Education Innovation

Chee-Hoo Lum Editor

Contextualized Practices in Arts Education

An International Dialogue on Singapore



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Education holds the key to unlock human resources that a society needs to survive and flourish. This is particularly salient in a borderless knowledge economy. For the past decades, the sterling performance of economies such as Hong Kong, Finland, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan in international studies (e.g. TIMSS, PIRLS and PISA) has channeled much attention away from the traditional centers of education research in America and Western Europe. Researchers, policy makers and practitioners all over the world wish to understand how education innovations propel the emerging systems from good to great to excellent, and how different their trajectories were compared to the systems in America and Western Europe.

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The audience of the edited volumes and monographs published in this series includes researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and students in the fields of education and teacher education, and public policies related to learning and human resources.

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Series Editors' Foreword

As series editors, we are tremendously proud to announce the fourth book in our Springer Education Innovation Series on Singapore's Arts Education. This book represents an effort describing and discussing how the education system privileges the Arts in the present twenty-first century context of innovation and globalisation. Educational Innovation is not always characterised by the sciences or in engineering, but the spirit of the Arts in rich cultures and practices exhibiting the diversity of perspectives, and expressivity is one which offers new insights to imagination and creativity.

It is heartening to note that the exemplary case studies described and discussed in this book shows that Singapore—although nascent in the Arts—is moving in trajectories which are productive and forward looking when compared internationally. The Arts methodology of juxtaposing the involvements of the creative-critical and reflective-reflexive perspectives is note-worthy of learning from other disciplines, through which artistic products are created from the process. The Arts also bring to the foreground the individual expressivity and creativity through this process-methodology which schools in Singapore can harness. Such learnings are especially manifested when schools form local and international partnerships with practicing artists. These artists work hand-in-hand with students through which embodied experiences are formed and valuable dispositions in the aesthetics are formed.

Indeed Arts and innovation is a productive interplay which can contribute to the well being of the student. The aesthetics and the humanistic designs which are so critical today should be developed in our students as a twenty-first century literacy regardless of their future pursuits. The Singapore Education System is one of the few systems in the world which has systematically embraced Arts into the curriculum for all schools, and this book has provided reflective insights into this journey of reform.

National Institute of Education Nanyang Technological University Singapore Wing On Lee David Hung Laik Woon Teh

Foreword

Ways Forward in Arts, Education and Culture

This book embraces the arts, education and culture. As a tripartite operation with historical roots and a natural evolution to the present moment, it holds principles and premises of significance to artists, teachers, and cultural agents. Its three-dimensional dynamic is at once Singaporean-local in its focus on the particularities of the progressive island-nation as it also is cross-culturally universal, in that local issues are directly relevant to the teaching and learning of the arts in national settings across the globe. This volume offers a dialogue on teaching and learning music, dance, the visual arts, theatre, and the art of storytelling in ways that balance philosophy and practice, and traditions and transformations. It is relevant reading for those who are committed to the future of the arts in society and its schools. Anywhere.

Singapore is alive in the arts. The sparkling gem of a city at the southeastern edge of Asia, it shines in all of its artistic glory to its citizens and to waves of international visitors annually. While there are clear indications of governmental support with the prime intent of financial return through tourism and the attraction of foreign investors into the country, it would seem that the brilliant expressions by masterful artists benefit all citizens of the nation, including the young. The commitment by Singapore to the support of a continuous engagement in the arts for school-aged children and youth is surely noteworthy in these global times of fiscal uncertainties and the consequent reduction of the scope of education programs (that have far too often resulted in the exclusion of the arts in schools). That Singapore has invested in arts education, and that it takes seriously the evolution of its cultural policy as hinged to arts education, is inspiring to artists and educators in the arts everywhere. The intrigue is certainly there, to know the frameworks that undergird and uphold the arts in Singaporean culture, to understand the systems that foster the arts in schools, and to recognize that as no society is truly utopian, even Singapore has its own growing pains in providing quality education in the arts in ways that are integrative and abiding.

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As all societies are in flux, each with its own set of growing pains and context-specific challenges, a view of the situation of the arts and arts education in Singapore is not only a case in its own right but also a window to the wider world of the arts, education and culture. Enter this volume, conceived of by artist, educator, and scholar Chee Hoo Lum, who has assembled those within and beyond Singapore to describe, analyze and interpret the current state of affairs regarding school arts programs, the content and process of these programs, the preparation and continued professionalization of teachers charged with responsibility for the development of children's creative-expressive practices, and the pedagogical pathways that genuinely connect children to the arts and artists for experiences with the potential to last a lifetime.

We need only to consider a single issue—the diverse cultural traditions that comprise a nation's artistic-expressive spectrum—(as one of many matters at hand) to recognize the clear-and-present tensions there are for those who envision a relevant and cogent school curriculum in the arts. Within the limitations of a teacher's preparation and the hours of a school day whose curricular goal is a broad and representative curriculum, whose artistic expressions shall be threaded into school music classes to impact children's expressive development? For the culturally diverse nation of Singapore, shall traditional Chinese orchestras be established in schools? Filipino kulintangs? Western-styled concert bands of winds, brass and percussion? Curricular units in the traditional songs and dances of the Malay population, and group lessons on Indian tabla? All these (and more) engagements are already in play in Singapore, and since these decisions are not so easily made at any given school, one choice may negate the presence of another and not all musical cultures will be in evidence even in curricular practice where equity is claimed as an important value. Knowledge of Singapore's reasoned responses to its diverse population in content decisions, and of its reconsiderations in view of current research and reflection, is provocative for sorting through reasons as to how these complexities are wrestled with there and elsewhere in the world.

Somewhat independent of questions of content within a program of the arts for a society and its schools are the processes by which people encounter and become thoroughly engaged in the arts. From adults in the public sector who informally experience the arts, to students learning the nature of the arts through prescribed classroom encounters, to highly motivated students who are intensively involved in honing a serious set of arts skills (such as at Singapore's arts-infused SOTA), process merits careful attention. Process encompasses analytical and holistic pathways, oral and literate channels, kinesthetic approaches that balance the mind-body dualism, and didactic and heuristic realms of instructional practice.

In Singapore as elsewhere, both specialist and non-specialist teachers are charged with the responsibility for teaching the arts, and the extent of preparation, supervision, and genuine assistance to these teachers very well influences the extent to which artistic experiences can be meaningful. ("Arts-light" activities, in which the arts function as time-fillers and entertainment pieces, too often result when teachers are insufficiently prepared in the art form and in the pedagogical techniques that are suitable to the students and the chosen art.) Teachers deserve support

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in the rediscovery of process: They deserve a spread of occasions to be thoughtful, reflexive, resourceful, and wondrous of the "what-ifs" that happen when the constraints of traditional ways of teaching give way to the facilitation of learning in ways that students find appealing. The Singapore Teachers' Academy for the aRts (STAR) provides points for departure and possible transfer into other settings, as it delves into (and documents) transformative processes in teaching and learning, acting upon the recognition of teachers as active agents of change. Attention to the preparation of teachers in the arts, and continuing assistance to them as they make their daily way in service to students, are key to insuring that the arts will continue to benefit students—and society—in profound ways.

It's fair to say that when it comes to the arts, education and culture, Singapore bears watching—by Singaporeans and by those far distant from the South China Sea. This volume opens a pathway for exploring arts education within the context of schools in a society that has embraced the arts as human expression of the beauty, joy, sorrow, angst, and so much more. It offers an examination of art as experienced in performance and as visual expression, and it analytically takes to task what has been achieved while also opening up honestly to what has not been accomplished. It presents provocative opportunities for consideration by arts educators of every form and context. As Singaporeans steam ahead with ways to weave the arts into the lives of children and youth in their everyday world of learning, these chapters offer moments of repose, reflection, and reconsideration. We do well to look and listen to Singapore for its philosophical frameworks for arts engagement in schools, its articulation in cultural policy, its educational practices in classrooms and communities, and its research and recommendations for change.

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Patricia Shehan Campbell

Preface

Rationale and Aims of the Book

Jean Luc Nancy (2003) suggests that every culture is "in itself 'multicultural'...a melee that within any 'culture' brings out a style or a tone; equally, however, it brings out the various voices or vocal ranges that are needed in order for this tone to be interpreted" (p. 283). Nancy also suggests that every culture, singularly drawn or drawn among other cultures, shares two properties: *having-in-common* and *being-in-common*.

These properties are even more poignant in a discussion of arts education around the world. With burgeoning interest in arts education as situated and lived/living practice, we note a paucity of treatises that focus on Southeast Asian perspectives of pedagogies and practices, particularly in understanding how communities of arts-practices across this region engage *through* education. This is all the more given more recent colonial provenance of the Southeast Asian region socially, culturally, economically and politically speaking. While contemporary practices secrete policies involving *privileged presence* of post- and neo-colonial infrastructures, it is the practices as locally situated which best underscore the impermeability of policy.

A book focusing on arts education practices in Singapore is not an example of insularity or even cultural essentialist discourse. As of January 2011, 3.8 million (about 74.29 %) of the five million people residing in Singapore are Singapore citizens or permanent residents; slightly more than one out of four persons living in this city-nation is neither citizen nor permanent resident (Singapore Government Statistics 2011). Given Singapore's current demographic reality, *having-in-common* and *being-in-common* takes on a very different significance when commonly shared not only includes basic amenities and opportunities but also access to education, culture, social networks and practices of the Arts.

This edited book hopes to contribute by addressing the growing interest in and importance of localised context within arts education practices, making *context* therefore, a central theme in coming to terms *with* a broader understanding of the arts and arts education as global and glocal policy and practice. The book seeks to

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provide a vehicle for the dissemination of research findings from case studies and autoethnographies about exemplary arts teaching in Singapore and provide a platform to negotiate generalities and particularities, global and local, formal and informal, through exegetical commentaries and critical dialogue between the local and regional/international discourse within each chapter. The situatedness of all chapters within a specific geographical location, lived and living practices in Singapore, drawing on the myriad network of social, cultural and historical contexts of the arts and arts education in Singapore, serves as points of departure engendering international dialogue on arts education.

The research narratives also point to the strengths in Singapore's positioning of arts education through government support in the last decade, propelling a string of initiatives that springboard development of arts education towards: (i) a robust creative and critical thinking arts curriculum; (ii) development of high-quality school arts ensembles; (iii) arts learning through technology and multimodalities; (iv) embodied learning in the arts; (v) the establishment of a specialized arts school; (vi) active reflective inquiry in arts pedagogy and practice towards learner-centered possibilities; and (vii) a thinking-through and negotiation about an arts identity grounded in localised, Asian and global perspectives.

Context in Arts Education

The meaning of any art form is tied closely to the context in which the arts making happen. Arts education, by association, is not simply transmission of "facts" but an education that is deeply embedded within social and cultural contexts. Culture as Nieto (1999 as cited in McCarthy 2009) explains, "is not static, and cultures are always hybrid and multifaceted; embedded in context; influenced by a broad array of social, economic, and political factors; full of inherent tensions; and constantly being constructed by human beings" (p. 30). Beyond considering the complexities by which social and cultural contexts constantly change forms of that art and its practice, an arts educator needs also to consider the complexities of the arts classroom, "a site of multiple subcultures based on ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, religious tradition, and generational difference" (McCarthy 2009, p. 30). The arts educator also needs to be cognizant and reflective about his/her context, to be clear and honest of a particular situatedness: acknowledging influences of academic and arts training and be mindful of his/her identity in the arts anchored in a complex range and interaction of variables. What Glover and Hoskyns (2006) illustrate through music educators and musicians at work, is the way

each [would] have learned their skills through a different mixture of self-teaching, alone or with peers, formal or informal tuition, apprenticeship, periods of part or full time study and learning 'on the job' through regular performing or participation in groups or bands. Rock and pop, folk and traditional, classical and jazz musical styles are each rooted in different learning styles and teacher-learner relationships, as are different instrumental or vocal

traditions. Each tradition brings with it a form of discourse, practice and learning assumptions that musicians import into their work with young people (p. 85).

The Significance of Context

The word 'context' is derived from the Latin verb *contexere* which means "to weave together", (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary 2007). Understanding and interpreting context is central, if not crucial, to social and cultural anthropology and has taken significance over recent years in other academic disciplines including education and in this instance, arts education. But what is the meaning of *context* in arts education and how is it defined and selected and by whom?

To contextualize is also to frame, "it is our sense of relevance, driven by our theoretical outlooks and practical dispositions towards the work, that defines where these frames are to be placed" (Dilley 2002, p. 454). Taking the cue from social and cultural anthropology, there are two processes of construing context

for us within our own bodies of knowledge; and for them within theirs. The conjunction of these parallel processes in the course of fieldwork or in our writing about the field and its subsequent dissemination to other readers may generate further contexts of knowledge through a dialogical relationship...but context is expandable, infinitely so; and we must never lose sight of the fact that a claim about context is precisely that- an articulation concerning a set of connections and disconnections thought to be relevant to a specific agent that is socially and historically situated, and to a particular purpose (p. 454).

The interest here involves a contextual framing that places the arts educator and the arts classroom as a specific site for contemplation about pedagogies and practices. Through the rich, thick descriptions in the case studies and autoethnographic accounts, one begins to see an expansive and changeable arts education context of global and local flows that weaves into the glocal, of colonial and postcolonial positionings, of a tugging between the formal and informal, and the uneasiness of letting go of generalities to the ambiguity of particularities vital to negotiating artistic processes *in* and *of* learning.

To stay relevant and meaningful as authors and authorisers of their context, arts educators must constantly re-think, re-analyze and re-frame their processes and engagement with the arts, to always contextualize and situate their practices in the arts classroom in view of changing sociocultural and demographic contexts. This edited book begins by amplifying the multiple yet understated nuances in particular contexts within arts education practices in Singapore and critically reviews these practices through an exegetical commentary and critical dialogue between each chapter author and a regional/international scholar. The outcome for the reader, it is hoped, will generate further contexts of knowledge in arts education because of the dialogical relationship purposefully created within the structure of the book.

Overview of Parts

The general structure of each chapter consists typically of three delineated sections: (i) a report of original research based on a case study/autoethnographic account of arts teaching or perception about arts education within the Singapore formalized school system ranging from primary to tertiary education; (ii) an exegetical commentary about the report by a regional/international scholar on the pedagogies and practices employed in comparison with current trends in the particular arts field; and (iii) a reflective dialogue between the author(s) and the regional/international scholar, getting at the tensions and issues surrounding the contextualized practice.

Part I describes the particularities of the arts landscape in Singapore discussing the ever-evolving state and context of the arts in the city-as-nation. It emphasizes on how the arts are identified and implicated in Singapore's unique history, looking at socio-economic policies affecting arts practices and practices of the arts, and Singapore's unique demographic situation and its fluid interaction with the global environment. Part I thus provides a macro perspective on the position of the arts in Singapore, contextualizing for the reader subsequent chapters in the book, to engage with themes and ongoing conversations on the arts and culture in arguably the most progressive nation in the Southeast Asian region. Supplementing Part I are also two recently completed journal articles: (i) Mapping research in Visual Arts education in Singapore (Cheo and Millan 2012); (ii) Mapping musical learning: An evaluation of research in music education in Singapore (Lum and Dairianathan 2013) that speak to an overview of Singapore's music and visual arts education landscape through a mapping of local research over the past three decades.

General Arts Education in Singapore Schools

Part II provides a critical opening counterpoint to this section that is timely in Singapore's arts education history, with governmental support for arts education at its height, moving away from a tradition of generalist arts teachers into a recognition and need for specialized arts educators in the primary schools. The tensions and issues of training for generalist vs. specialist teachers in a changing musical landscape is fleshed out by Dairianathan and Lum through the journey of an experienced general music teacher encountering the teaching of creative music activities (namely composition and improvisation) for the first time. It brings into question the requisite skill set a generalist music teacher is required to have in order to facilitate creative music activities (read mostly compositional and improvisational activities) in the music classroom. It suggests that teacher control (read levels

of freedom), confidence and competence, which goes beyond skill sets, are at the heart of an engaged creative music making endeavor and posits a closer look at local music teacher education that has often favored a more structured pedagogical perspective anchored within a perceived necessity on having a foundation of an Anglo-American Western classical music tradition.

Part III highlights the breakthrough of researchers in creating through digital platforms and arts practices, a/venues to help Singaporean youths deemed academically weak in the public school education system. These youths are enabled to express who they are in the world through *performative digital narratives* they created as part of a longitudinal digital storytelling project that was undertaken in their English Language classroom. These Singaporean youths became agents of and agency for their own learning and were able to express—through multimodalities of voice/s—their subjectivities and shifting identities. Working across artforms, these participating youth composed their digital stories using a range of visual, aural and written texts such as photographs, video footage, art works, original and recorded music, dramatic soundscapes, voiceovers, titles and credits.

Part IV indulges in the musical self, of free improvisation as a means to understand and converse with oneself and how this reflective musicking in its sincerity can then be articulated and shared with students, to encourage them to use music as a means to reflect upon their culture and daily lives regardless of background and proficiency.

It serves to highlight the power, influence and motivation for students of having arts educators (classroom teachers in this instance) as practising and accomplished artists in their own fields. As the author posits, "Contextualized free improvisation promotes the structuring of musical thoughts into one more embedded in daily life rather than one contrived, formalized and indoctrinated. They are emotional, mundane, virtuosic, intellectual, gruesome, all expressions of the expressive and constructed 'I' of the moment. Hence, it is a musical diary for self-indulgence, self-release, self-growth, balancing external realities with inner realities, and mediating life through sounds."

Part V provides a rare insight into the positioning of dance within the Singapore education system. Being situated within the physical education curriculum, dance as a subject is oftentimes relegated to fitness without much consideration for its aesthetic components. An argument for and against changing the dance curriculum to "fit with the times", catering to young people's personal dance interests and motivations are presented through an analysis of a survey and focus group interviews done with a group of secondary and junior college students.

Musical and dance ensembles from Singapore schools have acquired a habit of winning awards at local and international music festivals and competitions— a track record for the last few decades. This award winning mindset could not be made possible without kindred support of and for these ensembles by school leaders and administrators in many schools. Yet little is known of the 'workings in the kitchen'; the processes involved in nurturing these ensembles that leads them to excellence in achievement. Part VI will explore the successes of a primary school

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band through a qualitative examination of the dedication and hard work of its members and conductors, highlighting the working ingredients that are similar and different with other international settings.

Part VII examines the notion of arts partnership in schools, focusing in on the Singapore Schools Project (SSP), an initiative to introduce artists (particularly theatre) into the classroom with the intention of providing a different perspective to arts education within the school curriculum: to explore different ways that the arts can be linked to the curriculum and offer teachers different tools to develop projects with their students without the usual attendant assessment demands. The authors propose three core elements needed for arts partnerships: (i) Critical reflective practice; (ii) Experimentation in arts education practices; and (iii) Committed engagement to an attitude of collaboration that includes a two-way critical reflection to underpin the 'doing' of arts partnerships. The authors suggest that these core capabilities need to be practiced to achieve both policy and ground level sustenance of effective partnerships. The project also revealed how partnerships, when viewed as a process of 'becoming', allowed for discussion and paved ways for seeing alternative perspectives to teaching the arts and by extension, to classroom teaching and management.

Arts Education at Pre-tertiary Level

The establishment of a specialized school of the arts (SOTA) in 2004 signalled the Singapore government's resolve to cultivate excellence in specialist arts domains within the local educational system. Policy and practice exemplified in SOTA as a niche area in the vast pre-tertiary public school system, emerges as a potential model of and for arts education in Singapore as a model *beyond* the arts. What SOTA claims as an arts-infused curriculum can be adopted in other schools that may not necessarily be focused on the arts, but recognize the value of the multiple artforms—visual arts, music, theater, and dance—in the development of well-rounded and holistic young citizens of Singapore. Given the possibilities, prospects and problems, a study of SOTA might be meaningfully pursued through more research questions regarding SOTA in particular and the arts education in Singapore at large. Parts VIII, IX and X give a glimpse of the uniqueness and contribution of SOTA to the Singapore arts education landscape.

Part VIII investigates the experiences of flow among 14 adolescents, giving a glimpse into the thoughts and opinions of students within SOTA, about their engagement with the hard- and heart-ware of SOTA. It speaks about students' flow experiences and positive environmental factors provided within the school which affirms the heartware beyond the hardware that the Singapore government has invested to the development of creativity and critical thinking within Singaporean students and towards the arts and arts education in general.

Part IX presents a case study that aims to document and analyse teachers' beliefs, experiences, and practices in conceptualizing arts-anchored curricula at

SOTA. Using actor-network theory as analytic lens, the interplay of curricular beliefs, personal experiences and practices in a specialised arts school setting is explored to give a unique perspective on curriculum enactment and development in Singapore. Crucial questions that are addressed include: Does integrating arts into curriculum increase complexity and widen perspectives? In what ways does an arts-anchored curriculum promote teacher's thinking and learning? How do practitioners of arts and academic domains achieve the breadth and depth of discussion on their topic of choice? How is the core curriculum integrated with the arts-anchored enrichment? Rich narratives gathered in the field will render support in explaining significant propositions about how practitioners are involved in the curriculum modification process that meets the needs of the Singaporean arts-based school context.

Part X delineates the evolving signature pedagogies of artist-teachers and the complexity of intersections with students' learning and creativity. In particular, it focuses on examining and drawing out signature pedagogies of SOTA artist-teachers in the visual arts: (i) providing ways in which the artist-teachers dynamically explore, develop, and manifest artistic disciplines that embody their art form, (ii) how they create and foster construction of knowledge, (iii) instil values and foster habits of mind, and (iv) provide multiple, iterative, joint opportunities for students and teachers to engage in the arts.

Part XI reflects upon the changing landscape of the music syllabus requirements of the Cambridge 'A' levels in Singapore, specifically the inclusion of an Asian component that examines in-depth, the traditions of the Indonesian gamelan and Indian classical music. While the inclusion of the component is a clear indication of a move to diversify and expose students to a wider range of the world's rich musical culture and repertoire beyond a Euro-American classical paradigm, Onishi-Costes as a trained ethnomusicologist, was perplexed by the daunting requirements of the Asian component and questions the feasibility of such a curriculum and the ability of local music teachers with little or no training in these complex musical traditions, to be able to execute such a demanding task. This autoethnographic account points to the author's struggles and deep concern in teaching to the test and the growing content within the Asian component which now includes beyond gamelan and Indian music, African music, Japanese Noh and Kabuki and Chinese music. The author questions students' life-long appreciation of these musics in such hot-housing situations and makes a plea towards an understanding that "nonwestern classical musical systems require specialist teachers and long-term, rigorous learning just as much as western classical music."

Arts Education in Tertiary and Teaching Training

Part XII looks into a particular focus area (learner-centered pedagogies) of in-service professional training in music education within the purview of the Singapore Teachers' Academy for the arts (STAR), set within a framework of

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theory-practice nexus in reflective thinking. Through a professional learning journey of two primary and two secondary music teachers, it gives good insight into the contextual workings and thinking behind Singapore music teachers' enactment and engagement with learner-centered ideas towards twenty-first century educational goals. Part XII provides useful implications and ideas for teacher professional development in reframing their pedagogies and practices, suggesting a sustained process in order for transformation to be possible and for the reflective inquiry process to go beyond thinking into actual enactment and embodiment.

Parts XIII, XIV and XV are critical accounts of three tertiary arts education academic-practitioners' contextualized approach to their teaching of drama, music and visual art in Singapore. These three parts reiterate the significance of knowing, understanding and embodying of context as situated practice with implications for pedagogical development.

Part XIII examines the work of dealing with Asian traditional theatre forms as an intertwining of 'arborescent' and 'rhizomatic' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) approaches to knowledge and culture. Drawing on responses from tertiary drama students in Singapore to the question whether and how this empowers a capacity for broader choices in a globalizing world, Part XIII frames Rajendran's pedagogical process as a contextually based attempt to draw links and forge connections between the immediacy of everyday life and the seemingly remote realms of tradition. This as Rajendran argues, engenders a critical curiosity about how the present is in many respects a 'multiplicity' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) that allows for tradition to enrich and enliven the contemporary.

Part XIV traces a teaching journey in contextualizing and reconceptualizing a localized theory curriculum that started as a typically Western one but gradually transformed into one that seeks to better lay the music-theory foundation for a multicultural music curriculum. Whilst recognizing the differences between the social and cultural contexts of these various musical traditions, Chong contends that there are nonetheless commonalities that can be taught pertaining to a music-theoretic understanding of these musics.

Part XV delves into the author's approach to arts and art education as interdisciplinary, allowing for critical, creative and mutual cross-fertilization of ideas across other ways of knowing and experiencing. In the 'telling' of local courses designed, the author will point out learning notions of 'performance' in visual practice that encompasses the use of imagery in language, structured around a reduction and then extension of the senses. "Conceptual drawing" where synaesthetic tasks allow for the "translation" of sensory experience will also be discussed, centering around learning moments for students and educators to reflect upon.

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I do hope that the book will contribute to a more nuanced consideration of context as the basis of discussion in arts education, of being and becoming, of lived and living, and as anchor points of engaging with the glocal through the local and the global.

Chee-Hoo Lum

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She has published on socioaffective concerns of gifted learners, family influences in talent development, and experiences of flow among young artists. Her research interests include psychology of artists, Asian folktales, identification of the disadvantaged gifted, experiences of flow among creatives, and bibliotherapy. She also has a vibrant website on children's literature and young adult fiction (www.gatheringbooks.org http://www.gatheringbooks.org), and an active participation in the kidlitosphere and the YA blogosphere.

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Part I Singapore Arts Landscape

Chapter 1 The Singapore Arts Landscape: Influences, Tensions, Confluences, and Possibilities for the Learning Context

Gene Segarra Navera

Introduction

This chapter puts together relevant literature meant to inform current and future research in arts education in Singapore. It aims to discuss the evolving context of arts education in the city-state—how it is implicated in its unique history, its socio-economic policies, as well as the global environment with which it constantly interacts. Moreover, it hopes to enable researchers to locate their studies within the broader themes and ongoing conversations on the arts and culture in arguably the most progressive nation in the Southeast Asian region.

The chapter is divided into several sections. The second section locates the position of the arts in the history of Singapore until its independence. It also rehearses historical events and forces that had shaped how the arts had been viewed and regarded in the city-state until it separated from Malaysia in 1965. The third section continues with the historical account of arts in Singapore after independence, but specifically discusses the role of the strong state in the development of culture and the arts in Singapore. It takes into account the evolving cultural policy crafted and enacted by the government and which has had significant impact on the local arts and culture. The fourth section takes into account perspectives on Singapore arts and culture from the local artists and the academic community in the city-state. It seeks to highlight what may be regarded as alternative expressions to the statist account of the Singapore arts landscape. The fifth section brings to the fore the tensions and contradictions that interlace the development of Singapore arts and culture and that offer constraints, challenges, and potential opportunities for arts teaching and learning.

The final section concludes this essay by commenting on the tensions and contradictions that confront and challenge Singapore arts and culture, suggesting

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possible confluences that may arise from learning about these tensions, and drawing attention to possibilities in the learning context, that is, potential areas of inquiry for researchers on arts education and on the practices and pedagogies in specialized arts schools.

The Arts in/and Singapore Before Independence

The story of Singapore may be seen as a continuous struggle to thrive economically, first in a region wrought by years of colonial rule, then in an economic order where competitiveness appears to be a prime virtue.

In the early nineteenth century when Sir Stamford Raffles, touted as the modern-day founder of Singapore, "began the revolutionary effort of transforming Singapore into a cosmopolitan trading port", Singapore attracted immigrants from the world over including those who imbued the island with artistic and cultural performances from Southern China, Malaya, Indonesia, and other cultural groups (Salamat 2010, p. 16).

The confluence of various cultures in the Southeast Asian entrepot was manifested in the practice and performance of various art forms. In the field of music, for instance, Dairianathan (2005) suggests that ethnic Chinese and Indians that converged with the Malay inhabitants in Singapore carried and recreated their musical traditions from 'home'. What emerged then was a coexistence and, to a certain extent, intermingling of the musical and cultural traditions from the major ethnic groups. Singapore, in other words, emerged as an inter- and cross-cultural melting pot where ethnic cultural traditions such as the *bengsawan*, ¹ *bangrah*, ² and Chinese opera were performed to serve their respective communities and at the same time to work as windows towards understanding the cultural other.

Dairanathan (2005), however, noted that the crossing of soundscapes in Singapore—or cultural practices in a much broader sense—was not only limited to the traditions of the Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities. As open as Singapore was to trade and commerce, it was also accommodative to musical and cultural performances from German, Filipino, Japanese, English, Armenian Portuguese, Arab, and Indonesian communities. The coming together of various ethnic cultural traditions contributed to the diverse, and sometimes confusing, musical and cultural repertoire that Singapore has been known for.

Notwithstanding the coming together of rich and diverse cultures from various parts of the globe, it was inevitable for the British colonial rulers to impose on its subjects in the island the supremacy of the English language and the western culture

¹ Bengsawan refers to the Malay performance art that combines various art forms such as drama, music, and dance. For more information about this tradition, see http://melayuonline.com/eng/culture/dig/582/bangsawan

² Bangrah is a genre of music and dance that is associated with the Punjabi culture in India.

and the arts. Darainathan (2005) points out that Raffles himself considered the Imperial literature and the arts instrumental in civilizing the inhabitants of the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula (p. 511). The asymmetrical relations between the British imperial culture and the rest of the cultural communities, the colonial master and the colonized, would last for about 135 years—until Singaporeans found the courage to assert their right to self-determination.

On June 3, 1959, Singapore became a self-governing state after years of being under British colonial rule. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew became the city-state's first prime minister. What followed after Singapore gained self-government and autonomy from its colonial master was a bustling of artistic and cultural activities. National Museum director, Lee Chor Lin recounts that the year that followed "was a period of excitement and exuberance." Sharing her recollection of that period, she enthused:

A Bollywood movie titled Singapore was shot here that year. We had glitzy amusement parks, a vibrant night life, a thriving film industry and art which was inspired by issues of the time and by our tropical climate (Shetty 2010).

In the belief that it would help Singapore gain full independence from colonial rule and survive economically, state leaders worked for the merging of Singapore to the Malaysian federation. The marriage of Malaysia and Singapore happened on the 16th of September in 1963 (Salamat 2010). About a month or so before the historic merging of the two former British colonies, the National Theater was opened to commemorate Singapore's self-government. Also dubbed as the People's Theater "because of contributions made by various Singaporeans towards its construction", the National Theater designed by architect Alfred Wong hosted "an exotic mix of shows every month, ranging from Teochew opera and Russian ballet to Hawaiian dances" (Shetty 2010).

How the arts figured at the time of Singapore's early foray into self-government is probably captured by the words of Singaporean artist Cheo Chai-Hiang whose retro neon light installation was featured in the Singapore 1960 show at the National Museum in June 2010. The following words from Cheo is taken from Deepika Shetty's article on the artist's retro neon light installation featured in The Straits Times:

Life then was very simple, but there was a lot more soul. Songs, art, film, sport, everything had a space. Creativity was thriving. But the short period of relative calm was followed by great turmoil (Shetty 2010).

The turmoil that Cheo mentions in his recollection refers to the period when Singapore and Malaysia separated after a brief union. The 1963 union did not last long as disputes between Singapore leaders and the central government of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur ensued. It did not help that racial riots between the Malays and the Chinese had escalated. On August 7, 1965, the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, decided to expel Singapore from Malaysian federation—a decision which the Malaysian parliament unanimously reaffirmed. The expulsion led to Singapore's independence on August 9 of the same year (Shetty 2010).

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The process of nation-building after independence slackened the Singaporean interest towards the arts as the leaders of the newly independent state had to prioritize industrial and economic growth. It was only in the 1980s, during the period of economic recession, that the national leaders recognized the Singapore 'cultural and entertainment' sector's potential in contributing to economic growth (Chong 2005).

The next section continues with the task of situating the arts and culture within Singapore's history, but it specifically highlights the state's influence in the evolution of the Singapore arts and culture policy especially after Singapore gained its independence from British colonial rule in 1959 and then from Malaysia in 1965. It is then followed by a section that takes into account initiatives from the local artists and how they have worked centripetally and/or centrifugally from the state's cultural policy.

The Singapore Government and the Arts

The role of the government in the development of the arts and culture in Singapore is one that is considered both critical and contentious. On the one hand, it has been a taken-for-granted notion in the city-state that the government has been pivotal in defining the role of culture and the arts in the broader national context as well as the directions it has taken since independence. On the other, the Singapore government has been chided for using its powers to control artistic expressions in Singapore in the name of 'peace and harmony' (Bereson 2000).

The government's pivotal role in shaping Singapore's art and culture landscape may be gleaned from the evolution of its national cultural policy. Chong (2005) has noted that arts and culture was not a national priority until 1992 when Singapore cultural policy went 'global.' He traces the evolution of Singapore's national cultural policy by showing how the Singapore national leadership has viewed the arts and culture even before its independence in 1965 until more recent times. Chong's account of the national leadership's role in the development of arts and culture in Singapore points towards the creation of a coherent national cultural policy that is very much entrenched in the socio-economic plans of the national government.

Chong (2005) noted that before independence, the arts served as communal activities that offered "opportunities for ethnic interaction as well as their utilization of their public displays of 'multiculturalism'" (p. 555). This was clearly evident in the Ministry of Culture's articulation of the objectives of the arts and culture in 1959:

The creation of a sense of national identity, the elimination of communal divisions and attitudes. The propagation of democratic values, conducive to the ultimate creation of a just society. The creation of a wide acceptance of a National Language (Chong 2005, p. 155).

The instrumentalist role of the arts in nation building took a different turn in the 1980s when during the period of economic recession, the 1985 Economic Review Committee (ERC) singled out the potential for economic growth of the 'cultural and entertainment' sector. The ERC report, notes Chong, marked the beginning of a coherent national cultural policy that adopted Euro-American models of infusing "arts and culture investments into rust-belts or derelict industrial sites" (pp. 555–556).

What is, however, regarded as the 'watershed' in the development of the Singapore arts and cultural scene is the 1989 Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA) chaired by the late former President Ong Teng Cheong who was then Deputy Prime Minister. While recognizing the 'economic imperative' of the arts and culture, the Report, notes Chong, also emphasized their 'qualitative virtues.' The arts were now deemed to broaden minds, deepen sensitivity, improve the general quality of life, strengthen social bond, and contribute to tourist and entertainment sectors (p. 556).

The Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) itself acknowledged that the 1989 Report made "far-reaching recommendations for medium-term arts and culture development including suggestions for enhancing arts education at the tertiary and pre-tertiary levels; improving cultural facilities; boosting heritage and visual arts collections; encouraging reading and writing; and stepping up arts promotion by the media among the community" (Renaissance City Plan III 2008, p. 5). MICA noted that the Report established what would become the National Arts Council (NAC), the National Heritage Board (NHB), and the National Library Board (NLB). The Report also called for the development of what are now considered iconic arts and culture buildings and spaces in the city-state: the Singapore Arts Museum, the National Museum formerly called Singapore History Museum, the National Library, and the Esplanade: Theatres on the Bay (ibid.).

Ten years after the 1989 ACCA Report, the Singapore government undertook a second comprehensive review "to explore the role of arts and culture in preparing Singapore for the leap from an industrial to a knowledge economy in the 21st century" (Renaissance City Plan III 2008, pp. 5–6). The government recognized that the city-state "needed to invest further in the arts and cultural capabilities in order to enhance innovative capacity and measure up against other regional and global cities" (ibid.). In other words, the need to make Singapore competitive in the global economic order of the twenty-first century became an impetus for reviewing as well as reorienting the national policy towards arts and culture.

In 1999, the government put in place the Renaissance City Project (RCP I), which aimed to transform Singapore into a "Distinctive Global City for the Arts, where arts and culture would make Singapore an attractive place to work, live and play, contribute to the knowledge and learning of every Singaporean, and provide cultural ballast for nation-building" (p. 6). The RCP I resonated earlier rationalizations for developing the arts and culture (i.e., provide a cultural ballast in nation building and contribute to the knowledge and learning of every Singaporean) as well as the more recent, not to mention economically urgent, ones (i.e., make Singapore an attractive place to work, live and play).

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In envisioning Singapore as a Distinctive Global City for the Arts, the government through RCP I packaged the arts and culture as a 'pull factor' to increase its competitiveness in attracting skilled foreign talents and global capital and in encouraging highly skilled and mobile Singaporeans to stay in the country (Chong 2005, p. 556). Interestingly, this has brought about what has been dubbed as 'cultural liberalization' in Singapore which involved structural changes to censorship regulation. The censorship liberalization, comments Chong, needs to be understood within the context of Singapore government's global desires—that is, for Singapore to become the Global City for the Arts, 'local—global reconciliatory policies' must be put in place for international familiarity and standardization (p. 559). This, he says, is central to the globalization process that in turn "challenges the traditional distinctions between the domestic and the international, the territorial and non-territorial, and the inside and the outside, as embedded in conventional conceptions of the 'political'" (p. 559).

On the other hand, the government continued to regard the arts as an aid in nation-building. In the same year that RCP I was launched, J. M. Nathan was quoted saying, "The arts also help to enhance community development and nurture a more gracious society" (in Chang and Lee 2003, p. 135). The need to develop a 'gracious' society was also underscored by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong when he said:

A Renaissance society in Singapore would be a society of well-read, well-informed citizens, a refined and gracious people, a thoughtful people, a society of sparkling ideas, a place where art, literature and music flourish. It is not materialistic, consumeristic society where wealth is flaunted and money is spent thoughtlessly, in short a parvenu society (in Chang and Lee 2003, p. 135).

Clearly, the rhetoric of a renaissance society established the Singapore government's complementary goals of using arts and culture to achieve economic competitiveness in the region and the world, on the one hand, and to transform Singapore into a nation that is both highly sophisticated and gracious, on the other.

RCP I was sustained and expanded by the introduction of Renaissance City 2.0 (RCP II) in 2005. RCP II, according to MICA, was part of a broader Creative Industries Development Strategy and articulated an "industry approach for developing arts and culture" (Renaissance City Plan 2008). The Creative Industries Development Strategy laid out the plans for developing three sectors, namely, arts and culture, design, and media. The objectives of RCP II were bolder, not to mention more ambitious: (a) develop new arts and cultural industry capabilities; (b) build more arts/culture-business partnerships; (c) internationalize Singapore arts.

In its review of RCP I and II, MICA identifies the following key areas of Singapore arts and cultural development where the two comprehensive plans have had significant impact: international recognition of Singapore arts and culture; a more vibrant arts and cultural scene (determined through increase in the number of performances, visual arts exhibitions, number of arts companies and societies); increased demand and appreciation for the arts and culture (measured through attendance in arts and cultural events and visitorship to museums); and national pride and sense of ownership. It is evident from the way the government accounts

for the impact of RCP I and II that quantitative or statistical indicators are given premium and that these indicators serve as the bases for sustaining and furthering the national policy on culture and the arts.

In 2008, the Singapore government has taken the next stage in shaping the development of arts and cultural landscape. Two challenges confront Singapore's arts and cultural development, according to MICA's assessment: increasing competition among cities worldwide and the pressure from social and cultural differences. The government sees the booming Asian arts and entertainment sectors influencing the world's culture, lifestyle, and entertainment as an opportunity to re-position Singapore as "the lifestyle destination in Asia." Moreover, it has noted the development of Singapore as a mature society where people "are increasingly thinking beyond bread and butter issues and reflecting on issues of identity, heritage and quality of life" (p. 13). To MICA, this development opens opportunities for more Singaporeans to get involved in arts and cultural development which include but are not limited to volunteering for arts events and taking a stake in arts talent development.

Two studies commissioned by MICA—first in 2006 and the second in 2008—revealed specific areas where the city-state's next phase of arts and cultural development could focus on. These include the creation and promotion of original and home-grown Singaporean works; ensuring the availability of information on Singapore arts and culture to the local public and international audience; progressing towards private and people-sector-led arts and cultural scene with a comprehensive base of professionals in specialized arts services; developing future audiences by putting more emphasis on the arts in education and arts education schools; provision of mid-sized venues and more affordable workspaces for artists; increasing Singaporean's exposure to arts and culture by bringing it to the heartlands and enhancing access to arts and culture for those from low-income families and people with special needs; and diversifying sources of support for the arts and culture to include donations, sponsorships and volunteer efforts (p. 15).

The outcome of the studies is the Renaissance City Plan III (RCP III) which is regarded as the next step to achieving the government's vision of Singapore as a 'Distinctive Global City of Culture and the Arts.' RCP III envisions Singapore as a

Vibrant Magnet for International Talent, consistently ranking highly in livability indices due to its winning combination of first-world infrastructure, as well as distinctive multicultural and forward-looking identity; and a **Best Home** to an inclusive and cohesive population, appreciative and knowledgeable about its diversity, and proud of its national identity (p. 17, emphasis supplied).

Not unlike the earlier reports (i.e., 1989 ACCA Report, RCP I and RCP II), the RCP III's articulation of the vision resonates the instrumentality of arts and culture in making Singapore an ideal multicultural society and economically dynamic and competitive one.

The most recent government initiative to date is the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) which began in 2010 and which aims to chart the course of cultural development in Singapore till 2025. A report on the ACSR was released in January 2012. The focus of the review is on securing Singaporean identity and national

unity "amidst the multiplicity of global influences today" ("The Report" 2012, p. 5). Unlike the previous initiatives, the ACSR, according to its report, is driven by the private sector, the community, and the arts and culture sector (p. 13).

In a way, the ACSR report re-articulates earlier reports on the relationship of the arts and culture and the state of the national economy: affluence and trade brings about economic opportunity which attracts immigrants or foreign talents the world over (p. 6); the meshing of cultures makes it possible for the city state to develop the ability to appreciate various aesthetic forms (ibid.) and this would necessarily lead to creativity and innovation, making Singapore a "city of culture and arts patrons and consumers" (p. 7). What the ACSR set out to do is "to put in place the appropriate policies, incentives and educational opportunities that would facilitate a proliferation of artistic talent and free exchange of ideas, and catalyze a flowering of patrons and audiences that would sustain artistic and cultural creation" (ibid.). The ACSR has identified two strategic directions: engagement and excellence (p. 19). The first is supported by the following strategies: (1) reach new audiences; (2) sustain and deepen life-long engagement; and (3) galvanize national movement. Three other strategies support the second; (4) develop cultural institutions, companies, and offerings; (5) invest in talent, support professional aspirations; and (6) work with partners to achieve new heights.

In the ACSR list of recommendations, the creation of opportunities for learning—articulating, sharing, understanding, creating, and recreating—culture and the arts for various stakeholders (including students and young practitioners, working professionals, homemakers, senior citizens, community leaders and community groups, hobbyists and practicing enthusiasts, audiences, arts and culture practitioners and organizations, and educators and educational institutions) becomes a major task in "bringing arts and culture to everyone, everywhere, everyday" (engagement) and "building capabilities to achieve excellence" (p. 19). What is clear about the ACSR recommendations is that schools at all levels—from basic to tertiary education institutions—serve as seedbeds for the cultivation of arts and culture practitioners and audiences. The need for funding, infrastructure, and community support for the development of culture and the arts in the schools recurs in the details of the ACSR report. On the other hand, there is the persistent suggestion to involve stakeholders in communities especially in the heartlands to make arts and culture integral to the Singaporean way of life.

As of this writing, S\$247 million has been earmarked for the period 2012–2016 for the following priority areas: Community Engagement Masterplan, Arts and Culture Education Masterplan, and Capability Building Roadmap (Mayo 2012).

Voices from the Ground: Singapore Arts According to Artists and Art Critics

While governmental policies have significantly shaped culture and the arts in Singapore, it is inaccurate to view the development of Singapore arts from a top-down perspective. In fact, the evolution of the arts and culture in the city-state is as much a consequence of

the works of local artists who engage in various acts of negotiation and collaboration not only with the government but with other critical sectors of the Singapore society.

One way to understand how the local artists have dealt with the government cultural policy since independence is offered by culture critic C. J. W.-L. Wee. In his book *The Asian Modern: Culture, Capitalist Development, Singapore* (2007), he points out that in the years following Singapore's independence in 1965, the national leadership under the People's Action Party (PAP) led by the city-state's first post-independence Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew "aimed to make *industrial and capitalist modernity* the meta-narrative which would frame Singapore's national identity, and to create a 'Global City' which because of its trading links would escape the restraints placed upon it by history and geography" (p. 35). Such framing, Wee explains, 'renovated' as it were the 'national' as a category so that the racial and cultural differences which characterized Singapore could be contained and 'deterritorialized'—that is, homogenized to some extent—in order for the small city-state 'to leap into modernity.'

In the 1980s and 1990s, during which time the Singapore government advocated the development of the arts and culture in order to sustain economic competitiveness, Wee notes the "unexpected and significant authorization of the arts" (p. 10). This resulted in cultural production that served as a form of resistance against "the government's heavy handed cultural planning" (ibid.). This primarily was manifested in theater; but it was also evident in visual arts and film. With the state's authorizations, local artists in theater, visual arts and film produced works that 'reterritorialized' the complexities of life in the city-state. Wee cites as examples the "reenvisioning of daily life in the vast socialist-style public-housing estates" and the "rethinking of the island's multi-ethnic past" as manifested in local theater or cinematic productions as well as in visual arts (ibid.).

What may perhaps be regarded as a symbol of the Singapore artists' struggle to 'rethink the island's multi-ethnic past' is the founding and establishment of The Substation, considered as home for the arts, in 1990. Playwright Kuo Pao Kun, Cultural Medallion winner and artistic director of the Practice Performing Arts Centre Limited (PPACL) submitted a proposal in 1985 to transform the 60-year old Public Utilities Board electric substation at Armenian Street into an arts centre. It was in 1990—5 years later—that Kuo's proposal finally got the approval of the Singapore government. To Kuo, the creation of the arts centre was not so much about finding a place for the arts, but about 'creating a space in Singapore life for the arts' (More discussion on the ideas of Kuo can be gleaned from Quah 2005a, b). He said:

I am very concerned about creating a space in Singapore life for the arts. A space not in terms of place but a space in our value systems, lifestyle and consciousness. A space that will be as important in our lives as the need to find a job (in Sasitharan 1990, p. 2).

The Substation served as the symbol of the revitalization of the artistic community in Singapore—a revitalization motivated by the local artists themselves. It stood as proof that in spite of the so-called deterritorialization of cultural diversity in favor of economic progress in the years following independence, there was the yearning from the ground—from artists and cultural workers—to reclaim a space

for artistic pursuits and development. This recuperation of artistic and cultural space entailed a lot of risk taking and experimentation, but the Singaporean artists were unperturbed. This resilience and openness to challenges may be best captured in Kuo's famous words: "In art, a worthy failure is always preferable to a mediocre success" ("Making Room" 1996, p. 2). Artists like Kuo welcomed "the stream of intellectual and artistic challenges to subvert our monolithic mindset" (ibid.).

'Challenging the monolithic mindset' had come to be the stance of the local artistic community together with arts critics and the academe when the Renaissance City project was introduced in the late 1990s. Dissenting voices from the academe and the arts community provided critical perspective to the ambitious project of transforming Singapore into a Global City for the Arts aimed at making the city-state attractive to foreign capital, foreign talents, and the cosmopolitan Singaporeans.

Cultural critic Terence Lee, for instance, considers the policy directives of the government with regard to arts and culture as attempts at "industrializing creativity and innovations for economic gains" (Lee 2007, p. 47). To Lee, the Singapore government's planned and programmatic way of encouraging creativity is contradictory in that the government's notion of openness remains constrained by both economic imperatives and "the more controlled terms and tenets of political engagement" (Lee 2007, p. 48). On the latter, Lee (2007) argues that

Singapore's reputation as a no-nonsense authoritarian regime—with its political leaders ultra-sensitive to political criticisms and its citizens highly subservient and docile—is somewhat incompatible with the discourse of creativity, even making it futile. After all, creativity requires not passive and mechanical individuals, but thinkers who constantly challenge the status quo to achieve originality and innovation (p. 58).

Lee's description of the Singapore citizens being 'highly subservient and docile' may not, however, be totally true. In spite of what may be regarded as a highly regimented political engagement in Singapore, members of the artistic community have devised creative ways of engaging in social and political critique within spaces that are shielded from what Tan (2007b) calls the 'overenthusiastic agents of censorship' (p. 11). One example of a company of artists that has strategically worked within the constraining frame of the Singapore cultural policy is The Necessary Stage (TNS). TNS, explains its artistic director Alvin Tan, engages in a theatre practice that is research-based, interdisciplinary, and dialogical by focusing on indigenous and socially engaged productions. As if enacting Kuo's notion of Singaporeans being "natural heirs to all cultures of the world" (Wee, p. 128), TNS draws on artistic, cultural, and financial resources from the regional and international levels "to invent new devices to communicate or transmit sensitive issues and taboo subjects" (Tan 2007a, p. 200). Tan substantiates this point in the following:

Working regionally and internationally opens up possibilities to address sensitive topics. Instead of continuing to (re)construct tired images, artists can find more opportunities to create works that encourage critical reflection at a more complex cross-cultural level, challenging themselves to look for or create new and fresh metaphors with universal application and appeal (p. 200).

Meanwhile, some civic groups have worked out ways to transform 'the culture of fear' into creative activism (Chng 2007) by projecting its 'voice' to articulate the interests of the citizens. It is by claiming the citizens' voice that civic groups can, according to Chng, influence the key stakeholders in regulation (p. 211).

Lee's suggestion that Singapore is a 'no-nonsense authoritarian regime' is probably best symbolized by the rather strong enforcement of censorship in the city-state. Censorship may very well be considered a long-standing and one of the most challenging issues that artists in Singapore have had to contend with. Averse to dissent and political criticism, the government, notes Tan (2007c), justifies its use of censorship by either asserting that the minority groups have to be protected by the state from expressions or statements that may be religiously and/or racially offensive or by putting forth the idea that the majority of Singaporeans are conservative and not yet ready for challenges to convention. Tan (2007c), however, suggests that perpetuating such notions contradict the very idea of repackaging Singapore as a creative place. He says,

An overreliance on government censorship for protection not only weakens the minority community's resilience and sense of self-worth, but may also backfire when an overcensorious climate makes censorship very available to the majority for use against minority expression. Censorship recreates the conditions that call for (more) censorship (p. 85).

Tan (2007c) furthers that "if the conservative majority can get past the obsession with decency, and not resort to calls for censorship every time there is an aesthetic encounter that is unfamiliar and uncomfortable, perhaps the process of maturing as an audience can begin" (p. 89). He believes that a vibrant society must be open to alternative visions and possibilities and that art should continually challenge the status quo through experimentation and critique.

The ACSR, which documents current initiatives by the government in collaboration with arts and culture stakeholders, talks of no-censorship zones to encourage a more vibrant arts scene. Nominated Member of Parliament, Janice Koh, who lends her voice to the arts and cultural workers and stakeholders in Singapore's legislative chamber, however contends that "zoning marginalizes art and the role it plays in it" (Mayo 2012). She criticizes the ACSR for not being able to address "how censorship and regulation procedures also negatively impact the development of a vibrant arts scene in the long term" (ibid.). She asserts that designation of no-censorship is 'ring-fencing' and notes that the scope of government interference in the domain of arts and culture remains to be wide. She suggests that in a vibrant society, the audience and public should be "empowered to make choices" (ibid.).

It goes without saying that experimentation and critique thrives in a society where artists enjoy freedom (Florida 2003). Also, experimentation and critique would be possible only with an awareness of the complexities of the Singapore arts landscape—its histories, influences, tensions, and possible confluences. The previous sections of this chapter have attempted to take into account, albeit in a somewhat sketchy fashion, the historical forces and socio-political factors that have influenced or shaped Singapore arts and culture throughout the course of its brief history. In the last two sections, what are highlighted are the persistent tensions that have potentially constrained or set

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the directions for the city-state's arts and culture landscape and the possibilities for new and renewed confluences in the multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual society that is Singapore.

Tensions and Contradictions

Since the launch of the Renaissance City project, the Singapore arts landscape has been fraught with tensions and contradictions that on the one hand may be debilitating to the flourishing of Singaporean culture and the arts, but on the other, may just point towards opportunities for cultural and artistic growth and development. These tensions and contradictions are reflected in what is regarded as tendencies in the way arts and culture are programmed or directed by the Singaporean government. These are the tendencies to be economistic, hardware-oriented, and exclusivist (Chang and Lee 2003; Chong 2005)—tendencies that, as suggested in the previous section, have been teased out and challenged by the Singaporean artists and culture critics themselves. Each of these tendencies will be substantiated below.

The Economic Impulse

The cultural policy that Singapore has taken since the 1980s attests to the economistic attitude of the government towards the arts. That the arts can generate economic spin-offs is evident in the prioritization of urban regeneration, preservation of historic building, and the creation of arts zones—all of which are pursued to boost arts tourism in Singapore (Chang and Lee 2003, p. 134). Singaporean critics have also pointed out the state's predisposition to commoditize arts and culture and to regard Singapore identity as a brand (see for instance Cik 2012). This rather pragmatic take on the arts relegates to the sidelines the humanistic perspective in which the arts are viewed as vital to the holistic development of the human person.

For the compact city-state, arts tourism of course means welcoming foreign tourists as well as talents who can significantly contribute to the sustenance of the Singapore economy. It is part of the Global City for the Arts project that aims to transform Singapore into a global hub for business and creative talents from different parts of the world. Chang and Lee (2003) noted that the economic imperative has, in fact, ushered in the importation of foreign talents, a development which has overwhelmed the burgeoning local arts scene (p. 139).

The entry of foreign talents has created tensions between the foreign and the Singaporean, the global and the local (Chang and Lee 2003; Chong 2005). While the influx of foreign talents is seen as a means to globalize the arts and culture in Singapore, Chong points out that it actually "accentuates existing inequalities via

uneven distribution of capital" (p. 559). He notes that the beneficiaries of the Global City for the Arts project have been "modern dramas performed in contemporary settings by established English-language theater companies" (p. 561). This indicates the privileging of English-language contemporary theater which in turn reflects the dominance of the English language (p. 562). The privileging of contemporary English language theater companies, Chong suggests, goes well with the Western orientation of most global cities since European as well as American representation often serve as a signifier of the global capital (pp. 562–563).

The state has responded to this development by emphasizing English proficiency in schools in order to ensure a cosmopolitan and global-oriented work force in the future.

Hardware Orientation

Very much related to the economistic attitude towards the arts is the hardware orientation. This pertains to the emphasis in the construction of arts spaces and edifices (see for instance Tang 2005 and "Underground Museums Next?" 2005) with little regard to what culture critics refer to as 'heartware.' As Chang and Lee (2003) point out:

While arts development need not be divorced from urban space creation for it to be effective, the relationship becomes tenuous in Singapore when the focus on hardware is carried out at some expense of heartware and where arts spaces are provided without sensitivity attributed to arts places (p. 135).

To the critics of this orientation, the establishment of edifices intended for arts and cultural activities, while intended to support artists in their quest towards artistic excellence, does not necessarily translate to the flourishing of creativity. Chang and Lee (2003), in fact, point towards an emphasis on supporting the artists' creative space and less on physical space.

Supporting the artists' creative space may be exercised in several levels. One level, as suggested by the authors, would be to review or rethink the regulations that constrain artists in pursuing their art or that limit their own creative space (see also Davis 2004; Ng 2007). Chang and Lee (2003) assert that

Censorship, institutional constraints in the form of regulations and what has become known as 'out of bound markers' restrict the creative latitude of artists in Singapore (p. 138).

Another level would be to call for broader arts education which the authors argue is hampered by the "inflexible educational curriculum" (p. 139). This is in consonance with Kan (2008, 2009) & Cheng's (2008) suggestion for more flexibility in Singapore's educational curriculum (More discussion on arts education in Singapore can be gleaned from Chong 1998; Keun and Hunt 2006; Leong 2005; Loh 2001; Peng 2000 and Wong 2001).

In yet another level, providing moral support to artists who study overseas is also seen as more valuable than merely financing grant recipients (Chang and Lee 2003).

Exclusivist Arts Events

Another tension that has characterized cultural policy in Singapore is the contradiction between extensive efforts of the government to promote the arts and the low level of appreciation and awareness in the communities (p. 135). As pointed out by Chang and Lee (2003), the low awareness or appreciation may be largely due to the 'elitist' nature of arts events as they are construed as "inaccessible, expensive, and abstract" to the layperson (pp. 136–137). On the other hand, there are also those who eschew entertainment and prefer "being challenged and stimulated" (p. 136). Given the varying tastes and aesthetic perspectives of the local and international audiences in Singapore, the challenge is to come up with a variety of arts events in which various audiences are able to engage. Again, the development of the young Singaporeans' aesthetic sense—one that will enable them to appreciate the complexities of what is deemed 'high art' and at the same time critically engage popular culture—becomes imperative.

To Chong (2005), this exclusivist orientation is actually state-sponsored. He argued that the nurturing of potential flagship companies is "a form of state-sponsored mobility as well as exclusion" (p. 560). The potential flagship companies are usually English speaking and represent a more international outlook as opposed to local companies that use indigenous or ethnic content. This, he contends, is an outcome of the Global City for the Arts project. Rather than forging cohesiveness and solidarity, the project, argues Chong, revisits and accentuates divisions. Driven by "unwavering economic impulse", the project has transformed the Singapore cultural policy to something that is global, but at the same time, a marginalizing one (p. 566).

Quite succinctly, Chang and Lee (2003) express the tensions and contradictions that shape the recent development in Singapore arts and culture in the following:

The creative environment in Singapore is thus shaped by the contending forces of globalization aimed at internationalizing the city-state, and the influences of localization which help to assert local identity and control (p. 140).

Conclusion: Confluences and Possibilities for the Learning Context

In spite of the tensions and contradictions mentioned above, confluences in the Singapore arts and culture scene are manifest. First, there is consensus that while Singapore needs to adjust to the forces of globalization, developing local content and national identity must remain a major priority. Second, there is also the consensus on the need to balance hardware and 'heartware'—the economistic perspective which Singapore needs in order to survive on the one hand, and the humanistic perspective which would ensure the quality of life for Singaporeans on

the other. Finally, both the state and critics of the Singapore cultural policy agree that the education system plays a significant role in the development of culture and the arts in Singapore.

Developing National Identity in the Midst of Globalization

The tension articulated by authors such as Chang and Lee (2003) poses a challenge for Singaporean artists to work towards adjusting to the forces of globalization on the one hand and making sure that local content and national identity are strengthened and developed on the other. Surely, Singapore will continue to be global in its outlook as it maintains and develops its status as a business and education hub in Southeast Asia. But while at it, Singapore will need to strengthen its support for local artists especially those that sustain the multicultural artistic traditions that define what is uniquely Singaporean and that are rooted in the rich and colorful history of the city-state.

Striking a Balance

Balancing between the hardware and the heartware, between the economistic and the humanistic may very well define the cultural and artistic ethos in Singapore in the twenty-first century. Incisive commentaries and analyses on the seeming imbalance skewed towards the hardware and the economistic perspective have given way to vibrant discussions and debate on what art is in Singapore and how Singaporeans can make headway in the arts and culture scene. Self-examination necessarily leads to an awareness of Singapore's strengths and opportunities in the arts as well as its limitations and weaknesses. Given that the government is serious about reinforcing the artistic development of Singaporeans, it may very well consider the ideas that have emerged from the ongoing conversations and debate.

Schools for the Arts

The establishment of a specialized school of the arts—the SOTA³—is a reflection of the government's resolve to take seriously the need to cultivate artistic

³ SOTA is the School of the Arts: Singapore, "the first independent pre-tertiary school to nurture youths talented in the arts, with the vision to groom the next generation of artists, creative professionals and individuals who are passionate for, and committed to the arts in a multicultural society" (For more information about SOTA, see http://www.sota.edu.sg).

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excellence in the local educational system. SOTA, however small in the vast pre-tertiary school system, necessarily comes out as a potential future model of arts education in the city-state. What it proclaims as an arts-infused curriculum can be adopted in other schools that may not necessarily be focused on the arts, but recognize the value of visual arts, music, theater, and dance in the development of well-rounded and holistic young citizens of Singapore (For an alternative perspective on specialized schools, see Goh 2006). Given the possibilities, it might be worthy to pursue more research questions regarding SOTA in particular and the arts education in Singapore at large.

Some of the questions may include the following:

- 1. How are these tensions resolved or dealt with in specialized arts schools? Chang and Lee (2003) mention the "need to reconfigure the Singaporean mindset so that indigenous art forms are appreciated and can find a niche alongside global events in Renaissance Singapore" (p. 137)? How is this reconfiguration realized in schools specifically those that specialize in the arts such as SOTA?
- 2. What are the effective pedagogical practices that teachers of the arts employ to address the tensions and to deal with the contestations in the Singapore arts landscape?
- 3. How are the arts in Singapore conceptualized from the ground (students and teachers of art schools; teacher artists)? How are these conceptualizations realized in the classroom discourse and lived experiences of both students and teachers?

The possibilities are endless. And it might help to heed the following words from blogger Z'ming Cik (2012):

[I]s art just meant to be enjoyed? Should art not be a way for us to reflect on our social norms, or to understand the pain and suffering of fellow human beings in society? So if ever Singaporeans need to be educated about the arts, they should be taught this, that arts can mean a lot of things. It's often more than just a form of beauty, it's more than a fat sculpture outside a commercial building to symbolize prosperity, and it's not just big panels of mural in a MRT station, or flowery decoration in a Chingay float.

The writer later goes on to paraphrase the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy: "Art...is a human activity where one man consciously hands on to others the feelings he has lived through, so that others may experience them; and art as means of communication, is therefore a means of progress."

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Chapter 2 Exegetical Commentary

Audrey Wai Yen Wong

Gene's article has provided a succinct overview of the development of Singapore's arts policy since its independence, and notes the complexity of cultural politics in the island-state, such as the Singapore artists' resistance and creative responses to the state's "deterritorialization" of cultural diversity and the ways that Singapore arts and theatre groups have managed to "strategically" create works that address politically-sensitive topics. One particular narrative of Singapore's arts development, indeed, has been to tell the story(ies) of Singapore artists' relationships of negotiation with, and resistance to, the state, which are ultimately about carving out space not merely for creative expression of ideas, but for social dialogue. This narrative has also been about how, despite the Singapore government's deliberate, articulated policy to build a global city for the arts, the economic imperative remains dominant. There remains the lingering suspicion among artists and some of the public, that the ultimate aim of arts and culture is for attracting investment, foreign talent, and tourism.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Singapore's arts and cultural sector is vibrant today, and much of it has to be attributed to the investments made by the state – mainly infrastructural developments such as the Esplanade and the refurbishment of the National Museum. These investments in turn have stimulated increased activity by the arts community. In 2010, Singaporeans had 85 arts activities per day to choose from, according to the MICA Minister Lui Tuck Yew, speaking in Parliament during the Budget debates of 2011. In that year, the total number of arts activities was 31,886, while the number of arts groups has increased substantially between 2003 and 2011, from 302 in 2003 to 856 in 2011 (MICA 2012).

There is thus, plenty of activity in the arts sector today, but the question to ask now is, "to what end"? What is the direction that this increased volume of activity is taking us? What kind of arts hub will the Singapore of the future be and will it add to the aspiration of Singapore to be the "best home" for Singaporeans and new

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migrants? What is clear is that Singapore's arts policy over the years has given rise to tensions and contradictions as noted by Gene. Gaps have emerged which are perhaps insufficiently articulated and debated in the public sphere, and perhaps it is time for policy-makers and the arts community and the public, to take a serious look at some of these contradictions, imbalances and gaps in the arts and cultural sector.

The increased volume of activity I have mentioned has also been a result of the economist way in which the Singapore government regards the arts, which in fact runs in tandem with an interest in exclusivist events. One strategy which government agencies have adopted is to attempt to stimulate a market for art in Singapore by addressing both demand and supply at the same time through supporting highprofile international events such as the art fair Art Stage (run by the people behind Art Basel) and the opening of Gillman Barracks, a cluster of galleries, an initiative spearheaded not by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts but by the Economic Development Board which comes under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The supply, however, is that of artworks from out of Singapore; while these events do stimulate a degree of public and buyers' interest, there is still a lingering sense among the local arts community that they remain on the margins of such activity. Gene cites Terence Chong's contention that the Singapore state's drive towards creating a global city for the arts has prioritized certain types of art forms and arts groups while marginalizing others; the economist and global slant of policy have also marginalized individual artists, as Ooi (2011) has also argued.

Perhaps because of the economic imperative, it also appears as if the state continues to look for quantitative measures of success for its arts policy, at a time when perhaps more qualitative measures and particularly, impact measures of the arts on the public and the arts community are needed. The Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) report referenced in Gene's article speaks of specific numeric targets to be attained for Singapore through the strategies it outlines. The ACSR states the objectives of increasing Singaporeans' arts attendance rates so that 80 % of Singaporeans would attend an arts event per year by 2025, and for 50 % of Singaporeans, or half the local population, to participate or be actively involved in arts and culture by 2025 (ACSR 2012).

The ACSR's vision is that Singapore will be a society where arts and culture are part of everyone's everyday life; through the articulation of the numeric targets, it appears that numbers will be used as a measure of whether we attain this ultimate objective. There is some doubt (noted also by Gene) about whether the strategies outlined in the report will reap the desired results – apart from the censorship question, artists are also concerned that the new emphasis on 'arts in the community' in recent policy declarations would result in sacrificing the more 'purely' artistic expressions and sideline their practice. This included the recent announcement that the arts portfolio will come under a new Ministry for Culture, Community and Youth starting on 1 November 2012 (Woo 2012).

The artists' fear and concerns that pure art will be marginalized as more resources are pumped into arts activities for the community, perhaps is an effect of the media dedicating more attention to the 'community' aspect of the ACSR report rather than another main thread of the report which is about building

capability and excellence for the arts scene. However, this response from the arts community is indicative of the unbalanced relationship between the arts workers and artists 'on the ground' and the policy-makers and the National Arts Council/ Ministry – often the relationship is contentious or oppositional, and flashpoints over controversies such as censorship and funding cuts given airtime in the media. The arts community often challenges the policy-makers, most recently in a letter published in the press expressing their disagreement with the Arts Council's decision not to participate in the Venice Biennale (Chong et al. 2012). As hinted at in Gene's article though, the cultural politics of Singapore is more complex than that of artists opposing the state's attempts to control the field of culture. Artists have become advocates to the public and the government for the arts, and are organizing themselves to engage with issues affecting not just them, but the future of Singapore as they perceive it – an example would be how the arts community organized itself to choose their nominees as Nominated Members of Parliament in 2009 and 2011, and going a further step by asking for endorsement of their candidates from the Arts Council. The relationship between the arts community and the Arts Council (and other state agencies) therefore, is not a simple oppositional relationship but is one where both sides are engaging each other in dialogue as much as they challenge the other.

Among the gaps that have emerged in the wake of Singapore's arts development, is the question of space for art, or the contradiction between 'hardware' and 'software' discussed by Gene. While the government has provided hardware, this remains unevenly distributed not just in terms of location but in terms of their function, and arts groups and facilities are not always adequately resourced. For instance, there is a lack of actual 'creation spaces' that incubate artists and new work through a rigorous process of exploration and critique, with most theatre spaces for instance, primarily being venues for final 'shows' and outcomes, rather than devoting space, time and money to nursing an idea or concept from birth to final showing. Most grants, apart from the Arts Creation Fund from the National Arts Council, support only a fraction of the final production costs of an exhibition or performance, and not the development process which might take months if not years. Apart from the Arts Council, few additional funding sources are available, and most of these sources are private foundations whose grant quantums for arts projects have remained at the same level for over a decade. All these have led to physical and psychological constraints on artistic creation - and psychological constraints certainly go beyond the fear of being censored. These naturally, have implications in our desire for 'excellence' in the arts – without adequate space and resources to work, it is impossible for artists to produce top quality, wellresearched work.

Another gap, which the National Arts Council is starting to address, and which is mentioned in the ACSR report, is capability-building for the arts sector: enhancing the capacities of not only artists but also arts managers, administrators, technical personnel, production personnel and educators. New measures introduced in this area now include a Specialist Diploma in Arts Education offered by the National Institute of Education International (NIEI), and new arts management training

courses developed as collaborations between the Workforce Development Agency and local arts organizations that lead to a Workforce Skills Qualification certification. Here again, though, I feel there is need to sound a cautionary note: rolling out skills training programmes are not enough, we need more than technical, administrative and pedagogical skills to build capability and also to bridge that gap between what Gene calls "the extensive efforts of the government to promote the arts and the low level of appreciation and awareness in the communities". Why is this so? Because bringing the arts to the "people" requires dedication, an understanding of how people learn about and appreciate the arts, and the techniques and strategies involved in such outreach work, as well as imagination.

This has implications for how we carry out arts education in Singapore – and imagination is key. Ultimately, the role of the arts educator is not to simply equip our students with the techniques and skills required to be an artist, dancer, actor, director, designer or arts manager, but perhaps more importantly, to enable their capacity to harness their artistic instincts and passion to the creation of new work that expresses our identity(ies) and in the process, to stimulate a search for solutions to address gaps and problems in our arts development and to seize opportunities for better social dialogue among various communities and interest groups in Singapore (including the government) – in short, to be the creative solution-seekers that a more complex, globalized and socially and culturally diverse Singapore needs.

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Part II Creative Music Making in Primary School

Chapter 3 Learning as You Go: A Non Music-Specialist Teacher's Journey Through Creating and Making Music in a Primary School

Eugene Dairianathan and Chee-Hoo Lum

Introduction

This chapter emerges out of a major investigation into music education in Singapore undertaken by Visual & Performing Arts (VPA)-Music staff of the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore from 2010 to 2013. This investigation had for its concerns, assessing teachers' attitude to, and levels of preparedness for, teaching creative music activities in the national primary and secondary classrooms (OER36/08 ED). For the purposes of this chapter, "creative" activities are identified with activities of composing and improvising but may also include other activities where the pupils are given opportunities to make decisions about the music they create or perform. The practice of creative music-making is not only performative in the musical instrumental sense but questions what constitutes music, instruments and instrumentality all the while authored and authorised by music-makers through a variety of media.

Performative aspects of creative music-making are germane to the educational landscape in Singapore. Ng Eng Hen's keynote address (25 September, 2008), as then Minister for Education, outlined challenges for the year 2015 and a curriculum to prepare students not only *for* and *through* such a curriculum but also prepare them for challenges *beyond* the curriculum as well. Suggestions from teachers in the school system at the present revealed some preparatory skills, some of which were articulated: (i) Strengthen life-ready traits; (ii) Provide more space and time; (iii) Enjoy school – "Learn through play"; (iv) Ask questions; (v) Improve communication skills; (vi) Participation in Co-Curricular Activities, and (vii) Developing soft skills.

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The consequence of these declarations was an exhortation to enable learners to:

- (i) Be more discerning with information; how to teach students to exploit knowledge as *proactive recipients* not as being *passive receptors*; and,
- (ii) Prepare Singaporean students to respond in terms of communication and interpersonal skills beyond local negotiations given the impact of globalization and changing demographic architecture; learning to adapt to living and working among those resident in Singapore, requiring different strategies in social integration and socio-cultural skill sets.

A logical outcome of this holistically developed self was given further attention by present Minister for Education, Heng Swee Kiat in his opening address in 2011 where he noted how:

Many of you have asked for support to be more student-centric, to see to the total development of the person rather than to build up just the academics. You also want to see a more collegial and collaborative environment among schools. And you want to know how we can bring parents and the community with us. Our schools and teachers will need time and space, to engage in the more demanding type of educating – values and 21st century competencies. (Heng 2011, p. 5, point 36)

Minister Heng articulated challenges in the next lap in terms of:

- (i) Infrastructure for more student-centricity towards total development of a learner;
- (ii) A more collegial and collaborative environment among schools co-opting parents and the community; and
- (iii) Engaging in values and twenty-first century competencies auguring for a more demanding type of educating (Heng 2011, p. 5, point 36).

Many of these concerns have found relevance across changing political, socio-cultural and by consequence musical landscapes. The 2008 General Music Programme (GMP) syllabus, as a case in point for the Singapore music classroom, seems to have captured the essential imperatives of a broader more inclusive and lived/living curriculum through six objectives for engaging in music creating, performing and responding. But, there has been a disproportionately greater emphasis on the efficacy of performing in music classrooms much less creative music-making activities (Lum and Dairianathan 2013). Some clues to this selectiveness appear in fieldwork and survey studies by Dairianathan, Lum and Stead (2009) which reveal how primary school music classrooms in Singapore comprise a far greater constituency of non music-specialist teachers than music-specialist teachers currently teaching music classes. Are primary music school classroom teachers in Singapore therefore *prepared for* the desired outcomes of the GMP syllabus? Are primary school learners given the appropriate access and opportunity towards twenty-first century education dispositions via student-centric based curricula?

Related to appropriateness of context is the extent to which the music syllabus, particularly the 2008 GMP, is being implemented in schools, by whom and with what results through, or even despite, structures of influence and implementation. The diverse permutations and possibilities of application of music classroom

textbooks, establishment within each school of their own unique curriculum and teaching of music by non/music-specialists and external vendors (read use of specialist musicians in the curricular and co-curricular activities who are not serving teachers) engender more careful micro and macro level analyses to have a fuller understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning activities in the Singapore music classroom. Related to the efficacy of policy in implementation are teachers' voices through personal and professional reflections on prospects and problems on implementation of policy in classroom practice.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the learning journey of a non music-specialist teacher in a primary school who volunteered to take part in the earlier mentioned creative music-making project (OER 36/08 ED). Her narrative offers useful lessons in teacher competencies/competence as well as cartographies/topographies in teacher dispositions. Guiding the research study are the following questions:

- (i) What are the teacher's prior experiences in terms of engagement with creative music-making activities?
- (ii) What did the teacher gain from being involved in a series of creative music-making workshops?
- (iii) What changes in pedagogies and practices have occurred during and after implementation of a series of creative music-making activities with her classes?

Methodology

Following a nation-wide learning needs analysis survey in September 2009, all music teachers (and teachers teaching music) from primary and secondary schools were invited to attend four workshop sessions (of 3 h per session) organized by the research team to provide some basic pedagogical and facilitation ideas on creative music-making activities. The workshop was spread over 4 weeks. At the end of the last session, all participants were invited to participate in fieldwork observations of their implementation of creative-music making activities in their classes. Permission was sought formally, to the principals of their schools and themselves, to observe their classes. Four primary-school and two secondary-school teachers signed up for the fieldwork observations by the researchers.

All students who participated in the music classes of these six teachers were given consent forms for their parents to seek permission to be part of the research project and to allow the research team to video-record them in their music lessons. Students without consent were placed out of the recording frame of the video cameras but were still able to observe the musical activities. There were altogether 7–10 lessons of classroom

observations involving the same class culminating in a final class performance. Fieldwork observers comprised one project team member making fieldnotes and two researchers as videographers. Teachers were interviewed immediately after their class to reflect on what they did. Students videographed in the class also had their conversations recorded. After observations, all teachers involved were invited to a focus-group discussion to reflect on the impact of the workshop sessions and classroom activities. The analysis of data in this chapter is focused on Mrs. Sena, a primary school non music-specialist teacher who was one of the six teachers who volunteered for the research study.

All interviews were transcribed and field notes compiled for purposes of analysis. The data was process coded according to: (i) the teacher's prior experiences in creative music-making activities; (ii) the teacher's reflections on creative music-making activities during the workshop; and (iii) the teacher's and students' points of reflection during the implementation of creative music-making activities and at the end of the creative music-making performance. The codes were then chunked and analyzed with analytical memos written (Saldaña 2011) to systematically lay out the findings presented in the following section.

Findings

Introducing Mrs. Sena

In the context of Singapore music-classrooms, Mrs. Sena has been a teacher for at least 20 years and has been teaching music for 23 years. She represents less than 5 % of the entire cohort of serving teachers and teachers teaching music in the Singapore school system. She also represents the 'unqualified' profile of NIE teachers (unqualified refers to a teacher <u>not assigned Music</u> as a teaching subject during pre-service teacher training programmes but assigned to teach music amongst other academic subjects like English, Mathematics and Science as a beginning teacher). Mrs. Sena was accepted to study at the then Institute of Education (NIE today) during the mid-1980s and was posted (in fulfilment of her teaching bond) to a primary school as a beginning teacher:

I was posted to a primary school in 1987 where I led the Music assembly. I attended the first Kodaly Approach module when I was assigned to teach music in school [ca.1988]. I liked this approach very much because it was fun and practical. When I was required to teach music in Primary Three and Four, I attended an in-service recorder course [1989].

This initial classroom music teaching assignment for Mrs. Sena raises a number of questions, the first of which concerns basic competencies which would have been addressed at teacher preparation courses. Mrs. Sena possesses a Grade 5 ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) piano performance qualification obtained privately (Stead 2010). Could such private qualifications be considered appropriate collateral for musical competence or competencies for classroom music

teaching? Secondly, considering that she was not assigned teacher preparation courses, how could she have been assumed to have acquired competence in teaching classroom music? No doubt, she would have to be encouraged towards immersion in activities where music was an indelible part of, to prepare her presumably for generalist classroom music teaching. As Mrs. Sena acknowledged, she was supported by the school to further her musical knowledge through in-service courses. But is competence synonymous with competencies? Could competence in classroom music teaching represent the concatenation of musical (read skill set and techniques) competencies? Could such musical competencies be acquired through adhoc in-service courses even as they were conducted at a teacher preparation institute?

Mrs. Sena revealed another learning re/source and environment for her competencies:

My music teaching experience was enriched by the music programmes that the school had supported then. Working together with a caring music co-ordinator and colleagues in the music committee, I learned a lot from them too. I worked with my pupils [creative endeavour] to showcase their talents and things that they had learnt in the music curriculum for special events eg, Music Day and Talentime. I developed my competencies to be an effective music teacher. Working with the pupils was very interesting, exciting and enjoyable, as they were eager to meet the challenges that I had assigned to them (e-mail correspondence May 2011).

While her experiences also revealed no prior training or engagement with creative music-making activities, it was again school support and an initial experience in creative music-making activities which led her towards gaining confidence through affirmation from her former students who still remembered these eventful sessions when they met with her after they had left the school:

I did something like that [creative music-making activity] in 2004 with clapping and got them [students] to use tins and spoons and coconut shells. There were 3 different groups [from] Primary One and they did that [performed] for Music Day. Years later when I met them again, they could tell me, "You know, Mrs Sena, remember that time when we were in Primary I, we did this?" ... that was a small simple activity. .. even though they had by now left primary school when they met me out there, they could tell me "You know, I enjoyed that, I remember we did this." It was not one child, it was a group of children. So then I realized those little things that I did they still remember. I think this would have been an eventful journey for them (Interview with Mrs. Sena May 20, 2010).

Reflections from Facilitating Creative Music-Making Activities

The tension between competencies and competence surfaced when Mrs. Sena volunteered to join the creative music-making project. Her willingness to participate was countered by considerable reticence. A clue to her reticence lay possibly in her determination and motivation to compensate for the lack of teacher preparation in acquiring musical knowledge for classroom teaching via musical skill-sets and

techniques, or as Mrs. Sena mentioned earlier, competencies. Competencies – not to be confused with competence – could be acquired through structured programmes which became an important step towards developing competence in music teaching. Since it was competencies that she prioritised – which could be implemented more efficiently through a structured programme – working with creative music-making dealt with uncertainty; uncertainty which Mrs. Sena was less comfortable with. Such a penchant for structure and her determination to honour her commitment to participate in the project surfaced during the interviews:

It's my personality that, when I do something, I want order and I want an ultimate goal to be achieved. That's me. So, I'm like that at home too, you know, when I need to do something, I'm very structured. . I must start something and I must achieve something. (Interview between Researcher and teacher 15 April after first session)

Her penchant for structured approaches notwithstanding, Mrs. Sena's discursive strategies exemplified in initial classroom activities and explorations were not without a great deal of sensitivity to the dynamics of her learners as she was to reveal after her session:

Teacher: Today's objective, what I [was] trying to do is, I'm giving them an opportunity... the first freedom to create something on their own, not follow me, not to get things from me, but to have that freedom to just play around with what they know. I saw [what] that boy [was] doing. He's creative, when I never taught him. That means they have it [creativity], it's just that you give them the platform to perform. I think it's important, and the more you give them, then they have value for music. But if you keep telling [instructing] them...some of them don't like that. They just want the freedom to explore. (Interview between Researcher 15 April after the first session)

Teacher: That was my objective today...allowing them to explore. I think what they learnt was different kinds of sounds, a little bit of coordination...how am I going to come in, how to keep the tempo...you need to give the steady tempo so that the others can come in...I think this is the first time they are discussing and thinking of how are they going to work together, which they never did because we [usually] have a set lesson. (Interview with R&D team 22 April after lesson)

Allowing Space to Explore

Allowing the children the freedom or rather space to explore was very important to Mrs. Sena. To be sure, Mrs. Sena's behaviour had been clarified and understood by the researchers, interview questions raised leading questions which she was able to explain in greater detail:

Teacher: I have taught them rhythm... they can come out with different rhythmic patterns...last week, this boy did some sounds, which I was quite like taken aback like I didn't teach that...so I know the child is thinking and the child is exploring. And the child will be teaching me instead of me teaching the child!

Teacher: When they work together, they can make coordinated sounds, sounds which have some rhythm that gets you to like the rhythm, the way they're working. They already won the challenge...that shows they can create. I wanted everybody to be part of it. I was

thinking how to break them to the different groups to have some order. And I also needed to respect their decisions not to take part. I need to make sure that it's a small group but everybody is a part of it [otherwise] too many people with too many decisions...could be quite difficult to manage...Now they are exploring the tunes or their rhythmic patterns. How am I going to move on? How am I going to move on from here? Thinking of the machines that are at the construction site and later, I am hoping that next week...a platform for them to perform because they have been working on it. And after they have performed, then I intend to ask them which group will come in, you know, give them the freedom to make the decision. Eventually, I want all of them to perform. That is what I am aiming to do. When they perform, they can see what their friends are doing, they can work on their own rhythmic patterns, they can work on their own coordination, and they also have this confidence that they can do something. you don't have to always be musically inclined. You can still make music you know, without perfect pitch (Interview with R&D team 22 April after lesson).

There is evidence of the 'structured' self in the teacher's reflections but the significant difference here was the net outcomes of her structured self – determination and motivation to make students explore the possibilities and have the students' explorations realized at a performance watched and supported by their peers. Missing were possible keywords like 'getting it right' or 'correct rhythm' or 'perfect performance'. In their place were 'freedom to make the decision', 'rhythmic patterns', coordination, confidence, and a telling phrase 'you can still make music...without perfect pitch' [sic]...which musically bespeaks an outmoded understanding of musical ability or musical potential...but as a metaphor, an apposite counterpoint to elitist views or constructions of musical ability.

Allowing Learners to Take Ownership

This intrinsic motivation which the teacher had hoped to infect the students with was clearly working. By learning to hand over decision making to the students themselves, Mrs. Sena discovered how much easier it was to engage learning by enthusing learners to explore and structure their own learning; facilitating instead of instructing or directing them. This form of learning contrasted starkly with her experience of their response to a 'set lesson' [sic]:

They were very excited...Could see their expression, their intensity to do it right...they all worked together...they had a lot of variety of things in their little small groups...we explored the things [sounds] that we can hear over the construction site...explored some of the sounds found at home. Then I asked them "do you think this is a good idea?"... after that, I said "let's think you're at the construction site and then you have this rhythm...you must have a beat that comes, you can feel the beat... and you like to move to the beat"...confidence level varied in different groups and the cohesiveness among the members [but] I felt they were more organized. They really worked together.

Mrs. Sena seemed to have altered her teacher-directed behaviours in tandem with allowing the students to take ownership and structure their learning towards performance. First, dynamics of the lessons took the form of questions, like 'do you think this is a good idea?' which meant the teacher was no longer judge and arbiter

of taste or 'good' but left it to the students to grapple with. Secondly, she worked with advocacy 'let's think you're at the construction site'; giving the students an opportunity to use their imagination, to draw on their sensory experience of situations they would not be unfamiliar with. This approach towards advocacy enabled a diversity of possibilities of sounds in a single setting which the students could each work with. Even with the instructive, the attempt was more of an exhortation to her class to work with musical ideas and use them effectively in their respective groups; you must have a beat...you can feel the beat... and you like to move to the beat.

After their final performance (20 May 2011), Mrs. Sena seemed as pleased with observable behaviour, particularly the change in their approach towards the final performance:

Ultimately it's the enjoyment and the exploration that the children had [going] through the process because it's the examinations and they have very little time to actually get into their group. So it's their own feelings, they can say that they did enjoy means it is really an enjoyable lesson for them and I think it is also relieving the stress. Something different, something out of the book, something that they work together. For them it's like, "I can use a spoon? I can use a sand paper? Yay!"...

But in the entire period of watching and watching over them, the teacher was aware of limitations; of relinquishing control; building confidence; chart progression in terms of short and longer term deliverables; of endless possibilities to explore options; time management to name but a few:

There is also very little time for me to say, "take these things and you just explore". We are working from one point to another point and I want to see the improvement or progression. If I had more time, I would have explored more, I also needed to move...what is my progress, or what am I going to achieve the next step, or what is the difference for the next step? We can't be having the same thing. For me, I needed to progress...my intention or my objective. (Interview with teacher, May 20, after final performance 2010)

Relinquishing Control

Evident in Mrs. Sena's structured ways was a very reasoned and reasonable reflection of relinquishing control, letting the students take ownership and control over decision making. Instead of micromanaging every step and procedure, she asked them to consider one aspect of the creative music-making process – diverse instrumental possibilities through everyday objects or recycled objects through rhythmic patterns as point/s of commonality, rhythm as measure, rhythm as flow, rhythm as means for coordination, rhythm as a means for working together musically and as social dynamics for cohesiveness.

Not surprisingly, the structured self of the teacher kept recurring in all of this uncertainty as a means to come to terms with decision-making of instruments, instrumentality, ideas, choices, continuity, commitment and completion through

realizing all these possibilities into a performance leading to subsequent performances which hinge on the same questions of uncertainty:

When you do all these things... "What is the purpose? Where am I heading? What am I trying to achieve? What is the ultimate goal?" I think we have always been like very guided and we know what is the ultimate goal. What are we going to work towards, what are we going to achieve, what are we going to do at the end of it. But over here, we really do not know what is going to be at the end. But we are working towards an end. So as we move on, ultimately I could say, "Okay, this is what I have achieved in my journey to this." (Interview with teacher, May 20, after final performance 2010)

Somewhere in all of these reflections was a sense of understanding her own 'reticence'; how to make sense of uncertainty in music-making – what she called creativity:

I went to your workshop...The workshop has enlightened me to this thing about creativity. That is actually...it's an important part...you can never see that if you follow the book. If you follow the book, it's everything that you just follow, but when you are given something and you explore and you come out with something that's different, then you can see; this person is a thinking person, this person is exploring, this person is really trying to do something different (Interview with teacher, May 20, after final performance 2010).

But her change wasn't about an abrupt transformation in behavior without appropriate justification. During the weeks leading to a final performance, she had already intimated at the need to re-structure her ways:

When I was doing the...lesson plan, I was thinking, I must start something and I must achieve something. Then, [upon reflection and exposure to other sessions] I said, "Hey, why am I so controlled? Why am I controlling them? Why am I like having this and that, you know? Why can't I give them freedom"? I realized that I'm a bit too rigid. I'm trying to understand this new dimension of creativity...I think that's what young people nowadays want – freedom to explore. Whereas [in] my time, we conform[ed] to things. I'm trying to understand this new dimension, I'm trying to let go. Trying to explore, because I do know that there's some value in it, you know. And it's interesting, it's captivating, you know. It's not old and stale (Interview between Researcher and teacher 15 April after first session).

Major and Cottle (2010) spoke to how students within composing and arranging learn better when the teacher takes on an advisor and facilitator role rather than the originator of ideas. Once she had discovered that her students were exhibiting creative behaviour when given the freedom to think independently, there was less difficulty in giving them the freedom to choose, possibilities and options to choose from, space and time (within reasonable boundaries) to come up with solutions, be accepting of these solutions, prompting them subtly not by telling them what to do but point them toward vocabularies (rhythms, sounds of tins, basketballs etc.) and eventually giving them the confidence to make informed decisions leading to making them responsible for their performance in front of their peers:

Working with the pupils was very interesting, exciting and enjoyable...they were eager to meet the challenges that I had assigned them. I worked with my pupils to showcase their talents and things that they had learnt in the music curriculum (e-correspondence with teacher, 3 May 2011).

This had ramifications for her own behaviour as a musician and as educator and subsequently her own effectiveness as a teacher, learning how to facilitate creative behaviour alongside the journey with her students:

I developed my competencies to be an effective music teacher. I now constantly reflect on my teaching processes while delivering the lessons and fine tuning along the way to meet the high expectations set by myself and the school. (e-correspondence with teacher, 3 May 2011)

Summary Thoughts: On Control, Confidence and Competence

In speaking to effective music education in the generalist classroom, Jeanneret and DeGraffenreid (2012) suggest that

Musical knowledge is not enough and neither is confidence. Knowledge and confidence must be part of an integrated whole with a best practice pedagogy that is learner-centered and mindful of the multiple ways in which children learn and what they each bring to the classroom. There is also a need for generalist teachers to contextualize the knowledge of their students' development with regard to music learning... Appropriate musical expectations that focus more on cooperative learning processes... may positively influence teacher willingness to engage with their students around music (p. 410)

Some keywords emergent from the classes and discussions in this study on facilitating creative activity are confidence and competence. Control emerged more subtly in the discussions. Mrs. Sena admitted to seeking control to the point of micromanaging lessons, units of work and schemes of work struggled with the thought of "letting go". Once she discovered however, that her students were exhibiting creative behaviour with her "letting go", she realized the value of handing over control of decision making in creative activity. She also discovered how she was being taught by her students and how they had taken ownership of their music-making.

Despite a lack of teacher-preparation, creative music-making activity in Mrs. Sena's reflections was expressed in terms of a symbiosis of confidence and competence but emergent in control. Control emerged here as empowerment; extended to both teacher and students. Control in the hands of the teacher and students extended beyond classroom management, curriculum and learning objectives and outcomes. Empowerment of the teacher became a function of school ambience – colleagues, including principals. Empowerment is also about shared values and beliefs emergent in schools in supporting creative endeavor not only in music but across subject areas. And it is our belief that creativity is the confidence to engage in informed decision making in creative activities.

Throughout the entire time of fieldwork, it was evident Mrs. Sena demonstrated assured confidence in her ability to teach in a primary school setting; teacher competencies emergent from her teacher training programme, albeit not in music. Her lack of confidence emerged only because she was participating in activities out of her sphere of established control and convention of management. As she freely admitted, her personality identified most strongly with structure. It would only be natural that a situation where she would have to relinquish control would have been

cause for anxiety. Nevertheless, her competence as a primary classroom teacher, her perceptiveness, her sensitivity to her students and her care and concern for nurturing them enabled her to discover her students had much to 'teach' the teacher. On the other hand, the teacher acknowledged much support from and relinquishing of control by her superiors and school leaders. And it would seem the ability to relinquish control informed the ambience of her school ethos.

But such a narrative could well be a minority report. There is no fixed and fast rule that another teacher with the same starting points (not qualified in music but trained as a generalist teacher) would have managed her class, competencies and teacher efficacy (competence) to facilitate creative behaviour.

Such a realization raises our earlier questions. Are the keywords control (particularly relinquishing of control), confidence (inviting, engaging and encouraging students to make informed decisions and take responsibility and ownership) and competence (student competence through the two prior keywords and teacher competence in being able to exhibit and exert control over uncertainty) sufficient ingredients to facilitate creative behaviour or creative music-making activities in a classroom? What requisite temperament identifies with a competent teacher facilitating creative-activities in a classroom?

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Chapter 4 Exegetical Commentary

Wei Shin Leong

I have noted that current aspirations for changes in Singaporean teachers' teaching practices towards a more student-centric and twenty-first century-based learning outcomes are actively promoted as a nation-wide innovation. This chapter describes a Singaporean music teacher's learning about and trying out the practice of creative music-making to perceive, conceptualize and express ideas. Most educators and stakeholders will probably agree at least at a rhetoric level that these are fundamental capabilities for creative expressions and critical thoughts since their own schooling era. However the issue is why there are consistent systemic challenges to supporting many Singaporean music teacher colleagues to be adequately prepared for such teaching-learning aspirations. Reading descriptions of Mrs. Sena's learning reminds me of the importance of attending to a teacher's professional learning, growth (Pedder and Opher 2013; Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002) and embodied knowing (Dall'Alba and Barnacle 2005) as we think of ways to emancipating any *impasse* of enabling changes of any teacher's classroom practice. By making use of the analytical lens of ways of seeing a teacher's internal 'subjective' world of attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, personality, values; an external 'objective' world of sources of information, stimulus or support; and authentic lived practice, I hope to shed further light on the questions raised in the foregoing discussion of various episodes of Mrs. Sena's 'learning as she goes' of creative music-making.

Running through Mrs. Sena's reflections and in particular to her espoused ambivalence, I am optimistic that an 'unqualified' Music teacher with limited prior music education training or engagement with creative music-making activities can teach music creatively. This is provided that teachers know, understand and are convinced of the context and purpose of creative music-making sufficiently to interrogate their own beliefs and practice. Awareness could quickly founder if teachers see no benefit, value or if they cannot envisage trying it out efficaciously.

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In the case of Mrs. Sena, the convergence of her changing values and recognition of the utility of creative music-making has produced a strong self-agency, which drives the process of her engagement with learning and practicing it. According to Pedder and Opher (2012), teaching and learning practices that teachers genuinely value, are practices they are more likely to prioritize, and as such, practices they are more willing to incorporate as embedded features of their classroom practices. Self-agency is a powerful enabler for fostering a teacher's learning and change. But the cycle of such self-persuasion may be short-lived if they are not supported to sustain the effort of reflection and experimentation, due to various impediments like lack of time, growing self-doubt and excessive external control.

As Fullan (1993) puts it, it is not enough for teachers to be exposed to new ideas, they need time to know where the new ideas fit in their past and future lived experience and how to become skilled in them in the present (and not just like them). The preceding sections did not describe the details of the precise methodology of how the 'basic pedagogical and facilitation ideas of creative music-making activities' have been introduced to Mrs. Sena as an external source of knowledge.

I believe that there was a thorough and systematic process of helping her to examine her attitudes, beliefs and values permeating her changing day-to-day music teaching, while she interacted with new knowledge. This should be very helpful in helping the research team members and participating teachers to understand and articulate issues of learning and change. This cycle of reflection and conversation, stimulated Mrs. Sena to ask and respond to difficult questions which could otherwise remain very tacit and potentially threatening to her self-esteem.

The early affirmation of success in her very determined experimentation and also the care and support given to her by the school to further her music training become other important 'external' factors that negotiate her 'internal' struggle for the lack of congruency of creativity with her own 'rigid' or 'structured' style of teaching and personality. The positive experience becomes part of her professional knowledge that changes her internal world of conception of teaching and learning in music (Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002). The mediation of internal and external orientation of Mrs. Sena's learning, together with the close alignment between values and practices, provide grounds for my optimism of the findings here. In seeking a way forward to supporting other teachers in their professional learning, constructive strategies need to be developed to ensure teachers can learn in their own authentic way while taking into account the support that can be given by the school, community and Higher Music Education Institution. This balancing of considerations of accountability, agency, competence and building competencies is not merely theoretical but points to the authenticity and complexity of professional learning.

