Applying Drama in Taiwan's primary curriculum:

The reality and difficulties through primary school teachers' viewpoints

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Abstract

When drama was included in the curriculum in Taiwan for the first time as the result of recent educational reform, drama in education (DIE) gained more attention and was widely introduced to teachers. The reality, however, of teaching or using drama may not be as fruitful as the theories; in addition, the different teaching/learning cultures may also cause obstacles.

This research focuses on the reality and possible difficulties of applying drama in the primary school curriculum in Taiwan, taking a primary school in Taipei, Taiwan's capital city, as an example. The study aimed to understand Taiwan teachers' perspectives and evaluation of teaching or using drama, and those aspects that lower teachers' willingness to do drama. The findings indicated that many of the respondents knew and had learnt about drama, though not all teachers were willing to adopt it in the curriculum. The difficulties teachers were facing were caused not only by the conditions of teaching drama but also the whole environment. Gaining insights from the literature and research findings, the researcher

outlines implications for drama's future development in Taiwan: to urge sufficient and sustainable teacher training, and to prepare for "the third space" for adopting different paradigm of teaching and learning.

Dramas, Taiwanese opera in festivals, or TV programmes based on ancient Chinese stories were the favourite pastimes of many people. Because it was seen as entertainment or part of religious activities (e.g., performed in temple fairs), drama had a low status in Taiwan. There was not even any place for drama in Taiwan's arts curriculum in the compulsory education system (children in Taiwan receive compulsory education between the age six and fifteen) until the recent educational reform (Jung, 2000). While the theory and practice of drama in education (DIE) is still new to Taiwan, it has been developed and applied in education for a long period in Western countries. Therefore, many who are interested and enthusiastic about drama, including myself, went to the US or UK, the origin of DIE, to study further on this long-developed art education and pedagogy.

Complications emerge, however, as differences between the Eastern and Western culture were noticed; for instance, the views on drama's role, values, and ways of teaching and learning. When the new curriculum, introduced in 2003, mandating that the arts and humanities, including drama, must be implemented in primary schools, more teachers faced the immediate need and challenge of doing drama. Teachers may often work hard and encounter difficulties individually without sharing experiences or discussing the problems with one another (Acker, 1999). Therefore, it is desirable for me as a researcher as well as a primary school teacher, to learn more about teachers' views and share them with others through this study. Also for the long term development of drama in Taiwan, it should be considered how teachers respond to and evaluate doing drama.

Through this study I aimed to understand the reality or possible difficulties of adopting drama into Taiwan's education system by investigating Taiwan teachers' viewpoints. The

main aims of the research were as follows:

◈ To find out present teachers' knowledge and perspectives of DIE

◈ To find out the possible difficulties that teachers encounter when using or teaching drama

◈ To find out and analyze possible cultural factors that make drama a less effective pedagogy

◈ To find out useful implications for adopting drama in education to Taiwan

Insights gained from the literature on drama and from the findings will be discussed, and finally the implications will be drawn for teaching drama and for drama's future development in Taiwan.

Research Context

The cultural context of Taiwan is different from Western society in important ways such as philosophy of life, value system and social order. The educational context and values differ significantly as well. However, Taiwan has also been developed and modernized in the last decades; consequently, the society is more affluent, liberal, and accepts different cultural influences from other countries outside of this tiny island, from places like America, Japan and Western Europe (Jung, 2000; Wu & Hung, 2003). Long Ying-tai (2003), a Taiwanese columnist, once commented that Taiwanese celebrate Christmas and go trick-or-treating or masquerade on Halloween. While they may colour their hair gold, they do not transfer Western ideologies under the hair. Whether her comments reveal the reality of transferring Western systems to Taiwan, the influences of Western cultures on Taiwan's life style nowadays are palpable.

The recent educational reform of Taiwan and the new curriculum, "Grade 1-9 curriculum" (MoE), were also inspired by Western education systems. Attentive to the educational trends in Western countries, educators and artists called for a complete reform of

our own education which has been criticized as imbalanced and exam-oriented. During 1999-2003 the Ministry of Education of Taiwan announced the Grade 1-9 curriculum guidelines, which included Drama for the first time as part of "Arts and Humanities". Implementing the new curriculum caused anxiety among schools and teachers. Primary school arts teachers, however, were particularly worried because there had not been any training or courses on drama in the nine Taiwanese teacher training institutes in the past (Hsiao, 2004; Lin, 2002; Wang H., 2002; Wang, N., 2001).

