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Art is Experience: An Exploration of the Visual Arts Beliefs and Pedagogy of Australian Early Childhood Educators

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UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

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**Art is Experience:
An Exploration of the Visual Arts Beliefs and Pedagogy of
Australian Early Childhood Educators**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
from
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
by
GAI MAREE LINDSAY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

2017

To Murray, Amelia and James

My loves

My reasons

My being

My home

Art is not an outer product nor an outer behaviour. It is an attitude of spirit, a state of mind - one which demands for its own satisfaction and fulfilling a shaping of matter to new and more significant form. To feel the meaning of what one is doing and to rejoice in that meaning, to unite in one concurrent fact the unfolding of the inner emotional life and the ordered development of material external conditions - that is art
(Dewey, 1919).

Certification

I, Gai Maree Lindsay, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Social Sciences – School of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

August, 2017

Supervisor statement

As the primary supervisor, I Dr. Julie Kiggins, declare that all of the work in each article/book chapter listed below is attributed to the candidate Gai Lindsay. The candidate wrote the first draft of each and then Gai was responsible for responding to any editing suggestions offered by her supervisors. Gai has been solely responsible for submitting each manuscript for publication to the relevant journals/edited book, and has been solely in charge of responding to the reviewer's comments.

Gai Lindsay, PhD Candidate

Principal Supervisor Dr. Julie Kiggins

Thesis by Compilation Declaration

The style of this thesis complies with the University of Wollongong thesis by compilation rules and authorship guidelines. Published journal articles and an edited book chapter are integrated into standard chapters required for a thesis. These published inclusions are presented in italics to distinguish them from the remainder of the chapter.

An outline of the journal articles and edited book chapter included within this thesis is provided below. Letters of editorial consent to include the published material in the thesis are located in the appendices. A list of the conference and speaker presentations delivered in relation to this thesis is also provided.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter one commences with an introduction to the research problem outlined in a published article written for *The Conversation* (Lindsay, 2015b). Appendix A.1. presents the creative commons copyright information permitting the inclusion of the article in the thesis. The introduction chapter concludes with a published article that outlines the researcher's personal and professional journey toward PhD research (Lindsay, 2015e). Appendix A.2 presents the permission granted by the Editorial Board to include the article in this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter two presents literature review undertaken to inform the study. **Chapter 3:**

Conceptual Framework

Chapter three includes a published article that presents a socio-political, historical analysis of John Dewey's philosophical influence on the post-war development of the Reggio Emilia educational project in Italy (Lindsay, 2015a). This article serves to ground and justify the RE(D) conceptual framework developed to inform the research. Appendix B.1 presents the journal's copyright requirements for the inclusion of the published work in the thesis. The chapter also includes a published article that elaborates on the visual arts component of the RE(D) conceptual framework (Lindsay, 2016a). Appendix B.2 presents the permission granted by the editors to include the article in this thesis.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Chapter four concludes with a book chapter written for inclusion in an edited publication that presents international perspectives on visual arts dissertations in education. The inserted publication outlines a methodological metaphor that enriches and overlays the preceding discussion of the research design and methodology with a reflexive description of the researcher's dissertation process. Appendix C.1 presents the permission granted by the book editors to include the accepted book chapter within the thesis.

Chapters 5,6,7 and 8: Case Study Findings

These chapters present the findings of the four case studies in narrative form. There are no published papers included in this part of the thesis.

Chapter 9: Discussion

Chapter nine concludes with a published article that collates several research findings and includes theoretical discussion of the findings (Lindsay, 2016b). Appendix D.1 presents the permission granted by the journal editors to include the article in this thesis.

Chapter 10: Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter ten references two articles written for practitioner magazines that outline provocations from the research findings (Lindsay, 2015c; 2015d). The chapter also references the transcript of a professional learning module developed by the researcher (Lindsay, 2015f). The researcher was invited to develop the online learning module following the presentation of initial research findings at the 2014 Early Childhood Australia national conference. This research inspired professional development resources are available in Appendices E.1 and E.2 and E.3. Appendices E.4 and E.5 present the permissions granted to include these articles and transcript in this thesis.

Reference list: In support of clarity and brevity, one reference list collates all references for published articles, published book chapter, thesis chapters and appendices.

Conference Presentations

The following conference presentations have been produced as a result of the research conducted for this thesis:

- Lindsay, G. (2017). *Connecting minds and hands: Drawing upon brain theory and mark making to disrupt the fixed mindset of pre-service early childhood educators*. Paper presented at the 7th International Art in Early Childhood Conference, Paro College of Education, Bhutan.
- Lindsay, G. (2016). *A proposal to douse the flames of conflict*. Paper presented at the Early Childhood Australia National Conference, Darwin, Australia.
- Lindsay, G. (2015). *Do visual art experiences in early childhood settings foster educative growth or stagnation?* A paper presented at the 6th International Art in Early Childhood Conference, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong, China.
- Lindsay, G. (2015). *Visual arts pedagogy in early childhood contexts: The tangle of educator beliefs and practice*. A paper presented at the Inaugural Early Start Conference, University of Wollongong, Australia.
- Lindsay, G. (2014). *Arts education in early childhood contexts: Beliefs, pedagogy and pervading myths*. A paper presented at INSEA World Congress, Melbourne, Australia.
- Lindsay, G. (2014). *Educator beliefs and identity: Reflecting upon our image of the early childhood educator as artistic*. A paper presented at the Early Childhood Australia National Conference, Melbourne, Australia.
- Lindsay, G. (2014). *“Stitching” Voices into the Patchwork Quilt of Qualitative Research*. A paper presented at the UOW Social Sciences HDR Conference, Wollongong, Australia.
- Lindsay, G. (2013). *Constructing places in educator’s minds that inspire art learning in early childhood contexts: John Dewey’s foundational influence on visual art pedagogy in Reggio Emilia*. A paper presented at the 5th International Art in Early Childhood Conference, University of Cyprus, Cyprus.
- Lindsay, G. (2013). *Developing a Plan to Construct Artful Qualitative Research*. A paper presented at the UOW HDR Conference, School of Education, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia.

Invited speaker

Lindsay, G. (2017). *So, you think you can't draw? A hands-on mark-making workshop to disrupt the fixed mindset of early childhood educators*. A workshop presented at the Fairfield City Council Children and Family Services conference, Fairfield RSL, Sydney, Australia.

Lindsay, G. (2016). *So, you think you can't draw? A hands-on workshop for the artistically nervous*. A paper/workshop presented at the IEU Early Childhood Services conference, Sydney, Australia.

Lindsay, G. (2015). *Valuing art processes and products in early childhood education: A Deweyan Challenge*. A paper presented at the UWS Early Learning Conference, University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Acknowledgments

*"I have never believed, nor do I believe now, that a story belongs to only one person.
Stories are always plural and their origins are infinite"*

(Malaguzzi, translated in Cagliari, Castagnetti, Giudici, Rinaldi, Vecchi, & Moss, 2016, p. 10).

This dissertation story also belongs to many people with whom I share my sincere thanks. While the completion of a dissertation requires individual drive, persistence and a degree of stubborn intent, it would have been impossible without the infinite support of multiple others. My list of very important ‘others’ begins with my supervisors, Dr. Julie Kiggins and Professor Ian Brown. Your humour, advice, editorial suggestions and trust have guided the development of my academic voice and the construction of this thesis. Thank you both for giving me the freedom to make this thesis mine, even though my tangential explorations, checklist-driven meetings and metaphorical word play no doubt caused bouts of eye rolling from time to time. Thanks also to Dr. Jillian Trezise who enthusiastically supported me in the early days of my postgrad adventure. Indeed, I credit several academic mentors for nudging me toward PhD research. Opening the door to academia, Dr. Avis Ridgeway urged me to further explore and write about the ideas and questions I had developed throughout my teaching career. I am also indebted to Jill Talbot for numerous conversations and collaborations that fueled and affirmed my research focus. Beginning with a perfectly timed phone call, our kindred passions for visual arts and early childhood found a complimentary synergy during our artist in residence project at Lyrebird preschool and beyond.

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To my friends and colleagues in the early childhood sector, the international art in early childhood community and in The Early Years team at UOW, my thanks for your non-stop

encouragement and inspiration. The work we do to enhance quality education for young children matters. That I am aligned with such brilliant collaborators brings me much personal and professional joy. I would especially like to thank the generosity of the participants in this research. Sharing your time, your stories, your values and your beliefs with me was no small thing. I have endeavoured to respectfully honour your experiences and your voices.

Thanks to many friends at both gym and church for grounding me, tolerating me, distracting me and helping me to remember that there is a very important life apart from, and after, doing this ‘thing.’ To the many women in my life who I consider to be ‘sisters’, your love, faith and friendship have sustained me during the joys and crazy moments of this all-consuming undertaking. Particular thanks must go to my ‘gym and brekky girls’, Lynda and Jutta. Touching base during many mornings of life issues, family stories, laughs and friendship has truly been a sustaining blessing.

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Abstract

In early childhood settings, visual arts provisions are considered central to multidisciplinary curricula that facilitate children's processes of meaning-making, communication and play-based learning. Meanwhile, the personal and professional beliefs of early childhood educators influence both the planned and unplanned curriculum and resulting learning outcomes for children. If early childhood educators lack the confidence, skills, and visual arts knowledge required to effectively support children's visual arts learning and engagement, children's learning in the visual arts domain may be restricted.

While several studies confirm the problem of low visual arts self-efficacy amongst pre-service primary and high school contexts degree qualified teachers (DQT), very few studies describe the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of practicing early childhood educators. Even fewer studies support the voices of educators to be heard, particularly in the Australian context. Therefore, the central aim of this thesis is to describe and better understand the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of practicing Australian early childhood educators. The study aims to consider how educator's visual arts self-efficacy beliefs, personal arts experiences and pedagogical content knowledge inform visual arts planning, pedagogy and provisions in early childhood contexts. A further aim is to give voice to early childhood educators' visual arts beliefs and pedagogy to support professional reflection for both practitioners and educator training contexts. In so doing, this thesis hopes to inform and extend professional understanding about quality early childhood visual arts pedagogy that may in turn enhance young children's experience and development in visual arts learning contexts.

A multiple comparative, qualitative case study, located in two regional communities in the Illawarra region of New South Wales in Australia, explores the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of twelve degree qualified and vocationally trained early childhood educators in four early childhood education and care services. Semi-structured interviews, environmental audits, observations, and document analysis provide rich data to support the exploration and articulation of the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of the participants. The case study data was analysed using both categorical aggregation and direct interpretation and further interrogated using excel data grouping, mind-mapping, concept-mapping, and

arts-inspired visual tropes and stitched diagrams .Complementing the traditional case study design, the thesis is overlaid with the an arts-based educational research lens to reflexively position the experience and voice of the researcher as the quilter’s stitch that metaphorically constructs the multiple layers of research data, analysis and findings. The thesis also presents a conceptual framework informed by John Dewey’s established philosophical ideas about democracy, education and art and the key philosophical and pedagogical tenets of the Italian Reggio Emilia approach. Developed to inform the research design and data analysis process, the conceptual framework reveals significant alignment between John Dewey’s philosophies of democracy, education and art with the philosophy and visual arts praxis of the Reggio Emilia approach. This framework facilitates academic reflection about visual arts pedagogy in early-years contexts.

Overall, the research findings suggest that early childhood educators lack the visual arts skills, knowledge and self-efficacy required to plan and implement high quality visual arts experiences with children. Confusion about the purposes and methods of visual arts pedagogy are tangled with divergent beliefs about children’s visual arts learning and the role of the educator. Pre-service training seems to have little impact upon existing participant beliefs about the nature of visual arts development, nor upon a range of theoretical assumptions and visual arts myths that drive non-interventionist approaches to visual arts pedagogy. On the other hand, where constructivist theoretical approaches to visual arts pedagogy are applied, low self-efficacy beliefs may be overcome to support effective visual arts planning and engagement with children. This dissertation therefore offers several recommendations to inform future training and professional development in the domain of early childhood visual arts pedagogy. It is expected that the research informed strategies and professional resources presented in this thesis will provoke reflection amongst educators and inspire and extend the delivery of high quality visual arts learning experiences in early childhood contexts.

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Definitions and Acronyms

ACECQA (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority)

“The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) oversees the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF) and works with the state and territory regulatory authorities to implement and administer the NQF” (ACECQA, 2017).

Crafts

For the purposes of this thesis a distinction is made between **traditional crafts** (artisan crafts such as threading, sewing, paper folding, embroidery, weaving, woodwork and clay work) and **structured ‘craft’ activities** where an adult directs the child in the completion of a product-focused construction or object. Such structured ‘craft’ activities result in numerous identical objects and require significant adult intervention to achieve a pre-determined result.

Educators

The term ‘educator’ is used in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) to collectively reference all people working in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings. In the Australian early childhood context, educational teams are comprised of educators with qualifications ranging from minimum certificate three vocational qualifications to diploma vocational qualifications to degree qualified teachers and teachers with postgraduate qualifications. Within this thesis, the terms educator or early childhood educator (ECE) will be used to refer to all staff working with young children except when it is necessary to distinguish between qualifications. In that event, the terms degree qualified teacher (DQT) and vocationally trained educator (VTE) will be applied.

The Arts

The term, ‘The Arts’ refers to the domain encompassing five arts subjects, including Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts.

Visual arts

The visual arts are those art forms created for visual expression and appreciation. In early childhood contexts, they encompass processes and techniques associated with painting, drawing, printmaking, collage and construction, clay work and sculpture, textiles and crafts.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The central aim of this study is to enhance children's visual arts learning and engagement in early childhood education and care (ECEC) contexts by examining and richly describing the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of twelve Australian early childhood educators (ECE). Through the appreciation, analysis and disclosure of the personal and professional visual arts beliefs of educators, along with consideration of their visual arts pedagogical contexts, this study concurrently aims to "enrich and enliven the conversation" (Eisner, 1997, p. 268) about ECEC visual arts pedagogy.

This study has the potential to improve visual arts pedagogy in ECEC contexts by offering research informed guidance and contexts for professional reflection about visual arts pedagogy currently lacking in Australian and international ECEC contexts. It is hoped that in stitching together narratives of educator beliefs and practice, and by constructing theoretically informed proposals and recommendations, both early childhood educators, and those who train them, may reflect on educators' visual arts beliefs and pedagogy in support of pedagogical growth and enhanced practice.

1.1 A dilemma worth investigating

During my career as an early childhood teacher, visual arts confidence and content knowledge was rarely evident amongst colleagues and an atmosphere of pedagogical ambiguity surrounded activities broadly defined as art or craft. Kindler's (1996, p. 28) assertion that "the field of early childhood art education is troubled by the dissonance of the influences that attempt to define it" is evidenced in ongoing deliberations about whether educators should remain hands-on or hands-off in supporting children in their art-making, not to mention the divisive 'art verses craft' and 'process versus product' debates that abound amongst early childhood practitioners.

However, while the literature suggests the visual arts confidence, skills and knowledge of early childhood educators is lacking (Garvis, 2012a; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Terreni, 2010; Twigg & Garvis, 2010), there have been very few studies undertaken to explore and describe what practicing educators actually believe, say and do regarding visual arts pedagogy in ECEC contexts. In this regard, my desire to explore current early childhood visual arts pedagogical contexts and to formulate strategies for pedagogical

growth and guidance for visual arts practice in early childhood settings and training contexts is justified by Dewey's belief that learning and growth are optimised when meaningful present experiences are valued for their capacity to "promote desirable future experiences" (1936, p. 16). Therefore, in support of the ongoing learning and reflective practice of early childhood educators, this study will inform a process of "tough minded analysis of existing beliefs, including one's own.... to increase our clarity concerning what we are up to professionally" (Eisner, 1973-1974, p. 7).

The following article, published in 'The Conversation' (Lindsay, 2015b), introduces the problems this thesis aims to address. Written for a broad, non-academic audience, the article refers to educators as teachers to support reader clarity. Written following the data collection phase of the study, the initial findings outlined confirm the dilemma of the research problem.

'But I'm not artistic': how teachers shape kids' creative development (Lindsay, 2015b)

Many adults believe they are not artistic and feel nervous about visual arts. They vividly recall the moment when a teacher or family member discouraged their efforts to creatively express their ideas through drawing or art-making. Such early childhood experiences can affect developing confidence and learning potential throughout a child's education and into adulthood (Moore, 2006).

If preschool educators lack the visual arts knowledge and confidence to provide valuable art experiences, children's potential to creatively express their ideas using visual symbols may be restricted.

Creative thinking and the ability to make meaning in many ways is the key to success in the 21st century (Henderson, 2008)

The right to creativity

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31) states that children of all ages have the right to access and fully participate in cultural and artistic life (UNHRC, 1989).

We know that the early childhood years lay the foundation for all future creative learning and development (Jalongo, 2003). That's why it should worry us that some children may not have access to high-quality visual arts education.

American educational scholar Elliot Eisner (2002) refers to this as the null curriculum - the learning that children miss out on when educators lack the subject knowledge, skills and self-confidence to deliver enriching visual arts experiences.

The personal and professional beliefs of educators directly impact what and how they teach children (Pajares, 2011). If an educator's fear of art stifles a child's individual learning style at a young age, this may prevent them from reaching their full potential later on (Azzam, 2009).

How much play goes on in pre-school?

But aren't the walls of early childhood centres plastered with children's paintings and drawings? No doubt most people assume that preschools, more than any other education setting, provide creative environments and experiences that best support children's artistic learning and potential. But this is not always the case.

Many early childhood educators lack the self-belief, skills and knowledge needed to provide quality visual arts experiences. They struggle to provide the types of experiences that support young children to access the many benefits of making visual art (Twigg & Garvis, 2010).

Visual arts experiences enhance young children's learning and development (ACARA, 2011). These include intrinsic motivation, enjoyment, positive attitudes, cognitive problem solving, self-discipline, the development of tools for communication and meaning-making and fostering creativity and imagination, to name just a few.

In fact, learner-centred environments like those you expect to find in early childhood services can increase children's creativity scores (Jalongo, 2003).

Creative teachers

The problem is that these benefits only exist when effective, quality provisions are made by teachers (Bamford, 2009).

The research that I am doing at the University of Wollongong is tackling this problem. I am finding that many early childhood educators doubt their own visual arts knowledge and ability to deliver visual arts experiences to children.

While educators value art as a central part of the early childhood curriculum, their beliefs about the purposes of art are confused. Some see art activities as a way to keep

children busy. Others use art as a form of therapy or fine-motor development instead of as a tool for communication, problem-solving, and meaning making.

At the same time, the experiences offered to children in the name of art often consist of adult-directed crafts and activity sheets – instead of creative and open-ended use of quality arts materials. A lack of content knowledge, art skills and confidence causes educators to justify the use of gimmicky commercial materials like glitter, pipe-cleaners and fluorescent feathers. They believe these materials are more fun for children.

Some educators believe they should actively teach children by modelling and demonstrating visual arts skills. But others maintain an outdated hands-off approach and refuse to demonstrate art skills for fear of corrupting children's natural artistic development. What is most concerning, is that few early childhood educators recall the arts-based components of their pre-service training.

The place of the arts in the Australian school curriculum continues to be threatened and hotly debated (Watson, 2014). At the same time, references to the visual arts in the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) are unclear and provide little guidance for educators. In this context governments, universities, and skills-based courses need to re-consider the training of all educators to give them confidence to overcome the insecurities they express about their ability to teach art and to embed the arts in their teaching (Ewing, 2010).

British educator Ken Robinson (2007) blames formal schooling for killing off children's creative potential. Actually, this process starts much earlier – when early childhood educators are not well trained in the artistic knowledge and mindset to nurture children's imagination, meaning-making, and creative expression using visual arts materials and methods.

If educators and communities do not nurture children's artistic creativity in the vital early childhood years, their lifelong potential for engaged creative learning is stifled.

1.2 The gap between rhetoric and practice

The importance of visual arts pedagogy in the early years is widely documented (Christensen & Kirkland, 2009; McArdle, 2008; Vecchi, 2010; Wright, 2003), as is the understanding that educator beliefs influence pedagogy and practice (Dweck, 2006; Hedges & Cullen, 2005; McArdle, 2005; Richards, 2007; Terreni, 2010; Wong, 2007). Yet,

Bamford (2013, p. 177) attests that there is a significant gulf between the 'lip service' given to arts education and the provisions made in educational settings. Concerns about perceived discrepancies between visual arts curriculum guidelines, educational rhetoric and the application of visual arts pedagogy in the classroom are widely raised by researchers and academics (Christensen & Kirkland, 2010; Gibson & Anderson, 2008; Kelly & Jurisich, 2010; Stott, 2011; Terreni, 2010). Scholars have suggested a similar gap between educator rhetoric and visual arts pedagogy in Australian early childhood settings (Garvis, 2012a; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Twigg & Garvis, 2010).

However, little research has deeply explored and described the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of practicing university and vocationally trained early childhood educators, rather than examining the attitudes of pre-service degree qualified teachers (DQT) engaged in university practicums. Indeed, most of the existing research has focused on primary school contexts (Alter, Hayes, & O'Hara, 2009), pre-service DQT efficacy beliefs (Garvis, Twigg, & Pendergast, 2011; Twigg & Garvis, 2010) or broad beliefs about visual arts curricula (Gunn, 1998; Öztürk & Erden, 2011). Few studies directly report the visual arts beliefs, knowledge and pedagogy of practicing early childhood educators in their own words, rather than categorising and quantifying their beliefs within surveys and summative statements. Eisner (1973-1974), Kindler (1996) and Jalongo (1999) suggest that an exploration and description of the personal experiences and beliefs that guide professional practice in these contexts may enlighten this gap in understanding. This study explores these gaps in understanding by respectfully drawing upon the voices and experience of both participants and researcher, in order to render findings and recommendations that are accessible and applicable to early childhood practitioners and academics alike. While early childhood services may be ideal settings for early arts engagement through play based curricula (Eisner, 2002), there remains little specific guidance for educators regarding the skills, beliefs and practices that support pedagogy and no consensus on the knowledge and skills required to teach the arts (Andrews, 2004). Probine (2017) and McArdle (2012) affirm that early childhood visual arts continues to be a curriculum area lacking definition and a clearly articulated outline of what constitutes best practice.

1.3 Teaching the arts in Australia

The value for the arts evident in educational contexts reflects the cultural wellbeing of a nation (Bamford, 2006). In Australia, the diminishing presence of the arts in schools and universities is noted in *First We See: The National Review of Visual Art Education*, (2008), with Davis warning that the visual arts are in crisis, with many Australian children being denied quality teaching and learning. Similarly, in *The Arts and Australian Education: Realising Potential*, Ewing (2010) urges governments and tertiary institutions to re-consider the initial preparation of educators to give them confidence to embed the arts in their teaching and learning practices. She makes a compelling argument for the improved status of the arts in Australia in order to “realise the transformative potential of the Arts in education” (p. 56). More recently, the introduction of the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10* (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2013) provides curricular guidance for educators in primary and high school settings. However, it is noteworthy that these reports and curriculum documents rarely give more than a passing mention to early childhood education in prior to school settings.

1.4 The Australian early childhood education and care context

In Australia, early childhood education and care (ECEC) services typically provide care and education for children aged from birth to school age. Children’s engagement in education and care settings facilitates early education, social, emotional, physical, cognitive development, social engagement and overall health and wellbeing (Baxter, 2015). There are currently over 15,000 ECEC services operating in Australia and subject to the National Regulations for Early Childhood Education and Care and the Quality Assessment and ratings process (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), 2017). While ECEC contexts include a range of service types including informal care, family day care, out of school hours care, preschools and long-day care (Baxter, 2015), for the purposes of this research the focus will be on long day care and preschool settings. Depending upon service type, ECEC services receive operational funding from either Federal or State governments. Management structures vary, with services being managed by private, corporate or community-based entities that operate in either a not-for-profit or for-profit capacity.

Early childhood education and care settings in all Australian states and territories are subject to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulation (ACECQA, 2017). Under the Law and the Regulations, the National Quality Framework underpins standards of quality service provision, including research informed standards regarding the qualifications and training of early childhood educators, contexts for quality interactions between children and educators, group sizes and child-to-staff ratio requirements, the physical environment, curriculum planning and assessment, family and community engagement, leadership and management standards and health and safety requirements (Fleer, 2011). Due to the progressive roll-out of the National Quality Agenda legislation, variations in staff qualifications and educator-to-child ratio requirements continue to exist between jurisdictions.

However, in the New South Wales ECEC context for this research study, services catering for preschool children aged three to five years require an adult-to-child ratio of 1:10 children. The *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, (reg.272) outlines that ECEC services in NSW must employ at least one degree qualified early childhood teacher (DQT) for services catering for up to 39, with additional DQT's required for services enrolling more children each day.

In NSW, "at least 50 per cent of educators required to meet the relevant adult-to-child ratio must hold, or be actively working towards, at least an approved diploma level education and care qualification" ("Qualifications," n.d.). Degree qualified teachers (DQT) gain an early childhood teaching qualification at a university, while vocationally trained educators (VTE) gain their Diploma level or Certificate III qualification with a registered training organisation. University ECEC degrees vary widely in delivery and structure, with students across Australia enrolled in on-campus, distance, online, flexible and blended degree offerings. Vocational ECEC qualification are equally diverse in terms of delivery type, with Diplomas and Certificate III qualifications being delivered in face-to-face, online and blended settings, as well as via on-the-job traineeships. Variations exist between universities regarding the advanced standing offered to early childhood students upgrading from a Diploma to Degree level qualification. Currently, most universities offer approximately one year of advanced standing into the four-year ECEC degree, while a handful of online degrees provide up to two years of advanced standing.

In the Australian tertiary education context, visual arts coursework is typically delivered within one creative arts subject, where visual arts content is delivered concurrently with other arts domains, delivered in one semester early in the progression of coursework (Lemon & Garvis, 2013). Therefore, as an example, pre-service teachers potentially access 18 hours or less of visual arts content across a four-year degree. Cutcher and Cook (2016) also note the increasing proliferation of online and blended coursework and the challenge this poses in delivering effective and practical visual arts education for pre-service educators.

In the case of students upgrading from vocational qualifications to teaching degree qualifications via online distance education coursework, it is therefore possible for minimal or even no visual arts subjects to be undertaken at degree level; due to the recognition of prior learning assumed to have taken place within vocational training coursework. This also highlights the need to ensure effective visual arts training at the vocational training level to justify any recognition of prior learning granted to pre-service teaching students.

The National Quality Framework encompasses the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for Australia and the Assessment and Ratings process. The EYLF, Australia's first national early childhood curriculum framework, outlines the values, practices, principles and outcomes "essential to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age as well as their transition to school" (Fleer, 2011, p. 4). It honours children's identity and prioritises their right to learn and develop in play-based and relational contexts (Krieg, 2011). Fleer (2011, p. 10) further identifies that the EYLF aims to facilitate consistency across diverse ECEC settings, foster increased professionalism and "act as a tool for educator self-reflection and readiness for more widespread adoption of contemporary approaches to early childhood learning and teaching." The quality assessment and ratings process evaluates ECEC services against seven quality standards and determined whether the service requires significant improvement or is working toward, meeting or exceeding the national quality standard ("Assessment of services," n.d.).

The ongoing national quality reform agenda in Australian early childhood education underscores the need for research on this topic. The EYLF (Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations, (DEEWR), 2009) demands critical reflection about

pedagogical practice and consideration of the components of high quality programs and practice. The Educators' Guide to the EYLF (DEEWR, 2010, p. 14) states:

Without a guiding framework, educators' individual images, beliefs and values about what children should be and what they should become influence both the planned and unplanned curriculum experiences and learning of children and can lead to wide differences in outcomes for children.

Yet, references to visual arts and creative languages in the Early Years Learning Framework and Learning Outcomes are not explicit or prescriptive. Notions of creative and visual languages are vaguely embedded within learning outcomes related to communication, identity, confident learning and notions of multiple intelligence; adding to the ambiguity regarding the role that educators should play in supporting children to develop their visual arts literacy and the visual arts pedagogical strategies they should employ. Krieg (2011) affirms that the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), given its lack of detail regarding subject content and processes, does not articulate how educators should facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes.

This study therefore satisfies a timely need for research informed guidance for early childhood visual arts pedagogy.

1.5 The Research Questions

- i. How do educator beliefs inform the planning, pedagogy and provision of visual arts experiences in early childhood contexts?
- ii. How does an educator's pedagogical knowledge inform the planning, methods and provision of visual arts experiences in early childhood contexts?
- iii. How do early experiences and training influence the visual arts beliefs, knowledge, skills and confidence of early childhood educators?

1.6 Personal background:

Reggio Emilia as a Metaphorical Homeland: An account of professional ‘becoming’ (Lindsay, 2015e)

The personal and professional experiences that led me to embark upon doctoral research are outlined in the following published article (Lindsay, 2015e). This article explains the research decision to draw inspiration from the Italian Reggio Emilia approach and John Dewey’s philosophies of democracy, education and art. This foregrounds both the research design and conceptual framework for this thesis.

Prelude

An invitation in the August 2014 edition of ‘The Challenge’ to reflect on how the Reggio Emilia educational project has influenced me professionally and personally immediately provoked memories from throughout my teaching career. Encounters with the ideas underpinning pedagogy in Reggio Emilia have repeatedly reignited my passion as an early childhood teacher and have provoked me to advocacy, debate, research in practice, leadership and now doctoral studies and university teaching. Much of the credit I give to the project in Reggio Emilia for my ongoing growth as an educator has been documented in previous editions of ‘The Challenge’ (Lindsay, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2009, 2012).

However, ‘who I am’ is constantly changing and I continue to transform and to ‘become’ (Lindsay, 2012). Consequently, this iteration of my story of ‘becoming’ seeks to further examine several elements of the Reggio Emilia project that have provoked and inspired reflection, practice and professional transformation.

Reggio Emilia as part of my ‘self’

The world we have experienced becomes an integral part of the self that acts and is acted upon in further experience. In their physical occurrence, things and experiences pass and are gone. But something of their meaning and value is retained as an integral part of self.... It becomes a home and the home is part of our everyday experience. (Dewey, 1934, p. 108).

Engagement with the values that underpin the Italian Reggio Emilia project have spiralled and integrated their way into my being for more than twenty years. So much so that these values and meanings are now my professional homeland – a ‘place’ for ideological encounter and reflection that sustains and transforms me both professionally and personally. Indeed, the provocative values of the Reggio Emilia approach have steered me toward my current role as a PhD candidate and university lecturer. This paper will reflect upon several encounters with the values of Reggio Emilia that have kindled moments of illumination, transition and professional growth. Such shared reflections may encourage us as we construct our own professional homeland of values and ideas while together we honour the inspiration of the Reggio Emilia experience.

Value for art

As a young preschool teacher, my personal interest in visual arts saw me attend a 1990 public forum at the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Regretfully I do not recall the name of the presenter, however the documentary film “To make a Portrait of a Lion” (1987) ignited my desire to integrate visual arts experiences across the curriculum to support children to connect with their aesthetic instincts. I consequently instigated several visual arts explorations within my own pre-primary class and connected regularly with the local art gallery. These experiences convinced me that very young children can be supported to richly engage with the stories and the visual arts techniques found in artworks. I was inspired by the ways in which the educators in Reggio Emilia enacted their respect for young children’s intelligence and capability. Their holistic and cross-curricular application of visual arts methods to facilitate children’s explorations of the Lion statues in Piazza San Prospero concurrently challenged me to respect and empower children and refreshed my approach to teaching and research alongside children.

I could never have imagined that decades later I would appear in my own portrait with those regal medieval lions when I attended the 2008 and 2012 International Study Tours to Reggio Emilia, nor that I would be engaged in PhD research that is exploring educator beliefs about visual arts pedagogy. The journey that led me, both physically and philosophically, to Reggio Emilia and beyond has been one of encounter with the ideas and values of the Reggio Emilia educational project.

Value for ideas

From time to time I have wondered what it is about this philosophical approach that so inspires and ignites the passion of those invested in the education of young children. While a range of educational theories may inform pedagogical reflection, why do the values of the Reggio Emilia approach seem to sustain holistic philosophical and educational transformation? I believe that the ideas emanating from Reggio Emilia resonate so profoundly because, rather than offering theoretical absolutes, these timeless ideals reflect the core human values that we all yearn for. The ideology that underpins the values of the Reggio Emilia project nurtures a desire for democracy, meaning, human rights, respect, equity, joy and beauty. Dahlberg and Moss eloquently summarise saying,

The aesthetic dimension and poetic languages in schools and the learning process is above all, a source of hope for all those who believe in the possibility of an affirmative and inventive pedagogy that is open for connections, affect, intensity and emergence; a pedagogy that is open to children's potential and has the capacity to listen to expressive events – even intensity and affect – and to be open to that which has not yet been put into words; a pedagogy that finds joy in the unexpected, dares to follow projects in motion without knowing where they may lead, always prepared for surprise and risk; a pedagogy that adds to the world rather than subtracting as is all too common in education. In a world obsessed with quantification, reductionism, normalization and predetermined outcomes, this pedagogy gives cause to believe in the world again (Vecchi 2010, p. xxii).

Value for renewal

A renewed hope for the 'values that really matter' in education was my experience when, during a time of professional challenge, I sought to reignite my passion for early childhood education. My desire to engage in meaningful pedagogy had been ensnared by the demands of leadership, viability, budgets, political advocacy and change management. The opportunity to attend the 2008 conference in Reggio Emilia as an REAIE scholarship recipient was the career turning point that released and reconnected my heart and my vocation as a teacher. I was captivated by the story of Malaguzzi's advocacy for children. By taking preschool to the piazzas and porticos of Reggio Emilia and by making children's

learning visible to families, communities and the children themselves, Malaguzzi demanded that children be valued as citizens in their community. In this example I realised that my advocate heart along with my desire for children to experience respect, beauty and joy could be fuelled and find expression through this 'pedagogy of hope'.

Converging influences

Following my participation in the 2008 study tour several experiences converged to project me into a new phase of professional possibility. I frequently mused about how to interpret and apply the inspiration of Reggio Emilia, and in particular their value for children, for beauty and joy as a human right. I sought to interpret their aesthetic ways of knowing and making meaning to my own teaching context. At the time I was actively lobbying for young children, and the profession of early childhood education, to be valued so that all levels of government would support young children and families to access well-funded, high quality services. I was struck with the notion that children in our local community were rarely visible, nor welcome to participate and actively contribute to their own community.

Could I, as exemplified in the preschools of Reggio Emilia, combine advocacy and art-focused pedagogy? Could the language of visual arts support me to make our community, the children's families and teachers and even the children themselves more aware of children's great capacity to make meaning and express ideas? Could visual arts projects support children's ideas and voices to be heard outside the walls of the preschool and therefore raise the communities' value for children's rights as citizens?

Convinced that this was the case I embarked on several projects. We held an annual exhibition in conjunction with the local council and other preschools in the area to share children's artwork and the documentation of their ideas and voices in the community library. In support of this project, several successful grants funded the employment of local artist, Jill Talbot, to work collaboratively with the children, families and educators in the preschool service. Inspired by the example of the role of the atelierista in Reggio Emilia, I believed that Jill's role as visual artist in the preschool must not be restricted to that of a visiting visual arts specialist who would do isolated weekly art activities with the children. Rather, I determined that prior to Jill working with the children, the whole team of educators and any interested parents would undertake several art workshops using the methods and materials that we planned to introduce to the children. I intuitively believed that unless the art

processes, materials and methods were demystified for everyone involved, there would be a risk that the project would be series of one-off art activities driven by an artist, rather than an engaged and ongoing hands-on pedagogical approach for the whole team. I hoped that throughout the weekly program the teachers and educators, having participated in the adult workshops and having observed the art experiences that Jill and I undertook with the children, might have the confidence to extend on these experiences with the children independently. The projects were certainly significant for the children, staff and families involved. However, these projects also led me to question whether the visual arts beliefs and confidence of early childhood teachers and educators could either support or stagnate the process of learning in, through and about visual arts.

Looking beyond my own service I suspected that many early childhood educators lacked the confidence, knowledge and skills to deliver visual arts experiences that extend beyond sensory exploration and close-ended craft objects to actively teach visual art skills and methods using a wide range of quality art materials. In fact, having witnessed what children are capable of in both Reggio Emilia and in our own visual art projects I began to despair about the proliferation of poor quality materials, stencils, colouring-in sheets and identical productions covering the walls of many Australian services. I saw very little that positioned visual art as one of the many languages by which children are able to make and communicate meaning and wondered what was going on in the Australian context.

Value for research

Concurrent to these experiences, I was writing several articles for “The Challenge” as a follow up to my REAIE scholarship participation in the 2008 Reggio Emilia international conference. As a most encouraging mentor, Avis Ridgeway challenged me to consider possible new identities. Might I have something to offer in the way of pedagogical provocation and advocacy through research and writing? Did I have in me (as Avis suggested) the potential to undertake post-graduate study? Increasingly I began to entertain that possibility, particularly in light of Malaguzzi’s (1994) appeal for teachers to position themselves as co-learners and co-researchers alongside children. I was increasingly being challenged to consider that, in addition to valuing the theories and knowledge that are ‘out there’, we should value the theories that we develop as practitioners and to see ourselves as the authors of pedagogical theory in our own contexts. If I wanted answers to the gap that

seemed to exist between educator statements about the importance and centrality of art in early childhood and actual practice, then perhaps I should be the one engaging in research?

My consideration of these ideas was provoked by New Zealand educator Wendy Lee (IEU ECS Conference, 2010) who shared Dweck's (2006) theory about how the impact of educator mindset on children's learning and potential. Illustrating the concept of growth versus fixed mindset, Lee asked a room of approximately two hundred university qualified early childhood teachers to raise their hand if they thought that they could undertake a PhD and only three of us raised our hands. While disappointed at the lack of self-belief evident in the early childhood teaching profession, this response was not too surprising. In hindsight, perhaps this moment added more fuel to the fire of my increasing desire to explore my intersecting passions as a post-grad student. Following the PhD question the participants at the conference were asked to indicate if they thought of themselves as artists in their work with children and only four educators raised their hands. Given that many people equate the label of being artistic with the with the capacity to draw realistically or to be a professional artist, perhaps this low response was indicative of the common confusion about we define 'artistic'? Nevertheless, this again prompted me to wonder about the possible affect that educator's artistic self-efficacy beliefs may have on pedagogy, curriculum and children's creative learning.

An issue for research

After more than twenty years as a preschool teacher and director I had heard many educators preface any discussion about visual arts with the caveat that they were 'not artistic' and 'not very creative' or defer all visual arts programming decisions to the one person on their team who was the 'arty' one. I was motivated to better understand how the visual arts beliefs and confidence of early childhood teachers and educators might influence pedagogical provisions and interactions with children. Most importantly, I wanted to move beyond making assumptions about the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of Australian early years educators to identify what those visual arts beliefs, knowledge and pedagogy actually were. So, I took the leap and enrolled to undertake postgrad research!

A theory challenge

As I commenced study a theoretical challenge arose. Early in the research process one must identify a theoretical or conceptual framework that will inform and provide guidance in sorting and interpreting data. With my research focus on early childhood educators' visual arts beliefs and pedagogy I naturally sought to draw upon the Reggio Emilia educational project, and their value for aesthetics and poetic languages. However, both my supervisors and the educators in Reggio Emilia reminded me that an educational approach should not be regarded as a theory. Therefore, in order to develop a robust framework to support my reflection about the visual arts beliefs and practice of early childhood educators I co-located and synthesised John Dewey's constructivist philosophies of democracy, aesthetics and education with the constructivist core values of the Reggio Emilia educational project. What emerged from this synthesis was not only a rich framework to support my research but a deeper appreciation for the way the Reggio Emilia educational project was founded and sustained by its socio-political and historical grounding in multiple sources of inspiration, by which they "extracted theoretical principles" to support their work (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 58).

(RE) discovering Dewey

Through exploring the theoretical underpinnings of praxis in Reggio Emilia, Malaguzzi re-introduced, re-enlightened and enriched my engagement with Deweyan ideas. I immersed myself in Dewey's rich ideas about active education, democratic transformation and aesthetics and repeatedly identified Dewey's ideas reflected and exemplified in the core values and pedagogy of the Reggio Emilia approach. Further, investigations undertaken to justify and underpin the conceptual framework synthesis found that an influential network of Malaguzzi's Italian contemporaries actively shared, debated and adapted Dewey's ideas and reveal his significant influence on the foundational values upon which practice in Reggio Emilia is based (Lindsay, 2015a). This alignment identifies Deweyan concepts within Reggio Emilia's constructivist values about the image of the child, community engagement, the environment as the third teacher, art as a language, the inclusion of the atelier, the role of the atelierista, collaborative project work, the role of the teacher as a co-constructor of knowledge and the belief that education can bring about democratic and social

transformation. This research experience has been an exciting journey, which has enriched my thinking about contemporary pedagogical contexts. The opportunity to think deeply about the ideas of these great educators in relation to my research has been rendered even more joyful through their rich use of language.

A delight in language and metaphor

The use of metaphor in the Reggio Emilia educational project delights my appreciation for linguistic imagery. Like creating a work of art, Cameron and Low (1999) explain that the use of metaphor can render complex ideas more accessible. Whether encountering the ideas shared by Malaguzzi in the 'hundred languages' poem (Edwards, Gandini, & Foreman, 2012) or considering collaborative idea-sharing as a process of 'bouncing and catching balls' (Edwards, Gandini, & Foreman, 1998, p. 181) the poetic way ideas are presented holds its own romantic attraction. I find the same poetic resonance in the works of John Dewey who saw emotional engagement with ideas as central to inquiry (1916).

Dewey's prose moves me. His pragmatic, hopeful passion about education as the central transformative force for communities who both seek change and value democracy brings to mind the hopeful pedagogy that has been exercised in Reggio Emilia for more than six decades. Dewey's early-twentieth-century style of writing evokes for me the same metaphorical lyricism that resonates through the translations of Italian ideas emanating from Reggio Emilia. Indeed, other scholars have also recognised Dewey and Malaguzzi's common metaphorical style with Gandini (2012) and Schwall (2005) both noting their similar use of mountain peaks as a metaphor for creativity. Dewey (1934) expounded the need to render artistic processes and artwork more accessible by grounding them in everyday experience. He urged that art should, instead of being "remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing and achievement", be grounded in everyday experience (Dewey, 1934, p. 2). To illustrate this point, he stated "Mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They are the earth in one of its manifest operations" (1934, p. 2). Compare this to Malaguzzi's metaphorical request that "our task, regarding creativity, is to help children to climb their own mountains, as high as possible" (1998, p. 77).

Such metaphorical imagery transports me back to the conferences in Reggio Emilia where I became transfixed and transformed by the beauty of a pedagogy that seeks to enlighten, enrich and transform lives. Taking notes at a bi-lingual conference manifests competing delights. In the first instance, you are transported by the musical tones of passionate Italian educators almost singing their stories as they seek to share ‘what really matters’ about the work they do. Then as these stories are translated into English, a mere echo of Italian metaphor and imagery, frantic scribble aims to record the beautiful ideas presented. The opportunity to alternatively scribe and reflect is supported by the to-and-fro of the bi-lingual duet – a gift of time to revel in seductive ideas.

Value for uncertainty

One of the most seductive values of the Reggio Emilia project is the idea that educators should adopt the attitude of a researcher (Rinaldi, 2006) and in Malaguzzi’s words “never have too many certainties” (1998, p. 52). Dewey also valued uncertainty (Rankin, 2004) and explained that reflective inquiry is born from the experience of doubt (Garrison, 1996). He insisted that a willingness to question education itself must be central to educational processes (Hansen, 2006).

Indeed, qualitative research demands an attitude of uncertainty. While making my own position and frameworks explicit, the process of iterative research demands that I embrace ‘not knowing’ and put my assumptions aside to interpret and represent the voices of the participants in my study (Creswell, 2007). In the midst of doctoral research, when multiple ideas and possibilities often tie me in knots, Dewey (1934) comfortingly reminds me that achieving equilibrium will only be possible as a result of effort and tension. He urges me to adopt the philosophy that “accepts life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge and turns that experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities” (Dewey, 1934, p. 35). Both Dewey and Malaguzzi urge me to value this time of professional wondering and to maintain my intent to “let go of some old certainties in order to grow and be challenged to change for the better” (Lindsay, 2008b, p. 17).

A proposal for inspiration

As I identified the philosophical alignment between Dewey’s ideas and pedagogy in Reggio Emilia I admit to feeling somewhat nervous about how my proposal would be

received. Would purist devotees of the Reggio Emilia approach be offended at my suggestion that many core values of praxis in the project are firmly grounded in Dewey's educational and aesthetic ideals? Would highlighting the role played by Malaguzzi's contemporaries, including Bruno Ciari and Lamberto Borghi with whom Malaguzzi debated and interpreted Deweyan philosophy (Lindsay, 2015a) be considered an attempt to undermine the posthumous pedestal upon which Malaguzzi has been placed in many hearts and minds? Perhaps for some this may be the case. However, my examination of the socio-political reception of Dewey's work in Italy and the significant alignment between John Dewey's ideas with practice in Reggio Emilia has not in any way undermined my appreciation of the core values that underpin pedagogy in Reggio Emilia project. Rather this re-cognition of Dewey's ideas, as interpreted in Reggio Emilia, has heightened my appreciation of the layers of history, collaboration and collegial debate necessary in any educational context that seeks reformation.

No movement for social and educational transformation can be achieved in isolation. Indeed, my alignment of the two philosophies celebrates and confirms that sound pedagogical ideas are timeless. Quality practice related to hands-on, constructivist and collaborative inquiry, which democratically respects children as active learners, transcends time, culture and place.

If I hope that my thesis might in any way inspire and challenge visual arts practice in early childhood contexts, I too must embrace the rich collegial debate and openness to new ideas that Malaguzzi exemplified. Like both Dewey and Malaguzzi I must use all the languages at my disposal to embrace uncertainty and grapple with the research process to share ideas and to question and challenge assumptions.

In pursuit of the research aims and processes it is now timely to review and analyse the scholarly literature associated with the research problem.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To inform the current research study, this chapter reviews literature that presents both scholarly opinion and primary research sources focusing on the domain of visual arts in early childhood education and care contexts. The literature review explores definitions of quality visual arts practice and outlines specific issues regarding ‘out-dated beliefs’ and pedagogy that have been raised by scholars.

Literature that articulates the theory-practice divide and considers the influence of educator beliefs upon pedagogy, knowledge and practice justify the focus in the current study. Related to this, theories that inform the exploration of educator beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge are also reviewed and summarised. Further, the influences of context, pre-service training and professional development upon educator visual arts beliefs are explored. Several relevant research studies are discussed and analysed to both contextualise and justify the current research thesis. Following this, studies that highlight the need for further research about visual arts beliefs and practice in early childhood contexts justify the focus of the current research study.

It is also worth noting that this thesis presents additional literature reviews and synthesis within the published works inserted into chapters 1, 3, 4 and 10. The additional literature reviews undertaken provide justification for the development of both the research design and methodology, including the conceptual framework developed to inform and guide the current study. While some overlap is inevitable in a thesis by compilation, every effort has been made to minimise repetition and to ensure the smooth flow of the thesis argument.

2.1 Visual arts in early childhood education

The importance and benefits of visual arts experiences in the early years are widely documented (Bamford, 2009; Ewing, 2010; Garvis, 2012a; Vecchi, 2010; Wright, 2012). Indeed, visual arts pedagogies are considered central to children’s learning in early childhood settings (Boone, 2008; Clark & de Lautour, 2009; Garvis, 2013; Kelly & Jurusich, 2010). Experts and researchers describe some of the benefits of including arts in the curriculum as encompassing, but not restricted to:

- Ideals of cross-disciplinary learning (Eisner, 2002; McArdle, 2003; Rinaldi, 2006);
- Motivation, enjoyment, critical thinking, cognitive problem solving and self-discipline (Eisner, 2003; Lummis, Morris & Paolino, 2014; Oreck, 2004);
- Fostering positive attitudes, creativity and imagination (Alter et al., 2009; Eisner, 2002, 2003);
- Fostering aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic learning experiences (Eisner, 2002; Dewey, 1934; Ewing, 2010);
- Development of tools for communication and meaning-making (Christensen & Kirkland, 2010; Eisner, 2002, 2003; Ewing, 2010; McArdle, 2005); and
- Development of skills to support navigation in a globalised world (Eisner, 2002; Ewing, 2010; Lummis et al., 2014).

McArdle (2016) proposes that in order to transform the current position of visual arts pedagogy as a seemingly non-optional inclusion in early childhood settings, it is necessary to move beyond research that aims to justify the importance of visual arts to more deeply explore educators' visual arts pedagogy. Bamford (2009) cautions that the range of benefits for children only exist when effective, quality provisions are made by educators. Omissions in the visual arts curriculum can be as significant as the provisions made for children and present the risk of a 'null curriculum' where students are denied opportunities for learning (Eisner, 2002). Indeed, Ryan and Goffin (2008, p. 393) suggest that researchers and teacher educators must investigate why educators, as "those most central to what children experience in early care and education settings," are so often "missing in action."

Yet, the role of visual arts in the early childhood curriculum remains ambiguous (Althouse, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2003); and the endeavour to define effective visual arts pedagogy and the skills needed to teach the arts has little consensus (Andrews, 2004; Boone, 2008; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016). Hickman (2005) notes that numerous competing theoretical paradigms confuse attempts to define quality arts education practices. There are significant gaps and pedagogical tensions between what is known about children's visual arts development and what is known about the approach educators take in addressing children's artistic growth (Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Kindler, 1995). Aligning with this, Clark

and de Lautour (2009) attest that the role of the educator in the provision of visual arts experience has undergone minimal scrutiny. This study therefore aims to better appreciate the beliefs and pedagogical actions of early childhood educators.

2.2 Defining quality visual arts practice

Definitions of quality early childhood visual arts pedagogy remain ambiguous and scarce. In Australia, references to visual arts and creative languages in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) are not explicit or prescriptive. Notions of creative and visual languages are vaguely embedded within learning outcomes related to communication, identity, confident learning and notions of multiple intelligence; adding to the ambiguity regarding the role that educators should play in supporting children to develop their visual arts literacy and the visual arts pedagogical strategies they should employ. For example, the EYLF positions the arts as a tool for communication when it states that children can learn to be effective communicators when educators “provide a range of resources that enable children to express meaning using visual arts” and “teach children skills and techniques that will enhance their capacity for self-expression and communication” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 41). However, beyond such broad guidelines, there is no specific information to support educators to evaluate which resources, skills and techniques support quality visual arts pedagogy. Krieg (2011) notes that the EYLF does not organise knowledge into subject areas, in favour of educator to make curriculum decisions in response to children’s interests. It is problematic that in terms of specific subject guidance, the EYLF foregrounds some disciplines more than others (Krieg, 2011), further adding to the climate of ambiguity.

There is little readily available guidance available to support early childhood educators to know how to promote children’s learning in the visual arts domain (Sheridan, 2009). Affirming this, while frequently referenced early childhood textbooks outline the broad parameters and benefits of the arts in early childhood they do little to specifically articulate the features of quality visual arts pedagogy, nor the role that educators should play in planning for and supporting children’s visual arts learning. For example, few texts examine the merits, nor define the role of the educator, beyond critiquing the use of colouring-in stencils (see for example, Brownlee, 2007; Ewing, 2013; Kolbe, 2005, 2007) and urging educators to avoid adult-made, product-oriented craft models and pre-ordained

results (Brownlee, 2007; Isbell & Raines, 2007). Talbot's (2016) booklet, based on action-research conducted in early childhood settings, including collaborations with this researcher, provides instructional suggestions for hands-on engagement with several open-ended visual arts methodologies and hints at issues of educator visual arts self-efficacy and confidence.

Providing more specific outlines of quality arts practice, *The Qualities of Quality: Understanding excellence in arts education* report (Seidel et al., 2009), views quality practice through four lenses focussed on learning, pedagogy, community dynamics and environment. The report suggests that quality art practice features: educators determined to engage collaboratively with children using high quality materials and resources, quality relationships and interactions; Multidisciplinary and holistic curricula; authentic pedagogy where educators model artistic processes and attitudes of inquiry and participate in learning experiences with children; learning experiences build on children's prior knowledge and experience; educator who engage in reflection and dialogue about quality and how to achieve it; a learning community that fosters relationships of trust, collaboration and communication between educators and children; environments where the arts are a priority; Sufficient time for meaningful artistic work; and, Environments, materials and resources are functional and aesthetic.

Focussed more specifically on the early years, the Early Childhood Art Educators (ECAE) 2016 position statement, *Art Essentials for Early Learning*, focusses on the key features of quality visual arts interactions between children, educators, environment and materials; and the need for early years educators to be intentional, sensitive and knowledgeable (McClure, Tarr, Thompson & Eckhoff, 2017). The position statement outlines practices and principles that advocate for high quality materials in organised environments, access to a wide variety of visual arts media to support children's multi-layered expression, and "unhurried time, both structures and unstructured, to explore the sensory/kinaesthetic properties of materials and to develop skills and concepts in representing his or her experiences" (McClure et al., 2017, p. 158). For this to occur, McClure et al., (2017) note the need for responsive and reflective educators who value children's diverse abilities and strengths, support appropriate skills development in the use and care of visual arts materials; who understand and support the "unique ways that young

children represent their thoughts, feelings and perceptions” through visual arts experiences and processes (p. 160); who support the multiple ways children make meaning in and through the arts; and, who observe, listen, document, assess and reflect upon children’ learning.

Australian research conducted by Cutcher and Boyd (2016) sought to inform the development of pre-service educator training contexts through the observation of children’s artistic practices. The study identified that collaborative, intergenerational art making in early childhood settings facilitated opportunities for learning and growth for both children and educators (Cutcher & Boyd, 2016).

Bamford (2009) developed a description of the common characteristics and features of quality arts education programs in primary school contexts, such as an emphasis on collaboration, ongoing professional development, exhibiting children’s work, and multidisciplinary projects, to name a few. These characteristics, while informative, do not address early childhood settings nor consider the role that educators play in developing and supporting children’s visual arts learning. However, the characteristics identified by Bamford (2009) do have strong alignment with the values and principles that underpin the world-renowned Italian Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. The educational philosophy of Reggio Emilia and their notion of visual languages is regularly referenced in the literature as an exemplar of quality visual arts practice (Bae, 2004; Edwards et al., 2012; Ewing, 2010; McClure et al., 2017; Millikan, 2010; Seidel et al., 2009). However, as suggested by (Lindsay, 2016a, see Chapter 3.4.1), many educators avoid engaging with the principles of the Reggio Emilia, closing themselves off from the constructivist views that might challenge and inform their pedagogical beliefs and practice.

In contrast to the previous definitions of early childhood visual arts quality, others discuss quality by focusing more upon what it is not. Descriptions of myths and ‘mis-beliefs’ that allegedly influence practice form an attempt to define ‘anti-quality’ in early childhood visual arts practice (Eisner, 1973-1974; Jalongo, 1999; Kindler, 1996). Eisner (1973-1974) attests to the powerful influence of myths and beliefs upon one’s worldview and willingness to assimilate new information or knowledge. He notes the cognitive dissonance and discomfort that occur when new ideas or concepts do not align with current beliefs. Eisner identifies a range of persistent beliefs in the domain of visual arts education

as mythical, suggesting that adherence to such beliefs has restricted the delivery of quality visual arts education (1973-1974). Included in the myths challenged by Eisner is the belief that children's visual arts development is best supported through the provision of many arts materials and the emotional, yet hands-off support of the educator (Cutcher & Boyd, 2016). As Eisner (2002, p. 46) noted, "More than a few think art can't be taught, only 'caught'. Others believe that even if it could be taught, it shouldn't be."

Eisner (1973-1974, 2002) suggests this belief is fuelled by the notion that adult engagement in children's art-making will interfere with children's natural developmental progression. Eisner also labels as mythical the belief that the function of art education is to develop creativity through a therapeutic unlocking of children's creative potential (1973-1974). He challenges the regularly quoted myth that the visual arts process is more important than the visual arts product, instead suggesting they have equal merit (Eisner, 1973-1974). He suggests that the visual arts product attests to the quality of the process and argues that to "neglect one in favour of the other is to be pedagogically naive" (Eisner, 1973-1974, p. 11). He also notes that to glorify children's naivety, while neglecting to evaluate and support children's visual arts development devalues the domain of visual arts learning and stagnates the improvement of the visual arts curriculum. The belief that children's visual arts development is best served through the provision of multiple materials and experiences is also questioned by Eisner (1973-1974). Instead, he suggests that learning and growth are best fostered through in-depth engagement, repeated encounters and developing familiarity with materials.

Kindler (1996) similarly identifies a range of myths and habitual responses that stagnate early childhood visual arts pedagogy, fuel a hands-off approach by educators and foster misalignments between educator rhetoric and practice. Like Eisner, the mythical beliefs discussed by Kindler (1996) include the belief that visual arts development is an innate, therapeutic and naturally unfolding process in which the adult should not engage. Kindler (1996) notes the limiting belief that process is more important than product, suggesting this belief fosters incapacity to evaluate the quality of the processes and reinforces an attitude of non-intervention. Instead of visual arts pedagogy being informed by unfounded mythical beliefs, Kindler suggests that educator's need to be equipped with

knowledge, skills and attitudes that will guide effective visual arts pedagogy and connect theory with practice (1996).

Further, Jalongo (1999) identifies several barriers to quality visual arts pedagogy. These barriers include the tendency to position visual arts experiences as tools by which to keep young children busy, rather than as experiences that challenge children's intelligence and imagination; the notion that making a mess equates with creative expression; and, the tendency for early childhood educators to avoid teaching visual arts techniques to children (Jalongo, 1999). Jalongo advocates for open-ended visual arts experiences rather than homogenous and identical products (1999). She also challenges the notion that children require a constant selection of exotic materials to maintain their interest, suggesting that quality materials and processes will more effectively immerse children in visual arts experiences (Jalongo, 1999).

Pariser (1988) notes that Eisner's myths remain persistent in the field of arts education due to the influence of a romanticised view of children as natural and unspoiled that continues to fuel laissez-faire pedagogical beliefs and practice. Peers (2008), attempted to investigate the myths and perceptions that influenced primary teacher beliefs and practice in the visual arts, but judged the study unsuccessful due to poor generalist teacher attitudes toward visual arts as a subject. Given the ongoing ambiguity surrounding definitions of quality visual arts pedagogy, an exploration of the visual arts beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge of educators is merited to gauge the prevalence or absence of the visual arts myths and barriers raised by Eisner (1973-1974), Kindler (1996) and Jalongo (1999) that may be evident in Australian early childhood education and care contexts.

2.3 Out-dated visual arts beliefs

Numerous scholars attest that the visual arts beliefs and practices of educators remain entrenched in out-dated developmental, hands off and modernist approaches, rather than transitioning to the socio-cultural and post-modern learning theories that guide contemporary practice (Clark & de Lautour, 2009; Kelly & Jurisich, 2010; Probine, 2017; Richards, 2007; Stott, 2011; Terreni, 2010). Wright (2003) poses that three theoretical approaches are typically adopted by educators in the visual arts pedagogy, identifying educator directed activities as the reproductive approach, developmentally informed and

child-led activities as the productive approach, and sociocultural partnerships between children and educators as the guided learning approach. In Australia, Fleer (2011) raises similar concerns, noting that this practice exists despite an emphasis in the Early Years Learning Framework on multiple theoretical approaches to child development, developmentally appropriate practice continues to dominate the pedagogical discourse.

Sumsion, Grieshaber, McArdle, and Shield (2014) report that in the Australian context educators, regardless of qualification, tended to maintain a non-interventionist approach, while aiming to support open-ended play through the provision of environments and resources. Such hands-off approaches to children's visual arts education are positioned as notions originating from the post-war philosophies of Cisek and Lowenfeld which promoted the idea that children's art development would occur naturally without adult interference (Hickman & Ellington, 2015; Kindler, 1995,1996). Aligning with this, scholars propose that these persistent myths have remained a dominant discourse in the Australian context due to Frances Durham's (1961) Lowenfeld inspired booklet 'Art for the child under seven'; which has only recently been removed from circulation (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Richards, 2007).

Similarly, in New Zealand, the well-loved booklet 'Magic Places' by Pennie Brownlee is credited with ideas about hands-off, non-interventionist pedagogy (Clarke & de Lautour, 2009). Indeed, Clark and de Lautour's (2009, p. 115) research with four teams of early childhood educators in New Zealand noted the ongoing prevalence of the belief that adults should remain "hands-off" in relation to children's visual arts experience. They suggest that despite the emergence of socio-cultural and post-modern views, this persistent modernist discourse depersonalises the role of the educator and positions the educator as "onlooker" (Clark & de Lautour, 2009, p. 116). More recently, Probine (2017) attests these concerns persist in New Zealand, with many educators maintaining the non-interventionist view that while children are naturally creative, their own role should be restricted to observing and appreciating children's art making. In contrast, Bae's (2004) participants, informed by Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development and Reggio Emilia's constructivist approach, believed that to foster children's artistic development required the hands-on assistance of educators rather than the mere provision of materials.

McArdle (2016) reminds us that early childhood visual arts pedagogical content knowledge has become confused due to conflicting discourses regarding freedom for exploration versus intentional teaching, interventionist versus non-interventionist pedagogies and a lack of clarity regarding the purposes of visual arts in the early childhood curriculum. Ewing (2013) identifies the persistent laissez-faire, non-intervention belief that children's early art development will be corrupted by adult intervention; despite numerous recommendations that art development will not occur naturally. Further, McArdle (2013) notes the persistent discourses that determine practice when personal visual arts experiences or beliefs overrule pre-service training. Indeed, unexamined and unconscious practices dominate the early childhood curriculum (Narey, 2009).

Krieg (2011) suggests the lack of research focussed on the beliefs and behaviour of educators has led to the dominant view that adults in early childhood settings should facilitate children's play-based learning experiences rather than engage in specific teaching. As early childhood visual arts pedagogy is directly influenced by the educator's view of the child and the beliefs they hold about visual arts education (McArdle, 1999), it is necessary that the current discourses that shape practice be specifically identified. Only then, McArdle (1999, pp. 103-104) suggests, will it be possible to "understand what is possible, what discourses are available, what is the regime of truth" in order to "see what are the limiting situations, and what it might mean to teach art differently but effectively." This study therefore aims to identify the theoretical underpinning of the visual arts beliefs of the research participants, and consider the dominant discourses that persist in the Australian early childhood context.

2.4 The theory-practice divide

Numerous studies identify an incongruity between educator rhetoric about the importance of visual arts and the everyday visual arts pedagogy and planning that is seen in early childhood, primary and pre-service teacher education settings (Bresler, 1992; Garvis, 2012a, 2012b; Kindler, 1996; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). There appear to be discrepancies between "what teachers think they should do (beliefs), what they actually do (observed practices), and what teachers overtly represent that they have done (self-reported practices)" (Wen, Elicker, & McMullen, 2011, p. 948).

Indeed, many early childhood educators “feel ill-equipped to support visual arts learning” due to their personal lack of experience with visual arts (Sheridan, 2009, p. 72). Kindler (1996) attests the gap between stated beliefs and practice may be explained by the power of personal experiences in guiding professional practice. Illustrating this, Reynold’s (2007) study found that the mismatch between educators’ espoused beliefs and actual practice were due to implicit beliefs that were resistant to new theories or viewpoints. However, few studies specifically identify and describe the stated beliefs and resulting visual arts practice of educators in the field, with most literature stating more generally that while educators believe the visual arts are important (Bresler, 1992; Daher & Baer, 2014; Gunn, 1998; Twigg & Garvis, 2010) they are not utilised regularly due to:

- Low visual arts self-efficacy (Garvis, 2011; Garvis, Klopper & Power, 2010; McCoubrey, 2000; Oreck, 2004; Twigg & Pendergast, 2011);
- Limited visual arts content knowledge (Boone, 2008; Buldu & Shaban, 2010; Garvis & Pendergast 2010; Grauer, 1998; Hedges & Cullen 2005; Miraglia 2008; Narey, 2009; Stott 2011);
- Perceived lack of parental or institutional value for the arts in comparison to other curriculum areas (Buldu & Shaban, 2010; Collins, 2016; Garvis, 2012a; Ohlsen, 2016; Öztürk & Erden, 2011; Probine, 2017; Sheridan, 2009);
- Continued government will to prioritise arts policy and legislate for the arts curriculum (Barton, Baguley & MacDonald, 2013); Inability to articulate how visual arts support critical thinking (Daher & Baer, 2014);
- Lack of focus on the visual arts in pre-service coursework (Collins, 2016; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Cutcher & Cook, 2016; Garvis 2012a);
- Lack of time and resources in pre-service training contexts (Barton et al., 2013; Collins, 2016; Cutcher & Cook, 2016; Lummis et al., 2014);
- The challenge to deliver effective visual arts coursework in online and blended tertiary education contexts (Cutcher & Cook, 2016);
- Curriculum timetables and pressures (Buldu & Shaban, 2010; Cutcher & Cook, 2016); and
- Inadequate arts materials and resources (Arrifin & Baki, 2014; Buldu & Shaban, 2010).

While such studies inform the proposed research, the need for research that is located within Australian early childhood contexts, and that specifically describes the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of practicing educator's is required. This study aims to fill this gap in the Australian early childhood research landscape.

2.5 The domains of educator beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge

While beliefs are the “single most important construct in educational research”, at the same time they are a “messy construct” (Pajares, 2011, p. 307, p. 329). Beliefs can be explicit and stem from training, or implicit and developed from personal experience and long-established beliefs and values (Brown, 2006; Wang, Elicker, McMullen, & Mao, 2008). Building from this, Vartuli (2005) notes that beliefs are a major determinant of pedagogical choices. As Brownlee and Berthlesen (2004) attest, to understand educators' beliefs about teaching and learning can support clearer understandings about their pedagogical choices. Beliefs, shaped by personal and educational experience, are often implicit and unarticulated (Visser, 2006). However, it can be difficult to discriminate between beliefs and knowledge, as beliefs concurrently have a cognitive component representing knowledge, an affective component and a behavioural component (Pajares, 2011). Some scholars subsume knowledge as a component of belief, while others categorise beliefs as preconceptions and implicit theories that are drawn from many sources, including generalised beliefs, biases and prejudices drawn from personal experience (Pajares, 2011).

Given that beliefs and competencies cannot be directly observed or measured they “must be inferred from what people say, intend and do” (Pajares, 2011, p. 314). Pajares (2011, p. 316) therefore suggests that it is helpful to consider the different types of belief, including the beliefs born from “confidence to perform specific tasks (self-efficacy), beliefs about one's “confidence to affect student's performance (teacher efficacy)”, beliefs “about the nature of knowledge (epistemological beliefs)” and beliefs reflected in “feelings of self-worth (self-concept, self-esteem).” Added to this, Pajares states that educators also hold “beliefs about specific subjects or disciplines” and that understanding educator's “subject specific beliefs” is key to understanding the “intricacies of how children learn” (2011, p 316, p. 308).

In the art education domain, it is important to note that subject specific efficacy beliefs are strongly and reciprocally correlated with content knowledge (CK), pedagogical

knowledge (PK) and the prior personal experiences, beliefs and knowledge that beginning educators bring with them into teacher education programs (Grauer, 1997; McCoubrey, 2000). Pajares suggests that research has failed to adequately explore the power of educator beliefs upon pedagogy (2011), a gap this research hopes to inform.

The following theories relating to efficacy beliefs, mindset beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge are significant to the analysis of data retrieved from the research participants for this study.

2.5.1 Self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy beliefs result from the judgment a person makes about their ability to bring about a desired outcome (Bandura 1997; Garvis, 2013). Once self-efficacy is established it is resistant to change and once established during the beginning phase of teaching, self-efficacy beliefs are resilient to increases in years of experience (Garvis, 2009a). Educator self-efficacy beliefs have been related to student outcomes such as achievement, motivation and student's sense of self-efficacy as well as to educators' behaviour in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Indeed, higher levels of educator self-efficacy have been linked to higher levels of student engagement, particularly when educators worked in settings where high levels of collaboration were evident (Guo, Justice, Sawyer, & Tomkins, 2011). In comparison, low educator self-efficacy affects the effort educators make and their levels of aspiration for students (Tschannen Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Bandura (1997) outlines that people's belief in their ability to produce results affects how they think, motivate themselves, feel and behave and that low self-efficacy beliefs can hinder performance while mastery experiences most powerfully influence positive self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura, the originator of social cognitive theory and the construct of self-efficacy beliefs, explains that an individual's self-efficacy beliefs reflect their confidence about their own capability to perform a required task (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Bandura (1994) summarises that self-efficacy beliefs:

- Influence people's feelings, behaviour, motivation and cognition;
- Are developed through mastery experiences which require perseverance and sustained effort;

- Are developed through vicarious experience attained by observing relatable, competent models who transmit knowledge and teach effective skills and strategies for the desired task;
- Are strengthened through verbal persuasion regarding a person's capacity to perform a desired task and undermined if social talk condemns or casts doubt upon a person's capabilities; and
- Are fostered when a positive mood is created to reduce stress reactions and negative emotional reactions to performance.

People with positive self-efficacy beliefs perceive difficult or novel tasks as challenges to be mastered through persistent effort. Such people are not discouraged by failures or setbacks, instead identifying the need to acquire the required knowledge and skills through personal effort (Bandura, 1994). On the other hand, those who doubt their capabilities will avoid any tasks that threaten their personal identity. Rather than persist with or even attempt challenging tasks, those with low self-efficacy beliefs perceive difficult tasks as threats and justify their task avoidance by blaming their personal deficiencies and the obstacles they may encounter (Bandura, 1994).

The construct of self-efficacy shapes the effectiveness of educational practice, with Bandura (1994) suggesting that mastery experiences are the strongest influence on the self-efficacy judgements of educators. Educator beliefs regarding their capabilities in any domain create self-fulfilling prophecies as beliefs are reinforced through contexts and experiences (Garvis, 2008). In turn, educators with high self-efficacy are more likely to be more resilient and persistent in their support for students' learning and potential compared to those with low self-efficacy (Pendergast et al., 2011).

Indeed, Bandura (1994) suggests that people who successfully foster the self-efficacy beliefs of others provide not only positive appraisals, but actively structure learning situations to facilitate successful outcomes based on the individual's level of ability and knowledge. In educational terms, this suggests intentional and individual planning to scaffolding of skills and knowledge in support of positive, mastery experiences.

Low self-efficacy in the arts can cause professional paralysis (Kindler, 1996) and be an obstacle to effective teaching and learning (Alter et al., 2009). Garvis (2013) reinforces the notion that beliefs about arts teaching inform an educator's capability to teach the arts.

Of relevance to the current study, Australian studies with pre-service and in-service primary DQT's suggest those expressing low arts self-efficacy and anxiety about their own arts skills and mastery were found to neglect the arts in their classrooms (Klopper & Power, 2010; Lemon & Garvis 2013; Lummis et al., 2014).

Duncum (1999, p. 15) asserts that in relation to visual arts self-efficacy many generalist educators believe that if they cannot draw realistically, they cannot effectively teach art. Similarly, Garvis (2008) suggests that prior experiences in the arts impact upon current efficacy beliefs and confidence, proposing that “negative personal experiences during certain life stages and the lack of exposure to the arts during teacher training created negative pre-service teacher beliefs towards arts education” (p. 13). This notion supports consideration about participants in this study in relation to their personal beliefs and self-efficacy related to their capacity to plan for and participate in visual arts activities with children. This stance also informs potential influences upon visual arts self-efficacy within an educator's own childhood and training experiences, supporting the notion that early influences on self-efficacy beliefs are powerful and resistant to change (Bandura, 1997). However, this is counterbalanced by Bandura's (2012, p. 11) more recent assertion that external influences can “raise and lower self-efficacy independent of performance”, suggesting that self-efficacy beliefs and their impact on practice may fluctuate and change.

2.5.2 Mindset theory. Building on Bandura's discussion of positive and negative self-efficacy beliefs, mindset theory compares two implicit self-theories that play a role in determining how people respond to new learning opportunities and situations that challenge their beliefs about themselves (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995). People assuming an incremental or growth theory mindset believe that intelligence is malleable, prioritise learning and are willing to take risks and make mistakes; not seeing this as a failure but as an opportunity to develop mastery (Dweck et al., 1995; Watt, 2010).

Alternatively, those assuming a fixed or entity theory mindset adhere to the belief that their intelligence, skills and “traits (and those of others) as resistant to change and cultivation” (Watt, 2010, p. 84). These people are more interested in displaying their abilities rather than increasing them, tending to orient toward the “goal of attaining favourable judgements of their attributes and avoiding negative ones” (Dweck et al., 1995, p. 588). Their negative performance in any domain is perceived as a lack of ability, rather

than as a lack of effort (Dweck et al., 1995). Those with a fixed mindset “don’t address their deficiencies, because that would mean admitting that they possess deficiencies” (Watt, 2010, p. 84). Fearing humiliation, such people hide their mistakes and avoid risk taking, preferring to remain in their comfort zone.