Tensions from the competing agendas of competencies and competence, and consequent dilemmas in how Mrs. Sena reconciled her 'structured' and 'freed' selves, can also be discussed in terms of the vacillation within dilemmatic spaces of "certainty" and "uncertainty" (Helsing 2007). Mrs. Sena's initial preference of lesson delivery was more structured and she sought for clear outcomes by presumably limiting the musical roles that students can partake in the music classroom. As she

grew more confident and was willing to let the students take ownership and control, she was more open to embracing the uncertainty (and hence possibilities) of musical explorations in composing and improvisation. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that her students' desire for freedom to explore was some distance from her more 'conformist' reality, even though she was keen to explore this brave new world herself. Studying Mrs. Sena's dilemmatic spaces provides opportunities for understanding her professional identity as a music teacher in a very deliberate way. The dilemmatic spaces offers ways of connecting the formation of her past and present music teacher's professional identity and how she value and will continue to discover new professional knowledge, in this case through reconciling different expectations of creative music-making activities.

Finally in reflecting on Mrs. Sena's professional knowledge and learning, I discovered I saw her not just in terms of her music competence or competencies. I became aware that learning about her journey is much more than whether she has or has not successfully learnt and tried out creative music-making activities. Rather, knowing about this journey cannot be separated from knowing her lived experiences as a social participant in her world. Arguably, knowing about her learning therefore involves knowing her as a whole person and the different realities she resided in. Dall'Alba and Barnacle (2005) coined the term "embodied knowing" for understanding learning to be a socially constructed practice. Such an emphasis of knowing can help us see more clearly how Mrs. Sena has passed beyond restricted worlds of socially-culturally defined 'past', and being able to develop creative imaginations for the future.

Conceiving knowing as embodied reminds us that professional learning is not only an epistemological concern about what Mrs. Sena has known and acted on (or not know or unable to do), but also an ontological one that prompts us to ask further: *Who is Mrs. Sena?* In responding to this last question, we can then begin to appreciate and celebrate with her to the fullest extent, all the insights she has garnered, and in our own little way, wish her well as she continues to learn as she goes.

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Chapter 5 Dialogue

Eugene Dairianathan, Chee-Hoo Lum, and Wei Shin Leong

Wei Shin: How will reflecting on the details of the methodology of the professional learning sessions inform us of the change processes involved in Mrs. Sena's thinking and practices?

Chee Hoo: The workshops included a number of thematic activities that allowed for teachers to explore and experiment with sound ideas. It also involved teachers working in groups to create soundscapes, rhythmic and simple melodic compositions with their voices, body percussion, simple classroom instruments and various objects that they can find around them. Ideas on facilitation such as questioning techniques and differentiating what to say to each group as the creative process unfolds were discussed with the teachers. Groups were subsequently asked to perform their compositions followed by self-, peer- and/or teacher-evaluations. Ideas on revision of performances were also talked about and teachers actively worked through the revision process. Discussions at the end of each workshop encouraged teachers to share their thoughts about the creative process, of how they felt and what they were apprehensive about when exploring and creating as a group. Teachers were also asked to surface problems they think they might face or anticipate in doing creative activities with their students. For Mrs. Sena, the workshop sessions jolted a process of rethinking for her in terms of the possibilities and expanse of creative activities that can be made available for her students in the music classroom. It allowed her to extract particular ideas from the sessions to explore and experiment with her students while constantly reflecting and questioning her own ways of scaffolding and facilitating the process.

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Eugene: Are we certain on the other hand that we've been comprehensively cognizant of the change processes involved in Mrs. Sena's thinking and practices? Or of the history of Mrs. Sena as teacher, as learner, as reflexive and reflective teacher-practitioner? Since her own teaching and learning trajectories involved teaching and learning by experimenting, we've discovered her own dilemma in applying any single methodology across this period given her own discovery of the abilities of the students in her 'experiment'. Have we understood our own un/knowings of and about teaching-in-learning and learning-in-teaching? Or have we begun to understand teachers' proclivity, in their agency and instrumentality, for transforming teaching and learning? I doubt this chapter is complete without an entire narrative of Mrs. Sena but we acknowledge that such a narrative must be deferred to another forum or perhaps another chapter that enables autobiographies and auto-ethnographies. We do however, acknowledge that Mrs. Sena leaves wide-open through her own reflexion and reflection, opportunity to explore methodologies emergent throughout her 'experimental processes'.

Wei Shin: I am not referring to Mrs. Sena's methodology of professional learning but rather the prescribed activities and questions that facilitated what CH had mentioned of the 'unfolding of creative process'. I was coming more from a position that some readers may be interested in the details of the workshop so that they may venture on their own to create such learning spaces for other teachers. The particular kind of practical reasoning that had transpired within a particular prescribed methodology of 'workshopping' and how that may have resulted in the methodolog(ies) of 'learning as she goes'? Perhaps we are suggesting here that the distinction between teaching and learning of creative processes need to be further interrogated? I believe the same word is used for both in some languages.

Eugene: I return to your identification of two event/ualities: a prescribed methodology of 'workshopping' and the methodolog(ies) of 'learning as she goes'; with my emphasis of the contradiction of the conjunction and as possible disjunction. Nothing would have been easier to have teleologically mapped the workshopping with the emergent winning over of Mrs. Sena to confident decision making. Were we aware – perhaps was she even aware – that prescribed activities and questions would facilitate the 'unfolding of the creative process'? At the workshopping, Mrs. Sena represented her most resistant uncomfortable responses. Ironically, her conformity to the classroom intervention yielded outcomes I doubt even she was prepared for; hence her affirmation of what she saw in her learners. That is not to say she had not had a track record with her adhoc experimentation. I guess my question/ing questions usual trajectories that accompany use and user value. Mrs. Sena represents the initial resistance and later recruitment into the creative process. But we should ask if method/ology of prescribed activities and questions may have militated (contra facilitated) a process which might or might not have been commensurate with the 'unfolding of creative process'.

Chee Hoo: While the post class observation dialogues (beyond the workshop sessions) between Mrs. Sena and the researchers proved most useful for Mrs. Sena in deeply reflecting on her practice and approach, one must admit that this is a rarity.

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In reality, teachers in/of the arts are often left to their own devices with limited avenues or sounding boards that can allow them to constantly reflect upon their pedagogies and practice.

Wei Shin: So how could such findings in the light of comments like "minority report" and "rarity" become learning opportunities for teachers? How do we create more such spaces for teachers with/without formal support?

Eugene: I fully appreciate the 'minority report' and 'rarity' of such moments in teaching and learning. But it is these very moments that celebrate rare instances of exemplary teaching and learning in the hope that these moments emerge from a reflexive and reflective teacher-practitioner; which makes clear such abilities the purview and prerogative of <u>all</u> teachers; their un/preparedness of competencies notwithstanding. These rare moments fuel the search towards agency and instrumentality not as algorithm but as heuristic mode of inquiry of a teacher's trajectories towards effective classroom practice in advocacy towards self-actualisation, of both learner and teacher; whatever their identities and functions through that change.

Wei Shin: I agree, however, just like to add that I will suggest that the concept of 'relational agency' (Blackler 2009) is equally useful in understanding that any form of professional learning does not only reside in individual cognition, but in the resources found outside the individual mind.

Wei Shin: I believe Eugene made mention of systemic challenges which was not quite identified?

Eugene: When cultures (Mrs. Sena being one such exemplar) expressed or emergent in terms of performativity, agency and instrumentality target resourcefulness rather than re/sourcing in the permeability of such experiences, then they are functions of micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of operation challenging these systemic practices. Much has been said about egalitarian approaches to musical learnings through discursive strategies and tactics. Is enough being done in terms of this discursive-ness to engage learners through *live/d* curriculum? Such expressions make methodologies the subject of transcriptions and translations rather than prescription. Observing live/d practices in the classroom invites reflexive and reflective observations of how teachers 'learn as they go' as teacher, learner and classroom dispositions. But there are also observations of reflexive and reflective processes *beyond* the teacher, learner and classroom dispositions; exemplified in the ways such spaces are functions of dispositions of more senior leadership and management right up to the level of policy documentation.

Wei Shin: I think Eugene is trying to say that teacher's knowledge does not exist just as repositories of 'formal knowledge' from which teacher need to learn or dip into. Rather teacher's knowledge has to be constructed by each teacher in each moment of their practice and appear to exist as possible arguments – complete with claims, evidence, warrants, qualifications and sometimes rebuttal. An evidence-based (or informed) practice has to be more 'educational' by engaging the teachers

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to consider what are the practices in the classrooms that engages or constrains them in their discursive space, rather than one that is dominated only by externally led standards of what teachers should be knowing.

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Part III The Art of Digital Storytelling

Chapter 6 Making, Creating and Shaping Meaning Through the Art of Digital Storytelling

Prue Wales

Digital storytelling is an emerging and developing art form that is widely used informally on social network sites, like YouTubeTM and FacebookTM, and is gaining popularity in formal school settings as a means of engaging students' learning, providing them with a platform to express ideas and knowledge, and of fostering their multiliteracies. This chapter discusses *Youth Tell*, a digital storytelling project with Singapore youth, which aimed to encourage young people's media and literacy practices, and closely examines one of the stories a group of young people created. The *Youth Tell* study sought to investigate the participating youth's ability to communicate multimodally and to explore their interests and expressions of self through digital storytelling in order to better understand the ways they engaged in, interacted with, and managed new media platforms.

Creating and Making Meaning in a Digital Age

Gee (2008) reminds us that in this technological age notions of literacy are changing significantly and our understandings of literacy are expanding. Traditional theories that have dictated our understandings of how we communicate through language have become insufficient (Kress 2000). The advent of interactive electronic digital texts has called for different types of reading, writing and communication skills than the 'traditional' literacy skills found in linear 'print-based' forms (Luke 2000, p. 72). Lateral thinking is needed to work with hypertexts, critical thinking to source and choose information on the Web, and intercultural understanding when operating in virtual communities (Ibid). When we think about literacy today, we need to take into consideration the multitude of text types now available to us, as well as the social

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contexts in which they are applied and by whom, and the how they connect to information or media technologies (New London Group 2000, p. 9).

The emphasis on literacy steered by many governments and schools around the world has principally been dominated by a focus on the development of skills in the reading, writing and comprehension of printed texts. This has been particularly evident in English Language learning in the examination dominated education system in Singapore. With its citizens its chief resource, Singapore's education system focuses on economically driven subjects, particularly mathematics, sciences, technology and English Language (Cheah 1998; Kwek et al. 2007). A multicultural, multilingual country with a diverse ethnic population consisting of 74 % Chinese, 13 % Malay, 9.2 % Indian, and 3.8 % others (Singapore Department of Statistics 2010), Singapore has four official languages – Mandarin, Malay, Tamil (considered Mother Tongue) and English. However, English is 'the dominant language', crossing Singapore's 'interracial divides', and its proficiency is greatly valued as it is employed for purposes of 'administration, business and education' (Kwek et al. 2007). All classes in Singapore schools, apart from 'Mother Tongue', are conducted in English, yet just over 32 % of the population converses in English (Singapore Department of Statistics 2010) at home.

One of the outcomes of the Singapore education system's culture of testing has been the pressure it places on students to 'achieve' academic success and on parents and teachers to help them get there (Cheah 1998). Students begin a basic form of streaming in Primary 4 (9–10 years). Streaming is formalized at the end of Primary 6 after students take the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) that determines the stream they will enter in secondary school – gifted, express, normal-academic or technical streams. Once in a stream, there is little movement and students tend to stay where they have been assigned. Consequently, great emphasis has been placed on examinations resulting in a prevalence of instructional and didactic teaching (Kwek et al. 2007). Thus teachers tend to position themselves as 'sages on the stage' leaving little, if any, space for student centred learning. However, recent initiatives, programmes and reports by Singapore's Ministry of Education such as *Teach Less*, Learn More (MOE n.d.a), PAL (Programme for Active Learning) (MOE 2010b), STELLAR (Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading) (MOE n.d.b) and PERI (Primary Education Review and Implementation) (MOE 2009) and SERI (Secondary Education Review and Implementation) (MOE 2010a) express a desire for and a commitment to changing traditional teaching practices. We are witnessing clear shifts in literacy and learning policies in Singapore. Reports now advocate for teachers to foster more engaging pedagogical approaches and practices in their classrooms. The Youth Tell project wanted to move away from the intense examination and instructional teaching paradigm, aiming instead to work with teachers to develop engaging youth centred programmes that would lead to the formation of a digital storytelling community. We wanted to foster Singapore youths' personal and social interests through multiliteracy practices.

Within an education context, multiliteracies centres on the notion that there are multiple modes of representation, and the scope is far greater than 'language' (New London Group 2000, p. 5). When we communicate with others we rarely express ourselves in one mode but multimodally, or rather through a variety of modes

(Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996). These modes can be standardized, orderly meaning-making resources such as 'image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech and sound effect' (Jewitt & Kress 2008, p. 1). Thus working multimodally can include 'not just linguistic but also visual, gestural, three dimensional,' and other modalities (Pahl and Rowsell 2006). With computers, digital phones and other devices, today's youth work across modalities in their day-to-day lives. They are frequently engaged in experiencing and communicating on multimodal platforms such as through instant messaging, blogging, social networking, online gaming, video, music, digital story-telling, etc. (Rennie and Patterson 2010). Youth Tell provided an opportunity to explore how Singapore youth constructed and made meaning using a range of modes in their digital storytelling.

Contextual Meanings: Unpacking Youth Tell

Digital stories can mean different things to different people; and definitions of digital storytelling range from the specific to loose. Robin (2008, p. 224) identifies digital stories as digitally constructed personal narratives highlighting important lived experiences. The Center for Digital Storytelling sees digital storytelling in a similar way defining it as a workshop based process in which people create short 3-5 min autobiographic stories constructed 'by combining recorded voice, still and moving images, and music or other sounds' (CDS 2011). We wanted a more open approach however and felt uncomfortable with youth feeling they had to tell stories about themselves, so we looked to Skinner (2008) and Oehler (2008). Skinner (2008) has a more open classification positioning digital stories as narrative constructs combining multiple media. This is supported by Oehler (2008) who says that since 'digital' and 'story' are synonymous with multiple meanings and interpretations, digital storytelling can simply be defined as a combination of digital media placed within a 'coherent narrative' (p. 15). The Youth Tell researchers took this more open concept of digital storytelling and like Hull and Nelson (2005) accepted the notion of digital storytelling being a multimedia form consisting of images and/or video segments with background music and/or a voice over narrative. Quite simply digital storytelling involves using digital media in the presentation of a narrative. The incorporation of all these elements positions digital storytelling as a form that is both interdisciplinary and integrative, in that it can work across subject areas and art forms.

Digital storytelling has been advocated as a form that is interdisciplinary (Benmayor 2008), participatory and immersive (McLellan 1999). It is recognised as a medium that is multimodal, inquiry-based, critical and reflective and acknowledged for the way it connects story-makers to different kinds of situations and experiences. Within the educational context, digital stories have been advocated for a broad range of purposes and outcomes. Digital storytelling has been endorsed as a pedagogy – whether as a 'signature' or 'social' pedagogy (Benmayor 2008) or a narrative pedagogy (Gilbert et al. 2005). Researchers and educators have recognized its potential in constructing identity (Murakami 2008), giving agency (Hull and Katz 2006),

reflecting on practice (Freidus and Hlubinka 2002), fostering art education technology (Chung 2007), and developing knowledge and skills in language (Ng et al. 2010) and second language, and learning (McGeoch 2012) amongst others.

The chief purpose behind Youth Tell was to develop a range of digital storytelling workshops suitable for youth in formal and informal Singapore settings that would engage them in media and literacy practices. The research team, consisting of two principal investigators (of which I was one) and a team of six research assistants and associates (two of whom were members of the team from beginning to end) wanted to cultivate the participating youth's literacy practices through the development of multimodal, digital texts in which the young people could explore and express their shifting and emerging identities. More specifically we wanted to engage the participants' creativity, agency and voice through the development of their digital storytelling practices, and discover if there was anything we could learn from the young people's informal practices that could be tapped into and utilized in a formal education setting. My own interest in storytelling stemmed from my background in arts education and specifically in drama. I was interested in the way the arts can be used to stretch the imagination and provide perspectives on the 'lived world' through the stories they convey (Greene 1995). As Maxine Greene tells us:

the extent to which we grasp another's world depends on our existing ability to make poetic use of our imagination, to bring into being the "as if" worlds created by writers, painters, sculptors, filmmakers, choreographers, and composers, and to be in some manner a participant in artists' worlds reaching far back and ahead in time (p. 4.)

I was interested in the imaginative potential digital stories might provide, particularly through the possible applications of different art forms in the construction of the stories. Nathan (in Ewing 2010, p. 1.) posits that we work with the arts to express and comprehend our thoughts and feelings, joys, woes and conflicts. Each art form speaks in its own language, 'communicating in its own mode with particular knowledge, skills and symbols' and consequently each form needs 'to be seen and understood as different kinds of literacies' (Ewing 2010: 7). I was interested in discovering the types of art forms the participating young people would work with and privilege to express themselves in their story-making.

As researchers we were highly conscious of the constant demands made on youth to learn in and out of school, leaving little time for self-expression and play, we wanted to encourage the development of an evolving, flexible classroom space in which students could work on projects they felt were pertinent to their 'everyday lives', issues and practices. Moreover, we wanted to push the limits of what is considered 'normal' Singaporean school practice (Anderson and Wales 2012).

A longitudinal qualitative research study involving a series of Ethnographic Case Studies, *Youth Tell* took place in out-of-school-community-centres and a local secondary school over a three and one half year period. The study began after my co-researcher and I had completed a 6-month digital storytelling pilot study with youth aged between 14 and 19 at an informal youth centre (situated on the ground floor of a local neighbourhood Housing Development Board apartment block) in the 'heartlands' of Singapore.

Youth Tell participants ranged from 8 to 24 years of age. Within the school setting, we only worked with 'normal-technical' students, those in the lowest stream of the Singapore school system, as we were keen to identify ways in which those seen as 'low achievers', particularly in literacy, could communicate through the composition of multimodal texts. Over the course of the study we worked with six classes of normal-technical students ranging from Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 and four community centres. Some classes of students made one story, others two or more. At the informal learning centres some students worked with us for the duration of the data collection period and made multiple stories, collectively and individually. The facilitating teachers, artists and researchers developed a suite of digital storytelling workshops with a variety of social and educational purposes and outcomes.

We originally started off with simple equipment such as cameras, scanners, videos and PC computers. Art materials were also made available and included coloured paper, paints, crayons and clay/plasticine. The art materials allowed students to construct their own images by drawing or painting or constructing collages or sculptures and then photographing them. Some youth worked with photographs (new, old and accessed) and others with video footage or a mixture of both. A range of story genres unfolded, including fictional narratives (ghost stories, gangster tales, comedies, romances), personal stories (reflections, biographies, lived experiences), travelogues, music videos, etc. We were keen to use inexpensive platforms that most youth could get access to. Youth created their stories using Windows MovieMaker in the early stages of the programme because most schools had access to it as it was included as part of a PC package. However, as participating youth developed their skills they wanted to stretch their skills and started to request working with different programmes and equipment.

Data was collected over a period of 34 months. Collected data included video footage of workshops and student interactions, artefacts including the youth's digital stories, storyboards, constructed art works, student generated digital photographs, video footage and workbooks, individual and focus group interviews conducted with participating youth, teachers, social and cultural workers and trainers as well as the research team's fieldnotes and reflective journals, and notes from meetings and group analyses sessions. Over the course of the project over 200 stories were made. Some youth constructed one story, others multiple; sometimes they worked alone, and others in groups.

In the next section I discuss one digital story that was created by a group of four Secondary 1 students from the 'normal technical' stream over three afternoons. This group of 13-year-olds, two boys and two girls, made the story at the very end of the *Youth Tell* project during a special workshop that catered for participating youth from both the formal and informal settings. The group had some knowledge of digital storytelling having just completed a story for their Social Studies class. The collaborative digital story the group constructed is a fictional narrative with a 'message'. The collaboration involved the students creating and shaping their story as a 'cross arts' piece, drawing on visual art (through 2D paper animation), media, performance studies, and to a lesser extent, music. I apply a multimodal analysis to the story, and identify how the young authors worked across the arts to generate and

produce layers of meanings through their texts. I consider how the arts and digital storytelling offer opportunities for literacy development and expression through their multimodal nature

Understanding Meaning: Working Multimodal Analysis

Lundby (2008) and Scheidt (2006, in Lundby) suggest that digital storytelling should not be viewed in the same way as written tales or oral narratives but as its own individual form. 'Digital storytelling' says Lundby, 'creates its own composition' (2008, p. 9). The composition of the story discussed in this chapter, and of the digital stories constructed in the *Youth Tell* project, worked across and integrated a range of art forms. Bearing this in mind, Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) work on visual design analysis and Halverson's (2010) applications of the four elements of filmic analysis have been helpful.

I approach the Secondary 1 students' story, Awesome, as a semiotic text, and apply a multimodal analysis to understand the group's conceptual constructions. 'Semiotic tradition' tends to examine 'individual signs and their simple, direct meanings in terms of what they connote or symbolise' while a multimodal approach looks at how the 'signs are used in combination' (Machin 2007). The analysis of Awesome has involved breaking down the group's narrative composition into basic components. In doing this I have divided my analysis into sections where I first describe a section of the story, before analysing it. Each section of analysis is presented in italics. In undertaking the detailed analysis, which took place after the project was completed, I allude to three of Halverson's (2010) four filmic elements. These are mise-en-scène – or what is within the camera frame such as setting (including background and foreground), characterization (expressive skills such as gaze, movement, gesture, costume) and properties as well as colour, tone, focus, spacing, alignment; editing (this includes special effects and transitions and other work done in assembling the film after footage/photographs have been shot – e.g. the illusion of movement created in the 2D animation); and cinematography (camera angles and movement, techniques and framing and lighting, focus). I have not included an analysis of sound, the reasons for which I discuss later. Many of these elements can be found in the work of Kress and Leeuwen. However, I have considered also composition, contrast, framing, genre, metaphor, mood, pace, rhythm, signs, and text types (Kress 2010).

Understanding the Power of Friendship, Failure and Success

Awesome is a 2D stop animation digital story that was created in approximately 12 h over three afternoons. The group consisted of highly committed girls and two initially enthusiastic boys who lost some of their drive when they realized their zombie story would be too complex for the tight timeline and choose to construct

a story with a more moralistic theme. With them in the workshop were three of their teachers (who also constructed a story), a group of Secondary 2 students as well as youth from a community centre. A professional local animation company, *Animagine Pte Ltd*, facilitated the workshop. After being introduced to the basic elements of animation and individually creating strips for a praxinoscope – an early animation device in which a strip of images is spun on a cylinder with mirrors animating them to create the illusion of movement, e.g. a bouncing ball, a running man – the group began to devise their story.

The students were instructed to construct a clear, simple narrative that could be told in 1 min and contained a moral or message. This fit in well with the school's ethos of fostering values of character and citizenship, a primary goal of the teachers when working with normal-technical students, and was a criteria set by Animagine who firmly espouse the importance of stories containing an idea, moral or message – particularly when working in educational settings. The Secondary 1 students, after giving up the idea of a zombie story constructed a simple story about a school girl struggling with her grades who gets some help from her friend. The boys lost enthusiasm about content and while fairly happy to work with the technology and do some drawing decided that cutting out paper shapes was girls' work. The two girls worked consistently for the three afternoons while the boys were less committed. However, once the story was completed the boys were very proud of their own contributions and the story as a whole. Time constraints meant that the participating youth were unable to develop their own soundtracks. Animagine added the story's soundtrack after the workshops concluded. While the youth were able to discuss the types of sound they would like, sound has not been included in the analysis of the story as it is problematic in terms of the ownership and thus, whose meaning making it is.

Made in 2D animation the students did not construct a realistic representation of life but rather employed a range of cartoon-like elements to create a non-naturalistic comic book/storybook style. Some of the comic book conventions they used in the construction of their frames were speech balloons, captions, simple backdrops and properties, and thick black outlines to define and emphasise the shapes (similar to a colouring book that has been filled in). *Awesome* involved the construction of three backdrops on which the action of the narrative unfolds. Different shades of coloured paper were cut into shapes to represent spaces, people/characters, objects, emotions, expressions and actions. The Girl and her Friend were created with a cut-out-body-shape (rather like pears) that could be re-used on different backgrounds/settings. Other body-parts such as arms, feet, eyes and mouths were cut out separately so that they could move and/or display multiple expressions. The paper-cut-out characters and objects were placed carefully on the backdrops, also constructed from coloured paper, forming a collage, and photographed to create a series of still images or frames.

To move a character, the angle or position of the body and its parts might be adjusted slightly. For instance the arms might wave up and down, or a half circle mouth might be replaced with an open circle so the mouth appears half then fully opened. For each slight movement or adjustment another photograph/frame was

¹ This will be discussed in a future article.

taken until a sequence of photographs was collected. These photographs or frames were placed in sequence using Animagine's animation software programme, $AniMaker^{TM}$, and when played in succession give the illusion of a character/s moving. For example, large eye shapes with round dark pupils might be placed on a character's face, photographed and then be replaced with single black lines and photographed, only to be changed back to the wide eyes, etc. When these frames are placed sequentially in the $AniMaker^{TM}$ they give the illusion of eyes blinking.

Awesome is the story of a cheerful schoolgirl who is devastated to receive an 'F' for a test. A friend offers to help her study and together they cram for their next examination. The girl is delighted to receive an 'A' for her next test and advises her audience to 'never give up in life when there is still hope'.²

Awesome's opening mise en scène reveals an outdoor location. An arc of green paper with some spiky black doodles, made with a thick marker pen, fills the lower section of the frame. Above it, but separated with a black comic-book-style line, is an expanse of light blue paper. In the top left-hand corner sits a large yellow globe that has been cut off in the top corner of the frame. Triangles of yellow sit slightly away from the globe. Two white shapes, curvaceous at the top and flat on the bottom, appear suspended in the top right hand. A thick black line outlines each piece of paper to emphasize the representative shapes and patterns. Movement enters the frame.

The opening mise en scene conveys a spacious external setting, a rare feature in Singapore. The composition is balanced as we recognize the stylistic comic/story book style in which the shapes imply green grass, blue sky, the shining sun and harmless white clouds. The bright colours give us the sense of a beautiful day; warm, serene and peaceful. We could read this as all is well with the world.



Image 1: Awesome's Opening sequence reveals a happy girl with sparkling eyes

A Girl enters the frame from the right, moving sideways her body and gaze faces the audience. She stops momentarily in the centre of the image. She has a pear-like

² Awesome can be viewed on the *Youth Tell* website at http://youthtell.wix.com/dsw2#!youthtube

triangular-shaped body, long pink arms with mitten shaped hands, and longish white feet with no visible legs. Her arms are stretched out wide with her right arm pointing high into the air, her left arm down to the ground. A half-oval-white shape, signifying a smiling mouth, curves upwards. She has large black rounds for eyes that are scattered with squarish pink dots. The top of the pear-shaped body is flanked with a dome of yellow hair, to the sides of which are suspended two large teardrops of yellow that curl up at the ends signifying pigtails. In the middle of the yellow dome pointy edges hang slightly over the eyes indicative of a fringe. Two yellow floral shapes with pink heart centres pop up to the left and right of the frame on the green 'grass' while two yellow star shapes appear in the blue 'sky', one slightly to the left of the girl, underneath the sun, the other just above the girl's hand. In an instant these shapes vanish and the girl sidesteps to the left and departs the frame only to sidestep back in after a moment's pause.

There is a quick pace to the scene. The Girl's jaunty entrance and bright white smile communicates a cheerful and happy character. Her black eyes, dotted with pink, metaphorically imply that she has stars in her eyes, while the broad spread of her arms implies and open and welcoming nature. This is supported by her gaze towards the audience which conveys a mood of confidence and contentment. The sudden appearance of stars and flowers, which vanish again in an instant, suggest the Girl is flourishing; a rising star even who lives a magical existence. One star materializes just above her right hand, as if she has just thrown it up in the air, or could catch it. Yet, the stars and flowers vanish just as quickly as they arrive suggesting that good things can vanish in an instant. When the Girl runs out of the frame, there is a moment's pause before she runs back in, as if excited and keen to be back in centre stage.



Image 2: The Girl discovers she has failed and cried pools of tears

A red hand holding a piece of paper appears from the top right hand corner of the frame. It places the oblong piece of 'white' paper into the girl's hand. Black horizontal lines fill the bottom half of the paper signifying text. A large circled red 'F' fills most of the top half of the paper next to which is written, also in red, '0/100'. The uplifted half circular white mouth reverses to a grimace. A series of blue paper shaped tears run down each check in successive frames and form two

blue 'pools of tears' in front of the girl. A brown cloud-shape replaces the two white clouds and emits a forked bolt of white that travels down to the girl's head. She drops her right hand and the white paper falls to the ground.

The arrival of the 'paper' transforms the mood of the story into something more ominous. Bright colours are still present but these are interrupted with darker colours and tones entering the frame: reds, browns and a darker blue. The emerging red hand can symbolically be read as the 'hand of correction' - the teacher's hand, which comes from the 'right'. Yet the teacher is faceless, it is only the hand that delivers the Girl's results. We know it is an assessment result because we understand the context of school and its signs. The red F signifies a 'mark' of failure; 0/100 tells us that the girl has not just failed but achieved the lowest possible mark, nothing. She becomes 'worthless'. The composition of the test sheet emphasizes the 'failure'. The 'F' is a focal point – it is not only written in red, it takes up almost half the sheet. We can't miss it. Yet, the pace in which we witness the Girl's smile transform into a grimace, her arm drop, the paper fall, the dark brown cloud emerge and the bolt of lightning striking her implies that this is sudden and that she is surprised and shocked. Her life has turned upside down; her smile physically reverses. A dark cloud comes over her; a metaphorical image of depression. Life, which moments ago seemed bright and shiny, suddenly is hot. We witness the Girl's distress as she starts to weep. Tears run down her 'face', forming a puddle at her feet - another metaphor that perhaps she is drowning in tears. Her world has darkened.



Image 3: The Girl's friend makes an inquiry

The animation 'cuts' from the green field and blue sky and transforms to another location. Black fills the top two-thirds of the frame, orange runs across the bottom in a straight line – there is no longer an arced horizon but a 'flat' red/orange earth. The girl stands to the left. The girl's eyes are now two arrows, like mathematic symbols for 'greater than' and 'lesser than' like such, > < . From these narrow representations of eyes fall blue shaped tears outlined with a black marker. A white bolt of lightning is suspended right of centre against the black sky. Another girl (the Friend) with a similar pear-shaped body bounces in from the left of the frame. She has a bright red body, white feet and a similar dome of yellow hair with high 'pigtales'. Her eyes, large rounds of pink paper have semi circles drawn in the bottom section to represent irises,

with dots in the middle conveying pupils, and half circles at the top from which have been drawn a series of short lines signifying eyelashes. A black circle characterizes her mouth into which has been placed a small red oval shape denoting her tongue or back of her throat. The Friend moves towards the Girl, her body rocking from side to side, and slips her hand behind the Girl's. A green question mark appears by the side of her head just below the lightning bolt. A moment later, a speech bubble proclaiming, 'Don't cry' replaces the question mark. The Friend continues to bounce from side to side and her mouth is transformed to a half shaped oval. Another speech bubble appears and reads, 'Let's work hard together. I'll help!' The Girl's grimace transforms back into an upturned smile. A speech bubble appears above the Girl's pig-tale saying 'Ok!'

The Girl's world transforms into an environment of black and orange, of darkness and fire. She could almost be in hell itself. Her eyes are narrow slits, pointed arrows that could symbolize the sharp pain of failure. She continues to cry blue tears, as if there is no comfort, and she is in her own hell. The arrival of the Friend heralds help. The Friend is open mouthed and rocks from side to side, we instantly read her concern. As the Girlfriend moves closer to the Girl, she appears to take and hold her hand and then moves her arm as if she is about to put an arm around her. We understand that she wants to support and help her friend. The question mark represents an inquiry, for instance it could be saying, 'What's wrong?' 'Why are you crying?' 'Can I help you?' 'Do you want to talk about it?' A simple question mark allows the audience to ask their own questions. The offer of support is seen spatially through the composition of movement and hand holding as well as through the speech bubble that states, 'I'll help'. She does not offer help blindly, saying that she will do it for her, but rather she implies that the Girl needs to work hard and she makes an offer 'let's work hard together'. A subtext emerges. What is needed to achieve is not an isolated and lonely job but rather something to be shared and worked on together. The Girlfriend offers companionship and perhaps a work ethic as well as help.



Image 4: The Girl falls asleep in the library

Signage in the top left hand corner of the frame tells us the narrative has shifted to the 'LIBRARY...' The background has changed. The two girls are positioned side-by-side smiling, their upper bodies (faces) are set against the light brown background at the top

of the frame, Both now wear spectacles. Girl, situated on the left hand side of the frame, has square shaped glasses; her Friend positioned next to her on the right has round shaped John Lennon style spectacles. The Girl's eyes are once again wide black rounds with dots of pink. Running over the lower part of their bodies is a black sheet on paper suggesting they are sitting behind a long table/desk – on which their smiles rest. In front of each girl, on the table/desk, is a white piece of paper with lines drawn, representing text, and thus 'work/study' of some sort. Each girl holds an overly large long pencil constructed from stripes of yellow and red paper with a white point and black tip that balances on the 'work' (a white piece of paper in front of them). The Girl's mouth transforms into a fluid amoebic shape from which dribbles blue. Her eyes transform into straight black lines and her glasses drop to a crooked angle. The Friend's arm and hand move up and down swiftly, as if to shake the Girl. Two 'Z's float up from the Girl's head while four straight black lines run almost perpendicular to the Friend's hand. The Girl's 'closed eves' open to black circles and her 'amoebic-shaped' mouth transforms into a black circle containing a red dot. Both pencils move rapidly. The starry eyes (black with pink dots) return to the Girl and the pencils move on the paper.

This scene conveys the 'difficulties' of hard work. Both girls wear glasses, a symbol that they are both studying hard. The Girl, now in square glasses, has transformed into a 'square eyes'. She finds studying so exhausting her glasses slip, as do her study habits, and she falls asleep. We know she is asleep because her mouth dissolves and she dribbles blue drops of saliva. Just to affirm the situation, two Zs travel above her head – a comic strip and cartoon symbol for sleep/snoring. The rapid upward and downward motions of the Girlfriend's hand and arm convey that she is trying to shake her friend awake, which is supported by the perpendicular lines indicating the rigour of the shaking action. These perpendicular straight lines are another comic book convention sign. The Girl opens her eyes but they are black circles, perhaps a reference to the circles we get around our eyes when we are tired, perhaps to indicate that she is shell shocked, that her pupil are dilated. The pencils begin to move and we get the sense that the two girls are back hard at work. This scene also makes inferences about the friendship between the two girls. The Girlfriend, determined to help her friend pass her next test, will not let her sleep. She needs to be diligent and keep her friend on track. The Girl accepts her Friend's help and interference (waking her up).



Image 5: The Girl becomes a star 'A' pupil

The story cuts to the green grass, blue sky and two bouncing clouds seen in the opening scene. On the grass placed symmetrically to the right and left of the frame are two yellow flower shapes with pink heart centres, next to each sits a yellow shaped star. (The world appears back in balance.) Text on a white piece of paper sits under the clouds proclaiming, 'Few weeks after the exam'. This informative signage floats across to the middle of the page. The Girl and Girlfriend sidestep into the frame from opposite directions; both are still wearing glasses. They stand next to each other smiling but are separated by the arrival of a piece of paper that comes between them. On the bottom part of the paper sit three squiggly lines, indicating text. Above these lines is a large circled red 'A'. A yellow star is positioned at the top and bottom of the test.

The Girl has transformed from failure to 'star'. Here we have our happy ending. The mise en scene is almost symmetrical with a flower and star positioned to the left and right of the frame, indicating the world is back in harmony. Both girls continue to wear glasses that they started to wear in the library, conveying that they are still studious and hardworking. Moreover, this suggests the Girl has transformed her working habits. The girls remain in close proximity even when separated by the arrival of the marked exam paper implying the power of friendship.



Image 6: The moral of the story

The scene cuts again and we see the Girl, still wearing glasses, standing against a bright orange background, smiling. A large pink square speech bubble announces 'Never give up in life when there is still hope ©'.

While the narrative has ended, the digital story continues – there is one final element to complete: the message. This is delivered against an orange backdrop, a colour that could signify brightness, warning or attention. But it is just a colour; it does not signify or connote a physical environment. The authors want to ensure that the audience understands the moral of the tale – don't give up. There is always hope.

Conclusion: Rewriting Cultural Understandings

Hegemonic discourses and understandings of normal technical students argue that they typically struggle with literacy and experience difficulties completing work or producing comprehensive written texts. Teachers at the school reiterated these ideas frequently. 'When you give them (NT students) paperwork, ah, even their computer application, their daily paper, they struggle with it', the school's Head of Normal Technical students informed us. Their teacher told us that he rarely received more than a couple of sentences or small paragraph of writing from the students. The school's Head of English told us that technical students struggle to 'tease' out ideas and explore issues with any depth. "NT (normal technical) kids face obstacles of literacy and numeracy...when you, you can't get your reading, writing well, uh, how else are you going to learn new things," said the school Principal. Yet although the students might struggle to 'write' their ideas down or articulate them 'orally' it is clear that they can create comprehensive multimodal texts.

Awesome, while a simple story, contains considerable depth through which layers of meaning can be found. Moreover it is a strong piece of aesthetic work in its structure and composition. The story has a clear narrative arc and a theme, the central character develops as the story progresses, the narrative shifts from one location to another, there is action and dialogue, stillness and movement, mood and rhythm as well as dramatic tension – all elements of a good storytelling. The happy Girl experiences a setback, which causes anxiety and tension. She is offered help by a friend, works hard and overcomes her adversity. The Secondary 1 students showed that while they might be seen to struggle with their 'written', and even 'oral' texts, they are able to work with a range of literary conventions through the arts and digital media – be it an image, a gesture, a gaze or expression, the list goes on. The Secondary 1 students' digital story included the use of symbol and metaphor, pathos and humour, setting, character, tension and mood.

Many other stories created by 'low academic achievers' during *Youth Tell* demonstrated high multimodal literacy skills; Youth generally worked to their strengths. Those who were good at visual art and enjoyed art-making created their own images, those keen on photography or filmmaking shot their own film, others sourced image. Some narrated their stories or created their own sound effects through soundscapes; some worked from songs they had composed. Had there been more time in the animation workshop it would have been interesting to observe what kinds of sound and music the Secondary 1 students might have added. Demonstrations and music videos of *Youth Tell* the participating youth constructed a range of different story types and genres. These included autobiographical and biographical narratives, stories about friendships and adventures, birthdays and celebrations, hobbies and passions, point of view pieces, informative stories and documentary style episodes, ghost stories, love stories, enacted dramatic stories, travelogues, skateboarding demonstrations and music videos.

An understanding and knowledge of multiliteracies is essential in these times. We no longer live, work and/or socialize in monocultural spaces – certainly not in multicultural Singapore. As Kress tells us that,

Communication is multimodal: by speech at times, as a spoken comment, as instruction or request; by gaze; by actions – passing an instrument, reaching out for an instrument; by touch. (2010, p. 32).

The arts as forms of communication can express thoughts and concepts, information and ideas, feelings, and stories. Digital storytelling is an interdisciplinary, integrative art form and as Lundy tells us, 'creates its own composition'. It has been applied in a range of educational settings for pedagogical purposes including as a way to teach language learning (Ng et al. 2010), narrative and science (Gilbert et al. 2005), twenty first century skills and technology (Robin 2008), and art technology (Chung 2007). It has been seen as a 'worthy' and 'engaging' pedagogy. As a multimodal literacy, I believe digital storytelling can have a firm place within the arts as well as the literacy classroom. The facilitation of the workshops by professional animators from *Animagine Pte Ltd* helped students focus on aesthetic composition and meaning making within their narrative form in a creative way. Moreover, students who had experienced so much failure in the literacy/English language classroom had a highly successful experience that demonstrated highly competent communication skills.

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Chapter 7 Exegetical Commentary

Michael Anderson

About Digital Storytelling

The prominence of digital storytelling in the practice and research literature in the last decade or so has been quite striking. On the face of it digital storytelling is a simple approach that employs what is now everyday technology. In a sense that is the strength of it, that the seemingly banal technology of PowerPoint has been re-invented to support young people's media literacy. In Prue Wales' case reported here the technology has been used to provide students that have been marginalized by society and the education system they inhabit a voice to speak out. In this brief response I thought I might open up a dialogue about the approach from my own perspective as a researcher and teacher in drama education and technology. I'd like to start by discussing some appealing aspects about this approach to learning, before moving to some of the challenges for this approach to learning and where I see some of the gaps before making some suggestions about how digital storytelling might be extended and enhanced through the employment of drama education strategies to deepen and enrich the process.

The Strengths of Digital Storytelling

The case study presented in this piece provides some obvious benefits of this approach for students who are not "academically successful". Perhaps it is the accessible and everyday technology or the use of the aesthetic through the images that are projected that all at once act as an illustration of the story and an aid to memory. In the case of *Youth Tell* young people who have been silenced by a

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system that at times does not value what they have to offer. The chance to tell their stories perhaps for the first time provides an apparent catharsis and is an important part of these young people's understanding that in a civil and democratic society their voice can and should be part of the broader conversation. So in this sense digital storytelling not only provides an important (though under-researched) link to literacy learning but also creates the opportunity for cultural citizenship and a more agentic way of seeing oneself in the world. As Stevenson argues (1997, 2003) initiatives such as digital storytelling have the effect of promoting cultural citizenship through developing and embodying creative and self-expressive work. Participants in these programs use a variety of techniques to imagine and re-create the future. By creating their own stories young people express diverse aesthetic preferences and reconnect the 'self' with the 'other' in a global community (O'Toole 2006). If cultural citizenship is the attempt to "...foster dialogue, complexity and communication in place of silence and homogeneity" (Stevenson 2003, p. 345) digital storytelling is an ideal process to examine agency and how young people can actively evolve as cultural navigators.

Another strength of this approach is the opportunity for young people to engage with multiple art forms in the making of these narratives. Chris Anderson (2012) argues that we "are all Makers. We are born Makers", and that:

Projects shared online become inspiration for others and opportunities for collaboration. Individual Makers, globally connected this way, become a movement. Millions of DIYers, once working alone, suddenly start working together (p. 13).

Anderson's argument provides some important implications for young people in these kinds of projects. Not only is there an opportunity to make for themselves and their peers, in C. Anderson's terms the opportunity to broadcast themselves as active artists or Makers is also a potent opportunity. This moves beyond mere engagement or absorption of an art form. This process encourages young people to engage with multiple art forms to weave narratives that could be potentially shared with international audiences.

Some Challenges for Digital Storytelling

One of the issues that arose for me in this case study was the extent to which these young people were vulnerable and exposed in the process of telling their stories. One of the "gifts" of process drama is its understanding of the importance of metaxis – of simultaneously inhabiting a role and one's actual identity (Boal 1995; Bolton 1979). The work here while powerful and cathartic allowing young people to tell there own stories, offers some risks to student wellbeing. I have no doubt that the team involved in *Youth Tell* were acutely aware of this issue and handled this aspect of the process sensitively but in the hands of less experienced practitioners without the benefit of metaxic understanding the potential risks to a young person's wellbeing are significant.

The potential for the form to be extended through the uses of framing and metaxis where a distance is put between the stories and the self has an opportunity to allow young people to gain some of the same benefits in terms of literacy and cultural citizenship without some of the attendant personal risks. In this sense the work that the *Youth Tell* team have engaged with has great power but all of those involved in digital storytelling need to be mindful of the risks and opportunities that this allows.

The Way Forward and Conclusions

The approaches that have been demonstrated and analysed in the article that accompanies this response have enormous potential for learning and teaching. Their processes provide young people with access to agentic, engaging ways to learn and make a contribution as cultural citizens. The everyday technology at the core of this work makes it immediately accessible to many young people in many places. There are also opportunities that arise from this work with innovations in technology. There are opportunities in the emergent and accessible tools of digital animation (such as xtranormal) and motion capture technologies (Xbox Kinekt) to push the boundaries of what we currently understand as digital storytelling. Whichever path this approach takes what is apparent is there is still much to be researched and explored in digital storytelling for learning in diverse contexts. The case study presented here gives us a glimpse of what might be possible when we can engage with narrative through these kinds of technologies.

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Chapter 8 Dialogue

Prue Wales and Michael Anderson

Prue: Michael, thank you for your comments which I read with great interest. You seem to have honed in on four areas, all of which were highly topical when we carried out the research.

- (i) the possibilities of youth sharing their work with international audiences
- (ii) the vulnerability of students when making digital stories and the need to ensure their safety and create a safe space
- (iii) art making and the aesthetic with digital storytelling
- (iv) literacy and voice

Michael: Yes I think these are the critical aspects of the case study from my perspective and to a certain extent there are overlaps and complementarities in the discussion.

Prue: I'd like to first address the first two points together (notions of safety and the possibilities of sharing student work on a global scale) as these two are strongly connected and resonated for the research team throughout the study. From *Youth Tell's* beginnings we were conscious of the need to create a safe space. Chiefly this meant the youth feeling emotionally and physically safe to express themselves and also to say no. We wanted them to have agency and be able to make their own choices, particularly in terms of what they constructed, how they constructed it and when. It didn't always work as well as we would have liked. We found that when it didn't much of it was to do with conflicting ideologies between the research team and the agencies/institutions we were working with.

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Michael: Participant agency in this group seems crucial to me. For a group of students that I imagine had been given few choices this needs to be at the cornerstone of a program that claims to be providing "voice" for students. Can you explain how you made this possible?

Prue: We worked on establishing a supportive environment in our various research locations in different ways. At one informal site we started off by just playing games with the youth and helping them with homework. Then we gave them cameras to play around with and take photos of anything they wanted. We provided them with scrapbooks so they could document their photographs and 'tag' them. They didn't start making stories until we had been working with them for over three months. At the school site we began by building group dynamics and confidence through process drama which was carried out for six weeks before we started with the digital storytelling. We noticed a big difference in the way the students communicated with us during those six weeks. Once they began to realize that we were interested in what they had to say, they really opened up to us.

Michael: The history of drama and education and to a certain extent digital storytelling has been victim to naïve approaches to practice where making students vulnerable through telling their stories was seen as some kind of psychological end in itself. How cognizant you were of this danger in your work?

Prue: When it came to making stories we wanted to move away from the notion of traditional digital storytelling where the makers tell 'personal' tales. We were strongly aware that some youth wouldn't want to tell tales about their personal lives. We said they could make stories on anything they wanted. So some chose to develop stories that were fictional, others created stories about online games they played or other hobbies. Some developed stories about road trips they had taken or school trips overseas. Of course there were elements of the youth's identities within the stories, whatever they were, but we wanted them to feel that we weren't prying into their personal lives and they didn't feel the need to divulge things they didn't want to. I think they realized that. Another thing we did was we let the youth work with the modes they wanted to privilege. Some didn't want to do voiceovers as they felt uncomfortable speaking, so they focused instead on using subtitles and/or images and/or music. Yet there were times when the youth simply bared their souls to us, and as regarding as this was, we felt they were extremely vulnerable. One girl for instance developed a story about her father and how much she loved him. When he died she felt there was no one in the family who loved her or understood her in the way he had. Of course, if you look at awesome, while it is a fictional story, it is a story close to the hearts of normal technical students who have experienced so much failure.

Michael: The possibility of sharing this work with an international audience is an exciting one but it obviously needs to come with some protocols to keep participants safe. I am wondering whether and how you negotiated these possibly conflicting possibilities.

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Prue: One of the initial aims of the project was to find ways of sharing the stories through exhibitions and online. We had wanted to develop an online site where the youth could share their stories. However, we had so many stories where we felt the youth were vulnerable or could be exposed if we put them online – so many had personal stories or images of themselves – that we just couldn't do that. Had we placed them online we would have run into all kinds of ethical issues. This is something I am sure researchers are struggling with around the world. We did develop a website for the project, but we only put up a few stories that involved youth constructed artworks and where the students themselves were not visible.

Michael: One reason I am involved in drama and the arts is that it has the potential within the form to provide a new way of seeing the world and one's place within it. As you've said this project was not in the model of traditional digital storytelling but I sense more is possible if the powerful learning and teaching tools of drama were employed more in projects that grow from this one.

Prue: One of the things that we didn't tap into as much as I would have liked in Youth Tell is the potential drama offers in the construction of digital stories. Some of our students performed some simple characterizations in their stories and created their own soundscapes of sound-effects, but drama can offer much more and this is something I would really like to delve into more deeply. I would also like to see a really vibrant cross arts project using digital storytelling where visual artists, musicians and performers/directors are working together with youth.

Michael: Perhaps there are two other points I might raise that are of interest to me. I wonder if you thought there were moments of catharsis. What this looked like and whether it was true catharsis or just an unburdening or in fact if these two are the same. Also I think there are incredible opportunities here for literacy learning with these participants. Did you have this as an explicit goal and how did you achieve it?

Prue: Over the course of the programme we found that the youth became much more vocal in the kinds of stories they wanted to make, how they wanted to make them, and whether we could access new programmes they were interested in. At the school site the teacher noticed that they were communicating with each other more than they had been, and sharing each others' work. We also noticed that the older youth at the centres began to take over and initiate workshops for the younger, less experienced storytellers. One boy who had been marginalized his whole life – in school, at IT, in the institution – suddenly became a leader and mentor in digital storytelling because he had become an expert. He started making films about who he was in the world and the spaces that he and his friends visited.

Michael: I think it is clear that there are important benefits accruing from this project for the participants which is demonstrated for me by the readiness to take the work further beyond the initial learning experience-that is no small feat with these students. I wonder in the next project if there is to be one, if a more energetic and explicit engagement with dramatic processes as a kind of hybrid might deliver

stronger outcomes still in the depth of the responses. The opportunity that drama provides to create distance for the participants within the safety of the dramatic frame and its literacy affordances would greatly enhance these kinds of processes in my view. That said, there is obviously something significantly powerful in these approaches and in any modification you and your team would want to retain those qualities.

Part IV Free Improvisation

Chapter 9 Free Improvisation as Living Expression

Hoon Hong Ng

Prologue

I was at the piano again one day. Another routine fiddling? Why? But...why not?

He was a young boy who wanted to weave a fantasy world with sounds from his brown piano in the living room. He would return frequently to the piano every day to plough through all available scores. It was fun and pleasing. That was all. He progressed fast, completing Grade 8 in performance by 14 in less than 5 years.

Thinking he was a gem, his mother got him two cheap classical piano music tapes. He placed them in the player, got riveted by new sound possibilities, and began to deviate from the score and explore. Wanting to create fantasy soundscapes, he asked, "Can I learn to write music?" Baffled faces stared back. Playing by the score remained the only way he knew.

He notated his first piano piece, at age 12. He discovered power when cocooned in his music – through composition, anesthetized by sounds from which he created an alternate world, in which he was God. His financial situation did not stop him from composing on his own. Drawing upon his Western Classical knowledge, he wrote on book after manuscript book, pencil marks smudged from frequent rubbing, tinkering at the piano, keys clogged with rubber leavings, to obtain sounds he wanted (Fig. 9.1).

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Fig. 9.1 Early exploratory sketches showing strong Western Classical influences

By then, he knew he could never become one of those great pianists he heard on countless CDs. He also knew that these countless pianists had recorded countless interpretations of the same old music. And he wanted his own world.

At that time, his parents often argued when together. And then his father contracted cancer, got involved in a fraud case and filed for bankruptcy. All these, he didn't wish to understand. He was powerless.

He went to a competitive school, where stakes overbalanced the space to listen to himself. He learnt discipline and perseverance, which became tools to avoid practising less. Music then became a transcendental product – a portable showcase with a life removed from his immediate needs and dire situation. He wished he could play for the pure pleasure of it, as a counterpoint to his life.

Fig. 9.2 Improvisation on a line 1



It was years later.

He returned home from work, tired and depressed. After pursuing Architecture, he turned to education for a lack of direction. It wasn't the job he really wanted, but he had learnt acceptance. A sense of repression shrouded his being.

He saw his piano, stoic and silent in the corner, and approached it. In his mind, his world re-emerged. He began to fiddle, too tired to set his inspirations on paper, and played on. Complexities from his classical grounding did not come across, but he was at ease with the fluidity of the sounds. Whether they were cliché or extraordinary no longer mattered. He began to reflect himself through sounds, neither challenging nor conforming, but simply be. His technique and language grew more complex; his thoughts and emotions flowed increasingly freely with the ebb and flow of the sounds. He became alive (Fig. 9.2).

* * *

Contextualizing Free Improvisation

I penned down questions prompted by this recollection of my past: Can there be a use for music within one's personal space and time? What happens to musicians who do not have the ability or chance to do music professionally? Are there no other

avenues for them to channel their musical energies? I thought about my students in school, with no opportunity for formal musical training. Shouldn't they be shown what music can mean to them, other than exams and performances? Can free improvisation substitute notated music for them to partake in musical expression, given the fast-paced society, culture of consumerism and the majority population with limited musical training but may require musical outlet? Can free-improvisation as a practice, by satisfying and reflecting the needs and desires of the performer, be an act of consumerism in itself, making it more in line with the present society?

I regard free improvisation as neither an offshoot of music creation, a subset of conventional compositional technique nor groundwork to rigidify into written composition. It is also not a non-notated score, system or style already established in the mind, like Jazz, Indian improvisations or African musical performances (Blum 1998, p. 40). Despite these, free improvisation is not freed from the influences of idiomatic norm, cultures and styles.

It is a diverse collage of idioms and styles crafted using whatever tools, skills, and experiences the improviser may have, changing styles and techniques as he feels the need. It emphasizes the evaluation of what has happened and how to proceed next, and the behaviour of all parties (audience and musicians) involved. It is "without preparation and without consideration, a completely ad-hoc activity, frivolous and inconsequential, lacking in design or method," even though "there is no musical activity which requires greater skill and devotion, preparation, training and commitment." (Bailey 1992, p. xii)

The Free Improviser is therefore one who lives through the experience of music-making in various contexts, responding to himself and his surroundings in a constant dialogue, the architect who uses stylistic idioms and techniques which he may deploy or discard as he will, and not as prerequisites for music-making.

Autoethnographic Approach

Burnard (2007) provided earlier inklings for theorizing improvisation as a phenomenon through lived time, space, body and relations. Using autoethnography seems a good approach to study free improvisation, since music is embedded in culture (Hall 1992), and complements existing research approaches to improvisation (Pressing 1984, 1988; Burrows 2004; Sansom 2007).

Ellis (2004) describes how one uses narrative to organise experiences into temporal, meaningful episodes, thereby denying the one truth, or approach to why we live as we do. Free improvisation as an experiential process coincides with the autoethnographic reconstruction of embodied experiences situated in complex interactions between the cognitive, bodily, emotional and spiritual.

Rather than seeing autoethnography as 'retreating into personal inner subjectivity, it can instead establish and stabilize intersubjectivity' (Roth 2005, p. 15). It does

not create objective observer-independent knowledge, but brings about maximum intersubjectivity – by understanding the Self to understand the Other.

I used autobiographical performances to understand the connections and interactions between and within the 'I', my improvisation, and beyond the 'I', which is similar to performance ethnography, where performance complements fieldwork to express that which cannot be expressed in texts, as well as to reflect on how performance can supplement and critique these texts (Conquergood 1991). Much like the phenomenological nature of musical experiences, the ethnographic experience in improvising is built around encounter (Porcello 1998). By situating myself within the experience and engaging music in a situated, evolving and revelatory narrative, I moved towards a more holistic and integral paradigm for understanding music.

A total of 20 improvisations were performed, recorded and studied between August 2009 and February 2010 in various contexts, using a variety of digital and acoustic pianos.

Before each audio-recorded performance, I wrote my prevailing thoughts to contextualise it. Immediately after, reflexive narratives were written on the processes, my comments being guided by existing literature. After this, the audio recordings of the improvisations were replayed, and a second round of notes was annotated at specific points in the music where my recollection was triggered. This is an adaptation of Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR), used by Sansom in his study on identity within improvisational practices (Sansom 2007).

I worked inductively from the data gathered to present findings in traditional categories by first writing summary phrases on significant points, and then letting themes emerge. The themes were organized into categories, from which master themes were established, under which related emergent themes were connected together. For the final narrative, I tried to stay close to the words and their meanings, editing for clarity and flow. I also quoted and if necessary edited extracts to illustrate my points, and overlay the narratives with more traditional analysis and literature reviews to achieve greater clarity and depth of discussion.

Part 1: Understanding the Free Improvisational Process

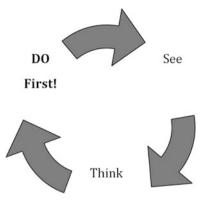
Preconceptions and Errors

I first looked at the systematic musicological aspect of free improvisation – as something that can be analyzed systematically, independent of cultural contexts (Nettl 1998, p. 2).

My improvisational performances bring to mind a method of connecting between my sensibilities and creation in an architectural module I attended in university.

We had to train our minds not to plan first, but instead react to what was done with the materials in our hands while engaged in the moment, evolving our thoughts

Fig. 9.3 Do-see-think loop



with the product in a simple Do-see-think loop (Fig. 9.3), where the process always begins with 'Do', as opposed to the convention of planning first. The end results were fantastical, striking architectural statements. The making sense of it all came after. This model bears similarities to a model by Pressing (1988), who notes that all existing theories in improvisation begin with a three-stage information-processing model, consisting of sensory input, cognitive processing and motor output, which translates to hear, think and play. Using the Do-see-think loop as the basis, the sequence will be rearranged as Play-hear-think, a practice I prefer to allow greater freedom of expression as well as moment-to-moment engagement.

This resonates with my experience of limiting preconceived notions that stunt the natural creative flow in free improvisation.

Can I improvise a piece using mostly repeated notes? How long can I sustain the pattern? The melody to Shostakovich's Fugue No. 5 in D surfaced in my mind, and I tried to capture some of its essence. However, the insistence on a repeated motif resulted in irregular rhythm. This was due to my lack of warming up and technical facility in repeated notes, made all the more clearer as a 'flaw' as there were few attempts to meld possible errors into part of the evolving music. The rigidity of the imposed rules seemed to reject anything that did not fit the criteria. There was no room for irregular elements.

From Improvisation 16 29 Nov 2009

Improvisers tend to allow their music to dictate its own form as they subconsciously create a unique form or struggle to free the form, as every performance uses a 'forward-looking imagination which, while mainly concerned with the moment, will prepare for later possibilities' (Bailey 1992, p. 111). Similarly, I was constantly acting and reacting to the sounds I heard in a moment-to-moment process to determine my next set of decisions, motions and sounds.

In Pressing's model (1988) are feedback loops which allow for error correction and adaptation, so that the discrepancy between intention and actual musical output is narrowed. I prefer not to view my performances as erroneous and in a constant need for correction. Rather, with each sound given voice in space and time, it becomes valid by its very existence, and a development to the next sound.

...errors in playing were not seen as failures or errors, but as stepping-stones to build upon to attain the sounds desired, or when accidental expressions that deviated from my intentions that were delightful became a feature of my playing.

From Improvisation 3 16 Aug 2009

This is closely associated with play and experimentation, discovering through 'accidents', which Hall (1992) exerts is serious business and a means of mastering skills. Improvisation, while playful, also integrates the development of analytical listening and performance skills. In free improvisation, the urge to discover unique experiences is done with less fear of failure due to its evolutionary nature, as errors are simply irregularities that become a source for experimentation in an everchanging landscape. Imagine what this mindset can mean for beginner musicians!

Layers of Consciousness

If we 'Do First', where do we get the notions to begin?

Since we think as we live, it is a question of whether the thinking and subsequent actions is a conscious effort or relegated to the subconscious, automated level. This basic understanding is evidenced in my improvisations, where referent to an acquired knowledge-base and selection based on culturally-influenced personal preferences determined my playing style and technique. My theoretical learning, stylistic notions and technical practices from the past were relegated to my subconscious, and were executed at an automated, instinctive level based on my imperfect memory, be it short or long-term.

I 'warmed up' my fingers on my Shigeru Kawai grand by playing introductory passages from Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 3 and Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C#, in anticipation of doing something light and fast.

After the jagged rhythms of the introduction, my fingers ran with ease across the keyboard. While the exact notes differed, the technical facility and mental images created in this rendition felt similar to the rapid passages that I just played for warm-up. Preparation beforehand, through our short-term memory, could influence the improviser's musical language. And my musical training served as the reservoir, through the conduit of my long-term memory, from which I could draw from.

From Improvisation 2 11 Aug 2009

All my improvisations have references to my training as a pianist and my repertoire of music which are so deeply embedded in my mind that they are subconsciously executed unless I consciously try to break out of the ingrained patterns. My automated executions are results from such ingrained habits and thinking potentials, and systems evolve to reduce initially complex actions into expedited, automated schemata so that they may be managed at the subconscious level. This releases conscious attention for other purposes, without which my improvisational flow would have been stunted. Reflections on my improvisations

reveal shifting levels of consciousness that govern the flow of improvisation through conscious and subconscious actions.

- ...wanted a static and bound feel, and played 3 sequences of 4 chords...
- \dots played sudden high-pitched chords above monotonous chords, which were intended before I began...
- ...looking back, I realized I had subconsciously divided the piece into 3 large sections by going through 3 cycles of chord progression...
- ...decided to play a new section, resulting from my need to break out of the monotony...

From Improvisation 5 30 Aug 2009

Active, conscious decision-making and execution juxtapose with subconscious, automated action in my improvisational process, my layers of consciousness weaving in and out, as I move between active decisions and automated action. Compared to performances of scored music, I experienced more instances where I relinquished conscious control to the automated. Conscious thoughts are often associated with active decisions that significantly affect the macro direction and flow of my improvisation, whereas subconscious thoughts are related to ingrained habits resulting from past influences, experiences and training that generate the micro details of my improvisation. This suggests the need for some technical familiarity and a musical knowledge-base that is culturally and stylistically informed (Pressing 1998).

This brings to mind Mvromatis's probabilistic computer model of chant improvisation in Greek Orthodox church style (Temperley 2007), which consists of a network of nodes that represents states, connected by transitions between them. When the machine goes through a state, it produces a sound output. To connect to another state, the machine must go through one of the possible transitions which also produce sound outputs, the choices being probability-based and constrained by stylistic notions input into the machine. Similar to Pressing's idea of time points (Pressing 1988), these key points are not unlike conscious decision points in my improvisation, and the transitions between points resonate with my subconscious, automated playing drawn from past referents.

If one's theoretical learning, stylistic notions and technical practices provide the foundation for the automated aspect of one's free improvisation, can limited exposure and training prevent a person from free improvisation? For this, I return to Bailey (1992, pp. 83–84) who states that free improvisation is "open to use by almost anyone – beginners, children and non-musicians. The skill and intellect required is whatever is available. It can be an activity of enormous complexity and sophistication, or the simplest and most direct expression: a lifetime's study and work or a casual dilettante activity. It can appeal to and serve the musical purposes of all kinds of people..."

Structuring Sounds in Real Time

Is it interesting to note how the music is organized intuitively with two major sections A and B. Within each section are minor sections, e.g. the 3 cycles in section A, and within each minor section are small segments e.g. the sequence of 4 chords in a cycle. This suggests inherent organization of the mind that jigsaws whatever motifs and structures that are prepared, or appear when improvising, be they macro or micro, and negotiates them into a coherent whole by making complex hierarchical and heterarchical mental associations.

From Improvisation 5 30 Aug 2009

How do my improvisations develop and change over time? I listened to recorded replays of my improvisations and wrote down observations which were later categorised and grouped according to common themes. From there I listed down changes evidenced in my performances, as I understand them.

Structure and Organization - Macro Sections

Introductory section: a section to set the context, where I may warm up and settle down

Main sections: the main bodies of the improvisation Transitory sections: connections between main sections

Juncture: conclusive section to end a section or the whole improvisation Climax: a section meant to be the highest point in the improvisation

Structure and Organization – Micro Organization (Within Macro Sections)

Elaboration: developing an initial musical phrase by gradually deviating from the initial motif

Contrast: interrupting the existing musical features with new features that are markedly different to create a new segment

Datum: a consistent musical pattern around which more freeform musical motifs arrange themselves

Integration: combining features of two distinct musical motifs

Interrupt: a short, contrasting motif that appears in the midst of a musically consistent section, punctuating it

Juxtaposition: alternating between two distinct musical motifs

Repetition: retaining essentially the same motif

Transformation: retaining certain features of a previous motif and introducing new ones to produce a markedly different musical character

Combination of the above organizations

Each macro section is defined by broad distinct musical features and intentions as I perceived them through playing and recalling my cognitive processes via playback. Micro organizations exist within the macro sections to develop these sections. Of great import is how I strove to evolve sounds over time, guided by micro and macro frames. The macro frame, which is formed by conscious decisions, constructs a web of multilevel constraints that serve as guiding principles for

the whole piece, though it in itself may evolve in the course of the performance. Micro frames in the form of organization and patterns on the other hand shape the various events within the macro sections during the performance, which seem to be triggered at decisive time points. Overlaying the whole decision-making is a general referent for generating the general behavior during the improvisation. In effect, this referent becomes a template – a basis for the improvisation which one conforms to or breaks away from in performance (Cook 1990).

My own observations of my improvisations conform, at several levels, to von Emmel's guide (2005) on learning to improvise: (1) Connecting with the environment and Self; (2) Staying with a concrete perception and tracking its path (intention); (3) Frame – system or boundary that guides or governs a segment of the music; (4) Evolving – the accumulation and development of minor (micro) frames to form a meta (macro) frame, and (5) Context of the performance. I like how Ruth Zaporah uses the terms 'shift', 'transform' and 'develop' to describe the technical approaches to change – ubiquitous and a constant in life, relevant in improvisation since the act of improvising is a reflection and a semblance of the mechanisms of life (in von Emmel 2005).

Summary

In this landscape of change over *different levels of consciousness*, there is the past that is backward-looking – my *theoretical learning*, *stylistic notions and technical practices* that form the basis of my training and preconceptions that result in error perception, and the future that is forward-looking, challenging and evolving my past, where *errors become stepping stones*. These are two forces in constant tension, but lose meaning and definition in the absence of the other. To understand free improvisation's significance is to understand the essentiality of this forward-looking aspect – often neglected in other musical practices – which is driven to a position of prominence in the *moment-to-moment* involvement.

Part 2: Living the Free Improvisational Process

Encounters with Myself

A slow, stately and solemn gesture for my first improvisation – to mark the beginning of this journey.

I struck the first chord in D major for its tonal, open sound. My right hand began its cantabile singing over chords as I immersed myself. My hands moved on their own volition, guided by my connectedness to my thoughts, emotions, body, instrument, and environment. Motivated by my personal sounds, I freed my accompaniment into free arpeggiaic forms, so that I could sing more freely and deeply. My emotions rose, and the sounds rose in

response. My emotions ebbed, and the sounds receded. I ended in D major, a conforming move for a peaceful, non-confrontational beginning.

Throughout, it felt like I was emotionally tearing, perhaps because it was a sort of self-recognition?

From Improvisation 1 10 Aug 2009

The dreary routine of my teaching life, the automated daily motion and blurred thoughts, going on through inertia and semiconscious volition, overwhelmed me. I wanted to reach out and extend a note of frustration within the daily humdrum that was slowly becoming meaningless.

I began with a slow, dissonant, four-chord motif repeated in sequence for a static, bound feel. I spent time listening, feeling and looking at keys I felt best represent my feelings. Within the constricting monotony, I struck the first high chords to demonstrate my frustration and urge to break out of the tedious system. My emotions surged with frustration and my music accelerated. In the grasp of my feelings, my subconscious took over and I smudged the moving bass sounds with heavy pedaling. This mess of sounds fed my confused emotions, so I created more of it to satiate, reinforce and encourage my feelings. I fought to strike high chords into the mass of bass confusion, pitting my mental insistence against the limitations of my technique. I reinstated the chord sequences from the beginning at twice the original speed, building intensity while reintroducing the high-chord motif. The constriction left me momentarily.

From Improvisation 5 30 Aug 2009

Being emotionally drained after paying respects to my late father, perhaps the sense of calmness was but self-imposed anesthetic? Perhaps playing and recording Stefanie Sun's Tian Hei Hei¹ these two days, with its nostalgic Hokkien childhood melody, opened the floodgate by recalling my ties to my father's side of the family.

I stared into space as I began, letting my fingers run with their conditioning and training, adapting to and interacting with the keyboard. Tonal sounds from Tian Hei Hei crawled into the introduction as I gravitated towards it to establish my comfort zone. I moved with detached thoughts, like a bystander, relying primarily on subconscious, automated actions and reactions to feedback, and the whims of passing thoughts.

I rambled, shifting gradually into less tonal realms. Suddenly, I felt the urge to create a great change, and turned the meandering melodies into loud, abrupt, detached chords. It felt important to demonstrate that change at that moment, to show that I could, and to do it. I flowed on from these rough-edged passages to gentler passages of descending scales as my mood changed.

I rambled on, and built up to a climax of mainly automated actions to indulge my emotions. The sounds ended abruptly. I spaced out for a while, and then turned off the stage piano.

From Improvisation 9 26 Sep 2009

¹ Stephanie Sun is a Singaporean Chinese pop singer and songwriter. The song Tian Hei Hei, which she sings in both Mandarin and Hokkien, is written by Singaporean music producer and composer Lee Shih Shiong. It is an adaptation of a Hokkien folk song, and describes the recollection of innocent and simpler childhood days and the urge to return to it.

Well-rested and on a whim, I decided to record my improvisation on my Shigeru Kawai grand for the first time. Excited to experiment, I wanted to play something that would please me as well as an imagined audience.

I struck the first few notes, and they drove me on with unexpected force. The keys' sensitive response to my touch produced colorful shades of sounds that blended in pleasant, unexpected ways.

I began with a singsong melody on Alberti bass with impressionistic overtones. Wanting to humour an imaginary audience, I interrupted this with a sudden twist – a fast, abrupt motif. I went on with a musical recitative, to communicate in my language. This monologue I soon broke with staccato motifs, followed by a catchy ostinato bass pattern, which formed the datum around which other sounds were arranged. In the spirit of fun, I struck a loud bass octave, and it became a musical juncture. Then I broke away briefly from the ostinato for a needed respite, before moving on in perpetual motion, building momentum as my excitement grew. Tension mounting, I accelerated within the boundaries of the ostinato and distorted the metric system. Pent-up by the long buildup and challenging the boundaries further, I struck random note clusters in descending order for sharp clashing sounds.

Finally I overcame the ostinato cage and broke into controlled chaos, letting my fingers dash across the keys in automated fashion to satisfy my adrenaline rush. Propelled by this musical climax, I struck a rapid motif in the high register. Liking the sound and the quick, random yet consistent automated motions of my fingers, I repeated it for emphasis, and directed its controlled randomness toward the climatic end.

From Improvisation 10 4 Oct 2009

* * :

These free improvisations were performed in the solitude of my own space to express that which cannot be articulated through words. They are strategic, intentional, deeply felt forms of performed individual and social activity, and living embodiments of how multiple levels of consciousness and activity synthesize to enact ontological meaning within sounds, within the flow of internal and external time.

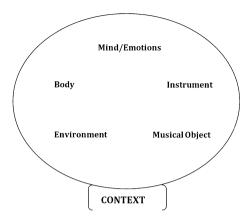
In the process of improvising, complex relational dynamics emerged as conscious thoughts – articulated sounds, actions, emotions and thoughts in the performances connected with each other and various other aspects of the performance as I lived within as well as apart from the event.

I noted how freely improvised music emerges from the inter-relational dynamics of various aspects that are of significance to the process:

Mind/Emotions – my thoughts and feelings
Body – my fingers, eyes, ears and other physical equipment
Instrument – the mechanisms and response of the piano
Environment – the acoustics, temperature, noise level and other factors
Musical object – the music as the product and entity for interaction

The interactions of these aspects demonstrate how, in living the free improvisational process, dynamics within and between these continua negotiate as I shift between planes of consciousness that are layered over the same timeline. From a lived experience, these aspects of involvement and others connect and correspond in a complex manner, which govern the selection and re-selection of events as well

Fig. 9.4 Aspects of involvement within context



as guide the overall pacing of the piece (Bailey 1992). This creates perpetual tensions in their complex interactions arising from the priorities and limitations of their individual governing systems, in the process creating definition to the improvised music. These aspects of involvement are influenced by and congruent with Sansom's six categories of involvement evident in free improvisation in a group setup (Sansom 2007), which includes the involvement of the partner as the sixth category.

In these experiences, I have inevitably created Situated Music; I have returned music to a form of daily social interaction with the inner self. I have created a Musical Diary, in which each piece of free improvisation is initiated by its Context. With that, I constructed a circle enveloping the five aspects of involvement and labeled it 'Context' (Fig. 9.4).

In this setup where music is situated, the context becomes the overall driving force, where individual analytic interpretive processes are necessary in developing improvisational skills appropriate to the performance context. Such skills might consist of knowing appropriate performance techniques for a given context, and the ability to deploy the musical possibilities organized in cognitively coded musical patterns acquired through exposure and experience (Porcello 1998).

Contextualized free improvisation promotes the structuring of musical thoughts into one more embedded in daily life rather than one contrived, formalized and indoctrinated. They are emotional, mundane, virtuosic, intellectual, gruesome, all expressions of the expressive and constructed 'I' of the moment.

Hence, it is a musical diary for self-indulgence, self-release, self-growth, balancing external realities with inner realities, and mediating life through sounds.

This may be associated with music therapy, where music is used to maintain and improve one's health across various domains, including the cognitive, the behavioral and social, the emotional and affective, and the quality of life. In particular, professionals in the field of music therapy have written about how music improvisation is used to improve the well-being of people with various conditions (Bunt 1994; Eschen 2002; Oldfield 2006).

Encounters with Others

Looking at the five aspects again, I put in a sixth category – Audience. Having reached a level of fluency with free improvisation, I wanted to know others' thoughts of it.

Ks arrived at my doorstep in the evening, looking frazzled and impatient. Once my student and now a young man and a good friend, I invited him over to listen to my improvisation.

'What happened?' I asked, sensing his mood, and surreptitiously trying to gauge the angle I should take with my improvisation later.

'I had to work in the morning. Went to the temple with my family in the afternoon. When I was about to come at four, my mum wanted me to drive her around on her errands,' he grumbled.

The last I checked, it was Sunday. No wonder.

'Well, can you listen to my improvisation? It's for my research,' I said with false energy.

'Just listen right?' he asked, plopped himself down on a chair, a jaded look on his face, and then heaved an exaggerated sigh, which I ignored.

'So what kind of music would you like to hear?'

'Anything.'

Trying to stay unfazed, I said, 'How about you give me three notes within the reach of a hand.'

'Any notes?' he asked, and hesitantly reached out.

F# G# A#

So conservative and systematic, I thought. How can I work with that to suit his tastes and present state of mind within the scope of my acquired and preferred musical language?

Thinking back to his praise of a soothing, atmospheric track from Mushishi, an anime we shared an appreciation of, I started my 18th improvisation.

I began with a broad, silent sunset in my mind, trying to reach out with musical sounds to soothe the Other. A sudden awakening strum was contrasted by a second weaker and more hesitant one. I began spinning notes established thus far in automated fashion, keeping to the mood and sound palette. Were the sounds becoming too abstract for Ks? Having to keep to a musical palette I hoped was appealing to Ks felt restrictive. His eyes were closed. Was he bored or enjoying himself? I started a new section with a more predictable and faster bass ostinato pattern, and then broke out of it. At the end, I recalled the initial motif and mood, and faded into silence.

I turned off the recorder and turned toward Ks.

'Well?'

'It sounds like Zephyr,' he said, mentioning a piano work I wrote a few years back.

'Does it?' I asked, disagreeing but keeping my tone neutral. 'So is this improvisation what you are looking for?'

'Not really,' he admitted. So I guessed wrong.

Covering my disappointment, I asked, 'Why is that? Doesn't it sound like Mushishi, and doesn't it soothe you?'

'Yeah, but yours sounds less focused whereas Mushishi sounds more to the point and more intriguing.'

'So what is it you are looking for then?'

'Something catchy for my mood. Easier to listen to.'

So my diagnosis was correct – he was pissed, but my prescription had erred. It occurred to me how most of us only begin to know what we prefer after living through an experience from which to establish a basis for comparison.

'Why don't I improvise again, and you see if you prefer it,' I said on the spur of the moment, already mentally arming my arsenal of popular music sounds and patterns, which I felt paled in comparison to my full musical palette. Nevertheless, the time and space was not my own now, so I intended to try.

'Ok,' Ks replied, seeming more enthusiastic as his participation became more evident.

As I played, I couldn't help feeling how cliché the sounds were. Regardless I still enjoyed the effort of bringing music to life, so long as Ks enjoyed it. I felt limited by the established language. Added to this was the feeling that I had not created something interesting to listen for. I found I could make a mistake by deviating from the established musical style. In expected fashion, I recalled material from the first section to round off the piece.

'Well?' I asked a second time.

'...sounds better to my ears, more rhythmic, but as a piece does not intrigue me. It sounds quite cliché.'

'But didn't you say you want something catchy to listen to?' Quietly I agreed it was cliché, but only because I thought that was what he wanted!

'Yes, but at the same time, it must also have some unique characteristics to listen for,' he said reflexively, 'like the first movement of Moonlight sonata, the heavy and tragic feeling...'

Another assumption about his musical tastes dashed.

And why my attempt to reach out to the Other, to reduce my desires and needs to accommodate one other? And my answer: living in this space in this moment together, it just seemed right that any music played should also permeate this shared space, a precious moment of shared experiences and emotions connected by the conduit of sounds as semiotics of emotional thoughts.

Within such improvisations that are within the frame of established musical language, with its appending expectations of audiences well-informed of the style, how much is actually free? How much of the Self is lost? Or do the social expectations of music create a fused style shared by all, and greater expression and meaning through shared embodiment and participation?

In comparison to my solo improvisations, I seemed to have lost part of my identity while trying to resonate with the other. But despite attempts to reach out to connect with others, I may never resonate with them as much as with my inner self. The distance is not a physical one, but a mental one brought about by diverse social and cultural experiences.

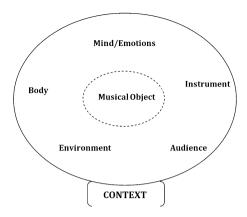
From Improvisation 18 20 Dec 2009

* * *

In these encounters with the Other – friends, students and music educators, I see multilevel interactions and negotiation between performer and audience – the cyclical dialogues that are intangible and yet so tangible in shaping the outcome of free improvisation. Dialectical hierarchies, perspectives and contexts between performer and audience result in the implicit negotiation of the resulting musical product.

What seems to be a purely intellectual process depends on physical processes such as social interactions, and interactions with objects and symbols, and the physical environment (Vygotsky 1978). Intellect and physical processes rooted in the external social world in any activity, including music making, are inseparable, as cognition may be shared among individuals through the mediation of objects, tools, symbols, and signs. My audience impacted upon my free improvisation through tangible and intangible cues and my perception of them. In the process we reached for mutual understanding and compromised.

Fig. 9.5 Aspects of involvement within context, with musical object as nexus



Engeström, Miettinen, and Punamäki (1999) demonstrated how dialectical relationships among mediational artifacts, stimulus, response, and social interactions may be mapped onto a mediational triangle. Burrows (2004) further proposed a model specifically for music improvisation in an attempt to show the hierarchy of mediations in the musical context, where the improviser in a group performance must react to aural stimuli and contribute while taking into account the group members' contributions. Contrary to Engeström's mediational triangle where the factors involved are related at the same level, Burrows' model shows the musical object that is being constructed as not just the object of the group activity, but also the mediational artifact central to the activity that mediates interactions among players. It shows the musical exchanges among individuals – via mediational artifacts such as instruments and sounds – through the shared audio space (central mediational artifact) – a nexus for distributing cognition (Burrows 2004, p. 8).

Summary

Using Burrow's idea of the musical object as a nexus through which other aspects interact, and taking into account the different setup of my improvisational practice, I placed Musical Object in the centre, surrounded by the other aspects, and constructed a circle to envelope all in Context (Fig. 9.5).

The final diagram represents my experience of living the free improvisational process. Within the outer circle is a sea of interactions involving all aspects, with the musical object placed within the inner circle to describe its position as not just a mediational aspect at the same hierarchical level as other aspects, but also the nexus, result and feedback of interactions.

In this context where I perform with an audience, free improvisation rejects music on a pedestal, where the audience tries to reach out to, understand, and aspire to. Free improvisation in collaboration becomes the potential medium for equal, level exchange, where the audience has a strong influence on and negotiates with

the free improviser the outcome of the musical product – the mediatory factor between the two – through shared time and space. Free improvisation, due to its contextual flexibility and mutability, has the very nature to serve as communication. Free improvisation with the Other becomes music to communicate, not to barricade; it becomes the mediator connecting people together.

Summing Up (Dialogue)

The Loyalist and the Rebel

- HH: Thanks for being a wonderful audience, Mr. Loyalist and Mr. Rebel. I would like your thoughts on my performance.
- Loyalist: I would like to begin with the challenge of conventions. There was a lot of crossing over of hands. Why? Shouldn't you keep to the space allocated to each of your hands?
- HH: I have always been exploring, finding new automated ways of playing that are convenient and effective. By playing around, I found this configuration that connects between my Body, Instrument and my Mind. It is a game of expediency.
- Rebel: Yes. A reaction against what has always been prescribed allows for new inventions and a sense of moving forward, like how you used the back of your hand on the black keys to create a new effect.
- HH: The backward slide? Yes I was experimenting at home and got a kick out of discovering it, so I modified and used it just now. And I find that too many preconceptions prior to improvising may constrict rather than guide my playing. In any case, systems and structures emerge and evolve naturally in the process of free-improvisation.
- Loyalist: But you can't possibly play off-the-cuff! You are biased by your social-cultural influences and experiences, which enable you, with the required knowledge and skill, to define your improvisation.
- Rebel: (Impatiently) Yes, yes, existing knowledge and skill are important, but how do you move on? There is an arsenal of patterns that you call into play each time, but at the same time don't you also try to break new grounds?
- HH: I agree, but comfort zone is still very important to me. It is within this comfort zone that I try to break out of the system, so that it creates meaning and significance in relation to the rest of the, should I say, more conformist music. This more conformist aspect can also become the basic semantics of communication with an audience with similar musical preferences.
- Loyalist: You also feel a sense of responsibility to what you have played before, and try to be consistent as you forge forward.

Rebel: Though you also break out of consistency when things get boring.

HH: Yes. It is often a moment-to-moment decision, where I think about what to do next before I bore myself and the audience. In fact the change aspect is really strong, and I have categorized the changes according to their common features. They include macro sections, within which are microorganizations such as elaboration, contrast and repetition...

Loyalist: Which are based on your existing practices...

Rebel: ...that evolve over time.

Loyalist: (Waving it off) Regardless, within the improvisation you just performed is a style that is clearly homogenous in terms of tonality, rhythmic patterns, textures and structure. It demonstrates strongly your need for conformity.

Rebel: But within this homogeneity were changes in sound patterns. For example you moved from mid to high range in order to break out of existing patterns, without which the music could not proceed...

Loyalist: But it still falls within the framework of homogeneity...

HH: Yes, there was constant tension between conformity and change, between breaking barriers and remaining relevant.

Rebel: So was there a lot of experimentation and finding out how it would finally sound? By doing something where there is no precedence for comparison, there are no mistakes. It boosts confidence in your creativity.

Loyalist: Or figuring out how it'd sound, knowing it would sound good, and executing it? While you can make mistakes following a prescribed style, you usually achieve what you intend to. It boosts confidence in your capability.

HH: Can I balance creativity with capability? In the final balance, perhaps there are mistakes, but these mistakes will be seen as opportunities to create new grounds. But that which is experimental and new soon becomes established and old, and something newer needs to come along. It is the constant regenerative nature of free improvisation. Therefore the two of you are not that different. But other than being rather organized by nature, the homogeneity you mentioned earlier regarding my playing reflected my thoughts and emotions in that moment. It may not be so in other Contexts.

Rebel: (Knowingly) Ah. So rather than conforming, you were articulating your Self in that moment. There is more than one you?

HH: I suppose. I improvised in this style because I know you have Western Classical background and so do it. I reacted to the audience.

Rebel: So you would have improvised differently if we had long hair and wore skinny jeans?

HH: (Laughs) I can only say that preconceived notions of my audience affected the resulting improvisation, certainly more so if you had indicated your musical preferences verbally, though your perceived reactions during the performance also affected me.

Loyalist: So you conformed to Other's needs.

Rebel: But you also defied Other's needs to create some space for your own expression.

HH: I did both. I compromised. In the process I mediated between myself and the audience within shared space and time. I think that the impact of the audience is proportionate to the extent of preconceived disparity between me and them at the moment of performance. If my listeners were 5-year-olds, my improvisation would be very different, and I would constantly check their responses to determine their engagement. It all boils down to Context. It becomes less of self-expression, and more of shared-expression.

Rebel: Let's talk more about the expression of the Self. By expanding your musical playground, being part of this process of discovery, whether alone or in social settings, is it also not therapeutic, because it allows you to break out of a cage of established practices and explore new places?

HH: Of course, and associated with this is the idea of releasing oneself through performance arts.

Loyalist: (Grumpily) Let's not forget that in order to break out of this cage to enjoy freedom and expression, you need to have the cage first.

HH: And all automated aspects of my playing came from these systems, schemas, or if you like, cages of patterns developed from traditional practices. It is the existence of automation that releases the focus of my consciousness for self-expression.

Rebel: (Impatiently) But with all your well-established automations, do you not feel that your improvisation has reached some kind of stasis?

HH: (Hesitantly) I do feel that I have reached a stasis, and may remain so until I venture to gain new perspectives and experiences. But in life we form a cage, break out of the cage, go into a new cage, and then break out of it again. So is there stasis?

Loyalist: (Wisely) Most people prefer one cage. It is very safe.

Rebel: (Annoyed) Back to self-expression, is there not an element of catharsis? Because of the physiological element in the physical act of performance, do you feel release from daily tensions?

HH: I do. When I am down or frustrated, one avenue I would take to mediate my mental state is free improvisation. Though I may bang on the piano if I am frustrated or play gloomily if I am sad, I may also play calming music or whatever it takes to make me feel better at the end. This is easy to do given the mutability of free improvisation. This is also what I mean by mediating my Self through sounds.

Loyalist: In other words, there is no direct correlation between music and state of mind. So you agree that the cathartic effect of music is brought about through the integration of the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and...

HH: I call these categories the six aspects of involvement. When

they interact to define my improvisation - through tension caused by conflicts and subsequent compromises between my

Rebel and Loyalist tendencies – I call it Immersion.

Loyalist and Rebel: But these conflicts and compromises as a result of us are a part

of daily life, is it not?

HH: Therefore free improvisation can be seen as snapshots of life.

Post Improvisation 19; 17 Feb 2010; With Music Educators and Practitioners (Based on actual discussion with Drs Eugene Dairianathan, Kelly Tang, Lum Chee Hoo and Peter Stead after my free improvisation performance at the National Institute of Education, Singapore)

Free Improvisation as Musical Living

Through the multilevel experience of actively encountering and participating in a musical process that creates perpetual tensions and resolutions – through dialectical arguments between distinct aspects engaged in Loyalist and Rebel instincts - the meaning of free improvisation is found. One's identity and self-definition is negotiated within the dialectical phenomena of free improvisation, through which ontological meaning is experienced within its transformational potential (Sansom 2007). From this perspective, meaning is found in conforming to the existing musical structural relations that represent the 'existing order' of things, while at the same time challenging them in the attempt to subvert that order. Napier (2006) sees this tension as arising from the demands of reproducing inherited models of expression on one hand, the need to reflect contemporary subjectivity on the other, and yet retain continuity from the former models. It requires re-representation of previously acquired templates, and its value may be understood with reference to a specific intellectual and artistic social-cultural angle. Free improvisation is therefore an ethnographic musical journey, where meaning can be found in its evolutionary and revolutionary quality that comes with change. Bulow's Impressions after an Improvisation succinctly summarizes the notion of free improvisation as a cyclical process searching for ontological meaning – 'Searching for oneness in an endless circle' (Bulow 1981-1982).

In a final move, I constructed a diagram to sum up my experience with free improvisation (Fig. 9.6).

Wrapped in a particular context, I 'Do' – striking the keys as various aspects of involvement interact in perpetual tension at different levels of consciousness. At the same time, I 'Experience' the doing as the sounds construct and negotiate themselves into macro and micro organisations of coherence. As I experience, I 'Assimilate' the sounds into part of the whole musical tapestry and decide on the next move. All these are guided by the Context and my acquired musical knowledge, preferences, skills etc. that are socially and culturally informed. When all these

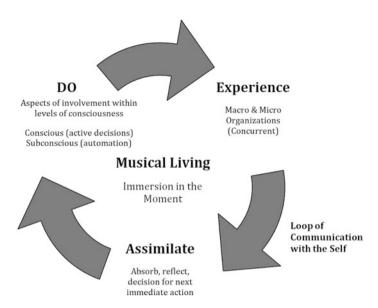


Fig. 9.6 Musical living

come together, I experience immersion in the moment. This moment-to-moment immersion becomes a kind of Musical Living. It describes the primary purpose of free improvisation – seeking ontological meaning through the cyclical process of perpetual Self-construction in relation to the Other, relating the inner world with the outer, meeting and understanding the Self through continuous discoveries and rediscoveries.

Bringing it Back to Music Education

Returning to my role as a music educator, what are the possible implications?

And my answer: for a teacher conducting general music and creativity programs, free improvisation provides an avenue for promoting self-expression by nurturing creativity and communication with oneself and others.

It promotes creativity because:

- 1. It allows for music making with whatever the students have, without need for formal prerequisites or matching of skill levels and musical styles.
- 2. It accepts errors and assimilates them as part of music making.
- It encourages play and experimentation and discovery through the exploratory nature of the moment-to-moment experience, with a minimization of preconceptions.
- 4. It requires constant acquisition of new techniques and musical sound patterns in order for the improviser to evolve and develop, as well as regenerate the spiritual essence and ensure continuity.

It promotes communication because:

1. It is Situated Music, where the sounds are made relevant through musical processes propelled by the prevailing Context, allowing reflection and mediation of the Self, similar to a diary or blog.

- 2. The moment-to-moment experience of transformation and change with rising tensions and subsequent resolutions is a reflection and semblance of the mechanisms of life, communicating and reflecting real-life thoughts and emotions.
- 3. Sharing free improvised music with the Other requires constantly reaching out for understanding and compromise between both within shared, lived time and space in an evolving context.

I imagine a class where improvisation can be developed without criteria, where students are encouraged to self-express and live through music within a dynamic context that is shaped and negotiated by all participants. For this to occur, instead of creating a situation in which there is a predetermined outcome and the sum of the parts is already known, music educators must be comfortable presenting unpredictable situations and exploring open-ended possibilities (Borgo 2005, p. 173).

If music educators agree that free improvisation is a means of musical knowing, a means to engage students in music making regardless of musical background and proficiency, that free improvisation as a discipline is not exclusive to music but pervasive in life, and that it stems from and encourages self-expression, then free improvisation should be developed as an essential skill in music classes.

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Chapter 10 Exegetical Commentary

Eugene Dairianathan

The autoethnographer (AE hereafter) offers us a rich and thick description of his personal narratives. I wonder if sometimes autoethnography is not better understood as an autobiographical account of an improvising self. The improvising self then begs the question of the human trajectory through free improvisation; is it a disposition, pre-disposition or even post-disposition? Or did AE find affinities to the sounds located in an instrument, such as the piano? Or did AE learn to acquire propensities related to the piano which gave him access to fantasy soundscapes? How was this improvising self arrived at: innate – induced, inducted. . . or perhaps introduced – imbibed, influenced, interested? Here are some of the possibilities our AE may not have divulged.

Point of origin notwithstanding, ownership of the improvising self was partly a matter of acquisition of skill sets, equipping a disposition through convention; in this case a graduated examination-based programme for playing the piano. This was a relatively effortless progression (Grade 8 by the age of 14 we are informed) but the assumption here was that such skill acquisition assumed through such a programme would afford opportunity to fantasize, albeit via the piano, ironically through motifs and themes AE would have experienced during his examination grades. If that irony was insufficient, AE was of a similar conviction to *in/scribing* (instead of *de/scribing*) his fantasies (perhaps not very different from his predecessor Chopin's Fantasie Impromptus *scored* on a page).

This trajectory of free improvisation is somehow problematized because of the ways in which improvisation as a disposition has also at least two referents; music and piano. For reasons mentioned, personal problems remove him from the realm of music, although it is not clear if being removed means being indisposed to time at the piano free improvising – or is it improvising freely – or the removal of music from his lived experiences which would have included listening or discussing music

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or rather music of his choosing. Or did AE discover that despite being able to improvise music at the piano could not insulate him from lived reality of a competitive existence alongside personal and familial difficulties?

And yet, somehow, that piano becomes instrument/al to a desire to re-engage himself in and through music – by improvising at the piano – in a way that signals a reunion...or perhaps a resignation to an inevitability of being...of being with music, improvisation and that piano...in such a way that AE does not relocate free improvisation, music and the piano...rather they find him...again...

AE's questions are provocations.

Can there be a use for music within one's personal space and time?

Rather than pursue the idea of use, perhaps one should ask if there is use-value attached to music in one's personal space and time. Then music it seems have been found for its propensity for mis-use, ab-use in a larger repertoire involving usefulness or uselessness. Our AE found multiple uses relating to himself. First he discovered his affinity for the piano. There seemed to be ways in which the piano became an extension of himself, his personal voice. And while the piano was instrumental to his predispositions, he was also instrumental in finding use for and through the piano. A little later, the piano or what it provided for, was a form of panacea from powerful and painful realities. When other priorities become much more important than self-gratification, AE had to live with his indispositions, his inability to keep in touch with this personal voice and it was only much later that the piano, as instrument and symbol, provided the necessary re-engagement with the articulation of this individual voice. But in arriving at this individual voice, one has to consider the pathways in which imitation, emulation, absorption, and personalization were connecting trajectories; albeit not in sequential, chronological or teleological order. Nonetheless, this individual voice seemed to have also considered the outpouring of the self and constituted differently from one who had always the company of non-familial connections, such as friends, informal gigs or paid gigs. Secondly, if one is playing for oneself, to oneself and through oneself, how does one contend with the dialogic imagination (Bakhtin 1981) beyond the self? Perhaps the music might hold the clue. Consider musical ideas when brought out on a piano by impulse/compulsion/compunction/constraint/restraint setting up text via pretext, context, subtext in various textures, and intextualities. Consider that within the musical improvisations are also extramusical improvisations: dispositions, predispositions and indispositions. Which among this matrix lets emerge through the improviser, improvisation-as-evidence, which excludes myriad other possibilities and opportunities that might have taken this improvisation in a different trajectory?

