled with her implicit acknowledgement of the value of skill-building, indicated her belief that creativity did not come merely from within the child, the teacher`s role was still crucial in fostering children`s creative development.

#### **5.4 Rituals of practice and the alignment with the intended curriculum**

While highlighting the value of a teacher-led, skill-oriented instruction, teachers also appeared to be mindful of its limitation. Concern about its possible negative effects on children`s creation of work of art was particularly evident, as there are those who (Li *laoshi* and Yan *laoshi*) pointed to the overbearing power of teacher demonstrations over children`s creation of art, “*I think teachers` demonstrations somewhat constrain children`s art-making...*”; and those who (Yu *laoshi*) found herself constantly struggling with how to make a good balance between direct manipulation and open-ended learning,

*If I do not provide demonstration, some of the children have no idea where to start; if I model ways of doing however, they would copy directly from the examples given...*

Many of teacher demonstrations and adult artworks were shown with the best of intentions, what often happened however, was that a stereotype was taught and children mindlessly copied it. This is obviously not a desirable outcome, and is at variance with the revised art curriculum`s advocacy of facilitating children`s personal expression. In order to help children do more in their artworks than just

copying, or meet the expectations of ongoing early childhood education reform, these teachers consider allowing children agency in art activities to be a desirable practice. They attempted steps towards giving the children more leeway in exercising their agency, although the extent of this varied.

Zhen *laoshi* emphasized her tendency to promote interest in the children with a change of artistic media. She maintained that children's interests in art and their exploratory behaviors tended to become more tenacious inquiries when opportunity were offered to them to explore the possibilities of different materials. This emphasis on attractive materials can be found advocated in expressivist practice. In addition to the belief in 'variety in materials', Zhen *laoshi* also demonstrated a high commitment to peer mediation accompanying art exploration/appreciation. She argued that the support and critical feedback children both gave and retrieved from their peers enabled them to come up with more ideas. This links to the valuing of co-constructive learning position. Li *laoshi* described to me how she used children's work and children themselves as role models to motivate the children collectively. Yan *laoshi* mentioned her avoidance of teacher demonstrations and instead gave children more freedom to make their own artistic decisions. Actively encouraging children's involvement throughout the process, as Yu *laoshi* considered, was an effective means to deepen the commitment and initiative of children. How was the effect of these rituals on children's engagement with works of art?

In response to "what is new for you today", all the children interviewed in Zhen *laoshi*'s class said of 'sandpaper': the new material they encountered, and that they were enthusiastic about exploring it,

*"It is my first time to draw on the sandpaper..."*, *"It feels sandy, rough..."*,  
*"It takes me a bit more effort to draw something on it..."*

However, it is worth noting that though offered a new material, children drew the same symbols with their new media. The children recounted their teacher Zhen *laoshi*'s story in their own work demonstrated the strong urge to conform,

*I drew (several) birds...They were flying away to the warm place for winter...The biggest one (the one wearing a crown) was the leader...*

The value of 'variety in materials' was undeniable, but it seemed that a cursory encounter with some new materials was not a sufficient condition for encouraging children's *personal* expression or developing their own artistic ideas. In addition to handling the new material, children were also given latitude to seek support

from peers. Observations of children`s art-making processes confirmed that by copying from, and commenting on each other`s work, children were able to widen their range of subject matter, and develop their own voices. A good example of is that of Zhu`s case who learned to use bowknot to decorate birds from Lin. It could be argued that in this instance the teacher model has been replaced by a child model. Lin was an example of a child initiating her own symbols.

Interestingly in Li *laoshi`s* class, most of the children I interviewed drew on the paper a `mother` with curly hair<sup>12</sup>, or a `sister` with two pigtailed<sup>13</sup>, or a `baby` with short hair<sup>14</sup>, although individual interview with children revealed that none of these children`s mothers actually had curly hair, nor did they have sisters or babies in reality. It seemed that calling upon one or two children to demonstrate progress (right after teacher demonstrations) did not necessarily lead to more expressive outcomes.

Children in Yan *laoshi`s* class characteristically drew with more expressive power. In response to the question of “could you tell me about your artwork”, the children *all* had a lot to say, what they did draw and why. Here is an example from Wang`s transcripts which is typical of the answers received,

*I drew a smiling sun...These were colorful flowers... (Why did you draw yourself long and thin?) I grow up and become a PLA man (People's Liberation Army).*

With regard to Yu *laoshi`s* class, there are variations in the artworks produced even though the influence of demonstrations and models could still be noticed. Examining what children said about their drawings showed that children drew to recount their teacher`s story. In response to my question about what his/her drawn vegetables were doing, children *all* replied, “*They are performing on the stage!*” However, they did do more in their artworks than just repeating Yu *laoshi`s* stereotype. Impressively, a child drew a dancing eggplant with a bottom-twisting movement, the movement of which fitted nicely with the curved body of the eggplant. This was not shown in teacher demonstrations or pictorial models. This child further described to me how she `dressed up` this eggplant,

*I drew eggplant a pair of earrings, high heels, and a pink skirt (the color of which, as this child asserted, suited that of the eggplant)...*

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<sup>12</sup> An exact example Li *laoshi* demonstrated in front of the group

<sup>13</sup> A stereotype shown in the pictorial models placed in the easel

<sup>14</sup> Another exact example one child finished and displayed in the class

Such engaged individual elaboration of symbols had been encouraged by experiencing the dancing movement.