This theory supports the analysis of the beliefs and mindset of the participants in the current study by supporting reflection about whether they believe their abilities in the domain of visual arts are fixed and unchangeable or whether they believe visual arts skills are something that they, and the children they work with, can develop with effort and practice.

2.5.3 Pedagogical content knowledge. Shulman (1987, p. 7) contends that “teaching necessarily begins with a teacher’s understanding of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught.” This pedagogical understanding results from the integration of subject matter content knowledge (CK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and constitutes the knowledge required to effectively deliver subject matter to students (Kleikmann, Richter, Kunter, Elsner, Besser, Krauss & Baumert, 2013; Shulman 1986). Shulman (1987) explains that PCK builds on other forms of professional knowledge, establishing it as a critical element in the knowledge base of educators. She notes that the separation of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge is a recent phenomenon in educational research (1986), suggesting an imbalance of pedagogical research focussed on how educators manage the classroom, has led to an absence of research focussed on educator subject knowledge, it’s sources and the ways content knowledge is delivered pedagogically. This is concerning because educator subject knowledge affects teaching practice and student learning (Kleikmann et al., 2013).

According to Shulman (1986), the assumption that educators are equipped with subject content knowledge may be unfounded. In addition, Ball (2000, p. 245) raises as problematic the "assumption that someone who knows content for himself or herself is able to use that knowledge in teaching”, noting that effective educators have the capacity to deconstruct their own knowledge and apply pedagogical knowledge to meet the needs of the learner. Ball (2000) also notes that teacher education contexts provide students with little guidance to blend knowledge and pedagogy.

In an arts education context, Grauer (1997) explains that content about pedagogical strategies must be explicitly taught and connected to students' existing or developing visual arts content knowledge, noting that students construct PCK based on their own experiences. Aligning with this finding, Sousa (2011) conducted arts workshops to investigate effective strategies to change the misinformed pedagogical preconceptions held by artist participants in training to become arts teachers. Specific arts education knowledge, methods and theories were taught with the aim to promote the participants' PCK. Utilising constructivist strategies to intentionally build the participants knowledge about how to teach content was found to be an effective strategy (Sousa, 2011). In order to build PCK amongst educators, scholars suggest that tertiary education settings should adopt constructivist and post-modern epistemologies to holistically integrate pedagogical methods courses, subject discipline courses and professional experience practicums, rather than separate knowledge attainment into separate parts. (Ball, 2000; Grauer, 1997).

The subject content knowledge of early years educators has been under examined (Hedges & Cullen, 2005). Many scholars attest to early childhood educators' inadequate subject content knowledge (Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Ryan & Goffin, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002) suggesting that prospective early childhood educators must be equipped with content knowledge, skills and pedagogical knowledge to teach basic arts concepts if they are to effectively support children's engagement in quality learning through the arts (Ewing, 2013; Klopper & Power, 2010; Lim, 2005). Illustrating this, Garvis & Pendergast's (2011) study found early childhood DQT participants ranked their own subject content knowledge in all arts domains significantly lower than their subject content knowledge in english and maths, concluding that when educators have limited content knowledge and low self-efficacy for particular subjects it may result in those subjects being de-emphasised or completely avoided in their teaching practice.

Confounding the requirement for educators to know what to teach and how to teach it, early childhood curriculum documents appear to neglect the prescription of specific subject content knowledge, leaving educators unsure about what types of knowledge they require to support young children's learning (Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Krieg, 2011). Krieg (2011) contends that while the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (2009) suggests

early childhood educators should intentionally engage in teaching and knowledge building, it does not address the place of subject content areas in this process. Further to this she notes that unless educators are familiar with the “concepts and methods of inquiry found in subject areas”, opportunities to draw on subject specific methods of inquiry to support inquiry and knowledge construction will be limited (Krieg, 2011, p. 51). Krieg (2011) suggests that subject content knowledge has traditionally been viewed negatively in early childhood contexts and proposes the need to challenge the common early childhood notion that processes of child-centred experiential learning are more important than the products, or meanings children make, from the learning experience.

Of concern is that the ECEC sector may collectively influence the PCK of educators by articulating, both explicitly and implicitly, unexamined content knowledge and pedagogical principles that are misinformed (McArdle, 2016). As previously outlined, such mythical views are often maintained as dominant, yet unexamined, pedagogical discourses (Eisner, 1973-1974). McArdle (2016) notes the competing discourses that have confused educator’s visual arts pedagogical content knowledge.

While professional agendas in Australian early education settings are broadly guided by culture, community values, politics and economics, the daily practice of education is actually comprised of knowing what to teach and how to teach it in ways that are suitable for the ages of children being educated and cared for. Therefore In this study, consideration of the participants’ beliefs about visual arts pedagogy include the exploration of the visual arts pedagogical content knowledge of the study participants and consider the possible sources of, or influences on their visual arts pedagogical knowledge.

2.5.4 Beliefs influence pedagogy. Noting the previous discussion of the interrelated, yet distinct belief constructs of self- efficacy, mindset, content knowledge and pedagogical beliefs, the following discussion of the literature will utilise the common term ‘beliefs’ unless a particular distinction is required.

Dewey (1910) notes that educator beliefs are fused with the delivery of subjects, suggesting that children’s perceptions of the attitude held by an educator toward a subject will in turn influence the child’s attitudes toward the subject:

With the young, the influence of the teacher's personality is intimately fused with that of the subject; the child does not separate nor even distinguish the two. And as

the child's response is toward or away from anything presented, he keeps up a running commentary, of which he himself is hardly distinctly aware, of like and dislike, of sympathy and aversion, not merely to the acts of the teacher, but also to the subject with which the teacher is occupied. (Dewey, 1910, p. 42)

Educator beliefs powerfully influence pedagogy and practice (Bautista, Ng, Múñez, & Bull, 2016; Isenberg & Jalongo 2006; Lara-Cinosomo, Sidle Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes, & Karoly, 2009), and the ability to perceive and evaluate the results of teaching (Arrifin & Baki, 2014). Educator beliefs about how children learn and about how teaching supports children's learning directly influence their interactions with children (Althouse et al., 2003; Wen et al., 2011). McArdle (2016) notes that many educators, being the products of poor arts education, bring their personal and cultural knowledge and their lack of visual arts self-efficacy beliefs and knowledge to the teaching context. McCoubrey's Canadian (2000) study identified limited visual arts teaching by primary school teacher participants who believed they lacked the 'natural talent' to be artistic, and expressed low levels of confidence to make art.

A study with Slovenian early childhood DQT's and educator assistants Zupančič, Branka and Mulej (2015) explored the priorities placed on subject content areas within a holistic curriculum and noted that individual beliefs about the importance of the subject and their personal inclination toward the subject determined the number of related activities offered to children. Disavowing the notion that degree qualifications guarantee theoretically informed, reflective pedagogy, Cassidy and Lawrence (2000) identified that the participants in their study relied more on personal beliefs and prior experiences to justify their pedagogical choices than upon their education and training.

Reynolds' (2007) study with early childhood DQT's located in kindergarten classrooms in Australia noted that pedagogy was not influenced by technical theories alone, but by the personal beliefs, values and working knowledge the educators had developed through experience. Many recent studies affirm that educators must value a subject so that it will be taught (Garvis, 2012a, 2012b; Klopper & Power, 2010). This was previously evidenced in Bae's (2004) research that described the beliefs and professional learning environment of a confident cohort of educators who demonstrated exemplary visual arts

practice guided by a strong identification with socio-cultural theories, coupled with a value for visual arts pedagogies.

2.5.5 Beliefs override knowledge. Importantly, pervasive, limiting and firmly established educator beliefs may remain intact and override acquired knowledge (Grauer, 1998; Lara-Cinosomo et al., 2009), pre-service training (McCoubrey, 2000; Hennessy, Rolfe, & Chedzoy, 2001) and the introduction of new theories and approaches (Richards, 2007; Wen et al., 2011). Reynolds (2007) notes that long held personal beliefs and values can influence the maintenance of beliefs that are resistant to new theories and approaches and result in a mismatch between educator's espoused theories and their actual practice. Similarly, a study examining educators' beliefs and pedagogy regarding technology noted that individuals might unconsciously hold existing beliefs that act as a filter against new concepts that conflict with their existing stance (Chen, 2008). It appears conflicting beliefs can influence educators' openness or resistance to new ideas and often had a more powerful influence on pedagogy than the participants expressed pedagogical statements (Chen, 2008).

2.5.6 Beliefs can change. Offering encouragement that negative, unhelpful or misinformed beliefs can be overcome, several studies identify that entrenched beliefs can be challenged by positive mentors or role models (Grauer, 1998; Bae, 2004); professional training that connects theory and practice (Kind, de Cosson, Irwin, & Grauer, 2007); and collaborative learning between artists and educators (Hennessy et al., 2001; Loughran 2001; Andrews 2008).

2.6 Influences upon beliefs

Multiple influences affect the formation and development of the beliefs of early childhood educators, including contextual factors, such as family background and childhood experiences; social, cultural and political influences on the professional and pedagogical beliefs of educators; pre-service training and engagement in ongoing professional development. The studies that have identified these influences will now be outlined.

2.6.1 Contextual influences on beliefs. Numerous studies assert the influence of prior experience upon the development of arts self-efficacy beliefs (Garvis, 2008; Grauer, 1998; Lemon & Garvis, 2013; McArdle, 2013) and resulting pedagogy (Garvis, 2009b;

Garvis, 2012b; Lummis et al, 2014). Indeed, some scholars reference such beliefs as the ‘baggage’ students bring to pre-service coursework (McArdle, 2013; Klopper & Power, 2010).

This baggage can foster a negative cycle of experience identified by several scholars. The low arts self-efficacy expressed by Australian generalist primary school DQT’s (Russell-Bowie, 2002) and novice early childhood teachers (Garvis et al., 2011) is expressed as the result of a cycle of poor experiences in childhood, compounded by poor pre-service education and poor teacher practicum experiences, which in turn create another generation of students taught by educators lacking self-efficacy in the arts domain. Aligned with this, Garvis’ (2008) study evaluated the impact of early experiences on the arts education beliefs and confidence of fifteen pre-service middle-school DQT’s, noting that negative experiences at school and minimal arts engagement during each life stage directly informed educators’ beliefs about their future teaching practice. Probine (2017) laments a similar cycle of negative influence observed in New Zealand early childhood settings.

In this regard, Garvis (2008) highlights the lack of research focussed upon the influence of early experiences upon educators’ arts efficacy, suggesting the need to identify the “confirming and disconfirming experiences that shape teacher engagement with the arts” (p. 110).

A powerful influence in fostering participation in the arts was supportive family environments, identified in Lummis et al.’s (2014) study with pre-service primary school DQT’s. Similarly, both Anning and Ring (2003) and Richards (2009) found that families were highly influential in transmitting beliefs and values about the arts to their children. In a reflective, self-study utilising arts-based methodologies, Probine (2017) articulates how her childhood experiences have shaped her visual arts beliefs and values, noting the powerful influence of childhood memories.

Likewise, in a study with pre-service DQT’s that explored the influence of childhood experiences upon the student participants’ current beliefs and understandings of early childhood practice, Horsley and Penn (2014) found that memories implicitly influence students’ developing philosophies and professional identity. Similarly, a study examining the constructed identities and beliefs of participant artists, Flood (2009) noted their memories of childhood and school art making experiences were dismissive and

unmemorable. Flood identified that her participants' "informal learning experiences had a stronger and more lasting effect than experiences found in their formal schooling" (2009, p. 60).

On examination, few studies have explored the impact of early learning experiences on the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of practicing educator's. This study will consider such influences on the formation of the participants' beliefs and pedagogy in early childhood contexts.

In the Australian pedagogical context, Deans and Brown (2008, p. 339) suggest that "social, cultural and political shifts in values, beliefs and practices impact on approaches to the arts, as early childhood practitioners grapple with increasingly complex views on how children learn and what factors impact on their learning." More broadly, the capacity of early childhood educators to enact their beliefs may be restricted by a number of contextual factors including parental expectations, professional training, apparent lack of administrative support, educator-child ratios and the 'centre philosophy' (Wen et al., 2011).

The absence or presence of such professional supports is directly associated with the quality of educator beliefs and practice (Wen et al., 2011). Ortlipp, Arthur and Woodrow (2011, p58) warn that while the introduction of the EYLF (2009) may shape a uniquely Australian professional identity and influence educator beliefs and practice, the "fragmented nature of the early childhood field in Australia makes it difficult to identify a shared professional identity across a workforce", suggesting that pervading divisions exist between theory, pre-service training, professional development ideals and actual practice in regards to the visual arts. Contextual influences upon educators' visual arts beliefs and pedagogy will therefore be considered in this study.

2.6.2 Pre-service training influences. Scholars note the seemingly difficult task for tertiary educators to develop pre-service educators' skills, confidence and knowledge across the arts domains, particularly considering students' general lack of background in arts education, timetable constraints and the disproportionate value for literacy and numeracy subjects over arts subjects (Bailey & de Rijke, 2014; Klopper & Power, 2010).

In the visual arts domain, Vecchi (2010) states:

There is nothing in the educational training of most teachers to prepare them to be sensitive to aesthetics or consider aesthetics a powerful element for

understanding and connecting with reality. That is why teachers are often seduced by techniques and tend to propose them with children using only a simplified knowledge of the expressive potential rather than informing sensitive dialogues with reality. Often, they demonstrate much greater concern for the final products than for the processes that generate them and they find it difficult to accept new or different schema from those they have learnt in art courses. (p. 36)

Several research studies contend that current pre-service training is not adequately equipping educators with the skills, knowledge or confidence to effectively incorporate visual arts learning in their classrooms (Bae, 2004; Boone 2008; Garvis 2012a, 2013; Garvis et al., 2011; Klopper & Power, 2010; Miraglia 2008). However, despite numerous government reports recommending better training and funding for arts education, there appears to be a decline in status and support for visual arts in most pre-service DQT education programs in Australia (Barton et al., 2013; Collins, 2016; Gibson & Anderson, 2008; Russell-Bowie, 2011), a decline of the quantity of visual arts pre-service training (Garvis, 2012a; Garvis et al., 2011) and a resulting lack of efficacy for the arts amongst graduates (Barton, et al., 2013).

Further, poor role models during practicum experiences hinder the potential to support the growth of educator self-efficacy in the arts for pre-service educators (Collins, 2016; Garvis, 2008, 2012a; Garvis et al., 2011; Hennessy et al., 2001; Hudson, Lewis, & Hudson, 2011). Barton et al., (2013) note that if educator's arts experience during their tertiary studies is limited, they will be likely to teach the way they were taught, if at all. One exception to this is outlined by McArdle (2012) who explains a mapping of curriculum offering for pre-service teacher education developed at one Australian university. Scholars developed a new foundation unit in the undergraduate teaching degree which sought to increase arts coursework across the undergraduate degree in order to more comprehensively engage students in discourses of art, child and pedagogy. Additionally, studio tutorials where students learn by doing is designed to connect student learning to their prior experiences and knowledge (McArdle, 2012).

In Garvis' (2012a) study, early career educators mainly working in the early years of primary school settings, noted that negative experiences during their pre-service practicum training had influenced their low self-efficacy for the arts. Garvis (2012a, p. 165)

proposed that this created “a cyclical failure for arts education in early childhood.” To remedy this, scholars note a range of research informed recommendations to support the transformation of educator’s visual arts efficacy beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge. These recommendations include:

- Raise awareness of the need to change practices of visual arts instruction (Bresler, 1992);
- Increase coursework across pre-service degrees (Bresler, 1992; Cutcher & Cook, 2016; Garvis 2009b);
- Deliver holistic, multi-disciplinary and well-rounded teacher education programs (Garvis 2008);
- Ensure adequate time in coursework and professional development to acknowledge that the translations from beliefs to practices are not immediate but involve a serious and time-consuming engagement (Bresler, 1992; Garvis, 2012b; Klopper & Power, 2010);
- Support pre-service teachers to develop awareness of the importance of arts and capacity to critique the examples and practice they see when in the field on professional experience (Garvis et al., 2011);
- Prepare generalist educators to understand both visual arts practice and the pedagogical possibilities (Cutcher & Cook, 2016);
- Support pre-service educators to develop an understanding of art-making and develop an identity as ‘artist’ prior to supporting children’s artmaking processes (Cutcher & Cook, 2016);
- Challenge future educators to think creatively, develop proficiency with arts materials and processes and expand their aesthetic sensitivity (Barton et al., 2013);
- Challenge negative beliefs and support development of positive beliefs towards the incorporation of arts education in the early childhood classroom (Twigg & Garvis, 2010);
- Teach visual arts pedagogical methods (e.g., authentic learning, scaffolding, inquiry-based learning) (Twigg & Garvis, 2010);

- Identify and draw upon preservice teachers' prior knowledge and extend their knowledge and skills to ameliorate for negative previous experiences (Garvis, 2009b; Lummis et al., 2014);
- Lecturers and tutors to model good arts practice throughout all elements of the course including teaching assessment and reflection (Garvis, 2009b);
- Expand professional development opportunities in the arts for teacher educators at the tertiary level (Barton et al., 2013);
- Build self-efficacy, skills and knowledge (Garvis, 2011; Garvis et al., 2011; Klopper & Power, 2010);
- Teach philosophy, theory and promote critical reflection about understandings and experiences, questions of identities and cultural production, and how these shape pedagogy (Garvis 2012b; McArdle, 2016);
- Facilitate positive learning experiences (mastery experiences for self-efficacy) at all stages of teacher development (Garvis 2008; Garvis, 2009a; Garvis, 2011);
- Facilitate positive learning experiences through peer interaction and opportunities to model and practice teaching arts activities to foster positive emotional arousal and allow students to benefit from developing collaborative teams (Garvis, 2009b; Garvis, 2011; Garvis et al., 2011; Klopper & Power, 2010);
- Deliver visual arts focused professional development, workshops and conference presentations for teachers in the field (Barton et al., 2013; Garvis, 2011; Garvis, Twigg, & Pendergast, 2011; Twigg & Garvis, 2010);
- Deliver professional development that is sustained over time to support the development of confidence in visual arts content and pedagogy (Garvis, 2013);
- Develop collaborative networks that encourage the development of communities of practice in art education (Twigg & Garvis, 2010); and,
Provide opportunities for beginning educators to collaborate with specialist teachers and more experienced generalist colleagues to allow access to vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion as sources of efficacy development (Garvis et al., 2011; Guo et al., 2011).

While studies have broadly identified the low arts self-efficacy of generalist primary and high school pre-service educators, the visual arts self-efficacy, visual arts skills and knowledge and visual arts pedagogy of both early childhood DQT's and VTE's has remained largely unexplored. The current study, while aiming to fill this gap in early childhood visual arts research, will also consider the influence of pre-service training contexts on the developing visual arts beliefs, efficacy and knowledge of the participants in the study. Further, if pre-service education is not adequately preparing educators to implement visual arts programs, consideration must be given to the systems of visual arts professional development and professional learning opportunities available in the early childhood sector.

2.6.3 Professional development influences

Scholars use the terms professional development and professional learning interchangeably, despite some nuance in their definitions. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments* (OECD, 2009, p. 49), defines professional development for educators as those “activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher.” Professional development can be provided in numerous ways including, courses, workshops and formal qualification programmes. It can occur collaboratively between educational institutions or between people. It can also encompass less formal activities such as reading professional literature and engaging in reflective conversations.

While it is acknowledged that some promote the term professional learning as a more active, collaborative and interactive iteration of professional development (Stewart, 2014), for the purposes of clarity in this thesis, the term professional development will encompass the intent of both definitions.

Garvis’ (2013) study with six preschool teacher participants noted the lack of early childhood visual arts professional development available to support educators in the successful implementation of quality visual arts pedagogy. The participants noted their need for professional development in the domain of the arts and commented that there is little arts professional development available in the Australian context. Garvis (2013, p. 51) noted that until professional learning takes place, “teachers will continue to have low

confidence and perceived competence towards teaching the arts with the arts positioned as a supplemental tool to help teach other subject areas.”

This lack of arts domain professional development fosters an ongoing gap between educator rhetoric and reality (Ewing, 2010). Interestingly Wen et al., (2011) found that educators with more professional training and more years of experience showed stronger alignment between teacher-directed learning beliefs and observed practice, while those with fewer years of teaching experience were more likely to believe in and apply developmentally focussed teaching practices.

In a study by Clark and de Lautour (2009), teacher participants resisted the socio-constructivist notion that they might engage in and provoke children’s visual arts learning, and preferred to maintain a maturationist belief that children’s visual arts learning develops naturally and without teacher intervention. Edwards (2007) cautions that unless such outdated and entrenched developmental pedagogies are challenged through professional development and training, they will prevail.

On the other hand, several studies have noted the transformative potential of socio-cultural and constructivist approaches to visual arts education. Deans and Brown (2008) describe the enthusiastic adoption of socio-cultural theory within the visual arts curriculum of an Australian early learning centre. Similarly, pre-service early childhood students in the United States (Danko McGee & Slutsky, 2003) and New Zealand (Kelly & Jurisich, 2010) experienced inspirational benefits following their introduction to the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. It is therefore worth examining the potential of Reggio Emilia’s approach to professional development to mitigate for poor pre-service training outcomes.

In Italy, systems of continuing professional development were introduced when the initial training of early childhood educators was considered to be inadequate preparation for complex and rapidly changing contexts (Lazzari, Picchio, & Musatti, 2013). In Reggio Emilia, collaboration amongst educators is situated as the starting point for professional learning and development (Edwards, 1995). Rinaldi (2006) and Giamminuti (2013) note that pedagogical documentation can be a tool for reflective practice and research in support of co-constructed communities of practice. Critical reflection, supported by peer exchange, ‘collegial confrontation’, active participation and engagement with theory and research

supports educational innovation more effectively than the mere transition of knowledge or skills training (Edwards, 1995; Lazzari et al., 2013). An important feature of the community inquiry approach to professional development in Reggio Emilia, is the process of evolutionary and collaborative co-construction of a shared image of teaching and learning” (Edwards 1995, p. 7). Such processes of critical reflection about practice build knowledge and competence (Schön, 1990). Schön outlines two forms of reflection being ‘reflection in action’ and ‘reflection on action’ and suggests that the practitioner both shapes and is transformed by their encounter with the situation (Schön, 1983; 1990).

Dewey is credited with the notions that reflective educators engage in a form of educational research (Eisner, 2002; Valli, 1997; Rogoff, 2003). Eisner (2002) argues that educators, rather than fall into familiar routines that neglect pedagogical growth, must instead position teaching as a form of personal growth and a process of learning how to teach. Indeed, educators who are reflective are more likely to engage in constructivist practices and to develop active teaching and learning partnerships (Brownlee & Berthlesen, 2004) and to experience renewal of beliefs and teaching methodologies (Deans & Brown, 2008). Such communities of practice support learning through participation within groups that share common interests and a desire to learn from and with the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Highlighting development and growth, whether personal, interpersonal or within communities is a process of transformation through participation (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995). In a recent study by Nolan and Molla (2017) it was confirmed early childhood DQT’s confidence and subject content knowledge were effectively enhanced through professional mentoring within collaborative professional learning communities.

The potential for professional development and reflective practice to influence educator beliefs and inform visual arts pedagogy must be considered. The current research study aims to consider the communities of practice, opportunities for professional development and collaborative reflective practice evident amongst the participants.

2.7 The Arts: Research about educator beliefs

Numerous studies note a lack of educator content knowledge and self-efficacy in the broad domain of ‘The Arts’ amongst:

- Pre-service generalist primary and high school DQT's (Alter et al., 2009; Andrews, 2004; Daher & Baher, 2014; Garvis, 2008; Hudson et al., 2011; Klopper & Power, 2010; Lemon & Garvis, 2013; Lummis et al., 2014);
- Early career generalist primary and high school DQT's (Garvis, 2011; Garvis & Pendergast, 2010);
- Early childhood pre-service DQT's (Garvis et al., 2011; Pendergast et al., 2011); and
- Early career early childhood DQT's (Garvis, 2012a, 2012b).

Existing studies in early childhood contexts have focussed broadly on 'the Arts' rather than on visual arts as a specific domain. A study with novice educators working in early years' classrooms in public and private schools considered the influence of pre-service, practical experience upon the formation of their current self-efficacy beliefs in the domain of the arts (Garvis et al., 2011). Data, gathered using open-ended online survey questionnaires, revealed that teacher beliefs about the arts and their confidence to teach in the arts domain were shaped by their prior student experience during practice teaching placements. Garvis et al. (2011) and Garvis (2012a) found that the beliefs of the 21 participants studied were mostly negative, thereby creating low self-efficacy for teaching the arts. Additionally, the participants' low self-efficacy in the arts was particularly influenced by the supervising educator they had been partnered with during practicum placements. The participants in the study reported their supervising DQT offered little or no modelling of arts pedagogy, made generally negative comments about arts in the curriculum and expressed that the arts have a less important profile in the curriculum than other subject areas (Garvis, 2012a).

While the study outlined above (see Garvis, 2012a; Garvis et al., 2011) highlights a bleak cycle of negative influence to offer one explanation for why the participants expressed low arts self-efficacy, it does not describe the daily arts pedagogy or domain specific arts beliefs of the DQT practitioners blamed for influencing the low arts-self efficacy formation of the research participants prior to their entry into the profession. Nor does it consider other possible influences on the formation of negative self-efficacy beliefs in the arts domain.

Garvis (2012b) also gathered data about the practical application of arts pedagogies in early years' settings by comparing arts practice within two kindergarten classrooms

(children aged three-and-a-half) and two preparatory classrooms in schools (children aged four-and-a-half). The educators in the study reported low arts self-efficacy, particularly amongst the more recently trained educators in the preparatory classrooms. This suggests the need to consider both years of experience and the timing of any training undertaken by the participants in the current study.

On examination, it appears studies that consider educator understandings about the purposes of utilising the arts within the curriculum are limited. A study in Queensland preparatory classroom settings, the first year of formal schooling for five-year-old children, sought to determine whether the arts are applied as a supplemental tool or a developmental tool (Garvis, 2013). The DQT's in the study reported their limited confidence to teach subject specific knowledge and skills in each of the arts domains, attributed to the educator's lack of pre-service training and perceived confidence to teach the specific knowledge and skills in each of the arts domains. The study found that the arts were applied as a tool to supplement learning in other prioritised curriculum areas such as literacy and numeracy, rather than being taught as subjects in their own right.

While these studies focus on 'The Arts' and inform consideration about DQT self-efficacy beliefs in the current study, few studies have specifically explored the influential nexus of the visual arts personal beliefs, self-efficacy, mindset and visual arts pedagogical content knowledge of practicing early childhood educators.

2.8 The visual arts: Early childhood educator beliefs

Bae's (2004) U.S. ethnographic study sought to understand the complexity of the educator's role and consider the rationales that guide their practice. The study also explored the effects of pre-service training on prospective educator's ability and confidence to teach visual arts in early childhood settings. The participants articulated opinions about the requirement for educators to balance freedom and structure in planning visual arts experiences; to give children choices and autonomy; to structure and guide children's learning; to listen attentively and be guided by children's explanations; to stay close to children as they work in order to support and motivate them; to assist children with skills not yet developed; to provide modelling of visual arts practice and stimulation using real art examples, and to provide high quality materials (Bae, 2004). In contrast to the study by Garvis (2012a) and Garvis et al., (2011), Bae's (2004) research noted the participants'

visual arts confidence, knowledge and skills, and their capacity to provide rich artistic environments for young children, had been enhanced by their practicum experiences with expert mentors in a U.S. setting.

In an Australian context, Twigg and Garvis (2010, p. 196) conducted a self-study, narrative inquiry to provide a “snapshot of current art practice in early childhood settings” in Australia. The researchers assessed and evaluated their own reflective documentation of visual arts experiences and scenarios, drawing upon their personal experience as DQT educators. This study asserted that educators continue to struggle with ideas about the place of visual arts in early childhood curriculum and the most effective way to teach it, raising the need for further research and professional development to equip teachers to embed arts pedagogy within their practice (Twigg & Garvis, 2010).

Another pertinent international study of the visual arts practices valued by early childhood teachers and teacher assistants was conducted in kindergarten settings in Slovenia (Zupančič et al., 2015). Utilising a questionnaire self-reporting survey, 231 preschool teachers and 264 assistant teachers expressed their opinions on the importance of art genres and visual arts fields in kindergartens. The participants ranked the visual arts domain as important for children’s development and as a tool for fun and relaxation. The researchers perceived that the participants preferred the easier, less technical activities they felt more confident to set up and implement. An informative feature of this study, compared to those previously reviewed, is that it valued the experiences and opinions of teacher assistants as well as teachers.

Research in New Zealand toddler education contexts sought to explore teacher beliefs and practices in the domain of visual arts pedagogy and to evaluate the epistemological underpinnings of the identified beliefs and pedagogy (Visser, 2006). Rogoff’s framework of participatory learning was employed to consider whether DQT beliefs were grounded in developmental philosophies of transmission and acquisition or in sociocultural communities of practice models, such as the Reggio Emilia approach. The study found that DQT beliefs and practice were largely embedded in developmental perspectives where visual arts pedagogy consisted of the provision of free play and exploration with a range of visual arts materials along with the adoption of a hands-off, passive role by the teacher.

Of interest to the current study in relation to the questions to be investigated is a study conducted two decades ago with preschool educators in New Zealand that sought to describe the beliefs of practitioners about visual arts education and implications for practice (Gunn, 1998, 2000). The mixed method study utilised narrative and reflective observations in four early childhood services, aiming to triangulate the data using surveys and video observations. The participants in the study expressed the belief that visual arts are of central importance in early childhood programs, yet maintained a developmental, non-interventionist teaching approach where educators would provide materials and leave children to explore on their own (Gunn, 1998).

The study reported a proliferation of teacher-directed, product-focussed activities. Through systematic analysis of the survey data, Gunn (1998) aligned educator responses with three theoretical approaches to arts education, including developmental approaches, the constructivist approach in Reggio Emilia and cognitive learning frameworks. Although Gunn (1998) explored participants' beliefs about the importance of visual arts, the participants' self-efficacy beliefs regarding their visual arts knowledge, skills and capacity to teach the visual arts was not considered. A significant limitation of the study was that the specific visual arts beliefs and knowledge of the participants was not documented.

2.9 Absent educator voices

While educator voices are useful tools for investigating practice the voices of educators, describing the complexities of early childhood teacher knowledge and pedagogy and expressing their own visual arts beliefs, are rarely heard in the research (Rivalland, 2007; Ryan & Goffin, 2008).

Importantly, Gunn's (1998) assumption that the participants in her study would be incapable of articulating their beliefs about visual arts effectively silenced the voices of those whose pedagogy was under exploration. Instead of supporting participants to speak for themselves, several studies sought to categorise the beliefs and practices of educators within historical and theoretical approaches to art education, such as teacher-directed orientations, child-centred orientations and socio-cultural orientations (Gunn, 1998; Kelly & Jurisich, 2010; Leung, 2012). This compels the requirement to value the voices of the participants in the current study.

2.10 Justification for research

The extensive review of literature has highlighted the gaps in visual arts research in early childhood contexts. Indeed, the void of research studies that feature the voices of educators has been noted (Rivalland, 2007; Bamford, 2009; Pajares, 2011). In addition, scholars have identified the need to closely explore the role of the educator in supporting classroom arts education (Klopper & Power, 2010; Ryan & Goffin, 2008); to consider the teaching philosophies that guide practice by focussing work of early childhood teachers (Krieg, 2011); to undertake contextual investigations of the underlying beliefs that influence practice (Wen et al., 2011); to explore the sources of educator visual arts efficacy beliefs and visual arts pedagogical content knowledge (McCoubrey, 2000); and, to probe the “reciprocal relationships between educational contexts, personal factors and self-efficacy” (Garvis, 2009a, p. 32).

Collett (2010) and Garvis (2012b) both suggest the need for Australian research in the area of early childhood arts in response to the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Reforms. Although Pajares (2011) suggests that research on educator beliefs has predominantly focused on in-service DQT’s, it is noteworthy that in the Australian context research has predominantly focused on pre-service primary and high school DQT candidates. The lack of research that considers the voices and experience of VTE’s is significant in the Australian context, where only one in six educators working in ECEC holds a degree level teaching qualification, with the remainder of educators being vocationally trained (Department of Education & Training, 2014). Australian researchers, Twigg and Garvis (2010, p. 201) identify that “further research supporting the long-term development of positive arts beliefs, values and experiences of early childhood teachers is needed in early childhood education.” Clark and de Lautour (2009) affirm this contention, stating that the role of practicing educators in the provision of visual arts experience has undergone minimal scrutiny. The aim of this research to explore and represent typical early childhood educator beliefs in the Australian context therefore requires the intentional inclusion of the voices and experience of both vocationally trained and degree qualified educators.

In conclusion, McArdle (2016) argues the need to shift the visual arts research paradigm beyond the ‘why’ of arts education to instead meet the challenge to articulate the

‘what’ and the ‘how’ of visual arts education so that early childhood educators may be supported to engage in critical reflection and to appreciate the influence of their own understandings and experiences and how these shape their pedagogy. The current study responds to this call to deeply explore what early childhood educators believe, say and do in the domain of children’s visual arts education in early childhood education and care contexts.

The following chapter outlines a comprehensive literature review that aligns the democracy, education and art philosophies of John Dewey and the Reggio Emilia project in Italy. This literature informs the development of the RE(D) conceptual framework which is applied to both the data collection and analysis processes in this thesis.

Chapter 3 The RE(D) Conceptual Framework

This chapter will firstly describe the formation of a conceptual framework named RE(D) and explain the constructivist theoretical paradigm in which the framework is located. It will then justify the framework through a published socio-political and historical analysis of the philosophical alignments between the democracy, education and art philosophies of John Dewey and the values of the Reggio Emilia educational project (Lindsay, 2015a).

An outline of the key points of conceptual alignment that formed the RE(D) framework is presented, while a full literary description of the RE(D) framework is located in Appendices B.3, B.4, B.5 and B.6. An outline of the alignment of visual arts and pedagogical principles between John Dewey's philosophy and the central tenets of praxis in Reggio Emilia can be found within this chapter as a published journal article (Lindsay, 2016a; see part 3.4.1 of this chapter).

3.1 The RE(D) framework

The RE(D) conceptual framework outlined in this chapter emerged from the need to justify my intention to apply the principles of Reggio Emilia's internationally revered art-centred pedagogy to the data analysis process. As the study evolved it was necessary to explore the socio-political and historical analysis of John Dewey's profound influence on the key tenets of the Reggio Emilia approach. It is apparent that this exploration constitutes an academic contribution in its own right.

This comprehensive discovery of Dewey's theoretical and philosophical views on progressive education and the role of visual arts as a medium for educational growth and experience have much to offer the visual arts in early childhood context. Lehmann-Rommel (2000, p.188) analyses the renewal of Dewey's philosophies undertaken by several Deweyan scholars and identifies that to renew Dewey "means that Deweyan themes are taken up and explored further in a different context." In doing this, Lehmann-Rommel (2000) urges researchers to clearly acknowledge the aims and objectives of the research interests that inspired the analysis, so that any bias in the interpretation of Dewey's ideas can be evaluated. Consequently, the analysis in this study of Dewey's work (referred to as D) and alignment with the educational philosophy and pedagogy exemplified in Reggio

Emilia (referred to as RE) is positioned not as an end in itself, but as a basis for encountering and discussing the beliefs and pedagogy of the participants in the current study (Lehmann-Rommel, 2000, p. 190).

The prefix 're' adds the meaning "to do again" and can also denote "returning something to its original state" ("Cambridge Dictionary", 2017). Katz (1998, p. 27) suggests that the Reggio Emilia educational project supports educators to reflect "in new ways about old things - those we might have taken for granted, or perhaps never questioned before." Indeed, this Reggio Emilian (RE)analysis of Dewey's (D) work has enabled me to (re)consider, (re)view, (re)cognise, (re)fect and (re)construct Dewey's notions about art, education and democracy through the lens of Reggio Emilia's contemporary, working example of exemplary visual arts pedagogy.

3.1.1 RE(D) Framework methodology. The Italian Reggio Emilia approach is an evolving educational project that adapts and interprets multiple theories and philosophies. The educators in Reggio Emilia consider their approach as neither theory nor method to be imitated (Edwards, 1995; Gandini, 2011; Giamminuti, 2013). A comprehensive review of the literature about the Reggio Emilia educational project revealed Dewey as a powerful influence on the formation of their approach to early childhood education (Cooper, 2012; Edwards et al., 2012; Rankin, 2004).

While Dewey is widely revered as an educational philosopher, numerous scholars acknowledge his theoretical credentials. Dewey himself explained that philosophy constitutes a general theory of education (Biesta, 2006) and described his own views about experience as a theory of experience (Dewey, 1939). His conceptions are also variously described as a theory of communication (Hickman, Neubert, & Reich, 2009), a theory of curriculum (Kliebard, 2006) and a theory of knowledge (Hall et al., 2010).

To consider whether Dewey's educational principles would furnish the theoretical weight to justify a Reggio Emilian inspired conceptual framework, a comprehensive review of Dewey's writings about art, education and democracy was undertaken, along with a review of literature about Dewey's contribution to the theory of education. The analysis of primary sources by Dewey included: 'My Pedagogic Creed' (Dewey, 1897), 'The Child and the Curriculum' (Dewey, 1902), 'How We Think' (Dewey, 1910), 'The School and Society' (Dewey, 1915), 'Democracy and Education' (Dewey, 1916), 'The Psychology of

Drawing' (Dewey, 1919), "Art as Experience" (Dewey, 1934) and 'Experience and Education" (Dewey, 1939).

Parallel to this process, a full review of the literature about the Reggio Emilia approach was undertaken, along with the researcher's personal conference notes developed during 2008 and 2012 while in attendance at international conferences in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Analysis confirmed that the RE(D) framework would powerfully support the research design, data collection and data analysis processes. As the aligned themes were grouped and coded it became increasingly apparent that four conceptual categories were particularly relevant to the research questions. The four conceptual themes encompass views about the image of the child, the visual arts domain, environment and materials and the role of the educator. These four conceptual themes, stitched onto a constructivist base became the RE(D) framework.

3.1.2 The (RE)D framework is constructivist. The RE(D) framework is epistemologically located within the theory of constructivism. Both Dewey and the Reggio Emilia approach are described as constructivist in nature (Cadwell, 1997; Forman, 1996; Garrison, 1996; Greene, 1996; Hewett, 2001; Prawat, 2002; Rinaldi, 2013; Swarm, 2008; Terwel, 1999; Thompson, 2015). While the term constructivism did not appear in the literature until the 1970's (Thompson, 2015), Dewey's philosophy is considered to have anticipated and even to have initiated the key features of constructivist thought (Ogunyemi, 2015; Richardson, 2007; Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 1998). Further to this, the "teacher-framed and child-oriented" curriculum in Reggio Emilia is considered a recent exemplar of the theory of constructivism (Kam & Ebbeck, 2010, p. 163).

Constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning (Fosnot, 1996) in which shared knowledge, language and culture develop through an individual's experiences and interactions with tools, objects, symbols, peers and adults within local environments (Cadwell, 1997; Chen, 2008; Dehouske, 2001; Martalock, 2012). Constructivism is grounded in postmodern attitudes toward learning that value customised teaching and learning, creative pedagogical approaches, risk-taking, uncertainty and reciprocal trust (Ogunyemi, 2015; Prawat, 1996, 2002).

The image of the child and the role of the teacher are disrupted by constructivism, with knowledge development positioned as an active and co-participatory process, rather than as the passive transition of information from the adult to the child (Greene, 1996; Thompson, 2015). Thompson (2015) states that constructivism envisions “children as knowledge producers, as capable creators of values and meanings, constructivist pedagogies situate the child, or the children, at the center of the process of learning” (p. 119). When constructivist educators design child-responsive learning opportunities they facilitate open-ended problem-solving, exploration, reflection and moments of disequilibrium in which children are supported to invent and self-organise their learning experiences (Chen, 2008; Fosnot, 1996; Rinaldi, 2013; Thompson, 2015).

The constructivist educator artfully observes, documents and reflects on children’s experiences in order to provide materials and extend experiences to guide and provoke further thought and action in the service of children’s learning and growth (Thompson, 2015). Given the centrality of reflective practice within constructivist educational contexts (Brownlee & Berthlesen, 2004) and considering the analysis of art education contexts required within this study, it is therefore fitting to utilise a constructivist conceptual framework to guide the appreciation and disclosure of the case-study data.

3.2. Historical justification of the RE(D) framework.

The following published article (Lindsay, 2015a) is a synthesis of John Dewey’s philosophies of democracy, education and art with the philosophy and pedagogy of the Reggio Emilia project. The comprehensive review of literature justifies and grounds the conceptual framework that will be presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Reflections in the Mirror of Reggio Emilia's Soul: John Dewey's Foundational Influence on Pedagogy in the Italian Educational Project (Lindsay, 2015a)

Abstract

This paper articulates John Dewey’s socio-political and historical influence upon the foundation and evolution of the world-renowned Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. It proposes that the pedagogical depth, influence and endurance of the Italian project are grounded in Dewey’s philosophies of education, aesthetics and democracy. An analysis of scholarly and original sources outlines the socio-political climate in post-World

War II Italy, the work undertaken by several progressive Italian educators and the Italian translations of Dewey's work during this period to reveal new insights about Dewey's enduring influence on the pedagogical values which underpin the Reggio Emilia educational approach. In so doing, it acknowledges the direct Deweyan influence on the work of Italian reformers Borghi, Codignola, Malaguzzi and Ciari and on the developing Reggio Emilia project. This revelation of Dewey's progressive values as interpreted by educators in Reggio Emilia offers inspiration to educators in contemporary early childhood contexts, to researchers and to students of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education.

Introduction

There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it (Wharton, 1902).

The Italian Reggio Emilia approach to early-years education, highly regarded for its child-focused pedagogy, employs many of John Dewey's ideas about democracy, education and aesthetics. Frequently hailed as the best preschool system in the world (Gardner, 2012; Hewett, 2001) the Reggio Emilia educational project (Rinaldi, 2006, 2013) is considered a notable exemplar of social constructivist pedagogy (Collett, 2010; Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Rinaldi, 2013). Additionally, the long-term, community-based pedagogical experiment (Rinaldi, 2006) provides guidance and inspiration for countless educators around the world. However, while scholars reference Reggio Emilia's principles and practice to inform and interpret their research (Merz & Glover, 2006; Tarr, 2001) the educators in Reggio Emilia do not regard their educational approach as a theory, nor as a model to be imitated or transported into other contexts (Cadwell, 2003; Edwards, 1995; Giamminuti, 2013). In order to respect and to denote the dynamic and evolving nature of pedagogical research undertaken in Reggio Emilia this article will utilise the term 'educational project' interchangeably with the more colloquial 'Reggio Emilia approach'.

Proposal of Deweyan Influence

While Dewey's broad influence upon this approach to early-years education has been recognised by scholars (Collett, 2010; Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Fielding & Moss, 2011; Hoyuelos, 2013; Rankin, 2004) few have examined Dewey's philosophical and historical influence on the foundational values and praxis of the project beyond an alignment of their

democratic and child-centred focus. This paper builds upon these general acknowledgements to justify and foreground an alignment of Dewey's philosophy with Reggio Emilia's key pedagogical values. It proposes multiple sources of Deweyan influence on both the formation and the sustenance of the Reggio Emilia approach. Socio-political and historic influences on the evolution of the Reggio Emilia project are identified, particularly highlighting John Dewey's philosophical influence via a network of Italian educators, including Borghi, Codignola, Malaguzzi and Ciari. Encountering Dewey's progressive democratic ideals within the historical and socio-political reception of his work by these Italian reformers offers an enlightening perspective on Dewey's international and cross-generational influence. Additionally, the revelation of several previously unrecognised sources of direct Deweyan influence on the foundational philosophy and ongoing practice in the preschools and infant-toddler centres of Reggio Emilia offers historical gravitas for pedagogic reflection by researchers, early childhood practitioners and students of the Reggio Emilia approach. It encourages educators to examine the historical formation of educational movements in support of contemporary pedagogical inspiration and reflection.

Pondering a transformational philosopher

John Dewey, born 1859, wrote prolifically in the domains of psychology, philosophy, art, democracy and social issues (Hickman, Neubert, & Reich, 2009). As a notable philosopher and educational reformer (Dworkin, 1959) he is identified as "America's Philosopher" (Hickman, et al., 2009, p. 18). Kleibard (2006) urges serious study of Dewey's educational philosophy for its enduring capacity to challenge educational reflection and practice, while Hohn (2013) positions Dewey's value for meaningful educational experience as a counterbalance to the current domination of individualism, testing and competition. In addition to being far ahead of his time, Dewey's educational philosophy continues to be radical (Schechter, 2011). Dewey centralised education, identifying it as the supreme means by which children's fullness of growth is achieved (Dewey, 1915, p. 118). Additionally, he believed that the school curriculum should aim to meet the needs of both the individual and the society in which they are citizens (Hall, Horgan, Ridgway, Murphy, Cunneen, & Cunningham, 2010).

Dewey's philosophy developed during the late 1800's, in a period of significant pedagogical debate between traditionalist and romantic educators, whose views about

purposes and methods of education, including the rights and interests of children, were positioned at conflicting extremes (Hildebrand, 2008). Power and responsibility for learning were positioned either in the hands of adults or the hands of children, but never both. Dewey rejected such opposing dualisms (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000), instead developing pragmatic philosophies of education, democracy and aesthetics in a career that outlasted the work of any other philosopher for whom there are “substantial and verifiable records” (Dworkin, 1959, p. 1).

Of relevance for reflection

Early childhood educators credit Dewey with concepts such as learning through play-based, hands-on activity and project-based approaches to curriculum provision. However, while educators recognise Dewey’s name little is known about his wide ranging and progressive educational influence (Weiss, DeFalco, & Weiss, 2005). Amongst the wide range of subject areas discussed in more than one hundred publications, Dewey outlined a range of ideas very familiar to early childhood educators. He expounded ideas in relation to theory and practice; democratic education; cognitive growth and experience; the active role of the teacher; subject matter and subject knowledge; the importance of community context and the need for pedagogical reflection in the service of professional development (Dewey, 1900, 1910, 1916, 1919, 1934). More specifically, Dewey’s constructivist leanings positioned the teacher as a researcher and co-constructor of learning in partnership with children, within social and community contexts (Garrison, 1996). His value for children as active agents in their social construction of knowledge (Griebing, 2011) saw him advocate for curricula based on children’s interests (Eisner, 2002). He extensively discussed the importance of aesthetic learning environments as a human right (Dewey, 1939; Page, 2006). While such ideas align with current dialogue and practice in contemporary early childhood contexts, and may consequently enhance pedagogical reflection, the deconstruction of Dewey’s extensive body of work may deter practitioners. Instead, O’Brien suggests that an examination of Dewey-inspired education contexts may be enlightening (2002). The Reggio Emilia educational project is one context where Dewey’s influence as a “great educational philosopher is still alive and well” (Hawkins, 2012, p. 75).

The growth of a revolutionary project

The Italian educational project officially established in 1963 by the municipal council of Reggio Emilia, has operated and expanded for more than fifty years, maintaining the core values upon which it was established (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012). The 'project', however, was initially conceived almost seventy years ago when a post-World War II community demanded educational reforms. It emerged from the political battle between left-wing communists and socialists on one side, and the fascist regime on the other (Hall, et al., 2010). Workers, educators and particularly women's groups advocated for social policy reforms, including improved access to early education and care (Lazzari, 2012). Oppressed community members inspirationally sought to reform society through the provision of early childhood services (Cadwell, 2003; Gandini, 2011). Of note is the leading role taken by educators in the Emilia Romagna region during the 1960's and 1970's, which pre-empted the introduction of new state and national legislation for the provision of early childhood services throughout Italy (Catarsi, translated & cited in Lazzari, 2012).

The key tenets of practice in the Reggio Emilia project focus on social reform through access and equity; the notion of children's democratic rights as citizens; strengthening community partnerships and democratic participation; images of children as capable and competent co-constructors of knowledge; the role of educators as researchers and co-learners; the use of pedagogical documentation in support of assessment, advocacy, reflection and research; the role of the environment-as-teacher (Third Teacher); a particular focus on visual art and aesthetics, and a holistic, project-based methodology (progettazione) which respects multiple learning styles and symbolic languages, also known as the 'hundred languages of children' (Edwards, et al., 2012; Rinaldi, 2006, 2013).

Today early childhood specialists globally explore educational practice in Reggio Emilia to support their own critical thinking and dialogue about theory and pedagogy. International conferences and ongoing academic publications inspire practitioners and scholars alike in their quest to both define what makes this educational project attractive and enduring, and to apply what is learnt to their own praxis. Indeed, the approach has expanded the conceptual vocabulary and pedagogical sensitivities now routinely referenced in early childhood contexts internationally (New, 2000). Significant insight and leadership were necessary components for the development and maintenance of such a complex and

revolutionary educational approach. Indeed, the success or failure of any educational reform requires leadership that is willing to depart from outdated ideas to reconceptualise practice (Stamopoulos, 2012). Illustrating this notion Howard Gardner compares the endurance of the Reggio Emilia project to Dewey's short-lived experimental progressive school and credits Loris Malaguzzi, the founding educator and long-term Director for its enduring pedagogy (Gardner, 2012).

A visionary leader

Educator and psychologist, Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994) is recognised as the “visionary founding director” and pedagogical leader who guided the transformation of parent-run cooperative preschools in Reggio Emilia into an early childhood system now recognised as an international leader in the early childhood field (Edwards, 2002, p. 6). More broadly he is recognised as an educator and pedagogue of great influence on the international culture of early childhood education (Fielding & Moss, 2011). Acknowledging that Malaguzzi was inspired by great philosophers and theorists, including Dewey, Gardner praises him as a “guiding genius.... deserving of recognition in the same breath as his heroes Froebel, Montessori, Dewey and Piaget” (Gardner, 2012, p. xiii-xiv). Despite such praise, Edwards suggests that while Malaguzzi did not position the project as a theory or model, its interpretation of a range of theories and philosophies could be situated as a “beginning of a theory” (Edwards, 1995, p. 2). The Reggio Emilia educators evidently “read, analyzed, transformed and used” a range of theories and philosophies to provoke thinking and innovative practice to enrich children’s learning and play (Cadwell, 2003, p. 93). Malaguzzi’s interpretation of theory to enhance practice is noteworthy with Gardner stating that “nowhere else in the world is there such a seamless and symbiotic relationship between a school’s progressive philosophy and its practices” (2012, p. xiv). Yet, despite Malaguzzi’s charismatic leadership, had the Reggio Emilia educational project been motivated by this man’s passion and personality alone, it may have exhausted itself following his untimely death in 1994, instead of evolving and flourishing as it has for well over half a century.

The sustaining force which contributed to the ongoing project was located not only in Malaguzzi’s passion but in the hearts, minds and desires of a whole community of educators, parents and citizens (Vecchi, 2010). Following Malaguzzi’s death his colleagues, while acknowledging the loss of their most important “reference point” and “maestro”,

determined that the educational philosophy would be sustained (Vecchi, 2010, p. 158). In fact, the legacy of the approach has been maintained by key leaders and educators determined to honour all that Malaguzzi had taught them and to demonstrate “that the (educational) experience was strong in itself, a way of not betraying Loris Malaguzzi, the best proof of his way of 'making school” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 69). Indeed, Malaguzzi’s way of making school was deeply grounded in Dewey’s philosophic and theoretical ideas and it may be concluded that this been a contributing factor to the endurance of the Reggio Emilia educational project.

Foundations of philosophic inspiration

Dewey’s philosophic influence upon praxis in the Italian educational project is widely indicated by scholars (Cooper, 2012; Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Faini Saab & Stack, 2013; Giamminuti, 2013; Hoyuelos, 2013). Likewise, the educators, artists and pedagogistas (educational leaders) as central protagonists of the project for more than fifty years acknowledge Dewey’s general influence (Rinaldi, 2006). The reluctance of Reggio Emilia’s pedagogical leaders to directly align specific theoretical inspirations with their practice may lie in the desire to “distance themselves from being pigeon-holed into a single particular perspective” (Hall, et al., 2010, p. 1). However, Gandini confirms that while the founding educators in Reggio Emilia avidly read the works of many scholars and theorists, (including Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget and others), Dewey was the most influential (Gandini, 2011).

A kaleidoscope of influence

Although there are significant points of alignment between their transformative philosophies and practice, there is little evidence to suggest that Loris Malaguzzi and John Dewey ever met. While Dewey was aware of and concerned about the fascist uprising and repression in Italy (Dykhuizen, 1973), his death in 1952 preceded Malaguzzi’s appointment as pedagogical leader and director of the early childhood services in Reggio Emilia by six years. However, examination of the literature written by and about these influential educational advocates supports the proposition that Malaguzzi studied and was inspired by John Dewey’s assembly of philosophical and theoretical ideas. Dewey’s enduring influence upon Italian pedagogy, Malaguzzi, and specifically the Reggio Emilia experience, can be identified in multiple sources of influence. These intersecting reflections of Dewey’s influence

are located in the context of the socio-political climate in Italy during and post-World War II. This is demonstrated in the search by progressive Italian educators for new educational ideas and methods; the Italian translations of Dewey's work (including the work and influence of translators and scholars Borghi and Codignola); and the social reform movement located in Bologna, under the influential leadership of Bruno Ciari.

A desire for democracy

Dewey's democratic ideals attained significant reception in post-war Italy, particularly in areas of northern Italy known for a strong history of anti-fascist resistance (Burza, 2009; Lazzari, 2012). Communities, parents and educators in post-fascist Italy embraced socialist principles to position the role that democratic early childhood education could play in bringing about social change and better opportunities for children (Edwards, et al., 2012). They were determined to raise children to be critical thinkers and the guardians of democracy. These aspirations aligned with Dewey's ideas about maximising democratic and community growth by teaching children about the ideals of citizenship (Dýrffjörð, 2006). In fact, the push toward liberal and democratic principles was not only driven by concerned Italian parents and educators but by a form of democratic evangelism emanating from the United States of America.

Following the liberation of Italy, American politicians and progressive educators sought to "introduce a school system based on liberal, democratic principles" with the goal of social reform (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 54). As partners in the "Italian reeducation experiment" allied forces from the US saw Dewey's version of progressive education as the "royal path" to the democratisation of Italy through the modernisation of the Italian primary school system (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 54,57). Burza's selective analysis of official documents of the Italian school system between 1945 and 1985 confirm that Dewey's ideals in relation to social transformation through democratic participation and collaborative pedagogy were evident in official Italian syllabus documents across decades (Burza, 2009).

Those seeking social change were guided by Dewey's argument that "if social changes are to be brought about in a peaceful, intelligent way, people must be trained in the art of free and enlightened discussion as exemplified in schools where academic freedom prevails" (Dewey, cited in Dykhuizen, 1973, p. 275). Rather than positioning governments as the primary source of democracy, Dewey championed the capacity of every citizen in a

community to participate intelligently in their own growth and determination. This was evident when Dewey expressed his social liberal ideals in “My Pedagogic Creed” stating, “Through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself into definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move” (Dewey, cited in Dykhuizen, 1973, p. 104).

In analysing historical and scholarly sources concerning the establishment of the Reggio Emilia project, it is apparent that Malaguzzi and colleagues collaborated to discuss ideas that could inspire and inform their own developing philosophy. Reflecting aspirations for democratic change, Malaguzzi affirmed that the educational reformation undertaken in Reggio Emilia “was a powerful experience emerging out of a thick web of emotions and from a complex matrix of knowledge and values” (translated & cited in Gandini, 2012b, p. 35). This complex matrix of developing knowledge and values included a network of like-minded and progressive Italian educators.

A collaborative network of influence

Italian educators frustrated with social inequity in the school system were motivated to search for new ideas about education, echoing Dewey’s discontent with traditionalist approaches to education (Dýrfjörð, 2006). In post-fascist Italy two thirds of the population, largely the disadvantaged working classes, had not completed their time at school (Jäggi, Müller, & Schmid, 1977). Therefore, educators committed to social change and particularly sought out information about approaches to pedagogy that valued democracy, community participation and social equity (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). Illustrating these concerns, a working paper written at the time advocated for educational reforms, stating:

School in our society is not democratic and critical. It is a school in which you listen and obey: the school of uncritical consent. It is not a school made by everyone for everyone – administered, run and controlled by the community. (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 114-115)

Half a century prior to this, Dewey had used very similar terminology to condemn traditional education for “passivity of attitude, its mechanical massing of children, its uniformity of curriculum and method”, and advised that “when the child lives in varied but concrete and active relationships to this common world, his studies are naturally unified” (Dewey, 1900, p. 34, 91). Lazzari and Balduzzi (2013) suggests that the social and political aspiration for peace and social renewal through democratic transformation motivated

Malaguzzi's determination to promote young children's right to education in the post war years. Malaguzzi explained that "it was a necessary change in a society that was renewing itself, changing deeply, and in which citizens and families were increasingly asking for social services and schools for their children" (translated & cited in Gandini, 2012b, p. 31).

In this endeavour to replace fascist ideals with democratic ideals, Dewey's theory of the school as a laboratory of democracy with its focus on civic participation and activist pedagogy, was extremely influential (Burza, 2009). Malaguzzi also confirmed the debate about educational reform strategies that proliferated in the 1960's was enhanced by renewed access to Dewey's theories (Gandini, 2012). Following decades of repression and censorship educators were able to access Italian translations and information about alternate educational systems which supported their reform ideals.

Indeed, throughout Europe new ideas and experiments from Freinet, Piaget and Vygotsky, as well as from Dewey's translated works, attracted the attention of educators (Gandini, 2012). Explaining the information gathering process used to support the transformation of the education system, Malaguzzi stated:

Preparing ourselves was difficult. We looked for readings; we travelled to capture ideas and suggestions from the few but precious innovative experiences of other cities; we organized seminars with friends and the most vigorous and innovative figures on the national education scene. (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 58-59)

Malaguzzi and the educators in Reggio Emilia were actively seeking theories and ideas from both established and contemporary sources. The Italian translations of Dewey's writings, including the work and influence of Lamberto Borghi and Ernesto Codignola are important to support this argument.

Poetic translations

During the fascist era in Italy, American theories and experiences including Dewey's books and ideas had been banned (Gandini, 2012). Despite Dewey's work having been translated and debated in educational circles in Italy prior to the fascist era (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000; Boydston, 1969), it was only after the war that Dewey's newly translated works re-entered the Italian educational sphere for democratic and progressive inspiration (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000; Burza, 2009). The prolific translation of Dewey's work in post-

war Italy was influenced by the particular social, cultural and political context (Boydston, 1969; Burza, 2009). Absorbed by Italian educators and philosophers, Dewey's works and philosophy "left a decisive imprint on a culture which had to be modernized, redefined and rebuilt after the fall of Fascism" (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 53). Following the liberation, educators' goals to develop a new way of teaching that embraced democratic ideals and was more relevant for children "found inspiration and encouragement in the works of John Dewey" (Hendrick, 1997, p. 4).

Drawing on Boydston's checklist of international translations of Dewey's books (1969), an examination of the timelines of Italian translations and reprints of Dewey's work between 1945 and 1970 parallels the significant formative years for the Reggio Emilia project and its foundational protagonists. The Italian appetite for Dewey's work at this time is evidenced by the publication and reprint schedule of Dewey's "The School and Society" originally published in 1900. This book was translated into Italian twice in 1915 and again in 1949, with further excerpts being included in the 1954 publication "Il Mio credo Pedagogico" (an anthology of Dewey's educational writings) (Boydston, 1969). It is important to note that these translated editions were reprinted almost thirty times between 1950 and 1970. Several of Dewey's other publications, including 'My Pedagogic Creed' (1897), 'The Child and the Curriculum' (1902), 'Democracy and Education' (1916), 'Art as Experience' (1934), and 'Education and Experience' (1938), underwent similar rates of translation with a demand for more than 45 reprints, during the same period (Boydston, 1969). Significantly Italian educators, including Malaguzzi and his colleagues, accessed the translations and reprints of Dewey's work, also engaging with ideas and values shared by Italian scholars of Dewey's work. In translating Dewey's books Italian scholars grappled with the nuance and turn of phrase that would best resonate with Italian readers, seeking to faithfully align Dewey's pragmatic thought and democratic ideals within the Italian context. Through this process of interpretative transformation Dewey's texts have become one of the cultural models of reference determining the innovation of Italian pedagogy (Burza, 2009). Indeed, the educators in Reggio Emilia recognise that reading Dewey's ideas is an interpretative process and therefore refer to Dewey colloquially as "our Dewey" (Fielding & Moss, 2011, p. 9). Therefore, Italian pedagogues were supported to interpret their approach to a new progressive pedagogy through a Deweyan lens.

Unlike the allied reformers who had neglected to access the knowledge of previously exiled scholars, the educators seeking progressive reform welcomed their leadership. Upon their return to Italy the exiled anti-fascist scholars, many of whom spent their exile in American universities, had a significant impact upon change in the Italian education system (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000). One such exiled scholar, Lamberto Borghi, was particularly influential in Italian progressive reforms and consequently on the evolution and development of the Reggio Emilia Educational Project.

Inspired translators and scholars

Lamberto Borghi (1907-2000) was an eminent Italian scholar, prolific author and translator of multiple books, magazines and editorials, which were inspired by and about John Dewey. He is regarded as the “most famous follower of John Dewey’s methodology” in the Italian context due to his focus on democratic pedagogy (Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007, p. 85) Borghi’s post-war publications sought to address problems within the Italian education system, particularly focussing on issues of social equity for disadvantaged communities as well as education in the arts and sciences (Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007). Like Dewey, Borghi positioned students as active and democratic participants in civic and cultural transformation (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000). Borghi’s focus in this regard illustrates his transatlantic dissemination of the ideas expressed by Dewey in ‘Democracy and Education’ published in 1916. His prolific writing, translations and teaching contributed to the reception and awareness of Dewey’s transformative pedagogical ideas in the Italian context. An examination of Borghi’s own professional journey strengthens the claim for Dewey’s influence on progressive Italian educators, including those located in Reggio Emilia.

A philosopher and historian, Borghi taught in high schools until 1938, when as a Jewish and anti-fascist academic, he was forced into exile (Schiavo, 1991; Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007). Continuing his studies in the USA, he met John Dewey whose work influenced him for the rest of his career (Martinuzzi, 2007; Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007). Like Dewey, Borghi shifted his academic focus from philosophy to educational science and pedagogy (Dykhuisen, 1973). This direct Deweyan influence on Borghi’s professional focus was facilitated by Dewey’s position as Professor Emeritus of Philosophy in Residence at Columbia University while Borghi was in exile (Dykhuisen, 1973). Additionally, during

his decade in America, Borghi worked as a “researcher, lecturer and political writer” while co-authoring “important cultural ideas with other anti-Fascists from various countries” (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 60). It is noteworthy that at this time Borghi was invited by the Teacher’s College of Columbia University to develop the draft document strategy for the introduction of a reconstructed education system in Italy (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000).

Upon his return from America in 1948, Borghi continued to lecture in education and pedagogy at various universities before taking up the position of full Professor and Director of the Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Florence from 1954-1982 (Schwarcz & Francesconi, 2007). Borghi’s Deweyan scholarship, translation skills and experience with the progressive education movement in America positioned him as a significant reference point for progressive pedagogy in post-war Italy. Illustrating his leadership in this regard Borghi filled the coveted positions of Vice President of the ‘Comparative Education Society in Europe’, and President of the Italian Federation of ‘Centers for Exercise Methods of Active Education’ (Schiavo, 1991). At a regional level, Borghi collaborated with Ernesto Codignola, his predecessor at the University of Florence, and fellow Deweyan scholar and translator, to establish an educational movement known as the Laicists. The Laicist movement sought to promote Dewey’s ideals of progressive secular education by applying “educational theory” in “experimental schools” (Allemann-Ghionda, 2000, p. 61). As scholars at the University of Florence, Borghi and Codignola supervised the training of new teachers. It is likely that they supported the experimental work undertaken in Bologna, which was led by their mentee and past student Bruno Ciari.

It is this writer’s belief that the activities of this established network of progressive educators, and the work of Bruno Ciari in particular, converged to predestine Loris Malaguzzi and therefore the Reggio Emilia project to embrace and apply Dewey’s philosophy.

Influential friends

While some western scholars singularly credit Malaguzzi for instigating post-war debate and collaborative reform of early childhood education in Italy it is necessary to recognise the particular influence of his friend and colleague Bruno Ciari. Malaguzzi credited Bruno Ciari, along with another Deweyan inspired friend and colleague Gianni Rodari as influential friends (Martinuzzi, 2007) and notes that they delivered conferences

and wrote papers together (Cadwell, 2003; Edwards, et al., 2012). Members of the Reggio Emilia community likewise agreed that their work followed “in the footsteps of Bruno Ciari” (Ghirardi, 2002, p. 27). Both Ciari’s books and his work in Bologna influenced Malaguzzi significantly, impacting on the development of the educational project in Reggio Emilia (Gandini, 2011).

Bruno Ciari (1923-1970) is recognised as an important Italian pedagogue (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013) and described as one of Italy’s “best-known left-wing educationalists” (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 115). His books, which became classics in Italy, focused on teaching techniques and advocated for social equity through access to high quality early childhood services (Ciari, 1961, 1973). Ciari credited both Dewey and Freinet, known as the ‘French Dewey’ (Lee, 1984) as foundational influences upon his philosophical and pedagogical beliefs (Ciari, 1961, 1973). Ciari influenced the wider educational system in Italy through his work in Bologna “which advanced educational continuity by promoting experimentalism in the field of Early Childhood Education” (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 149). Like Malaguzzi, Ciari began his career as a primary school teacher before committing himself to early childhood education in the service of democracy and social equity (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). He became a leader in educational and social reform movements in the Bologna region, invited by the left-wing Bolognese administration to establish the preschool education system for the city and appointed as director of the Education Department in Bologna (Cadwell, 2003; Gandini, 2011; Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013).

Running parallel to educational reforms in Reggio Emilia, Ciari’s educational movement located in Bologna contributed significantly to Malaguzzi’s pedagogical philosophy (Edwards, et al., 2012; Leach & Moon, 2008). Identified as the “pacemakers in left-wing educational policy for the whole of Italy” Bolognese citizens and educators progressed educational reform in their community (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 115). The Movement for Cooperative Education (MCE)/ ‘Movimento di Cooperazione educative’ was established in 1951 under Ciari’s leadership (Cadwell, 2003). This movement “attracted scholars and intellectuals who after having experienced the Resistance and the fall of the Fascist regime, wanted to participate actively in the building of a new society” (Salvadori & Mathys, 2002, p. 176). This was also the case for Ciari whose time as a partisan resistance fighter inspired his passion for educational reform (Lazzari, 2011). The MCE drew

inspiration from the progressive ideals of John Dewey and is still active in Italy today (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). Deweyan aspirations sought to reform society, beginning with young children and their families. Ciari stated,

The future of society will depend on the schools that we will be able to build, aiming at the promotion of human flourishing against the conditions that are currently threatening it. This is a high pedagogical ideal to stand for: to build a world which is more equal and fair. (translated & cited by Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 169-170)

An annual debate about educational issues called 'Febbraio Pedagogico Bolognese' (Bolognese Education February) was established by the Bolognese reformers, inviting participation from "parents, teachers, students, politicians and unionists from the city and the rest of Italy, as well as from other countries" (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 115). They sought to share contemporary knowledge about education with a wider community, and focused on the theme of 'The Child, The Family and the School' (Jäggi, et al., 1977). Importantly, the events' title significantly reflects both the titles and contents of Dewey's publications 'The School and Society' (1900) and 'The Child and the Curriculum' (1902). Also noteworthy is that the inaugural 'educational Februaries' were held in 1963 and 1964, coinciding with the first two years of operation for the Reggio Emilia Municipal preschools.

The innovative educational reforms in the preschools of the Emilia Romagna region which prioritised community involvement and parental participation are credited to the "pedagogical work and political vision" within the social management proposal devised by Loris Malaguzzi and Bruno Ciari (Catarsi, 2011; Lazzari, 2012, p. 558). "Since the 1960's the pedagogic proposal of these two authoritative pedagogists" was grounded in "a deep social scheme and the will to contextualize and historicize the educational process, by involving both teachers and families, and the whole social community in management" (Catarsi, 2011, p. 17). Inspired by Dewey's ideas about "active pedagogy" these reforms developed new understanding about learning and were "understood as a process of active construction that necessarily takes place in social interaction, where new meanings can be created, shared, confronted, questioned and negotiated" (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 153).

Ciari's Deweyan Influence

Indeed, many of the pedagogical ideas developed and shared by Ciari align with proposals articulated by Dewey half a century earlier. Recalling the exposition of the

relevance of Dewey's educational ideas to early education contexts earlier in this paper, one can see that Dewey's ideas consequently found expression in the key tenets of practice in Reggio Emilia. It is important to both recognise and acknowledge that these key pedagogical values find their source in Malaguzzi's post-war partnership in a network of progressive educators, including Ciari, who were informed and inspired by Dewey's ideas.

Ciari's application of Dewey's ideas can be aligned within several values central to praxis in Reggio Emilia including: social and democratic reform; an image of children as competent co-constructors of knowledge; community partnerships and participation; the role of educators as researchers and co-learners; the importance of the educational environment and the holistic methodology centred around project work and the visual arts.

Social and democratic reform

Ciari's educational vision aligned with Dewey's progressive rejection of traditional approaches to education that provided neither hope nor respect for children located in "largely peasant populations" or for "students living in a newly industrial age" (Leach & Moon, 2008, p. 2). Ciari held that early childhood education and care performs a political and democratic function when it "brings together children from social classes" promoting a "constant exchange of experiences and cultural contributions" (translated & cited by Lazzari, 2012, p. 558). Ciari, like Malaguzzi, advocated for children's democratic rights as citizens (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013) and delivered secular services to all social classes while rejecting the discriminatory welfare model of church-run services (Jäggi, et al., 1977). He believed "as long as schools select and discriminate, there will be no democracy" and when opportunities "open only to a minority, there will be privilege, injustice and inequality" (Ciari, translated & cited in Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 133). Ciari advocated that municipal preschools could achieve social change and that a civic society becomes possible when its youngest citizens are valued (Lazzari, 2012).

An image of children as competent co-constructors of knowledge

Ciari viewed children as "strong and rich personalities with a natural curiosity" and believed they construct learning through processes of discussion and interpretation (Leach & Moon, 2008, p. 2). Similarly, Malaguzzi eloquently decreed that "our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and, most of all, connected to adults and

other children” (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10). Ciari believed that the “fundamental political task” of the service is “to create a common cultural ground for all children, regardless of their social conditions...that ensures a real promotion of each individual as a full person — active and creative — and as a critically thinking citizen” (translated & cited in Lazzari, 2012, p. 558), mirroring Dewey’s position that the purpose of education is to support all students to participate fully in a democratic community life.

Community partnerships and participation

Aligning with Dewey’s constructivist ideals, Ciari’s educational philosophy positioned the learning process as a social construction, where the relationship between the school and society was paramount (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). The services in Bologna were democratically operated and managed in collaboration with the local community (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013). Ciari positioned the school as a centre for meetings, debates and “collective creative work” (Ciari, translated & cited in Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 115). Indeed, Ciari’s democratic ideals resonate with the community-engagement focus for which the Reggio Emilia project is famous (Moss, 2014). Likewise, Dewey’s values were reflected in Malaguzzi’s view that the process of education, undertaken through community cooperation, must overcome “the rigidity of roles, the separation of institutions and the classification of individual destinies that has caused so much damage to school and education” (translated & cited in Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 156).

The role of educators as researchers and co-learners

Significantly reflective of Dewey’s earlier work, Ciari’s discussions about the role of the teacher align directly with initiatives adopted in Reggio Emilia. Dewey’s laboratory school experimented with ideas about team-teaching and collaboration with ancillary staff (Tanner, 1991). Similarly, Ciari introduced the idea of teachers working collaboratively in pairs in his experimental schools, (translated & cited in Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 154) outlining the concept of collaboration within pedagogic teams under the leadership of a pedagista (Leach & Moon, 2008, p. 2). Ciari positioned the research and observation undertaken by teachers as the key to pedagogical success (Leach & Moon, 2008) again aligning with the current values of Reggio Emilia.

Scholars currently acknowledge Reggio Emilia for its value for cooks and cleaners as members of the educational team (Moss, 2007). However, in Ciari's schools, ancillary employees such as cleaners were concurrently positioned as equal and valued resources for children's education and received training in teaching techniques (Jäggi, et al., 1977). Reflecting Dewey's value for the contribution of non-trained staff (Tanner, 1991) Ciari stated:

The work in the group of adults should be based upon parity of roles, respect, reciprocal support and collegial decision-making; the same values that children should interiorize. We also think that these values should characterise the professional development of teachers all along. (translated & cited in Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 154)

The importance of the educational environment

In the post-war years, the Bolognese early childhood services rejected the "social disadvantage" amplified by "badly equipped and short staffed" church-run nursery schools, to ensure they provided rich learning environments for all social classes (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 117). The physical environment was afforded pedagogical significance, with well-equipped environments "rich in stimuli and possibilities" and attracting children from all social classes (Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 117). The services in Bologna, seeking to facilitate communication and cooperation throughout the educational service reflected Dewey's (1900) ideas about age grouping to provide three classrooms for three, four and five-year olds, clustered around a freely accessible common room (Jäggi, et al., 1977). Notably, this aesthetic focus and the floor plan design adopted by Ciari is identical to that found in the arrangement of classrooms and central piazza within many of Reggio Emilia's preschools. Vecchi (2010) explains the approach in Reggio Emilia, highlighting their choice to provide environments that are "lovely" and "cared for" as an expression of the perception that all children have a right to be provided with conditions that support wellbeing (p. 82).