What happens to musicians who do not have the ability or chance to do music professionally? Are there no other avenues for them to channel their musical energies?

What does one speak of, to speak of ability or inability? And what of the opportunity to *do music professionally* [sic]? Does not a professional status come at the end of a programme of instruction, training, conditioning, understanding how to apply skills and rules in a battery of tests that inform you that scoring a certain mark entitles you to the award of a pass, merit or distinction? And do such systems of validation mean anything for one's learning? Does it grant access to a future experience where these tests prove vital to that experience? And what does it

mean for people to discover their own musical expression? Is that composing or improvising or both or neither?

The first lies with the definition of improvisation. Magrini (1998, p. 169) offers two reasons for suggesting "what is improvised is to some extent unpredictable". One is an "aleatory and unsystematic character of the event" while a second identifies a lack of knowledge and information for those who experience it; citing historical evidence beginning with citations by the foremost scholar on improvisation, Ernst Ferand (1957 as cited in Nettl 1998). Second, the perceived authority of historical evidence in the Euro-American art tradition determines institutional reception and treatment of musical improvisation as *regulated* practice. Consequently, instrumental proficiency, together with an understanding of relevant musical conventions, has traditionally determined improvising skill. This reveals a very limited focus on the skills involved in improvising. The third problem lies in the nature, role and identity of musical improvisation in the global context. Blacking (1995, pp. 224–225) suggests music emerges as "both the observable product of human intentional action and a basic human mode of thought by which any human action may be constituted". Consequently, expectations will inevitably differ across cultures.

An understanding of the word 'improvisation' which has its latin roots in, 'improviso'...by its nature, unpredictable but it also indicates the lack of knowledge to regulate unpredictability; not two polarized concepts but two symbiotically related dispositions. The late John Blacking tells us that we cannot really learn to improvise, which means it is difficult to make it commercially viable, but that does not mean it is random or aspects of that behavior are subject with series of interrelated structured systems expressing these systems in relation to the reactions picked up from an audience (Blacking 1973, p. 100). They differ across cultures. Here is such an excerpt from Cultural Medallion recipient, Singapore jazz musician Jeremy Monteiro as a case in point:

When I was 3 or 4 years old...I used to pick up melodies very easy...and I used to take up all the empty MILO and OVALTINE tins and used the chopsticks then make a drum set out of it...cymbals from an overturned tin (Oral interview with Jeremy Monteiro, July 2003)

To take a parallel example from Lucy Green (2002) of a baby banging the table with a spoon, the two ways of dealing with such a situation would have been to *prevent* the protagonist either by removing the application of mechanical energy on to the sounding surface (hand or chopsticks assisting the hands) or persuading the protagonist to stop. Blacking made it widely known in Venda society in South Africa that surrounding adults and children were likely to encourage such activities converting "spontaneous rhythm into intentional musical action by adding a second part in polyrhythm" (Blacking 1984, p. 46, cited in Swanwick 1994, p. 24).

Most people have at some stage banged an object repeatedly on a table, experimented with a few notes on an instrument, hummed a made-up melody, among others. For a few, enculturation into playing music may never proceed beyond these experiments. But when it does, two pathways are possible – along one route such enculturation may turn into formal music education which involves the introduction of new or unfamiliar skills and knowledge of sorts not normally assimilated or associated with daily life. The other path, by contrast, involves a continued journey along exploratory lines turning into informal music learning. This is the path taken by many of those who become popular musicians (Green 2002, p. 22).

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If improvisational ability is contingent on musical ability, Blacking (1973, p. 100) suggests that what is ultimately of most importance in music "is there in the body, waiting to be brought out and developed...all aspects of his/her behaviour are subject to a series of interrelated, structured systems, and when s/he improvises, s/he is expressing these systems in relation to the reactions s/he picks up from his/her audience". Blacking's (1973) observations articulate a dual dimension in improvisation. The first is that which is made possible through formal training and skills situated in a context-dependent and practice specific system. But the second and equally important dimension lies in intentional risking the uncertainty of circumstances and/or human behaviours. Following Berliner (1994), negotiating unpredictability cannot simply be explained away as reflexivity in the face of errors of omission or commission. Unpredictability may also be read as *intentional behaviour* in risk taking.

Can free improvisation substitute notated music for school students to partake in musical expression, given the fast-paced society, culture of consumerism and the majority population with limited musical training but may require musical outlet?

The lessons from improvisation, free or otherwise, are not that they substitute notated music...which begs a smaller but more fundamental question...what is notation if it does not articulate

- (i) Mnemonic and archive function.
- (ii) Points of homage and departure
- (iii) Communicative function riff triggered musical and extra musical responses.
- (iv) Symbolic and symbiotic function less supplementary function.
- (v) Visualising function riffs *in/form* topography of creative activity.
- (vi) Descriptions of creativity from within. Publication is merely access to un/stable texts.
- (vii) Transition from notation to sound recording is deferred spatial representation.
- (viii) Extra/musical content through music.

And we need to be aware that written & oral scripts records or sketches *which* bear witness to the compositional process (Lillestam 1996, pp. 210–211); notation as communication-in-performance, more so than composition-in-performance (Oesterreicher 1997, p. 207); and finally, notation as visualizing – conceptualising or mapping – technology (Lochhead 2006). *AE's* early practice was to have recourse to written notation and ability to visualize content and form – instrumental towards later aural & oral scripting tactics and strategies.

Extramusical content was expressed through improvisation and later became difficult to transpose which led to aural/oral musings without the written medium. What did/does it mean for AE to ask the question?

The second more pertinent question throws open three more keywords funded by another question. Why is limited musical training an impediment to being able to engage in free improvisation? The keyword training is already problematic. For Liang Wern Fook – awarded Singapore's highest award of Cultural Medallion

in 2010 for his contribution to Xinyao – training for him was about listening to previous models:

I learnt about other forms of music through avid listening to different genres of songs...songs from my parents...Chinese art songs...."O Sole Mio" and "Come Back to Sorrento" sung with Chinese [Mandarin] lyrics...pop songs in secondary school [aged 13–16 years] "我家在哪里?" (Where is My Home?)...songs by 刘家昌 (Liu Jia Chang) or songs from Hong Kong drama serials...songs from Taiwan written by undergraduate students on campus 民歌 (Mingge) somewhere in the late seventies...songs like "兰花草" (Orchid), "恰似你的温柔" (Just Like Your Gentleness), "外婆的彭湖湾" (Grandmother's Penghuwan)...very catchy and simple...I started to write my own songs (Oral Interview with Liang Wern Fook, January 2004).

AE's pathways to being self-expressive parallel Liang's accounts of his days of self-discovery and "apprenticeship" in music and text understood as the processes of writing through music: "These kinds of songs [Xinyao]...were more personal, more approachable....simple chords, simple structures and simple compositions and later on, because I began writing...poetry and prose, I tried to put in words for [my] own music" (in Dairianathan 2004, pp. 259–260).

This grew to a stage where "this special way of writing songs...constitutes an important part of my Xinyao compositions; to me at least, it was a most natural form of expression with no commercial motive. Xinyao opened the doors for diverse people from different training and backgrounds to participate in it, even when some of us didn't have proper training. Some of us sang because they liked to sing their own compositions...in the 1980s, none of us ever thought that we could cut an album or sign a professional recording contract. If it had not been for this Xinyao movement, I would never have done it...the music industry... established itself because of Xinyao...[t]he younger generation...in the 1990s would have had a better start benefitting from...many Xinyao songs" (Dairianathan 2004, p. 261).

AE's question is rather much a question as response to his question. The institutional privilege if you like, of the Euro-American art tradition, helps to determine institutional reception and treatment of musical improvisation as regulated practice. After all, should we not thank Chopin, we now have a fantasy impromptus petrified in musical score for us to engage in a cover of an 'improvisation'?

Secondly, musical training is not equivalent with musical preparation. According to Karl E. Weick's (2001) study of correlating organizational practices in the corporate world with practices in jazz, the concept of improvisation also engages several concepts in mainstream organizational practice and likewise suggests ways to strengthen them. If time is a competitive advantage then people gain speed if they do more things spontaneously...to do more things spontaneously is to become more skilled at thinking on your feet, a skill that is central in improvisation even though it is not given much attention in accounts of managerial action. Improvisation has implications for staffing. Weick quotes Paul Berliner, among other writers, who assert young musicians who are laden with technique often tend to be poor at improvisation because they lack voices, melodies, and feeling. Weick reasons that this sounds a lot like the liability that corporations associate with newly minted MBAs (2001, p. 299).

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To evaluate limited musical training is to deconstruct the complex of learning, institution (read person and infrastructure) and the propensity for access and relevance to a future on both sides. To return to the question Can free improvisation substitute notated music for them to partake in musical expression, given the majority population with limited musical training? It may do well for learners to partake of notated music as provocations or prescriptions. But it does not tell us of the dispositional quality of the learner, institution or the propensity towards self-expression that free improvisation is meant to fulfill.

Can free-improvisation, by satisfying and reflecting the needs and desires of the performer, be an act of consumerism in itself, and therefore better aligned with current society?

Perhaps the question now becomes, can free-improvisation become a socially-constituted act, even when creative endeavour among popular musicians is not engaged in solitude links with Vygotsky's *Psychology of Art* (1965/1971 – his original PhD Dissertation) about the social dimension of creative work:

Art is the social within us, and even if its action is performed by a single individual it does not mean that its essence is individual... Art is the social technique of emotion, a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life... It would be more correct to say that emotion becomes personal when every one of us experiences a work of art. It becomes personal without ceasing to be social (in Moran and John-Steiner 2003, pp. 61–90).

And in another question to a question, should AE not ask how consumerism (financial or cultural) can best be understood, advocated and/or avoided in his musings? But perhaps it is his retort (below) that might prove instructive.

The DO (first!)-SEE- THINK circuit is both open and close/d.... that they involve *improvising to learn* and *learning to improvise*, one is almost tempted to think of a never-ending loop or a Sisyphusian task of being condemned to an perpetual existence in and through improvising...but if one also considers this loop such that what is learnt is then done...it no longer is a loop but a spiraled pathway amidst the complex of variables....and that spiral – from a sisyphusian perspective – can be as much a progressive as a regressive spiral.

AE's experiences suggest the activity of *improvising-as-learning* then leading to performance was funded on 'much consideration from planning to execution of improvisation'; an exercising of thinking about as well as engaging in improvisation. His views have considerable resonance with the concept of askēsis in Technologies of the Self, by Michel Foucault, as one of three techniques in the Stoic philosophical tradition. Principle features of askēsis included exercises characterized by two terms meletē and gymnasia. Meletē ('meditation') referred to work undertaken in thought in order to prepare a discourse or an improvisation to anticipate the real situation by memorizing responses and reactivating those memories by placing oneself in a situation where one can imagine how one would react. Gymnasia ('to train oneself') involved training in a real situation despite having been artificially induced. (Foucault 1988, p. 34–37, emphases mine).

Meletē and **gymnasia**, elaborated in Foucault's *Technologies of the Self*, are important considerations in musical improvisation for at least two reasons.

First, Gilbert Ryle (1979, p. 129) discusses improvisation as one means to convert knowledge and doubt into adaptive action. He argues that virtually all behaviour has an ad hoc adroitness akin to improvisation, because it mixes together a partly fresh contingency with general lessons previously learned. Ryle describes this mixture as 'paying heed'. Secondly, meditation and actual practice (or rehearsal) of concepts developed in the meditation form continuous loops; learning to improvise and improvising to learn; leading to improvisation in an emergent performance. Respondents' views of the entire process in their journals and essays are in no doubt that the discussions, rehearsals, reflections after performances, contributed not insignificantly towards more assured final performances. An evaluation of the impact of improvisation in music, as mental and performance preparation, musicians and non-musicians notwithstanding, must take cognizance of melete and gymnasia not only in the emergent performance but in the rehearsals leading up to it. Melete and gymnasia leave us with little doubt that improvisation must consider rehearsals, preparatory exercises before performance, as valid indicators of improvisational ability, albeit levels of proficiency (Dairianathan 2007).

What lessons might we draw from improvisation and music-making from AE? In the Stoic tradition, subjectivation of truth is the aim of these techniques; a sense of truth in relation to the self. **Askēsis** means not renunciation but the progressive consideration of self or mastery over oneself.... It has its final aim not preparation for another reality but access to the reality of this world. The Greek word **paraskeuazō**, ('to get prepared'), refers in actuality to a set of practices by which one can acquire, assimilate, and transform truth into a permanent principle of action – a *lived reality* (Foucault 1988, p. 35, emphasis mine).

If the lived experience of musical improvisation is *one* means of access to the lived reality of this world, **meletē** and **gymnasia** fulfil a primary role in musical improvisation as in the Stoic **askēsis**; the progressive consideration of the self.

What lessons are there in this entire pathological discourse of free-improvisation – or do we mean to improvise freely or to possess the freedom to improvise freely – for a learner who wishes to engage in his/her present reality by fantasizing through another reality? Or perhaps allow one lived reality to sublimate un/fulfilled desires in a mundane existence? Or perhaps inoculate oneself from the present lived realities by engaging in another lived reality?

AE brings back some pertinent points about Improvising – whether it is Free Improvisation, Free (dom) to improvise or Improvise Freely – as an anthropological endeavor. Ingold and Hallam (2007, p. 1) inform us the ability to improvise encompasses far more than knowledge and training and instrumental virtuosity and fidelity to conventions and performance, which brings us to four points on improvising from an anthropological perspective:

- 1. It is, generative.
- 2. It is relational.
- 3. It is temporal. It's not just about chronos, as in passing time, but also as in kairos, the right time.

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4. And of course, it is in ubiquity, everyday, everywhere. It is part of a culture, which in Blacking's sense, is performed and exists in an inevitable outcome of human sociability and creativity, obvious not only in the oral, but oral and visual sense as well.

Last, but not least of all, if education is to consider the training <u>and</u> tapping into the potential in each learner to draw upon the synergy of both, should we not consider a regular (contra *regulated*) diet of activities – with the piano as instrument, instrument as facilitator, instrument as methodology, instrument as medium – which invite the learner to be free to improvise *through* music?

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Part V Dance in Physical Education

Chapter 11 Young Singaporeans' Perceptions on Dance in Physical Education

Leong Lai Keun and Joan Marian Fry

This study explored young Singaporeans' (13–17 years old) perceptions of dance, especially their views on the nature and purposes of dance in schools. It is drawn from a recent macro study of students' experiences and views of physical education (PE), a dimension of which is dance education, in the light of the stated objectives in the Singapore schools' PE curriculum (Curriculum Planning and Development Division [CPDD] 2005). The aim of the broad study was to identify, document and promote best practice in PE in three dimensions, games, dance and gymnastics, as contextualized across three levels of schooling (primary, secondary and pre-university) (McNeill et al. 2009; Leong 2012). This particular dimension focuses on adolescents (n = 85), who provided data through focus group interviews conducted in two secondary (Sec) schools and two junior colleges (JC). The purpose is to give voice to students' views in order to provide teachers and policy makers with insights into what dance is for the young people involved with the long-term aim of developing meaningful dance curricula.

Background

This section addresses two aspects of the literature: *dance in Singapore schools* and *young people's perceptions of dance*. The first section provides a context to the study and the second a comparative body of literature focused on the phenomenon of interest.

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Dance in Singapore Schools

In official discourse, the Singapore school curriculum (MOE 2012) is represented as three concentric circles. At the core is *Lifeskills* development, the purpose of which is to ensure that young Singaporeans "acquire sound values and skills to take them through life as responsible adults and active citizens" (p. 3). Entitled *Knowledge Skills*, the surrounding layer is made up of "skills-based subjects [that] enable students to analyse and use information and be able to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively" (op. cit.). Comprising the outermost ring, and significantly most dominant in practice, are three categories of *Content-based subject disciplines*—languages, mathematics and sciences, as well as humanities and the arts. When examining dance's place in Singapore's education system, a researcher might perhaps be excused for expecting to locate dance in this outer ring as one of the arts. However, that is a false premise: Dance is to be found in the curriculum centre. Dance is recognized as an essential component in (a) the co-curricular activities (CCA) programme (Ministry of Education 2010a, b, c) and (b) the PE curriculum (CPDD 2005).

In CCA, dance is performance-oriented and typically taught by specialists, and often "outsourced" to commercial vendors who train student performers for particular events, including the Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) many of which are seen to be competitive. In addition, as one of an array of arts co-curricular activities (CCAs), dance is offered as a specialist elective. Named in all levels of the mandated PE syllabus (primary, secondary and pre-university), dance in those terms, may be regarded as 'dance for all'. Dance in PE provides a holistic education through nurturing students physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. It stands to be a viable component in PE essentially to meet the main objectives of the PE syllabus, such as to develop in each student the ability to demonstrate positive self-esteem through body awareness and control, and to develop and maintain physical health and fitness. Within PE, dance teaching is mostly confined to activity-based lessons that focus on learning and performance of one or a few dances with goals relating to fitness, skill development, recreation and rhythmic acuity as well as locomotor skills and some sequences and movement explorations. Not many schools are able to give teachers sufficient curriculum hours to develop a comprehensive dance education programme that allows children to create, perform, and respond emotionally to dance as well as to apply dance knowledge, aesthetics and critical judgement. Against that context, this chapter is drawn from data generated by a larger project that investigated best practice PE in local schools.

It is lamentable that, in an education system where academic excellence prevails, the significance of dance as a distinct field, integral to the school PE curriculum is often undermined. It is also reflective of the PE scene in Singapore schools where fitness has been prioritized (McNeill et al. 2003). However, the marginalization of dance is not particular to Singapore's schools, as Sanderson (2001) has also pointed out that in England, while all of the arts are marginalized in the current curriculum for schools, dance is particularly heavily penalized (p. 127). She emphasizes that

marginalization will continue regardless of increased curriculum representation if the education of dance teachers does not enable them to become effective in developing the aesthetic awareness or personal meaning of their students. Coupling little opportunity with a non-supportive environment, it is not surprising that teachers find themselves lacking confidence to teach dance. The PE teachers interviewed in McNeill and coworkers' (2009) study rationalized about lack of time, lack of students' interest, and personally feeling inadequate to teach dance (Wang et al. 2009, pp. 6–47).

Drawing on her study of student teachers' confidence to teach dance, Rolfe (2001) suggests that if they perceived the environment to be supportive, their confidence is likely to be boosted (p. 170). Indeed MacLean (2007) has noted the findings of her predecessors (Green et al. 1998; Rolfe and Chedzoy 1997) that there is an emerging pattern in England where, for many student teachers, opportunities to teach dance have also been lacking (p. 100). She cautions that this can have serious implications because opportunities to teach dance has been shown to negatively correlate with student teachers' perceived confidence to teach (Chedzoy 2000 and Mawer 1996 cited in MacLean 2007, p. 100). Against this backdrop of underprepared teachers, it is small wonder that most school students have no experience in dance. What little knowledge they have of dance is through the media, concerts, performances, or the occasional mass participation activity at their school's All Citizens Exercise Simultaneously day ("ACES day").

Young People's Perceptions of Dance

Although teachers' views of PE are well documented, comparatively fewer investigations have been reported on young people's perceptions of the nature and purpose of dance as a school subject (Smith and Parr 2007; Wright et al. 2003). It is noted that young people's views in PE and physical activities have long been a neglected area of research in the PE curriculum practice (Williams and Woodhouse 1996, p. 212). Moreover, Biddle et al. (2004) have argued that PE programmes should take into account the perceived needs and views of young people (p. 692).

With the marginalization of dance in the school curriculum, it goes without saying that very little has been undertaken specifically in the area of dance education. Stinson, Blumenfeld-Jones and Dyke (1990) have pointed out that, while dance scholars, professional dancers, choreographers and critics have the opportunities to talk and write about dance (its meaning and the experience of dancing) in biographies and autobiographies, the same cannot be said for our young students giving voice to their perspectives on their dance experiences, or the lack thereof. Furthermore, young people's perceptions of dance are not recognized as a basis for theory-building in education or the arts (Bond 2001; Bond and Stinson 2000/2001; Stinson et al. 1990). There is general consensus on the compelling need for dance educators and researchers to understand how young people experience dance and

what it means to them (Bond and Stinson 2000/2001, p. 49). The ways students perceive, describe, and experience dance reflect in general what they value (Stinson et al. 1990, p. 16) and such values further shape the nature of students' participation in dance. Dance researchers are in agreement that the meaning of dance is neither fixed nor uncontested, and that teachers as well as their potential students play significant roles in the ongoing definition of the field (Buck 2006; Bond and Stinson 2001; Shapiro 1998). There is clearly a need to explore the meaning and purposes of dance in schools specifically in the ways in which young people view and experience dance. There is potential relevance in such findings for policy makers and teachers to incorporate young people's views in the construction of the curriculum and so provide more valuable and meaningful dance curricula for students in schools.

Methodology

This report was drawn from a qualitative study of best practice PE. The broader research team of PE pedagogues (McNeill and Fry 2010) discussed research questions that addressed students' experiences and perceptions associated with the objectives of PE as stated in the national PE syllabus (CPDD 2005) which incorporates dance. The key elements of the research process are outlined below.

Context

When dance is taught in Singapore Sec schools and JCs, folk, line and social dances are the main focus in the PE curriculum (McNeill and Fry 2010). However, some schools do offer dance either as an elective or for enrichment in the PE curriculum. Dance education may also be included in an arts education programme (NAC-AEP, an enrichment experience to help students better understand and appreciate the Arts). Such "value-adding" programmes are often conducted by a commercial agency (vendor) and their varied content ranges from technique of various dance genres to dance drama. The National Arts Council (NAC) in collaboration with MOE aims to provide quality arts education programmes for schools, to nurture arts and to promote engagement in the arts catering to the wide range of student needs through the NAC-AEP. It consists of three programme categories: Arts Exposure, Arts Experience and Arts Excursion.

Permission and Sampling

Ethics approval was granted by the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore, and the Ministry of Education (MOE). The design purposefully sampled Singapore

schools offering best practice PE programmes, defined by reputation and their results on a national school-ranking system which, for PE, does not include achievement in dance. This investigation into perceptions of dance with PE involved students in two Sec schools and two JCs. One PE class was randomly selected from each school and invited to participate. In all, 85 adolescents (age range = 13–17 years), and their PE teachers (all graduates of NIE), provided written informed consent. Confidentiality was assured; in this paper, school level and, where able to be identified when the quality of recording allowed, gender and school level are the only signifiers of the student voices.

Data Collection

The research team, that included the authors, conducted focus group interviews with students (N = 5-7) without the presence of the PE teacher. Differences between the interviewers were minimized by having the entire team involved in planning and designing the interview schedule and the phrasing of questions. Each of the interviews began with a brief explanation of the nature and purpose of the study. The interview schedule consisted of broad open-ended questions loosely structured around the key elements: dance in your PE programme (nature of lesson, own interest and activities most enjoyed in PE), personal views on dance (importance of dance, dance forms, dance outside school-time, and desire for dance in PE curriculum), as well as contribution to body awareness (bodily confidence, wellbeing, self esteem). (See Appendix 1 for sample questions.) There was no particular order to the questions or issues discussed which was very much left to the discretion of the interviewers in the context of each focused conversation. The approach was to encourage an informal dynamic discussion, with student freedom of expression and ownership of the discussion (Wilkinson 1998). Lasting about 35 min, each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis; given the age group, it was not possible to determine the gender of some students from the quality of some recordings.

Data Analysis

The researcher's role is key in interpreting participants' views and making constant comparison across groups and across sites (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Analysis took the form of noting particular or recurring words and phrases, and then analyzing their frequency, intensity and context. This process identified patterns and emergent themes (Bryman 2004) within the youths' views and experiences of dance. Once identified they were coded into two major evaluative categories: *positive* and *negative* perspectives. From each major category, main issues were identified and arranged into categories of meaning based upon the key themes of the interviews

such as young people's views of dance, the meaning of dance, its importance in the PE curriculum, its purpose, and their experiences. These categories were then amended to incorporate other themes that emerged from the interview: gender stereotyped; hip hop and being cool; passion and choice; non establishment; not fitness training; significance of dance and health benefits; youth relevance, or not fun; the teacher, pedagogy and small group, not mass activity; dance applications and transfer of learning. Analysis continued during the report process when authorgenerated inferences were verified against the original interview transcript in order to maintain the integrity of the speaker and trustworthiness of the analysis.

Results

Two key areas emerged as significant in the students' perceptions of dance: (a) personal meanings and (b) pedagogical experiences. The findings are structured around these two key dimensions.

Personal Meanings

Several interrelated conceptions of dance emerged as central to these Singaporean students' understanding of dance as a multi-faceted phenomenon: To them dance was seen as gendered, as "happening", as passion, as non-strenuous, as having health benefits, as youth culture, and as having broad application. The significance of each facet is discussed below.

Dance as Gendered

There was a general stereotypical response to dance being not for the boys and calling it "sissy" and "a girl thing" by the Sec school male respondents: "It's very sissy. Like girl". One Sec male student strongly stated, "I hate it", but expressed surprise that a girl classmate should also hate dancing: "You hate dancing? How could you [a girl] hate dancing?" This myth that dance is more for the girls was best articulated by a group of JC students, one of whom suggested, "Maybe the girls do ah, like the dance; maybe the guy [sic] do more of aerobic thing". Confirming this gendered notion, other boys who variously stated that "guys would not be interested in dance for PE and would prefer to do basketball or soccer; and that the guys who were not interested would just get medical certificates or appointment letters to escape dance". One student felt that dance might not meet the needs of everybody, saying "maybe martial arts . . . will appeal to them [the guys]".

Their female classmates similarly seemed to consider that dance was an activity more for girls than for boys. When the conversation shifted from self to others, a JC

female student, who had said that she personally liked dance, readily implied that dance was not for the boys, "What the guys said, I don't think they will want to. Like, the whole group of guys dancing—a bit weird. It's like weird". A female peer was also doubtful about dance either for herself or for the boys, "But for me personally, *no* and maybe to the guys I don't think [so]—*no*. But, if there are a lot of girls who might want to do dancing during PE, I mean, why not let them do dancing for PE, right?".

Historically, dancing by men has been thought of as "emasculating", only an activity for homosexual men (Hanna 1999, p. 161). Dance has also been viewed as predominantly "a female mode of expression and representation" (Thomas 1995, p. 9). Meglin (1994) has opined that dance education is not immune to gender problems that exist in society; and that the scarcity of male students, student choreographies that reflect media stereotypes, dancers' body and self-esteem issues have perpetuated the problem of differential gender positioning of dance (p. 2). She concurred with Burt's (1995) point that the stereotyping of dance as a feminine field has deterred boys and men from dancing. In a more recent study into English adolescents' gendered attitudes to dance, boys appear to be more negative to dance than do girls (Sanderson 2001, p. 129). Sanderson suggests that, by default, schools seem to be perpetuating the prevailing negativity of male dancers held by adolescent boys, and that unfortunately male PE teachers could be reinforcing these negative attitudes. She also agrees that a culture of feminine dominance in dance, combined with limited opportunities for boys to have positive experiences in school, and few male teachers as role models are negating factors (Burt 1995; Waddington et al. 1998).

Dance as "Happening"

This notion was raised by the male students. They projected a generalized and spontaneous view that particular forms of dancing such as folk were old fashion because they were of the past. In contrast, there is evidence of a strong influence of popular culture among these youths who perceived street dancing, hip hop, jazz dance as being modern. In fact, when asked, "What does dance mean to you?" one student responded that dance *is* hip hop. When further questioned if they personally danced, male students almost always responded in the negative as illustrated in the interview excerpts: "No. We are more happening" (Sec boy); "We're not, we're not from . . . the olden days" (Sec boy); "You know, time passes . . . we are more in the modern . . . world" (Sec boy). When prompted for an explanation, a JC boy who seemingly spoke for the rest of his classmates, stated that they felt this way essentially "because [dance's] not exciting".

Collectively, the data almost shout about students' preference for dancing "in the modern type". The boys wanted something "not classical", "not traditional and stuff". Specifically one asked for dance "more to like jazz, hip hop". One JC student elaborated on this point, and stating they would enjoy dance "maybe if you choose

[switch] from folk dance to techno, more exciting, 'cause very fast: You sweat a lot'. Interestingly, the male students were more vocal here in their views of what dance meant compared with their female classmates. Researchers concur that there are gender differences in attitudes to dance in school, with boys expressing negative views, such as disappointment in the type of dance experiences provided (Pool 1989; Ross and Kamba 1997; Sanderson 2001). For instance, Sanderson (2001), in her study found that the boys were extremely negative in their views about ballet. We draw a parallel here from the male students' negative view of folk dances.

The general sentiment from the boys was that if dance, such as hip hop, break dance, popping, jazz, cha-cha-cha, belly dancing, reggae, were to be taught, then they would join dancing. This group of students also viewed such dance forms as "modern" (not the genre sense, but rather as it being contemporary) or "with the times". From all accounts, dance type, or style had a strong influence on the perceptions of dance projected by the students, especially by the boys. From the findings, there appears to be a need to provide the young people with dance choices from a wider range of dance genres. Sanderson (2001) suggests that attention should be paid to curriculum content which appeals to both boys and girls (p. 129). The notion of happening was for some students linked to how some students developed a personal passion in dance.

Dance as Passion, as Personally Enriching

There was a general consensus that having the passion and interest for dance was central to its personal significance and, as such, there were individual responses to dance as a movement form. Moreover, students felt that responses to dance were so unique to the individual that students should be given a choice of dance genre or should not be forced to dance at all. For them, even the ways in which dance activity was provided were important. Students interviewed expressed these feelings in various ways as the following interview excerpts illustrate: "Dance is within your passion, not in your, like exercise [sic]" (Sec boy). "Dance is something you choose to be in, like interested. Certain people might not be interested in dance," said another student who felt that, unlike PE which is compulsory, dance should be a personal choice. "For dance, it is more like what you do after school" (JC boy). There were also girls who substantiated these views; for example, a JC girl suggested that dance should be an elective "because we get to choose ... you will choose something you want."

Earlier research has indicated that, by enabling students to do what they want and with whom they want, they may derive greater satisfaction from their dance experiences (Green et al. 2005; Smith and Parr 2007). In contrast to the previously discussed views of the JC students, a Sec school group (mostly boys) was particularly enthusiastic about the thought of having dance lessons during PE. "Definitely. Yeh, I like, I join dancing," said a boy who enjoyed hip hop. Others commented similarly: "Yar. Okay. All very sure, hundred percent"; and

another exclaimed, "Bring in more dance just like what my friend says, 'dance'." A group of Sec boys described themselves as being so "into" hip hop and explained, "...we will be like thinking [of our] next PE lesson ... we want to dance like that" and they lamented the principal reportedly prohibiting dance outside PE time because it was a distraction from their studies.

So strong were some students' claims about the dance form needing to be "for them" that their views can be interpreted as non-establishment. One group of Sec students spoke openly about the negative vibe that they felt that the school authority projected about dance. The students commented that the school principal wanted them to concentrate fully on their studies which he stated as more important than dancing. Students at the school reported that the principal had said, "Dance is distracting us from our studies". When asked if dance should be taught, the student responded "I don't think it will happen in PE . . . he will never allow us".

Dance as Non-strenuous, Not for Fitness

Dance was seen as a "definite" positive change to the fitness training that dominates PE, particularly the curriculum for boys at the JC level. These are the years just prior to compulsory national service for all young Singaporean men (see McNeill and Fry 2010; Fry and McNeill 2011). Thus, this notion of activity intensity was compounded by gender. "At least you don't have to run, you know like, for three lessons or so you don't have to do running. So, it's like good," commented one JC girl. Generally the students claimed that dance was not vigorous. Having reported it as an activity more for girls than for them, the boys especially were against dance reporting it only as a "small workout", a "peaceful activity that works the muscles" and, furthermore, it belonged in an "old folks' home". According to one Sec boy, boys "wanted something to train them to be trim and fit rather than dance" and he and his peers would rather do more of an aerobic activity in PE. A JC male student commented, "Maybe if you choose from folk dance to techno, more exciting cause very fast then you sweat a lot. That's the purpose of PE what, PE have to sweat what Isicl". A JC peer said:

It [Dance] is better for those people who are not so active because some of them prefer more activity, such as playing soccer and really those are hardcore games; but, then others just prefer to, maybe like, do some slow exercises. So, I think it [dance] might suit this kind of people.

From the above statements, it is clear that the students considered that PE enhances health, particularly in the fitness aspect. However, they did not feel the same about dance, especially in reference to folk dance. Students likened dance to "slow exercises". Smith and Parr have noted in their report of research findings (Evans and Davies 2004; Gard and Wright 2005) that such views are based on a superficial acceptance of common-sense understandings of that engagement in sport and physical activity comes via PE (2007, p. 45). It is evident that these

Singaporean students believed that dance is not vigorous enough to produce exercise benefits. This misconception could be perpetuated by the group having had very little experience in dance, perhaps only one or two sessions of introductory folk dance and/or some hip hop within PE. While this view might also be an expression of young people's ageism, it is a manifestation of their narrow experiences of dance which have led to their narrow perceptions of dance. This finding suggests that unless dance education is included within PE there are no opportunities for PE teachers to ameliorate such myths, through the deconstruction of dance as a gendered and aged activity.

Dance as Having Health Benefits

On the point of dance contributing to physical wellbeing, a group of Sec students spoke with one voice. To them dance did offer some health benefits. However, a few were more reserved, saying "a bit", "more or less" (both from girls) and "partially" (a boy). A girl stated that dance made her "flexible". Another made oblique reference to the aerobic benefits of dance: Dance made her "sweat". Yet another female student who took Chinese dance as an extra-curricular activity said, "... Ya, because [you] perspire a lot. Because you got jump here, jump there, jump everywhere". Pushed on the personal significance of dance, this same group reiterated their earlier responses about the importance of dance as contributing to their physical well-being. According to a girl, dance was "ok. Like a form of exercise". A male class-mate said that it was a "small workout". However, the Chinese genre dancer said that dance was "not very important, unless got performance, then very important. [Then you] need to go practice". Only two students were hesitant about the significance of dance in health, with personal ratings of "so so" and "not important". However, only one student admitted to perhaps taking dance lessons outside school hours. To her, dance contributed "a bit" to her physical well-being. She also saw dance as a way to lose weight and said, "If got money, I [sic] take up because I want to lose weight".

The following discussion centers on students' comments about the physical attributes of dance in relation to body awareness which we felt could fit into the health benefits question. When asked if dance make them more aware of their body, a group of JC students responded in the positive; for example, a girl said, "Yah, I think so. Because ... maybe you watch all those competitions like you know be very nice that kind of thing so the teacher would request that you do something properly and so we are more aware." She continued with an example of having to do things "properly" on the dance barre and of how the teacher asked them to "do some stuff on it," so "we need to know how to move our body in a way." Another student stated that "It [dance] forces you to coordinate your body like for run, and then you can run, run, run and stop and then walk, walk, walk". He seemed to suggest that dance had some carry over into sport, but had difficulty articulating that link,

"The only difference is, as in the muscles and everything. As in, like I don't know, like running is very different from, it [dance] ends up a different stuff".

It would seem that students saw dance as more of a stretching activity that helps in the coordination and flexibility rather than in aerobic fitness. It is worth noting that the simplicity of the students' thinking in the linking of some specific health benefits to dance, such as coordination and weight loss, are more laypeople's understanding of the relationship between health and exercise, rather than derived from participating in a comprehensive PE programme that incorporated dance (Smith and Parr 2007, p. 46).

Dance as Youth Culture

The students projected two dominant views on dance: (i) Some students indicated their dislike for dance because of lack of interest and a perception that dance is not fun; (ii) Other, but fewer students wanted to dance because of personal interest, enjoyment and novelty. The general negativity of the first group is very clearly represented in this selection of typical comments. A Sec girl said flatly that she was "not interested". Perhaps wanting to appear more diplomatic, a male counterpart said that he has "not much interest in dance" and would "rather spend time on other things". Another Sec girl was more clear, "No [I don't like it.] Dance is tough. I have lessons, you know. Indian modern dance—it's torturing". Whereas, a boy commented, "What we learn in sports, can do". However, his peer who reported hating other activities such as running was also similarly adamant about having "No time" for dance, even hating hip hop and break dance styles.

Unfortunately, the JC students' negative views about wanting dance in PE were also intense: A blunt "Of course not" suggested if given a choice, dance would definitely be off their agenda. "I mind" having dance in PE, because it's "not exciting" said another male student. Many of the boys could not see that any fun could be derived from dance as the following comments illustrate: "I don't think many of the guys will be, like, interested because in the end they will turn to basketball or soccer also. So I think for PE, like I said, it's more about having fun, right?" A female classmate endorsed their position, "I don't enjoy dancing. I only dance on ACES day which we are forced to dance", so emphasizing that she danced because it was compulsory. Two boys' comments again suggested that interest in dance was an individual perspective, with one saying that he did not like dance because "It's not as fun as other sports", he acknowledged that "It's like very individual". Another qualified his position in reference to having dance in PE:

...but maybe those that are enthusiastic about dancing, maybe this is for them... but I think for the guys, [they] will in the end go back to soccer or basketball because, if especially during nearing exams this [is] the only time where we can play these games. (JC boy)

In contrast to the negative position put by the students above, there were fewer students who were in favour of dance on the curriculum and they too cited personal interest and fun as valid reasons for its inclusion. Asked what activities she enjoyed most, a Sec girl said, "Dance, free dance". On the point of including dance in the curriculum, a JC girl was positive, "Okay. I mean, no harm trying new thing". Dance was "quite interesting, also. Yah, but quite fun, dance. Sounds interesting," said a Sec boy.

With limited curriculum time for PE, the issue of timetable priority and teacher/ student preference for the common team sports played in Singapore (soccer and basketball) is intensified prior to and during the examination periods, during which PE scheduled lessons are cancelled and students are left to play very much on their own accord while their teachers invigilate. This perception that dance is neither fun nor as exciting as other sports seems to be a key element in the students' disinterest in dance. The central hedonistic value that young people place upon interest and fun in an activity is consistent with other studies. Young people also tend to place more value on the supposed non-educational aspects of PE, in particular, on the sociability that is said to be generated in lessons (Flintoff and Scraton 2001; Jones and Cheertham 2001; Smith and Parr 2007). Researchers (Monk 1996; Stinson 1997) have identified a biological basis for pleasure in music, and the same can be said for dance. Stinson suggested that the element of fun in dance should not be underestimated and that dance teachers should use this as a motivator (1997, p. 64). Yet, when students are extremely adverse to dance, motivation is very difficult to generate. However, on this position Stinson feels that the reasons for students' non participation are by and large deeply personal, and are often expressed simply and strongly such as "I hate it". Therefore it appears that from their perspective, their engagement has little to do with those factors which the teacher could readily change (p. 58). There is however, a glimmer of hope for teachers, as Stinson clarified, it is possible that varied teaching approaches and/or some other environmental changes might be stimulating factors for students' participation.

However, students themselves failed to see it. Among boys, homophobic fears may be suppressing any desire to dance, whereas among the girls, it may be poor body concept that prevents them from dancing, feeling that dancing can expose their bodily movement to the scrutiny of others in what they see as performance-driven dance lessons.

Dance as Having Broad Application

From the students' views expressed, there seemed to be some transfer of learning or application of dance steps which took place during their sporting activities. The following selection of comments from a group of JC students is illustrative of this perception: "I think we are also doing dancing. For us, soccer [players] you also dance. The teacher teaches us how to dance [laughs]—samba dance," according to a male student. "Ya. Dance on the spot. You know in the skills, right," said another male student. "The crossing [like] that time when we do the samba dance,"

responded the student who had to have the interviewer clarify that this was the grapevine step, a basic dance term of which the group was ignorant. In PE, you "learn a lot of things. As in when you play soccer, you not only learn one sport. It's not as if you learn dancing or you learn gymnastics," suggested a male student who seemed to be suggesting that one learns more than the sport when one plays a sport.

Dance as a Pedagogical Experience

In many Singapore schools, the only dance experience students have is the ACES day participation which is compulsory. Among students there are two associated views of that experience, and their expressed negativity seems very much linked to a teacher-directed pedagogy. The first perspective comes from Sec students. "It's an ACES day workout, in which we dance for about 12 minutes continuously. So, we will slowly learn the steps, then train," said a male student. When asked how they felt about the ACES day dance, they variously stated, "I think it's good, we doing it. We get to learn ...," said a male student. The students here had a positive experience of the ACES day workout naming the opportunity to learn progressively and practise, the modern aspect of it, the different music, and the promotion of self-esteem (feeling proud) as motivating factors for learning. The "modern aspect" is with reference to some funky and hip hop steps being infused in the dance. "It's getting more modern" said a female student. Furthermore:

[On] the ACES day, where we will go to the sports stadium, and they will play the music and everyone moves together like the Singapore Workout [community mass participation aerobics activity]. So it's something quite grand, the whole school is proud of. And it makes everybody proud of their own school . . . it gives you the feeling that you are special (male student).

The following responses are from JC students who were negative in their views of ACES day workout in general, and mass dancing in general. A girl was skeptical that the quality of teaching that she had experienced would meet the needs of all students:

...unless the, all the PE teachers go through a course so that smaller groups can be formed for the dance unless if not if it's a mass dance, I think it won't work, because in mass dance a lot of people would not do it. And that it was proven during our ACES day.

One male student cited the same pedagogical factor, mass group instruction, as making learning difficult. This coupled with a reported lack of safety awareness compounded his negative experience of dance: "... if you have a very big group, it's hard to conduct for this sort of lessons, because you also need to think about like safety, you know".

Students were asked about the appeal if popular dance styles, such as street dance, were to be included in the curriculum. Their responses seemed to be bound in a belief that dance came "naturally" to some people, who essentially have the

aptitude, and that such feelings cannot be taught even if teachers take in-service courses. Consider the following JC female student's comment:

I mean you must see the people who join also like, if, like, and also the teachers. I mean dancing is like something naturally, right? It's like some people can learn, but mostly it's whether you can do it or you can't do it. So, I don't think, even if you send the teachers for courses, they can really engage, like teach, us properly about it. So, it's, if dance were to make [it into the curriculum], it's not about teaching. It's more of like expression of yourself, rather than teaching that sport, because you can't really teach dance, it is more of an expression of your own feeling.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study, to explore young people's perceptions on dance especially with regards to the nature and purposes of dance in schools, has been a relatively under-researched area especially in Singapore schools. While we are aware that the findings are based on a small sampling (total N=85 students from two Sec schools and two JCs), they provide insights into the students' thinking. The issues raised are relevant to curriculum planners and teachers in their development of dance education programmes.

Dance and Young People

It appears that providing the students with a greater degree of choice of activities, activities that are more congruent with their lifestyle preferences and sporting needs will help them derive greater satisfying experiences from PE. Young people today are discerning with enquiring minds. They want to be respected and be given the opportunity to make their own choices enabling them to do what they want and with whom they want. Gone are the days when teachers could talk down to our students and ignore their perspectives.

Gender and Negativity Toward Dance

The majority of the students who were negative about dance were the boys who had had virtually no dance experience, whereas those who have done dance generally found it to be pleasurable. There is a need to increase the number of male PE teachers who can teach dance to be deployed to do so. Increasing appropriate male role models is a step in dispelling this notion of dance being feminine and only developing soft skills. It is apparent that we may need to provide extrinsic motivators such as building fitness and learning dances, such as hip hop that interest them as well as injury prevention in order to engage students. However, eventually we should acknowledge that it is the intrinsic motivators focusing on pleasure, joy, and

self-esteem that hold the key to making dance a meaningful experience for our students. There is a need to help our students build a positive self-image in dance, because, as McCutchen (2006) states, today's young adolescents are often plagued by insecurities (pp. 90–91). Stinson clearly points out that we should not be formulating dance education into medicine that is "good" for students on the rationale that it is like other school subjects (1997, p. 65).

Provision of Quality Dance Programmes

There is a definite need for a structured curriculum, with sound pedagogical practices, knowledgeable teachers, and a supportive environment, in order to change our students' negative perceptions of dance. Attention should be paid to curriculum content which appeals to both boys and girls. Stinson is a strong advocate of skills in teaching, not just dancing in order for teachers to engage students in dance (1997, p. 65). She firmly believes that educators need to use strategies that give all students the best possible chances for success if they are to experience pleasure in moving and knowing through dance. In order to give our teachers the confidence to teach dance, dance education should therefore be the priority. There is also a need for school authorities to provide opportunities for teachers to teach dance which means that a dance curriculum must be on the agenda at both the school and university level so that dance teaching develops as an expert pedagogy. Perhaps, there is a future in which dance in schools is visible as an entity, separate from the PE curriculum.

A final note here on pedagogy is that the teacher's enthusiasm for dance must be apparent, in order to convince students to engage in dance. Where young people perceive dance genres such as folk dances as for being for the elderly, teachers must ensure that they include folk dances that range in difficulty and pace in their planning in order to provide challenge and to dispel this stereotyped notion. McCutchen (2006) recommends that we provide opportunities for students, especially the boys, to demonstrate their strength and psychomotor skills as well as involve them in the design of their own assignments (p. 91). Teachers can provide opportunities for students to improvise and create their own folk dances as a means of challenging and empowering them and help them value enhanced intercultural understanding (Leong 2009). Here, we accept the UNESCO definition (cited by de Leo 2010, p. 4) of intercultural understanding which is "about understanding the interconnectedness between cultural diversity, peace, human rights and sustainability". The teacher's role when engaging young people in cross-cultural dance experiences is to design tasks that engage learners in exploring aspects of other cultures that help them make connections between the dance and other key elements of the culture by which they can make comparisons with their culture. This is critical in a multicultural, multi-religious country such as Singapore. Increased connectedness will come through the dance experiences themselves when, at times, the learners are encouraged to take on the dance quality of "the other" in their interpretation of the dance.

Creative dance is currently only included at the primary school level of the PE syllabus. However, together with dance improvisation should be introduced to secondary students to help them understand dance as a way to create and communicate meaning. This is especially relevant when dance is viewed as a product of culture and experienced as a cross-cultural event in the contemporary context of increased globalization (Shapiro 2008). If, along with a range of folk, creative and improvisational were to be introduced to secondary level students, there is potential to help young people understand dance as a way to create and communicate personal and social meaning.

Significance of Pleasure and Enjoyment in Learning

Stinson has emphasized a need to use strategies to provide students dance experiences that are satisfying in terms of pleasure and enjoyment; and which also give them the best possible chance of success to experience the pleasure of moving and knowing (1997, p. 65). Stinson continues that we must also challenge our students to go beyond pleasure and enjoyment: We must provide them with the competencies to extend their current skill and knowledge. In addition we also need to give them choice, freedom, and a sense of control, so that they find dance intrinsically motivating rather than rely on the teachers to make it merely fun. From the findings, it is clear that most students, especially the boys, favour hip hop and genres they consider 'modern', such as jazz, break dancing, popping, and belly dancing. Therefore, there is a need to provide a range of dance types and styles in order to cater to students' diverse interest and needs. However, not many teachers are proficient in teaching such a genre range, so we advocate that such dances are taught under the CCA programme by qualified genre-specific instructors, unless teachers themselves have such unique recognized qualifications. With limited time in the PE curriculum, our PE teachers should focus on teaching a limited range, such as folk, social, and line dances. Perhaps, with the current curriculum review in PE and with increased time given to PE curriculum we could relook at what dance experience we could offer our students and include dance improvisation and composition into the dance syllabus as well. But the teachers must be trained in the pedagogical know how so that they can make dance experiences a pleasurable and intellectually stimulating experience.

To Conclude

Dance experiences should help them [students] integrate different aspects of themselves—the moving self, the thinking self, the artistic self, the emotional and social self, and the spirited self. Because dance is a metaphor for life, our aim should be to bring dance to students (McCutchen 2006, p. 91).

The basis of sound pedagogy is the provision of a supportive and non-threatening environment wherein students may dance without the fear of being ridiculed or intimidated. McCutchen (2006) advocates providing a supportive environment and encouraging full participation through genuine, specific positive feedback to young adolescents who, at this age, either may be embarrassed or lack confidence when attempting new dance skills (p. 91). She reiterates that it is important to discern and tap their interests. Limited though our data are, we hope this study will be a catalyst for more research in this area of students' perceptions on dance which will give us educators, policy makers and administrators additional understandings of our students' thinking. Thus, we can work towards providing them with a dance curriculum that is both socially valuable and personally meaningful. It is also for us to consider how we can also improve our pedagogy in order to engage our students. Meaningful educational experiences call for student-centered learning and putting students ahead of mastering curriculum content, while bearing in mind that dance engages the whole person (physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively).

Appendix 1

Sample Questions

Do you dance? Are you interested? Not interested or not offered? Why not interested?

Do you all do anything like dance in your PE? How do you find the experience?

Can we have dance in PE? What is dance like as a PE lesson? What does dance mean to you when we talk about dance?

What do you think of dance? Dance is like...

Tell me what the modern dances are?

How important is dance lessons to you? Why is it important or not important?

If you were offered dance, do you think you'd enjoy it?

Folk dance, if it is offered, do you think that you will be keen?

Do you think dance not restricted to folk dance, any kind of dance that is very popular now, those street dance for instance, will appeal to you?

Do you think you will continue to take up dance lessons outside of school now that you have some experience of it, and why?

Do your dance lessons contribute to your physical well-being?

Do dance offer opportunities for developing any aspects of confidence or selfesteem?

What is it that you don't like about dance?

Do you think dance lessons make you more aware of your body movement and in what way?

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Chapter 12 Exegetical Commentary

Michael Gard

In many ways, the challenges facing dance education mirror those of the field of physical education in general. For a variety of reasons, it is now received wisdom that times have changed and that we cannot simply ask students to involve themselves in physical activity because it is intrinsically valuable or, worse still, because it is part of the culture. Instead, across the world educators operate in an environment in which students apparently need to be convinced or tricked into believing that physical activity is fun or useful or 'cool'.

One way of responding to this situation, as exemplified in this chapter, is to ask students what they want. There are many reasons, good reasons for doing this, perhaps most obviously because many young people live lives in which they are increasingly called upon to exercise their choice as consumers. On the surface, then, the idea that dance education, like physical education more generally, must 'move with times' and be more responsive to student choice seems obvious.

However, there are dangers here. First, as the data in this chapter show, the voices of students are not monolithic. In my own dance education practice in Australia and Canada, the areas of dance in which students are often most enthusiastic – or least resistant – are folkloric and 'old fashioned' ballroom dances. There are a number of possible reasons for this but my sense is that these kinds of dances offer students the security of clear, defined movement patterns. They do not require students to move in more creative or artistic ways and therefore pose less of a personal 'threat'.

From my perspective, though, there is a deeper and more troubling danger in over-privileging the voices of students in the selection of dance education content and the formulation of curricula. As the authors of this chapters point out, many of the opinions expressed by students are based on limited experience. While traditional folkloric dances might not seem particularly physically challenging, this is often because students have not been asked to perform these dances with a high

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degree of physical or stylistic precision. In other words, their experiences and opinions may be based on poor quality teaching.

Many university dance educators know only too well the limited amount of time we get with pre-service teachers. This time is usually not sufficient to produce teachers with a broad dance knowledge or skill set. However, it strikes me that simply making dance education experiences more 'vigorous' or more 'modern' is unlikely to solve the problems we face. For one thing, modern forms of dance such as jazz or hip-hop require no less expertise on the part of teachers than ballroom or traditional folkloric dances. Very few physical educators have this expertise, while dance education experiences designed purely to give students a 'work out' will become boring and stale very quickly.

I am encouraged by the data presented in this chapter and in many ways it matches my own experience as a dance educator. For one thing, the data presented here suggest that many students are open to dance and are simply waiting to be exposed to authentic, high quality experiences. What do I mean by 'authentic' and 'high-quality'? In my view, students deserve to be taught by teachers who understand the material they are teaching. This means, if not overly proficient, teachers need at least to understand the physical and aesthetic requirements of the dance forms that they propose to teach. As with any area of the curriculum, dance needs to be taught competently and with enthusiastic intent. Without this, there scarcely seems a reason to try.

However, there is much more to being a competent dance teacher than knowing the movements of a dance and having a method for how these movements will be communicated to students. In most cases, high quality dance teaching requires an understanding of the relationship between movement and music as well as a sense of the range of creativity permitted within a given dance style.

In short, my argument here is that before we fall into the trap of an overly literal response to the things that students say about their dance experiences and preferences, we, as teachers, need to make sure our own house is in order. In my view, poor quality dance education experiences are often worse than no experiences at all. Perhaps what many of the students interviewed in this chapter are commenting on is not dance itself but the kinds of dance education experiences they have had.

Even if they did speak with one voice — which they do not — it would be impossible for us to address the anxieties and aspirations of all students. In the meantime, I think there is value in hanging on to the impulses to teach and to lead students. The teaching that we do might serve many purposes, including keeping aspects of ones' national culture alive as well as promoting artistic expression and creativity. Either way though, simply taking our lead from students' voices has the potential to divert attention away from our primary goal which is to teach well.

Chapter 13 Dialogue

Leong Lai Keun, Joan Marian Fry, and Michael Gard

Lai Keun: Michael has aptly pointed out issues dance educators are facing be it in the context of physical education or dance in teacher education. One challenge is a seeming urgency of having to convince our students that physical activity is fun or 'cool'. As he has emphasized, in this day and age our students are discerning consumers who want their rights be made known and recognized. Image projection and peer pressure seem to play a significant part in what contemporary young people perceive as good or 'cool'.

Given this scenario, it does appear that the most logical course of action for dance educators is to 'move with times'—be more responsive to student choice. Yet, as Michael has cautioned there are dangers in such an easy acquiescence. These are noted here.

Firstly, based on his dance teaching experience in Australia and Canada, Michael has found that students are often most comfortable with, or least resistant to, folk and ballroom dance genres. Michael's situation is not much different from my dance teaching experience here in Singapore where pre-service student teachers are similarly at ease with learning folk and ballroom dances. As he suggested one possible reason is the sense of security bound to being able to follow or learn the steps with ease. Furthermore, the teaching/learning environment especially in folk dances is often very harmonious and non-intimidating—students are generally non-competitive. This dance form contributes to one of the National syllabus objectives—for everyone to have fun and be able to socialise. McCutchen (2006) refers to the adolescent age group of students as being bound by peer pressure, and working well in groups, but being very self-conscious of learning new skills and

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fearful of standing out from the crowd. She has likewise advocated that students be given initial opportunity to work in small groups (p. 90).

Secondly, Michael is well justified in saying that we should not be 'over-privileging' students' voices when selecting dance education content in the formulation of curricula. For the simple reason that, as revealed by our data analysis, Singapore students, both at the school and university level, either are lacking or have limited experience in dance to enable them to make informed value judgements about dance. And, the limited perspective of some students is compounded by the problem of poor quality teaching on which their perceptions and opinions may be based. Therefore, the need to have qualified and proficient teachers of dance is of utmost priority. Although we have mentioned that there is a need to provide folk dances of varying pace and challenge that is not to say that such lively activity will solve the problems we face as dance educators, and dance teacher educators. It is not our intent to design dance education experiences only to give students a physical workout. Although having our students improve their physical fitness through dance is one of the National syllabus objectives that we hope to achieve in addition to contributing to the other psychomotor objectives, and to achieving equally important cognitive and affective outcomes. Hence, we have also chosen to emphasize the value of creativity and intercultural understanding in the teaching and learning of folk dances. We acknowledge that the issues we face as teacher educators are broader than those of dance teachers in schools. In addition to teaching our student teachers to dance, one of our challenges is to prepare these future teachers with the necessary content knowledge and sound pedagogical content knowledge for them to engage our school students in the dance curriculum through meaningful and successful pedagogy.

Thirdly, the issue of time constraints mentioned is real: we have minimal hours (36 contact hours for a course, likely to be reduced to 24 contact hours in the coming years) in which to prepare our pre-service teachers. We are therefore limited to being able to teach folk, line, and some ballroom dances. As Michael has also pointed out, hip hop and other forms of what our students call 'modern' dances; such as jazz require no less expertise on the part of the teachers. Without the necessary personal expertise and genre-specific pedagogical content knowledge, most teachers will be neither confident nor effective in planning, teaching, and evaluating units that draw on these dance forms. So, rather than to try to cram too many different dance genres in a dance course for teachers, we have to be realistic: focus on what is easily attainable for teachers given that most of them come with little or no dance experience. This also reiterates our earlier point made about our student teachers being comfortable with learning folk and social dances for the same reason as above that they would find it easier to teach these dances as they are easier to attain.

Having teachers understand *at least* the physical and aesthetic requirements of the dance forms that they propose to teach, as advocated by Michael, is definitely a prerequisite minimal competency for teachers. Without a doubt we need to prepare competent and enthusiastic teachers so that they, in turn, can provide our students with dance experiences that go beyond pleasure in a changing contemporary culture.

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Joan: Yes, student responses to dance as a movement form are an important consideration in dance courses. In pressed economic times, even in economically stable Singapore, pragmatists dominate discourse about the purposes of schooling. When public perceptions are very utilitarian, activity programmes in schools must either serve the nation's good or the individual's good (in serving the nation). The rationale in the former instance is that school activity programmes contribute to the foundation of Singapore as a sporty nation and in the latter group and individual recreational activities contribute to the development and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. Such positions are often silent on dance as a pleasurable leisure activity to be enjoyed for its own sake, unless, when dance is included in school programmes, it too must serve the nation's good (for example, the ACES Day referred to by the interviewed students). When young people talk about dance, they seem either to comply to the status quo, perhaps to impress those in power, or to, as with these students, reject the orthodoxy and cry 'give us our own dance form'. Thus, merging students' desires with broader curriculum objectives, requires a broader definition of dance than that which would merely satisfy students' views on what is trendy. If this is the case then fulfilling the official agenda of school curricula will be in jeopardy.

Our data have shown that students' views on dance are well formed during their school years. Michael and Lai Keun have both identified that, by the time student teachers enter university pre-service education courses, their beliefs are further solidified. Although we teacher educators have limited time in the curriculum, the onus is on us to expose students' entry perspectives through the use of purposeful conversations with students in order to facilitate their reflection on how their narrow experiences have similarly limited their understandings of dance. In the deconstruction of their beliefs, we must help student teachers reconstruct new meanings of dance through a broad, not narrow, range of pleasurable dance experiences that are both focused on personal development and professional development in their role of future teachers.

A difficulty associated with little time for dance in the curriculum is the restricted possibilities for student development. Until the recent expansion of school physical education in the school timetable, a 'touch-and-go' approach has been characteristic of selected activities in school dance curriculum programmes. McFee (1992) points out that it is not the bodily movements that constitute dance but the dance itself. When the only opportunity for all students to engage in dance is in the context of traditionally technicist-driven physical education, physical education teachers may use 'fun' dance to justify maintaining student motivation, while covering their own inadequacy—be it lack of conviction about the value of dance or lack of conviction in their being able to teach dance. Although they have had a range of dance experiences in their own pre-service programmes, dance seemingly is an activity field that teachers want to avoid in their school programmes. Thus when teacher educators are able to lead student teachers into a dance culture that is emotionally and socially transformative, dance beyond being an utilitarian activity, there may be a chance for the success of such experiences. Teacher educators must be explicit in their intent on making deep changes in the L.L. Keun et al.

psyche of student teachers so that they too might be able to take their students beyond the familiar through the expression of mood, feelings and emotion through engaging in dance.

Michael: With co-authors Anna Hickey-Moody and Eimear Enright, I have recently completed an article for the journal *Sport, Education and Society*, the purpose of which was to grapple with questions concerning physical education's relevance to the lives of young people. In particular, we tried to clarify what 'youth culture' is and how it could or should shape physical education practice. These are complex matters but an obvious starting point is to make explicit the orientation of teachers towards youth culture. In other words, I agree with Joan's point about the need to give students time and space to explore their own thoughts, feelings and beliefs about movement forms such as dance. However, a necessary corollary of this, I think, is for educators to make explicit their thoughts, feelings and beliefs about young people. In particular, what does it mean to "move with the times"? Is our intention to pander to youth culture, critique it or inoculate students against it?

The future for physical education worldwide is radically unclear and there are signs of possible extinction in many countries. The situation calls for both innovation and principled action. Hickey-Moody, Enright and I consider both. On the one hand, we discuss participatory action research that places curriculum development in the hands of students and attempts to refashion the traditional power relations that have existed between students and teachers. Students are telling us they want more choice and autonomy and it is reasonable that we should give these to them.

On the other hand, and in direct contradiction to my previous point, any physical education worthy of the name should retain the impulse to teach and instruct. This means that teachers must have knowledge to impart that students will generally not have. Physical education is not recreation and the teacher's work is not exhausted by simply organising the contexts in which movement can take place. Our challenge as teacher educators is to convince our students that dance is fun, physical but also a serious educational undertaking. It is not simply a matter of turning on some music and approximating a set of movements, whether those movements are of the teacher's or students' choosing. Without a sound theoretical and practical knowledge basis, it is difficult to see why students should be asked to dance in physical education classes at all.

Lai Keun & Joan: Yes! "Physical education is not recreation". When we teach dance, it is not just so our students can have a great time but more importantly it is to give them an educational life experience that will carry them through adulthood beyond the school years. The recreational needs of the students for more 'modern' dance forms can be fulfilled by the school dance CCA and outside agencies or dance studios in the community. It is indeed a serious educational undertaking one which Michael has said goes beyond just having students dance to the music. It is heartening to know that we all speak with one voice with regards to the directions we need to take in order to provide our teachers with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge in dance so that our students in schools get the holistic educational experience that they deserve.

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Part VI Band Directing in Primary School

Chapter 14 Contextualizing Band Directing in a Singapore Primary School: Questioning Function and Significance

Chee-Hoo Lum and Tania Rahman

Introduction

The utilitarian function of a symphonic or military band, of emphasis being placed on "outreach, discipline and local pride" (Westbury 2002, p. 50) seems to run contrary to what might be termed 'new' music education in current times, where creativity and process triumphs obedience and product, and the role of dialogue and student-centered learning takes precedence over expert-directed teaching (Westbury 2002). In band directing, "no discussion can or should occur, say, in a rehearsal setting and that all decisions about music must be made by the conductor" because "[i]f a band director were to run his/her wind ensemble like a Greek symposium, very little music would be ready for a scheduled performance" (Westbury 2002, p. 43).

Concert bands, choirs, Chinese orchestras and other instrumental ensembles are prominent in many primary, secondary, and pre-tertiary schools in Singapore and have become the pride and joy to which an arts niche in most local schools are identified, proudly displaying banners of success tagged to illustrious awards won at the Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) Central Judgings¹ and playing/singing at major school events. With so much time, money and effort put into the running

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¹ "The Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) is an annual event organized by the Ministry of Education to celebrate the achievements of our youths in their co-curricular activities (CCAs). Starting in April and culminating in a month-long celebration in July, the SYF will engage students from schools across Singapore involved in the performing arts, sports and uniformed group CCAs" (http://www.singaporeyouthfestival.sg/).

of such ensembles within schools' CCAs² (Co-curricular activities) where the instructors for these ensembles are hired externally by schools and administratively managed by teachers-in-charge within the schools, there must be sufficient significance and function to these ensembles beyond the awards and provision of entertainment to the school community to justify their existence.

In an attempt to understand the pedagogies and practices of exemplary arts educators and artists in Singapore, a collaborative research grant project between the National Institute of Education (NIE), the MOE's (Ministry of Education) Co-curricular Branch, and the National Arts Council (NAC) was set-up to web-document a series of case studies (OER 7/10 LCH). In this chapter, the focus is on one of these case studies, to examine an exemplary band instructor working in a primary school, exploring the instructor's reflective pedagogies and practices and the complex workings within the school context, to allow for a rich discussion about functions, purposes, processes and implications in local music and arts education.

Background of the Band Director and the Concert Band

Affendi (pseudonym) is the current director of a primary and secondary school concert band. He serves as the vice-president of a local band directors' association, plays the trumpet with a semi-professional wind band and is a member of an international trumpet and symphonic band association. Affendi started his music education learning to play the cornet in primary school and then on to the trumpet at secondary school. He started conducting after National Service, first helping out with sectionals in some bands before conducting a primary school band. He subsequently took up band directing full-time. While conducting, he undertook an 8-months band directing course and subsequently received a Band Directing Diploma. He attended clinics and conducting classes, and worked with renowned band directors locally and in Japan. Beyond these academic credentials, he continues to learn on the job and on occasions, seek out established band conductors for advice and master classes.

The concert band focused in this discussion is an award-winning primary school⁴ band made up of students situated in the northern part of the city-state with students coming from primarily low social-economic backgrounds. The band members are mainly of Chinese ethnic backgrounds with a sprinkling of Malay and Indian

² Student participation in music CCAs is by choice and CCAs are held outside curriculum time. Within curriculum time, music is a compulsory subject in all primary and lower secondary schools with up to 1 h per week. Music classes are guided by a national syllabus, the General Music Programme (GMP 2008).

³ National Service in Singapore or conscription, requires all male Singaporean citizens who have reached the age of 18 to be enrolled into the military between 22 and 24 months.

⁴ Students in Singapore Primary Schools typically start at age 7 and goes up to age 12, from Primary 1 to Primary 6. This particular primary school houses about 2,000 students in total.

students as well as international students such as Filipino, Chinese nationals, and also students whose parents migrated from Myanmar. The band consists of about 200 members at present, with 70 in the main band, around 60 in the recruit band and around 70 new Primary 1 and 2 pupils (aged 7 and 8). The concert band has been touted to be one of the most established and widely-recognized primary school bands in Singapore achieving several gold awards over the years.

Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative case study approach. Over a 2-week school holiday period,⁵ the research team video-recorded approximately 25 h of band rehearsal sessions including several number of sectionals. In addition to the rehearsal sessions, interviews with the band instructor and other stakeholders such as students, parents, and the teacher-in-charge were audiotaped. The transcriptions of the audiotaped interviews and video-recordings of the rehearsals accompanied with approximately 350 pages of field notes served as data for analysis. The data was coded based on words and processes that spoke to the instructor's foundational beliefs, pedagogies and practices. Similar codes were put together to tease out significant themes. Analytical memos were then penned down to clarify the themes before the findings were derived.

Several factors came into consideration for selecting a qualitative case study approach for the present study. First of all, the study is broadly aimed at interpreting the images of local music and arts education practices through a single band instructor's beliefs and efforts. In addition, the study also looks at different complexities at work in the band instructor's workplace and his profession as a musician in general. A qualitative case study approach allows for such multilevel interpretations because qualitative research, as Stake (2010) contends, emphasizes interpretation which can reveal the "unique character" of a case (Stake 2010, p. 31). In other words, case study research examines the "unique" character(s) of a case by means of "the close examination of people, topics, issues, or programs" (Hays 2004, p. 218). Baxter and Jack (2008) acknowledge the significance of considering the context in which the study will take place. In the present case, it was a decision to focus on the teaching practices of one single band instructor and the context, is his usual teaching place, i.e., the school was chosen for observation where he teaches throughout the year. The multilevel interpretations of Affendi's case as a band instructor in the present study, therefore, depend on such contexts as his own background (academic and professional) as a band instructor, the school where he teaches as well as the history and culture of band instruction in Singapore.

⁵ The data collection was done during the school's end-of-year break (typically end of November till the beginning of January). In this instance, the band members were required to attend daily practices (9 am to 5 pm) for 2 whole weeks during this end-of-year break.

In addition, Affendi's case provides insights into the current trend of band instruction in Singapore. This also rationalizes the suitability of a qualitative case study approach to the present study as case study research probes into "contemporary cases for purposes of illumination and understanding" (Hays 2004, p. 218).

In dealing with contemporary cases in a case study, "[a] how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin 1994, p. 9). So, the research "ordinarily leaves the determination of meaning and worth to the consumer or audience who may construct their own naturalistic generalizations by drawing on the information in the case study" (Stake 1995, p. 85). In Affendi's case, the researcher had to go back to Affendi to double check the information collected in order to make room for such "naturalistic generalizations".

Yin (1994) views interviews as a very significant source of data which allow the researcher to gather information from different perspectives:

Overall, interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees, and well-informed respondents can provide important insights into a situation. They can provide shortcuts to the prior history of the situation, helping you to identify other relevant sources of evidence. However, the interviews should always be considered verbal reports only. As such, they are subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation. Again, a reasonable approach is to corroborate interview data with information from other sources (p. 85).

In Affendi's case, multiple interviews were conducted with Affendi, his colleagues such as the teacher-in-charge, the vice-principal and principal of the school where he teaches as well as his students. The audiotaped interviews were accompanied by video-recordings of a number of his teaching sessions. Through the interviews, Affendi's personal beliefs about his own teaching practices as well as the whole band instruction culture in Singapore were matched with the perceptions of his colleagues, students and the school authority. Information from such multilayered data has helped form an overall picture of Affendi's beliefs and practices as a band instructor in Singapore.

Findings

Teaching and Learning Processes

Affendi considers his own teaching method as 'unorthodox,' adjusting constantly through trial and error. To determine if a chosen repertoire is suitable for the band, Affendi always begins with an initial reading of the score for the entire band from the beginning to the end without stopping. This helps him to determine feasibility of the repertoire. Affendi is able to play at foundational level all the band instruments, thus allowing him to demonstrate and identify possible trouble spots for particular instruments. After identification of possible 'trouble spots' within each piece, he usually leaves students to sort out the technical difficulties during sectionals on their own.

The organization of whole day practices consist of sectionals dispersed between combined practices with timings of each determined by the readiness of various sections in sorting out troubled spots. Affendi would move from section to section (sectionals are conducted in different classrooms and hallways within the school compound) to listen and monitor the development in the practices.

During main band rehearsals, Affendi constantly taps the beat for the band, seeing tempo as crucial and emphasizes rhythmic and melodic precision. After the band is secure with tempo and getting all the notes in place, he then proceeds to 'shape' the piece. Affendi also emphasizes that students need to memorize the score. The main features of Affendi's teaching processes are discussed below:

Sectionals

Affendi always emphasizes during the main band rehearsal that the first stage is to "clear wrong notes and fingerings" (an immediate task in sectionals) followed by the second stage, which consists of working on expressions, articulation and musicality. He gives good reference points for sectionals always letting students know what to focus on ahead of time. It is in Affendi's opinion that peer pressure during sectionals can help to promote better skills development, for example, accurate note reading and articulation, among students.

In the sectionals, Affendi appoints section leaders selected from the students. In doing so, he actually creates opportunities for developing leadership qualities among students. The involvement of students in leading sectionals appear to be part of a trust system in which Affendi can entrust the senior students or even the section leaders to lend hands in conducting the rehearsal process. Affendi also appoints section leaders from each section who help him manage the rehearsals of different sections in his absence. He relies on the senior members to manage and discipline the younger students in the sectionals.

Affendi believes in the development of leadership qualities among his students as a major part of his teaching aims and goals. This is in line with Myers' (2009) thoughts towards constructivist strategies for orchestras and bands, in which he "advocates strategies such as empowerment of musical leadership and responsiveness by means of transfer of leadership among students to model and imitate musical pieces with and without instruments and also follow up discussions and reflections on such experiences" (p. 59).

A recruit band exists within Affendi's band sectional structure. They are essentially made up of young students (Primary 1 and 2 students) who have joined the band without any initial musical background. The recruit band practices separately from the main band and Affendi determines these students' graduation to the main band by means of musicianship and not seniority. Thus, one can remain in the recruit band if his or her level of musicianship has not reached the standard to play in the main band. In this way, students feel a need to push themselves and are constantly engaged.

Sound Before Sight

Affendi emphasizes loving the instruments first: the students need to be fond of the instruments before starting to learn how to play them. He believes strongly in sound before sight – starting students off by playing the instrument, instructing the students to just learn by ear. He ensures that the students get the sound first before throwing in technicalities like tonguing and fingering. He also uses on occasions audio CDs of working repertoire for students to learn by ear. He builds up their interest through playing first, leading on to the learning of notation. Affendi also believes that aural training like getting students occasionally to dictate rhythmic and melodic phrases are particularly useful for their musical development.

On Interpretation and Balance

In interpretation of musical pieces, Affendi often begins by telling students a programmatic narrative that is in line with the context of the piece or sometimes, an imagined plot that he has conjured up. Sometimes he would allow students to write their narratives on paper and share with him and other band members. The students could take ideas from the title of the piece to which they could add their own interpretations. After listening and reading students' interpretations, Affendi would also tell his made-up version. Along with input from students, the stylistic interpretation of the piece would be created which Affendi feels, would help with students' imagination and anchoring of the piece when they play and perform. The final version for interpretation by the band is usually Affendi's version with some input from students. Affendi would often refer to emotions as well (happy, sad, angry, etc.), getting the students to feel as though they are watching a movie, allowing the ebb and flow of emotions to surge. This is in line with Heikinheimo's (2009, p. 49) contention that "the shared work by the teacher and the student articulates the definition of music and means for learning musical expression".

In order for students to feel the correct stylistic features of a piece of music, Affendi would at times model during main band practice by playing on particular instruments such as the drum set on one occasion to allow members to get the 'pop' feel. Students would then try to imitate what Affendi has modeled. In a typical practice session, Affendi would also get some band members to the front to listen out to their own parts for balance, so that they can hear for themselves what needs to be done in their particular sections.

Repertoire

Affendi chooses his band repertoire from music pieces that he has heard before and usually picks pieces that are a little beyond the students' technical competence to

challenge and motivate them to improve musically. However, he stresses the importance of students understanding the context and content of the pieces.

The band's repertoire includes pop songs, 'serious' music, and songs of current interest. More specifically, they would include Euro-American classical transcription pieces, original works for the concert band and also some current Chinese, Korean and English pop songs (like those by Lady Gaga), and pop rock songs (like those by Evanescence). Affendi essentially selects for the band, repertoire of a variety of genres including swing, rock, pop, Latin, classical, film and even music from cartoons and anime. For the recruit band, Affendi would select 'five- to six-note thingies' for the students to play (for example, Barney's theme song). Affendi would also encourage small ensembles to perform on their own during band concerts like a clarinet quintet or a saxophone ensemble. Thus, Affendi provides the concert band with a broad repertoire. He tries not to alter what the composer originally intends to convey through the music piece. He does not like to re-adjust pieces to suit the band's capability and believes that re-arranging will cause the pieces to lose their integrity.

Affendi keeps himself updated with the latest global band movement. Currently, according to Affendi, the trend for primary school bands is to play various musical transcriptions. His liking for the current trend in band direction mainly came from his musical learning experiences with his exchanges with Japanese band directors and local teachers. He gets advice from these local and regional conductors and also observes Japanese bands and students to decide on the direction of his school bands.

Affendi's thinking behind repertoire selection and its interpretation seemed to have considered and reflected upon Dewey's (1934, p. 85) philosophy that:

Theories which simply focus on the expressive object dwell on how the object represents other objects and ignore the individual contribution of the artist. Conversely, theories that simply focus on the act of expressing tend to see expression merely in terms of personal discharge.

Jorgensen (2004) has propounded that "if the aim of education in any domain is to engage pupils fully then they must be given an active voice; from this stance there need not be any contradiction between the notion of democracy within teacher–pupil relationships and the attainment of positive learning outcomes" (pp. 5–6). Affendi considers his students' voices and opinions but to what extent is it an 'active' voice?

Practice Time

Affendi's dedication to his profession is reflected in his ubiquitous presence during rehearsals. In order to focus on his duties as a band director, he teaches at only two schools for long hours. During school holiday practice sessions, Affendi pointed out, Nine to five I will be in the primary school. So I will schedule the secondary school to come at three o'clock, to do their sectionals, then I would come in at six, after my primary school, I would end nine thirty at the secondary school.

He receives a monthly salary on contracts for 400 h per year from these two schools but his teaching hours actually clocks over 700 h per year in order to get his students up to a good performance level.

Affendi spends long hours for practice including 8 h daily during school holidays and on school days, twice a week, 4 h on Wednesdays and 2 h on Tuesdays. He continues to find ways to motivate students to practice, particularly at home, sharing with the students possible ways of squeezing in practice time between homework and tuition. Some students face difficulties practicing at home as the instruments can be rather loud and not conducive for practicing in small and compact living spaces. Despite that, Affendi constantly encourages band members to bring the instruments home for practice whenever possible.

The luxury of long practice hours has allowed Affendi to include explicitly the teaching of music theory with his students, which according to Affendi, is not always possible with other bands. By the time Affendi's students play in the main band, they are familiar with key and time signatures, and fundamental notation and terms. Upon graduation (at Primary 6, aged 12), the students can usually sight-read fairly well and have a good grounding of the basic concepts and elements of music.

Discipline in the Band

Affendi has established a school band tradition in his teaching context which he termed "band manners". Every member of the band has to follow the band manners and Affendi considers these manners as part of disciplining his pupils. Band manners would include unison greetings of the band director and teachers-in-charge led by the band major.

Affendi considers discipline as a way to encourage students' musical skills development and to develop in them a sense of esprit de corp – he scolds students at times, compels them to run and do push-ups, drive students to tears at times to 'wake them up' before a concert performance. He established the culture of 'punishment' as a part of tradition passed down from seniors (admits, however, that it is kind of militaristic). Even so, he builds very good relationships with his students by being strict and yet personable, e.g., by playing soccer with them after band practice.

⁶ Due to the scarcity of land, the bulk of Singaporean low- and middle-income families live in high-rise flats with rather compact living spaces and neighboring flats close to each other.

Critiquing the Teaching and Learning Process

In recent years, the role of the teacher conductor in music classrooms has been debated. As Allsup (2010) proclaimed,

At risk of stating the obvious, music teaching and learning in these large ensembles was and remains primarily experienced through performance. Curricular choices address the right level of challenge for a particular group (and attention to audience needs), and assessment comes in the form of a well-played concert or high festival rating. This is a simplified description of a highly complex learning environment. However, the educational logic of bands, orchestras, and choirs has never needed a rationale beyond its apparent functionalism. It is a remarkable testament to their utilitarian appeal that these expensive forms of teaching have survived a century of budget swings (p. 50).

Jorgensen's (2011) use of the 'production' model as metaphor for music education draws parallels with the teaching and learning in symphonic and military bands. Teaching within this model is such that "instructional materials and objectives are predetermined, and the music teacher assumes a technical role of delivering information and organizing and conducting musical activities that achieve specified ends" (p. 98). Learning is "mostly receptive, as students are im-pressed by and receive knowledge from their teachers...for example, ensembles of musicians are taught to sing and play exactly as the teacher desires, and there is little room for students' musical interpretations of pieces" (p. 99). Instruction, "as in apprenticeship, the student's task is to receive the teacher's wisdom and emulate it, and music teachers and their students interact in predictable, hierarchical, and unidirectional ways" (p. 100). The focus on musical products "diverts attention away from the process of music making and taking. Being preoccupied with techniques and instruments of music teaching, learning, and instruction can miss its heart and soul" (p. 109).

With the emergence of constructivist educational practices, there have been calls for constructivist approaches in teaching music. Instead of acting as the master in the music classroom, the constructivist teacher conductor plays the role of a facilitator and allows for greater degrees of student participation, engagement and leadership. The teacher conductor's focus on extracting good performances from students in teacher-centered practices is now prioritized by the students' individual musical growth. New strategies for teaching music such as rehearsal engagement, repertoire selection, musical independence, physical response to music have surfaced which define the role of the teacher conductor in a new light. For instance, "rehearsal engagement" is considered by Scruggs in Scruggs et al. (2009, pp. 53–54) to be an "important concept sometimes neglected by conductors":

For students, to be engaged means that they are actively involved with the music during the rehearsal. Even if the director leads a perfect rehearsal, he or she has not necessarily engaged students in a meaningful musical experience. This may be because conductors neglect to ask students for their input in regard to the rehearsal or because the music literature is selected without benefit of student assistance. Another possibility is that directors are less concerned with student understanding than with student performance. All of these practices could be described as consistent with a teacher-centered classroom (pp. 53–54).

However, authority in music teaching has gained variable treatment from theorists and researchers deriving from research on parenting and teaching.

Steinberg et al. (1989) explicated the notion of "authoritative parenting" holding the view that "authoritative parents, whose parenting style was found to contribute to academic aspirations and achievement amongst their children, treated their children warmly and democratically, yet with a degree of behavioural control" (Creech and Hallam 2011, p. 106). Birtchnell's (1993) interpersonal models reflect these teaching and parenting dimensions: "While upperness provides the opportunity to impart knowledge and exert influence, lowerness provides a space where individuals may receive care and attention and benefit from others' knowledge. While closeness represents the possibility for communion, distance provides opportunities for development of agency" (as cited in Creech and Hallam 2011, p. 106). Evidence in music teaching shows that "close, responsive relationships with the teachers" as well as "expertise" are valued by pupils and also "as pupils develop they may seek different types of support within both the pupil-parent dyad and pupil-teacher dyad" (Creech and Hallam 2011, p. 106). The research by Creech and Hallam (2011) investigates "the extent to which responsiveness and control influence specific facets of learning experience, which were conceptualized as pupil outcomes that... include enjoyment of music, satisfaction with lessons, motivation, self-efficacy, self-esteem and pupil attainment" (p. 107).

Affendi's teaching practices certainly reflect a number of issues raised by Creech and Hallam (2011) such as the influence of "control" in gaining pupil "responsiveness" as well as "pupil attainment". Running a primary school band of 200 members is complex business as evident in the teaching processes and the community support that is needed (detailed in the next section). Many systems need to be in place to ensure the smooth flowing of the machinery in this 'production' (reference to Jorgensen's (2011) production metaphor). Affendi definitely has to keep everything in check while assuring quality music education for the students. The fundamental question then lies in the definition of this quality, shaped by the belief system of Affendi which in essence, is defined by the strife towards excellence in musical performance and the utilitarian functions of the band including teamwork, discipline and camaraderie.

Support and the Building of Community

Affendi sometimes gets assistance from the alumni to help the younger members to practice as the school has no budget for instrumental tutors. Affendi talks about a kind of buddy system established between the senior members and the recruits which reflects rapport between these two groups. They act as middlemen between Affendi and the band recruits or younger members helping with communication between them. Many alumni members carry on their band interest in their respective secondary schools but have a great sense of belonging to this school band. During SYF years particularly, the alumni (at least 8–15 of them) would regularly help Affendi out in sectionals to coach the younger band members. The alumni association is not an official association attached to the primary school. Although it is hard for the alumni to practice in the primary school because of their secondary

school commitments, they still return to participate in the practices, help with the sectionals in rehearsals and also just to socialize and chit-chat. The alumni also helps out with the organization of Parents' Night and other band camp events.

School camps are a yearly event and a good way of building rapport and relationship with band members. Typically a 3-day residential affair at the school, the alumni members come in to assist Affendi in whatever ways they can. In his efforts to build up a community of band performers and supporters, Affendi works towards organizing events like annual band concerts and parents' nights in his school, the purpose of which is also an attempt to help pull back the alumni. Affendi shows appreciation to all parents for giving their continued support to the band particularly in SYF years where practice hours are long and all kinds of logistical support are needed from them. The alumni are tasked to organize a Parents' Night to give thanks to parents.

Affendi has close communication with parents. They have Affendi's personal contact number and Affendi maintains regular contact with them. Parents allow their children to practice regularly, knowing they are learning to play an instrument and being part of the band which is the pride of the school. Affendi has established good rapport and trust with parents.

The band teachers-in-charge have been very supportive to Affendi, staying during long practice hours during school holidays, sacrificing their own school breaks, sorting out administrative details from band uniforms to ordering/repairing of instruments and informing Affendi of band members who did not show up for practice and tracking their reasons of absence and following up with parents.

Community building is a significant aspect of band teaching. Cusiak's (1973) finding that "music ensembles form close-knit circles" (cited in Adderley et al. 2003, p. 190) is supported by Morrison (2001) who further suggests that "school ensembles are not just classes or performance groups, but guardians of their own specific culture, a culture that informs and enriches the lives of their members" (p. 24). Adderley et al. (2003, p. 190) identify themes like "identity", "transmission", "social dimension", "practical and personal boundaries", "traditional song and performance practices", and "diaspora" through which Morrison (2001) explores this "overlooked culture".

Creech and Hallam (2011) consider such themes as "shared purpose", "pupil—teacher rapport" and "parental support" as "prominent" in "pupil—teacher—parent relationships" in instrumental music education. According to them, "Close agreement amongst pupils, their parents and teachers with respect to learning objectives has been found to be a feature of successful learning partnerships" (p. 103). They consider "parental support" as crucial in forming a child's musical perceptions: "personal, behavioural and cognitive support offered to children by parents has been found to be a key factor in sustaining a child's musical well-being" (p. 104; see also Creech 2006; Pruett 2003).

In Affendi's teaching context, themes like "transmission" and "social dimension" play significant roles in community building. The involvement of the alumni or former band members in his teaching practices aids the transmission of the school's band culture from the senior alumni to the current young band members. Support from the parents and the teacher-in-charge contribute to the creation of a social dimension, although different from the one Morrison (2001) points out but a significant one to boost band teaching in the school.

Working Around Constraints

Affendi faces a number of constraints, one of which is the lack of space for practice at school. The school lacks a band room with proper acoustics. The school classrooms have low ceiling and not a big enough space to accommodate the band. For this reason, the band members have to practice in the school hall which is very noisy due to the close proximity of the MRT⁷ station to the school as the MRT passes by every 3 min. Due to lack of a fixed band room, the band has to move up and down for the sectional practices which can be a logistical nightmare for Affendi. For this reason, Affendi's band members are trained to set up and tear down the band in the hall as part and parcel of teamwork building and responsibility of being a band member. In addition, the school band faces competition of space with other activities that happen concurrently in the hall at times.

Another problem that Affendi mentions is the lack of instrumental tutors for band members. Senior members and alumni, and on occasion Affendi's friends help out with instrumental tutoring of band members. Affendi thinks that hiring more instrumental tutors will help in role-modeling for children and the learning process will be faster. However, as he says, it's not easy to find tutors to coach younger students and there is the issue of funding.

Affendi is concerned about logistical support in schools, particularly making sure that eventually, proper band rooms with adequate acoustics are built for students to practice in. He comments on the need for schools having watchdogs for monitoring over bands so that even with the change of conductors in schools, the standard of band teaching does not fall. Affendi also emphasizes a call for standards in local band directing which he regards at present to be too commercially driven.

Foundational Beliefs in and Devotion to Band Education

Schools cannot change that culture, that imagined nation; they can only reflect them. The "aims of education" reside outside the world of curriculum office and documents... they are found in the imagings, understandings, and dispositions of students, parents, communities, and teachers as members and agents of a living, albeit invisible *Weltbild* (Westbury 2002, p. 110).

By examining the foundational beliefs of the band director, his teaching processes and multiple views gathered from students, teachers-in-charge and parents, it is hoped that this case study will get at what Westbury terms the "aims of education" (in this instance local band education) through living and lived practices.

As described earlier, Affendi believes in teaching his students proper musicianship skills and values, and watching them grow as individuals. He wants his

⁷ The MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) system is the public railway transport system for Singapore that spans the entire city-state.

students to develop as musicians and responsible band members, to work hard in band practices and give their best in performances. He wants his band members to play from their hearts and perform as if they are accomplished artists in every performance. He believes in long practice hours devoted to the learning of repertoire but focuses his band members on values of time management, consistency in learning and performance, teamwork as well as significance of everyone in the band. Clearly, there are aesthetic and utilitarian rationales present in Affendi's beliefs, with aesthetic referring to the

musical and artistic goals of music education, for instance, understanding, experiencing, or cognizing the values and principles of music, whereas the utilitarian rationale has referred to various educational benefits such as the development of self-discipline, self-esteem, or the social significance of music-making (Westerlund 2008, p. 80).

Affendi's insistence on the relevance of every band member reflects the participatory nature of his teaching ideals, in line with Bowman's (2004) contention that "foremost among the reasons music truly matters educationally is its participatory, enactive, embodied character – and its consequent capacity to highlight the co-origination of body, mind, and culture" (p. 46). Affendi's beliefs of teaching music appears to characterize his philosophy as "practical" as well as "social", "cultural-historical and aesthetical", and "a combination of these" from his idea of the participation of teacher and students in music-making (Heikinheimo 2009, pp. 48–49; see also Davidson 1997; Elliott 1995; Hargreaves and North 1997; Langer 1953; Louhivuori 1998; Scruton 1997; Torvinen 2007; Westerlund 2002).

Affendi's philosophy regarding music-making as a participatory event also echoes Heikinheimo who regards "most performances" as "social events" or "occasions of making and experiencing music together" (2009, p. 50). This is because "the "mutual tuning-in relationship" in musical performance transcends the barrier of "I" and "thou" into the realm of "we"" and such kind of relationship "binds those who play together, and also the musicians and their audience". Hence, the "mutual conception of musical engagement widens the musical interaction to concern the social context" (Heikinheimo 2009, p. 50; see also Alfred Schutz in Scruton 1997, p. 438).

Some Summative Thoughts and Implications

During conducting, Affendi employs a three-second rule to ensure response to the conductor (i.e. students need to be constantly aware of Affendi's conducting through eye contact). The baseline of his teaching is note accuracy and strict adherence to the tempo before any interpretation of the piece is decided and worked upon. Musical decisions are left primarily to Affendi with the motto "the conductor is always right". Hence the responsibility of students' musical development falls heavily on Affendi by resting complete trust in the conductor. On occasions, Affendi does cater to the preferences of his students by introducing within the repertoire, popular tunes that are current with their media influences.

Affendi's band goes through the process of teaching and learning together as a team, in a hierarchical system of leadership and discipline, building up musicianship skills alongside social, moral and value development. While Affendi stresses musical excellence in performance as a key foundation in music education for his concert band, the winning of awards are not important to him at all as he believes in just allowing the band to play and play well. The care and encouragement he provides for his students alongside the building up of community support for the band through the alumni, parents, teachers and school leaders make him a well-liked and successful band director within the Singapore band scene.

While Affendi's approach to his concert band draws some parallels to Jorgensen's (2011) production metaphor, and justifiably so because of a 200-member strong band that requires efficiency, technical proficiency and discipline, strengthened by Affendi's fundamental belief in the significance of performance excellence as musical goal, it leaves one to question and ponder upon the varied aims and objectives of different school music education programs. Are the aims and objectives different within the general music program during curriculum time as opposed to school musical ensembles in CCAs? What about informal and non-formal musical activities that students engage in outside the school setting? Should the aims and objectives be different? If they are different, are they all equally valid and valuable? What are the uses and functions of music (Merriam 1964) and music education in each case? Is it to ensure students' active voice and empowerment in music decisions and music making, and critical/creative thinking and identity formation through creating music? Or is it about attaining high proficiency in music technical skills and a polished performance of a demanding repertoire? Can we realistically achieve all these aims equally well? Ultimately, it boils down to the music educator's choice based on his or her teaching beliefs and practices which will have significant impact on the teaching and learning of students in their musical education. The point is to keep questioning and debating these fundamentals to propel the thinking forward in music education and in this particular instance, band music education.

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Chapter 15 Exegetical Commentary and Dialogue

Steven Morrison

I know Affendi. Well, not personally. But the description of him in the preceding section rings so familiar that I feel Affendi and I—and, for that matter, many of our fellow instrumental music teaching colleagues the world over—go back a long way. Perhaps more than any other facet of primary or secondary school music, the dynamics of the band classroom retain a certain consistency from nation to nation. Unlike orchestras and choirs that may tend to draw their identities and traditions from the concert hall or church, respectively, modern bands are creatures of the school. The best primary, secondary and university bands serve as models for those at other schools. The network of band reaches from school building to school building and from campus to campus, making the context of the band teaching in Singapore seem as familiar as in a band room in Seattle.

Affendi's history as an enthusiastic school band member, an aspiring teacher who gained his early experience by leading section rehearsals, and eventually a full-fledged band director responsible for his own program describes a path that resembles that of many instrumental music educators. His experience as a young band member and the early taste of teaching responsibility ignited a passion for this performing tradition that he now passes on to other young people (a common trajectory as described by Bergee and Demorest 2003). The overall design of his program and its curricular goals are consistent with those of most large ensemble programs. And the relationships that develop among students, between older and younger musicians and between alumni and current students—not to mention the connections between the community and the ensemble—would be familiar to most present and past band members.

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Chee Hoo: In terms of pre-service music education training in the U.S., is it a requirement for all band conductors to be certified within the state as qualified music educators before they can proceed to conduct a school band? If so, what do you see are the benefits of such training compared to those who just picked up the trade from the ground?

Steve: Yes, except for very rare cases, teachers assigned to band classes in U.S. public schools hold state certification. Generally speaking, this involves completion of the requirements for a state license as well as requirements for qualification in the specific content area (instrumental music, in the case of band and orchestra teachers). In the U.S. the fine arts area is considered a component of a student's program of study, all of which, in turn, must be taught by qualified and certified teachers. As band is one format in which that study takes place, band teachers must hold appropriate qualifications and licensure.

As I see it, the advantages to this include the opportunity to contextualize both band-specific skill training and overall musical development within the broad area of teacher preparation and, for that matter, tertiary education. In such a setting, preparation to teach band largely occurs within the same settings as preparation for any other area of music which, in turn, occurs within the larger setting of undergraduate (or, in some cases, graduate) study. The opportunity to interact with peers and teachers from throughout the field of music as well as from the various "area studies" (the sciences, humanities, etc.) requires students to view music within the big picture of human learning and experience. Ideally, teachers would carry this perspective into their various primary and secondary schools as they help their own students make transfers within music and across curricular areas.

For Affendi, directing a band program is more of a lifestyle than it is simply a profession. Given that he spends nearly twice as much time as his contract stipulates tending to his program, it is an understatement to say that "running a primary school band of two hundred members is complex business." His desire for some degree of oversight and quality control among the band teaching profession of Singapore reveals his view of band as a teacher-driven enterprise. That is, the success or failure of band programs is largely a function of the teacher's knowledge, skills and effort. It is no surprise then that Affendi measures his investment of time by the hours that he feels are needed rather than those that are required.

The success of a band program, in Affendi's eyes, comes down to achievement in both musical and social skills. While the balance between these two instructional agendas can be difficult to accomplish in some areas of music teaching (for example, Abril (2006) presents a discussion of this balance in the teaching of world music), the ensemble classroom tends to lend itself to concurrent academic and social learning. For example, student leadership is often fostered through peer instruction techniques, a context that focuses on skill acquisition among younger or

less accomplished performers while encouraging older or more able students to take on the role and responsibility of instructor.

To develop students' musical skills Affendi acknowledges his inspiration from global leaders in the band teaching community, particularly those in Japan. The influence and relevance of the Japanese band model (Hebert 2012) is clearly seen in both the structural characteristics—long rehearsal hours, extended vacation practices, co-curricular status for the ensemble—as well as the teaching approaches—instructor as facilitator, extensive student leadership responsibilities—of bands in Singapore. Though Affendi minimizes its importance, the band contest is another feature of the Japanese model that makes an impact on Singapore band teaching through its role as a significant and high-stakes measure of program success and the resultant emphasis on and extensive practice time devoted to a very few carefully selected pieces of music. Affendi is not afraid of taking risks with the music he selects as he feels it is important to identify materials just beyond the students' comfort zone (a Vygotskian approach that is explored in a music learning context by Elliott 1995).