While efforts had been made to support children's participation in art activity, what children produced still tended to be uniform. Some resulting artworks looked so identical that there was little which could be called individual about it. Why do children tend not to invent aspects of their own imagery even when given the verbal encouragement to do so? To answer this question, we probably need first to consider: How much room are children actually given to develop their own ideas? Are they offered ample opportunities to exercise their active role as learners or just allowed to occasionally take the initiatives?

In both Zhen *laoshi* and Li *laoshi*'s class, very rarely were children asked to think about ideas, or consider alternative solutions. By controlling a step-by-step procedure to produce art, Zhen *laoshi* and Li *laoshi* had done most of the possible problem solving for children. Since children were surrounded by these 'given solutions' it was not surprising they had such a hold over children's expression of thoughts and feelings. It has been argued that having seen the teacher do things for them and showing finished examples to motivate them also confirm children in the belief that there are 'right' ways to make art (Winner, 1989; Barnes, 2002; Wilson, 2008). Children quickly learn that preschool involves producing particular styles of art, styles that might have little to do with their own imagination (Winner, 1989; Barnes, 2002; Wilson, 2008). Therefore, they become dependent through teachers' over-direction, and are likely to say that they could not make art unless directed. The driving force behind this is to get things right in the teacher's eyes rather than develop their own 'visual' language. A good example could be seen in a child's explanation of why she did what she did, using a frequent refrain, 'Zhen *laoshi* says'.

*Zhen laoshi says to use dark-colored crayons to do outlining or coloring in a sheet of light-colored sandpaper...Zhen laoshi says to use light and black colors to do coloring, so I...Cause Zhen laoshi says if we outline birds black, then they would stand out...*

Apparently, teachers' style of working undermines children's confidence of making their own artistic decisions. Understandably, some children felt more secure following teacher-conceived processes to reproduce teacher-conceived products, no matter whether they were given freedom to try out or talk about their

ideas or not<sup>15</sup>. This apparent freedom to explore was limited as children were just expected to add interesting details of their own after observing teachers' demonstrations and pictorial models. Not surprisingly, the resulting artworks tended to be stereotyped and lacking a personal voices. *Zhen laoshi* and *Li laoshi*, while professing a belief in children's self-expression, just appended a relatively child-centered phrase to their practices of directive teaching. They were aware of the leading role teachers should play in directing children's skill acquisition, probing understanding, and making improved suggestions. Seldom had they realized their role in such a way that the responsibilities of the task were gradually handed over to the children. In *Zhen laoshi* and *Li laoshi*, I see the influence of the long tradition in Chinese culture in valuing teacher authority and an old transmission model of teaching.

What can be seen from *Yan laoshi*' and *Yu laoshi*'s pedagogy and beliefs however, is an attempt to empower children to exercise their agency, not confined to the level of rhetoric.

Recognizing that children should be central to the process of art learning and have a voice in how their art would develop, *Yan laoshi* therefore got children to talk more about the drawing they were to make, comparing and contrasting. Instead of imposing an adult design on children, *Yan laoshi* asked them to develop their own (graphic) symbols. The learning process encouraged children's decision making. Therefore, the resulting artworks were of greater vitality. Another possible reason for this diversity of artistic outcomes, as I see it, is that the content includes children's interests. 'Drawing boys or girls' is a topic that children know very well or like very much. Both Liu and Wang claimed that they usually drew themselves at home, while Tian also expressed a preference for this topic as it spoke closely to her lived experience. It seems that when learning contexts are familiar and appealing to children, their depiction of ideas, feelings and experiences are likely to be the most successful (Barnes, 2002; Fraser et al, 2008).

Children in *Yu laoshi*'s class were offered the opportunity to engage actively with the body and to express their ideas symbolically through movements by self and with others. Children were also offered further opportunities to engage in "a form of dialogic mediation" (Wright, 2012b, p. 217). They could collectively construct

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<sup>15</sup> Freedom to explore refers to *Zhen laoshi*'s commitment to peer mediation accompanying art exploration and appreciation, and *Li laoshi*'s commitment to peer tutoring when demonstrating

a range of understanding either through social exchanges with teachers and peers while engaging in art, or through a discussion of the finished artworks.

These rituals of practice had provided greater invitations for children`s input, their exploration of and experimentation with solutions, and therefore children tended to stay on task. It is worth acknowledging that both Yan *laoshi* and Yu *laoshi* did not abandon their authority. They retained overall responsibility for presenting children with meaningful art experiences, but they also gave children the independence to explore ideas for themselves.

In many ways, art that evolved from children could be more complex than the sometimes simplistic stereotypes taught. The graphic symbols children develop on their own is part of their evolving perception which might vary among individual children (Barnes, 2002; Wright, 2012a). For teachers who want to help this process, they might need to “cultivate their sensitivity and a willingness to step back” (Barnes, 2002, p. 55), allowing children latitude to shape the direction of their own learning. This freedom to explore, as Fraser et al (2008) emphasize, “is necessary if arts programs are to go beyond the given information and enable children to bring their imaginations to the task at hand” (p. 17). So long as children are able to be involved as *active participants* with the support of teachers, the works they produce are likely to be of greater vitality.

In Yan *laoshi*`s class, for example, I witnessed children`s art creations rich with intriguing graphic patterns and full of personal voices. Some of my observations revealed multiple-color use skills children possessed and they were able to happily use pattern to convey affective importance. For instance:

The researcher: Why did you use a variety of colors to color the clothes?