The views of drama in Taiwan's society are notable as well. Before the new concepts of drama were brought in our education, the values of drama were unimportant and unnoticed in Taiwan. Even now when the values of arts are justified in the new curriculum and drama has a place in it, parents or the schools are still suspicious about the role and values of drama (Lin, 2002). It could be hard for the teachers to do drama in the curriculum without the support from the school and parents (Tsai, 2003).

The Primary School and the Teachers

The primary school where this study took place is proud of its modern teaching equipment and its welcoming-attitude toward new teaching methods. In this large-sized primary school in Taipei, there are 66 classroom teachers (with 11 teachers in each grade), who teach almost every subject and take charge of communicating with parents; there are 24 specialist teachers in arts/music/PE/science/ English, and 24 teacher-administrators who teach fewer hours but deal with school administration. In a big primary school as such, the division of work will be very different from a small-scale school, where teachers take responsibility for a variety of works. Although the work is clearly divided, workloads of teachers in big schools are no less heavy than small schools. The maximum number of pupils in each class was reduced to thirty to thirty-five in recent years; and in each class there is only one classroom teacher.
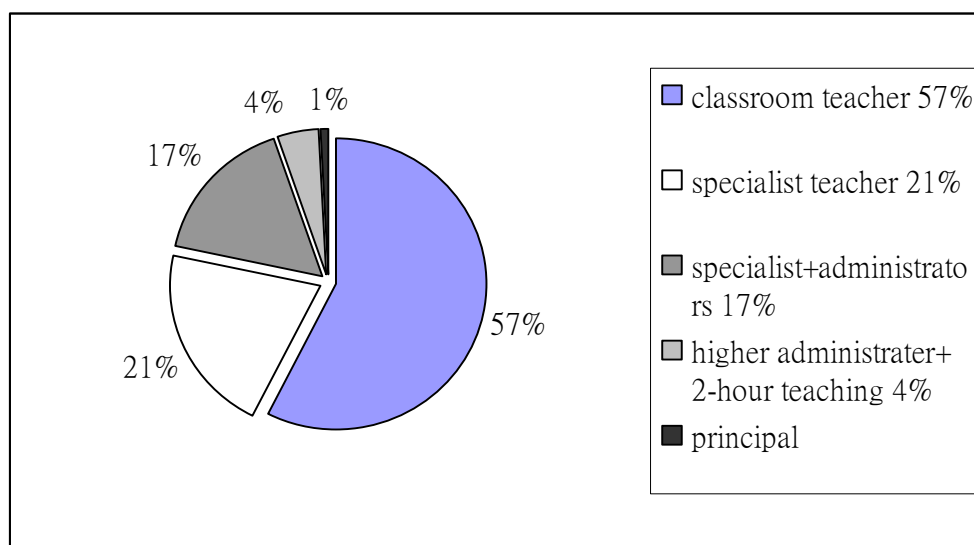
Figure 1. *The structure of large/medium primary schools*

Parts of the reformed primary curriculum were implemented in 2000; other subjects including "arts and humanities" were taught in 2003. Teacher training for the new subjects especially drama, was sporadic. While policies and guidelines of the grade 1-9 curriculum are set clearly, the images of how to implement the new subjects are still blurred. Teachers who must teach drama felt unprepared both mentally and professionally (Tsai, 2003; Wang, N., 2001; Wang, H., 2002). Therefore, one of the aims of this research was to learn teachers' attitudes towards drama, to recognize the situations they faced and their evaluations of doing drama, and eventually let their voices heard through this study.

Literature Review

How drama is viewed in the West and its present status in the UK curriculum are examined in this section. Issues concerning teachers' abilities to both enact and understand a new paradigm from a different culture are also looked at in this section.

Drama's Role and Value

Drama, like dance and music, is natural and spontaneous expressions of humans. In the traditional view in West, the functions of drama, especially in the form of theatrical performances, are believed to be recreational or cathartic. Until more recent times, another role of drama has evolved as a learning medium (McGregor et al, 1977; Somers, 1994; Wagner, 1979) when the drama in education movement was initiated by drama educators such as Peter Slade in the UK and Winifred Ward in the US.