From a curricular perspective one of the central themes that emerges from Affendi's story is the tension between group and individual achievement. On the one hand, Affendi has developed and maintains a vision of performance excellence and he works hard to help students collectively achieve at the highest possible level. Through the extensive use of modeling and listening, an emphasis on sound development before note reading, and the engagement of senior members, alums and friends as private or section tutors, he keeps such desired outcomes as characteristic tone quality and technical fluency in the eyes, ears and minds of his students on a consistent basis. Indeed, his stated goal is to help his students "perform as if they are accomplished artists," to play their instruments with the same fundamental level of command and beauty—if not technical range—as professionals (Duke and Byo 2011).

On the other hand the broad educational mission of school music may appear to run counter to the large group instruction model (Allsup and Benedict 2008). A teacher's desire to foster individual student achievement and to encourage the development of musical independence seems contradictory to the pressures of preparing group performances. In fact, for students to reach Affendi's goal of functioning in every possible way as an accomplished performing group, they would need to largely forsake any individual notions of musical expression and creativity in deference to the artistic decisions of the conductor, just as in a professional ensemble. Affendi even directly states, "the conductor is always right."

Chee-Hoo: How far can we push the band conductor along to the point of allowing for band members to be more involved in the music creative process, of composing their own band repertoire for instance, or improvising and developing themselves as well-rounded musicians beyond performing musicians?

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Steve: Taking the perspective that band teachers are culture-bearers of a particular musical tradition, the types of musical interactions they facilitate in the band classroom tend to reflect the experiences they have had throughout their own musical upbringing. Teachers who view themselves as skilled composers, arrangers or improvisers are likely more apt to include these experiences in their own curriculum. The challenge then is to include these opportunities in a teacher's professional and musical preparation.

I think one must be careful of equating a "well-rounded" musician with a highly skilled musician. Curriculum standards can easily become a wish list on which we place every conceivable form of musical expression and interaction. When a description of every possible way in which a person <u>could</u> be musical becomes every way in which we expect a person to <u>be</u> musical, we risk setting ourselves an impossible challenge and underestimating and undervaluing the experiences we actually can and already do offer.

As we consider the breadth and depth of an instrumental music curriculum a question we might ask is, "Who do we want a student to be?" I don't mean this in a general sense, such as "What kind of musical person do we want a student to become?," but literally, "WHO?" Who is that specific person who personifies the full complement of musical knowledge represented by the various curriculum documents?

In fact, it is one's perception of his or her role as conductor that can negotiate the balance between attention to group performance and student learning, between a director-centered and a student-centered classroom (Bazan 2011; Graulty 2010; Morrison and Demorest 2012). It would be hard to argue that the conductor (or director, or teacher—nomenclature can speak volumes about the traditional dynamic of the ensemble rehearsal) brings the richest array of expertise to the music room—it is, in fact, his or her responsibility. However, it is the manner in which the teacher chooses to deploy this expertise that sets up and lays out the instructional equation. The difference between talking music at students versus making music with students is the difference between direction and collaboration. The teacher who talks music ("Let's begin where the A theme becomes more lively") rather than gives directions ("Let's start at measure 17") is more successfully bringing students into the arena of musical decision-making. By acknowledging one's identity as a music expert (especially, as in Affendi's case, among those with extensive study relating to a particular teaching context) while still envisioning and treating students as musicians—indeed, Affendi's inclusion of music theory instruction suggests his desire to equip students with a broader perspective than simply production skill—can go a long way toward establishing the ensemble as a music-making community rather than simply a well-trained performing group.

Nevertheless, students desire success at the task at hand; in the context of a performing ensemble, accomplished performances are a reasonable expectation. Affendi's emphasis on musical precision and skill development reflects his

knowledge that group success is best accomplished through achievement at the individual level. The "production" model of music instruction necessitates attention to what and how students are able to produce, a matter intimately bound with process. The best teachers concern themselves with the "what" and "how" for each and every student. While ensembles can produce acceptable performances on the strength of a few good players, attention to the achievement of each student provides a more substantial outcome and a more rewarding student experience (Duke and Benson 2004). And, of course, it is more faithful to the overall mission of education.

In a snapshot, Affendi's professional path and identity as well as his commitment to the global band tradition reflect the personal histories and musical values of band teachers the world over. In his classroom one can observe much of what is considered best practice in instrumental music teaching. The large enrollment of his program and the extensive network of alumni, parent and community support suggest that students value the experiences he provides in his classroom. There are familiar constraints and limitations that he either creatively circumvents or works continually to rectify. But in the end, he puts forth a great effort to allow students to explore music through the band tradition. Much as with any music tradition, bands change and evolve in response to the many pressures surrounding them. That the band tradition encompasses such a significant educational function demands a responsiveness from it that goes well beyond musical innovation and adaptation to include pedagogical and curricular components as well.

Chee-Hoo: As we move towards considerations of 21st century competencies in education, of considering the development of creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills (Schuler 2011) in students, and in Singapore's case, wanting to "nurture each child to become a confident person, self-directed learner, active contributor and concerned citizen" (MOE 2010, p. 3), are there further thoughts within the field of band education in line with general music education that serve to move forward each of these skill sets, particularly with regards to critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, and productivity and accountability? (P21 2009).

Steve: Looking back on my own experience as a secondary student, many of these very traits developed as part of my participation in school music performance, in my case band. Interestingly, I recall that they developed as much from my musical interactions outside the band period as they did within the formal rehearsal context. The band room was a musical nexus where we gathered before, during and after school to practice, to try our hand at improvisation, to experiment with arranging and composing, to run student-led small group rehearsals and to share "finds" from our various LP collections. Even conversations over lunch in the school cafeteria would often veer off in musical directions ranging from critiques of a

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recent performance to stories of live concerts one or another of us may have attended. Music seeped into every available part of our school day.

To say these opportunities were a direct result of "band education" is a bit of a stretch in terms of them being formal parts of an instrumental music curriculum. But they did reflect a curiosity about and willingness to "play with" the ideas presented within the large group setting. Our teacher was, in fact, quite hands-off when it came to building in creative or individualized activities into the rehearsal schedule. On the other hand, he was very quick to provide and support every opportunity for self-directed learning.

Perhaps, to put it another way, by focusing on a high level of achievement on a very specific set of musical skills, students encounter ideas, practices, tools and strategies that can be applied to a whole landscape (or, if you will, soundscape) of musical challenges. The variable, I believe, is not necessarily one of curriculum but of approach on the part of the teacher, an approach which, in turn, rests on his or her expertise as a musician and enculturation into a collaborative instrumental music making tradition.

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Part VII Integrating the Arts & Partnerships

Chapter 16 Integrating Arts into the School Curriculum: Negotiating Partnerships – The Singapore Schools Project

Noorlinah Mohamed and Jane Gilmer

Introduction

Broadly the project was undertaken to bring a presence of the artist into the learning environment, into the classroom, essentially to bring the way in which artists teach into the classroom in curriculum time (ITI, Interview 20 March 2012).

To prove the relevance of arts in the school curriculum was the prime motivating factor for the Singapore Schools Project. As Director of the project T. Sasitharan points out:

There are arts in the schools but I thought the way they were being taught was problematic and this was the motivation for the project – to open up different possibilities and to place a premium on the imagination (ITI, Interview 20 March 2012).

The Singapore Schools Project was initiated to introduce artists into the classroom and to document their process, with a view to introducing a different perspective to arts education in schools. The project is particularly relevant because of its context: Singapore, adopted English as its *lingua franca* in 1965¹ "establishing English as the language of business, of government and as the language of instruction in all government main stream schools" (From speech by Mr. S. Iswaran 2010). This means that knowledge transfer in Singapore has undergone a radical shift to include a more 'western' and by extension, global attitude to what is offered in both education

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¹ For historical perspective on the political, social, cultural and economic complexities underpinning the language policy as well as the impact that had on Singapore nationhood, read Chua, B.H. 2003. "Multiculturalism in Singapore: an instrument of social control". Race and Class, 44(3): 58–77.

and arts practices (Wee 2002; Gopinathan 2007). A discursive unpacking of the global-local transcultural adaptations is not the remit of this chapter. What we offer is a brief historical overview of the globally informed Singapore arts education practices, and its impact on arts partnerships in the Singapore Schools Project.

Arts education initiatives in Singapore developed in full swing with the establishment of the National Arts Council Arts Education Program (NAC-AEP) in 1993. In 1999, The Necessary Stage, one of the oldest English-language theatre companies in Singapore, conducted the first artist-led in-curriculum theatre education projects at Mayflower Primary School (Wong and Hunter 1999). In 2001, the National Arts Council (NAC) introduced the Artist-in-School scheme; other artists-led in-curricular theatre education soon followed. By 2002, the National Arts Education Award, a joint arts education award by the NAC Arts Education Program (NAC-AEP) and the Ministry of Education (MOE), was developed to nurture and encourage good arts practices in schools. However, there is little by way of documented critical analysis to chart and make sense of these practices. The Necessary Stage in-curriculum theatre education initiative was perhaps the only project that had been documented, until the event of the Singapore Schools Project. Noting some of the arts education initiatives in Singapore suggests a sense of its evolution, and development, since the founding of Singapore in 1965. It also suggests an existing and continued presence of artists in the arts education landscape.

Drawing specifically on the Singapore Schools Project (SSP) 2011, initiated by T. Sasitharan at the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) formally known as The Theatre Research Practice (TTRP), our research focused on the ground-level perception and construction of artist-school arts education partnerships, particularly theatre education. We attempted to situate these practices within the prevailing arts and education policies in Singapore and examined the impact of limited arts education research on the ground-level construction of arts education partnerships. Our contention is that the absence of detailed documentation of past arts practices, particularly in schools, has generated ground-up arts partnerships, often with a limited sense of the larger arts education landscape. Accordingly, we set about exploring the formation of a workable framework for artist-school partnerships based primarily on the critical reflective practice of both artists and teachers.

Research Team (RT): Do you think this project [referring to the ITI led Singapore School Project] was any more unique from other arts projects that have gone into schools historically? We obviously can't think of all of them, but what is the difference here? Is it the outcome, or the way it was done?

ITI: Well, I don't think that it was pretty unique from other projects that had been brought into schools. It had a couple of objectives that I think probably marked it out as different and I think one of them is the attempt to refuse to become part of the everyday system of teaching. I think it is important for the artist to remain a collaborator but to understand that s/he is an outsider and must always be an outsider. In this respect we did not want to provide a service [like an external arts provider] – this is the difference (ITI, Interview 20 March 2012).

ITI: Part of the engagement was to have a teacher's workshop...now in some of the schools I think the teachers felt that we were a threat. They felt that the artists were there to tell them how to teach (ITI, Interview 20 March 2012).

RT: That's why I'm wondering if we get involved in the notion of partnership. In what way, looking into the future, if you want to continue with this form of intervention, what ways do you think that this partnership and the whole concept of partnership, besides conducting a teacher's workshop could be further developed? (ITI, Interview 20 March 2012).

The Singapore Theatre Education Landscape Post 1990s

The history of theatre artists' involvement in education began long before the establishment of the NAC. One could trace it through the development of theatre companies and their work with arts outreach programmes. An example is the English-language children's theatre in 1984 (http://theonlinecitizen.com/2009/12/three-cheers-for-act-3/), led by R. Chandran, Ruby Lim-Yang and Jasmin Samat. The founding of the first English-language Youth Theatre Singapore, administered by the Singapore Theatre American Repertory Showcase under the leadership of Christina Sergeant and Roger Jenkins in 1985, is another example (Kalidas 2012). The different motivations of artists' involvement with education vary: to engage with teaching the arts, economic considerations, the absence of theatre for young people (Lim-Yang 2012), an investment towards the development of future artists (Tan 2012), and the legitimization that special skills has on the presence of artists in schools (Mohamed 2011).

These earlier theatre education projects were confined within co-curricular activities (CCAs), as well as the NAC marketed Arts Education Programs consisting of ad hoc short-term workshops, assembly theatre performances as well as excursions and attendance to arts programs in purpose-built arts facilities (http://aep.nac.gov.sg). Drama within the school curriculum, involving artist-school partnerships was a later development, and became more prevalent when the NAC Artist-in-School scheme was established in 2001. The distinction between the NAC-AEP marketed ad hoc arts programs and the Artist-In-Schools (AIS) program lies in the ideation of 'artist-led' arts education content. In this scheme, schools, which erstwhile enjoy a 60 % funding from the Totalisator Board for their student engagement in AEP programmes, enjoy an additional 30 % funding of the total cost of engaging a resident artist in the school. The aim was to encourage sustained arts programmes in schools and to bridge school-arts community relations.

In the initial conception of the AIS, the artist, identified as one who is trained in the specialization of the arts, as well as having professional artistic practice, is acknowledged as possessing the 'expertise' to teach the arts. However subsequent iterations of the AIS guidelines indicate a shift in their perception of 'expertise':

- 1. Have wide knowledge of the art form, with recognized certification from arts institutions (minimum qualification of a diploma in a relevant field).
- 2. Possess necessary pedagogic experience (at least 2 years' teaching experience in the art form), or work with experienced arts educators in carrying out the project.

3. Display professionalism in the execution of the program, including but not limited to, the ability to communicate and facilitate effectively. (http://aep.nac.gov.sg/artist_in_schools.aspx)

According to the NAC, from 2001 to 2010, over 80 AIS ranging from Primary to Tertiary level arts programs were initiated.

The introduction of 'pedagogic experience' as a requirement and the inclusion of a distinct category of players named as 'arts educators', suggests an acknowledgement of the twinning of both artistic knowledge and teaching skills deemed necessary in arts/theatre education. We suggest that this evolution was partly attributed to the introduction of arts education offered in higher education institutions. These guidelines also signal the important role 'educators' play as partners in the conceptualization, construction and implementation of theatre education in schools.

However the process of conceptualizing and implementing the AIS has not been matched by research to examine, unpack and critique the construction, successes and challenges of these projects. In addition, documentations of shifts in arts education policies, as well as the impact of ground level discussions between institutions and artists on theatre education practices are limited. Indeed, the lack of research has resulted in a near absence of concrete data to inform the development of future projects. As a result, artists and schools lack the benefit of incremental knowledge to further enhance and deepen their conceptualization of future arts education projects and a clearer understanding of what constitutes artist-school partnerships.

Methodology

When the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) proposed The Singapore School Project in July 2011, it offered our research team an opportunity to develop a parallel journey to investigate, understand and critically unpack arts education practices in Singapore, particularly those involving artist-school partnerships. Importantly, it also offered the possibility for documentation to be generated that could potentially prove the validity of arts education as an essential item in the school curriculum.

Our research team consisting of four researchers, initiated a case study research in two schools – Edgewood Primary School and Regent Junior School (both pseudonyms) for 8 weeks from July–August 2011 to document processes. Working with interviews of teachers and artists as well as observation of the artists' teaching practices, our main aim was to understand the affordances of artistic influence on arts education in schools particularly during curriculum time, and the impact it has on students' appreciation and engagement with the arts. Accordingly, we included

² The National Institute of Education (NIE) began offering theatre and drama education degree level courses to teacher training in the early 1990s followed by Master's in Education and Master's by Research in the mid-2000s and, in 2007 a Ph. D program.

focus group interviews with students from both schools as well as students' reflective journals. Emerging out of this rich data, in particular the interviews and observations, another recurrent theme caught the team's attention as a factor that impacted upon the process: it centered on the tripartite relationship between the arts organization, in this case ITI, school (school leaders and teachers) and artists. As a consequence, we enacted a secondary and parallel concentration on what we later termed the process of partnership construction between ITI and the two schools.

To begin our research, we invoked Laurel Richardson's (1997) prismatic analytical structure which positions the object of inquiry like a crystal that refracts different data sets: observations of classroom practices; observations of teacherartist relationships beyond the classroom; interviews of teachers and artists as well as conversations with ITI representatives; as well as cultural policy and the educational policy documents of the NAC and MOE. Such refractive analytical perspectives offered the team inter-subjective engagement with "an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities, and angles of approach" (Richardson 1997, p. 92). At the same time, this complex array of "partial understandings" of a given phenomenon offered us knowledge in states of 'becoming' – inconclusive rather than conclusive 'happenings'.

Unpacking Arts Partnerships – Dualistic Analytical Structure

The defining of arts partnerships is a relatively new undertaking. The term 'partnership', originating from legal and business law, denotes a relationship governed by a contract between two or more competent persons with a view of profit (Morse 2010, p. 1). This legal framework sets out the rules that guide the behaviors and practices of the 'partners' with a promise of mutuality between equally 'competent' partners. Embedded within such a contract are values of collaboration, cooperation and respect, useful in themselves within a legal framework but limiting when applied to arts partnerships, leaving a number of relational questions unanswered. In the deciding of how arts partnerships can work questions arise such as: Does the party who initiates the partnership decide the direction? Can a partnership evolve with time and hence guide the relationship? How is competency judged? And, how do the partners negotiate the different practices, values and conceptual languages that each may bring to the relationship? Implicated within these questions are issues of power and the struggle with diversity and heterogeneity, all of which are central to our investigation.

Boyun Choe (2010) offers a socio-political analysis of partnership that is worth considering. Comparing the British as well as the Korean cultural systems, she explores the extent to which these political imperatives impact cultural policies and initiatives, including arts partnerships. We concur that this socio-political analysis of partnerships is useful on the policy-level discourse. However it limits the

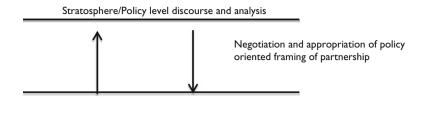


Fig. 16.1 Expansion of policy level analysis to include the ground-level negotiation and appro-

priation of the policy level configuration of 'partnership'

Ground level / Artist/Arts Organization/School

analysis to a stratospheric plane, examining effects of partnerships from a top-down optic. What we suggest for this discussion is an expansion of policy level analysis to include the ground-level negotiation and appropriation of the policy level configuration of 'partnership' (see Fig. 16.1). As a strategy, a dualistic analysis is particularly useful in the context of Singapore because of the way arts management works, particularly when considering the limited reflexive discourse available on the subject. Correspondingly, adopting such a strategy enabled us to explore the possible variant interpretations of 'partnership' enacted in arts education in Singapore.

Arts Partnership Within Singapore's Pragmatic Cultural Paradigm

In the 1999 Renaissance City Report, the term 'partnership' appeared seven times and in the 2012 Report of Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR), 24 times. In both these documents, partnerships were identified as crucial to establishing Singapore as a global arts city raising the question of what actually constitutes arts partnership. This is relevant to the agenda of high profiling of the arts while also raising the question of what the arts actually means to the community of Singapore, including arts participation in schools. We suggest that within these reports, partnership is defined within a more 'legalistic', pragmatic and functional usage with an emphasis on 'roles', 'responsibilities' and 'engagement' guidelines to effect 'mutual benefits' between the state, the private sector, individual citizens and the arts community in the global arts city agenda. We argue that this earlier pragmatic framework is subsequently scaffolded into the current 'arts for life' mandate emblematic of the government's 'inclusive' paradigm (ACSR 2012) but actually excludes the potential creative and dynamic relationship between parties. Within the inclusive framework, the arts are appropriated as "promoting social cohesion across population segment" defining a consensual identity of "Singaporean-ness" (ibid, p. 10), However, this notion of 'inclusivity' does not necessarily feature in the conceptualization and implementation of arts partnerships initiated on the ground.

The instrumentalist, pragmatic and inclusive construction of 'partnership' assumes a consensual and harmonious relationship where the language of partnership is at best monolingual. Furthermore, the set aims and objectives are often limited to economic and national development, rather than the intrinsic values and experiences of engagement with the arts (Wee 2002; Chang 2000) with all its attendant complications. Such modes of partnership do not consider the problematics of heterogeneous and multiple perspectives that different sectors, communities, professionals and, personalities bring to the table as partners. It also ignores the precise aspect of its practices, that is, the nitty-gritty process of how such a partnership is made possible, and what it means to enact 'engagement' between two parties. As such, within the existing policy perception of the arts, partnership is therefore conceived as a tool for 'engagement', rather than an 'engagement' in itself, suggesting a divide between the actual and the ideological.

Critically identifying these differences is useful in the constructing of a workable arts partnership model. For instance, the challenge of a utilitarian perspective of 'partnership' can limit reflective process as T. Sasitharan points out in a post-SSP concluding interview with the research team:

No matter how earnestly and honestly the invitation is made, I think there are only a few people who could engage in the process which would have made it positive. I think there is a certain kind of systematization, a certain kind of conventionality, which is part and parcel of any kind of institutional structure, and that becomes a barrier, for the process to work (ITI, Interview 20 March 2012).

Indeed, lacking critical reflection in examining contributions to the process of partnership increases the danger of systematization in both the artists and teachers, and runs "the risk of reproducing the ideological operations of the state" (Rae 2004, p. 241). Such potentially uncritical engagement can reduce the possibility of effective transformations in practices that could occur within the partnership and by extension, impact upon change that might take place in the classroom.

Ground-Level Negotiation of Partnership as Intersections of Heterogeneous Relations

Research on ground-level arts projects reflects the struggle and negotiation at the intersections of 'different points of views' embedded within arts partnerships (Reiss and Pringle 2003; Thomson et al. 2006; Maddock et al. 2007). One of the difficulties to resolving partnership issues pertains to what Sasitharan observed as the "systematization" and "conventionality" of their respective institutional and intellectual histories, affecting their practices. This research recognizes that to value partnerships as intersections of different positions, diverse voices and experiences, requires an even deeper relationship that is open to the dialogical considerations of their respective perspectives on education.

From our experience working on the SSP, and challenging the pragmatic model of arts partnerships, we suggest a possible way forward is to view arts partnerships as, 'becomings'. This shift in perspective is subject to the potentialities of success, as well as failure, where both effectiveness and challenges are reflections of the same learning curve. There are no precise models, only elements based on negotiations between two ideologically different knowledge structures: artistic and pedagogic concerns. We propose that there are three core elements needed for arts partnerships: (1) Critical Reflective Practice (2) Experimentation in arts education practices (3) Committed engagement to an attitude of collaboration that includes a two-way critical reflection to underpin the 'doing' of arts partnerships. These core capabilities need to be practiced to achieve both the policy and ground level sustenance of effective partnerships.

Critical Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning (Schön 1983), and reflexive practice is a dynamic interaction between reflection and action with an intention to learn to change.

Alex Moore and Andy Ash, in their article 'Reflective Practice in Beginning Teachers: Helps, Hindrances and the role of the Critical Other' (2002), identify the role of reflective practice as a form of professional development. Their article outlines types of reflective practice that can be employed, and the different stages in the reflective practice process to include reflexivity, or critical reflective practice, that ultimately empowers the artist or teacher to critically engage in seeing the consequences of their work. While Moore and Ash acknowledge that reflexivity is a skill that can be developed, they also indicate factors that may inhibit it. They include 'performance' anxiety of having to demonstrate reflexive capabilities, the lack of support and time and space for reflection, as well as the engagement with new experiences (Moore and Ash 2002). However, with commitment to the process, this practice can produce outstanding results and changes in teacher perception, as we discovered.

When an artist/teacher critically reflects within the context of the classroom, he or she considers their approach. The impact that this can have on young people as well as its relation within the larger society is notable. Reflexivity that is improvised within a structure of planned actions, and negotiated responses, develops with the students in class. A reflexive artist/teacher goes beyond reflecting-in-and-on the action. As it is experienced, the reflexive artist/teacher includes critique as a critical dimension in organizing reflection (Reynolds and Vince 2004). It is this critical element of reflective and reflexive practice – the questioning of tensions and contradictions that are exercised in being artists/teachers, and how they respond to the ideologies of the schools and the environment beyond the school walls – as central to effective ground-level arts partnerships.

Notably at both Edgewood Primary and Regent Junior Schools, we observed varying degrees of critical reflection that supported partnerships, thereby enhancing the experience of integrating the arts into the curriculum for both teachers and artists.

Critical Reflection Exemplar 1: Artists' Negotiation of School Culture

In interviews with the artists working at both Edgewood Primary and Regent Schools, they acknowledge the paradox of arts practice as flexible, open and experimental, yet disciplined, and bound by limitations. Significantly, however, it is the flexible and liberating aspects of the arts practices, which are often cited and highlighted as contrary to the teaching practices in the school system.

For example, a situation occurred in Edgewood Primary School when an artist's (Artist A) attempt to encourage student ownership of their learning experience was perceived as 'intractable chaos' by teachers unaccustomed to his less structured approach. Teachers who were alarmed at the seeming lack of discipline attributed it to the artist's limited experience in classroom management. This resulted in teachers wanting to intervene, yet censoring themselves from doing so out of respect for the artist's position in class. This particular issue was subsequently raised in a discussion in one of the Teacher Workshop sessions. Artist A explained his approach as "finding a natural way of introducing" new elements rather than "forcing it". However, he later conceded that his approach may not be suitable for classroom teachers who are engaged with the students on a daily basis and with curricular and assessment goals to be met.

In a separate interview, Artist A reflected on the incident and affirmed that, "it is important to get to know the feel of the system". He commented that an attitude of "this is how we are going to do things and nothing else", denies the possibility of enabling the two systems to co-exist. The notion of 'freedom' in the classroom, is perhaps explored as a matter of degree, limited by varying expectations and demands, that is, a question of presence, in one system and an absence in the other. He further reflected, "...because we don't have a quota to meet, there is no minimum requirement as far as outcomes. This means there is greater 'freedom' within the discipline and structure to allow for a range of performances, where none of them is a failure" (Artist A, Interview, 21 July 2011).

The artist's reflections highlighted the particular requirements for artists selected for an in-school engagement revealing two essential qualities: a trained practicing artist and an ability to work with young people. The material generated from our research also points to a third quality that should be included in the requirements: the artists' ability to be both reflective and reflexive. As Moore and Ash (2002) suggest, reflective and reflexive artists, are more able to find 'meeting points' between seemingly disparate systems in order to construct a complementary approach to benefit the students in schools.

Critical Reflection Exemplar 2: Teachers' Negotiation of Divergent Values in Teaching

The success of implementation rests not only on the driving force of the school leader, in particular the Principal, to work towards embedding arts education within the school culture, but also the commitment, or 'buy-in' of the teachers in the endeavor. In the two schools observed, this was translated by the commitment of the Principal to recognize interests among its middle management teaching staff and to empower them to identify and initiate arts-related initiatives. This way of working also included operational support such as the reorganization of the curriculum time-table, as well as setting time and space aside for the participation and involvement of teachers in artist-led arts engagement. Emphasis was also placed on the professional development of teachers, to enable them to better engage with the arts initiatives.

From our research findings, we understand that while a clearer operational structure may ease the management of arts partnership in schools, the effectiveness of the partnership hinges upon the negotiation of divergent values, agendas as well as the understanding of what it means to engage with the arts in a school setting. One of the recurrent elements gleaned from the interviews with the two teachers bridging the partnerships between the ITI, the students and the respective teachers, was shared belief. As Teacher A in Regent Junior School stated:

You must have the same belief for this programme as the person who proposes this. I see value in drama because I feel that, it (referencing education) cannot be two-dimensional, it has to be multi-faceted in terms of feelings. Drama is the way to go (Interview, 1 July 2011).

Shared belief however, is not easily translated into shared process. Significantly, the different interpretations and understanding of arts education vocabulary enacted among teachers as well as between teachers, and artists, generated a sense of discomfort and unease in the partnerships. For example, in the same interview conducted with Teacher A, it was revealed that Regent Junior School's past experiment with drama in the classroom had been with 'process drama' specifically developed for drama education (O'Neill 1995). Consequently, the school had planned a small-scale project initiating process drama as its main pedagogical tool in teaching English language.

In contrast, however, ITI's approach is a multi-disciplinary arts engagement reflecting rehearsal and studio base practices and notably different from process drama. Additionally, ITI engaged two artists, one from dance and another theatre, to collaborate and explore the varied ways in which these two disciplines could work together. This strategy adds another layer to the arts partnership by introducing collaborative teaching by artists of different disciplines in the classroom:

The artist has to have a stake in wanting to open up the education system and to open up the possibilities in learning. So it's not just about bringing good capable artists in any domain doing this work. There has to be an ideological, educational, pedagogical imperative which the artist must have and that I think is important (ITI, interview, 20 March 2012).

Initially, teachers were resistant to the artists' approaches because they thought that the artists would not know how to teach in the way that they themselves understood the teaching process. ITI worked with the premise that if schools trusted the presence of the artist enough to create a space, where different sorts of interaction could take place, then a kind of alternative learning would be generated that could ultimately empower the schools to adopt different approaches to teaching.

The teachers' concern as to how the artist could manage the classroom was mediated through peer observation, where teachers were invited to observe and participate in the artist-led classes as well as the professional development workshops that were taught in parallel alongside classroom work. At one workshop, Regent Junior School teachers discussed the value of 'learning through play', privileging 'the body' and 'getting physical', and using the arts to 'understand the self'. This aspect of the artists' work was viewed as a philosophical shift in educating and the teachers came to recognize what the underlying principle was: "You want the kids to be totally involved, you want them to be responsible, you want them, to you know, to play an active role in their learning process" (Teacher focus group interview, Regent Primary School, 13 July 2011). The professional development workshops also offered the possibility for teachers to engage fully in the process.

At the end of the 8-week research process, we noted that the teacher-artist discussions did not resolve, or generate an immediate transformation of practices. However, this was not the intention of the SSP project. Rather, the project revealed how partnerships, when viewed as a process of 'becoming' allowed for discussion and paved ways for seeing alternative perspectives to teaching the arts and to classroom teaching and management. Furthermore, it offered both teachers and artists a means to develop both a shared and personal internal dialogue about their teaching practice. Understanding that these different approaches are emblematic of current philosophical shifts in education, particularly in a Singapore context, generates an entry point to further experimentation with the *act* of teaching rather than deficit arguments in how the artist or teacher teaches.

Support for Experimentation in Arts Practices in Schools

Clearly, professional development for teachers in arts education that runs alongside student engagement with the arts during curriculum time is an important aspect in the experiment of artist-school partnerships. Teachers draw from the experiences of the respective artists and consequently strategize to incorporate drama and creative practices in their teaching.

For many of the teachers, the professional development workshop was their first encounter with the arts and working directly with artists. Being new to the arts and confessing "arts is really not my forte", a number of teachers struggled psychologically and physically with using the arts as a teaching medium. There was fear and uncertainty and most needed encouragement and support to experiment:

We realized how difficult it is to actually make the puppet itself, ya. So, we actually kind of adapt it, ya, a little for our pupils because it's meant to be a one day kind of activity, ya. . . . at the beginning we thought that, oh it's quite tough, you know. That with all the set up and with the light and everything else you know, how it's going to turn out. But in fact after trying it out, we find that it's actually pretty interesting, ya, both for the pupils as well as for us to see that you know, it can actually take place, ya. And then, of course they have learnt something because 'erm prior to this, they would, they might just have seen puppets you know, but they might not have really you know, put their hands together to create them (Teacher focus group interview, Edgewood Primary School, 22 August 2011).

What gave the teachers the impetus and courage to experiment with what they considered to be a 'new' element in their teaching, was the welcome absence of immediate evaluative assessments, as well as targeted outcomes that are often pegged with attainment standards. Instead, the aim of the SSP project, when adopted in both schools, was to explore the different ways that the arts can be linked to the curriculum, and offer the teachers different tools to develop projects with their students without the usual attendant assessment demands. Supported by the exploratory nature of the process, teachers began opening up to the idea of arts education in school time:

It is important for the children to know, you know, different kinds of arts. Ya. They should be exposed to it. . . . Because I find that, maybe as a child, as a pupil, I really didn't have that much of an exposure. Compare to nowadays, the children, nowadays. Ya,- really. So the interest is really like you know, not being nurtured, ya (Teacher focus group interview, Edgewood Primary School, 22 August 2011).

An Attitude of Collaboration Between 'Experts'

The Edgewood Primary Head of Aesthetics offered her perspective:

I think a lot of that [dialogue] is also a result of the driving force from the teachers. It cannot come alone from the artists. Because the artists don't know what we need. We know what we need and they (pause) can help us.

This comment by a Head of Department reveals her capacity for critical reflective practice, and her ability to take stock and understand the differences between teachers and artists, assisted her to negotiate her team of teachers and to foster a collaborative spirit between artists-teachers. Accordingly, the collaborative process was developed within an environment where pressure is not exerted on the individual capacity to generate 'strategies' independently, but to construct teaching ideas collectively. This process was accounted for by one of the teachers involved:

It's a group effort, ya, where all our P4 teachers were involved in the planning stage, you know, where we first crafted out problems, you know, for the project itself. Right up to getting the lesson plan as well as the worksheets out (Teacher focus group interview, Edgewood Primary School, 22 August 2011)

Developing a 'collective' attitude through group process offered a safety net for teachers new to the arts to work with everyone's expertise as well as their different levels of 'studentship' in arts practices. Taking advantage of the weekly level sharing sessions already established within the school system, the teachers would meet across departments, linking story ideas with teachers from English, Maths, Science, History and Culture, to discuss, reflect and adapt the artists' strategies into their classroom teaching.

The presence of strong teacher collaboration not only enhanced the arts experience of the teachers, but also deepened the collegiate feeling between teachers and artists. At Edgewood Primary for instance, collaborative teacher-artist relating was as simple as valuing class participation, communication and understanding of the respective teaching approaches. In one of the classes observed the attending teacher's supportive attitude towards class activities, affirmed the artist's presence, as well as developed a sense of trust and respect for the work. As Artist B observed:

She joined in the games, she worked with the kids and she understands, try to understand us, she takes pictures and then after that I think she also affirms some of what we do with the children in class (Interview, 4 August 2011).

Recognizing that artists are not trained teachers, the co-operating teacher supported the artists' activities by scaffolding writing activities with questions to guide their student reflections. The teacher also offered feedback to the artists on students' progress or areas that she felt could better the artist's engagement with the students. Her work complemented the 'open' and sensory frame that the artists offered to the students. As she was a keen participant in the project, she generated strong rapport with the artists. As the research team observed, the rapport translated to a positive environment for the students as well. The teachers' active and 'joyful' participation enhanced the sense of community-driven learning experience that the artists were trying to achieve through their art forms.

The duration of the SSP project in Edgewood Primary and Regent Junior Schools lasted for 8 weeks. During that time the school experienced many hours of contact time with the artists and innumerable number of hours in discussions and conversations that were conducted beyond scheduled periods. At the end of the process, the ITI and the respective schools invited parents and the teachers to attend a presentation of the students' works-in-progress. After the presentations, parents stayed behind to dialogue with the teachers and the artists as well as with their children. The rawness of the presentation reflected the partnership process that was still in constant negotiation. When the SSP project finally came to a close, the question asked was not: "Was the partnership successful?" but "How did the partnership negotiate the varied practices and values?" Such a pivotal question raises the issue of how to develop a different rubric of measuring success, one that privileges "painstaking process" and "becoming" over a final product.

Conclusion

Our investigation of ground-level engagement with arts partnership in schools indicates the possible appropriation and negotiation of partnership issues involving artists and teachers as critical mediators. Assuming artists and teachers are equal

partners in the arts partnership endeavor, then reflective and reflexive practice is useful not only in their respective professional practices as teachers but also their encounters with each other – a self-monitoring and critical engagement with their own subjective viewpoints that can be self-appraising. Considering partnerships as on-going processes of development, or 'becomings', enables teachers and artists to strengthen their capabilities and to own the partnership process through critical reflection, dialogue, peer-observation and professional development. We propose that learning to be partners in the arts is itself a creative undertaking, negotiating the intersections of heterogeneous relations and an acceptance of failures and success as part of the process. These types of relational partnerships have no specific model to follow because they are based on the institutional histories of the respective partners and, how they negotiate their own positionalities. There are clearly challenges that may potentially unhinge partnerships, and so it is essential that critical reflection as a tool is practiced every step of the way, to disrupt, intervene, and if necessary, pause to take stock, of the process.

Sherry Arnstein's (1969) suggestion of partnership as a-high-order participation, requiring high-order negotiatory abilities, is a suitable parting note. In both schools, we observed the strength of the artists and the teachers, through their commitment to a dialogic connection. We also note that it is the responsibility of the key players and how they interact and dialogue with one another that affects the success of the project. We suggest that a continuous and open dialogue allows both sides to negotiate differences, as well as differing scales of abilities, expertise and bridges the gap between the absence of similar vocabulary in practices not as negatives but as possibilities.

Because this is one of the first research projects to document arts intervention in the school curriculum, further research needs to be undertaken to understand arts partnerships in schools. Nonetheless, we hope this introductory research endeavor provides a first step for future investigations, examining the dialectical and constitutive relations between ground-level and policy-level initiatives of arts partnerships in schools in Singapore, so as to generate more artist-teacher projects.

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Chapter 17 Exegetical Commentary

Jenny de Reuck

The originality of this project sets it apart from many Arts interventions into school curriculums of the past several decades. In Singapore, as in the USA, UK and Australia, there have been multiple attempts since the early part of the twentieth century to introduce drama, dance, music or the visual arts into the classroom with a view to enhancing both the cognitive and physiological development of young people. Some of these projects have been well documented, others (as this research indicates) have not received the kind of theoretical assessment either of the processes or the outcomes of what has become identified as action-based or practice-led research. There are many reasons for this lacuna in the context of creativity in the Singapore education curriculum (and this is the primum mobile in this dialogue between practitioners, educators, arts and tertiary institutions, government agencies and students themselves) but they are beyond the scope of this chapter. The need for a theoretical justification of the value of arts education in the primary and secondary school, however, remains the responsibility of its practitioners, whether we regard ourselves as artists or educators or, indeed, both. An empirical study of the kind undertaken here goes some way towards articulating both the scope and the limitations of an intra-curricular intervention such as that which forms the core of the SSP: the engagement of 'stakeholders' from a variety of institutions (ITI, NIE and the NAC for example) and a selection of primary schools as well as participants as diverse as artists, teachers, academics and bureaucrats is as commendable as it is challenging. Each facet of the SSP arguably generates a level of risk but, given the integrity and sensitivity evident in its implementation, this pilot has avoided any major pitfalls and has demonstrably contributed to the discussion that everyone

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¹ See, for example, John O'Toole (1976), Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote (1995), Nellie McCaslin (1996), Neal Kitson and Ian Spiby (1997), Jeffrey D. Wilhelm and Brian Edmiston (1998), Anthony Jackson (2007) among many others.

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interested in the development of young people through the Arts generally – and the performing arts, specifically – is determined to have. A very important first step in much-needed research has been taken.²

T. Sasitharan, the Artistic Director of ITI has initiated a significant variant on the 'theatre and drama in the classroom' model which saw groundbreaking youth theatre groups such as *The Necessary Stage* and *Act 3* as the dominant players in Singapore through the late 1980s and 1990s. They developed their material, initially, in an arena that was largely self-funded, but with the establishment of the National Arts Council (NAC), as the investigators make clear, youth theatre companies began to receive state funding and artists were remunerated for their work with students in primary and secondary schools. Earlier interventions by these companies into the classroom were strongly supported by the NAC (with a particularly dynamic phase occurring between 2001 and 2010) but the results of this work went largely unscrutinized by academics and have not been the subject of an integrated research-intensive investigation of the kind suggested here. The collection and collation of data from this unquestionably vibrant period of Arts Councilsupported arts activity, their interpretation and publication as part of a systematic research enterprise has not yet occurred, hence the value of ITI's initiative, under its Artistic Director, which has brought together artists, teachers, trainers and researchers as well as the primary school children whose participation crucially informs the case studies. The opportunity to publish the outcomes of this initially action-based research has made it possible to assess, interpret and disseminate the results more broadly and to provide a basis upon which further studies can be undertaken.

A key outcome of the SSP, articulated by the investigators, is the need for the theorization of 'partnerships'. For some years there has been, as the case studies make clear, a *tacit*, non-reflexive relationship established between the various stakeholders in the NAC/AEP-driven arts education agenda. The nature of the partnerships, however, has not been formally interrogated with the result that the sometimes competing – not to say conflicting – interests of the various parties, have not always been resolved. There has been no integrated model (or set of models) derived from the range of earlier projects that has allowed for subsequent interventions to work from (or within) a notion of 'best practice'. This may well have actually occurred in any

Though validated for years in certain discipline areas outside the Arts and Humanities in tertiary institutions, practice-led/action research has only recently achieved a new level of credibility as its proponents deploy its methodology in an academic climate that seeks to establish ways in which to measure so-called 'non-traditional' research. 'Metrics' to be used to measure the quality of this practice-based research – whether in design, film and media, the visual arts, architecture, music or the performing arts – are currently being developed in Australia as part of the Federal government's ERA (Excellence in Research Australia) agenda, formerly understood as the RQF (Research Quality Framework). Malaysia too has embarked on this trajectory for quantifying non-traditional research. This follows from similar attempts in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. See for example, DEST (2006), Green, L and Haseman, B. (Eds.) (2006) and Haseman, B. (2006).

number of contexts, but in the absence of a formal documentation and analysis, such knowledge is denied future practitioners (as well as the other stakeholders involved).

The practice-based research that informs this project, then, seeks explicitly to address this concern in order to develop a model (or models) to ensure that iterations (and reiterations) of the challenges encountered are not a continuing facet of artist-school collaborations, and that the successes might be built upon and developed. This pilot study offers both a specific evaluation of the processes and outcomes of the partnership between the SSP and Edgewood Primary School, as well as a more general theoretical framing of the context within which future partnerships may be located. In this sense, it is a ground-breaking initiative, moving beyond 'mere' practice (with the undoubtedly positive outcomes associated with creative work in the classroom) towards a more theoretical understanding of the processes as they impact upon all the stakeholders.

Crucial, too, in the development of this practice-led methodology, is the role of reflection, as outlined by the investigators. The study has brought to the surface some important variables which to date have emerged as points of resistance and even conflict: these pertain to the relationship between the artists and the schools. In the case of Edgewood Primary School, the Principal 'bought in' to the study (thereby endorsing the project) and then made the space and the time available to the artists, the students and the researchers. Under pressure from other curriculum demands other schools might not be able to meet the requirements for such an intervention, desirable though it might be, and the corresponding insights into these less overt facets of the relationship, derived from reflection and self-reflexivity on the part of the practitioners and researchers as well as the classroom teachers, allows for embedded restrictions to be confronted and, where appropriate, overcome or understood in terms of their political or aesthetic import within the educational arena.

The SSP study raises an important question for the development in the future of artist-school partnerships and the politico-aesthetic parameters that may determine the scope and nature of the intervention. A defining feature of this study is the status of the artist in relation to the classroom. T. Sasitharan, in the interview at ITI, articulated the necessity for this person to be an 'outsider', unconstrained by the demands of a curriculum to assess and grade the students. Such artist-practitioners, he suggested, would have the means, from their own learning and experience, to reignite "the spark of curiosity" that conventional classroom teachers, with the heavy demands of their day-to-day teaching, may not be able to ignite. By inserting the 'outsider' artist into the centre of learning (rather than offering an extracurricular activity) the SSP asserted its main-stream potential at the same time as, in the pilot in question, it ran the risk of alienating the classroom teachers whose students (and study periods) were involved. However, the explicit determination to

³ Interview, ITI, 20 March 2012.

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engage the teachers in corresponding workshops and training, where their reflections on the process were developed and interrogated, appears to have gone some way toward mitigating the sense of disempowerment (invasion, perhaps) that some of the teachers feared and, more to the point, expressed. Future contracts that develop into more subtly aware, ideologically inflected 'partnerships' that take into account the embedded power struggles at the core of any external intervention into an existing dynamic, would be more carefully calibrated to accommodate as far as possible the competing regimes of the teacher, the artist, the students and the research or other institutions engaged in the aesthetic/pedagogic transaction.

The vision that underlies the SSP and the subsequent documentation of the practice-led research by educators is commendable. The placement of practising local artists into the curriculum itself – when it achieves 'best practice' – allows for the development of creativity in a way that conventional pedagogy may not. The spirit of cooperation between all the partner institutions that made possible a program capable of deepening the creative understanding of the Singaporean youth is exemplary: however, to be maintained across more than a few schools where the principals and teachers – for cultural and aesthetic reasons – 'buy in' to the project, the interrogation begun with this project will need to be extended.

For this reason, if the initiative continues (and it is to be hoped that it will) a scheduled review of the processes and their outcomes should be tabled. This review would not confine itself merely to the impact or otherwise upon students' creativity of the artists' interventions in the classroom but examine, additionally, the ways in which the partnership could more fully participate in forming a communally endorsed articulation of the defining pedagogical approach of the program. This shared understanding could be achieved by securing – at a metalevel of engagement – the alignment of agreed educational strategies under a more articulated statement of the program's strategic goals. The resultant set of agreed approaches should facilitate the resolution of misunderstandings that will always emerge when independent participating bodies bring their differing political, philosophical, cultural and aesthetic perspectives to bear on complex fields of human experience.

In the current study, principals and the teachers themselves have shown personal and administrative courage in allowing the 'outsider' artists a space in their contested curriculums. For a 'free spirit', almost by definition – that is, the individual practicing artist – to engage the minds and aspirations of young Singaporeans while unconstrained by curriculum responsibilities and administrative accountability requires a degree of confidence in the process that few educators might be willing to exhibit. Yet their courage and judgment in creating this *space* is underwritten by the recognition that, especially in a field of study marked by the freedom of the student to explore new ways of seeing the world, the very educational philosophy of the Singaporean authorities constitutes the keel that steadies the educational challenges that the entry of a *free element* (or 'outsider') generates. But while this challenge is obviously recognized, the obligation for steadfastness of vision by the other members of the program is intensified. Hence

the need for a schedule of reviews of the on-going strategic cohesion of the participating project partners.

If an educational pedagogy can be understood as an educational methodology, such a methodology should be explicitly articulated as a form of inquiry unconstrained by any form of control beyond that of the 'force of the better reason', 4 best explored in just such a free space as the partners to this venture have created. The official endorsement of this experimental program underwrites the new Singaporean spirit of unconstrained creativity.

The educational institutions of other countries would do well to take note.

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⁴ As argued elsewhere, with John de Reuck (de Reuck & de Reuck 2012).

Part VIII Flow in Young Artists-in-Training

Chapter 18 Finding Flow in Artistic Skill and Technique: **Narratives of Young Artists-in-Training** in Singapore

Rhoda Myra Garces-Bacsal

Background of the Study

In the past decade, there has been an upsurge of interest in creativity and the arts in Singapore (Ho and Chong 2008; Keun 2006; Tan et al. 2007). This has not always been the case. Niu (2006) noted that from the 1970s until the late 1990s "the academic literature on creativity in Singapore was silent" (p. 387). Tan and Law (2000) in their review on the research of creativity in Singapore concluded that creativity had yet to become a significant research theme in Singapore by the end of the twentieth century.

The resurgence of interest in the arts and creativity may be due in part to implications from the Renaissance City Report (Ministry of Information and the Arts [MITA] 2000) which envisions Singapore to be a Global Arts City whereby the arts are vibrant and considered to be central to Singapore's future and cultural identities. Another possible trajectory may have come from issued statements by the Ministry of Education in Singapore that teachers are entrusted with the task of developing and nurturing future generations of creative young Singaporeans. The goal is to "create an environment in which experimentation and learning are never stifled, in which creativity thrives, in which change is not seen as an intrusion but a challenge" (Ministry of Education [MOE] 1999, p. 12).

Consequently, most research studies in Singapore focused on how to foster creativity in education (Fatt 2000), students' creativity efficacy (Tan et al. 2007), creative thinking and problem-solving responses (Keun 2006) and styles of creativity (Ee et al. 2007). A lot of this research has been done from the educator's perspective (Tan and Law 2000; Tan 1998, 2001a, b). While there are research studies that also tap into students' views on creative teachers (Tan and Rasidir 2006) and activities which students find useful for fostering creativity (Tan and Law

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2002), there is nothing written yet on the qualitative experiences, perspectives and voices of talented teenagers who are studying in the very first specialized arts secondary school in Singapore. The arts school opened in 2008, and this chapter is only a part of a much-bigger research project that also aims to look into the curriculum practices and pedagogies of the school.

Literature Review

A Systems Perspective on Creativity and Talent

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) extended the perspectives taken on creativity to include a systems-wide approach instead of just focusing on the individual-artist. He looked at the role played by the *domain* or the shared symbolic knowledge of a particular culture. He also noted the importance of the *field* which consists of the individuals who essentially function as the gatekeepers in a particular domain (Csikszentmihalyi 1996). He defines creativity as "a phenomenon that is constructed through an *interaction between producer and audience*. Creativity is not the product of single individuals, but of social systems making judgments about individual's products" (Csikszentmihalyi 1999, p. 314).

In Piirto's theoretical model called the Pyramid of Talent Development (2004, 1999), she also looked at the interrelationships between individual creativity and contextual factors focusing on five aspects in the development of talent: the genetic, emotional, cognitive, talent and the environmental aspects. The pyramid indicates that talent cannot be perceived from an individual vantage alone and should be contextualized from within a much larger picture, hence the five environmental factors surrounding the talented individual: home, community and culture, school, chance, and gender.

Such a systemic model of looking at creativity is applicable particularly in the Singapore context, since the country is determined to nurture the various skills and talents of its young people. To achieve this goal, the government of Singapore has established the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA, now known as Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, MICA) and the National Arts Council (NAC). Considerable investments have been invested to strategically position Singapore as a leader for the Asian Renaissance in the twenty-first century. The vision is for Singapore to be a "Global City for the Arts" through the promise of financial support (a 5-year S\$50 million MITA pledge of support) to the local arts and cultural industry (Chong 1998, 2005; MITA 2000).

In the recent Renaissance City Plan III (MICA 2008), MICA reported the dramatic increase in the number of performances and visual arts exhibitions from 6,000 in 1996 to 27,000 by 2007. There is also evidence of a strong demand and audience base as seen in visitorship to National Heritage Board (NHB) Museums from 316,000 in 1996 to 1,856,000 by 2007. The number of Singaporeans who attended at least one arts event in the past year has also dramatically increased from

1 in 10 in 1996 to 1 in 3 in 2007. It is unclear, though, from the reports whether the increase in number is due to greater awareness, or a more systematically-enforced school participation, or real attendance as brought about by one's own personal interests and initiative.

The creation of an infrastructure for the arts is also evident in the establishment of the Arts Education Program by the NAC since 1993. The objective is to reach out to schools to promote an arts appreciation among young Singaporeans and to simulate their creativity and interest in the arts. The programme includes music, theater, visual arts, literature and multimedia (National Arts Council [NAC] n.d.; Cheng 2008).

The most notable of recent initiatives has been the establishment of the School of the Arts (SOTA), established in March 2004, Singapore's first independent pre-tertiary arts school focusing on four arts areas: theater, visual, arts, music, and dance. The overarching vision of SOTA is to nurture students who are talented in the arts and to prepare the next generation of artists and creative professionals who have the passion for and commitment to the development and blossoming of the arts in a multi-cultural society.

SOTA has a 6-year curriculum pathway for students aged 12 through 18. MICA (2008) noted that SOTA's "innovative curriculum, based on the International Baccalaureate system and utilizing arts as a tool to teach academic subjects, offers a completely new paradigm of education in Singapore" (MICA 2008, p. 10). The School of the Arts (SOTA) opened its doors to an overwhelming response of 1,000 students competing for 200 vacancies in its initial year in 2008 (MICA 2008).

Heartware Versus Hardware

Despite the overwhelming financial resources invested in the arts, there is a reservation that "while many of the newly created spaces *house* the arts by providing necessary structures and venues, they have not become *homes* for the arts" (Chang and Lee 2003). Chang and Lee (2003, p. 139) concluded that "the provision of physical *hardware* must be complemented with the cultivation of a creative *heartware* – spaces sensitively customized for the arts." Cheng (2008, p. 152) posits that, in contrast to physical infrastructure, 'software' is a "tricky concept to define and develop". MICA (n.d.) acknowledges this need and asserted that there is now a concerted effort to develop the "software" that naturally accompanies the hardware aspect that is now being firmly put in place.

Flow Among Talented Teenagers in the Arts

In a landmark 5-year longitudinal study conducted by Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen on 200 talented teenagers (1997), two suburban high schools in the United States were chosen for the study and the teenagers were nominated for

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their talent in mathematics, science, music, athletics and the arts. Empirical underpinnings were uncovered that provided clues to the motivations that drove some teenagers to continue while others become disengaged and eventually lose interest in their art forms.

The researchers initially studied the experience of talent through the experience sampling method (ESM) in which students fill out a detailed survey (the experience sampling form) which includes a report of their current activities, thoughts and feelings. Participants were tasked to carry a beeper for seven consecutive days and were requested to fill out the experience sampling form as they were signaled 7–9 times in a day. The second phase of the study included analysis of indices of achievement such as achievement scores and ratings of accomplishment and engagement from both teachers and students themselves.

The flow model of optimal experience was the perspective used by the researchers in looking at the adolescents' motivations in sustaining their burning interest, passion, and ardent commitment to their chosen domain. One of the ways through which *flow* is achieved is when there is a symmetry between one's skills and the challenges that the individual is facing in any particular domain (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). If the challenges are way too complex for one's skills, one might experience anxiety; whereas, if one's skills are way too advanced for the tasks given, the individual might experience boredom. One of the major findings from this 5-year research is that one aspect that differentiates teenagers who eventually became disengaged in their talent areas as opposed to those who tenaciously remain in it would be the presence of *flow*: "A talent will be developed if it produces optimal experience" (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1996, p. 252).

Flow was found to be the strongest predictor of subjective engagement, the extent of the student's progress in the school's curriculum in her or his talent, and their commitment in their domain through college. The researchers explain that "optimal experiences are important to talent development partly for this reason: Memories of peak moments motivate students to keep improving in hopes of achieving the same intensity of experience again" (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1996, p. 253).

The "Thorn" Among Talented Individuals

While Csikszentmihalyi talks gloriously about the enjoyment and the optimal "in-the-zone" state of most talented individuals, Piirto (2004, 1999) further described talented individuals to be tormented by the presence of the "thorn" compelling the individual to engage in the art form. Piirto (1999) further reiterated that, while Csikszentmihalyi (1996) calls this process *flow*, Jung refers to this as the passion that engrosses; Hillman describes it as the *daimon* in creative lives. Reynolds and Piirto (2007) refer to it as the *thorn* among the creatives, since it pricks the individual until one devotes time, attention, and energy to it. Piirto (1999, p. 41) noted: "As well as a joy it is a burden. As well as a pleasure it is a pain. However, the person who possesses the talent also must possess the will and fortitude to pursue the talent down whatever labyrinth it may lead."

Significance of the Study

While the flow state or optimal experience has been identified to be a key factor in talent development, this has not been explored much among talented teenagers coming from Singapore or even in Southeast Asia. While there are cross-cultural studies being done on the development and expressions of artistic talent, creativity and giftedness (Cheng 2008; Rostan et al. 2002) as well as factors contributing to talented performance from a Chinese perspective (Wu 2005) and from the Singapore context using Gagne's DMGT-based analysis of a musically gifted adolescent (Ho and Chong 2008), this study constitutes an initial exploration highlighting the experiences of adolescents identified to be talented in four arts areas (visual arts, dance, music, and theater) who are receiving training in the first specialized-arts secondary school in Singapore. This chapter reports on the results from one of the many strands of data from an on-going larger study of specialized arts education in Singapore. The research would provide a more nuanced understanding of the heartware and hardware issue that now confronts the Singapore arts scene from the perspective of Singapore youth talented in the arts.

Methodology

The researcher's objectives are to answer the following questions: (1) How is flow experienced by talented teenagers in visual arts, dance, theater and music who are studying in a specialized secondary arts school in Singapore? (2) What are the environmental supports that facilitated the development of their artistic talents?

Csikszentmihalyi's (1990, 1996) definition of the flow state or optimal experience was used in the study. This would include the following elements: (1) a feeling of enjoyment, (2) the presence of a challenging activity that requires a commensurate level of skill, (3) a goal-directed endeavor that provides clear, systematic feedback as to how well one is performing and intense concentration while engaging in the task, (4) a lack of self-consciousness, (5) letting go during performance or the paradox of control, and (6) the transformation of time.

An extraordinary aspect of this ongoing study is that it may be likened to what is described as the "moral epistemology of knowing subjects" (Gunzenhauser 2006, p. 621). The researcher was able to have a deeper appreciation of the complexity of the school, teachers, students and leaders through an immersion in the programmes at the School of the Arts. This relational knowing of research participants is perceived to be instrumental in developing a closer and deeper engagement of the researchers and participants within the research context (Gunzenhauser 2006).

Table 18.1 Distribution of respondents across year levels and art forms

Year level	Music	Dance	Theater	Visual arts
Year 2	1	1	1	1
Year 3	1	1	1	2
Year 4	1	2	1	1
Total	(3)	(4)	(3)	(4)
			Total	14

Criteria for Selection of Respondents

There were 18 students initially nominated by their teachers for participation in the study. The teachers were requested to identify students who showed the greatest potential and motivation in both their academic work and in art forms. The rationale for seeking nomination from the teachers may be noted in Csikszentmihalyi's et al. (1996) own selection criteria for the 200 talented students in their longitudinal study. They indicated that they placed "considerable emphasis on the evaluations of teachers and coaches – in other words, on the judgment of the relevant field" (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1996, p. 64). This is particularly relevant in this study since the teaching faculty consists of professional artists. These artist-teachers are likewise performing actively (through exhibitions, showcases, performances) in the Singapore arts scene – they are indeed what is termed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996, 1999) as the relevant gatekeepers in their respective arts domain.

Description of Respondents and Informed Consent

After detailed classroom observations, conversations with the teachers and the students, and consultation with team members, the research team ended up with 14 student participants in total (four from visual arts, three students from the theater group, three from music, and four from dance. See Table 18.1 to note the distribution of respondents across year levels and art form). The respondents' ages vary from 14 to 18 years of age. Their exposure to and early training within their art forms began when they were as young as 18 months to as long as 14 years.

The research team also went through several levels of ethical screening and reviews. The institutional policies and procedures were closely followed such as obtaining student and parental consent as well as ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents to ensure the ethical viability of the research. The respondents were also free to withdraw from their voluntary participation in the research at any time.

Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured questionnaire was developed by the research team after a prolonged period of engagement with the arts students, artist-teachers, and the school community. The instrument has been studied, revised, and refined through repeated discussion, analysis, and subsequent observations done in the school. For the purposes of this chapter, the researcher has included the questions that pertain to their experiences of flow (See Appendix A for the semi-structured interview guide).

The initial one-on-one interview sessions with the students lasted between 40 and 75 min, while the subsequent interview sessions lasted between 25 and 40 min long. During the first interview, the students talked about their family and involvement with their art form, while the second interview looked into their experiences in their arts school. All interviews were conducted within the school setting during the students' afternoon or morning break, or after they have been dismissed from school in the late afternoon. Sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed by the interviewer to verify whether there are any errors in the transcription process. The reviewed transcript was then sent to the respondents to further account for accuracy and validity of data content.

Before the researcher scheduled interview sessions, the research team did class-room observations, attended school functions, and participated in various school events to familiarize themselves with the school community. This strategy ensures the likelihood of generating credible findings and interpretations, since according to Merrick (1999), a prolonged engagement in the field, which requires an investment of sufficient time for persistent observation, is essential in qualitative research.

Data Analysis

To discern the flow experiences among the students, their responses to the key question: "How do you feel whenever you engage in your art form?" was coded. The researcher also went through the interview transcripts repeatedly to discern whether the students made mention of any other elements connected to the *flow state* as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (e.g. enjoyment, clear goals and feedback) (1996). The same procedure was done in their responses to other questions as found in Appendix A (e.g. "What do you think are some of the things that contributed to your development in your art area?" "Describe to me what your teachers here are like." "Tell me about your first year in SOTA. What was it like?"). Grounded analyses of their responses were done to help generate the themes and categories (Cresswell 2008).

In total, 27 interviews were transcribed, validated, analyzed, and coded using a blend of Strauss & Corbin's systematic approach in the qualitative framework (whereby coding begins with a list of concepts – since elements of the flow state are outlined) as well as Glaser's emergent theory approach (coding themes are

generated while reading the interview transcripts) (Creswell 2008). While there were certain elements that were being looked at in the narrative (elements of the flow state), the themes were not prefigured but slowly arose from the data. The researchers repeatedly moved from the concept of flow to the students' experiences and their narratives, allowing the latter to speak for themselves. The coding themes were generated while reading the actual interview transcripts. Open coding was initially used to scan the data before eventually moving into axial coding whereby the themes became more evident (Creswell 2008).

The researcher also made use of the qualitative software NVivo 8.0 to code the themes and categories. The program was also run to conduct a coding comparison query among the research team – across the themes generated. The percentage of disagreement in coding (Person A and not Person B) across the team members ranged from 0 to 12%, whereas the percentage of agreement across the majority of the themes ranged from 85 to 100% consistently across all team members.

Results and Discussion

There are two major themes generated in response to the questions raised by the research team, namely *Experiences of Flow* and *Environmental Support for the Arts*.

With regard to 'Experiences of Flow', six major subthemes were teased out from the students' responses, which paralleled Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) elements of optimum experience: (a) enjoyment; (b) required skills; (c) clear goals and feedback; (d) loss of self-consciousness; (e) control; and (f) transformation of time.

With regard to the second major theme, Environmental Support for the Arts, students' perceptions of how their talents were nurtured within the school domain included two key issues: (a) The Arts School experience (sense of school community, first year impressions and, mentorship within arts disciplines); and (b) Singapore Community and Culture (changing tides, community valuing of the arts). Each of these key themes and subthemes is described in greater detail below.

Theme One: Experiences of Flow

Enjoyment

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) described enjoyment as a forward movement for the individual. He noted that there is a general sense of novelty and experiencing joy after overcoming a challenge and knowing one has accomplished something complex.

Dance students describe this sense of accomplishment and joy as follows:

I think before dancing on stage, you have a lot of butterflies in your stomach, but then the minute you get on stage, you just start enjoying yourself. – Year 2, Dance student

Well I think it's like 90 percent of the process is very hard and you have to work very hard, but each class, when each time you dance you always feel when it is good. Like I always try to be happy when I dance, because I don't really know how to describe it. Well, there are times when you can get very upset with yourself and frustrated because you cannot do certain things but at other times, when you are able to like just free yourself, it's a very good feeling. – Year 4, Dance student

This sensation of doing something "fun" and "exciting" is likewise apparent in a theater student's characterization of how she feels each time that she performs on stage:

It was just so fun like you go out there and nobody knows who you are and you just start doing something and you just start singing you start dancing and people are smiling at you and they're appreciating what you're doing and you're having fun doing it and it's bringing joy to someone else and that's even greater. – *Year 4*, *Theater student*

The Music students depicted the sensation of *joy* as something they are unable to express in words. As a Year 3 and Year 4 student noted:

I can't really describe it. It's like fun. Like playing the songs together, enjoying ourselves. At the same time, I try to present to people something that they would enjoy hopefully... Well, it's scary, fun, exciting, in a way. – Year 3, Music student

Music is a language for instance. As in like music is something that you can't really describe. – Year 4, Music student

Students talented in the visual arts, on the other hand speak about the relaxing quality of drawing and painting which alleviates their stress and their happiness in doing something that they have envisioned:

I mean in my spare time, I enjoy doing art; it actually is quite relaxing from all the stress itself when I draw or paint. I actually feel much better and I feel good about myself so it's actually a room for expression and relief. – *Year 3, Visual Arts student*

When I do the work, I can tell that I'm enjoying it when I don't think about what people are going to think about it. I do it because I'm so sure that this is what I want to do. This is my concept and I'm so happy to execute it and ... I know when I'm feeling it. – Year 4, Visual Arts student

Challenging Activity Requiring Skills

The presence of an activity that requires an enormous amount of training, practice, and effort has been mentioned by three students coming from dance, theater, and music. A theater student from year 4 realized that engaging in their art form is not all just fun and enjoyment. She related that:

When I came here, I learnt that it's not always a game and it's not always fun and smile. As in yes, that should be what's motivating it but throughout the process there's going to be some tears, there's going to be some pain, there's going to be some sweat. But like yeah,

what should motivate you is that you love it and that you have fun and I really learn that it is really tough; it's not always easy. – Year 4. *Theater student*

A dance student poignantly talked about the difficulties and hardships that she encountered and the pressure that she experienced while training:

We had an external choreographer come in, and I think I felt a personal responsibility to the work. Because it is not our own work, it's somebody else's creation so I felt like I had to bring that out and I had to do it justice. So there was that pressure there, I guess I did cry a few times during the rehearsals because the pressure was mounting, I think, and I couldn't get everything very quickly and it was frustrating. I guess the rehearsals for it were a bit tough and difficult to handle... I guess when you finish dancing, you've done it well, there's obviously a certain high that's there because... I don't know how to say it... it's a very exhilarating feeling like knowing that you have done something, you've done it well. – Year 3, Dance student

A music student from year 3 noted that "it can get pretty challenging, ya." She related that there is "a lot of stuff to work on, like if your basic technical skills are not there, you have to like work really hard, and it can be quite long."

Clarity of Goals, Feedback and Focus

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) emphasized that in order for one to reach that optimal state of functioning, one must be relentlessly goal-driven. In the interviews conducted with the students, it was apparent that there was a very strong desire to improve one's self. A theater student from Year 2 had some difficulties describing the goals that drive her, stating: "I am not very sure what it is. It comes from somewhere but I'm really not sure what it is. I just feel the need to be good." A theater student from Year 4 reflected that she has an idea where this desire to better one's self may actually stem from:

I don't know but I think whenever I wonder why am I doing and why am I working so hard and staying up so late and being so tired because I love the feeling that good theatre gives me and it feels like magic. It feels magical to me. The idea that I am learning to create magic like that. My own magic. It's what keeps me going I guess. It's what gets me up in the morning and gets me going for 4 hour-rehearsals and 2000 word essays, that's just it. – Year 4, *Theater student*

Talented teenagers from Dance and Visual Arts also related how important it was that they receive direct feedback about their progress in their art forms. This coaching from artist-mentors is something that they value greatly:

When my teachers talk to me, they tell me things about my work that I didn't notice. Soon I sort of learnt from them... I tried to imitate the way they looked at our works. I tried to imagine if I can look at my works just like my teachers look at my work, I can have a wider viewpoint. So I decided to do it that way and I realized that, whoa, [there is] so much in what I have done that I have not realized. If I have the capability to do that right, maybe I have the capability to do more, and then it gives me more confidence to work on what I want to do. – Year 4, Visual arts student

Over and above the transfer of technical expertise, a Dance student related that the affective support and encouragement from her teachers was also something that helped her in clarifying her goals and was highly instrumental in helping her improve her craft:

When I first came here, I had a very declining period where I could not improve. I had a tough time like each time I improved, I got injured and my body went funny and stuff. So I really had a very bad struggling period where I could not rise to the occasion but she [teacher] really just stood by me and just said "just keep going, just keep going" and she would encourage me and she will still give me opportunities to dance even though I might not be to the level where I am supposed to be and she would like just like let me keep trying until I get it and I think further to the end of the year, I stopped getting injured so often and so I think I improved and I went to ... as in I made some improvement. — Year 5, Dance student

Loss of Self-Consciousness

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) noted that when one is thoroughly enjoying what one does, "there is not enough attention left over to allow a person to consider either the past or the future, or any other temporarily irrelevant stimuli" (p. 62). The talented teenagers' narratives reflect this kind of "losing one's self" – and what is amazing is that it runs across the different art forms. A theater student spoke about finding one's self and losing it while performing:

I think it's very nerve-wracking before you go on stage, it's really really nerve-wracking before you go on... So I think in that way it's very scary to be performing but when you go on, and you know, really, just immerse yourself into the moment. I think it's a lot easier to just, you know, let go and you lose the nervousness and lose the anxiousness, all that just gets lost while you're saying your lines or you're doing your movements. – Year 3, *Theater student*

A music student talked about losing herself in her music:

I try not to think about the fact that people are actually there looking at you because it gets really scary... if I'm by myself, it's just ok... yeah, but after awhile, you don't notice it. Because the main focus is how you play, not the people you are performing for. – Year 2, *Music student*

In the visual arts, the young artist-in-training talked about "finding herself" while having her paintings on exhibit for all to see:

It was quite unnerving sometimes coz...now, I see them in a museum space and they are framed, it's like, oh, you're not my work anymore, you're like transformed into something, but I don't know what you are. I know I'm still the person who made it and sometimes I felt a bit like disconnected from it, like, I'm so used to seeing you, looking so crappy looking in my classroom with all the paint and all the dirty floor and then now you're hanging here and you look different now... Sometimes it feels a bit scary, like you've given birth to this thing and then they grow up and then like, yeah. But, it's a very good feeling after that. When I actually talk to the audience, I regain my relationship with the work. – Year 4, Visual arts student

Paradox of Control

This state of being is characterized by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as not so much the feeling of being in control at all times, but the knowledge that one is able to exercise control at will, and take ownership of it, particularly in difficult and challenging situations.

Among the student narratives, a common thread that was teased out was their constant mention of "letting go." Once again, this runs across three different art forms (dance, theater, visual arts). The young artists-in-training talked eloquently about how the process is like when one lets go and the experience that they derive from it. A visual arts student who had her work on exhibit talked about the feeling of letting go particularly if people look at her work and simply look away:

I'm happy to take my heart and put it out there. Yeah. I do it totally willingly and because I would rather make myself vulnerable by displaying such a work then, than totally keeping safe and totally safe, but looking at something that I'm not satisfied with and looking at something that is not displayed at all. I want something that will make my heart beat faster, like when I put my work there and people see it. If it is something that I don't really care about or I don't really invest a lot of thought into it, and I know I don't really care if people like it or not – I don't want that kind of feeling. – Year 4, *Visual arts student*

This level of risk-taking over something that the student values greatly speaks volumes about their capacity to let go, despite the potential heartaches that they may obtain from having their works on display. A dance student, on the other hand, talked about how it is like to "let go" in dance:

Your mind might be somewhere out in outer space and you are just dancing without a brain. That is when, like, I feel like I am not dancing. And there are some days when you are just present in yourself and you feel everything you are doing, that is when you are obviously not dancing because you are too conscious of what you are and what you are doing. But there are times where you are really at the optimum state where you can ... you are in the liminal stage of both... you are in this transitional stage where you know what you are doing and at the back of your head, you don't see it but you just feel whatever you are doing and you are able to do it to the full capacity. Yah, that is like best feeling you can get but you just feel that you are moving through nothing or space and using every part of your body to express that moment and yah, it is just very fluid. – Year 4, Dance Student

Playing a character in theater is also described by a Year 3 student as requiring a balance between being in 'character', yet retaining some level of control over one's emotions and sensibilities:

I think it's a lot about self control and knowing that you're doing this for the audience, and you're doing this for the role, you cannot go back to ... recollecting the actual moment of reality like you're doing it like all over again... I mean, I think we should only take that emotion of the moment, ya not the actual surroundings, the environment - you take the emotion, you invest into the role of your character and you show it, I mean, and when you do show it, the audience accepts it, because they know it's coming from somewhere true. — Year 3. Theater student

Transformation of Time

Among the common descriptions of optimal experience is the notion that "the orderly progression of clocks is rendered irrelevant by the rhythms dictated by the activity" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, p. 66). In other words, time does not seem to pass the way it ordinarily does. This feeling is likewise reflected among the student narratives. A visual arts student, for instance, noted that:

I'll just be working and working and I don't want to take breaks and that kind of thing. It's actually a very amazing feeling when I feel it. But, if I don't, right, I really can't, then it's quite torturous, so it's like it's either all the way here or all the way there, for me. – Year 4, Visual arts student

The talented teenagers also described how time seems to go by in a flash, particularly when they are immersed in doing their art forms at any particular moment. A dance student narrates:

It's like everything just goes very quickly... then you kind of glance at the audience... you don't really notice that you're dancing in front of an audience... it's like it's finished in just a few seconds ... it's that kind of dance... it's like physically there's so much then suddenly it's all gone... it's exciting. — Year 2, Dance student

The same sentiment is reflected by a theater student as she talks about performing on stage:

When you get to the performance itself, it's like there's an adrenaline rush, and the next thing you know, it's over. It is a really good feeling, especially when it comes to the end. – Year 3, *Theater Student*

Thus, it is very possible for them to just lose track of time doing whatever it is that they do best, with total disregard about their bodily needs – or, they sense time as zooming by in a flash, simply gone in an instant.

Theme Two: Environmental Support for the Arts

While Piirto (2004, 1999) talked about five different suns in her pyramid of talent development, this chapter will only discuss two major environmental influences: (a) the SOTA experience and (b) the Singapore community and culture.

The SOTA Experience

Consistently among the 14 case studies, what is highly apparent is the sense of community the students felt while at SOTA. They talked about a distinctive school culture where they feel a warm sense of belongingness and acceptance *both* from the teachers and the student body. The older students also talked about "first year

highs" and spoke of subsequent years as their arts training demanded greater discipline from their end. The students also expressed how the arts school has deeply influenced their ways of thinking and viewing the world through the mentorship of their arts teachers.

Sense of Community. The voices of the students themselves speak volumes about the feeling of kinship that they were able to derive from attending the arts school:

When I first stepped into this school, I thought the environment was very open and free. It was like, when you step into this school, you are the person you are. You are no longer choosing who you want to be. You are just who you are, I'm <name>, and you are whoever, yah. So there is much like an identity. I feel like I have an identity like, there's a place for me. – Year 4, *Dance student*

A visual arts student also spoke poignantly about how different her primary school experience was in comparison to her arts school:

You know, in my previous primary school, we're always taught to greet the teachers like it's more of an obligation instead of like... But here it's really sincere you know. When you see each other, you greet each other like really sincerely, and it's more friendly. Also maybe because it's a smaller community. So it's different, the feeling is different. – Year 3, Visual arts student

First Year Madness. This particular theme is more apparent among the older students who are able to make very clear comparisons across their experiences in their first several years in the arts school. One student talked about having inhibitions upon entering an "arts" school – something which is very different from a Singaporean vantage:

My first year, well initially, like the first month, I was really questioning my decision to come because I was like in this whole new environment. It was very weird. I was like, oh man, I wish I was back in previous school> or something. After that I got slowly used to the school mates, new friends and stuff so it got much better and I don't regret it now. — Year 4, Dance Student

A Year 4 theater student, on the other hand, used a food metaphor to describe how her experience across the different year levels was like in the arts school:

When I came to SOTA, the first year was just like mad. It was just so... everyone was so high all the time. My friends and I always compare, like, if each year was a food, right, the first year would be like ice cream and candy, and then the second year will be like oatmeal and this year will be more like vegetable. Something like that. The first year is always best. Ice cream and candy year. Everyone was bouncing off the wall. Everything was new. Everything was fun. Everyone was cool. So yah, that year was just like wow, amazing!

There is a realization that, while there is a great deal of raw excitement, energy, and sheer fun and enjoyment, they also need to settle down and work hard in order to be good in their craft.

Mentorship. The narratives of the students indicate that they sense the high demands required of them by their teachers, and one of them even shared feeling a sense of burnout from all the hours of practice and training. However, they also

stated that, despite the "pretty high demand like standards and stuff" (as worded by a Year 3 Music student), they also value the personal connection that the teachers have with them. According to a Visual arts student:

SOTA doesn't have name tags, that is the most special thing for SOTA because the teachers are confident that they will know you and they don't need a name tag to recognize you...The teachers here, you almost freak out by how they know your names... Second lesson and they can call you already. It is a very very nice kind of surprise. You feel like you are really part of the school. – Year 4, Visual arts student

They also look up to their teachers who inspire them in their craft. According to one Dance student:

My dance teachers, I mean I can't pick one because they all really inspired us. Not just through teaching but because they've gone through everything that they're telling us. So they know it first hand and it's very inspiring that you know, they're willing to... I mean our long hours are not long for us only, but for them as well. It's inspiring that they're willing to put in so much effort to groom us. So that's something that I find very admirable and really selfless. That's something that I really appreciate. — Year 3, Dance Student

Singapore Community and Culture

The Renaissance City report (2000, p. 5) boldly stated that: "Renaissance Singapore will be creative, vibrant and imbued with a keen sense of aesthetics." Within the past 10 years, changes have been taking place around the city to lay down the infrastructure for the arts. Millions of dollars are being set aside to support the local arts scene and to provide funding to ensure that Singapore will make its presence felt in the international arts scene. Chang and Lee (2003), however, are concerned that the newly created physical spaces which house arts organizations and events may not truly be perceived as 'homes' among artists. The researchers (Chang and Lee 2003) pointed out that "a social environment conducive to the flourishing of the arts and a creative milieu that liberates artistic talents must also be catered for" (pp. 128–129).

Over and above the physical "hardware" that is being put in place, education itself is being revolutionized with the "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" approach to ensure that creativity and critical thinking take precedence over rote learning and memorization. Despite these well-intentioned movements, Hogan and Gopinathan (2008) contended that "teacher dominated instructional practices prevail within [Singapore] classrooms. There is little instruction but considerable evidence of a very tight coupling between the high stakes examination system and classroom instruction" (p. 370).

Given the evident cultural changes slowly taking place, and the gap between the policies and its actual implementation in practice, the overarching imperative is to get the pulse of the youth to determine just how deeply their training in the first specialized arts school in Singapore influenced their way of thinking and their consciousness.

Discussion and Conclusion

Barab and Plucker (2002) talked about the evolving, contextual and highly dynamic nature of individual-environmental relations. The authors have theoretically grounded the notion of talent development and juxtaposed this with ecological psychology, situated and distributed cognition, activity theory and legitimate peripheral participation (Barab and Plucker 2002). Similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems theory of talent development, Barab and Plucker (2002) postulated that, instead of regarding ability and talent as a construct that resides solely within the individual, one's talent could be understood as an offshoot of the dynamic transaction between one's physical environment and the sociocultural context. One may also perceive these arts-students' experiences of flow as providing further evidence of the ecological context that is gradually being built around their arts school that allow such expressions of intensity and involvement in their art domains. It would also be good to conduct a longitudinal study with the young artists-in-training to determine how many of the soon to be graduands in SOTA would pursue an arts-related course.

Heartware and Hardware Issues

The evident shift towards a creative society was highlighted by George Yeo, in 1992, during his tenure as Minister of Information and the Arts (as cited by Lee 2004) when he said:

What we are witnessing is an economic and cultural renaissance of a scale never before experienced in human history. Like the renaissance in Europe a few centuries ago, this East Asian renaissance will change the way man looks at himself, at human society and at the arts. The rise in the level of cultural life in Singapore is part of an oceanic tidal flow that will wash onto every shore in the Pacific. (p. 289)

While a number of researchers (Cheng 2008; Chang and Lee 2003; Lee 2004) are concerned about whether the physical arts infrastructure are indeed perceived to be "homes" by artists (the 'hardware' is not sufficient to develop artists), the voices of these talented youth from Singapore indicate that their arts school is not just a huge edifice where they obtain their arts training. Rather, they perceive it as a home where they feel a deep sense of belonging, connectedness with fellow artists-in-training, and respect towards their artist-mentors who know them by name.

Heartware and Hardware: Flow and Mentorship

The students also attribute much of their flow experiences to their arts mentors who serve as an inspiration to them, being artist-practitioners themselves.

Mentorship is highly evident not just through the transfer of technical knowledge, but the emphasis on the creative process (not the product), the individualized approach to providing feedback to the student's progress, as well as consistent encouragement and support in instances when they encounter enormous difficulties in their art forms. This kind of tacit knowledge imparted by arts mentors also has been documented in Subotnik's (2002) writing when she talked about how the young performers at Juilliard attribute their success and their musical training to the mentorship they received. In Csikszentmihalyi's et al. (1996) study on talented youth, it was evident that the teachers who the students consider to be memorable were those who were able to "transcend institutional roles in favor of a more personal approach to teaching" (p. 181).

Similarly, in this study, evidence of the importance of mentorship is shown in the students' personal narratives when asked about their teachers at SOTA. These arts-students' reflections and narratives highlight how their passion for the arts can be ignited with the support, encouragement, and firm discipline and training that they have received from their arts education.

Heartware and Hardware: Pedagogical Implications for Educators

Several themes could be extracted from the students' narratives which might prove to be helpful for educators such as: (1) the significance of investing a sense of personal connectedness with the students as they engage in their training, (2) the importance of immediate feedback as they progress in their respective fields, (3) the inspiration that is derived from seeing the students' own mentors perform or, at the very least, having firsthand knowledge of what it means to be in that domain, and (4) the sense of community that is fostered in a school that allows one to express one's artistic sensibilities. From these students' narratives, sensing the soul behind their skill and the heart behind their technique have enabled researchers a glimpse to their experiences of flow as they engage in enacting their art forms. Evidently, the technical expertise is only one aspect in their demonstrated abilities. These talented Singaporean youths also have expressed passion, intensity, and a high level of commitment and involvement in their art forms. Reynolds and Piirto (2005), who have done an enormous amount of training of talented youth, have emphasized the significance of knowing a students' passions and motivations in order to fully support them in their talent development:

Talents are not to be developed blindly without inquiry into the student's passion. Depth psychology insists on including a student's heated interests. Depth psychology inquires where and why a talented student is engaged in a certain domain, be it mathematics, a certain branch of science, literature, music, sports, or other domain (p. 169).

It may be argued that the participants in this study are considered to be the talented group who are excelling in their respective art forms and may not be entirely representative of the sensibilities of the entire school community. Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1996), in his landmark study on talented adolescents, provided a very clear rationale as to why it is important to hear these students' voices and sentiments. In his description of their sample of students:

Although they were an elite subsample of an already elite group of young students, and although some researchers may object to trying to understand development from such a perspective, Maslow was probably correct in claiming that the study of health is at least as important as the study of pathology. We can learn much about average development by examining positive extremes (p. 240).

These experiences of flow, as narrated by the talented teenagers from Singapore, are a testament to the confluence of demonstrated talents, environmental support, and the various opportunities provided by the sociocultural environment allowing the arts to flourish and develop: indicating the presence of a 'heartware' and not just the 'hardware.'

Appendix A. Semi-structured Interview Guide

- 1. Could you tell me about your (music, art, dance, theater)? How long have you been doing your (music, art, dance, theater)?
- 2. Could you describe to me what the experience is like when you are engaging in your [art form] (dance, music, etc)? How do you feel whenever you engage in your art form?
- 3. How often do you practice? How often do you do your drawings (for visual arts)/ rehearse for theater/dance/music? How about during vacations?
- 4. What do you think are some of the things that contributed to your development in your art area? How about some of the things which you feel do not help you in developing your art form?
- 5. Tell me about your first year in SOTA. What was it like?
- 6. How different or similar is the school from your previous schools?
- 7. Describe to me what your teachers here are like. How about the kind of training and education that you receive in your art form here, what is it like?

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Chapter 19 Exegetical Commentary

Susan Wright

I would like to draw upon a number of principles and viewpoints in my response to this chapter – *Flow among Artists in Training in Singapore*. To begin, it is worth emphasizing that, what we generally call the imagination and creativity are mental capacities that are evoked, stimulated and developed through artistry. Through play-like encounters in the arts, young artists discover the power of signs and develop fluid thought processes and skills that equip them to be active creators.

However, generally speaking, schools have been in danger of deprecating these important capacities in students; yet they would be wise to preserve them as fully as possible, for as long as possible. In a world which is becoming increasingly complex, creativity and imagination are what will sustain cultures and develop individuals who can cope with the evolving demands of globalization (Pink 2006). As humans, we need (and have always needed) the arts to help us perceive and come to terms with an ever-changing reality. For the student and the adult artist, participating in the arts is an affirmation of our existence in an often bewildering world (Fineberg 2006). The arts document the present, explore the past, and anticipate the future (Cox 2005; Wright 2010).

To hone this discussion, for illustrative purposes, let us focus on the visual arts (although the following comments are applicable to all arts disciplines). There is considerable evidence that visual thinking and graphic representation constitute an important and perhaps primary vehicle of understanding and communicating (Arnheim 1969/1997; Gardner 1980; Matthews 2003; Wright 2010). As Pink (2006) argues, a culture whose inhabitants are afraid to imagine are unlikely to be much good at doing anything well, particularly those things that define and advance culture, such as the creation of literature, the making of art or finding creative breakthroughs in fields such as science. He elaborates:

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Today, the defining skills of the previous era – the 'left brain' capabilities that powered the Information Age – are necessary but no longer sufficient. And the capabilities we once disdained or thought frivolous – the 'right brain' qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning – increasingly will determine who flourishes and who flounders. (p. 3)

Ideally, education should nurture creative and imaginative abilities because, as Lev Vygotsky (1978) argues, the mind, unlike the body, takes on in significant degree the shape of what it 'eats' (Egan 1999, p. 63). What we learn is due to the cognitive and affective tools mediated in education systems and in the culture in which we live. If teachers perceive the arts as being useful only for occupational or recreational purposes, students become cultured only into 'academic' achievements and, consequently, lose out on the challenges offered through visual, spatial, aural and bodily-kinesthetic thinking – forms of understanding, expressing and communicating that are fundamental to the arts. Ironically, whilst pushing children to perform 'academically' in schooling, we underestimate them 'intellectually'. To illustrate the significant intellectual, affective, social and embodied ways in which the arts underpin and enrich the education of children and young people, I draw upon the writing of Peter Abbs and his description of reciprocal principles of educational activity that support and honor creative, artistic and collaborative learning.

Abbs' (2003) first principle is that *education is existential in nature*. He describes the teacher as a releaser, "a midwife, aiming to give birth to existential acts of learning and spiritual engagement in the student" (p. 15). Rather than prescribing "settled narratives of meaning", the purpose is "to engender a quest in the search of what is not known, of what may never be known, of what is emotionally alluring" (p. 15). This principle centers on liberating students to imagine and bring into existence something intangible and other-worldly. It respects students' disposition to engage with forms of representation which may delve into transcendent, mythical and allegoric forms.

Abbs's second principle is that *education is essentially a collaborative activity*. He refers to the plays of Plato, which were elaborations of Socrates' philosophy that the existential act of enquiry arises through "animated dialogue, in the disciplined narrative of conversation [between] individuals engaged in the common pursuit of understanding" (p. 16). This principle places teachers in the role of interlocutors (Wright 2010), surfacing and hearing the voices of students through a genuine form of enquiry and dialogic mediation. Such an approach supports a mutual pursuit of understanding, where the interlocutor must be willing to 'go with the flow' with students.

Abbs's third principle is that *education is always a cultural activity which has to be continuously deepened and extended*. This calls for a "progressive initiation of the student into the culture of the discipline" which is achieved by grasping the "intimate connection between symbol and consciousness" (p. 17). This principle resonates with Wright's (2010) emphasis on children's creation of artifacts that shape and are shaped by culture. It foregrounds the importance of teachers in understanding not only students and pedagogy, but also the disciplines of the arts – so that they can appreciate the content and form of students' symbolic communication. Such understanding helps teachers build on students' current knowledge and interests, which can lead to the shared development of an emergent curriculum

and continued opportunities for students to construct knowledge rather than simply to be passive recipients of it.

Abbs' final educational principle is *Futures*, which he describes as follows:

Education exists to set up a conversation down the ages and across the cultures, across both time and space, so that students are challenged by other ways of understanding and, at the same time, acquiring ever new materials – metaphors, models, ideas, images, narratives, facts – for shaping and reshaping and testing again that never finished process, their own intellectual and spiritual lives. (p. 17)

This final principle resonates with the emphasis on an education that prepares students not only to cope with a quickly evolving, globalized world, but to develop dispositions and skills that will sustain and advance culture. Such skills are inherent in creativity, like fluency, flexibility, transformation, inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness and meaning. These are fundamental skills that students use while engaging in visual and performing arts disciplines – which is why the arts should take a central position in education.

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Chapter 20 Dialogue

Rhoda Myra Garces-Bacsal and Susan Wright

Myra: In Susan's Commentary, she emphasized that imagination and creativity are mental capacities that are evoked, stimulated and developed through artistry. I agree with this, and would even add further that a lot of it has to do with developing and refining an aesthetic sense allowing students to perceive the world around them in a more nuanced and textured fashion. In the literature cited in the chapter, Barab and Plucker (2002) pointed out that ability and talent are products of a dynamic transaction between the physical environment and the sociocultural context, not just a construct that resides solely within the individual.

Susan: Surely there must be an acknowledgement of individual talent in the mix.

Myra: While individual talent is recognized and acknowledged, it is perceived from within a macrosocial context, although I agree that inherent talent and individual interest are what would provide the initial spark to pursue the arts further.

Susan: Indeed, for decades, art has been the focus of observation-based studies that have centred on students' processes of symbolic representation and communication (Krötzsch 1917; Luquet 1913), the act of creating (Freeman 1980; Golomb 2011) and problem-solving (Thomas and Silk 1990). Such studies reveal that developmental pathways are multifaceted, pluralist and shifting; they are influenced by students' individual interests, abilities, circumstances and traits (Kindler and Durras 1997), educational intervention or educational neglect (Duncum 2005) and other sociocultural variables. Hence, educational affordances for students must be responsive to and embrace the multifaceted nature of human development and the role of the arts in building meaning within a changing and complex world.

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Myra: This confluence of factors is also one of the reasons why this study aimed to look into how the students respond to the 'educational affordances' that are provided them, since evidently, the presence of the infrastructure (the hardware) is no guarantee that it will produce the affective dimension that would allow the students to deepen their commitment, understanding, and passion in their art forms (the heartware).

Susan: I like that you are returning to these metaphors. I think you should remind the reader that you are doing so and that they will provide a medium in which you can review key points from the chapter, namely the experiences of flow and the environmental support required for this.

Myra: It is also very heartening to see that at the time that the interviews were conducted, the students' responses reveal this passion for their chosen arts areas and their commitment in ensuring that they develop and refine their skills further.

Susan: Indeed this research points to the evidence that – if given the opportunities to be creative – the quality of participants' artistry is powerful and an important component of the future development of the culture of Singapore and its place on the international map.

Myra: It would also be interesting to see how these young artists' passion in their arts develop and evolve and whether this would be sustained until they reach their IB (international baccalaureate) years in their arts school and in their university years. Longitudinal research is required to look further into this to determine whether *flow experiences* are indeed significant factors in influencing their eventual commitment and involvement in their chosen fields.

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Part IX Weaving and Anchoring the Arts into Curriculum

Chapter 21 Weaving and Anchoring the Arts into Curriculum: The Evolving Curriculum Processes

Tan Liang See and Letchmi Devi Ponnusamy

Introduction

There is growing interest in education circles to ensure that curriculum is designed to achieve outcomes other than high scores in examination for our learners. Even as countries such as the US and UK implement greater testing and accountability measures on the back of poor performance in global assessment rankings such as TIMMS and PISA, there is also a concomitant call in the same countries for schools to be more than factory assembly lines with the same curriculum for all learners (Darling-Hammond 2006; Hargreaves 2003). The move to diversify curriculum so that it achieves a wider range of outcomes and is matched to the learner has led to a plethora of curriculum initiatives (Dimmock 2000; Dimmock and Lee 2000; Elmore 1996; Tishman et al. 1993).

This chapter examines the complex relations and the interactions among teachers during a curriculum innovation process in a specialized arts school. The conceptualization and implementation processes fall under key concepts such as curriculum management, teaching perspectives and collaborative involvement in curriculum planning and implementation. This account of arts-anchored curriculum innovation in a specialized school examines the interactions among teachers from diverse background and experiences and the curriculum development processes, and is analysed using Actor-Network Theory (ANT). The literature that is germane to this study of arts-anchored curriculum development, principally that of integration of the arts in education, curriculum innovation, teacher learning, the role of

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teacher agency and teacher beliefs in praxis are first discussed in this section. The section then briefly explores the elements that make up ANT and its use in understanding curriculum development in education.

Curriculum Integration and the Arts¹ in Education

One common concern amongst educators today is the compartmentalisation of knowledge as they are taught in the various disciplines, leading to learners not being able to see connections. Perkins (1992) points to the fragile knowledge syndrome and explains that learners today possess "inert knowledge" (p. 22). There is consensus amongst researchers that disciplinary compartmentalisation as is realized in traditional school subjects limits opportunities of inquiry and demotivates student learning (Cummings 1994; Gess-Newsome 1999; Venville et al. 2002). Recent research has also focused on the interplay of agency, experiences and practice in curriculum integration (Wallace et al. 2007). In fact, the growing interest amongst educators today in integrated curricular practices has its roots in the progressive education movements of the 1920s and 1930s, but it also comes on the back of the perception that an integrated curriculum provides deeper learning experiences that can prove more meaningful for all learners (Ellis 2005).

Several researchers have individually pointed to the psychological/developmental, sociocultural, motivational and pedagogical benefits of integrating curriculum (Beane 1997; Krug and Cohen-Evron 2000; Venville et al. 2002). Eisner (2000) points to the need to recognise the multi-sensorial quality of learning, arguing students do not only rely on their teachers, but instead use all of their human experiences and senses to create their own understanding. Particularly significant is the growing awareness of the benefits of integrating the arts in education as learning in the arts is seen by educators to involve greater engagement and motivation for learning (Gee 2004; Tishman and Palmer 2006). Elfland (2004) describes artistic production as "imaginative cognition", where as an activity, the arts unites cognitive processes with the creative enterprise of imagination. He argues that artistic production requires any knowledge gained to be re-organized into a meaningful performance, and that what results is a complex, personalised knowledge creating process. Hence, there is a sense that the multi-sensorial, knowledge building, nature of learning in the arts, although more complex and challenging, can lead to more meaning and therefore more engagement in the

Furthermore, the twenty-first-century has spawned pervasive, fast-paced, inter-disciplinary information and knowledge growth, where learners are

¹ Throughout this chapter, the term arts refer to the whole field of artistic endeavours such as theatre, visual arts, music, dance and such similar aesthetic disciplines. The term arts education, arts integration and arts-infused therefore stem from this understanding of learning the aesthetic disciplines.

expected to understand and decipher language and image-based symbols at faster speeds and with increasing sophistication. Beane (1997) had observed that learning experiences become meaningful when knowledge is integrated within a students' life-world and contextually situated within community, regional, national, and global dialogue. Scholars have contributed to knowledge about defining what constitutes interdisciplinary work (e.g. Boix-Mansilla 2008/2009; Boix-Mansilla et al. 2000), as well as emphasising an authentic integrated (connected) approaches to curriculum design (L. Erickson 2007). Integrating the arts into mainstream education allows young learners to successfully navigate the more complex, future environment (Elfland 2004). In another sense, an arts-integrated curriculum is thought to create the conditions for complex, real-world learning (Wilson 1997).

Despite the arguments in support of arts education, researchers do not agree on the extent of the transferability of cognitive skills gained in arts education to other disciplines (Burton et al. 2000; Hetland and Winner 2004; Smithrim and Upitis 2005). Similarly, M. Erickson (2004) points to the recent challenge in arts education of the need to develop arts curricula so that learning across different environments is enhanced. The lack of strong evidence however has not dampened the significant interest and confidence in the importance of the arts in education movement, especially amongst policy makers and school authorities, and several notable projects have been put forward (Appel 2006; Marshall 2005). Despite of such contentions, anchoring the arts in schools is being trialled. Numerous terms such as arts-infused, arts-centred and arts-across-the curriculum abound in the literature today to describe the combination of two or more traditional subjects with the arts (Russell and Zembylas 2007).