Liu: *Because it looks beautiful, I like it!*

Similarly in Yu *laoshi*`s class, there were children who created art through using their own kinesthetic experience supported from a range of additional sources—teachers modeling, peers, subject matters (photos displayed on the screen which showed people with varied dancing movements).

What children experienced and produced in these two teachers` class seems to be more compatible with the goals of the revised early childhood art curriculum. Nevertheless, it is worth acknowledging that Yan *laoshi*`s concern for order and discipline<sup>16</sup>, and Yu *laoshi*`s valuing of skill-building through modeling,

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<sup>16</sup> Yan *laoshi* did not encourage peer support and tutoring accompanying art exploration and appreciation.

demonstrated the sustained influence of Chinese culture in guiding teachers' professional practices.

## **5.5 Effects of the hidden curriculum**

In addition to the influence of implicit cultural logic, tight schedules, large class size and parents' demands for observable outcomes were other perceived challenges by teachers to their effective teaching of art.

### **5.5.1 Tight schedules**

Time has been identified to be a critical factor in the development of art project (Bresler, 2002; Fraser et al., 2008; Sinclair, 2009). Exploration of materials, experimentation with ideas, and critical reflection of art experiences are inevitably time-consuming processes, so too are the refinement of skills, and the enhancement of understanding (Bresler, 2002; Fraser et al., 2008; Sinclair, 2009). As Oreck (2006) writes, "Art experiences need time, and time is an increasingly limited commodity" (cited in Sinclair, 2009). Oreck takes the words right out of these Chinese preschool teachers and children's mouths. In most Shanghai kindergartens, the daily routines of the classroom are dictated by school-determined schedules which structure children's activities into short time frames of 20-30 minutes. In a class of 5-6-year-old, art activity typically takes place in a weekly 30 minutes slot (for a class of 4-5-year-old, the time will be a weekly 25 minutes slot). Teachers usually have time for a brief introduction of new topics (about 5-8 minutes); a brief demonstration of new practical knowledge (about 10 minutes); a brief period for children's independent exploration (about 10-15 minutes); and an extremely brief discussion of that art experience (often 2-3 minutes or less). This single opportunity per week is in sharp contrast to the claim from Jolley and Zhang's (2012) work where children in some of the Kunming kindergartens enjoyed a weekly 3 hours of art lessons. Given the limited time available for an art session, it is not surprising that teachers are preoccupied with a more didactic approach to teaching art so as to ensure that children *do* learn something within their weekly 25-30 minute time slot. Time pressure has also resulted in teachers' choice for tidy materials. Consequently, the opportunities allotted to children's self-inquiry are rare, let alone opportunities for development through refining. Within such limited times, exploration of more fluid materials such as clay or paint becomes impossible, idea development is marginalized.

### 5.5.2 Large class sizes

In addition to time limitation, there are other constraints like large class sizes to consider. Some teachers (Li *laoshi* and Yan *laoshi*) expressed their disapproval of peer interaction accompanying art exploration. They feared the chaos that might arise from the social exchanges occurred within a group of 30 children. They worried that so long as the children were engaged in discussions they would no longer focus on their own art-making. However observation of children's art-making process revealed that accompanying their activity, children often spontaneously engaged in dialogue and interaction with their peers, copying or commenting on each other's work, offering instruction when they felt necessary. These social exchanges, explicit or silent, actually enabled children to come up with more ideas related to the topic of the day, as evident in the following vignette—a selected excerpt from the observational notes taken from Zhen *laoshi* and Yan *laoshi*'s class respectively,

In term of Zhen *laoshi*'s class

At one table sit two boys (Wu, Yi) and two girls (Lin, Zhu)

The pace of working differed from child to child, some were already coloring, and others were still struggling with outlining.

At that time, Wu was wondering what color to use to paint the birds' bodies.

Noticing Wu's hesitation, Zhu announced, "*I want to dress my bird up in red clothes!*" Then she picked up a red crayon and began to do coloring, "*It should be painted evenly*" she murmured.

Spending 2-3 minutes of coloring, Zhu looked at Lin's drawing and said, "*You do not color evenly enough, have a look at my work, I do much better.*"

After giving Zhu's work a glance, Lin continued working attentively on her own drawing.

In terms of Yan *laoshi*'s class:

At one table sit one boy (Wang) and three girls (Tian, Liu, and Hong)

Noticing that some children had already completed outlining, Yan *laoshi* suggested, "*When you finish up outlining, you could do coloring*".

Followed by Yan *laoshi*'s word, Wang picked up a blue felt pen to color the

clothes.

Tian turned to Liu: “*What color would you use to color the clothes?*”

Liu replied, “*I will use at least three colors to do coloring. I want my clothes look colorful! Don`t copy me!*”

After hearing Tian and Liu`s conversations, Hong decided to use multiple colors to do coloring

As Fraser et al (2008) put it, “the phase of chaos and messy incoherence is a common aspect of creative endeavor...learning in the arts resembles structured chaos...” (p. 21). Concern about the possible influence of chaos may be warranted, but it is also important to be aware that an overemphasis on order and discipline could deprive children of the opportunity to be creative.

### **5.5.3 Parents expectation for observable outcomes**

It was claimed by participant teachers that influences from parents also contribute to the perpetuation of teacher-directed art. Some teachers told me that they very often felt pressure from parents who set high demands for observable outcomes of their children`s learning. Art is especially vulnerable as an ‘observable outcome’.