A holistic methodology centred on project work and visual arts

Reflecting Deweyan ideas, Ciari promoted holistic development across all learning domains (Cadwell, 2003). Like Dewey before him and perhaps inspiring his colleagues in Reggio Emilia, Ciari stated that learning must be based on investigations that "proceed from

a problem, from a state of doubt, or from an unfulfilled need” (1973, translated & cited in Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 122). Running parallel to Malaguzzi’s radical decision making in Reggio Emilia to centralise artistic methods, Ciari valued creative and artistic activities equally with other subject areas and positioned art as a language for making and expressing meaning, stating, “Just as one speaks everyday...the child must express itself daily through colours, lines and plastic forms” (Ciari, 1973, translated & cited in Jäggi, et al., 1977, p. 122).

Propelled to leadership

The collaborative partnership enjoyed by Ciari and Malaguzzi, which clearly influenced the evolution of ideas within the Reggio Emilia project, was cut short by Ciari’s death in 1970 projecting Loris Malaguzzi into a leadership role within the Italian progressive educational movement (Gandini, 2011). This result elevated the regional educational project in Reggio Emilia to prominence. Alignment of Ciari’s Deweyan inspired pedagogical philosophy with the values and praxis of the Reggio Emilia educational project demonstrates his significant influence on Malaguzzi, the Reggio Emilia project and the renewal of Italian education in post-war Italy.

Conclusion

This paper has positioned the Reggio Emilia educational project as a mirror, reflecting and illuminating Dewey’s constructivist ideas. The historical and socio-political reception of John Dewey’s philosophies of aesthetics, education, and democracy in post war Italy was a prelude to the formation of key values and principles within the Reggio Emilia approach to early education. Indeed, the pedagogical depth, influence and endurance of the Reggio Emilia project, can be located in the Deweyan philosophy that inspired their approach to education. Acknowledging that neither the Reggio Emilia project nor Dewey’s philosophy claim to be theories by which practice can be examined, the illumination of their shared ideas reflects a constructivist theoretical approach to guide both examination of research data and pedagogy. Accepting that theory development requires ideas be examined and tested in practice, one may consider that Dewey’s philosophy was tested and rendered theoretical within his laboratory school, while in Reggio Emilia these pedagogical ideas have been refined and tested during more than fifty years of action research.

Dewey's progressive democratic ideals located within the reflective interpretation of his work by Italian reformers Borghi, Codignola, Ciari, Malaguzzi, and educators in the Reggio Emilia educational project, offers inspiration to contemporary educators in early childhood contexts. Like their historic counterparts, modern children still have the right to access quality early childhood education and care where progressive activism is fostered. The identification of Dewey's ongoing legacy in a current exemplar of high quality educational practice challenges educators to consider their own pedagogical ideas and values while providing a focus for reflection about their current and future pedagogy.

3.3 Literary description of the RE(D) Framework

The resulting literary analysis, presented in this thesis as the RE(D) conceptual framework, offers four topics of conceptual alignment to guide data analysis and professional reflection about early childhood visual arts pedagogy. (see Figure 3.1). For each topic, illustrative quotes that align the shared philosophical and theoretical conceptions of Dewey (D) and the Reggio Emilia (RE) approach are provided in table form and supplemented with literary analysis (see Appendices B3, B4, B5, B6).

The RE(D) framework inspired a series of questions that henceforth guided the development of interview questions and data analysis considerations (see Appendix B.7).

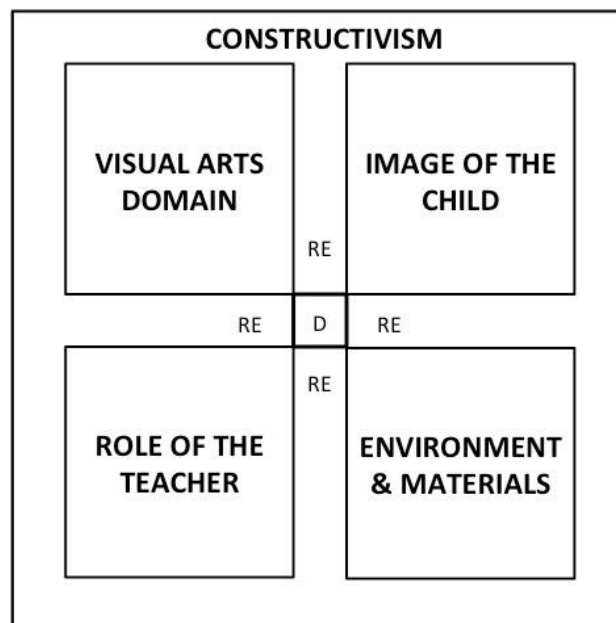


Figure 3.1: RE(D) Conceptual Framework.

3.3.1 Four topics of the RE(D) Framework. The four topics and their sub-themes are:

Image of the child (See explanation and full literary synthesis in Appendix B.3)

- Democratic participation
- The rights of the child
- The child as a community member
- Children are capable, active protagonists of their own learning
- Value for the preschool years
- Children learn through experiences that are active and hands-on
- Children learn through interest-focussed learning projects
- Children learn through cognitive conflict and problem solving
- Children learn through social collaboration and co-construction of knowledge

Visual arts domain (See explanation and full literary synthesis in Appendix B.4 and part 3.4 of this chapter)

- Laboratory and atelier
- Art as play and experience
- Art as a language
- Art for making meaning
- Art methods and techniques

Environment and materials (See explanation and full literary synthesis in Appendix B.5)

- The environment as a resource
- Relationships with materials
- The environment reflects the beliefs and knowledge of the educator

Role of the educator (See explanation and full literary synthesis in Appendix B.6)

- Role of the educator – as Artist
 - a) To design environments that demonstrate aesthetic sensitivity and to develop the ‘100 languages’
- Role of the educator – as researcher
 - a) To have the attitude of a researcher
 - b) To make children’s learning visible
 - c) To be a co-learner and co-constructor with children
- Role of the educator – as Teacher
 - a) To develop a responsive curriculum that adapts content to children’s interests
 - b) To engage in meaningful experiences that build on prior experience and lead to growth
 - c) To guide, extend, provoke and propose
 - d) To teach skills, model techniques and lend assistance

3.4 Visual arts domain

Dewey's democratic ideals guided his image of the child and determined his focus on growth and arts-based educational inquiry. He centralised the arts capacity to facilitate communication within a community of inquiry and experience, believing art-centred communities would develop children's social, cultural and personal identities and foster democracy (Faini Saab & Stack, 2013; Hefner, 2008; Richards, 2012). Dewey also considered the arts to be a means of securing student engagement in the learning process by connecting with children's innate desire to be active and creative, stating:

If we were to introduce into educational processes the activities which appeal to those whose dominant interest is to do and to make, we should find the hold of the school upon its members to be more vital, more prolonged, containing more of culture. (1915, p. 28)

Dewey proposed that the child's impulse to communicate, construct, express and inquire are ideally integrated within art-based activities that emphasise free movement, discussion, making, constructing, playing, crafting and printing to name a few (Lim, 2004). Such activities, he suggested, would fulfil the educational goal to engender attitudes for lifelong learning through richer, more meaningful experiences (Hickman et al., 2009). Additionally, through art and the creation of objects, Dewey considered that people are united, made fully human, and become aware of the self (Dewey, 1934).

Similarly, in the Reggio Emilia approach, aesthetic learning contexts are also considered an important stimulus for learning, whereby aesthetics experiences cultivate conceptual and relational connections (Vecchi, 2010). Like Dewey before them, the educators in Reggio Emilia identify that art must not be confined to museum or gallery, nor placed on a pedestal separate to existence and experience (Dewey, 1934). Rather, art should be utilised in everyday contexts to support aesthetic sensibility and growth.

3.4.1 Aligned views about visual arts and aesthetics

This section of the RE(D) framework presents the published article "John Dewey And Reggio Emilia: Worlds Apart - One Vision" (Lindsay, 2016a). The article introduces the aligned views regarding visual arts and aesthetics outlined by Dewey and developed in the Reggio Emilia project. Again, justifying the RE(D) framework, specific Deweyan influences upon Reggio Emilia's aesthetic and art centred pedagogy are proposed, most

notably in relation to the formation of the atelier in Reggio Emilia. The article particularly outlines the application of art as a tool for enhancing children's educational interests and addresses notions such as 'the hundred languages of children' and art's role as a unifying and democratic force.

John Dewey And Reggio Emilia: Worlds Apart - One Vision (Lindsay, 2016c)

Abstract

The Reggio Emilia educational project is internationally renowned for an early childhood pedagogy that centralises visual arts as a graphic language within multi-disciplinary projects. Loris Malaguzzi, the first director of the Italian project, is credited for introducing ateliers (art studios), as well as an atelierista (visual arts specialist) within each preschool. This paper suggests that Malaguzzi's conception of the atelier as a place for art focused, hands-on collaborative research with children may have been inspired by John Dewey's (1900) discussions about art laboratories as a unifying force for democratic and transformative education. Contemporary educators are invited to reflect on their own visual arts practice in light of the shared vision of these two educational philosophers.

Introduction

The Reggio Emilia educational project is internationally renowned as an early childhood pedagogical approach that centralises visual arts as a graphic language within multi-disciplinary curricula. The first director of the Italian project, Loris Malaguzzi, is credited for placing ateliers (art studios), as well as an atelierista (visual arts specialist) within each preschool. Yet, at the turn of the century John Dewey, an esteemed American philosopher and pedagogue, proposed that art laboratories could be a unifying force for democratic and transformative education. Howard Gardner (2011, 2012) pairs Dewey and Malaguzzi as radical pedagogues for both centralising children's construction of knowledge and suggests that while Malaguzzi revered Dewey's philosophy, the project in Reggio Emilia has surpassed Dewey's laboratory school in its seamless connection between philosophy and practice. This view is justified. However, a comparison of Dewey's discussion about art laboratories and his ideas about the roles of generalist and specialist teachers with

Malaguzzi's subsequent conception of the 'atelier' and the 'atelierista' raises the possibility that Malaguzzi's acknowledged Deweyan inspiration (Edwards et al., 2012) may have been more particular than previously understood. The purpose of this paper is to contemplate the synergy between John Dewey's philosophies about democracy, education and art and the development of art-centred philosophy and practice in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Additionally, it considers the possibility that Malaguzzi was specifically inspired by Dewey's art and education philosophies to introduce the concept of the atelier and to place art at the centre of an active, child-focused pedagogy in Reggio Emilia.

The philosophy and educational practice implemented by pedagogues, artists and educators in the Italian Reggio Emilia educational project for more than half a century can significantly enlighten and inspire both praxis and pedagogical reflection for early childhood educators. Cutcher (2013) suggests that this educational approach also has the potential to inspire and guide visual arts pedagogy with older children. However, for many educators, a determination not to 'do Reggio' (McArdle, 2013), nor to jump onto the latest methodological trend (Lindsay, 2008a) may limit the rich opportunity to learn from, and be challenged by both the Italian educational research project and the scholars who inspired it. Indeed, given that educators in Reggio Emilia do not promote their approach as a model to be imitated (Edwards, 1995; Gandini, 2011; Giamminuti, 2013), it is appropriate for educators seeking philosophical and pedagogical guidance to deeply explore the theories and philosophies that inspired developing practice in Reggio Emilia.

Consideration of Dewey's influence on the formation of the atelier and the role of the atelierista in Reggio Emilia affirms Richards' identification that Dewey "opened spaces for others to make personal connections between his philosophies and their own" (2012, p.41). This notion invites contemporary educators and researchers to do the same, applying Dewey's and Malaguzzi's shared ideas to develop a philosophically and historically grounded framework by which to reflect upon their own pedagogical philosophy.

An art-centred project

The Reggio Emilia educational project is a network of preschools and infant-toddler centres located in Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. There are currently more than 30 early education services managed by the municipal council, however prior to 1963, services were established and managed by groups of parents and community members (Edwards et al.,

2012). In partnership with educators, including the founding director of the Reggio Emilia preschools Loris Malaguzzi, parent groups sought to reform post-fascist Italy through the provision of democratic access to quality early childhood education. For more than fifty years, the educational project has maintained a philosophical view of children as active participants in their own learning, possessing both the human right and the potential to learn in relationship with others. They exercise a distinctive value for family participation and collaborative partnerships between children, educators and the community. A focus on the importance of aesthetic educational environments and the conception of the 'hundred languages of children' has been of particular inspiration to educators around the world (Cooper, 2012; Faini Saab & Stack, 2013). Malaguzzi's 'hundred languages' ideal advocates for the human right to make and express meaning in multiple ways using encounters with "many types of materials, many expressive languages, many points of view, working actively with hands, minds, and emotions, in a context that values the expressiveness and creativity of each child in the group" ("Reggio Children", 2014, np). In Reggio Emilia the multiple processes of working with art materials and methods are not defined as art in the traditional discipline-based sense (Cooper, 2012; Faini Saab & Stack, 2013; Vecchi, 2010). Instead, art-making is positioned as a visual, poetic and symbolic language by which both children and adults collaboratively engage in playful experiences to construct knowledge, support learning and to render children's learning visible. Vecchi (2010, p. 114) explains that "by placing the children within similar processes to those of the artist" they engage with "attitudes of culture and mind" to support processes of communication, research and making meaning. To support such processes, each preschool and infant toddler centre in Reggio Emilia features a central 'atelier' (a well-equipped studio), as well as 'mini-ateliers' in each classroom (Gandini, Hill, Cadwell, & Schwall, 2005). Each preschool employs a trained artist known as atelierista. The atelierista works closely alongside children, families and teachers to support engagement in learning projects that centralise the use of visual arts materials and methods (Vecchi, 2010).

Exploring Dewey's influence

Dewey is acknowledged as a source of philosophic influence by educators in Reggio Emilia (Edwards et al., 2012) with Gandini (2011) stating that of all the theorists who inspired their work, Dewey was the most influential. Additionally, scholars have noted

Dewey's broad influence in Reggio Emilia in terms of democracy (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Moss, 2014), ethics (Hoyuelos, 2013), the image of a capable child (Ewing, 2010), aesthetics (Cooper, 2012; Faini Saab & Stack, 2013) and a focus on constructivist and active learning approaches (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011; Rankin, 2004). However, few studies have deeply explored nor articulated the complex synergy between Dewey's philosophy and praxis in Reggio Emilia, particularly in the area of visual arts, or 'poetic' and 'graphic' languages as they are called in the educational project. Indeed, few have considered how Malaguzzi enacted Dewey's (1934) call to embed art, not exclusively in museum and gallery, but within everyday life experience. Faini Saab and Stack (2013) drew parallels by presenting an analysis of several points of similarity between Dewey's ideas and the Reggio Emilia project in the areas of aesthetics and communication, imagination, community, inquiry and democracy. However, their broad analysis refrained from suggesting direct Deweyan influence upon the formation of philosophy and practice in Reggio Emilia. While they identified several aspects of common theory and practice, the Deweyan sources selected to illustrate their analysis, largely drawn from Dewey's 1934 work "Art as Experience" do not effectively exemplify the points they pursue.

"Art as Experience" written by Dewey in 1934 was not directed specifically toward children's education. Rather it presents a broad philosophical discussion about how connecting art processes, art products, culture, politics and everyday life may constitute a transformative aesthetic experience for both individuals and communities. While it does present a compelling rationale for arts-based curricula (Hefner, 2008), it does not articulate Dewey's rich guidance about art education located in his earlier works. Richards (2012) drew predominantly from "Art as Experience" to state that while Dewey provides a relevant framework to understand the nature of young children's art experiences he did not specifically outline visual arts methods and educational strategies. However, an examination of additional Deweyan sources, particularly 'The School and Society' (Dewey, 1900), 'The Child and the Curriculum' (Dewey, 1902), 'Democracy and Education' (Dewey, 1916), and 'Experience and Education' (Dewey, 1939) challenges this proposition and extends upon the analyses presented by Faini Saab and Stack (2013) and Richards (2012) to outline Dewey's educational ideas about visual arts methods and strategies. Indeed, these Deweyan publications, which were prolifically translated and reprinted in post-World War II Italy

(Boydston, 1969) contain specific points of probable Deweyan inspiration for Malaguzzi's establishment of the atelier in Reggio Emilia. During the period when Malaguzzi was establishing the foundational values upon which the Reggio Emilia educational project is built a network of progressive Italian educators in the Emilia Romagna region, including Malaguzzi, encountered and debated Dewey's progressive and democratic educational vision (Gandini, 2012b; Lindsay, 2015a).

On examination, many of Dewey's ideas about democracy, children, education, environments, aesthetics and art find parallel synergy with the key tenets of praxis in Reggio Emilia. These parallels extend to the socio-political and historical contexts in which they formed their educational philosophies. Scrutiny of Dewey's context and ideas, followed by discussion of Malaguzzi's educational philosophy suggests threads of connection between their aligned beliefs in support of pedagogical reflection by contemporary educators.

Context: America Early 20th Century

Dewey's educational philosophy evolved in response to the changing social and political climate in America prior to World War I (Hall, et al., 2010). Weiss and DeFalco (2005) explain that between 1870 and 1910 immigrants entered the United States to escape conditions in Europe and to secure work in the expanding industrialised workforce. The rapidly expanding school system maintained traditional and rigid methods of passive recitation. Attempts to "assimilate large numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse children" in "overcrowded, anonymous classrooms" made no concession to children's individual needs, interests or contexts (Weiss & DeFalco, 2005, p. 4). In contrast, Dewey (1897) proposed that instead of treating children as passive recipients of adult knowledge, the only way to prepare children for an unknown future was to empower them to reach their individual potential by developing their capacity to apply skills and judgments in new situations. In order to facilitate this Dewey believed that schools should be "connected with life so that the experience gained by the child in a familiar, commonplace way is carried over and made use of there, and what the child learns in the school is carried back and applied in everyday life, making the school an organic whole, instead of a composite of isolated parts" (Dewey, 1900, p. 91).

Democratic transformation

Dewey sought to reform society by transforming the way schools viewed children and learning contexts (Hansen, 2006). Emerging ideas about manual training, nature study and art informed his democratic retort to traditional methods of teaching (Waks, 2009). He proposed that for education “to have any meaning for life, it must pass through an equally complete transformation,” with schools becoming “an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the way of life of the larger society, and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history and science” (Dewey, 1900, p. 28, 29). He rejected traditional methods that sought to instruct passive children en masse to preference methods that focus on the immediate interests and activity of the child, proposing that school should be a context where the child is the “centre of gravity” and where “the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve” (Dewey, 1900, p. 34).

A new image of childhood

Demonstrating his respect for children, Dewey emphasised the freedom, self-activity and self-education of each child, viewing them as capable, active and autonomous learners (Dewey, 1897; Smith, 2005). He centralised children’s existing powers, skills development and potential for learning. Cuffaro (1995) explains that instead of negatively judging the child’s current abilities against future goals and ambitions, Dewey valued children’s immaturity as a precondition for growth. Therefore, his value for the “potentialities of the present” saw him conceptualise education not only as preparation for life, but as life in process (Dewey, 1939, p. 51). To this end, he emphasised active, play-based, multi-disciplinary curricula where learning would result from children’s natural curiosity and play-based exploration (Dewey, 1939; Kliebard, 2006).

Aesthetic languages

Dewey urged the need to respect the aesthetic impulse present in every ‘live creature’ to cultivate a sense of wonder and to enhance both individual and community life (Dewey, 1939). He positioned communication through art as the “incomparable organ of instruction”, elevating teaching and learning through art as a “revolt” against “education that proceeds by methods so literal as to exclude the imagination” and “the desires and emotions of men” (Dewey, 1934, p.361). He proposed that a child’s innate impulse to make

and communicate meaning using aesthetic materials and to reproduce ideas graphically would integrate play, aesthetic awareness, communication and cognition (Dewey, 1900). Dewey located art objects as languages, stating “they are many languages...each medium says something that cannot be uttered as well or as completely in any other tongue” (1939, p. 110). He also believed that aesthetic inquiry and expression is fostered through the appreciation of beauty and aesthetic qualities in everyday experiences (Hildebrand, 2008).

Dewey’s laboratory school

The Chicago Laboratory School (1896-1904) exemplified Dewey’s belief that philosophy and theory are only useful if they inform practice (Dewey, 1910; Tanner, 1991). As a place of action research his school explored which conditions most effectively support children’s learning, development, and engagement, including their “capacity to express” themselves “in a variety of artistic forms” (Dewey, 1905, p.118). Hildebrand (2008) explains that Dewey’s belief in the centrality of aesthetic experience to philosophic inquiry saw him centralise exploration, hands on activity and communication using artistic materials and processes within his ideal school. His constructivist educational focus positioned children as active learners deserving of an aesthetic and democratic curriculum (Dykhuisen, 1973; Tanner, 1991; Weiss et al., 2005). By connecting theoretical inquiry with social and practical activities Dewey aimed to support children in their “need of action, of expression, of desire to do something, to be constructive and creative, instead of simply passive and conforming” (1900, p. 80).

Art as a unifying force

Dewey believed that the art impulse is intrinsic to children’s play and experience (1934, 1939). He believed the natural resources to be employed in the service of children’s active growth included their interests in “communication; in inquiry, or finding out things; in making things, or construction; and in artistic expression” (1900, p. 47). When individuals make art, Dewey suggested, they transform themselves as they actively adapt to external materials and conditions (Dewey, 1934). In his book “The School and Society” Dewey particularly described how children’s learning and engagement could be supported when hands-on art methods, or ‘occupations’ served as a unifying force within multi-disciplinary, child-centred, and active learning environments. He stated that a “spirit of union” between

experiences of inquiry would give “vitality to the art”, and give “depth and richness to the other work” (1900, p. 89).

Art-centred collaborative research: environments and educators

Dewey identified that children’s learning occurs through interaction with materials, people and the environment (1939). He positioned art-making as a context for research in which children would engage in an active cycle of experimentation, knowledge and skill development, akin to the scientific research undertaken in laboratories (Dewey, 1939). Dewey conceptually designated areas of the floor plan as “studios for art work, both the graphic and auditory arts” (1900, p. 85, see Figure 3.2), emphasising that “the graphic and auditory arts, represent the culmination, the idealization, the highest point of refinement of all the work carried on” (1900, p.86).

In addition to laboratories for art and music, Dewey described a central room as “the place where the children bring the experiences, the problems, the questions, the particular facts which they have found and discuss them, so that new light may be thrown upon them, particularly new light from the experience of others” (1900, p. 85). He suggested that artwork has the potential to unify the expression of children’s ideas and to support children’s cognition, perception and communication in an aesthetic and motivational fusion (Dewey, 1900).

Dewey (1902, p. 31) believed that environmental provisions and art methods alone would not be transformative unless a knowledgeable teacher collaborated with children to both “determine the environment” and influence the direction their learning could take. Rejecting the undemocratic methods of traditional education, he positioned the teacher as a collaborator, researcher and co-learner in partnership with children (Dewey, 1910; Glassman & Whaley, 2000; Rankin, 2004; Schecter, 2011). The teacher was positioned as a “leader of group activities” who, being “intelligently aware of the capacities, needs, and past experiences of those under instruction” facilitated child-initiated co-operative projects (Dewey, 1939, p. 66, 85).

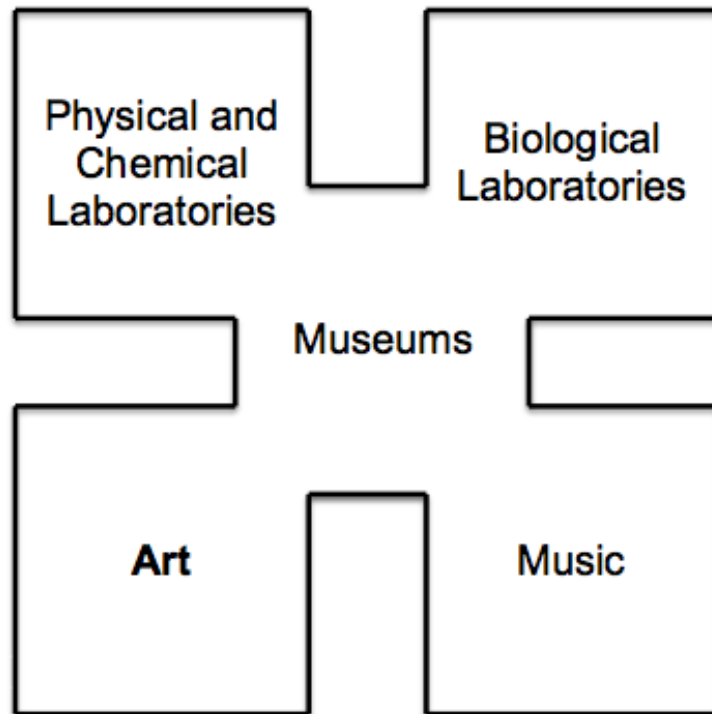


Figure 3.2: Dewey's laboratories (Dewey, 1900, p. 85)

Dewey described the vital responsibilities of the teacher to utilise their pedagogical insight and subject knowledge to interpret the child's activity, design learning environments and facilitate planned and spontaneous experiences in support of children's learning, engagement and growth (Dewey, 1902, 1910, 1939; Hildebrand, 2008; Schechter, 2011). He valued children's interests as a representation of their "growing power" and "dawning capacities", particularly valuing the skills of careful observation and reflective practice as vital to the teacher's capacity to plan for children's learning and development (Dewey, 1929, p. 14). When a teacher appreciates and gives direction to a child's "interest in conversation or communication; in inquiry, or finding out things; in making things, or construction; and in artistic expression" (1900, p. 47) Dewey said they "keep alive the sacred spark of wonder" and "protect the spirit of inquiry" (1910, p. 30). Indeed, he likened the teacher's selection of appropriate materials, methods and social relationships to foster the "attitude of the artist" in children as the 'art' of teaching (Dewey, 1910, p. 204).

Teachers with specialised subject knowledge

In the laboratory school, Dewey's initial decision to employ generalist teachers was based on a belief that it was not "necessary for the teacher to have specialized knowledge in the concepts, principles, and methods that comprise the various fields" or subjects (Tanner, 1991, p. 106). He believed that if the teacher planned "constructive activities which were intellectually valuable" the growth of organised subject knowledge would evolve (Tanner, 1991, p. 106). However, he later identified this assumption to be false, distinguishing that it is impossible for one person to be competent in all subjects and warning that in such cases "superficial work is bound to be done in some direction" (Dewey 1897, cited by Tanner, 1991, p. 106). By the end of the first year of the laboratory school Dewey drew upon his own principles about learning from experience and developed a school curriculum where specialist teachers were also employed (Tanner, 1991). Reinforcing his belief in the agency of young children, Dewey identified that instruction by specialists should begin in the first years of school and be valued for the capacity to inspire learning and inform subject knowledge and skills (Tanner, 1991). Mayhew and Edwards (1936, p. 266) elaborate that in the laboratory school "children willingly enter into the sort of activity that occupies the adults of their world, for they recognize that they are genuine and worthy of effort. Such activities are capable of the utmost simplification to suit the powers of any age; they can also be amplified and extended to meet increasing interests and growing powers."

Context: Reggio Emilia Italy mid 20th century

The educational project in Reggio Emilia evolved in response to the search for democracy and social justice following World War II and the liberation from decades of fascist oppression (Edwards et al., 2012; Hendrick, 1997; Lazzari, 2012). Emulating Dewey's vision for transformation, hopeful parents in partnership with progressive educators contested traditional education methods to envisage an educational system that would experiment with "new pedagogical approaches inspired by the principles of democracy, civic participation, solidarity and social justice" (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 151). Recalling the post-war liberation, Malaguzzi referenced Dewey's term, "foundations of the mind", to state that "the first philosophy learned ... in the wake of such a war, was to give human, dignified, civil meaning to existence; to be able to make choices with clarity of

mind and purpose; and to yearn for the future of mankind" (Malaguzzi, interview in Gandini, 2012b, p. 36). Malaguzzi also aspired to provide equal access to education for "all children for the promotion of their social and cultural development as citizens" (Balduzzi, translated & cited in Lazzari, 2012, p. 558). It is interesting to note that while reflecting on his own value for childhood, Malaguzzi referenced Dewey's choice to combine "pragmatic philosophy, new psychological knowledge, and - on the teaching side - mastery of content with inquiring, creative experiences for children" (translated & cited by Gandini, 2012b, p. 53). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Dewey suggested that those seeking to develop a "new social order" through transformative movements in education, should evaluate the actual needs, problems and goals of their own context, rather than be controlled or limited by educational 'isms' (1939, p. vi). Given the emphasis on contextual pedagogy in the Reggio Emilia schools (Catarsi, 2011), one may consider that Malaguzzi perhaps followed Dewey's advice by focusing on the values they sought to promote for children as citizens, rather than focusing upon the socio-political conditions they were seeking to reform.

The image of the child in Reggio Emilia

A central value of the Reggio Emilia project is their 'image of the child' as "rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and, most of all, connected to adults and other children" (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10). Lazzari (2012, p. 558) explains that the process of democratic emancipation in the early childhood education system following World War II led to a new understanding of children that positioned them as active protagonists in their own learning and as citizens in their communities. Affirming this and acknowledging the influence of several theorists including Dewey, Malaguzzi stated "we do indeed have a solid core in our approach in Reggio Emilia that comes directly from the theories and experiences of active education and finds realization in particular images of the child, teacher, school, family and community. Together these produce a culture and society that connect, actively and creatively, both individual and social growth" (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 60). Dewey's (1900) desire that educators should make the child's interests rather than subject matter the focus and departure point in designing the learning curriculum, is reflected in Malaguzzi's statement that "things about children and for children are only learned from children" (translated & cited in Gandini, 2012b, p. 31).

Aesthetics and beauty

Vecchi (2010, p. 5) claims that one of the “most original features” of pedagogy in the Reggio Emilia project “is an acceptance of aesthetics as one of the important dimensions in the life of our species and, therefore, also in education and in learning.” Indeed, both Cooper (2012) and Faini Saab and Stack (2013) confirm that Dewey and Malaguzzi both integrated aesthetics as an element of experience rather than treating it as a separate entity. Vecchi explains that their choice to focus on beauty and aesthetic inquiry with children was built on the desire to “illustrate the extraordinary, beautiful and intelligent things children knew how to do” and to eliminate work where children were marginalised, where “teacher’s minds and hands were central” and where stereotyped products proliferated (2010, p. 132). Reflecting Dewey’s (1934) discussion about the primary human impulse to create and make, evidenced in the production of decorative and cultural artefacts across millennia, Reggio Emilia’s educators also reference the simple everyday objects throughout all eras and cultures as proof of the human desire to celebrate beauty and aesthetics (Vecchi, 2010). The aesthetic focus in Reggio Emilia is described as a “slim thread or aspiration to quality” where “an attitude of care and attention” and “a desire for meaning” is applied across disciplinary areas (Vecchi, 2010, p. 5).

The atelier in Reggio Emilia as a unifying force

Similar to Dewey’s progressive response to restrictive traditional pedagogical approaches Malaguzzi conceptualised the atelier as a “retort to the marginal and subsidiary role commonly assigned to expressive education” (Interview with Malaguzzi 1998, in Gandini, et al., 2005, p. 7). Cooper (2012, p. 303) explains that Malaguzzi’s choice to develop the atelier attests to the value he attributed to “imagination, creativity, expressiveness, and aesthetics” within the educational processes of “development and knowledge building.” Within the atelier, the work of atelieristi (visual art specialists) supports collaboration and connection through shared educational projects between children, educators and the wider community (Vecchi, 2010). Such interest-based project-work unites Dewey’s (1900) belief, that art and play are central to processes of making and communicating meanings, with the belief in Reggio Emilia that children’s play and inquiry are enriched through art and design (Vecchi, 2010, p. 5) and through engagement with a

wide range of materials and many expressive techniques (interview with Vecchi, in Gandini, 2012a).

The multiple ways that children are supported to make and express meaning are known as the 'hundred languages of children'. Rinaldi explains that "the hundred languages are a metaphor for the extraordinary potentials of children" and their multiple "knowledge-building and creative processes" (2013, p. 20). The particular emphasis on visual languages in the atelier does not position art as a stand-alone subject, focussed on traditional methods. Instead, Gandini (2012b, p. 310) explains that they "have focussed on the visual language as a means of inquiry and investigation of the world, to build bridges and relationships with one another, in constant dialogue with a pedagogical approach that seeks to work on the connection rather than the separation of various fields of knowledge." This choice to integrate art processes within multi-disciplinary projects was driven by the esteem that Malaguzzi and the Reggio Emilia educators held for children's inherent creative potential and their right to "make meaning out of life within a context of rich relationships, in many ways, and using many materials" (Gandini, et al., 2005, p. 1). Indeed, Malaguzzi described the atelier as "instrumental in the recovery of the image" of an "interactionist and constructivist" child who was "richer in resources and interests" than previously understood (interview in Gandini, et al., 2005, p. 7).

In Reggio Emilia, the work of the ateliers expands "out into the classes and school through enriched proposals in the classroom" with learning environments credited as the 'third teacher (Vecchi, 2010, p. 127). Rinaldi describes this collaborative inquiry "a way of working in "laboratories", with the school conceptualized as one big laboratory or "workshop of learning and knowledge" (1998, p. 115). As it evolved, the atelier was increasingly positioned as a context for inquiry, where educators are positioned as co-learners and researchers who partner with children and their families to guide and sustain children's learning (Rankin, 2004). Malaguzzi explains that the use of visual arts materials and processes in the atelier supports educators to research the "motivations and theories of children from scribbles on up" as well as explore "variations on tools, techniques, and materials with which to work" (interview in Gandini, 2005, p. 7). Such views recall Dewey's ideas about intentionally planning for children's social and cognitive learning within a metaphorical floor plan where hands-on arts and occupations fused children's interests with

content knowledge. It is also interesting to consider the parallels between Dewey's description of a central recitation room as a context for collaborative encounter and the inclusion of the central Piazza (foyer) as a space for community encounter and shared inquiry in the Reggio Emilia project.

The atelierista as specialist teacher

An exploration of Dewey's influence upon the establishment of the atelier in Reggio Emilia is further informed when considering Malaguzzi's "radical and courageous choice" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 36) to compliment the inclusion of the atelier with the role of the atelierista. Aligned with the value of the atelier as a place of research, the atelierista supports a focus on the 'aesthetic dimension' or 'poetic languages' (Dalberg & Moss (eds.) in Vecchi, 2010, p. xviii) in order to stimulate "interest in visual languages of both children and adults" and to "extend the term 'language' beyond the verbal" (Millikan, 2010, p. 15). Malaguzzi believed that an expert in the methods, materials and 'languages' of visual arts, would enhance children's aesthetic engagement and be "an important activator for learning" (Dahlberg & Moss (eds.) in Vecchi, 2010, p. xix).

Atelieristi collaborate with children and teachers to develop the work of long-term projects (Millikan, 2010; Vecchi, 2010). They expand the repertoire of materials available and teach techniques to enhance children's use of artistic media to communicate and express ideas (Faini Saab, et al., 2013; New, 2007; Vecchi, 2010). As qualified artists, atelieristi inform and provoke children's capacity to "communicate their understandings through various media" (New, 2007, p. 7). They bring new perspectives to the pedagogical work (Hall, et al., 2010, p. 46), enhance the research processes of pedagogical observation and documentation and partner with teachers to give "value and visibility to work with the children" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 109).

The atelierista is positioned as "a thoughtful, skilful researcher of children's and adults' ways of knowing who, at the same time, remains a playful, nurturing companion in ongoing experiences with children, families, and colleagues" (Cooper, 2012, p. 297). Indeed, rather than limiting the position of the atelierista to a mere support role or specialist teacher of art techniques restricted to weekly lessons, Malaguzzi positioned the atelier and the role of the atelierista as a context where the child's relation with things and people in the

environment are best activated through aesthetic processes (Faini Saab & Stack, 2013; Vecchi, 2010).

Conclusion

Gardner's suggestion that Malaguzzi's sustained connection of philosophy and practice in the Reggio Emilia project surpassed the progressive work of John Dewey's laboratory school has merit (2012). It is important to both identify and consider the alignment between Dewey's philosophy and concepts in Reggio Emilia such as 'the image of the child', 'the hundred languages of children', 'multi-disciplinary project work', 'interest-based projects', 'the environment as third teacher', the 'atelier' and 'atelierista' and the role of the educator as co-constructor and co-researcher with children. Such ideas may have had their genesis in Dewey's ideas about the place of art and aesthetics in educational settings, his respect for children as active learners, the laboratory as a context for multidisciplinary research and his ideas about the role of the teacher and of subject specialists.

This consideration of Dewey's influence on the Italian educational project does not aim to undermine nor devalue the evolution of inspirational praxis in Reggio Emilia. Instead, it celebrates the processes of collaboration and 'borrowing and sharing' of ideas that the Reggio Emilia educators urge students of their approach to adopt as they interpret and adapt the values that underpin their practice for interpretation and adaption in their own contexts (Edwards et al., 2012). Malaguzzi's decision to place an atelier and a visual artist into every local government preschool and infant-toddler centre in Reggio Emilia (Gandini, et al., 2005, p. 7) was revolutionary (Vecchi, 2010), perceptive and courageous (Cooper, 2012). It unified artistic methods and techniques with processes of learning and reformed pedagogy in a manner that Dewey aspired to (New, 2007). Like Dewey before him, Malaguzzi pursued a "living connection between theory and practice" where "theory served to improve practice and practice was oriented to improve theory" (Rankin, 2004, p. 81). Malaguzzi's respect for the application of theory in practice and his reverence for Dewey's philosophy may have created the context for the development of his revolutionary extension of Dewey's ideas.

Dewey held that children's learning and growth develop through experience and interaction with the world and that "the past absorbed into the present carries on; it presses forward" (1934, p. 18). One could say that Dewey's aesthetic vision, and his discussion of art laboratories in schools, supported by specialist art educators, was absorbed into the

foundation of the Reggio Emilia schools. Further, Malaguzzi's courageous and determined introduction and defence of ateliers and atelieristi (Dahlberg & Moss (eds.) in Vecchi, 2010, p. xv) within the revolutionary Reggio Emilia educational project has the potential to press educators forward into enhanced aesthetic experiences with young children. Indeed, Dewey's philosophies of aesthetics, education and democracy as exemplified in the Reggio Emilia educational project continue to offer rich guidance and inspiration for those considering the place and implementation of art methods in their own education contexts.

The research design and methodology for this study are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The research aim to value the voices of participants while respectfully disclosing and interpreting the personal and professional beliefs is best supported through qualitative research designs and methods where respectful inquiry is conducted in natural settings using methods that value the voices of participants and the reflexivity of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). This study employed inductive coding to further generate the thematic categories (Eisner, 1998) to provide structure to a narrative “(re) storytelling of the case studies (Leavey, 2009).

Indeed, qualitative research enables consideration of the research questions from the perspective of the participants, welcomes iterative research design, allows for researcher reflexivity and encourages multiple data collection methods as well as holistic approaches to writing the research findings (Creswell, 2013).

This chapter details the research design and the methods employed to “gather, manage and interpret large amounts of qualitative material” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 14-15). Building on the value for uncertainty outlined in Chapter 1, section 2.11 (Lindsay, 2012), the design and methodology for this dissertation embraces complexity and uncertainty (Dewey, 1934). A traditional qualitative case study design is enriched and overlaid by an arts inspired account of researcher reflexivity.

The chapter begins by reiterating the research questions that guided the choice of qualitative research design. The methodological choices selected for the study are then discussed and theoretically justified. Following this, the chapter describes the scope of the study, selection of cases and participants, limitations and outlines the data collection, analysis and coding methods employed. The choice of case study narrative for the presentation of findings is also outlined. A discussion of both ethical strategies and issues of credibility follows.

Supporting the credibility of the study, the chapter concludes with a book chapter (Lindsay, accepted for publication) that explicitly reveals and values my identity and experience as artist (quilter and stitcher), researcher and teacher (preschool and university).

4.2 Research Questions

The research aims to explore the following questions:

- i. How do educator beliefs inform the planning, pedagogy and provision of visual arts experiences in early childhood contexts?
- ii. How does an educator's pedagogical knowledge inform the planning, methods and provision of visual arts experiences in early childhood contexts?
- iii. How do early experiences and training influence the visual arts beliefs, knowledge, skills and confidence of early childhood educators?

4.3 Methodological choices

Creswell recommendation that qualitative research be justified with clear assumptions, employ a worldview or paradigm, and use a theoretical lens to inquire about the meaning that individuals ascribe to problems was applied (2013).

4.3.1 Research assumptions. Several assumptions justified the selection of qualitative research methodologies. These assumptions are grounded in the reality that:

- Research participants have varying knowledge and experience and hold multiple beliefs;
- The researcher aims to develop a detailed understanding of the research context;
- The researcher makes their own beliefs and values explicit;
- The presentation of the research thesis aims to ensure that research methods and findings are credible and dependable; and
- The methodology is open to change throughout the design and data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013).

4.3.2 Research paradigm: Qualitative case study. Creswell (2013) affirms the most scholarly rationale for a study is that it fills a gap in the literature and provides a voice for individuals not heard in the literature. Yin's (2009, p. 57) replication approach to multiple-case studies positions theory development and reflection as central to the iterative research process. Selected to guide the collection and analysis of rich data, a case study

methodology supported the intent of this study to respectfully represent the voices of participants.

The development of this qualitative dissertation was emergent and iterative, with the selection and stitching together of the data aligning with and informed by the constructed conceptual framework. This co-constructive and evaluative process employed Yin's (2009) case study method, where the definition and design of the research methodology overlaps with processes of preparation, collection, analysis and reporting (see Figure 4.1).

A single case study located in one early childhood service with three participants served as a pilot study in order to test a range of data collection methods and to undertake initial data analysis and coding. Case study design permits methodological alteration throughout the study should early questions or strategies falter or if new issues emerge (Stake, 1995). Therefore, at the conclusion of the pilot study the data collection methods were evaluated and refined before expanding the fieldwork to replicate the study in three additional early childhood with an additional nine participants.

This cyclical process guided data collection and analysis from multiple cases and different perspectives (Yin, 2009) to support comparison and rich description of the visual arts beliefs of early childhood educators located in a range of early childhood education and care services typical of the wider ECEC context in Australia.

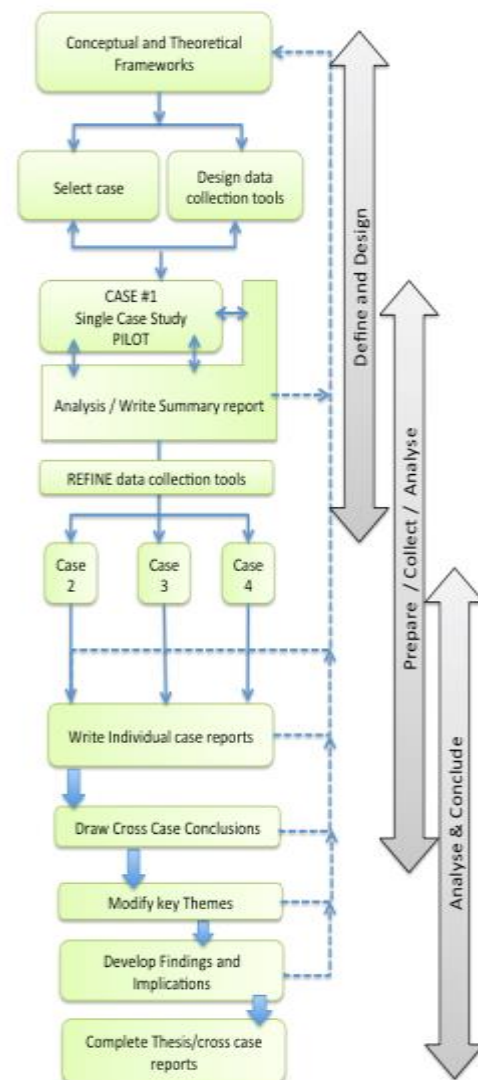


Figure 4.1: Research Plan (Modelled on Yin 2009, p57.)

In conducting this case study research, I embraced the notion that, rather than expecting to “arrive at a singular and unchallengeable slice of knowledge,” I must aim to enhance perspectives and raise important educational questions about the research context (Barone & Eisner 2012, p. 53).

4.3.3 The role of the researcher. The nature of this study requires that the researcher’s role and voice are rendered explicit. The paradigm of Connoisseurship and Criticism was chosen to inform my role as researcher. Connoisseurship and Criticism draws on notions of aesthetic perception and utilises interpretation to describe and illuminate the case being studied (Barone & Eisner, 1997). In this study, the lens of ‘connoisseurship and criticism’ effectively supported the researcher to make the role explicit and to appreciate and disclose the phenomenon being studied for the benefit of both research participants and readers.

Giamminuti (2013, p. 76) notes that this “artistic approach to research” afforded her the capacity to describe, interpret, evaluate and locate thematic values within case study research to enable the reader to experience “vicarious participation” of the phenomena being revealed. Like appreciating a work of art, connoisseurship and criticism values the perceptions and views of the researcher as a possible interpretative resource, whereby experience and knowledge illuminate the situation, while inviting the questions, uncertainties and interpretations of others who view the phenomenon through the eyes of the researcher (Eisner, 1998). Barone and Eisner (1997) explain that:

Connoisseurship is developed when an individual has so refined his or her understanding and perception of a domain that the meanings the individual is able to secure are both complex and subtle. Informed by a body of knowledge they yield what is not obvious. (p. 100)

While the term connoisseur implies the competent application of knowledge and experience in order to appreciate the research context through “critical judgement”, the term criticism often implies “fault finding” (Delbridge, 1986, pp. 125, 142), rather than the disclosure of appreciation described by Barone and Eisner (1997). I therefore explicitly and intentionally employed Dewey’s (1934, p. 312) guidance to exercise “judgement as an act of controlled inquiry”, drawing upon a background of experience and theoretical frames to

apply “disciplined insight” that may support a reading audience to “discriminate and unify” their beliefs about visual arts pedagogy in early childhood contexts.

The aim to render a thesis accessible to early childhood practitioners required that instead of telling educators what to believe (Dewey, 1934, p. 312) it was necessary to present the data and findings in ways that may support vicarious participation and theoretical reflection. Rinaldi (cited in Cadwell, 2003, p. 167) advises that all anyone can do is offer his or her interpretation of events facilitated by an attitude of reciprocal and respectful listening rather than a one sided ‘telling’, stating:

We need the listening of others in order to do this. In listening to each other, it is as if we create an invisible connection between us that allows us each to become who we are. The threads of listening among us form a pattern that connects us to others like a web. Our individual knowledge is a small part of the meaning that holds the universe together.

4.3.4 Theoretical Lens. Multiple threads of Deweyan influence are stitched throughout this thesis. Dewey’s influence on Eisner’s (1998) conception of qualitative educational inquiry operates in complimentary synergy with the constructed conceptual framework that guided the processes of research design, analysis and dissemination. Aubusson (2002), responding to the process of making sense of messy data, advocates for qualitative studies to move beyond mere description to develop new conceptual frameworks by which events and phenomena may be better understood and explained systematically. Therefore, as introduced in Chapter 1 and expanded upon in Chapter 3, the key tenets of the Reggio Emilia educational project were aligned with John Dewey’s philosophies of art, education and democracy to develop the constructivist conceptual framework by which the research data was described, interpreted and thematically coded. The four-part conceptual framework, positioned upon a constructivist base, facilitated data analysis within the categories of visual arts, environment, image of the child and the role of the teacher.

4.4 Scope of the study

In total, four case studies were selected and invited to participate in the research. Initially, a single, bounded, pilot study case was purposively selected to richly describe and

interpret the current situation for a group of three educators within a single early childhood education and care setting (Stake, 1995). The purposeful selection of three educators in each case was determined to yield deep insights into educator beliefs and to “maximise” what could be learned within manageable and non-intrusive timeframes (Stake 1995, p. 4).

Following the data collection and initial coding of data, the study was expanded to include an additional three cases in a multiple comparative case study design. The purposeful sampling of multiple cases using replication logic enabled the alignment and comparison of data across the cases in support of a more compelling and robust exploration of the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of the participants (Yin, 2009). The analytic benefits in selecting multiple cases are substantial (Yin, 2009). Replicating the pilot study methodology, three participants were purposively selected from each of the three selected services to enable multiple embedded units of analysis and comparison between multiple cases (Yin, 2009).

The ECEC services selected were located in two regional cities in the Illawarra region of the state of New South Wales (NSW) in Australia. The main criteria for selecting the cases were convenience, ease of access and geographic proximity (Yin, 2009). In addition, the selection of potential case study locations was purposefully restricted to classrooms with children aged three to five years in long day care and preschool services. The educators in the chosen classrooms were both degree qualified early childhood teachers (DQT) and vocationally trained early childhood educators (VTE) who had shared responsibility for curriculum design and delivery.

These settings and service types were typical of ECEC services across Australia (Yin, 2009). As ECEC services in Australia have a complex variety of management structures, the case study sites were also purposively selected from not-for-profit, independently-managed services to minimise comparisons between the humanistic and economic motivators of early childhood service provision (Campbell-Barr, 2014).

The ECEC director and management committee of each potential case study site were invited to participate, following a phone call and visit to each ECEC service. A detailed description of the proposed research was provided firstly to the management body of each service. The preschool director nominated staff to be considered for the study and

this was based on the identification of team of educators currently working with children aged three to five and upon the needs of service routines and schedules.

The ethical procedures applied in this study are outlined in part 4.9 of this chapter. Once approval to proceed was granted, each educator in the nominated classroom was provided with information and consent forms and the opportunity to speak in person with the researcher. To support transparency and ethical practice, participant consent forms were distributed and collected not only from the participant educators, but from the families of children that would be in attendance on the day of the week nominated for data collection visits at each service.

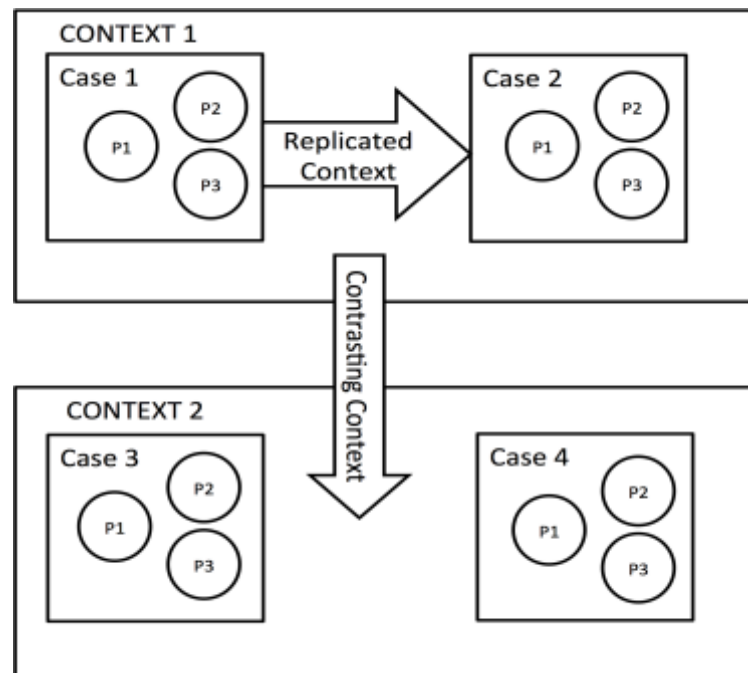


Figure 4.2: Multiple comparative case study.

4.4.1 Replicated case study settings and participants. Building on the lessons learned during the data collection and initial data analysis of the pilot study, the selection of the additional cases was motivated by the ambiguous theoretical foundations for practice revealed in the pilot case study. This highlighted the need to select cases that might enable comparisons between services exhibiting a lack of theoretical direction with early childhood contexts that articulated overt philosophical or theoretical foundations. A list of potential education and care services for the multiple comparative case study phase of the

fieldwork was identified through analysis of information, curriculum and marketing documents located on service websites.

This analysis of available information identified services similar to the pilot case, where no particular philosophical or theoretical position was articulated in policy, philosophy or marketing documents (Context 1); and services that overtly attribute their practice to a particular philosophical or theoretical inspiration, such as the Reggio Emilia approach (Context 2). From this list of potential settings, three additional early childhood education and care services were invited to participate in the study in order to both replicate and contrast with the pilot study context (Yin, 2009).

In total twelve participants from four early childhood services participated in the study (see Figure 3.2). As Yin (2009) explains, such designs enhance the researcher’s insight into both multiple and bound cases. The comparison of contrasting philosophies, beliefs and practices between multiple embedded units of analysis facilitates the clarification of emerging themes about the visual arts beliefs and philosophies that influence visual arts pedagogy.

4.4.2 Participants. The case study sites are detailed in Table 4.1. In order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were allocated to the early childhood service and to all participants (Yin, 2009).

Table 4.1: Case study participants

Service Name	Children per day	Age group	Classroom grouping	Weeks / year + hours open	Number of educators in service
Koala LDC	34	0-5	1 x 0-3 years 1 x 3-5 years	48 weeks 8am-6pm	10
Possum Preschool	40	3-5	2 x 3-5 years	40 weeks 8am-4pm	9
Bilby LDC	59	0-5	1 x 0-2 years 1 x 2-3 years 1 x 3-5 years	51 weeks 8am-6pm	13
Wombat Preschool	40	3-5	2 x 3-5 years	40 weeks 8am-4pm	8

4.5 Limitations

A limitation of the case study methodology was that participants, despite being selected as typical, might not have expressed beliefs and practices representative of the wider early childhood education and care community in Australia. As a context bound case this study cannot be replicated as different findings may result if the study was replicated (Cutcher & Boyd, 2016). This issue of external reliability in case study research was managed through detailed documentation of the case study methodology so that, if a later investigator followed the same procedures, they could reliably test the theories generated in their own context (Yin, 2009).

Time can be a limitation as this study was not longitudinal in nature, with the researcher being embedded in the location for a specific time.

Another consideration is the willingness of participants to share personal reflections about their beliefs and pedagogy. Some participants were more willing to open up and share their beliefs and vulnerabilities than others. I was highly conscious of the imperative to nurture a trusting, accepting relationship with the participants and to maintain respectful protocols of engagement so that they might consider me an interested colleague, rather than a judge of their beliefs and practice (Yin, 2009). As Stake (1995) encourages, the research aim was to “enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning” about what educators think about and believe regarding visual arts pedagogy and to explore how these beliefs are enacted in their daily practice.

The selection of data tools constituted a potential limitation. The evaluation of data collection tools during the pilot study phase of the research, along with an openness to change the data collection methods if necessary, mitigated somewhat for the risk that the tools selected might not yield useful data.

The issue of potential researcher bias due to my previous role as a teacher and director of ECEC services in the region was also an important limitation to monitor and to guard against. This was managed through intentional processes of self-reflection while transcribing and analysing data. In this regard, I embraced Malaguzzi’s exhortation to “never have too many certainties” (1998, p. 52) along with Dewey’s reminder that reflective inquiry is born from experiences of doubt (Garrison, 1996).

It is also important to remember that the goal of a case study is not to generalise to other cases but to generalise to theory (Yin, 2009) and to support the reader to make naturalistic generalisation through richly constructed stories about the cases in support of vicarious experience (Stake 1995). As Eisner (2001) explains, qualitative research can support reflective practice and enhancement of educational practice:

The generalizations derived from qualitative case studies are essentially heuristic devices intended to sharpen perception so that our patterns of seeking and seeing are more acute. We don't use the generalizations drawn from the specific case to draw conclusions about other situations but, rather, we use them to search those situations more efficiently. (p. 141)

Barone & Eisner (2012) note that the goal of educational research is not to generate superficial truths, but to aim for deep illumination of the situation.

4.6 Data collection methods

Case study research gathers data from multiple sources in support of a credible account (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2013). Yin (2009, p. 70) describes this as good listening through “multiple modalities” so that a sense of “what might be going on” can be revealed by the case. Several data collection methods were employed including observation, environmental analysis consisting of field notes and photographs of the environments and visual arts material provisions, document analysis and interviews to gather rich data and describe the visual arts beliefs and practice of the participants within the early childhood education and care (ECEC) context. The pilot study data collection and early data analysis processes particularly informed the evaluation of each method and refined the phases of data collection prior to replicating the study with three additional ECEC services.

As the research goal was to better understand the experience of the participants within their context; to hear their individual and collective stories and to give expression to their lived experience (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009; Creswell, 2013), it was important to select data collection methods that would yield the most useful information about the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of the participants. Each of the methods employed during the pilot study, along with the modifications applied to the expanded multiple case studies, are now described.

4.6.1 Pre-visits: Initial observations and photographic documentation. The pilot study data collection commenced with a visit to the service to build trust with participants, children and other staff (Yin, 2009). This strategy was replicated within the subsequent expanded study. The duration of the initial visits was flexible and open ended in order to fit in with the routines of the service and accommodate the needs of children and staff. The pre-visits generally lasted between three to four hours. During the initial visits to the participant services photographs of the environment were gathered, particularly noting the presence and presentation of visual arts learning experiences and displays. The location of visual arts supplies and storage facilities were documented. Written field notes documented layout, provisions and initial impressions of the researcher. Policy documents, including the service philosophy, curriculum and education policies were also collected during the initial visit. This opportunity to observe and reflect informed the development of interview questions and points for further observation.

4.6.2 Environmental Audits. Within each case study four environmental audits across the six-month data collection period facilitated the targeted observation and documentation of visual arts provisions. This strategy was employed because the environmental provisions made within an educational setting determine the qualities and possibilities of learning opportunities available to children (Ceppi & Zini, 1998). Further to this, Manning, Garvis, Flemming and Wong (2015) suggest that the knowledge and qualifications of educators determined the quality of learning provisions made for children. Aligned with this, in Reggio Emilia environmental spaces and material provisions are positioned as the third teacher and as a source of “educational provocation and insight” (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007, p. 40). Environmental audits were therefore selected as a potentially rich source of data about the interplay between educator beliefs and the planning and provision of visual arts materials and experiences.

Detailed documentation and photography of visual arts materials, both those available to children and those in storage, was undertaken to identify patterns in the provisions and the usage rates of visual arts materials. Any displayed artwork by children or others was also documented. Repeated audits of visual arts storage areas revealed preferences and contradictions regarding the purchase, access and provision of visual arts materials. The considerable time required to re-document each audit phase during the pilot

study, was rectified within the expanded case studies by developing an electronic checklist for each location following the initial audit. This modification simplified the documentation of changes and additions as well as the recording of unchanged materials during the subsequent phases of the environmental audit process.

4.6.3 Document analysis. Prior to commencing data collection, it was anticipated that policy documents, curriculum planning documents and daily pedagogical documentation in each participant service would reveal the services' approach to visual arts pedagogy and serve to highlight gaps between policy, rhetoric and observed practice. Eisner (1998, p. 184) explains that such documents often "reveal what people will not or cannot say." Indeed, the presence or absence of written pedagogical reflections reveal much about professional practice (Larrivee, 2005).

The weakness of this data source was the variation in detail and quality between the policy and procedure documents in each case. On the other hand, the very absence of explicit links to visual arts policy and practice revealed a great deal about the priority placed on visual arts curricula at each setting, affirming Ewing's (2010) report that while some Australian children access intentional arts planning and implantation, many more do not.

During the pilot study the absence of planning and documentation records guided this researcher to compliment the analysis of documents with the analysis of photographs shared with the families in a daily computer slide show. Stake (1995, p. 55) affirms that researchers, while prepared to concentrate on particular things, must be open to the "unanticipated happenings that reveal the nature of the case." The analysis of policy and planning documents facilitated the collection of data that was reflective of daily practice by integrating "real-world events with the needs of the data collection plan" (Yin, 2009, p. 83).

4.6.4 Interviews. Guided by Jensen's (2006) belief that participants' spoken words represent their thinking and enlighten understandings about the educational worlds in which they operate, individual interviews were conducted with each participant on three occasions during the data collection cycle. Guided by Creswell (2013) interviews were recorded to facilitate memory, accurate quotations and sufficient details to provide a context for credible interpretation. Written research notes were also taken to record nuance, researcher reflections and perceived attitudinal responses. Each interview lasted for one hour on

average, resulting in approximately forty hours of recorded interview content. Interviews were conducted in offices or classrooms in the participant ECEC settings. The interview questions were designed to elicit descriptions about participants' personal beliefs regarding visual arts learning and pedagogy; their visual arts self-efficacy and visual arts knowledge; and about the theoretical perspectives that inform their work with children. I was mindful of Yin's (2009) advice to persistently maintain a focus on the planned line of inquiry, while asking unbiased and conversational questions that serve the needs of the line of inquiry. I also sought to listen intently and to ask questions that focussed on concrete examples and feelings based in the participants' personal experience (Eisner, 1998).

Based on pre-determined questions, the first two interviews with each participant, were open-ended and conversational in nature (Yin, 2009). The final interviews conducted at the end of the data collection period were individualised and provided the opportunity to recheck and revisit questions that had emerged throughout the fieldwork and the cycle of data analysis. During the final interview participants were also shown a collection of images representing the wide range of visual arts materials and techniques typically observed in early childhood visual arts contexts. Photo-elicitation, an interview research method described by Felstead, Jewson & Walters (2004) served to illicit participant responses to reveal their knowledge and attitudes toward different visual arts materials and processes. Along with note-taking, interviews were recorded for later transcription and analysis.

Transcriptions of the pilot study interview recordings enabled the effectiveness of both the interview questions and the interview style to be evaluated. This process yielded significant data, affirmed the range and focus of the interview questions and enabled initial coding of the data to commence. The same interview cycle and bank of interview questions were utilised throughout the expanded multiple case study, while the transcription of interview recordings was outsourced to enable timely processes of member checking and data analysis.

4.7. Timeline

The six-month timeline plan for the data collection cycle accommodated holiday and scheduled breaks between four phases of data collection. These breaks enabled responsive flexibility around scheduled events and unexpected occurrences in the settings.

Additionally, they allowed for data transcription, analysis and member checking between each phase.

4.8 Data analysis.

Educator beliefs are knotted within a tangle of participant histories, training, experience and context. Like Aubusson (2002, p. 2), “the interconnectedness of the all the varied factors” in the study defeated any straightforward methods of description and analysis. To understand the beliefs, issues and contexts of the cases required that I review the data “again and again, reflecting, triangulating and being sceptical about first impressions or simple meanings” (Stake, 1995, p. 78).

Following each data collection visit, in addition to reviewing and coding the interview transcripts, the researcher’s handwritten notes, sketches and photographs were reviewed. As I undertook this process, I reviewed the RE(D) framework and the guiding reflective questions inspired by it (See Appendices D.6 and D7) to repeatedly sort and regroup the participants’ comments and my notes and questions into categories and blocks of data in an iterative and non-linear approach to data analysis (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002).

Additionally, in my role as connoisseur and critic of the case, I consciously reflected on my own experience and knowledge in the identification of data codes and themes. It was important to remind myself throughout the process that my (re)presentation of data, while aiming to genuinely express the perspectives of the participants, also reflected my own interpretations. Fordon (2000) also proposes innovative ways to engage with data about the observed case using vernacular language and non-literary devices. I therefore supplemented the process of data sorting and coding with mind and concept maps, diagrams and visual arts informed diagrams to artistically reflect on the layers and complexities of the research process. This interplay between the data, theory and researcher reflection added depth to the analysis process and findings (Sumsion, 2006).

As the study evolved, I utilised two key strategies to analyse and sort the growing stash of data into themes and patterns. These strategies included thematic coding and concept mind-mapping. Similar to the quilting technique of cutting, rearranging and stitching small pieces of fabric into larger patterned blocks, Creswell (2013) affirms experimentation with multiple tools for analysis to deconstruct data before rearranging it

into new forms. These tools were utilised for data analysis separately within each of the four bounded cases before undertaking cross-case analysis to develop and interpret the broader meanings embedded in the data (Creswell, 2013).

4.8.1 Initial Coding. The case study data, commencing with the pilot study, was initially coded without any pre-conceived categories applied. Rather, each line of data was read, analysed and organised into groups utilising both categorical aggregation and direct interpretation (Stake, 1995) to uncover and refine the emergent themes (Stewart, 2007). I categorised both the factual information available as well as seeking out the hidden meanings of professional practice within the messages being presented by the participants and by the environment (Goodfellow, 2003). Broad categories related to the research questions supported reflection about the experiences, knowledge and beliefs the participants were sharing with me as well as the messages presented by the environment. NVivo software for qualitative analysis was used for the initial storage and coding of the pilot study data. The broad themes that became evident focussed on educator beliefs about:

- The environment and materials;
- The role of the teacher;
- How children learn and engage in visual arts;
- Educator visual arts knowledge, skills and self-efficacy;
- The purposes and benefits of visual arts in early childhood contexts; and
- Broad beliefs about visual arts and visual arts education.

Initially overwhelmed by the conflicting and competing discourses expressed by the participants regarding arts versus crafts, process versus product and intentional versus non-intervention pedagogies, I developed a visual trope to represent the tangled nature of the case study themes (see Figure 4.3).

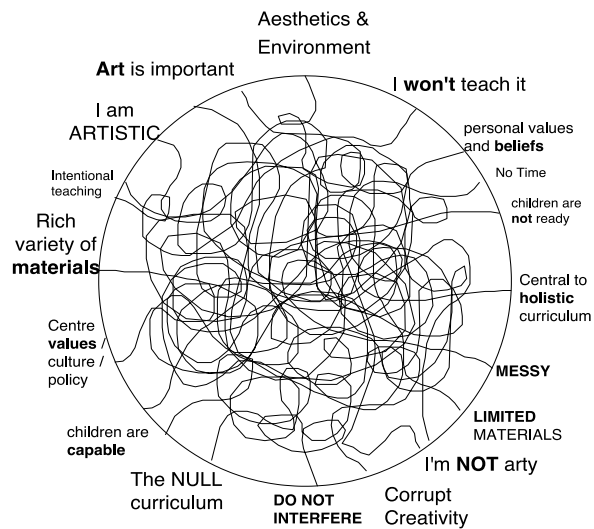


Figure 4.3: The tangle of beliefs.

4.8.2 Excel coding. As the thematic codes became more refined, it was clear that the NVivo software was not sustainable for the analysis of subsequent data collected within the multiple comparative case study. To apply the functionality of NVivo beyond the initial coding phase would have demanded a time investment not justified by the numbers of participants and amount of data. Instead, the already coded data was transferred into an excel spreadsheet to support ease of access to the data and straightforward arrangement and rearrangement of the data. Creswell (2013) notes that matrices are very useful for data sorting and coding. The functionality of the excel platform enabled the data to be coded, categorised and further refined utilising tabs for the broad themes; and the axes of the spreadsheet for grouping participant quotes, references to documents and links to the environmental audits under a range of subthemes. The search capacities of the Excel tool also enabled links between data categories to be easily explored and identified (see Appendix C.1 for an example).

4.8.3 Mind-mapping and concept mapping. While the development of codes and themes began to make sense of the complex interplay of educator beliefs, skills, knowledge and practice, the need to explore the connections between these ideas was supported by both mind-mapping and concept mapping. Dey (1993, p. 48) identifies that studying the correlations between classified categories can form an image of the “data which is both

clearer and more complex than our initial impressions.” The mapping of ideas with mind-maps and concept-maps enabled a visual and non-linear exploration of the relationships between variables (Brightman, 2003). Mind maps illustrated the association of ideas in a way that linear forms of data analysis could not. In this way, a central thematic concept provoked a radially organised structure of key words and connected ideas (Brightman, 2003). While sometimes messy and disorganised, mind-maps proved to be a useful strategy to summarise the connection of key concepts in the data (see Figure 4.4).

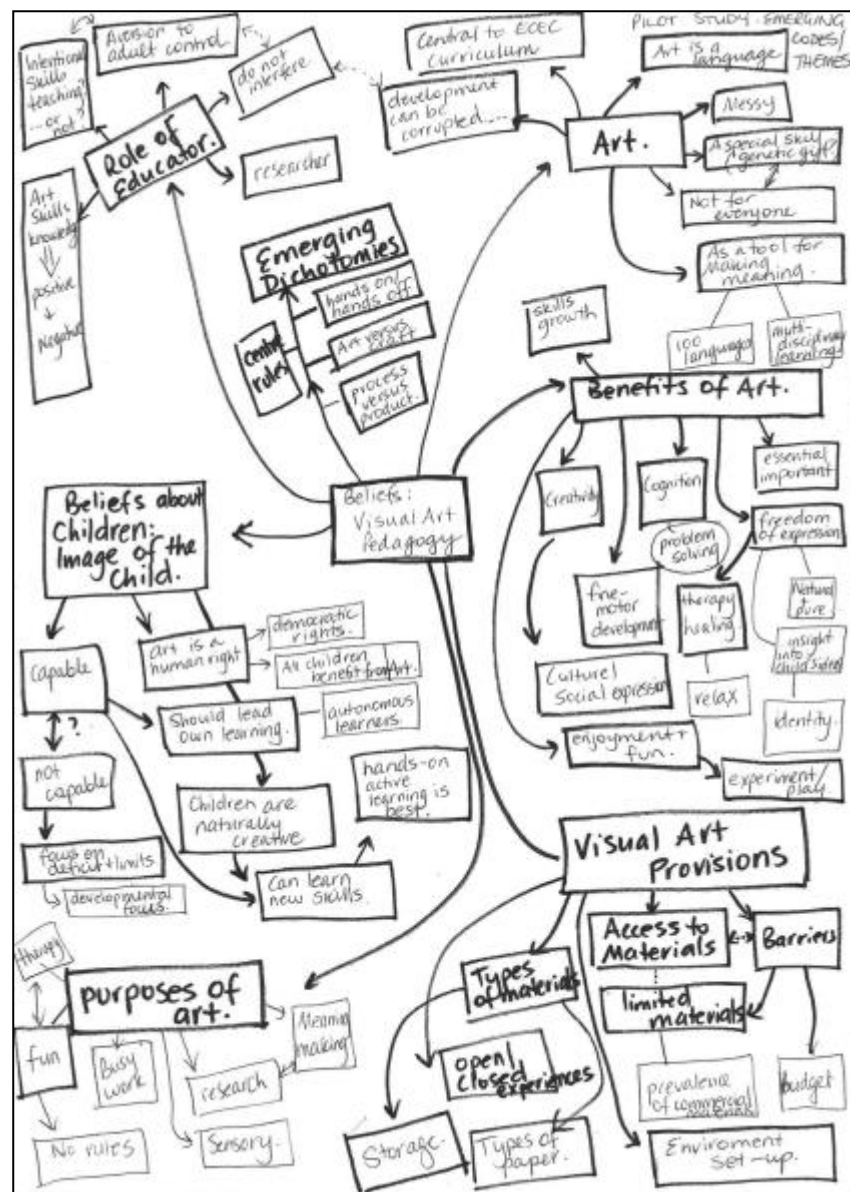


Figure 4.4: Mindmap: Visual arts pedagogical beliefs

Concept mapping illustrated the relationships between concepts to present propositions that demonstrate my interpretations of the data (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). I reflected on the data to make proposals by connecting two or more concepts with linking words. Brightman (2003) explains that this can provide new insights into the information being mapped. Using imagery and visual symbols, mapping affords an economical way to communicate ideas (Dey, 1993; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). By explicitly presenting the relationships between ideas, maps encourage critical thinking, clarify ideas and develop interpretations and views about a subject (Brightman, 2003). Used as a qualitative data analysis tool, it can help to “organize research, reduce data, analyse themes, and present findings” (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009, p. 71).

The positioning and connecting of concepts and proposals on maps supported the exploration of causal connections in the data. This process was undertaken to visualise data about individual participants, and to explore emerging themes within each bounded case study before applying the process to the cross-case analysis of key themes and proposals. For example, the data surrounding educator beliefs and pedagogy about visual arts provisions was explored using a concept-map (see Figure 4.5). Like the messy and intuitive process of selecting, cutting and categorising fabric, mapping is “exploratory and suggestive, drawing out the threads of analysis, rather than organising or classifying data in any systematic way” (Dey, 1993, p. 112). Further to this, mapping and the process of graphic question asking, provided a guide for further and more systematic analysis of the key themes and propositions (Dey, 1993).

4.9 Ethical strategies

A range of ethical strategies were employed throughout the study to minimise the likelihood that my presence as researcher would violate the needs and well-being of the research participants or disrupt the children’s regular educational program (Stake, 1995). Although children were not directly participants in the study, the location of the case studies within early childhood settings additionally required ethical consideration for the safety and wellbeing of the children and families in the service. Consequently, my current working with children check clearance was provided to participant services as an assurance of my safety credentials.