In this chapter, the term arts-anchored describes the integration and infusion of the arts across the four art forms (i.e. dance, music, theatre and visual arts) as well as with other academic subjects as defined by the school in this case study. Taking into account the possible interdisciplinary approaches as outlined by Fogarty (1991), the school adopted a wider vision of a connected curriculum that espouses the possibilities of knowledge and skills as being connected and connectable. The connected curriculum appears to provide a fertile thinking ground for practitioners to generate organic and fluid interdisciplinary learning experiences.

Curriculum Innovation

The term curricular innovation refers to any new curricula initiative that is not a part of the existing teaching and learning process. Hence, the introduction of the arts into education is best seen as a curriculum innovation process, especially given the low profile that arts has in traditional secondary school environments. It must be noted that terms such as *curriculum change*, *curriculum restructuring* or *curriculum reform* refers to any modification that takes place to existing curriculum.

In the past, Schwab (1973) had argued for the principle of coordinating the four entities of subject matter, learner, teacher, and milieu in the development of new curriculum, or curriculum innovation. A similar set of considerations are used by

curriculum developers now, so that curriculum innovation currently involves multiple processes like curriculum management, uncovering and changing teachers' perspectives, and adjustments in pedagogical practice.

However, curriculum has been formulated traditionally in a hierarchical manner, with education authorities and other knowledgeable experts taking on a greater role, and usually without the direct involvement of teachers and students at the start (Skilbeck 1984). The post-modern way of thinking about formulating new curriculum development is that it is a non-hierarchical, interconnected process (Perillo and Mulcahy 2009) and that it involves multiple stakeholders and their concerns (Brady and Kennedy 2007). A more nuanced, dynamic and networked notion of curriculum is therefore called for when understanding curriculum change processes today. Therefore, the curriculum innovation process is viewed as happening in "an ecology of learning environments" (Heath 2000, p. 128), one which calls for engaging human, informational and spatial resources where all kinds of human and non-human knowledge are important learning conduits and networks (Tatnall 2010).

Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that despite the numerous curriculum innovation efforts that have taken place continuously over the past 20 years, not much has changed or that the change is not sustainable (Brown 2005). Dimmock and Lee (2000) suggest that this is because curriculum, teaching and learning are often shaped around existing leadership, management and organisational structures. To some extent, this failure is also due to a lack of detailed analysis of the complex nature of the change process and the extent to which different players become involved in creating new curriculum. A deeper understanding of the competing visions and challenges and the networks in each innovation team can move the process forward.

Curriculum Innovation and Teacher Learning

It has been noted by many that teachers are central to the process of curriculum reform (Appel 2006; Cuban 1990; Czerniak et al. 1999; Fullan 1993). However, although much of curriculum change can be mandated through new syllabi and associated documents, wanting to change the teacher's professional practice is more complex and involves multiple changes (Skilbeck and Connell 2004). Guskey and Huberman (1995) point out that getting teachers to accept educational change or innovate requires much persuasion and support. Day (1999) indicates that this involves teacher learning and development, which requires appropriate documentation framework such as the Wiggins and McTighe's (2005, 2006) Understanding by Design approach to scaffold learning and allow clarifications of curriculum units. The socio-cultural theory of learning (Greeno 2003; Lave and Wenger 1991) highlights that both the physical and social contexts affect change and so to ensure real-world learning for teachers there is a need for teacher participation in the dialectical practices of a community. Putnam and Borko (2000) similarly assert that teachers involved in innovating curriculum need to be part of discourse

communities that allow debate and the exchange of views about the practices that shape teachers' thinking. Curriculum innovation projects also integrate arts and other academic disciplines (Bergman and Fiering 1997; Goldsmith-Conley and Bales 1994; Irwin 1992). M. Erickson and Stein (1993) also point to curriculum innovation as being a dialectical process that is complex and constantly changing, where team members reconceptualise their ideas in light of reasoning and investigation.

Teacher Agency and Curriculum Innovation

Several researchers have point out the importance of the teacher's active role in educational reform efforts (Fullan 2000, 2003a, b; Smylie 1997) and see the teachers' role as being intrinsic to curriculum development (Clandinin and Connelly 1992; Fullan 2003b; Tyack and Cuban 1995). Ben-Peretz adopts the view that teachers play a dual role in curriculum development processes, that of "in-the-field researcher, and that of independent worker" (1980, p. 52) which highlight teacher intervention as being vital to curriculum innovation. Clearly the dialectical process of curriculum innovation and integration requires greater participation or agency on the part of the teacher.

In social theory, 'agency' is defined as an individual's ability to function independently of the constraints created by society (Calhoun 2002). However, teacher agency is best understood if we view teaching in the interconnected sense of teachers' work that includes the schools and societal goals as well as the students' future. In this sense, teaching is not only driven by teacher beliefs, an entity that is viewed as inflexible, unchanging and less dynamic (Bandura 1997; Nespor 1987), but rather as acting dynamically between the teachers' beliefs, skills and values about their work in the classroom and how these interact with external social and cultural factors that are sometimes not in the teachers' control. Biesta and Tedder's ecological view of teacher agency (2006) aligns itself with this position, and sees agency as something that is achieved, rather than possessed, through the negotiated, active engagement of individuals with aspects of their contexts-for-action. Teacher agency is therefore characterized as involving the three particular configurations of routine, purpose and judgement, and is achieved in transactional situations.

Key to this ecological view is the idea that both routine and the purpose are relevant in accessing agency. Teachers exercise their agency through their ability to critically shape their responses to problematic situations and it is equally exercised for beneficial and non-beneficial purposes (Priestley 2011). The notion of agency, which is different from the traditional ones, often viewed as either over-socialised with a macro outlook or concentrated only on the local and the individual (Fuchs 2001), becomes more useful in understanding teachers action in curriculum innovation efforts. If teacher agency is both temporal and spatial, then the past experiences and the projective aspirations and views of agents, as well as the present possibilities affect the teachers' action in curriculum innovation.

Priestley et al. (2012b) explored the role of teachers' agency in curriculum processes, and found that curriculum innovation was best facilitated when those charged

with enacting new policy are able to enhance the agency of all change agents, including senior managers, teachers and local education policymakers. However, despite these advocates of teacher agency, curriculum development processes, especially in the English-speaking world, often perceive the teacher as the implementer, one who achieves the developer's intentions (Biesta 2004; Connelly and Clandinin 1998; Priestley et al. 2012b) and that little has been done to understand teacher agency in sustaining educational innovations (Vongalis-Macrow 2007).

As this chapter explores teachers' curriculum innovation efforts through the Actor Network Theory (ANT), a short description of its significance to education and curriculum innovation processes is discussed next.

ANT as a Research Framework in Education and Curriculum Innovation

ANT began as a systematic framework to study the arrangements that lead to scientific and technological achievements. However, ANT has since been used extensively in the social sciences as a way of describing and understanding the complexity of social change. ANT holds the view that reality is "complex, diffuse & messy" (Law 2004, p. 2), and it defines the numerous, dynamic and often complex relationships between different actors through networks (Nespor 2002). As a framework, it moves away from traditional binaries that describe social systems – that between humans and non-human, the local and global, and of agency and structure. Instead, ANT systematically examines how all the disparate actors are linked in complex, tenuous networks and they work together as a whole to transform the network. Therefore, an actor in ANT refers to both human and non-human entities, as both are seen as significant parts of reality. Actors are not clearly defined in start of the analysis, and treating humans and non-humans the same is not meant to de-humanise the human actor. Instead ANT "opens up the possibility of seeing, hearing, sensing and then analysing the social life of things – and thus of caring about, rather than neglecting them" (Mol 2010, p. 255). The network is conceived as "a heterogeneous amalgamation of textual, conceptual, social, and technical actors" who perform process-based, built activities (Crawford 2005, p. 1). All the actors and networks are linked as actor-networks in ANT, so that act with, relate to and/or exist with each other. Hence Law points out that actornetworks reflect the "power and the tension" (Law 1999, p. 8) evident in complex real-world interactions, which traditional sociological divisions such as agency and structure cannot portray.

Over the years, ANT has come to be seen as both theory and method, as ANT is not a unified way of thinking but rather a constellation of ideas and researchers have made shifts in ANT theorizing. Currently, researchers have been using terms such as the assemblage, configurations, and collectives in their descriptions of ANT.

In education, ANT "allows networks to be treated as contested and precarious multiplicities which order practices, bodies and identities through complex enactments" (Fenwick 2010, p. 119). Given today's theories of learning as being distributed and situated (Lave and Wenger 1991), Fenwick and Edwards (2010) argue that ANT allows researchers to recognise knowledge as "multiple ontologies, rather than the stable transcendence into one ontology" (p. 32). Our understanding of curriculum innovation process is enhanced by ANT's meticulous framing of the complex interactions between different actors - human and non-human- and the multiple exchanges at different levels. ANT based curriculum studies can therefore more clearly illustrate the complications of curriculum implementation, by highlighting how the actors and the formal curriculum documents mobilize certain networks of individuals, things and organisations, and how they are "translating them (the networks) and being translated by them" (Fenwick and Edwards 2010, p. 57). Boylan (2010) points out that although other perspectives such as activity theory and enactivism have been applied to curriculum development, the benefit of ANT is its fluidity and focus on change rather than on the actual players in the field.

Three particular concepts drawn from ANT, translation, relationality and fluidity, are useful in guiding action for curriculum change. The defining feature of an actor-network is the two-way dynamism of the relationship between different parts of the system. Thus, each network is not fixed but changing, and all the entities are themselves in a process of flux, changed by their changing relationships between other entities. ANT as a framework in curriculum processes therefore allow us to recognise the existence of a multiplicity of contested, fragile and evolving knowledge that are created through translation, the processes feature relationality and fluidity in the networks and the entities. Given that all the actants are incorporated into a generalised symmetry, where humans and non-humans interact in networks that have agentic effects, curriculum is therefore seen as multiple and heterogeneous, rather than curriculum being reduced to a linear, single ontology. If the image of curriculum can be seen as an 'ecology of learning environments' (Heath 2000), then the study of the processes and outcomes of curriculum is seen as being the result of teachers in multiple locations and in multiple ways, rather than by one single powerful performer/performance, such as the subject teacher or the school. Therefore a complex concept of curriculum development is visible through ANT where there is weaving and anchoring of ideas and experiences from multiple locations into avenues of learning by unit designers, practitioners and learners.

Studying Curriculum Innovation Processes in Interdisciplinary Units

Drawing from the discussion in the previous sections, we use ANT as a framework in this section to gain a deeper understanding of curriculum innovation process in the creation of interdisciplinary units. Using the view that teacher agency is

relational to the context of curriculum innovation, and is not fixed, we see teacher openness to experimentation and innovation with regard to curriculum design and pedagogical practices as developing greater opportunities of professional learning and growth which in turn builds greater professional resilience We therefore examine the intricacies of the interplay of school policy, teacher agency, experiences and practices in a particular case of curriculum innovation. Moreover, we start with an account of context of the study which helps us shed light over the interpretation of policy and emphases of curriculum innovation. The next section presents three conceptual tools that we borrow from ANT to illustrate the dynamics that exist among both human and non-human actants and result in teacher agency, experiences and practices.

Context of the Study

The school involved in this research offers a 6-year programme in both arts and academic learning for youth from ages 13 to 18 years, and it is the first independent, pre-tertiary school with an arts specialisation initiated by Singapore's Ministry of information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) in 2008. The school takes in about 200 students annually through Direct School Admission² (DSA) scheme. The school provides artistically talented youth with a vibrant learning environment where artistic and academic potential can be realised. The school's mission is to identify and groom future generations of artists and creative professionals to be leaders in all fields, particularly in the arts and creative industries. Being situated in the Asia Pacific region, the school aspires to build on the heritage of diverse cultural strengths which are unique to Singapore and the region.

This specialised school, the physical expression of the ideals of the Renaissance City Reports (Ministry of Information and the Arts 2000, 2008; Ministry of Information Communications and the Arts 2004), has undertaken the challenging task of offering "a completely new paradigm of education in Singapore" (Ministry of Information and the Arts 2008, p. 10) through the arts. For example, students in this school learn about physics principles through sculpture; chemistry principles through glazing and pottery; and mathematical principles through music (footnote, p. 10). Being an arts school, students are exposed to their respective selected art-forms for more than 10 h per week while they study regular academic subjects, so that both academic and at least one art-form feature in their standard curriculum.

² Direct School Admission (DSA) scheme is an admission exercise where participating schools select some Primary Six students for admission to Secondary One based on their achievements and talents before the PSLE results are released. The objective of the DSA is to promote holistic education by giving participating schools greater flexibility in selecting students while holding on to the key principles of transparency and meritocracy. For students, the DSA scheme is viewed as an opportunity for potential applicants to demonstrate a wider range of achievements and talents other than PSLE scores (Ministry of Education 2012).

Students go through a 4-year school-based "connected curriculum" that prepares them to take the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma examination at the end of Year 6 to graduate.

Stemming from the vision of the Renaissance City Reports, the school adopted the "connected curriculum" (Perkins 1993) as a vision for its curricular initiatives. As conceptualised by the school, the connected curriculum focuses on the intertwined nature of the disciplines particularly that of the arts and the academic disciplines, thereby promoting the reorganisation of curriculum for powerful and generative learning experiences. The idea originated from the understanding that knowledge is connected and that it can also create more connections (Perkins 1993), like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Operationalizing this vision of the connectedness of knowledge into the regular curriculum required curricular innovations. The curricular innovations are manifested in four forms, namely the Interdisciplinary Units (IDU), Integrated Arts (IA) units, Borderless Learning Unit (BLU); and the Analysis, Research and Communication (ARC), all of which offer important niches of learning experiences for the learners in the school. Consequently, all teachers engage in the curriculum innovation process, and they get started on this as soon as they join the school. At the national level, the "connected curriculum" speaks to the vision of offering "a completely new paradigm of education in Singapore" (Ministry of Information Communications and the Arts 2004) through the arts. The "connected curriculum" therefore is instrumental in articulating the interpretation of "new paradigm" to stakeholders at a community level which include the Ministry, educators, artist communities, potential parents and students.

The school's commitment to the connected curriculum, created a new emphasis on an integrated and expert-driven form of learning, and this creates a fundamental need for curriculum leadership. Propelled by a keen interest in the arts and utilising her networks with both local and overseas artist communities, the principal made crucial decisions such as recruiting practising artists who are devoted to nurturing young talents in the pre-tertiary school setting. The recruitment of practising artists with diverse artistic background is rooted in the belief that arts in education is about "experimentation, expression and discovery" (Ministry of Communications and the Arts 2004) in the process of making arts. It echoes the scholastic view of artistic experiences being not only the ways of doing and cultivating skills, but also about building sensibilities and sensitivities (Bresler 2006). Moreover, the school leader's interest in understanding the processes and outcomes of curriculum innovation led to a sustained research effort with the authors which then provided access to the school's communities. This chapter draws on a small subset of the data collected from the larger study of the school's leadership, curricular and pedagogical development.

Early studies of educational innovations tended to focus upon knowledge, awareness and adoption decisions, but few penetrate the crucial area of implementation, to find out "how teachers were actually using an innovation" (Marsh 2004, p. 80). Being cognizant of this trend, this study sought to understand the dynamic interaction of actors (both human and non-human), actor-networks and the

translation process of curriculum innovation as a result of teachers operationalizing curriculum integration for learners. However, it does not attempt to answer the how and why questions on curriculum innovation processes the school endeavours. Instead, the chapter explores the interplay of school policy, teacher agency, experiences and practices.

Methodology

Participants

Participants in this study include the principals, dean of studies, heads of department, subject heads and teachers who gave their consent to the study voluntarily. The school, having a far sighted vision of the beneficial role of educational research on the school development, provides access to its teachers and archival documents. This was institutionalised through a general consent that teachers signed when they joined the school. However, access to interviews, classroom observations and surveys was subject to the availability and the comfort level of teachers and students.

Data Collection

Data for this chapter was gathered through observation, field notes, interviews, and curriculum documents. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, allowing the interview to proceed unimpaired of note-taking, but with all information available later for full analysis. Curricular documents, such as curricular map, unit plans, lesson plans, and students' work were analysed to provide insights into the research topic. This formed a subset of the larger study that included interviews with the principal, vice-principals, deans, heads of department and teachers. The two cases selected for this chapter were information-rich cases that reflected the experiences and challenges faced by the actors in the context of a curricular innovation, one that involved the integration of arts and academic disciplines. Staff meetings, staff lunches as well as culminating performance platforms, such as art exhibitions, concerts, and dance and theatre showcases foster relationships among the artist teachers and academic teachers, and the research team were offered the opportunity to participate in numerous such school events.

The two information-rich cases that are presented here reflect the experiences and challenges faced by the non-human and human actants in the context of a curricular innovation, one that involved the integration of arts and academic disciplines. The research team was mindful in developing rapport with the human actors in trying to capture the unique experiences and developments at the heart of

the curriculum innovation process. Rapport is seen as the development of affinity with the participant (Kvale 1996) and the degree of acceptance or cooperation on their part (Blohm 2007; Johnson 2002). As such, all information was gathered with the willing participation of individual actors, curriculum teams and the school community and through liberal investment of time and other resources. This allowed researchers to draw more personal and in-depth portraits of the curriculum innovation process. Patton (2002) also points out the need for neutrality in building rapport, and this was observed throughout the entire data collection process, especially with ensuring that the respondents' views and actions were not judged and participant confidentiality was observed.

Two Case Studies

This section presents two information-rich cases that are embedded within the larger case of curriculum innovation. This chapter focuses on two specific IDU units of instruction and how the creation of the units propels six teachers and the networks of curriculum leaders to work with one another.

At the 2-week curriculum planning sessions, the Dean of Studies would call for curriculum ideas that can be charted on the school's curriculum map for the following academic year. At these meetings, the centre of gravity is the shared curriculum ideas and interest amongst teachers. During such meetings, initial networks that consisted of two to four teachers working collaboratively to plan a unit, were voluntarily activated during the curriculum planning weeks and with follow-up actions thereafter. Even as these initial networks were formed by human actors, each network was being directed by the school's vision of creating connected curricula and the resulting curriculum policies. Hence, each IDU idea is a unit of instruction that manifests the "connected curriculum" as it features integration between the arts and academic disciplines and is constructed by a team of teachers. It was also found that since its inception, although the innovation and implementation of IDU started off as part of the regular school curriculum, the number of time slots available for this part of the curriculum has dwindled over the years, due to multiple demands on curriculum time.

We now present a detailed description of the two IDU units that acquaints the reader with the core ideas of each unit, the teachers involved and the networks created in the IDU curriculum innovation process.

Case 1: A Unit Focusing on Problem Solving and Artistic Experimentation

The unit was the joint effort of teachers from four subject areas: Chemistry, physics, ARC and visual arts. This unit that was taught over seven weekly sessions, outside curriculum time, with each session lasting 90 min. Year 3 students who opted to

attend the course were expected to produce a pinhole camera and create images with it. Multiple forms of formative assessments were used by different subject teachers, such as a chemistry practical session, an online physics quiz and a reflection at the end of the course.

A unit on 'The pin hole camera' was conceptualised 2 years ago by four teachers during the curriculum planning sessions that takes place over 2 weeks in November of each academic year. During the curriculum planning weeks, specific time slots are devoted for teachers to identify possible curriculum ideas and search for potential collaborators among fellow colleagues to develop interdisciplinary units. The unit on 'The pinhole camera' unit was organically-grown during the curriculum planning weeks. On deeper examination of the way that this unit materialised we find the common denominator of knowledge and interests about the pinhole camera to be important actants. The common knowledge and passion for understanding the pinhole camera of the four teachers – Keith, the practising artist; Linda, the chemistry teacher; Peter, the physics teacher; and Warren, the English language teacher – allows them to connect in this common curriculum space called the pinhole camera IDU. It was the immense interest and the imagination of possibilities in using the pinhole camera as a tool for exploration and experimentation that bind Keith, the main proponent of the unit, and the rest of the team members together.

In class, students were exposed to experimentation by designing and making pinhole cameras using recycled materials. They were required to explore the possibilities of manipulating the images by adjusting the size of the pinhole, the use of film, and the levels of exposure to light source in order to achieve artistic expression. Keith and Linda, the art-form and chemistry teachers respectively, saw commonality of interest in the unit as the task required learners to test their pinhole camera's efficacy in creating good still-images, which in turn required learners to convert the photographic images from film to paper. As the use of pinhole camera also involves principles in physics, it was natural to have Peter's involvement in crafting the unit of instruction. Warren joined the team naturally as he was personally interested and was known to the team as being knowledgeable in photography. Having read extensively about photography, his role was to provide information about the origins, development and philosophy of cameras and photography as well as getting students to write caption for their images they created in the DIY cameras as products of the unit.

However, the varied composition of the teachers involved in this unit clearly shows that the knowledge base that each of these human actants brings to this network is diverse and multi-disciplinary, which adds a dimension of dynamism to the network. The interaction of different knowledge bases allowed for continued experimentation in the unit so that the teachers often contributed their professional and discipline-specific knowledge to grow the unit. For example, given the experimentation processes that permeated the unit – Keith wanted the budding artist-learners to test image quality on laboratory-made film. Linda, who saw the potential for more in-depth learning in Chemistry, agreed and continued to test procedures to use laboratory-made film rather than commercially available films in

the units' experimentation of creating images with the pinhole camera. Although this idea was dropped later as it was too complicated for the short duration of the unit, the teachers and their different knowledge bases were central actors in this network. Such dynamism in the network maps out a more complex, real-world depiction of curriculum innovation process, and contributed positively to achieving the wider objective of a connected curriculum. as it enabled students to experiment visual-artist's concern of creating images, which in turn resulted in getting learners to work with multi-disciplinary ideas such as how to create a pinhole camera, how to use light (size of exposure and distance of image) and chemical reactions (in photography) to make a high quality visual product.

The unit was conducted for two classes of 20 students who volunteered to participate in the past 2 years. Since its inception, the teachers involved separately expressed that they are still not satisfied with the quality of the unit they had generated, and the members of the team had diverse views on how the unit should be improved and implemented for future classes.

Case 2: A Unit Focusing on a Deeper Understanding of Artistic Expression

The unit was the joint effort of teachers from two subject areas: Literature and Media Education. The unit was taught within the curriculum time of each subject over one semester. The unit required students to select, annotate and animate the poem using multimedia software. Formative assessments took the form of checkins throughout the process of product creation whilst the final product was assessed by the respective subject teachers using subject-defined criteria.

'Poetry in motion' is a collaborative effort of Rachel, a veteran literature teacher and Jack, a media education teacher. In this unit, students learned imagery in poems, and used related literary devices and skills to annotate poems in Literature class. In the Media Education class, using two computer software, iMovie and Garage Band, students were required to illustrate the selected annotated poems and recite the poem. The final product created by students was graded by both teachers in their respective courses adhering to subject requirements. The unit was created 3 years ago by another Literature teacher and the current Media Education teacher with the Year 1 cohort in mind. Due to its perceived effectiveness, subsequent teachers have been assigned to teach it to the Year 1 Literature cohort annually.

Rachel joined the school 2 years ago. She had been assigned to teach Year 1 Literature over the past 2 years. She received the "Poetry in Motion" unit of instruction from the previous Year 1 Literature teacher who had written and implemented the unit, and upon receiving it, started consulting with that teacher to get a better idea of it. She saw the learning potential in the unit and was willing to try it out with Jack, the Media Education teacher for that year. After the first trial, two learner outcomes – the level of creativity and in-depth understanding demonstrated in student products – impressed Rachel. Additionally, it was found that the students' performance in interpreting poetry with specific literary devices

improved. Rachel became convinced of the potential of the unit. At the same time, Jack was also satisfied with the unit as he observed that the students were able to create meaningful products using the software. He was also impressed by the fact that the unit allowed him to assess student learning in the use of media without compromising the elements of his subject. Unlike the pinhole camera unit which required students to spend additional curriculum time outside of lesson time, this unit of instruction was planned to take place within the formal curriculum time of respective subjects over two semesters. Students received the relevant instructions from both teachers and completed the required personal project. The rubrics articulated subject-specific dimensions in the assessment that drew from two different subject areas and these were aligned with the learning objectives indicated in the unit plan and student worksheets.

Analysis

Using ANT as an analytical lens, this section presents the curriculum integration and innovation processes with two IDUs. Key ANT conceptual tools, such as *translation*, *relationality*, *and fluidity* (Law 2007) are appropriated to analyse the web of networks and the dynamics of interactions where artist-teachers and academic teachers collaborate and experiment with a variety of domain knowledge and classroom practices. This analysis begins with an overview of the actor-network in the cases.

Overview of Actor-Network in the Cases

ANT employs the notion of actors that are connected through networks. A network consists of a constellation of human and non-human actants who voluntarily responded to a particular interdisciplinary curriculum idea and begin interacting mutually. Figure 21.1 illustrates a network of practitioners and curricular structures in the overall context. Each unit of analysis consists of actants, both human and non-human, who form multiple actor-networks within each and across the subjects under their purview. The human actants are teachers, curriculum leaders and students. The non-human actants include subject matter, the shared curriculum vision – the "connected curriculum", the curriculum policies and IDU units of instruction. The curriculum vision is agentic in empowering teachers to articulate the values and qualities of the learning experiences, as well as mandates curriculum and pedagogies within the school. In short, the process involves either non-human actants or human actants in response to the shared curriculum vision.

Figure 21.1 shows the existence of a complex network of human and non-human actants providing a dynamic environment as highlighted by Putnam and Borko (2000). The figure describes in as complete way as possible the context in which

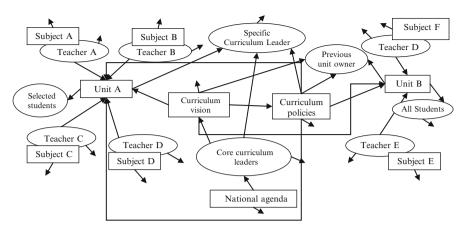


Fig. 21.1 A network of practitioners and the curricular entities

new curriculum ideas and classroom practices may be generated and applied in curriculum innovation. In both IDUs, the formation of each network was a response to the context and structure (i.e. to generate unit of instruction to facilitate the connected curriculum) that had been put in place by the core team of curriculum leaders. The IDU platform drew teachers from all subjects to volunteer ideas and time in making curriculum. The IDU time slots were either within the formal curriculum time or beyond the formal timetable.

Translation Stages in Curriculum Innovation Process

Translation is the process of establishing identities and the conditions of interaction, and of characterizing representations. There are four "stages" in the translation process – (a) problematization; (b) interessement; (c) enrolment, (d) mobilization. These four stages of translation in ANT do not happen in an orderly progression. However, each stage is important for translation to occur. For the two embedded cases described in this chapter, problematization began through MICA's commissioning of the school to nurture artistic talents and promote creative thinking through the arts. The view that knowledge in the arts is "connected" and integrative is seen as the basis to nurture creativity through experimentation, expression and discovery. This propelled teachers to capitalize on opportunities such as the IDU to innovate the curriculum so that there was space for deeper student experimentation and expression. Thus, the "connected curriculum" that aims to provide an alternative educational experience, is grounded on the national agenda. As such, the curriculum innovation process has been driven by the "connected curriculum". The Direct School Admission scheme results in a community of self-selected stakeholders, which include teachers, students and parents, most of whom are attracted to the vision of a "connected curriculum"

and each stakeholder therefore, in their own way, want to contribute and partake of this pioneering educational endeavour. The "connected curriculum" mobilises the school right from the beginning, as it gets all stakeholders to rethink the curriculum which marks the beginning of the problematization process in the school and in curriculum innovation. Thus, translation may be perceived as being initiated by multiple perspectives and engagements at different levels by the stakeholders; and there is no obvious beginning and ending of each stage.

Translation involves the process where a focal actor defines possible identities, attempts to interest teachers, students and parents (other actors) and makes these stakeholders' interests consistent with that of the school. The focal actor here is the "connected curriculum". In doing so, Callon (1986) points out that the "connected curriculum" establishes itself as an obligatory passage point (OPP) and renders "itself indispensable". The "connected curriculum" that is indispensable therefore creates curriculum space. Under the umbrella of the "connected curriculum", interdisciplinary units (IDU) demonstrate one of the ways in which knowledge and skills can be integrated between or among arts and/or academic subjects.

Each IDU is the focal point that leads to interessement, which involves a process of convincing other actors to accept the definition of the focal actor. The IDU is one of the curricular platforms for teachers of different disciplines to gravitate around curriculum ideas that they would like to contribute voluntarily. This process either defines or transforms the meanings and purposes of actors' involvement and relationships of the human and non-human actants and the interplay of interests and identity commitments (Callon 1986). Interpreting the "connected curriculum" as an IDU manifested connectedness in another form, therefore creating an alternative meaning and form of curriculum. Within the curricular network, members form relationships by means of a self-selection and natural matching. The idea of generating interdisciplinary units which is a non-human actant, is the catalyst of the process by which actors define and align their disparate interests. Actors translate interests into statements in line with a particular argument and in this Case this involved the teachers finding ideas in their different subject areas to craft a unit of instruction within the framework of IDU. This is the stage of enrolment. In this process, allies for particular argument are identified and enrolled in the network. Members in the curriculum team become the delegates who front the curriculum and their divergent viewpoints and interests that have been inscribed in them (Ben-Peretz 1990).

As the actor-network assumes a particular role and performs knowledge in a particular way, mobilization happens and translation has succeeded. In both embedded cases, the "connected curriculum" drives the operationalization of the actor-network in conceptualising and implementing each interdisciplinary unit. In this common environment of a shared curriculum vision, related policies, and leadership by core curriculum leaders, teachers responded to the context by either initiating curriculum ideas or getting involved in the curriculum making processes. During the weeks where curriculum planning takes place, each network recruited members in its own way. The enrolment process is characterised by teachers registering with a particular idea, so that they reveal personal interests and capacities such as relevant knowledge and skills to

become a member of a particular network of actants. As a result, each network is grounded not only on a shared curriculum vision, but also on the teachers' aspirations of developing students into creative individuals through problem solving processes. Teachers who develop the unit of instruction over time gained insights into the knowledge, skills, values and practices that are needed to foster problem solving skills that are very much favoured in the twenty-first century.

Teachers who initiate curriculum ideas and persist with curriculum innovation processes such as conceptualising and implementing the unit define and control an obligatory point of passage (OPP) and thus such teachers become indispensable to the network. Such a position increased their power both within and outside actornetworks. The teachers who initiated the curriculum ideas in both of the IDUs described here possessed prior knowledge of the kind of learning that was needed, a great sense of ownership to the units created and enthusiasm to implement the unit of instruction. This was especially visible in Keith and his work in Case 1, where he continually provided the push for moving the unit forward each time it was rolled out to learners. These teachers become the gatekeepers in the network, and persuade other actors to enroll in the network, move through the implementation process (e.g., to test or accept a curriculum idea) and thus contribute to the durability of the network. At this point, each teacher's ownership of the unit of instruction is strengthened by the collaborative effort of members within and outside of the network if the curriculum idea is still viable. This is presented in the unit of Case 1 as the teachers who saw viability in the idea of the pinhole camera unit, strengthened the unit further and in the process began to take more ownership for the unit. However, the analysis found that if the unit of instruction had already been tested and documented formally as was the situation for Case 2, it is unlikely that teachers would reconfigure the unit or opt for alternative possibilities. In ANT terms, this is the notion of irreversibility. In a way, the shared curriculum that results from the interactive process is a form of capital accumulated by the network of human and non-human actants that take the challenge to reconfigure curriculum. Over time, teachers within the network collectively develop dispositions to think, act and collaborate with one another which in turn shape curriculum and pedagogical practices in school. Thus, within the two actor-networks, in a way teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2012a) is being activated in fulfilling the curriculum vision, although this is being done at varying degrees.

Translation, Teacher Agency, Experience and Practice

Networks are formed as teachers gravitate towards collaborators with similar prior experiences and personal interests of the intended unit of instruction. The relevant knowledge of these networks becomes an endowment for their professional practice in curriculum innovation and implementation. For instance, in Case 1, Peter's earlier experience in planning and implementing a set of Science curricular materials on pinhole camera for the Year 1 light and optics topic when he first joined the school was highly valued among the network of his colleagues. Fascinated by the

possibilities of creating images using a pinhole camera, Keith is committed to facilitating the connection between the arts and sciences with his network of colleagues involved in designing the IDU unit. In a way, the professional repertoire of each teacher is enriched as each teacher brings diverse knowledge and experiences from different fields into the discussion with the central purpose of crafting a unit of instruction. In Case 2, however, membership is by assignment of workload allocation in each academic year. In a way, the unit has been formalised as part of the curriculum by the previous network of actants. The curriculum documents that were part of the previous network serve as an intermediary in the current network, serving as a key entity that transports effects, e.g., an idea, or an artefact, from one actor to another during a relatively stable transaction. Teachers in Case 2 therefore receive ideas from intermediaries in the network such as the pre-packaged curriculum documents and need to be open to understanding the objectives relayed in them. In addition, non-human actants such as the high quality of student product, the detailed documentation evident in this unit of instruction and the allocation of additional official curriculum time to the subject,³ are instrumental in leading Rachel to believe in the value of a process-oriented pedagogical approach in deepening the learner's understanding of literary images.

With regard to the outcomes and effectiveness of such curriculum innovation process, some form of a physical realisation of the outcomes in the learners or inscription has to be achieved. Inscription is the externalizations of the stakeholders' thoughts and interests. It happens when the actual translations of social practices into material forms. In other words, inscriptions happen after students graduate from the school and begin to practise and contribute to creative industries.

Relationality in Curriculum Innovation Process

In ANT, relationality refers to the nature and quality of relationships. The nature and quality of relationships within the network can be appraised by the pattern of interaction among members. Relationality is thus a tool to understand interactions between human and non-human actants in which the curriculum innovation processes occurred. Examining the pattern of interactions allows us to uncover how the actants and actor-networks are intertwined as they transform the curriculum vision into pedagogical practices and make curriculum decisions either individually or as members of a team or network. In our analysis, the relationship among members within the actor-network appears to be non-hierarchical, diverse and dialectic.

³ Three hours of Literature in this school as compared to 1 h in her previous school.

Description of Quality of Relationality

The relation among members of each actor-network is open, mutual and non-hierarchical. On the one hand, there is no official team leader or follower. At the same time, an emergent social status among human actants is observed. This reflects the post-modern way of thinking about curriculum development processes which Perillo and Mulcahy (2009) described as non-hierarchical and interconnected. The working relations are led by the non-human actants such as the objectives of the unit of instruction. For example, in Case 1, although Peter regarded Keith as the owner of the unit since he is the one who rallied the team, the working relation is very much tied to the objectives of the unit. Specifically, the designing and testing of laboratory-made photographic film required Linda and Keith to work closely to explore and experiment with alternatives. Mutual interaction that occurs within actor-network is tied to the teacher's openness to take initiatives in Case 1; while the interaction among members of the network in Case 2 are needs-based and non-hierarchical. For example, being new to the unit, Rachel needed to consult Wayne who conceptualised and implemented the unit previously.

Studying the interactions that occur between human and non-human actors in the two cases, varying levels of relationality is observed. This is especially evident in the way non-human actors such as existing curriculum documents, the allocation of official curriculum time and the promise of high quality student products, create varying relationality with the human actors that exist in the network. Hence, the interaction between each actor (human and non-human) is based on the different role they play and therefore the relationality varies in terms of strengths in the network.

In addition, actor-network is often described as "informal" and there is evidence that the curriculum generated by the teachers is tentative. For example, in both cases, in order to honour the innovative curriculum idea crafted by the network, members within the actor-network choose to let go of their personal preferred curriculum idea(s) in order to experiment with the feasibility of the proposed idea even if they had no prior experience with the idea. Hence, teachers were willing to experiment with the proposed idea(s) in their desire to provide authentic and connected learning experiences whilst they act as "in-the-field researchers" (Ben-Peretz 1980, p. 52). The high level of personal involvement in crafting and implementing lessons, the relative ease that teachers felt with proposing and/or withdrawing, and iterative consultation process expresses the informal quality of the actor-network. Thus, in a way, the curriculum idea takes priority over the demarcation of professional knowledge and practice and teachers' experience in the lesson.

Relationality, Teacher Agency, Experience and Practice

The range of human and non-human actants that created the alignment and sharing of interests and goals in the curriculum innovation process include artefacts, documents, organizations, standards, technology, individuals, and practices. Specifically, each actor-network consists of non-human actants, such as the

Renaissance City Reports, curriculum vision, the available IDU time slots, the pinhole camera, the poem, and human actants, namely the teachers with diverse background, the learners, and the school's leaders. All of these actors created a network that converge on one common entity – the IDUs. This reflects Heath's (2000) description of the curriculum innovation process as happening in "an ecology of learning environments" (p. 128). As such, this diverse set of sociocultural contexts and artefacts become a cradle for innovation.

The creation of the connected curriculum is an amalgamation of the knowledge, expertise and practice of academic and artist-teachers, as well as the non-human actants. Every non-human actant has a part to play in changing the viewpoint of the human actants and to some this effect happens in the reverse too. In fact, the analysis of the curriculum innovation process reveals that non-human actants can direct teacher agency and teachers' practice. This echoes Tatnall's (2010) call for engaging human, informational and spatial resources where all kinds of human and non-human knowledge are important learning conduits and networks.

Another unique result of this is that the network countenances relationality between different non-human and human actants. For instance, the raw images that are obtained from the pinhole camera drive the artist-teacher to experiment with different levels of problem solving as illustrated below:

So making the camera by varying it, by changing it, is a kind of looking, is a kind of understanding, is a kind of, ..., the art of why this works and why it doesn't work. And why and how each different camera creates different results ...

(Keith, Interview)

On the other hand, the raw images produced by the pinhole camera dissatisfy Warren:

But I think the end product does not justify the due process.... I would like to see the literary elements being expressed as part of the product.... we need time for discussion.

(Warren, Interview)

The diverse views expressed within the actor-network motivated by the raw images produced by the pinhole camera seems to speak of human-actant needing time to suitably appropriate the significance of the activity and images for the subjects involved and consolidate the scope of the unit. The pinhole camera generates differences in teacher agency and therefore in teachers' practices in curriculum innovation, for in as much as it offers opportunities to collaborate, it also leads to the cross-pollination of ideas and strategies used in the teaching and learning processes. On the contrary, the use of process oriented approaches in teaching academic subjects as well as the move towards a standards-based assessment of creative processes are apparent in Case 2. Although the unit objectives and learner outcomes which are products of the curriculum vision, point to the niche position of each member in planning and implementation of the unit, the nature and quality of relationships between the human and non-human actants can be better understood if the networks were to be viewed as evolving entities. Non-human actants such as curriculum vision, availability of schedule and materials shape collaborative curriculum ideas, disciplinary knowledge and knowledge practices. To a large extent, the non-human actants have the power to regulate human actants constantly. The collaboration among human actants in exploring and experimenting curriculum ideas is co-determined by the non-human actants in the network.

Similar to student learning, teacher learning is a social act that is dialogic in nature both within and beyond the actor-network where debate and deliberation about plausible curricular ideas takes place (Deasy 2002). In an actor-network, teachers form a community of learners. The endeavour of crafting a unit of instruction that is interdisciplinary in nature is demanding on teachers who are used to high-stakes examination system in Singapore. Teachers who are accustomed to a well-planned syllabi and structured roles within the classroom find that they need to make paradigm shifts in the quest to produce these interdisciplinary units of instruction. As the curriculum "emerges from the systematic reflection of those engaged in the pedagogical act" (Grundy 1987, p. 103), they constantly negotiate within and beyond the actor-network to achieve the goal of their collaboration. Within each actor-network, teachers are yearning for time to seek clarifications on curriculum ideas as a team. The quality of relationship within each network differs tremendously in accordance to the pedagogical practices. Despite the fact that teachers' interests are aligned within the actor-network, the analysis uncovers that only putting in place the vision of the "connected curriculum" is clearly an insufficient condition. Communication within the actor-network is typically task oriented among the human-actants. The professional conversations are very much guided by the curriculum vision, disciplinary knowledge and knowledge practice. Our analysis also reveals that the communication patterns in the two networks differs: Case 1 is more exploratory than Case 2 as the unit is still work in progress, human actants are constantly interacting and experimenting with the non-human actants in order to adjust curriculum ideas and improve the unit of instruction.

On the whole, this investigation using ANT finds the relationships between the curriculum, the teacher-self and the other team members are mediated by the envisioned national goals for curriculum innovation, the personal choice of participating in such a network, and to a lesser extent the interests of other teachers in the network. These relations are also seemingly moderated by school's policy and priorities for the curriculum innovation process. Moreover, the interaction between different human and non-human actants resulted in a process-oriented mode of teaching and learning for both the teacher and the learner. It also engendered greater personal and professional growth, and generated greater documentation of curriculum process to achieve sustainability.

Fluidity in Curriculum Innovation Process

Fluidity refers to the qualities of being flexible, adaptable and responsive (de Laet and Mol 2000; Law 2007). Within the curriculum innovation network, our analyses showed that there is a range of curriculum documentation and implementation

practices. The "connected curriculum" endorses teachers to build the curriculum by working with ideas rather than following the prescribed or fixed syllabi. Although the school subscribes to the use of Understanding by Design as a framework (Wiggins and McTighe 2005) to manage curriculum documentation, there is leeway for teachers do otherwise. In terms of implementation, due to the multiple competing demands made on the timetable, the official curriculum structure of IDU has undergone changes, so that IDU is made available to students either within or outside the curriculum time. Hence, in Case 1 it was offered as an elective for a selected group of students whereas Case 2 was conducted during curriculum time for all students. On the whole, teachers within the network have total control over the design and implementation of the unit. The IDU network is flexible and responsive to the professional repertoire of the teachers as well as the needs of learners.

Fluidity, Teacher Experience and Practice

Teachers of different subject matters have free reign with how to craft IDUs that enhance learning or deepen understandings. The fertile and organic nature of the connected curriculum vision mobilises the unit creation stage as it offers the multiple possibilities of links between or among subjects. In addition, the connected curriculum vision also provides space for adjustments and modifications that involve the fine tuning of the flow of unit to the needs of learners. These units are not prescribed and the curriculum space grows organically over time. These practices are made possible through the flexibility and simplicity of the curriculum vision that the school has adopted. Thus, the overall permutation of curriculum space in each network is complex. Law (2007) points out that due to complexities, fluidity, which involves multiple modes of ordering and multiple realities, are precise to each actor-network as such complexities are irreducible to one another. The planning and implementation of IDUs is complex and therefore rests on teachers' flexibility and intuitive understanding of the needs of the network. Case 1 offers one perspective on how teachers deal with the complexity and messiness of curriculum connection. The connections articulated in the unit around the pinhole camera did not lend itself to the extant curriculum, unlike Case 2. Hence, the curriculum schedule for Case 1 does not reside within the core curriculum. The unit was delivered in a late afternoon time slot. Teachers and students had to endure extra-long school days.

Because currently . . . , it is up to the teachers to find the time, whether it is within curriculum or outside curriculum, to get an IDU to run.

(Keith, Interview)

Despite the physical and time demands, the teachers involved in the planning and implementing of Case 1 persevered as they believed in the worthiness of the unit. On the one hand, the teachers work in a negotiated curriculum space, one that authorises teachers to conceptualise and organise the unit in order to meet learners'

needs and with a self-planned schedule. On the one hand, as curriculum time is viewed flexibly, both the substance and form of unit of instruction are modifiable according to the teachers' professional judgment on the elements of the unit of instruction. Such network *fluidity* therefore seems to involve the element of the network sustaining teachers' interests to experiment, especially for Case 1. Even with Case 2, the teachers reported wanting to experiment further on the IDUs in the upcoming year.

The fluidity of the curriculum innovation process provides a viable work space for interested teachers to collaborate which encourages and motivates teachers to collaborate and innovate. The curriculum space that is afforded through the IDU is an opportunity for teachers to exercise choice and discretion in reconfiguring curriculum, a quality that is not enjoyed in the formal curriculum. Hence, fluidity increases teacher's professional repertoire and creates a sense of personal satisfaction in exploring and experimenting curriculum together with colleagues and students.

Fluidity and Teacher Learning

Crafting an IDU is a complex real life problem for teachers. As complex real life problems are ill-structured, solving the problems becomes an adventure. Several examples in this study can be used to illustrate this point. The failure that teachers faced in their efforts at developing self-made photographic film in the school laboratory for use in the pinhole cameras resulted in them turning to commercially available films instead. Though this measure was not ideal, the teachers acknowledged this set back and moved on with curriculum implementation.

...I did ... a few things on my own ... to do my own film and not to use commercial film by actually growing the silver halide crystals in the lab. ... I did it with the lab staff ... silver halides very expensive and very temperature sensitive ... we need to ... get the size of the crystals right and any light... will actually cause the film ... not (to be) sensitive. So when we prepare the crystals, ... then it didn't appear, ... I think Kodak took fifty years just to develop ... when it didn't turn out. ... that's why we decided that we use commercial film. (Linda, Interview)

Despite the above encounter, the team was determined to conduct the unit in the next academic year as Keith believed that the issues with homemade film could be resolved if he were to continue working on the idea with Linda. The homemade film is holding the entire team hostage.

...we also went into homemade gelatin, ... we want to go back to our original idea of ..., greener and also more cost effective. ... So it is all homemade stuff. But I don't know, I mean so far we need to experiment.

(Keith, Interview)

In another instance, Peter regretted that he could not engage the class with the scientific experimentation processes even though he felt that the IDU curriculum had potential for this, as there was a conflict of schedules. He was only able to be in

the IDU class only half of the time this semester. Hence, his plan of getting students to manipulate multiple variables such as brightness, distances, exposure time, aperture sizes, and patterns of images during the lesson could not be realised.

I mean the whole idea is that we don't teach them. . . . that they read it, they get a little bit of the terminology then. . . when they actually try it out, they realized: 'Yah, I know why (it) is looking this way and that way'. . .

(Peter, Interview)

Moreover, Peter pointed out that the component of online assessment on Physics principles had to be omitted after the first trial due to poor learners' response.

... last year we...were a little bit more coordinated because when we did it ... I did the Google doc and the questionnaire and survey.... So the kids actually have to reflect and do it on the computer. So it was more of...I could see that...you know... What was being learnt... but... I think at a point in time there was about 60 % only of the kids who actually did it. Then we have to chase them ...

(Peter, Interview)

These instances indicate that teachers are entangled in curriculum innovation process. They meddle with the conventional knowledge practice by exploring process-oriented pedagogies and encounter obstacles in their professional life. In order to overcome the difficulties, teachers need to be responsive and agile in making curriculum decisions. They have to adjust the content, process and product of the unit spontaneously during the implementation due to a combination of limitations within the context. Despite of these difficulties, Peter was positive about the delivery of IDU.

Fluidity and Teacher Agency

In a way, the characteristic of *fluidity* created opportunities for teachers to exercise their personal choice in making curriculum decisions. As mentioned, making curriculum decisions in the context where teachers are accustomed to a prescribed curriculum is a brand new experience for teachers in a Singaporean context and this gives rise to situations where the personal stance of teachers was heightened. Hence in some cases, fluidity activated teacher agency to drive the unit of instruction and in other cases teachers chose to leave the network and work on other curricular directions. For example, in Case 1, one of the teachers experienced disequilibrium in the curriculum decisions made in the unit. Instead of looking for possibilities to enhance the components of the unit, he focused on the limitations of the component under his charge. The tension in his personal stance becomes acute to the point of discomfort as the product becomes a hindrance to make the caption for the mini exhibition planned at the end of the unit of instruction.

... we have had exposure to ... the theories about interdisciplinary unit. ... But I think the end product (of this unit) ... doesn't justify the due process. It is actually very simple negative images, or very vague ... pictures, ... students ... don't feel the sense of accomplishment. ... Ideally if the image was very nice, ..., if they could do it well to just a simple A4 size, and they could have an accompanying caption in words, then they

would have achieved it so much more. ..., maybe their favourite quotation about photography. Why they choose to take? ... they ... (did) it within one hour, so they can't actually go out of school and expose the image.

(Warren, Interview)

The non-human actants within the context could affect teachers' personal agency. In Case 2, Rachel was not involved in crafting the unit. She learned about the unit from her colleague who planned and delivered the unit previously. Rachel's knowledge about the unit was accumulated through personal inquiry into the conditions of implementation of the unit.

I had my meetings with (the teacher who wrote the unit) ... she explained it to me at the beginning and then when I had problems I went back to her. ... and we reviewed it at the end of last year ... and we put in all the changes ...

(Rachel, Interview)

The existence of a ready-made unit that was handed to Rachel could have dictated her implementation of the unit. The conversation with Rachel highlighted, however, that other non-human actants such as student products mediated the personal agency. Despite her years of experience, Rachel went through the learning process like what it takes a beginning teacher to understand the nuances of the reasoning processes and developed an appreciation of the unit. In a sense, the teacher agency that was triggered here came about because of how the process of delivering the IDU made a difference in student performance.

... when I came in, ok, I mean it makes sense, I understand it but like the students, I had problems with choice of poems. Which one should they choose and why are they choosing this one and why would this one work and this one not work.

(Rachel, Interview)

Teachers' responses observed in both Case 1 and 2 indicate that teachers who are malleable in their approaches to teaching and learning benefit the most from the experiences of delivering the IDUs. However, the fluidity was also affected by the level of teacher agency that results from their interactions with the non-human actants in the context when teachers' personal stance might be immobilised by how they perceived their agency within the context.

The fluidity in the process of curriculum development resulted in observable teacher growth. One of the outcomes of fluidity in the curriculum innovation network is that teachers take risks in the inquiry process that in turn helps them to build their professional repertoire and develop resilience. Fluidity is the vehicle that empowers teachers to exercise personal choice in investing either formal or informal curriculum time or resources in providing alternative educational experiences, other than the conventional high-stakes exam oriented pedagogies. Teachers are motivated to take risks in generating curriculum ideas and try out the unit of instruction together with their colleagues.

Mapping Teacher Agency, Experiences and Classroom Practices into Curriculum Innovation Process

The two case studies presented in this chapter shared the results of a decentralised curriculum innovation process that grew from the vision of a "connected curriculum" and its effects on the teachers who participated in crafting interdisciplinary curriculum units. Analyses showed that nuances of curriculum innovation and the associated issues are best understood through the exploration of the complexities within specific actor-networks rather than just examining the formulated prototypes of curriculum innovation. In each actor-network, the quality of interactions and relationships are very unique and each highlighted a different set of challenges in terms of teacher agency, teacher experiences and classroom practices.

Given the ecological view of teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2012a, b) that includes teacher experiences and classroom practices, different effects are visible in actor-networks. Teacher agency is activated in accordance to the curricular idea (i.e. the non-human actant) that each actant brings to the discussion table. Driven by the "connected curriculum" (Perkins 1993), the outer dialogic which is the professional discourse, engages human actants to interact intensively with the non-human actants, even as they all endeavour to share their professional knowledge and curricular insights with the human actants. As a result, teachers grow professionally by gaining new insights of curriculum and pedagogical practices which in turn informs classroom practices. More significantly, in the context of this specialised school, the curriculum innovation attempts are anchored by the integration of the arts with academic subjects. This collaboration of artists and academic teachers has added value to shape teacher agency and practices within the actor-network. In ANT terms, the non-human actants such as the arts-anchored curriculum and the attendant curriculum policy, drive teacher agency in the process of curriculum enactment.

Analyses of the two case studies also surfaced the dynamics inherent in the actor-network stemming from the curriculum innovation processes. The collective inquiry process within the network is dynamic both within the actor-network and with the other human and non-human actant-network in the context. This gives rise to the negotiated curriculum which views curriculum as praxis (Grundy 1987). Although Ben-Peretz (1980) pointed to teachers in curriculum innovation assuming the dual role of "in-the-field researcher and independent worker" (p. 52), the dynamics of interaction involves a wider pool of actants. However, the dynamic of interaction is a double-edge sword. Professional discourse in curriculum innovation could be constructive, non-constructive or even destructive especially during the process of curriculum enactment. In the face of such diverse professional discourse, the teachers' response to the curriculum innovation process also varies. In the face of dissonance, teachers who are malleable may turn tensions and challenges into opportunities as they persist in reconfiguring the curriculum until they and the team arrive at acceptable resolutions. On the other hand, teachers who take an unequivocal stance in curriculum innovation process become emotive and withdraw. The fluidity of the actant-network in curriculum innovation may provide possible opportunities for building teacher resilience.

The analyses also saw the essential role of problematization in the curriculum network. Problematization of the need to create alternative curriculum engaged the entire school in the mode of exploration and experimentation. The development and utilisation of a negotiated space facilitated teachers the customisation of curriculum and instruction, resulting in qualitatively different experiences for students and teachers as well. Within the negotiated space, curriculum innovation appears to be charted by the teacher's pedagogical practices rather than institutionalised practices. Teachers found their voices in the process of curriculum enactment. Although some units of instruction may be idiosyncratic to a particular actor-network, the availability of a buffet of educational experiences and the offering choices to students facilitated and honoured learning needs, interests and personal choice. However, the negotiated space loosens the traditional curriculum supervisory links (Dimmock and Lee 2000). The management has no control over the substance and format of these units of instructions and the use of central sources of information diminished. At this point, the need to coordinate resources and services across the decentralised units and ensuring that teams are accountable to the curriculum time, organisational tensions arose. Nevertheless, the principal benefit from an educational standpoint for the learners is that curriculum diversity increases over time and brings unprecedented educational experiences to the students.

Using ANT allows researchers to unleash teachers' voices and understanding the dynamism of actor-network in curriculum innovation process. It has been reported that too often curriculum innovation is reported with a macro view without consideration for teachers' voice (Marsh 2004). The exploration of curriculum innovation as an actor-network, gives us a nuanced understanding not only of teachers' voice but also of the impact that existing conditions and structures (curriculum vision, assessment guidelines, schedule, resources, teacher expertise etc.) impose on the work of curriculum innovation, as well as the agency that makes curriculum innovation happen. Using ANT provides us a worm's eye view of curriculum innovation process. Perhaps, the limitation of ANT is that it is a microscopic view that is challenging for school or curriculum leaders to consider or deal with thoroughly. However, such a view does depend on individuals to deal with the complexities and nuances in the process that is the built-in of the curriculum innovation structure and system, and this can be a good thing in the long run.

Conclusion

Using the embedded case study approach, this chapter documented and analysed teachers' agency, experiences, and practices in conceptualizing the arts-anchored curriculum. ANT offers a unique analytical lens to unveil the complex nexuses and the interplay of curricular beliefs, personal experiences and practices involved in selecting, adapting and modifying curriculum, in the efforts to cross-fertilise the

arts and academic subjects. The inquiry of teacher agency, experiences and practices of weaving the arts into curriculum is best guided by listening to teachers' voices and their desires to contribute in crafting an arts-anchored curriculum to meet the needs of the artistically-inclined youth in the Singaporean school context, in their desire to remain relevant to the twenty-first century.

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Chapter 22 Exegetical Commentary

Terrie Lynn Thompson

This paper, Weaving and anchoring the arts into curriculum: The evolving curriculum processes, draws on Actor Network Theory (ANT) to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of practices of curriculum innovation. My entry point into this chapter is not arts education per se, but rather through ANT, a theoretical perspective I explore with, and have explored, for several years. I will comment on how the use of ANT sensitivities by Tan and Ponnusamy leads to a different and nuanced way to explore curriculum innovation as well as highlight a few challenges this approach brings. I follow Mol's (2010) lead:

The strength of ANT is not in its coherence and predictability, but in what at first sight, or in the eyes of those who like their theories to be firm, might seem to its weakness: its adaptability and sensitivity. If ANT is a theory, then a theory to help tell cases, draw contrasts, articulate silent layers, turn questions upside down, focus on the unexpected, add to one's sensitivities, propose new terms, and shift stories from one context to another. (p. 262)

Sociomaterial perspectives encourage thinking about the ways in which the relational and material are intimately entangled and diversely enacted: the sociomaterial mediation of practices and spaces. Such perspectives are reclaiming the study of materiality in social sciences and challenge the conventional distinction between humans and the material world. This current ontological and posthumanist turn works on challenging supposedly stable categories—such as *human* and *thing*—by instead seeing them as enacted in fluid and complex networks of social practice (i.e., Gourlay 2012). Sociomaterial sensibilities suggest that it takes both human and nonhuman actors to enact any practice. Therefore, as ANT concerns itself with how people, technologies, texts, and other objects move and (dis) assemble, the focus is on the interplay of heterogeneous entities (actor-networks) mixed together in *assemblages*. ANT is part of this contemporary turn and is well suited to studying hybrid and fluid practices; practices and spaces which are global

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and local, physical and virtual, fragmentary and tethered, inclusive and exclusive. Similar to Fenwick and Edwards (2010), I use the term ANT as a "temporary marker" to refer to a "constellation of ideas" (pp. 1–2).

ANT has been used extensively over the past 20 years in fields such as medicine, public health, economics, and management and organizational studies, and is now making an entrée into educational research and practice. Tan and Ponnusamy's study is a welcome addition to this growing body of research. Although educational practices are saturated with objects and things, they are often overlooked or treated in a deterministic fashion. Objects are not simply benign tools catering to human users' whims or dictators manipulating individual's actions. ANT attempts to sidestep deterministic orientations and instead bring things and objects out of the background and into critical inquiry by acknowledging the co-constitutive nature of practices. In this study, Tan and Ponnusamy identify an array of non-human actors enmeshed in processes of operationalizing curriculum integration: standards, Renaissance City Reports, IDU time slots, curriculum documents, policy statements, rubrics, iMovie, poems, pottery, lesson plans, curriculum maps, and the pinhole camera.

What kinds of questions do ANT-inspired researchers ask? First, there is a pronounced move away from the individual to the collective (the assemblage). In this de-centering of the human, phenomena are seen as the *effect* of a network (and more likely multiple networks). In her study, McGregor (2004) illustrates how the teacher is a network effect, "mutually constituted with the materiality of schooling" (p. 348); the effect of sociomaterial orderings of practices. As Fenwick and Edwards (2010) elaborate: this is a radical reframing away from the teacher as an individual subject. Second, within ANT-inspired research there is a strong interest in how specific practices are *enacted* and the effects of those enactments. This leads to questions such as: "How is arts curriculum implementation enacted?" or "What is being mobilized from the sociomaterial mediation of curriculum implementation practices?" There is an interest in sorting out how particular assemblages come to be, including what was disrupted or stabilized to create or maintain a particular configuration. Third, more recent ANT work often tackles the politics of materials as they intersect with other materials and human actors: questioning the performativity of "thingly gatherings" (Thompson and Adams in press) in transforming, stabilizing, or disrupting practices. Researchers may raise questions about tensions, ambivalences, or what is made invisible or othered. These three re-framings influence the way research questions are posed, reflecting Mol's (2010) reference earlier to ANT and its ability to help turn questions upside down.

There are many ANT heuristics. Translation is a useful ANT concept that enables researchers to look at how assemblages of entities come to be and how actors interface with others: willingly, under coercion, or unknowingly. Translation enables researchers to sort through how some understandings come to hold more power than others; how some actors, such as a "connected curriculum" policy statement emerges as strong and influential. Tan and Ponnusamy draw on Callon's (1986) four moments of translation to describe how curriculum innovation is enacted in one school as assemblages are roped together through a complex process of problematization, interessement, enrolment, and mobilization: teachers are

enacted as gatekeepers, owners of units of instruction, collaborators, and crafters of curriculum. But these are not enactments by individuals. Rather, they reflect the work of the assemblage or network as it responds to the invitations of an array of human and non-human actors both present and absent, close and distant; invitations that are taken up, resisted, ignored, or negotiated. The collaborative efforts described by Tan and Ponnusamy highlight the work going on to keep a particular assemblage energized and stabilized and to keep some actors, such as teachers, enmeshed. There is also a nuanced acknowledgement of how actors from other places and times, such as previous curriculum documents, may be evoked and assert influence in current assemblages.

ANT research is descriptive. It focuses on specificities. It is rich with materialities. Towards the end of their chapter, Tan and Ponnusamy depict the tensions underlying the decision to use homemade or commercial film in the pinhole cameras. They describe how the homemade film seems to be "holding the entire team [assemblage] hostage". It is in these snippets that the presence and power of things and objects jumps out. As written elsewhere, "of interest here is not only how such thingly gatherings serve in the performance of practice ... but also the difference each [object] makes in the forming, informing, deforming, conforming, reforming and transforming of practices and their performative outcomes" (Thompson and Adams in press).

Foregrounding the materiality of practices is a challenge. That most people are not aware of the materialities of their activities must be recognized in data collection and analysis approaches. And then there is the thorny problem of tracing the "things". Indeed, Latour (2005) asserts that "specific tricks have to be invented to *make them [objects] talk*, that is, to offer descriptions of themselves, to produce *scripts* of what they are making others—humans and non-humans—do" (p. 79). My colleague Cathy Adams and I have proposed several heuristics that may enable researchers to "interview" objects holding sway in the lives of their human participants (Adams and Thompson 2011; Thompson and Adams in press). After all, if it is important to unpick the materiality of practices, the first practicality is figuring out how to do this. Tan and Ponnusamy mention analyzing curricular maps, unit and lesson plans, and student work but do not further elaborate. I am interested in how the accounts rendered by these actors can become part of the research report.

How does a researcher genuinely reach and include the non-human? Must objects rely on human spokespersons? Although ANT-based research generates accounts that include both objects and people, is re-presentative symmetry possible? Clearly, a challenge for ANT researchers is to bring objects out of the background—analytically and in texts. A comment from a reviewer of one of my early ANT studies highlights the difficulty of de-centering the human in research reports: "The actors you seem to be following are the humans. They are the center of your narratives. Although objects are mentioned, they are treated as inert participants". Researchers embarking on ANT research constantly wrestle with how to acknowledge the materiality of practices and the inclusion of the tracings, energies, and voices of objects implicated in those practices. A further challenge is

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highlighting the inseparable *hybrid* concoctions of humans and non-humans enfolded in any practice.

This brings me to agency. Agency is a delicate and complex issue in ANT's ontology. Suchman (2007) argues that it is not about "assigning agency either to persons or to things but to identify the materialization of subjects, objects, and the relations between them as an effect . . . of ongoing sociomaterial practices" (p. 286). In this sense, agency is distributed. Fenwick and Edwards (2010) explain:

From an ANT perspective, what appears to be the teacher's agency is an effect of different forces, including actions, desires, capacities and connections that move through her, as well as the forces exerted by the texts and technologies in all educational encounters. Yet, while networks and other flows circulate through the teacher's practices, her own actions, desires, and so on are not *determined* by the network, but *emerge* through the myriad of translations that are negotiated among all the movements, talks, materials, emotions and discourses making up the classroom's everyday encounters [emphasis added]. (p. 21)

Although Tan and Ponnusamy adopt a view of teacher agency as relational and conclude that curriculum innovation processes reveal how non-human actants can direct teacher agency, there is still a sense of agency as individuated and ascribed to human actors (the teachers) rather than distributed and enacted across networks of texts, teachers, policies, students, technologies, administrators, and so on. Latour (2005) writes about the need to acknowledge the "uncertainties and controversies about who and what is acting when 'we' act" (p. 45).

Returning to Mol's (2010) statement, the usefulness of ANT is to help tell empirical cases, highlight the invisible, find the unexpected, and pose different questions. Researchers who draw on ANT do so in order to offer a different perspective on everyday practices and to acknowledge mess, contradictions, and ambivalences. How can this sort of analysis help to inform practice and future research? As Tan and Ponnusamy observe, their micro-analytic research into how art-anchored curriculum is enacted may leave educational leaders wondering how to respond to such research. By studying webs of relations between heterogeneous entities, researchers can critically explore how curriculum innovation practices are (dis)ordered in multiple shifting networks. Such research can make visible and invisible an array of doings, realities, capabilities, enfoldings, voices, and tensions thus enabling a questioning of the politics of such assemblages. Emphasizing more critical understandings of the co-constitutive and performative relationship between people and things, and how these relations both smooth and complicate curriculum innovation practices, enables educators to keep Latour's (2005) "matters of concern" open. Bringing relations into view enables them to be interrogated. Mol (1999) uses the term *ontological politics* to assert that "the conditions of possibility are not given" and to draw attention to the politics which underline the active shapings going on as various performances are enacted (p. 75). Law (2009) contends that practices are assemblages of relations that do realities and since realities are done in particular ways, the implication—the ontological politics—is that they could be assembled differently. I suggest that exploring such ontological politics and questioning how assemblages are assembled (and could be re-assembled) could enable such micro research to scale.

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Chapter 23 Response

Tan Liang See and Letchmi Devi Ponnusamy

As researchers of curriculum innovation initiatives, we find that ANT brought about a change in our perspectives about the stable categories of "human and things". The fact that the relational and materials are intimately entangled points to an iterative as well as interactive process in curriculum innovation. For instance, whilst there are parallel iterations between teachers, learners and the curriculum, there are also interactions amongst all three actors ("human and thing"). In our analysis of this particular information-rich case, when the curriculum innovation is being enacted, the actual form that the curriculum takes draws from human inputs as well as visions that are mapped out in curriculum documents. However, each actantnetwork is connected with one another within the larger context of the school, which points to an interactive process.

One way to describe the processes encountered in the sociomaterial assemblage of curriculum innovation is a synergistic interdependence between "human and things". Synergistic interdependence is characterized by a process in which each actor, whether human or things, disrupts and stabilizes the other. In this process "multiple ontologies" (Fenwick and Edwards 2010, p. 38) rather than a single ontology is manifested. For example, the syllabi are disrupted and stablised during the introduction and enactment of IDUs. This was apparent in the ways that pedagogical processes and assessment modes underwent modification for both literature and media education which became stablised over time as seen in 'Poetry in Motion' unit. Thus the curriculum becomes a 'lived' one (Grundy 1987) as opposed to a prescribed one, giving rise to multiple ontologies.

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The existence of multiple ontologies results in ontological politics in curriculum innovation process. One example of such politics involves the different ways that time was set aside for curriculum innovation in the two IDUs. In case 1, the teachers decided to conduct the IDU outside formal curriculum time. This resulted in changes in the interrelationships among the teachers, students, and curriculum leaders which created new configurations of power, influence and conflict. In the second case, when IDU was conducted during formal curriculum time, the configurations between teachers tended to be more cooperative than collaborative.

Thompson points out that ANT researchers wrestle with how to include the energies and voices of objects implicated in the practices. In the curriculum innovation processes, we re-oriented our analysis to unpack who and what is responsible for the changes over who is responsible for the innovation and changes. In terms of methodology, thematic framework was derived through triangulation of key ideas involving the role of people and artifacts that contributed to curriculum innovation. In doing this, we are "questioning the performativity of 'thingly gatherings'" highlighted by Thompson and Adams (in press). Therefore, the non-human actors are as enabled as human actors, so that the non-human actors have the capacity to direct human-actors in the assemblage in disrupting and stabilizing practices. As such, given the complexities and dynamism of the assemblage, it becomes one-dimensional to place teacher agency cannot be sensed as individuated and ascribed to human actors. Thus, we argue that teacher agency cannot be sensed as "individuated and ascribed to human actors."

The benefit of using ANT to analyse curriculum innovation processes is that it allows educators to understand the sociomaterial sensibilities that exist in the assemblage. The sociomaterial sensibilities generate a deeper realization of the interactive and iterative nature of the human and things that exist in the curriculum innovation assemblage. Knowing about the (dis)order in the assemblage presents educators with ways of identifying persuasive leverages that provide greater sustainability of the initiatives, which possibly allows for scalability within each context.

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Part X Signature Pedagogies in the Visual Arts

Chapter 24 Learning, Assessment and Signature Pedagogies in the Visual Arts

Libby Gordon Cohen

Introduction

This chapter explores the dynamic intersection of three conceptual frameworks: (a) making learning visible (e.g., Project Zero 2001; Seidel et al. 2001); (b) assessment in the visual arts (Eisner 1999, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007); and (c) signature pedagogies (Shulman 2005, 2008), within the context of a vibrant pre-tertiary arts school in the Republic of Singapore. Connections with prior research and related literature are used as lenses for examining learning, assessment and pedagogies. Two pedagogies, consultation and critique, emerge for consideration as signature pedagogies in the visual arts. The chapter closes with an insightful response written by Susan Wright, who extends the discussion through an emphasis on dynamic processes of meaning-making and ways in which artistic processes are co-created through the interactions of students and teachers.

Context

In 2000, *The Renaissance City Report* envisioned Singapore as a Global Arts City in which the arts are vibrant and central to Singapore's future as well as to the Asian Renaissance in the twenty-first century (Renaissance City Report 2004). In March 2004, the Singapore Government established the School of the Arts (SOTA), Singapore's first independent pre-tertiary arts school which focuses on four arts disciplines: music, visual arts, dance and theatre. In 2012, *The Report of the Arts and Culture Strategic Review* described Singapore's vision for the arts through 2025 with the overall aspiration that Singapore is "A nation of cultured and

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gracious people, at home with our heritage, proud of our Singaporean identity" (2012, p. 15).

The SOTA's vision is to nurture students who are talented in the arts and to prepare the next generation of artists, creative professionals and individuals who are passionate for and committed to the arts. At the SOTA, the curriculum is an element in a dynamic context in which teaching and pedagogies are expressed and intertwined. The SOTA offers an innovative connected arts and academic curriculum for students, ages 12 through 18 in music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. The 6-year curriculum pathway includes an International Baccalaureate. Within each of the four arts disciplines, the teaching faculty is composed of professional artists who are also teachers. What follows is a description of a collaborative research project with the visual arts teachers at SOTA, with the goal of describing their characteristic pedagogy when working with students in this discipline.

The SOTA's architectural team aimed to create an iconic school building in a dense urban environment. The location of the building and its placement in the urban arts district signals the high profile of the arts in Singapore. The building is viewed as the embodiment of the arts—as a laboratory of creativity and a source of inspiration and creativity. The school principal's vision of the SOTA is that the school is a "laboratory of creativity"—an incubator for igniting the imagination in the arts and other disciplines. The Singapore government uses multi-pronged drivers to fostering a knowledge economy and developing creativity through the arts is one driver.

On-going engagement in a context. An exceptional aspect of the collaboration with the SOTA can be characterized by what Gunzenhauser (2006) has described as intensive, on-going engagement in a context among researchers, teachers, and students. Immersion in the context allowed findings to emerge and new research questions to be encountered. According to Gunzenhauser, relational knowing of research participants involves the increasingly closer and deeper engagement of the researchers and participants and immersion in the research context. Relational knowing is characterized by caring, respect, mutual and equal relationship of "knowing" (p. 627) one another, shared critique, and common understanding.

One visual arts classroom was selected for in-depth study because the teacher was particularly interested in collaborating with the research team and he was eager to gain insights about the use of consultation and critique with his students. He has been a visual arts teacher at the SOTA for several years.

The 13-year old students in this classroom had completed 6 years of primary school and were enrolled in Year 1. The classroom observations, interviews and collection of artifacts took place during the 9-week module which was titled "Identity."

According to the teacher, the purposes of the module were to: (1) represent facial or bodily expressions through drawing and/or painting; (2) explore the idea of *identity* and make a series of works in representation and/or, possibly in abstraction; and (3) develop the process of art-making in a step-by-step way. For the module's final project, the students were expected to have a completed observational study

Table 24.1 Identity module

Week	Topic	Skills/Techniques
1	Studies in observation and exploration of processes of drawing/painting faces and bodies with layers and textures	charcoal/pen
		Slow controlled drawing in charcoal/conté stick
2	Development of studies through research regarding artists and artworks	Marking-making and hatching with pen and ink
		Blending method with paper stump for pencil and charcoal
3	Refinement of technique(s) by viewing and discussing the works of artists and their artworks	Blending, hatching, shading, texturing, block shading
		Research on using drawing techniques
4	Experimentation with new or unexpected techniques/ results	Mixed media with colored pencils, pastel, watercolors
5	Museum visits	Mixed media
		Research
		Experimentation
6	Consultation and independent work	Consultation and independent work
7	Consultation and independent work	Consultation and independent work
8	Consultation and independent work	Consultation and independent work
9	Exhibition and critique	Exhibition and critique

and/or exploration of the topic and works that demonstrated techniques in layering and texturing, several developmental works in a series that demonstrated the steps in developing their composition, several resolved techniques in drawing or other media that referenced artists or artworks, and a sketchbook with collected images, drawings, and reflections. The module, the topics and schedule during the 9 weeks are described in Table 24.1.

Data sources as documentation. Multiple classroom observations, continued conversations with the artist-teacher, in-depth interviews with students, and the perusal of students' sketch books and their artworks were examined in a continuing process of uncovering and unpacking signature pedagogies in the visual arts classroom. Signature pedagogies characterize how artist-teachers teach students—how they create and foster the construction of concepts, improve techniques, nurture creativity, instill values and foster habits of mind.

The interviews with the teacher focused on gathering information related to his professional background, views about pedagogies, teaching practices, and images of himself as an artist-teacher. During classroom observations, the researchers took field notes, and video recorded and photographed the sessions. The artefacts that were collected included lesson planning documents, samples of students' artworks, and students' reflections on their own development as artists. The research team

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meticulously collected, catalogued, mapped, archived and analysed the data and artefacts. The process of triangulation (Richardson 2003) was used to confirm findings, and also highlight anomalies and contradictions and to resolve discrepancies among the researchers.

Making Learning Visible

This chapter has been influenced by the research on teaching and learning conducted by Project Zero at Harvard University, which is described in the book *Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners* (Project Zero 2001). The metaphor of "making learning visible" conveys ways of documenting students' learning, such as interviews, performances, artifacts and observations (Project Zero 2001) so that students' learning is made "visible." The SOTA's curriculum and pedagogies partially stem from Project Zero and the "making learning visible" metaphor.

According to (Seidel et al. 2009), pedagogies in the arts become evident during students' active involvement in the arts which can include rehearsal, critique, and improvisation. Klebesadel (2009) wrote that signature pedagogies become apparent during curating and exhibiting. Researchers have advanced knowledge about signature pedagogies and the dynamic relationships with making learning visible concepts.

Krechevsky et al. (2007) emphasize the contribution of cultures of learning in schools to making learning visible in classrooms. Making learning visible is stressed so that learning can be observed and documented. Documentation of learning fosters reflection and deeper understanding about students' own and each others' works. Krechevsky et al. (2007) wrote that making learning visible builds on the "pedagogy of listening" (p. 13) approach for which the preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy are well known (Guidici and Rinaldi 2001).

Hattie (2009) synthesized more than 800 meta-analyses related to achievement. He wrote that visible teaching and learning occur when learning goals are explicit, challenging, and when there is agreement by teachers and students about the attainment of learning goals. Visible learning takes place when students are receptive to feedback and are engaged in the act of learning. Teachers and students realize and understand that teachers are supporting students' learning and students are engaged in continuing their learning. Key concepts associated with making learning visible are that teachers are focused on supporting continuous learning and students develop into becoming their own teachers.

Visible teaching (Hattie 2009) occurs when the teacher understands the intended learning outcomes and is able to monitor learning, provide feedback, and incorporate various strategies and approaches so as to further learning. Teachers are able to direct, control, and change their teaching so that students' learning is continued. Specific ways in which teachers contribute to learning include the teachers' expectations of students' learning, knowledge of assessments, ability to use varied strategies customized according to students' needs and performance, ability to

foster a warm, supportive classroom climate, clarity of criteria for students' success and achievement, and ability to engage and motivate students. When supporting students' learning, teachers can hone in on specific criteria for success, establish challenging, yet achievable goals, understand teaching and learning processes, and be open to feedback from students and peers.

Positive changes in school culture and student learning occur when using the visible thinking approach (Ritchhart and Perkins 2008; Ritchhart et al. 2011). Making thinking visible informs teaching. It provides evidence of what students are thinking and how teachers should proceed if there are misconceptions or misunderstandings. Naming and noticing activities are important for visible thinking.

Classroom activities become learning oriented when students are: valued, participate actively and confidently, structure thinking before writing, engage in deep learning in the content areas, and thinking skills and dispositions are fostered. Classroom culture is shaped by eight forces: classroom routines and structures for learning, language and conversational patterns, implicit and explicit expectations, time allocation, modeling by teachers and others, physical environment, relationships and patterns of interaction, and the creation of opportunities (Ritchhart and Perkins 2008).

Cultures of thinking are developed when thinking is visible. Key elements of visible thinking occur when students document their thinking, reflect on thinking, and extend their thinking. Teachers can systematically foster cultures of learning when certain thinking routines are practiced (Ritchhart et al. 2011) to deepen approaches to learning and relate to making meaning, developing understanding, problem solving, and decision making.

Studio Structures. Researchers (Hetland et al. 2007; Winner et al. 2006), who observed students in visual arts classes, explained that visual arts teachers interact with their students in three ways known as studio structures. Teachers typically begin classes with information and a showing phase which the researchers named Demonstration-Lecture. During the second phase, Students-at-Work, teachers circulate around the classroom or studio and talk to students about their work. During the third phase, Critique, students reflect on the work of themselves and their peers. While there is still much to be learned about studio habits of mind, the researchers (Hetland et al. 2007; Winner et al. 2006) suggested that these studio structures foster eight studio habits of mind. The eight habits of mind that can be fostered through disciplined study of visual arts are: developing craft, engaging and persisting, envisioning what is not observed, expressing feelings, ideas and meanings, observing, reflecting on their own and their peers' works, stretching and explaining, and understanding the world of visual arts.

Assessment

In this chapter, Eisner's seminal writings (1999, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007) on assessment inform the teacher's pedagogies. A key aspect of "making learning visible" is the use of documentation. Documentation is a central activity in visual

arts (Given et al. 2010). Typically, students keep representations, inscriptions, written descriptions, reflections, journals, diaries, sketch books and portfolios that portray their efforts over a period of time. Through communication and dialogue with teachers and each other, students are supported in making progress on their artworks, trying techniques, creating new forms, practicing techniques and experimenting (Cushman 1996).

According to Eisner, "curriculum and teaching that mediates it are mind altering devices" (Eisner 2002, p. 341). In the visual arts, representations involve processes that propel discoveries and transform ideas and images into representations. Eisner (2002) used the term "inscription" when describing the form, which may be fleeting and temporary, which results from the original idea or image. Thus, sketches are drawn in students' sketch books, sculptures are created, and pictures are painted. Inscription leads to editing, through which the artworks are developed further. Representation, inscription and editing are intertwined with communication—which, according to Eisner (2002), is the act of making transformations public. Communication among teachers and students is essential because it provides ways in which individuals and cultures grow and develop. The choices involved in the forms of representation are critical to the further development of thinking, imagination, creativity and artistic skills and lead to artists finding their mode of self-expression.

Eisner (2002) wrote that assessment and evaluation can be included in arts education and that judgments about students' works and the processes that are used should be part of such formative assessment. Teachers should focus on students' progress, or development, over time, including school and out-of-school activities, and multiple types of evidence can be used. Eisner (2002, 2007) suggested possible areas for assessment and these include the ways in which students approach their works, problems that are encountered and types of questions that students ask. Assessment should be informed by conceptualization and sensitivity.

Signature pedagogies are intricately connected to learning and assessment. The next section explores this connection to "making learning visible." As will be suggested later in this chapter, the use of documentation, consultation and critique are integral to this process and are suggested as examples of signature pedagogies of visual arts teachers.

Signature Pedagogies

Curriculum and pedagogies are two important contributions to the shaping of minds (Eisner 2002, 2003). Pedagogies dynamically influence artful teaching and learning (Klebesadel 2009). Signature pedagogies in visual arts teaching may be described as pedagogies that facilitate students' evolution as artists. According to Shulman (2005), signature pedagogies develop three habits—the habits of the mind, hand, and heart. In other words, these pedagogies enable students to think, perform, and

act with integrity in the discipline of visual arts. Shulman (2008) elaborated upon signature pedagogies in the following excerpt:

When we identified particular pedagogies 'signatures' for fields, they shared certain characteristics. They had become regular, repeated, and even routine for teaching and learning in the field; they were not one shot projects or performances. That said, they also tended to distinguish the field in question from other professional fields. Although some form of 'lecture' is nearly universal from elementary school through professional or graduate school, its very universality would make it an unlikely candidate for the signature of any field in particular. Clinical rounds, studio design, chevruta study, legal case dialogue interactions, elementary school reading groups, or psychotheraphy role playing might well function as signatures in their respective fields, but traditional question-and-answer recitation would be less distinctive. (p. 7)

Shulman (2005), in a seminal article in *Daedalus*, conveyed that disciplines have signature pedagogies which characterize the emphasis teachers place on common traits and values. Distinctive pedagogies are persistent. Shulman (2005) wrote that signature pedagogies

Implicitly define what counts as knowledge in a field and how things become known. They define how knowledge is analysed, criticized, accepted or discarded. They define the functions of expertise in a field, the locus of authority, and the privileges of rank and standing. (p. 54)

Consultation and Critique in the Classroom

Consultations with students regarding their works are pervasive in visual arts classrooms and studios, and documentation is a primary source of information for assessing learning and development (Eisner 2002; Krechevsky et al. 2007; Turner and Wilson 2010; Yu 2008). Consultations are based on conversations and collaborations among students and teachers. Consultation was interwoven into the visual arts teaching during the classroom module on Identity. The teacher viewed consultation as having formative aspects, and critiques were considered to be summative assessments of students' progress. Regarding consultation, the teacher considered the following aspects as important: evidence of first-hand observational studies, evidence of sound drawing skills, experimentation, reference to an artist's style and work, and evidence of developing sketches to their final works.

In addition, the students were critiqued and assessed in the following areas: imagination, expression, application of visual knowledge, sensitivity to media and materials, self-motivation, self-evaluation and reflection. Critiques of students' works involved detailed presentations by students about one or more works-in-progress, comments, questions, and feedback by peers and responses by presenters. Knowledge was co-constructed through dialogue, questioning and challenging what is there; hence, learning became process-oriented. Through a dynamic process, the student presenter became immersed in decision-making, justifying the work and steps that had been taken until the allocated time was used or a resolution had been achieved.

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Teachers, peers, or presenters can facilitate consultation and critique sessions. The structure of the sessions can be determined by the teacher or through mutual agreement by all participants. From time-to-time, invited experts and guest artists were invited to participate in such sessions.

In general, while the critique process can be implemented as a specific type of assessment (Soep 2005), critiques do not have to be restricted to assessment alone. Indeed, when used over a period of time (Soep 2005) and embedded in the pedagogies of visual arts teachers, critiques foster the further development, evolution and transformation of students' aesthetic and intellectual development. Several structured processes or protocols have been implemented in some schools that foster critical thinking about students' works (Cushman 1996; Seidel et al. 2001). Although several guidelines (e.g., California protocol collaborative assessment conference, tuning protocol) have been developed to structure the detailed study of students' works, provide feedback, and promote reflection on the structured process (Cushman 1996; Seidel et al. 2001), such protocols were only loosely followed by the visual arts teacher in this study. In his day-to-day conversations with students, the teacher clearly conveyed the purposes and distinctive characteristics of consultation and critique. The following excerpt provides a student's description:

[The teacher] always collects our sketch books and comments something on these post-its. And on these post-its, he will talk about the good points I've done and ask us to like continue. [He] also tells us our mistakes and tells us how it can be improved and also relates them to the current projects we'll be doing. So, in the process we are improving our work, not only by the normal standard work like practices but also through the project work so through it we have more, we have a more wholesome learning experience.

For Year 1 students, critiques can be stressful as well as provide opportunities to learn skills that can be used in academic subjects as the following excerpts reveal:

Student 1: [Critiques] can be a bit stressful and pressurizing sometimes because like we still have like our daily work in other subjects for example Math and Science and English. So it can be hard, yeah it can be hard. It can be for us to actually get something done in time but it also teaches us time management. He always emphasizes that we have to manage our time in the upper years to be able to excel. However, the whole thing is very beneficial to us because we can, most of us have learnt like how to actually balance these two, the arts subject and standard subjects.

Student 2: At the end of each project, he'll do group critiques where all our peers will also critique our own work and he will document them and send it to us to help us learn how to be more confident in our work and see how we perform so we can improve on them. Your presentation can improve our public speaking. Yeah, so, we, we are more confident. I think it's his critiques and his strict timelines, deadlines, make our class and I very, more responsible of our work and I grew in confidence by a lot.

During the consultation process the teacher reviews the students' sketches and artworks that have been developed during the module. Students can explain their ideas and the concepts that they are developing. In the following excerpt from a conversation that took place during a consultation, the teacher and student discuss a student's sketch in preparation for the development of the artwork shown in Fig. 24.1. The student explained that she created dotted lines on the portrait to

Fig. 24.1 Critique portrait



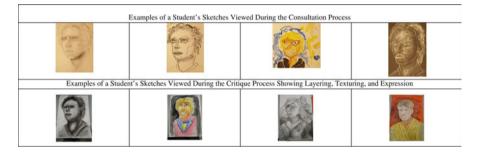


Fig. 24.2 Comparison of sketches that were viewed during consultation and critique sketch

indicate a disconnection between the subject matter and actions. While the student had difficulty verbalizing her thoughts and impressions, the teacher suggested that "her head is not in control of her body":

Teacher: Her head is not in control of her body ... she wants to be responsible for her wrongdoings. You are talking about stitching as well right?

Student 1: I think like rather than stitching her face, maybe like the neck is a good idea. Teacher: The whole body can be a stitched body. But the face can be further stitched up ... So everything is about patch work.

During the critique session, the student elaborated upon the details as conveyed in the following excerpt:

It's to show that she is very detached from her body. Like her mind and her body is very detached. Because she keeps thinking and saying to herself that she doesn't wanna spend money, she wants to be responsible, she wants to like help her parents out. But then her body's like spending money and doing stuff that like is very irresponsible . . . it's like she has a choice to cut.

Using excerpts from another student's sketch book (Fig. 24.2) and interviews with the student (Table 24.2), the data portrayed the contrast between the consultation and critique processes. Of interest were the changes that the student made after the consultation session, especially with all portraits being in three-quarter

Table 24.2 Contrast between consultation and critique

	Consultation		Critique
Teacher:	Okay. So what experimentation have you done? Like you try to bleed water colour and all that thing is it?	Student:	Two medium? Oh, I have 4 portraits with Yeah, 5 mediums. So I wanted to work on different mediums, so I can show what, how good I am with each material, yeah.
Student:	Yeah.	Teacher:	Why do you want to do that? Do the different media represent some- thing of your personality or Luke Skywalker's personality?
Teacher:	To try and expose his character, is it? Link to his character. Is this successful for this?	Student:	Water colour to me is really smooth. It doesn't take a long time to master. It doesn't take a long time to start on. And the chalk, it's really rough, and I like the way it creates the effects. And pen, pen hatching is for me, the way to like fast hand, fast sketch and the pencil and shading. And notice that most of them are from the left three quarter view and most of them are the head down to the chest. I did that because, to have unity in all the pictures.
Student:	No. I want it darker but I didn't have enough paint.		
Teacher:	Bring out the paint. Yeah? Darker. So either it's poster colour or Yeah. Poster colour would be stronger, you can still rely back onto I mean it works like water colour. I've taught you the method of water colour, wet on wet. Poster colour can effect that in a opaque way.		
Student:	I can do both right? On the same piece of paper. Will it destroy the paper?		
Teacher:	Well, poster colour with more water will destroy. So you get cartridge paper. Yeah? Use that and Ok good.		
Teacher:	Right. All facing three-quarter left.		
Student:	Yeah.		
Teacher:	Oh Something about the left side?		
Student:	Yeah. I like the left. I always like I have this fascination to left.		
Student:	I want to be a lefty but I'm not a lefty.		

position, facing to the left. The precise point at which consultation is transformed into critique may be blurred. Inspired by feedback gathered during the consultation session, students proceed to continue the development of their artworks to the critique stage. However, once reaching the critique stage does not necessarily mean that students terminate work on their projects. Many students who were observed proceeded to continue to improve and enhance their works, viewing the critique as just one point in their artistic development.

The Teacher's Reflections on Consultation and Critique

During an interview at the end of the 9-week module, and just after the students had completed their critiques, the teacher revealed that he gained insights into his use of pedagogies of consultation and critique. The teacher clearly drew a distinction between the formal processes involved in critique and consultation, as the following excerpts revealed. He conveyed that:

Consultation is a work in progress, where the students are in the midst of thinking what they have been assigned to do and they are moving stages to stages, and they might get stuck and they might not know how to proceed. And it's a one-to-one, or one-to-many, a small group where the students are discussing.

The teacher believed that these processes aided in concept development, problem-solving, improvement of techniques, and creation of unique styles. Development of technical skills, processes, and ideas are interconnected and must be fostered simultaneously. The teacher emphasized how problem-solving and conceptual development are integral to consultation:

Problem-solving is solution-based, trying to find out where students are at, and trying to make the students move on if they are stuck. But again it's confusion with skill introduction. Because there is like, you know, understanding skill and they are practicing. Consultation can happen in the midst, [of them] trying to get ideas. Consultation goes with ideas, and then goes with trying to explore those skills to a better plateau. The consultation pushes them to explore and do something other people have not done. So it's very, very angsty time, where, you know, can lead to no solution, can lead to them thinking more things up, can lead to them to discover something they have not discovered. I realized that they were not ready, in the beginning, [to understand] how the concept [identity] is developed. So I started with something they have on hand or whatever it is, just start working on some pieces. And then I just walk around to guide them about whether they have successfully thought a concept through or not. I'll just see what they are doing, [if] there's a kind of improvement.

In contrast, according to the teacher, the critique is a formal, structured process:

The critique is very formal, the critique is presentation. The students get an audience, and this audience can respond. And then, the students must respond to sort of like, respond to their questions, and defend their artwork, in that sense. Critique is always like that, a defense and a kind of contextualizing. It can lead to something new, because then they discover something they didn't see in the first place.

The teacher conveyed that critique is not the end of the process or of the students' work. It is one aspect of pedagogy that can propel continual development and refinement of students' progress in visual arts. As the teacher explained, "But of course you get critique in the middle of a work in progress. And, it's official in the sense that it's graded. There is certain grade that the teacher will assign. So the critique, actually it's quite summative, in a sense."

Conclusions

As used at the SOTA, consultation with students by visual arts teachers is a way for teachers to offer formative comments and for students to gain feedback, refine their ideas and concepts as well as their artwork. Anchored in "making their learning visible" and documentation of students' work, consultation in visual arts classrooms involves the teachers and students engaging in a series of observations of, and iterative conversations about, the development of students' technical skills, composition, conceptual development, ideas, processes, and subject matter.

Consultation is a constructive process used by teachers that scaffolds students' development and progress as artists. During consultations, students articulate their ideas and intent to the teacher who provides feedback and suggestions.

The critique sessions provide a more formal arena for students to give and receive feedback from not only the teacher but also their peers, develop their ability to ask and reply to critical questions and build their confidence in speaking about their artwork.

Critiques provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own works as well as the works that are critiqued. They foster dynamic opportunities to examine and adjust expectations and judgments regarding students' works and progress. The hallmark characteristics of critiques in the visual arts are that feedback is offered, and the presenter is expected to be accountable by responding to feedback through explanation, examples, reflections, self-questioning, and thinking. Indeed, re-thinking and the critique process is iterative. The comment-response-comment cycle continues. Using critique, as a process in the visual arts classroom, can enhance and deepen students' understandings of visual arts and their artworks.

Additional research is needed to substantiate and elaborate on the development, implementation and effects of the consultation and critique processes in visual arts teaching in order to provide deeper understandings of the dynamic application of these processes within art forms, learning and curricula. Yet, the research described in this chapter provides insights into the connections among making learning visible, inscriptions and pedagogies of visual arts teachers. Although limited to one classroom, the research yielded glimpses of signature pedagogies in visual arts and the essential connections with "making learning visible" and documentation. Eisner's tracings of representations, inscriptions, editing, communication and aesthetic qualities are evidenced in the signature pedagogies of visual arts teachers and the reciprocal conversations and dialogues among teachers and students during consultation and critique sessions. Signature pedagogies provide ways in which visual arts teachers dynamically explore, develop and shape the evolution of students' learning, growth and development as artists.

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Chapter 25 Exegetical Commentary

Susan Wright

Creativity and the arts play a fundamental role in human thought, education and society (Arnheim 1974; Marjanovic-Shane et al. 2010). Vygotsky (1978) argued that creativity is the construction and synthesis of emotion, experience-based meanings and cognitive symbols (John-Steiner et al. 2010). Emotions, meanings and symbols are embodied in creative products that endure over time and become appropriated by future generations (Moran and John-Steiner 2003). We perpetuate our culture when we create cultural artifacts, such as artworks, books or inventions and share our understandings with others through conversation and teaching (Moran 2010). Art provides "a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life" (Vygotsky 1925/1971, p. 249). As Moran (2010) elaborates:

Through art we come to understand ourselves and each other better. Furthermore, art helps perpetuate culture by affecting individual's minds and hearts to make use of, to transform, and to carry forward the ideas and emotions embedded in the materials of everyday life. (p. 142)

When we see education as a "cultural, systemic form of multimodal meaning making", we understand that "teaching and learning are creative, collaborative processes that originate within, are sustained by, and simultaneously generate novel purposes in human relationships" (Marjanovic-Shane et al. 2010, pp. 215–216). Indeed, the most valuable learning occurs when people are engaged in activities that use their imaginations and creativity (Egan 2005; Eisner 1999, 2005; Greene 1988; Holzman 2009; Wright 2010). The recognition of the importance of creativity and the arts in education is reflected in Eisner's (1999) comment that "providing a decent place for the arts in our schools may be one of the most important first steps we can take to bring about genuine school reform" (p. 86).

A central feature of arts pedagogy, in a range of educational contexts, is the acknowledgement that emotional safety and respect are essential conditions, and that relationships must be generated in such a way that participants feel esteemed

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and protected. Within such a community of practice, learning in the arts is through experiencing and meaning-making, and this is linked to the development of self and personal identity (Wenger 1988).

Development, then, becomes the "practice of a methodology of becoming, where people shape and reshape their relationships to themselves, each other, and to the material and psychological tools and objects of their world" (Holzman 2010, p. 31). Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) stated that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice... first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)". Hence, education is a collective form of working together and simultaneously creating "the zone (environment) and what is created (learning-leading-development)" (Holzman 2010, p. 30). Lobman (2010) elaborates on Vygotsky's meaning of the Zone of Proximal Development:

When ZPDs are created, people are performing – they are being who they are and who they are not, simultaneously... In this understanding of performance, pretending, playing, and imagining are essential to emotional, social, moral, and cognitive development... The focus shifts from the products of those environments to the dialectical relationship between what is to be learned and the creating of the environment for learning and development (p. 204).

Individually and collectively, the multiple tools we select to represent meaning through the arts and other creative endeavours "define who we are and assist us in the reconstruction of our identities and abilities" (Bruner 1990, p. vii) as well as our culture (Connery 2010). Cultural-historical theory offers a theoretical framework for documenting and describing the creative processes of sign acquisition (Connery 2010), meaning-making (Wright 2010) and mediation (John-Steiner 1999). Semiotic signs, including gestures, movements, words and visual symbols, are the building blocks of meaning-making. Signs provide an efficient means for mediating learning, as the use of signs corresponds to the many ways we re-present internal and external thought. Hence, the relationships between thinking and the material with which teachers/students work requires thinking within the medium we use. Each material imposes its own distinctive constraints and affordances (paint/clay/collage). The mediation of meaning interweaves the ways we receive and relate information to make sense of our worlds, using physical and psychological tools.

