Children's images of imagination: The language of drawings

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ABSTRACT

The beliefs teachers hold about children's imaginative capabilities directly influence their classroom practices. This paper reports on a small research study where the authors drew on an arts-based framework discussing two of Kieran Egan's cognitive tools – in particular, the Somatic and the Mythic – to better understand the drawings of 5–12 years old about their imaginations. Drawing is valued as a process of metacognitive and creative meaning making that helps to explain the children's thinking about where their imaginations are located and how they access their imaginations and creative ideas. The findings highlight the important role drawing can play in enabling teachers to access children's conceptual thinking. They also offer some insight into how children understand the role imagination plays in their lives and learning.

In these current times of unprecedented change, imagination has gained prominence for its role in entrepreneurial innovation and creativity. This focus is mainly directed towards economic productivity and employment. Less attention is focused on the critical importance of imagination in being human; on living full and enriching lives filled with possibilities. Eisner (2002, p. xi) believes this limited focus stems from the enduring belief that 'the arts are nice, but not essential'. He argues, as we do, that the arts build a sense of emotional wellbeing along with cognitive and linguistic capacities. With attention to our senses assisting and questioning the experiences of life around us, our imaginations make future endeavours possible.

There are many ways to describe our imaginations. Vygotsky's (1978) early theorising on the importance of the imagination established it as an essential player in children's development:

> imagination, as the basis of all creative activity, is an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific and technical creation alike. (p. 3)

Dewey's (1934, 1994) notion of imagination relates more directly to aesthetic experience. Our imaginations, he asserts, are deeply rooted in experience and connected to our capacity for empathy. When we encounter inconsistencies in our direct experience, imagination can assist us in re-visioning the experiences that are absent in reality. It is imagination that allows us to explore additional possibilities. Maxine Greene (1995), a student of Dewey, suggests that it is our *social imagination* that enables us to think about these alternate possibilities for the world. She describes it as reaching beyond what is. Our imagination has the power to transform our experience. It is curious, as Fettes (2010) observes, that educators who profess interest in experience appear to be less interested in the workings of the imagination.

This article focuses on how children depict their understanding of imagination. Initially we briefly examine the concept of imagination and the importance of visual representation in literacy development and wellbeing. Drawing on Egan's cognitive tools we suggest that children's views, as expressed in their drawings, can be seen as a window to their capacity for higher cognitive, aesthetic and moral thinking from an early age.

The imagination

In Western philosophy, the imagination has been regarded as the intermediary world between the world of the senses and the world of thought (Brann, 1993; Jay, 2004). So, it is that imagination has rarely made an appearance in writing on formal schooling outside the domain of the arts (e.g., Greene, 1995; Greene & Hogan, 2005). Leslie (1984) asserts that using imagination is an early symptom of the human mind's ability to characterise and manipulate its own attitudes to information. Our own ability to pretend enables us to

understand pretence in others. In short, 'pretence is an early manifestation of what has been called "theory of mind".' (Premack & Woodruff, 1978, p. 416). We can imagine our own futures rather than have them defined for us. The importance of imagination in 21st century thinking has been theorised by Rita J. King, the co-founder of Science House (http://www.science-house.com/) who deems this time as the Imagination Age. She says, 'this age is defined by the mindset of the interaction of science and humanity.' https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/origin-imagination-age-rita-j-king. Similarly, Daniel Pink (2005) pays recognition to the Arts and Humanities naming this time the Conceptual Age. Pink argues that:

> conceptual age workers must be able to create artistic and emotional beauty, to detect patterns and opportunities, … to empathise, to understand the subtleties of human interaction, to find joy in one's self and elicit it in others (p. 51).