The names, focuses and practices of drama vary from country to country. In the US, *creative drama* is the term most used, along with *informal drama*, *creative play acting*, and *improvisational drama* (Heinig, 1993). Drawing from the notion of learning by doing of Dewey (1938) and the idea of encouraging children's natural creativity of Mearns (1929), Ward (1952) advocated creative drama including dramatic play and story dramatization which are at the heart of creative drama in the US (Chang, 2003). Whereas in other countries such as Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the terms *developmental drama*, *educational drama*, *process drama*, or just *drama* are frequently seen (Chang, 2003; Heinig, 1993). The educational drama activities involve movement exercises such as theatre games, pantomime, and conventions such as improvisation, hot-seating, and teacher-in-role are employed to the discussion of certain issues (Barlow & Skidmore, 1994; Clements, 1996). Albeit there are different definitions and applications, the persistent characteristic of drama is considered to be a medium for learning. The nature and content of both creative drama and drama in education, is rather a dynamic process evoking personal development, instead of

product-oriented (Heinig, 1993; Hsiao, 2004).

Drama's Status in the UK

Drama was included in the UK's National curriculum as a part of "speaking and listening" in the English subject in 1990 (QCA). Nevertheless a debate was raised in the UK concerning drama's role and value in education: should drama be seen as an art subject in its own right which emphasizes the aesthetic education, or merely a pedagogical praxis that enriches the teaching/learning of other subjects? Practitioners who would like to see drama as a discrete *art* subject in the curriculum were disappointed (Abbs, 1996; Hornbrook, 1989). Whereas other educators eluded the controversy with a more integrated view noting that drama education can teach both the art form and cultivate an aesthetic as well as enrich learning and facilitate personal development, social skills, and creative abilities through drama process (McGregor et al, 1977; Somers, 1994). It is this integrated point of view of drama that was adopted in this research.

Despite more importance and status given to drama in the curriculum, drama was not applied as widely as expected (Henry, 2000). Baldwin (2002) pointed out that "the reality has been that hardly any drama is happening despite the fact that it is deemed statutory" (p.105). In addition, drama courses have decreased in teacher training institutions; as a result trainees are less likely or confident to use drama when they start their teaching career (Tsai, 2003). Therefore, there is still a gap between what is expected and the real practice even in the UK.

Teachers' Ability to Take Actions

Teachers do report difficulties when it comes to implementing mandated drama in the curriculum, including problems over controlling order in the classroom (Henry, 2000; Tsai, 2003) and difficulty in the assessment of drama. It is not easy, for example, to assess the quality of empathy or creativity by exams (Clements, 1996). There is, however, another

stance: teachers are not passive victims of a new education system and policy, but rather, empowered activists. Acker (1999) commented that some educational researchers tend to overstress the constraints of structure and cultures within the education system and neglect the fact that teachers can be creative individuals and can learn to face those unfavorable situations. Woolland (1993) also called the difficulties myths and excuses that teachers hold about drama in the primary school. He argued that albeit working in primary school is demanding, it is worthwhile finding time for drama. Without teachers' taking action, change and innovation will never be possible. This study sought to determine what the realities were for teachers trying to use drama for the first time.

Transferring a New Paradigm from a Different Culture

As mentioned previously, though Taiwan is deeply influenced by its Chinese inheritance, it is a multicultural society that welcomes both its own diverse cultures and influences from other "modernized" countries (Wu & Hung, 2003). The recent educational reform in Taiwan for instance, introduced new paradigms and pedagogical approaches from Western countries, including drama in education.

Greenwood (2001) noted that there are multiple views of the interaction of different cultures. Some scholars, for instance Said (1995), believe that Eastern societies, when colonized by the Western countries, lose their own identities; therefore Eastern countries should reject the "cultural invasion" of the West to keep their own cultures. Yet some other researchers, such as Spivak (1990) and Bhabha (1990), are more concerned with negotiation with Western values rather than simple rejection. Spivak has argued that postcolonial theory cannot predict or describe the dynamic of current cultural interaction; it can only analyse and describe what has happened. For Bhabha who proposed the concept of "the third space", it is possible that two different cultures can meet and a new space emerges (as cited in Greenwood, 2001).