Li *laoshi* developed this theme:

*...Parents do not understand child art. They pay great attention to the quality of finished artworks and are likely to evaluate them through adult lens... Minimal attention is given to the considerable efforts children make to produce art, or the expressive power of their art...*

Given the cumulative impact of cultural forces, time limitation, large class sizes and parental expectations, there is little empowered advocacy for art as a form of *personal* expression.

### **5.6 Tensions between the intended and the implemented curriculum:**

This study found a discrepancy between teachers` beliefs (beliefs in child art) and pedagogy (in reality, teacher-directed art), which further reveal a tension between expressive-oriented reform objectives and skill-oriented classroom practices.

Examining what teachers actually do and say about professional practice revealed that the field of Chinese early childhood art is still permeated with an understanding that skill development precedes creative expression. Teachers are there to instruct children in the skills of expression and thereby enhancing their

enjoyment of learning. Given teachers' continued emphasis on teaching practical knowledge through teacher demonstrations and pictorial models, it is interesting to note the criterion they claimed to determine the success of art classes. This was not so much what skills the children learnt, but rather what level of enjoyment children showed. Emphasis seemed to be given to whether children were empowered to release emotions or express themselves through art. Most of the teachers in this study clearly viewed art as a language of expression, a powerful vehicle by which children can articulate their ideas, feelings and experiences when words were either inadequate or unavailable. Paradoxically, they were preoccupied with a mechanistic approach to teaching art. They determined the topic to be explored, offered model works for appreciation, demonstrated a detailed procedure for creating an artwork, and provided selected materials for carrying this out. As such controlled conditions have been set up, there were very few decisions that children could actually make about their art.

Particularly in both *Zhen laoshi's* and *Li laoshi's* classes, art was structured very much like a discipline where actions were modeled by the teacher and copied by the children, emphasizing teacher's delivery and children's acquisition of practical knowledge. Consequently, children drift into replicating a 'safe' representation to satisfy teachers, rather than to express themselves or their experience of the world. Such changes as there were to the color of birds, or hair styles and facial expression of family members, as I see it, hardly make the work of art expressive. This tendency to value realistic detail over an expressive style could also be traced in *Yu laoshi* and *Yan laoshi's* class. Yet it was undeniable that children in the latter two teachers' classes children were given more freedom to make their own artistic decisions. Through individual invention, children in *Yan laoshi's* class learned to develop their own graphic symbols to represent 'boys or girls' for themselves. Children in *Yu laoshi's* class were encouraged to enter the topic physically through their bodies, and to imaginatively combine varied objects and context: vegetables and movements. From my viewpoint, art-making in these two classrooms was more than a discipline or an emotional activity. It also involved a cognitive endeavor where children were expected to figure out by themselves how to solve new problems.

What should art education do is culturally determined and the teacher is often the most influential agent. Teachers concurred that art education should serve essentially as an avenue for children's creative expression and emotional

enjoyment, yet in reality, developing children`s manipulative skills still takes precedence, and sometimes even dominates to the extent that creative expression is minimized. This reflects Chinese traditional values where for centuries the learner apprentices to an experienced practitioner. This dissonance could also be found in these teachers responses to what art should be for.

Why is there a gap between teachers` beliefs and pedagogy? Many art educators and researchers ascribe this `belief-practice` gap to the absence of clear policy directions and perhaps more emphatically to the influence of teachers` personal experiences (Kindler, 1996; Vong, 2008; Wong, 2009). This can also be used to explain the gaps between teachers` declared beliefs and actual art teaching behavior revealed in this study.

The revised early childhood art curriculum, as discussed earlier in the study, is an eclectic mix of the Western and Chinese notions of art education. It presents multiple goals in hybrid directions for teachers to follow. However, it leaves the question of how to apply theory into practice for the teachers to explore on their own. Teachers found themselves being pushed into conflicting philosophies: How could they integrate foreign ideas into existing practices without truly experiencing such new models of art teaching?

Individual intuitions might find their own way. More likely they are drawing from the rituals of practice they already had expertise in, to bolster those new ideas. Some have also learned what to do from more experienced teachers, teachers “who are products of the old system but who are nevertheless asked to lead their younger colleagues in the movement toward new ideas and practices” (Hsueh et al., 2004, p. 461). This was evident in teachers` explanation of how they learned to teach art or refine their strategies in art teaching,

*“...by observing my cooperating teacher who is specialized in art teaching (Li laoshi and Zhen laoshi)”, “...by observing and evaluating art classes implemented by experienced teachers or get my own art practice observed and evaluated by experienced teachers (Yu laoshi)...”, “...by attending workshops... engaging with other teachers in a discussion of refining strategies in teaching art (Zhen laoshi)”.*

A teacher-led, skill-based instruction is the way many teachers still felt comfortable teaching art, as it is the way they were taught or trained. This perhaps explains that while the Western notion of art education was known to these

teachers, they continued to adopt a more ‘traditional’ approach to teaching art in varying degrees.

The comfort of living through a predetermined, teacher-directed style of teaching provided teachers with enough reassurance to perpetuate their practices. They did however, develop alternative rituals to motivate and engage children, such as confronting children with an array of attractive materials, or encouraging peer support and tutoring. Many noted strategies for empowering children to produce original artworks, or scaffolding children’s co-constructing understanding. These teachers tried to discover ways of developing their own ideas about teaching art, through reflective teaching, extensive reading, and attending workshops where available. Few would argue against these teachers’ efforts to improve the quality of art experience for young children. However, it is important to be aware that traditions die hard, and sometimes “the continuities with the past are striking” (Gardner, 1989a, p. 154). Policy change by itself does not provide sufficient understanding to support the breaking of old habits into new behaviors. To implement a desirable change, as Kindler (1996) reminds, teachers need to be convinced of the usefulness of new principles in a pragmatic manner. Newly acquired knowledge, not supported by direct experiences, may not be sufficient to effectively initiate change.