Kieran Egan's interest in the imagination in education is extensive and to that end he has established an Imaginative Education Research Group (http://ierg.ca/) which systematically studies the imagination. Egan (1992) describes the work of the imagination by saying that '[It] lies at a kind of crux where perception, memory, idea generation, emotion, metaphor, and no doubt other labelled features of our lives, intersect and interact' (p. 3). In Egan's model, literacy education draws on Vygotsky's (1978) early ideas about imagination and play, his developmental theory as well as his studies on the influence of practices in solely oral cultures. Egan recognises our pre-linguistic selves as somatic, a time when we use our body to move in space with the heightened use of our senses to understand the world around us. He argues that unfortunately this somatic understanding is often replaced rather than integrated with language and cognitive understandings. The result is that the individual can be cut off from experiences that allow imagination to flourish. In a response to Egan's theory, Maxine Greene (1985, p. 167) agrees that Egan's focal point is necessary to sustain when he says that: 'curriculum and teaching methods … have excluded much of the richness of human experience that young children can have direct access to.' Greene (1985) furthers and complicates, her response to Egan by drawing on wisdom from past philosophers and educational theorists to demonstrate how the imagination has been neglected in education. She disagrees, however, with Egan's account of concrete and abstract properties, feeling he has taken a somewhat reductionist approach. Greene (1978) argues that:

> It [imagination] draws toward the unexplored, toward the possible. It opens windows in the actual and the taken-for-granted toward what might be and is not yet. (p. 170)

From the varied interpretations of the imagination above it is apparent that it is an area not easily defined or caught. This makes it a most worthy area of investigation for children to explore and share with their teachers. It is not about the children being correct or even accurate in their depictions of imagination. It is also not about them producing beautiful drawings. It is a playful yet thoughtful exploration about its presence and importance in their lives at the moment. This exploratory research project demonstrates how children's drawings can reflect their thought processes and understandings about elusive concepts like imagination and having creative ideas.

Visual literacies and the role of drawing as process

In the past two decades, attention has been drawn to the rapidly expanding landscape of literacy and how globalisation, through technology, is altering ways to learn with respect to linguistically diverse cultures. The International Visual Literacy Association defines visual literacy as:

> A group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences … Through the creative use of these competencies, [we are] able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, [we are] able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communications (Fransecky & Debes, 1972, p. 7, http://www. ivla.org/, 2003)

While initially focused on design, visual literacy is now acknowledged more broadly in literacy education. The New London Group (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kalantzis, Cope, Chan & Dalley-Trim, 2016) comprised ten researchers, educators and futurists from around the world. They began meeting in the early 90s and coined the term *Multiliteracies* to reflect changes in our understanding of literacy and focus on exploring modes of meaning making and the affordances each mode provides. In Australia, Lo Bianco and Freebody (1997) described the socio-cultural and educational context for the development of new policy. Through examining current theories and research they recognised the importance of visual, audial, gestural and special patterns as meaning making tools. Some of these findings have been incorporated into the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2017) (http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/) with visual literacy as one of the organising elements. The focus and resources in curriculum documents are, however, geared to

ways of *reading* images rather than *producing* visual images. The section on 'Creating Multi-modal Texts' has minimal focus on drawing for representation of ideas. While the Visual Arts section mentions how children can use art to communicate ideas, the section on Critical and Creative Thinking has no mention of using drawing as a mode to think with.

Kress (2010) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001, 2006) provided a grammar of visual design: a metalanguage when learning how to read images. Painter, Martin and Unsworth's (2014) work on semiotics using a systemic-functional approach has also contributed to a new focus on the importance of learning to read images. Callow (2012) provided educators with a practical semiotic framework to assist in the discussion of images and words and how they work together. Kress (2010) and Matthews (1992, 1994, 1999) view drawing as one of the many languages children use to communicate stories about their experiences in informal settings. Through the children's drawings there are narratives they tell to themselves and those the children tell to others. There is no separation in the multimodes children use to communicate until teachers instruct them to separate these modes.

While there is acceptance of multiple modalities, it is interesting to note that teachers have paid far greater attention and value to reading the visual in picture books and in reading visual texts than in the production of graphic texts. The graphic novel for instance has gained wide acceptance over the past twenty years. As a memoir, an historical account or a narrative many graphic novels are now studied in depth in classrooms across Australia. Derived from the comic book, the graphic novel originally had its appeal for struggling and reluctant readers. *The Complete Maus,* by Art Spiegelman (1991), appears to have paved the way for a far wider and diverse readership. The text is a memoir; a conversation with the author's father, a Holocaust survivor. This graphic novel was published in full in 1991 and in 1992 Spiegelman was awarded the Pulitzer prize.