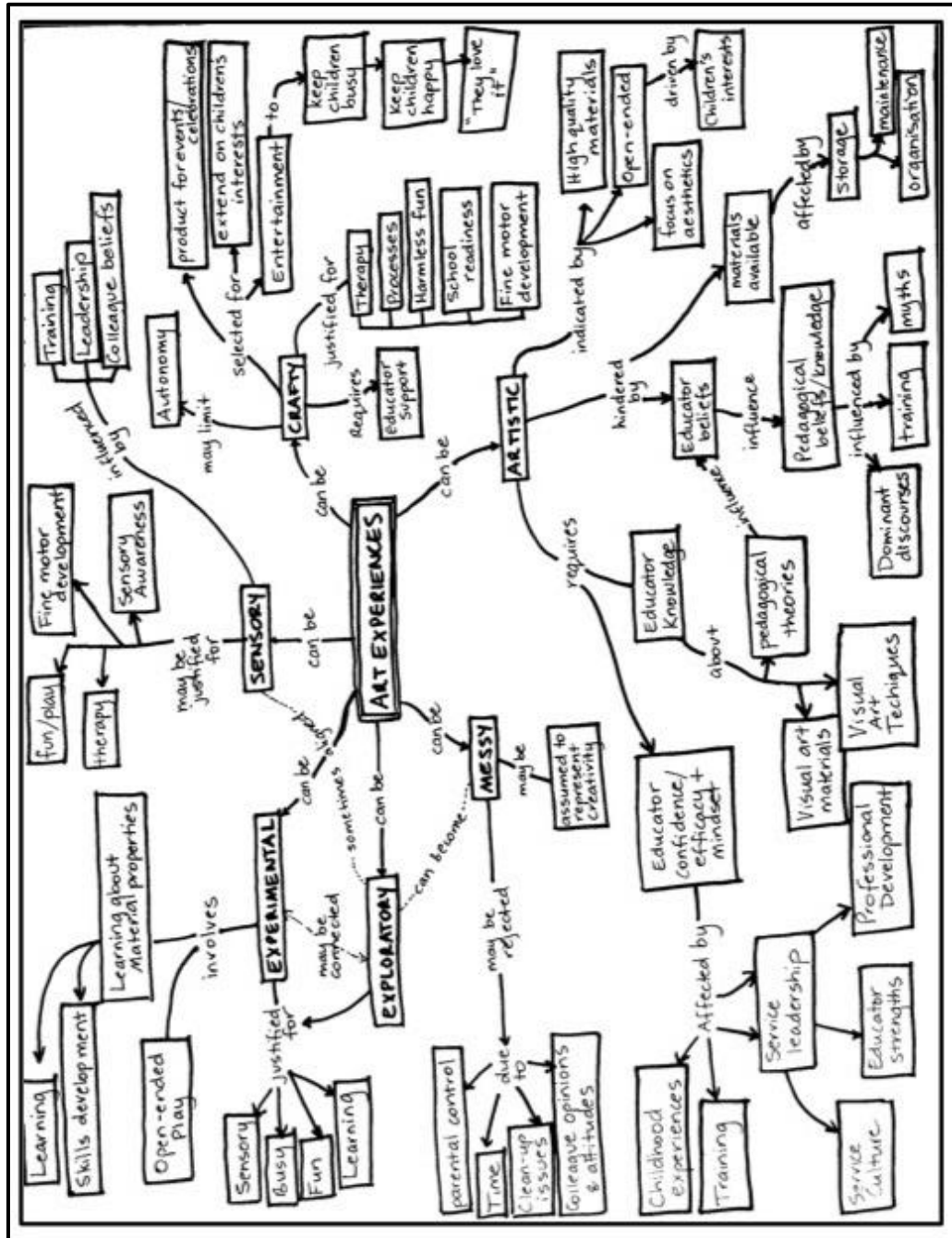


Figure 4.5: Concept map: Visual arts experiences

To ensure ethical research practice this study complied with the University of Wollongong's human research ethics policies, the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and received approval from the human research ethics committee, prior to commencing data collection. Approval to conduct the research was gained from both leadership and management teams at each research location (Creswell, 2013). Introductory letters offered the opportunity for the management, staff and families at the preschool to meet with me to clarify information about the research project (Stake, 1995, Yin, 2009). I gathered informed and written consent from the research participants and from the guardians of any children who would be present in each early childhood service while I was in attendance (Stake, 1995).

All participants were informed of their rights to maintain confidentiality, withdraw consent and cease participation in the study at any time. Meetings, interviews and data collection were scheduled at times most suitable for the participants and to minimise disruption to children's educational program. The research maintained high level of sensitivity when questioning participants about their personal and professional beliefs. I developed clear protocols to begin and end the research process, with consideration for the needs and feelings of participants. Stake (1995, p. 59) suggests that "a quiet entry is highly desirable" and that a parting gift to compensate for the time and intrusion at the site can support the participants to feel supported and valued. Therefore, a familiarisation visit commenced the research at each location and at the conclusion of the data collection process each participant service was given the gift of a visual arts resource.

4.9.1 Member checking. Stake (1995) advise that sharing data transcriptions, interpretations and reflections with research participants supports their perspectives, beliefs and experiences to be accurately documented and clarifies the accuracy and credibility of the account. In addition, Eisner (1998) affirms that consensual validation is a form of evidence to be employed in educational connoisseurship and criticism. All participants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts of each of their three interviews and to add comments or clarifications to their responses. This opportunity was presented within one month of each interview to support clear recall and to ensure that any clarifications could be made in a timely manner. None of the participants responded to this offer, beyond

affirming that they were satisfied with the transcript. This may be due in part to the nature of working in early childhood settings. In consideration of such time pressures, I routinely mentioned the previous interview at each subsequent meeting, verbally checking that participants had received the transcript; asking whether there was anything of concern; and, inviting participants to raise additional comments or questions either in person or via e-mail.

Additionally, in the final interview with each participant, issues or questions that had emerged from analysis of the first two interviews were raised. This not only provided the opportunity to clarify the participants' views on particular aspects of their previous responses, but also provided the participants with the opportunity to revisit their opinions and beliefs. Leading up to and throughout the data collection and data analysis process, I maintained a determination to respect the generous contribution of the participants and to be sensitive to each participant's beliefs (Creswell, 2013) in order to respectfully honour and disclose the voices and consequent pedagogical stance of the participants in this study.

4.9.2 Confidentiality. Participant confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection with all electronic recordings and transcripts stored in a password-protected repository. As previously outlined pseudonyms were applied to all of the participant early childhood service and educators and to the names of the early childhood services (Creswell, 2013). A coding system was applied for anonymity. For example, when transcribing interview data for interview two for Eva at Possum preschool, this was coded as PEI.2 (Possum Eva Interview 2). Similarly, coded initials for each participant service pseudonym were applied to de-identify policy and curriculum documents. For example, the Wombat Preschool Learning Environment and Provisions Policy was coded as W.LEPP. Care was taken to avoid the inclusion of identifying information in photographic documentation and permission was granted to include these images in this thesis.

4.10 Warranted assertability

This research aimed to present a credible account of the participant's visual arts beliefs, pedagogy and contexts; while disclosing the researcher's beliefs, biases, assumptions and perspectives about the multiple-comparative case studies. As Eisner (1998; 2003) outlines, rather than asserting global truth or a claim of validity, it is more desirable to put together a credible account of the case by using multiple sources of data.

Such a focus supports the practice of listening (Garrison 1996) to ‘give voice’ to the perspectives and localised experience of the research participants. Like art, qualitative research combines perception, interpretation, expression and communication. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that it is not possible to arrive one singular truth or perception, because, as Eisner (1998, p.46) states, “what we come to see depends upon what we seek, and what we seek, depends...on what we know how to say.” Similarly, Dewey believed that the development of knowledge through inquiry is an artistic construction whereby any claim of understanding must be accompanied by a contingent acceptance that different times and contexts may yield different perceptions (Garrison, 1996, p. 445-446).

Dewey positioned the processes of inquiry and critique as a reflective thinking tool that can support us to understand the nature and limits of our prevailing viewpoints about educational practice (Schechter, 2011). Building on Dewey’s definition of thinking as a process of doubt and inquiry, Schechter (2011) explains that critique must be accompanied by an attitude of tentativeness and revision, where the search for understanding is strengthened through theoretical interpretation. This study therefore adopts Dewey’s conception of warranted assertability to guide the intent to appreciate and respectfully disclose the voices and lived experience of the participants.

4.11 Stitched metaphors.

In this study, the process of constructing conceptual frameworks and qualitative design elements to effectively connect research goals to theoretical paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) repeatedly yielded visual imagery and terminology reminiscent of the processes of quilt design and construction. Similar to Creswell’s (2007) alignment of qualitative research with the threads, colours and textures of woven fabric, metaphorical imagery repeatedly dominated my personal expression and reflection about of the research process.

From the very early stages of my doctoral candidature I determined to visually document key milestones using the language of thread, fabric and text. This satisfied a desire to aesthetically anchor my expressive self within the often-overwhelming structures of academic research and the demands of the academy. Barone (2000) affirms that it is appropriate to acknowledge the human purposes and values that influence the production

and consumption of texts. To acknowledge my interests, values and purposes as a researcher was imperative, not only to support a credible account (Eisner, 1998), but to position myself authentically within the research process.

Indeed, to undertake the research design process in a linear, procedural or routine fashion would not have satisfied my requirement for aesthetic synergy, flexibility and connection throughout the development of the thesis. Supporting this paradoxical desire, Stewart (2007) suggests “practices in the arts and education by their very nature, are underpinned by structure and improvisation, order and creativity, experience and intuition” (p. 126). Further to this, Eisner (2001) encouraged qualitative researchers to be like artists and move beyond telling to communicate in creative and visual ways, while Dewey (1934) reminds us that “when there is genuine artistry in scientific inquiry and philosophic speculation, a thinker proceeds neither by rule, nor yet blindly, but by means of meanings that exist immediately as feelings having qualitative colour” (p. 125).

The application of Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER) to support processes of researcher reflexivity and self-expression of the research experience, while unusual in a case study context it has been employed successfully in previous studies. For example, Fels and Irwin (2008) explain that when researchers innovatively weave theory, practice and arts-based traditions together, they create stories that reveal several perspectives. Sinner (2006) outlines a range of dissertations that have combined ABER values with the development of narrative case study methods.

In the early childhood research context Probine (2017) combined traditional qualitative methods with elements of ABER to engage in self-reflexive practice while gathering data about children’s art-making, noting that qualitative methodologies are not incongruous with qualitative case study methods. Indeed, several scholars note that processes of ABER provide ways to not only examine the experience of research participants, but to facilitate opportunities for researcher reflexivity and self-expression about their research experience (Barone, 2008; Bomugil, 2015; Probine, 2017).

The metaphor of a researcher’s voice as the stitch that designs, constructs and holds together a qualitative research quilt supported me to reflexively position myself within the research design and methodology. The following book chapter (Lindsay, accepted for publication) positions the researcher as a qualitative quilt-maker. It adopts an arts-based

educational research lens to overtly identify my own role in the research process and describe the aesthetic and creative choices I utilised to make sense of the research process.

“Stitching” Voices into the Patchwork Quilt of Qualitative Research (Lindsay, accepted for publication)

Abstract

A dissertation, envisaged as a ‘patchwork quilt’, is articulated and diagrammatically constructed from card, text, thread and transparent parchment to position the researcher as ‘quilt-maker’. The voices of participants and researcher are stitched into the patchwork layers of arts-based educational research that examines explored the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of early childhood educators, while informing the emergent and reflexive construction of a thesis by compilation.

To Assemble and Stitch a Research Dissertation

When I learnt the art of patchwork quilting, the elderly teacher bemoaned the need to hold a quilt together with stitches. The joy in quilting, she explained, stems from a delight in fabrics, colours and the quilt design. She joked that were it possible to ‘whack a quilt together’ with glue, it would be preferable to the labour-intense process of assembly by stitching. However, to ‘short-cut’ the assembly process would not produce a quilt likely to be appreciated for its beauty, stability or warmth. I extend this notion to the doctoral thesis process.

Beginning doctoral research after more than twenty years as an early childhood teacher, the complex task of layering and constructing a piece of work with value for both myself and my colleagues in the early childhood sector demanded a methodological approach that would appreciate and feature the voices of participants, while acknowledging my own labour of love in crafting the research. I intuitively sought ways to retain my identity, while making sense of the complexities of research design and satisfying the expectations of the academy. As a quilter, I found myself increasingly applying familiar quilting terminology to visualise research processes and elements. Advised by my supervisors to investigate the arts-based educational research paradigm, I consequently embraced the invitation by Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis & Grauer (2006, p. 1254) to

“muse on the aesthetics, consider the ambiguity, and reside in the divergence,” which ultimately led me to visually deconstruct qualitative research and the dissertation construction process using a quilting metaphor.

Much like a quilt, the construction of an effective research design requires the alignment or “methodological congruence” of questions, aims and methods wherein the elements of the research project are joined together as a cohesive whole rather than fragmented parts (Creswell, 2013, p. 50). My desire to conduct iterative research that appreciates the complexities of the case to reflexively evoke meaning (Flannery, 2001; Koelsch, 2012) was concurrently tempered by Creswell’s (2013) suggestion that to credibly articulate the beliefs and interests of both participants and researcher requires a carefully-constructed, intentionally pieced research design. Inspired by O’Donoghue (2015), these imperatives compelled me to embrace the provocative mind-set of an artist to articulate my ideas visually and to connect the familiar to the unknown in order to make sense of the world (and the research context) through artful design.

This chapter describes and illustrates how my dissertation operates as a qualitative patchwork quilt, a metaphor developed to guide arts-based educational research that aims to not only appreciate and respectfully disclose the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of early childhood educators, but to explore, interrogate and articulate my own voice, interests and methodological reflections within the complex construction of a PhD thesis by publication. I propose that not only is my rendered researcher’s voice the stitch that holds together the assemblage of research findings, but also that my intentionally hidden voice, slip-stitched into the seams and in-between spaces of the research story, further strengthens and stabilises the dissertation. The complex layers and processes of research design and thesis construction are metaphorically aligned with the notions and elements of quilt making to propose a reversible research quilt where the pieced construction of an enlightening conceptual framework features equally with the research findings as a contribution to the academy.

The imperative to undertake a PhD thesis emerged from my own “professional” and “educational” life (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1237) and was underpinned by my desire to present research “that matters for others” (Chambers, 2004, p. 7). After two decades as an early childhood teacher I was concerned about the pedagogical impacts of an apparent

lack of visual arts confidence and content knowledge amongst early childhood educators. My research therefore presents an exploration, appreciation and articulation of the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of twelve early childhood educators located in four early childhood education and care settings in two regional communities in New South Wales, Australia. A comparative case-study design utilised interviews, observation, document analysis, environmental audits and photography to gather rich data. At the same time my research aims to stitch together a dissertation that connects the expectations of the academy with my own desire for expressivity. Supporting this desire, Eisner (1997) encourages researchers to align qualitative methods with their personal interests, strengths and aptitudes. My use of familiar quilting terms progressively demystified the complexity of research design and enabled me to embrace my identity as a researcher and align it with my identity as a teacher and artist.

Quilt Layers and Research Layers

While others have previously utilised a quilt metaphor to linguistically describe the assemblage of research data (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Flannery, 2001; Khalifa, 2003; Koelsch, 2012; Parr, 2010), I extend the metaphor to interrogate and a/r/tographically (Sinner et al., 2006) visualise the layered components and construction of research dissertation. Parson's (2015) suggestion that metaphors can be visually illustrated inspired me to construct stitched diagrams from card, text, thread and transparent parchment to enlighten the layers and components of the research design process. Indeed, the images presented in this chapter offer a methodological metaphor by aligning visual makings and text.

A patchwork quilt is constructed from a decorative, pieced top layer, a fabric backing and, between these layers, a piece of wadding. The three layers are sandwiched and held together by a decorative running stitch known as the quilting stitch (see Image 4.1). Aligning quilting with research, Flannery (2001) suggests that the quilt top represents the research data that is seen by others and that the backing of the quilt, while not readily visible, aligns with the knowledge and expertise that underpin processes of inquiry. She further aligns the completed quilt with the publication of findings (Flannery, 2001). While my research design shares several metaphorical design elements with Flannery's imagery, it extends upon these ideas to consider both the component layers of the research design as

well as the dissertation construction. I now share my emergent journey as a researcher, aligning quilt-making layers and steps within my research study and positioning myself as the stitch that constructs, connects and embellishes the multiple elements of the research dissertation.

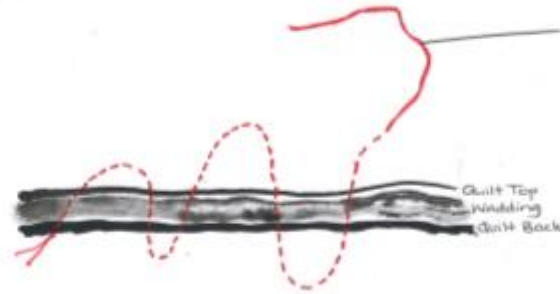


Image 4.1: The quilting stitch holds three constructed layers together

Commencing the Construction of a Qualitative Research Quilt

The first phase of my research journey was an overwhelming tangle of confrontation between my prior knowledge and experience, my desire to gather information that would matter, my developing identity as a research student and the demands of constructing a PhD proposal within the new and unfamiliar constraints of academia. The processes of reading, wondering, data collecting and musing, alongside the multitude of decisions to determine theory, epistemology and methodology are aligned with the early stages of quilt construction (see Image 4.2). This helped me to appreciate the necessity in gathering, sorting and even rejecting some of the ideas I collected. Choices must be made in the construction of patterned blocks of data. Therefore, rather than becoming overwhelmed by the choices before me, the quilt metaphor enabled me to accept this messy reality as vital to the process of thesis construction.

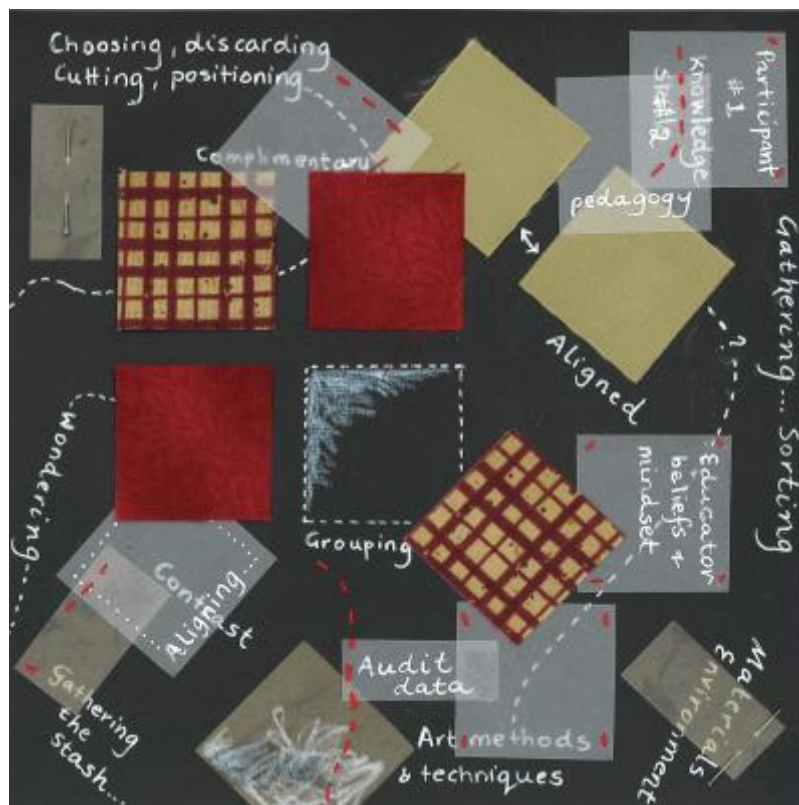


Image 4.2: Gathering data and theories.

Valuing Voices: Research as an Emotional Construct

To value the experiences and voices of research participants requires that personal stories, knowledge and experiences be acknowledged, both within the data and within the researcher's interpretation of the data. My intention to honour both the voices of the participants and my own voice as a preschool teacher and researcher was informed by Dewey's (1934) ideas about inquiry and uncertainty. Dewey explained that clear understandings of the dominant themes within examinations of lived experience might not develop "without exclamations of admiration, and stimulation of that emotional outburst often called appreciation" (1934, p. 2). Mindful of the responsibilities and the risks in selecting, appreciating and disclosing the beliefs of the research participants, I sought to present patterns of data to support the reader to question and interpret the phenomenon through my eyes (Eisner, 1998). Drawing upon Dewey's notions of holistic inquiry, Siegesmund proposes a/r/tography as a methodology that joins together "brain and heart, spirit and flesh, conscious and unconscious" (2012, p. 103). Similarly, while I

pragmatically employed the research principles and methods of traditional case study design, I consciously valued my experiences as a teacher and sought ways to express the construction of my research dissertation with artistic sensitivity. This desire to sensitively envelop and inform the research problem through the presentation and theoretical interpretation of each participants' lived experience aligns with the quilt-making process in which fabric is collected, selected, layered, pieced and stitched to form a patch worked construction.

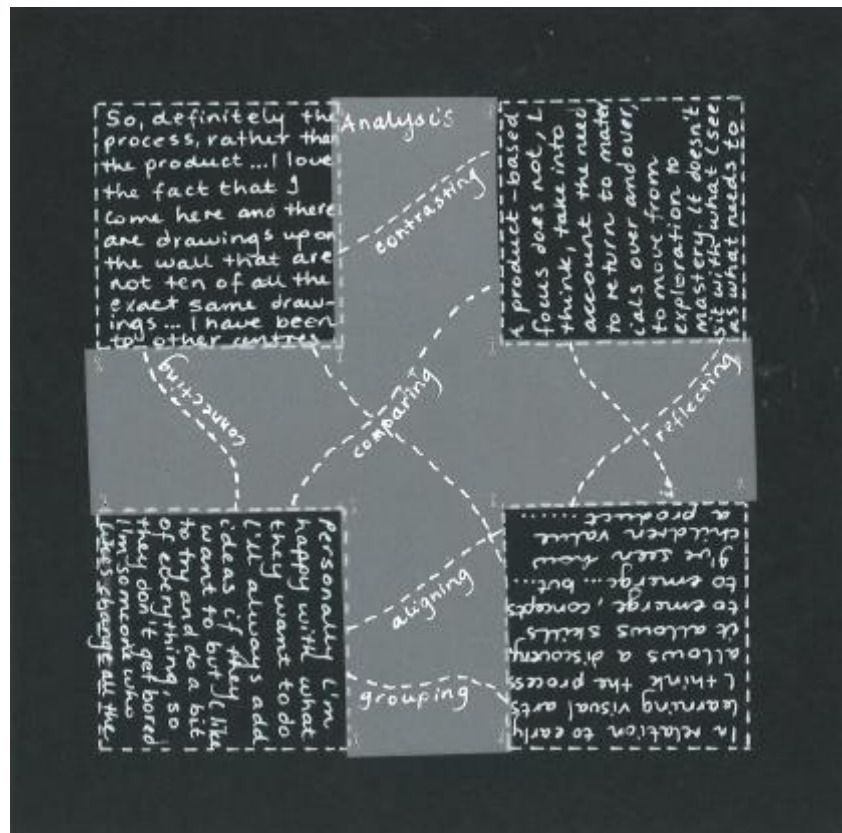


Image 4.3: Sorting and piecing data.

Sorting and Piecing Together the Collected Stash of Data

A quilt top is constructed from pieces of plain or patterned fabric that have been cut and stitched together to form patterned blocks. Similar to Flood's (2009, p. 59) 'textscapes' and 'threadscapes', the constructed 'patchwork blocks' within my research heuristically represent the visual arts beliefs, pedagogical content knowledge and stories of the research participants. I therefore sought to feature participant voices without judgement to enable

the reader to interpret the shade and pattern of educator beliefs about visual arts pedagogy. Yet, data is a delicate, sometimes slippery, fabric; prone to fray unless the researcher skilfully aligns, and shapes it into narrative patterns and summary blocks. Just as there would be no quilt without a quilt-maker, there would be no research were it not for the intent, action and purpose of the researcher. Consequently, it was also necessary to acknowledge my own role in stitching threads of connection between audience, participants and myself (Flood, 2000) as I drew upon my knowledge and experience, along with the conceptual framework, to analyse, compare, connect and stitch together the case study narratives (see Image 4.3).

Conceptual Backings: A Reversible Research Quilt

In a real quilt the backing is the bottom layer of the quilt ‘sandwich.’ It is traditionally comprised of a large piece of fabric that serves the dual purpose of stabilising the quilt and encasing the messy stitches and frayed raw edges of the pieced quilt top. However, in seeking a single theoretical framework to guide and inform data analysis in my study, existing theoretical lenses were as unsatisfying to me as a plain singular stretch of fabric backing on a patchwork quilt. Instead, the foundational backing of my research is comprised of an intricately pieced socio-political, historical and conceptual synthesis of the art-centred pedagogical values jointly articulated by John Dewey and the Italian Reggio Emilia educational approach (Lindsay, 2015a; 2016a). This conceptual lens inspired, guided and anchored my analysis and discussion of the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of early childhood educators, just as the fabric quilt backing on a quilt stabilises the whole (see Image 4.4).

The pieced data and the pieced conceptual framework in my dissertation contribute equally to the research field and to my desire to create contexts for pedagogical reflection about early childhood visual arts beliefs and pedagogy. Indeed, my socio-political and historical analysis of Dewey’s influence on educational philosophy and pedagogy in Reggio Emilia constitutes an academic contribution to early childhood visual arts research in its own right. I therefore determined that my dissertation should be positioned as a flipped or reversible quilt, where both the research findings and the constructed conceptual

framework are presented with equal value, and where the presentation of research data is concurrently enlightened and stabilised by constructed layers of theory.



Image 4.4: Thematic assemblage and overlay.

The Researcher as both Seen and Unseen Stitch

A quilt is made up of countless stitches that connect many pieces of fabric that subsequently form the quilt blocks and layers. Once complete, a final decorative quilting stitch anchors the quilt layers together, concurrently strengthening the quilt and enhancing the design (see Image 4.5). This embellishing stitch, while adding another layer of complexity to the design and drawing attention to particular blocks, also enables the quilt to withstand examination and use. Applying this notion to my research, Barone and Eisner's (1997) ABER conception of the researcher as a connoisseur and critic of the case positions my researcher's voice, formed through years of pedagogical experience and

informed by the constructed conceptual framework, as the stitch that both holds together and enriches the complex layers and elements of the research.

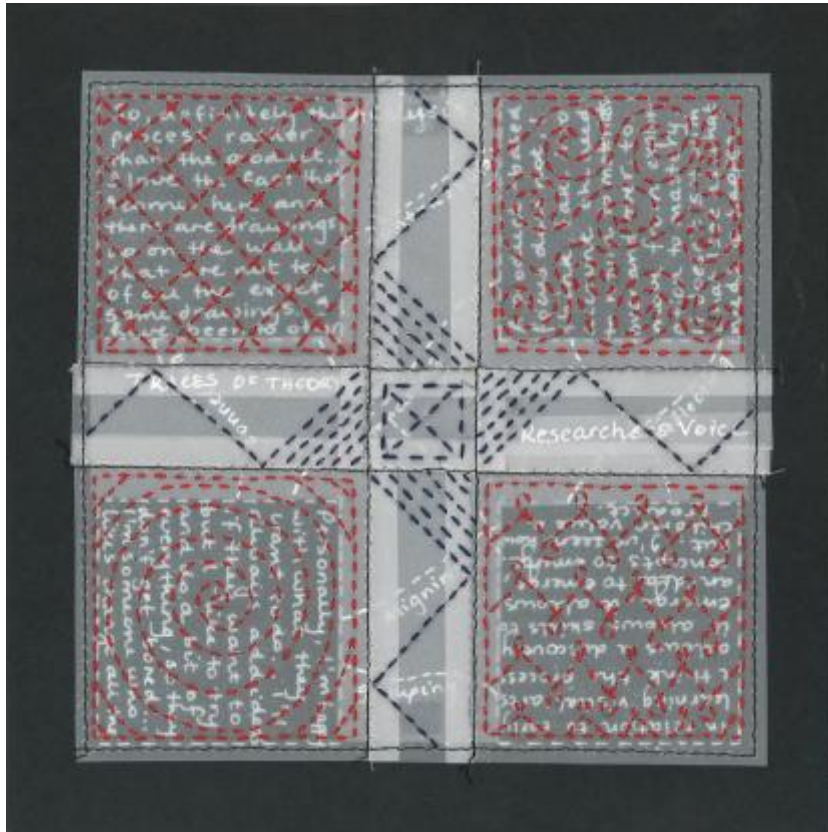


Image 4.5: Seen and unseen stitching.

At the same time, I heed Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong and Bickel's (2006, p. 72) notion that rich learning occurs in the "interstitial" and "in-between-spaces." I acknowledge that it would be impossible to express every element of my research journey, including the multiple reflections about which threads of data and findings should feature and be explicitly rendered in the dissertation. Instead, this background work on my part remains located in the seams and wadding of the research quilt. I explicitly reveal that in constructing my dissertation there were times when I deliberately placed the threads of my overt voice and opinion into the seams of the research data - as the unseen stitch - to intentionally strengthen and feature the fabric of participant voices and beliefs. Sinner et al (2006, p. 1249) affirm that arts-based research, in sharing lived experience, seeks to "include voices in research that may not otherwise be heard." I contend this sometimes

demands a disciplined silence on the part of the researcher. Though not always visible, I am still there; still explicitly involved in the construction and strengthening of the dissertation.

Satisfying and Disrupting the Expectations of the Academy

Recognising the ongoing “tensions in the academy concerning arts-based inquiry” (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1227) my approach to PhD dissertation sought to both satisfy and disrupt the dissertation requirements within my academic context. Although arts based educational research and a/r/tographic methodologies are well established in some academic communities, such as those articulated by Sinner et al (2006) and LeBlanc, Davison, Ryu and Irwin (2015), I identify with Elizabeth, Capous-Desyllas, Lara and Reshetnikov’s (2015) view that such methodologies remain neglected in some contexts.

In my own research journey, I initially perceived a subtle expectation that PhD dissertations should follow traditional research design patterns. Additionally, although presented with the option to develop a thesis by publication, few guidelines were provided to support the non-linear piecing together of traditional thesis chapters and published articles in order to satisfy external examination. Amidst this ambiguity, and despite the fact that my dissertation must undergo external examination, I was emboldened by the notion that ABER is located in the “liminal space” between traditional approaches to research and artistic practice and should not be “judged according to predetermined criteria” (Sinner et al., p. 1229). Additionally, Dewey’s (1934) philosophies about aesthetic inquiry and experiential learning have inspired my determination to construct a dissertation of “genuine artistry in scientific inquiry” where I proceed “neither by rule, nor yet blindly, but my means of meanings that exist immediately as feelings having qualitative colour” (p. 125). Similarly inspired by Dewey, Siegesmund (2012) suggests that because a/r/tography is a “methodology that seeks to capture, record and artistically re-present” new perceptions and wisdoms, it supports researchers to embrace uncertainty and put aside externally imposed pre-occupations with “production of knowledge” (p. 106).

However, located as I am in the seam allowance between traditional research expectations and my own ABER aspirations, it was necessary that I carefully align and stitch my preference for a creative, dynamic and emergent process of inquiry together with traditional patterns for qualitative research. Sinner (2006) also combined traditional

qualitative research methods with ABER to tell “a subjective story of lived experience” that may have otherwise been overlooked in more traditional paradigms (p. 369). Therefore, while I employed traditional case study and data collection methods, I positioned the research process as an emergent, flexible and responsive practice to embrace my own creative inquiry and to shape assumed dissertation formulas into more satisfying patterns. I applied quilting imagery and metaphors to not only make sense of methodological processes for myself, but to provoke the academy within my context to consider the visual articulation of research methodologies, so that my dissertation might offer a localised platform for expanding approaches to educational research. In crafting a dissertation that stitched connecting threads between traditional case study design and my own desire to artistically articulate research “practice, process and product”, I sought to “trouble the understood framework of qualitative research” and redefine “methodological vehicles” in my own educational research context (Sinner et al., 2006, pp. 1255, 1225).

Conclusion

The construction of a research dissertation is a long, intricate process. As with a traditional quilt pattern, once the research design is established and the methodical collection and construction of data is underway, the principles of rigour and trustworthiness, along with the external expectations of dissertation examiners, discourage significant deviation from the plan. However, as with quilts, not all research is traditional. While basic standards of sound design and construction must remain constant, contemporary quilters employ processes akin to art design, where play with fabric, form and colour align with visual arts processes, and where the quilt artist intuitively develops the quilt design in response to the gathered materials and intent of the project. Similarly, ABER and the methodology of a/r/tography encourage me to reflexively situate my “own presence and contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process” (Elizabeth et al., 2015, p. 3).

My research journey highlights the complex patterns and layers of interpretative meaning-making embedded within a research design and aims to appreciate and articulate the research process in ways accessible to both researchers and practitioners. By metaphorically visualising the elements of research design as the pieced fabrics, layers and stitches of a quilt, the often-alienating language of research inquiry is rendered accessible

not only to the early childhood educators that this research aims to inform, but to researchers seeking a reflexive expression of their own identity.

The following four chapters present the research findings and the voices of the participants within the four case study settings.

Chapter 5: Case Study One - Koala Long Day Care

5.1 Context

Operating in a small regional city in New South Wales Australia, Koala Long Day Care (KLDC) is a not-for-profit, community-managed centre, licensed for 34 children aged six weeks to six years, including five occasional care positions. The service was rated in 2014 as ‘meeting the national quality standard’. There is one classroom for three-to-five-year-olds and another for babies and toddlers aged between six weeks and three years. The service operates for 48 weeks per year and is open from 8:00am until 6:00pm. Ten staff members are employed in full-time and part-time capacities, with two DQT’s, two Diploma VTE’s, two Certificate III VTE’s, one Certificate III VTE inclusion support worker, one Certificate III VTE trainee, one administration clerk and one cook. The service operates a concurrent indoor/outdoor program that results in educators spreading themselves between classroom activities and outdoor play provisions.

Within the environment, a focus on aesthetic display was evident. For example, clusters of jars holding coloured water and arrangements of arts materials were displayed on shelves, although it should be noted that these were located above children’s eye line. Several Aboriginal artworks were permanently mounted in both playrooms and external veranda walls. The display of children’s artwork was minimal, with a few framed children’s paintings appearing as if they had been in place for quite some time.

Policy and curriculum documents included aspirational statements of intent such as, “Be aesthetically pleasing and present the environment and program accordingly. Ensure the environment is aesthetically pleasing with attention given to order, beauty and light in particular” (K. Curriculum Document Draft 2013, p. 7). The philosophy, policy and curriculum planning documents at KLDC were being reviewed to align with the National Quality Framework and Early Years Learning Framework introduced four years prior. Although the existing and draft curriculum documents did not indicate specific theoretical inspiration for the service philosophy, policy or pedagogy, a review of the written philosophy and policy documents at KLDC indicated that the service articulates value for: child centred practice; respectful attitudes toward children; individual rights; children’s freedom and choice and open-ended play-based learning. The documents outlined that educators would “endeavour to provide a range of resources that enable children to express

meaning using visual arts” and listed possible arts provisions including a wide range of variety of drawing materials, finger-painting, print-making, easel painting, clay, plasticine, cutting, collage and construction activities.

5.2 Participants

The three educators who accepted the invitation to participate in the study had 24 years of combined experience in the early childhood sector, with 18 years of combined experience at KLDC.

5.2.1 Lana. Lana has worked at KLDC for the entirety of her decade-long career in the early childhood profession. Prior to gaining early childhood qualifications, she had commenced a fine arts degree before leaving university to train and work in the hair and beauty industry for approximately 15 years. After gaining a vocational Diploma in Children’s Services, Lana commenced employment at KLDC, subsequently undertaking an upgrade to university teaching qualifications via part-time, distance education. As the service director Lana manages KLDC in collaboration with a voluntary parent management committee. Her teaching duties are comprised of the provision of programming release time and rostered days off for educators in the preschool room.

Lana considered herself to be artistic and creative, with vivid memories of art-making from her early childhood years. She noted her family’s influence in the development of her artistic identity, with fond memories of regular excursions to galleries and exhibitions. As an adult, she engages in artistic activities in her personal time, listing painting, gardening, home decorating and music appreciation as examples of her artistic expression. She values the therapeutic aspects of art-making, stating that in difficult times she leans “towards doing something creative ... to bring me back to a level-headed mood” (KLI.1).

Recalling her prior to school visual arts experiences, Lana expressed pride in her non-conformist nature, describing her resentment about a painting experience that “was trying to put me into a box”. She particularly noted that while she “excelled at art” in primary school because of her “creative mind”, vivid memories of being forced to colour in templates fuel her ongoing passion against such restrictions. She stated emphatically:

The education system lets you down if you have that side of you because they try and conform you very fast. I do recognise that and it's something that I am very passionate about in my teaching – not to do ... and that's why, like templates and things really annoy me, because I can even remember as a child having templates and having to colour and thinking I don't want to colour in those drawings, I want to colour in my own. (KLI.1)

Lana's passion for visual arts continued throughout high school, completing majors in ceramics and fine arts during her Higher School Certificate. She particularly recollects the "great high school art teachers" who led these subjects (KLI.1). Lana is less complimentary of her visual arts experiences during pre-service training at both TAFE and university, describing the teaching methods during her TAFE training as both restrictive and unartistic. She noted that there were no visual arts focussed subjects offered during her distance education upgrade to a teaching degree qualification.

Lana felt reasonably confident to incorporate visual arts in her work with children, however she noted that her skills and knowledge needed refreshing. Discussing theoretical influences on her visual arts pedagogy, she passionately noted that Bob Dylan's music and lyrics inspire her creativity. She recalled the influence of well-known early childhood authors, such as Greenman, Curtis, Carter, and Kolbe for their books on environmental design, curriculum planning, aesthetics, and visual arts pedagogy. Although she mentioned the arts pedagogy of the Reggio Emilia approach she defended her pedagogical choice not to directly teach arts skills and techniques, stating:

I know with Reggio and stuff, where you can guide them like you would if you were teaching them an instrument, you would have to teach them the basics and then go further, but at this stage, I don't believe we need to do that yet. (KLI.2)

5.2.2 Mack. Mack has worked as a full-time teacher in the preschool room for five years and, having recently been appointed as educational leader, was responsible for both the provision of pedagogical leadership in the service and for the review and alignment of service policy documents with the national quality standards. It is interesting to note that Mack also commenced fine arts training before deciding to become an early childhood teacher.

While Mack had no memories of art-making from his time at preschool, he passionately recalled the Steiner school he attended briefly during his early primary years, commenting at length on the powerful influence of a teacher who used drawing to tell stories and to integrate visual arts across the curriculum. His move to a state primary school exposed him to “very rigid” and “very structured” arts experiences that were “almost craft at times”. Despite this critique, he noted that it “was still fun and it was engaging” (KMI.1).

During high school Mack explained that his interest in visual arts was “very dominant – probably at the cost of everything else” (KMI.1). He mentioned an incomplete TAFE visual arts diploma qualification, but seemed embarrassed to state, “I gave up painting, ‘cause I found it really frustrating...it’s a really tricky medium. Umm, I felt I had to keep pushing and pushing and pushing myself to make a change ... but it was just too hard” (KMI.1).

Following this, Mack enrolled in an early childhood teaching degree, commenting that during his university studies he disconnected from art-making, preferring to express his creativity through writing and assessment tasks. He also stated that the visual arts coursework in the degree was not at all memorable and that he utilised his own “level of understanding” gained through personal experience to develop his own views on visual arts pedagogy.

Mack enthusiastically discussed the theoretical influence of Herbert Read upon his views about children’s visual arts education; particularly referencing Read to support his own views about the therapeutic benefits of arts education. He also expressed the belief that to effectively teach art “you do have to have some form of ability” and explained his confidence to apply his own abilities in the early childhood teaching domain, “because I have taken the time. It’s part of my life and I have also learned about having a certain skill base that I learned at TAFE and refined my skills” (KMI.3).

Yet, alongside Mack’s passion for visual arts and its importance for society, he was also rigidly private when talking about his own art-making. He adopted a pseudonym to protect his identity on an artists’ blog and in a local display of several pen and ink drawings. Mack believed that any art-making, undertaken by himself in the workplace, would be self-indulgent. He intentionally separated his artistic and work identities, stating “I feel now that it is two separate worlds for me ... I don’t come to work to draw and do

what I do – that’s separate, that’s distinct.” He explained that while he brings his “love for visual arts” to work and his “love for being creative”, his focus needed to remain on the children rather than on what he would like to do (KMI.1).

5.2.3 Abby. Abby is a full-time diploma qualified educator in the infant and toddler room. She has worked at KLDC for three years. She had been absent from the workforce for several years raising her family. Her duties included care, education and the maintenance of child observation and planning documents. She has no memories of visual arts making during her own childhood. While she undertook compulsory visual arts subjects in the early years of high school she stated, “I wasn’t really into arts that much.” When asked to comment on any recollections of visual arts training at TAFE, she hesitated before commenting, “Umm, Visual arts ... I really can’t recall visual arts. It really wasn’t a strong point of our studies” (KAI.1).

Although Abby acknowledged that visual arts are important for society, she was personally indifferent to visual arts and did not consider herself to be artistic, frequently announcing, “I am not arty” in an apologetic tone. Her responses to most interview questions were brief and somewhat restrained. When asked whether she was confident to guide children’s artistic learning, she responded, “Not necessarily ... I’m not an arty person, but we still provide lots of different opportunities for the children, even though it’s not probably my primary interest ... at all (laughs)” (KAI.3). While Abby did not identify any theoretical influences, she believed that to support an effective visual arts curriculum, an educator should be passionate and knowledgeable about art. Yet she also believed that it was not necessary for an educator to have arts skills to effectively plan for young children’s visual arts learning because, “It’s more looking to the interests of the children. If that’s what they need, it’s up to us to provide that in different formats for them” (KAI.3).

5.3 Beliefs about visual arts in early childhood education and care

All three participants at KLDC believe that visual arts experiences are an important part of their daily curriculum. Several motivations for planning such experiences were expressed by the participants, including the need to facilitate children’s learning, to avoid boredom and to validate children’s efforts. They identified a range of purposes for children’s art-making, including the need to develop cognitive, physical and fine motor development skills through fun, play-based learning activities and to experiment with

materials and explore interests. Mack and Abby particularly noted that visual arts support the acquisition of fine motor skills, with Abby stating:

You've got all of the fine motor skills developing ... the way they can grasp things, and things like that and then you can progress onto when they start making patterns and shapes and figures and things like that, so it's a huge learning part for us.
(KAI.1)

Further to this Mack positioned visual arts as a tool for meaning-making, suggesting that children often draw to “find out, to interpret, to work something out ... like a hypothesis” (KMI.2). Visual arts were also positioned in curriculum documents as a language by which children can build and communicate “knowledge, understanding and skill” and “develop understandings of themselves and their world through active, hands-on investigation” (K. Curriculum Document Draft, 2013, p. 13, p. 17). Similarly, Mack believed art-making supports children to develop their identity through moments of self-expression, explicitly linking this belief with the written goal to “make all children feel possible” (K. Curriculum Document Draft, 2013, p. 4).

This was reinforced when Mack announced:

I think the benefit for people is that they can access a part of, and like, this sounds really airy fairy, but they can access a part of themselves – and through that they can access different ideas or things that they might not be able to express through words; things that can only be expressed through a visual format or a sculptural format or through dance. (KMI.2)

Related to this was the notion that children benefit from the therapeutic nature of art-making. Lana particularly positioned art-making as a therapeutic experience that could calm children and help them deal with behavioural issues, stating:

It's just a wonderful form of expression and it's a really calming way for children to deal with any issues, behavioural or anything. I just think it's a wonderful escape as well and it's a really insight into someone's mind and thoughts if they allow you to see that, and if it's not stopped and it's allowed to flow really freely. (KLI.1)

5.3.1 Perceived barriers to visual arts education. All participants noted a range of barriers that challenged their implementation of a visual arts curriculum including time, availability of materials, educator preferences and attitudes to art-making and collegial work challenges. The participants felt that time to plan for and set up arts experiences was compromised in the long day care context by the need to concurrently supervise children. Routines and timetable constraints affected Lana’s capacity to meaningfully engage with children. She noted:

I think my biggest complaint always, and I have to constantly remind myself of, is to give a lot more time, and to really listen and engage with the children ... to allow them to be expressive, and to allow them to go that little bit further ... But then there are the restraints of being in a centre, where you’ve got things that have to be done by a certain time. It’s just part of, you know, part of the place we live. (KLI.2)

Mack suggested the provision of visual arts experiences could be limited either by the resources available, or when educators avoid using unfamiliar materials. He also explained that an educator’s selection of materials might in turn restrict the options available to children, “If you put crayons and paper out, they are going to draw with paper and crayons ... if you put crayons and pencils out – you are setting up some choices there.” (KMI.3)

Mack believed an educator’s personal beliefs and perceptions create potential pedagogical barriers. Having earlier expressed his discomfort with new experiences and his desire for structure and routine, he identified his own tendency to focus on drawing as his “go-to” activity choice, commenting, “Maybe I rely too heavily on drawing. Maybe the experiences I plan or the provocations I plan might be too similar, but I try to very hard to mobilise and vary those experiences” (KMI.3). He added that his regular use of paint, pencils and crayons was due not only to the availability of these materials, but due to his confidence in using them.

In her role as director of the service, Lana further identified the challenge of negotiating roles and responsibilities within a diverse team of educators. She expressed frustration to note:

Yep – time, and working with a variety of educators that come from different backgrounds, which is good? But with different beliefs systems and values, that can sometimes, I think, stop certain things from occurring ... And having the support network around you ... which is just a killer in our environment I think ... to be able to know that you might be absorbed in having lots of fun and that’s great, but other things need to be done ... So, when one person is actually involved and having that moment with the children, then your job then is to do the scouting around and make sure that other things get done, so that window of opportunity isn’t gone. And I think that’s one of the hardest things for us in a centre. It really is. (KLI.3)

5.3.2 Beliefs about visual arts processes and visual arts products. When invited to share their views about the regularly quoted early childhood mantra that the “process is more important than the product”, the participants expressed preference for the learning process, but noted that the product is sometimes highly valued by the child. Mack stated:

In relation to early learning visual arts, I think the process allows a discovery, it allows skills to emerge, it allows an idea to emerge, concepts to emerge. But, I’ve seen how children value a product. I think that is generally true most of the time ... I think we can’t always apply it (the process is more important mantra) ... I think it is true and I think as educators we have to value that. (KMI.2)

The KLDC curriculum documents articulated the goal to “emphasise the process of expression with less emphasis on the product or result” (K. Curriculum Document Draft, 2013, p.32). Abby discerned that parents view arts products as evidence of their child’s engagement in the learning program and added that when there is no product “a lot of parents get upset” (KAI.3). Mack recalled his own visual arts experience to reflect on the process and product dichotomy, suggesting that while both process and product can have value, for children the growth inherent in the process is most important. He explained, “It should be growth over prize. See what they want to do too, but value both. Sometimes the drawing isn’t important, it’s the experience of doing the drawing that is important” (KMI.3).

5.4 Beliefs about children and how they learn

The participants shared a belief that children resource their own learning through active engagement within social contexts, aligning with the KLDC curriculum document intention to “see children as capable and resourceful” (K. Curriculum Document Draft 2013, p.7). They believed that children learn new skills through practice and through peer and educator modelling. In addition, copying and imitation were considered valid tools for developing new skills and confidence, with Mack believing that copying can be a useful starting point for children who are not sure how to begin. He related this belief to his own experience and drawing, where he picks “certain subject matter” that he has “a degree of comfort in” because “to learn something new is daunting” (KMI.3). While Lana believed that copying might be appropriate for learning new techniques, she did not think it appropriate to have children produce identical work. Rather, Lana aligned peer and social learning contexts with the processes of apprenticeship and modelling within communities of artists, commenting:

They can work together, discuss things together, learn from each other, inspire each other ... and I think that’s why you see in famous artists, they go off and they do group things together and go off and paint as a whole, so you can get ideas and you can help each other. (KLI.2)

5.4.1 Children’s readiness to learn visual arts skills. Mack and Lana expressed the dual notion that a child’s capacity to develop visual arts skills is within the child, awaiting self-discovery and development; and that such development should evolve naturally. At the same time, Mack questioned preschool children’s developmental capacity to resource their own learning, suggesting that readiness to learn visual arts skills, and drawing in particular, may not emerge until primary school. He stated, “And I think, about eight seems to be that magic age when things happen, eight ... nine ... Maybe ... certain types of learning they don’t engage until that age. I think the brain crystallises in a certain way” (KMI.2). In seeming contradiction to this belief, Mack added that visual arts development stops for some children when they transition from early childhood settings to formal school settings. He believed that this occurs if children become self-conscious and critical about their own

art-making capacity, either through comparison with others or because of criticism by others.

5.5 Pedagogy: Curriculum Planning

The educators at KLDC believed that planning for children's learning was their responsibility. They believed such planning should uphold the rights of the child, be responsive to children's interests and choice and should build upon observation, documentation and team reflection about children's play and development. A 'planning and provisions' document recorded a three-week planning cycle. Three curriculum plans were displayed during the fieldwork period. The planning templates reported on prior areas of interest, listed planning intentions in three curricular areas and outlined potential materials and provisions for the three focus areas. A space for listing regular provisions, including painting and drawing, remained the same in all three templates. Spaces for parent feedback and weekly reflection by educators all remained blank on the three documents examined.

Throughout the data collection process the documentation of children's learning and development was minimal, with a total of four learning stories presented in a plastic sleeved folder in the preschool room. During the first fieldwork visit Lana explained that there was no written curriculum plan because, during the quieter school holiday months at the start of the year, educators focus purely on getting to know the children. Additionally, while the planning and documentation system was being redesigned by Mack in his newly appointed role as educational leader, he was the only participant to partially use the system during the data collection period. The electronic photo display available to parents on a laptop computer was the most consistent record of children's activity within the program.

Planning to follow children's lead. The participants believed that following children's lead was paramount, with Mack commenting, "Like, there's lots of things I would like to do, but it's not about me, it's about what the children want to do" (KMI.2). At the same time, Mack questioned the appropriate balance between child choice and educator responsibility and expressed dissatisfaction with the view that every choice a child makes must be accepted as an educative experience, especially in situations where they might be destructive or messy. Lana was less concerned, expressing the belief that all child-led experiences have value, regardless of the outcome. For example, although Lana expressed her intent to show respect for children by displaying their art work in a "tasteful and unique

manner” she added that she would also respect children who did not want to display their work, explaining, “some children just want to do their art and then they want to want to screw it up and run” (KLI.1). Both Mack and Abby deferred to Lana’s influence when explaining their pedagogical choice to be led by the children’s choices and to avoid adult interference in children’s visual arts processes. It was therefore interesting when Lana confessed that her stance regarding child-centred programming had caused occasional conflict with her colleagues. She explained:

I still like to be led by the children though, I don’t actually like to come and say, ‘this is what we’ll be doing’ ... but I wouldn’t, unlike other colleagues of mine, I won’t necessarily say, ‘I’m setting out the paint easel a certain way?’ I actually do it with the children to incorporate it, and I don’t like to actually direct them in how they have to do their artwork – that can really stagnate them, so I don’t do that. Which is – that can be a bone of contention when you’re working with someone else, ‘cause they can do that, and you sort of have to say, ‘Ok, well that’s their style, their method.’ But for me, if they (children) want to use a variety of brushes or no brushes, that’s their choice. (KLI.2)

5.6 Pedagogy: Visual Arts

At KLDC, the participants avoided engaging in children’s art-making processes. This stance was reinforced by Lana’s insistence that visual arts experiences should facilitate children’s choice, freedom and personal expression. Lana exclaimed:

It is an escape, and you need to let that person be in their own little world. And if you see, which I was pointing out to a lot of the educators as well, if you see a child is so absorbed, do not go over and annoy them and ask them what they are doing or say, ‘Oh, what’s that?’ If there don’t need to be any provocations happening – leave them alone. (KLI.2)

The participants also expressed the notion that a child-led visual arts experience required only the provision of materials and the observation of the educator rather than any modelling or teaching of visual arts skills. Mack expressed significant concern, suggesting that his own artistic skills had the potential to corrupt children’s visual arts skills development. He emphatically remarked:

I think the worst thing I could do as an educator; the way that I could most fail the children in that sense is by me drawing something and them seeing that and then seeing how I draw something at a standard. (KMI.2)

Seeking further clarification, I asked Mack whether he believed that him drawing or modelling visual arts skills with children might disrupt their natural learning process, to which he responded:

Absolutely. It would be disharmonious, is the best word to describe it ... and I just really believe in it and it's actually from working with my director. And now I have really adopted it and I am quite against it. To answer your question very directly, what would happen if I actually taught in this context? I would refuse, because from everything I have stated, it would be – I don't think they need to be taught... There is just no need. It's completely superfluous and potentially damaging. (KMI.2)

5.6.1 Considering adult-led experiences. When commenting on adult-led experiences the participants expressed the belief that adult-led experiences could stifle a child's individual expression and development of arts skills. This resulted in all forms of crafts or sensory arts experience being banned at KLDC. When asked to share her thoughts about crafts activities and particularly those related to seasonal events such as Easter or Father's Day, Lana adamantly exclaimed:

No, it's never going to happen with me around... I think it's boring for the children, it's boring for the teachers, it's boring for everyone... It astounds me that people still think that is something that you would do... and we have TAFE students that come here and I have to take them aside and explain to them why we don't do it at this centre how it doesn't fit into our philosophy and they will still argue with me and they will still endeavour to set up the lovely caterpillar. (KLI.2)

While Mack and Abby initially reflected Lana's critique of seasonal crafts and questioned their value for children, they concurrently identified a range of possible learning benefits, such as learning to follow instructions, and stated that children may find such crafts engaging. Mack cautiously expressed the belief that doing seasonal crafts could be justified, explaining:

You want an activity that has leeway and potential and flexibility and I don't think that those things (crafts) do ... but if children want to ... there is no reason you can't do things for Father's Day, make craft for Father's Day or Mother's Day or Easter. (KMI.3)

All three participants expressed concern about the value of colouring-in activities, with Abby announcing, "We do not provide colouring here ... Colouring is more just a template ... it kind of boxes them into that activity 'cause that's all you can do with that" (KAI.2). While Lana believed that colouring-in has no benefit for children at any age, Mack vacillated between the centre-wide ban and the belief that colouring-in may sometimes have calming and therapeutic benefits.

The KLDC curriculum document noted that creativity would be facilitated by encouraging "sensory play and exploration of expressive materials" (K. Curriculum Document Draft, 2013, p.32). However, sensory painting activities such as finger-painting, balloon and bubble-printing, along with novelty painting experiences such as marble-roller painting and fly-swat painting were not implemented at KLDC. When asked to explain her thoughts about such painting activities, Lana exclaimed:

No – I hate it. I hate it with a passion. I do. I really, really do. I can't hold back on that. I've had a week and half of opinions. But no, I can't ... I find that the most irritating thing 'cause I will ask them (staff), and I do it all the time here, 'Why are you doing that? ... Who wanted to do that marble rolling? Who said that?' If it has come from something – fine, I am happy for that. But to come out with that preconceived idea that we are all going to do a painting using marbles – that just gets me you know. (KLI.2)

Despite Lana's views, both Abby and Mack believed sensory experiences were harmless and fun experimental processes. While reinforcing that such activities were not permitted at KLDC, Mack grappled with the process versus product debate to express his beliefs:

Yeah, well you know what? Those activities are innately fun. Really, like getting a fly swat, covering it in paint, whacking a bit of paper is fun. Marble painting is the same. I think the test and the true ... what to say ... the proof is in the pudding. If

you look at the creative production ... the end result – which is not the important part – at times it is the process, and you know what? That’s a fun process whacking paper with a fly swat, doing marble paintings, blot paintings. Actually, in some ways it’s good for younger children to maybe get a mastery of certain things ... But at the same time, if you stop, step back, look at all of those things finished, if they look all exactly the same, then I think there’s a problem. (KMI.3)

5.7 Types of Visual Arts Provisions and Activities

The KLDC curriculum documents listed the intention to present materials such as clay, plasticine, charcoal, oil pastels, textas, acrylic paint, watercolours, and activities such as finger painting, painting, printmaking, drawing, collage and the use of natural and found materials (K. Curriculum Document Draft 2013). With minimal documentation or display of children’s artwork, the primary source of information about the provision of visual arts related experiences was the daily photographic slideshow presented to parents. During the six-month data collection period, the visual arts provisions appearing in the daily photographic slideshow were predominantly drawing activities, easel painting and occasional collage activities.

Drawing was the most common visual arts provision. Listed as a ‘regular provision’ on the curriculum planning document, coloured pencils, lead pencils and crayons and coloured A4 paper were available daily; either in containers on the trolley or in these same containers on tables, at easels or on the floor. When asked why drawing activities with pencils and crayons seemed to be the dominant provision, Mack responded:

Well our trolley is a whole lot of drawing materials, but they are mostly pencils and crayons...But, when you think about our cupboard – that’s what we have on hand. I have tried to mix that up by having the mixed media and stuff, but... (KMI.3)

Painting activities appeared to be presented at either a table or, more frequently, at standing easels in the outdoor area. The paint that seemed to be routinely provided to children was acrylic paint decanted directly from the bottle. The paper provided for painting was most frequently A3 size or smaller, and paintbrushes were usually large long handled brushes. When collage activities were observed and documented, they consisted of either the provision of large paper, scissors, glue pot and magazines on the floor, or the

placement of baskets of collage items, glue and scissors on either the trolley or a classroom table. A range of brightly coloured commercial materials such as pipe-cleaners, felt balls and fluorescent feathers were also presented in baskets on several occasions.

5.8 Materials, aesthetics and access

Mack outlined his belief that the aesthetic presentation of materials ensures activities remain “perpetually interesting” and do not “become stagnant,” explaining:

I think it’s how you present it ... you can just chuck everything out, but making it look ... things that are distinct and separate ... they can mix it up as much as they want after that – but I think it’s important to make it attractive and interesting and it makes it a provocation essentially. (KMI.2)

Despite this, the trolley containing materials for children to access for drawing or collage seemed to be rarely tidied or re-stocked. Throughout the fieldwork, it contained crayons in a range of baskets and containers, baskets with scraps of previous collage activities, piles of magazines in a box, containers with play dough and play dough tools and scribble covered clipboards.

Although the Draft Curriculum Document articulated the intention to “be rich in the provisions of an array of materials that are accessible to children” (2013, p. 7), children’s access to visual arts materials appeared to be limited. This was evident in the provision of paper. While Mack expressed the notion that they had access to an abundance of large and small-scale paper, the drawing paper available to children consisted of a limited supply of coloured A4 paper. A minimal supply of large paper appeared to be haphazardly stored.

Chapter 6: Case Study Two - Possum Preschool

6.1 Context

Possum preschool (PPS) is a not-for-profit community-managed preschool located in a leafy suburb in a large regional city in New South Wales, Australia. The preschool enrolls 40 children per day aged three-to-five years of age. The service operates from 8:00am-4:00pm for approximately 40 weeks per year. Nine early childhood educators, consisting of four DQT's, four Diploma VTE's and one Certificate III VTE, are employed in full and part-time capacities. PPS was recently assessed as 'exceeding the national quality standard' by the NSW regulatory authority under the auspice of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

The service runs a concurrent indoor/outdoor program. Small focus groups of approximately 10 children gather twice a day for approximately 30 minutes with their focus educator. Interspersed between long periods of open-ended and free play, these groups "provide regular times for intentional teaching and learning in the social context of a small group" (P. Group time policy, 2012, p. 2). Within this group structure, educators set group goals for each term as well as weekly goals intended to "reflect the individual strengths and interests of the children within the group" (P. Group time policy, 2012, p. 2). The PPS curriculum documents reference several inspirations, including The Early Years Learning Framework and the UNHRC Convention on the Rights of the Child. While the documents do not specify particular theoretical influences, much of the terminology reflects the principles of the Reggio Emilia educational approach. For example, policy and philosophy documents regularly refer to children as capable, active learners, and as citizens with rights. Respectful partnerships with children and families are valued and nurtured. Teaching and learning are positioned as a relational partnership between children, families, educators and the environment. Educators engage in intentional teaching, documentation and professional collaboration and reflective practice. In addition, a portfolio of literature and collected documents, utilised to inspire visual arts pedagogical reflection, regularly reference the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education.

Attention to beauty and aesthetics was evident in the design of purposive learning areas within the classroom and outdoor play spaces. Visual displays of objects of interest, including documentation panels of children's artwork from current and past learning

projects, adorn the shelves and walls throughout the centre. This pedagogical approach was reflected in the service philosophy intent to “provide spaces of wonder and delight” (P. Philosophy, 2012, p. 1) and underpinned by curriculum statements that position the environment as the third teacher. For example, “At Possum Preschool, the environment is not a backdrop to learning but is an active contributor and as such it deserves considered reflection and attention” (P. Curriculum Document, 2013, p. 3).

6.2 The participants

Representing 43 years of combined experience in the early childhood sector and 34 years of combined experience at PPS, the three educators who accepted the invitation to participate in the study were:

6.2.1 Eva. As teacher, director and educational leader, Eva had worked at PPS for 15 of her 24 years as an early childhood teacher. Prior to gaining her Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching, Eva had completed a Bachelor of Primary teaching and worked as a primary school teacher for eight years.

While Eva did not consider herself naturally skilled in visual arts, she expressed her enjoyment of creative projects and the inspiration she gains from art appreciation. Eva had no memory of any visual arts experiences outside the home during her early childhood and primary years, although she did recall the significant influence of an art teacher aunt. She believed her aunt’s value for nature, along with her mother’s interest in botany, supported her to develop “an eye for looking at detail, especially within the environment” (PEI.1). She credited this early development of observation skills for her ongoing enjoyment of viewing and appreciating art.

While Eva recalled high school art-making as a discouraging and negative experience, she noted her delight in completing several community arts courses between high school and university. She also recalled that during her pre-service university degree “there was some contact with the arts” and recalled her enjoyment in undertaking a textile craft elective (PEI.1). Beyond university Eva noted it had been necessary to pursue her own professional development in visual arts pedagogy. She had attended numerous conferences and exhibitions about the Reggio Emilia approach and arts-based pedagogy. Additionally, she had personally arranged professional development sessions for her own team and the wider early childhood community by inviting guest presenters to inspire pedagogical

reflection and skill development. Eva's personal interest in, and yearning for artistic expression fuelled her pedagogical aspirations. She commented that she regularly attends art exhibitions and considers herself "active in seeking out art-related knowledge" (PEI.1).

While Eva reported that she enjoys the art making process and particularly values painting alongside children, she noted that in her own art making she especially enjoys the processes of planning and thinking about possibilities for both herself and children.

She explained:

When I'm actually creating, I don't want to be disturbed. I want the world to be gone. I want to be in my own little space and just focus on the task at hand. The thinking part is sort of almost like dreaming. I'm thinking of, 'How could I use these shells?' or 'How can I use these rocks?' Often it relates to, 'How can I use them with children?' because I can see for myself lots of possibilities and I want the children to be able to have the chance to see those possibilities too.' (PEI.1)

6.2.2 Regan. Regan had worked at PPS for all 14 years of her career as an early childhood educator, and fondly remembered her own attendance at the preschool as a child. Initially employed as a VTE, Regan subsequently gained her Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching qualification via distance education. She also recently completed a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. In her role as a part-time (four days per week) teacher, Regan contributes to the planning, documentation and evaluation of the play-based learning curriculum. Although Regan did not consider herself to be particularly artistic or creative, she acknowledged her views about art-making and artistic capacity had shifted to understand that artistic self-confidence was an attitudinal construct rather than a skill exclusive to those with the confidence to draw and paint.

While Regan's prevailing memory of her preschool years was the smell and feel of play dough, she vividly recalled the proliferation of structured craft activities experienced during primary school and commented, "That definitely influences me when I'm here to think that that's not what I would call a visual arts experience" (PRI.1). Regan studied art until Year 10 in high school, but lacked confidence in her abilities and mostly felt nervous and inadequate. Her experience at TAFE, on the other hand, had supported her ability to critically evaluate the artistic merit and outcomes of different types of activity. Regan

reported that her university studies did not extend her knowledge, commenting that she “didn’t get any inspiration” from the university subjects undertaken and crediting TAFE for her visual arts pedagogical knowledge (PRI.1). Regan also acknowledged Eva’s influence on her interest in art-centred curricula, noting Eva’s provision of relevant articles and support to attend conferences and seminars. In addition to Eva’s leadership, Regan acknowledged the theoretical influence of the Reggio Emilia approach, listing their use of quality visual arts materials and processes as inspirational. Regan believed her emerging confidence with artistic processes subsequently enables her to empathetically support children in their visual arts learning and development and to reassure children that their efforts have value. She stated:

I do feel I’ve grown in confidence from when I first started to now. I feel like I have more confidence when a child would say, ‘I can’t draw something.’ I feel like I know that feeling; that I try and talk to them and say, ‘Yes you can. I believe that you can. Your tree might not look like my tree but that’s your tree and that’s what you see your tree as, and that’s okay.’ (PRI.1)

6.2.3 Teri. Teri had worked at PPS as a full-time VTE for five years since completing a Diploma in Children’s Services at TAFE. She had no prior work experience in early education and care. Her responsibilities included collaboration with the other educators in the preschool to plan for, implement and evaluate the play-based learning curriculum.

While Teri had no specific memories of art making prior to school, she vividly recalled her early yearning to be able to draw like her artistic mother and sister. She described a primary-aged obsession with drawing horses, noting her desire to draw horses as well as “a friend who was a really good horse drawer” (PTI.1). During early high school, realistic pencil drawing, based on photographs or other artworks, became a passion. However, studying visual arts for her higher school certificate had undermined her confidence and made her feel inferior to students able to create artworks from their imagination, rather than by replication of images. She noted her lack of self-belief and the fear of failure that had prevented her from moving away from her comfort zone. It wasn’t

until studying the Diploma at TAFE that Teri reconnected with her artistic self and visual arts content. She explained:

It was a really good opportunity for me, starting the TAFE course, because I realised that it was going to involve a lot of art. I had a great interest in art, but I'd let it slide. I hadn't really done anything in a long time. I also had this impression of myself that I lacked creativity and that I didn't really have a creative, imaginative mind. So, I surprised myself quite a lot when we had to present projects that were art-based. I had tapped into a creativity that I didn't think I had. That was quite nice for me. (PTI.1)

Teri noted the influence of scaffolding theory for her belief that the “presence of an educator just takes an experience to another level for the children” (PTI.2). She also noted the importance of a child-like attitude to reflect on her own artistic growth and development:

You're just so constantly inspired by the children here. You go back to when you were that age. You realise, 'Well, I was just like them. I had that natural ability where my ego didn't come into it. I wasn't judging it. I was just doing it and enjoying it.' I think how important that is to try and retain that attitude when you grow up. Not to put judgments on your work or what you're doing. Just to really enjoy it. (PTI.3)

6.3 Beliefs about visual arts in early childhood education and care

The participants identified a range of benefits for children from visual arts engagement, including sensory, fine motor, self-esteem and identity development. They also believed arts experiences facilitate attitudes of exploration and experimentation and support children to develop an aesthetic awareness and appreciation of beauty. Eva believed artistic work affords both artist and viewer the opportunity to communicate their ideas and perspectives and positioned visual arts as “one of the languages that helps children to develop a sense of identity” as they express their imagination and creativity (PEI.1). Both Teri and Eva expressed the notion that visual arts experiences have the potential to extend and enrich children's learning across all learning domains. Eva particularly noted that visual arts are “great for focusing attention,” adding:

You see people with their tongue sticking out in the height of focus, and the world's gone for them. I think that ability to put yourself right in the moment of your creating is really important for children and can be really powerful for them. I think it has a really strong place and it can be the foundation for lots of other learning. (PEI.1)

6.3.1 Perceived barriers to visual arts education. The participants at PPS discussed several potential barriers to visual arts education including, parental value for the arts, attitudes to mess-making and issues related to space, time, budgets and professional development. However, they believed that in their own context such barriers had not restricted their capacity to prioritise the integration of visual arts learning across the curriculum.

Regan explained that parents sometimes impose outcome-oriented expectations upon children's play with visual arts materials when they do not understand the benefits of visual arts learning. While Regan believed that in some early childhood contexts educators mistakenly provide product-focussed craft experiences to satisfy the expectations of parents, rather than the needs of children, she explained that at PPS they prefer to educate parents about the benefits in developing skills through open-ended experiences.

Fear of mess, either by parents or educators, was identified as a significant barrier to visual arts engagement. Teri articulated her frustration stating, "some parents are quite thingy, for want of a better word, about their children getting paint on their clothes" (PTI.2). She noted that while some people dismiss messy activities as problematic, she believed "messy experiences are the most fun and often the most expressive" and commented that she would "like to see us do more of that" (PTI.2). At the same time Eva discounted the notion that a messy activity is automatically a creative activity of benefit to children:

I'm not averse to mess, but I do think that there is something in the visual pleasure of ordered materials and for some people, that order is essential. I think for some children, mess can be a real turn off and shut down ... mess can be just chaos. It mightn't equate to any artistic endeavour or purposeful use of materials. I don't

think mess necessarily automatically says that something artistic has been happening. (PEI.3)

Eva noted her desire for more shared planning time and more professional development opportunities for the team of educators. Meanwhile, both Teri and Regan acknowledged Eva's influence for their own visual arts pedagogy, with Regan announcing:

We're a really lucky centre that we have lots of resources. I suppose in some centres where that's not a strong focus, it could – you know what I mean? It could get lost or overshadowed by other strong interests. I think it depends on your educational leader and then the rest of the team's attitude towards it. (PRI.2)

6.3.2 Beliefs about visual arts processes and visual arts products. When participants were invited to share their beliefs about the “process is more important than the product” mantra often quoted in reference to early childhood visual arts pedagogy, they consistently affirmed their value for the learning process and questioned the value in teacher-dominated, product focussed experiences. This belief was reflected in the policy statement that “art activities involve processes as well as products. It is the process of doing art that is so important to learning” (P. Learning environment policy, 2012, p. 2).

Regan expressed her desire that visual arts processes, and the resulting product, should support children to be recognised as individuals:

I love the fact that I come here and there are drawings up on the wall that are not ten of all the exact drawings. I have been to other centres where each child has their handprint up on the wall, and it's there and that's their art. Although that is unique to them, I suppose I question what the child's got out from that ... Where did the inspiration come from? Can you see the child in that visual arts experience? (PRI.2)

The participants also identified that while children may or may not value the art product, the processes undertaken can either facilitate or undermine children's feelings of success or failure. Teri articulated her views on the process/product dichotomy:

The child might care about what the end result is, and they can either be extremely delighted by the end result or extremely disappointed by the end result... The end result, it really doesn't encapsulate the whole experience, the emotional experience

that they've felt during the process and just participating with other children in that social experience as well...I think if they only focus on what their end result is, that can really dent their confidence and make them not really want to try again, because they don't think that they're getting it right. There's no right or wrong, it's just what the child is able to do with the materials. Whatever is a result of that is just perfect for them. That's all you want, is for them to enjoy it really. That's what I want, is just to see them enjoy something and not to be bogged down with how to get it right. That outweighs whatever is presented at the end. (PTI.2)

Eva reinforced the notion that open-ended, process oriented experiences afford children with greater "scope for creative expression" through familiarity with materials and processes. She explained:

I think the product focus really negates what we know about how children learn and what motivates them. The need for practice. A product-based focus does not, I think, take into account the need to return to materials over and over, to move from that exploration to mastery. It doesn't sit with what I see as what needs to happen for a person to get to really express themselves creatively, because they know the materials inside out and can let their imagination fly. (PEI.2)

6.3.3 Beliefs about educator qualities required to teach the visual arts. The participants outlined the educator qualities they believed would effectively facilitate children's engagement and learning in the domain of visual arts, identifying that both confidence and knowledge were helpful attributes. Teri particularly noted that while it was not necessary for educators to be talented artists, educator interest, enthusiasm and confidence should inspire children's participation. She believed it was the educator's role to encourage children to "want to explore these different arts materials or experiences" (PTI.3). Rather than dominate an experience as the expert, Teri believed educators should learn alongside children, modelling enjoyment and exploration with arts processes. Extending on this notion, Regan suggested that while educator confidence with a range of visual arts media is helpful, it is necessary to realise that developing confidence with materials takes time, commenting:

I would want an educator to be accepting of how each individual person or child uses that medium. Creative. Confident. Flexible. Relaxed. I think when you're introducing a new medium or a new material or a new concept, to be relaxed in the approach and to realise that everybody sees it in a different way and may need a different amount of time to build confidence with that medium. (PRI.3)

Regan added her concern that if an educator lacks knowledge, confidence and interest in visual arts processes, they may avoid engaging in experiences with children. In addition to the importance of pedagogical knowledge in the visual arts domain, Eva confirmed the necessity for the whole team of educators to be engaged in ongoing learning and skills development. She believed educators need to be supported to develop a sense of competence and confidence, stating:

I definitely think it's a possibility for everybody, but it needs to be something that's nurtured or mandated, depending on the individual staff members. You have lots of different attitudes and it certainly can be done right to empower non-artistically-minded people to feel that they are competent. I think once they have the confidence and if they were given the right structure, then they will be motivated by what they see happening with the children. (PEI.3)

6.4 Beliefs about children and how they learn

The participants were united in their view that young children are capable to actively engage in play-based learning. Additionally, they placed no developmental limitations on children's capacity to tackle new or challenging tasks. They believed that children learn over time through collaboration, knowledge-sharing, observation, practice and imitation.