## **Summary**

This chapter has discussed several themes:

- The role of the teacher
- The provision of teacher demonstrations and adult artworks
- The prioritizing of skills
- Rituals of practice and the alignment with the intended curriculum
- Effects of the hidden curriculum
- Tensions between the intended and the implemented curriculum

These themes have been identified from current rituals of practice that are typical of art teaching and learning in two Shanghai kindergartens. Some of these themes have also been discussed in Jolley and Zhang’s (2012) work, such as policy guidelines’ promotion of a more child-centered expressive-oriented art education. However, there are some findings from this study that are not covered in Jolley and Zhang’s (2012) work. For instance, why such a perpetuation of a teacher-directed art? This study identifies a set of barriers that constrain the

implementation of the intended curriculum. It highlights the tension between teacher-directed art and child agency in art. The tension between skill-oriented and expressive-oriented art education is also negotiated. The following chapter will summarize the findings of this study and discuss the implications for further research in the field of Chinese early childhood art education.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

In this chapter, the findings from two Shanghai kindergartens are summarized. The direction for further study is discussed.

### 6.1 Conclusion

There has been a radical shift in the principle of Chinese early childhood education since the 1980s` reform and subsequently early childhood art education, which is epitomized by the revised art curriculum published in 2001 (found within the national *Guidelines*). Varying visions of art education have been integrated within this revised early childhood art curriculum, indigenous and abroad. Facilitating children`s *expression* and *creativity* appears to be the newest prominent. The old teacher-directed, skill-oriented focus of art education has gradually fallen out of favor in policy documents.

Consistent with the shift of the principle of preschool art education, there appear to be a shift in teachers` viewpoints about art and their art education practice. Not many decades ago Chinese kindergarten practitioners would have believed that art should be taught as a discrete set of skills, and that having children follow a highly directive procedure to reproduce teacher-prescribed outcomes was what the art teaching was for. Nowadays, generalist teachers in Chinese preschools are more aware of the expressive intent for art making, believing that children should be seen as active learners who have opportunities to determine the direction of their art learning with the support of adults. Teachers in this study conveyed the clear sense that the primary reason for doing art was for children to release emotions or express themselves, which seemed to have greater resonance with the Western ideas of last century. Only teacher explicitly pointed to the cognitive nature of art explorations.

However, there is a clear tension between the teachers` explicit verbal emphasis on freeing children`s expression and creativity, and the limited opportunities they actually provided for children`s decision making. This study found that a predetermined, teacher-directed style of teaching still characterized the observed preschool art programs, as recognized by both the teachers themselves and the researcher. By structuring art activities, teachers carefully monitored the development of children`s ideas, and directly shaped children`s expression.

Interactions among children were restricted and very much under the control of the teacher. Adult demonstrations and model works were in practice prioritized over children`s spontaneous creativity.

Having been perceived to be a rather limiting way of working towards the fruition of expression and creativity, why does this approach persist? This can perhaps be attributed to the cultural foundation of Chinese (art) education and its influence in shaping teachers` pedagogical style. These implicit cultural imperatives include emphasis on teacher`s actions in regulating children`s art, and the idea of `skills before creativity`. It is tied, explicitly, to how creativity should be nurtured in young children and what is creativity. In the Chinese culture, creativity is conceptualized as an evolving process, emphasizing the reformulation or re-interpretation of old ideas, not a revolutionary process highlighting deviation from conventions (Gardner, 1989a, 1989b; Rudowicz, 2004; Leung et al, 2004; Niu & Sternberg, 2006; Leong, 2011). This is consistent with Jolly and Zhang`s (2012) findings of the art education in Kunming kindergartens (Yunnan province, China) where formal teaching of skill and schemas gradually give away to children`s own imaginative and expressive composition. Nevertheless, in contrast to Jolley and Zhang`s (2012) suggestion that reforms of Chinese preschool art education have been universally successful since 2001, I would argue that these implicit cultural logics add a particular complexity to desired changes of the teacher`s role in art education praxis.

There were teachers (such as Zhen *laoshi* as revealed in interview) who have experimented avoiding overly structured lessons but recognized that the majority of their children needed much clearer guidelines. Having endured the experience of hearing children`s `I can`t draw` responses, they quickly reverted to a directive approach to teaching art. However, this `rigid` style of teaching is not without its problem. *All* the teachers in this study claimed that they were mindful of its limitation. Alternative rituals of practice had been adopted as antidotes, such as offering children an array of new materials; using the child`s artwork as `experts` for demonstration; avoiding adult demonstrations and instead giving children more freedom in creating their own art; encouraging children`s overall participation in activities.

In spite of all of the efforts teachers have made to encourage children`s *active discovery* and enhance their enjoyment of learning, many of the artworks revealed stereotyped formulae lacking of *personal* voices. Evidence from children`s

accounts of their art experiences further support this finding through their repetition of the teachers' stated intentions. It seems that children in these two classes had been given so much 'help' that they hardly needed to make their own artistic decisions compared to their counterparts in Yan *laoshi*'s and Yu *laoshi*'s class. Not surprisingly, the resulting artworks differed only in marginal details (choice of colors, way of decorations, etc). What can be summarized from these four cases is that the briefer opportunities left for children's experimentation with materials and their own ideas, the less expressive and creative their work is likely to be in the end.