There is growing recognition of the need to equip young people with lifelong skills, knowledge and understandings for 21st century living that transcend siloed curriculum subjects. The American National Education Association's (2013), *The four C's* (critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity), is one example that is widely quoted. Utilising a multimodal approach, Kress and Jewitt (2003) position all communicative processes as equal in ways they can assist learning. Yet to date, the written word remains privileged in the classroom. Mavers (2011) acknowledges this privilege believing that drawing, as a mode of representation, is not deemed adequate with respect to curriculum requirements. Only after the 'real work' of writing has been completed are children permitted to draw. Drawing also often serves as a 'time filler to keep children occupied' (p. 54). Even in the early years, far less attention and value is paid to children creating images to explain their thinking and extend their language capabilities. In addition, we are aware that children, encouraged to create images, diminishes after the first few years of schooling (Britsch, 2013).

Yet it is clear that drawing has many benefits. Hope (2008) writes convincingly about the importance of drawing in the primary classroom arguing that 'Drawing comes from within, from an image held in the human mind. Even when engaged in observational drawing of an object placed right in front of our eyes, our minds act as a filter' (p. 4). Drawing from one's imagination makes thoughts clearer. It also assists children in organising their ideas. Drawing occupies the middle ground between the imagination and the reality. A number of researchers, including Hope (2008), Brooks (2009), Heath and Wolf (2005), and Mackenzie (2011), make the important distinction between drawing as process and drawing as product. They favour what can be learned from teachers' valuing drawing as a process. Children's thoughts, after all, are processes stored in their container of future ideas.

Research utilising drawing as a mode for expression and deeper thinking is minimal. In the United Kingdom, Heath and Wolf (2005) studied children, four to seven years of age and observed their language growth as they worked with a professional visual artist, one day per week for an entire academic school year. One of their key findings demonstrated that the children's use of language devices, such as perception and expressions of metaphors and analogical reasoning, increased while discussing their art work. Mackenzie (2011, 2018) undertakes extensive research into the relationship between drawing and writing as a means of communication. She has found that by prioritising drawing, talking and storytelling, as part of literacy programs, children in their first year of school are assisted in learning to write. Early childhood educators often recognise the important relationship between drawing and meaning making.

Yet all too often we have seen writing and drawing employed separately rather than as a holistic way of making meaning. At other times we have failed to see that drawing enables us to symbolically represent or visualise our thinking. We argue that it is of utmost importance that teachers recognise the value of drawing to think with, beyond it being merely a precursor to learning to write.

Images of imagination

As educators, we wondered about the ways children are extending their use of visual language to make sense of their life's experiences. Abstract thinking involves the ability to think about objects and ideas that are not present. Mavers (2011, p. 131) asks, 'How can things that are invisible, be drawn?' She responds to her question by suggesting that children use metaphor to represent what is invisible. This encourages them to explore abstraction. Brooks (2009) and McArdle and Bolt (2013) examine the strength of children's drawing in relation to their development of abstraction in scientific concepts. Brooks' study centred on shadows examining the drawing processes of 22, five and six-year-old children, over three months, in an urban, year one classroom in Alberta, Canada. Drawing on Vygotsky's work, her examination of the children's drawings showed marked changes in their thinking. Drawing played a significant role in the growth between spontaneous concepts drawn from everyday experiences to more scientific concepts. Drawing, Brooks (2009) argues, simultaneously involves memory, experience, imagination and observation and is further extended in conversation with others. As we read the research around children's drawing, we found that drawing appears to be an accepted and often utilised mode to understand children's scientific understanding. Yet, in the Australian English curriculum area (2017) the written word appears to remain the predominant mode for understanding children's thinking as well as the product of that thinking.

Egan's (Egan & Madej, 2010) conceptualisation of artistry in children's embodied knowing and his continuum from the somatic to philosophic thought and irony resonates with us. He privileges creativity, wonder, problem-solving, stories and storytelling in the learning process and has long advocated that teachers work with what children can imagine as a starting point (in contrast to what they already *know*) when planning learning experiences.

With our strong belief in children's capabilities, we wanted to better understand how children visualised the concept of their imaginations and how these images informed their thinking. We were interested in the language of understanding in their drawings.