6.4.1 Children are capable. The participants collectively expressed the view that young children are capable, strong and competent, a stance outlined in both the service philosophy intention to acknowledge "that every child is unique, creative and capable" (P. Philosophy, 2012, p. 2); and the curriculum value for "empowering children as capable competent learners" (P. Curriculum, 2013, p. 5). Regan reflected on the Reggio Emilia approach to express her value for children's existing knowledge and strengths. She explained:

I think in Reggio the children are viewed as people and as decision makers. They're valued for who they are. They're not a three-year-old who's half a six-year-old. They're three-year-olds in their own right. I've always really supported, agreed with that sentiment...Children's thoughts and ideas, they come pre-loaded, pre-experienced. To see the child as a capable person...They come with experience and to respect that experience. (PRI.3)

6.4.2 No developmental limits. The participants believed that a child's age or development pose no impediment to their visual arts learning and engagement. Eva explained that children are "learning right from birth" and that "the scope for people's journey to move through the arts depends on the opportunities that are provided to go on that journey" (PEI.2). Regan further identified that while a child's "age and stage of development does impact how you present things", it should not prevent an educator from adjusting and scaffolding experiences to make them age appropriate (PRI.2). Rather than seeing a child's developmental level as a barrier, Teri believed "it is important to push children beyond what they think they are capable of doing." (PTI.2). She expressed the notion that a child's inexperience was an opportunity to expose them to new experiences in order to provoke and challenge them toward the development of new skills and knowledge. At the same time, Teri also believed that children's capacity to develop visual arts skills might be genetically determined. She mused that some children seem pre-disposed to effectively use materials and techniques, and credited her own capacity to draw as a "gift from my mother, from her side" (PTI.1). When recalling children who were "just incredibly talented and precise and have so much eye for detail" she expressed the notion that "they're born with that ability" (PTI.3). At the same time, she expressed the notion that visual arts skills can be learned and nurtured:

From the start of the year to the end of the year, I've seen children grow so much in their artistic ability. What they could do at the beginning pales in comparison to what they're able to achieve at the end of the year. That's just through opportunity, experiences and confidence, gaining that confidence... and discovering how to do something...I do think it can be learned. It may not come naturally, but it can be learned. (PTI.3)

6.4.3 Children learn through scaffolding, imitation and collaboration. The participants discussed their value for collaborative learning, whereby children and adults learn by observing and imitating one another. This was reflected in the policy intention to “encourage children as peer tutors” (P. Group Time Policy, 2012, p. 2). Regan commented:

But in our environment here, we do talk a lot to the children about helping our friends and if someone says, ‘I can’t do that,’ I suppose we model that too. If someone says, ‘I can’t draw,’ then I’ll say, ‘Oh, this is how I’m going to draw it.’ I think the children model that. (PRI.2)

Teri further explained that young children are supported to develop agency and self-confidence when educators scaffold learning and support children to progressively explore and practice visual arts related skills. She believed that educators should not “underestimate a child’s ability to achieve something” but rather evaluate their own role in facilitating experiences that will support successful engagement (PTI.2).

6.4.4 Time and practice. The participants also believed that children learn when afforded time to practice and revisit experiences. Eva outlined that she deliberately introduces materials and processes to support “no-fail interaction” and allows time to revisit the materials and skills again and again. She positioned engagement with materials in relational terms, explaining:

Here, when I’m introducing new media, we do it in a skills-based way at group, so that they’re getting the opportunity to talk about the dos, the don’ts, what they’re seeing. So hopefully that builds their confidence to use them in an independent way throughout the day. It’s almost as if you need to introduce and shake hands with the material to become really comfortable enough to feel that you can go from exploration to mastery to then creative use. (PEI.2)

To achieve this, Regan articulated their collective and deliberate decision to keep the resources and experiences in their environment constant to support mastery over time:

Even though they’re built upon and changed, the layout and the resources and materials are similar throughout the year to be able to master those skills. You find

people who master something go back and teach the younger children or the less experienced children how to use that. (PRI.2)

6.5 Pedagogy: curriculum planning

PPS teachers and educators implement a comprehensive planning cycle. They place high importance on building relationships with individual children and their families and planning the curriculum to respond to children's interests and strengths. Each educator is responsible for maintaining an individual record of learning for the children in their daily focus groups. Educators develop individual journals for each child that contain written learning goals, observation and documentation records, educator reflections, work samples and photographs of children's play and learning. In addition, the educators are collectively responsible for maintaining a daily "spotlight on learning" journal. This daily photographic and written summary briefly records noteworthy play and learning experiences that have occurred each day to communicate with children's families. The classroom learning areas remain mostly unchanged throughout the year to support children to be able to develop a sense of belonging and ownership and to freely access materials and equipment. Any modifications or additions are documented as part of the planning cycle. Analysis of the participants' focus group plans and individual documentation revealed regular integration of visual arts learning experiences as part of both group and individual curriculum plans. Regan explained that visual arts pedagogy is prevalent at PPS because "it's a part of our curriculum, it's a part of our philosophy" (PTI.2).

6.6 Pedagogy: Visual Arts

A range of values and beliefs guided visual arts pedagogy at PPS. The participants particularly noted their preference for open-ended visual arts learning experiences, their willingness to act as a model or guide for children in the use of visual arts materials and methods, and their intention to plan for and provoke visual arts learning.

6.6.1 Open-ended visual arts experiences. The participants were of one mind when explaining their preference for open-ended visual arts experiences. Teri explained that an emphasis on open-ended arts processes supports enjoyable, successful, child-oriented learning, noting:

Nothing really holds them back. They don't get in their own way. They just feel it and do it. I love that there's no right or wrong with art, with drawing, painting, play dough, clay. It's not the end result so much, it's the pleasure in the process and just the enjoyment of it. (PTI.1)

The participants did not qualify stencils or prescriptive crafts as visual arts experiences and did not consider such activities would be appropriate in their preschool. For example, reflecting upon an image of collaged fish shapes made of pre-cut patty pan papers and stick on goggle eyes, Regan articulated:

They would enjoy it, but they wouldn't know what they're missing out on really ... There may be some benefit as far as fine motor skills are concerned ... but they don't look like they've been done by a child at all. That's not a child's scissor cutting. That's an educator's cutting. Yes, it doesn't really lend to the child exploring their own creativity and ability. (PRI.2)

Eva confirmed that she encourages her team to avoid teacher directed activities. She suggested she would encourage staff to ask themselves:

'So, what is the child gaining from this? Is it taking them somewhere? Is it enhancing their creative knowledge?' If you weren't getting appropriate answers to that, you'd probably have to question, 'Why I am doing that. Is it just because I like it?' (PEI.2)

Teri also questioned the inherent limitations of some experimental activities, such as print-making and marble roller painting. While she acknowledged that such cause and effect activities may be fun and have some learning benefits for children, she noted the PPS choice to "put a lot of emphasis on real self-expression coming from within the child" in order to "encourage what's up here in their mind and their imagination" and to help children to "translate that through a creative experience" (PTI.2).

Further to this Eva articulated an emerging distinction she is applying between visual arts experiences and sensory activities, such as finger-painting. Rather than automatically condemn experimental and sensory experiences, she explained the pedagogical reflection required to determine the merit of an activity:

I see finger-painting as a sensory experience, but also having lots of other potentials. It's almost like using the sand pit as a medium for art exploration with patterning and drawing and mark making. It's hard ... It depends on the intent, the people involved, what's provided with it, and maybe the control or freedom that's exercised. (PEI.3)

This notion was related to the participants' belief in the importance of providing children with many opportunities to engage in hands-on, experimental and messy play opportunities as a pre-cursor to more intentional and purposeful art-making processes. Regan positioned messy experiences as "the exploring stage of things" which may later lead to more intentional, expressive and communicative art making (PRI.3).

6.6.2 Modelling and scaffolding. While the participants preferred open-ended visual arts experiences and avoided educator prescribed (and produced) activities, they believed it was appropriate to model visual arts techniques and to guide children through visual arts processes. Regan outlined the need to be a positive role model, regardless of personal levels of confidence, explaining, "So you really have to set that example that even though you may not be the best, you're still trying and you're still enjoying it. That's the bottom line, is that you enjoy something" (PRI.3).

All three participants acknowledged their dilemma in deciding whether to step in and support children's efforts or stand back and allow free exploration and problem-solving. Regan identified that some children can be unsure of "where to start" and that "a blank piece of paper is really daunting" to explain the need to have empathy for the child's processes of encounter with new materials and techniques and to be willing to provide children with "support and scaffolding to further their learning" (PRI.3). Teri also outlined that while it is "important to see where the children go naturally with resources", she intervenes to "provide a bit of guidance as to how to use the materials to get the most satisfying results" if she observes children not using materials effectively or respectfully, explaining that "it's necessary for the children to see exactly what they're able to do with the resources that may not occur to them initially" (PTI.3). Eva summarised the team approach:

I think if you're going to expect someone to feel comfortable, confident to use materials, they need to have them modelled for them, they need to have them supported in their interactions. They just might need a little bit of prompting or a little bit of, 'You're doing okay', and validation to build their confidence enough. I think that it's an essential part of providing an arts program. (PEI.2)

6.3.3 Planning to provoke learning. All three participants articulated that they plan for children's learning, not only by grounding their planning upon observations of children's strengths and interests, but through intentionally planning to provoke learning. The participants drew inspiration from multiple sources to develop the learning curriculum, with Eva explaining that they are inspired by "great artwork and book illustrations" along with "inspiration from nature, from books, from music, from a whole range of sources and the ideas of others" (PEI.2). Regan explained how she intentionally introduced children to visual arts materials:

Well, I follow the children's lead, in that I try at the beginning of the year to offer them a variety of experiences so they have a little bit of an understanding of what we can do throughout the year. It will be finger painting, it will be using the sharpies, it will be using the watercolours, it'll be using the acrylic paints. It'll be using all those different kinds of mediums, charcoal, oil pastels, those sorts of things. (PRI.1)

6.7 Types of visual arts provisions and experiences

The PPS Philosophy outlines the intent to encourage "children to explore and enrich their creativity by providing a wide range of open ended experiences, materials and resources" (P. Philosophy, 2012, p. 1). Curriculum and policy documents listed a range of strategies to support such learning, including to "provide long periods of uninterrupted time for children to explore and pursue their interests and friendships"; opportunities to "return to materials, explore them in depth and be creative" (P. Learning Environment Policy, 2012, p. 1); to "offer materials which are open-ended and encourage diverse and creative responses" (P. Learning Environment Policy, 2012, p. 2); and, to "embrace and foster creativity in our community of learners" (P. Learning Environment Policy, 2012, p. 2).

To achieve such goals a range of visual arts experiences were offered as regular provisions in both indoor and outdoor learning areas for the whole of the preschool day. In the indoor visual arts area, a painting table and a drawing table routinely provided access to painting and drawing materials, including watercolours, fine paint brushes, crayons, felt pens, sharpies and pencils.

A wide selection of paper, of different sizes, colours and textures, was available on an adjacent shelf. Children were also given ready access to scissors, sticky tape, glue and masking tape. On the outdoor veranda, another drawing table, often with a vase of flowers or a pot plant in the centre, provided access to drawing materials and a range of paper. On the same veranda, two easels were provisioned with large, sturdy paper, a range of paintbrushes and acrylic paint in a range of colours and shades. Adjacent to the easels and the drying rack a “making table” and a trolley containing an assortment of natural and man-made materials afforded children the opportunity to freely engage in collage and construction using the frequently replenished range of loose parts and recyclable materials.

In addition to these regular visual arts provisions, the daily diary and photographic documentation records evidenced the provision of additional learning experiences such as collage painting, table collage, stamping, finger-painting, face painting, photography, collaborative murals and colour-mixing experiments. While experiences with clay and play-dough were not documented during the fieldwork period, the participants referred to it as a regular provision that will be intentionally introduced to children in the coming months.

In discussing her planning for visual arts learning experiences, Eva noted that some learning projects, inspired by her own experiences and interests, may be introduced as a provocation for children. For example, she outlined how her interest in Aboriginal art and the artwork of Bronwyn Bancroft inspired a learning project that she repeats annually because in the past “children have really responded with great passion or emotion” (PEI.1).

Describing the stages of the project recently introduced to her current focus group, Eva explained how appreciating professional artworks stimulates a range of learning opportunities:

Okay, so if I say for instance this week we’re looking at the art work of Bronwyn Bancroft. In the lead up to that, we’ve read her books a number of times. We’ve

looked at her different techniques...So we're talking about the shapes that we can see, the shapes, the lines, the ways that she's combined colours, the ways she's used black to make the colour stand out. I encourage each child to share an observation with the group and then I will do some modelling and I'll talk while I model...Then I'll say, 'I'm going to try and do some of the repeat curves, like Bronwyn used in that tree trunk in the book we just looked at.' Then I might say, 'I might try and do some of the swirls she used in the ocean.' So, I'll talk about what I'm doing just briefly, and then how I'm going to add colour to that; and then put the ball in the children's court and give them the materials and the time with the books available there just to give a visual inspiration. (PEI.1)

6.8 Materials: Aesthetics and Access

The aesthetic presentation and maintenance of the learning environment at PPS is grounded in the belief that “environments that spark the imagination and promote learning are provisioned with materials and equipment that are carefully chosen” (P. Learning equipment and materials policy, 2012, p. 1). Eva affirmed, “spaces need to be inviting to come into” (PEI.3). She outlined her requirement that all educators and children maintain care for the learning materials and spaces:

I expect educators and children to re-establish the space and leave it respectfully clean for the next group when they're using space. For instance, when we're tidying up from the clay, we make sure the tables – even though they've still got the cloth and the clay on it – that the clay is back in its ball, in the container. The chairs are under the table...The same with using the art tables. I think that it's really important that the children are involved in that, not that the mess is left and the teacher does it after. That it's only our responsibility. (PEI.3)

Regan credited Eva for the culture of aesthetics at PPS, explaining that with “a director who values aesthetics and seeing the importance of the environment as our third teacher... our environment reflects who we are and what we think and what we feel” (PKI.3).

Their value for aesthetics extended to the storage of materials throughout the preschool. Materials in the cupboards and storerooms were well maintained and ordered.

Paper, materials and equipment were straightened and replenished daily, enabling ease of access for both children and educators.

Eva noted that the provisions made in a centre “speaks volumes of what is valued” adding, “If you’re not providing it as one of the everyday tools for learning, then the children pick up on the message that that gives them” (PEI.2). The intention to “offer children a variety of mediums for expression and assist children to gain confidence with them” (P. Group time policy, 2012, p. 2) was enacted through the intentional provision of open-ended access to high quality materials throughout the preschool day. This respect for children’s rhythms of learning, through the provision of time, was expressed by Teri:

I know in some other centres, they only have art experiences out for a certain part of the day, and then they all get put away. I don’t like that... I’m certainly of the belief that those experiences should be available to children all day long, because who are we to dictate when they should be ready to participate in that experience? ... Here, I love that we have those experiences available, all day every day. The children can bank on those experiences as being there whenever they feel like visiting them.
(PTI.2)

Chapter 7: Case Study Three - Bilby Long Day Care

7.1 Context

Located in a large regional city, Bilby LDC (BLDC) is a not-for-profit long day care service managed by a corporate organisation. It is licensed for 59 children and operates three classrooms for 16 babies, 18 toddlers and 25 preschool aged children. In addition to a non-teaching DQT/director, twelve staff, consisting of one DQT, six Diploma VTE's, three Certificate III VTE's and two trainee VTE's, were employed in full-time, part-time and casual capacities.

The study was conducted in the preschool room. During 2014, the NSW regulatory authority, under the auspice of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), assessed and rated the service as exceeding that national quality standard in five of the seven quality areas, and meeting national quality standards in two areas. The service is open for 51 weeks per year between the hours of 8:00am and 6:00pm. In the large preschool classroom, learning areas including a writing table and shelf, a mat area adjacent to a large whiteboard, dramatic play area and construction shelf were arranged around the periphery of the room. The inclusion of lamps and twig mobiles evidenced a desire to enhance and beautify the physical environment. In the centre of the room, several tables with surrounding clusters of chairs were utilised for planned experiences and mealtimes. A heavily stocked collage trolley and a drying rack were located adjacent to a sink and storage area. The classroom opened onto a shaded veranda area and playground space. Painting easels were located on the veranda. In the wide foyer hallway outside the preschool classroom entry, a large scrapbook, displayed on an aesthetically arranged hall table, documented the daily learning and play provisions undertaken in the preschool classroom.

The BLDC 'Education, Curriculum and Learning policy' (B. ECL Policy, 2013, p. 4) stated, "elements of the Reggio Emilia approach and Scientific Brain Research are reflected into the program." The current Director affirmed that since the departure of the previous Reggio Emilia inspired director this information was out-dated. The service does not identify any particular theoretical inspiration for their practice beyond the statement that "current Scientific Brain Research ... is reflected in our daily interactions, knowledge of each individual child and our educational program" (B. Philosophy, 2013). Rather, the

intention to implement the principles and practices of the Early Years Learning Framework is articulated.

7.2 Participants

Representing 31 years of combined experience in the early childhood sector and 19 years of combined experience at BLDC, the three educators who accepted the invitation to participate in the study are:

7.2.1 Emma. Emma is a part-time co-director at BLDC. She has worked for 12 years at the service, commencing immediately after completing her early childhood teaching degree. For her first six years at BLDC, she worked as a teacher and as ‘second-in-charge’ to the Director, before taking on the position of non-teaching Director. Throughout her years at the service Emma has moved from full to part-time employment due to maternity leave and parenting choices. Her current two-day per week position is largely comprised of administration duties with few opportunities for direct teaching.

Emma repeatedly expressed an absolute lack of confidence in her own artistic knowledge and ability, explaining that “for people like myself who don’t see themselves as very creative, I think you then clearly steer away from it” (BEI.1). She explained that she had always felt intimidated by art galleries and did not feel that she had a right to be there “because people are talking terminology that I don’t understand and having discussions that I don’t feel I can enter in to” (BEI.1).

While Emma had no memories of art making during her preschool years, she vividly recalled a primary school experience where she felt “really, really embarrassed” when a teacher publically criticised her drawing (BEI.1). Such feelings of inadequacy continued in high school visual arts classes with Emma stating:

I can’t remember what I was actually doing, but I can just remember thinking, Oh God, I want to get out of here. I hate this. I hate that I feel totally out of my depth. I don’t know what to paint. I don’t know what to put on this paper. (BEI.1)

When asked how this experience had made her feel, Emma reacted tearfully, commenting, “Just... I don’t know. I’m getting really emotional. It’s ridiculous (reaches for tissue). I don’t think I’ve even thought about it since high school. That’s bizarre, isn’t it?... It was intimidating, and I guess I felt insecure. (BEI.1)

Emma noted that although she continued to feel intimidated by visual arts during university, the passion of her lecturers helped her to enjoy the subject, gain new perspectives about visual arts appreciation and develop some knowledge. When asked which theories inform her approach to visual arts, Emma cited Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding. She also mentioned the lack of visual arts professional development available to practitioners. Emma believed her capacity for pedagogical leadership in the visual arts domain is hindered by her personal lack of confidence coupled with her non-teaching role. She explained that while she is "involved in providing and ordering the materials" and "may go in and help set up visual arts experience", she "would steer away" from being more involved when working with people she perceives as more creative (BEI.1).

7.2.2 Harley. Harley shares her role as Co-Director with Emma. She teaches in the preschool room for two days per week and carries out management and leadership duties for the other three days, including her role as educational leader. She is currently studying via distance education to upgrade her qualifications from a Diploma in Children's Services to an early childhood teaching degree. Prior to this Harley obtained her vocational Diploma through a private training organisation while employed full time at three previous early childhood services. Harley has worked in the early childhood sector for nine years and has been at BLDC for four months.

While Harley did not consider herself "exceptionally artistic" or "particularly good at art" she noted visual arts is something she is "interested in" (BHI.3). She values and enjoys painting, although has little time with her current study schedule. She wistfully yearned for the time to re-engage with painting and undertake formal visual arts training. She felt art-making transports her to a place of focussed creativity:

Because I'm a jittery kind of person, it takes a lot for me to just focus in on one thing. So, when I start on an art project, I do find that it's one of the only times in my life where I'm actually completely focused on what I'm doing, and not just distracted by anything else around me; and not thinking about anything else other than what I'm doing right then in that moment. (BHI.1)

Harley vividly recalled preschool memories of drawing "over and over and over again 'til I perfected it" and was "identified as someone who was quite creative and quite

good at visual arts and a good drawer” during primary school (BHI.1). Despite this, Harley noted extra-curricular visual arts classes, where subject matter and arts methods were imposed, had interrupted her interest in visual arts and influenced her current approach to visual arts pedagogy. She commented:

For years, I stopped. It’s only been kind of the most recent years that I’ve gone back to painting again. But it just turned me off. So, I think that’s why it’s so important for me to just give them (children) that opportunity to do what they want to do and paint what it is that they want to paint, or draw what it is they want to draw without giving them any limitations. (BHI.1)

While Harley participated in compulsory arts classes at high school, she had no prominent memories related to this experience. She also noted visual arts was not a significant focus of her vocational training coursework, and commented that although she was taught about “the importance of having it readily available”, she was also “trained to give out stencils and help them to colour-in” (BHI.1). Her prominent memory of vocational training was the instruction to:

Not force the children to do anything they don’t want to do and not to stifle their own creativity. Just give them a whole variety of resources, preferably a resource trolley or something where they can choose what it is they want to do... Give them a whole heap of things and see what they create themselves. (BHI.1)

Harley explained her current distance education early childhood degree coursework had no core subjects in visual arts, stating, “... we haven’t done any creative component as of yet in my degree, no” (BHI.1). When asked which theories inform her visual arts pedagogy, Harley explained she draws upon her own experience rather than theory. She noted the lack of visual arts professional development available to practitioners in early childhood settings and expressed a desire that educators be “trained a bit more and have more of a heavier emphasis on it in their studies” (BHI.1). Despite this, she believed her own lack of visual arts training was not problematic, given her “bit of creative background” and her confidence and willingness to engage with arts processes (BHI.1).

7.2.3 Lisa. Lisa is a full-time VTE in the preschool room. She gained a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care as a trainee at a privately owned long day care

centre, and subsequently completed a Diploma in Children's Services via correspondence while working full time. She has worked in the early childhood sector for 10 years and has been at BLDC for seven years. Lisa's duties in the preschool room include collaboration with colleagues to plan for, implement, document and evaluate the educational program. When Harley performs administration duties, Lisa assumes room leader responsibilities.

Lisa was very enthusiastic about the benefits of visual arts "for freedom of expression" (BLI.1) and, despite her perception that she is not artistically skilled, believed she is "probably quite creative with coming up with experiences for the kids to explore and working with them" (BLI.3). Her preschool art making memories consisted of colouring-in. Lisa recalled no visual arts during primary school, commenting she was more "sporty" than "arty" (BLI.1). She enthusiastically described her decision to do visual arts as an elective at high school, stating:

Oh my god. I chose visual arts as an elective and I think I was really bad. I thought I was really good and I really enjoyed trying to be creative, but I just never was as good as other people. But I loved it. (Long pause.) I chose it as one of my electives and I was like, 'Why did I do this?' Because I like it, but I was never very great at it. (BLI.1)

Lisa believed she had missed out on completing typical Diploma coursework subjects having been granted recognition of prior learning for her workplace experience. She noted, "I personally don't really remember what sort of arts we did with our training. It was so long ago" (BLI.1). She also commented that professional development for educators seems to prioritise training related to regulatory compliance, commenting, "I haven't been sent to any training yet for art" (BLI.1).

When asked to articulate the theories that inform her visual arts pedagogy, she responded:

Sometimes we go online. The children will want to do something, so we'll just go on our smart board and Google it. That's probably the main thing we do besides just knowing things ourselves or just copying from each other's' rooms, if we like what they're doing... We try to Google it and work from there with creative arts and see if we can find new ideas, just through looking on the smart board. (BLI.2)

7.3 Beliefs about visual arts in early childhood education and care

The participants collectively identified a diverse range of benefits resulting from the provision of visual arts experiences in the early childhood context, including the development of self-expression, confidence, sensory awareness and the opportunity for therapeutic engagement in a busy ECEC environment. Perhaps influenced by her own missed childhood opportunities, Emma noted her desire for children to “develop those skills and develop that confidence to participate fully in experiences in their future childhood and not sort of steer away from that” so they would experience the benefits of “increasing knowledge, increasing confidence and awareness and therefore increasing enjoyment” (BEI.1).

All expressed benefits for children’s fine and gross motor development, with Lisa particularly listing school readiness benefits related to improved pencil grip and skills with scissors and glue. The participants also believed visual arts is important as a creative and expressive outlet, with Harley stating the “opportunity to engage in creative arts” supports children “to express themselves if they don’t have the ability to express it verbally” (BHI.1). Connected to this notion of self-expression, Emma positioned visual arts engagement as an important life skill, stating:

I think children are able to express themselves, express their feelings very well through art. I think if it’s something that you then become confident with as a child you can take that through your life and use it as an expression of your world, really. (BEI.1)

The participants questioned the notion that messy arts experiences are automatically creative. Lisa liked mess and believed it promotes creativity, but noted that when children are given absolute freedom they “might end up destroying what they wanted to create in the first place because they don’t actually have a stop button” (BLI.3). Similarly, Emma noted messy visual arts play does not necessarily guarantee creativity for all children. Harley distinguished between sensory exploration and art-making, suggesting:

There is a bit of a difference with creating art and sensory. As much as they are interconnected, they’re not ... if you get too messy, you can lose the purpose of

what you're doing. It depends. Sometimes it becomes more about the mess and less about the art. (BHI.3)

Harley believed an educator's personality may influence their approach to messy arts experiences, commenting that Lisa "who's really boisterous and loud" would embrace mess-making more readily than Emma, who would "be more quiet and sitting with the children" (BHI.3). Given Harley's comment, it was interesting to note that Lisa predominantly emphasised the need to provide visual arts activities that are fun and entertaining, and repeatedly expressed an aversion to being bored. Lisa explained this is "because you do get stuck in a rut sometimes, especially if you're doing the same thing every day" (BLI.1). She elaborated on her approach to visual arts planning:

Personally, I am happy what they want to do. I'll always add ideas if they want to but I like to try and do a bit of everything, so they don't get bored. I'm someone that likes to change things all the time. If they wanted to still do the old thing, I'll always give them that option, but I like to do, like fly-swatter painting, balloon painting, collaging, easel, play dough. We like to put lots of things in with the play dough, like we've put the glitter, we've put patty cake cups so they can pretend to cook and be visual. (BLI.1)

7.3.1 Perceived barriers to visual arts education. The participants discussed several barriers that hinder visual arts pedagogy at BLDC, listing the cost of resources and lack of time to engage in learning experiences. Emma and Harley, as educational leaders, particularly focussed on issues related to the confidence, knowledge and attitudes of the educators in their team, with Emma commenting, "within our team, I reckon 80 per cent feel much like me. There's no ridiculously competent people" (BEI.3). She explained, "I want my staff to be really confident and engaging in conversations with children about art to further their learning and further the child's thinking" (BEI.2).

Emma added that she and Harley had been trying to challenge the educational team to reflect more deeply about the types of learning experiences being presented to the children. Noting a tendency by some educators to present structured, adult-led craft activities, Emma explained her use of questions to support educator reflection:

But we just talk about what the children are getting out of the experience. Using open-ended questions to the educators; ‘What did you anticipate to get out of this? What do you think the children are getting from this?’ They usually come to the conclusion by themselves and they go, ‘Oh. Yes. It’s not a really good experience, is it?’ ... I think when you ask them a question, they generally know it, it’s just they haven’t actually thought about it. (BEI.2)

Harley also believed educator attitudes present a barrier when messy visual arts experiences are avoided “because they don’t want to clean up the mess” (BHI.2). To overcome the barriers created by educator knowledge and attitudes, and to get all educators “on the same page”, Harley believed staff would benefit from “some kind of training or workshop” adding:

It doesn’t mean that you’re going to love art at the end or you’re going to appreciate art or you’re going to be particularly good at drawing, but at least you’ll have the same level of development and understanding how to best inspire and encourage children without limiting them. (BHI.3)

7.3.2 Beliefs about visual arts processes and visual arts products. The study participants noted the importance of learning that takes place during the art-making process, listing language development, self-expression, visual arts skills, creative development and fine-motor skills amongst the procedural outcomes. However, they also placed value on the visual arts product. Emma commented, “I think the end product is also ... I don’t know. It’s of significance for the child certainly, and so it should be for the educators ... But certainly, the end product is still a valued piece” (BEI.2).

At the same time, Harley believed the visual arts product does not always articulate the learning involved in the process of making art. She recalled a recent experience to explain her point:

You can look at a picture and you don’t quite understand what it’s about until you get the child to explain it to you. So, I guess sometimes the final product doesn’t necessarily reflect on the process ... because it might look like some scribble to you, but ... We were doing a story about a dinosaur in the shed. That was an element of the story. The piece of paper just looked coloured in black, but the child

had actually drawn a dinosaur and then coloured over the top so that it was in the shed, behind the door. But you wouldn't have known that unless they explained that to you and you'd go, 'Oh yeah.' You could see where he's drawn it first and then scribbled over the top. (BHI.2)

Lisa focussed more particularly on her own processes of preparing visual arts materials and experiences for children and her dislike for the stress and anxiety induced by the management of process heavy activities. She commented:

I find the process quite stressful, getting it prepared...I hate them having to wait for me to have to prepare it. That's what I find stressful, more than anything ... I like to prepare as much as I can so they can actually just do it, do what they want and there's no stress or anxiety about me even being there, trying to write their name and cut it up. I like the preparation to be done so they can just have it when they want, when it's there and they can just do it how they want it to be done. (BLI.1)

7.3.3 Beliefs about Educator qualities required to teach the visual arts. The participants articulated a range of educator qualities required to effectively support children's visual arts learning. Emma spoke with yearning as she listed characteristics including creativity, confidence with visual arts materials and "experience with producing art so that they're better able to guide the children" (BEI.3). Interestingly, Lisa believed that extroversion was a necessary characteristic and equated this quality with the capacity to implement fun ideas with children, commenting:

I think you have to be eccentric and outgoing and open to ideas and challenges ... because if you're introverted and shy, you probably wouldn't want to express yourself more in those ways as an extroverted person would. They're more open to the variety of different things and materials that you can use to do art ... Probably imaginative as well. Using your creativity, imagination through their art so then they can come up with the fun ideas for the children to explore and use different things and work with them to have fun ideas. (BLI.3)

Harley cautioned that without educator understanding, enthusiasm and background knowledge, children's ideas and expression might be appreciated:

I think you need to understand how to support children to express themselves creatively. If you don't have that kind of background or knowledge, you're not going to get the most out of them or appreciate the work that they do. A lot of it's open to interpretation. Some art is just for the sake of it, but some things really do portray meaning, and if you're not asking the questions or looking for it, it can be missed and undervalued. (BHI.3)

7.4 Beliefs about children and how they learn

The participants described children as capable learners and outlined that children learn through scaffolding, observation and imitation.

7.4.1 Children are capable. The BLDC website expressed the notion that “Children no matter how young, are respected contributing members of the community” and explained that the centre philosophy “reflects the underlying belief that all children are capable learners” (B. Website, 2013). The participants agreed children are able to undertake new tasks, as long as the educator is aware of the child's development and scaffolds learning.

7.4.2 Children learn through imitation. All three participants believed that children learn by observing and imitating others, with Emma making reference to processes of “scaffolding”, “co-researching”, “exploration” and “open-ended questioning” (BEI.2). Harley explained that children's confidence can be supported through peer scaffolding:

I think sometimes you'll have a child sitting at the art table and they won't know what to draw. It can be a bit of a negative impact on them, because they say, ‘I don't know what to draw. I don't know how to draw’ and then they don't. If that's (copying a peer) going to build their confidence up and give them some ideas, and later they can go down their own creative path, then that's fine by me. (BHI.2)

At the same time, Lisa explained that while children learn “by watching and seeing others”, she encourages children “to do it on their own, because one way is not necessarily the right way.” She expressed her desire to teach children that “their way is the right way” and that “there's no wrong way to do it” (BHI.1).

7.4.3 Beliefs about children's visual arts development. While the participants articulated their belief in children's capacity to learn through observation, imitation and

environmental provisions, they concurrently expressed reservations about children's developmental capacity and readiness to learn about visual arts, including the notion that arts development occurs naturally for those with a natural artistic predisposition; that some children are not artistic; and, that children often lose the capacity to freely engage in visual arts expression as they enter primary school.

Emma believed that some people are born with a "natural creative flair" (BEI.1). She drew upon her own childhood to express her view that artistic ability may be inborn:

I think some people are just born naturally predisposed...Look at my sister and I. My sister is very arty and we were brought up in the same environments, went to the same schooling, but clearly, she was able to push through those barriers because it was something she was really confident with, always. (BEI.3)

Harley stated that "some children just aren't interested in the creative arts", but added that given the right conditions, such children can be supported to "tap into a bit of their creativity" (BHI.3). She believed with access to tools and the opportunity to experiment, children may build their artistic abilities. She stated that educators should "provide that inspiration" and "provide the tools and the resources that that child needs to tap into their own visual arts" (BHI.3). Like Emma, this belief was grounded in personal experience. Harley explained, "I know I learnt a lot more myself individually, rather than what others had taught me through exploring and trial and error and my own interests and what had inspired me" (BHI.3).

Lisa also expressed the opinion that children's age, physical and cognitive development may delay the arts experiences she would provide because, "some children can't – they haven't mastered the skill of holding a pencil or things like that but they do get that with age so they'll develop that as they grow" (BLI.1). She expressed her preference for preschool children's capacity to "create with purpose" compared to 'smudged' toddler work where "nothing ever looks like anything" (BLI.1). She believed younger children's short attention spans demand that learning experiences be adapted, explaining, "We don't extend them for long periods of time...for the younger children we do the same sort of scenario but just cut the time shorter because it's just that attention span, that some of them don't have. (BLI.1)

Emma grieved for the loss of children's freedom of expression through visual arts, again recalling her own childhood experiences to state that in the early years children:

Don't see the right and wrongs with what they're producing. What they're producing is always brilliant. They don't feel like they need to fit into a box, you know that feeling that I had of going, 'Oh, what am I supposed to do with this paint on the paper?' They don't have that. They do whatever they feel like and that's their expression and that's fine. Whereas later on in life, even by primary school, I think you've lost that. (BEI.1)

7.5 Pedagogy: Curriculum Planning

The BLDC Education, Curriculum and Learning Policy outlines that "each child's learning will be based on their interests and strengths and guided by our educators" and, "every child will be equally valued and their achievements and learning celebrated" (B. ECL Policy, 2013, p.3,4). The same policy outlined that educators would record children's learning and development in portfolios "to ensure programming for each child remains relevant to their interests and developmental stage" (B. ECL Policy, 2013, p. 3). Consequently, the preschool entry desk displayed a large daily diary scrapbook to record key events that occurred each day using both handwritten text and black and white paper prints of photographs taken during the day.

In addition to these documentation tools, the educators in the preschool room developed a monthly planning template that outlined a planned focus for the month, along with planned learning experiences related to language and literacy, music and movement, arts and crafts, sensory activities, science and nature, a home corner theme, mathematical concepts, transition ideas, jolly phonics focus, letter of the week, physical development activities and smart board technology. Harley explained:

I do a year planner for the school-readiness program and I incorporate visual arts in that so that at least I've covered everything throughout the twelve months. At least one week out of the four they're going to be doing something different, so we can make sure we've got fly-swatter, collage... It's more so that when we get to the end of the year we've covered twelve different craft experiences, rather than putting out

the same old thing every single time, just to give that bit of inspiration...Because it gets a bit stale. (BHI.1)

It was interesting to note this educator oriented, themed approach to planning given the previously stated intent to base the curriculum upon children's interests. The intent of the year activity planner seemed to aim for variety and coverage of particular experiences throughout the year. For example, the school-readiness letter-of-the-week focus consisted of a structured activity sheet focussed on one letter of the alphabet per week. While the planning template was largely incomplete, the intent to provide an 'All About Me' worksheet in January, an Easter craft activity in April and school readiness activities in October were listed.

7.5.1 Planning to implement children's choices. The educational team at BLDC had recently undertaken training in which the main focus was to simplify the planning cycle and streamline documentation process. This training had presented information to support the educators in the service to efficiently provide evidence that the program is centred on children's interests to satisfy assessment and ratings expectations. Harley further explained their increased attention to displaying children's art works since undertaking the documentation training was a strategy to provide visual evidence of communication with families about children's learning (BH. Audit notes). Previously, the daily diary had consisted of sections in which provisions for various learning areas such as school readiness, language and literacy, music and movement, and arts and crafts were reported. After the training, the daily diary format was altered to incorporate children's voices and interests into the daily documentation shared with parents. This change resulted in the daily diary becoming a collection of labelled black and white images along with lists of children's activity requests and the provisions made in response to those requests. Lisa explained:

We'll ask the kids a lot what they want to do, because they'll come up with ideas, and we'll be like, 'Oh. We didn't think of that.' So, we like to ask for their input. Also each other, but to go with what they want, not just what we want, because it's what they want and what's going to make them happy ... So, it's more about the freedom of what the children want to do themselves. (BLI.1)

Lisa added the need to provide many options and material choices for children because some kids mightn't like it" and so "they don't get bored and they have the variety" (BLI.1). It seemed that along with listening to children's activity requests the participants were aiming to keep children happy and busy. Harley commented:

But if they're interested in cars at the moment, we'll put out a car painting and if they ask for something, we'll put out what it is that they asked for. But we do ... I guess we think about what we've put out recently and try and mix it up. (BHI.1)

At the same time, Harley acknowledged that satisfying all children's desires had been a challenge, stating:

We do acknowledge every idea, whether it might be just briefly a little quick chat about it, or it could be more in depth and engaging. What we were doing at that time was putting out pretty much everything they said, or the majority what they'd requested. Acknowledging. I don't really know how we decipher what we do and what we don't do, because we kind incorporate everything unless it's completely unrealistic. (BHI.3)

7.6 Pedagogy: Visual Arts

The BLDC website stated that creative arts are incorporated into the curriculum (B. Web, 2014) while the Education, Curriculum and Learning policy stated "Children are encouraged to express themselves creatively through a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities" (B. ECL Policy, 2013, p. 4). None of the philosophy or policy documents specified particular guidance for visual arts pedagogy. Despite this, the participants expressed a range of beliefs about the role of the educator in planning for and implementing visual arts in the curriculum.

Emma noted her intention to draw on children's "interest from other areas and bringing them into our visual art area", but confessed:

Through my lack of knowledge, I provide a lot of, in my experience, very open-ended...Lots of different materials, but, not really developing skills. You know, I might talk about textures of things or the process in doing things. But not feeling confident in that area myself, I don't know the particular skills to teach. (BEI.1)

She commented that in the visual arts domain her focus centred on developing “fine motor skills and co-ordination”, “pencil control”, “colours” and “textures” rather than “visual art skills” (BEI.1). While she believed that it is important to support the development of creativity through the provision of time to “explore by themselves” along with “time to teach in that area as well”, she raised doubts about whether an educator should teach art skills if they are not confident and knowledgeable in the domain, commenting:

I don't know. I think unless you're competent in teaching those skills, that maybe it's better to let the children explore. I'm thinking back to most of the educators I've worked with over the years, and probably maybe one or two stand out as someone being competent... not in their teaching ability, but in their knowledge of visual arts and their knowledge and ability to challenge children with their perceptions of themselves as an artist. (BEI.3)

7.6.1 Provide materials and support ... but don't interfere too much. All three participants believed it is appropriate for educators to support children's learning through the provision of modelling and support, particularly in relation to the technical use of materials. At the same time, they all commented that educators should not impose any form of prescriptive instructions onto children. Harley drew upon her training to inform her stance not to intervene too much in children's exploration of materials, explaining:

We were trained to, I guess to not force the children to do anything they don't want to do and not to stifle their own creativity. Just give them a whole variety of resources, preferably a resource trolley or something where they can choose what it is they want to do ... Give them a whole heap of things and see what they create themselves. (BHI.1)

She also believed that educators should provide materials and support, while allowing the child freedom of expression, stating:

I don't think they should completely guide the entire process and I think they need to be open minded to allow the child to explore. I think it doesn't hurt to show them how to use the tools, especially if they're exploring clay or plaster, how to use it

safely. But I don't think they should expect the child to be able to do it the way they do it. (BHI.2)

The participants expressed concerns that educator interventions have the potential to corrupt children's artistic development. Emma and Lisa both believed that educator driven processes posed a risk to children's developing confidence. Emma recalled her own childhood experiences to explain:

From my experience, you're given these closed activities and have certain expectations of certain outcomes that educators want. If you don't think you can fulfil them, there goes your confidence, there goes your enjoyment. You're not going to want to participate, and therefore you're never going to be able to explore yourself as an artist. (BEI.3)

7.6.2 A desire for more. Emma noted the recent tendency to program visual arts experiences purely on the expressed requests of the children during morning meeting consultations. She assessed their current practice:

So, we've got all the materials out; some children don't engage at all. Some children engage in lots of different types of art experiences. Others engage in the same types of art experience because they feel comfortable with that all the time. I guess I want to look at how we can broaden everyone's involvement. I think more intentional sort of...but that's where we fall down. That's going back to our knowledge and our confidence. (BEI.2)

She expressed the desire to move beyond their current limitations to implement their visual arts pedagogy more intentionally, stating:

I don't think we have a really, really poor art program. I certainly wouldn't say it's great, but I think children are still gaining some great experience here through visual arts. Clearly, we can provide it. I just think there's so much more that we don't even understand that we could be providing. (BEI.3)

7.7 Types Of visual arts provisions and learning experiences

Reflecting the participants' intention to provide a wide variety of visual arts experiences to ensure children's engagement, interest and entertainment, the daily diary, interviews and environmental audits at BLDC revealed there are almost no restrictions placed upon the types of learning experience categorised as art. During the data collection period, there were records noting the provision of collage materials and glue; cutting activities; easel and table painting with acrylic paints; object printing; drawing with crayons, pencils and felt-pens; interest-based object drawing such as drawing stick insects found in the garden; paper-making projects; electronic drawing on the smart board; and, crayon and watercolour resist painting. Although there was no charcoal located in any of the storage cupboards, Emma noted their enjoyment of charcoal drawing, commenting that "it's not a pretty art experience", but children "obviously...like the messy stuff" (BEI.2). While there were no documented records of the provision of clay and no utilisation of the unopened clay stored in a cupboard, Harley noted that clay is a regular provision despite her comment that, "None of the educators are very skilled in clay work, so they're kind of left to their own devices. We sit with them try and help them but it's kind of like a playdough-type experience with the children" (BHI.2).

Harley also expressed her desire to ensure variety:

But we always have the craft trolley out there, and the glitter is always very popular. We try to throw out a whole heap of different things in there. But I like to just have paintbrush painting in a whole variety of paints. It's not uncommon for me to put out six or seven different colours and different shapes. I don't like generic ... That's just something that I do every day. (BHI.1)

The participants also welcomed the provision of sensory and novelty arts experiences such as painting with fly swatters, toy cars, finger-tips, string, shaving foam, paddle pop sticks and foam rollers. Painting experiences such as marble roller painting, butterfly squash painting and finger-painting were also routine provisions, with Harley noting that finger-painting is "one of the most popular art and craft that we engage in" (BHI.2). Perusing an image of toy car print painting, Lisa expressed the importance of novelty and fun, announcing:

I think this is fun painting, I like this type of painting. Because cars especially – they love cars, so driving cars with paint is quite exciting to them. I like golf ball, I like fly swatting. It's just more of a fun way of painting. Using resources that they probably wouldn't use at home or anywhere else... They love it. They think it's fun and all of them - probably 95% of my kids love doing all these types of paintings and they think it's a lot of fun. (BLI.1)

Despite participants expressed pedagogical concerns about adult directed activities, seasonal crafts were routinely provided. For example, the daily diary noted, "Today we will make green handprint shamrock for St Patricks Day on Monday" and, "children enjoyed the opportunity to do creative craft for harmony day today. Children chose orange paper and gluing collage on the paper" (B.DD, 2014). It was interesting to note the aim to give children choice in the following diary entries: "Today we were very busy... A lot of the children wanted to explore Easter craft so we decided to collage Easter eggs. The pre-schoolers were given a variety of materials to choose from. Lisa brought some Easter stamps which were very popular" (B. Daily Diary, 2014). Structured collaborative activities, such as a rainbow made of cut-outs of children's hand shapes also required significant construction by educators rather than by children. Emma fluctuated in her attitudes toward structured crafts activities and stencils, questioning whether they are acceptable or not and explaining she changes her mind depending on whom she is talking to.

Stencil sheets were routinely provided as part of the school readiness, letter of the week program. Other structured activities such as tracing templates and photocopied outlines were also documented and observed. It was therefore interesting to note Lisa's views about stencil sheets, especially given the public display of skeleton stencils coloured children and cut out by educators:

Yes, they don't love us doing stencils here. I don't mind stencils every now and then, because the children do love it. They do get it at home. We don't do it all year, so I think every now and then, stencils are okay ... I think stencils are okay to colour in every now and then, because it helps them with their fine motor, to colour

in lines. We don't really ever offer it to them, so every now and then I don't think it's wrong. But probably the other two ... I'd like to get their opinion. (BLI.1)

In this regard, Emma seemed unsure when asked her views about colouring-in. She stated, "Well, you know, who are we to say it's not an appropriate art form if they're getting enjoyment out of it, they're requesting to do it? I don't know" (BEI.2).

7.8 Materials: aesthetics and access

While predominantly focussed on the maintenance and cleaning of the environment, the BLDC Physical Environment policy includes the goal to "provide a physical environment that is safe, appealing, constructive, well-maintained and welcoming to all individuals who use it" (B. PE Policy, 2013, p.5). Evidencing this, the preschool classroom aesthetically presented displays of play materials and objects of interest on shelves and room dividers. The display of children's artwork was carefully arranged in several displays around the classroom as well as on the parent sign in table that featured an artist of the week on a small display easel. The materials presented at the writing table and the collage trolley were not presented aesthetically, with scattered collections of pencils, chalks, papers and piled packets of opened and unopened commercially purchased feathers, glitter pipe cleaners and sparkly shredded plastic to name a few. It was therefore iterating to note that Lisa's comment that children:

Always need to have options to select what they want and what they choose to use. It always needs to be clean so they actually can see... what's available and it look like it's respected as well. The area is respected, so they'll respect it. (BLI.1).

The writing table and the collage trolley were the dominant locations for the routine presentation of readily accessible visual arts materials. Additional materials and visual arts experiences were presented as short-term activities, either at tables or standing easels during free choice play periods in both morning and afternoon. Referencing the collage trolley, Lisa added that the children "usually come up and ask can they use something before they use it anyway" (BLI.1) while Harley noted that children's access to materials was dependent on the type of material stating:

Well, it depends on what it is, I suppose. If it's...all the things on the top shelf is all a lot of collage materials, so they can just help themselves. When it's paints and things, they need to actually tell us that they need certain colours, or getting out the clay and things like that. They seek our assistance. (BHI.2)

Emma believed that the materials routinely presented to children were limited in their variety and type, believing "it's a bit repetitive" (BEI.2). At the same time, she noted that the current selection of materials is connected to "the staff's knowledge and creativity" adding:

We've been making some changes lately and...I reckon we're doing well, and I think it's just been a change in mindset for the staff and then...I don't know. I think it's been really good, the discussions staff are having and the changes in the rooms are all very different but I guess shows the difference in our staff. (BEI.2)

Chapter 8: Case Study Four - Wombat Preschool

8.1 Context

Wombat Preschool (WPS) is a not-for-profit preschool located in a small regional city. A voluntary management committee, mostly comprised of the parents of pre-schoolers, manages the service. The preschool enrolls 40 children per day into two classrooms of 20 three-to-five-year-old children. The service operates from 8:00am until 4:00pm during school terms for approximately 40 weeks per year. Under the auspice of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), the service was rated as 'exceeding the national quality standard' in all quality areas by the NSW regulatory authority.

WPS employs two full-time and two part-time DQT's, two full-time and one part-time diploma VTE's and one part-time Certificate III VTE. The team of educators at WPS pride themselves on their commitment to professional development and pedagogical reflection, with all members of staff frequently attending team planning and reflection meetings, professional development courses and local network meetings. Reflecting this commitment to pedagogical reflection, the service philosophy identifies the theoretical and ethical influence of: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR, 2009), Australian National Quality Standards, Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics, the schools of Reggio Emilia, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence, the UNHRC Convention on the Rights of the Child, Piaget's Cognitive Development theory, Vygotsky's Dialectical theory, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (W. Philosophy, 2011, p. 3).

The classrooms at WPS are light and spacious, with large windows and high ceilings, reflecting the service philosophy intent that learning environments "be carefully considered, planned and maintained to ensure they are welcoming, inclusive, aesthetically pleasing and interesting play spaces for children" (W. Philosophy, 2011, p. 2). Furniture, play equipment and objects of interest were attractively arranged to create inviting and aesthetic play spaces. Natural materials, along with a neutral colour palette, created both a sense of calm and a pleasing backdrop for several displays of children's artwork. The outdoor learning spaces featured well-tended grass, trees and plants along with sandpits, climbing equipment and shaded spaces for planned play and learning experiences.

The daily program consisted of long blocks of uninterrupted free playtime in both the indoor and the outdoor learning environments. Both planned and spontaneous whole class and small group gatherings occur at intervals throughout the day. A core belief, identified in the service philosophy, is that children “learn about people, nature, the world and themselves when the spirit of early childhood is nurtured through play, relationships, growing independence, exploration, creativity and love” (W. Philosophy, 2011, p. 1).

8.2 The participants

Representing 28 years of combined experience at WPS, and more than 74 years of combined experience in the wider early childhood sector, the three educators who participated in the study were:

8.2.1 Nora. Nora has worked at WPS for six years as a part-time teacher, although it is worth noting she had also served as teacher and director at the service for several years earlier in her career. She has 32 years of teaching experience in both early childhood education and care services and the early childhood vocational training sector. In addition to her early childhood teaching degree, she has attained two post-graduate degrees in the field of literature studies. Nora considers herself creative, however she balked at the notion she might call herself artistic, believing that to be called an artist requires the regular practice of art-making. At the same time, she identified that although she has the yearning to make art and the potential to develop an artistic identity, current time limitations restrict her capacity to pursue her interests.

Nora had no recollection of any visual arts experiences during her preschool years, nor during her primary years at a Catholic girls’ school. She perceived this was due to the nun’s reluctance to implement visual arts experiences with very large class sizes. She also reported her high school experience as limited; with “only the ‘arty’ ones” taking art, despite the predominant view that art was “not going to get you anywhere” (WNI.1). As a young adult, Nora was able to fulfil her yearning to make and create. During her initial teacher training Diploma, she reported the influence of a “lovely art teacher” who, besides teaching “the formal techniques of various forms of art”, presented “opportunities...to explore the materials and to make things” (WNI.1). Nora noted her engagement in elective subjects such as drawing, ceramics, drama and dance and reported she had dabbled in ceramics, silver smithing, weaving and mud brick building during the intervening years.

Nora believed her reengagement with the visual arts as a young adult was fortuitous, because she was “really enthusiastic” to satisfy her yearning for creative expression (WNI.1).

Nora acknowledged the theoretical inspiration of the Reggio Emilia approach, particularly in relation to the use of many materials and methods to support children to explore their own theories within projects of interest. She also credited the work of Ursula Kolby in relation to the use of drawing to support children’s meaning making and expression of ideas. Identifying the lack of practical visual arts workshops available to early childhood practitioners, Nora explained the need to “keep driving your own passion” (WNI.2). She explained:

I think it just draws something from within me and I love it coming through and seeing it being expressed. For me, I think it’s been really a matter of time, being able to dedicate time to it... You actually have to give yourself time and place to be creative, to express yourself. Very difficult in our busy lives, where that’s not our primary role – to be artists. But, as a teacher, however, it feeds me. So, I’m always trying to find those opportunities, whether they’re coming through in workshops or courses. (WNI.1)

8.2.2 Helen. Helen has been a full-time teacher at WPS for eight of her 14 years in the early childhood profession. Prior to gaining her Bachelor of Early Childhood Education via distance education, Helen had attained a three-year Diploma of Primary Teaching degree. However, she had taught casually in primary schools for only five years before starting a family and subsequently working in out of school hours and early years settings. Helen did not believe she was artistic. Although she appreciates art made by others, she condemned her own artistic capacity for her perceived inability to draw realistically:

I feel like I’m no good because I can’t get things to look like things...But for me personally, when I judge myself as an artist, I guess I’m judging myself as a drawer. I don’t know where that comes from, it probably came from my own schooling. Maybe being made to feel that I wasn’t very good at it. (WHI.1)

Helen reported no specific visual arts memories from her own preschool years at WPS. Her primary school memories were predominantly focussed on structured crafts

activities and colouring-in, which she identified as “reassuring” because “you feel like you can achieve something” (WHI.1). She noted a lack of mess-making and “freedom of expression” at primary school (WNI.1). While Helen studied visual arts at high school, she reported few art-making memories, coupled with “often feeling inadequate...in terms of art” (WNI.1). Helen’s undergraduate studies in both primary and early childhood consisted of undertaking one visual arts subject during each degree. Helen recalled little content from the Primary degree arts subject, noting minimal practical experience and the belief that learning mostly occurred on practicums. While completing a distance education upgrade to early childhood qualifications, Helen undertook one visual arts subject, commenting:

It focused on providing children with open-ended materials. That there is no right and wrong in art and that it’s a process. That there’s different skills perhaps that you can get out of it, in terms of I guess fine motor, but also colour development and expression...I guess when I updated to Early Childhood, it is more about giving the children the tools and supporting and extending and scaffolding perhaps their techniques. But allowing that freedom of expression, and that all artwork is valued. (WHI.1)

When asked about the theoretical influences on her visual arts pedagogy, Helen appeared very nervous and stated she did not know much about how theory would relate to visual arts pedagogy, stating, “It’s been so long since I studied theory” (WHI.2). In addition to this, Helen noted she had infrequently accessed visual arts professional development because:

I’ve never thought of it as my area. I’ve never felt like it’s my strong point – which is probably all the more reason to do training. But then again, I don’t know if there’s a lot of training available in the creative arts. (WHI.2)

8.2.3 Mary. Having gained a Diploma in Children’s Services 28 years previously, Mary worked in two early childhood centres in the local area before commencing as a VTE at WPS. She has worked at the preschool for the past 14 years in both full and part-time capacities. Mary explained that while she loves art, she does not feel personally artistic. Mary recalled no prior to school art-making memories, however remembered finger-painting in her first years of primary schooling, fondly recalling “the warm finger-paint and

squishing,” adding, “I still love doing that at pre-school when we do finger-painting. All that tactile stuff” (WMI.1). She thought visual arts in high school was very structured, and remembered learning a range of processes and techniques such as oil painting, sculpture, clay work, photography, watercolours and fine brush painting. Commenting on her visual arts studies at the pre-service vocational level, Mary believed that although arts related learning experiences were somewhat “open-ended” she felt “a lot of it was probably more structured, I guess, back then, to what I feel it is now,” noting that activities like butterfly squash were very product focussed and “teacher directed and structured” (WMI.1). Mary believed experiences such as excursions to the art gallery and visits to the preschool by indigenous artists had extended her knowledge about using visual arts with children. When asked to articulate the theories that inspire her visual arts pedagogy, Mary balked before explaining that rather than be informed by theoretical approaches, children’s interests predominantly guide her visual arts pedagogy.

8.3 Beliefs about visual arts in early childhood education

The participants expressed varied beliefs about the benefits of visual arts in early childhood contexts. Art making was described as an aesthetic, cognitive, creative, sensory, fun and socially joyful medium for personal expression. All three participants placed very high importance on the therapeutic capacity of art, and particularly sensory arts experiences, to calm children and support them to express emotions in productive ways. Visual arts experiences were also perceived to furnish opportunities for children to learn new skills, make hypothesis, develop fine motor control and experiment with a range of visual arts media. Mary believed such experiences lead to feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction for children, explaining, “It’s helping them to create their identity by using their own ideas and their own thoughts to make that visual” (WMI.1). Nora expanded on this notion explaining art “speaks to the heart” as a human “drive to create” (WNI.2). She believed art is not only “nourishing and satisfying for a child” (WNI.2) but that it supports children’s identity development as they, “get to know themselves” and “place themselves in the world and connect with the environment, with materials, with nature, with colour, with paint, with clay, with whatever” (WNI.1).

Helen believed when children's work is valued and displayed they develop a "sense of belonging" (WHI.1). Nora further explained that in contexts where a sense of belonging and collaboration is nurtured, children's skills can be effectively scaffolded:

Making our mark helps us to belong anywhere... Seeing that and doing that in a social context is also very stimulating and it's joyful, so they are actually having such fun sharing this together. Particularly when you see children creating their art with friends and they are just sort of bouncing along together. Or they might just be doing it parallel across the table and they're seeing what others are doing and they're thinking, 'Oh, I might use that too'. They're learning stepping-stones, they're scaffolding upon each other. (WNI.1)

All three participants described visual arts as a language by which children can be supported to communicate their ideas, beliefs, theories and interests in a visual form. Visual arts were also situated as a tool for engaging children in processes of co-learning and co-research within interest-based projects of inquiry. Mary suggested visual arts have the capacity to connect children's interests across curriculum areas such as literature and math, and conversely, to bring children who "aren't quite interested in the visual arts and the art studio" into new experiences by connecting the arts to their current interests (WMI.1). Nora noted the value in children having "lots of opportunity to transmit what and who they are into a visual form," explaining "once they see it as a visual form, it's both satisfying and also stimulating and moves them on cognitively as well to the next stage, or learning a technique" (WNI.1).

Beyond being a beneficial experience, Nora expressed the notion that visual arts extend and enrich children's and adult's experience, growth and development:

Getting back to visual arts in particular, I think it should be very much a part of people's lives right through the continuum. So, if we can have access to materials and the opportunity and the time, it enriches our lives. It doesn't have to be for production or sale or showing or anything formal like that, but it's the actual process of creating something from nothing, basically. That is its intrinsic value. (WNI.1)

8.3.1 Perceived barriers to visual arts education. Several barriers were identified as having potential impacts on visual arts provisions at WPS, including the cost of materials, issues of supervision and parent and educator attitudes to mess.

The participants did not agree regarding budgetary impacts upon their visual arts provisions. Mary and Nora believed the cost of materials restricts the resources available and the frequency with which more costly and consumable materials can be provided. In contrast, Helen was satisfied with the range of materials available, commenting there were no financial constraints on the purchase of important resources.

The participants highlighted the need to minimise potentially messy arts experiences on particular days due to the combinations of children with additional needs and behaviour issues. Nora stated that although the team of educators at WPS are “pro-creativity” and “very happy to put the time into setting up” visual arts experiences, the number of children with challenging behaviours impacts upon their capacity to facilitate children’s art-making and clean up after visual arts experiences that require more intensive supervision and support (WNI.2). Helen also noted the challenge faced when parents dismiss the importance of children’s art-making and worry about their child’s clothing becoming soiled. Nora agreed, stating that she would “rather them have the experience and go home with dirty clothes” (WNI.2). Considering whether a messy experience equates to a creative experience, Helen debated, “Say the kids have ditched the brushes and they’re using their hands. That’s exploration, that’s a sensory experience. Is it artistic? Could be, if they’re mixing colours and things. I think more it’s just a sensory experience though” (WHI.3). At the same time, Helen equated freedom of expression with creativity, commenting:

I’ve never seen a clean artist’s workshop or space. It’s always covered in colour. Definitely you need to have freedom with your materials, but I do think some personality types are messier in that than others ... But definitely if they’ve got freedom of movement and expression with their materials, then that definitely helps with their creativity. (WHI.3)

8.3.2 Beliefs about visual arts processes and visual arts products. The participants agreed that art-making processes are very valuable for children’s growth, learning, skills development and enjoyment. At the same time, they valued the visual arts product as

evidence of children's work, noting that educators should not disregard children's interest in the end product. Helen believed the visual arts process "is more important than the product," because through "making errors", and engaging in "trial and error" problem solving, "you can learn a lot" (WHI.2). Meanwhile, she commented that "a lot of young children now ...have a bit more of an idea that they actually want a product to look like a product" (WHI.2). She believed this "can be rewarding" if children achieve their intended goals, but that "if they don't necessarily achieve a product they are satisfied with" they can be deterred "from having a go" (WHI.2).

Nora believed educators should not discredit the product, explaining:

We've been through a long stage in Early Childhood of thinking process-oriented, and I think there's great value in that, but I think ... value can be placed on a product, particularly when children have worked towards something to value that end product. Children are very individual, it's not necessarily for all, but I think that's where we need to be not discrediting the product. We do that in society. We frame things. We go to galleries. We are valuing the product. (WNI.1)

Mary positioned the product as evidence of the process, suggesting that for children the product, as "the visual outcome of their hard work and their thinking and creating", may be "just as important as the process" (WMI.2). At the same time, she explained her belief in the importance of the art making process:

I think the process is more important than the end product ... It's the thought that goes into it. It's the planning ... It's all that open-ended learning. It doesn't have to be perfect to be creative. The arts are not perfect. I think that's the magic and the glory about visual arts. (WMI.2)

8.3.3 Beliefs about educator qualities required to teach the visual arts.

Collectively, the participants identified that educators require artistic skill, knowledge and confidence. Helen and Mary more specifically added that educators should be creative. Helen suggested creative educators, "may appreciate and notice art more readily" and have "that more artistic bent in their personality...They probably would go to art galleries and perhaps seek it out" (WHI.3). At the same time, Helen identified that many educators, herself included, "don't necessarily do that" if they don't consider themselves artistic

(WHI.3). She commented, “I know there’s other teachers – like Nora’s more creative than myself in terms of art. She can get more out of the children than I necessarily can. It’s not necessarily my strength” (WHI.3). Meanwhile, Mary connected the requirement for creativity to the notion that educators should have “lots of ideas on how to maybe put their visual ideas into art” (WMI.3). While Mary believed having “a broad knowledge of art and techniques” would be helpful, she appreciated her own capacity to learn new skills, explaining she uses “research to help with my artistic ability and put forward something I would like to teach or a technique that we talk about” (WMI.3).

Helen advocated for having “an educator in the art studio at all times,” noting, “We find children engage more. They can learn more in-depth. They’ve got support for the skills” (WHI.3). Consequently, she believed it would be ideal to employ a resident artist as “someone with that creative mind that’s not necessarily concerned with all the other busyness that’s happening in the room ... The experiences could be enhanced by someone that is more creative and is that way inclined. Enriched I suppose” (WHI.3).

Yet, despite her own lack of visual arts self-confidence and her wish for the expertise of a resident artist, Helen believed that all educators can learn to deliver good quality visual arts experiences, explaining, “I think you can do that because I consider that I can do that. I’ve had enough experience to know what the children like and what to program and that kind of thing” (WHI.3).

Nora further explored a range of attitudinal qualities she believes are important characteristics for an educator engaging with children in visual arts learning and teaching. She believed characteristics such as flexibility and an open-minded attitude to “ways of interpreting” and ways “of expressing” effectively “encourages and creates the culture and environment for children to be able to draw out their natural artistic talents” (WNI.3). Extending on this notion, Nora believed pre-service educators require more training with a range of materials, tools and techniques, noting that many pre-service students who have undertaken practicum experience at WPS seem to have little prior experience in playing with materials themselves (WNI.3).

Nora also believed that for educators to “be aware of the potential” visual arts learning and “to draw that out” in children, it is necessary not only to have knowledge and confidence, but to have “a creative or an artistic viewpoint...to see potential in many items,

many objects as potential material for making art...You're looking for those opportunities, those teachable moments" (WNI.3). She considered it important to nurture these characteristics with all staff, explaining:

I think it's really important that the whole team invests in that, because otherwise it's very hard to drive an art ... creative program. It can't be just pulled along by one person. It needs to have a whole team supporting and have similar approach, or at least supporting the approach and then learning on the go, on the job. (WNI.3)

8.4 Beliefs about children and how they learn

The participants valued children as "active learners in the learning process" (W. Learning Environment and Provisions Policy (LEPP), 2011, p. 1). In addition to this they also noted the importance of the social learning context to children's experience as capable learners.

8.4.1 Children are Capable. The WPS philosophy articulates "high expectations" for children along with children's "right to access a quality early childhood experience" where educators "respond to all children as capable learners" (W. Philosophy, 2011, p. 3). Reflecting on this, Nora believed children's capacity is not determined by a child's age or developmental stage but by their prior experiences, noting that:

Capacity speaks differently to me therefore than stage and age...Some people come in already equipped with lots of skills, ready to burst out and expand. Other children have not even been listened to; therefore, they are not even formulating ideas in their own mind. They don't know that they can actually assert themselves or can do something without being told...That speaks a great deal to capacity. (WNI.2)

8.4.2 Children's visual arts development. While the participants believed that children are active and capable learners who interact with peers to develop skills and knowledge, they expressed some doubt about children's developmental readiness to learn new skills in the visual arts domain. This was mainly related to concerns about fine motor development, however children's cognitive development and interest were also highlighted. Helen was concerned that exposing children to experiences before they are ready may be detrimental, suggesting:

I think you can teach - try and enforce skills on children too young when they're not ready. If they're not showing signs of readiness, it can actually be detrimental, because they might see a particular skill as difficult and have some negative connotations about that.

(WHI.2)

Nora highlighted that educators must match experiences and expectations to children's readiness to undertake a task and build on children's existing developmental skills and knowledge, explaining:

There's different skills we learnt, that are only possible to be learnt when they have something foundational. For example, the need to have muscles, finger and hand muscles, to be able to cut and draw. Yes, offering a baby drawing is still possible, but we might look at a hand, fist holding a crayon, doing a line. Whereas you give it to somebody, even a five-year-old, and you're going to get something completely different – a masterpiece of detail and ideas. (WNI.2)

Coupled with the notion of developmental readiness, Nora commented on children's "natural capacity" to communicate using visual arts processes, stating, "some children are very expressive, very creative, and it's just oozing out of them" (WNI.2). She expressed regret that children's ability to "naturally relate to materials, the environment, and their creativity" is lost as "schooling goes on" and "a separation starts to happen" (WNI.2). Helen expressed the belief that early childhood environments more effectively support children's visual arts development because "Nobody's artworks are ever criticised; nobody's artwork is ever really labelled or not good enough" (WHI.1).

8.4.3 Children learn in social contexts. The participants noted the importance of the social context for learning, including opportunities to learn through modelling and imitation. Nora noted, "We know that our best learning, and into the future, will be in groups. The stimulation from each other is one of our most valuable tools. That's why we come together. We love coming together. We're social beings. I think that's a great way to learn" (WNI.2). Helen expanded on this to discuss the peer scaffolding of skills that occurs in social contexts:

Well, individual attention or small groups is definitely the way to go to learn a new skill. And time. Then repetition, and plenty of opportunity to reinforce the skills before, I guess, you're moving on. So, I guess that's scaffolding. (WHI.2)

Mary described and delighted in the peer affirmation and encouragement she observes when children collaborate in the art studio:

You can see the children – they take ideas off each other. They're sharing their own knowledge and you hear the conversations in the art studio and the compliments the children are giving each other, not so much on the end product, but the effort. For example, 'I really liked when you did that.' The other child will say, 'I can do that for you as well.' Just the communication. Just children inspiring each other and learning from each other. (WMI.3)

The three participants were comfortable with the notion that children might imitate the artwork of their peers to learn new visual arts skills. Helen aligned such processes with the zone of proximal development, believing that when children learn from "older peers or more experienced peers or experts" they can be supported to "have good positive experiences" and be "more likely to revisit the art studio and come up with their own ideas later on" (WHI.2). Nora noted that children don't actually "copy the work," explaining, "They copy the techniques and they copy the materials, but their work is always unique. It's like a jumping board. That's why we learn in community" (WNI.2).

8.5 Pedagogy: Curriculum planning

The play-based learning curriculum at WPS centred upon the participant's respect for children as "active participants in the learning process" (W. LEPP, 2011, p. 1). This was reflected in the planning cycle, where the daily curriculum was developed in response to observations and educator documentation of children's learning, strengths and interests. Several templates recorded, documented and evaluated curriculum planning included children's individual records and goals, children's journals, a quarterly room planning template, a weekly planning document, a daily diary and fortnightly parent newsletters. The classroom-planning document was displayed adjacent to the class entrance and outlined an image and description of each learning area in the classroom, along with its learning goals. In the same area, the daily diary consisted of a one-page pro-forma upon which brief

handwritten notes recorded key events of the day. Adjacent to this, a computer slideshow of photographs documented daily learning experiences for the interest of parents. The participants noted the daily program is based on both the preschool philosophy, their “own personal philosophies” (WHI.1) and the “guidelines that come from the EYLF (Early Years Learning Framework)” (WNI.1).

8.5.1 Planning based on children’s interests. The WPS philosophy outlined the intention to base the daily curriculum on children’s interests by responding to children’s “current explorations” (W. Philosophy 2011, p. 2). A strategy employed to achieve this outcome was the routine inclusion of a daily morning meeting. At this meeting, children and educators discussed topics of interest to “share information, discuss ideas and collaborate” (W. LEPP, 2011, p. 2). The children’s ideas and discussions were recorded for future reference and curriculum inspiration on an adjacent ‘wondering wall’ that operates as a “catalyst for further investigation and projects” (W.LEPP, 2011, p. 2). This strategy is based on the educator belief that “an intense sense of curiosity and wonder will take children’s learning much deeper than traditionally observed from a pre-planned program from an adult’s perspective” (W.LEPP, 2011, p. 2). Mary highlighted children’s interests are her “provocation,” explaining the morning meeting often provokes further explorations in “the art studio; to make and expand...” (WMI.1). Nora identified the requirement that educators know children very well in order to support their learning:

Okay, so we’re just really looking at... where is the child at now? Understanding who they are and where they’re at in all areas. Really, the best way is to work on what their passion is, or interest is, or strength is. That way it’s much more engaging ... to learn the skills through their strength and interest. The skills support the learning, rather than the skill being there for the sake of it... we’re focused on the play, but through that, all these skills are being learnt. I suppose it’s knowing the children, identifying how to work with them individually, and then letting that drive what we do. (WNI.2)

8.6 Pedagogy: Visual Arts

WPS policies identified educators as “facilitators in the learning process” (W.LEPP. 2011, p. 2). The study participants expressed a range of beliefs about their role as

facilitators of children's art-making. They particularly noted their intention to respond to children's interests; to provide tools, materials and encouragement; and, to teach and model visual arts techniques in order to provoke and extend children's learning.

8.6.1 Respond to children's interests. All three participants believed their visual arts curriculum planning responds to the interests of children. Helen explained their provision of materials and the "provocations...put into the art studio" are "led by the children's interests" and by the goals they set to "extend their interest in creative arts" (WHI.1). Nora highlighted the important choices an educator makes when "observing the children and knowing the children" and assessing each child's stage of visual arts engagement, knowledge and skill (WNI.3). She articulated the educators' choice to provide children with materials and tools along with unhindered freedom to explore and create, coupled with the choice to provide educator support, modelling and provocation:

For some, you know that they either come with their own ideas or very quickly generate an idea that is stimulated by the materials. Whereas other children do need support...Others are still at the experimental stage, so you just want them to engage with the materials ... You know that if they're at that stage, they actually need to explore that stage before we start trying to provoke them into – whether it's pattern making or purposeful positioning of materials, attachment and whatever. It's understanding the children; the stage they're at...With this comes this openness; I'm providing the provocation. Where it goes can be diverse. (WNI.3)

8.6.2 To provide tools, materials and encouragement. Nora believed "changing the tools", "changing the materials" and "offering a variety of things" is "an essential step" in children's early experimentation with materials (WNI.3). She positioned the art studio as an "invitation to come and create," noting they "set up provocations" to "get children to think about working in a different way, or using the materials in a different way" (WNI.2). Mary added the need for educators to allow time for children to "feel free to explore" and to "use their own ideas" (WMI.2). While she initially noted a preference for "open-ended art, where children can explore on their own" (WMI.1), Mary later suggested the presence of an educator "can draw children to the area" and support social discussions about what children are making (WMI.3).