In addition to the cultural logics identified by the researcher, there are further constraints such as limited time, large class sizes and parents' expectations that reinforce challenges to the implementation of a more child-centered, expressive art curriculum and pedagogy.

Cultural factors identified by the researcher as well as constraints noted by the teachers just explain the perpetuation of a teacher-directed art, but they do not necessarily explain the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and pedagogy. My study aligns with the growing body of research coming from the field of Chinese kindergarten curriculum reform (Huseh et al., 2004; Liu & Feng, 2005; Tang & Maxwell, 2007; Zhu & Zhang, 2008; Chen-Hafteck & Zhuoya, 2008; Li et al., 2011). I would suggest that teachers' observed belief-practice gap is a result of lack of exposure to curriculum implementation models during pre-service and in-service training.

The revised early childhood art curriculum presents multiple goals in hybrid policy directions for teachers to follow. However, it leaves the question of how to apply theory into practice for the teachers to explore on their own. Left to themselves teachers tried to bring together principles and practices but how effectively they did it is questionable.

By 'putting new wine into old bottles', these teachers attempt to find their way. Most of the teachers in this study also made special mention of an apprenticeship model, in which they learned what to do and how to do it from more experienced teachers. Such mentors had nevertheless been taught and trained in previous tradition. Not surprisingly, in these teachers' efforts to translate these Western notions of art education into classroom practices, they arrive at a more Chinese understanding of foreign ideas such as what is meant by 'self-expression' and how

it should be fostered in the classroom.

The publication of a formed curriculum policy by itself cannot automatically lead to a desirable change. My study affirms Kindler`s (1996) viewpoint that in order for a desirable change to be implemented, teachers need to be provided the opportunity to experience and internalize new ways of teaching art, rather than being simply informed about the new possibilities.

Although the importance of the teacher`s role and the development of art competency were strongly expressed by these teachers, they also reflected that children should be encouraged to express themselves through art, and that their art experience should be enjoyed. In order to approach the teaching of art in ways that challenges the children perceptually while at the same time, engaging the children in an atmosphere of enjoyment, these preschool teachers have deeply held embedded beliefs about the role they should play in scaffolding young children`s learning in art. Although they have not quite yet figured out how to provide the optimum balance between direct instruction and open-ended learning, skill attainments and creative self-expression, they continue to search for ways that will improve the quality of children`s art experience.

## **6.2 Future research**

Two public kindergartens in Shanghai, four classrooms in total are reflected in this study. The sample size was small and the time spent on fieldwork was relatively limited due to access issues. Therefore, it is not appropriate to claim that these observations can be generalized to be representative of all the Shanghai kindergartens. Neither can the explanations that teachers from these two kindergartens gave be considered typical Shanghai kindergarten practitioners` views. Given the vast variability that could exist in Shanghai just from such as school differences and local resources, the findings from this study should be treated with some caution.

For this study, measures such as triangulation of observations, interviews and children`s voices were put in place to maximize the credibility of the findings. To obtain a more thorough understanding of preschool art education in Shanghai kindergartens after these thirty years of reform efforts, and to reinforce the study`s findings, it is recommended that more longitudinal research take place in a network of Shanghai kindergartens, public-owned and private-owned, with a

varied degree of commitment to art. Themes arising from my study warranting further investigation are:

- The tension between Chinese tradition and contrasting Western views of creativity and expressiveness
- The constraints in practice that reinforce teacher-directed pedagogy
- Effective interventions that support teachers to make significant changes in their own art pedagogical practice in kindergarten art

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Question prompts

#### Appendix 1.1: Question prompts for teacher interview

1. How long have you been engaged in the teaching of art in preschools?
2. What initially inspired you to teach art in preschools? (Personal experience)
3. What do you enjoy most about teaching art? (Personal experience)
4. Are there any challenges for teaching art?
5. When planning for this lesson, you must have made quite a few decisions. I'm interested to know what are some of the key ideas that guide your decisions?
6. (1) I noticed when you were teaching...Do you usually teach using...? Could you give an example of...*(a practice I want to tease out)*  
(2) What do you think will happen if you do not do it?  
(3) Was there a time when you did not use..., and what happened?
7. Have you always taught like this or was there a time when you had made changes in the way you taught? (Practice)
8. Have you had the opportunity to join in the professional development that has affected the way you think about art? (Personal experience)
9. What have you found to be the most helpful for the development of your art teaching practices? (Beliefs)
10. Show the teacher one work...Tell me what you are noticing in this work;  
Show another work...This is interesting to me because it is quite different.  
What advice would you give me to help view this range of work from children?
11. What do children bring to art? (Theory, the purpose of doing art) Is there something in these children's artworks that tells you that? (Evidence)
12. If a child does not engage in art, would that matter? What might they be missing out on? (Theory, the value of art)
13. If you were to teach this lesson again what might you want to change? Why? (Reflection)
14. What kinds of unsolved questions do you still reflect upon? (Reflection)

#### Appendix 1.2: Question prompts for child interview

1. Could you tell me about your work? What kinds of things did you make first? This one is very big! Would you like to tell me more about this part of your work of art?
2. Why do you make it? Have you made a drawing/work of art like this before?
3. What do you enjoy most when making art?
4. What was new for you today...that you learnt?
5. Do you make art at home? Tell me a bit about the art that you do at home.
6. If your artwork was a book (title) what would you call it?