The study

Our objective was to better understand how children viewed the role of imagination in learning and its aesthetic importance to them. Nine primary teachers (including one Visual Arts specialist teacher) with particular interest in literacy across Australia, were invited to participate in the study. The letter of invitation that was sent to primary school aged children, their parents and teachers asked the children to draw and label (using only a black pen) where imagination is located in their bodies and how they travel to their imagination to use it. We asked that the drawings be solely in black and white for the purpose of reproduction but later realised its additional potential.

The children were also invited to draw and label an invention that could capture great ideas. In all, an astonishing 639 black and white drawings were received. This, in itself, demonstrates both the children's and teachers' interest in this area and the potential for further study of this area.

Methodology

Arts-based methodologies tend to 'blur the boundaries between the arts and the sciences' and have proved to be adept at reshaping, eroding and shifting the scientific foundations on either side of the qualitative-quantitative divide (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p. 3). They can help us study the liminal in education (Ewing & Hughes, 2008). By employing an arts-based qualitative methodology (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Knowles & Cole, 2008a, 2008b; Diamond & Mullen, 1999) we were seeking to explore the expressive quality in the children's experience of imagination through their drawings and the labels and annotations they provided. Through their drawings we were able to subjectively access children's inner worlds; worlds they often feel more comfortable inhabiting than the world of words (Prosser & Burke, 2008). We looked across the drawings for the themes that emerged for us from the children's thinking and the language they used in their annotations. It was important that we try to see the world through their lenses rather than from our own. Then we examined how these ideas were manifest in Kieran Egan's (1992) cognitive tools of the Somatic, Mythic in particular.

Findings

The themes in the drawings and the stories they told, appeared to fall into four main areas:

1. where imagination resides
2. hope, happiness and well being
3. openness and fantasy
4. bad ideas, good ideas, bad thoughts, good thoughts. (Latham & Ewing, 2018)

Each is discussed below with some of the children's examples.

Where imagination resides

The youngest children's drawings tended to place

imagination in their hearts and in their brains. Imagination was also depicted as travelling through their bodies and moving outward. Faras gently moves imagination from mother to child and/or from the child to the mother. It is an expression of sharing and passing on one's imagination through intergenerational and social means.

Faras

Felicia's drawing portrays self as an embodied moving being. At times, arrows were employed to demonstrate this movement. We are reminded of Messer's (2001) description of the creative process as a 'dance'. Felicia expresses this movement as she dances and says, '*Every time I move I feel like something is travelling through my body, and then when I really need a good thought and I move and dance, it comes to me just like in this picture. I move and I laugh it just comes to me and I can create new things.*' (Latham & Ewing, 2018).

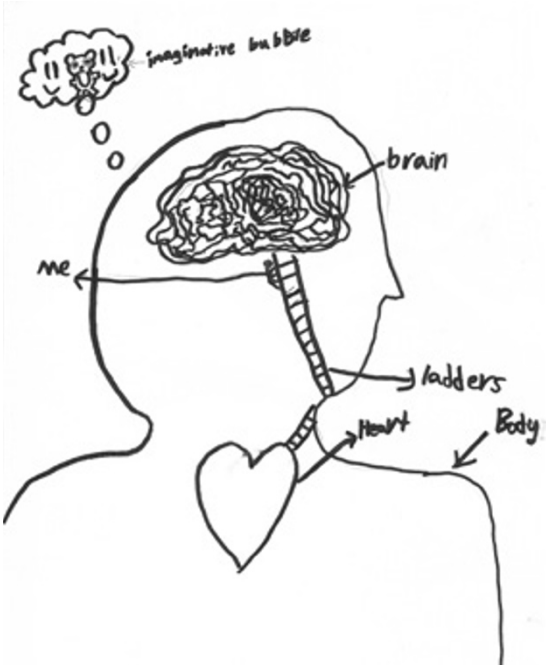
Felicia

Tasman (9) implicitly relates her soul to her imagination and says, '*My soul [is] climbing into my nose then walking into my brain.*'

Tasman

Ten-year-old Grace is able to verbalise where imagining happens in her brain. When she drew her heart she said, '*This is where I feel my imagination. My brain sends my imagination to my heart to make me feel it. I usually have different feelings with my imagination.*'

Similarly, Spencer (8), shows a person climbing a ladder from the brain down to the heart (Latham & Ewing, 2018).