Physical tools, such as paintbrushes, computers and telephones, mediate actions aimed at nature and external objects (Kozulin 1986) and assist us in the mediation of cultural understandings. Psychological tools, such as language, art, writing and systems for counting, are internally directed implements that assist us in understanding individual and collective thought, emotion, and behaviour (John-Steiner and Mahn 1996). As Connery (2010, p. 6) elaborates, "Psychological tools capture, shape, relate, and transform our thinking. As we learn to use or appropriate and employ psychological tools, higher thought processes are developed". A number of psychological tools are offered by the arts. Because of this, "higher order thinking becomes the origin, focus, and end product of an arts-based curriculum" (Marjanovic-Shane et al. 2010, p. 227). When coupled with critical thinking skills, developed through dialogue, group discussions and collaborative efforts, the content knowledge and strategies of development in the arts are further refined. Higher order, critical thinking is fundamental to creative education because art "condenses reality and the phenomena of life in ways that humans are not capable

of experiencing in their daily lives" (Connery 2010, p. 20). Connery explains this by citing Vygotsky's (1925/1971) description of the intimate relationship between content and form in artworks:

Content takes on an allegorical resemblance or symbolic manifestation through form. Form results from a synergistic interaction between the artist's work (cognitive-affective processes) and content (abstract and physical properties) inherent in the piece itself. In this manner, Vygotsky referred to form as an action or a verb, "[an] artistic arrangement of the given material, made with the purpose of generating a specific aesthetic effect". (p. 19)

Vygotsky affirmed that, "together with language, myth, custom, religion, laws, and ethical standards, art exists as the physical manifestation of an idea in motion" (Connery 2010, p. 19). Consequently, researching the arts calls for more than an analysis of the artistic artefact; it also should focus on the analysis of the psychological processes of sign acquisition and meaning-making that were used to create it. This is a dialectical process which requires paying attention to the way in which form is configured. The artist (student/teacher) composes relationships among a virtually infinite number of configurations. What constitutes the right qualitative relationship for any particular work is idiosyncratic to the particular work. The open 'rules' of the arts and arts education rely on feel, paying attention to nuance, making choices and revising decisions until the composition feels right (Eisner 1999).

Rather than having clearly defined end-points, in the arts, one may act, and the act itself may suggest a direction to follow. The open-ended creative process capitalizes on emergent features and relationships, through exploration and discovery, which Jongeward (2009, p. 250) describes so eloquently below:

I work on something (action-interaction)
Something works in me (receptivity-transformation)
Something comes into being (emergent form)
I come to know something (emergent meaning)
Something becomes seen (visibility to others)
I see myself (self-visibility)

Because the arts allow us to say what literal language can never say, culture's most important meanings are often expressed best through the arts. It is important for young people to immerse themselves in arts practice, in order to create and interpret understandings of themselves and their place within the world. Many current educational theories recognize this and focus on preparing students to be critical, flexible thinkers who are able to act creatively within a rapidly changing world (Bruner 1990; Dewey 1934/1988; Eisner 1999, 2005; Greene 1988; Vygotsky 1978; Wright 2010).

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Part XI Pedagogical Issues in Multicultural Music Education

Chapter 26
Pedagogical Issues in Multicultural
Education: An Autoethnography
of the Challenges in Delivering 'A' Levels
Non-western Music Curriculum in Singapore
Schools

Pamela Costes-Onishi

Part I: Behind the Scenes

Motivational Background

I had recently completed my Ph.D. in ethnomusicology at the University of Washington when I moved to Singapore in 2005. The circumstances that confronted me during my early years brought me to the teaching job I was not expecting I would engage in after earning my doctorate: teaching 'A' levels music at a junior college. This experience is the focus of this research. I would like to analyze the experiences as they reflect on the challenges of my teaching practice at the 'A' levels juxtaposed with my apprehensions as an ethnomusicologist about the demands of the syllabus I was expected to deliver. It is my goal to share these long-kept observations about how the study of non-western music is viewed in Singapore schools and to use this encounter to come to a better evaluation of my own pedagogical system as a scholar/lecturer.

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¹ A levels is an important pre-university examination given yearly to junior college students in Singapore. It is a certification given in collaboration by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Singapore and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). It is an internationally recognized certificate for qualification in universities locally and overseas. Please see the section on "Musings on the Singapore Examination System" in this paper for a detailed history and explanation.

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Theoretical and Methodological Tools: What Approach Will Best Translate My Research Intentions?

If you are reading this paper up to this point, you may already have noticed how academically untraditional the presentation is. You may already be wondering how much the writing is self-focused to be categorized as scientific. After all, academic writing and research, even though qualitative in design, is expected to exemplify the scientific approach of systematic data collection, validation and analysis. It is not my intention to abandon clear methodology and systematic analysis. As an ethnomusicologist, I am trained in the qualitative methods of doing research with specific emphasis in ethnographic methodologies. But even at the time of my dissertation writing, I have already espoused what anthropologists refer to as the "new ethnography" (Clifford and Marcus 1986; James et al. 1997; Rosaldo 1993; Hammersley 1992), which regards ethnography as akin to literature and storytelling (Clifford 1988; Van Maanen 1995; 1988) and invention rather than representation (Clifford and Marcus 1986). As a result, I have always intentionally written in the first person in order to emphasize that the "accounts are specific and positioned" (Costes 2005, p. 27).

The limitations surrounding this research, namely, time constraint and necessity to rely largely on personal memories and materials, lend to the type of ethnographical approach that includes the self as the object of research and self-experience as a tool for analysis. This methodology is called autoethnography, which is a type of research which connects the personal to the cultural and a style of writing that is literary and a process of self-discovery (Ellis 2004, p. xix, 4). Autoethnography is a conscious inclusion of the self in writing about people and culture, or, in Ellis' (2004, p. xvii) words, a 'systematic sociological introspection' and 'emotional recall' to understand a lived through experience.

Although I have always believed in ethnography as a story from the author's perspective, I have never written an autoethnography where I specifically write about myself or start from my personal experiences. I usually limit the inclusion of myself based on my background that could influence my reading of a phenomenon. In a lot of ways, I am doing the same in this study except that most of the data for analysis are materials that I used for the classes and my emotional recollection of events rather than field data collected from others. I did not have the opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews with current students and teachers of the same class that I taught, but I managed to collect responses to an open-ended questionnaire I distributed in 2011 that the students were more comfortable answering. These responses along with the current syllabi constitute the documents from which correlation of my experiences of 4 years ago were based.

Presentation: What Is the Best Way to Convey and Analyze My Data?

There are many forms by which to write an autoethnography² but I will adopt a combination of detailed storytelling which are "reflected upon, analyzed, and interpreted within their broader sociocultural context" (Chang 2008, p. 46) and personal essay. In the ensuing sections, I will present my recollections, reflexive analysis, and suggestions in a narrative format. I would like to express that this is my first attempt to write in such format and so I already anticipate certain shortcomings.

My characters will be based on real colleagues and students but will bear different names. I will purposefully not include the name of the school I taught in to increase anonymity of my main characters; I will also recreate scenarios based on actual events. As with any other autoethnographies, I hope to bring the readers into the actual situations in order to have a more concrete grasp of the issues that will be raised and contemplated in this study.

Part II: The Story

Reflections on the Syllabus

It was January 2007 when I started my first job in Singapore. I still have mixed feelings about taking this post: first, this school is obviously not a university as I hoped would be my first employment; and second, I am a little apprehensive about the junior college system,³ which is non-existent in my native country of the Philippines, where I received my primary, secondary, and undergraduate education.

I remember my main motivations for taking on this job are the content of the syllabus and the opportunity that I thought I would have in developing its non-western music component. The main modules I am expected to deliver are music theories and analyses of Indonesian gamelan and Indian classical traditions. I

² Heewon Chang (2008, pp. 35–37) named the following as types of autoethnography: (1) autobiography (chronological, comprehensive look in life); (2) memoirs (thematic, fragments of life); (3) journals (logs or records of daily growth, musings, insights); (4) diaries (daily happenings); (5) personal essay (insights to environment); (5) letters (when it contains thoughts and behaviors of author). All these have in common: memory search, self-revelation, and self-reflection.

³ The Singapore education system consists of 3 years pre-school, 6 years primary, 4–5 years secondary, and 2–3 years pre-university or polytechnic. The junior college is a 2 years pre-university education; "The curriculum comprises two compulsory subjects, namely General Paper and the Mother Tongue, and a maximum of four Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education 'Advanced' GCE 'A' Level subjects from the Arts, Science or Commerce Courses. At the end of the pre-university course, students sit for the GCE 'A' Level examination (http://www.singaporeedu.gov.sg/htm/stu/stu0104.htm)."

am also expected to deliver other western music modules. Here's an example of the syllabus for H2⁴:

INTRODUCTION

This syllabus is designed to engage students in music listening, performing and composing, and recognises that each is an individual with his/her own musical inclinations. This syllabus is also underpinned by the understanding that an appreciation of the social, cultural and historical contexts of music is vital in giving meaning to its study, and developing an open and informed mind towards the multiplicities of musical practices. It aims to nurture students' thinking skills and musical creativity by providing opportunities to discuss music-related issues, transfer learning and to make music, endeavouring to develop in them a life-long interest in music.

AIMS

The aims of the syllabus are to:

- (i) Develop musical creativity and critical thinking through a range of skills, knowledge and understanding in music
- (ii) Heighten social and cultural awareness through music studies and activities
- (iii) Broaden intellectual and emotional responses through developing a range of listening, music writing and performing skills
- (iv) Develop essential music skills for those candidates who wish to pursue their music studies at a higher level, and/or music-related careers
- (v) Provide the basis for an informed and lasting love of music

FRAMEWORK

This syllabus approaches the study of Music through Music Studies and Music Making. It is designed for the music student who has a background in musical performance and theory. Music Studies cover a range of works from the Western Music tradition as well as prescribed topics from the Asian Music tradition. The various works and topics are designed to give opportunities for critical thinking through music analysis and to encourage active listening experiences. Music Making provides the necessary breadth of musical skills while allowing candidates the choice of a major in either performing or music writing, according to their interests and abilities.

⁴ The music component of the rigorous examination process of the A levels (please see "Musings on the Singapore Examination System" section in this chapter for a discussion of the A levels) has two parts: H2 and H3. H2 aims to balance the academic studies of music both in western and Asian, and practical music studies. H3 is available for those seeking a deeper level of music studies through research on analytical, performance, and composition.

This syllabus is the 2007 syllabus which is very similar in many levels to the 2012 release.

The objectives and aims demonstrate a more advanced level of music studies with students who are expected to be serious about deepening their skills and knowledge. Upon examination of the syllabus and its assessment objectives, the highly specialized focus comes further to the fore, which is not different from what would be expected of first and second year university students majoring in music. The following are the components of the H2 syllabus:

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

The examination will reward candidates for positive achievement in:

Component 1: Music Studies

Aural awareness, perception and discrimination in relation to Asian and Western music

Analysis of music in the context of the genre/tradition/style

Discussion of the music in relation to appropriate musical issues

Component 21: Performing (major)

Technical and musical competence on one instrument or voice

Technical and musical competence **either** on a second instrument **or** in an ensemble setting (first/second instrument) **or** in accompaniment (first/second instrument)

Interpretative understanding and stylistic awareness of the music performed

Component 22: Performing (minor)

Technical and musical competence on one instrument or voice

Interpretative understanding and stylistic awareness of the music performed

Component 31: Music Writing (major)

Musical competence in Stylistic Imitation and Composition Techniques

Musical competence in the development and organisation of musical ideas in Composition

Imagination in creative work

Component 32: Music Writing (minor)

Musical competence in Stylistic Imitation

Musical competence in the development and organisation of musical ideas in Composition

Imagination in creative work

This syllabus actually intimidated me a little. For one, in order to deliver the objectives properly and beneficially to the students, the teacher should be highly competent in not only music theory but also in composition techniques and performance on instruments as well. The breadth of knowledge required for such a syllabus is equivalent to a music specialist and definitely not simply a music generalist. This gave me the impression that they might be looking for someone who has a graduate degree in music, even a Ph.D. such as me, to deliver the more

specialized demands of the syllabus. Studying these components and the more detailed expectations outlined in the full syllabus, affirmed my decision to take on the challenge. I was also told that my students would be the cream of the crop in Singapore at this level; although, even at this point, I already am wondering if my specialization in ethnomusicology, Western classical music, and Philippine music alone would suffice to teach all of the above expectations.

I am a trained ethnomusicologist first and foremost, and I also have a strong background in western music and performance. However, the knowledge and skills demanded of such a syllabus is more appropriate to a team of faculty with specialization in composition and music theory, and performance in the different instruments the students hope to take as a major or minor. In short, it needs a faculty akin to a music department in a college or university. At this early stage, although I am grateful for the job, I am under the impression that this is an ambitious syllabus that will be taught by music generalists instead of specialists. The actual depth of knowledge the students will acquire is therefore already questionable as compared to the expected deliverables. Such a syllabus already carries with it an assumption that all teachers who have music as a major will be able to teach composition and performance without any problems and to high standards. It does not take into account that music studies are divided into specialized fields and skills, nor the reason why, at the university level, a major and minor are chosen. In order for the course to be effectively taught, the objectives need clarification and the actual marking of exams should be made available in order to examine the actual standards of the examiners as compared to what was written. The specialized qualifications of the instructor should be kept in mind, as well.

To make things complicated, the Asian component of the syllabus also assumes that the course instructor should be able to teach gamelan and classical Indian music, perhaps under the premise that it is still music studies after all. I remembered the many questions that came to my mind as I leafed through the Asian music component section of the syllabus. These are the things expected of me to deliver:

Asian Topics

The Focus Recordings and suggested readings that accompany each topic are intended to assist teachers in planning courses of study. They are not intended as prescribed materials and are not indicative of the areas within the topics that will be tested in the examination questions.

Topic 1: Gamelan

The topic examines bronze and bamboo gamelan of the Javanese and Balinese tradition. In this syllabus, the listening is focused on:

Central Javanese Gamelan Gamelan gong kebyar Gamelan angklung Gamelan joged Candidates are expected to:

Identify and describe the tuning systems (pelog and slendro), imbal/kotekan, interlocking rhythms and texture

Identify and briefly describe the common instruments and their functions used in bronze and bamboo Gamelan

Identify and describe the buka (opening melody), balungan/pokok (inner melody) and irama

Identify and describe the Javanese musical structures (ketawang, ladrang lancaran) and Balinese metrical cycles (e.g. gilak)

Follow a transcription of the buka and balungan in Javanese gamelan extract in cipher notation

Discuss the performance contexts (e.g. in Wayang Kulit, dance-drama)

Topic 3: String Music from the Carnatic and Hindustani traditions

This topic examines contemporary classical string music that draws from vocal music of the Karnātak and Hindustāni traditions. In this syllabus, the listening is focused on instrumental kṛiti and the khyal-based gat.

Candidates are expected to:

Identify and describe the rāga, tāla (metric cycle), drone and laya (tempo/rhythm) with respect to the Karnātak and Hindustāni styles

Identify and briefly describe the instruments, their playing techniques and their role in the ensemble

Identify and describe structural and improvisatory features of the Karnātak instrumental kriti

Describe the musical development and improvisation in the Hindustāni gat
Follow a transcription of the melodic line in an extract in sargam notation
Discuss the modern performance contexts and the effects of modernisation on the
instrumental performance style

As I studied the expectations for the Asian music component, I immediately thought I would probably be working with a faculty who has high level of training and background in these musical traditions. The terminologies and musical elements that require identification, understanding, and analysis definitely require someone who either has sustained experience in performing these instruments or have taken theory classes under masters of these traditions. Take for example the expectations for the Indian classical traditions: Candidates are expected to identify and describe the raga and tala, drone and laya with respect to Karnatak and Hindustani styles. Identifying the various *rāgas* or melodic modes in both traditions will demand more than the 5 h allotted to this musical system⁵

⁵ When I taught the module in 2007, the total time allotted for the Asian music component is 10 h: 5 h for Indian music and 5 h for gamelan.

per term.⁶ The candidates are even asked to identify the tala rhythmic cycle, improvisations on the melodic modes, and characteristic features of the raga.⁷ That is just the Indian music component and there is still the gamelan where candidates are asked to identify the raga and tala equivalents in the balungan/pokok and irama. For the gamelan, there is also the possibility that the students will be given examples to analyze outside of the classical Javanese gamelan and Balinese gong kebyar.

Anyone reading this syllabus who understands what it entails to study these traditions will know that it has very high objectives. Even under a trained specialist, acquiring the ability to analyze what was being asked in the syllabus will take years of training. The first thing that comes to mind is that is there an assumption by the writers of this syllabus that non-western traditions can be analyzed and learned in a mere 20 h of lessons? Even the western component is already very demanding, but most of the students would have background in western theory and performance for years before they come to take their A levels; but this is likely not so for gamelan and Indian music.⁸

There is also the question about the competence of the teacher who is expected to deliver the outcomes effectively for student learning. The specialized nature of the syllabus would require specialists to teach. If there is an assumption that just about anyone who has music training should be able to teach all that is expected, then the objectives will not be met satisfactorily unless the grading system itself has in reality low standards. At best, everything the students will learn is textbook knowledge that can be repeated for examination's sake without any depth in understanding for life-long learning.

I wonder how this system of testing came to be such an important part of Singapore education and who actually designs the syllabus. Are they experts in the field of western and Asian music? How do they assess the papers? Are they aware of the level of expertise required to teach such a syllabus?

Musings on the Singapore Examination System

Before writing this chapter, I revisited my curiosity about the whole system underlying the demand for top examination results and its centrality in Singapore

⁶ There are four terms per academic year for the JC level in Singapore. Each term has 10 weeks of teaching instruction, except Term 4 which has only 8 weeks because of the Christmas and New Year Holidays. JC2 level will have a longer Term 4 because of the A levels examination period.

⁷ In this 2007 syllabus, the focus is on the instrumental forms of vocal music. Identification of raga features is now incorporated in the lower 'O' levels.

⁸ The syllabus also suggests Chinese music as an option for the two Asian music requirements. The school I taught in chose the gamelan and Indian traditions. I believe the other junior colleges also opted for the same traditions as my school. Again, the teachers are not qualified to deliver such a syllabus to their students.

education. What I quickly learned in my one year of teaching 'A' levels at the junior college was that the whole curriculum was designed around the examination that students needed to pass to gain as proof of their competencies in music. Thus, everything became mechanical for the students, memorizing terms and doing exercises over and over again in a pedagogical style of "hit and miss" or learn-asyou-do system. Nothing is really explained in-depth to the students in relation to the exercises and everything is supposed to be absorbed through experimentations and constant practice 10; all these expectations crammed in 10 h of lessons per term for the Asian music component. In my research in reflecting on my experiences, I found the book *Examinations in Singapore: Change and Continuity (1891–2007)* by Tan et al. (2008). This provided me with an insight into the history and context of this system.

Since the British colonial period, Singapore has developed a long partnership with the University of Cambridge. It started with the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) in 1891. It was first introduced in the English-stream schools, where students are educated in the language of the colonial administrators. The systematic examination system of the English-stream schools gave them a more structured approach to education as compared to the vernacular schools. The students who graduated from the English-stream schools had the competitive advantage in securing jobs.

The examinations such as the Competitive State Scholarship Examinations and the Queen's Scholarship became the basis to promote quality education through a healthy competition among schools. Those who successfully pass with high marks would have the privilege to study in the prestigious Oxford or Cambridge Universities in England. The scholarship was discontinued in 1910¹¹ and reintroduced in 1939 but was limited only to Raffles College and College of Medicine students. The President's Scholarship introduced in 1966 is the current manifestation of the Queen's Scholarship.

By the late 1800s, passing in the Cambridge examinations became the benchmark of quality education to the extent that the Secondary education has been centered on preparation classes for the commerce examinations or Cambridge Local Examinations. The reports validated the system in such a way that English education improved ever since its implementation. The examination results became the basis for admission to Raffles College and scholarship studies in the UK. After

⁹ Obtaining top marks in examinations ensures better acceptance in universities and jobs.

¹⁰ Most of the classes are devoted to what they call "tutorials" where students are supposedly trained almost at a one-to-one level through giving them exercises for practice. If any theory is to be explained, that is reduced to just one or two lecture hour sessions and students are left on their own to study further.

¹¹The reasons given for discontinuing the scholarship examinations were (Tan et al. 2008, p. 9): "one, the subjects of Latin, French and Mathematics were deemed to be not suited to local needs; two, scholarships led to unwholesome competition; and three, a few brilliant pupils benefited at the expense of the majority of the pupils."

this period, the history was replete with several examination systems with a special favor to those passing the English standards when it comes to opportunities.

So where does the 'A' levels fit in all this? It is one of the national standardized examination systems that were considered to be a crucial response to Singapore's need to unify its ethnically diverse population in the 1960s when the country attained internal self-government. The People's Action Party (PAP) saw the need for a more inclusive national education system with a focus on giving equal treatment to all four language streams. The inauguration of the Ministry of Education (MOE) is meant to create a central supervising body that ensures a national curriculum enabling equal opportunities for all language-streams schools. This is to differentiate from the former English-stream school bias of the colonial period. The English language is still considered mandatory for the reason that it will serve as neutral unifying language for all ethnic groups and will provide competitive advantage to Singaporeans in the international community.

The national system of examinations is believed to be an effective tool to bring about a common national curriculum. It started with the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) in 1960 and followed by the Singapore-Cambridge GCE 'O' levels in 1971 and the Singapore-Cambridge GCE 'A' levels in 1975. GCE is the General Certificate of Education introduced in 1959 for those who do not have the Cambridge School Certificate to qualify for the Higher School Certificate. The continued collaboration with Cambridge stems from the confidence the administrators have in its examination system. The 'O' and 'A' levels were patterned after the UK with some adjustments suitable in the Singapore context.

The 'A' levels is a replacement for the Higher School Certificates conducted for all language streams. It is meant to standardize the pre-university qualifications of the students. It is administered, set, and graded largely by Cambridge with only the MOE being responsible for the Mother Tongues. In 1983, the national stream was introduced, which prioritizes the English language in all subject areas except mother tongue or second language.

The advantages and disadvantages of setting an entire curriculum based on the examination contents were debated within the MOE. There was a concern about whether "curriculum drives examinations or examinations drive curriculum" during the British colonial period and again in 1963 by the Commission of Inquiry into Education (p. 83).

I paused in my reading and thought, "Hmmm...so they did weigh the consequences." Still I'm curious why the 'examination drives curriculum' was favored in the end.

The argument on the cons side is that a curriculum focused on examination may conflict seriously with those aspects of the subjects that have educational value. The pros argue that it improves performance in theoretical studies such as university

¹² Singapore has four official languages: English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil.

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of what subjects are tested at the 'A' levels, please refer to Tan et al. (2008, *Examinations in Singapore: Change and Continuity* (1891–2007), pp. 81–83).

entrance exams and fulfills the urge to excel and achieve; they also believe that this type of controlled system will help the teachers to deepen their knowledge of their subject areas by keeping abreast on what is currently relevant. The conclusion of the authors, who are from the Singapore Examination Board, was in favor of retaining the examination-based curriculum.

The efficacy of a common certificate for national unity was clear, as it reflected the parity and unity of Singapore's education system, and brought about the integration of the four language streams.

National examinations have played an important role in contributing to the development of human capital in post-independent Singapore. Criticisms notwithstanding, national examinations have supported an education system aimed at providing a common educational experience for students from different communities. It seems national examinations have come of age, and are here to stay. (pp. 84–85)

I closed the e-book and decided it is best to relate my personal experiences as a teacher of the 'A' levels to reveal actual situations that ensue out of this 'examination drives curriculum' position of the MOE and Singapore Examination Board. After reading this argument, I wanted to actually gain more insights from the situation and objectively approach the experience as I recalled my story. I opened my computer and began to write.

Designing an Examination-Based Curriculum: Setting the Scenario

After settling on my workspace, which was an enclosed cubicle with a spacious desk and a common area that I shared with two other music faculty, ¹⁴ I immediately set to work on my syllabus for the Asian music component. I opened the syllabus and thought to start in the gamelan, an area I am more familiar with since my specialization is on the gongs and drums of Southeast Asia. I read the details of topics once again.

Asian Topics

The Focus Recordings and suggested readings that accompany each topic are intended to assist teachers in planning courses of study. They are not intended as prescribed materials and are not indicative of the areas within the topics that will be tested in the examination questions.

Suggested readings intended to assist in the planning of courses of study. I underlined that sentence and thought "so I am free to design my own syllabus", which was good for me as someone who values freedom in the structure of the

¹⁴ For the first term that I was with this junior college, there was only one other faculty since the other one was on leave.

courses I teach. The second sentence bothered me a little as it stated that the topics were not indicative of the areas that would be tested in the examination questions. I wheeled around to ask Bing Wen. ¹⁵

"Excuse me, but I just want to clarify what this means." I handed him the syllabus with the highlight on the second sentence.

"This is the guideline but we can never be sure what examples or excerpts will actually be given. And, yes, the questions could be anything. So you have to prepare them to answer any kind of possible questions and scenarios." Bing Wen answered as a matter-of-fact.

"Do you at least have an example of the past exam questions so I can have an idea what to teach the students?" I asked.

"The past exams are not shown to us, only a model. We just started this Asian music component so we are also unsure as to how to approach it. But here are some of the practice exams I have given them and the only examination sample from Cambridge." He quickly tried to locate the papers from among the folders lined up on his desk. "Here you go. I just based the questions from that guideline."

I glanced at some of his questions: (1) identify the instrument in the *buka* section; (2) identify the *balungan* and *irama*; (3) identify the tuning system; (4) identify the instruments that are playing in this section and name their functions; (5) discuss the performance context, etc. I immediately noticed that all the questions were based on what was suggested in the syllabus.

"These questions require detailed analysis. So have teachers before me undergone training in the gamelan, both Javanese and Balinese? And we have to teach all the concepts in 20 h for a year, correct? Also, when it says musical structures, are these examples the only ones students need to know?" I asked still wondering how I could successfully make the students grasp gamelan theory in such a limited time considering they are without any exposure in the tradition.

"There really isn't any teacher training at the moment, so we try to develop our own materials. We do not know how they are going to be tested in those theories and structures as well; again, those are only examples. The key is to give them more materials to listen to and analyze. Like out of the 20 h, 5 h per term to be exact, you are given 1 lecture hour and the rest should be tutorials. You give them exercises and check their work. That is how we structure our classes." Bing Wen explained, not showing any concern at all about the demanding and very general syllabus given to lecturers.

I asked, "If the types of musical structures and metrical cycles are not specified, that's quite a lot to grasp without any immersion in the actual music, don't you think?" Bing Wen just shrugged his shoulders in response.

I thought to myself, if all cycles and structures were potential examination points, then that meant students were expected to familiarize themselves in all of them in all levels of musical examples. Even identifying and describing the interlocking rhythms could be very tricky since they go really fast in actual

¹⁵ Not real name. All names that will appear in this paper are fictional but the characters are not.

performance and they have different types that are not easy to identify unless you have been playing them for some time. The students would need to try each metrical cycle and experience how the different instrument parts relate to each other to truly come to an understanding of these concepts. I did not believe simply listening would enable them to answer the metrical cycle and melodic modes given to them at random. They would get some out of it, but how deep the understanding that would be, is a different matter altogether. The lecturer should have intense exposure and background in the tradition as well to analyze those examples and break them down to the students.

I turned to Bing Wen again and asked, "Do you have a gamelan in the school?" "Unfortunately we don't and none of us can play either. Maybe you can? What we do is we engage an outside vendor to provide 1 or 2 workshops on the instruments to give the students exposure." Bing Wen further explained.

"I have some experience playing in a gamelan, Javanese specifically, but it may not be sufficient to the expectations of this curriculum. I know the foundational principles but since there is a great chance that students will be tested in a more advanced material, and in so little time without any regular hands on experience, I am not sure how far I can get them up to the expected level." I admittedly expressed my limitations and concerns.

I paused and asked, "And what kind of teaching materials do you have for the other forms of Balinese gamelan and classical Indian music?"

I glanced at the syllabus for Indian classical music and immediately felt overwhelmed by the expectations.

"Our students just started their classes last term on Javanese gamelan. They have not started with the Indian and Balinese, yet. Jia Yin is in-charge of the Indian supposedly but since she's on leave this term I'm not sure if she has prepared anything already. I think I remember she invited a musician to play sitar for the students." Bing Wen recalled then added, "By the way, I worked with the JC2s¹⁶ already on the gamelan last term so it would be better to give them more advanced materials, especially on Javanese gamelan."

At this point I wondered what he meant by 'advanced' materials; could it really be possible that the students learned the concepts really well in 5 h of the past term and ready to move on to advanced topics? I noted this and told myself I would wait and see in the first meeting.

"So basically, the students last term had some exposure to musicians and 1–2 workshops; that was all the hands-on exposure and the rest was classroom listening?" I tried to re-affirm.

"Basically, yes. We try to build a library of CDs so they can practice on their own. We also have budget for books if you have anything to add to our collection." He offered.

¹⁶ There are two years of A levels education. JC stands for Junior College and students are referred to as belonging to either JC1 or JC2, first and second year, respectively.

"So you said you basically try to just build materials on your own. So, even without any training or background you're still expected to deliver this syllabus."

"Well, I have some background in gamelan from my university undergraduate since one of the professors there is an expert in Balinese gamelan." Bing Wen tried to defend his competency on the topic.

"But there are no teaching materials from the examiners or MOE?" I asked.

"No materials available. We just try to share what we have between JCs. That syllabus is all we've been given by MOE and know about the topic."

I went back to my own planning trying to absorb the information about how this component has been taught. I assessed the situation: (1) The JC2 students had only one term of introduction to the gamelan; (2) Both JC1 and JC2 students have not started in Indian music and other types of Balinese gamelan; (3) only 10 h per term is given to the Asian music component, giving students at the JC1 40 h of lessons and the JC2 20 h; (4) there are no specific instructions on what aspects of the broader categories in the syllabus will be tested; and (5) there are no teaching materials available either from Cambridge or the Ministry of Education (MOE).

I realized I am basically on my own in teaching this component. The only basis for the quality of teaching would be the student assessment grades. It is entirely up to me to determine how to teach the broad concepts outlined in the syllabus and to guess the level of depth and the kinds of questions that would be asked in the students' exams. I am also bothered by the fact that my planning was so focused, influenced and limited by these concerns about what would be tested and how the students would be tested.

I turned to Bing Wen and asked, "So, how do teachers cope with the demands of the syllabus if they do not have background in gamelan and Indian music? How do they even begin to prepare?"

"Well, we just study and make things work or bring students for a workshop. At this level, we expect the students to do their own independent studying on the topics they will be tested on as well. Actually, you have to really give the students different examples each time you draft a common test. That way you can be sure of the integrity of the results. But, of course, you have to search listening examples on your own as well." Bing Wen casually shrugged like he was used to this method. Then after a pause, he added, "See, the more important thing is that they pass the A levels, with high marks hopefully. So far this school is doing very well."

I weighed this answer in and the clarity dawned on me that the exam result was the end goal and not really the longer-term learning. In this system, the students were free to forget after the exams or the mentors could just hope they learned deep enough to remember later on. I also thought how the teachers without sufficient background and competencies to teach Asian music must be feeling really alone and at a loss. For even if my colleague was trying not to show any weakness as a lecturer to me, I sense that this school's faculty was also unsure as to how to approach the topic effectively. How do they teach? How much do they teach? How deep do they teach? How confident are they in teaching this component? I did not

get answers to these questions until a year after I decided to move on to another post. A recent survey I conducted with current 'A' level students also yielded some answers.

What Students Say About Their 'A' Levels Asian Music Education

I walked to my first class lecture in gamelan to about 25 eager JC2 students. After the introductions, I went on to ask them what they have already covered during the past term. A student raised her hand.

"Well, we actually just had very few lessons. We had 1 workshop in gamelan but that's about it. We do not know anything about the other type of gamelan at all. As for Indian music, we had workshops that helped a little."

"Okay then. Let me just pass this evaluation exam and try your best to answer." I passed a short Javanese gamelan exam covering only the basics such as identifying terminologies such as *balungan*, *slendro*, *pelog* and *irama* and naming of instruments and their functions. For the musical example, I used the exact same one that was given to them by Bing Wen in their end of the year Common Test.

After an hour, I gathered the exams and went back to my office space to check the responses of the students. I was not the least surprised, despite the same excerpt, to see that majority of them could not identify properly the instruments and define the basic terminologies. The students were also clueless as to how to determine the rhythmic cycle and the tuning system. I could see that most of them were very talented in that they could identify exact pitches but those were randomly placed without clear indication that they understood the tone relationships. I knew that even though Bing Wen expressed that these students should be given "advanced" materials since they had lessons with him the past term, with the very few sessions and 1 workshop, I doubt if everything was clearly understood by the students. The assessment test just proved my predictions correct.

I did the same assessment exam in Indian music, and the results were far worse than the Javanese gamelan. Again, I asked myself how I could possibly cram all the necessary knowledge and skills in 20 h for the entire year, 10 h for each music culture to be exact. Besides, as the lecturer, my background was also not as extensive in these musical traditions, which means I would have to study and analyze to the best of my understanding whatever musical examples I would give my students. I told myself, I would need more than a crash course to properly understand how the raga and tala system work in Indian classical music! This was a real challenge most specifically to the lecturer.

Looking back at this experience, it is now understandable why the teachers I talked to in writing this paper end up simply inviting guest speakers for these components, giving students only 3 h at the most to learn everything. Supposedly, the teachers should follow up but how is this possible if they themselves do not

understand the musical systems really well? It is not uncommon that the 1–2 workshops or guest lectures per year will be the only preparation students would have for the Asian music component at the 'O' and 'A' levels.

This was confirmed when a student from the same JC came to me a year after I left the school for private tuition. This student and mother had no knowledge about me being a former lecturer in the school. The student only had a month preparation time left before the 'A' levels and was panicking because she was not clear about the Asian component. When I sat down with the student, I felt like I had to spell everything out from the very basics when she supposedly had at least 60–80 h preparation already. The she told me she encountered the terminologies but was really unsure how they function and work within the music. She explained that I might say that it could be just her not listening at all to her lessons, but the fact was they only had two sessions plus a workshop each to cover both gamelan and Indian music. The student expressed that even if I ask her schoolmates, they would tell me the same thing. The mother said no one in the faculty seemed to really know what to do with this component.

I remembered sending Bing Wen a Facebook message about this situation and offered to help in the school again since I had the time then. Surprisingly, I received a response that he thought he knew who that student was and that she and the mother were making up stories. He also said the school did not have any problem at all teaching the Asian music component and that my help was not needed. I just sighed and wondered why some lecturers could not admit they needed help in certain areas when there was clear evidence that students were struggling to get by.

I sent out an open-ended survey questionnaire to four schools offering 'A' levels in writing this paper. Unfortunately, only one school sent out the responses of students; the lecturer also did not answer the questions specifically addressed to him/her. Out of the 29 students, 11 are from the 'O' levels. The results of the survey are therefore context-specific to one school program. There are also very few thoughtful responses with majority simply answering 'yes' or 'no' without any further explanations.

Below is a summary of the responses:

Eighty three percent of the respondents have at least 10 years of western classical music background in piano or violin; 93 % have theoretical background and some practical hands-on experience through brief workshops on gamelan, Indian music, and Chinese music from their 'O' levels; 76 % think that the requirements are reasonable, but this is unclear since responses allude to the general 'A' levels including the western component; 79 % feel they are given enough materials although they feel these are not clearly explained; 45 % express they will not be able to retain what they have studied, while 41 % feel they will retain only the general facts but not the details; 72 % of the students think that studying non-western music is necessary for their education.

¹⁷ The student is a JC2 who is about to sit for the A levels. At this stage, students should have had 30–40 h per year of Asian music preparations for a total of 60–80 h in 2 years.

Table of summary of questionnaire responses

Categories	Percentage of responses (%)
Students with at least 10 years of western classical music background	83
Students with theoretical background and some hands-on experience in non-western music during their 'O' levels	93
Students who think the requirements are reasonable (includes western music)	76
Students who think materials are enough although not clearly explained	79
Students who think they will not retain what they have studied after the exams	45
Students who think they will retain only general facts and not the details after the exams	41
Students who think non-western music education is important	72

The top suggestion by 93 % of the respondents is related to practical knowledge on the instruments and ensemble playing. Most students feel they need more handson experience to relate theory to practice. One student wisely suggested bringing in local musicians at a regular basis to explain the concepts more to them. The students feel that although they are given enough materials, the teachers are unsure as to how to systematically organize them. They also have the impression that their teachers are not familiar with the exams. There is also a comment that the materials are mostly text-based but not enough listening extracts.

In general, considering my personal experience and the student feedback, there really is a serious need to design a proper way to organize instruction and development of practice exam materials that will be effective within the 30–40 h timeframe per year given to the Asian component. But first, the lecturers need to acknowledge the fact that assistance is needed; Only through this first step that any form of action on the part of the exam board and national curriculum planning can be expected.

Final Reflections and Suggestions

As I look back at these experiences, I realized that I have been keeping these thoughts of assisting lecturers of the 'O' and 'A' levels Asian component long enough to warrant their importance to me. I am still unsure how I can effectively accomplish this task but I believe that I can try to use my immediate opportunities. This chapter is a first step of getting this problem out in the public. It is important to show the voices of the students and my experiences as a former lecturer. I am hoping to conduct a more extensive research of interventionist nature in the near future to actively test ideas on a suitable pedagogical system. In the meantime, as closing thoughts, I would like to offer some suggestions to maximize learning beyond examination in the 'A' levels Asian component.

First, there is a need for a more progressive curriculum design for the Asian component from 'O' to 'A' levels. In this way, the 60–80 h total in both JC levels supposedly allocated to the study of Asian music will be effectively utilized. As I see it, 60–80 h of education in gamelan and Indian music should be sufficient enough, especially if there is some preparation already done at the 'O' levels and the goal seems to be for students to have a grasp of their essential elements for a deeper appreciation. The bigger problem in actual classroom situations, as related by the students, is either: (1) lecturers barely utilize the maximum hours, resorting to 1–2 guest lectures or workshops to cover the entire module; or (2) the hours are not used effectively because of the uncertainty of lecturers about the syllabus and the subject matter. If there is a curriculum design that clearly specifies what types of skills are targeted for each level, lecturers will not second guess what preparations should be done.

Second, lecturers should be given sustained teacher training in the various components. During the course of my teaching the 'A' levels, I constantly took mental note that I should devote my summer vacation to intensive lessons in the gamelan or Indian vocal/tabla lessons. I unfortunately did not have the opportunity that year but I went the following year and spent 40 days in Solo, Indonesia studying Javanese and Balinese gamelan and dance 3–5 h every day. I subsequently went to Bali to learn *kendhang* ¹⁸ and dance. I can truthfully say that my understanding of the theoretical knowledge I have previously acquired in my graduate studies and preparations for my 'A' levels classes made more sense within the context of performance. Even the functions of the instruments go beyond textbook knowledge when contextualized. Each component requires some form of specialized knowledge and experience and so teachers should be given this first before they can be expected to teach the students.

Third, the Cambridge exam board should identify the specifics of the musical elements that will be tested. For example, specific scale systems and rhythmic cycles should be itemized. Expecting the students who have not had any substantial background in any of the Asian music genres outlined at the 'A' levels to randomly identify the myriad scales and cycles in these traditions is rather ambitious. The goal for introducing Asian music tradition is "to give opportunities for critical thinking through music analysis and to encourage active listening experiences" (H2 Music Syllabus 2007, p. 2). These experiences must be contextualized and approached systematically in order to develop a "life-long interest" in these musical systems. There is a progressive system in learning gamelan and Indian music and this should be presented to students in a similar manner. The goal should be re-evaluated of whether it is just to give a general idea of the systems without any focus or to develop a deeper understanding of the systems through focused examples. In any case, a thorough and specific examination of selected scales and rhythms will ensure better understanding and appreciation of these systems.

¹⁸ This is a two-headed Balinese drum used to lead the Balinese Gong Kebyar ensemble.

Fourth, MOE and Cambridge should make appropriate resources available for the teachers to use as classroom practice materials. The student comments show that although enough materials are given to them, they are not clear as to how they should be applied. When I was teaching, the tendency was to prepare a lot for the classes due to the broad expectations of the syllabus. There was also this concern of not knowing how the students will be tested exactly and so I wanted to make sure that they were at least exposed to a whole lot of things. This just caused confusion and information overload on the part of the students. Once the specific aspects of a raga or tala have been narrowed down clearly for the teachers, for example, appropriate materials should be provided for instructional purposes. These materials should be guided, considering the fact that the lecturers will most likely have very minimal knowledge of these traditions.

And, **fifth**, the schools should maintain a budget to pay local artists to provide more sustained hands-on workshops for the students. These workshops should direct attention to the relationships and functions of instruments within the musical structure and not simply for exposure or experience. Students can spend a whole day playing gamelan, for instance, but if the necessary information they needed to get out of the workshop is not highlighted and emphasized the entire exercise will only serve as a good experience in the end. Hands-on learning is very important in the development of listening skills especially of an oral tradition, and so these workshops should be a sustained part of the curriculum design and not a one off activity. This will also create a healthy relationship between the schools and community artists.

It is my hope that this personal narrative will serve as a data source for the re-evaluation of the 'A' levels Asian syllabus. At present, a friend who is teaching at the 'O' levels showed me the example exam; The syllabus has become even more demanding in that students are expected to learn not only gamelan and Indian music but also African music, Japanese Noh and Kabuki, and Chinese music. It is good to increase the listening experiences of the students through different musical systems, but we always have to ask whether life-long appreciation and understanding can really be achieved through unclear and crammed musical knowledge. As an ethnomusicologist, I appreciate the inclusion of varied musical systems in the syllabus, but we have to be careful in their implementation. We need to understand that non-western classical musical systems require specialist teachers and long-term, rigorous learning just as much as western classical music. The 'A' levels is not just intended for general music appreciation but for those seeking deeper knowledge of music. If the Asian syllabus will remain the same, then I really doubt if it will serve its purpose.

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Chapter 27 Exegetical Commentary

Amy Beegle

Through her personal narrative, Pamela describes and reflects upon a number of important educational issues that are prevalent not only in Singapore, but also in the United States. Educational practitioners and scholars have noted the challenges of a strong focus on test-driven curricula (Charlesworth 1994; Lofty 1993; Fisher 2008), curricular consistency (Schmidt 2006), as well as adequate teacher-preparation and resources for teaching world musics (O'Flynn 2005; Schippers 2010).

More specifically, Pamela has identified concerns related to the implementation of courses in world music education, particularly the desire for communication and coordination between those who created the syllabus/exams and those who are expected to implement the curriculum through teaching in the junior college setting. Pamela suggests that such communication in addition to more hands-on music making and greater in-depth understanding of each musical practice might better facilitate students' abilities to meet the goals outlined in the syllabus.

It seems that those who developed the syllabus for the course described by Pamela obviously had excellent intentions for the musical and intellectual development of students, as they advocated for improving "creativity and critical thinking, social and cultural awareness, intellectual and emotional responses through listening, writing, and performing, and informed and love of music." However, the anxiety and frustrations described by Pamela are understandable because the time and resources needed to implement the curriculum were not made readily available at the institution at which she was hired to teach, and her suggestions for improvement seem reasonable.

Pamela's suggestions include: (1) better continuity in curriculum design, (2) sustained teacher training in each curricular component, (3) identification of realistic goals and specific musical elements to be tested, (4) appropriate resources for classroom use, and (5) funding for sustained hands-on performance workshops taught by experts. Support for each of these suggestions can be found in the work of many educational scholars.

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Regarding curricular design, in order for developmental learning to occur, there should be an alignment between the instructors, students, curriculum, and institution (Grubb 2005). Long (1994) advocates for curricular consistency through developing subskill-based course guidelines, which directly supports Pamela's first recommendation. If one of the course goals is for students to develop skills and knowledge, it is simply good educational policy to plan for sequential student skill-development over time.

In regards to teacher training, it is clear that the best teachers are knowledgeable in their subject areas. If the course requires students to gain "aural awareness, perception, and discrimination in relation to Asian music," the lecturers should have in-depth knowledge and skill in these areas. Schippers (2010) strongly advocates for music teachers to have "not only a firm grasp of the various types of music they teach but also a real understanding of teaching methods across the world and of themselves as actors in the musical learning process" (p. 107). Therefore, I would add that the lecturers at the junior college should also receive some training in transmission processes of the Asian musics to be addressed.

The author has also identified a concern regarding a disconnection between the expectations of the Singapore Examination Board and the instructors who are to prepare students to take the exams. I agree that the Asian Topics objectives outlined in the syllabus seem lofty compared to the amount of instructional time and resources provided. Communicating test content to instructors might be helpful to junior college lecturers so that they might organize their time more effectively.

Her fourth recommendation is for appropriate resources to be made available for use in the junior college classroom. One model that may be useful for instructors who are awaiting such resources might be the Oxford Global Music Series, a collection of texts, each focusing on musics from a different region of the world. Most of these texts are written by ethnomusicologists and provide a great deal of contextual information as well as recorded examples for classroom use.

Pamela's final proposal is for schools to set aside funds in order to pay for more sustained hands-on workshops for students. Although the syllabus does not explicitly require students to develop performance skills in Asian musics, aural awareness, perception and discrimination can certainly be developed through more hands-on musical practice. The students who were surveyed by Pamela seemed to crave more workshop-related activities. From the perspective of an ethnomusicologist, the "ultimate object of study is humanity itself, with music as the medium through which humanity emerges ... the methods and approaches utilized in the field dictate as essential the immersion of the ethno-student in the culture being studied" (Quesada 2002, p. 141). In the absence of actual geographical immersion in the culture, the second best experience is to invite an expert in the musical practice to work with students. These types of performance experiences are becoming more popular in ethnomusicology programs, even inspiring a book, *Performing* Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles, edited by Ted Solis (2004). The authors of the syllabus also appear to encourage "bimusicality" in that the assessment objectives (Components 21 and 22) include performance on both a major and minor instrument or voice. Quesada (2002) noted that "Performing experiences and direct personal experience with a music tradition should constitute essential parts of [music] training" (p. 146). O'Flynn (2005) also argues that ideas of "bimusicality" and "intermusicality" should be applied to curricular development and teacher training.

This commentary has focused mainly on the author's suggestions in order to provide support for implementing her recommendations. The main issue voiced by the author is the disconnection between those who are writing the curriculum (including assessments) and those who are expected to implement the curriculum. This issue must be addressed if students are to be expected to perform well on exams. This may not be easily addressed, but improvements could be made if bridges are built in areas including curricular continuity, teacher-training, clarity of learning objectives, increased resources and hands-on learning at the junior college level in Singapore.

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Chapter 28 Dialogue

Pamela Costes-Onishi and Amy Beegle

Amy: I want to start by saying that I commend this educational institution and the Singapore education system for including Asian music in this particular course of study. I think it's a great thing, but I think they have very lofty goals. It's a wonderful thing they are trying to do. Now the question is how they actually get those resources and people in order to meet these lofty goals?

Pam: Yes, in my experience, these goals really require a very specialized treatment of the materials. In order for the teacher to be effective and in order for the students to benefit a lot from it, they really need an instructor who knows the subject matter well and perhaps other artists to come in and help them.

Amy: Right.

Pam: The problem here is that the curriculum is very much geared towards tests and examinations at the end of the two years. Actually they only give about 10 hours shared for both gamelan theory and Indian theory at the time that I was teaching. I think they change the topics every two years or so.

Amy: It is 10 hours total for both of those?

Pam: For both of them, every semester. So, the students will get about 40 hours of instruction for the entire year. That's all that is being devoted to the Asian component. All the teachers would receive were the questions. So, just to go by with those questions as a guideline and expect the teachers to come up with their own syllabi to teach all of those concepts and not even provide any training for them . . . I guess that is why I used the word "ambitious" to describe that kind of curriculum. It's a little bit intimidating actually if you think about it, even for me. I was a little bit hesitant.

Amy: It would be for anyone. You obviously have the specialty, you know, but not everyone would have that specialty.

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Pam: Just outlining and saying that students should be able to identify the characteristics of a raga in Indian music, not just north but south as well, which is very broad and we know there are quite a number of scale systems and they're complicated.

Amy: I think those should be learned in 40 hours. I mean, just that [raga and tala system].

Pam: The reality is there aren't really enough resources and those who set the exams and questions they do not give any kind of help or assistance. Because when I was there, it was only me trying to gather whatever I could from what I learned about those topics and anything I could get hold of. And just studying...I remember I prepare for my classes until early in the morning the next day almost every day just trying to analyze everything. I remember I need to give the students fresh music every time. The teachers have to search for all the music examples on their own. So, it's really very tough.

Amy: It sounds like this may be a project for someone to put together the curriculum and maybe gather the materials to provide for the instructors.

Pam: Actually this is the biggest concern and I think it will be good to have all these teaching materials and I've been thinking about doing this too; maybe because I taught the Asian module? I hope that through this paper somebody would try to do something, and yes, to make this as a project if they really wanted to continue this program, which I think is very good for the students. But I think they should prepare early. I think now they are starting to streamline it a little bit. They start during high school, like in the 'O' levels.

I was invited recently to guest lecture for that level. So, I went there and taught for 2 hours to their students and I asked the teachers, 'So, how many lectures have they had?' before I went there so that I could prepare the materials that I would give them; and they told me that this is the first and last they're going to have a lecture about Indian music and then they will take the exam. The students are going to be on their own reviewing. And I said, 'really you are not going to follow up?' and they said 'we are going to sit in your lecture so that we can see what you've given them and we're going to try to follow up with them.'

Amy: Sounds like there's a lack of continuity as well. Sounds like there should be more curriculum development work.

Pam: Yes, I think so too. I think it would work if, as we both already mentioned in our papers, they should be more specific, these people who are setting the exam and those people who would implement it; they should coordinate a little bit better. Be more specific about those points to be tested.

Amy: Right. I think there should be better communication between the folks who are designing the assessments and the people who are actually delivering the instruction. The disconnect makes it difficult for the students and for the instructor.

Pam: I think they should also be more specific about what they want. Like for instance raga system. . .so this scale system of northern India, there are a lot of those so they probably should focus on certain scales that the students would be able to listen through in different examples. At least in the exams they would know that they would be given at least these 10 scales or something like this. So that when

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they hear the music example they would have some kind of a basis. It takes a while to get used to those scale systems as well. As it is, they don't have any materials and they don't really specify what specific scales they really want. Everything is just stated generally like in the syllabus that I have shown in the paper. If you're the teacher, you would feel like you have to give the students everything. So you have to expose them to as many musical examples as possible because you never know what they're going to be given in the exams. That is still very tough even for the teachers because they have to study everything.

The schools don't even have the musical instruments. The time that I was at the junior college, it was even difficult to connect to the artists. There was no central support where you can just ask, 'can we request for you to send these musicians to give us workshops once a week?', for instance. There was nothing like that so I have to look for my own artists.

Amy: Did you use the internet at all to find sources on line that you could show them [students]?

Pam: At that time there wasn't anything ready. But a year after, or was that two? I was searching on line to do this tutoring... at least they [on line] now have certain sources that teach what the instruments are and how they are played. These are master musicians singing the scale to the student. But those are more introductory, but at least the students can hear the scales. I still think there should be consistent training for the teachers, especially.

Amy: And also for the students it would be nice for them to have hands-on workshops so they're actually doing more than just studying the theory but actually making music. They will have better understanding of the music.

Pam: When I taught this, although I know I need to give them practical experience and I need to give them a lot of listening examples, the problem is if you're not really very familiar with the theory and you're teaching it...and you're trying to catch up so that you can teach it...you end up teaching a lot of theory and historical context because...how much can you get to the practical side if you don't even have the theory down too, right? So, I think that's why the approach becomes more lecture-driven rather than practical. It should be a balance of both. But I can understand why students are complaining, 'why are we always just being given lectures and theories but no hands-on?' and 'the listening examples are very little'. I think everybody understands this problem even the students know what is needed. It's just that there's nothing being done about it. A lot of the teachers too don't have the proper background and they're also teaching a lot of other things as well.

Actually, even the western music requirements...this whole 'A' levels has serious problems with the way it was designed. It's the same kind of problem like asking teachers to teach Lieder writing in the style of Schubert. When I was teaching, I thought I was only going to teach the Asian music component, at least it's closer to my strength, but apparently I needed to teach western classical music as well and I've been given those teaching assignments. So I had to learn all those. I mean, to teach Lieder writing in the style of Schumann or Schubert...how can I do this? I am not even a composition major and how much do I know about Schubert?

Amy: So there's this lack of understanding that every part of the music curriculum requires special training for teachers. They need to hire specialists if they really want students to gain the benefits.

Pam: Exactly. That's why I said when I saw that syllabus. . .it's really something that you would give to first and second year students in a music school, you know, for music majors. That's the level of exams and expectations from the students.

Amy: Yeah, in the United States I teach in a conservatory now and these are the kinds of things that our students, even sophomores and juniors, are learning.

Pam: When I taught the class... so Hide [Pam's husband] was teaching in a conservatory here and I was asking for teaching materials on these things because at least he's a theorist so he'll probably have something, and he was really surprised about the things I was asking from him. He was like, 'You need to teach them these things? What is the level of the students?' Supposedly this is just a transition level for those who would like to take music as a major, which most of them would end up doing, that's why they're taking this 'A' levels in Advanced Music exam.

Amy: So they're probably going to be majoring in music in college?

Pam: Yes. Most of them become performance majors.

Amy: Seems like there're just too much to be covered. So one of the problems is that there is too much...sometimes less is more. If they cut it down or narrow down the focus and then hire people who have specialties in those areas or train the instructors that will be better.

Pam: Train the instructors or connect more to the local musicians; bring them in the classroom. I mean, if the instructors can't really give that [practical]. It can't be just one off workshops because right now that's what's happening in the schools; like they would invite a guest lecturer and that's the first and the last students would hear about this and they're on their own. It has to be consistent. At least someone should be coming in once a week who really understands the theory and practice. It really helps in understanding any kind of musical system. It's music so you really should practice it; you really should play and hear it.

Amy: It might be better to just focus on one musical practice even. Just really get to know the theory and the performance aspect and everything about that one particular music rather than try to cover so much material and just barely scratch the surface. In order for that to take place it sounds like the assessment will have to change as well.

Pam: I think so too. It has to start from that because they're [exam setters] the ones who actually dictates this curriculum basically. I mean, the teachers would strive hard to prepare their students to do well in those exams. That's the end of the whole thing; that's the whole point. They should probably re-examine their requirements and make sure they have adequate resources that they can give to the teachers to use and deliver the goals of that curriculum. I think that's one of the important things that need to be done.

Ironically, though, the students will say what they think about their education...they're pretty outspoken about that...some of the teachers...well, I can understand that if you're a teacher you probably don't want to show any

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weakness in what you can deliver, right? So they would either avoid answering the questions altogether or they would say, 'No, we're doing fine.'

Amy: That's the problem as well. The instructors need to admit that they need more assistance in their training.

Pam: Some of them would. Like those teachers in the 'O' levels. They asked me how I prepared for my 'A' levels when I taught it. It seems like they still have the same problems. That's why I thought something really needed to be done about this curriculum.

Amy: Yes, it's not just you. It looks like it's a big problem.

Pam: No, it's not just me. I really thought there was a big problem just by looking at the curriculum. I was really expecting that they're going to have a slew of specialist faculty because even in the practical exams...they have a performance examination as well...I was given students to coach who were majoring in violin or winds, and to comment on their playing; how can I comment about a wind instrument technique?

Amy: You don't have that expertise.

Pam: I think the expectations of the 'A' levels would really require specialists. Teachers who are specializing in those instruments students would take. As of now, they think if you are a music major then you should be able to teach any kind of music.

Amy: That's a common problem when the administrators don't understand the way music should be taught.

Pam: I wonder if it's the same in the U.S.? Do you have a program that is similar to the 'A' levels there?

Amy: Not really. I mean, you have to audition in order to get in the conservatory but there's nothing specific that they should pass this particular test. They have to take theory exams when they enter but in high school there's really not much. So basically it's up to the individual and most students that would like to major in music take private lessons. The private teachers are the ones helping them to be excellent performers in order to get in the conservatory. There are some really excellent independent schools but they're not required to administer any kind of exams.

There are some high schools that specialize in the arts, so you can specialize in music. Like for example, in Cincinnati we have School of the Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA) and in this school, students can focus on whatever their specialty is, like for instance you can be a harp major and just take classes in harp. There are these specialized schools in the cities mostly. Usually there's only one or two of those in a city and not even in every city in the United States. But there's not even a special exam. The exams are very standard: reading, math, & science. There are very few states that have adopted assessments in the arts and music.

It's really different here although if we talk about 'teaching to the test', in the past year, there are requirements that students need to pass these exams in math, language, & science. Schools are held accountable based on whether or not students pass these tests. They can actually lose government funding if students do not pass the exams. So we have exams, just not in music and art.

Pam: But these issues that were raised, do you find any equivalence that would be applicable in the U.S. context?

Amy: Well, yeah, I think whenever you have a system that requires students to meet goals and the instructors are not provided with adequate resources – human resources, musical resources, or curriculum resources - you have the frustration where the instructors figure out what to do and how to implement the non-existent curriculum. Because you're only given goals without other curricular support, teachers who are trying to develop their own curriculum find it is frustrating if there has not been any curriculum done before they arrive in the institution.

Pam: Yes, that's a big problem. I think these kinds of goals are for the college level where you have professors trained to teach these subjects. Students can really take classes under those teachers and make sure they get the proper education. The 'A' levels here still have a general teacher of music who handles these specialized things. Do you think it's even possible for general music teachers to deliver this kind of curriculum?

Amy: If there are a lot of resources provided to them. At the outset they would need musical examples, having access to community resources in terms of musicians who are specialists, and just more training. I mean, generalists can't be specialists; it's not possible. Yeah, I think there are many lofty goals here that will be difficult for a generalist to meet.

Pam: I wonder if it's even worth pursuing this kind of curriculum at this level. Because if you cannot provide all these resources. . .definitely it will take a lot more than just few workshops even for the teacher to be able to really teach this.

Amy: Might be better to change the assessments so that you're focusing in one particular music or aspect so that you're not trying to cover everything. I understand that they want their students to be exposed to different musics, so if you want them to be exposed to different music that's different from having the understanding of the nuances. I think in the text they're asking for in-depth understanding of the theory of each of these musics. I think that is a bit too much for a generalist to cover.

Pam: Yes, so it's a matter of resetting the goals really. It's either that or they provide the proper instructor and the proper resources to really support that kind of curriculum.

Amy: It says here in the syllabus: developing creativity and critical thinking through music (reads through)... these are all fabulous goals but I think each of these could be reached by focusing it more and not trying to cover everything. I mean, maybe just focusing on one particular music practice and getting to know that. The students can still meet these main aims by focusing on just one musical practice. What do you think?

Pam: I think they should have the focus...they can even focus on two. But I think they should narrow down those exact points in the music that they wanted the students to be tested on. Like for instance in a gamelan there's a lot of these [time] cycles that they adhere to every time they would play, at least identify which of those cycles students should be familiar with. For the teachers as well they would know exactly how to prepare for the lessons.

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Amy: Concepts. So the teachers have the exact goals but they do not have the concepts.

Pam: No they don't. Because when I asked what kind of raga and tala I needed to teach them, they [teachers] just told me I just had to expose the students to as many musical examples as possible.

Amy: Any teacher would be frustrated by that. I think any teacher who's trying to teach this syllabus would be frustrated by that.

Pam: And it's not only that. They also have to be familiar with all those different variations, for example, of Balinese gamelan.

Amy: So maybe not focusing on one music but just cutting down the broad coverage of what they're learning; to be very specific about what about the gamelan and what north and south Indian classical traditions.

Pam: They would say 'it's going to be the vocal music of south India' so that's narrow enough; but then again there's this commentary about the scale system and rhythmic cycle within that music, which can still be really broad. I mean, any of the rhythmic cycles can be applied to a vocal music. At least they can narrow that [cycles] down more. If they do that, perhaps it would be possible [to implement the curriculum]. I think anyone studying a new musical system would know that it's impossible to cover everything.

Amy: Yes, that makes sense.

Part XII Reflective Journeys of Music Teachers

Chapter 29 **Reframe to Transform: Reflective Inquiry Journeys of Two Singapore Music Teachers**

Siew Ling Chua and Chee-Hoo Lum

Introduction

This chapter investigates the reflective inquiry journeys of two music teachers who were engaged in a professional development project with the Singapore Teachers' Academy for the aRts (STAR). In this project, the teachers reflected on their beliefs and practices as they compared music curriculum and pedagogies, experimented with pedagogical changes, and engaged in research and "reflective conversations" (Ghaye and Ghaye 1998). The teachers' reflective inquiry journeys are presented through two vignettes. These vignettes draw from the learning experiences in their journeys to suggest some considerations for a professional development experience that could empower teachers to reframe their professional beliefs and reinvent their practices.

Several scholars have discussed reflection, reflexion, critical thinking and critical inquiry theories and approaches that seek to achieve professional renewal, reinvention, transformation and emancipation in teachers (Loughran 2002; Ryan 2005; Hennessy 2009; Mezirow 2009; Fook 2010; Sachs 2011). From the perspective to develop autonomous and empowered music teachers, the reflective inquiry journey will necessarily be a complex one. For example, there is a need to address the "interpretative frames" (Hentschke and Ben 2009) or "frames of reference" such as mindsets, habits of mind and meaning perspectives (Mezirow 2009). These "frames" are shaped by beliefs and contextual understandings, practices and lived experiences. The difficulties are that teachers' interpretative frames are not without inconsistencies and internal contradictions, which they themselves may also not be

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aware of. Hence, Hentschke and Ben (2009) suggested that arts teachers need to "mobilise different levels of reflection in order to inform their own practice" (p. 46).

There are many different levels of reflection. Building on Schön's "reflection-on-action", Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) developed an enabling model of professional development which involves "reflection on values", "reflection on practice", "reflection on improvement", and "reflection on context" as a process of continuous knowledge construction premised on the belief that teachers are creative individuals. Scholars have discerned a hierarchy in the levels of reflection which Taggart and Wilson (2005) categorised as: "technical" (focuses on the behavior, content or skill), "contextual" (involves clarifications and elaborations of underlying assumptions and predispositions of classroom practices and consequences of strategies used) and "dialectical" (critical reflexivity involving introspection and disciplined inquiry).

Key enablers to engage these different levels of reflective thinking include dialogues between the insider (teachers in the classroom) and outsider (other educators who do not teach the class) which is suggested by proponents of networked learning, dialogic approaches, and social perspectives of learning (Ravenscroft 2011; Wenger 2009). Reflective conversations between the insider and outsider allow for analysis of coherence and consistencies in teachers' constructs and their interpretative frames. Also, placing the focus on participation within a community so that people engage in rigorous conversations about practice while developing relationships and a sense of community is potentially a powerful means to renew and transform practices. We posit that situating reflective conversations in reflective inquiry within a community could facilitate participants' engagement with different levels of reflection, and as a consequence, empower them and transform practices.

The Project

In this project, four teachers, who were nominated by their principals, underwent a sustained reflective inquiry journey. Informed by stage theories of professional development (Berliner 1994), the teachers were identified because they were experienced teachers who take on leadership roles in their respective schools, and were at a phase where they were ready for new challenges and stimulation. Their reflective inquiries were facilitated by a program manager and program director at STAR, as well as a research consultant from the National Institute of Education, Singapore. The small "community of practice" (Wenger 2009) that comprised teachers from the primary and secondary schools, representations from the ministry and academia, which engaged in reflective inquiry and practice sustained over a six month period, lent itself well to dialogic learning with opportunities for the insider and outsider exchanges.

At the start of the journey, the teachers engaged in **reflection on values**. They wrote about their personal beliefs and views about music education, which painted

a picture of their professional identities through their personal narratives. They discussed their personal beliefs and teaching practices as they embarked on a study trip to Nova Scotia. The study trip provided a changed context to discuss pedagogic practices with a particular focus on understanding and discovering what learnercentered teaching or student-centered learning mean. Engaging in reflection on context, the teachers were guided by questions which included the observable pedagogies and practices of music teachers in Nova Scotia, the similarities and differences with their own classroom pedagogies and practices, and possible implications for action towards local practices.

The discussions took place every evening after field observations in the day. The teachers also recorded their field notes and reflections on a daily basis to document their observations.

Upon their return to Singapore, the teachers identified area(s) they wish to pursue as part of their personal inquiry or research, and trialed their ideas in a module of lessons based on the new knowledge and inspiration. They were observed for four consecutive lessons during which post-lesson conference dialogues with facilitators and teachers' reflections took place. These conversations provided the platform for reflection on practice through both reflective and reflexive thinking. Throughout this journey, the facilitators engaged teachers through questions and suggestions, to help teachers deconstruct and analyze their own thinking and practices.

Towards the end of the six month journey, the group gathered to discuss their projects and share their reflections on the entire journey, including their reflections on improvement.

The 10 hours of audio transcripts of the discussions, 50 pages of teachers' written reflections, 12.5 hours of video recordings of lessons taught by the teachers served as data for analysis. The transcripts were coded so that themes could be drawn for analysis, before re-writing them into individual narratives. Teachers' articulated beliefs at different points of the journey were compared and their articulated practices were compared with those observed in the actual recorded lessons. The individual narratives were then presented to teachers for further reflective conversations, which also serves to strengthen the credibility of the accuracy of representation (Saldaña 2011). For the purpose of this essay, only two of the teachers' journeys will be presented here as they reflect contrasting experiences from which we can draw insights for future professional development of teachers. The names of the teachers used in this essay are not their real names.

¹Creating a learner-centered environment is one of the strategic thrusts of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to achieve its vision of "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation". Through the use of appropriate learning programs and pedagogical tools, teachers can engage and motivate students as active participants in their own learning processes. By forging close relationships with their students and by role-modelling, teachers create a whole-school learning experience for them that fosters thinking and life-long learning. In this essay, the term "learner-centered teaching" is used synonymously with "student-centered learning".

Ron's Reflective Inquiry – Redefining Learner-Centered Lesson

Ron's beliefs or "professional gut feelings" as he called it, were very much shaped by his own experiences. In his narratives, he recounted how he was involved in various music co-curricular activities throughout his primary, secondary and college life where he felt his confidence developed as he did well in these areas. In his words, he saw music as his "savior". He felt that he would be "a very ordinary person without music" as music gave him "an early taste of confidence". He believed that some character traits of the pupils could be built through music education. These included teamwork, the ability to express thoughts, and a sense of rootedness to the nation. Ultimately, "music can help the child to find his strengths and even his callings". Indeed, these early experiences framed his philosophy of music education which formed the basis of his music teaching practice. And he felt the need to transform himself at this stage of his teaching career.

It has been in my mind for a long, long time. . . What I know is a bit outdated. My knowledge and skills that I acquire in 1996. . . I feel that there is a need for me to do something about it. So, this opportunity to go to Nova Scotia was really good because then I can go to another country and take a look and see what they are doing, and see if there's something I can pick up and bring back home.

He started with an interest to understand whether the lessons were "successful", and was less concerned about whether the lessons he observed were learner-centered although that was the focus of the team's discussions.

I was just asking myself, were the three lessons successful? If they were successful, why they were successful? If they weren't, why they weren't successful? So I'm asking very basic question(s), I'm not even thinking on whether it's this centered or that centered....So I mean if I were to observe a lesson....I only look for two things. Did learning take place? Two, were the students engaged?

There were many reflections at the **technical level** as he observed characteristics of successful lessons. The initial contributions by Ron to the group discussions after lessons observed were the "how" in teacher talk. He was concerned about the exact words used by the teacher, and the affirmation given to students. Here is one example of his observations of the teacher:

I think she get(s) the students to demonstrate.... Then she would comment, "this is like an ostinato".... then someone mentioned about dynamics, someone mentioned about rest. Then she said something like "oh, rest! It really gives you a variety of notes" ya, that's what she said. These are the exact words... without actually saying ... "elements of music".

In his field notes and reflections, it was evident that he valued good classroom management, music literacy and student engagement. He observed that there was a lot of time spent on group creating and presentation, and processes of scaffolding in the lessons, suggesting that he might not have done as much in his own teaching practice. It also suggested that he valued the focus on creating and presentation.

There were moments where Ron shared his reflections at a **contextual level** when he tried to make sense of what he observed in the context of teaching and learning. For example, he was interested in "authentic learning" and described some of his observations as follows:

(It was) interesting (to me) because he used authentic learning experience. He was pointing to a part of history in Halifax He (the teacher) also incorporated into the music I think for me, it's because my school is in the beginning stage of implementing PETALS². . . . So, one of it is authentic learning experiences. So I thought it's a very powerful example for me which I can bring home to share with my students. . . . Because in his own words, the best part of the project is to let students feel a sense of ownership; students (being) not afraid of trying new things or exploring new ideas. The idea of them creating is to let them go through a design loop and ask questions – is this working? How am I going to fix it? Is this good enough? And make them think a lot more with their ears, rather than with their fingers. . . . If feel that these would be the key take-away(s) for me it can be quite powerful in the compositional process.

Towards the end of the trip, Ron reflected that the trip provided him with an opportunity to renew his understanding of learner-centeredness. Immediately after the trip, he articulated that the key learning from the trip was giving students opportunities to create and to express themselves, to learn an instrument and apply their learning in the process of creating, to make musical decisions, collaborate and be self-directed learners. From his reflections, it was clear that Ron observed a structured approach to giving ownership to students, and to use composition to deliver curriculum outcomes. He understood the need for students to make their own decisions and to have choices.

Upon his return to Singapore, Ron started to apply the learning from his reflections into his practice. His music curriculum was conceptualized such that concepts relating to melody, rhythm, harmony and structure were taught through the process of students creating their music and making musical decisions. In the process, students were also expected to acquire harmonica skills, practice their solfege, handsigns, and sing.

In practice, his interpretative frames and deeply ingrained habits presented some initial problems for the enactment of learner-centered music teaching. For example, reflective conversations revealed that for Ron, a successful lesson was one that achieved the lesson objectives. He needed to complete what he wanted to do in the lesson. His concerns about time constraints and meeting the lesson objectives could have largely affected the way he facilitated group work in his lessons. He reflected that it was "a little difficult to discuss with a particular group (of students) in depth". Indeed, in the initial lessons observed, he gave very brief comments to the groups

² The PETALSTM framework, developed by the Ministry of Education (Singapore), seeks to support teachers in understanding the dynamics between what a teacher does and what a student experiences, and to provide a common language and professional vocabulary across all schools in Singapore. It comprises five dimensions of learning and teaching that contribute to engaged learning in the Singapore classroom. The five dimensions are: Pedagogy; Experience of learning; Tone of environment; Assessment; and Learning content. They are abbreviated into the acronym "PETALS".

when they were practising, and one-word or one-phrase remarks after each group's presentations. His need to cover his planned curriculum content was so strong that he sometimes could not provide time for students' responses.

The post-lesson conference conversations surfaced these initial dilemmas in his interpretative frame. First, he might have been unsure of the benefits of a learner-centered approach making more lasting impact on students in terms of their learning of music. Second, his belief in the correlation in music talent and cognitive ability also influenced his distribution of creative activities in his lessons. As he believed that the higher academic ability classes would have more time for creative and reflective work, learner-centered lessons worked better for students with higher cognitive abilities. For classes with students of lower academic abilities, he seemed to take a more curriculum-centered approach, and had less compositional activities.

His beliefs were reinforced by what he observed in his lessons. For example, he shared that students in the lower academic ability classes told him that it was very difficult to compose and they were only interested in playing the harmonica. In response, he taught the class very differently as he found that composition became a rather "technical exercise" since "they couldn't play what they wrote". But through the conversations with a facilitator, Ron realized that students might not have been accustomed to composition in his lessons in the first place and hence found it difficult.

Making efforts to keep an open mind about learner-centered teaching, he pressed on with his revised mode of instruction and the way he taught. He expressed that he wasn't sure if composition would be a more effective instructional approach since his training had been in performance.

In subsequent lessons which he video recorded without the presence of facilitators, there were always group creative activities. He brought in video examples and iPads to inspire and interest his students. By the second semester, students showed excitement and engagement in the tasks they worked on. There was much less teacher talk, and more autonomy given to students to explore concepts which he introduced, such as requiring students to finger the tonic and dominant chords on the music keyboards on the iPads. Students also demonstrated greater confidence in playing the harmonica as they revisited tunes learned in the first semester. In the last few lessons, students were seen independently revising their songs through notation and giving suggestions to their peers within the group as they worked on their group compositions and performance. A few students began to lead their groups as they worked on putting the parts together. In his interactions with students, he was clearly more relaxed, much less concerned with time constraints, and was stretching his students' abilities by challenging them with suggestions. It was observed that there was a much deeper level of interaction with the groups, also perhaps there was more scope for them to do so given the more complex nature of the task assigned.

Towards the end of the six month journey, "learner-centered instruction", for Ron, was about "empowering them (students) to think" and to give students choices so that they can "make decisions on their own". He shared that he changed his practice by giving his students choice and helped them understand their choices which he had not done in the past. He also believed in the opportunities to be provided for students to collaborate and be self-directed learners. He said that

students already had in them, a pool of knowledge. The teacher's role was to draw out the knowledge, enhance it and help students generate new knowledge.

The greatest fundamental shift in practice, hence, for Ron, was in the structuring of the lessons and providing opportunities to give students choices. What Ron saw in Nova Scotia, he tried to enact in his lessons. It was difficult for him to scaffold the lessons and he admitted that he tended not to break down instruction into smaller steps in the past. In the same conversation, he also reflected that it wasn't always necessary to break down into smaller steps.

I also see that if you give them a huge enough challenge, a big enough step, you also challenge them in other ways, for example, you ask them to look for answers on their own. So, in a way then, they have to talk amongst themselves, and find out the problems and try to search for the solutions.

It was observed that Ron now felt he had a choice because he questioned and compared the assumption and validity of both practices.

At the final discussion with the team, as Ron was sharing on his use of iPads in his lessons, he was also able to articulate the place of ICT as a tool to engage students from a rather student-centered perspective.

I strongly believe in this....if there is one tool that will engage the students effectively is – it must be connected to their lives. What else? It's modern technology... You can talk about er... all kinds of teaching pedagogies, but what ... is not connected to them, it doesn't count. I allow people (students) to use iphone in my class.... I allow them to photograph what I write on the board, I actually allow them to record what I say in class, I allow them to video tape me ...

The deeply felt need for change is spurring him on. He expressed that he hoped that there was a change in his lessons because he renewed his understanding of student-centeredness and had changed his teaching. His habits of mind and dilemmas in his interpretative frame presented certain impediments and constraints, and this awareness, surfaced through the several reflective conversations, becomes a further impetus for change. At the final discussion with the team, he proclaimed:

I want to develop a better understanding of what is a student-centric lesson. That being said, it doesn't mean that I am good at delivering a good student-centric lesson. I'm only beginning to understand it. And I believe that, there is a lot more room for me to grow and I would like to be able to move into that – be a competent, if not an excellent teacher, in delivering a student-centric lesson.

Yu's Reflective Inquiry – Moving Beyond Learner-Centered Instruction

Yu, throughout the journey, enjoyed articulating and discussing a breadth of music education issues. At the start, and at the **dialectical level** of reflection, she shared that music must be experienced through performance or composition, and has a purpose and function. She believed that as music is not a universal language, teachers need to have authentic music experiences and an open mind to the musics

they teach so that they could engage their students in different musics. She believed in connecting the music taught to the context, making the music of a different culture come alive for the students, so that the world of music becomes almost a personal experience for the students. To a large extent, her reflective inquiry journey already commenced long before this project started as she had already been critically reflecting on music education issues.

We understood that Yu was also driven by her personal goals to succeed in her General Music³ teaching. She said, "It is a personal challenge I set myself – I have to succeed". There is an intrinsic motivation to embark on this reflective journey.

At the **contextual level** of reflection, she was able to make new meaning from critically discussing the Atlantic Canadian curriculum documents, viewing it to be "relevant" and re-contextualizing it against the twenty-first century competencies in Singapore. At the **technical level**, she reflected on the facilitation of group work which she observed in Nova Scotia, and was able to articulate reasons for practices which she was unconvinced about. At the same time, she was open to re-exploring and questioning her own assumptions, such as whether large group composition activities were possible. Her openness to explore new ideas, even if they might seem to be in dissonance with her beliefs, had perhaps contributed certain richness to her reflective thinking.

She underwent a process of clarification of the definition of "learner-centered" with the rest of the team. At one juncture, she led the team to think about the definition of "learner-centered" by questioning fundamental assumptions and searching for new information.

We mentioned learner-centered. I actually just 'googled' what learner-centered learning isSo before I googled this, I was also wondering whether if it's not learner-centered and (if) it's (teaching is) didactic, does it equate to lesser learning or less efficient (learning). I'm also trying to grapple with that. No doubt I believe in learner-centered approaches; I strongly believe in that. But at the same time, I'm also considering whether that equation stands – not learner-centered equals 'no good'.

³ General Music Programme is offered to all students in primary and secondary schools in Singapore. The syllabus aims to: develop awareness of and appreciation for music of various cultures and the role of music in daily living; develop ability for creative expression through music making; and, provide the basis to develop an informed and lifelong involvement in music.

⁴ The twenty-first century competencies have been communicated by Ministry of Education (Singapore) to schools to place a sharper focus on preparing our young for the future. The twenty-first century competencies comprise: Civic Literacy, Global Awareness, Cross Cultural Skills, Critical and Inventive Thinking, and Information and Communication Skills. Under-girding these competencies is a bedrock of values, beliefs and attitudes that help the young navigate in complex and changing times. Other major twenty-first century competencies initiatives and schemes around the world include Partnership for twenty-first Century Skills (P21) Framework in the US, the Assessment and Teaching of twenty-first Century Skills (ATC21S) Framework (sponsored by Cisco, Intel and Microsoft), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Definition and Selection of Competencies (OECD-DeSeCo) Framework (which formed the basis of PISA 2009), the European Reference Framework: Lifelong Learning Key Competencies, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Information and Communication Technology (UNESCO ICT) Competency Framework for Teachers.

For Yu, the lessons she saw helped her see how her own beliefs about learner-centered music lessons were put into practice. She was particularly impressed by how the teacher gave every opportunity to students to take the lead, to provide them with choice and to ride on students' suggestions, which was spontaneous and took little time.

In the conversations within the community of practice, she caught on the notions of identity formation first introduced by a facilitator. She saw, on the third day of her field observations, how compositions gave students a sense of ownership and student identity.

The group compositions were compelling pieces of work.... The sense of student ownership to the task and the product's reflectiveness (sic) of student identity came through strongly here. In addition the task provided students with the opportunity to explore music through and in relation to another art form, incorporating popular media that makes the whole experience authentic and applicable to real life.

On the fourth day of her field observations, she was inspired by the "freedom of expression" given to students by teachers whom she observed, which were also framed by a clear lesson structure. "There wasn't so much telling the students how to do it exactly", she observed. It was also clear that she became more excited about the notion of identity formation as she reflected on how she could allow the "individual identity to surface" instead of trying to "close the gap" by remediating the students.

I was trying to level up people (students) and, of course, I have been trained to do differentiation and that was not in the right spirit of differentiation ... I was, all the time, trying to level out those (students) who were not (performing)... and I was also trying to develop those who were good but I think I wasn't doing so much justice to either. I should have stepped back and said, "ok, you are without the music background, yes, I'm going to level you out but I'm not going to be so terribly stressed about it because I know you are always a gap from the rest but it's okay", so I should have thought of it this way, it is okay, I will try to help you out... now I'm going to really, really stretch you and it's no longer therefore about closing the gap... in the end, the gap is still as wide, but that's because they are ... sort of moving at the same time, so the gap is still there, and I have to tell myself that, ok, I'm at peace with this, it's okay.

Yu's contextual and dialectical levels of reflection seemed to have helped reframe her internal dilemmas. On the first day of her field observation, it was evident through her field notes and conversations that she had struggled with embracing the "creative" approach since it could compromise the standard of the music performance. She re-contextualized and re-evaluated its possibility for the Singapore context.

Such an approach may mean that one has to sacrifice quality of performance at the highest level for greater student engagement; the greatest orchestras in the world still require the insights of its conductor to make great music. In fact during the interview Ms D (not her real name) reported a lack of improvement in (the) quality of performance despite the move into the new music curriculum. It appears that while it is possible and certainly desirable to introduce student autonomy and this new curriculum approach into band instruction, there is still no running away from some degree of artistic dictatorship for ensembles of high ability. The new approach will benefit most if not all bands in the Singapore context, but

artistic excellence exists in a different realm must be pursued in a different way, even if with the support of such new approach.

On the second day, she wrote:

We need to get past the obsession with quality of performance if we want to achieve the desired outcomes in this kind of band instruction. Therefore, classroom band program needs to be seen to have a separate set of objectives from CCA performance groups' rehearsal[s]. Right now we are in danger of killing the artistic excellence of SYF⁵ groups to fill a gap in the instructional system.

However, by the second evening of the field observation, Yu was convinced that in the pursuit of creativity, standards should not be compromised as it was only through attainment of these standards that students could connect emotionally with the music they perform. She believed in engaging with the emotional dimension of music.

If I can have my way, it would be best if music is taught through a band program with all its richness and still leaving a platform for pursuit of artistic excellence. . .. The engagement of the soul as a performer is absent in this lesson demo.

So to me it's a very efficient (approach) but somewhat (in a) very clinical way. But still (in a) very enriching way. And I, I have firm beliefs and I really love the style. But I thought something is missing . . . which is the communication of music . . . something that affects your emotions.

Through her own introspection and reflective thinking, she was able to evaluate and question the beliefs and practices of others.

He [The Teacher observed] said you can't have both (the pursuit of creativity and pursuit of performance standards). But part of me believe him . . . I think the greatest orchestras in the world need the dictatorship of the conductor to make great music, there's no other way around it, you need a Karajan to make the Berlin sound correct. So part of me believes in what he says that you can't have both but I guess I . . . I do see very clearly the strengths of both ways.

Yu's proposed research focus was on how creative and critical thinking in music could be enhanced by student empowerment strategies. Her lessons in the project were centered on compositional activities. She also examined how she could scaffold the process for the students. Her student-empowered strategies included the use of individual iPads, Garage Band, cooperative learning, reverse teaching (or flip teaching)⁶ and student choice, and she was able to explain how these empowered students to become self-directed learners. She concluded that "there was a correlation between having a student-centered [lesson]...[with] effectiveness and engagement of the students when they felt empowered to do things." She realized that it was not just the task that enhanced critical and creative thinking but how the lessons were carried out.

⁵ SYF is an abbreviation for Singapore Youth Festival which is an annual event organised by the Ministry of Education (Singapore) to celebrate the achievements of Singapore youths in their co-curricular activities.

⁶ Reverse teaching (or flip teaching) refers to students watching the lectures and videos at home, and performing hands-on work and face-to-face interactions with teachers and peers in class.

It was observed that her lessons had greater and greater engagement of students in terms of critical and creative thinking over time. At the first lesson observation, questions assigned to students were close-ended questions which required students to recall or work on repetitive tasks. Although the task provided opportunity for students to create, the delivery of the lesson seemed rather didactic. As an observer then, I felt that there could be more opportunities to get students to take accountability and be empowered to provide suggestions or lead. At the post-lesson conference, Yu described that the lesson was "more of giving the tools". But she began to see possibilities about exploring having more student voices in the lesson.

In the second lesson observation, students were observed to be highly engaged as they worked with "shoulder partners" to play and record chords on their respective iPads, creating a chord progression for the composition. There were many instances in which she approached teaching from a constructivist approach. For example, she asked the students to work in their groups to discuss questions that required some critical thinking, and gave them some time to discuss before she asked them to share their responses. She also drew from students' responses and explained new knowledge to the rest of the class. At the post-lesson conference, Yu reflected that she was convinced that letting students self-discover would lead to critical thinking and higher level of engagement, and was less concerned about time issues by the second lesson observation.

By the fourth lesson observation, she was engaged in a process of questioning and critical discussions with the groups. For example, during group discussions on a film extract, she went around the groups, raised questions and provoked further thinking. She provided hints, asked students to elaborate and asked further questions to extend their thinking. In addition, one innovation was the reflection sheet, which required students to reflect on how they *felt*, which she pointed out, was not a typical practice. And by that post-lesson conference, it was clear she had defined her own notions of learner-centeredness. When the facilitator suggested that "certain lessons perhaps should not be learner-centered because if it was just about information...", she chipped "I tend to disagree" because she saw how her students had benefitted from her classes. She revealed that she had "cut teacher talk by at least 50 %". The show of disagreement and critical judgement, and in a way, not necessarily conforming to ideas even if put forth by perceived authorities, is evident of her being *freed* so that she is now able to make autonomous decisions that will change her practice, and hence achieving emancipation.

Towards the end of the six month journey, she was ready to convince another colleague. For example, when Ron expressed his concerns about limitations of time and hence his tendencies towards a more didactic teaching to achieve the learning outcomes, she was able to offer suggestions and advice, such as differentiating the curriculum and bonding with students, which were also learner-centered strategies, and cautioned him about getting into a "vicious cycle". She also suggested handy strategies such as giving slips of questions, thus presenting the questions visually as an alternative to verbal questions.

There were many "macro ideas", as observed by a facilitator, which Yu developed towards the end of the six month journey, perhaps as a result of the

interactions with various levels of reflection. She concluded that it had "been a fruitful journey" and had "gone beyond her original question". Pursuing notions of twenty-first century competencies, she felt that student-centeredness was what went in the day-to-day lessons, and the rationale for having student-centered lessons was "beyond musical skills and musical appreciation" and "growing into what 21st century competencies skills were actually developing for students so that students are prepared for the future". She felt that it was a "happy outcome" for her as she was "able to look at the whole department in a very different light".

She has developed a vision and a goal in terms of *student outcomes* at the heart of learner-centered teaching:

They (students) have to be able to talk, and to give feedback... I try to acknowledge every response I am very troubled by the fact that they [students] are not as outspoken or as willing to speak in a mass lecture. So, in my lessons, and I tell my (fellow) teachers as well, that we need to work on responses ... I will strive to say that "that was a good idea", "I can see why you say that", "can you now elaborate on that", so that is critical thinking as well, as they (students) have to build on the last response and interestingly, in some of my other classes where I have longer contact with, they are amazing. They will say "building on so and so's point, actually I think ..." then another person will say "ya, I agree with that one but actually I don't agree with you, but extending on another person's view, I feel that ..." and this is what I am working towards.

And the growth and emancipation enabled her to be a versatile teacher. In planning lessons, she "planned the questions first". She said that she "often does not cover all the questions", but let the questions lead to other questions and would "build on that learning moment". She said, "it is amazing what the students can give you if you scaffold it in terms of questions".

Implications for Professional Development

Analyzing the reflective inquiry journeys taken by Ron and Yu, we could surmise that the following professional development experiences would be valuable contributors to such a process:

1. Providing a changed context for teachers to reframe their assumptions and practices

In this project, the opportunity to view another teaching practice in another culture provided a changed context and a stimulus for discussions and reflections. As Ron pointed out, "it gives him the opportunity to rethink and ask himself – what I believe has been true so far, is it still relevant?" For Yu, although it was not "life changing", it stirred a series of reflections which became important in the journey of transformation.

2. Opportunities for insider-outsider reflective conversations situated in a community of practice

Insider-outsider professional exchanges and reflective conversations were able to unearth assumptions and presuppositions in the teachers' interpretative frames. The dialogues facilitated reflections at various levels. From the individual perspective, Ron pointed out, "They have been questioning us about our personal philosophy, our educational philosophy...it creates a conflict in ourselves because we got to think. In fact ... we have to rethink, rebalance, realign". From the organizational perspective, the dialogues within the community facilitated the co-creation of knowledge, which in this context, was the discovering and understanding of the notion of learner-centered teaching.

These reflective conversations were enhanced through social interactions within the community and positive relationships since the dialogues between the teachers could be inspiring and motivational. For example, Ron's admiration for Yu's ability to reflect deeply might have had some influence on his sharing at the final discussion during which he shared several reflexive moments with the team. He had asked himself if he had conceptualized the project so that it was relevant to the students, and if he had communicated well to the students. He asked himself if he was ready to "teach" them the twenty-first century skills which Yu spoke about.

3. Opportunities for an iterative process in conceptualizing lessons, enacting, deconstructing and reflection to make new meaning and knowledge

The opportunity to engage in a cyclical process in which lessons were conceptualized, enacted, and deconstructed, so that they could be reflected upon to make new meaning and construct new knowledge facilitates the transformation of practice. Ron said, "I am also beginning to have a better understanding. While we can read the MOE framework, or read all kinds of books of twenty-first century skills, but it takes the doing ...to have a better understanding of what is required of twenty-first century education."

4. Facilitation of the reflective processes should be a flexible and fluid one that crosses different levels of reflection

It has been observed that teachers do not necessarily start at the technical level of reflection to move towards a dialectical level. There could also be differing entry points in the level of reflective thinking in different issues in music teaching.

5. Considerations of personal motivations and stage of development in teachers' professional practices is essential

We have seen how the intrinsic motivations of Ron and Yu have sustained them in this journey. As both Ron and Yu are experienced music teachers, they are able to look back at their own practices, compare with their new experiences, reframe and enact newly conceptualized plans. The different degrees of success are to some extent, dependent on their individual levels of fluency in their practice.

6. A sustained professional development process is necessary in the process of transformation

The sustained professional development journey has allowed relationships to be built in the community of practice, which facilitated frank and open discussions.

It would also not have been sufficient to see transformation of teaching practice by the end of the four lesson observations scheduled for Ron. It was only in the latter recorded lessons that showed some changes in the teacher-student interactions and student outcomes. Subsequent dialogues with Ron and the team to reflect on practice and on improvement helped consolidate these understandings and encourage reflexive moments to evaluate his own practice.

Indeed, Ron himself said that "it takes time and a lot of feedback to relearn".

I am what you call an experienced teacher. So, I have years of experiences. It also means that I have years of baggage. I have years of things which I have learned which may be difficult to unlearn, which I feel comfortable using, because they have worked for me so far... I want to change. Maybe the flesh is willing, the mind is weak...So, sometimes we fall back on our old ways of doing things. So, that's one key challenge.

This experience attests to the need for a prolonged professional development process that seeks to transform a music teacher.

7. Reflective inquiry process would be enriched when reflection goes beyond thinking

An insight gained from this experience was that challenges and impediments to renewal and transformation of practice may include feelings and emotions, intuition, "professional gut feelings", personal perceived realities and deeply rooted habits of mind. Ron's renewed practice was not an outcome of the different levels of reflections alone, but in his personal motivation to change, his professional gut feelings about the benefits of learner-centred lessons, and inspiration drawn from his colleague Yu.

Conclusion

The journeys of Ron and Yu have provided much food for thought about the processes of reframing, and about empowering and transforming the music teacher.

Building on the notions introduced in the beginning of the essay, and drawing on insights from the reflective inquiry journeys, we wish to suggest that the planning of professional development programs featuring reflective inquiry could take into account two perspectives – the perspective of the facilitator, and that of the recipient. Facilitators of professional development are concerned about the types, processes and structures of reflection they could use, such as Ghaye and Ghaye's (1998) enabling model for reflection-on-practice. But from the recipients' perspective, it could be more empowering for themselves if they are aware of and experience the different levels of reflective thinking (dialectical, contextual, technical) so that they are better able to transform their own thinking and practices. The

two perspectives could perhaps be described as the 'enablers' and 'outcomes' of reflection, and having the awareness of the distinction would be useful.

Building on a theoretical awareness of the two perspectives, the practical applications for reflective inquiry processes could include providing a changed context to stimulate thinking, opportunities for reflective conversations, insideroutsider exchanges, and cyclical processes of conceptualizing – enacting – deconstructing lessons over a sustained period of time. Like any professional development programs, these should also take into account the readiness of the participants and their personal motivations, their prior experiences and personal beliefs.

The diagram below summarizes how these knowledge and understandings could interface with one another, to guide the conceptualization of future reflective inquiry journeys that can achieve professional renewal. For example, the enabling model for Reflection-on-Practice provides an approach to engage the reflective practitioner by considering the various areas where reflection can take place. In addition, an understanding and awareness of where the teacher is at his or her level of reflection (technical, contextual, dialectical) would help facilitators engage him or her differently to enrich the reflective conversations.

Towards transformation		
Theoretical	Models for levels of reflection	
frames	Facilitator's Perspective or 'Enablers'	Recipient's Perspective or 'Outcomes'
	Enabling Model for Reflection-on-Practice Ghaye and Ghaye (1998)	Reflective Thinking Pyramid Model Taggart and Wilson (2005)
	(Cyclical and Flexible processes) Reflection on Context Reflection on Values Reflection on Practice Reflection on Improvement	(Flexible starting points) Dialectical Level Contextual Level Technical Level
Enabling approaches	Changed Contexts Reflective Conversations Insider-Outsider exchanges in Communities of Practice Iterative Process of conceptualising, enacting and deconstructing lessons (Over a prolonged professional development period)	
Considerations	Readiness and Personal Motivation e.g. taking into account Systemic and Personal Drivers (Grundy and Robison 2004), Stage theories of professional development (Berliner 1994), and Prior experiences and personal beliefs	

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Chapter 30 Exegetical Commentary

Eric Favaro

I was privileged to have had the opportunity to work with Ron and Yu. I met them prior to their trip abroad, organized classroom observations in Nova Scotia, and subsequently observed them in action in their own country. I was, from the outset, rather skeptical that significant transformation and changes in habits of mind could occur with brief exposure to learner-centric music lessons and to limited sustained professional development. However, as Ron and Yu realize, they are not "experts" on learner-centeredness but they have grown significantly in their personal beliefs, their confidence, and their commitment to continue on their journey to learn more about it. As an "outsider" in the process with a vested interest in their journey, I know I have learned as well, and will be applying my new understandings to our current situation in Nova Scotia. A true partnership is emerging bridging borders, continents, and cultures.

I was intrigued and pleased to read that "Ron's renewed practice was not an outcome of the different levels of reflections alone, but in his personal motivation to change, his professional feelings about the benefit of learner-centred lessons, and inspiration drawn from his colleague, Yu" (p. 12). For me, it was affirmation of a personal conviction in the professional development of teachers that developed early in my career. Three components, evident in the quote, truly sum up for me the 'raison d'être' for lifelong learning: a personal *commitment* because there is a desire for *improvement*, and the necessary social interaction and *collaboration* that exists when true learning takes place.

When the new curriculum in Nova Scotia was first introduced, our teachers experienced similar feelings as Ron and Yu. Ron's concern, for example, to complete a planned lesson in a limited amount of time all the while focusing on meeting the syllabus objectives drove his need to stress content and so diminish the role of creating, presenting and responding. Yu's "obsession" with ensuring a quality performance caused some anxiety. She did not want to compromise having

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her students connect emotionally with the music they performed. Reading their reflections, thoughts of the challenges we as Nova Scotians experienced in our curriculum implementation over a 5-year period came to mind.