## **Appendix 2: Participation Invitation**

### **Appendix 2.1: Letter of invitation to principal**

#### **LETTER OF INVITATION TO PRINCIPAL**

Dear Principal:

This letter is to ask if your kindergarten would be interested in participating in a research project I am undertaking for my Master in Education thesis.

My research focuses on art teaching and learning in kindergartens. I am particularly interested in how art activity is implemented in the preschool classroom and documenting what teachers and children's journeys in art are. To do this I would like to be able to conduct classroom observations and individual interviews with some staff and children in your kindergarten at a time that is convenient to you between mid November 2012 and January 2013.

The research will involve running records of art practices in 2-3 kindergarten classrooms, and individual interviews with the teacher (Time commitment from participant: 40 minutes, after art session) and 3-4 children in each participating classroom (Time commitment from participant: 5-10 minutes, after they finished their artworks). The children's artworks will also be photographed. The art practices will be recorded through the researcher's handwritten notes. Individual interviews will be recorded either by handwriting or taping, depending on participant preference, and then transcribed. Transcription of the child participants' recordings will be finished on the day and seek their confirmation. Transcription of the teacher participants' recordings will later be e-mailed to them for confirmation or amendment.

This research adheres to the University of Waikato's ethical guidelines, which ensure voluntary participation and confidentiality. If there is another ethics committee that oversees the conduct of the research in your kindergarten, then an application will also be made to that committee.

If your kindergarten agrees to participate, I will ask the teachers, the child's parents and the child involved to read information sheets and sign consent forms that outline the conditions of participation and my responsibilities as well.

If at any time you have any concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor:

My contact details: email ([wh91@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:wh91@waikato.ac.nz)), or phone: 13162700665

Contact details of my supervisor Graham Price: email ([grahamp@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:grahamp@waikato.ac.nz)), or phone at work: (+64) 7 8384466 ext 7925

Thank you for your consideration. I am looking forward your prompt response.

## Appendix 2.2: Letter of invitation to teachers

### LETTER OF INVITATION TO TEACHERS

Dear Teachers:

This letter is to ask if you would be interested in participating in a research project I am undertaking for my Master in Education thesis.

My research focuses on art teaching and learning in kindergartens. I am particularly interested in how art activity is implemented in the preschool classroom and documenting what teachers' and children's journeys in art are. To do this I would like to be able to conduct classroom observations and individual interviews in your class at a time that is convenient to you between mid November 2012 and January 2013.

The research will involve observing and noting your art teaching practice and an individual interview with you about your journey in the teaching of art (Time commitment: 30 minutes, after art session). Individual interview will be recorded either by handwriting or taping, depending on your preference, and then transcribed. Afterwards, I will e-mail to you a copy of your own transcript to read and edit as you wish.

The research adheres to the University of Waikato's ethical guidelines, which ensure voluntary participation and confidentiality. If you agree to participate, then you will be asked to read information sheet and sign consent form that outlines the conditions of participation and my responsibilities as well.

If at any time you have any concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, or my supervisor, or the principal of the kindergarten:

My contact details: email ([wh91@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:wh91@waikato.ac.nz)), or phone: 13162700665

Contact details of my supervisor Graham Price: email ([grahamp@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:grahamp@waikato.ac.nz)), or phone at work: (+64) 7 8384466 ext 7925

Contact details of kindergarten principal: email (XXX), or phone at work: XXX

Thank you for your consideration. I am looking forward your prompt response.

## **Appendix 2.3: Letter of invitation to parents**

### **LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARENTS**

Dear Parents:

This year I am undertaking a research study for my Master of Education thesis. My research focuses on art teaching and learning in Shanghai kindergartens. I am particularly interested in how art activity is implemented in the preschool classroom. I am documenting what the teachers' and children's journeys in art are.

I am approaching you because your child may be selected as one of the participants, and this letter is to ask if you would be willing to give permission for your child to participate in this research study.

The research will involve observing and noting your child's art learning practice and an individual interview with your child about their art experience (Time commitment: 5-10 minutes, after they finished their artwork). Your child's artwork will also be photographed. Individual interview will be recorded either by handwriting or taping, depending on your child's preference, and then transcribed. The transcription of your child's recordings will be finished on the day, and your child will verbally confirm with me any written notes I may have made of their speech.

This research adheres to the University of Waikato's ethical guidelines, which ensure voluntary participation and confidentiality.

#### **Right to withdraw:**

Your child can withdraw from participation at any time up to the completion of the data collection phase, being the 31<sup>st</sup> of January, 2013. They can decline being observed, or their drawing activities being noted down, or their voices being taped, or answering any questions they do not wish to answer, or their artworks being photographed. They can do this by telling me, or their teachers, or their parents.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Only me and my supervisor will be privy to the observational notes of your child's drawing activities, interview recordings of their ideas, or photographic images of their artworks. Appropriate pseudonyms will be used to protect your child's anonymity in any published research. All information collated will be retained securely for 5 years after completion of the research and then destroyed.

#### **Use of information:**

All information collated during the course of this research will be used to write this thesis, and future publications and conference presentations on this topic. If you or your child does not wish any information to be included in publications or

presentations that may result from this research, you could make a statement on the given Consent Form. Any identifying references will be removed.

If you agree your child to participate, then you will need to sign the attached consent form.