Spencer

These expressions are often poetic in nature and encapsulate a caring and dynamic with respect to their imaginations through images of climbing moving, feeling, dancing bodies and sentiments of the fluidity of imagination in motion. The children are framing and reframing their imaginative identities with curved lines, circular shapes and groundless figures.

Some of the older children 7–12 tended to locate their imaginations solely in their brains. While intricate knowledge of the brain was at times demonstrated in their drawings, there was less aesthetic expression. Once again arrows were used to demonstrate the way imagination expresses thought. At times, the top of the head was removed showing the inner workings within. The drawings often looked more like models employing rectangular and square shapes for labels. Roman (9) demonstrates his knowledge of the brain where he locates his imagination.

Roman

We wondered whether these drawings suggested that some older children, with more information and cognisant of more traditional educationally defined divisions between subjects, begin to separate mind from body or think in more linear terms.

In Egan's theory of learning, Somatic knowing is pre-linguistic, based on direct experience. This bodily understanding, occurs in the first two or three years of life but can remain prevalent throughout life to better inform cognitive understandings. Many of the children's drawing we analysed demonstrate that these sensory and embodied somatic understandings are evident in these drawings and thus strongly present beyond children's earliest years.

We recognise, however, that the questions we asked about imagination may well have shaped their building upon these somatic understandings.

Hope, happiness and well being

We don't often discuss happiness in terms of educational pursuits. We cage pleasure in terms of emotional intelligence, wellbeing and engagement. Yet we are aware that feelings of hope and happiness aid children's cognitive development and their willingness to learn (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Through their drawings, the children offered feelings of hope, with representations indicating that anything is possible. Their imaginations allowed them to float away, to escape to better times, better places. Ten-year-old Abby expressed the importance and promise of imagination when she explained: *'It's when you think up things and make them up. They're not true. It gives people hope.'* The drawings of the children indicate that their imagination offers them a happy, safe and serene place to escape to and reside. The stories children hear and read and tell themselves can provide them this feeling of hope; some day life will be bettered. Through Imaginative Education, Egan stresses the importance of children being encouraged to explore stories with affective and cognitive tools working together to provide their lives possibilities.

'Joshua's (6) drawing shows his pleasure in thinking

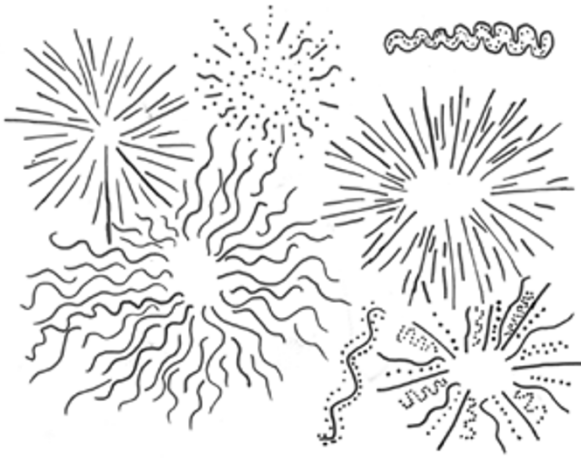
Joshua

Aoife displays the serenity in her face and her ease of movement as imagination travels through her body while Kira (9) says, '*This is how I feel when I am doing something I love. I feel like fireworks because I am happy and joyful*' (Latham & Ewing, 2018).

Openness and fantasy

By requesting that the drawings be in black and white, the children's aesthetic responses were limited to what they drew, its size and where it located itself on the page. It was less influenced by their ability to draw or the colours used. Remy's (10) tree metaphorically represents life as a tangle.