8.6.3 To teach and model arts techniques. The participants considered whether educators should or should not intervene in children’s art-making processes. Helen believed “sitting back and watching is probably the preferred option at the start,” explaining, “If a child’s being creative, you butting in and questioning them about what they’re doing can be detrimental, can put them off. Interferes with that natural flow” (WHI.3). However, she also noted her desire to intervene when children participate ineffectively in visual arts experiences, commenting:

I guess you get other children that will go and flit in, blob, blob, blob, and take off. You think, ‘If I could jump in there, I might be able to extend that a little bit, get them to sustain a bit of engagement, put some thought into it. (WHI.3)

While Helen seemed somewhat uncertain about whether intervention is appropriate, Mary identified, “when you’re learning and you’re free to learn on your own, you can only go so far.” She suggested that if educators intentionally introduce “provocations and techniques,” children are given “other avenues to work with” (WMI.2). Despite not feeling “overly artistic” (WMI.2), Mary expressed her confidence to move children forward by modelling visual arts techniques to children, explaining she uses her “skills as a provocation” to “give children that...starting point” (WMI.3). Mary noted the benefit for children when educators support children’s problem solving by asking questions. For example:

If something’s not going to plan, rather than them crumble, being a supporter and saying, ‘Well, if that’s not working quite like how you’d like it, what else can you do?’ I think being there as an educator, being there to support and helping children through plays a big part. (WMI.2)

Nora commented on her long career to recall changing pedagogical approaches. She compared historical negativity toward the intentional teaching of visual arts techniques with her current view that if educators demonstrate a particular technique, children’s frustration can be translated into a “teachable moment” (WNI.2). She explained:

Now I see that at the right moment for the child, it’s the right thing to do. I’m not sitting up there (saying), ‘Okay, this is how we learn how to cut paper or to make a

person.’ But it is just tuning into, ‘What would support this child now, if they’re trying to make a dog and the tail keeps falling off?’ It’s like finding that teachable moment to enable that success for that child, and the satisfaction that goes with that ... That can really open up a new world to them, a new technique or new materials that works in a different way with certain techniques. (WNI.2)

8.7 Types Of visual arts provisions and learning experiences

Environmental audits, along with content analysis of the daily diary and photographic slideshow, revealed a broad range of visual arts experiences routinely offered at WPS. Drawing and painting at easels were offered daily. The art studio offered collections of collage and construction materials. Visual arts and sensory experiences were implemented both during indoor and outdoor play times. The daily diary evidenced the inclusion of a range of printmaking experiences, such as mono printing, leaf prints, handprints, plastic thong prints and lemon/lime printing. Painting experiences included acrylic and watercolour painting at easels and tables, as well as occasional finger-painting. Many of the drawing experiences documented in the daily diary and slideshow were connected to group and interest-based projects such as self-portrait explorations, treasure map drawing, and drawing related to an ocean project and a bird/feather project.

Several planned activities related to special visitors or events such as making headbands for a hop-a-thon fundraising event, tile painting for Mother’s Day and Aboriginal dot painting and cardboard tube didgeridoo painting. Supplementing the routine provision of open-ended experiences were a range of novelty activities such as paper lantern making, eye-dropper painting, paper-bag puppets, bubble-blow prints, golf-ball painting and painting with tennis balls on sticks. The environmental audit also revealed a range of additional objects in the storage cupboard suggestive of fly swatter painting, dish mop painting, spatter painting, squirt bottle painting, clay work, charcoal, pastel and chalk drawing, wire sculpture.

Provisions such as paint-making with crushed flower petals, paper-making, and the regular use of recycled materials, boxes and collections of leaves, sticks and natural materials in the art studio evidenced the preschools’ strong emphasis on sustainability and recycling. Indeed, the range of commercially purchased collage materials was minimal,

with the audit only revealing a small collection of crepe paper, a bag of coloured patty pans, a bag of mini pom-poms and an almost depleted bag of fluorescent feathers.

8.7.1 Fluorescent feathers. Alongside the wide assortment of largely open-ended provisions, it was surprising to observe a wall display connected to the bird and feather project, where children had pasted fluorescent feathers onto identical photocopies of a bird outline. Noting the participants' previous comments about the prohibitive expense of commercial and expendable materials, I queried their justification of this provision. Mary explained the experience had been implemented by a new staff member and because it was the educator's first week in the service, they had not wanted to discourage her contribution. Giving her personal opinion of such experiences, Mary stated:

I don't mind it, but I prefer not to. If I was going to do something like this, I would probably have a small picture of a bird up the top and maybe children could draw their own birds or just choose feathers or even just have a picture of a bird. (WMI.3)

Helen justified the use of the fluorescent feathers suggesting, "children love feathers" because "it's something different that they don't necessarily get at home" (WHI.3). She also expressed the notion that for children "who think that they can't do it...a little bit more of a structured activity...can give them that bit of confidence to come and engage a bit more and try out a few ideas" (WHI.1).

While explaining the bird stencil activity had occurred on a day she was not in the centre, Nora expressed internal conflict over the use of commercial materials:

We do buy them, but we go through them quickly and then we don't have any ... There always seems to be this period where it's like, 'Oh, you know, what can we put out today?' There's none of the beautiful stimulating things like the feathers or whatever...But it does make us ... there always come up that question of, 'How much do we let them use of these materials?' ... Yes, it's lovely to have them in there and stimulating and quite joyous to be able to use those materials. We don't have them all the time. I suppose in that respect it always makes it more interesting when they do come out again. (WNI.3)

8.7.2 Novelty visual arts experiences. Noting the regular provision of sensory and novelty arts experiences, such as finger-painting, marble roller painting and fly-swat painting, I was interested to consider the participants' views regarding such activities compared with visual arts based experiences that have more open-ended outcomes. Responding to several images of such activities, including fly swat painting, Helen justified their inclusion in the program:

I'd say we probably trot all of those out now and then. The children really respond to them. They think it's fun. (It) doesn't really require any skill...I guess it is a freedom of expression...They're exploring different concepts like colour mixing and patterning. Different ways of applying paint. So yes, there's a place for it. It's fun. You want kids to have fun at pre-school. It's just an extra way of doing art. (WHI.2)

She noted while they do not force children to participate in particular activities, preferring to leave children's options open, it is part of their philosophy "to have materials and provocations and things available" (WHI.2), adding:

That being said, we may have another table where there is something a bit more structured. Obviously, we're meeting the needs of different children, different levels and different skills... They may not be being creative, but they are getting other skills I suppose, from an art experience, and that's okay. (WHI.2)

Nora, on the other hand, distinguished between activities that have an aesthetic purpose, such as leaf printing, and more novel activities such as fly-swat painting. She noted with leaf printing that children "have to engage with a piece of nature; a natural material. So, they're getting the texture, the smell, and then that relationship with that" (WNI.3). She acknowledged while they "quite often use things from another part of our life into art" such as fly-swatter painting, such experiences require "virtually no skill – it's just a hit" (WNI.3). She noted that such activities should be used "as a foundation" for further extension, such as "talking about the pattern that made and then 'What can we do with this?'" (WNI.3).

8.7.3 Colouring-in stencils. Stencils and colouring-in sheets were provided at the writing table; however, the participants were conflicted about the provision of such

activities. Mary and Helen, while pointing out they do not categorise these activities as art and would not over-use them, nevertheless justified their inclusion for several reasons including therapeutic intervention, enjoyment, school readiness and as a provocation for interest-based projects. Mary explained the initial introduction of Mandala colouring sheets began as a therapeutic intervention for a child with mental health and occupational therapy issues. Helen elaborated:

I'm reflecting on some of our children that have some perhaps high energy, their engines run high in mental health. The things that sooth and calm them is colouring-in...I think a colouring-in activity – not all the time by any means, but it can really focus that attention. It's something that's really familiar to most children. (WHI.3)

Helen believed stencil images, when introduced as a provocation around a topic of interest, give children an entry point for their exploration:

They're not always in that mood for having a go themselves. Sometimes they do enjoy that colouring. I don't know. I just think today's children are rushed and rushed and rushed. To sit down and do a little page of something therapeutic is good for their well-being. (WHI.3)

Helen also explained they provide this option to children as a free-play choice because some children “are given colouring-in at home and they love it, and it's something that they can master. They get a real sense of achievement out of it” (WHI.2). This view is perhaps connected to both Helen and Mary's personal expression of their own childhood enjoyment of colouring-in. Helen particularly recalled the sense of achievement and reassurance she felt as a child when others praised her for staying in the lines, while Mary recalled happy memories of colouring-in with her own children. Despite her justifications for colouring-in as a valid provision, Helen admitted she continues to experience “pricks of consciousness,” explaining, “When I was learning early childhood, it was such a big no-no. It was such a big no-no with the prior management. It's not so much now. I guess I still have that little dilemma” (WHI.3). She worried that because providing colouring sheets is “so easy” she might “slip into that ease and laziness and justify it” because “it's what the children want...” (WHI.3). Nora shared Helen's conflicted concerns, explaining “I never liked stencils, but they're offered here...I have mixed feelings about it still, because it's not

my choice...it doesn't sit comfortably with me. But I accept it because the other staff are involved." (WNI.2). Nora expanded on this dilemma, musing:

It's a hard one because we're a team and we all bring our different backgrounds and beliefs and we need to respect each other's skills and talents and backgrounds.

Therefore, I need to put myself into...other people's shoes and look at it from their perspective. I can see where they're coming from. It can often be the engaging thing for a difficult child. It can be the thing that settles a child because it's something familiar. The part that I find happens though is once it's there, it then increases. Just because there's a precedent and it's like, 'Oh, can we have this stencil now?' We don't call them stencils. But I just noticed today that there was a whole lot of dragons photocopied to go out there...I still think that the blank piece of paper and our imagination is a far better drawing tool or drawing platform where we're sitting and talking and having a conversation, than something that's been pre-determined. (WNI.3)

8.8 Materials: aesthetics and access

The participants at WPS believed the aesthetic presentation of materials and learning areas operate as an invitation to engagement, participation and learning, a view underpinned in policy statements such as:

The learning environment is designed to promote thinking, investigation, co-collaboration and independent learning. We use our environment as a teacher, and as educators constantly reflect, project and add provisions to the environment to challenge inspire and delight children as they learn. (W. LEPP, 2011, p. 1)

Helen noted their intention to establish "an exacting environment that draws in the children, creates interest" and "invites the children" into learning contexts, explaining, "the art studio is a lovely place to make that appealing...Because art for me is all about aesthetics" (WHI.2).

The quarterly room planning template described the educators' goals for the visual arts learning area, linking its design, as well as children's access to visual arts materials and experiences, with philosophical goals related to high expectations and equity, environmental sustainability, aesthetics, children's agency and choice, and respect for

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spaces and materials (W. Philosophy, 2011, goals 3, 6, 7, 8, 9). The planning document outlined:

We have established two distinct areas in our art studio. Our art easel is in a roomy position where two children can paint easily. It is adjacent to the art rack and close to the bathroom for ease of hand washing. The art studio is simply stocked with collage materials in a large shelf which can also be used for daily provocations and display purposes. We have introduced an art trolley which contains scissors, extra paintbrushes, tape and tools used in art creations. (W. Quarterly room planning, 2014, Term 1)

On the whole, the presentation of visual arts materials and the provision of visual arts experiences in the classroom environment satisfied such goals. A desire for aesthetic presentation was evident in the careful presentation of materials and in visual displays of objects of interest. For example, the art studio area contained a range of recyclable and natural collage materials stored aesthetically in baskets. The art studio shelves also provided children with ready access to construction tools, glue and drawing implements. The writing table routinely presented a range of paper and writing tools for children's ready access. Children's artwork was displayed and documented with care. Indeed, the visual arts materials offered in the service were of good quality. Acrylic and watercolour paints, pencils, crayons and felt pens were well presented and well maintained. Large sheets of sturdy white paper were available at the easels and other paper in assorted sizes was freely available on the writing table and in the art studio shelves. The large storeroom held significant stocks of paper and cardboard, both purchased and donated.

While the materials available to children were replenished and renewed daily, the aesthetic presentation of materials was not always effectively maintained during free play activity times due to the time and staffing demands already outlined by the participants (see perceived barriers). For example, pencils, felt pens and paper sometimes remained scattered in the writing area and the easel painting area was occasionally less inviting due to the need for new paper and clean surfaces. Nora expressed her preference for "limited mess," commenting, "I think there's a lot to be said for having a beautiful invitation." Nora further

noted that although she would “like to be able to reorganise the table or floor ... often during the morning”, it was not “always possible in our busy environment” (WNI.3).

The storage of visual arts materials and tools also suffered from the time constraints faced by educators. While visual arts materials and tools were located in broad categories within one of two storage areas, the environmental audit revealed an assortment of scattered materials throughout the storage cupboards, suggesting a rushed gathering and return of equipment. Nora affirmed they “like to have lots of material out; lots of range. Not quantity, but a range of material out there” (WNI.2). At the same time, she valued the need for “ordered shelves and materials close at hand ... easily seen and easily accessible” as well as “adequate space and room for them to move and place their things,” believing “it’s easier for children to make choices when the range is clear for them to choose between” (WNI.3). She noted that an ordered and aesthetically maintained environment presents an invitation for children and communicates that:

You can collect something beautiful here. Not like, this is such a mess... You know, nothing’s appreciated. I think that’s what it’s about. That respect for your own work and respect for other people’s work and the value that you give it. (WNI.3)

The next chapter will discuss the findings of the case studies presented in the previous chapters, with reference to scholarly literature and the RE(D) conceptual framework.

Chapter 9: Discussion

In discussion of the findings of the study it is important to revisit the research questions that sought to explore how educator beliefs, both intrinsic personal beliefs and extrinsic pedagogical beliefs, inform visual arts planning, pedagogy and provisions in early childhood contexts; and how educators' visual arts pedagogical content knowledge informed planning, provisions and methods for visual arts experiences in ECEC contexts.

To engage with these questions a reflective conceptual framework was designed through the alignment of Dewey's theories of art, education and democracy with the key tenets of visual arts pedagogy approach from Reggio Emilia.

This chapter will answer the research questions by discussing the visual arts self-efficacy beliefs, visual arts content knowledge and visual arts pedagogy of the research participants. Five key focus areas inform the research questions. Firstly, the visual arts self-efficacy beliefs of the participants will be appraised, along with consideration about the influence of past experiences and training upon the formation of visual arts beliefs, knowledge and pedagogy. Secondly, the participants' pedagogical beliefs and knowledge will be outlined with a particular focus on the theoretical beliefs that guide visual arts pedagogy and inform the role of the educator. Thirdly, the provision of visual arts learning experiences will be described, including analysis of the participants' beliefs about the purposes and benefits of visual arts in the early childhood curriculum. Fourthly, an exploration of the aesthetic, environmental and material provisions within the study will be outlined.

In conclusion, this chapter will consider several contributing influences upon the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of the participants, including a range of persistent visual arts myths and barriers along with the influence of qualifications, experience, professional development and service culture. Stitched throughout this discussion, elements of the RE(D) conceptual framework and research literature will support reflection about the case study findings and consideration of possible implications for pedagogy, practice and children's visual arts learning contexts. The chapter closes with a published article (Lindsay, 2016b) which discusses some key findings and provocations from the study through a Deweyan Lens.

9.1. Visual arts self-efficacy beliefs

The results of this study demonstrated that the research participants' personal visual arts beliefs and self-efficacy directly influenced their pedagogical beliefs and choices. The participants expressed varying degrees of confidence in relation to visual arts knowledge, processes and skills. This gap between idealised educator attributes and the realities of personal beliefs and practice suggest that educator beliefs about their personal artistic ability directly influence their pedagogy.

9.1.1 I'm not artistic. The majority of research participants expressed the belief that they are not personally artistic, a finding that aligns with McCoubrey's (2000) study with Canadian elementary school teachers, highlighting the need to break the negative cycle of low visual arts self-efficacy. It was also interesting to note that the participants in this study identified as having low visual arts self-efficacy, deferring all responsibility for planning and engaging in visual arts activities to the person in their team considered to be the 'arty one'.

Similarly, several studies note the lack of confidence and self-efficacy in the broad domain of the arts amongst pre-service generalist primary and high school teachers (Garvis, 2008; Klopper & Power, 2010; Lemon & Garvis, 2013; Lummis et al., 2014), with early career generalist primary and high school teachers (Garvis, 2011; Garvis & Pendergast, 2010), amongst early childhood pre-service teachers (Garvis et al., 2011) and amongst early career early childhood teachers (Garvis, 2012a, Garvis, 2012b).

Collectively, the participants in this research study expressed the belief that they lack the visual arts skills knowledge and confidence they identified as necessary attributes for effective visual arts education. However, it was most interesting to note that one participant who defensively identified herself as lacking artistic skills and knowledge concurrently expressed a lack of concern about the impact this might have on children's learning and development. This lack of concern seemed to be fuelled by the belief that if children are going to be artistic this will occur regardless of the educator.

Bresler (1992, p. 410) also found that some teachers did not perceive their lack of visual arts knowledge and skills as problematic, instead selecting activities and projects perceived as "easy to teach, easy to manage, and attractive to youngsters." Similarly, McArdle (2013, p. 196) suggests such attitudes are not uncommon in those who have a low

opinion of their own artistic abilities and identified that such students sometimes excuse their lack of visual arts knowledge as ‘OK’. In contrast, and aligning with Arrifin and Baka’s (2014) findings, one research participant expressed significant concern about the impact her lack of knowledge and confidence to implement child-centred visual arts learning experiences may have on children. The RE(D) framework offers multiple points of reflection regarding such pedagogical apathy in terms of the role of the educator and the domain of visual arts. When art is positioned as a process of visual communication and meaning making it becomes accessible as a language for both children and educators. Concurrently, when educators exercise an image of the child as capable and consider the rights of the child as paramount, they may be inspired to overcome their low visual arts efficacy and adopt an attitude that seeks to become a co-learner and co-researcher with children, while developing a responsive curriculum that employs the arts to extend, guide and provoke children’s learning.

9.1.2 I can’t draw. Several participants equated their personal measure of artistic ability with the capacity to draw realistically and therefore identified themselves as non-artists. Comparable findings were identified by McCoubrey’s (2000) research and more recently in Zupančič et al’s (2015) study with preschool teachers and assistant teachers. Duncum (1999) cautions that generalist teachers who deny their own artistic skill based on the belief that they can’t draw are more likely to explore a range of materials in lieu of intentionally teaching visual arts skills, while McArdle (2013) explains that many students reject the label of artistic based on their own perception of what it means to be artistic. Challenging the belief that realism is an indicator of artistic skill, Dewey (1934) states:

If measure of artistic merit were ability to paint a fly on a peach so that we are moved to brush it off or grapes on a canvas that birds come to peck at them, a scarecrow would be a work of consummate fine art when it succeeds at keeping away the crows. (p. 209)

This finding very powerfully addresses the research question about the beliefs that impact upon the visual arts planning, pedagogy and provisions that are enacted with children. Educators who held this belief largely abdicated their role in delivering visual arts experiences with children. This finding therefore suggests that pre-service early childhood

educators may benefit from philosophical and theoretical engagement with the definition of artistic practice in order to challenge their mistaken reverence for realism as an indicator of artistic potential.

9.1.3 I can support children’s visual arts learning. It was interesting to note that despite identifying as ‘not especially artistic’, several participants expressed their appreciation for visual arts and their desire to develop their own artistic skills and to incorporate this interest into their pedagogy with children. This desire seemed to be realised most effectively when participants collaborated within teams to expand their collective visual arts knowledge and pedagogy. Similarly, Guo et al. (2011) found that American preschool teacher self-efficacy was enhanced when professional collaboration expanded their participant’s sense of confidence and self -efficacy.

In this study Eva (PPS) demonstrated her educational leadership and willingness to model her personal art appreciation and awareness of artistic processes and materials inspired confidence in her colleagues. In contrast at BLDC, lower levels of visual arts self-efficacy and pedagogical content knowledge, combined with a lack of team collaboration, led to a program dominated by sensory and one-off activities.

This corroborates Grader’s (1998) and Bae’s (2004) assertion that entrenched beliefs can be challenged by positive mentors or role models. It also illustrates Garvis’ (2008) suggestion that positive arts exposure amongst adults can instigate positive beliefs toward the arts. The RE(D) framework identifies the powerful role of modelling when educators and children collaboratively teach skills, model techniques and offer assistance. Holistic and collaborative approaches have powerful potential to support children to learn through social collaboration and co-construction of knowledge, with Dewey (1897, p. 3) noting that “all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race.”

9.1.4 I am artistic...but I won’t interfere. Importantly, the study revealed that the presence of personal visual arts skills and interests did not always guarantee effective visual arts pedagogy.

For example, Lana and Mack (KLDC), who confidently identified as creative and artistic, were the participants who most purposefully segregated their personal artistic identity from their pedagogical role. These participants unquestioningly rejected the notion

that their personal visual arts skills and interests might compliment children's learning experiences, while concurrently expressing value for children as competent, experiential learners. Their pedagogical beliefs about visual arts, childhood, and about children's visual arts learning, overruled their personal visual arts knowledge and skill.

Bresler (1992) found that teachers with visual arts skills and knowledge were more likely to transfer that knowledge into their visual arts curriculum planning. However, this research suggests that visual arts pedagogy may be more powerfully determined by the collision of personal and pedagogical beliefs than by subject content knowledge.

9.2 The influence of past experiences and training on current visual arts beliefs, knowledge and pedagogy

Without exception, the participants' recollections about their prior experiences within the domain of visual arts confirmed strong, and not unexpected, connections between childhood experiences and current self-efficacy beliefs.

Most participants seemed to have developed their attitudes toward visual arts and their feelings about their own visual arts self-efficacy during their childhood, family and schooling experiences; well before they commenced their professional training. This aligns with numerous studies that assert the influence of prior experience upon the development of self-efficacy beliefs (Garvis, 2008; Grauer, 1998; Lemon & Garvis, 2013; McArdle, 2013) and resulting pedagogy (Garvis, 2009; Garvis, 2012b; Lummis et al., 2014). Some scholars reference such beliefs as the 'baggage' students bring to pre-service coursework (McArdle, 2013; Klopper & Power, 2010), while Pajares (2011) and Garvis (2009a) draw upon Bandura's self-efficacy theory to explain that beliefs born of early experiences are typically resistant to change.

Gatt and Karpinnen's (2014) research identified the influence of negative visual arts and craft experiences during primary and secondary school on subsequent student "attitudes, beliefs and emotions toward arts and crafts courses in teacher education" (p. 85). Certainly, the findings of this study confirm McArdle's (2016) suggestion that before equipping early childhood educators with visual arts teaching strategies, they must be supported to reflect upon their own visual arts identity in order to understand how their pedagogy is shaped by personal beliefs and experiences.

9.2.1 Family Influences. The families of the research participants contributed in part to whether their artistic interests, knowledge and skills were nurtured or restricted.

This finding compliments previous studies where the influence of families upon pre-service primary teacher's self-efficacy in the arts was noted (Lemon & Garvis, 2013; Lummis et al., 2014). Generally, the study participants experienced very little family input regarding visual arts appreciation or visual arts making and noted the absence of opportunities to engage in visual arts experiences during their childhood.

Only one participant (Lana, KLDC) credited positive familial influences as the source of her passion for artistic and creative expression, believing these early experiences inspired her resentment of templates, colouring-in and stereotyped activities and her preference for artistic freedom. However, it is also possible that this emphatic recollection of early memories, combined with her strong belief in art as a form of personal therapy, may have been selectively amplified to justify her pedagogical preference for non-interventionist pedagogies.

Pajares (2011) explains that in order to sustain closely held beliefs, some individuals may recollect and interpret memories selectively. It was also interesting to note that not all participants who remembered positive family influences had developed high levels of visual arts self-efficacy. Certainly, whether families nurtured the participants' visual arts interests or not, their schooling experiences throughout childhood had significant and profound effects on their developing visual arts self-efficacy.

9.2.2 Childhood influences. Alienation from visual arts languages during childhood appeared to contribute to the lack of visual arts self-efficacy amongst the research participants and seemed to result in an abdication of the responsibility to support children's development in the visual arts domain.

Aligning with Eisner's (1973-1974) null curriculum hypothesis, this study affirms that what is not taught can significantly affect both children's learning and development and the future pedagogy of educators; producing a negative cycle of influence. Very few study participants recalled positive or memorable early childhood experiences in the visual arts domain, beyond vague recollections of play dough, finger-painting and colouring-in. Adding to this void of memorable visual arts engagement, several participants mentioned the mostly negative influence of primary and high school teachers.

For some participants, a thorough alienation from the domain of visual arts at a very young age had resulted in the abdication of their potential to contribute to the visual arts curriculum in their contexts, and fostered an ambiguous pedagogy that deferred entirely to the practice of their colleagues. The participants' early disconnection from the visual arts languages they were expected to teach illustrates McArdle's (2016) identification of a divide between educators' visual arts background and the requirements of their role with children. Dewey (1939, p. 49) identified the power of "collateral learning," where the development of future attitudes and desires for learning are profoundly strengthened or weakened by experience. He proposed that if the desire for learning is compromised, "The pupil is actually robbed of native capacities which otherwise would enable him to cope with the circumstances that he meets in the course of his life" (Dewey, 1939, p. 49). Considering the research questions, it is somewhat disquieting to consider the profound impact family influences might have on an educator's future identity and capacity to either foster or restrict children's learning and development. If we are to honour children's right to speak the language of art and to break the negative cycle of influence (Garvis et al., 2011), the imperative to redress thesis impacts on an educator's future potential is clear.

9.2.3 Pre-service training and education. The outcomes of this study demonstrated that pre-service early childhood coursework, at both degree and vocational levels appeared to have little impact on the content knowledge and visual arts confidence of research participants. Indeed, when seeking to identify how pre-service training impacted upon their visual arts planning, pedagogy and provisions, it was alarming that most participants could remember very little that was memorable about their tertiary visual arts training.

Many of the participants' embedded personal beliefs and pedagogical assumptions remained largely unaltered by their pre-service training, aligning with Grauer's (1998) suggestion that self-efficacy beliefs are more powerfully influenced by childhood experiences than by training and coursework. Added to this, few study participants were able to recall the visual arts coursework from their pre-service training, nor remember any content that had counterbalanced their pre-existing lack of visual arts content knowledge and self-efficacy.

This expands upon previous studies in pre-service primary teacher contexts that identified the minimal or negative impact of university coursework on teacher's developing

arts knowledge and self-efficacy (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010; Garvis et al., 2011; Gatt & Karppinen, 2014). This study highlights that this problem applies in both degree and vocational early childhood training contexts.

Kindler (1996) attests that because arts education has remained a neglected field for several decades, few early childhood teachers are equipped with adequate experience in arts domains. More recently in the Australian context, scholars have noted the lack of visual arts training typically integrated into early childhood teaching degree coursework (Ewing, 2010; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). The challenge to reverse students' low arts self-efficacy during thirteen weeks of subject content delivery is raised by McArdle (2013), while Garvis (2009b) argues that limited pre-service training reduces both self-efficacy for teaching the arts and the likelihood that teachers will implement the arts in their practice.

To effectively train generalist teachers when they enter pre-service coursework with minimal personal arts experience or confidence is a very real problem, especially considering the minimal time and value afforded to the arts in pre-service contexts (Collins, 2016; Russell-Bowie, 2002).

9.2.4 Confounding assumptions about visual arts subject content knowledge.

Although having undertaken undergraduate visual arts training and expressing high levels of visual arts self-efficacy participants refused to share their skills and knowledge with children, suggesting that other pedagogical beliefs and assumptions influenced their teaching practice.

It seemed their personal and prior visual arts knowledge did not synthesise with the early childhood pedagogical content delivered in their pre-service coursework, a phenomenon McArdle (2013, p. 201) identifies as “persistent discourses.” Reynolds (2007) notes that long held personal beliefs and values can influence the maintenance of beliefs that are resistant to new theories and approaches and result in a mismatch between educator's espoused theories and their actual practice.

Effective early childhood visual arts teaching requires a combination of visual arts content knowledge and a clear pedagogical understanding of how young children learn (Boldt & McArdle, 2013). The mismatch between the participants' visual arts content knowledge and their enacted pedagogy seems to illustrate Ryan and Goffin's (2008) view that teachers may reject training that does not fit with what they believe is best practice and

challenges the assumption that content taught at pre-service level will be effectively enacted.

Gatt and Karppinen's (2014) study found that student's personal beliefs and emotions influenced a resistance to change during training, while McArdle (2013) suggests students in possession of some knowledge may be less inclined to surrender their existing certainties. In this case it seemed that the beliefs that art is sacred and therapeutic and that children's visual arts development is vulnerable to adult influence overruled the early childhood training undertaken. These concepts will be further explored later in this chapter.

In contrast, the experience of two other participants suggests it may be possible to overcome negative or minimal visual arts experiences during childhood and schooling to accommodate new learning about visual arts and increase self-efficacy to incorporate visual arts pedagogies. Nora (WPS) and Eva (PPS), despite having few visual arts experiences in their childhood, were able to satisfy a yearning to express themselves creatively when they undertook artisan related coursework during their pre-service teacher education. This finding aligns with studies undertaken with pre-service primary teacher participants which found that despite minimal childhood experiences, when training provided authentic artistic experiences and practical process training participants developed an interest in the arts and expressed more positive attitudes and self-efficacy to teach arts and crafts (Garvis, 2012a; Gatt & Karppinen, 2014; Lummis et. al., 2014) and influence professional practice by impacting upon epistemological beliefs (Brownlee and Berthleson, 2004).

Described in the RE(D) framework, it seems that this is the type of pedagogical growth that occurs in Reggio Emilia, where the expert atelierista (artist) works collaboratively with classroom educators in shared projects of inquiry. The educators learn on the job, along with the children and in interaction with the environment. In the same way, Nora and Eva overcame their earlier lack of visual arts confidence and experience by being deeply immersed in visual arts methods and processes.

9.3. Pedagogical beliefs and knowledge

Although all research participants positioned children as confident and capable learners, the degree to which this declared belief was applied to children's learning in the visual arts domain varied considerably between participants and case study settings.

Gaps between rhetoric, written policy statements and beliefs about children's visual arts development suggested that for some participants the visual arts domain generates a different set of pedagogical rules and assumptions that ultimately determine the visual arts pedagogy enacted with children.

9.3.1 Gaps between rhetoric and practice. On examination of the curriculum and policy documents it was evident that in the majority of services there were gaps between the articulated policy intentions and practice.

The curriculum and policy documents at all participating services articulated a strong 'image of children' as confident, active learners; capable of constructing their own learning in collaboration with peers, educators and the environment. Terms such as 'capable child', 'agency', 'the rights of the child', and conceptual understandings positioning the child as an active constructor of their own learning, articulated as values in Reggio Emilia and evident in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009), appeared in the curriculum documents of all participant services.

The inclusion of such statement is not surprising considering the inclusion of constructivist views in early childhood contexts and the requirement that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services embed the principles and values of the EYLF (Krieg, 2011; DEEWR, 2009). However, while centre policies and participant rhetoric articulated a range of ideals, it was interesting to note a tendency amongst some participants to express ideals that did not seem to be consistently enacted. For example, the participants at KLDC frequently expressed intentions regarding their curriculum planning and visual arts pedagogy that were not evident in practice. Such gaps between educator rhetoric and practice were similarly identified in numerous primary, early childhood and pre-service teacher education studies (Bresler, 1992; McArdle and Piscitelli, 2002; Twigg and Garvis, 2010; Garvis, 2012a).

Providing a possible explanation for this phenomenon, Wen et al. (2011, p. 948) highlight the discrepancies between "what teachers think they should do (beliefs), what they actually do (observed practices), and what teachers overtly represent that they have done (self-reported practices)." As with Reynold's (2007) identification of the mismatch between kindergarten teacher's espoused beliefs and their actual practices, the findings of

this study affirm that participants' implicit beliefs about children's visual arts learning and development may be resistant to alteration by other theories or viewpoints.

9.4 Beliefs about learning new skills in the visual arts domain

Misalignments between policy document ideals and participant beliefs about children's visual arts learning and development suggest that some participants' views about how children learn remain entrenched in outdated, maturationist attitudes.

While the participants were unanimous in their belief that children learn new skills through observation, exploration, modelling and collaboration, the transference of this pedagogical belief to the visual arts domain varied considerably. For example, the participants at PPS and WPS articulated their willingness to support children's learning through intentional teaching, modelling and through repeated experiences and encounters with materials across time.

Such beliefs and pedagogy are reflected in the Reggio Emilian value for time and encounters with materials (Vecchi, 2010). They also align with the constructivist value for learning that occurs through moments of relatedness with others, with materials and within social environments (Cadwell, 1997). However, although the same belief that children learn skills through modelling and scaffolding was articulated by the participants at KLDC and BLDC in regards to broader learning contexts, they did not appear to apply these constructivist concepts equally to the visual arts domain.

It seemed that the participants in these services were not confident about children's readiness to learn specific visual arts skills, beyond the natural development that might occur if left to their own devices. These beliefs suggest adherence to developmental notions of visual arts skills development as a naturally unfolding, yet fragile progression. The beliefs of the participants could be challenged by Malaguzzi's challenge:

To know children is to appreciate them, and become more aware of our educational responsibility. However, before this it is right to sweep away once and for all the foolish belief that we must wait for a certain age in order to begin children's education - 'they don't understand that anyway'. Children's character and the personality of the child are constructed from birth, from the first days of life. (1957, translated & cited in Cagliari et al., 2016, p. 54)

9.5 Theoretical beliefs and knowledge

In this study, few participants were able to confidently name the theoretical influences on their visual arts pedagogy, suggesting that personal beliefs, vague pedagogical knowledge and habitual practices may have predominantly guided their visual arts practice.

This aligns closely to Page and Talyer's (2016, p. 16) view that although teachers should ideally be able to "articulate the theoretical bases of their programs" many early childhood educators flounder in this regard. Stephen (2012) suggests that many educators' most recent encounter with theory may have occurred in the distant past during their initial training. Whether specifically identified or not, the theoretical beliefs of the participants influenced their approach to visual arts pedagogy and determined their beliefs about children's visual arts practice and the role of the educator in facilitating children's learning in the visual arts domain.

This informs the research intent to identify how an educators' pedagogical knowledge informs planning, provisions and pedagogy. Indeed, participant beliefs about children's visual arts learning and development seemed to fall into two theoretical paradigms. Some participants' beliefs were located within notions of child art as naturally developing, therapeutic and potentially corruptible, while others expressed constructivist principles to embrace an image of the child as both ready and able to engage in visual arts learning in collaboration with peers and educators.

9.5.1 Art as natural development. Interestingly, participants that expressed developmental views frequently justified visual arts activities for their fine-motor benefits, believed children's visual arts development is best supported with minimal intervention by the educator. These participants expressed doubts about children's readiness to learn particular visual arts techniques and methods.

The notion that preschool children might not yet be ready to learn visual arts skills and techniques was expressed in varying degrees by participants in three of the case study settings. Such beliefs generally aligned with the view that visual arts development is a naturally unfolding process, best left to occur in its own time, if at all.

Such views positioning artistic ability as a natural and inborn trait imply that children's artistic development is an option available to the genetically predisposed or to those expressing interest in arts experiences.

Numerous scholars attest to the ongoing predominance of developmental perspectives in early childhood contexts (Fleer, 2011; Richards, 2007; Stephen, 2012; Stott, 2011; Terreni, 2010; Thompson, 2015). More specifically, research examining teacher beliefs and practices relating to toddler art education also identified a participant tendency to focus on developmental perspectives (Visser, 2006). It is interesting to note that developmental paradigms were mostly referenced by less experienced and qualified participants, a finding consistent with Vartuli's (1999) identification of the predominance of developmental beliefs amongst educators with less teaching experience.

Kindler (1995) further suggests preschool teachers particularly adhere to philosophies of non-intervention that emerged from post-war notions of child art as a natural unfolding. The resulting belief that adult interference in children's art making inhibits children's natural development, fuels the "common (and convenient) belief that artistic development takes care of itself" (Kindler, 1995, p. 11). McArdle and Spina (2007) attest that *laissez-faire* and non-intervention approaches remain attractive to Australian teachers because of their limited arts knowledge, experience and skill.

This study concurs with Kindler (1995) and McArdle and Spina (2007) to propose that educators lacking visual arts self-efficacy may conveniently, albeit subconsciously, latch onto the belief that art is a naturally developing and easily corruptible state in order to abdicate their responsibility to be part of children's learning encounters with visual arts materials and methods. It seems that when educators lack the confidence to know what and how to teach children in the visual arts domain, a philosophy that permits non-interference may be very reassuring.

9.5.2 Art as constructed knowledge and skill. These educators articulated and intentionally enacted their beliefs in children as capable protagonists in their own learning.

Several research participants identified the constructivist approach of the Reggio Emilia project as a guide for their visual arts pedagogy. This was particularly effective when spoken beliefs and practices also aligned with written statements and policies.

For example, at PPS the Reggio Emilia inspired intention to embed visual arts pedagogies was clearly articulated throughout curriculum and policy documents and enacted in practice. Compared to services where participants expressed developmentally limiting views of children's capabilities, services where participants referenced constructivist beliefs appeared to engage more readily in open-ended visual arts experiences, coupled with educator modelling to support children's skills development and self-expression.

9.6 The role of the educator: Intentional engagement or non-intervention?

Informing this study, the competing discourse between constructivist and maturational epistemological beliefs about children's development presented a dichotomy between participants. Some participants implemented collaborative and intentional teaching of visual arts with children, while others adhered to non-interventionist practices.

The research findings suggest that participants' personal visual arts skills and self-efficacy did not determine their choice for or against active personal engagement. Rather, their beliefs about children's capacity, development and learning, whether informed by theory or myth, seemed to determine their pedagogical position.

The findings of this study concur with Garvis' (2012b) view that visual arts teaching practice in early childhood settings is shaped by an educator's epistemological stance; which informs their views about children's development and learning and their own role as an educator. As Cassidy and Lawrence (2000) attest, rather than the role defining the behaviour, it is the practical interpretation and application of the educator's belief about their multiple roles that defines their pedagogical choices. Similarly, the RE(D) framework notes the powerful pedagogical influence that results from an educator's image of the child. Indeed, the epistemological stance adopted by an educator in terms of their beliefs about children as citizens, how children learn and how and when children should, or should not, be supported by the educator will determine most pedagogical choices.

In this study, the participants that adopted intentional pedagogical approaches to children's visual arts learning and experience embraced constructivist notions of the educator as a co-learner and co-constructor of children's learning. The personal visual arts self-efficacy of these participants did not seem to deter their belief that children's learning

could be supported by a willingness to demonstrate or model the application of visual arts materials and techniques.

For example, the educators at WPS and PPS valued socially constructed learning where collaboration, imitation, modelling, scaffolding and the presence of the educator enabled children to overcome moments of frustration. In contrast, the research participants that believed children's natural visual arts development could be stifled by adult intervention maintained a non-intervention stance. For example, at KLDC the notion that an educator might demonstrate or model particular visual arts skills in order to scaffold children's visual arts knowledge and skills was rejected as "potentially damaging".

9.6.1 Misinterpreted pedagogical principles. The non-intervention approach to visual arts demonstrated by some research participants also seemed to align with a misinterpretation of the field-endorsed mantra to base early childhood curricula upon children's interests.

Although all of the research participants explained their programs were led by a focus on children's interests, some participants believed that following children's interests meant doing whatever children wanted to do, regardless of the educational merits of the choice. Instead of planning for the intentional teaching of visual arts processes in response to children's observed and expressed interests, they justified their planning choices by deferring to children's choices.

In seeking to satisfy the assumed expectation to follow children's interests, notions of 'child choice' and 'freedom of expression' were elevated, while educator knowledge and intentional teaching were subjugated. It appeared that most activities presented to children were either justified as a response to children's activity requests or selected to entertain children, avoid boredom and keep children busy.

The research findings exemplify the ongoing tensions between values for child control and teacher control raised by Leggett and Ford (2013). On the one hand, it was not surprising that all of the participants expressed the desire to plan curricula based on children's interests and choices. Such statements reflect pedagogical expectations outlined in the EYLF Educator's Guide to base educational programs on children's "current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests" and to "support children's emerging

interests and allow them to demonstrate their innate creativity and curiosity” (DEEWR, 2010, p. 86).

However, the concept of intentional teaching in the visual arts domain was problematic for participants holding the belief that adult engagement may be a corrupting force. It is important to remember the research participants who maintained hands-off, child-choice approaches to curriculum planning and pedagogy firmly believed they were respecting and honouring children’s rights to open-ended, self-directed play when they provided arts materials for open-ended exploration and avoided intentional teaching, modelling and scaffolding of visual arts skills. I therefore agree with Thompson’s (2015, p. 10) view that the “tendency to minimize the contributions of the teacher in order to highlight the capacities of the learner often reflects the best of intentions.”

Leggett and Ford (2013) identify that difficulties arise when interpretations of intentionality are misguided. Therefore, while perhaps taking comfort in the claim that everything being offered to children was grounded in children’s interests, the participants that consequently rejected intentional teaching in the visual arts domain ignored the problem that open-ended play on its own neglects to support children’s subject content learning and skills development (Edwards & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2011, 2013; Leggett & Ford, 2013).

Aligning with these findings, Visser (2006) found that early childhood participants believed all planning should be based on children’s interests and rejected the notion that educators might scaffold, model, collaborate and co-construct visual arts learning with children. A lack of teacher clarity was identified regarding the status of visual arts as a legitimate discipline with distinct subject content knowledge and learning outcomes (Visser, 2006). Meanwhile, Clark and de Lautour (2009) found their participants’ non-interventionist approach was coupled with the belief that children should create their own work with minimal interference.

More recently in Australia, Flear (2011) noted the ongoing predominance of maturational views of child development that place limitations on the reach of intentional teaching. Given the leaning toward maturational notions of children’s visual arts development expressed amongst several research participants, it is interesting to consider Ryan and Goffin’s (2008) theory that educators relying on developmental curriculum and

teaching approaches tend to centralise their “desire to be child focussed,” while failing to recognise teacher’s “pedagogical decision making as a critical intermediary between children and their learning.”

9.7. Visual arts provisions: arts and crafts and everything in-between

Many participants in the research study struggled to differentiate between the various merits and purposes of visual arts and craft activities typically offered to children in early childhood contexts.

Indeed, the research revealed that few participants demonstrated the capacity to evaluate the quality of their own visual arts practice nor to articulate the distinctions between visual arts, craft, sensory experiences, experimental activities, open-ended project work and close-ended teacher-directed tasks. Several participants used the terms ‘art’ and ‘craft’ interchangeably or labelled structured activities, such as stencils and step-by-step products, as ‘craft’, often referring to these activities in disparaging terms. Indeed, while the participants implemented a range of arts and crafts related learning experiences, the divergent beliefs expressed suggest that visual arts pedagogy in the early-years education context is both highly ambiguous and frequently contested.

The lack of distinction between visual arts and crafts provision amongst the participants was not surprising given the broad and ambiguous references to visual arts made in the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009). In addition, frequently referenced early childhood arts textbooks do not clearly articulate the distinctions between arts and crafts, beyond critiquing the use of colouring-in stencils (see for example, Kolbe, 2005, 2007; Brownlee, 2007; Ewing, 2013) and urging educators to avoid adult-made, product-oriented craft models and pre-ordained results (Brownlee, 2007; Isbell & Raines, 2007; Pelo, 2007). Given pre-service visual arts coursework is afforded minimal time and value (Collins, 2016; Twigg and Garvis, 2010), it is not surprising that educators struggle to appreciate the distinctions between arts and crafts procedures and outcomes, nor that in their desire to do the ‘right thing’, they reject experiences assumed to be unacceptable.

9.7.1 Confused categories and null curriculum. This study demonstrated a desire to facilitate children’s individual expression and creativity, resulting in a constriction of the visual arts curriculum offered to children.

Regardless of the label given to the range of activities presented to children in the case study settings, it was concern about structured, adult-led experiences that often determined the categorisation of arts activities as acceptable or unacceptable. For example, at KLDC, the ban on all sensory activities stemmed from a vehement determination to centralise the child's freedom of expression and avoid adult support for any activity that might produce homogenous rather than individualised finished products. It seemed sensory activities were placed into the same category as the production of close-ended items, such as stencils, colouring-in sheets, novelty activities and theme inspired egg-carton caterpillars and Easter collage.

This rejection of all activities not categorised as open-ended art, while refusing to guide and model visual arts skills with children, resulted in what Eisner (1973-1974) would consider a null curriculum; significant because of the experiences denied to children.

9.7.2 Absence of traditional crafts. This study demonstrated close-ended, teacher-centric and structured imitations of traditional crafting processes. Within the case studies, the prevalence or absence of particular visual arts provisions provided insights into the beliefs, knowledge and intentions of the participants.

Most noteworthy was the complete absence of traditional crafting experiences, such as stitching, threading, weaving, paper folding and paper cutting amongst all of the participating services. This unexpected finding further affirms the ambiguity that appears to surround the definition and differentiation of learning experiences that employ visual arts materials and methods. It also suggests that traditional crafts may have been subsumed into a broader rejection of the types of structured, pre-determined and adult-directed activities often disparagingly labelled as 'bunny-bum art' or even 'craactivities' (Duncum 2000; Grieshaber, 2010; Peters, 2016).

In contrast, in Reggio Emilia educators' preference open-ended engagement with graphic materials above close-ended "stereotyped products," where the participation of children is marginalised (Vecchi, 2010, p. 132). At the same time, children in Reggio Emilia are intentionally equipped with component "graphic language" skills to support growing competencies in the visual and graphic languages (Hendrick, 1997; Katz, 1998).

It is possible that the general absence of seasonally inspired and 'bunny-bum' activities in the participant services might suggest that Australian early childhood educators

have eliminated such practice, and enacted Jalongo's (1999, p. 205) call to "reject the 'art' or 'craft' projects that homogenize children's responses and cause everyone's to look alike." However, the fact that several participants expressed contradictory sentiments regarding the potential for such activities to please parents and provide harmless fun affirms Ewing's (2013) claim that art making continues to be a contested topic in early childhood contexts.

Dewey identified the unhelpful divisions between arts and crafts, or the practical work of the artisan, in educational contexts (1915; 1919). He believed that by grounding children's play and learning within hands-on engagement in everyday practical skills and occupations their formal learning would be equipped and inspired (Dewey, 1897; 1910; 1915). It seems Dewey's dualistic assertion that "genuine art grows out of the work of the artisan" has been devalued in contemporary early childhood educational contexts (1915, p. 86) to narrow children's exposure to quality visual arts and traditional crafting experiences.

Addressing the inquiry of this study, it appears that the educators lacked the skills, confidence and knowledge to scaffold children's learning from immersion in material, graphic and expressive skills toward artistic expression. Indeed, discrepancies regarding the differentiation, provision and omission of various arts, crafts and arts-related experiences within the current study suggest a lack of pedagogical clarity regarding the categories of activity that constitute early childhood visual arts and early childhood craft experiences.

9.8 Beliefs about the purposes and benefits of visual arts provisions.

The beliefs expressed by the research participants about the purposes and benefits of visual arts in early childhood contexts were located in four broad categories focused on developmental goals, educational goals, therapeutic goals and entertainment goals. There was significant alignment between the participants' categories of belief about the purposes of visual arts and their pedagogical beliefs and knowledge.

9.8.1 Developmental goals. When articulating the benefits of visual arts engagement, most participants listed fine motor development as a beneficial outcome. Linked to this they also noted the sensory developmental outcomes from playing with visual arts materials. It was interesting that participants who predominantly focused on fine motor development as the major benefit of visual arts engagement tended to be the least qualified and the least confident with visual arts pedagogies in each case study setting. This developmental focus was not unexpected given the theoretical dualisms previously

outlined. It suggests that for some participants, developmental learning benefits may be the default response to any analysis of children's play.

More than thirty years ago, Eisner (1973-1974) highlighted educators' mistaken adherence to the mythical belief that children's visual arts development is best served through the provision of materials and emotional support alone. He advocated for intentional teaching to equip children with the skills and means to progress forward in their learning, warning that the "skills needed for artistic expression are not acquired simply by getting older" (Eisner, 1973-1974, p. 8). More recently, scholars note the persistent commitment of the early childhood sector to developmental interpretations of children's play, despite the increasing focus on postmodern and sociocultural conceptions of childhood and children's learning (Edwards, 2007; Grieshaber & Ryan, 2005).

However, while Edwards (2007) attributes this in part to adherence to outdated training by a maturing workforce, this research suggests adherence to developmental views about children's visual arts development may also be linked to the educators' beliefs about their own visual arts development and efficacy. It also raises the possibility that some pre-service coursework continues to highlight developmental outcomes in the visual arts domain. After all, if visual arts learning were to be positioned as a socially constructed skill, rather than a developmentally-ready-or-not-skill, early childhood educators would surely be compelled to actively engage in children's visual arts learning.

Yet, the prevalence of unquestioned developmental justifications amongst these less confident, less knowledgeable and more recently trained participants raises the possibility that early childhood educators may require training that supports them to confront and reframe their assumptions about visual arts development for both children and themselves. In this regard, Edwards, Blaise and Hammer (2009) assert that to move early childhood educators beyond developmentalism requires a shift toward postmodern conceptions of childhood.

9.8.2 Entertainment goals. Several research participants positioned visual arts and crafts activities as a strategy for keeping children busy, happy and entertained. This finding also suggests that some research participants mistakenly positioned children's play and children's work as a dichotomy rather than as a complimentary dualism and consequently

coupled their desire to entertain children as advocacy for children's right to freedom of expression through play.

These participants articulated the belief that children would become bored unless provisioned with a constantly revolving smorgasbord of activities, suggesting a deficit image of the child in need of entertainment. It was also interesting to note that the expectation to provide fun and entertaining experiences was particularly prevalent in the participant service where the least qualified participant was responsible for most of the daily curriculum planning.

The prevalence of commercial materials such as fluorescent feathers, glitter glue and sparkly pipe cleaners illustrated the participants' belief that arts activities should be fun and entertaining. Such materials were used at three of the participant services to varying degrees, despite these same participants suggesting that the cost of materials could be a barrier to effective visual arts provisions. The belief that effective pedagogy is best achieved by keeping children's hands busy with a range of exotic novelty materials is challenged by Jalongo's (1999) proposal that such beliefs give the profession a bad name and are a barrier to effective education that extends children's imaginations and intellect.

Similarly, Sheridan (2009, p. 72) notes that educators require knowledge to ensure that the visual arts experiences they provide are "meaningful and promote understanding, rather than just activity." Eisner (1973-1974) labelled the belief that it is best to provide children with a wide variety of materials for exploration as mythical, suggesting that ever changing, trivial experiences do not support children's learning. Still highly relevant in contemporary contexts, Dewey (1910) warned that when educators believe they need to respond to children's impulses there is a tendency that they will "supply a multitude of stimuli in order that spontaneous activity may be kept up...in order that there may be no flagging of free self-expression."

Dewey (1934) also addresses the competing discourse of play versus work, highlighting that for children purposeful work is fun. He appreciated that adults mistakenly separate children's play and work because of their own comparisons of play and work, "in which some activities are recreative and amusing because of their contrast with work that is infected with laborious care" (Dewey, 1934, p. 291). While there is a place in life for diversion and escapism, Dewey attests this does not justify "defining art in terms of

diversion” (1934, p. 291). Dewey (1910) therefore challenges the notion of art as entertainment, suggesting that when children are supported to engage in deep and purposeful experiences that lead to mastery and growth they will be both educated and entertained through playful and purposeful work.

9.8.3 Educational goals. It was interesting to find the research participants that adhered to post-modern, constructivist notions of children as capable tended to be those who positioned visual arts engagement in educational terms.

The participants that aligned themselves with constructivist beliefs about children and play in the visual arts domain seemed to implement more purposeful, hands on and intentional visual arts curricula. For example, at both PPS and WPS the visual arts were utilised to support children’s processes of meaning making, exploration and communication. These intentional educative strategies were evident in both planning documents, daily diaries and in the documentation of children’s learning.

The beliefs of these participants aligned with Dewey’s (1934) notion that in play, children powerfully experience true freedom through meaningful work. As Dewey (1934, p. 291) attests, “No one has ever watched a child intent in his play without being made aware of the complete merging of playfulness with seriousness.”

Like Dewey and the educators in Reggio Emilia, these participant services espoused and enacted the belief that children are capable, active protagonists who learn through hands-on experience with materials, the environment and collaborative inquiry with peers and educators (see Dewey, 1897, 1915; Malaguzzi, 1993, 1998; Tedeschi, 2012). Visual art was positioned as a language whereby children can make, explore and communicate meaning when equipped with quality methods and techniques (see Dewey, 1910, 1915, 1919, 1934; Katz, 1998; Malaguzzi, 1998; Vecchi, 2010). Educators were empowered by the concept that as researchers of children’s learning processes and as co-learners with children they did not have to be the expert, but rather could utilise the visual arts to support meaningful learning experiences (see Cadwell, 1997; Dewey, 1897, 1939; Vecchi, 2010).

In contrast, while individual educators at BLDC and KLDC also articulated some of these concepts, their rhetoric was not enacted due to their beliefs about the role of the educator in the visual arts domain or their own lack of visual arts pedagogical knowledge. This resulted in planning and documentation records that had very little reference to visual

arts learning, beyond photographic reporting of some arts related activities. Leggett and Ford (2013) note that tensions and confusion regarding the role of the educator were raised when their participants' understandings about intentional teaching were misguided. They note the benefit for educators in engaging with contemporary sociocultural theories that shift conceptions of intentional teaching and intentional learning from developmental deficit discourses toward a focus on children as competent co-partners in the teaching and learning space (Leggett & Ford, 2013).

In addition, Bae (2004) suggests that teacher beliefs about their role in supporting children's visual arts learning are informed through constructivist notions of modelling and scaffolding. Building upon Bae's (2004) broad observation this study proposes that direct engagement with post-modern, constructivist approaches, where children are positioned as competent, capable and intentional learners, seemed to foster learning environments where visual arts were valued as an accessible and powerful educative medium.

This notion of the education versus entertainment divide in early childhood visual arts contexts is further explored with reference to Dewey's advocacy for educative experiences that concurrently lead to children's growth, engagement and enjoyment.

9.8.4 Therapeutic goals. In this study, participants believed that visual arts engagement enables young children to develop their identity and release their emotions through free and unrestricted exploration with materials. Most research participants expressed a belief in the therapeutic benefits and purposes of visual arts engagement.

Such beliefs seemed to be strongly connected to notions of art-as-freedom, with several participants expressing the belief that there should be no restrictions or rules for children making artworks. Aligned with the belief that visual arts development unfolds naturally, adherence to the notion that art making is a form of personal therapy seemed to be more prevalent amongst participants that articulated that child choice and freedom determine the curriculum. A therapeutic focus was also more prevalent amongst the participants that adhered to maturationist beliefs about children's visual arts development.

McArdle (2008) notes the dominant discourse of art-as-freedom and personal expression amongst teachers who are reluctant to teach. She notes that teachers either accept visual arts teaching as a master and apprentice transmission of skills and techniques

or adopt a laissez faire, exploratory stance; adhering to the notion that there is no right or wrong with art (McArdle, 2008).

Interestingly, scholars suggest such beliefs are particularly fuelled by modernist and liberalist human discourse (McArdle, 2003; Boldt & McArdle, 2013). Dewey proposes the discourse of art-as-freedom, escapism and therapy is prevalent because of an assumption that aesthetic experiences provide “a release and escape from the pressure of ‘reality’” (1934, p. 291). Aligning with this view, Kindler (1996) challenges the assumption that visual arts engagement consistently contributes to a sense of calm satisfaction, highlighting the frustration and anxiety that can result from the visual arts process.

Indeed, Dewey (1939) clearly warns that the satisfaction of desires and impulses should not be the final goal of education.

9.8.5 Art as sacred. Some participants reified art as a special gift and seemed predisposed to adopt the belief that children’s visual arts development unfolds naturally and that adult intervention may corrupt children’s fragile visual arts development.

When participants positioned visual arts as an outpouring of personal freedom and as a form of individual therapy, this seemed to be accompanied by a belief that children should be left to express themselves without any form of adult restriction or imposition. Several participants also considered art skills to be a rare and sacred gift bestowed upon the privileged few. These participants reified art as a domain of development distinct from other learning areas when they positioned artistic skill as an inherited gift or inborn predisposition. Such beliefs imply that art development is somehow reserved only for particular people and less accessible than other learning areas.

Extending upon McCoubrey’s (2000) finding that primary teacher participants with limited visual arts skills and knowledge considered the capacity to make art a naturally developing talent somehow denied to them, this study shows the mistaken belief that artistic talent is an inborn trait was also prevalent amongst participants who considered themselves artistically skilled. This finding complicates McArdle’s (2013, p. 197) proposition that if pre-service coursework teaches an “appreciation for the importance and power of the arts” graduates are more likely to include the arts in their planned curriculum. In this study, a belief in visual arts as important was not sufficient to ensure the implementation of quality visual arts experiences with children.

Ironically, the belief that art is a sacred gift, coupled with the assumption that adult intervention prevents the gift to evolve naturally, reduced children's opportunities to learn the component skills of visual arts making. Dewey warns of this assumption as he highlights the need to align the arts with everyday experience rather than place them upon an unattainable pedestal (1934). He pragmatically accepted that while natural gifts may play some part in the production of a work of art, they must be subjected to the discipline of the art form, developed by learning about materials and component skills (Kleibard, 2006).

In Reggio Emilia, this notion was adopted to position visual and graphic arts as tools for communication and meaning making rather than an inaccessible process or object (Vecchi, 2010). The application of visual arts languages as accessible and achievable skills was evident in the pedagogical approach adopted by Eva, Regan, Teri (PPS) and Nora (WPS), illustrating that a belief in the importance of visual arts must be pragmatically grounded within visual arts pedagogical knowledge about how to teach visual arts skills with children.

9.9 Aesthetics, environment and materials

While most participants in this study expressed value for the provision of aesthetically presented environments and materials, variations in both the intentionality and execution of visual displays, as well as the storage and presentation of visual arts materials, suggested gaps between authentic and tokenistic practice driven by pedagogical intentions.

The environments at each participating service exemplified the participants' value for aesthetics and beliefs regarding children's right and capacity to access and engage with visual arts materials. The environments also provided insight into the quality, storage and accessibility of materials presented to children.

If learning environments reflect the beliefs and knowledge of the people who design and inhabit them (Malaguzzi, 1998) and operate as a "concrete measure" of educator's beliefs (Touhill, 2011, p. 20), the exploration of the learning environments in the participant services articulated several beliefs and values worthy of consideration.

For example, while the static displays of bottled, coloured water at KLDC suggested a desire for interesting and aesthetically presented displays, this contrasted markedly with the less organised and rarely maintained presentation of materials on the classroom trolley. In contrast, at PPS the provision of visual displays based on child interest

or educator provocation and carefully presented, well-maintained arts materials embodied their philosophical value for Reggio Emilia's notion of the environment as third teacher. Their policy embedded engagement with Reggio Emilia's values for aesthetics, time, quality materials and processes suggests they have moved well beyond tokenistic display to embed aesthetic provisions as an experiential facilitator of children's ongoing relationships with materials.

In the Australian context, a renewed interest in the role of the physical environment may be attributed to the influence of Reggio Emilia's notion of the environment as third teacher (Touhill, 2011). This renewed focus on learning environments has also emerged from the introduction of the Australian National Quality Standards that guide the assessment and rating of the quality of the physical environments in early childhood settings (Fleer, 2011; Touhill, 2011). However, Touhill (2011) identified the risk of tokenistic imitation of the environmental design strategies exemplified in Reggio Emilia that may occur without accompanying reflection on the values and principles underlying the approach.

9.9.1 The intent of display. The manner in which children's artworks were displayed illustrated the participant's beliefs, motivations and intentionality.

Indeed, the degree of documentation and display of children's work seemed to align with overall levels of quality service provision and practice. Three participant services arranged children's drawings, paintings and project work with care and respect, expressing their desire to communicate children's engagement with the children's parents and guardians. In contrast at KLDC there was minimal display or documentation of children's learning and visual arts activities, despite their expressed desire to support children to appreciate their own work by displaying it in a "tasteful and unique manner" (KLI.1). Although the gap between rhetoric and practice in this case perhaps indicates a *laissez-faire* approach to program delivery, it is also worth considering the competing priorities and expectations for practice in the early childhood field that potentially influence the enactment of pedagogical principles.

Although the display of children's work may be attributed to the participants' desire to show respect for children's learning and artistic efforts, it is also possible that such practices are driven by the expectation to decorate the environment to satisfy assessment

and ratings requirements. For example, at BLDC the procedural shift in documentation, planning systems and the display of children's art works, resulting from professional development training, seemed to be predominantly inspired by the expectation to provide evidence of children's engagement and learning for assessment and ratings purposes.

Similarly, Clark and de Lautour (2009) found that New Zealand educators were motivated to "behave professionally" in order to "display the profession's collective aspirations" (p.115). This aligns with Wall, Litjens and Taguma's (2015) view that pedagogical choices are influenced by quality assessment and monitoring processes. Ohlsen (2016, p. 2) exposes the gap between enacting "genuine learning through authentic processes" and appropriating children's artwork to enhance and "dress educational environments." This possible emphasis on assessment inspired 'decoration' of classrooms, rather than the interests of children, aligns with Twigg's (2011) ethnographic study which challenged the assumption that educators may indiscriminately display children's artwork without considering children's right to determine the use of their own work.

9.9.2 Access to visual arts materials. The manner and times in which visual arts activities were offered to children reflected both the participants' beliefs about children's learning and their beliefs about the purposes of visual arts in early childhood settings.

For example, at PPS and WPS the intentional provision of extended periods of time for children to explore, play with and revisit readily accessible arts materials reflected their value for children as engaged and capable learners. These participants articulated children's right to be given time to become familiar with materials in order to develop knowledge about the affordances of materials and the technical confidence to use them effectively. It is also interesting to note that this strategy concurrently supported the educators in the service to maintain the aesthetic presentation of materials while they co-participated alongside children to model the application and respectful care of materials.

Such intentionally enacted strategies suggest their pedagogy was powerfully informed by appreciation for Reggio Emilia's value for 'time' (Vecchi, 2010) and for children as co-learners and co-researchers (Dewey, 1916, 1939; Edwards, 2012; Rankin, 2004). The pedagogical practices displayed align with Bae's (2004) and Merz and Glover's (2006) descriptions of teams of educators similarly inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach in terms of respect for children, the role of the teacher, value for time and the provision of

materials and experiences. Similarly, Baxter's (2007) thesis highlighted the powerful influence of the Reggio Emilia approach upon pedagogical decisions regarding aesthetics and environments and the allocation of time for meaningful project work with children.

9.10 Contributing influences on visual arts beliefs and pedagogy

Persistent adherence to a range of visual arts myths appeared to exert a powerful influence on the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of the research participants.

On examination of the results of this study, several additional factors appeared to contribute to the visual arts beliefs, knowledge and resulting pedagogy of the participants. In addition, the types of early childhood qualification undertaken, the participants' years of experience and their engagement in professional development suggest possible contributing influences upon the visual arts beliefs and content knowledge of the research participants.

Further to this, leadership styles and the existence of visual arts embedded policy and resource documents also appeared to impact upon participants' beliefs, efficacy and pedagogy.

9.10.1 The influence of persistent visual arts myths. In this study, the general absence of visual arts content knowledge and visual arts pedagogical knowledge amongst the research participants seemed to perpetuate a persistent adherence to a range of visual arts myths and mantras.

Indeed, several of the myths and barriers identified by Eisner (1973-1974), Jalongo (1999) and Kindler (1996); and reiterated by many scholars (Hong, Part, & Rowell, 2017, Peers, 2008; Richards, 2007), were repeatedly articulated during the research study. These myths include the belief that children's natural visual arts development is best served when educators provide a range of materials for exploration but remain hands-off (Eisner, 1973-1974; Jalongo, 1999); the belief that visual arts development evolves naturally (Eisner, 1973-1974; Kindler, 1996); and, the belief that visual arts engagement is primarily a therapeutic exercise (Eisner, 1973-1974; Kindler, 1996).

Two other myths evident amongst the research participants were a focus for reflection. Most prominent was the notion that chaos and mess are synonymous with creativity, while the process versus product myth exposed a range of tensions for the research participants.

9.10.1.1 Myth One: Visual arts mess-making builds creativity. Jalongo (1999) identified as common the myth that messy visual arts activities build creativity. Indeed, while some participants valued messy activities, others questioned the assumed links between visual arts mess-making and creativity. Furthermore, some paid lip service to the creative benefits of messy arts experiences, yet avoided mess-making activities in practice. Other participants noted the tensions created between staff and parents about mess-making concurrently explaining the need to advocate for children's right to free expression through messy play, while admitting the demands of child supervision sometimes restricted the types of experience offered in order to avoid the need to clean up messes. There appears to be a link between the romanticising of messy arts play, the belief that visual arts are therapeutic and the belief that children's choices, regardless of their educative value, determine a child-focused curriculum.

Previous research studies have noted the mixed messages expressed by teachers regarding mess making, suggesting that while teachers express value for messy experiences there is an aversion to mess-making and a desire for order (Bailey & de Rijke, 2014; Brown, 2006). Eisner (1973-1974) highlighted as mythical the belief that creativity is developed through art, suggesting that while arts engagement can foster general creativity, it should not be positioned as the therapeutic key that exclusively unlocks the child's innate creativity. Dewey's progressivism challenged the romantic belief that children's choices should determine the curriculum, suggesting such beliefs substitute chaos for education and restrict children's access to subject content knowledge and independent thought (Weiss et al., 2005).

9.10.1.2 Myth two: Visual arts processes are more important than visual arts products. Eisner (1973-1974) suggests that teachers lacking clarity about their pedagogical goals and strategies in the visual arts domain tend to focus instead on activities and products. While several study participants expectedly raised the common early childhood statement that the process is more important than the product, others expressed the belief that the visual arts product holds value for children and should be considered as an element of the learning process.

For example, the participants' determination to avoid product-oriented activities participants at three services placed a very heavy emphasis on processes, rejecting all

teacher-centred activities; while hesitantly noting that children generally value visual arts products they make. In contrast at WPS, both process and product were valued, coupled with a rejection of close-ended and limiting products and a concurrent value for quality materials and processes. Through reflective and intentional pedagogy, the WPS case exemplified Shields, Guyotte, and Weedo's (2016, p. 47) notion of the artful pedagogue as one who uses the visual arts to blend process and product in the same way that learning and knowledge are intertwined in the path toward emergent meaning-making and understanding.

More than thirty years after Eisner (1973-1974) challenged the view that the process is more important than the product, this study suggests the debate is ongoing and that unexamined adherence to this myth risks ongoing pedagogical divisions in the domain of visual arts pedagogy.

9.10.2 Unquestioned myths and entrenched beliefs. The prevalence of unquestioned visual arts myths and entrenched beliefs within this study suggests that in the absence of visual arts content and pedagogical knowledge, some educators may adopt shared myths and mantras to instil some level of confidence and certainty about their pedagogical choices. It also suggests that these myths and mantras could be perpetuated in both coursework and professional development resources.

For example, while participants noted their pre-service coursework taught them that the visual arts process is more important than the product, numerous websites, blogs and books repeat the mantra that 'it's the process not the product' without articulating which processes constitute quality visual arts practice; nor identifying how educators should support children's learning beyond the provision of materials and uninterrupted freedom to explore (Axelsson, 2013; Caplan & Kyretses, 2014; Hardy, 2017; Kohl, 1994; Phillips, 2010).

Compounding this mythical stance, scholars suggest a persistent adherence to Victor Lowenfeld's and Herbert Read's post-war positions on children's visual arts engagement as a creative and therapeutic release has influenced the ongoing reliance on mythical pedagogies and the slow uptake of constructivist approaches to children's visual arts learning and development (Kindler, 1996; Richards, 2007).

Additionally, McArdle & Piscitelli (2002) and Richards (2007) propose that these persistent myths have remained a dominant discourse in the Australian context due to Frances Durham's (1961) Lowenfeld inspired booklet 'Art for the child under seven'; which has only recently been removed from circulation.

9.10.3 Types of early childhood qualification. The quality of participants' visual arts content knowledge, visual arts self-efficacy correlated with their resulting confidence and preparedness to plan for and implement visual arts experiences with children.

It was interesting to note that all four participants who indicated the highest levels of confidence in their own visual arts skills and pedagogical knowledge were university trained early childhood teachers. Of these, three had trained as on-campus students, while the remaining teacher had upgraded from a Diploma qualification to a Degree qualification by distance education coursework.

The least confident of the participants, although Degree and Diploma qualified, reported that their training experiences had little impact on their pre-existing low visual arts self-efficacy, a finding that exemplifies Garvis' (2009b) assertion that negative personal beliefs about the arts will result in marginalisation of the arts in the classroom regardless of the educator's awareness of the importance of the arts. It was also interesting to compare the divergent confidence levels expressed by Diploma qualified participants who had undertaken full time on-campus study compared those who had gained their qualification through on-the-job vocational training delivered by a private training organization and where significant recognition of prior learning had been granted.

Further to this, participants that had upgraded from vocational Diplomas in Child Studies to Teaching Degrees explained they had not accessed any visual arts related coursework within their distance education studies. Australian universities generally offer recognition of prior learning to students entering a Degree with a Diploma in Child Studies, resulting in these students being exempt from visual arts coursework requirements. This is of significant concern given few participants with current or previous vocational training expressed adequate confidence in their own visual arts skills and knowledge or their ability to support children's learning. The findings of this study therefore suggest the current assumption that vocational training subjects provide adequate prior learning to justify automatic exemptions from university level subjects may be misplaced.

Although limited in the number of participants the research findings raised some concern that pre-service coursework delivered wholly online may do little to transform educators' visual arts beliefs and knowledge. For example, one participant reported an online visual arts subject reinforced a range of visual arts clichés and did nothing to alter her lack of visual arts content knowledge and confidence.

Affirming this, Australian research undertaken by Baker, Hunter, and Thomas (2016) identified a student disconnect when arts content is delivered online, rather than in blended formats. Previous studies have shown that teacher attitudes and knowledge, and resulting classroom quality, are higher amongst more qualified participants (Whitebook, 2003).

However, Cassidy and Lawrence (2000) found that when teachers articulated the influences on their beliefs they mostly referred to personal experiences than to formal training. They also noted the diverse range of qualifications found in early childhood settings compromises teacher's capacity to articulate the influences on their practice beyond their own beliefs and suggest that teachers tend to rely instead on an authority figure to inform their curriculum decisions (Cassidy & Lawrence, 2000).

9.10.4 Experience. The participants' years and variety of experience also seemed to have a significant impact on their pedagogical confidence, knowledge and capacity to critically reflect on their own beliefs and pedagogy.

For example, at WPS, the participants shared 74 years of combined experience in the wider early childhood sector, with 28 years of combined experience at the service. At PPS, the participants were similarly experienced with 43 years of combined experience in the early childhood sector and 34 years of combined experience at the preschool.

While not all of the participants in these settings were especially confident in their own art-making skills, within their teams they capably applied their broader pedagogical knowledge about how children learn to the domain of visual arts. The visual arts were positioned as a tool for meaning-making and communication and integrated across the curriculum through interest-based projects and intentional provisions. Generally, the participants in these services were also more reflective in their observations, documentation and intentional teaching. They tended to articulate their work as collaborative and

constructivist in nature and also seemed to hold an image of children as capable and ready to learn.

In comparison, the participants at KLDC had 24 years combined experience in the early childhood sector, with 18 of those years being at KLDC. At BLDC, the participants shared 31 years of combined experience in the early childhood sector and 19 years of combined experience in the service. Most participants in these two services had minimal experience outside of their current workplace. These less experienced teams also tended to more frequently position visual arts experiences as an outpouring of the creative process or as a sensory, fine-motor or therapeutic experience. They more frequently equated messy activities as automatically artistic and creative. Priority was placed on ensuring visual arts activities were fun and entertaining.

Eisner (1973-1974) and Kindler's (1996) visual arts myths, such as the belief that adult modelling may corrupt children's natural artistic development and that process is more important than product, were expressed more frequently by the participants in these services. It was also interesting to note that participants in these services engaged in much less pedagogical documentation and reflection than the more experienced participants. The leaders in these services were often preoccupied with management duties and contributed less to the educational program than their colleagues. Their curriculum planning was often described as responsive to children's interests while there was little evidence that this was the case. They seemed to position children as either ready or not ready to engage meaningfully in visual arts experiences.

The results of the study also align with Wen et al.'s (2011) study that found stronger links exist between educator beliefs and practice amongst more highly qualified and experienced teachers. It also contradicts Reynolds' (2007) assertion that higher qualifications and more years of experience do not indicate greater alignment between espoused theories and observed practice.

9.10.5 Professional development. The study revealed a lack of visual arts professional development which resulted in few opportunities for participants to expand their existing visual arts skills and knowledge.