When DIE meets with Taiwan's culture, educational values and curriculum, one can question whether a "third space" will emerge, and if, it does, what will it look like. I believe this research and the people involved in this trend are all *witnesses* as well as a part of this culturally interactive process.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

This study aimed to develop a multiple-perspective understanding of the situations and problems that Taiwanese primary school teachers face when adopting drama, a Western pedagogy, to the classroom in Taiwanese educational settings. To attain this goal, questionnaires with open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews were employed to capture in-depth and extensive views from a real-life setting. Therefore, the information gathered was rich in qualitative evidence that helped to answer the research questions as listed below:

◆ What are the teachers' experiences with DIE and access of learning it?

◆ How do teachers evaluate employing drama in teaching?

◆ How have they responded to the new curriculum—drama was included for the first time?

◆ How willing were they to adopt DIE in their teaching?

◆ What is their perspective and suggestion for drama's future development in Taiwan?

Before the study was conducted, consent was obtained from the school authority (e.g., principal). I followed these steps in the research process: a) explained the purpose of the study to the participants and distributed or e-mailed the questionnaires through head teachers; b) collected the questionnaires; c) asked for follow up interviews after identifying issues needed to be clarified in the questionnaires; d) organized the data (e.g., typed the transcript) and analyzed; and e) translated the results from Mandarin (or Taiwanese in colloquial form) into English.

The term drama or DIE in the questionnaire and interview does not particularly confine to the practice of creative drama or DIE due to the situation in Taiwan. A more integrated view of drama was adopted as a result that both influences of creative drama in the US or drama in education in other countries come together in Taiwan. International drama conferences were held where practitioners from the UK, US, and Australia were invited, and theatre workshops held with trainers who have studied drama in the US or UK (Hsiao, 2004). Nevertheless, within varied practices, the applications for children's learning and development through drama are unchanged. Therefore a broader definition of drama was used, emphasizing its salient characteristic as a learning medium and process for development—against the traditional view and product-oriented way of teaching drama.

The questionnaire consists of four questions on background information, and 20 open-ended questions on doing drama, evaluation and recommendation of applying drama in the curriculum. The questionnaire was completed by 18 teachers who volunteered. They work in a large-sized primary school in Taipei, Taiwan's capital city where educational resources are abundant. Each of the volunteer–respondents had a different role in the school, varied teaching experiences, and educational background. Follow up interviews were conducted with eleven teachers who kindly offered me time (from 15-40 minutes) to clarify the issues raised in their returned questionnaires, and to collect deeper understanding of the research questions. Other data sources included e-mails with interviewees, lunch time chatting with parents and other teacher colleagues, and my own research diaries both in the UK and in Taiwan. The profuse data gave me valuable insights suggested by the data.

Analysing the qualitative data was a spiral process (Creswell, 2003) which involved an interaction between the inquirer and the data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To get the most out of the data, I employed systematic steps as followed: a) I read the data to get familiar with the contents. Then I broke down the texts and sorted by topics; b) I constructed categories within each topic by identifying recurrent themes; c) I coded the content and

interpreted the coded texts in light of the perspectives in the literature or researcher's own experiences (Radnor, 2001; Wellington, 2000); and constant comparisons with the new and previous data also helped the discovery of new relationships (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants' ratifications of the initial findings were sought since the interpretations were made from the researcher's perspectives and experiences (Creswell, 2003). While maintaining the credibility, the critical view of a disinterested peer was also employed not to claim the objectivity of the study but to be aware of my own bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research Findings

The primary school teachers' views on drama are presented in four categories: teachers' experience with and access of learning DIE, teachers' perspectives and evaluation of drama, their willingness to do drama, and their recommendations for the future development of DIE in Taiwan.

Teachers' Experience With and Access of Learning DIE

As mentioned above, the 18 respondents had different positions in the school. In fact, their positions comprised three main roles in a large-sized primary school in Taiwan: classroom teachers, specialist teachers, or teacher-administrators. Their teaching experience was wide-ranging as well, from under three years to over fifteen years. The respondents either graduated as qualified primary school teachers from teachers' colleges in Taiwan (changed to "university of education" since 2005), or they graduated from other universities and then took a one year teacher training course and an extra year of apprenticeship.