From the outset, most music educators were extremely skeptical when this perceived radical change was introduced. The remainder were tenuous at best. Prior experience with and understanding of music education pedagogies was from a very traditional point of view. In other words, they taught the way they were taught throughout their school years and in post-secondary studies. Even the writing team who had developed the new curriculum (teachers in service who had been chosen because of their expertise and commitment to improve) began to reflect on what they had created and how it was received. They questioned their own ideas and wondered if they had "gone too far" in writing a curriculum that required teachers to be totally retrained and reoriented to more contemporary teaching pedagogies. After much collaboration, the team concluded that they needed to view teachers-in-the-field as "students" and provide them with personal experiences that allowed them to "play" with these new concepts. Only through this hands-on learning over an extended period of time could they really know the curriculum for themselves.

In year two of the process, the approach to professional development as led by the implementation team changed dramatically. They had teachers *do* the activities and experience them in a sequential order as if they were students in a regular music class. They wanted them to experience those same feelings of success and failure as would their students, and in reflection, to interpret and articulate how they felt when they take a gem of a musical idea, compose a piece of music, perform it for their peers, and receive constructive feedback. The implementation team wanted teachers to feel the internal struggles that occur when one is moved out of his/her comfort zone, and to offer guidance and support for them as they experienced these feelings. Only then, during a debrief and reflection session, did we discuss "teacher talk" – outcomes; suggestions for learning, teaching and assessment; contexts for teaching and learning; instructional resources; curriculum design; learner-centered classrooms. It is important to highlight that these discussions occurred *after* the teachers had experienced learning in context in a simulated classroom setting.

By the end of that year, the teachers participating in the professional development activities were experiencing new insights and ideas as they collaborated and shared personal stories after they had tried the same activities with their students. There were still many skeptics and these were primarily the teachers who had a reputation for higher-level performing groups. Attitudes began to change in the third year when the successes of the implementation team became more evident—their student groups most often stood out above others for their musicality and skill in performances. The skeptics could see for themselves that students who were taught using a learner-centric approach were equally advanced in their playing skills, and exhibited a level of maturity in their interpretive skills that surpassed those of students who were taught using traditional pedagogies. The students were thinking like composers, and the emotional impact of their performances was evident.

Now at the end of year five in the implementation process, it can finally be said that the implementation is showing very acceptable results. It is now time to tackle the next obstacle: new teachers coming into the field who have a very traditional approach that is based on their schooling, and this is the default teaching style for many of them.

As noted in the opening of my response, my concern still exists about insufficient time and personal experience with learner-centred teaching for the two subjects of this study. I believe that Ron and Yu's journey is now just beginning. They both see the "why" and the "what" of learner centred pedagogies; they know why it is important, and they also understand the foundations of learner-centric lessons. The "how" is still to come – a long and winding road where they must truly experience the successes and failures of the new pedagogies as students experience them. This requires a carefully crafted professional development plan led by leaders who have extensive experience in this approach.

Reframe to Transform: Reflective Inquiry Journeys of Two Singapore Music Teachers articulates seven experiences that are valuable contributions to the learning journey. Item f—"A sustained professional development process is necessary in the process of transformation"—is the most critical at this stage for Ron and Yu if they indeed are committed to changing habits of mind. Throughout the next stage they need to articulate their personal feelings of creating and performing music, and receiving constructive feedback from their peers. It is my personal feeling, based on experience, that then and only then will they truly be able to implement learner-centric lessons in their music classes.

Ron himself said that "it takes time and a lot of feedback to relearn... I am what you call an experienced teacher. So I have years of experiences. It also means that I have years of baggages. I have years of things which I have learned which may be difficult to unlearn, which I feel comfortable using, because they have worked for me so far". The final step in the process will be taking newly acquired learning and applying it in specific ways to meet the prescribed outcomes of the Singapore syllabus. In taking it to this metacognitive or "what if" stage they will truly make it their own and change their habits of mind. They will become teacher leaders who can speak to experience as they mentor others in their learning journeys.

Chapter 31 Dialogue

Siew Ling Chua, Chee-Hoo Lum, and Eric Favaro

Siew Ling: What are some of the specific leaning points that you have taken away such that you will be able to adapt them in your specific context?

Eric: Having devoted my entire career to the professional development of teachers, I have always supported the notion that collaborative action research is one of the most effective methods by which teachers in service develop a deeper understanding of specific pedagogical skills and subsequently change their habits of mind. For the most part, I have seen little evidence amongst teachers of true action research, primarily because time constraints often limit the scheduling of all the steps necessary for the research process to be successful. We "roll out" a new curriculum, often to large groups of teachers at one time, and focus primarily on experiences that will help them understand the new curriculum and the pedagogical changes necessary to implement it.

I was particularly impressed with the design and format of the learning journey that Ron, Yu, and other colleagues embarked upon. With the trend towards communities of practice, there has been more evidence of research-based professional development, but not to the extent of this learning journey. Under the mentorship of a researcher from the National Institute of Education and the Director of Music at STAR, a carefully planned methodology was implemented, and each participant identified a specific question related to learner-centered pedagogies that they wanted to pursue. The process involved key milestones: preliminary reflection and discussions to acknowledge their base line understanding; classroom visits to schools in Nova Scotia that were already using a learner-centered approach,

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followed by group discussions after each observation based on extensive field notes; experimentation with the approach in their classrooms over several months upon their return to Singapore, each lesson videotaped and followed by reflective conversations; group discussions with others who were participating in the learning journey; and finally an analysis of the data and conclusions about next steps.

I see a need and a great benefit for trainers in Nova Scotia to adapt a similar process whenever and wherever possible as we continue developing learner-centered pedagogies with music educators. This has been the primary "take away" for me. By implementing a similar process, I feel that teachers will internalize the changes and articulate their personal understandings of the new curriculum, thus becoming more effective teachers as they "adapt" the new pedagogies rather than simply "imitating" them. We have an opportunity to implement this approach with the inauguration of a new graduate programme in Music Education at Arcadia University in September, 2012.

Chee Hoo: What remains as pertinent challenges in Nova Scotia of the learner-centered shift in the new curriculum?

Eric: As the new curriculum was implemented, it became apparent that three key challenges existed if music educators were to embrace a learner-centered approach: the importance of scaffolding the learning over an extended period of time; the realization that extensive planning using a backward design model is required; and the understanding that good musicianship is not compromised in the new approach. As we advance our work with music educators across the province, these challenges continue to be the focus of the training, not only for veteran teachers, but also for those being hired from universities where a learner-centered approach is not stressed. [It is important to note that Arcadia University is the only post-secondary institution currently teaching Music Education from this perspective].

From the beginning of the implementation process we discovered that most music educators viewed the new curriculum as a radical shift from the way they were trained. They felt overwhelmed and their reaction to the pedagogical change was often defensive as they justified their current practice. The trainers continue to reinforce the fact that many music educators are already doing what could be termed a "learner-centered" approach, but they are not consistent in allowing students to take responsibility for their learning through a more creative process. Music educators are asked to examine their practice and select small aspects that could be adapted to this new curriculum. Here the operative word is "adapt" and they are encouraged to take small steps and experiment with what they are currently doing. Above all, it is always stressed that they should focus on those areas where they are most likely to experience success, and build from there by scaffolding the learning, and building on the positive responses of the students.

A learner-centered approach requires extensive planning and preparation, and it is interesting when teachers begin to realize this. The lead teachers who are actively involved as trainers stress with music educators that the myth of less planning with more experience does not apply in this case. They explain that the learner-centered approach requires more planning, and that it will only work if they plan using the "backward design" method. It is absolutely critical that teachers understand

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that they must identify the outcomes to be achieved, make decisions about the assessment strategies to be used, and then plan the activities they will use in the learning and teaching process. They can no longer simply plan activities or select repertoire and then decide where these fit in the prescribed outcomes.

Throughout the process, good musicianship remains pivotal, and teachers cannot compromise the development of strong musical skill and technique. The participants are shown how this is possible by giving more responsibility to the students and approaching skill development in a less traditional way.

Siew Ling: It is interesting how the writing team developed a curriculum that they themselves have not experienced. How did they know? What professional development experiences did they receive?

Eric: The curriculum was developed using a team of writers who were hired because of their expertise in writing and in music education pedagogy. This approach differed from previous curriculum projects whereby select teachers came together at various times throughout the school year to brainstorm ideas and develop them into strategies for learning, teaching and assessment. The Arts Education Consultant for the Department of Education, Ardith, had a vision for a new curriculum in grades 7, 8, and 9 that was more innovative, and that focused on a learner-centered approach. Being an experienced and very successful band and choral teacher, her idea was to stress those elements of the arts that foster and promote creativity, innovation, problem solving, independent thinking – all twenty-first century competencies. Her belief was that if we say that the arts support these skills, then we should teach them in schools, and traditional band, choral and classroom music programmes were not doing that.

A researcher and former Arts Education Consultant was hired to research best practices in other jurisdictions around the world to see if this type of programme already existed. When all the data was collected and analyzed, it was determined that the other jurisdictions were merely implementing variations on a very traditional approach. A team of writers who were lead teachers in their disciplines was hired for the writing process. They were brought together to review the research and brainstorm ideas for the direction that this project could take. They were each provided with the latest of resources, and were tasked with writing specific modules for each course. The team had determined at the writers workshop that the new curriculum must be creative above all, have a learner-centered focus, and each module must be consistent with the others.

As the writers developed the modules, the Consultant selected a team of teachers in the field who she felt had the potential to become lead teachers. She felt these teachers were already doing very creative and innovative lessons with their students, and she knew they would be keen to experiment with a new approach to the curriculum. They were asked to try the activities in the modules, and to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. This pilot or testing period lasted one full school year, and the pilot teachers were required to provide extensive feedback every six weeks. Based on their feedback, the writers revised the curriculum to make it the best that it could be.

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A second opportunity for feedback was available when the new curriculum was distributed to every music educator in the province. They were encouraged to make comments and suggestions, and these too were incorporated in the revisions of the final draft. In effect, although the teachers in the field did not directly write the curriculum, they played a pivotal role as they tried the ideas suggested by the writers and offered suggestions for improvement based on their experiences in their music lessons.

Siew Ling: I am not sure if we used the term "teacher talk" in the same way which we used in our paper. In our paper we were referring to what the teacher says in the classroom.

Eric: In my response, I used "teacher talk" to refer to the background information that a teacher must have in order to understand the curriculum. Maybe it would be best to revise my response by using the phrase, "philosophical and theoretical underpinnings".

Siew Ling: We agree with these. The new experience also provides "changed context" that will stimulate reflective conversations.

Eric: I agree. It is very important for teachers to first experience and then reflect.

Part XIII Critical Dialogue with the Contemporary in Traditional Theatre Forms

Chapter 32 Brief Encounters with Traditional Theatre Forms: In Critical Dialogue with the Contemporary

Charlene Rajendran

Is the traditional aspect of theatre, with all its discursive possibilities of meaning, critical to the contemporary? And if so, what can a theatre educator in Singapore do to make Asian traditional theatre forms relevant to contemporary drama students in a modern Westernised city? These students are often exposed to a range of popular, modern and Western media, with little access to any form of traditional performance. Thus their experience of forms such as Kathakali, Chinese Opera, Noh and Wayang Kulit, is not only limited by minimal exposure but informed by notions that these traditional sites of culture are marginal, outdated, and perhaps useful as exotic relics of the past. The challenge to make meaningful connections with these performance styles, practices and aesthetics is thus demanding, but needful because the process renders a more grounded sense of cultural identity and community. Even if the forces of globalization can appear to outnumber and outweigh those of being situated and local, it is worthwhile investing time and energy in processes that encourage rootedness through sustained ties with cultural tradition, memory and history. Particularly when modernity as expressed through indigenous forms enhances a capacity for local forms of agency that question the dominant hegemony of Western tropes of cultural advancement.

This chapter positions the traditional aspect of Asian theatre forms as critical to the development of indigenous contemporary performance-making. Particularly in modern, multicultural and postcolonial Asian societies such as Singapore, where notions of national identity are moderated through processes that fuse and combine several elements of the alleged East and West, old and new, the traditional offers a significant resource of cultural capital. I contend that theatre education programmes within modern Asian contexts need to incorporate the traditional as integral to the contemporary because this links to the development of indigenous contemporary theatre practice. However the difficulty remains in doing this with depth and

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criticality, when the traditional is regarded as unrelated to the contemporary or even regressive and thus detrimental to advancement – as is often the case in newly modernising states.

A dialogical approach which encourages students to question the value of traditional forms, while learning about their history, form and practice, opens up the discourse on how the traditional can be understood. It also allows for contemporary frameworks of theatre that are created through exploration and interaction with the traditional to evolve in the learning space. In so doing a multi-cultural ethos of combining different elements while retaining their distinctness can be cultivated, with the view towards rethinking how cultures are related even when perceived to be separate. Resisting a compartmentalisation and essentialism of cultures, this process promotes experiences of culture as porous, fluid and open to reinvention through experimentations with theatre forms, old and new. In turn this generates a sense of rootedness within an experience of cultural multiplicity, an important consideration in a multiracial, multilingual and multireligious society such as Singapore.

The question of how to develop this is approached by reflecting on an undergraduate course entitled Asian Traditional Theatre Forms that I have developed and taught at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. Bearing in mind that the cultural context in Singapore often displaces the traditional amid the modern, the course attempts to rethink the relevance and value of traditional performance forms within a contemporary context. Hence the main aims of the course are to:

- 1. enable students to become familiar with how Asian traditional theatre forms are particular to the cultural contexts in which these forms have evolved, yet able to extend beyond stipulated boundaries to become part of the contemporary;
- 2. explore how these forms are markedly different from the contemporary in training, aesthetics and principles of practice, while still related to contemporary understandings of the body in performance;
- allocate space for students to experiment with adaptations and re-interpretations of traditional stories and practices that are commonly associated with these forms, in order to create a sense of connection and participation that empowers ownership and entitlement.

These aims will be considered in relation to responses from students about their experience in the course, and reflections that arise in my own evaluation of the efficacy and value of choices made.

The Predicament of Asian Traditional Forms in Contemporary Singapore

Most young people in Singapore are distanced from the traditional performing arts, as there is little time and space allocated to these practices in a fast-paced, competitive and materialist society that seeks to stay ahead of current technological

trends and innovations and thus be seen as modern and progressive. Students are more exposed to Western cultures and contemporary arts practices, whether in the media, formal education or state-sponsored arts programmes as examples of what is 'cutting edge' and valuable. In contrast Asian traditional theatre is largely regarded as an outmoded expression of culture, with values and styles that no longer appeal to the contemporary person nor reflect his/her ethos. According to Chinese Opera scholar, enthusiast and practitioner, Chua Soo Pong, this notion has created a sense of "alienation from cultural traditions and practices" (Chua 1995, p. 91) for contemporary Singaporeans, creating a sense of distance and thus resistance towards cultivating an interest in traditional forms. The 'alienation' also points to a tension between nostalgic notions of identity that romanticise the old world as an idyllic bygone era, with modern identity that prioritises the attractions of the new and futuristic.

What often distinguishes traditional performances from contemporary and popular theatre is the strict codification, classical vocabularies and ritualistic quality. These characteristics then create a sense of 'high art' that renders the traditional seemingly inaccessible as well. However increasing encounters with the traditional, as aspects of cultural history and an indigenised contemporary, allow for a growing familiarity that reworks the scope of theatre and culture. This is valuable in enlarging perspectives and challenging reductive norms.

Few who have experienced the disjuncture of historical erasure, personal displacement and social fragmentation would dispute the need for 'tradition' to inform how we engage with the modern. Even if 'tradition' is itself a contested term that can be wielded for functional purposes, whether to endorse communal agendas or delineate the 'modern', the view that traditions matter and traditional performance forms should be preserved persists. In relation to the course, 'traditional' describes the kind of Asian theatre form examined, and thus draws on acknowledged classifications that delineate Chinese Opera, Noh, Kathakali and Wayang Kulit as being among a wide range of recognised Asian traditional theatre forms to choose from. These compare with modern and non-Asian forms of theatre, suggesting there are qualities that link what is Asian and traditional geographically and stylistically.

Yet what constitutes the 'traditional' remains open to question as it operates diversely across social, political, cultural and artistic spheres. Social historian Eric Hobsbawm examines the term 'invented tradition' and points to its use in establishing and implying continuity with a "suitable historic past" (Hobsbawm 1983a, p. 1), denoting a selective process that ties in with broader social and political agendas such as nation-building and community cohesion. These 'invented traditions' are repeated to establish a sense of 'invariance', implying links with a historic past even when it is 'largely factitious' (Hobsbawm 1983a, p. 2). They can be 'performed' for and by the public in mass rituals, parades and ceremonies that celebrate pomp and splendour, to generate spectacle and claim authenticity in the name of shared identity (Hobsbawm 1983b, pp. 304–305). Here 'tradition' serves its purpose when it identifies what is iconic or representative of a culture or community. This is particularly useful when a sense of tradition is being lost or threatened by modern changes (Hobsbawm 1983a, p. 11). In a modern multicultural

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city like Singapore traditional theatre can be seen to perform this role, giving credence to cultural groups who seek to underline their historical presence. Even if not 'invented' in Hobsbawm's sense of formalising and ritualising cultures by imposing repetition (Hobsbawm 1983a, p. 4), their presence is largely to reiterate continuities of culture rather than advance innovations or adaptations.

However, a more probing sense of how the past is imbricated in the present can be seen in philosopher Giorgio Agamben's discussion of the relationship between the contemporary and history. In his terms, the contemporary has a "special relationship with the past" that is cognisant of the "indices and signatures of the archaic in the most modern and recent" (Agamben 2009, p. 50). This enables the contemporary to return to this "unlived element" (Agamben, p. 51), often buried in the remains of memory and history, and retrieve connections that are otherwise left unearthed. In this regard the 'traditional', or 'archaic', becomes part of a gradually unfolding understanding of the present. The 'special relationship' that develops is one that deals with an 'unlived element' that is not bound by certitude or prescription, but is open to a 'presence' that may not be fully knowable but experienced through multiple lenses and perspectives. This enlarges the 'traditional' to include multiple ways of becoming part of the contemporary without necessarily losing its value as old and lodged in a particular past. Instead a less oppositional frame is created to forge connections across difference, and infuse experience with what is.

Nonetheless, the 'traditional' can remain elusive and confusing to the contemporary student who feels displaced by being deterritorialised through constant prods to become hip and modern.

There were definitely challenges stemming from culture rejection (or apathy – depending on how you swing it) on my part. It was obvious I had little or no attachment (emotional or otherwise) to most of the forms covered throughout the course.... [due to] the overwhelming precedence of 'non-culture' in my individual self. I prefer the term 'non-culture' to 'western-influenced' because what constitutes my current culture is a mess of cultures, some of which are my own concoctions. (Danial) ²

¹ Agamben qualifies the 'archaic' as close to the 'origin', and thus 'not only situated in a chronological past' but also 'contemporary with historical becoming' in the same way that 'the embryo continues to be active in the tissues of the mature organism, and the child in the psychic life of the adult'.

² As part of my research for this chapter, I requested students who were in the 2011 cohort to respond to questions about their experience in the course, as feedback about the effectiveness and value that it had for them. I draw on some of these responses to reflect the range of views and issues that emerged, all of which cannot be fully explored within the confines of this article. The NIE students who participated in this dialogue were Ahmad Musta'ain, Amanda Wong, Chia Ying, Danial Hanafi, Harvinder Singh, Lisa Lok, Siti Rafidah Bte. Rahman.

They were given a list of questions, which they responded to in their own time via email. Their responses were elicited after the process of assessment and grading had been completed. The questions were: (1) In your exploration of Asian traditional theatre forms through readings, watching performances and videos, what did you find most interesting? This can include what was challenging and what was compelling, or what was simply perplexing. But explain why. (2) What, if any, was the value of doing the practical workshops with Joanna Wong and Biju as part of this course? How did you negotiate working with two different forms and two different

One rather interesting observation I had through this course was that as an Indian myself, I found myself more comfortable with Kathakali as compared to Chinese Opera. In fact, on reflection when I was rehearsing my Chinese Opera movements, I found myself taking extra steps and giving facial expressions which were similar to what we learnt in Kathakali. Interestingly enough, most of my other classmates found themselves more familiarised with Chinese Opera movements. I cannot explain why this is so... (Harvinder)

The students at the National Institute of Education (NIE) constitute a mix of racial, religious and linguistic backgrounds, and approach the course from a range of positions and locations. The students come from Chinese, Malay, Indian and other ethnic backgrounds, all of whom are fluent in English as that is the language of education, and most of whom speak another language that reflects their cultural lineage. Some, like Danial, may feel distanced from a sense of Asian tradition, while others, like Harvinder, may foster stronger ties to a designated race or cultural group. These combinations of culture, or 'non-culture' in Danial's terms, are experienced in collages of multicultural behaviours, habits and tastes that are common to everyday life. They include the conflicts and contradictions of being at cross-purposes with conventional norms, and at cross purposes within.

For many Singaporeans, like other postcolonial, multicultural and urban Asians, the experience of living at the intersections of plural cultural influences of Asia and the West is not uncommon. Being linked to conventional practices of traditional culture at home and with the community, while simultaneously modernised in behaviours on the street and in the workplace, is a regular feature. These mixes are rarely represented in official depictions of a plural society, which tend to categorise cultures according to unitary racial, linguistic and religious designations. This conveniently leaves out the messy, if not chaotic, interactions and overlaps of culture that lead to new versions of designated cultures and identities. Traditional cultures in particular, are depicted as only relevant to those who 'belong' to the culture through racial, religious or linguistic assignation. To contest these reductive views, the mixes of culture must be foregrounded and normalised.

As anthropologist Nestor Canclini (1995) recognises, the 'hybrid' cultures that evolve in postcolonial and modernising contexts, such as in his area of study which is Latin America, depict the interactions between and across diverse cultures. As Canclini notes, these are not "defective version[s] of the modernity canonised by the metropolis" (p. 6) but instead "complex articulation[s] of traditions and modernities (diverse and unequal)" in which "multiple logics of development" not only exist, but "coexist" (p. 9). The negotiation of changes can also be both transgressive and reiterative, but what allows for an emancipation of the imagination is the close study of "the oblique pathways, full of transactions" in which the diverse meanings of

traditional performing artists? (3) When you were creating the workshop performances, what did you most enjoy and most dislike in the process? When you watched the performances your classmates presented, what did you find most engaging? (4) As a contemporary person and a theatre student, how has this brief encounter with traditional theatre impacted on your perspectives on theatre and culture? This can include aspects that relate to personal identity, or how to view theatre, or the conflicts of being between cultures, etc.

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modernity "come into play" and thus allow for the "divergencies" and "unresolved conflicts" of cultural difference (p. 11).

Singapore, much like Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka, is a plural postcolonial nation where multiracial, multireligious and multilingual citizens from diverse Asian backgrounds negotiate cultural differences and contemporary reinventions of tradition on a daily basis. In Singapore, it is the Chinese, Malay, Indian, Peranakan and Eurasian cultures which are most prominent in the national imaginings of identity. Hence the exploration of the traditional, as crucial aspects of these multiple cultures, is invariably linked to issues of national, communal, social and personal identity. This is often tinged with the bittersweet of creative contradiction, as the need to assert authenticity and distinctness can impede the process of integration. On the one hand there is the cosmopolitan capacity to adapt to a range of cultures and negotiate "multiple belongings" and "overlapping allegiances". On the other hand, there is the traditionalist pressure to be authentic within the parameters of one's assigned cultural category. This leads towards a "rooted cosmopolitanism" in which the "plural dimensions of human identity [which] don't rest easily with each other, and sometimes not at all" (Cohen 1995, p. 233) are engaged and not denied. It also encourages a "critical cosmopolitan imagination" in which emphasis is given to a capacity to deal with difference, as situated and open, dialogic and transformative (Delanty 2006, pp. 35-40). Thus difference is recognised as difficult but desired.

So when Harvinder locates himself as 'Indian' he refers to a range of forces that make this racial category potent as a marker of identity, even though he is Singaporean by nationality and Westernised in his education. The multiple dimensions of his cultural identity are thus brought together in a 'rooted and critical cosmopolitan' manner when he recognises how he is 'different' in some respects to his classmates, being the only ethnic Indian in the class, and yet part of a wider phenomenon in which there was an observable familiarity with an assigned culture for 'most' of his other classmates who were Chinese. It suggests that ethnically Chinese Singaporean students were more adept at Chinese Opera movements, much like Harvey was leaning towards the style of Kathakali. This presents a range of possibilities as to how culture can be claimed, owned, acknowledged or even denied. What if Harvey felt more adept at Chinese Opera or a non-Indian student was more attracted to Kathakali?

In contrast Danial's allusion to "non-culture" points to a resistance to being labelled along these categories, and a desire to validate the "mess of cultures" instead. Reflecting on the Singapore context cultural theorist Kwok Kian Woon (2004) explains the "cultural predicament" of being between worlds, as a "problem of tradition" that stems from negotiating modernity as a "historical discontinuity" rather than a gradual evolution from the past (pp. 1–3). The rupture that has been created by a "single, quick and big leap" (p. 6) towards modernity entailed breaking away from the old to embrace the new. This led to a fragmentation in which drastic changes necessitated severed

³ "Multiple belongings" and "overlapping allegiances" are phrases frequently used in the discourse on cosmopolitanism, to discuss identity constructs as inherently plural even in seemingly homogenous cultures. They challenge the idea that "singular" belongings and "distinct" allegiances, ideas propagated by nationalism and communalism are the only valid basis on which to build a sense of social cohesion.

bonds with traditional practices and ideas deemed disruptive to progress. Kwok points to how the instrumentalist shift towards English language education produced a struggle for many individuals about what language to call their "mother-tongue" when they were becoming distanced from their ethnic languages. It also raised questions about how to take ownership of "an originally foreign language" (p. 9), namely English. However the desire for authenticity and historicity also compels gravitation towards something conventionally linked with cultural identity. Hence in Kwok's terms the pull towards "traditionalism" allows for associations with a "golden age" which can be "preserved" to substantiate claims to rootedness, while the push towards "cosmopolitanism" encourages pluralism that dissolves boundaries and accords freedom of choice (pp. 10–11).

To counter the extremes of traditionalism and cosmopolitanism, Kwok advances the idea of a "living tradition" as a "cultural project" which 'embodies a living reality, a living idea or a set of ideas, a living set of values or practices – living, because it continues to speak meaningfully to our lives in the present, to our way of life' (p. 14). This "living tradition" is grounded in "the rich and detailed particularity of local life and therefore also the processes of interpretation and translation that lie at the heart of the development of traditions" (p. 17). This emphasis on 'interpretation and translation' demands recognition of the presence of tradition in contemporary life, and a desire to interact dialogically through changes that revitalise the form through thoughtful and intelligent connection.

Within the auspices of the course, students are given the opportunity to engage with how tradition continues to 'live' in the modern urban space, despite hurdles such as a lack of interest and limited resources that make it difficult to do so. Their brief encounters with traditional theatre practitioners and the task of taking on some of these forms in their own creative work, places them in a 'cultural project' that attends to how the traditional can 'speak meaningfully' to the concerns and pre-occupations that prevail in contemporary life. Students then begin to see how the 'particularity of local life' includes a much wider range of cultural practices than is often given notice, and these alternatives can in fact contribute to a stronger contextually grounded expression of what constitutes contemporary Singapore.

But in order to 'interpret and translate' these ideas with insight and confidence, it is necessary to possess a working understanding and appreciation of the 'vocabularies' involved. The challenge for theatre educators, who consciously deal with the diversity of society as integral to an understanding of cultural identity, is to forge ways of encouraging students to explore the constructs of identity as constituted of a combination of cultures rather than singular and unitary. It also seeks to dismantle notions that multiculturalism operates primarily as different parallel cultures in society, to assert that multiplicity occurs within, and not just between, individuals and communities. ⁴ This is

⁴ Malaysian theatre director Krishen Jit referred to the notion of 'multiculturalism within bodies' (2004) as an alternative to frames of multiplicity that emphasise differences between cultures, but fail to recognise the differences within them as well. This is particularly relevant in contexts such as Singapore, where several cultures have co-existed and interacted over several generations, and thus the boundaries that divide have become much more porous and permeable. See Rajendran and Wee (2007) for discussion of Jit's politics of difference in multicultural society, and the challenges of dealing with difference in theatre.

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not easy to develop as the process takes time, energy and conscious shifts in priority, and there are few encouragements to allocate resources to do so. Yet an initial attempt will at least acquaint students with the challenges involved.

Engaging the Contemporary Drama Student in Dialogue with the Traditional

This course investigates the idea of [traditional] theatre as part of cultural identity and multiculturalism – which makes one wonder. Are we responsible for the demise of many non-popular theatre forms? Are they non-popular because they are non-Western and non-realist? In fact, why are they always advertised or seen as exotic and non-mainstream? Could it be because they are not assimilated well in our society, and if they aren't, why not? (Ahmad)

I feel that living in the rat-race that is the contemporary world, the need or yearning to be more involved with tradition will be swallowed up by the everyday trivialities that we deem important aspects of contemporary life. Although my perspectives have been nudged [by the course] to open up more, that impact is for me minimal, and it will take great effort to resurrect that feeling of understanding and appreciation - which sank when the course ended. (Rafidah)

To criss-cross the boundaries of tradition and modernity with dexterity and conviction, demands being able to negotiate cultural difference with a sense of openness, play, experimentation and respectful regard for the frameworks that pertain. This develops insights into the value of inter-connectedness and a capacity to participate in something that challenges rather than reiterates the norm. The contemporary student should be encouraged to approach the traditional with a lively engagement about how it relates to everyday life, as well as provides perspectives about culture and identity. So dialogues that link the traditional with the modern and trace similarities as well as contrasts between them, with opportunities to review how contemporary life is often a mix of diverse elements and influences, act as sites for encountering the past as imbricated with the present.

The Asian Traditional Theatre Forms course is structured as a series of lectures, discussions, video viewings, and practical traditional theatre training workshops. When possible the students are also required to attend performances of traditional theatre. Students are acquainted with a basic understanding of four Asian traditional theatre forms, Kathakali, Chinese Opera, Noh and Wayang Kulit. They are required to attend six 2-h practical training sessions with traditional practitioners in two of these forms, which thus far have been Kathakali and Chinese Opera due to the availability of these practitioners in Singapore. The rationale for this

⁵ For Chinese Opera, students worked with a leading exponent of Cantonese Opera, Joanna Wong from the Chinese Theatre Circle, Ltd. See http://www.ctcopera.com.sg/joanna.html. For Kathakali, students were trained by Kathakali performer and teacher, Sri Kalamandalam Biju from Bhaskar Arts Academy. See http://www.bhaskarsartsacademy.com/dancers.html.

multi-pronged approach is to provide students with a varied encounter of traditional theatre forms, and thus highlight the range of options available in making links with Asian performance. The Internet is a further resource that students are encouraged to draw from, acknowledging the availability of materials and accessibility of ideas in virtual media, compared to live performances and written materials.

Students are then required to draw on some elements of the practical, historical and theoretical knowledge gained to create contemporised adaptations of stories, practices or elements that are traditionally used in one or more of these forms in a workshop performance. They are tasked to experiment with what it means to translate ideas from one form and context into another, and deal with the politics of culture that emerge in the process. Students then reflect on the process in a workshop seminar that requires them to articulate their process of making choices, and critically examine the efficacy of their approaches.

While there are several difficulties in trying to accomplish all this within the limitations of a single undergraduate course of 36 h over 12 weeks, it is nonetheless an opportunity for brief encounters to broaden the scope of what it means to learn about, make, and view theatre that focuses on the old, with a conscious exploration of how this connects with the new. The very fact that students are tasked to watch, read about and try out some basic elements of Asian traditional theatre is itself a valuable space for enlarging critical horizons about traditional performance, examining notions of the modern and rethinking the constructs of the contemporary. Needless to say, greater allocation of time and resources in the overall drama programme would expand this potential further.

Multicultural theatre, which has become an area of experimentation in contemporary performance, reflects the plurality, juxtaposition, borrowing and mixing of markedly different traditional and modern, folk and popular forms to create new frames for reviewing cultures and rethinking their boundedness. This often reflects the flows of culture that occur in a global community, where the old and new, local and foreign, co-exist in varied combinations. The course emphasises that drama students need to negotiate how the traditional relates to the contemporary and tap into wider discourses that engage cultures through the lens of inter-connectedness. Here, the bringing together of difference is meant to challenge perceptions that cultural forms need to be perpetuated as singular, pure and separate. This can be considered a form of alternative multiculturalism – one that foregrounds the fluidity of cultures, even as particularity and situatedness are validated. It challenges the boundaries of identity while expanding the scope for how identity can be reconstituted to be inclusive and in flux without the anxiety of displacement or loss.

⁶ See Pavis (1996), Bharucha (2001) and Lo and Gilbert (2002) for discussion on the politics of multicultural theatre and some of the problems that emerge in efforts to bring together diverse performance traditions within a coherent frame.

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The performer is thus tasked with being able to learn vocabularies of performance that are different to her particular cultural background and adapt to 'other' forms that are conventionally outside the boundary of her cultural constitution. In Singapore, the drama student is usually comfortable with learning about Western and popular cultures, but struggles to work through Asian traditional forms as there is the tension of simultaneous proximity and distance. These forms are meant to connect with individual histories and identities, but seem alien. They are rarely a part of her everyday environment, and thus appear strange and inaccessible. Intercultural performer Claudia T. Nascimento (2009) points to how the work of the intercultural performer, which I assert is similar to that of the multicultural performer, ⁷ can lead to a kind of displacement as a result of an 'active crossing of cultural borders' which serves to "broaden her personal and cultural horizons, to expand her artistic experiences, or to seek direct contact with foreignness and difference as a way of working" (p. 14). This purposefully incorporates 'other' cultures into one's own and breaks the illusion of a "perfect match between her ethnicity and cultural identity" (p. 17). But in broaching these areas of study it is hoped that students will have their perspectives 'nudged' as Rafidah noted, or be willing to question, like Ahmad, what leads to the 'demise' of some forms. Instead of just 'displacement' there is then a questioning process of why this awkwardness arises and what it indicates of being urban, modern and Asian in twenty-first century Singapore.

I now turn to two particular emphases of the course that I contend are dialogical approaches to learning about the connections between traditional theatre and the contemporary. They attempt to open up the meanings of key terms such as 'traditional' and raise questions about how innovation and adaptation help engender effective strategies for making the traditional resilient. The first is that students should work, even if briefly, with traditional theatre practitioners. Second, students are expected to experiment with and adapt traditional stories and practices in relation to contemporary contexts. These aspects of work stress the importance of continually interrogating frames of culture, and generating pluralistic interpretations of how culture and theatre can be reviewed through active participation and reinvention. I argue that these approaches are useful in advancing an integrative and collaborative framework for learning about what is deemed traditional, and thereby experimenting with ways in which the contemporary can be reconfigured to include Agamben's notions of the 'archaic' and 'unlived' – aspects which enrich and expand understandings of 'living traditions' in the present.

⁷ Intercultural theatre is broadly defined as theatre that brings together traditional and contemporary elements from different cultures, often foreign to each other, to juxtapose and fuse new ways of engaging the intersections of culture. Multicultural theatre refers to theatre that draws on diverse cultures that often co-exist within a nation or society but remain othered through political and cultural structures. The delineations between cultures are often sustained to suggest parallel streams of culture. In alternative multiculturalism the fixity of these boundaries is challenged, without denying their relevance.

Contemporary Students Working with Traditional Practitioners

A crucial component of the course is to enable students to work with traditional theatre practitioners, who are trained and still engaged in performance making and training, as well as involved in the process of contemporisation of the form within their particular disciplines. Students attend 32-h sessions with a traditional performer based in Singapore, who provides a very basic introduction to training systems and techniques. This facilitates a very small glimpse of the larger picture, particularly when traditional training often demands a minimum of 6 years of full-time enrolment in an academy. Hence the main focus of this activity is to enable students to experience some of the processes involved in training, and give them an opportunity to interact with traditional practitioners. Even after viewing videos, reading about historical contexts and discussing principles of practice, the traditional form can seem very distant when there is little opportunity to view performances and observe the work within a community of practitioners. This makes the encounter with the practitioner all the more vital to gaining a lived sense of the form in contemporary life.

During the workshops students have an opportunity to learn first-hand about the discipline and rigours of the form. They attempt a range of physical exercises (such as the different walks in Chinese Opera, and the basic rhythmic steps in Kathakali) and explore a selection of gestures and movements that constitute the rudimentary elements of the traditional theatre form (these can include learning how to use the 'water-sleeves' in Chinese Opera, and learning some of the 'mudras' in Kathakali). This introduces them to a very basic vocabulary of performance, and challenges them with learning these techniques as part of learning about the form. Often these complex and demanding styles and movements are unfamiliar to their bodies and they struggle to accommodate and acquire the skills needed. Like learning a classical language that is hardly spoken on the street, it entails consciously re-training the body to become adept in codes of expression that are rarely seen and heard. Apart from grappling with poor stamina, there are issues of dexterity and coordination that need to be negotiated as well.

However what is often more compelling is the interaction with the traditional practitioner, whose dedication and commitment to the art form reflects an alternative world-view – one which prioritises a dedication to these forms despite their relative marginality.

Being able to work with the traditional artists was the highlight of the course. In my view nothing can compare to being able to personally experience the forms, even if the encounter was just the tip of an iceberg. (Ying)

I began to appreciate the practitioners of the forms (not so much the form itself) and gained profound respect for what they do. (Danial)

Beyond what was discussed or questioned in class, I felt that it gave my body an opportunity to understand what it takes to be engaged in the particular theatre form... Learning from both artists was enlightening because they were very sincere and generous with their time, advice and encouragement. (Ahmad)

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Watching the tedious training through video and going through the training process personally were two entirely different experiences. The training in the documentary did not seem real. It seemed remote. . . Going through the training with a professional who lives in our context made the learning surreal – that there are individuals who still persist in this path. (Lisa)

As Lisa notes above, the awareness that 'there are individuals who still persist in this path' makes the earlier exposure through videos that much more 'real' and challenges the students to reconsider the deep levels of commitment and cost involved. Even if this is just a 'tip of the iceberg', as Ying observes, it nonetheless offers a tangible connection with the terrain and begins an internal dialogue about what it takes to advance traditional theatre in a contemporary context. The fact that these practitioners are regarded as 'sincere and generous' according to Ahmad, also leads to a 'respect' for their efforts even when there is minimal enthusiasm about the form itself, as seen in Danial's response. The attitude towards traditional theatre is then personalised and politicised through a connection that transcends the aesthetic and cultural dimensions.

The individual connections that students are able to make with traditional practitioners, through learning about their practice and hearing their stories, motivate questions about why some forms are more resilient, and others less so. It expands an understanding of how these forms are part of ongoing reviews of culture, and provides insights into the different ways in which individuals sustain their interest and passion for the traditional theatre form. Conversations between students and practitioners create openings for students to voice their doubts and concerns about traditional theatre, and hear how practitioners negotiate these issues. As a result, students are able to observe how theatre practitioners in urban Singapore stem from multiple backgrounds and occupy diverse positions, and thus review their own situatedness within these areas of theatre work and study. This not only prods an awareness of the challenges involved in sustaining traditional theatre, but accords some enjoyment of the rewards of being able to do so.

Adapting Traditional Stories and Practices to Contemporary Contexts

Another critical aspect of the course entails experimenting with stories and/or basic principles of the traditional theatre form, in creative dialogue with the contemporary. Students are tasked with choosing a story that is often performed in the traditional repertoire (such as Ne Zha in Chinese Opera, or The Kidnap of Sita in Wayang Kulit), or selecting particular elements associated with a traditional theatre form (such as the significance of the slow-walk in Noh, or the use of mudras in Kathakali), and adapting these to forge critical connections with the contemporary. This is often done by examining the central conflicts, characters or concepts involved, and interrogating how they are similar and/or different with prevailing and emergent practices, beliefs and aesthetics. The adaptation can incorporate a

range of strategies such as changing the context, reworking the structures of power, juxtaposing different cultural elements or interrogating the values espoused. A primary objective is to engage with imaginative ideas about how traditional theatre can be inter-connected with everyday concerns in contemporary life. This then leads to an experimental fusion of diverse ideas and forms, generating cultural assemblages that consciously reference and draw from a range of sources.

Students work in groups of five or six to devise and perform a 10–15 min excerpt of a full performance that they envisage making. In this excerpt, they demonstrate how they would develop conceptual ideas about adapting traditional theatre elements to contemporary contexts. They then translate their ideas onto stage, using some elements of the traditional theatre vocabulary that they have learnt about or acquired during the course. Experimental juxtapositions and collages of culture are encouraged, to produce re-imaginings of how particular stories and practices can be rethought. In this manner, students participate in developing more porous and fluid boundaries of culture, while engaging in ways that cultivate an expansive 'living tradition'.

This approach is based on the idea that the contemporary student who engages with traditional theatre, even if briefly, must be empowered to make his/her own connections with the form, its practices and philosophies. By engaging with a repertoire of stories that are commonly performed, or dealing with practices and elements that constitute the underpinnings of the form, the students are challenged to review the meaning, value and application of these ideas. They then negotiate these ideas within a reworked frame that reflects their worldviews and interests, in dialogue with traditional notions that are not usually encountered. Not only does this reduce the distance between what appears to be 'strange' or 'other-ed' and the perceived ordinariness of modern life, but it also allows the student a means of identifying with traditional frames that pertain.

Once the students have shared their ideas in a workshop performance, they are then required to reflect on and articulate their process in a seminar. This is an opportunity to discuss the motivations for their work, interrogate the choices made, and expound on the difficulties they faced in bringing together the traditional and contemporary. Students are meant to identify and examine the critical underpinnings and artistic links that informed their process, and be able to describe, analyse and evaluate what happened. It is also a time to further engage in critical feedback from the rest of the class, having been part of a shared dialogical process through the course.

There were a lot of explorations involved and it pushed me to be open and willing to try out many possibilities. However I was frustrated when things didn't flow the way we wanted it to and we got stuck. Or felt something was amiss. I became very bothered by the challenge. (Ying)

It was challenging to weave in elements of the traditional forms... but we had a superficial understanding and appreciation of the forms... so it was difficult to rationalise and justify our choices... we struggled to make connections between form and culture. This led to a weak interpretation... (Danial)

There were times when I was very frustrated about selectively borrowing what was taught and using it in our performance assessment – it came across as 'blasphemous' and I

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thought we were toying more than experimenting... [but] it was a highly rewarding thinking process... (Ahmad)

Multicultural processes that encourage reworkings of diverse cultural boundaries are valuable in contesting hegemonic structures that tend to divide and alienate rather than promote interaction and collaboration between different cultural spheres. The interaction between different kinds of theatre is then symbolic of varied connections that prevail in a society of multiplicity and change.

The primary challenges of developing a performance that reflects the interconnectedness of the traditional and contemporary are to 'weave' (Danial) a range of ideas together, without losing sight of the artistic form and cultural context. When it works well, this can produce exciting reconfigurations of contemporary culture, that suggest a more integrative vision of modern life that draws from its histories, even as it moves beyond these conventional interpretations. It can render a greater openness to how the traditional is valuable in rooted expressions of culture, while being adaptable to changes that inflect its meanings through contemporary lenses. Thus the rooted and rhizomatic are intertwined to indicate the varied ways in which culture can expand and grow, linking the more conventional and straightforward process of linear histories with the multi-directional connectedness of rhizomatic chains of meaning. Here substantive multiplicities express the mix and intersections of cultures that are present in everyday urban lifestyles, continually moving between and across varied historical, political, social and cultural frames.

However with minimal exposure to the traditional forms and limited understanding of their practices, the task to adapt can also produce 'frustration' and tension when the choices made do not cohere, or ideas fail to 'flow', as pointed out by Ying. It may even lead to a sense of guilt about a process of 'toying' with culture that suggests 'blasphemous' revisions in the name of experimentation, as noted by Ahmad. Rather than avoiding these problems, the course attempts to provide a platform where these questions can be confronted and recognised as crucial to the ongoing processes of rethinking the currency of the traditional in the contemporary. By emphasising the workshop performance as a stage in a larger process of critical reflection, the intent is to sharpen the capacity of students to identify and deliberate on the kinds of struggles that can emerge when creating dialogical approaches to using traditional forms in performance. As they interrogate the implications of their choices they are meant to highlight the positive and problematic outcomes of their project, towards broadening their discourse and deepening insights about the process of contemporisation and fusion.

This is an issue that theatre practitioners who seek to evolve indigenise contemporary performance frames struggle with. As cultural theorist C. J. Wee Wan-ling

⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) suggest that 'rhizomatic' patterns of thought allow for non-linear configurations of knowledge that are less dependent on 'arborescent' notions of 'rootedness' as the basis for understanding. This can also be related to notions of identity and subjectivity that are 'nomadic' in their capacity to shift between different locations and notions of self and other.

(2007) notes, in the seminal intercultural production *Lear*, that was directed by Singaporean director Ong Keng Sen and produced by TheatreWorks, the "polyphony [of varied traditional and contemporary forms from across Asia] is not held together by enough of a consciousness of its inherent contradictions and tensions" (p. 137). This limits the intercultural project to an "elite montage of cultural fragments of Asian high traditions fitted into the contemporary world" (p. 137), rather than developing into an 'allegory of an emergent "New Asia" that revises the "essentialist, multi-ethnic/Asian-regional framing of culture" (p. 137). Wee acknowledges the difficulty of embodying high levels of self-reflexivity within an ambitious production such as this, and thus points to the challenges of working with multiple cultures within a single production, without objectifying cultures and thus losing connection with context and history. Students who take on their own process of adaptation and reconfiguration are thus participating in this dimension of theatre work, and contributing in some way to its value.

Conclusion

I guess as a contemporary viewer I am used to a faster pace of living and more logical understanding of life. Hence when watching the videos and performances [of traditional theatre] I sometimes found myself getting uncomfortable with the pace of the traditional theatre forms. (Ying)

Some people may find that because they [the performers] had prescribed movements they are very restricted. But I love the idea that the actors mastered and perfected these movements, which gave them even more freedom to venture with how they went about performing other stories. (Amanda)

Watching these [traditional] performances made me realise how distanced I have become from my own culture. It posed questions on whether these cultures still matter to me. Does it matter if I do not identify with them? Of if I do, why does it matter? It is an ambiguous process. (Lisa)

Contemporary urban Asian identities are often inflected by multiple influences that include the local, Asian and traditional, as well as the modern, Western and foreign. These different dimensions of culture do not operate as binary opposites that simply contrast each other, but are related aspects of a multicultural space that expands the spaces between. Nor are these multiplicities recent developments that stem from current forces of globalisation, but aspects of an older history of interconnectedness across wide-ranging regions as a result of trade, colonisation and

⁹ Lear was first performed in Tokyo, Japan in 1997, and appeared in Singapore in 1999. It was an elaborate and cutting-edge performance that brought together varied contemporary and traditional artists from several Asian countries such as Japan, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Working with traditional forms such as Noh, Chinese Opera, Thai classical dance and Indonesian gamelan, the director, Ong Keng Sen created a work that was multilingual and multitextural, allowing for a range of vocabularies to converge and diverge on stage. For further discussion see Wee (2007, pp. 121–142) and Bharucha (2000).

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religious dissemination. While a settled, linear and arborescent rootedness may be identified as typical of situated and stable selves, the nomadic, liquid and rhizomatic connections that allow for multiple dimensions of influence and interaction must also be acknowledged as crucial to identity in a pluralistic society. This contributes positively towards inter-cultural and multi-perspectival frames of cultural production, which in turn reflect the mixes and overlaps that are increasingly prevalent. Working dialogically with Asian traditional forms is but one way of advancing a pluralistic vision for drama students, as it blurs the boundaries between one culture and another, while broadening ideas about what is relevant to present-day culture. Despite the hurdles of meeting the demands of the traditional, it remains a resonant part of Asian life – even if it can feel 'uncomfortable' (Ying) or raise questions that remain 'ambiguous' (Lisa). The possibility of developing a 'love' (Amanda) for traditional forms remains present and this encourages greater agency and choice.

For me the most interesting thing about Asian traditional theatre is how ritualistic it is... We see that some things in these performances, to the traditional practitioner, are sacred. (Harvinder)

This course allowed me to see how theatre is a precious platform for the preservation of cultures as well as identities. (Amanda)

...there were things in the course of exploration that I thought I knew about Asian traditional theatre forms, when in fact I truly didn't know and it was an eye opener to experience these things (such as the many facets of Wayang Kulit and how it differs in each country). (Rafidah)

What was most interesting was my own perspective and expectation towards these theatre forms when I was confronted by them. While watching the Chinese Opera performance I had anticipated a sense of reunion with my own culture... But it was not so. (Lisa)

I felt ashamed of my understanding and involvement in the art forms of my ethnicity. I questioned why it took a Hawaiian man¹⁰ to teach me an Indonesian dance-form when it should have been the Indonesian-me¹¹ who should be more of a master than someone who is not part of the ethnicity or culture. (Ahmad)

While the encounters with the traditional performance forms in the course examined above are admittedly brief, they nonetheless allow for an 'eye opener' (Rafidah) and refashioning of perspectives when 'confronted' (Lisa) by the lack of congruence or the limited 'understanding and involvement' (Ahmad) in art-forms that are inextricably linked to one's sense of identity. As a 'precious platform' (Amanda) for the reconnecting with cultures that are threatened by flux, the traditional form offers students an insight into an alternative framework for making and learning theatre. If a dialogue can be generated about how this too can be a valid, if not 'sacred' (Harvinder), space for reconfiguring contemporary theatre and

¹⁰This refers to a workshop held at the National Institute of Education, conducted by dancerresearcher Garrett Kam, on Indonesian classical dance. Kam, who is ethnically Chinese, is originally from Hawaii, but based in Indonesia and trained in several Indonesian classical dance traditions.

¹¹ Even though Ahmad is a Malay-Singaporean student, his ethnic origins are Boyanese and thus he identifies with being culturally Malay and Boyanese, and thus Indonesian as well.

modern selves, then it advances the process of learning theatre in contextually grounded frames. All the more if it means becoming aware that what one thought one knew was partial, and there is more to know and much more to the process of knowing.

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Chapter 33 Exegetical Commentary

Janet Pillai

This commentary makes reference to several alternative theoretical concepts such as somatic education, engaged arts and performative pedagogy which have become part of the discourse today in support of the intrinsic value of arts education.

(Somatic knowing).... is an experiential knowing that involves sense, precept, and mind/body action and reaction - a knowing, feeling, and acting that includes more of the broad range of human experience than that delimited within the traditionally privileged, distanced, disembodied range of discursive conceptualization. (Matthews 1998)

The pedagogical approach used in the mentioned course on Asian Traditional Theatre Forms stands out particularly because it attempts a complimentary engagement of both thought and action, adopting the concepts of somatic or embodied knowing and the more distanced discursive knowing traditionally employed in tertiary level arts education. The design of the mentioned course combines analytical and objective forms of knowledge construction while simultaneously attempting to bring the body into the learning process. This holistic approach to curriculum design is commendable because it allows for greater educational inclusivity and equity, and provides opportunity and legitimacy for what Matthews (1998) refers to as bodily-situated human knowledge.

The course design demonstrates some of the characteristics of engaged arts. According to Pillai (2010), engaged art is a pedagogical model of art which gives prominence to the art process as a tool for learning. While formal education uses a 'cognitive approach' to communicate information, teach skills or solve problems, engaged art attempts to give prominence to 'affective learning' through use of the senses, emotions and hands-on experience. In the course design, Rajendran has combined formal theoretical knowledge with experiential learning as well as reflection through the creative process. Rajendran utilizes the transformative

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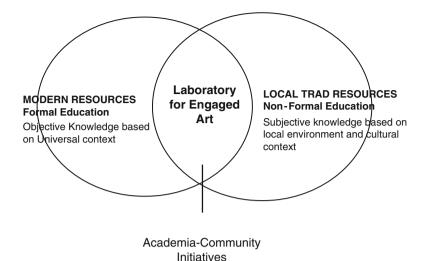


Diagram 33.1 Platform for engaged art (Pillai 2010)

process of moving from guided experiential learning of traditional arts creation to contemporary workshop performance as performative pedagogy.

Performative pedagogy combines performance methods and theory with critical pedagogy in an effort to carry out the dual project of social critique and transformation. Performance offers an efficacious means of completing this project by privileging students' historicized bodies, by implementing contingent classroom dialogue, and by exposing students to the value embedded in performance risk. (Louis 2002, p. iv)

The roots of performative pedagogy and the teacher as cultural worker stems from Paolo Freire (1970) who forwarded the idea of 'conscientization' i.e. an embodied socio-cultural inquiry praxis as a panacea to lead passive individuals (who have lost the ability to critically respond to the dominant culture) towards critical consciousness. In the documentation of student's responses to each phase of the course on Asian Traditional Theatre Forms we perceive the awakening of students towards traditional practitioners, awareness of their own bodies and a questioning of their cultural self. The teacher, Rajendran may be perceived as playing the role of a cultural worker requiring the students to seek in the process of the course, meanings about self and society.

The pedagogical approach employed in this course extends an opportunity to Singaporean students to examine the meaning of culture and context for themselves and in turn to expand their perspectives and approaches to the arts (Diagram 33.1).

Engaged art and scholarship as evidenced in the mentioned course provides a critical platform that allows for subjective knowledge to undergo objective scrutiny and for objective knowledge to be applied in a subjective context. For the process to attain greater impact however, requires building relationships, establishing shared goals, sharing assets and resources, employing the principles of negotiation, collaboration and participation between academics and community.

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Chapter 34 Dialogue

Charlene Rajendran and Janet Pillai

Janet: The American anthropologist, Julian Steward (1955) propagated the idea of culture as a changing 'creative process of adaptation or adjustment' to circumstances and the environment. As an illustration; the universal feature of dancing is bodily rhythm, which is a human rather than cultural trait, but "how" we dance is a cultural fact explainable only by cultural history and environmental factors. Do you see the approach taken in this course as an attempt to give students an experience of the "creative cultural process of adaptation and adjustment" to a contemporary context?

Charlene: Definitely. One of the motivations for getting students to create their own performance pieces within the course, even as a work in progress that is unfinished, is to make them work with the vocabularies of traditional performance, and not just learn them or learn about them. It is hoped that by doing so, they will begin to understand how any cultural process, be it new or old, is a 'version' of various elements put together in ways that respond to something current. Cultures don't emerge from nowhere, and yet we are rarely prodded to think about the contexts and histories within which particular styles and forms have developed. So if Noh is the outcome of Shinto beliefs and Shogun structures, then how does it translate into the present? There are links, yet what must we do to make them meaningful? And how does a tradition that has origins in the Japan of the 1400s pertain to 21st century Singapore?

In particular, I think it's crucial for Singaporean students who are inundated with virtual and mass media that are largely based on cultures from abroad, to see possibilities for reconfiguring local cultures in ways that are both rooted and rhizomic. Such that the histories of performance forms are acknowledged as vital to an understanding of traditional theatre, yet these are also connected to ongoing

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adaptations and adjustments that occur in contemporary theatre. This makes the seemingly outdated 'traditional' a valuable resource in contemporary currencies of expression and intervention - if there is intent and option to revise how they are viewed, engaged and embodied.

The challenge is to do this within the larger curricula for education that does not necessarily have similar foci and priorities, given that within the postcolonial and globalised context of Singapore, a Western-based education system still prevails. Thus the brief encounter with Asian traditional rhythms and impulses that are present in its forms of 'dance' may provoke a short time of 'adjustment' to a different world, but the overwhelming pervasiveness of a modern and techno world, raise questions about whether this is sustainable in the long run.

Janet: I think it is extremely interesting when contemporary performance finds ways of transporting, interpreting or transforming experience, knowledge, skills and thought processes from the past into current contexts. Culture and cultural tradition is a valuable and rich resource that can survive any application. I was amused to see some rather innovative animators from Kelantan (a state in Malaysia) adapt the stylistic essence of Kelantanese shadow puppet theater to produce a contemporary animation series.

Singaporeans as you say, like students in other Asian cities, are inundated with virtual and mass media often resulting in the culture of consumerism overriding the culture of creation and innovation. There is a tendency for the 'creative industry' to treat/view the young as ready-made audiences/consumers. Increased exposure to the arts, more venues and more access to technology is a one-way street where the young are engaged as passive consumers watching, listening, enjoying and appreciating the arts, but hardly engaged as creative agents of change.

So, upon teaching this course do you feel that short emersions and excursions into the traditional performing arts can achieve some useful level of embodiment and teach about somatic knowing?

Charlene: Tough one. Yes and no. There is definitely the potential for the course to alter some aspects of theatre knowing and doing. By simply acknowledging the difficulties and struggles of coping physically with the traditional theatre workshops, students come to see how their bodies can be pushed beyond certain comfort levels of performing. And when this occurs, the awareness that a quality of presence, dynamism of articulation and enlargement of points of reference is useful. But the degree of accomplishment is hard to determine. Thus while I would argue that it is 'useful' beyond doubt, what really makes it useful is harder to determine.

The level of embodiment and somatic knowing that develops from the course alone is limited due to constraints of time, and needs to be seen as such. Often this is also because students are caught up in a range of other assessment demands that make it difficult for them to really internalise what they learn and then experiment with their ideas to the fullest extent. They are occupied with balancing a range of different kinds of learning, particularly in courses that do not emphasise the performative and creative dimensions of education. Most of this is neither somatic nor embodied. Thus the very skill of learning through the body, which needs time and space to breathe, is curtailed.

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However the brief 'brush' with the traditional does leave a trace, and more detailed and long-term research needs to be done about how this trace actually impacts on further theatre thinking and doing for the students. Bearing in mind that they go on to become teachers in schools where the Asian traditional form is rarely encountered, this could be gauged through their personal interest in traditional and intercultural theatre and whether it is sustained. Do the programmes they conduct and organise include elements of the traditional? Does the Asian traditional form have any influence on their approaches to teaching and making theatre?

The short emersion in and excursion into the traditional should ideally lead to a long emersion and excursion. But this rarely occurs, except for a few students who decide to take a deeper interest in the form, and embark on their own journeys. A small number have actually continued with lessons in a traditional form, or continued to watch performances when and where possible. So it does lead to an engagement that stretches beyond the course. And it does revise how they understand and approach performance. But how far this extends I cannot really say at present.

Janet: Culture arises from the creative process of adaptation and adjustment to change. Policy makers perhaps need to understand that the creative process i.e. sensual engagement and learning, creative problem-solving, innovative thinking and application of knowledge can be learnt through experiential projects in both the science and the arts.

There seems to be insufficient platforms or even encouragement within education policy and vision to provide the young with 'in-depth and extended encounters' in the art-making process. While it is still possible to do so within the Asian context, arts education policy should also support and encourage a symbiotic approach to learning that brings together the formal laboratory/studio setting of western-based education system and the non-formal traditional platforms of skills and knowledge transmission or acquisition.

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) a French sociologist, described 'embodied' cultural capital as a "competence" or skill derived from cumulative experience that cannot be separated from its "bearer" (that is, the person who "holds" cultural knowledge). The accumulated knowledge impresses itself upon one's character and way of thinking.

Hence the process of true engagement requires employing the principles of negotiation, collaboration and participation between academics and community. With this course do you see Asian tertiary education going towards deeper levels of engaged scholarship with community?

Charlene: The ideal way to conduct this course would be to collaborate with traditional theatre practitioners who are open to contemporising their form, while recognising the importance of 'preserving' critical elements of the form. The collaboration would entail their being involved in teaching how the histories of the form and the practices of training are interwoven, and thus engaging students in a cognitive understanding of what the form means in relation to theatre histories, as well as how the forms continue to be practiced in contemporary Singapore society and further afield.

The model of engaged arts practice you propose, that consciously links the non-formal with the formal, is highly desirable and much needed in Asian tertiary education. It offers an important alternative to the current dominant systems that separate the two, and often loses out on the range of knowledges, particularly the tacit and implicit, that are invaluable in deepening understandings of cultural identities and societies. A revaluing of how the informal enriches and deepens the formal, and an awareness of the intricate and complex workings of the community through intelligent and insightful participation in it, enhances the capacity to apprehend multiple truths and knowledges as relevant and resonant. It provides a counter-process to the merely information-driven process, which often consumed passively and rarely made applicable to everyday life. So yes the need to engage the 'bearers' of culture is critical.

However I think that Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' needs to be seen as a double-edged sword, because the tendency to merely commodify the 'bearer' of culture in a capitalist society can then reduce the intangible qualities and unmarketable skills that are not easily visible or made known. Thus my hope is that an understanding of 'cultural capital' through an engaged arts education process, will serve as a critique of the consumerist values that emphasise only the tangible and marketable. So true engagement would entail being purposefully cognisant of the capitalist frames that tend to devalue the less 'fashionable' aspects of the community, and excavate the hidden and tattered remnants of our cultures, to restore them with care and compassion.

If we are to negotiate, collaborate and participate in and with the wider community, then I think academics must practice respect and concern for the community in ways that are tangible and engender reciprocal relations. Too often the academic assumes a top-down approach that is off-putting for the community. This will also be read by students as yet another endorsement of a hierarchical notion of knowledge that prioritises the formal over the informal. So the challenge for me is to develop processes that are convincing about the parity of knowledges, ranging from the very formal to the wildly informal, as varied but valid ways of thinking, doing and living theatre, enhancing the arts, advancing education and giving life the integrity it needs.

Janet: I agree that it is critical that the teaching and learning of an art form preferably takes place within an authentic context, where the expression of the form as is, can be understood in relation to the history and experiences of the community, the environment and its resources.

Non-governmental organisations and institutes have already understood how the exchange of objective and subjective knowledge and skills, exchange between academics (or professionals) and community can enrich knowledge-making. I observe with optimism the growing interest in engaged scholarship in Asian universities where academics and students are being challenged to leave the ivory tower and work with or learn from community.

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Part XIV Music Theory for the Twenty-First Century Music Teacher

Chapter 35 Revamping Music Theory for the Twenty-First Century Music Teacher in Singapore

Eddy K.M. Chong

Opening the Curricular Door

It was my foray into what is now referred to as Web 2.0 that pried open the curricular door of my music theory teaching. Fresh from completing a doctoral dissertation on Schenkerian analysis and having taught the American undergraduate theory curriculum for 4 years, I had conceived of a similar theory curriculum when I started teaching the theory courses in the various music education programmes at the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Singapore in 2002. Admittedly, I was aware of the multi-ethnic and multicultural context in Singapore and had noted that my students in the music education programme were already being exposed to musical traditions such as those of the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Japanese. Nonetheless, based on my limited understanding—and not without some misunderstanding, as I later realized—of world musics, I was convinced that western music theory offered what I saw to be a systematic way to understand music, at least on the theoretical front and that this basic knowledge could in turn enable students to understand the musics of other traditions. My pedagogical rationale back then stemmed perhaps from a past conceit that western music and its theories are by far the most sophisticated musical achievements of human civilization, especially in respect of harmony.

It was not until a few years into my teaching that a chance acquaintance at a general education conference gradually—and most unexpectedly—called into question my Eurocentric tunnel vision. Over a conference lunch, a presenter on blogging in education had piqued my interest in the pedagogical affordances of this Web 2.0 tool for music teaching purposes. With the help of this educational-technology collaborator, I subsequently introduced blogging into one of my theory classes and quickly saw its motivating effects on the students when the latter were

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given this additional "classroom" space for more autonomous and collaborative learning (Chong 2006; Chong and Soo 2005). Little did I know that this was to unlatch my curricular door. In face-to-face lectures, I taught the standard topics of a western music theory curriculum—from harmony and phrase structures to classical forms. Then, to prompt students to apply this knowledge beyond western classical repertoire and thereby see its relevance beyond classical music, the blog-based assignment required them to analyze and discuss music outside a western art-music repertoire. I suggested popular music, musicals and film scores as possibilities; Jazz was deliberately not mentioned due to my limited technical understanding of that style. The scope for analytical discussion was loosely defined, the bottom-line being that they must demonstrate their theoretical understanding and analytical skills they had learnt in relation to western art music when discussing their chosen piece.

It did not take long before I found myself discussing with students on their blogs not only Western pop, but also Mando-, Canto-, J-, and K-pop; of course, hits from musicals and films were on the discussion table given the typical musical diet of this generation. Initially, I felt relatively adequate with my western theory training, I commented on their interpretation of pop harmonies and song structures, adopting the ploy of simply highlighting similarities and differences between classical styles and those of "the other." I did harbour plans to acquaint myself with Jazz styles so that I could eventually broaden the options for my students. However, I was pushed out of my comfort zone quicker than I had expected, in fact I found myself venturing even farther afield than what I had earlier envisaged when I unwittingly urged some students to take advantage of their own musical training in non-western traditions. For example, when one of my students, a fine yangqin player active in the local Chinese music scene, started discussing a yangqin solo piece (凤点头 fengdiantou by 徐昌俊Xu Changjun), I began to be aware of the limitation of a western perspective not only in interpreting Chinese harmonies but also in dealing with Chinese rhythms based on the notion of ban (板), which is not to be equated with the western notion of beat. Further, when she started seeing the work in compound ternary form as if the composer had actually been using this western form, it dawned on me that perhaps we needed a more cultural-informed perspective to better understand structural organization in Chinese music, and indeed their underlying aesthetics. Another similar instance surfaced when she, in her online search for information, came across the idea of yuyaowei 鱼咬尾 (literally, fish biting the tail of another), which is a metaphor for referring to the phenomenon of starting a new phrase with the ending of the previous one. All these showed up the limitation and indeed cultural bias of my western-based theory curriculum.

If the above cases had meant learning only with one student (and I was thankful that I could read some of the online sources in Chinese), another case made me feel more uncomfortably inadequate. From the same class, another student was interested in a local Malay garage band *Force Vomit*. This time, I really felt ill-equipped to guide the student in more specific technical terms to understand what he time and

again could only generally refer to as "the Malay feel" in the music. I was much less familiar with traditional Malay music, and there was little music-technical information in English on Malay music that I could lay my hands on back then (and I do not read Malay). Even on more familiar musical turfs, I was challenged with unexpected viewpoints from this student who had entered the programme without the usual formal musical training. When analyzing a song by the rock band *Blink 182*, he wondered aloud on his blog why power chords "work[ed] even though the [chordal] third is omitted." These and other similar instances prompted me to think more critically about the universality of western music-theoretical understandings and their underlying assumptions. These in turn led me to question my pedagogical assumptions about the adequacy and, dare I say, the supremacy of a western-based music theory curriculum. The winds of change have entered through my pried-open curricular door: my learning journey as a music theory teacher was set to change course.

Situating the Theory Curriculum

My first-year undergraduate theory programme became the site for my pedagogical rethinking and curricular revision. In responding to these external forces of change that had originated from working with my students, I was very clear that the two-semester undergraduate theory courses in question should form the foundation for the students' musical studies. Seen against a larger backdrop, it had to prepare them for the kind of society they live in. The multi-ethnic make-up of the Singapore population has always been characteristic of the Singapore society even before her independence in 1965. The demography from the 2010 population census is representative: 74.1 % Chinese, 13.4 % Malays, 9.2 % Indians, and 3.3 % constituting the category undesirably labeled as "Others" (Singapore 2010). At the dawn of this modern city state, school education had understandably been identified as a key instrument for fostering multi-ethnic integration and cohesion (Singapore 1956, 1959). In recent years, as a result of the globalizing trends across the world and the Singapore government's more recent immigration policies, non-citizens now make up almost 40 % of the population, and of the citizens some 20 % are born in other countries (Singapore 2010). A multi-cultural music curriculum for the Singapore schools then becomes all the more relevant. The music students at NIE therefore need to be suitably equipped to deliver such a curriculum, and (for a music theorist like myself) this subject competence must be undergirded by sufficient and an appropriate understanding of the different musics themselves, not just the musical practices in its socio-cultural context. To borrow Campbell's words (2002), if "music is a way of knowing culture" (p. 27), then music theory provides a way to know the music at a level deeper than what "musical tourism [with its] whirlwind tour of songs from many lands" offers (p. 31).

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The Journey Begins...

The transformation of my theory curriculum was a gradual one—it had to be. As I embarked on a learning journey myself to better understand the musical worlds closer to home and in particular their attendant (if implicit) music-theoretic underpinnings, I sought ways to allow the newly-acquired understandings to inform my teaching of theory concepts. Taking a prudent approach, instead of radically overhauling the course overnight, I initially looked at ways to augment my course content by incorporating related topics not typically included in a western music theory curriculum. For example, I had previously focused on western art music in my theory teaching, now to better prepare my students to handle the analysis of popular music, I started introducing some discussion of pop harmonies and pop-song structures in my lecture component more systematically rather than leave this to more ad hoc blog discussions. I also handled the compare-and-contrast more sensitively, pointing to... on the one hand, and highlighting distinct features....on the other. Admittedly, this was but a very modest step towards diversifying the theory curriculum and was clearly far from being adequate.

Meanwhile, as I gingerly negotiated less familiar subject terrains before opening the door wider to admit non-Western musics, I began re-thinking my pedagogical objectives. This took place at a time in the middle of the last decade when "teaching for understanding" was a catchphrase in Singapore. At the same time, my research in edublogging (Chong 2008a, b, 2011; Chong and Soo 2007) and in turn the learning sciences were directing me to the notion of "learning to be" and heightening my awareness of the aspect of disciplinary enculturation in the teaching/learning process (Brown and Duguid 1991; Brown et al. 1989; Bruner 1996; Lave 1988; Lave and Wenger 1991). I became increasingly conscious of re-angling my teaching to develop students' musical understanding and thinking so as to eventually inform and shape their musical listening rather than focus on getting them to learn musical facts per se ("learning about" music), which in music theory, often means learning taxonomic labels. Apropos the now slightly-diversified curriculum, I also began to underscore the existence of alternative music-theoretical thinking across cultures as I sought—both in face-toface teaching and online interactions—to broaden students' musical horizons and prod them to be more sensitive in their musical thinking in the face of such differing musical cultures.

In extending my own musical horizons, acquainting myself with the music of select traditions, namely Chinese, Japanese, and Indonesian (Chong 2009, 2010) and subsequently adding the two main Indian ones (Hindustani and Carnatic), I quickly discovered that upholding the western music-theoretic paradigm can be fundamentally problematic; my earlier compare-and-contrast approach, at least in its superficial form, simply would not do sufficient justice to some of these traditions. For example, it would be misleading if we merely point out that "Auld lang syne" is pentatonic in the same way as Chinese folk tunes are. From

researching into the Chinese scale system—in fact systems—I discovered that the ancient Chinese from as far back as the ancient Greek times already had a scale system based on five notes, each of which may be (to borrow a western term) the modal "finalis" (调头diaotou) to yield five modal species (调式diaoshi), each of which may in turn be rendered at 12 different transpositional levels, thereby giving rise to a 60-item pentatonic scale system. Furthermore, two altered tones (变音 bianyin) may be added to form septatonic scales. Then, depending on the specific altered tones involved, three different septatonic scale types may be formed, each of which gives rise to a corresponding set of 84 scales (Du 2004, pp. 105–106). Neither the Chinese notion of diaotou nor bianyin should then be simply equated with the Western notions of tonal/modal centre and chromatic pitches respectively given their differing theoretical conceptions. It is in the light of such understanding that I became more careful when presenting what appears to be basic concepts—the notion of scale, in this case—in music theory.

In fact, putting Indonesian gamelan scales and Indian $r\bar{a}gas$ alongside the Chinese pentatonic scales, more radical differences emerged. The gamelan sléndro and pélog turn out to be tuning systems (laras) rather than scale structures per se, and the modal practice is such that, for example, only five out of the seven notes of a pélog are typically used for a particular pathet (modal type). Moreover, as tuning systems, there is no standardization of intervallic distances, unlike their Chinese and Indian counterparts (Miller and Williams 2008; Sumarsam 1995). Another pertinent difference concerns the Javanese tuning aesthetic as distinct from the Balinese *ombak*, the latter referring to the sounds brought to life as it were by exploiting the acoustical effects of beats (Gold 2005, p. 33). Contrasting in a different way, the Indian $r\bar{a}ga$ has an equally intriguing set of complexities involving gamaka (pitch inflections and embellishments), vakra (non-unidirectional scalic movements) and specific melodic movements as distinguishing features. However, perhaps reflective of their historical link, both Indian rāgas and Gamelan pathets have very specific extramusical associations. With Chinese music, no such associations apply and though pitch inflections may be characteristic of certain instruments such as the guqin, they do not define the scale type. Faced with such disparate modal conceptions and practices, re-thinking the theory curriculum content then led to a reformulation of the underlying conceptual framework—one that resist uncritically adopting lock-stock-and-barrel the underpinnings of western music theory but take serious cognizance of any pertinent fundamental differences—to understand and in turn teach the subject matter.

Reframing the Theory Curriculum

Fortuitously, being involved in teaching music-education courses, I came across the *Understanding by Design* (UbD) curriculum design model developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005). The authors propose conceptualizing the

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curricular content in terms of key concepts and generalizations—"big ideas"—that lie at the core of a discipline or subject; it is these fundamental knowledge which will translate into enduring understandings for the students—"enduring" in the sense that they will be retained even if many of the factual details are forgotten years later. For my purpose, I saw the potential for these to also constitute the platform for negotiating between disparate musical traditions and their theoretical systems. A big impetus to radically redesign my theory curriculum came in 2010 when a new teacher-ed programme was rolled out for which I designed a course entitled "Music Theory for a Multicultural Music Curriculum." With the earlier foundational theory course, I was tweaking an existing course, now I could draw up the course content afresh.

Previously, I had already begun to ask what some of these UbD "big ideas" might be, albeit within the old course structure. The latest curricular designing opportunity now allowed me to follow through more fully the curricular implications of the premise that students need to approach musical traditions with more critical awareness of culturally-biased assumptions in respect of music theory. This had an impact on the teaching approach itself. For example, to more appropriately understand modes and scale across different cultures, I sought to bring to the fore the UbD kind of essential questions—questions that can be asked repeatedly across different topics, even across subjects, to help "uncover" (another UbD term) understandings:

- What kind of tuning system and aesthetics apply to the music in question?
- As an abstract scale structure (if there is one), what is its origin or derivational basis?
- Are there defining modal practices for rendering the modes?
- Are there religious or other extramusical associations tied to specific modes?

These questions go beyond the simplistic approach of defining a scale as a series of pitches or intervals nor assume the Pythagorean system as a given. In UbD terms, the ultimate objective is to help students uncover basic concepts pertaining to pitch, tuning, and pitch relations; and, in the longer term, to ask similar questions of other musical traditions. Similarly, with rhythmic organization, the western hierarchic organization from the hypermetric to the sub-beat level is not presumed as universal but presented as a culture-specific mode of musical thinking: one need only consider the Indian tāla organization to appreciate this when asking the essential question "how does the particular tradition conceive of rhythm?" To illustrate further, with the ancient Chinese notion of indeterminate beat (拍无定值 paiwudingzhi), and the associated idea of sanban (散板) (Du and Oin 2007, pp. 272–273), the notion of rhythmic hierarchy is not only irrelevant but misleading: even if sanban for example is equated in modern terms with ad lib. or rubato and the westernized score notated as such, our students must not assume that it has the same expressive and aesthetic intents as its western counterpart. The Chinese fundamentally different approach to musical time is perhaps best seen in the Chinese character-based tablature of the ancient Chinese zither instrument, the guqin. Such cross-cultural diversities can then emerge more easily in the absence of *a priori* assumptions when we try to understand traditions on their own terms by asking UbD-style essential questions.

A related guiding principle in my new curricular designing concerns the emicetic distinction that anthropologists and subsequently ethnomusicologists have been mindful of. To understand each of the selected musical traditions more authentically, I took to heart what Nattiez had referred to as "ethnotheory" (Nattiez 1990). Conscious of the outsider-insider dichotomy, I paid particular attention to possible differences arising from such perspectival differences. Hence, in asking how culture bearers themselves understand particular musical phenomenon or element, the notion of a blues scale was problematized; students then learnt about the aesthetics of "having the blues" (Weisethaunet 2001) and were prompted to critique the common presentation of the blues as being based on some kind of pentatonic or septatonic scale with "bent" notes. Similar attention is paid to the differing aesthetics pertaining to power chords in rock and heavy metal (Walser 1993) on the one hand and the major/minor third clash in Flamenco music (Fernández 2004) on the other. The enduring insight for the students then is the serious limitations of a purely pitch-based understanding or, in these two cases, the perils of ignoring the contributory role of the musical instruments (and timbre) in question when understanding the pitch world of a particular tradition.

As a further step towards more authentic (emic) understandings, I attempted too to read sources in the original language where possible, and paid special attention to key terms in translations. Ultimately, one essential question motivating this is: what can we infer about the cultural mindset from which the particular tradition stems? This opened up a rich world of alternative worldviews, at times vividly expressed with metaphors. For example, the Chinese structural principle of qi-cheng-zhuan-he 转、合) embodies the aesthetics of ancient Chinese poetry, which stresses the importance of an arresting and apt opening, the naturalness of its continuation (承接), the need for a turn (转折) to present new ideas, and finally for an effective wrapping up (合成) that is compared to dotting the dragon's eye to make the whole come alive (画龙点睛). Admittedly, there is some resemblance with the western notion of contrast and reprise but the rhetorical structure and poetic sense would have been misconstrued if it were presented only in such western terms. A similar pitfall applies to the Indian tradition. At first glance, the Carnatic devotional concert genre, the Kriti, resembles a rondo structure in its ABACA layout. However, their original Sanskrit terms Pallavi and Anupallavi suggest a different relation between A and B: "sprouting" and "continuation of the sprouting" (Jackson 1992–1993, p. 26; Viswanathan and Allen 2004, pp. 129, 131). In fact, on this understanding, we can then better appreciate how the varied repetitions (sangatis) applied to the pallavi, anupallavi, and occasionally the caranam is a form of musical "sprouting" too—"budding in new directions, opening vistas in the $r\bar{a}ga$ and climaxing" (Jackson 1992–1993, pp. 35–36) whilst "bringing out the colourful and varied aspects of the rāga bhāva" (Sambamoorthy 1973, p. 151); these cannot be simplistically compared with the Western idea of theme and variation. At the same time, the pairing of the structural elements (pallavi-pallavi reprise, anupallavi-pallavi reprise, and caranam-pallavi

reprise) (Padmavathy 1982, p. 42; Viswanathan and Allen 2004, p. 65) suggests a shaping very different from that of a western rondo, one complicated by (a) such elements as the dynamism of growth through the *saṅgatis* across the *pallavi*, anupallavi, and sometimes the *caraṇam* (Jackson 1992–1993, pp. 24–28), (b) the *caraṇam* as culmination yet itself ending with a final pallavi reprise, and, not forgetting too, (c) the impact of the insertions of the improvisatory *niraval*, *kalpana svara* and *tani āvartana*. Certainly, one can see a certain parallel in notions of growth in Indian musical thinking and the Western ideology of organicism (Solie 1980), but again universalist generalization risk losing the richness of the music-cultural conception in question.

Looking back, my learning journey thus far as a music theory teacher—very much like that of "beginning students of a musical system" (Campbell 2003, p. 17), indeed of numerous musical systems—has yielded at least three important enduring understandings, for myself and hopefully for my students at some point:

- Indigenous musical terminologies (if existent) often embody or reflect the broader cultural thinking of the particular tradition. In fact, in the first place, as ethnomusicologists have critically known for a long time, there are cultures whose concept of "music" as understood in the west does not even exist (see for example Idamoyibo 2006, pp. 2–9 to 2–13; Merriam 1977, p. 190; Nettl 1978). As such, our study lens reflects the learner's mindset as much as the object of study (music in this case) reflects the (music-)cultural outlook from which it originates.
- There is no universal organizational principle for musical sounds, but mankind does organize sounds in some ways and for various purposes, whether or not they call it "music." Beyond the most rudimentary awareness of pitch differentiation, duration, timbre, volume, tempo, and simultaneity of sounds, the way people have brought these parameters together is very much dependent on particular culture and the context in question; historical factors also play a part since all traditions evolve over time.
- While musical structures will inevitably exist, musical understandings need to go beyond structural descriptions. Indeed, at times, extramusical considerations and the understandings they lead to are far more pertinent than musical ones—this realization, which has broader implications for other aspects of music, is important lest we harbour too much of a conceit for music theory. The various world music courses that my students take as part of their music education programme are therefore crucially complementary for a more balanced and holistic understanding.

Incidentally, it should be noted that the enduring understandings articulated here are very much in sync with the five propositions for exploring music as spelt out by Michael Bakan, whose textbook I have adopted as a supplementary text for my newly-developed theory course. In essence, he emphasizes that music, as organized sounds and silences, is "a product of human intention and perception, ...[hence] it is inseparable from the people who make and experience it." He further points out that the term music is "inescapably tied to Western culture and its assumptions" (Bakan 2011, pp. 3–7).

Beyond Cognitive Understanding

As a practising western musician, I was critically aware of the need to ground music-theoretical understandings on musical experiences; technical description of rhythms is pointless if one does not have a sense of the rhythmic feel in question; similarly, definitional understanding of heterophony does not equate with an ability to hear one such texture (as I found out, to my surprise and dismay, when assessing students' learning). In fact, having participated in a variety of workshops to gain some first-hand experiences performing non-western music, I have come to realize that even basic musicianship skills called for may vary from culture to culture. For instance, good western sight-singing skills may be an advantage when singing Chinese pentatonic melodies but not necessarily when negotiating Gamelan tunes. In Indian music, the typical western rhythm training is insufficient to handle some of the rhythmic complexities, especially with faster *layas*; indeed, even the simple notion of a tāla cycle, especially a long one, may not be intuitively felt by a western musician who is more familiar with much shorter western metrical and hypermetrical cycles. Juxtaposing the latter cycles against the Indian or (shall we add) Gamelan and African ones, it is evident that the term "cycle" and its musical sense needs to be culturally contextualized, and our musical ears attuned accordingly. This enculturation of the ears at times entails suppressing one's predilections or previous learning—which in my case and for the typical Singaporean student, is a western-trained one. For example, I have found myself having to consciously eschew western tonal expectations when listening to certain Chinese melodies, prompting me to realize that aesthetic notions of musical closure is also not universal. Furthermore, in this connection, the application of western solfège to Chinese modal species, especially those other than gong-based (宫调式), is problematic insofar as the conventional audiation of the solfège "doh" would not apply to modal species whose modal centre is other than "gong."

On a deeper psychological level, it is also important to adopt an appropriate listening mindset to better—more fairly—appreciate the music on its own terms. For example, the traditional Chinese preference for unification (统一), in contradistinction to the Western predilection for resolution of conflicts (perhaps best epitomized by the sonata principle), leads to musical unfoldings that are based on naturalness in continuity and on the co-existence of disparate elements embodied in, for example, the concept of yin and yang rather than on stark contrasts or even conflicts that need to be ultimately reconciled. As such, traditional Chinese music seldom manifests the Western kind of resolution-based reprise and, not surprisingly, some western-influenced Chinese composers have transformed this western structural element along Chinese aesthetic sensitivities when adopting it (see for example Yick 2013). Applied to music theory teaching, this entails an awareness that conceptualizing music in architectural terms is antithetical to the Chinese emphasis on flow (Shi 2008, pp. 137–146). Likewise, as touched on above, the Indian Kriti also calls for the fostering of a very different listening psychology to complement the theoretical learning.

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Interim Stock-Taking

Obviously, the learning journey has not come to an end for me. So far, it has been many fascinating discoveries and a realization of new facets of understandings not just new factual knowledge—at every turn in my cross-cultural music-theoretic explorations. My theory pedagogical thinking are, admittedly, still very much at its nascent stage as I continue to broaden and deepen my learning on the one hand, and to rethink my own pedagogical principles on the other. In lieu of a fully fleshed-out example of the multi-cultural music theory curriculum I have recently developed, I have merely articulated some broad directions through some specific examples and in UbD terms. With an eye on fostering multi-cultural awareness and sensitivity, I hope that my theory course can offer a window—a music-theoretically tinted one but culturally-informed at that—on the rich and diverse musical creations that have emerged in different parts of the world from different times. To be clear, the musictechnical learning is but a means to build a general and flexible enough mental schema for students to continue their own musical cross-cultural encounters and learning. Ultimately, my objective is to equip students for their inter-cultural sensemaking—what Nicholas Cook calls "intercultural analysis" (Cook 2012). A theory curriculum that concerns little beyond technical jargon, especially a western one, will no longer suffice for the twenty-first century, most certainly not for a multiethnic, multi-cultural country like Singapore.

That said, whilst the general direction ahead may be relatively clear, the actual path to be beaten out is less so. Indeed, it is fraught with challenges: issues of essentialism and universalism need to be addressed, caution against Indo-Occidentalism (Jairazbhoy 2008) and other dangers of institutionalization need to be heeded, and, in general, terminological usage needs to be judiciously thought through. For example, we need to ask if cross-culturally observable musical structures validate claims of universality and of terminological neutrality. Granted the "usefulness" of such terms to help students relate one tradition to another, will we risk downplaying or even effacing important music-cultural distinctiveness as we have noted above? These are but some fundamental questions that I am as yet unable to fully address. Perhaps, the present chapter can initiate some relevant conversations or even spark some debates useful for theory pedagogues interested in embarking on this journey.

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Chapter 36 Exegetical Commentary

Terry E. Miller

The goal of expanding "music theory" courses to include music outside the Western classical canon is, as Prof. Chong discusses, daunting. This is so for several disparate reasons including: (1) language, (2) contents, (3) concepts, and (4) the setting. Simply including Chinese melodies, Indian $r\bar{a}gas$, Javanese gamelan idioms, African rhythms, and American popular songs in a class otherwise devoted to Bach chorales, Mozart sonatas, and Brahms chamber works is problematic for the four reasons listed above. Why this is so requires some explanation.

European languages remain the principal means to transmit information about music theory, and the music in question is normally European/American music. Thus, both language and music share a common cultural basis. Languages evolve the specific vocabulary required to transmit the concepts, parts, and processes deemed significant in their musical world. Even more fundamental is the matter that language and music occupy entirely different realms of human experience. Just as music is incapable of describing language, language is incapable of describing music. Music is, as many fondly repeat, "organized sound" or "humanly organized sound." The "organization," however, is perceived in the brain and is entirely dependent on experience and conditioning. But music is a sonic experience and not part of human speech. And it is certainly not a "universal language." Consequently, we have evolved a vocabulary to describe music by analogy to a non-musical, concrete experience. A tone is "bright." A texture is "dense." A melody is "angular." But music is, like oxygen, "colorless, odorless, and tasteless." As a result, the languages used to teach music Western theory utilize a vocabulary (or jargon) peculiar to music that denotes and describes only those musical traits considered significant and describable.

If this is true in, e.g., teaching Western music theory in English, it is likely true for Japanese, Indian, Ghanaian, and Native American musics as well. Even Western popular music has peculiarities of vocabulary and concepts that fall outside the

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norms of those used for classical traditions. It is both impractical and frankly impossible for theory teachers to know all of the languages of the musics being presented in an expanded-content class. Assuming we can identify the essential concepts, mechanics, and processes of a "non-Western music," we are still forced to express them in terms evolved for an entirely different music. "Lost in translation" barely expresses the limitations of this solution.

William Malm coined the phrase "equally logical but different" to describe the various music systems encountered in the world. Experience has shown, however, that explaining the "logic" of Western classical music is actually quite difficult. To a limited extent, music theory addresses questions of logic in music in that it identifies the musical conventions and habits of Western composers that produce enough consistency in style to create expectations for how this music proceeds. Composers can either satisfy our expectations or surprise us with unexpected turns. Music theorists isolate and teach many of the traits that we are conditioned to expect (e.g., patterns of chord progressions), especially at the undergraduate level, while Schenkerian analysis seeks a broader gestalt intended to reveal part of the logic of "common practice" compositions.

Music theory courses, however, tend to focus on those musical elements that can be most easily isolated, named, and described. The more subjective the musical traits (such as the subtleties that define a given composer's "style"), the more challenging they are to address. Great preference is given to those traits which can be represented graphically, either in notation or symbols such as "f" (forte) or "moderato" (medium tempo). The five-line staff evolved to represent the tuning, pitches, and rhythms of Western music. As a consequence, music theory courses prefer to transmit knowledge of Western music through literacy. As efficient as this system is, it is inextricably linked to one particular "ethnic" musical world—Western music—and is, by nature, "ethnocentric." Music theory courses best accomplish tasks that can be accomplished in classrooms.

The challenge of incorporating "non-Western" music (including even popular Western music) is that these musics usually operate on foundations that can be anywhere from slightly different (e.g., non-functional chord progressions that defy Western theoretical explanation) to conceptually different (e.g., "mode" as the basis for composition/performance). The staff represents well the 12 pitches of the Western tuning system but begins to break down when forced to represent alternate tuning systems, including equidistance using fewer than 12 pitches. Although Western-trained Thai musicians have evolved a customary way to represent the seven equidistant tones of the Thai tuning system on the Western staff, the apparent tones and semi-tones differentiated in the notation belie the actual intervals that are approximately 171 cents each. Thai musicians using the staff also represent the most emphasized pitch (both in terms of structure and in meter) as beat 1, immediately after the bar line, but Thai music is conceived of as "end accented." In their thinking, beat 4 is what we call the "downbeat." Attempts to represent this by placing this important beat/pitch before the bar line have proved confusing and ineffective.

Similarly, Vietnamese music is not just conceptually different but has defied most attempts to represent it on the staff. There is also no practical way to represent in staff notation the tuning of Vietnamese music, let alone the subtle and elaborately nuanced embellishments that define both the mode and the regional style. Additionally, Vietnamese music, unlike Thai (which is composed), consists of modally generated compositions/performances that, while working within a system of defined pitches, ornaments, melodic tendencies, rhythmic cycles, and even non-musical elements (such as "sentiment") vary with each realization. Notating a Vietnamese modal "composition" is therefore as inexact as it is ephemeral.

Music theory can be of different realms. Some theory is "descriptive" and focuses on actual practice. This is especially true of Western music theory. Additionally Western theorists tend to assume that their teaching pertains broadly to most Western music and is therefore comprehensive. But "theory" also encompasses systems that can be highly specific not just to a named culture (e.g., "Japanese") but even to a genre within that culture (e.g., "koto theory" is different from "shakuhachi theory"). And not unexpectedly, non-Western theory systems focus on those elements which are deemed most significant whether they can be easily described, named, and notated or not. All of these limitations occur within the problems of language and vocabulary.

Many of the world's theoretical systems are far more speculative and philosophical than they are practical. Rather than describing the musical world as it is, they seek to describe an ideal world that is "logical" in comprehensive ways unknown to reality. Both northern (Hindustani) and southern (Carnatic) Indian modal systems of *rāgas* offer vast melodic and rhythmic/metrical possibilities, though in practice only a small percentage of these are ever used. Music theorists of the Islamic world have argued for centuries about how many pitches comprise the tuning system, how many modes there are, and what they mean philosophically. The ancient Greek theoretical system, though well articulated and understood by modern scholars, tells us virtually nothing about the reality of Greek music, neither ancient nor contemporary. In these cases there is a comprehensive music theory for a given culture, but it is only intended for intellectuals, having little to do with actual music making. The practicing musicians of the culture may, in fact, know little about the intellectual theory. They do what they do and likely have little to say about it. It is normal that none have studied "music theory."

Indeed, the last point is worth emphasizing. One of the peculiarities of Western musical training is the belief that musicians ought to understand the theoretical system, its terminology, and its notation of the music they practice. It is assumed, when hiring music teachers, that whatever the person's performance or scholarly focus, he/she could potentially teach theory courses as well. This is not so for most of the rest of the world's musicians. They simply play music and rarely talk (let alone write) about it.

The foregoing, then, identifies some of the reasons why non-Western musics cannot easily be incorporated into Western music theory courses. It appears to be the old dilemma of pounding a square peg into a round hole. Further, even in order to understand this challenge, the classroom teacher has to know the "other" musics well enough to understand the concepts, practices, and vocabulary so foreign to the Western experience. One cannot solve a problem before you know you have one. Therefore, the training of music theory teachers must also be addressed.

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Leaving music theory aside, theory majors, like other music majors, learn from little to nothing about non-Western music (and even "traditional" American music) while earning their degrees. Although in the United States, NASM expects all schools to offer at least a minimal amount of information on popular and non-Western musics, practice varies widely from token efforts embedded into otherwise Western-oriented courses taught by teachers with no specific training to full-fledged "world music surveys" offered by faculty who may or may not have had training in the area. Though there are exceptional theory faculty who take an interest in non-Western music and alternative theoretical systems, the majority do not. It is therefore not surprising that many feel inadequate to the task of incorporating such music into an otherwise Western-centric curriculum. At least you know what you do not know before attempting a remedy.

Mantle Hood, long the great guru of UCLA's ethnomusicology program which he started in the 1960s, is much noted for advocating "bi-musicality," the idea which valued learning a musical tradition from the inside, that is, by learning to perform it. While it is obviously impossible to learn to perform all the kinds of music that one might potentially teach, having experienced at least one will create a heightened awareness of the issues. Theory teachers with such experience will not just be more aware of the challenges but will have a better shot at overcoming them. Further, it can be argued that learning a "foreign" music in depth also helps one understand the uniqueness of one's own tradition. To paraphrase Margaret Mead, "one cannot truly understand one's own culture without having experienced another, and it really doesn't matter which one it is." Studying a foreign tradition is the best way for music theory teachers to understand the uniqueness of Western classical music while at the same time disabusing themselves of any assumptions of Western music's universality, naturalness, or superiority.

Prof. Chong has begun this journey. As he progresses, he will become increasingly aware of the difficulties discussed above. As his knowledge of musics other than Western classical grows, he will find solutions to the dilemma of teaching them even within the straight-jacket setting of the "music theory classroom" with its staff lines on the wall and piano in the corner. He can call upon traditional masters from other traditions to come to his classroom and explain their traditions, though he must understand that students will have to make major thinking adjustments just to receive this knowledge. Perhaps they will need to dispense with paper. Perhaps they will have to sit cross-legged on the floor. Perhaps they will have to dispense with the Socratic method and refrain from asking questions, and just listen to the master. Western students are used to receiving knowledge in well-organized, logical packages (now presented with PowerPoint), but the rest of the world receives this knowledge differently. Perhaps students will need to handle an instrument and learn some basic techniques and melodic riffs. But the door to this vast storehouse of "non-Western" knowledge can only be opened if both teachers and students make the effort. And it will not be just the students who are "out of their comfort zone"; teachers will be as well. And they will additionally have to relinquish control as "knowledgeable master" and become "student/facilitator." Prof. Chong now understands how long this journey could be, but knowing this, can rightfully point out the way to his students.

Chapter 37 Dialogue

Eddy K.M. Chong and Terry E. Miller

Eddy

Prof. Miller, thank you for insightfully summarizing into four factors the essential challenges faced by the theory teacher. If I may distil it further, I would say the crux of the matter lies in one phrase from your response commentary: "Lost in translation." Here, the idea of translation is broadened to refer to not only that of foreign languages but also to the fundamental problem of translating the individual-cumcollective musical experiences—I consciously refrain from using the culturally-biased adjective "aesthetic"—into words and music notation. I say "individual-cum-collective" in acknowledgement of the two mutually dependent dimensions in any musical response or experience. Both levels of experiences stem from the general cultural backdrop that contextualizes the music, with the individual level also shaped by more subjective predilections.