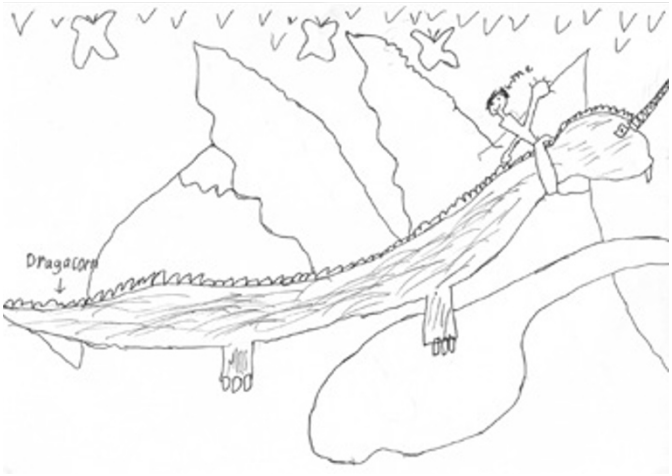
Aoife



Kira

Remy

Graciella



Charlotte

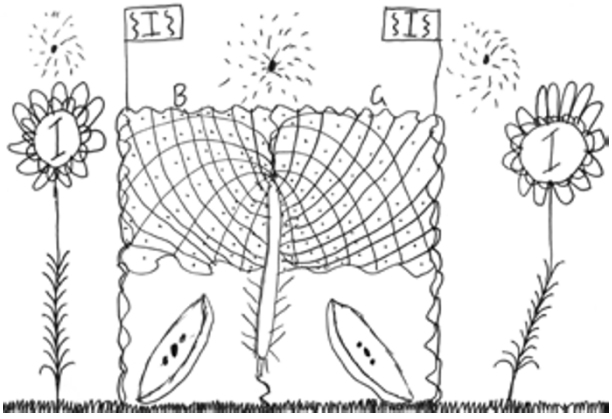
Many of the children's drawings were bold expressions of the importance of dreams and dream catchers. Graciella (11) asks, '*How far does your imagination go?*' as she draws a figure falling from the sky about to descend in the sea.

Charlotte (8) uses her imagination to ride her Dragacom into her private fantasy world.

The children's agency in these drawings is very strongly represented.

Bad ideas, good ideas, bad thoughts, good thoughts

While classifying is a necessary skill in order to efficiently deal with the world, it can also create essentialist, non-accurate or nuanced biases. Susan Gelman (2003, 2005) discusses these challenges in her book *The Essential Child*. When children in our study were asked to invent something to catch their great ideas, they often classified ideas in a binary fashion as 'good' and 'bad'. Jacob (9) went so far as to create goal posts to divide and kick a football through the good and bad ideas.



Jacob

Jai

Jai expressed a binary in his thinking through drawing robotic horses that he says, '*mainly catch good ideas and the horse sucks in bad ideas and turns them into good ideas*' (Latham & Ewing, 2018).

The images were often of machines and robots with labels that divided ideas into 'good' and 'bad', 'funny' and 'useful'. This language tended to be classifying and naming components using words such as: sensors, chords, manual, pipes, mirrors.

In the Mythic stage of his framework of cognitive tools, Egan (1992) stresses the importance of binary thinking in providing children with a sense of right and wrong that helps them to establish the shared beliefs in their community. It is a means of socialising children into cultural myths and taboos. By featuring the extremes of reality, Egan (1992) argues that narratives set up a dialectical activity. Egan believes it is at the Mythic stage around ages 3–7, that children require intellectual security; a time when they are developing oral language. It is also a time when they are fixing accounts of the world to sacred models and where they encounter necessary binary oppositions. Stories are a strong vehicle for these realisations. We argue this mythic stage is evident in the good and bad themes in these children's drawings.

While finding these cognitive tools from Egan's framework helpful, we suggest that tying these tools to a fixed age is limiting. Egan locates the philosophical cognitive tools as emerging at ages 15–20, where there is mastery of theoretical abstractions. We suggest that children are acquiring these tools of abstraction at a far earlier age and that mastery should not be tied to a fixed stage, rather, ongoing. The somatic, mythic and philosophic are all evident in the drawings we received from our participants. The drawings along with the annotations on the drawings demonstrate the power of children's thinking when they are afforded opportunities to express them.

Responses from parents and teachers

The children's drawings arrived with comments from many of their parents, teachers and principals. They informed us of their surprise and delight with the power of the children's thinking displayed in their drawings, and in the conversations that occurred around the drawings, and thanked us for taking an interest in this dimension. This finding is supported by Kendrick and Mckay's (2004) Canadian study of drawing as an alternative way of understanding children's literacy. They also found that the teachers were overwhelmingly surprised that children were able to express such complex understandings through visual language representing whole areas of their sensory lives (p. 125).