Of the 18 teachers, 15 had heard and learned about DIE; only three teachers had never come across the term or pedagogy. Teachers learned about it from school seminars or workshops (every Wednesday afternoon 1:30-4:00 pm is reserved for meetings or seminars on different topics) or from workshops held by children's theatres and other arts institutes.

The seminars or workshops held in the school are free; teachers who are interested in attending workshops held by private institutes outside the schools have to pay for the training themselves. Three teachers learned about DIE through educational journals or arts websites (see table 1). Among the 15 teachers who had learned about DIE, six had observed a drama lesson in the school, and eight had actually applied drama in their teaching. In the following section, the evaluations of drama's strengths were made by the teachers who had observed or had taught drama. The appraisals about the difficulties in teacher drama were solely made by the eight teachers who had actually taught drama themselves.

Table 1

Access of Learning DIE

Access	Number of Person
School seminar/workshops	9
Theatre workshops	7
Educational journals	1
Websites	2
Total	15

The result shows that most teachers in this primary school in Taipei have knowledge of DIE since in 2003 the "performing arts" were included in the new curriculum and school timetable. Because these of curricular reforms, the educational department, children's theatres, and private cultural institutes make efforts to promote the performing arts including teaching through drama.

Despite the fact that drama is becoming more wide-spread, there are still some teachers who have no idea or no interest in this trend. One interviewee simply explained that: "I just have no intention to learn drama, or use drama in teaching. I may go to see a performance, but not relate it with my teaching." Perhaps, as Acker (1999) explained, teachers' work may

not totally mirror educational trends, for "schools appear to have elements of the old and new" (p.21). It is notable that the samples of this research are from the capital city; it is very possible that still many teachers elsewhere in Taiwan do not know about DIE, for other towns in Taiwan certainly have fewer resources than big cities.

Teachers' Evaluation on Drama — The Strengths

The teachers who had observed or taught drama discussed the effects of using drama in the classroom. They report that the benefits of teaching/using drama are to help children learn, to nurture creativity and to raise teacher's morale.

Helping children to learn. The respondents commented that drama makes learning more interesting and, therefore, raises pupils' motivation and increases their involvement in the learning process. Teachers also mentioned that drama techniques, if well-used, often help to bring in-depth learning. When appraising the effects of drama, a teacher said that: "…it really depends on how well the teachers use the drama techniques. We know it does not mean we can apply it well......but I have seen very experienced teacher using the activities helps pupils to think deeply or differently."

Nurture of creativity. It is worth noting that that all 15 respondents mentioned that drama is powerful in fostering children's creativity in the questionnaires. However, creativity can mean any kind of new ideas and inventions, including nasty ones. Therefore, seven of the teachers add a proviso that drama is helpful in nurturing creativity when the drama teacher guides the pupils properly. "I think drama helps develop pupils' creativity; by that I mean 'positive creativity'. … it's not that kind of funny jokes or teasing like the TV hosts made", one teacher observed. Some other teachers also mentioned "positive creativity" to mean that they do not allow pupils to do whatever they want during drama lessons as the parents or other colleagues misunderstand when seeing a "noisy" or "messy" drama lesson.

Raising teacher's morale. Only three respondents considered that drama can boost their

morale when they can get more response and feedback from pupils in drama lessons and can keep their teaching from being dull. When I raised this issue in the interviews, teachers were less optimistic about drama's potential to raise teacher's working morale. One teacher said: "…to boost our morale is not the main purpose for me to do drama; I would only say it's just 'side-effects'." While another teacher considered the benefits of doing drama are "not so rich as to cover all the difficulties of teaching or the labour invested."

Other strengths. Teachers also listed other advantages that drama brings, including: pupils can learn to observe and become more concentrated, learn to express themselves, learn social skills such as co-operating or communicating with others, build their confidence, and gain a sense of achievement. A teacher using drama games in teaching Chinese idioms recalled that: "kids were excited and become more concentrated than normally. …they participated enthusiastically". Through the drama activities or tasks, another interviewee commented that, "pupils can obtain the skills or improve in the aspects that in a traditional sit-and-listen learning won't help, like self-expressing and confidence….though [they progress] little by little".