Stepping away from our discipline for a broader perspective, it appears that the problem of "translation" is not uniquely faced by music. How does one appreciate a foreign country's history without having lived in that country and interacted with the people there? My five-year stint in America as a graduate student certainly gave me additional insights and, I may even add, a different level of empathy with American history. Turning back to music, again speaking from personal experience, my direct contact with musicians and academics from mainland China and my eventual setting foot in China have both enhanced my reading of Chinese writings on Chinese music.

This points to another issue. Even granted that we accept a certain degree of "loss" in the process of linguistic translation, we still need to wrestle with the issue

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of whose perspective qualifies as "authentic," and in turn (for educators), which warrants to be taught? More fundamentally, Prof. Miller, you have drawn attention to the theory-practitioner divide, which raises question over the raison d'être of music theory. Indeed, while theory teachers deliberate over their pedagogical basis in making certain choices, such as whether to teach the cadential six-four as "Ic", "I $_4^6$ ", as part of a "V $_4^6$ $_{-3}^{-5}$ ", or perhaps even in terms of Riemannian functions, they are additionally challenged by music (including intercultural ones) whose theoretical systems have not always been consensually codified; in some cases, the music even appears to resist codification.

In the context of Singapore, there is yet another pertinent issue. Where Chinese music is called *huayue* (华乐, Chinese music)—as opposed to *minyue* (民乐, folk music) in China, *zhongyue* (中乐, music of China) in Hong Kong, and *guoyue* (国乐, national music) in Taiwan—should we confine our purview to the oldest of origin in this case? With Malay Gamelan music, to what extent should we apply our understanding of Indonesian gamelan? Such diversities of related traditions add a level of complexity to the understanding of the "theory" that underpins the musical practices. How should we identify the "core" knowledge to be taught to enable students to subsequently negotiate such regional differences? In this regard, we should also add the fascinating challenge of having to understand the richly-syncretic music of the Baba-Nyonya community, which blends in Portuguese, Dutch, British, Malay and Indonesian elements—would our students have the proper music-theoretic lens to understand the Peranakan fusion on its own terms?

Faced with such challenges, my present response is to look beyond the specifics of music-theoretic "facts" to what is more "enduring." Whilst pragmatically choosing a certain set of content to teach for now and continuing to tweak this, my underlying objective is to sensitize students to some of these issues that are broached in their process of learning about and experiencing the various kinds of music, whether in my course or in others. This meta-cognitive awareness in respect of the differences between traditions and the epistemic nature of the theoretical understanding sought for is meant to prepare students' mindsets for their multicultural musical encounters and learning such that they are less "blind" to their initial musical enculturation and more critically aware of any attendant biasness. The other critical enabler is of course the knowledge framework—"schema"—that must be developed together with a basic musical skill set. Determining what constitute the building blocks of this framework and what "basic" means for a multicultural music curriculum is of course the task that still lies ahead of me.

Terry

My initial essay's intention was to "open eyes" to the challenges faced by any music theory teacher attempting to incorporate "world music" into the curriculum. Only after one recognizes the problem can one begin to find solutions or compromises. Prof. Chong's characterization of the problem as one of "lost in translation" is apt. In spite of limitations, we must continue our quest to broaden our students' musical

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horizons nonetheless. An imperfect understanding is preferable to no understanding whatsoever. And indeed, one of the main purposes in expanding the kinds of music studied is to broaden our students, which hopefully leads to greater tolerance, if not understanding.

Singapore, though modest in size when viewed as a "country," is surprisingly diverse. That so many ethnic groups—however defined—live in harmony is a testament to Singapore's success in fostering an acceptance of diversity. And yet it can be taken several steps further, especially in music. Students need to understand that each group has developed its own individual ways to express themselves, their identity, their beliefs, their values through music. Before being concerned about the vastness of the world's music outside Singapore, teachers might more reasonably concentrate on the musical variety found close to home. In these cases it would be possible for students to experience both the sounds and the music makers first hand, interacting with them and possibly even learning in a "hands on" manner. I feel the first priority is a mutual understanding within Singapore's diverse musical cultures.

But it is also important to introduce students to the rest of the world's most prominent musics. As an ethnomusicologist, I've long considered it my duty to understand the music I study to the greatest extent possible—and attempting to overcome my own "ethnocentrism" as much as possible—and then "translate" that understanding to my students, be they freshmen or doctoral candidates. As Prof. Chong points out, inevitably something will be "lost in translation." That's simply "the price of doing business." The most effective teacher, however, will not just possess an understanding of the music being taught but recognize the cultural differences that can lead to misunderstanding when poorly taught. To say it another way, the teacher has to be at least aware of the differences—often conceptual in nature—and then do his/her best to overcome them. Teachers who are not attuned to these challenges can easily do more harm than good by distorting the music under study through inadvertently judgmental language (e.g., "Javanese music LACKS harmony"). The issue in such a case is not what they LACK but what they HAVE.

While learning about particular musics is the first goal, there is a larger and more profound goal here: learning a process for sorting out new experiences. If students have come to see how a particular music is conceptually different, presumably they will seek a similar understanding when confronted with the next experience—because they now understand the challenge. Aware that an ethnocentric comparison of the new experience with their limited life experience to that point will not suffice, they can at least ask better questions and avoid jumping to false conclusions.

Singapore is located in one of the most musically diverse and colorful parts of the world. For American students, visiting most foreign countries constitutes a major trip. Singaporean students can cross into Malaysia easily, take the train to Thailand, or fly to exceptionally diverse places like Jakarta, Phnom Penh, Ho Chi Minh City, or Yangon. Such trips in the United States would only get students to a nearby state. The cost of bringing musicians from these places is also comparatively modest compared to the situation in my country. To make this work, then, music teachers in Singapore first have to open themselves and become excited about the prospects before they can convey this to the students. It requires a combination of lived experience and knowledge imparted in the classroom.

Part XV The Synaesthetic Mind & Ways of Knowing in the Arts

Chapter 38 Turning the Curious Corners of Thought: The Synaesthetic Mind and Ways of Knowing in the Arts

Susie Lingham

Art is exploring fundamentally new modes of perception, through the senses, and new forms of imagination.

(Bohm 1996, p. 134)

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Preamble

What is the value of art education; what are the values that art education seeks to propagate; how is the value of each artistic inquiry assessed? What is the *nature* of creativity?

A little information on my own background so as to contextualize this chapter and its scope: I am a writer-artist, art theorist, art critic, and art educator. My DPhil was in literature, religion and philosophy, within which art was inextricably and inevitably woven, and I worked to develop a philosophy of mind that focused on the idea of the unconscious in relation to how 'consciousness' is explained and grasped. My artistic practice is interdisciplinary, and so, although my teaching area was, and is at present, located in the 'Visual Arts', I see 'Art' in the larger sense of the word.

In 2000, the National Institute of Education, Singapore, offered, for the very first time, the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Higher Education (PGDipTHE) for Art specialists. It was a full-time course, 9-months in duration, and was designed to culminate in a 10,000-word thesis. At that time, I had just begun teaching full-time at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, after completing my Masters by research in Australia – which was in writing and critical theory – and decided to take up the opportunity to contextualize and analyse my own art teaching practice

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with this professional Art Education qualification. My PGDipTHE thesis was entitled: *Dialogue*, *Imagery* & *Synaesthesia-related Tasks: Learner-Centred Inter-disciplinary Teaching* & *Learning in Art Education*.

What is involved in Art Education at the tertiary level? Skills cannot be taught in isolation: there are penumbral issues surrounding the emphasis on technique and sensitivity to material. Stimulating 'ideas' towards concept development occurs within the process of acquisition of skill. This would involve 'critical thinking', an ability to make analogical transfers (Ansberg and Dominowski 2000), and a constant reconstruction of procedures that have become familiar.

Visual art in the contemporary world encompasses a wide range of practices and disciplines, requiring *creative* research in many areas. Interdisciplinarity is not a destination – it is the process that enables access to different modes of apprehending artistic, social and cultural realities. My approach to the arts and art education is perhaps transgressively interdisciplinary, but allows for critical, creative and mutual cross-fertilization of ideas across other ways of knowing and experiencing. Specific students' processes/responses, and my reflections on specific ideas and experiments in art education as contextualized in my own teaching practice will form the basis of the chapter.

Context is crucial – and I have taught a variety of subjects in the humanities and arts in very different contexts, from universities to art colleges, and now at an institute of education. I will illustrate my approach through examples of particular aspects of courses I designed and taught at the University of Western Sydney (UWS), Australia, LASALLE College of the Arts, the University of Sussex, U.K., and the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore, between 1996 and 2011. These courses are:

- (a) Writing For Performance (I first designed the course in University of Western Sydney (UWS) where I was undertaking my MA (Hons)), which I then re-contextualized for LASALLE-SIA, College of the Arts as Text and Performance. I restructured and modified one component of this course for a writing workshop at Sussex University in 2007, and most recently, a further modified version for a workshop titled The Word as Sound for the Arts Club at the Singapore Management University in 2011. In UWS, the course was originally titled 'Writing for Performance', which I interpreted as an interdisciplinary practice that encompasses the use of imagery in language, and I structured the course around a reduction, and then extension of the senses.
- (b) Conceptual Drawing (first designed for students doing 3-D Studies Sculpture, Ceramics, Fine Art Jewellery at LASALLE-SIA, College of the Arts) where synaesthetic tasks allow for the 'translation' of sensory experience e.g., from sound to image.
- (c) Visual Arts & Creativity (A Masters in Education (MEd) course at NIE where I teach it for the Art Specialization students as well as for non-art Primary and Secondary Specialization students who take the course as an elective). Part of the original course description underlines the relevance of art education to

"aesthetic understandings, linguistic and logicomathematical thinking". In my approach, notions of creativity are explored though parallel studies in art and particular topics in non-art subjects e.g., symmetry, in science and mathematics. The aim is to help non-art educators work through art-related tasks as a *medium*, such that they are able to create an interdisciplinary lesson plan that, while targeting the non-art subject's desired learning outcomes, facilitated this through heuristic and tacit learning modes of discovery through interdisciplinary art-related tasks. For the art educators, the course allows them to get intensely engaged in a variety of creative tasks that challenge and elasticize notions of what art education is, re-acquainting them with its key role in educating the imagination.

Within this chapter, I will highlight specific 'case study' vignettes from the various courses I have taught for analysis – not in any chronological order – centered around responses and work resulting from the set tasks, which I then reflect upon.

Introduction

[G]rowth does not have an end, it is an end. (Kelley 1995, p. 95)

Einstein famously declared, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."

What is 'Imagination'? It is a way of knowing or intelligence that has always led the artist – and the scientist – into new territories. David Bohm (1996), physicist and theorist, says:

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that [...] intelligence does not arise primarily out of thought. Rather, [...] the deep source of intelligence is the unknown and indefinable totality from which all perception originates./[I]ntelligence is not to be regarded as a result of accumulated knowledge which could be learned, for example, as a science or as a technique. Rather, it can perhaps best be regarded as an art – the art of perception through the mind. (p. 75)

In cautionary tones we say: 'Don't let your imagination run away with you' – as if imagination were a treacherous seducer. Or, we accuse someone of having 'a lack of imagination'. Or we begin, excited ourselves, and attempting to excite another: 'Imagine if we touched the lottery...'

And a sensible person would *reason* that the odds of winning the lottery are more than a million to one – so, given those unlikely chances, *logically*, don't bother with the lottery, and no point 'imagining' winning anything either. Reason, it would appear, does not much operate in the long snaking queues outside the ubiquitous lottery booths in Singapore! Hope, and its sturdier relative Faith, while seemingly altogether distinct issues from our focus on 'imagination', does feature in the concepts of heuristic and tacit learning processes, which we will be looking at.

Imagination, Reason and Intuition

The education of the imagination is a never-ending process (Lloyd 1998, p. 168)

Imagination, reason and intuition are the three kinds of knowledge that the seventeenth century philosopher Spinoza classifies and explores as 'powers of the mind', and these 'powers' can be seen as different 'ways of knowing'. A 'way of knowing' is an ongoing process: it is how mind – and body – *learns*. Rather than simply focusing on 'knowledge' and how much or how accurately one knows *about* a subject, it is vital to learn about learning itself. Any body of knowledge itself is a limit, has a 'shelf-life', and becomes irrelevant as new understanding comes into view. Any body of knowledge depends on the sensitivity and accuracy of the instrument used to perceive and categorize, hence it would be circumscribed by the limits of the instrument itself.

Visual literacy in the teaching of art-education and fine art should not be just the teaching of visual principles through the use of visual aids or through visual references. In attempting to stimulate and train learners to become art practitioners, it is important to exercise the muscle of *imagination* as well, rather than just provide visual input of images and objects or representations of images and objects already in art-historical existence. The sensitized visual sense is a mode of apprehending the world and the various codes that represent a diverse range of 'realities' – social, cultural and artistic. 'Visuality' can be generated through non-visual means. Visual literacy is more than the ability to read visual imagery, or having demonstrable knowledge of Art History and Theory, or the skill to make aesthetically pleasing or provocative art. The approach I take is one of educating the imaginative faculties through processes of dialogue, activation of 'imaging' languages (visual/auditory/textual/mental) and synaesthetic tasks.

Both reason and imagination play vital roles in the cultivation of visual literacy. If art students' imaginations were stimulated, then solutions to the inevitable problems of the art-making process would be much more varied, creative and individual.

In Antonio Negri's interpretation of Spinoza, reason and imagination are not in an ascending hierarchy, as in Plato's famous ascent from the world of appearances to the world of the forms. The imagination has here a resilience which allows it to coexist with reason in a unified perception of the world [...] The two cannot be separated; but they are not two worlds, but rather two ways of being and thinking. (Lloyd 1998, p. 164)

Skill cannot be cultivated in a disinterested vacuum: there are always attendant ideologies. The least desirable situation for the practice of visual art, as a credible means of inquiry and a methodology for research in its own right, would be to produce harvest upon harvest of mere 'illustrators' of theory, idolaters of ideology, harried by the need for validation by theory before their practice can be considered a viable instrument for research. Such slavish formulaic approaches to art practice short-circuits genuine innovation and r/evolution and, at the same time, takes the 'critical' edge out of theoretical pursuits. It is not how much theory

students *know* and can recite, but how innovatively they apply this knowledge that matters.

In the teaching of art, recognizing and identifying learners' individual methods of meaning-construction and special interests is crucial. This will enable 'tailoring' stimulus and strategic hints through a 'poetics' of language and form that could guide them towards new insights. Setting projects that require conceptual thinking and not just the display of skill could also spur students towards a deeper engagement with their subject. Providing a wide variety of stimulus from a variety of disciplines should also encourage learners to use their imaginative faculties when translating sense-experiences into ideas and vice-versa.

We extend this also to say that there are different ways of knowing, and these types of knowledge are not always immediately accessible to each other – there is the requirement of *active mediation*.

Affective ideas relate to imagination, and are sense-derived and oriented. Spinoza locates imagination as the lowest order of knowledge because it comes into play in the absence of full knowledge, as in childhood when one makes up states of affairs without having the benefit of factual knowledge. He does acknowledge though, that imagination is necessary, even if not based on *fact*, and seeming to lack an ordering *principle*. Imagination, reason and intuition, are all *powers* of the human mind. In Spinoza's series, each knowledge is built on emendation of the preceding knowledge, so there is a kind of evolution toward 'true knowledge' – and this describes a kind of heuristic, *experiential* process of learning/understanding, and it is significant that it culminates in intuition.

While it is sense-related, imagination does more than recall or recreate phenomenological perception or 'experience': even memory does more than recall, working in active synthesis with imagination. Every time we remember an event, we are reconstructing it. Imagination *generates* new experience through an inverse process of re-informing previously abstracted understandings of perceptual and sensuous experience. From the very start, the mind is an image-maker. The French philosopher Deleuze says that reason would not "find itself" if not for all "the resources of imagination" (Deleuze 1990, pp. 295–297).

We read an important difference between idea/concept and image, the intellect and imagination. Ideas and concepts are about understanding principles, or laws; image concerns apprehending form. We see the inverse process of imagination as an 'imbuing' or 'endowment', whereas moving towards reason, the image is 'abstracted', de-sensibilized, re-rendered as more 'thought' than 'felt'. This is a feedback *loop*, a process in *continuum*, and most decidedly not to be cast in the traditional dichotomy or dualisms between mind and matter, intellect and emotion, reason and imagination.

The key idea in this argument is: the continual 'emptying' of structure in consciousness/thought. The 'emptier' the structure, the more imaging can be quickly thought up and processed. It is the abstraction process, which is a kind of *kenosis*, and yet an encoding simultaneously – so it is condensed, but 'light', allowing it to be freed from the phenomenological grip – in a way, it is an evolution of imagination's *scope*. So, sense-saturated images help *fix* moments in memory *vividly*, *realistically* – the point here is *fixedness* – it *recreates* a past, but may not

move forward to *create*. Memory and imagination are here linked. However, imagination is double-ended: it is also speculative, and works to project re-memberings into the future. Like reason and intuition, imagination too, is an on-going process, being daily-fed from many sources and reconfiguring responsively.

The Heuristic Approach

Knowledge at one's fingertips, or knowing something like the back of one's hand. Gut feeling. A certain hunch that won't be nudged away. There is a sense of embodiment when we speak of 'knowing' something in this way. It is a way of 'knowing' that may be ambiguous, but is arrived at more swiftly than via the more logical mode of reasoning.

Michael Polanyi, a philosopher of science, explored what he called 'tacit knowledge' – unformulated, unwritten knowledge that is 'embodied' and passed from person to person. Tacit knowledge implies we know more than we think we know since we are continually receiving information in one form or another whether we are aware of it or not. With more heuristic and interdisciplinary approaches toward development of both tacit and explicit knowledge in the arts, *detours* are often extremely felicitous events. It can lead to invaluable *incidental* learning, and allow for new and unpredicted ideas to emerge. To enjoy the process as exploratory, there should be no labouring under the fear of 'making mistakes'.

Experience is subjective. It is a way of knowing that is held as true without necessarily being verifiable, e.g., the mystical experience. It is doubtless felt and thought of as 'real' by the individual experiencing it, but nearly impossible to convey with clarity to another. Experience is a mode of learning that autonomously accumulates as tacit knowledge, without us necessarily being aware that we are learning. It engenders the ability to anticipate, to predict and respond accordingly.

Here, we look at the course I first restructured and taught at UWS, Sydney, in 1996. Second and third year Australian English and Drama students took this course as an elective, and they did not specialize in Visual Arts at all. In the light of heuristic learning, I set interdisciplinary tasks within the larger context of 'performance' – otherwise traditionally contextualized within 'language', 'drama', 'acting' and 'scripts'.

Vignette 1: Writing for Performance¹

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¹ See page 5.

The course is shaped as a process of 'reduction/extension' of means, through which students will explore aspects of performance including theatre, dance, installation, language and performance poetry, sculpture, multimedia and technology and interactive performance/installation, the materialized word and works on gender, culture and 'other'

The weekly sessions were staged and titled accordingly, with the related theoretical readings complied in a reader:

Exit Stage -Displacement of the stage as site of performance; manipulating

the proximity between performer and audience

The Oust, Abdication and Camouflage Exit Author -

Exit Sight -*Voice and the timbre/weight/texture of performative texts* Exit Performer -Text as Performer/Performing Image; The Absent Performer

Exit Self -The Merge: Medium and Message

Enter Other -In 'other' words: the Silenced Other, the Sexual Other and the

Cultural Other

Append Technology and the remotely controlled extended Body; the

Machine assemblage of body, mind and machine

Subtract The permeability of boundaries – time, space, medium,

Division discipline – the audience as performer, text as object, life as art.

While it was primarily a 'writing' course, these students were tasked weekly, with each week focusing on a different 'sense' and mode of perceiving. For instance, 'Exit Sight' focused on 'sound' and the voice, and I extracted and modified this for the workshops conducted at LASALLE, the University of Sussex, and the Singapore Management University (Arts Club), which are discussed later on in the chapter.

The students' works culminated at the end of week 13 in a 3-day interdisciplinary performance and art 'festival', which included highly original and experimental works like:

'Taxi Stories', which was based on the concept that taxi drivers usually have interesting tales to tell (an experience that seems to hold true all over the world). The student 'researched', collected and recorded real taxi drivers telling stories, then hired a taxi driver to ply between the two large campuses at UWS, where groups of students and lecturers could hop in and out and get ferried (instead of the university bus) to their destination, and essentially became 'captive audiences' to the pre-recorded taxi driver stories that the taxi driver himself would play on his sound system. The various stories were edited and timed precisely to last the trip. Functioning like a heterotopia of many taxi experiences unfolding within another in real time, it created a reflective space for self-conscious and intense 'listening', and effectively took the idea of performance-audience-stage out of its usual context, displacing preconceived notions of what performance could be. This piece was a successful experiment of 'Subtract Division', the last stage of the course, as it synthesized the experiential tasks and readings of 'Exit Stage', 'Exit Sight', as well as 'Exit Author'.

Another literature student tried her hand at installation work for the first time, and created leaf-shaped poems, delicately attaching these to real leaves of an existing shrub

² See Appendix A.1 for the image of the poster the class created. The event was called 'Gyre', a title inspired by W. B. Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*.

outside a building with high traffic area on campus, such that people walking in and out of the building would pause, and be amazed at finding a living installation that could be read, as well as experienced as *visual* poetry. Here was an instance of 'text as performer'.

A pair of drama students created a private 'theatre' work in the toilet, where the audience simply had to cram in and find a spot to witness the performance, which incorporating rhythmic flushing in the various cubicles – creatively utilizing 'effects' at hand – as a sound device throughout the performance. This piece strongly focused on the ideas of 'Exit Stage', creating a site-specific piece of theatre.

Yet another literature student wrote a deeply humorous lecture on semiotics as a performance script, and managed to persuade her English lecture to 'perform' the lecture while she played her 'role' in the audience as 'the absent performer'.

Reflection

These Australian non-art students gained a whole new perspective on their own area of language and drama, as well as writing, performance, and visual art, and saw how they could create unique experiences through interdisciplinary practice that 'transgressed' and permeated traditional domains and boundaries. Their expressions were created through, and generative of, theoretical engagement with artistic and socio-cultural issues, and intellectual discussion. They surprised themselves with their own abilities to be *creative*, in the fullest sense of the word, while honing their critical skills.

I conducted a variant of the course (2002/2003) when I taught at LASALLE College of the Arts, calling it *Text and Performance*. Bearing in mind that in Singapore, performance art (a Visual Art form), although introduced to Singapore artists in the 1980s as a viable practice through Tang Da Wu, a well-established performance artist in the scene, it was never 'officially' taught in any institution then.³ In fact, in 1994, a performance art work carried out at an art event in Singapore was controversially misrepresented in the local press, and the artist was found guilty of 'obscenity' in Court. For a decade after this, performance art was effectively banned, through the imposition of a prohibitively high deposit required for each performance, as well as cessation of government funding. The dire consequences generated an atmosphere of oppression and paranoia around performance art works. The form of performance art as practiced in Singapore was mostly 'scriptless', which contributed to anxieties about its 'unpredictability'. I restructured the description of the course for the Singapore context thus:

'Performance Art' has often been straight-jacketed by misconceptions about its 'form', and an expectation (as well as fear) of 'scriptlessness'. This

³ Ray Langenbach taught at the National Institute of Education, Singapore, from 1993 to 1996. He incorporated performance art in his teaching of contemporary art practices, and at the request of some of the students opened a studio for the exploration of performance in a large storage shed, set away from the other buildings on the campus. The students and Langenbach would congregate there during some class-periods and at odd hours for performances and critiques.

interdisciplinary course is aimed at providing a means for students to rationalize the performance process and explore the wider contexts of 'performance' – from performance poetry to video work. The course is shaped as a process of 'reduction/extension' of means, through which students will explore the performative aspects of text and image as mediated through material, the body, the voice, etc. There will be writing tasks on a weekly basis, which are designed to help the student develop concepts, content and strategy for the work that is assessed.

In the LASALLE case, the focus was adjusted to align with the fact that all the students *were* Visual Arts students, for whom – mostly – writing, of any kind, was not a strength or a driving factor, or seen as 'art' in its own right. However, like the earlier UWS course, I brought in text itself as centrally 'performative', with examples like Conceptual artists and the art group Art + Language, and in more contemporary art, where artists like Jenny Holzer, whose texts perform as 'image', whether engraved in stone or as digital text in Times Square, and Barbara Kruger who juxtaposes text and image in poster-like thought provocative works. And besides the obvious Robert Indiana's *LOVE* work, which takes the 'word' to literal, concrete sculptural form, I also introduced the Singapore-born artist Suzann Victor's installation work where human hair was used to form words that conjured parts of a woman's body, such that literally visceral text created an 'invisible' image.⁴

In 2007, I restructured and modified the 'Exit Sight' component of this course for a writing workshop for Drama students at Sussex University, U.K., and most recently, conducted a further modified version for a workshop titled *The Word as Sound in Performance* for the Arts Club at the Singapore Management University in 2011. The interdisciplinary edge carved out a unique space for the range of students from Australia, Singapore and the UK to experiment with synthesizing art forms and ideas from a variety of domains, generating creative expression that was both exciting and critical.

Creativity is not something that can be transmitted as pre-packaged 'knowledge'. As Bohm puts it, "certain kinds of things can be achieved by techniques and formulae, but originality and creativity are not among these" (Bohm 1996, p. 32).

So, there is no *proper* way to be creative. It is the *learning* process itself, and as such, works along heuristic principles, takes risks, and is able to deal with a lack of certainty as it ventures out towards new possibilities and solutions.

Just as our sense perceptions are not 'separate departments' but have influence over, into and across each other, ideas and devices from the literary, visual, musical, performance practices and even sciences are cross-relational and can be applied to enrich each discipline and to develop new experiences and discoveries. This is so too in the sciences where, for example, Biology and Chemistry, or Astronomy and Physics, from evolving into separate and specialized bodies of knowledge, have

⁴ Victor's work, *His Mother Was a Theatre* (1994), was acquired by the Singapore Art Museum, where it is now considered a pivotal contemporary work, marking artistic response to a tumultuous time in Singapore's art history. The work was created as a response to the 1994 censorship of the performing body and nudity in artistic practice.

been cross-fertilized to produce the research areas of Biochemistry and Astrophysics. Knowledge, methodologies and research from diverse disciplines can thus forge new lines of inquiry, which can only promote a deeper understanding of our environment and ourselves. Why shouldn't we be willing to take the turn around unexpected and surprising corners in thought?

Mental Imagery and Visuality in Language

There is a deep wisdom in our language[s], and it is often revealing to examine the metaphorical images contained within it. The idea that intellectual concepts are somehow arranged in a 'conceptual space' was implicit in our language[s] long before cognitive psychologists made it explicit. (Stewart and Cohen 1997, p. 178)

Many creative people claim to 'see' the solution to a problem in an image. [...] Einstein imagined what it would be like to ride on a beam of light or drop a penny in a plummeting elevator. He once wrote, 'My particular ability does not lie in mathematical calculation, but rather in visualizing effects, possibilities, and consequences'. (Pinker 1998, p. 285)

The act of 'seeing' and the word 'see' are often used metaphorically to describe 'understanding' or 'perceiving' – phenomena that do not occur at the retinal level. The word *idea* derives from the Greek *eidos*: "both that which one sees [...] and that by means of which one sees" (Hillman 1989, p. 53). To transmit this *idea* of 'seeing', it is necessary to avoid referring only to pre-existing 'forms'. How does one, for instance, refer to an idea, or *potential* form? How to contemplate the development of an idea into a form not yet in existence i.e., the creative potential and process of art-making students? To grasp the full implications of concepts and ideas, we should recognize and apply the inherent visuality in language and figurative discourse – the "space" within which ideas get discussed, transformed and re-articulated into visual art, which in turn generates more thought and new ideas.

The capacity to 'visualize' effects, possibilities and consequences is invaluable in the process of art production. Optional ideas get to be reviewed before commitment to materiality and along the way, the process itself can continually be transformed and re-routed through this anticipation and projection of possible effects and consequences. Intent and the meticulous execution of that statement of intent is not necessarily the measure of 'good' work – certainly not in art-making. A willingness to *mediate* intent through hypothesis and projection of aspects of visual art like potential audience response to different styles of presentation or personal response to process should not be seen as 'indecisive'. Any preparatory work – from sketches to working models will inevitably undergo continual revision and this process can only be enhanced through an ability to construct and reconstruct 'mental imagery' which is "a kind of interaction between seeing and thinking" (Pinker 1998, p. 214) as described by Steven Pinker, Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He goes on to exemplify: "Most people say they answer

questions like ['What shape are a beagle's ears' and 'When a person stands up straight, is her navel above her wrist?']" using a "mental image". They visualize the shape, which feels like conjuring up a picture available for inspection in the mind's

I often, quite deliberately, abstain from offering direct visual stimulus when teaching art-making. Instead, I encourage learners to raise 'mental imagery' – language-conjured vision. The visuality and materiality in language operates as a stimulus for the transformative and evaluative processes of creative thinking and perception.

In one session of a theory course I designed and taught at LASALLE College of the Arts (2000/2001) titled 'Meaning in the Real and the Representation', I presented students with a spontaneously spun visualization exercise that I called, after Einstein, a "thought experiment".

Vignette 2: Art Theory and 'Visualization',5

In order to relay concepts about how meaning is made in Roland Barthes' (1991) essay 'Rhetoric of the Image', I 'painted' a hypothetical scene, encouraging students to freely visualize, and through strategic hints and questioning, free-associate within constraints. It went thus:

You walk into a gallery. As you wander around, you see, at one end, what looks like an installation. There is a bed - a bed covered with pink satin. Nearby, a totally red bicycle is stationed. You notice that the bicycle is connected to the bed by a heavy chain that lies on the floor. What do you think the work is about?

A few attempted to answer. "Romantic" said some, perhaps referring to the pink satin- covered bed. "Quite BDSM" said one with special reference, perhaps, to the chain. After a few other suggestions, I asked, "Do your guesses and interpretations based on the images and objects satisfy you? Can you say you know for sure what it means? What are you looking for now?"

The title of the work.

eye" (Pinker 1998, p. 214).

So I continued. "Right, you're thinking, 'What does it mean? Where's the title?' You look for the label on the wall where the title is sure to be. It says "The Reunification of China."

(Always bearing in mind this was totally spontaneous – I deliberately had no fixed meaning or interpretation in mind.) This drew an intense response from the students who immediately started to discuss with one another the possible meanings with this new aspect of the image.

⁵ From November 1999 to September 2003, I taught across a range of theoretical and studio practice subjects, as well as Creative Writing (Art Enrichment Programme) at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

"It's about how the ideals of communism are still tied to bourgeoisie desires," offered one mature student. Which seemed a reasonable enough interpretation of the mental image conjured up!

This 'thought-experiment' demonstrated Barthes' assertion that 'the image is polysemous'. I went on to explain the denotative, connotative and linguistic messages that can be read from any image – and using the thought-experiment, demonstrated how the 'linguistic message' i.e., the title, is utilized for its 'repressive value' – how it frames and restrains the polysemous nature of the image. Through the posing of Einstein-style 'thought-experiments' like this, students were encouraged to *hypothesize*.

Visual literacy in the process of art education need not only be facilitated solely through visual stimulus. Likewise, creative thinking does not necessarily occur only in language. While some concepts are best manifested and explored in language and others best expressed visually, thought-form – or the language of thought – still evades definition. With astonishing prescience, the American poet Emily Dickinson writes "Your thoughts don't have words everyday" (Dickinson 1999, p. 555). This wordlessness of consciousness and thought is a notion that scientists and philosophers are still studying intently.

Synaesthesia and Metaphor

And peering around a particularly curious corner in thought, we notice we are trailing the phenomenon of *synaesthesia* – a term defined in the *OED* thus: 'The production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by stimulation of another sense or part of the body.' So for instance, one could experience a particularly nasty paper-cut as a high-pitched note on a violin. And looking at contemporary art practice now, it is apparent that the 'visual' is by no means the only sense that art appeals to.

The translation of experience – both everyday and extraordinary – necessitates the crossing into synaesthetic thresholds. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) explain: "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing or experience in terms of another" (p. 455). Synaesthetic metaphor pushes perception further around surprising turns and corners in thought than the more usual sense associations. In poetry and art, the expression of one experience via another is what brings fresh insight into perception of the world. In art, emotions are given form and colour, or weight and depth. An auditory experience translates into colour or the memory of a touch becomes sound – inter- and intra-sense-associative experiences open up new ways of knowing. We already experience the productive yield of this approach in science, e.g., ultrasound mapping of the body, where sound conjures image.

In my Drawing class at LASALLE for the 3rd Year Diploma (3D Studies) students (2000/2001), I set out 'sensory/perceptual translation' projects that had

the objective of stimulating learners toward exploring new ways of expressing themselves through sense-association:

Vignette 3: Conceptual Drawing – Experiential Synaesthetic Tasks⁶

These experimental tasks, which involve the psychology of perception, seem to expand emotional and sensory vocabulary, encouraging a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to visual literacy. The first project (Project I) was "Sensory and Perceptual Translation": students were required to "translate the associative experience of smell, touch, hearing, tasting into visual work". This meant they were to try and experience one sense – whether olfactory, tactile, auditory or gustatory – through another. They were then to translate these into visual works in any dimension or material. This was a 5-week project and learners had to discuss their progress and ideas continually. At the end of that time, they were to produce four pieces of visual works as a series.

The second project was a continuity and extension of the first project: (Project II) "Sensory and Perceptual Translation: Auditory into Visual". This time, learners were given auditory stimulus for the duration of the two-and-a-half hour lesson and were required to produce experimental "auditory-into-visual" works in the studio. They were also encouraged to "strategically restrict one sense (e.g., blindfold themselves) or arm movement (e.g., use the left hand if right-handed etc.) in order to challenge new perceptions, styles and techniques" while responding to the auditory stimulus. Learners were told to choose drawing materials they felt were 'appropriate' to the music. They were given different pieces of music lasting increasingly longer periods to work to/against, but the pieces had one thing in common – they were strictly instrumental, so there was no human voice singing or articulating words, as I did not want any direct influence through discernible meaning as expressed in language. The students listened to music and soundscapes with different textures, from acoustic bowed strings to techno sound. They were pieces of music that I myself found stimulating. Some of the pieces were from Kronos Quartet's In Formation where the strings run a stirring spectrum of sounds, from the staccato and percussive to the very 'elastic' and 'stretchy'. One of the key pieces of music I brought in was Steve Reich's 'Music for 18 Musicians', which is 56 min and 31 s long and moves in a big wave-like form through micro-shifts in acoustic texture, and includes soprano voices as instruments, marimbas, pianos, clarinets, xylophones, violin and cello. Learners worked continuously throughout the piece and completed their pieces at the end of the music.

⁶ Conceptual Drawing (first designed for students doing 3-D Studies – Sculpture, Ceramics, Fine Art Jewellery – at LASALLE-SIA, College of the Arts) where synaesthetic tasks allow for the 'translation' of sensory experience e.g., from sound to image.

Brief Overview of the Projects

My agenda was to explore the sympathetic relationship, or resonance of the visual to the other senses, to try experimenting with that potential to relate it as a source and a channel, to those other senses, and to create a work visually that challenges vision itself. These projects that require exploration into synaesthetic experience through interdisciplinary activity e.g. through the use of exercises where students have to interpret the experiences of one sense in terms of another have constraints or preset conditions that would help *re-route* thinking into less familiar territories and hence encourage active and intense learning through discovery.

I have also applied this drawing task *in reverse*, when I taught Creative Writing (Art Enrichment Programme for the general public 2000/1/2). I presented arbitrarily chosen visual images to learners who then were required to write from the image as stimulus. This is a reference to 'jumpcutting' in film, where scenes cut into each other quickly and disjointedly, and yet we perceive them to be continuous. The creative writers were asked to translate the visual into words, writing from image to image, discontinuously. Then, by linking the narrative, it would result in one complete story written entirely from disparate images.

Thus a 'mirrored' situation occurs – 'writing from the visual image' reflects the drawing process of 'imaging from music'. The shifts in my teaching contexts – teaching creative writing or teaching art-making – meant processes were *inversed*, and these processes posed a challenge to sensory perception and artistic expression, encouraging the transformative and evaluative processes of creative thinking and interpretative perception.

Setting projects that require conceptual thinking in the creative process and not just display of skill can also spur learners towards a deeper engagement with their subject. Providing a wide variety of stimulus from a variety of disciplines also encourages learners to use their imaginative faculties when translating sense-experiences into ideas and vice-versa. In fusing disparate ideas to create an iconic memorable moment with which to influence perception, a teacher can, nevertheless, only use what already exists in the learner's mind and 'guide' possible configurations into place.

From the transcripts of conversations with four case studies relating to the conceptual drawing projects, which I recorded on magnetic tape in 2001, I focus now on one extracted dialogue with the student Heleston Chew.

⁷These are edited transcripts – extracted from my PGDipTHE thesis (2001) – of conversations I recorded in March 2001, with four case studies featuring art students undertaking the Diploma in Fine Art (3D Studies) at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. The interviews relate to the Conceptual Drawing Course I designed and conducted then for the 3D Studies students – they included students specializing in Sculpture, Ceramics, Jewellery, and, for a short time, Glass. The dialogue chosen here is from various one-on-one dialogues, as well as recordings made during a class critique where we reviewed the works done over the past 7 weeks to prepare for the Mid-Year Review. It involved peer assessment and commentary of each other's work. There were 13 students in this class – for *Project I & II*. Given the constraints of the chapter, I focus only on one student's response: Heleston Chew.

Project I: "Sensory and Perceptual Translation" (5-Week Process)

Case Study: Heleston (Final Year Diploma Sculpture student)

The project triggered a really intense research and exploratory phase for Heleston.

Excerpt of Conversation with Heleston⁸

Heleston: The first project is the translation of other senses into the visual, then I'm thinking of the other way round when a blind person [who] doesn't have visual [sight], when they sense everything in the world with their other senses. Like how do they "see" the world, and how do they see the world which is different, and how do we see their world is also [an interesting point.] So I'm trying to get what they understand about that world through our [knowledge], which means how do we see what they see.

[...] I'm dealing with [...] 3 kinds of persons [...]: one is partially blind, one is totally blind and one is colour-blind—blind of green. (Heleston is referring to three visually impaired people that he helps as a volunteer.) So I'm trying to see what can he normally see, like trees and stuff, like how he would see things like that. Because he used to do this kind of linework, which is very good one, like he knows exactly where to place the colours but actually he's colour-blind. So I try to do what he did, but I cannot get what he did because...

Susie: To do what? To experience the colour in other...

Heleston: I'm trying to see if we can do the same as him, but cannot. He's totally out of the context. What he did was very good, but I cannot get that thing and in terms of, let's say, I'm trying to understand them, I have to know if I blindfold myself, what is the first thing I feel. Then I found out [it was] frustration, confusion, anger and sad[ness]—which are all very negative.

But one of them is very enlightened, he can understand what we say, he's very sensitive about the things around me, so I'm trying to engage how he [does it]. [To] me, maybe he lost his sight but he gained something else, some higher understanding of certain things.

So you were suggesting like those Braille that they use.

Susie: Braille is by touch; we see it as design, but the blind don't 'see' the design.

 $[\ldots]$

Heleston: [A]bout how dictionaries translate colours. Then I figured that if I put it in Braille, they won't be able to understand it at all because they never see colour before.

⁸ Tape I: Conversations in 3rd Year Drawing Class, Department of 3D Studies (20 February 2001).

Susie: Because it's all described in relation from one colour to another. [...] Hang on, I would like you to read it out [the definitions]. In other words, this is the dictionary explanation of colour for visually 'able' people.

Heleston: Okay, I tell the explanation and then you guess what. I'm sure everyone can guess. "Of the colour ranging from that of blood to deep pink or orange."

Susie: So, red.

Heleston: *Yah*, so we know red already, but for them, they wouldn't know what the colour of blood is.

Susie: Or what is pink or orange.

Heleston: "Of the colour between blue and yellow in the spectrum" which is green. Because we take it for granted, things that we see everyday.

Susie: Some more [definitions]?

Heleston: "Of the colour of buttercups, lemons, egg yolks."

Susie: Some more? Let's go the whole hog.

Heleston: "Having the colour of clear sky. Having the colour of dark wood or rich soil. Reflecting no light, colourless from lack of light, like coal or soot, completely dark. Resembling a surface reflecting sunlight, without absorbing any of the visible rays, of the colour of milk or snow. The colour between red and blue, the colour between red and yellow."

Susie: Amazing. What is really amazing is that the dictionary cannot explain colour in other terms than in colour itself. That's very interesting research.

Heleston: That's why I'm wondering ... because remember I told you how I saw it in the movie, how the guy showed the girl what colour means in the world because the girl was blind, then he bring ice to show the girl blue.

Susie: Yes, through a different sense. So coldness is blue and warmth is red, which is actually how colour 'vibrates'. At the very abstract level, colour [can also be] temperature, so visually also, that's also temperature...

[...]

I find it amazing that the dictionary, in order to explain colour, will use colour to explain colour, and if you don't have a sense of colour, you can't experience it [...] In the end, [you want] to get a visual and colour is visual—it is a very, very, visual thing for our normal way of doing work, completely ...but I'm sure people who are blind, a person who isn't born blind but became blind, they start to be able to see colour in a different way, because they have [experienced it], they can feel it in the darkness. Visually, colour plays tricks on us also—it'll make something look more focused, or [seem like its] at the back—it's all illusion.

Excerpts from Conversation Continued with Heleston on the Roof (14 March 2001)⁹

Susie: Okay, when we started out doing this drawing class, in particular, and my course outline, the brief said some things about synaesthesia and trying to translate

⁹ Tape IV: Conversation with Heleston on the roof (14 March 2001).

one sense into another sense—how did you feel initially, when I was talking about translating all your other senses into a visual sense?

Heleston: Okay, first of all I found it's kind of related to my major work, so I'm very keen on exploring the idea, and at the same time, I think that's what visual art is all about—to translate, to really translate, other things other than the visible to the visual, a visual form, I think I think it's supposed to be a challenge to artists, visual artists.

 $[\ldots]$

Susie: You wanted to work with colour, because it's something that's not immediately apparent to our other senses, it's something that's specially for the eyes. So you talk about being a blind person, and cannot see colour, so how would you explain colour—that is your thesis—how would you explain colour to a blind person? [They] use a language that is just like our language but it's tactile. And that's why you chose Braille isn't it?

Heleston: Yes, yes.

 $[\ldots]$

Heleston: And the fact that, although we might say we that we know or understand something, there's a difference between knowing and understanding something.

[...]

Susie: So it's like we know if we press a button, the fan will work, but understanding how a fan works is another thing...

[...]

(I referred Heleston to the phenomenon of the afterimage) Did you play up with our vision, the actual mechanics of vision, for instance when we look at something is very red, like a red square, and we close our eyes, what you see 'inside' is a green square. Did you play up with that when you were using the opposites? [...]

Heleston: Yah *eh*, I hadn't thought of that.

Susie: I think it would be quite interesting, because you are then referring to something that is within our eyes, the mechanics [of the afterimage], it's not [that] we perceive vision necessarily, but we've come to accept it as the physics of light [...] Again, that would be lost entirely on a person who's blind.

Heleston: Yah, I never thought of that (laughs). Thank you.

 $[\ldots]$

Reflection

These conversations with Heleston concern **Project I**. The approach he took on the task is methodical and is the result of deep engagement and inquiry about basic processes of perception, codes and sign systems as well as construction of meaning. The work itself went through different phases. Once he had decided to use Braille, he researched the tactile sign-system in relation to the alphabet. His response to the 'translation' bit in the project brief followed quite a sophisticated and involved

route of transformation and evaluation. From the tactile sense, he undertook to attempt to 'experience' colour through Braille and came to the realization, after looking up dictionary definitions of specific colours, that the lack of the visual sense was a definite impediment to the experience of colour. Language in whatever code seemed unable to 'describe' colour other than in its own terms. He then decided to address this dilemma from a position of irony - first punching out the Braille alphabet on a copper plate, then punching out dictionary definitions of colour in Braille on copper plates. Then he decided to further ingrain the alienation by not using the copper plate as it was, but to scan it as a 2D image, thereby making a critical comment on the uselessness of dictionary definitions of colour in Braille. A further development was to place a solid geometric shape of colour in juxtaposition to this 2D image – a colour that did not tally with the colour being described in the now 'ineffectual' Braille. The first series of these studies were scanned and printed on metallic paper. He later produced these images as prints – allowing the printmaking process to leave the raised imprint of the plates on the paper. (Please see Appendix A.2 for Heleston's images.) It also now dealt (after dialogue) with the visual phenomena of the 'after image' - so that the definition of one colour in Braille was juxtaposed on the same print with its complementary colour -the colour of its afterimage. This turn he took 'nailed' the entire process with one of the most sophisticated sense of visual irony I have ever seen.

Project II: "Sensory and Perceptual Translation: Auditory-into-Visual"

Excerpt of Conversation with Heleston 10

Heleston: For this exercise, first one I did is ... there are 4 sketches. Ok, *uhm*, I actually don't know what is going on here. For me in terms of music, I don't see I terms of colour, I see it as a vibration or frequency, so I don't know how to choose the colour when I do (the) thing. Maybe for me the lightest colours, like yellow is a representation of sharp sounds and the darker one will be the base. That's the closes I get, but I still do the things that I feel about music, which is the rhythm, so basically it doesn't matter for me if I use colour or not, because I'm on the rhythm thing, not colour.

Susie: But the colour works, *eh*?

Heleston: I'm trying to work it, that's why I'm confused about the whole exercise, because I'm thinking what colour to choose for what, because if I concentrate on sharp music...

Susie: Sharpness or bluntness...

¹⁰ Tape II.

Heleston: The sharper is which one, then I will use the bass.

Susie: So actually, you were trying to focus on one piece of frequency. So this one is which one? You were trying to focus on one piece?

Heleston: Yes, each colour on one frequency.

Susie: So, you all want to guess which colour is which piece? **Heleston:** That's why quite tired after the session because...

Susie: Of concentration. I mean in the end, it's quite nice work, so it doesn't need more touching up, it doesn't need anything.

Heleston: Visually it's nice.

Another student: Is blue the sharpest or highest frequency?

Susie: No, blue [here] is the complete opposite.

Heleston: Blue, it is the bass... **Susie:** ...the lowest frequency.

Heleston: There's even one time when you can hear only the vibration, the blue. **Susie:** Yah, that's when it occupies a lot of space. And the yellow is the highest? **Heleston:** Yah, these are the pitch *lor*, the thinner and lighter colours are the sharper sounds.

Susie: And that's quite interesting, because that piece of music, that particular one is actually heavily layered, it's happening in layers, they're all doing...at different rhythms, different pitches also.

Heleston: So many... **Susie:** Very dense.

Heleston: This is the second one. After this exercise, I think it'll be better if I do it in the centre, all the papers, because music for me, if they can do colours that means it's not from the start to the end, they can always be continued.

Heleston: This is the last one. For this one, I'm trying to blend all the ... because all these are very breakdown, you see. Different pitch; this one I'm trying to blend ... what the rest are doing. I'm purposely ... when I see Suran's (another student) work and think like that, he obviously has a whole concept, a whole music...

 $[\ldots]$

Susie: Not trying to divide the music.

Heleston: Yah, which is something that I cannot get. I can only get the different layer at one time, I cannot see it as a whole.

 $[\ldots]$

Susie: You can do that: you can use this as a jump, a springboard. So if you like individual marks, that's fine. I remember you did this on wet paper, you made this wet first, and (when) it was damp, you had fabric underneath it? So it was quite soft. And then you see these marks, actually it's an impression, it's not just a drawing. It's dug in, and when it's wet, you can see the depth, and I thought you used the method quite well. Quite good—in the end the works have depth. Not actual depth $lah \dots$ it's like Braille, but opposite \dots the effect of the artwork, unless you turn it the other way around. Can you see? If you do a light rubbing, try that and you'll be working in reverse, so there are methods here you can [use].

Reflection

Heleston's response to Reich's 'Music for 18 Musicians' was a very conscious, self-observational one. The reflection that he could not grasp the music as a 'whole' but as divided 'lines' led him to realize that he had 'broken down' the 'pitches' in the piece into the visual principles of colour and line. (See Appendix A.2 for images.) The fact that he worked on heavy dampened paper resulted in quite 'visceral' mark-making that had some correspondence in terms of 'weight' and intensity in the pulse of the music to the *pressure* with which he made those marks. It was as if the music, as Heleston listened, got grooved into the damp heavy paper, a process that in itself echoes the way music *is* recorded in analogue, e.g., the grooves in vinyl records. As I said to Heleston: "Yes, we know we can perceive smell and perceive sound, and smell is smell, sound is sound: but *what happens* when sound becomes smell, when smell becomes vision?" What happens is transformation, a translation and re-encoding of experience. (See Appendix A.2 for images of some of the works discussed.)

Still keeping on the topic of synaesthetic tasks: while the preceding 'Drawing Projects' were expressly designed for Visual Art students, the following workshop discussed here was excerpted from my original 'Writing for Performance' course ('Exit Sight' week) at UWS, Sydney, and was re-designed with an additional 'theatre component' for second year Drama students at the University of Sussex, U.K., in April 2007. More recently, in February 2011 at the Singapore Management University, I modified it as 'The Word as Sound in Performance' for students of the Arts Club:

Vignette 4: The Word as Sound in Performance

My workshop description was crafted thus:

The aim of this workshop is to help develop an awareness of how words can be used effectively as *sound* in performance. The focus is on the sound of words: translating the written text, i.e., what is read with the eye and mind, into an 'oral-aural' performance, i.e., what is *heard* by the ear and mind. Engaging not just with visual imagery in language, we will explore synaesthesia: the translation of one sense perception into another through words. We will work with the power and performativity of sound through the texture, heft and meaning of words. As Patsy Rodenburg¹¹ in *The Need for Words* (1993) notes, it is vital to release the sensual and physical power of words – to explore the physical, emotional, organic side of language *felt* in sound.

With reference to Rodenberg's work on voice, I shaped the first part of the workshop to acquaint the students with the sensuous *quality* of words as generated

¹¹ Patsy Rodenburg was Director of Voice at the prestigious Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London for 26 years and until recently at the Royal National Theatre.

and experienced by the human voice – their *own* voices. Besides a short reading to get the students into thinking about 'listening', 'sound' and the human voice, ¹² as with my 1996 'Exit Sight' session in UWS, I used Michael Ondaatje's poem 'Sweet Like A Crow' as the foundational working text. (See Appendix A.3 for full poem)

To get the students to experience the *sound* of words, the students were asked to choose one phrase from Oondaatje's poem and then to 'speak' the same phrase to shape different vocal effects, using Rodenberg's exercises:

Shout/use a full voice Whisper Intone/chant Growl Hiss Sneer Speak text while moving Sing

The students were told to be aware of rhythm, and to build this by beginning slowly and then letting the voice die away or rise to crescendo then roller coaster, or have a refrain that remains constant or switches mode. They were given verbal suggestions and cues to conjure visual images to work through, e.g., 'you are a mountain, lonely and ancient, yearning for companionship', or 'you are Marco Polo, in the court of Kublai Khan, pleading to be allowed to return home to Venice'. The words themselves did not matter as 'meaning'. It was actually nonsense in the context, but when attended to and *performed*, became *meaningful sound*, and was perceived as such.

Then, with further reference to Rodenberg's '7-Word Story', I ask the students to do a **7-Word Performance** using only seven words with which to *perform* a story:

Words can be repeated and used to unlock a rhythm in the story. Weigh word choice carefully and note how each word's significance is tested against the other. Also, use sound and opposing word values to invoke impressions in the listener's mind. Conjure ambience, mood and atmosphere from considered use of the sound and meaning value of the chosen words.

The students could begin either by arbitrarily choosing seven words and then making up the story-performance based on those words, or think of the story/plot first – and then choose seven key words for the story plot and work from there. The performances that resulted were interdisciplinary indeed, including physical movement, and the voice became, at once, 'musical' instrument, singer, as well as tale-bearer.

With the Sussex University Drama students, attending this as a writing workshop, I also devised a component in the workshop where students were asked to

¹² Cid Corman, 'Speech: As It Falls: Is Poetry' & Susan Sontag, from "Aesthetics of Silence", *The Poetry Reading, A Compendium on Language & Performance*, eds. Vincent & Zweig (Berkeley: Momo's Press 1981).

think of writing/scripting literally as a 'shaping', or 'ambience-sculpting' process. The specific verbs used during dialogue would shape and turn the conceptualizing process in certain directions. Some aspects were:

Plot or story arc – draw a shape to feel its form and dynamics e.g., Circular? Triangular? Does it have 'corners'?

Theme & Motif – employ a perceptible metaphorical device that recurs and 'morphs' e. g., fear shown as a clockwork mouse that is present at crucial moments in the work, sometimes totally wound up and manic, sometimes still; or sorrow as 'water' – heard via the sound of dripping, rain, thunderstorms, glasses of water being smashed on walls etc. The morphing of the metaphor can be translated across different senses e.g., from vision to sound, etc.

Importantly, I chose Michael Ondaatje's poem 'Sweet Like A Crow' as a key text to work with/through because it is built on 'sonic similes', and is essentially about sound. A whole cacophony of sounds, ordinary, fantastical, imaginary, unheard-of sounds e.g., 'Like a crow swimming in milk' and 'a womb full of twins', are written into being, and exist as readable words, as poetry, then, when spoken aloud, explode as sounds that can be seen, felt and heard – and intensely – in the inner, and outer ear. It is a poem with imagery that performs synaesthetically.

The use of synaesthetic metaphors or strategies is more than just an appeal to the senses. It triggers off a process of 'translation' of experience and re-'vision' of sense-perceptions. This is part of what Bohm terms the "art of intelligent perception" that will prevent us getting "lost in the fixity of categories" (Bohm 1996, p. 75). And synaesthetic metaphors can take us into highly conceptual realms. The bald fact is, "we define our reality in terms of metaphor [...] [and] metaphor is conceptual in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, pp. 485–486).

Creativity & Art

To return to a question posed earlier on: What is the nature of creativity? Bohm (1996) describes the creative mind as "free" to be "attentive, alert, aware and sensitive" (p. 16).

Given that my own learning processes have always been somewhat unruly, and my teaching contexts have been at the tertiary level, and mostly within the teaching of critical and creative *thinking/making* of one mode or another, to find myself at an institute of education doing teacher education does feel like a detour, felicitous or otherwise. At NIE, the focus is not on teaching art itself, but art in the context of art education, and education in general. However, I keep my focus on 'educating the imagination'. I design and conduct the Master of Education course 'Visual Arts & Creativity', both as a core course for the students specializing in Art Education, and also, as an elective module, for teachers who teach every subject *but* Art! I have conducted the course for teachers who teach mathematics, science, English, Chinese, Malay, Chemistry, Geography, Design and Technology – teachers who teach in primary, secondary and even, in a few cases, Junior college level. And

sometimes these classes are large -18-19 in a class. The course description as inherited originally links creativity to "aesthetic understandings, linguistic and logicomathematical thinking", and creativity theory is central to the coursework. I discuss a few aspects of the course here.

Vignette 5: Visual Arts & Creativity

In this course, I emphasize that teaching creative approaches to learning requires *creative teaching methods* that are experimental and self-reflexive, and creative art education stimulates learning and an exploratory approach in all fields, from science to music. Central to the approach is to encourage creativity and imaginative learning in the classroom, and to do this by first getting the teachers – some who may have taught the same subjects for years – to actually engage in strategic and creative tasks themselves. They are also introduced to the many interdisciplinary approaches that inform contemporary visual art practice with a view to inspiring them with wonder, and willingness to experiment with ideas and material.

For the non-art teachers, the focus is to help them develop an appreciation for artistic practice and methodologies, so that they are able to devise individualized art-inspired projects and tasks in the classroom informed by longstanding as well as the latest creativity research to encourage creative approaches to whatever subject they teach in the classroom. I set a group task for the non-art teachers to identify the topic they felt was hardest to teach and hardest for their students to learn. They then had to present the creative lesson plan, showing how they would go about teaching it using some of the art methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches discussed. Two examples were:

A group of about four primary school Mathematics teachers, who having identified 'Fractions' as the topic they wanted to try teaching through more creative means, worked together using recycled plastic bottles and a range of dry beans and pulses to make different series of percussive 'shakers' that were filled to specific levels in order to 'represent' parts of a 'whole'. A whole range of bottles were colourfully filled to a specific 'fraction' of the 'volume' of the bottle itself, somewhat systemically: e.g. $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{2}{3}$ etc. This is more than a visual analogy, and was certainly more interesting than drawing a diagram of a pizza and the parts it could be cut into - especially since the lesson had another interdisciplinary component. Not only were the students to learn how to make the 'fraction' percussion orchestra, the teachers had devised a way for each filled bottle to correspond - approximately – with a musical tone, and the students would actually be able to perform a simple melody with their very own handmade percussive instruments. That in itself, for a music teacher in particular, would have been interesting; the idea of the unusual relationship here of rhythmic percussions creating 'melody'. This could then be another opportunity to introduce the students to Southeast Asian musical instruments like the gamelan. This project certainly had the potential to be further explored, where the concept of fractions and sound could be interlinked with other types of material and form, and be used to teach mathematics, music, as well as creative and interdisciplinary art-making.

Another group of primary school teachers who taught science, worked on the topic of 'Symmetry'. They explicated the relations of this abstract concept to Visual Art and architecture – from the human face to forms in nature – through a 3-dimensional

wall-mounted mind map of selected images, objects, and words. These were detachable/ attachable parts that students could play with as they were learning about symmetry. Another task in the lesson plan was to engage the students to take digital photographs of their faces, print and then cut the photographs at specific symmetrical points so that they could play with 2 'left' parts of their faces and 2 'rights' to see the visual effects that would arise. The sheer visual attractiveness and interactivity of the wall mind map itself was certainly a far cry from how they would usually have taught symmetry. (See Appendix A.4 for images of the work.)

All the creative lesson plans devised had to be 'tested' for feasibility in their own classrooms, and the MEd students wrote up their reports accordingly. This was all very experimental for the teachers, some of whom had never done any 'art' since they were lower secondary school students themselves.

Importantly, one of the worrying observations many of the teachers shared in their reports was that to do such creative lessons would take quite a bit more time than they had on curriculum time – an observation that in itself speaks volumes about the rushed pace of learning in primary schools, where even *art* lessons, let alone 'creative' activities to teach other subjects, are often deemed to be a waste of time.

For the art teachers, both in primary and secondary schools, the task was to teach art creatively, using new approaches, and to avoid merely using 'how-to' demonstrations in class, which only encourage many children to 'do as teacher does' so as not to 'do the wrong thing'. In this instance I introduced the teachers to creative tasks that would help them out of thinking of Visual Art education as being merely about transferring a set of definite skills e.g., 'painting' or 'wood-carving'. Learning these skills has, undoubtedly, many benefits, and students do gain immeasurable confidence when they *know* something, and *know* that they can do it well.

The course though, being on 'creativity', aims to take the teachers through an adventure of *different* 'ways of knowing' in the arts, and one of the strategic tasks I set for this course stems from my Creative Writing course, which I designed in 2000/2001. This is a writing/drawing task on using the imagination through the example of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* – a collection of 12 short stories, with titles like 'How the Camel Got his Hump', 'How the Leopard Got his Spots' and 'How the Alphabet was Made'. As Philip Pullman says:

The stories are creation tales to rank with the finest ever invented by that greatest storyteller of all, the anonymous maker of folk tales in cave or castle or cottage; and they are funny. What more could any reader want, whether at five or ninety-five?¹³

The MEd student teachers were told to work in groups and analyze a selected 'Just So' story – each of which comes with Kipling's own black and white illustrations. The key characteristic of Kipling's 'Just So' is that they are 'creation myths', written as addressed to a child, and the author's illustrations have explanatory captions that are like private 'asides' that one can imagine as weird and

¹³ Philip Pullman in his introduction to the 2008 edition of Kipling's *Just So Stories* (London: Vintage Books, 2008).

wonderful 'answers' to pressing questions of the eager, listening child – explanations that are completely unrelated to 'fact' as understood in the real world, yet completely logical in the context of the 'Just so' story and any imaginative child. Interestingly, when I conducted the Creative Writing Course in 2001/2002, it was for working adults – with professionals from various fields e.g., law, advertising, and some teachers too. Most of them plunged into the task of reading with some glee, as they recalled the curious questions that still bugged them. One lady however, who was a mother of young children, actually expressed serious concern that the 'Just So' stories were all "wrong", that they did not provide factual answers to the questions, and would thus mislead the child if they read the stories, or had the stories read to them. This was mind-boggling stuff indeed! But the mother's anxiety goes some way to explain how imagination and imaginative thinking may be negatively regarded by 'educators' and parents, who mistakenly place reason and 'knowledge' above imagination, misunderstanding the active, heuristic role that imagination plays in creativity.

After reading, discussing and enjoying the story, the MEd Art students were asked to remember questions they themselves may have had or still have, or questions their own children ask them – questions that may seem 'obvious', and yet, have the scope to be explained in a creative and imaginative way. I title the task: Weaving a 'Just-So' to the 'Why-So?' and ask students to re-imagine possible answers for the 'mysteries' that still arouse curiosity. 14 These re-imaginings can take any form: storyboards, illustrations, poem-songs, plays, short stories, and interdisciplinary forms that often start out as something and become altogether something else along the way. The task catapults them into a child-like state of mind, allowing for all manner of absurd and ingenious possibilities to arise and be 'play-worked' through.

Conclusion

Imagination is a very important faculty of mind. Feeding on experience, imagination is a 'multiple-vision' scope, being unrestrained by the limits of either knowledge, or possibility. It haunts the threshold between the unconscious and the conscious mind, between Spinoza's 'reason' and 'intuition', a two-way valve between two intensities. It allows for provisional constants that enable creative and predictive states of mind, what the poet John Keats calls 'Negative Capability', 15 where a person 'is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts,

¹⁴ Some 'Why So' questions that surfaced were: "Why does the full Moon seem to follow you around?", and a more adult one: "Why do men have nipples?", etc.

¹⁵Letter to George and Tom Keats, Complete Poems and Selected Letters of John Keats, ed. Jim Pollock (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), p.491. '... I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason [.]'

without any irritable reaching after fact & reason [.]' This extends the 'I's' grasp of other minds' 'I's, *creating* virtual experiential possibility far from immediate actual experience.

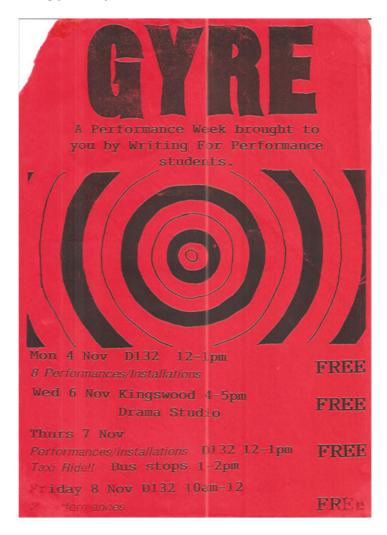
What is the value of art as a mode of inquiry and a way of knowing? Merleau-Ponty, the poetic philosopher of phenomenology in art, aptly puts it:

What is irreplaceable in the work of art, what makes it, far more than a means of pleasure, a spiritual organ whose analogue is found in all productive philosophical or political thought, is the fact that it contains, better than ideas, *matrices of ideas* – providing us with emblems whose meaning we never stop developing. Precisely because it dwells and makes us dwell in a world we do not have the key to, the work of art teaches us to see and ultimately gives us something to think about as no analytical work can; for when we analyze an object, we find only what we have put into it (Merleau-Ponty 1993, p. 114).

Art is more than being about pleasure or self-indulgent self-expression. When we encounter a particular work of art, it opens doors into the human spirit that we may never have known existed; it beckons us to take that little detour, to turn that curious corner in the mind, and perhaps we may encounter a new way of knowing. The interdisciplinary nature of artistic inquiry is a ceaselessly self-reflexive and creative process that leads the practitioner, the critic, the educator, and the engaged perceiver toward ever-increasing epiphanies of possible ways of knowing, imagination, and very significantly, self-knowledge.

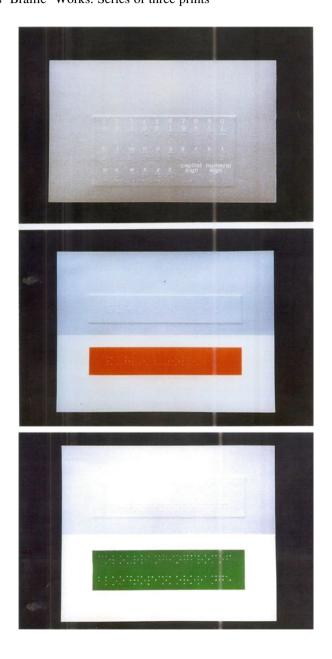
Appendices

A.1. Writing for Performance, GYRE POSTER (UWS, 1996)



A.2. Conceptual Drawing: Experiential Synaesthetic Tasks

Case Studies (2001)
Project I – Sensory Perceptual Translation
Heleston's 'Braille' Works: Series of three prints



Project I – Sensory Perceptual Translation

Serene's 'Noise' Works: 2D sketches & 3D remote-controlled work



Project II – Sensory and Perceptual Translation: Auditory-into-Visual Heleston's works done during session: Three mixed media pieces



A.3. Sweet Like a Crow (Ondaatje 1989)

For Hetti Corea, 8 years old

The Sinhalese are beyond a doubt one of the least musical people in the world. It would be quite impossible to have less sense of pitch, line or rhythm. ~ Paul Bowles

Your voice sounds like a scorpion being pushed through a glass tube like someone has just trod on a peacock like wind howling in a coconut like a rusty bible, like someone pulling barbed wire across a stone courtyard, like a pig drowning, a vattacka being fried a bone shaking hands a frog singing at Carnegie Hall.

Like a crow swimming in milk, like a nose being hit by a mango like the crowd at the Royal-Thomian match, a womb full of twins, a pariah dog with a magpie in its mouth like the midnight jet from Casablanca like Air Pakistan curry, a typewriter on fire, like a hundred pappadans being crunched, like someone trying to light matches in a dark room, the clicking sound of a reef when you put your head into the sea, a dolphin reciting epic poetry to a sleepy audience, the sound of a fan when someone throws brinjals at it, like pineapples being sliced in the Pettah market like betel juice hitting a butterfly in mid-air like a whole village running naked onto the street and tearing their sarongs, like an angry family pushing a jeep out of the mud, like dirt on the needle, like 8 sharks being carried on the back of a bicycle like 3 old ladies locked in the lavatory like the sound I hear when having an afternoon sleep and someone walked through my room in ankle bracelets.

A.4. MEd: Visual Arts & Creativity (Elective) at NIE

Primary School (Science) Teachers' Group Project on Symmetry





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Chapter 39 Exegetical Commentary

Ray Langenbach

Foreword

Dr. Susie Lingham asked me for a dialogue over her article 'Turning the Curious Corners of Thought: The Synaesthetic Mind & Ways of Knowing in the Arts' in *Contextualized Practices in Arts Education: An International Dialogue on Singapore*. I am taking seriously the notion of the dialogue. But first, a confession and caveat. I am deeply prejudiced in the writing of this so-called "exegesis"... actually it is more of a set of somewhat arbitrary questions and comments on Susie's article.

I have known the writer for around 20 years, including a period when we were working together to defend freedom of speech and artistic expression in Singapore against interventions into civil society by the government. She was then a founding member of the Fifth Passage [artist]collective and I was Lecturer at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University (where *she* now teaches). I first encountered Lingham's *Reader* for the course *Writing For Performance* that she delivered at University of Western Sydney around 1996/1997 when I was there pursuing a PhD. I was struck by her brilliant pedagogical approach to teaching post-structuralist and post-modernist writings, while retaining the complexity and richness of the subject.

This ability to organise and represent difficult theory for student consumption without dumbing it down has always been one of Lingham's strengths. And it reflects her own mind and intellectual honesty. She is a philosopher to whom the relationship between ethics, epistemology and ontology is never far from her thoughts. In a nutshell, Lingham employs the methodology of Socrates' dialogues with her students, a technique used in millions of dialogues between masters and students that have taken place also in the *ashrams*, *madrasahs* and *pondoks* of Asia.

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What shines through this article is Lingham's continued commitment to the linkages of philosophy to pedagogy through *praxis*. It is in practice that the students reiterate what they have learned and directly engage the imaginative logic of the work, as it is in this act of creation, that the 'transformation' Lingham repeatedly refers to takes place. Not just in the formal elements, not just the materials: it is the synergy of all the elements and the challenge to create that produces this "alchemetaphoric transformation".

Commentary

We all are marked by the irreplaceable practices of our favourite teachers ... those teachers who adapted a syllabus or curriculum to fit our particular needs or provided a wall for us to rail against.

I recall a professor with a tragic alcohol addiction from my years in art school. Jan Cox, a Belgian artist of the COBRA movement taught monumental painting at the Boston Museum School. When he had a class the following day he would manage to drive to the parking lot outside the school after the bars closed, and it was the students' job to awake him in his car and open his synapses with several cups of cutthroat-strong coffee. Then he would regale us with stories and methods for transposing our sketches and ideas to monumental scale. There was no sense of certainty in his teaching. At times he would converse for a few hours (these could not be called lectures), or, if he had awakened early he might paint over our paintings from the previous week. This of course caused disturbance and altercations with his students, which were then followed by a deeper kind of dialogue than was otherwise possible. In my mind he was one of the worst-great-teachers I have had. Not just because he broke all the rules of good teaching, but also because teaching for him was an unscripted zone of possibility and chaos.

I was told by the American artist, Chris Burden 20 years ago that his methodology for teaching video art amounted to asking the students to first construct film cameras, and then prepare film with light-sensitive emulsion, and punch sprocket holes along the edges. They would then shoot their films and construct a projector for the screening. For a sculpture class he asked the students to take the heaviest object they could carry on their own to the roof of the building.

When I taught sculpture at Universiti Sains Malaysia, I asked the students to create spirit traps and to put them into action; to draw a 1 km line in the landscape; and to create a work that compresses time and expands space. And then another that compresses space and expands time.

It is the narration of such particular pedagogical practices that I find useful and enthralling, for it is there that you find pedagogical philosophy on the hoof as it were: walking, trotting or at full gallop. In this paper after 15 odd pages in which the author justifies her methodology, the reader encounters the transcriptions of conversations between lecturer and students (most of which, for some reason, suffer under the demeaning social science moniker "Case Studies"). That was where the

flower opened; I felt the article was finally allowing me to find a place to inhabit the writing, without intervention by an author earnestly trying to make me understand. I was allowed to enter the very state of questioning experienced by the students, with the ambiguity necessary for apprehension, while avoiding the false catharsis of comprehension. No life jacket...just the corpus of the method, as a miniature *bildungsroman* narrative there for all to encounter or not as they wish, in the manner that they wish: as documentation of an event, or as metaphor.

Then, after getting the gist of the method, I found I could proceed with a bit more patience to what seems to me to be over-simplified explanations for the method that the author brought to bear on the dialogue. Frankly I would have preferred an article completely composed of these small dialogues. The long passages that describe how synaesthesia is part of the author's pedagogy, suffer for their scientific thinness, and their lack of metaphoric richness and complexity; a kind of complexity which I have found in her other writings.

[To the Writer:]

When you are sailing full into the wind, your writing is layered and rich; but here you seem to be writing for a public that can only chew one small metaphor at a time. I found the linguistic landscape of this article bare, stripped down and caught somewhere between the way you think and what you think others of your imaginary public (or the editor or publishers) want to hear. So, for me the article provided instrumental propaganda for a dialogical methodology that needs none.

On the arguments for a synaesthetic pedagogy:

Because I am aware of the phenomenon of synaesthesia, but am not an expert in its neurology or history, I turned to, where else, Wikipedia. There I learned that ideasthesia has been distinguished from synaesthesia. While the former term doesn't flow off the tongue like the latter, it has the benefit of explicitly including volition and cognition. Whereas synaesthesia (the mixing of the senses) functions as a neurological reflex (at least for synaesthetics: those sensitive to synaesthetic effects), ideasthesia covers a much broader territory of conceptualization and language. At a glance, it seems to offer a better description of almost all the examples of 'synaesthesia' presented in this article. I couldn't shake the sense that a number of phenomena are being mashed together under synaesthesia, and that the article is really about something quite different: namely bringing the students to a point of reflective conceptualisation in their art practice. When seen this way, the article and its diverse arguments that otherwise seem to head in different directions (imagination, synaesthesia, interdisciplinarity, informed perception, concept creation, and practice-led education) makes more sense to me, and the mélange of activities under 'synaesthesia' seem more coherent.

Secondly, to separate the phenomenon of synaesthesia from its diachronic cultural context, and treat it purely as a synchronic tool or methodology in contemporary arts education raises some sticky issues. The structuralist turn (Freudian

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psychology, semiotics, anthropology, Marxism, Phenomenology) at the end of the nineteenth century along with reception theory in film, music and theatre, had a millennial politics attached. The notion of all-encompassing and unifying ideologies began to take the stage in Europe, while the global canvas of colonialism was still in full-swing if fraying at the edges, but also while Europe itself was collapsing into the first of two catastrophic wars. The second of these "world wars" would abruptly terminate this particular phase of modern colonialism, as it ushered in the ideologically inflected globalism of the cold wars. European-type urban insurgencies spread with the migration of diverse populaces migrating to the new colonial/post-colonial cityscapes of Asia, Africa and South America.



Sita (inspired by the Ramayana) 1893 by Odilon Redon (Symbolism, Aestheticism)

To what extent is the ideasthetic or synaesthetic phenomenon linked with the *fin de siècle* decline of the European colonial empires? And can it be linked to the rise of the disjunctive, polysemic aesthetics inspired by the urban barricades of nineteenth century revolts and insurgencies that transformed into the trenches and the Maginot lines of the wars. Can synaesthesia be linked to the rise of conceptualism in European art via collage, montage, and bricolage, Dada, Surrealism and Futurism? And how is it linked or not to the notion of a *total art* of Wagner's operas or Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* or to the experience of modernity and the idea of the modern, so beautifully and so *ideasthetically* described by Marshall Berman (1982/1983)?

The maelstrom of modern life has been fed from many sources: great discoveries in the physical sciences, changing our images of the universe and our place in it; the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new human environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates

new forms of corporate power and class struggle; immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurling them halfway across the world into new lives; rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth; systems of communication dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly powerful national states, bureaucratically structure and operated, constantly trying to expand their powers; mass social movements of people, and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain some control over their lives; finally, driving all these peoples and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market (p. 16).

Berman's description of these twentieth century Euro-American symptoms of 'modernization' are just as relevant here in twenty-first century Southeast Asia (reiterating what we already know, that post-modernism is a sub-set of modernism). I would argue that it is the character of modernization that you are referring to as the phenomenon of synaesthesia.

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Chapter 40 Dialogue

Susie Lingham and Ray Langenbach

The dialogue that follows the foreword has been spliced together from two separate email commentary-and-response between Langenbach and Lingham, and edited after a final face to face conversation over coffee as well as after a final commentary via email from Langenbach in December 2012.

Foreword

I've known Dr. Ray Langenbach since 1993/1994. Ray is a rare specimen: a creative artist, a compassionate *and* passionate art educator, a theoretician of the highest order, a performance artist who dances with agility on the tightrope between theory and practice, and a genuinely lovely, generous human being who embraces life in all its ever-accruing complexity of experience and reflection. I invited him to comment on my reflections here for all of those reasons, and also that he himself had taught at the National Institute of Education in Singapore from 1993 to 1996, an institute where I am currently at. From many accounts, he has been, and continues to be an inspirational *educator* – as can be gathered from his brief description of some of his own highly interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches in the teaching of art.

I was initially surprised to find that Dr. Langenbach's first commentary seemed to be fixed on the word 'synaesthesia', and appeared to assume that it was the only 'methodology' I was discussing in my approach to interdisciplinary art education. We clarified that point at the face to face conversation on 16 December 2012 – the title that had been settled on after a brief discussion between the book editor and myself seemed to place the focus on synaesthesia: 'The Synaesthetic Mind: Ways

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of Knowing in the Arts & Interdisciplinary Art Education'. Which admittedly can be construed as being too 'specific', given the range of ideas being discussed. And so the title has been changed back to what it originally was – 'Turning the Curious Corners of Thought: The Synaesthetic Mind & Ways of Knowing in the Arts' – which hopefully allows the reader more room to roam a bit, if not actually galumph.

Another issue to address is Langenbach's criticism of the writing style. I am aware that writing is a very flexible instrument. I will not protest too much, other than note that the writing style here is apposite to the context. It can be assumed that a book entitled *Contextualized Practices in Arts Education: An International Dialogue on Singapore*, will necessarily be of interest to a very specific audience.

Lastly, on the matter that caused some consternation to Ray: the subtitle 'Case Studies' in relation to the dialogue sessions. Since I began teaching in 1996, I have had many conversations with students, both during formal 'classroom' sessions and at more informal times out of that context, some conversations more interesting than others, and some positively thrilling. Most of these moments have vanished without record. The only times I 'recorded' such dialogue was in 2001, when I was doing the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Higher Education, and the idea of research methodology was something I decided to engage in more formally. These conversations were labeled 'case studies', because that was what they were: individual cases that I was studying. One such dialogue (indicated as such) took place on the rooftop of the art college LASALLE, which was an old rambling place, and the rooftop was actually off-limits. The conversation was with Heleston, who has continued to be a real friend and fellow-questor in the realm of art practice and education. He is himself currently a full-time art educator at LASALLE, which is now housed in a swanky new award-winning building in the heart of the art district in Singapore.

And now to the spliced 'dialogue' between Ray and myself over the last few months:

Edited Dialogue

Susie: *Ideasthesia vs. synaesthesia:* I've always been aware that synaesthesia is actually the term for a medical condition where the senses are experienced as 'fused' – not necessarily all at once, and while this condition is rare, and considered an 'abnormality', there are more and less common modes of synaesthesia. The 'fused' or confusing of one sense perception into another, typically for instance, sounds or particular notes of instruments being associatively experienced as colour is studied in neuroscience, and one of the most published neuroscientist on the topic is V. S. Ramachandran, Director of the Center for Brain and Cognition and Distinguished Professor with the Psychology Department and Neurosciences Program at the University of California, San Diego. He, together with fellow researcher E.M. Hubbard, repeated Wolfgang Köhler's 1929 experiment of the **Bouba/Kiki Effect** in 2001with American college undergraduates and Tamil speakers in India.

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When asked "Which of these shapes is bouba and which is kiki?", it was reiterated that *most* people, and not just synaesthetes, from both language backgrounds, associated the spiky, pointed 2-dimensional shape with the name 'kiki' and the curvy bulbous shape with name 'bouba'. This reinforces the implication that there is already sense-association in language and speech, where the 'shape' of sounds readily extend to visual representation that 'correspond' to those sound-shapes.

Ray: I want to interject something that I will return to a little later. While I claimed earlier that you mistook ideasthesia for synaesthesia, now I will go out on a metap...er... limb, to suggest that you and Ramachandran and Hubbard are mistaking the mimetic relationship between the morphology of a written word and auditory mimesis or *onomatopoeia* for synaesthesia. Unless onomatopoeia is a sub-category of synaesthetic phenomena?

Susie: When I undertook the 'interdisciplinary' and sense-reductive approach to teaching the course 'Writing for Performance' at the University of Sydney in 1996/ 1997, and even when I shaped the 'synaesthetic tasks' for my drawing classes in 2000/2001, I had not heard or read of any scientific research on synaesthesia, and certainly had not read anything by Ramachandran and Hubbard. I was interested in the phenomena because I tended to operate in this 'cross-sensory' way e.g., especially with musical forms in 'chords' which I would experience as a moodcolour, or an impressionistic 'setting'. I remember 'coaching' my brother who was practising to enter a classical guitar competition, by making references to different phenomena to get him to achieve a particular quality of sound from his acoustic classical guitar e.g., I asked him to try to make a particular phrase in the Leo Brouwer piece (Elogio De La Danza) he was playing, more oily – I felt the need for this sensation in that particular part of the piece, where it was generally ostensibly more percussive on the whole. I do not claim to be a synaesthete. Perhaps because I read and write poetry, this way of 'verbing nouns' for instance, is natural to me. And that is why, significantly, the question of whether synaesthesia is a sensory phenomena or a conceptual phenomena – while an interesting distinction – is not really a distinction for me. As a writer, artist, and someone who plays the guitar and piano 'by ear', concept and percept both have affects that can be experienced. The physiological condition of synaesthesia is being researched by scientists, who extrapolate its implications into other aspects of cognition. My interest in this is, it is true, the conceptualization of experience. The distinction that you brought up between ideasthesia and synaesthesia may, or not be just a question of the correct 'term', since ideasthesia, as a term, seems redundant to me. Ideas, by their very seeming immateriality, are always already 'skeletal' and tending towards embodiment, whatever the materiality at hand. I use the word synaesthesia here to refer to the image-language-concept-continuum into experience, and the best example is the experiential 'synaesthetic' function of metaphor, which interestingly, have that affective quality of deepening and extending conceptual experience. Onomatopoeia is an excellent instance of when the experience of a particular phenomenon/activity is represented as auditory sign within language – and the notion of onomatopoeia as 'a sub-category of synaesthetic phenomena' is an interesting insight indeed.

However, onomatopoeia runs counter to the instance of the 'auditory' in the Michael Ondaatje poem 'Sweet Like Crow' which I selected for different interdisciplinary workshops designed to heighten sensitivities to the complex relations between word and image. The visual/auditory as experience in a poem like this reaches beyond the one-to-one conflation of the onomatopoeic word-sound.

Regarding your point about the ideological and political origins of the observation and use of the synaesthetic 'effect' in art, film, theatre and literature in Europe, I would reiterate that, terminology aside, this ability to *affect* is not tied to "diachronic cultural contexts", although *how* it affects may indeed be very much bound up with the 'sense' and 'sensations' of the times. Yes, indeed, modernist French poets and writers like Baudelaire, Mallarme and Rimbaud, and the Russian Nabokov were sensitive to the synaesthetic effect in writing and metaphor-making, whether or not they were actually synaesthetes. They were able to generate synaesthetic experience through their art – but perhaps, this generative aesthetic experience was not readily grasped by *everyone* either.

Ray: Ok, putting aside the issue of the distinction of synaesthetic vs. ideasthetic for a moment, what I am implying is something a bit more inclusive: that the era itself provided a polysemic and synaesthetic moment, as described by Berman.

Susie: I would argue that the phenomenon has been recognized and experienced way out here in the East too. The terminology might be different – it may not have been termed 'synaesthesia', and the sobering fact that English is my first language, literally my 'mother tongue', makes it difficult for me to argue from the 'other' side, as far as language is concerned. Poets in particular though – whatever the cultural context – have always turned to this mode of thinking-making, an instrument that I identify and name as the 'synaesthetic metaphor', and in so doing, continue to open up new ways *to think about experience*, and so *experience thought*. I like the word that you used (coined?) 'alchemetaphoric' transformation: I certainly relate to that mode of thinking-making – the concept of 'transmutation' being key here.

Marshall Berman's word 'maelstrom' is also very apt. While he uses it in the context of the modern condition, where everything seems to be speed-pulling together in counter-vortices, it is about the speed of *becoming*...where disparate disciplines and understandings *turn* each other, and turn *into* each other – *concept*, *percept*, *affect*. Inescapably, Modernism – literally, technologically, linguistically, conceptually and ideologically – as first ignited and developed in the West (which was itself seriously *affected* by the East and the colonized 'others'), continues to be deeply *affective*, like a domino-effect maelstrom, in postcolonized cultures around the world. The idea of the 'meme' ricochets away here – itself a word that is spun off the word *seme*, the smallest unit of meaning, a seed-term in semiotics, which was itself first rooted in linguistics and the study of literature, and has since been well and truly incorporated into the study of visual art.

Ray: Perhaps it wasn't the artists themselves who drew on synaesthetic or ideasthetic consciousness, but they were drawn to it as the new syncretic consciousness emerged from the cultures in which they lived. They were, in a sense the

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instruments of the synaesthetic/ideasthetic meme. The rise of flaneurism during the fin de siècle implied that it was the authors, artists and poets themselves who were the new metaphors—or metonyms— for the modern age and the city, rather than just their works.

Susie: True, technology has always driven art – and culture. And while the idea of machine consciousness is a very real conundrum and is certainly of philosophical interest, and brings to mind the 'optical unconscious' that Walter Benjamin ascribes to the camera, where information is 'collected' in a non-discriminatory way, I note that human perspective is a finely tuned, selective 'instrument' in its own right. The 'extra-sensory' aspect of human experience, and the human being's *desire to experience*, is very definitely extended through machines, whether large or small, complex or simple. But fundamentally, machines are made possible and incrementally more complex by each succeeding generation of human beings – scientists and innovators, artists included – *for* each succeeding generation of human beings, and behave as legacies do, both positively and negatively, as blessing and as curse *at once*. They are extensions of the human being's abilities, as well as limitations, and desires to *reach out* of its presupposed conditioning and positioning in the scheme of observable Nature.

Still, everything needs to be 'sense-experienced' – however fleetingly – before it can be processed and 'translated'. And every sense experience is infinitely re-translateable, or re-encoded, and transmissible. The machinic sensor and its recollections may be all that's left of recordable/recorded experience in the long run, given human history and the possible trajectories of its future, or lack thereof. And it is certainly interesting to speculate how, in the perhaps not-so-distant future, machines and human beings might continue to teach/learn from each other, and whether machines might not more 'naturally' tend toward 'ideasthesia' in their transgressive acts of creative re-cognition.

'Totalising' is certainly not the mode I work in – I have come to realize that I am very unstructured in my own 'learning' processes, and would go so far to say that I often do not know how, and, more alarmingly perhaps, *if*, I learn – I only know I operate in a very unstructured, maverick way. So in the pedagogical context, teaching artmaking and conceptualizing through non-visual means seems to be just part of the 'natural' creative process to me, as I believe that there is no 'proper' way to be creative.

Ray: I am interested in the theoretical implications of Kevin Smith and Phil Hester's DC Comix visualization of *Onomatopoeia* as a man in a black costume and cape with a mask with two concentric circles for eyes (that seems to be drawn from African masks, or as Susie notes, a gas mask).

He stands in this image against a background of onomatopoetic words, while voicing one more: "snap". How do we approach this personification of a synecdochal cognitive state? In effect the comix character is presented as a homunculus: the persona of a particular cognitive modality or potential inside the mind to discern an iconic/mimetic relationship between the auditory sign and its referent. Onomatopeia and 'synideaesthesia' are semiotically porous: the real emerges

through the porosity of the sign. And the sign itself, that which formerly seemed to be such a 'solid' thing, "melts in the air".



The DC Comic villain *Onomatopoeia*, nemesis to Green Arrow and Batman, written by Kevin Smith and illustrated by Phil Hester (wikipedia)

In ancient Greek *onomatopoeia* has its source in "the name I make"; referring to a ritualised and naturalised performance of naming; the bringing something into being through the repetition of its name, which as it is repeated disappears into the phenomenon it mimics.

Susie: *Onomatopoeia* the comix character, does perhaps offer scope for analysis in the context of how the mind works, but essentially seems to illustrate the 'magical' power of the 'utterance', a reference to the primacy of the voice, the spoken word, and speech – performativity – recognized since time immemorial. Onomatopeia – the literary device – while *affective*, does not go beyond the specifically experiential. Except in some instances, where particular words resonate at the homonymic, synonymic and symbolic levels at once, e.g. 'snap', it is usually a word-sound conflation that *stills* the conceptual potential of synaesthetic metaphor and imagery in language.

The interdisciplinary approach, or 'intervention', discussed in this chapter is intended to stimulate the possibility for the rich combinatorial processes, including

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accessing personal experiences, that lie at the heart of creativity – processes that take unexpected detours, moving away from the merely mimetic into non-mimetic, conceptual expression and representation. I seek, through dialogue sessions, synaesthetic task-setting and interdisciplinary activity, to engage the *imagination*, where percept-concept-affect interplay in creative feedback.

Ray: In my reading, your paper is the presentation of a cross-disciplinary and conceptual pedagogical method that utilises Socratic dialogue. Through these means a model of syncretic *conceptual* consciousness and an emergent notion of creativity are transmitted to students to help them reflex while on their work. This is achieved through the turning of the trope, and the students' sensitization to a multiplicity of valences and implications already in their works, but put there largely unconsciously. You rightly place metaphor/metonymy/synecdoche/performativity at the crux of the matter, as it is this opening into a multivalent and 'thick' reading that provides the conceptual turn, which is at the root of your pedagogical interventions.

Chapter 41 Afterward: One Book, 16 Chapters, Four Hats, and a Compelling Journey

Liora Bresler

Forewords are doorways. They aim to provide the reader with conceptual, and organizational lenses to enter the book experience. Less common, afterwards, positioned at the exit, are codas (literally "tails"). This one reflects on what the book did with my own experience, inviting readers to do the same. In an age where interactivity is explicit and ubiquitous, I see this afterward as the first reply, embedded in the "bound" text, to be followed by other readers to interweave their own impressions, observations, and personal experiences of this volume.

In the process of writing this afterward, multiple hats introduced themselves throughout the reading. Wearing the hat of an academic citizen, adviser and member of committee dissertations, I noted with satisfaction of how directly relevant some of these chapters were for my students and peers. The metaphor of a book as a feast suggested itself as I imagined a global, yet quite specific, (inviting Tawnya, Anna, and Sven, Heather and Kimber to sample chapters and ideas) group sitting around an imaginary, ever-expanding table. Appreciating the tastes and flavors of the presented themes and issues, our discussions of ideas and methodologies, similarities and differences of contexts, arts disciplines, and situations, was vivid and engaged.

Another hat is that of musician turned qualitative researcher. I have found that my earlier sensitization to musical dimensions – form, rhythm, orchestration – has shaped my responses to the academic world of written texts, from students' papers and dissertations to books and handbooks. My dissertation (Bresler 1987) was in a form of a sonata form; my handbook (2007) used preludes and interludes to create what I was hoping would create an attractive rhythm and form. In that spirit, I relished Chee Hoo Lum's structure and orchestration of dialogue and responses. In a post-positivist paradigm where texts are recognized to be perspectival, the integration of another thoughtful voice, exegetical commentary as a counterpoint, and the affordance of a dialectical third space to respond to the counter melody, is not only refreshing and stimulating but profoundly educational in

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modeling careful listening and processing. Indeed dialoguers rose to the task and brought up thought provoking counter points and perspectives, often responded to by the original authors.

And there was the traveler hat, the one that I acquired in my visit in Singapore several years ago. This one activated all my senses – ears and eyes, smells, touch and taste, all parts of an intensely evocative experience. Having a personal encounter with the culture and with some of the particular settings described in the book, the reading was filled with concrete details. I was curious about the enthusiastic, impressive students and teachers in SOTA that I met in my visit; the cutting-edge, innovative artists from the alternative performance venue; the teachers in the so-called ordinary schools (knowing that schools, like people, are never "ordinary"). I wondered what has changed from my visit several years ago, culturally, politically, personally. Recognizing that some of the fascination I have experienced reading the book was contributed by my vivid memories, I pondered how much of the richness that I experienced in that visit could be conveyed through these pages, and whether images and sounds would provide additional layers.

Rather than sequential, these hats are (fluidly) nested. The official hat for which I was invited was that of a researcher who has been invested in issues of arts curricula, observant of underlying values, and cultural contexts, as well as personal lived experiences. In this role, I applauded the skillful juxtaposition of macro, meso, and micro levels, drawing on the qualitative research commitment to understanding phenomena in context.

Providing a broad context, the Introduction and Chapter 1 presented historical, political, economical, cultural, sociological, and artistic contexts, dating before independence to the present day. From her perspective as an artist, creating new spaces in Singapore's artistic scene, the commentator highlighted in her commentary issues at the core of artists' mission within a complex reality.

The institutional, meso level centered here on schools, typical schools as well as the unique arts-infused SOTA. Micro perspectives included students' and teachers' perspectives, encompassing non-arts teachers, band directors, theory, and music and visual arts specialists. While the book did not plan to tackle a comparative lens, (and in any limited number of cases it is a futile, impossible by definition to do), it still forms an invitation to reflect on the differences between these distinct types of situations and experiences.

While each of the chapters focuses on one level, contexts are interwoven to facilitate understanding. Individual teachers or students' experiences are shaped by institutional structures, policies, and value systems. Institutions, in turn, assume their vitality and educational force from the individual members that live and work in these institutions. The chapters were skillful in weaving broader contexts in the presentation of the individual case.

Issues identified and explored provided a compelling range: flow in students' experiences of learning and creating; students' perceptions and stereotypes about dance and dancers; a teacher's free improvisation and the power of the arts in his lived experience; teachers' immersion in an educational setting in other countries (here, Nova Scotia) to support their development and their own journey of growth;

genuine and inspiring experimentations with curriculum reform of foundational, skill-oriented disciplines such as music theory; the demands, constraints and joys of one band director as representing others. Disciplines encompassed music, visual arts, dance, drama, and digital story-telling. Issues encompassed the classical multicultural education; and assessment within these specific educational contexts, to teachers' experiences of "push" and "pull" in allowing students greater agency and creativity in their artistic activities.

Each art form has its intellectual and disciplinary traditions, practices, and cherishing, and I was fascinated to learn what shapes they took in the Singapore educational and cultural scene. The inclusion of diverse arts disciplines highlighted some of the commonalities across the arts – the interplay of skills and creativity; tradition and innovation. The diversity also helped us attend to the differences: the discipline specific types of knowledge, expectations and stereotypes that each has. Taken as an umbrella term (The arts), and at the same time scrutinizing each case individually, within a specific art discipline, a specific genre, a specific situation, we go back to the underlying question of how can the arts educate us, in making and appreciating, teaching and learning? What is it about the arts that render them the power they have? The questions are big, the answers are local, pending on specific situations, and circumstances, roles and practices.

I find some of the emerging patterns to be heart-warming. This is particularly important in an age with tremendous push towards narrow economical goals, where the notion of ownership, personal meaning, and individual voices and experiences can be ignored within the educational system. Here, the range of methodological genres — from case studies and narrative inquiry, to self-study and auto-ethnography, proved to be an excellent fit to capture these issues with depth and complexity.

The reading was a wonderfully rewarding one. Accompanying teachers and students on their journeys to their inner and outer selves, it brought me closer to a country rich with vibrant intellectual and artistic projects. Editor Chee Hoo Lum should be applauded for his well conceptualized, beautifully orchestrated, compelling journey, as are the authors of the chapters for articulating issues and ideas as skillfully and engagingly as they did.

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Chapter 11 Young Singaporeans' Perceptions on Dance in Physical Education

Leong Lai Keun and Joan Marian Fry

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Chapter 13 Dialogue

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Chapter 21 Weaving and Anchoring the Arts into Curriculum: The Evolving Curriculum Processes

Tan Liang See and Letchmi Devi Ponnusamy

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Chapter 23 Response

Tan Liang See and Letchmi Devi Ponnusamy

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