All of the participants commented on the lack of visual arts professional development available in the early childhood sector, and like the participants in Bautista et

al.'s (2016) study, they viewed this absence of training opportunities as problematic. Scholars have noted the absence of arts focused professional development for early childhood teachers (Garvis, 2013; Jalongo, 1999) and the tendency for educators to neglect professional development in the arts (Jalongo, 1999). Yet the results of this study suggest that even when training is advertised it may not be prioritised by educators with low visual arts self-efficacy or by service management.

While the need for sustained professional development to mitigate low levels of confidence to teach the arts is raised by scholars (Ewing, 2010; Garvis, 2013; Twigg & Garvis, 2010), the PPS case in this study illustrates that sustained professional development can effectively occur in-house and within teams of educators. For example, Eva (PPS) intentionally supported her team to reflect about their visual arts pedagogy, organised attendances conferences about the Reggio Emilia approach and invited guest speakers to conduct in-house training. These participants had been supported to embed new models of practice by connecting their visual arts practice to their philosophical beliefs about children's capacity to engage with visual and graphic arts as a language and meaning-making tool.

The benefits in establishing communities of practice and team mentoring are highlighted by Nolan and Molla (2017). Kindler (1996) affirms that transformative change is possible when theory and practice are connected and when educators are supported to construct knowledge and build their personal visual arts self-efficacy.

9.10.6 Leadership, context and policy. The style and culture of pedagogical leadership in the participant services appeared to align with the intentionality and quality of visual arts curriculum offered to children. Leadership styles also had an impact on whether teams of educators were equipped to implement intentional, open-ended, constructivist arts experiences.

For example, the ambiguous and authoritarian leadership style at KLDC demanded unquestioned adherence to several pedagogical mantras and mythical rules for visual arts practice, despite the conflicting beliefs expressed by other participants in the service.

Challenging this style of leadership, Alkus and Olgan (2014) confirm that the sustainable implementation of creative pedagogies cannot rely on the work of one person, but must result from effective team collaboration. Exemplifying such collaborative and

democratic leadership the strategies employed at PPS supported the visual arts confidence of the educational team through policy-embedded value for the arts and modelling of arts-inspired hands-on pedagogy to empower the professional growth and development of the educators.

Ryan and Goffin (2008, p. 390) affirm the influence of leadership upon enacted pedagogy in early childhood settings and recognise that leadership determines context and this in turn “shapes what teachers do and say in their interactions with children.” Indeed, a professional teacher is one who masters content and procedure, engages in pedagogical reflection and is capable of articulating their knowledge, reasoning and actions to others (Shulman, 1986).

9.10.7 Policy documents and resources. The study demonstrated that team collaboration was particularly supported when the pedagogical leader clearly articulated their vision for the visual arts curriculum.

Of the four participant services, PPS alone explicitly articulated and embedded visual arts pedagogical intention throughout their policy and educational resources documents. This provided the educators at the service with theoretical and pedagogical guidance. Given the ambiguous references to visual arts in the EYLF (see DEEWR, 2009) and the inconsistent inclusion of visual arts pedagogies in pre-service coursework, this strategy centralised the visual and graphic languages and provided a foundation for in-house professional growth and development. Such strategies are reflective of the intentional implementation of visual arts methods and processes as a conduit for multi-disciplinary inquiry with young children espoused by Dewey and the educators in Reggio Emilia (Lindsay, 2015a).

Consideration about the lack of intentional reference to visual arts pedagogy in the policy documents at the remaining participant services is informed by Thompson’s (2015) notion that policy guidelines rarely articulate the means by which quality provisions should be made. Earlier, in the broader Australian education context, Russell-Bowie (2011) advocated for an enacted arts education policy, while admitting that previous arts policies have not resulted in change. Ewing (2010) again highlighted the marginalisation of the arts in the Australian context and called for the arts to be centralised and prioritised to raise teacher’s confidence to embed and teach the arts.

Kindler (1996) maintains that the early childhood sector fails to provide substantial curricular advice about how best to support children to experience the many benefits of arts engagement. Further, I suggest that this fuels a situation, exemplified in this case study research, where numerous educators are ill-equipped to interpret, articulate or effectively enact visual arts in their work with children.

Extending upon previous studies that have highlighted the issue of low visual arts self-efficacy amongst pre-service teachers (Bae, 2004; Garvis, 2012a; Garvis et al., 2011; Twigg & Garvis, 2010), this study confirms that educators with low visual arts self-efficacy, limited visual arts content knowledge and uncertain pedagogical beliefs struggle to plan for and implement effective visual arts learning experiences with young children.

9.11 Conclusion

This chapter concludes with a published article (Lindsay, 2016b) that brings together the major tenets of this thesis to engage with the research questions and provoke pedagogical reflection in the domain of visual arts experiences in early childhood settings.

Do Visual Arts Experiences in Early Childhood Settings Foster Educative Growth or Stagnation? (Lindsay, 2016b)

Abstract

This article offers findings from research that explored the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of early childhood educators and supports reflection about the educational merit of different types of visual arts experience offered to children. The range of visual arts experiences typically delivered in early childhood education settings varies significantly in method and purpose, yet there is little guidance to support early childhood educators to evaluate the visual arts experiences they include in the curriculum or to consider their role as art educators. At the same time, the research literature suggests that pre-school educators lack confidence to make and teach art and that their visual arts subject knowledge is limited. Qualitative case study research explored the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of twelve educators located in four Australian early childhood education settings. Data collection methods included interviews, environmental audits and analysis of pedagogical documentation about visual arts provisions. John Dewey's philosophies of democracy,

education and art synthesised with the philosophy and pedagogical values of the Reggio Emilia educational approach support interpretation and analysis of the research data. In particular, Dewey's philosophy of consummatory experience and growth alongside Eisner's discussions about visual arts myths and null curricula guide reflection about visual art provisions in early childhood contexts. A continuum of visual arts experience is proposed to support reflection about the types of experience that potentially mis-educate and lead to visual arts stagnation compared with experiences that may foster consummatory and educative growth.

Introduction

Despite visual arts being valued as central to play-based practice within early childhood contexts (Bamford, 2009; Vecchi, 2010; Wright, 2012), "there remains a large and growing gulf between the 'lip service' given to arts education and the provisions" made in educational contexts (Bamford, 2013, p.177). While early childhood educators readily acknowledge the desire to provide a range of educative and fun art activities, the research literature suggests these educators lack the pedagogical content knowledge and confidence to scaffold children's learning and to personally engage with art-making processes (Garvis, 2012a; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Terreni, 2010; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). Scholars suggest that the visual arts are not utilised effectively in early childhood contexts due to low educator confidence (Garvis, 2011; Klopper & Power, 2010; Oreck, 2004), low visual arts self-efficacy (Garvis, Twigg, & Pendergast, 2011; McCoubrey, 2000), limited visual arts knowledge (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010; Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Miraglia, 2008; Stott, 2011) and a perceived lack of parental and societal value for the arts (Buldu & Shaban, 2010; Öztürk & Erden, 2011).

While previous studies have quantified pre-service teacher beliefs about visual arts within broad summative statements, few have explored and described the visual arts beliefs and practices of early childhood educators in their own words. The scarcity of research in Australian preschool contexts, coupled with ongoing national quality reforms and ambiguous visual arts guidance within curriculum framework documents, underscore the need for research on this topic. There is a pressing need to fully appreciate the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of early-years educators in order to support pedagogical reflection and growth for both practitioners and pre-service teacher educators.

This paper presents findings from qualitative case study research that examined the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of twelve Australian early childhood teachers and educators (collectively referred to hereafter as educators). The constraints of a single article do not permit a full discussion of the wide variation in teacher and educator beliefs and their resulting visual arts pedagogy. Therefore, research findings that illuminate pedagogical ambiguity about art processes and art products will identify several educator beliefs that may influence the pedagogical provisions made for children. To support critical engagement with the research data, a brief overview of the conceptual framework developed to interrogate the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of the participants will be outlined. In particular, Dewey's philosophy of consummatory experience and growth alongside discussions about visual arts myths and null curricula (Eisner, 1973-1974; Jalongo, 1999; Kindler, 1996) provoke reflection about the types of visual arts experiences offered in early childhood contexts. In conclusion, a continuum of visual arts experience is proposed as a useful framework for educators to evaluate their visual arts pedagogy and to consider which visual arts provisions best foster 'consummatory' educative growth and which experiences may potentially be considered stagnant and 'mis-educative' (Dewey, 1939). This continuum of arts experience may enlighten reflection about visual arts beliefs and practice for many early-years educators and pre-service teachers.

Research design

A constructivist world-view underpins the qualitative research design to position knowledge and skills as the consequence of active, hands-on experience with both materials and other people. Twelve participants located in four Australian early childhood education settings generously shared their visual arts beliefs, knowledge and practice. Data was collected through interviews, environmental audits and analysis of pedagogical documentation for a six-month period. In order to appreciate and disclose the experience and insights of the researcher and to respectfully give voice to the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of Australian early childhood educators, the comparative case-study applied Barone and Eisner's (1997; 2012) conception of connoisseurship and criticism within an arts-based educational research paradigm. Underpinning data analysis and the research design, a conceptual framework guided reflection about concepts such as the role of the educator, the image of the child, environment, materials and visual arts pedagogy.

Conceptual reflection and insight

Developed to support data analysis and interpretation, the conceptual framework synthesised the philosophical and pedagogical links between John Dewey 's educational philosophy with the key tenets of the internationally renowned Reggio Emilia Educational Project in northern Italy. This synthesis is grounded in Dewey's considerable historic influence upon the exemplary visual arts pedagogies in Reggio Emilia (Lindsay, 2015a). Despite the fact that Dewey's ideas about arts and education were written at the turn of the 20th century, they offer contemporary early childhood educators refreshing insights about quality visual arts pedagogy.

Artful education – Dewey. *Dewey (1934) defined art as a process of doing and making, where physical materials and tools are applied to the production of “something visible, audible or tangible” (p. 48). He identified that young children's play has artistic qualities and positioned hands-on play and exploration as the foundation for all learning. Progressive for his time, Dewey (1915) proposed that children's interests should be central within educational processes (p. 34). Rebellious against educational methods that dominate and subdue the interests of children, Dewey (1934) poetically positioned communication through art as the “incomparable organ of instruction”, elevating teaching and learning through art as a “revolt” against educational methods that “exclude the imagination” and “the desires and emotions of men” (p. 361). Indeed, Dewey (1915) proposed that children's innate impulse to reproduce ideas graphically and communicate meaning using aesthetic materials integrates play, aesthetic awareness, communication and cognition. Informing the Reggio Emilian concepts of the ‘image of the child’, ‘the hundred languages of children’ and the ‘atelier’, Dewey promoted art-centred educational methods that respond to the interests and activity of the child.*

Artful education - Reggio Emilia. *Following Dewey's progressive philosophy, educators in Reggio Emilia reject pedagogies of transmission and reproduction to advance a respectful pedagogy that intentionally listens to children, gives voice to their theories and makes their learning visible (Rinaldi, 2013). The processes of doing and making are not defined as art, but like Dewey before them, the educators in Reggio Emilia position art materials and methods as visual languages and as tools for communication, research and*

making meaning (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012; Vecchi, 2010). A central atelier (art studio), classroom ateliers and the role of the atelierista (art educator) all testify to the central place that is given to visual arts methods and materials as languages that support children's learning to be made visible. Predestined results and stereotyped products are discouraged. Instead, materials and contexts support children to explore and communicate their ideas visually. Children's research and play processes are valued and documented to investigate children's learning processes and to make learning visible through graphic and poetic representation.

Provisions, provocations and paradoxical beliefs

Despite Dewey's rich ideas about art education and high-quality exemplars of visual arts practice, such as that developed in Reggio Emilia, the research findings confirm that many "Early Childhood Educators continue to struggle with ideas about the place of art in the curriculum and the most effective way to teach it" (Twigg & Garvis, 2010, p. 193). Amongst the twelve study participants, there was wide variation and some ambiguity in how educators classified, justified or condemned various art activities and experiences. For some of the participants, any experience or activity that involved art materials was legitimised as art. Others judged the merit of an experience on whether it was messy, unquestioningly equating mess-making and sensory experience with creative expression and development. Some labelled the art process as more important than the art product, while paradoxically justifying an assortment of identical creations that could only be considered product focused. Other educators discerningly classified the various types of experience as exploratory, experimental, sensory, crafty or artistic, suggesting that different types of art experience may serve different learning goals and purposes. This disparate range of beliefs about visual arts pedagogy, while not able to be generalised from the comparative case study to all early childhood contexts, nonetheless suggests that there is a lack of certainty amongst early childhood educators regarding their content knowledge, beliefs and confidence in visual arts pedagogies.

Eisner (1973-1974), Kindler (1996) and Jalongo (1999) suggest that, in early childhood contexts, a range of unexamined beliefs, myths and pedagogical habits have had a detrimental effect on educator beliefs, knowledge and their resulting visual arts pedagogy. These decades-old challenges continue to be highly relevant in current Australian early

childhood contexts with the research participants voicing incompatible, disparate and mythical beliefs about visual arts provisions.

Considering art provisions

During interviews, the research participants were asked to respond to images depicting a range of visual arts experiences. The images represented open-ended experiences such as easel painting, print-making, drawing and clay work; sensory and exploratory activities like marble-roller painting and bubble-prints; and structured craft activities and stencils. Educator responses to the images, coupled with their interview commentary, highlighted incongruent beliefs regarding whether the experiences were indeed art; whether the experiences were considered appropriate for young children; whether educators would or would not provide such experiences; and whether the experiences were deemed to have educational merit. The unique combination of the participant's pedagogical and visual arts content knowledge within the context of each early childhood setting revealed beliefs about the educator's role in facilitating art processes and products that merits further examination.

The myth of the corruptible child

Six of the twelve participants expressed the belief that children's natural artistic development is best fostered when educators provide a range of art materials, along with emotional support, while refraining from any intervention in children's art making process. Eisner (1973-1974) labelled the belief that adult instruction and modelling can corrupt children's innocent perceptions and visual arts expression as mythical (p. 11). Yet in one location, the research participants embraced this 'myth' as sacred. One participant, despite previous training and some expertise in visual arts techniques, adamantly refused to model, guide or participate with children in the art-making process stating,

I think the worst thing I could do as an educator, the way that I could most fail the children is by me drawing something and them seeing how I draw something as a standard...There is just no need. It's completely superfluous and potentially damaging.

In direct contradiction, when asked how children develop knowledge and skills in other learning domains, all three participants in this location stated that children learn

through observation, modelling and instruction, a view that aligned with their curriculum policy assertion that ‘guidance and teaching by educators, shape children’s experiences of becoming’. Despite the lead teacher’s frequently expressed value for artistic expression and creativity, the belief that children’s art development can be corrupted by adult engagement governed pedagogical discourse and practice. This ban on educators teaching or facilitating arts experiences beyond the provision of basic materials ironically resulted in an almost non-existent arts curriculum with only poor-quality paint, pencils and crayons and small A4 paper presented to children for the whole six months of data collection.

This case exemplifies Dewey’s (1902) assessment that some educators, seeing “no alternative between forcing the child from without” consequently leave them “entirely alone” (p. 17). Contemporary scholars claim that despite the emergence of constructivist pedagogical approaches, the visual arts beliefs and practice of early childhood educators largely remain entrenched in outdated developmental approaches (Richards, 2007; Stott, 2011; Terreni, 2010; Thompson, 2015), a concern repeated in a recent Australian report (Fleer, 2011). Added to this, educator zeal for non-intervention is often reinforced by the myth of the art process versus the art product (Kindler, 1996).

The process versus product myth

Eisner (1973-1974) challenged the widely-held notion that the art process is more important than the product. Reflecting Dewey, Eisner (1973-1974) attests that the product is evidence of the processes employed and claims that to “neglect one in favour of the other is to be pedagogically naïve” (p. 11). Yet, in early childhood settings, the mantra that the art process is more important than the product prevails (McArdle & Wong, 2010). Expressed as an aversion to the mass assembly of art-products, the mantra figured heavily in the research participant’s evaluation of the merit of various arts activities. When asked to explain their response to the ‘process is more important than the product’ mantra, one educator stated, “So definitely the process rather than the product. I love the fact that I come here and there are drawings up on the wall that are not ten of all the exact same drawings.”

Participants also expressed views about the importance of joy in the experience of making art, the pleasure in the process, the creative outlet and the freedom of exploration where there are no wrong answers. For example,

There's no right or wrong, it's just what the child is able to do with the materials. That's all you want, is for them to enjoy it really. That's what I want.... is just to see them enjoy something and not to be bogged down with how to get it right. That outweighs whatever is presented at the end.

Others, however, appreciated that making either/or distinctions between the process and the product is not always helpful. One participant in particular stated, "In relation to early learning visual arts, I think the process allows a discovery, it allows skills to emerge, it allows an idea to emerge, concepts to emerge...BUT...I've seen how children value a product."

This reflective statement added a dose of contradiction to the oft-quoted 'process versus product' mantra. The participant wondered what the responsibility of the educator should be when children express value for the product as well as engagement with the process. While some educators in the study reflectively considered the balancing act between process and product, others were less sure about which art processes and their resulting products best support children's learning and growth. Dewey provides educators with a framework for reflection about ways to consider both art processes and products.

A Deweyan challenge

Dewey (1934) proposed that the "work" of art is both the process and the product (p. 222). He warned against an elitist attitude to visual arts products that would separate them from the efforts, emotions and ideas of the artist. Conversely, to elevate process over product reduces art expression to a "discharging" of "personal emotion" (Dewey, 1934, pp. 85-86). His idea that aesthetic or artful products result only from aesthetic or artful processes (Dewey, 1934, p. 290) suggests that children's art products may reveal much about the quality of the learning process that led to their production. Indeed, art products may be examined as the evidence or artifacts of children's learning processes.

Dewey (1934) valued the playful and serious learning made possible through children's intrinsic drive to explore, experiment and express their ideas. He considered the processes of children's play, like the processes of art, to be a phenomenon that embraces freedom of expression alongside the view that play "is transformed into work" when the "activity is subordinated to production of an objective result" (Dewey, 1934, p. 291). It is

instructive to note that Dewey distinguished between child-inspired, unconstrained, play-based work and the imposition of toil or labour that results when activities are focused only on procuring an end result (1934, p. 290). Such discernment is exemplified in contemporary Reggio Emilia, with Vecchi (2010) expressing their determination to “illustrate the extraordinary, beautiful and intelligent things children knew how to do” by eliminating the “widespread work circulating in early childhood services at the time, where mostly teachers’ minds and hands were central and children had a marginal role, which led to the same stereotyped products for all” (p. 132).

Indeed, Dewey’s dualistic value for both process and product inspire educator reflection about adult imposed, product driven art and craft activities. His idea that artwork must extend beyond emotional discharge also guides cautious reflection about viewing visual arts activities as therapeutic busy work and a cure for boredom. Indeed, Dewey (1939) advised that not all experiences are equal and that ‘mis-educative’ experiences can stagnate children’s current and future learning, stating:

The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience (p. 13).

Focussed on the “quality of experience which is had”, Dewey (1939, p. 16) suggests that while potentially enjoyable, activities not based upon children’s interests and processes of inquiry are rushed and “all on the surface” and do not have “great depth” or lead to conceptual growth or maturity (1934, p. 46). He describes the transient excitation of children’s interest as an undigested meal or emotional palette tickling, saying the child is “forever tasting and never eating” and never experiencing the “organic satisfaction that comes only with the digestion of food and transformation of it into working power” (Dewey, 1902, p. 16). Applying a contemporary metaphor, one might describe the constantly rotating smorgasbord of entertaining and sensory art activities often seen in early childhood services as junk food compared to the nutritious meal of empowering, educative art processes that

build upon past experiences to transform materials, produce aesthetic products, and propel children's interests toward definite achievement and growth.

To educate or entertain?

When responding to images of visual arts experiences, participants in the study repeatedly commented on the entertainment value of activities. For example, when asked what motivates their visual arts planning one animated participant stated, "I like to try and do a bit of everything, so they don't get bored. I'm someone that likes to change things all the time. I like to do - like fly-swatter painting, balloon painting, collaging, easel, play dough."

To this child-pleasing desire to entertain through art, Dewey (1934, 1939) suggested that even though children may respond positively to certain activities, in the absence of quality materials and developing skills and knowledge, both children and educators can be ignorant to the missed opportunity for enriching experience that leads to growth. Dewey's distinction between genuine and mis-educative experiences finds parallels in the contemporary dichotomy between playful learning and edutainment (Okan, 2003; Resnick, 2004). More recently, in the field of edutainment, technology is added to the educational process to extrinsically motivate learning and make learning fun (Okan, 2003), suggesting that the intrinsic motivation to learn through play will somehow fail to overcome the chore (or the bore) of learning. Similarly, in early childhood settings, crafty, gimmicky, internet-inspired craftivities are justified when educators mistakenly believe that without such enticements, children will become bored. Such approaches trivialise rather than promote the learning process (Okan, 2003).

Inspired by Dewey's ideas, Eisner (2002) branded the learning opportunities children miss out on when educators lack the subject knowledge, skills or the self-confidence to deliver art experiences as the null curriculum. Jalongo (1999) outlines that the failure to teach visual arts techniques destructively undermines children's creativity, urging instead for children to be equipped with quality materials and knowledge about how to use them so that their ideas may find expression.

Identifying that some experiences may be less enriching, one participant commented on an image of a 'patty-pan fish collage' made of cupcake papers and plastic goggle-eyes saying,

They would enjoy it, but they wouldn't know what they're missing out on really... There may be some benefit as far as fine motor skills are concerned... but they don't look like they've been done by a child at all. That's not a child's scissor cutting. That's an educator's cutting. Yes, it doesn't really lend to the child exploring their own creativity and ability.

Expressing similar concerns, Dewey (1939) argued that while all experiences potentially increase automatic skills and can be "immediately enjoyable" they may also "promote the formation of a slack and careless attitude" which further reduces the quality of subsequent experiences (pp. 13-14). Despite these potential limitations, participants justified structured crafts and novelty art activities due to their perception that children would enjoy them:

I'd say we probably trot all of those out now and then. The children really respond to them. They think it's fun. (It) doesn't really require any skill...I guess it is a freedom of expression...They're exploring different concepts like colour mixing and patterning. Different ways of applying paint. So yes, there's a place for it. It's fun. You want kids to have fun at pre-school. It's just an extra way of doing art.

Dewey (1902) explained that although such experiences do not automatically foster visual arts learning and growth, educators and children may grow to prefer them through habitual routine:

Familiarity breeds contempt, but it also breeds something like affection...Unpleasant, because meaningless, activities may get agreeable if long enough persisted in. It is possible for the mind to develop interest in a routine or mechanical procedure, if conditions are continually supplied which demand that mode of operation and preclude any other sort. (p. 27-28)

Such pedagogical justifications justify Dewey's turn of the century complaint about what he called "cramped experiences" where he announced "I frequently hear dulling devices and empty exercises extolled because "the children take such an 'interest' in them" (1902, p. 28). His ideas present a challenge to contemporary early childhood educators to

evaluate whether all forms of play automatically promote learning? Does the imperative to make learning fun justify the use of art materials for entertainment rather than education?

Dewey's preference for growth

It must be noted however that Dewey did not condemn experiences that may be fun, experimental or exploratory. Rather he suggested that educators must appreciate and honour the agency and interests of the child in order to support children to progress beyond initial exploration and toward deeper growth and learning (Dewey 1939, p. 16). He appreciated the joyful play and inquisitive activity of the child, but concurrently discussed the responsibility of the educator to give the child's activities direction:

All children like to express themselves through the medium of form and color. If you simply indulge this interest by letting the child go on indefinitely, there is no growth that is more than accidental. But let the child first express his impulse, and then through criticism, question, and suggestion bring him to consciousness of what he has done, and what he needs to do, and the result is quite different. (Dewey, 1915, p. 40)

Dewey suggested that for educative or 'consummatory' growth to occur educators must share and not withhold their own knowledge and experience from the child (1902, 1939). They must interpret children's interests and integrate art into the child's experience, providing guidance so that art experiences build on prior experience and support skills development (Dewey, 1902). He proposed a model of active cooperation and shared engagement between educators and children (Dewey, 1916). Borrowing from Csikszentmihalyi (1996) this suggests that educators, rather than delivering a repetitious cycle of sensory, busy-fun activities, which could be called 'small e' experiences, might instead draw upon Dewey's ideas about growth and learning to construct, along with children, 'big E' art experiences that build on prior skills and knowledge and lead to growth. Dewey (1934) explained that open-ended activities coupled with processes of authentic inquiry foster conditions where works of art can be produced (p. 293). Such ideas highlight the educator's responsibility to educate (not only to entertain) and to extend upon children's natural curiosity and initial experiments with quality visual arts materials. This was exemplified in one preschool setting where constructivist theories, including the Reggio

Emilia educational example, drive pedagogical choices. One participant in this service explained how art techniques and skills are intentionally introduced, scaffolded, and modelled by teachers:

Here, when introducing new media, we do it in a skills-based way at group, so that they're getting the opportunity to talk about the do's, the don'ts, what they're seeing. So hopefully that builds their confidence to use them in an independent way throughout the day. It's almost as if you need to introduce and shake hands with the material to become really comfortable enough to feel that you can go from exploration to mastery, then to creative use.

However, the research data suggests this may be a challenge for some educators, with most participants expressing doubt rather than confidence in their capacity to support children's learning using arts materials and methods. The leader in one participant service expressed such doubts:

Through my lack of knowledge, I provide a lot of, in my experience, very open-ended... Lots of different materials, but, not really developing skills. You know, I might talk about textures of things or the process in doing things. But not feeling confident in that area myself, I don't know the particular skills to teach.

Perhaps as Kindler (1996) attests, the conflicting and competing contexts of early childhood visual arts pedagogy have resulted in a "professional paralysis" which has created a "fear of active involvement, perpetual uncertainties, and support a false notion of art that is so relative and so exclusive that individuals should be left to figure it out on their own" (p. 25).

Certainly, in the Australian context, there is little documented guidance for educators regarding visual arts pedagogy. References to visual arts and creative languages in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR, 2009) are not explicit or prescriptive. Added to this, pre-service coursework is not adequately equipping educators with the skills, knowledge or confidence to effectively incorporate visual arts learning in their learning environments (Bailey & de Rijke, 2014; Garvis, 2012b; Miraglia, 2008). Such pedagogical ambiguity, across all levels of educator development seems to have resulted in the substitution of myths and mantras to guide practice. However, rather than unilaterally

condemn educators or the types of visual arts practice they implement, it may be more constructive to support educators to evaluate their own beliefs and practice.

A proposal for pedagogical reflection and growth

It is important to note that while all experiences may contain some potential learning value for children, the role of the educator must be to focus upon the quality of the experience (Dewey, 1939). Drawing upon the research data alongside Dewey's constructivist art and education philosophies and the Reggio Emilia approach, I therefore propose that a 'Continuum of Visual Arts Experience' may support educators to reflect upon which visual arts experiences in early childhood settings best foster consummatory and educative growth and which experiences may be considered potentially stagnant and mis-educative.

In Deweyan terms, if the goal is for children to engage in 'consummatory growth experiences', educators will intentionally build upon experimental and sensory experiences to provide regular and repeated open-ended opportunities for children to create, make meaning and communicate their ideas using high quality visual arts materials. Familiarity with art materials and methods will support both children and educators to confidently use them. Educational experiences will build upon the interests of children and support their thinking to be made visible. Both process and product will be revered for their educative and aesthetic values. Pedagogical and visual arts content knowledge will culminate in informed curriculum design. Employing constructivist principles, educators will apply the belief that art skills can be learned and taught. The educator located at this end of the continuum is a co-learner, co-researcher and co-teacher with children and remains hands-on in order to guide, suggest, challenge, scaffold and model visual arts skills and methods.

Located between the extremes of the visual arts continuum is the tendency for educators to rely on sensory, exploratory and experimental art activities such as balloon printing, marble roller painting, hand and foot-prints and finger-paint. As previously discussed, while such activities may be fun and keep children busy they have the potential to either lead to growth, if skills are developed and extended upon with the support of engaged and knowledgeable educators, or to stagnation through endless repetition of meaningless activity.

At the opposite end of the continuum are the types of experiences that have the potential to stagnate children's visual arts growth. In contrast to consummatory growth

experiences these activities may be a shallow and constantly revolving smorgasbord of close-ended tasks with narrow or pre-determined outcomes. An unexamined reliance on developmental theories may limit educator beliefs about young children's (and their own) capacity to develop visual arts skills and knowledge. If educators do not critically evaluate the educative value of an experience, activities may be justified only for their fun, mess or entertainment value. Materials will be limited in their quality and in their capacity to make meaningful rich marks and may also be excessively commercial or designed for one specific use. The scope for individual learning, growth and creative expression is diminished. The educator may be extremely hands-on in such activities however their hands-on role will be to manage or even to make the item for children, particularly if the product has been selected as a class-wide thematic or seasonal product. Such activities seek to keep children busy and entertained, to meet perceived parent expectations or to satisfy the educator's desire to make a product for special events and celebrations. Toward this end of the continuum, the child is less visible in both process and product.

To label such activities as potentially stagnating may seem harsh. However, it is important to respectfully appreciate that educators perhaps make such choices because they lack confidence, skills and pedagogical content knowledge to teach visual arts. It is possible that the myth of the corruptible child and the persistent preference for close-ended, process focussed activities remain firmly entrenched in early childhood educational contexts because unexamined mantras demand less of educators in the way of confronting their own arts skills, beliefs and pedagogical knowledge development.

Conclusion

Almost a century after Dewey advocated for artful pedagogies to support children's holistic learning and growth, the quality of visual arts provision in early childhood contexts remains ambiguously undefined and highly contested. Children's experiences of art-making are determined not only by the activities and materials provided, in themselves driven by educator knowledge and beliefs, but also by the intersection of the pedagogical and personal beliefs of the educators who guide children with varying degrees of intentionality, support and engagement. This research shares the call by Ewing (2010) for both government and tertiary institutions to re-consider the pre-service training of educators in order to instill confidence to embed the visual arts in their teaching practices (p. 55). In sharing the voices

and experiences of the research participants along with Dewey's pedagogical challenges, it is hoped that this research will support early childhood educators to vicariously reflect upon, evaluate and determine their own visual arts practice. The proposed continuum of visual arts experience aims to equip early childhood educators with a reflective tool that may enable them to meet Dunn and Wright's (2015) charge to articulate and guarantee children's right to high quality arts experiences. Rather than remaining bound by unexamined myths and mantras, educators will be supported to discern close-ended, mis-educative experiences that potentially lead to stagnation and to instead facilitate consummatory growth experiences. This aim was echoed by one research participant who urged that,

Children should have a very wide range of visual arts offerings or provocations over time...building up their skill and experience. Repeating experiences so that they can revisit, relax into them and refine what they're doing... it's really essential that children have lots of opportunity to transmit what and who they are into a visual form.

For this to occur, it is necessary for educators to be equipped to evaluate how their "own knowledge of the subject matter may assist in interpreting the child's needs and doings, and determine the medium in which the child should be placed in order that his growth may be properly directed" (Dewey, 1902, p. 23). Such informed and aesthetically focussed educational guidance, advised Dewey (1902), frees "the life process for its most adequate fulfilment" (p. 17) and may contribute "directly and liberally to an expanded and enriched life" (Dewey 1934, p. 27).

The following chapter concludes the thesis with a brief review of the key research findings and recommendation for practice and further research. It presents a range of research informed strategies to support the transformation of educators' visual arts beliefs, pedagogical content knowledge and practice.

Chapter 10: Conclusion and Recommendations

This research explored and described the visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of twelve practicing Australian early childhood educators. It identified that the visual arts efficacy beliefs and pedagogical knowledge of early childhood educators directly influenced the planning, pedagogy and provision of visual art experiences in early childhood contexts. Ultimately, this study suggests the possibility that early childhood visual arts pedagogy may be less informed by pre-service training contexts than by educators' personal and professional beliefs and knowledge about childhood, children's learning and the domain of visual arts.

While most participants in this study valued and reiterated that visual arts pedagogies were central to their practice, at the same time they believed they lacked the visual arts skills, knowledge and self-efficacy to effectively support children's visual arts learning and engagement. Indeed, many of the participants in the study struggled to differentiate between visual arts provisions and to evaluate the purposes and quality of visual arts provisions. Interestingly, few participants were able to articulate any theoretical influences on their visual arts pedagogy, suggesting that for some educators, personal beliefs and habitual practices may in fact be a determinant of their visual arts practice. These firm personal beliefs and pedagogical assumptions frequently emanated from childhood schooling experiences and family influences, often embedded well before educators commenced their professional training.

It is worth noting that where participants lacked pedagogical knowledge, visual arts content knowledge or visual arts self-efficacy their beliefs and pedagogy seemed more vulnerable to a range of visual arts myths and barriers described by Eisner (1973-1974), Kindler (1996) and Jalongo (1999). This vulnerability was compounded in contexts where leadership appeared to be ambiguous, where participants lacked critical reflection and where educators were less experienced and qualified.

In addition, this study identified a lack of visual arts content knowledge, resources and professional development materials available in the early childhood settings explored. Indeed, the study revealed that early childhood educators were generally expected to figure out their own visual arts pedagogy or to perpetuate visual arts myths and mantras in their search for reassurance and pedagogical certainty.

This research proposes that unless the visual arts beliefs of early childhood educators are disrupted by intentional visual arts training, professional development, constructivist theoretical assumptions, effective leadership and reflective practice, the visual arts curriculum offered to children may be significantly compromised. In order to fill the gaps that jeopardise children's visual arts learning and engagement, this research highlights the need to implement strategies to transform the pedagogical beliefs, visual arts content knowledge and visual arts self-efficacy beliefs of early childhood educators. This chapter will outline recommendations for both practice and further research before concluding with a final call for the transformation of early-childhood educators' visual arts beliefs, knowledge and pedagogy.

10.1 Recommendations for practice

The following recommendations outline strategies and interventions that may disrupt the low self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service and practicing early childhood educators, provoke reflection about the role of educators to plan for and implement visual arts learning experiences, address gaps in pedagogical knowledge and visual arts content knowledge amongst early childhood practitioners and consider strategies for professional development in the domain of visual arts.

10.1.1 Increase visual arts coursework requirements for all pre-service educators.

To transform the visual arts self-efficacy beliefs and visual arts pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service educators requires that students undertake more than one visual arts subject during their course of study. This aligns with numerous Australian studies that have similarly identified the need for increased visual arts coursework at the tertiary level (Bresler, 1992; Cutcher & Cook, 2016; Garvis, 2009b). Beyond an increase in the number of visual arts subjects available is the need to advocate for adequate time to support students to engage in learning experiences that will support transformative growth (Bresler, 1992; Garvis, 2012b; Klopper & Power, 2010), develop proficiency with visual arts materials and processes (Barton et al., 2013) and develop the mindset of an artist (Cutcher & Cook, 2016).

This study has also highlighted as problematic the provision of advanced standing in creative arts subjects for early childhood students enrolling into university degrees having already attained a Diploma in Child Studies. The proliferation of fully online early

childhood teaching degrees in the Australian context magnifies this problem, given the challenges in delivering visual arts subjects in non-face-to-face teaching contexts (Cutcher & Cook, 2016). To assume such prior knowledge means that early childhood teachers may graduate and enter the profession having never completed visual arts coursework to challenge their visual arts efficacy and build their visual arts pedagogical content knowledge. To continue to ignore Ewing's (2010) call to integrate arts subjects across pre-service coursework in order to equip educators to learn in, through and about the arts is to knowingly allow children and the adults who work with them to experience an ongoing cycle of low visual arts self-efficacy and ambiguous pedagogy.

10.1.2 Deconstruct educators' visual arts self-efficacy beliefs while delivering hands-on visual arts content knowledge and constructivist pedagogical content. To support educators to effectively assimilate the visual arts content delivered during pre-service coursework into their own personal and pedagogical beliefs requires that low self-efficacy beliefs in the visual arts domain are addressed before equipping educators with visual arts teaching strategies. This study proposes that early childhood students must experience deep immersion in hands-on, practical visual arts learning, coupled with theoretical provocations to challenge their personal visual arts self-efficacy, equip them with visual arts content knowledge and foster pedagogical knowledge regarding visual arts learning and teaching. Drawing upon the findings of this study, I therefore propose the following strategies.

Strategies to build educators' visual arts self-efficacy

This study revealed that the beliefs of most participants regarding their capacity in the visual arts domain were firmly established by prior experiences and somewhat entrenched. Scattered engagement in visual arts coursework appeared to have had little impact on the educator's visual arts efficacy.

Teacher educators have a significant role to play in the imperative to deconstruct the negative impacts of the null curriculum many students experience prior to entering teacher and vocational education programs. Those training the educators of the future should facilitate educator mastery in the visual arts domain by planning for positive, interactive learning experiences where visual arts skills are competently modelled and where students are affirmed, encouraged and challenged (Bandura, 1994).

To support the development of an artistic identity, educators should engage in immersive hands-on and reflective art-making to develop a sense of mastery (Bandura, 1997) and to “feel like an Artist within” (DeHouske, 2006, p. 291). Dweck’s (2006) theory of fixed and growth mindset may also challenge educators to consider the notion that visual arts skills can be developed with effort.

The study also revealed that educational leaders in early childhood services had a significant impact on the visual arts efficacy, knowledge and pedagogical beliefs, both positive and potentially negative. To support the growth of visual arts practice in early childhood services the educational or pedagogical leader should facilitate in-house professional learning through the intentional development of visual arts policies and practices and by modelling visual arts skills and pedagogical techniques.

Strategies to develop educator’s visual arts content knowledge

This study has suggested that early childhood educators struggle to evaluate and articulate the intentions, purposes, benefits and outcomes of visual arts learning experiences. To counteract this, rather than label all experiences as ‘art and craft’ it may be beneficial to explicitly differentiate between the range of visual arts learning experiences that could be offered in early childhood contexts, including close-ended, adult-directed activities; sensory experiences, experimental experiences; exploratory experiences; traditional crafting and artisan experiences and open-ended engagement with visual arts materials and techniques within projects of inquiry that support visual communication, meaning-making and expression.

This would support a closer examination of the quality and merit of learning experiences in terms of the educator’s role in supporting children’s agency. As outlined by Lindsay (2016b), educator’s must determine whether the visual arts materials and processes they offer to children will be a learning experience leading to growth or an entertainment activity that may lead to educational stagnation.

In the study, traditional crafts and artisan processes, such as clay-work, weaving, stitching, threading, paper folding and paper cutting techniques, appeared to be largely missing in the early childhood participant services. It is proposed that this abdication from traditional crafts may have emerged in the Australian early childhood context as a reaction

against adult-controlled, structured ‘craftivities’, a dichotomy discussed by Lindsay (2015d) with the aim to provoke educator reflection (see Appendix E.2 for the published article).

To Re-legitimise traditional crafting processes in early childhood contexts may, as Dewey suggested back in 1915, serve to de-reify art making, removing it from the gallery walls and rendering it humble and accessible to both children and educators. Therefore, rather than negatively position traditional crafting processes in the same category as close-ended, adult-controlled, Pinterest-inspired and seasonal craft activities, perhaps a renewed value for artisan processes has the potential to provide educators and children with a broader repertoire of opportunities for artistic expression.

Further to this, in order to raise educator’s awareness of the value and purpose of visual arts in the early childhood curriculum and the community beyond, visual arts processes and techniques should be repositioned as a multi-disciplinary language for children’s communication, expression and meaning making. The notion that visual arts, or ‘crafts’ as many label them, are merely an activity designed to keep children busy and entertained must be challenged and disavowed (Lindsay, 2016b).

Beyond developing educators’ understanding of the merits and benefits of visual arts experiences, this study has highlighted the imperative for educators to develop both practical and theoretical content knowledge in the visual arts domain. The RE(D) framework suggests that educators should adopt the mindset of the researcher and take on the role of co-learner and co-researcher with children. Such an attitude would free educators from the false expectation that they must be an expert artist before engaging in play and exploration with art materials and processes. In short, educators must make art and develop visual arts skills and competencies in order to effectively teach the language of visual arts to children.

The common notion that artistic capacity is measured by the ability to draw realistically was evident in the study. Direct teaching of drawing skills to pre-service teachers and educators may serve to challenge the notion that being artistic is an inborn trait. If educators could experience the revelation that learning to draw is a cognitive and physical skill that can be developed through instruction and practice (Edwards, 1999), this may serve to disrupt long held assumptions and attitudes and change educator’s perception

about their capacity, and the capacities of young children, to learn to speak, play and make meaning using the language of visual art.

Strategies to build educators' visual arts pedagogical knowledge:

A range of outdated beliefs about art making as a sacred and therapeutic process fuelled an adherence to non-interventionist pedagogy amongst some participants. Compounding this, the study revealed a common abdication of educators' responsibility to engage in processes of intentional teaching of visual arts, despite the fact that intentional teaching is identified as a core practice in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2011) In addition, the ongoing proliferation of the myths and barriers identified by Eisner (1973-1974), Kinder (1996) and Jalongo (1999) suggest the need for significant research informed 'mythbusting' in early childhood contexts.

Although raised by McArdle (2005) more than a decade ago, the imperative to reposition visual arts as a cognitive, physical, expressive, emotional and accessible language remains pertinent in the Australian context.

Educators should be challenged to engage with Dewey's (1934) notion of art as experience and to position visual arts as a language and as a means by which to connect the curriculum in response to children's interests (Lindsay, 2016a). Educators should interrogate the constructivist RE(D) framework developed for this thesis and the reflective questions it generated (see Appendix B.7) to reflect upon their image of the child, the role of the educator, the importance of materials and environments and to consider the function of visual arts in the early childhood curriculum. In this way, they may be inspired to challenge limiting developmental and maturationist assumptions about children's visual arts development.

Before teaching educators the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of early childhood visual arts, they should be challenged to become aware of the importance of their own role in planning for and implementing visual arts learning experiences with children, that is, to become aware of the 'who' in the teaching and learning nexus. The RE(D) framework outlines that educators should conceptualise their roles as artists, researchers and teachers and adopt an attitude of life-long learning and wonder, alongside the children they teach.

Noting the participants' comments about the lack of visual arts professional development, and given the absence of specific and practical guidance for visual arts

pedagogy in the Australian early years context, visual arts resources and professional development materials to provide educators with visual arts procedural content knowledge and theoretical inspiration for constructivist, hands-on visual arts pedagogy ought to be developed.

Therefore, returning to the research aim to render a thesis that is accessible for early childhood practitioners, this thesis has inspired the development of several resources that seek to fill the void of practitioner friendly professional development materials. These resources include articles in practitioner magazines (Lindsay, 2015c, see Appendix E.1; Lindsay, 2015d, see Appendix E.2) and an online visual arts learning module (Lindsay, 2015f, see Appendix E.3 for the training module transcript).

10.2 Recommendations for further research

This research study has highlighted several potentials for future research. Noting the case study context of this research, the research should be expanded to explore early childhood visual arts beliefs and pedagogy in other Australian contexts and explore whether the visual arts beliefs, knowledge and pedagogy revealed in this study are common across the early childhood sector in Australia. Furthermore, future studies should explore the epistemological beliefs and perspectives that inform visual arts pedagogy in early childhood contexts more broadly. In addition, an expanded exploration of the prevalence or absence of traditional craft experiences in ECEC settings would add to consideration about why traditional crafts seems to have disappeared from many early childhood centres as a pedagogical ‘no-go’ zone.

The study revealed a perception that there is minimal visual arts coursework undertaken during pre-service tertiary training, therefore an evaluation of the amount of visual arts coursework being offered across training institutions would inform the early childhood pre-service training context. It would also be enlightening to conduct an audit of the visual arts coursework content delivered in Australian university and vocational training contexts to determine the key discourses, theories, skills, visual arts content knowledge and pedagogical strategies being delivered to pre-service educators.

Considering the increase of early childhood degrees being delivered completely online and granting educators credit for prior learning in vocational creative arts subjects, an evaluation of the qualitative variance between the visual arts pedagogical beliefs and

knowledge of teachers trained in on-campus compared to distance education courses is required.

In addition, the significant prevalence of unexamined visual arts pedagogical myths amongst the participants suggests the need to conduct research to consider the prevalence of such beliefs across the early childhood sector and whether vocational training organisations and tertiary settings are perpetuating them.

Finally, considering the examples of best practice evident amongst participants that adopted constructivist, Reggio Emilian values and principles, the RE(D) framework developed for this study has potential for application in future research exploring visual arts practice in other contexts.

10.3 Final Reflections

The transformation of early childhood educator's visual arts beliefs and pedagogy is complex. For too long, visual arts pedagogy has been defined by myths, mantras and dualisms such as 'process versus product', 'art versus craft', 'open ended versus close ended', 'teacher-led versus child-led', 'good art versus bad art', 'right versus wrong'. It is important to consider McArdle's (2016, p. 2) warning that attempts to change educator beliefs and attitudes about early childhood visual arts pedagogy can be futile in the absence of critical self-reflection.

Garvis (2009a) notes that educator beliefs are resistant to change after the beginning phase of teaching. However, this study, while acknowledging the fixed and limiting beliefs of some participants, concurrently identified the transformative practice enacted by educators located in constructivist and Reggio Emilian inspired collaborative teams.

Where leaders modelled visual arts methods, prioritised holistic and multi-disciplinary curricula, implemented intentional visual arts pedagogy, delivered in-house professional learning and fostered an empowered image of children and educators, high quality visual arts exchanges were evident. As McArdle (2013) attests, while the limiting beliefs some educators bring with them to educational contexts may seem insurmountable, knowledge about the significant value of the arts compels the requirement to do all we can to transform educator's beliefs and pedagogy for the sake of the children they will teach.

The visual arts myths and barriers that Eisner (1973-1974) and Kindler (1996) warned us about decades ago will persist in early childhood circles unless pre-service visual

arts coursework and professional development contexts deconstruct and disrupt the low visual arts self-efficacy and childhood baggage students and practitioners bring to their work with children. While Jalongo (1999, p. 208) identifies the need for teachers to “get over their negative experiences and feelings of inadequacy in the arts” in order “to bring out the best in children”, this thesis proposes that achieving this requires particular sensitivity to the vulnerability of personal beliefs.

When confronted with ideas that cause self-doubt and threaten self-belief, some people appear to be open to reflection and growth while others, in an act of esteem-protection, elect to loudly and rigorously defend their current stance and reject all suggestions for change. As Dweck (2006) reminds us, divergent responses to challenging situations occur between people with a fixed or a growth mindset; either threatening or enhancing people’s beliefs about their capacity to learn and develop new skills. Beliefs will not shift unless challenged and personally assimilated (Pajares, 2011). Therefore, in pre-service training contexts it is necessary to focus not only on subject content knowledge, but to challenge and deconstruct the personal and implicit beliefs of educators that may hinder the assimilation of pedagogical content knowledge.

Dewey (1934) offers helpful counsel regarding the complexity in challenging personal beliefs. He suggests that while it may be “easier to ‘tell’ people what they should believe than to discriminate and unify”, disciplined insight developed through thoughtful inquiry better equips processes of meaningful evaluation and professional growth (Dewey, 1934, p. 314). To support thinking and inquiry requires openness to doubt (Dewey, 1910).

Prior experience in the early childhood teaching profession renders me particularly sensitive to the need for this research to respectfully consider the existing visual arts beliefs, knowledge, experience and pedagogy of the early childhood students and colleagues. Constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning guide an appreciation that the beliefs and pedagogy of the research participants were developed through the learning experiences afforded to them throughout their professional and personal development.

This study has shown that the context of educator beliefs is complex and should not be reduced to dichotomous statements that undervalue the conflicting beliefs, knowledge and motivations of the educator. Therefore, rather than fuel defensive attitudes amongst

educators that may shut down reflection and growth, it is necessary to create contexts for respectful dialogue, reflection and encounters with alternate visual arts pedagogies.

Any proposals aiming to inspire new habits and perspectives in the realm of early childhood visual arts pedagogy must, as Dewey (1910) counsels, move beyond the obvious points in the case to unwrap the detail and complexity of the current context.

This research study has aimed throughout to respectfully appreciate and disclose the current visual arts beliefs and pedagogy of early childhood educators in order to develop effective strategies for pedagogical transformation and growth.

My desire as a researcher is not to create further divisions between educators regarding 'right' and 'wrong' visual arts pedagogy. Indeed, presenting educators with a list of new myths and mantras, or do's and don'ts to guide their visual arts pedagogy would be both ineffectually prescriptive and counterproductive.

Rather, my aim is to create contexts for professional reflection and self-evaluation that will support early childhood educators to examine their personal and pedagogical beliefs about early childhood visual arts learning, and therefore develop the capacity to design visual arts pedagogy appropriate for their own contexts of teaching and learning. I hope, as a consequence of the research undertaken, to support reciprocal listening, critical reflection and growth amongst early childhood practitioners.

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APPENDICES

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Lindsay, G. (2015). 'But I'm not artistic': how teachers shape kids' creative development. The Conversation, Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/but-im-not-artistic-how-teachers-shape-kids-creative-development-34650>

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Lindsay, G. (2015). Reggio Emilia as a Metaphorical Homeland: An account of professional 'becoming'. The Challenge, 19 (1), 12-16.



Reggio Emilia Australia
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13 June 2017

To whom it may concern,

Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange (REAIE) grants Gai Lindsay permission to reproduce the text *Reggio Emilia as a Metaphorical Homeland: An account of professional 'becoming'* which was published in The Challenge journal, Vol 19, No.1, April 2015, for inclusion in her PhD thesis.

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Karen Szydlik
For the Editorial Board
Pam Andrew, Chris Celada and Debbie Nicholas

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Lindsay, G. (2015). Reflections in the Mirror of Reggio Emilia's Soul: John Dewey's Foundational Influence on Pedagogy in the Italian Educational Project. Early Childhood Education Journal, 43(6), 447-457. doi: 10.1007/s10643-015-0692-718-19

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As Australian Art Education currently has no editor, permission to include the published journal article has been granted by Dr Karen Maras, President of AEA. The requirement to include acknowledgement of the original source of publication is satisfied within this Appendix and in Chapter 4 where the article is inserted.

Lindsay, G. (2016). John Dewey and Reggio Emilia: worlds apart - one vision. Australian Art Education, 37(1), 21-37.

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Sent: Monday, 19 June 2017 2:37 pm
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Karen

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Appendix B.3: RE(D) Framework: Image of the Child

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>"The child is the starting point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard. To the growth of the child all studies are subservient; they are instruments valued as they serve the needs of growth. Personality, character, is more than subject-matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realization, is the goal. To possess all the world of knowledge and lose one's own self is as awful a fate in education as in religion. Moreover, subject-matter never can be got into the child from without. Learning is active. it involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation starting from within. Literally we must take our stand with the child and our departure from him. it is he and not the subject-matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning" (Dewey, 1902, p. 9).</p>	<p>"In summary, our image of children no longer considers them as isolated and egocentric, does not see them only engaged in action with objects, does not emphasize only the cognitive aspects, does not belittle feelings or what is not logical, and does not consider with ambiguity the role of the affective domain. Instead our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and, most of all, connected to adults and other children." (Malaguzzi 1993, p. 10).</p> <p>“This is the right of ALL children... It’s necessary that we believe that the child is very intelligent, that the child is strong and beautiful and has very ambitious desires and requests. This is the image of the child that we need to hold” (Malaguzzi, 1994, p. 5).</p>

The RE(D) framework developed to guide data analysis identifies a range of beliefs about children and the ways they learn which influence the pedagogical decisions and practice of educators. Indeed, Rinaldi, president of the Reggio Children organisation affirms that the beliefs educators hold about children directly influence children’s “social and ethical social and ethical identity, their rights and the educational contexts offered to them” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 117). Malaguzzi (1994, p. 1) also expressed the powerful influence that an educator’s ‘image of the child’ has upon pedagogy:

Each one of you has inside yourself an image of the child that directs you as you begin to relate to a child. This theory within you pushes you to behave in certain

ways; it orients you as you talk to the child, listen to the child, observe the child. It is very difficult for you to act contrary to this internal image.

Despite being separated by the Atlantic Ocean and several decades, Dewey in America and Malaguzzi in Reggio Emilia, Italy, shared the progressive belief that children deserve respect and support to engage as equal protagonists in their own education. In both contexts, these inspired philosophers and educational leaders challenged any view of childhood that would position education as a tool for economic and social engineering alone; to embrace the idea that children have legitimate rights as citizens in their communities.

Demonstrating his respect for children’s capacities, Dewey emphasised the freedom, self-activity and inherent desire for education within the child (Smith, 2005) and acknowledged the learner as a source of new meanings and insights (Biesta, 2006). The Reggio Emilia image of children as active participants in their own learning aligns with John Dewey’s notion of a child-centred and child-motivated curriculum (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011).

Democratic Participation

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
Dewey’s notion of democracy as "a mode of conjoint, communicated experience" justifies the transformation and renewal of contemporary educational practice. He suggests that democracy is only achievable if educational practice is restructured so that every participant, including child, teacher, family and community have the means, support and resources to realise their full potential as human beings. (Hansen, 2006, p. 11).	“The supportive atmosphere of the school by principle is open and democratic, inviting exchange of ideas and suppressing distance between people; thus, in all circumstances, the school maintains its effectiveness and a welcoming feeling to all concerned.” (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10).

While the common democratic focus of both Dewey and the educational project in Reggio Emilia has been outlined in the article, “Reflections in the Mirror of Reggio Emilia's Soul: John Dewey's Foundational Influence on Pedagogy in the Italian Educational

Project” (Lindsay, 2015a), it is worth expanding on these ideas here as they directly influence the Image of the Child component of the RE(D) framework.

Dewey believed that all education contexts should be democratic because he believed it was these social ideals that best support intelligence to grow (Garrison, 1996; Schechter, 2011). He advocated for “people from diverse backgrounds learn from each other” in a form of “creative democracy” (Saito, 2006, p. 83). Genuine democracy, according to Dewey, is characterised by a spirit of inquiry, wherein processes of shared inquiry and reciprocity support democratic awareness of other’s ideas and perspectives (Hansen, 2006). His response to adult-dominated, mass-educational contexts saw him centralise democratic, community-based education in his philosophy (Addison, Burgess, Steers, & Trowell, 2010, p. 115). Indeed, he believed that schools are central to developing democratic communities, where the intelligent growth of all individuals, regardless of social standing, would benefit the whole of society (Saito, 2006).

The post-world-war-two spirit of democracy and social reform that emerged in Reggio Emilia is most effectively articulated by Malaguzzi’s Deweyan inspired contemporary, Bruno Ciari:

The future of society will depend on the schools that we will be able to build, aiming at the promotion of human flourishing against the conditions that are currently threatening it. This is a high pedagogical ideal to stand for: to build a world which is more equal and fair. (Ciari 1972, p196, translated by Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 169-170)

Municipal schools became a driving force in promoting social change, as the full realisation of children’s democratic participation in the life of their communities implies the rethinking of the ways in which civic society is organised according to the contributions of its youngest citizens. In this sense, the role of early childhood education and care becomes intrinsically political (Ciari, 1972, pp. 225–6, translated & cited in Lazzari, 2012, p. 558).

In contemporary Reggio Emilia, the belief that children are citizens with the right to actively engage and contribute to the life of the community is considered to be a form of transformational democratic participation (Rinaldi, interview in Turner & Wilson, 2009).

Indeed, Rinaldi (2006, p. 140) directly credits Dewey when declaring their value for democracy and their aspiration to be a “place where culture is constructed and democracy is lived.” This strong commitment to democracy in Reggio Emilia has resulted in a project where politics, ethics, trans-disciplinary, research and educational experimentation are combined in service of children and the community (Vecchi, 2010, p. xix).

The Rights of the Child

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“Life is the great thing after all; the life of the child at its time and in its measure, no less than the life of the adult. Strange would it be, indeed, if intelligent and serious attention to what the child now needs and is capable of in the way of a rich, valuable, and expanded life should somehow conflict with the needs and possibilities of later, adult life. ...if we identify ourselves with the real instincts and needs of childhood, and ask only after its fullest assertion and growth, the discipline and information and culture of adult life shall all come in their due season” (Dewey, 1915, p. 60).</p>	<p>“The equation was simple: If the children had legitimate rights, then they should also have opportunities to develop their intelligence and to be made ready or the success that would not, and should not, escape them. These were the parents’ thoughts, expressing a universal aspiration, a declaration against the betrayal of children’s potential, and a warning that children first of all had to be taken seriously and believed in” (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 58).</p>

Both Dewey and Malaguzzi believed that children have the democratic right to educative experiences that value their present interests and contexts. Rather than negatively comparing the child’s current attainments with future goals and ambitions, Dewey focused on children’s existing powers and potential for learning and development (Cuffaro, 1995; Dýrfjörð, 2006). Malaguzzi’s inspiration in post-war Italy, was to provide equal educational access for “all children for the promotion of their social and cultural development as citizens” (Balduzzi, translated & cited in Lazzari, 2012, p. 558). Malaguzzi yearned for an

educational system that would “lead to experimentation with new pedagogical approaches inspired by the principles of democracy, civic participation, solidarity and social justice” (Lazzari & Balduzzi, 2013, p. 151). Vecchi (2010, p. 58) affirms that such goals “led Malaguzzi to the significant intuition of inserting the atelier” as a place where beauty and aesthetics are valued as human rights. Indeed, Malaguzzi aspired for the atelier to “act as (a) guarantor for” a fresh and original approach to things” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 1).

The Child as a Community Member

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>"In sum, I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. Education therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests and habits" (Dewey, 1897, p. 6).</p>	<p>The Italian phrase, “Io chi siamo”, meaning “I am who we are”, expresses a central idea in the schools of Reggio Emilia, that within collective and community spaces individuals are supported to develop their best thinking and to develop their individual self (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998, p. 219.)</p>

Connected to an image of a child with rights is the conception that children have both an individual and a collective identity, along with individual and collective responsibilities. Dewey (1915, p. 7) correlated individualism and socialism, stating that “only by being true to the full growth of all individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself.” In Reggio Emilia, children are valued as “citizens with full rights of participation and engagement in teaching and learning” (MacDonald, 2011, p. 632). This relationship between education and democracy is highlighted by Rinaldi (2013, p. 23):

An educating community is a community, a city, where early childhood centres and schools, play a key and crucial role. The role they play is not only for learning formal knowledge by children, but for learning values on which the community itself bases its identity and can reflect on the moral aspect of becoming a citizen and a worker in, and of, a society.

Children are capable, active protagonists of their own learning

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>While acknowledging the role of education in drawing out children’s capacities, Dewey believed that the child “is already running over, spilling over, with activities of all kinds. He is not a purely latent being whom the adult has to approach with great caution and skill in order to gradually draw out some hidden germ of activity. The child is already intensely active, and the question of education is the question of taking hold of his activities, of giving them direction" (Dewey, 1915, p. 36).</p>	<p>All people- and I mean scholars, researchers, and teachers, who in any place have set themselves to study children seriously - have ended up by discovering not so much the limits and weaknesses of children but rather their surprising and extraordinary strengths and capabilities linked with an inexhaustible need for expression and realization" (Malaguzzi, interview in Gandini, 2012c, p. 53).</p>

Children who are valued as capable citizens with rights are consequently valued for the strength and agency they bring to the learning context. Throughout Dewey’s work, he refers to children using descriptors such as capacity and potential to denote their ability, power, potency and force and to highlight their strong capacity for self-directed learning and growth (Cuffaro, 1995). Similarly, in Reggio Emilia children are valued as strong and capable; full of potential; curious; and as constructors of their own learning in collaboration with educators, parents, and the learning environment (Cadwell, 1997).

Value for the preschool years

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>"I believe that education, therefore is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (Dewey, 1897, p. 6).</p> <p>“It is his present powers which are to assert themselves; his present capacities which are to be exercised; his present attitudes which are to be realized" (Dewey, 1902, p. 31).</p>	<p>"When we say that school is not a preparation for life but is life, this means assuming the responsibility to create a context in which words such as creativity, change, innovation, error, doubt and uncertainty, when used on a daily basis, can truly be developed and become real" (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012, p. 246).</p>

Dewey and the educators in Reggio Emilia value children’s intrinsic capacity for growth during the early years of development. Rather than devalue children’s current skills and knowledge, Dewey saw children’s immaturity as a precondition for growth and the opportunity to learn through experience (Dewey, 1916). Dewey positioned a child’s ‘immaturity’ as a strength and a power, rather than as a negative (Cuffaro, 1995). He believed that the pattern of a person’s mental life is set in the first four or five years and that children in this stage of development should be stimulated by physical experiences that are part of their natural environment and that appeal to eye, ear, and touch (Dewey, 1910).

Dodd-Nufrio (2011, p. 236) affirms that Dewey’s principles are evident within Reggio Emilia’s preschool values and practices, citing Valentine to clarify that:

Unlike other pedagogies that can be guilty of treating early infancy as a preparation for later childhood and adulthood, and consequently seeing nursery education as a kind of antechamber to later stages of formal education, the Reggio Approach considers early infancy to be a distinct developmental phase in which children demonstrate an extraordinary curiosity about the world. (p. 236)

Children learn through experiences that are active and hands-on

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“By positioning teaching and learning as active and constructive processes that connect the cognitive and the active domains, Dewey connects two kinds of education that are often split in formal education contexts. He brings subject matter, and its inherent emotions and practical skills together rather than maintaining a dualistic attitude to learning” (Page, 2006, p. 46).</p>	<p>“Children are born with a connecting mind that seeks to communicate and explore. They are active and interactive from the very beginning. This must mean that we are born with a mind that desires interaction with other things and is capable of this both singly and in multiple relationships. We have built a shared epistemology from recognising children as active and constructive learners from their very birth. This brings in the idea of interdisciplinary work, therefore we should be able to imagine schools which connect ideas and subjects. Perhaps schools should not be separating the knowledge which was all connected at our birth” (Tedeschi, 2012).</p>

When outlining the types of learning experience most appropriate for preschool aged children, Dewey identified that “The material is not presented as lessons, as something to be learned, but rather as something to be taken up into the child’s own experience, through his own activities” (1915, p. 106). Dewey suggests that hands-on and practical forms of activity and expression should dominate the curriculum as tools for making meaning and connecting what the child already knows to their current explorations and interests in ways that are appropriate to the strengths of this age group of children (Dewey, 1910). Rather than develop schools as places apart from the child’s experience, Dewey urges for schools to “recapitulate typical phases of his experience out of the school, as to enlarge, enrich, and gradually formulate it” (Dewey, 1915, p. 106). Similarly, the Reggio Emilia approach is focused on “children’s active, constructive and creative learning processes” (Millikan, 2003, p. 7). Malaguzzi (1993, p. 11) stated that “children learn and communicate through concrete experiences.” Schools must be places of action so that through acting and doing “children are able to understand the path of their learning and the organization of their experience, knowledge, and the meaning of their relationships with others” (Ceppi & Zini, 1998, p. 119).

Children learn through interest-focused learning projects

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>"The child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting point for all education.... without insight into the psychological structure and activities of the individual, the educative process will, therefore, be haphazard and arbitrary. If it chanced to coincide with the child's activity, it will get a leverage; if it does not, it will result in friction, or disintegration, or arrest of the child nature" (Dewey, 1897, p. 4)</p>	<p>Vecchi (2010) explains the aim in Reggio Emilia to develop empathy with the subject of interest, using materials and techniques along with a value for time. She suggests that the initial focus must be to "establish an intense relationship with the reality being investigated. Especially with very small children this phase is fundamental for the quality of development of subsequent phases” A second phase “might be to look for different materials together with children, letting them make the choices” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 32).</p>

Dewey's image of children as active, hands-on learners who are motivated to experiment and solve problems informed his view that children's "impulses" and interests are a powerful educational resource (Tanner, 1991, p. 104-105). He believed that projects of inquiry should be based upon the interests and everyday personal experiences of children (Dewey, 1897, 1902, 1915). Indeed, he established his laboratory school in Chicago based on his view that children grow through experience and therefore require personal involvement in active learning experiences that build on their immediate interests (Weiss, DeFalco, & Weiss, 2005).

Several scholars have located Dewey's influence on Reggio Emilia's project-based approach within his belief that curriculum must be informed by children's interests (Katz, 1998; Glassman & Whaley, 2000; Dýrfjörð, 2006; Hall et al., 2010; Griebeling, 2011) with Hall et al. (2010) suggesting that the word project does not adequately articulate the in-depth, long-term projects that develop in response to children's interests. In Reggio Emilia the curriculum design response to children's interests and processes of inquiry are known as *progettazione*. Rinaldi (2013, p. 33) explains the complexities of *progettazione* as:

The process of planning and designing the teaching and learning activities, the environment, the opportunities for participation and the professional development of the personnel, and not by means of applying predefined curricula. *Progettazione* is a strategy of thought and action that is respectful and supportive of the learning processes of the children and the adults; it accepts doubt, uncertainty and error as resources, and is capable of being modified in relation to the evolution of the contexts. It is carried out by means of the processes of observation, documentation and interpretation in a recursive relationship, and through a close synergy between the organization of the work and the educational research.

Such an approach aligns with Dewey's belief that unified thought and action lead to meaningful and connected learning; where learning, personal agency and educational growth take place through ongoing cycles of reconstructed and reorganised experience that build upon past experience to enhance future learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2006, p. 133). Dewey (1897, p. 14) warned that children's interests should not be repressed more merely humoured, stating that to do so fails to "penetrate below the surface" and may "weaken

intellectual curiosity and alertness”, “suppress initiative”, and “deaden interest”. Instead he urges that children’s interests be identified and acknowledged as a power that can inspire genuine interest (Dewey, 1897). These sentiments align with Malaguzzi’s belief that schools must practice “attitudes of constant exploration where things are explored in order to reach a higher recognition, interest and joy in life - and a larger joy of solidarity with other people” and where the child is “a co-director, able to make his or her own choices” and where “the child becomes a producer instead of a consumer” (translated & cited in Moestrup & Eskesen, 2004, p. 32).

Children learn through cognitive conflict and problem solving

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“Dewey challenges the widespread assumption, in his time and our own, that learning takes place through a prescribed series of "certain preordained verbal formulae" rather than through direct experience with problems at hand and with the children learning to assess for themselves the consequences that accrue from that engagement” (Kliebard, 2006, p. 117).</p>	<p>"Even when cognitive conflicts do not produce immediate cognitive growth, they can be advantageous because by producing cognitive dissonance, they can in time produce progress. If we can accept that every problem produces cognitive conflicts, then we believe that cognitive conflicts initiate a process of co-construction and cooperation" (Malaguzzi, 1994, p. 12).</p>

Dewey (1910, p. 10) proposed that when confronted with difficulties, the “formation of some tentative plan or project” to develop a solution to the problem is motivated. However, he warns that confusion will remain unless some past experience or prior knowledge supports the problem-solving process (Dewey, 1910, p. 10). Dewey therefore positioned education as a meaning-making process that occurs when the learner actively participates and communicates and when the insights of the learner are valued (Biesta, 2006). When motivated by interest-inspired problem-solving activities, the judgement and attention acquired far exceeds the discipline of reasoning powers developed through formal lessons (Dewey, 1915, p. 12). In this way, Dewey positioned problem-solving activities

As agencies for bringing home to the child some of the primal necessities of community life and as ways in which these needs have been met by the growing insight and ingenuity of man; in short, as instrumentalities through which the school itself shall be made a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons. (1915, p. 14)

Similarly, rather than rely upon educational methods of transmission, reproduction and predestined results, education in Reggio Emilia is based on solving child-focused problems through experimentation, trial and error. It is a “pedagogy of listening” where the learner develops theories, shares them and tests them in collaboration with others (Vecchi, 2010, p. xvii). In Reggio Emilia emotional and intellectual conflict and debate are valued as a “means to advance higher-level thinking” (Hewett, 2001, p. 98) and processes of collaboration and co-construction (Edwards, Gandini, & Nimmo, 2015). Malaguzzi proposed that:

If conflicts don’t arise, if there are no confrontations, if there aren’t moments in which there is a losing of equilibrium, if the certainty doesn’t leave room for the uncertainty, if a child doesn’t accept the flux of insecure moments, the climbing up stops. (Malaguzzi, in Edwards et al., 2015, p. 47)

Children learn through social collaboration and co-construction of knowledge

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>"I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas and arousing his feelings and emotions. Through this unconscious education, the individual gradually comes to share in the intellectual and moral resources which humanity has succeeded in getting together. He becomes the inheritor of the funded capital of civilisation" (Dewey, 1897, p. 3).</p>	<p>Malaguzzi (1993, p. 11) identified that "Children's interactions provide a fruitful ground for symbolic construction, which derives in large part from cognitive abilities and from the forms in which they are manifested. Interactions increase the capacity on the part of children to step back from reality and to describe it anew, to demonstrate the emerging process of abstraction and recombination of ideas."</p>

Dewey believed that children's learning is empowered and stimulated to action through social situations which stimulate the child to collaborate with others and to consider the diverse viewpoints of the group (Dewey, 1897, p. 3). The child's social life is central to "all his training or growth" and "gives the background of all his efforts and of all his attainments" (Dewey, 1897, p. 9). Additionally, Dewey credited children's social life as a stimulus for concentration, communication and higher levels of curiosity (Dewey, 1897, 1910). Through active and constructive joint activities, Dewey proposed that people learn by referring "to each other's use of materials, tools, ideas, capacities and applications" (Rankin, 2004, p. 73).

In Reggio Emilia, this is expressed through the metaphor of a bouncing ball, whereby children and teachers enter an intellectual dialogue that involves sharing and borrowing ideas in the process of play, exploration and collaborative problem solving (Edwards et al., 2012; Edwards et al., 2015). Children collaborate socially in their own learning in order to produce "a form of mutual confrontation and dialogue known as 'confronto' in Italian (Vecchi, 2010, p. 2). Vecchi (2010, p. 2) explains that 'confronto' "is seeking people out because we want their point of view". Through such shared collaboration between children, teachers, family and the community; education, knowledge development and social growth are positioned as a social construction (Cadwell, 1997; Dýrfjörð, 2006). In this regard, Edwards (Edwards, 1995, p. 8) explains that:

Malaguzzi never saw the developing child as an ideally autonomous learner, but rather saw education as a necessarily communal activity and symphony of subjectivities involving children and adults. He saw long-term and meaningful relationships between and among children, teachers, and parents as the necessary precondition for the flowering of communication, co-action, and reciprocity.

Appendix B.4: RE(D) Framework: Art and Aesthetics

Art as play and experience

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“Art is always the mean term, the connecting link, of play and work, of leisure and industry. ...Play is not amusement; the play of childhood is not recreation. Amusement and recreation are ideas which require a background of monotony, of enforced toil, to give them meaning. Play as work, as freely productive activity, industry as leisure, that is, as occupation which fills the imagination and the emotions as well as the hands, is the essence of art. Art is not an outer product nor an outer behaviour. It is an attitude of spirit, a state of mind-- one which demands for its own satisfaction and fulfilling a shaping of matter to new and more significant form. To feel the meaning of what one is doing and to rejoice in that meaning, to unite in one concurrent fact the unfolding of the inner emotional life and the ordered development of material external conditions-- that is art” (Dewey, 1919).</p>	<p>"We have to convince ourselves that it is essential to preserve in children (and in ourselves) the feeling of wonder and surprise, because creativity, like knowledge, is a daughter of surprise. We have to convince ourselves that expressivity is an art, a combined construction (not immediate, not spontaneous, not isolated, not secondary); that expressivity has motivations, forms, and procedures; contents (formal and informal); and the ability to communicate the predictable and the unpredictable. Expressivity finds sources from play, as well as from practice, from study and from visual learning, as well as from subjective interpretations that come from emotions, from intuition, from chance, and from rational imagination and transgression" (Malaguzzi, interview in Gandini et al., 2005, p. 8)</p>

Dewey stated that “play is the chief, almost the only, mode of education for the child” (1910, p. 149). Play indicates the child’s mental attitude, images and interests in a free and satisfying interplay “of all the child's powers, thoughts, and physical movements” (Dewey, 1915, p. 118). Indeed, Dewey believed that for children, play, work, playfulness and seriousness are completely merged processes (1934) and that art is the connecting link between children’s play and work (1919). Pre-empting contemporary play-based curricula, Dewey (1897) suggested that the child’s natural inclination to construct, make meaning and actively express their thinking should furnish the ideal medium by which to introduce children to subject knowledge.

Dewey centralised play as an artistic experience whereby the “productive control of physical materials” effectively directs and articulates children’s “play spirit” (1919, n.p) and extends children’s “ideas drawn from past experience” (Dewey, 1934, p. 290). Indeed, Dewey (1910, p. 204) proposed that art ideally originates in a harmonious merging of playfulness and seriousness. In such contexts, the process of visually reproducing or expressing a mental image through the application of physical techniques and processes is to “put forth in expression whatever has been gained in impression and then to assimilate it into an idea” (Dewey, 1919, n.p). Further to this, Dewey clarified that “a great deal of motor expression is not something done with an idea already made in the child’s mind, but it is necessary to the appreciation of the idea itself” (1919, n.p.). In summary, it is through the physical experience of making and doing that children develop their ideas and theories.