Implications

Although an exploratory study, we suggest there are a number of emerging implications that merit further investigation. It is clear that the imagination and drawing as process need to be afforded more powerful roles in the early childhood and primary classroom. This will be determined by the teacher's mindset about the importance of imagination and the role of images in representing thinking. While drawing is natural for children to engage in, it is not always natural for teachers to encourage drawing and value it as a creative process of thought building.

In terms of philosophical thought, White (1992) and Kitchener (1990) argue that children's lack of life's experiences prevents them from doing 'real' philosophy. Murris (1990, 1997), Brooks (2009) and Cox (2005), among others, take on the issue of age, stage determinism.

We agree that age-related staged developmental theories are problematic because they assert that children are not yet ready (because of age) to engage

in particular thinking skills. This has meant and continues to mean that policy-makers, the wider public, pre-service and in-service teachers are not challenging children with higher order thinking and questions concerning abstract and philosophical ideas. The belief that children are not (yet) capable of such exploratory deep level thinking represents a deficit model of children, focusing on what they allegedly lack rather than what they can bring to classroom learning experiences.

The Arts: The role of drawing

We understand that, educationally, what it means to know and better understand can take multiple forms. Drawing has the power to evoke aesthetic and somatic knowing; knowing in one's bones and in one's heart. This is one essential way to come to know oneself and the world. The language inherent in drawings around imagination is a universal language that informs thinking. As teachers, we need to provide children opportunities to express ideas that matter to them in varied ways. One of the most effective ways of engaging children in drawing in the classroom is to inspire the *wildfire effect* (Frisch, 2012). This occurs when children draw together and talk together. This social process quickly spreads and enables children, teachers and parents' powerful opportunities to learn what the children are thinking and how they are thinking.

Challenging binary thinking

While binary thinking is useful for holding onto certain realities, as Egan suggests, there is a need to interrogate notions of stereotypically-held binary views from an early age. Teachers can also provide stories that counter the traditional norms. This exposure will assist in disrupting some of the polarisation of thought and the gender, racial and cultural divides or stereotypes that can so often limit thinking. The conversations teachers have with children, the teacher's view of the world, the nature of the critical questions posed, the stories that are selected and the reactions and feedback the children are provided about their drawings can all assist in challenging the norms (Latham & Ewing, 2018).

The teacher's mindset

Ultimately it is the teacher's mindset that will determine the value given to the imagination and to deep and critical thinking through drawing (and other art forms) in the classroom. Stanford researcher Carol Dweck (2012) argues that teachers can have fixed or growth mindsets. The fixed mindset is deterministic. Uncritically adhering to an age-related model retains the belief that universally children progress in fixed stages over which the teachers in a child's life have little influence. This belief implies that some children are born intelligent and others are not. In the growth mindset, however, the teacher believes in children changing, always on the way to becoming, not there yet, but with the certainty that they will get there. While we support Egan's use of cognitive tools to foster imagination we similarly question his somewhat reductionist use of fixed universal ages and stages of growth for children's readiness for using these tools. Within a growth mindset, teachers will employ a range of literacies for children's thoughts to surface. The imagination will not be a neglected area in learning, but rather, a prominent starring light. These teachers will utilise storytelling as a means to challenge age-stage determinism and encourage visual and other modes of representation to capture children's thoughts and ideas. As G.B. Madison (1988) wrote:

> It is through imagination, the realm of pure possibility, that we freely make ourselves to be who or what we are, that we creatively and imaginatively become who we are, while in the process preserving the freedom and possibility to be yet otherwise than what we have become and merely are. (p. 191)

Conclusion

We are living in times of rapid change; times when teachers need to keep questioning and revising what it means to be literate. It is clear that drawings have the power to communicate children's inner thoughts and feelings. Drawing is one means whereby children can explore and express their imaginations and create new understandings as they make sense of their inner and outer worlds. At the same time these drawings can provide teachers and parents with new insights about their children's thinking, their hopes and fears. Their images represent their responses to the affective world; the world they envisage through the senses, through perception, the world they long for. As a language of expression, children, as poets, draw upon a range of cognitive and affective tools that assist their meaning making. These tools demonstrate their capacity for higher order thinking at an early age and allow them to create images that can surprise and delight the artist within as well as her eager audience.

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