If at any time you have any concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, or my supervisor, or the principal of the kindergarten:

My contact details: email ([wh91@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:wh91@waikato.ac.nz)), or phone: 13162700665.

Contact details of my supervisor Graham Price: email ([grahamp@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:grahamp@waikato.ac.nz)), or phone at work: (+64) 7 8384466 ext 7925

Contact details of kindergarten principal XXX: email (XXX), or phone at work: XXX

Thank you for your consideration. I am looking forward your prompt response.

## **Appendix 3: Participant information sheet**

### **Information sheet for teachers participating in the study**

#### **Study Title:**

Teaching and learning drawing in Chinese preschools: viewed from the perspective of early childhood curriculum reform in China

#### **Research Aims:**

This research aims to explore the current pedagogical orientations of art education in Shanghai kindergartens. There is much to be learnt about how art activity is implemented in Shanghai kindergartens as the kindergarten reform has been moving so fast in this most lively commercial city in China. Hopefully through this study, readers will be alerted to changes that early childhood curriculum reform in China from the 1980s has brought to art education in Shanghai kindergartens.

#### **Research Questions:**

1. What are common rituals of practice that are typical of art education praxis in two contemporary Shanghai kindergartens?
2. What do teachers reveal as their rationale for their approach to teaching art?
3. How do children`s actions, artworks and speech represent their art learning?
4. In what ways do teachers and children`s responses reflect the way that art education has been represented in current kindergarten policy guidelines and historical reforms?

#### **Participants will be involved in the project by:**

1. Agreeing to participate
2. Signing the Consent Form
3. Observations will be conducted in participating kindergarten classrooms over a period of one week, beginning at the start of the school day, and focusing on art instruction time. In particular, the implementation of art activity will be recorded in detail through the researcher`s handwritten notes.
4. After the art session, individual interview will be conducted at a suitable time for the participant. The aim of this interview is for the participant to share their own journey in the teaching of art. I want to audio tape this conversation so I can revisit the content for deeper understanding. The taping of this conversation is completely optional, and the participant can decline being taped (Time commitment from participant: 30 minutes).
5. Once I have completed the transcription of the recordings (including observational notes of art instruction and interview data), I will e-mail it to the participant who will

be able to read and edit their own transcripts in order to best represent their journey in the teaching of drawing.

**Right to withdraw:**

If at any point in the proceedings the participant feels they wish to withdraw, they will have the right to withdraw from participation until 11<sup>st</sup> January, 2013.

The participant has the right to decline their art instruction being noted down. The participant has the right to decline the conversation being taped. The participant has the right to decline answering any questions they do not wish to answer throughout the individual interviews.

Once the data collection phase has been completed, and the study has been drafted, then the participant will be unable to withdraw.

For any participant who does not wish their information to be included in future publications or conference presentations that may result from this research, they could make a statement on the given Consent Form, and any identifying references will be removed.

**Confidentiality:**

Only the researcher and her supervisor will be privy to the observational notes, interview data, any audio tapes, and photographic images. The researcher will send a copy of the transcription of the recordings to the participants for confirmation or amendment.

Throughout the findings information will not include specific names of people, places of work, or other personal details. Appropriate pseudonyms will be used. All information collated will be retained securely for 5 years after completion of the research and then destroyed.

**Use of information:**

All information collated during the course of this research will be used to write a Master in Education thesis. Information may also be used in future publications and conference presentations on this topic.

## **Appendix 4: Consent form**

### **Appendix 4.1: Consent form for teachers**

#### **CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS**

- I have read the attached information sheet and agree to participate as requested.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may choose to withdraw from participation at any time up to the completion of the data collection phase, being the 18th of January 2013.
- I understand that I will have access to the transcription of my recordings and that as a participant, I will have the opportunity to edit anything contained therein.
- I understand that my confidentiality will be maintained and that any information I provide through my involvement will be used only for the purpose of the named research or any subsequent publications and conference presentations that may result from this research.
- I understand that the information collated during the course of this research will be retained securely for 5 years after completion of the research and then destroyed.
- If I have any concerns about the research I may contact the researcher, or her supervisor, or the principal of the kindergarten.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4.2: Consent form for parents

### CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

- I have read the *letter of invitation to parents* and agree to my child participating as requested.
- I understand that my child`s participation is voluntary, and my child may choose to withdraw from participation at any time up to the completion of the data collection phase, being the 18th of January 2013.
- I understand that my child will verbally confirm with the researcher any written notes the researcher may have made of their speech.
- I understand that my child will remain anonymous and that any information my child provides through his/her involvement will be used only for the purpose of the named research and any subsequent publications and conference presentations that may result from this research.
- I understand that the information collated during the course of this research will be retained securely for 5 years after completion of the research and then destroyed.
- If I have any concerns about the research, I may contact the researcher, or her supervisor, or the principal of the kindergarten.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

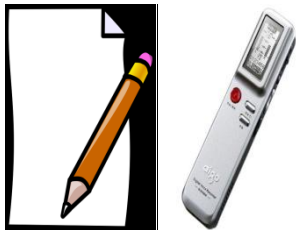
### Appendix 4.3: Consent from for children

#### CONSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN

I am willing to be involved in the study on the teaching and learning of drawing in my classroom.



- You can watch me while I draw.
- You can make notes.



- You can tape my talking.



- You can photograph my drawings.

**No**

- I can say no at any time if I don't want you to keep any information.



- I understand you will keep all records of me safely locked away.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_