Such playful transactions between the individual and their environment, whether other people, toys, books or materials, constitute ‘an experience’ (Dewey, 1939, p. 41). He believed that when unconstrained play transactions enable the child to reconstruct materials, play is transformed into work (Dewey, 1934) and constitutes aesthetic experience that directs ideas and motivates further learning experiences and educational growth (Kliebard, 2006). Indeed, Dewey sought to create the conditions for “an experience” which leads to growth through the “ongoing reconstruction of experience” (Rankin, 2004, p. 74).

Like Dewey before them, educators in Reggio Emilia seek to create aesthetic, playful art experiences that support children to work out and express their thinking, and where “everyday realities” are perceived through a “poetic lens” (Vecchi, interview in Gandini, 2012a, p. 308). Rankin (2004, p. 74) also affirms that Deweyan conceptions of experience and growth are exemplified in Reggio Emilia, stating that when “children investigate and reflect on their experiences, they are growing toward a more expanded and organised view of these experiences as well as gaining understanding of how their investigations relate to diverse subject matter.” Indeed, Malaguzzi centralised “play with a purpose” as the “basis of life” in the Reggio Emilia schools (Gandini, 2011, p. 8).

The educators in Reggio Emilia also regard art as a form of play (Gandini, 2011, p. 9). An aesthetic focus, they believe, introduces surprise, interest and the “joy of the unexpected” to the learning process that both enrich life and generate interesting cultural events (Vecchi, 2010; Vecchi, interview in Gandini, 2012, p. 308). Aligning with Dewey’s

idea that playful art processes support and connect children’s cognitive and expressive growth, Rinaldi (2006, p. 120) posits that art, as a human right and as part of daily life, supports children to learn and to know in holistic ways that bring together the learning disciplines. To achieve such ideals, Malaguzzi (1994, p. 4) suggested that the teacher must be the protagonist, main actors, prompters and authors of children’s play; “someone who thinks ahead of time”, creates “the environment in which activities take place” and who affirms and guides children’s work. Indeed, Reggio Emilia’s constructivist pedagogy of relationships between people, environment and materials underpins their ongoing “playful relationships with all of the elements of art” (Swarm, 2008, p. 36).

Art as a language

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“Now art is the most effective mode of communication that exists” (Dewey, 1934, p. 286).</p> <p>" And so the expressive impulse of the children, the art instinct, grows out of the communicating and construction instincts. It is their refinement and full manifestation. Make the construction adequate, make it full, free, and flexible, give it a social motive, something to tell, and you have a work of art" (Dewey, 1915, p. 44).</p>	<p>“Putting ideas into the form of graphic representation allows the children to understand that their actions can communicate. This is an extraordinary discovery because it helps them to realise that to communicate, their graphic must be understandable to others. In our view, graphic representations can be a tool of communication much simpler and clearer than words" (Malaguzzi, interview in Gandini, 2012, p. 66).</p>

Dewey’s philosophy is built on his view that language and communication support processes of problem solving and meaning-making (Garrison, 1996). He concurrently believed that spoken and written language were not the only means of communication, suggesting that art shares ideas more effectively than any other means (Dewey, 1934). Dewey (1910, p. 159) suggested that anything utilised to signify an idea, including signs, symbols, gestures and visual images can be considered a language. The arts, as “universal languages”, support communication even where there are no common languages between cultures (Hickman et al., 2009, p. 17). Art, according to Dewey, is an expression of

experience (Faini Saab & Stack, 2013); a sensory dialogue between imagination, conceptual planning and materials that raises “consciousness of the qualitative dimensions of experience” (Hildebrand, 2008, p. 149); and, a means by which to channel and transform the self (Richards, 2012).

Dewey stated that children instinctually use pencil and paper to satisfy their desire to “express themselves through the medium of form and color” (Dewey, 1915, p. 40). Art-centred inquiry and communication in education contexts owe much to Dewey’s philosophies of aesthetics and creativity (Cuffaro, 1995; Page, 2006; Hildebrand, 2008; Faini Saab & Stack, 2013). In his Chicago laboratory school, Dewey considered that expressive activities served both social and intellectual purposes that called for communication through drawing, speech and written records” (Tanner, 1991, p. 105). Such processes of inquiry, communication and art-engagement build from moments of doubt along with the desire to resolve the doubt (Faini Saab & Stack, 2013). Indeed, Dewey believed that children have inherent social and communicative instincts; constructive and making instincts; an investigation instinct; and, an expressive creative instinct (Faini Saab & Stack, 2013).

These Deweyan ideas find full expression in the early childhood schools of Reggio Emilia where:

- Children are considered to be innately capable of constructing and interpreting symbols and codes to make and express meaning and to communicate ideas (Vecchi, 2010);
- Children are considered capable of expressing and communicating ideas through the use of “symbolic languages”, and can “assemble and disassemble possible realities”, “construct metaphors and creative paradoxes”, construct “symbols and codes”, “decode established symbols and codes”, “attribute meanings to events” and attempt “to share meanings and stories of meaning” (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 117);
- “pre-primary children can use a wide variety of graphic and other media to represent and thereby communicate their constructions” (Katz, 1998, p. 28);
- Children have access to many materials to facilitate their explorations and to test and express their ideas using many ‘languages’ (Schwall, 2005, p. 17);

- Children are encouraged to express their ideas visually which supports them to tangibly understand their own and others' thinking (Cadwell, 1997);
- Children are encouraged at all times to make connections between the affective and the cognitive, and to express their ideas through drawing, movement and designing using different media (Ewing, 2010, p. 3);
- Art is considered to be a sensory language by which children explore and search for meaning (Faini Saab & Stack, 2013, p. 118);
- Children, including pre-literate children, are encouraged to explore their understandings using a range of symbolic languages such as “drawing, painting, clay modelling, collage, performance and so on” (Hendrick, 1997, p. 33);
- “Artistic products begin with the children’s experiences and develop in a spiral of increased understanding through the development of art as communication” (Faini Saab & Stack, 2013, p. 117);
- Children are familiar with using their drawings to support discussion and the development of further work such as murals, sculptures or paintings (Pohio, 2009); and
- Educators value the importance of “giving children opportunities to communicate what they are thinking at any stage of knowing” (Hendrick, 1997, p. 33).

The culture of the atelier in Reggio Emilia has evolved a form of mutual confrontation and dialogue (Vecchi, 2010). The visual languages support educators to build on children’s prior interests and conversations by discussing and expanding upon their ideas, by translating their ideas into different visual languages, and by suggesting further explorations and experiences (Cadwell, 1997, p. 71). Malaguzzi (interviewed in Gandini, 2012c, p. 66) outlines that as children move “from one symbolic language to another” they find that “each transformation generates something new” and brings clarity to their construction of knowledge. For children to undertake these processes and communicate effectively the educator must foster symbolic representations (Hall et al., 2010). Additionally, each language “must be treated by adults and with children for its rich structure and expressive possibilities” which requires the educator to expand their repertoire of ‘languages’ in order to improve their ability to listen to and facilitate the

learning and expressive processes of children (Vecchi, 2010, pp. 18-19). Rinaldi poetically outlines the potential of the hundred languages of children:

The hundred languages are a metaphor for the extraordinary potentials of children, their knowledge-building and creative processes, the myriad forms with which life is manifested and knowledge is constructed. The hundred languages are understood as having the potential to be transformed and multiplied in the cooperation and interaction between the languages, among the children, and between children and adults. It is the responsibility of the infant-toddler centre and the preschool to give value and equal dignity to all the verbal and non-verbal languages. (2013, p. 20)

Art for making meaning

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“Every great work of art represents the analysis and synthesis of a great mind...If there is one principle more than another upon which all educational practice (not simply education in art) must base itself, it is precisely in this: that the realization of an idea in action through the medium of movement is as necessary to the formation of the mental image as is the expression, the technique, to the full play of the idea itself” (Dewey, 1919).</p>	<p>"This is also why manual work, less distant than would first appear from the work of thinkers and scientists, constitutes an aspect of the effort made by humanity to understand the world...In the culture of the atelier, whatever subject matter or material it treats, there must be awareness of theory made flesh in the material that gives body to theories, anticipates them, suggests them, or in some way illuminates them" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 175).</p>

Beyond the use of art as a language, Dewey considered art-making and hands-on processes employed by children to support their processes of inquiry and meaning-making. In stating that art is “industry unusually conscious of its own meaning” he expressed the idea that art activities support emotional and intellectual awareness (Dewey, 1919, n.p). Dewey considered that artistic inquiry takes place when experimentation with a range of media, along with processes of making and doing, consciously aim to achieve a satisfying resolution to a problem (Johnston, 2009). The educational aim in making art is not to make valuable products, but to develop social power and insight (Dewey, 1915, p. 18). Indeed, Dewey’s view of learning through experience equated to an iterative “backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what they do to us”, where doing

and trying constitute an experiment with the world that seeks to work out the connections between things (Feiman-Nemser, 2006, p. 133). He proposed that artistic processes of inquiry should focus on daily and common experiences in order to discover the aesthetic qualities of the experience (Hildebrand, 2008, p. 151). Dewey (1910, p. 149) explained, “When things become signs, when they gain a representative capacity as standing for other things, play is transformed from mere physical exuberance into an activity involving a mental factor.”

Similarly, in Reggio Emilia, expressive languages, when woven into a child-focused pedagogy, are considered important tools in knowledge development (Vecchi, 2010, p. 1). By engaging with aesthetic materials and methods, children’s minds, bodies and emotions are engaged (Cadwell, 1997) in “experiences and explorations of life, of the senses, and of meanings” (Gandini et al., 2005, p. 9). Cadwell (1997, p. 27) further explains that children are supported to integrate existing knowledge with new perceptions and understandings and therefore “continue to build and rebuild, through the materials, an ever-expanding awareness and understanding of the world and their place in it.” Such “art-as-exploration” activities support children to “unite their actions and perceptions in a cumulative manner” (Richards, 2012, p. 216). Through artistic methods and techniques, such as drawing, painting, modelling and construction, children’s understanding of topics of inquiry are deepened and their capacity to represent their knowledge in concrete ways is developed (Griebing, 2011, p. 6).

Art methods and techniques

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“There comes a time when children must extend and make more exact their acquaintance with existing things; must conceive ends and consequences with sufficient definiteness to guide their actions by them, and must acquire some technical skill in selecting and arranging means to realize these ends. Unless these factors are gradually introduced in the earlier play period, they must be introduced later abruptly and arbitrarily, to the manifest disadvantage of both the earlier and the later stages technical skill in selecting and arranging means to realize these ends” (Dewey, 1910, p. 152).</p>	<p>“Visual and graphic languages provide ways of exploring and expressing understandings of the world...The visual arts are integrated into the work simply as additional languages available to young children not yet very competent at conventional writing and reading; the arts are not taught as a subject, a discipline, a discreet set of skills, or treated in other ways as a focus of instruction for their own sake.... This is not to suggest that the children are not given direct directions and guidance in the use of the tools, materials, and techniques of graphic and visual representation. Of considerable interest is the way such teaching (vs. instruction) invariable includes giving the child - in simple form - the principle underlying a suggested technique or approach to materials. The inclusion of the principle with a suggestion increases the chances that the child will be able to solve the problem when the adult is not there - an appropriate goal of teaching at every level" (Katz, 1998, p. 35).</p>

Dewey (1919) identified that to utilise art methods as communicative and exploratory tools requires familiarity with tools, materials, processes and techniques. He believed that the connection of art methods and techniques to the aims of the child’s imagination results in an education that not only develops specific skills and knowledge, but more broadly develops the skills to appreciate deeper conceptual knowledge and truth (Dewey, 1919). While Dewey acknowledged that natural gifts for art-making may exist, he clarified that for anyone to express and make meaning using art materials also requires hard work and knowledge development regarding the techniques and affordances of the

materials concerned (Kliebard, 2006). Hildebrand (2008, p. 167) expands on Dewey's "Art as Experience" to clarify that the only difference between artist and non-artist is that the artist has become familiar with materials and has practiced the skills and capacities required to visually express their ideas.

Dewey (1910) therefore advocated for methods and techniques to be introduced to children earlier rather than later in order that they develop the capacity to realise their goals and aims. He believed that first-hand experience with real materials and processes, particularly with natural materials, would best support children's imaginative play, observation skills, ingenuity, constructions, logical thought and "the sense of reality acquired through first hand contact with actualities" (Dewey, 1915). Dewey also advocated for children to be given time to engage with and explore materials, time to choose a project of interest and time for reflection, imagination and repeated experience (Johnston, 2009).

In Reggio Emilia, the balance between free exploration with materials and techniques and more intentional instruction and guidance is determined as a negotiation between educators and children. The provision of quality art materials and support for technical skill acquisition by educators and atelieristi does not aim to create mini-adult artists, but instead aims to furnish children with multiple ways (or languages) to "make their thinking visible" (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 7) within small group projects of inquiry (Griebing, 2011). Hendrick (1997) elaborates on the intent that adult guidance "empowers youngsters to move ahead with their creations in a satisfying way" (p. 45) adding that:

Reggio Emilia educators guide children in their work – they equip them to have the skills to be able to graphically represent what they know. Children like to demonstrate what they know when they can do it well – otherwise they often become frustrated when they feel less than capable. They want to have skill with a pencil or a paintbrush, just as they want to have skill with the alphabet and numbers.
(p. 67)

It is therefore necessary that children have many opportunities to become familiar with materials through play, manipulation, trial and error (Malaguzzi, in Edwards et al., 2015, p. 96). Some of the strategies frequently utilised in Reggio Emilia include:

- Children are given many opportunities to “find, explore, and use a large variety of informal material” and to “revisit their own work”, along with the work of their “classmates and other artists (Bertolini, 2013, p. 13);
- Children are afforded uninterrupted time to play, explore and become familiar with new materials and objects prior to any expectation that the child will create a specific object or expression using that material or technique (Malaguzzi, in Edwards et al., 2015, p. 93). Vecchi (2010) clarifies that time supports children to develop a relationship with the material being investigated that in turn enhances the quality of subsequent experiences. She notes, “Encounters between children and materials are generally extremely rich in suggestive qualities, memories and meanings, without much intervention on the part of the teacher” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 32);
- The drawings, sculptures, paintings and representations created by the children are used to modify, develop and deepen understandings as a basis for further hypotheses, discussions and extension of experience (Katz, 1998 p. 34);
- "Reggio children approach the task of representing what they are studying through drawing, purposefully and assiduously, because they have a lot of experience using their drawings. They are accustomed to using their own field drawings as bases for discussion, argument, and further work, such as making group murals, sculptures, and paintings" (Katz, 1998, p. 34);
- Cadwell (1997, p. 37) explains that observational drawing is seen as a tool that supports children’s ability to notice and to discover a relationship with “another being or object” while developing the capacity to invent ways to express varieties and subtleties of line, texture, shape, form and colour with many different materials.” Such drawing experiences are supplemented with the educator’s documentation regarding the children’s engagement, conversations and learning (Katz, 1998, p. 31);

- Materials and equipment are well cared for and aesthetically displayed, with educators and children being responsible for the care of the materials and environment (Vecchi, 2010, p. 133). This organisation and care for materials is considered to “create fertile ground for making meaning out of the pieces and parts of our collective lives” (Cadwell, 2003, p. 34);
- Cadwell (2003), Millikan (2010) and Hall et al. (2010) list the range of materials often offered including clay, clay tools, wire, collage materials, materials and tools for painting and drawing, loose parts such as mirrors, seashells, glass, recycled materials, and equipment such as computers, printers, photocopiers, digital cameras, firing ovens, light-tables, overhead projectors and shadow-screens. Natural materials such as dried orange peel, seeds, grains, stones, leaves, feathers, sticks, cones and shells also abound in carefully arranged and maintained collections;
- Children’s work is displayed with respect and care to communicate to children about the importance of their work and to inspire and encourage children to engage in their work seriously and with great care and attention (Katz, 1998; Gandini, 1998);
- Collaborative work is typically carried out in small groups (Edwards et al., 2012);
- Educators clearly communicate their “serious interest in the children's ideas and in their expressions of them: which results in “complex work can result, even among very young children” (Katz, 1998, p. 38); and
- Educators are mindful of aesthetic qualities such as the “size, shape, colour, grain and surface quality of paper” and the “quality of tools and materials (Vecchi, 2010, p. 111).

Vecchi further explains that:

Small gestures of care and attention, like illustrating the potential of a tool with children, or letting children choose the size of paper or where they would like to sit are all elements predisposing children to work willingly, concentrate and feel pleasure. (2010, p. 111)

Appendix B.5: RE(D) Framework: Environment and Materials

The environment as a resource

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>Referring to the environmental influences on growth and learning Dewey (1939, p. 35) states, “But when their educational import is recognized, they indicate the second way in which the educator can direct the experience of the young without engaging in imposition. A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all they have to contribute to the building up experiences that are worthwhile.”</p>	<p>The environment is seen here as educating the child; in fact, it is considered “the third educator” along with the team of two teachers...All the things that surround and are used by the people in the school - the objects, the materials and the structures - are seen not as passive elements but, on the contrary, as elements that condition and are conditioned by the actions of children and adults who are active in it” (Gandini, 2012a, p. 339).</p> <p>"Built environments are always windows for ideas. Among other ideas in Reggio pedagogy, we are convinced of the right to beauty in a healthy psychological relationship with surroundings. Inhabiting a place which is lovely and cared for is perceived to be a condition of physical and psychological well-being and, therefore, the right of people in general and even more so of children, all children." (Vecchi, 2010, p. 82).</p>

Dewey (1934) proposed that life does not only occur within an environment, but through interaction with it. He explained that the provision of empowering and educative experience is impossible unless an “educative medium is provided” stating that the way children engage “will depend almost entirely upon the stimuli which surround them, and the material upon which they exercise themselves” (Dewey, 1902, p. 18). By supplying materials that are responsive to the instincts of the child, along with technical information and discipline knowledge, Dewey suggests the growth of the child is enriched.

In Reggio Emilia, these ideals are exemplified within environments that are personified as “the third educator” and where the provision of aesthetic and responsive

environments is a declaration of children’s right to quality (Rinaldi, 2013, p. 28). Vecchi (2010, p. 88) adds:

The aesthetic quality of an environment requires attention and gestures of care, the maintenance of things and of culture, an attitude of respect for the things around us to which we should dedicate careful thought, organization and financial resources.

Learning environments in Reggio Emilia are described as rich, stimulating, amiable, liveable, serene, relational, rich, educational, caring, welcoming and inclusive (Gandini, 2012b). More broadly they are also viewed as places of production, learning, culture and socio-political experimentation (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 119). Careful design seeks to develop responsive learning environments as living spaces that facilitate meaningful and valuable experiences (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 119). Indeed, Rinaldi (interviewed in Vecchi, 2010, p. 98) poetically states:

Organising a space means organising a metaphor of knowledge, an image of how we know and learn...the spaces and the furnishings, the lights, the sounds must allow relationships, actions, reflections, sharing and collaboration. So here we have the concept of designing the environment that also means designing life, which means constructing a context in which it is possible to continue to live.

Relationship with materials

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“It is not enough that certain materials and methods have proved effective with other individuals at other times. There must be a reason for thinking that they will function in generating an experience that has educative quality with particular individuals at a particular time” (Dewey, 1939, p. 45).</p>	<p>“Of course, materials are of great importance. The more materials the children have, the better...Discovering the laws within the material means that to discover materials leads to a long process of discovery” (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Moekstrup & Eskesen, 2004, p. 18).</p>

Dewey (1934, p. 293) held that self-knowledge emerges from the human impulse to create objects and adapt external materials to the individual vision and expression of ideas. When media are employed in such acts of personal expression and meaning making,

Dewey considered the result an expressive art (Dewey, 1934). For this to occur, however, Dewey indicates that the materials used must be ordered and organised in an act of purposeful “selection and development of material” (Dewey, 1934, p. 287). The materials used must be of high quality so that the “artistic sincerity of the individual artist” is not bound and narrowed, and so that “the wings of his imagination” are not clipped (Dewey, 1934, p. 198.)

Dewey also urged the need to become familiar with materials so that the “strange and unexpected corners are rubbed off” (Dewey, 1910, p. 12). He considered the only difference between an artist and a non-artist is formed in the opportunity to engage with materials and develop the capacity and skills of disciplined expression (Dewey, 1934; Hildebrand, 2008). Materials, therefore, only become an art medium when the material becomes a tool for expression or communication through the skill and intention of the artist (Hildebrand, 2008; Richards, 2012). Dewey valued time as a necessary element in children’s selection, exploration and application of an art medium and urged for classroom environments to minimise limitations on processes and materials (Johnston, 2009). Richards (2012, p. 284) suggests that for “children’s art activities to develop into fuller art experiences... in a Deweyan sense, children needed some dedicated art spaces and resources.”

High quality materials and processes are valued as central to Reggio Emilia’s aesthetic approach to pedagogy. Open-ended materials are well organised, aesthetically displayed and well-maintained (Cadwell, 1997; Vecchi, 2010; Gandini, 2012b). Children’s right to express their thinking and to “discover and communicate what they know, understand, wonder about, question, feel and imagine” through the hundred languages is manifest in the provision of a wide assortment of materials (Cadwell, 1997, pp. 5, 27). Millikan (2010) explains the learning spaces, including classrooms and the ateliers, contain:

A rich array of materials and tools for painting and drawing, as well as materials for three-dimensional work such as clay and wire; and a variety of recycled and discarded materials. A new range of equipment now includes a computer, printer, photocopier, tape-recorder, digital cameras, and an oven for ceramic work. But beside the large atelier there is also the opportunity within each classroom for children to work freely and imaginatively, either individually or with others, in using paint, clay, drawing, and collage materials, blocks, and recycled materials for building and other open-ended construction materials, as well as having the use of light-tables, overhead-projectors, shadow-screens and other materials and equipment for exploring sound and movement. (p. 15)

Through deep engagement with such materials, children are supported to connect new understandings and perceptions with their prior knowledge to build an expanding “understanding of the world and their place in it (Cadwell, 1997, p. 27). It is important to note that in Reggio Emilia, the materials and processes employed in the atelier are not regarded as art, but are positioned as “an inseparable, integral part of the whole cognitive/symbolic expression involved in the process of learning” (Hendrick, 1997, p. 21). Instead, by utilising the affordances of art materials and techniques, the educators in Reggio Emilia engage in research about the “motivations and theories of children from scribbles on up” and explore “variations on tools, techniques, and materials with which to work” (Malaguzzi, interview in Gandini et al., 2005, p. 7).

The environment reflects the beliefs and knowledge of the educator

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“We may group the conditioning influences of the school environment under three heads: (1) the mental attitudes and habits of the persons with whom the child is in contact; (2) the subjects studied; (3) current educational aims and ideals” (Dewey, 1910, p. 39).</p> <p>“With the young, the influence of the teacher's personality is intimately fused with that of the subject; the child does not</p>	<p>“We value space because of its power to organise and promote pleasant relationships among people of different ages, create a handsome environment, provide changes, promote choices and activity, and its potential for sparking all kinds of social, affective and cognitive learning. All of this contributes to a sense of well-being and security in children. We also think it has been said that the space</p>

<p>separate nor even distinguish the two. And as the child's response is toward or away from anything presented, he keeps up a running commentary, of which he himself is hardly distinctly aware, of like and dislike, of sympathy and aversion, not merely to the acts of the teacher, but also to the subject with which the teacher is occupied.” teacher and subject attitude” (Dewey, 1910, p. 42).</p>	<p>has to be a sort of aquarium that mirrors ideas, values, attitudes and cultures of the people who live within it” (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Gandini, 2012b, p. 339).</p>
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The learning environment is influenced by the teacher’s image of the child (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2009, p. 171). Indeed, Dewey (1934, p. 256), identifying that the environment is comprised of human, physical, cultural and community elements, posed that all experience results from the interaction of an “organism with its environment.” Expanding on Dewey’s idea, Hansen (2006, p. 16) affirms that the medium of the educational environment constitutes the teacher’s strongest influence on children’s learning experiences. Dewey (1910, p. 155) identified that the educator’s “quality of mind” powerfully determines what is taught to the child and whether the experience is utilitarian or educative.

Drawing upon Dewey’s belief that mastery of content should be combined with creative inquiry-based experiences for children, Malaguzzi restated Dewey’s view that educational institutions should be judged on their capacity to extend children’s knowledge and competence (Edwards et al., 2012). Malaguzzi therefore believed that learning environments reflect the beliefs and knowledge of the people who design and inhabit them (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Edwards et al., 2012, p. 78). The documentation and display of children’s work in Reggio Emilia testifies to the educator’s desire to make children’s learning visible and to engage in research and professional reflection about children’s thoughts, ideas and learning processes (Hendrick, 1997). In this way, environments actively communicate to children, families and communities about the types of learning that are valued in the educational setting (Pohio, 2009).

In Reggio Emilia, the educational environment and the introduction of the atelier reflects educator’s value for aesthetics, learning, exploration, agency as well as their

advocacy for children's right to "beautiful and well cared for" learning spaces (Dahlberg and Moss, in Vecchi, 2010, p. xxi). The atelier expressed the intention of the Reggio Emilia educators to value "imagination, creativity, expressiveness, and aesthetics" within the educational processes of "development and knowledge building" (Cooper, 2012, p. 303). Indeed, Malaguzzi described the atelier as "instrumental in the recovery of the image" of an "interactionist and constructivist" child who was "richer in resources and interests" than previously understood (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Gandini et al., 2005, p. 7). He expressed his conviction that an educator's beliefs about how children learn and the subjects they encounter are manifested as an act of advocacy within the learning environment, stating:

Our school environments and the materials they offer to children on a daily basis are an integral part of learning experiences. When the atelier, as well as all our school environments, are continually developed and used in purposeful ways they transform our everyday life in school into a living manifestation of the richness of children's potential. (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Gandini et al., 2005, p. 31)

Appendix B.6: RE(D) Framework: Role of the Educator

Dewey identified and appreciated the complexity and importance of the educator's role in applying professional knowledge and experience to develop and enhance children's learning and growth, stating:

The problem of the teacher is a different one...His problem is that of inducing vital and personal experiencing. Hence, what concerns him, as teacher, is the ways in which the subject may become a part of experience; what there is in the child's present that is usable with reference to it; how such elements are to be used; how his own knowledge of the subject-matter may assist in interpreting the child's needs and doings, and determine the medium in which the child should be placed in order that his growth may be properly directed. He is concerned, not with the subject-matter as such, but with the subject-matter as a related factor in a total and growing experience. (Dewey, 1902, p. 23)

As the Deweyan and Reggio Emilian views about the role of the educator were synthesised for this RE(D) framework, the literature represented three aspects of an educator's identity, reminiscent of an a/r/tographic conception of the educator as artist (a), researcher (r) and teacher (t) (Irwin & Sinner, 2013).

A/r/tography poetically resonates with Dewey's aesthetic focus, with Siegesmund (2012) suggesting Dewey is an intellectual predecessor of a/r/tography. It is helpful to consider the overlapping a/r/t identities of the educator as an evolving product of both personal and professional knowing and experience. While a/r/tography as a methodology is located within the art-based educational (ABER) paradigm, within this outline of the RE(D) framework it is utilised as an organisational tool to clarify the complex interplay of the educator's a/r/t identity and its influence on the visual art experience and growth of children. The RE(D) framework related to the role of the educator is now presented within the three aspects of an educator's identity, being artist, researcher and teacher.

Role of the educator – as artist

To design environments that demonstrate aesthetic sensitivity and to develop the ‘100 languages’

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>"In order to understand the aesthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens" (Dewey, 1934, p. 3).</p>	<p>"This form of inspiration can be found in all people and cultures, past and present: to aestheticize, understood and experienced as a filter for interpreting the world, an ethical attitude, a way of thinking which requires care, grace, attention, subtlety and humour, a mental approach going beyond the simple appearances of things to bring out unexpected aspects and qualities. This aspiration to beauty and loveliness is so often demeaned by the dominant current culture that underestimates the significant psychological and social repercussions of doing so" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 10).</p>

As outlined in the RE(D) framework discussion about art and aesthetics, both Dewey and the educators in Reggio Emilia value aesthetics and seek to develop environments that communicate an aesthetic sense. The educator is central in designing learning contexts that promote a value for aesthetics and for learning through the ‘hundred languages.’ The educator therefore requires familiarity with a range of art methods and techniques, but more importantly, must demonstrate an artistic or aesthetic approach to the design of the curriculum, which includes the environments, materials and interactions presented to and with children.

The design of the learning environment exerts a teacher’s strongest influence on children’s learning (Hansen, 2006). Therefore, the educator, rather than leave the child to their own devices, must adapt the environmental conditions to suit the needs of the learners in each context (Dewey, 1902). Dewey further states that no “imposition of truth from without” is possible, clarifying that “all depends on the activity which the mind itself undergoes in responding to what is presented from without... that it may enable the

educator to determine the environment of the child, and thus by indirection to direct" (Dewey, 1902, pp. 30-31).

In terms of teaching specific subjects, such as art, Dewey acknowledged that it may be unrealistic to expect every educator to be competent in all subjects (Tanner, 1991, p. 106). Instead, he urged that generalist teachers work collaboratively with specialist teachers in order to inspire learning and inform their subject knowledge and skills (Tanner, 1991). Such notions powerfully align with the collaborative work undertaken between teachers and atelieristi in Reggio Emilia. Malaguzzi's insistence upon the inclusion of an atelierista in each school, enabled partnerships between educators and artists to support the development of aesthetic sensitivities and artistic skills and attitudes. Artistic sensitivities and skills are not considered as goals for children only, with Malaguzzi (1994, p. 4) stating, "When we in Reggio say children have 100 languages, we mean more than the 100 languages of children, we also mean the 100 languages of adults, of teachers."

Rinaldi (2013, p. 20) explains that the hundred languages are a metaphor for the many ways knowledge is constructed by children with extraordinary potential, through "cooperation and interaction between the languages, among the children, and between children and adults." The goal in Reggio Emilia is not that everyone become an artist, but that everyone has the opportunity to explore, practice create, image and think in artistic ways (Vecchi, 2010). The development of an aesthetic sense is valued as a "way of researching, a key for interpretation, a place of experience" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 11). For this to occur educators must have a belief in fostering visual and symbolic learning and a willingness to become familiar with materials and techniques themselves in order to support children's explorations (Edwards et al., 2015). Malaguzzi explained that when introducing materials, starting with complexity, rather than simplicity, offers the child the gift of understanding variations (Edwards et al., 2015, p. 96). Similarly, Dewey advocated for children to be intentionally taught authentic skills and techniques and "to be started on the most advanced plane; with the least to unlearn and correct" (Dewey, 1896, cited in Tanner, 1991, p. 106).

Educators must pay informed attention to the presentation of materials and develop learning environments that express this appreciation of children's learning and development. Strozzi clarifies the artistic sensitivity required of the educator:

Regarding how we present things to children - whether a piece of wire or a sheet of paper - there is a great attention on our part... It is a matter of civility of relationships among people and with materials and the environment, so children feel that, and they respond to it with the same attention. (translated & cited in Edwards et al., 2015, pp. 91-92)

Role of the Educator – as Researcher

a) To have the attitude of a researcher

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“I believe that interests are the signs and symptoms of growing power. I believe that they represent dawning capacities. Accordingly the constant and careful observation of interests is of the utmost importance for the educator. I believe that these interests are to be observed as showing the state of development which the child has reached. I believe that only through the continual and sympathetic observation of children's interests can the adult enter into the child's life and see what it is ready for, and upon what material it could work most readily and fruitfully" (Dewey, 1897, p. 14).</p>	<p>“.. in the case of education, listening to children's strategies and the ability to relate these to the theory of pedagogy, the theory of art, and practical situations and processes that the materials induce, determines the professional growth of educators to such an extent that work with children must become central" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 113).</p> <p>“They know that, above all, they are constantly striving to grow, learn and evolve as educators. They want to ask themselves questions that can spiral in many directions, take them deeper, just as they hope to do with children. They take time to take stock, look at what they have done, what the children have done, what is missing, how they might proceed. The ideas and reflections come from working this process through together, and from challenging each other.... They are very frank with each other, yet they are not defensive. They are accepting of suggestions for improving. The discussion may appear heated at times, but is always open” (Cadwell, 1997, p. 53).</p>

Dewey (1939) discussed the educator’s obligation to utilise careful observation to provide knowledge about the activities of children so that expansion of experience may

result. To do this he suggested processes of reflective review by which the educator should discriminate and make a record of the “significant features of a developing experience” in order to intelligently plan for further experiences (Dewey, 1939, p. 110). He suggested the use of a reflective map to document the learning and teaching journey for children and educators (Dewey, 1916). Such strategies were tested in his laboratory school, where teachers initially documented children’s learning from both the perspective of the children and the perspective of the teacher under separate sub-headings, before later combining this reflection into a narrative form (Tanner, 1991). While basing practice in educational theories and principles, Dewey (1902, 1915) urged educators to critically analyse their practice to ensure the strategies employed suit the current children and context. Dewey credited such processes of inquiry and criticism for enhancing practice (Dewey, 1916); fostering insight and perception (Dewey, 1934); stimulating doubt, challenging assumptions, and developing new possibilities in educational practice (Hansen, 2006), and; for engaging teachers in the study and analysis of the art of teaching (Hansen, 2006).

All of these ideas are exemplified in Reggio Emilia, where pedagogical documentation is utilised “as a tool for research, evaluation, professional development, planning and democratic practice” (Moss, 2012, p. 108). Dialogue and debate are also welcomed as professional development learning tools (Rinaldi, 2006; Cadwell, 1997). This attitude of research, along with a Deweyan value for doubt, uncertainty and inquiry, was evident from the very foundation of the Reggio Emilia approach, with Malaguzzi (1998, p. 78) affirming the intent to “preserve our decision to learn from children, from events and from families to the full extent of our professional limits and to maintain a readiness to change points of view so as never to have too many certainties.” Like Dewey, the educators in Reggio Emilia value theory, when it works in balance with practice, to enlighten and deepen understandings about how children learn (Vecchi, 2010).

The atelier is particularly valued as a context where children are supported to reflect on their own learning, while teachers concurrently develop their understandings about how children learn (Gandini, 2012a). In Reggio Emilia this is positioned as a “pedagogy of relationships and listening” whereby educators, through the cycle of observation, documentation and reflection, sustain and extend children’s natural interests and curiosity (Rinaldi, 2006; Bertolini, 2013, p. 13). In fact, Vecchi (2010, p. 132) proposes that the

evolution of the atelier as a context for research stems predominantly from the observation and documentation of children’s learning processes. Malaguzzi (interview in Gandini, 2005, p. 7) explains that the use of visual art materials and processes in the atelier supports educators to research the “motivations and theories of children from scribbles on up” as well as explore “variations on tools, techniques, and materials with which to work.”

b) To make children’s learning visible

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“Activity that is not checked by observation of what follows from it may be temporarily enjoyed. But intellectually it leads nowhere. It does not provide knowledge about the situations in which action occurs nor does it lead to clarification and expansion of ideas...keeping track is a matter of reflective review and summarizing, in which there is both discrimination and a record of the significant features of a developing experience. To reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind” (Dewey 1939, p. 110).</p>	<p>“Children have the right to use many materials in order to discover and communicate what they know, understand, wonder about, question, feel and imagine. In this way they make their thinking visible through their many natural “languages” (Cadwell, 1997, p. 5).</p>

Dewey’s value for the competencies and rights of the child, so evident in the work of the preschools and infant-toddler centres of Reggio Emilia, influences an attitude of advocacy in which educators aim to make children and their learning visible. Dewey (1902, p. 16) explains that the subject matter of science, history and art serve to “reveal the real child to us”. Without external expression or “embodiment” Dewey (1934, p. 53) posits that experience remains incomplete. In particular, Dewey “makes the student both “visible and vital, the holder of a central place in educational theory, research, policy, and practice” (Fenstermacher, 2006, p. 112). Just as Dewey’s progressive philosophy challenged the

image of children maintained by traditional schools in the early 20th century, the acts of pedagogical activism by educators in Reggio Emilia were and continue to be a political statement regarding the rights of the child.

In Reggio Emilia, educators utilise pedagogical documentation along and the visual display of children's work, including work using art materials and methods, to advocate for children's strengths and abilities to be acknowledged. Documentation is an expressive and narrative tool that reveals developmental information about children and aims to convey an "image of children as citizens, as actors in society and co-constructors of culture" (Turner & Wilson, 2009, p. 7). Much of the early intent of the work of the atelier and the exhibitions of children's projects revolved around the desire to visually communicate with the public (Vecchi, 2010), and particularly with children's parents, regarding their children's intelligence (Malaguzzi, 1994). The products of children's work give parents a "new image of their own children and children in general" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 72). Malaguzzi (1993) elaborates on their goal for every child to be visible and part of a dynamic learning community, stating that by opening up multiple forms of communication to children:

The landscape of communication becomes more complex and reveals itself through the voices and thoughts of children, through agreement and disagreement, through continuous negotiation that produces growth of thought and representation through many languages [that is, through many modes of symbolically representing ideas, such as drawing, painting, modelling, verbal description, numbers, physical movement, drama, puppets etc.]. (p. 11)

c) To be a co-learner, collaborator and co-constructor with children

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“The development occurs through reciprocal give-and-take, the teacher taking but not being afraid to give. The essential point is that the purpose grow and take shape through the process of social intelligence” (Dewey 1939, p. 85).</p>	<p>"In Reggio where teachers are open to the unexpected, power and resources are shared between children and adults as they tell each other what they think and know. Reggio educators have taken collaborative learning, a concept that Dewey wrote about, and expanded it by establishing and promoting reciprocal relationships between adults and children” (Rankin, 2004, pp. 82-83).</p>

Dewey’s progressive and constructivist educational ideals retaliated against educational methods of adult imposition and control. He positioned both teacher and child as co-constructors of learning (Dewey, 1916; Biesta, 2006) stating, "the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher” (Dewey, 1916, p. 167). Dewey’s constructivist views, based on the view that “both children and adults co-construct their knowledge through interactions with people and the environment” (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011, p. 235) positioned the teacher, not as one who transfers knowledge and habits to the child, but as one who selects influences and assists the child to respond to those influences (Rankin, 2004; Biesta, 2006, p. 61). Pre-empting Reggio Emilia’s notion of the hundred languages and their concept of the classroom or atelier as a place for research and inquiry, Dewey’s approach to education sought to develop curricula that would connect “individualism and community, practice and theory, mind and action, and head and heart” (Page, 2006); and where the “teacher, students and community together create a common zone of inquiry that fosters “educative” experiences (Weiss et al., 2005, p. 11).

In Reggio Emilia, the educator’s role as a researcher, collaborator and co-constructor of children’s learning values the guidance and wisdom required to sustain children’s learning by presenting possibilities, materials, and contexts that support growth and meaning-making (Edwards et al., 2012; Dahlberg, 2013). Rinaldi (2006, p. 120) suggests that, “one of the primary tasks of the teacher, and thus of the school, is to help the

child and the group of children learn how to learn, fostering their natural predisposition toward relationships and the consequent co-construction of knowledge.”

Educators are considered to be researchers who work in collaboration with colleagues and the parents of the children to give “orientation, meaning and value to the experience of the schools and the children” (Gandini, 2011, p. 2). Malaguzzi (1993, p. 9) explains that in planning for collaborative experience to "transform existing situations into new desired ones”, the educators in Reggio Emilia "make cognitive reflections and symbolic representations" and refine their communication skills. The educator’s co-participation must competently propose occasions for learning, while remaining open to doubt, experimentation and modification (Edwards et al., 2015). This constructivist commitment to collaboration requires educators to maintain an image of the child as competent and resourceful, and the intent to view learning as a collaborative, two-way process (Rankin, 2004).

Role of the Educator - as teacher

a) To develop a responsive curriculum that adapts content to children’s interests

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>Dewey’s key educational focus was to construct a course of study that began with children’s interests, harmonized with the growth of the child in capacity and experience and led to knowledge in the major disciplines (Tanner, 1991).</p>	<p>“Our task is to construct educational situations that we propose to the children in the morning. It’s okay to improve sometimes but we need to plan the project. It may be a project that is projected over a few days, or weeks, or even months. We need to produce situations in which children learn by themselves, in which children can take advantage of their own knowledge and resources autonomously, and in which we guarantee the intervention of the adult as little as possible. We don’t want to teach children something that they can learn by themselves. We don’t want to give them thoughts that they can come up with by themselves. What we want to do is activate within children the desire and will and great pleasure that comes from being the authors of their own learning... We often have to do it against our own rush to work in our own way. We’ll discover that our presence, which has to be visible and warm, makes it possible for us to try to get inside the child and what that child is doing. And this may seem to be passive, but it is really a very strong activity on our part” (Malaguzzi, 1994, p. 3)</p>

As already identified earlier in the RE(D) synthesis, both Dewey and the educators in Reggio Emilia believe that children learn most effectively when the focus of the learning experience is based in children’s interests and prior experience. In regards to this, the role of the educator is to apply the attitude of a researcher to the role of pedagogue, and to develop curricula that identify and respond to children’s interests. To do this, Dewey (1902, p. 13) identified the educator’s need to apply theory, professional knowledge and

experience to interpret “the child's life as it immediately shows itself, and in passing on to guidance or direction.” Rather than credit the subject itself as being inherently cultural or educationally beneficial, Dewey centralised the imperative to adapt all subject content to children’s level of growth (Dewey, 1939). Learning should be holistic, rather than pigeonholed into classified categories, and should be held together via children’s interests and personal experiences (Dewey, 1902). He warned that failing to adapt the materials to the need and capacities of the child may cause an activity to be non-educative (Dewey, 1939, p. 46).

In Reggio Emilia, the adult’s reactions to the interests and activities of the child, whether “an observer who interacts at key moments” or a “detached observer who supports but does not interfere,” is considered to determine the continuity and outcomes of children’s learning (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Edwards et al., 2015, p. 69). Indeed, for the child to be viewed as “a constructor, or in connection with others, a co-constructor, of its individual development” may require the educator to support the child to make choices or reach decisions (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Moestrup & Eskesen, 2004, p. 21). Aligning such thoughts with Dewey’s views, Rankin (2004, p. 75) suggests that “the educator in Reggio Emilia has a specific role that is informed by his or her prior experience and knowledge” and “the educator has responsibility for tasks that are beyond the capacities of young children,” such as “conducting research, sustaining the ongoing social and cognitive processes among children and calling attention to the ideas of particular children.” This requires that educators in Reggio Emilia undertake careful and reflective observations to develop in depth knowledge about children’s strengths and interests in order to:

- Reflect on how children engage with learning provisions and adjust them accordingly” (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2009, p. 173);
- “Know children so well that they know when to intervene but not to interfere in the work” in order to support and empower children to move forward (Hall et al., 2010, p. 50);
- "Seek our proposals and ways of building interesting contexts that let individual children and groups of children set out on adventurous thought and action in the most subjective, autonomous way possible” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 40);

- Provide “thoughtful intervention when needed” and “promote the quality of relations children readily have with things around them and what they are doing” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 31); and
- Allow “the child to take the lead while also encouraging the child to wonder, notice, and make the relationships that would allow a new level of understanding to develop” (Cadwell, 1997, p. 28).

This attitude toward children, embodying what has become known as a pedagogy of listening and a pedagogy of relationships in Reggio Emilia, reflects the driving desire so eloquently explained by Vecchi (2010, p. 132):

Our main interest was to illustrate the extraordinary, beautiful and intelligent things children knew how to do and sweep away (or so we hoped) the widespread work circulating in early childhood services at the time, where mostly teachers' minds and hands were central and children had a marginal role, which led to the same stereotyped products for all.

b) To engage in children meaningful experiences (that build on prior experience and lead to growth)

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“... the beginning of instruction shall be made with the experience learners already have; that this experience and the capacities that have been developed during its course provide the starting point for all further learning” (Dewey, 1939, p. 88).</p> <p>“...there is incumbent upon the educator the duty of instituting a much more intelligent, and consequently more difficult, kind of planning. He must survey the capacities and needs of the individuals with whom he is dealing and must at the same time arrange the conditions which provide the subject-matter or content for experiences that satisfy these needs and</p>	<p>"There is a difference between assimilation and accommodation, an equilibria maggiormente [a balance leading to growth]. You can understand what could happen in the moment that the child gets a new stimulus. When the child assimilates, he is simply assimilating a food; he just puts it inside himself. But in case he doesn't only assimilate it, but he breaks it down and rebuilds it in new terms, so he has understood something. So the equilibrium that causes increase is when this pas- sage from here to there enlarges his capabilities" (Malaguzzi, quoted in Edwards et al., 2015, p. 75).</p>

<p>develop these capacities. The planning must be flexible enough to permit free play for individuality of experience and yet firm enough to give direction towards continuous development of power” (Dewey, 1939, p. 65).</p>	
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Dewey placed high importance upon the educator’s responsibility to plan for and to maximise the quality of experiences undertaken for and with children (Dewey, 1939). He warned that valuing a child’s interests and current experience should not lull educators into the idea that all experience leads naturally to growth and learning for children, explaining that some experiences are mis-educative and that such experiences, even if immediately enjoyable, can arrest or distort the growth of further experience (Dewey, 1939, p. 13). Because every experience offered to children has an impact on their future experience and growth, Dewey identified the crucial role played by the educator in selecting the kinds of experience that “live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experience” (1939, p. 17). Indeed, for Dewey, growth was the ideal aim of education and the criteria for evaluating the quality of all social organisations (Garrison, 1996).

Dewey explained that it was not adequate to merely provide experiences, nor even to focus on the processes furnished by an experience. While the immediate enjoyment of an experience is easy to observe, the effects of an experience and its influence on later experiences, and therefore learning, are not immediately evident (Dewey, 1939). Because of this, along with Dewey’s goal to develop aptitudes for lifelong learning and growth, the educator must create an ongoing desire for rich and meaningful experiences (Hickman et al., 2009). To do this, Dewey favoured holistic and aesthetic processes of inquiry that integrated cognitive and artistic means to explore and communicate (Hickman et al., 2009).

The educator must also consider whether proposed experiences will appeal to the child’s interests and whether the experience will support the child’s impulses and therefore “carry the child on to a higher plane of consciousness and action, instead of merely exciting him and the leaving him just where he was before” (Dewey, 1915, p. 120). To make such decisions about experience, Dewey outlines that the educator must determine whether children’s interests are important or trivial, helpful or harmful, transitory or immediately

exciting and determine which experiences will be enduring and permanently influential (Dewey, 1915, p. 135). The educator must also utilise their insight and maturity to determine what direction experience is taking and provide guidance and direction to build on and connect experiences (Dewey, 1939) by supplying “an environment of materials, appliances and resources” both “physical, social and intellectual” (Dewey, 1913, cited in Hall et al., 2010, pp. 106-108).

Both Dewey and the educators in Reggio Emilia value the process of growth through interest-based inquiry, reflection and expanded cognition (Rankin, 2004, p. 74). Like Dewey before them, educators in Reggio Emilia seek to create the conditions for “an experience” which leads to growth through the “ongoing reconstruction of experience” (Rankin, 2004, p. 74). Vecchi (2010, p. 58) affirms that meaningful interactions in which children and adults collaborate as co-researchers, within shared projects of inquiry, aim to “produce experiences.” To achieve this, the educators “listen intently to the way children perceive and understand the world and respond with both appreciation and the expertise to help them build on and expand what they understand” (Caldwell, 1997, p. 31).

c) To guide, extend, provoke and propose

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>"Another instinct of the child is the use of pencil and paper. All children like to express themselves through the medium of form and color. If you simply indulge this interest by letting the child go in indefinitely, there is no growth that is more than accidental. But let the child first express his impulse, and then through criticism, question, and suggestion bring him to consciousness of what he has done, and what he needs to do, and the result is quite different" (Dewey, 1915, p. 40).</p>	<p>"Within this role, the teacher does not sit back and simply observe a child construct her own knowledge, although at times he may if appropriate; rather, he plays an active role in providing the child with the provocations and tools necessary to achieve her personal goals and advance her mental functioning" (Hewett, 2001, p. 97).</p>

The goal to extend experiences in order to lead to children’s growth requires a knowledgeable educator to actively guide, inspire and extend learning opportunities through proposals and provocations. Dewey refuted the dualistic view that promoting and

respecting the freedom of the child necessitated the exclusion of the adult's interests from the learning relationship, instead suggesting:

When education is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities. (Dewey, 1939, p. 66)

Dewey advises the following considerations regarding the educator's role;

- The educator must intentionally guide children toward educative experiences, rather than merely indulge or excite the interest with no view to learning and growth (Dewey, 1915);
- Educators must be familiar with subjects so that experiences can be effectively organised and guided (Dewey, 1939);
- Contemporary early childhood contexts, where educators justify activities for their entertainment rather than their educative value, must be challenged (Dewey, 1939). Dewey (1939, p. 51) urged that “instead of inferring that it doesn't make much difference what the present experience is as long as it is enjoyed,” significant attention must be paid to the conditions of each experience offered; and
- The educator must maintain the attitude of a lifelong learner so that, through enthusiastic leadership, the child's “scared spark of wonder” may be kindled to “protect the spirit of inquiry” (Dewey, 1910, p. 30).

The role of the educator as guide and provocateur is equally valued in Reggio Emilia where they acknowledge “children extract and interpret models from adults” who “know how to work, discuss, think, research, and live together” (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 12). In this reciprocal relationship, the educator is a co-learner and co-researcher with children, who aims to “support and challenge the child on its journey of meaning-making and learning” (Dahlberg, 2013, p. 84).

The complexities of this dual role are manifested in the following ways:

- Educators intentionally support children to explore materials in order to equip them with the skills to communicate their thinking and ideas with visual languages (Hendrick, 1997);
- Educators provide children with objects and cultural artefacts that support them to “find hidden relationships and to come into possession of an extra mental structure” (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Edwards et al., 2015, p. 72);
- Educators communicate enthusiasm for learning and inquiry when they try out solutions with children (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Edwards et al., 2015, p. 92);
- In order to listen to the interests of children and to respond effectively, educators “must have a good knowledge of the language of Poetics and the languages suggested by materials (above all, an approach sensitive to surroundings, a poetic way of seeing) and of the strategies of children's thinking” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 38); and
- Educators must delicately balance the need to allow children to take the lead while also “encouraging the child to wonder, notice, and make the relationships that would allow a new level of understanding to develop” (Cadwell, 1997, p. 28).

d) To teach skills, model techniques and lend assistance

Dewey	Reggio Emilia
<p>“In an educational scheme, the occurrence of a desire and impulse is not the final end. It is an occasion and a demand for the formation of a plan and method of activity... The teacher’s business is to see that the occasion is taken advantage of. Since freedom resides in the operations of intelligent observation and judgment by which a purpose is developed, guidance given by the teacher to the exercise of the pupil’s intelligence is an aid to freedom, not a restriction upon it. Sometimes teachers seem to be afraid to even make suggestions to the members of a group as to what they should do. I have heard of cases in which children are surrounded with objects and materials and then left entirely</p>	<p>“They maintain that lending adult assistance when needed, whether it be bending a recalcitrant piece of wire or hammering in a reluctant nail, empowers youngsters to move ahead with their creations in a satisfying way. The way I have come to think about this is that there is vast difference between showing a child how to use a brace and bit to make a hole and telling him where to put the hole or what to do with it once drilled. Although Reggio teachers unhesitatingly teach skills and lend a helping hand when needed, they would never tell the child where to put the hole (though they well might ask her why she is putting it in a particular place” (Hendrick, 1997, p. 45).</p>

<p>to themselves, the teacher being loathe to suggest even what might be done with the materials lest freedom be infringed upon. Why, then, even supply materials, since they are a source of some suggestion or other? But what is more important is that the suggestion upon which pupils act in any case must come from somewhere. It is impossible to understand why a suggestion from one who has a larger experience and a wider horizon should not be at least as valid as a suggestion arising from some more or less accidental source” (Dewey, 1939, pp. 83-84).</p>	
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Implicit in the educator’s role as a supportive guide for children’s learning is the requirement that the educator be willing and able to model and teach the specific skills that will advance children’s learning and development. Indeed, Dewey (1939, p. 32) stated that “The mature person, in moral terms has no right to withhold from the young on given occasions whatever capacity for sympathetic understanding his own experience has given him.” Dewey grappled with the notion that some educator’s resist guiding or intervening in children’s learning experiences for fear of invading personal freedom and, as a consequence, neglect the deliberate progression of subject knowledge (Dewey, 1939). He identified that some educators disregard the importance of children’s current experiences to their future growth, instead sentimentally idealising the child’s naivety, natural interests and development (Dewey, 1902). Such educators, Dewey said, mistakenly “see no alternative between forcing the child from without, or leaving him entirely alone” and thus neglect to understand that development and growth can only occur “when adequate and normal conditions are provided” (Dewey, 1902, p. 17). Instead, he posited, “Guidance is not external imposition. It is freeing the life process for its own most adequate fulfilment” (Dewey, 1902, p. 17). Dewey rejected the notion that children’s skill development would naturally unfold if left to its own devices (Schechter, 2011), and believed that an adult learning partner has much to offer children in the way of knowledge, methods,

acquaintance with materials, problem solving support and a modelling to direct the child's activities toward educative aims (Dewey, 1915, 1939).

At the same time, Dewey (1939, p. 85) acknowledged the risk that such guidance can be abused, especially if educators force children to undertake activities that express the goals and purposes of the educator above those of the child. However, his solution to this potential abuse is not that the adult withdraws from the activities of children, but that the educator “be intelligently aware of the capacities, needs, and past experiences of those under instruction”; “allow the suggestion to develop into a plan and project by means of the further suggestions contributed and organised into a whole by members of the group”; and, ensure the plan “is a co-operative enterprise, not a dictation” (Dewey, 1939, p. 85). Therefore, while Dewey warned against adult control of children, he did not consider all adult guidance coercive, identifying that the educator can support children to find purpose in their activities (Schechter, 2011).

Malaguzzi expressed very similar sentiments when he stated, "The teachers' task is to guide the children and "lend" the children their knowledge without taking away the children's initiative” (translated & cited in Moestrup & Eskesen, 2004, p. 32). He also identified the common fear that “adults will influence the child too much” and suggested that this occurs when children are positioned as unique and separate from the world of adults, rather than as co-participants in a learning community (Malaguzzi, translated & cited in Moestrup & Eskesen, 2004, p. 9). The risk is that if adults do too much for the child, either through misplaced care or a limiting image of the child, it “creates a passive role for the child” in their own learning (Malaguzzi, 1994, p. 2).

Rinaldi (2013) explains that in contesting traditional models of teaching, where either the teacher dominates a passive child, or an active child dictates to a passive teacher, the educators in Reggio Emilia position learning and skills development as co-constructed and collaborative. In this context, the educator is expected to “know children so well that they know when to intervene but not to interfere in the work” (Hall et al., 2010, p. 50). More direct adult guidance is offered when children need support to move forward in their experience (Hall et al., 2010). Vecchi (2010, p. 33) elaborates that the close presence of a supportive adult can serve as a reminder for children of past experiences and feelings as they give shape to materials and processes of inquiry. Such gestures of “care and attention,

like illustrating the potential of a tool with children, or letting children choose the size of paper or where they would like to sit are all elements predisposing children to work willingly, concentrate and feel pleasure” (Vecchi 2010, p. 111). Indeed, Malaguzzi suggested that before asking children to solve problems, the educator should ensure that children have had some introduction to the preparatory skills and techniques required to undertake the inquiry (Edwards et al., 2015, p. 17). In determining when to intervene, the educator must achieve a balance between providing provocations, techniques and materials and providing space for children to experience the small frustrations that may lead to new solutions and child-led resolutions (Vecchi in Edwards et al., 2015, p. 73). Such intentions reflect the purpose of the Reggio Emilia project to “produce a reintegrated child, capable of constructing his or her own powers of thinking through the synthesis of all of the expressive, communicative, and cognitive languages” (Edwards et al., 2012, p. 365).

Appendix B.7: RE(D) Framework: RE(D) inspired pedagogical questions

Developed from the RE(D) conceptual framework, the following questions provided guidance for the development of the interview questions and data analysis considerations. These questions have potential application as a pedagogical reflection tool for early childhood visual arts pedagogy and for further research applications in the domain of early childhood visual arts pedagogy and professional development.

Image of the child

- What image of the child is expressed by educators, both verbally and through pedagogical choices and provisions?
- What beliefs and knowledge do educators express regarding how children learn?
- Are children trusted to self-direct their play and learning or do participants express doubt about children's capacities and abilities?
- Are children seen as capable and intelligent protagonists of their own learning?
- Are children respected as capable initiators of their own learning or in need of adult intervention?
- What do the visual art provisions and curriculum decisions suggest in terms of the educators' image of the child?
- Is children's right to experience high quality visual art experiences reflected in pedagogical and environmental provisions?
- Are children afforded autonomy and agency in hands on experiences?
- Are children predominantly positioned as active or passive learners?
- Are children's play and work respected?
- Do children's interests, strengths and current development influence pedagogical planning?
- Do educators believe early childhood is a naïve, unique and sacred stage of development or do they position children as co-participants in the learning community?

Visual arts domain

- Are children afforded the right to engage in cultural and artistic experiences?
- Is an appreciation for aesthetics evident in environmental and pedagogical choices?
- How is art-making positioned within the daily curriculum and in relation with other learning domains?
- Is visual art positioned as a cognitive tool for research, theory-making and communicating meaning?

- Is visual art positioned as a visual language?
- Are visual art skills and knowledge development considered to be universally attainable or relegated as a unique possession of those who are naturally artistic?
- What beliefs do educators express about the purposes of visual art pedagogy?
- What values and beliefs do educators express about art processes and art products?
- Are art experiences developed in response to children's interests, strengths and development?
- Are art skills scaffolded and developed over time?
- Are visual art provisions educative or potentially mis-educative?
- Are visual art materials and techniques applied in child-focussed, interest-based projects?
- Are visual art provisions open-ended and playful or close-ended and educator driven?
- How is children's artwork displayed?

Environment and materials

- How are aesthetic values reflected in the environment?
- How are educator beliefs about visual art pedagogy reflected in the learning environment?
- Are visual art materials and environmental provisions evident?
- Which visual art materials and processes are presented to children?
- What importance is placed upon the environment as an educational resource?
- How are visual art materials organised, displayed, accessed and maintained?
- Who is responsible for this in the educational team?
- Do children have ready access to quality visual art materials?

Role of the educator

- Do educators exhibit a spirit of inquiry?
- Do educators seek pedagogical rules and certainty or embrace processes of action research?
- Which theories or approaches inform educator's visual art pedagogy?
- Where do educators source ideas for visual art experiences?
- Do educators differentiate between art and craft processes?
- How do educators utilise observation, documentation and reflection to inform their visual art planning?
- Is reflective practice evident?
- Are educators positioned as co-learners and co-researchers with children or do educator choices dominate art provisions and planning?

- Are visual art experiences intentionally scaffolded to support visual art learning and skills development?
- Are educators willing to provoke and challenge children's visual art learning?
- Are educators confident to model and teach visual art skills and methods?
- Do educators model and provide guidance in the application of visual art tools, materials, processes and techniques? Why / Why not?
- Are educators observers who interact at key moments or detached observers who refuse to interfere in children's art engagement?
- Do educators allow for cognitive conflict and problem solving to support educative growth?
- Are pedagogical choices motivated by goals for enjoyment and entertainment or by educative goals?
- Are children provisioned with time and repeated experiences with materials and processes?
- What visual art content knowledge do educators express and demonstrate?
- What knowledge of visual art processes and materials are exhibited and expressed by educators?
- Where and when did educator beliefs and visual art content knowledge develop?
- What visual art professional development do educators access (if any)?
- Do educational teams work cooperatively to complement and share visual art skills and knowledge?
- Do educators develop and nurture their own visual art knowledge and skills?

Appendix C.1: Excel Spreadsheet: Data Coding

codes and themes.xlsx

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	No direct instruction	PILOT INT 2A: I still like to be lead by the children though, I don't actually like to come and say "this is what we'll be doing", so	PILOT INT2T: But I think respecting children's creativity and respecting where they take it and how they might do things	PILOT INT2T: When asked if children can get their own paint - They shouldn't have prescribed limits...if they want to have a bit	PILOT INT1A: I actually do it with the children to incorporate it, and I don't like to actually direct them in how they have to do			
2	Knowledge corrupts?	PILOT INT 2A: That's the problem when you have knowledge in a certain thing, so...I don't know... it's hard, because when	PILOT INT3T: There is a fine line between what is an instigation and what is something that will unbalance that creativity?	PILOT INT 2A: Given that what are your thoughts about teachers modeling and intentionally teaching				
3	refusal to model	PILOT INT 2T: I think the worst thing I could do as an educator, the way that I could	PILOT CURRIC DOCS: Offer learning not teaching environments. Interesting to note this distinction in the written policies...	PILOT INT 2T: Reflections from interview #2.1. 4-47 In your second interview you talked about teaching new skills through	PILOT INT2T: But for me, professionally and personally I couldn't actually say let's sit down and I will show you how to	PILOT INT2T: And I see it everyday, some of the things that children come up with is amazing, but if you try and prescribe	PILOT INT2T: But for me, professionally and personally I couldn't actually say let's sit down and I will show you how to	
4	CORRUPT through demonstration and modelling	Pilot INT 2T: But if in this context I drew a horse, just for the fun of it with children around, and they saw that, I could	PILOT INT 2T: interviewer: so what you are essentially saying is that were you to draw as an adult is able to draw then your feeling is harm - and you know it	PILOT INT 2A: Oh yeah...we could draw that for them and we wouldn't think that would do them any harm - and you know it	PILOT INT 3T: There is a fine line between what is an instigation and what is something that will unbalance that creativity?	PILOT INT3T: (Researcher: When asked about what EVLF says about intentional teaching and how this might apply to refusal to model or teach	PILOT INT3T: (Researcher: When asked about what EVLF says about intentional teaching and how this might apply to refusal to model or teach	K3: No. Unless you paint a tree. I want tree to look like my if you say, "This is n
5	Adult control corrupts:	PILOT INT 3T: speaks strongly when talking about aversion to adult controlled learning and the idea that adult	T2 - I think the worst thing I could do as an educator, the way that I could most fail the children in that sense is by me	T2 - If you were to share and teach your personal drawing skills with the children, what might the outcome be? (23:15)	T2 - I don't think to teach them fundamental drawing skills, children don't need to know perspective...you might	When asked about what EVLF says about intentional teaching and how this might apply to refusal to model or teach	KuE3: 11. Do you believe that the provision of modeling and guidance of art skills by an educator has the potential to corrupt	
6	do not interrupt	PILOT INT 2A: In your last interview, I got the impression that you value engagement in and personal expression	PILOT INT 2A: And if you see, which I pointing out to a lot of the educators as well, if you see a child's so absorbed, do not go over	PILOT INT 2A: And if you see, which I pointing out to a lot of the educators as well, if you see a child's so absorbed, do not go over	K3: Be creative. Yes. I think there's definitely time for that, and I think, as with every other aspect of the curriculum, children			
7	Do not draw for children	PILOT INT 3 M - in talking about exposure to real art - Yes, definitely, but there is	INT2T - I would never draw for children here or here, but for them to see themselves, oh yeah, we	PILOT INT3T: They are finding ways...it's territory that they have to cover	PILOT INT 3T: They are hands off, corrupt storage, image of the child			purposes of art

Appendix C.2: Table Summary of visual arts and craft provisions across four early childhood education and care settings

	Structured teacher-directed activities (“bunny-bum” activities)	Stencils & Colouring-in	Traditional crafts	Explore and Experiment activities / Novel activities	Sensory Experience	Collage & Construction	Open ended art & materials (projects of graphic inquiry)
Koala LDC	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	SOME	SOME
Possum Preschool	NO	NO	NO	SOME	SOME	YES	YES
Wombat Preschool	SOME	SOME	NO	SOME	YES	YES	YES
Bilby LDC	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	SOME

Appendix C.3: Letter of Permission for reproduction of book chapter.



May 14, 2017

To whom it may concern,

As editors of the book **"Provoking International Perspectives: The Visual Arts Dissertation in Education"** we grant Gai Lindsay permission to reproduce the text from her chapter titled **"Stitching" Voices Into the Patchwork Quilt of Qualitative Research** in her PhD thesis.

The edited book is currently undergoing blind review with Intellect Publishers.

Sincerely,

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Appendix D.1: Permission to include article published 'International Art in Early Childhood Research Journal'

Lindsay, G. (2016). Do visual arts experiences in early childhood settings foster educative growth or stagnation? International Art in Early Childhood Research Journal, 5(1), 1-14, Retrieved from <http://artinearlychildhood.org/2016-research-journal-1/>.



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14/06/2017

To whom it may concern,

The editorial board of the International Art in Early Childhood Research Journal grants Gai Lindsay permission to reproduce the text from 'Do visual art experiences in early childhood settings foster educative growth or stagnation?' in her PhD thesis.

The peer reviewed article was published in 2016 in the International Art in Early Childhood Research Journal, Volume 5, Number 1

Sincerely yours,

Dr Margaret Brooks

Editor in Chief,

International Art in early Childhood Research Journal

Appendix E.1: Visual Arts Education in Early Childhood Contexts: The Tangle of Educator Beliefs

Lindsay, G. (2015). Visual arts education: The tangle of beliefs. Bedrock: The Independent Education Union early childhood education magazine, 20(3),18-19

Personal and professional beliefs about visual arts directly influence the pedagogical and professional choices early childhood educators. An educator's belief about their personal ability to make art, along with pedagogical beliefs about art learning, frequently over-ride any training in visual arts pedagogy undertaken during pre-service training. Even though visual arts are valued as central to play-based practice within early childhood settings, many early childhood educators do not perceive themselves to be artistic (Lindsay, 2015b). While able to present children with a range of arts materials and activities some educators lack the confidence and the pedagogical content knowledge to effectively plan for, implement and evaluate the visual arts provisions made in their classrooms.

This article will briefly summarise the divergent and often contradictory beliefs represented in a qualitative case study. Three theories that contribute to a clearer understanding about the ways beliefs influence practice will be outlined before presenting several reflective considerations.

Tangled beliefs

Case-study research with twelve participants in four regional early childhood education and care services is examining what early childhood teachers and vocationally trained educators believe, say and do regarding their visual arts pedagogy. Amongst the research participants there was little consensus about the purpose of visual arts in the curriculum. While some position visual arts experiences as tools for therapy, creativity, communication or meaning making, others view arts as a fun way to keep children busy. Educators concurrently state how important visual arts is within early childhood settings while expressing doubts about their own visual arts knowledge, confidence and capacity to deliver high quality arts experiences to children. Some say educators should engage actively alongside children to model and scaffold skills, while others remain hands off and refuse to

model arts techniques for fear of corrupting children's natural artistic development. Great variance in both visual arts methods and the quality of arts materials raises concerns about the provisions and learning opportunities presented to children. Some educators justify the use of commercially produced materials such as fluorescent feathers, glitter-glue and pom-poms as more fun and entertaining than quality open-ended visual arts materials such as clay, charcoal and high-quality paints. The educational leaders in services have considerable influence upon visual arts practice, with arts-inspired leaders effectively guiding their teams. On the other hand, leaders with low visual arts self-efficacy confess that they have neither the knowledge nor the skills to effectively lead their colleagues in quality visual arts pedagogies. Of significant concern is that none of the participants in the study had clear recollection of the visual arts coursework undertaken during their pre-service training.

While the findings of one case study cannot be generalised to all education and care services, the tangle of divergent beliefs identified in the study suggest that visual arts provisions in early childhood settings potentially range from outstanding to deficient. This is a concern when references to the visual arts in the Australian Early Years Learning Framework are not explicit. Notions of creative and visual languages are embedded within learning outcomes related to communication, identity, confident learning and multiple-intelligence. Yet, if educators lack visual arts self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and pedagogical content knowledge man (Shulman, 1987) and do not exercise a growth mindset to overcome fixed beliefs (Dweck, 2006), children's visual arts learning and development may be restricted.

Theories about beliefs

Bandura explains that self-efficacy beliefs result from the judgments people make about their ability to bring about desired outcomes (1997). Low teacher self-efficacy in the arts can cause professional paralysis (Kindler, 1996) and be an obstacle to effective teaching and learning (Alter et al., 2009). The way educators perceive the nature of intelligence also affects their approach to supporting children's learning. Dweck (2006) explains that people with a fixed mindset believe that ability and intelligence are inborn and difficult to alter. This fatalistic view of learning would consider that people are either born artistic or not. If art skills did not develop easily and naturally, people with this mindset would quickly give up

and state that they were not artistic. In comparison those with a growth mindset believe that intelligence is changeable through effort. Such people focus on learning processes and skills development and are willing to persist when faced with challenges. They would view skills development in art making as no different to learning skills in any other domain. Combined with these belief theories, an educator's pedagogical content knowledge has a profound effect on the visual arts curriculum offered to children. Pedagogical knowledge encompasses the 'how' of teaching while content knowledge constitutes the 'what' of teaching. Shulman (1987) explained the need for educator's to effectively combine the knowledge of how to teach with subject content knowledge, pre-empting Bamford's (2009) warning that the range of benefits available to children through visual arts engagement are only possible when effective, quality provisions are made by educators.

Where to from here?

It is hoped that this research, through sharing the beliefs, stories and experience of the participants, will offer a context for educators to reflect on their own visual arts beliefs and practice. Elliot Eisner (1973-1974, p. 15) urged educators to "examine our beliefs with all the clarity we can muster" to support theoretical and practical growth.

To that end educators are encouraged to ask:

- *Am I a co-researcher using the language of art in projects of inquiry with children or an observant entertainment director?*
- *Do I provide high quality aesthetic materials or gaudy commercial materials?*
- *Do I feel confident to apply visual arts methods, techniques and theories or abdicate this role to colleagues perceived as 'arty'?*
- *Do I model visual arts skills and techniques or provide a variety of materials for experimentation, hoping that learning will naturally emerge from any and all experience?*
- *Do I exercise a fixed or a growth mindset about my capacity to develop and foster skills and knowledge in the visual arts?*

In conclusion, the words of a research participant encourage personal and professional growth:

“I think you need to understand how to support children to express themselves creatively. If you don’t have that kind of background or knowledge, you’re not going to get the most out of them or appreciate the work that they do...Some art is just for the sake of it, but some things really do portray meaning, and if you’re not asking the questions or looking for it, it can be missed and undervalued.”

Appendix E.2: Art or Craft: Interest or Pinterest?

Lindsay, G. (2015). Art or craft: Interest or Pinterest? Every Child: Early Childhood Australia, 21(4), 24

Contradicting the regularly quoted mantra that “it’s the process not the product”, calendar events often drive the mass production of identical seasonal products such as footprint reindeers, Valentine cards or paper-plate Easter bunnies. Such activities are often selected from Pinterest or the latest Facebook post rather than emerging from the interests of children. While some educators view such “craftivities” as harmless fun, others believe that they limit children’s opportunity to develop skills and confidence in the ‘language’ of art.

There are many benefits for children in making art including enjoyment, problem solving, communication, self-discipline, holistic learning and fostering creativity. However, Bamford (2009) warns that such benefits only exist when educators provide effective quality art experiences. Most early childhood educators would agree that visual arts methods and materials are an important part of their daily practice with children. But research suggests that there is a lot of confusion and not much agreement about which types of activity produce a quality art experience.

An educator’s knowledge, skills and confidence to make and teach art influences their visual arts pedagogy. Contributing to this lack of confidence, many educators have little if any memory of visual arts coursework in their training. Such differences in visual arts practice can result in wide differences in learning outcomes for children (DEEWR, 2010). Considering the lack of subject guidance and educator confidence, it is not surprising that many educators believe that any and all experiences that use arts materials are artistic and beneficial for children. Instead of being able to classify different types of activity as exploratory, experimental, sensory, crafty or artistic depending on the intentions, materials and processes used, many educators evaluate activities for their capacity to be cute, fun and capacity to keep children happy and busy.

Many educators confuse the difference between art and craft. Both art and craft require the use of skills, processes and techniques applied to a range of materials to achieve

a goal or to serve a purpose. Craft is usually pre-planned and requires step-by-step instructions to achieve a specific result. Art on the other hand is open-ended and the outcome is determined by the art-maker. While both types of experience can potentially support children's learning and engagement, the difference between them is a bit like the difference between closed and open-ended questions. Some questions produce a predictable one-word response, while others open up unknown opportunities to share ideas, feelings and opinions.

So how can educators best support children's rich learning and growth in the visual arts? It may be helpful to reflect on the following questions to ensure a balanced approach.

1. Is our visual arts planning built on children's prior interests, skills and knowledge?
2. Do we provide a wide range of open-ended, high quality visual arts materials?
3. Are materials displayed invitingly and readily accessible to children at all times?
4. Do educators in our team have confidence with visual arts methods and skills?
5. Do we engage in any activities where the educator fixes, controls or adds to the children's work to achieve a desired outcome? Is everyone expected to have a turn?
6. Do we believe children are capable and respect their ideas and efforts?

Appendix E.3: Visual Art and Creativity in Your Curriculum

Lindsay, G. (2015). Visual art and creativity in your curriculum. Early Childhood Australia Learning Hub. from <http://learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/elearning/visual-art-and-creativity-in-your-curriculum/>



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