Teachers' Evaluation of Drama — The Difficulties

Teaching is not easy work: during the process there will be many unexpected situations that will involve quick decision-making in addition to information delivery. Teaching drama or teaching through drama may be an even more difficult task for teachers. All of the eight respondents who had experiences of teaching/using drama admitted that there were difficulties that affected teachers' morale. The evaluations by the respondents are divided into two categories: difficulties of teaching drama itself and those caused by the different environment.

The difficulties of teaching drama itself. Primarily the respondents in this study mentioned that doing drama is "energy-consuming" and "intellectually-demanding". One

teacher commented in the interview that:

> *I have to maintain good classroom control through out the drama process, keep learning in a certain quality instead of just letting pupils have fun, and to respond immediately to various demands from different pupils. These are all tiresome. Every time after a (drama) lesson, I just feel exhausted physically and mentally!*

The second difficulty teachers expressed is time constraint, which includes the pressure to plan the lessons and squeezing time in the crowded timetable and curriculum to develop drama activities with pupils. If teachers teach drama or use drama techniques to boost learning, they definitely will sacrifice the time of other "academic" subjects. The third difficulty comes from the teachers themselves: the desire to be "professional". They wished to have as successful teaching experiences as they have read about or observed in workshops, but they often failed. They felt disappointed and less confident, and not sure what went wrong. "This really affects my will to carry on using drama. I will doubt if I can make it next time," commented one teacher, who was very interested in learning DIE, and had attempted to apply what she learned.

Other difficulties brought up were: lack of enough space in schools, difficulty in maintaining classroom control due to the children's lack of self restraint, pupils were not active enough in learning, and some teachers considered their personalities did not match this pedagogy.
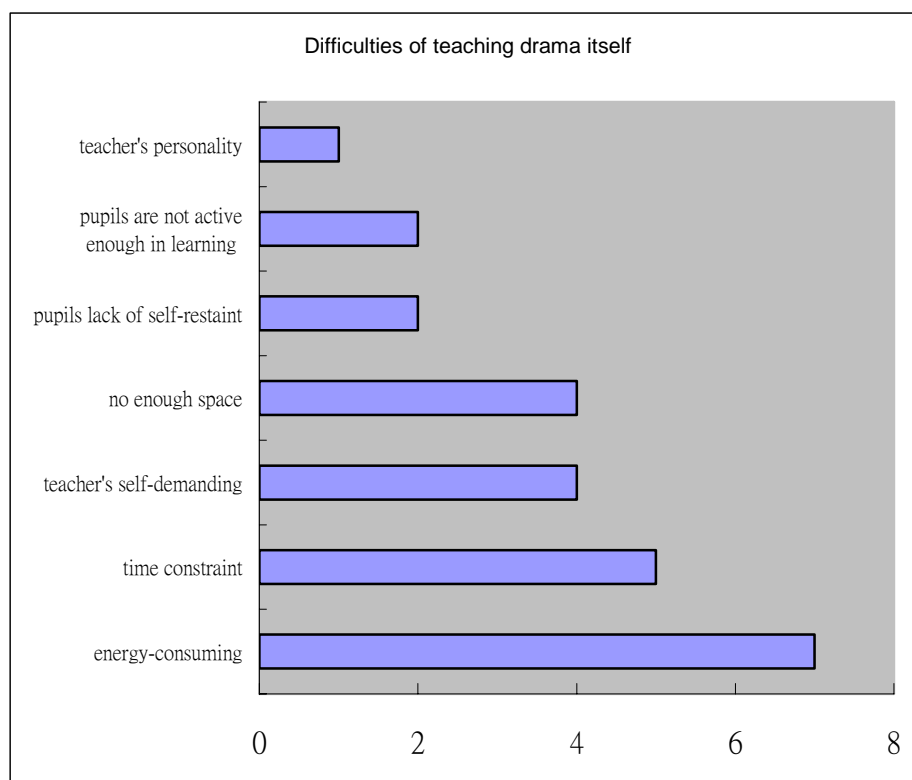
Figure 2. **Difficulties of teaching drama**

The difficulties caused by the environment. According to the respondents, some of the problems they encountered were caused by the environment, i.e., the social values, school culture, and ways of teaching/learning under Taiwanese cultural context. Some of the teachers, who required teaching performing arts, believed that they lacked sufficient training. Also they were disappointed that there was insufficient support or resources from the schools, such as funding, space, and continuous drama training. Due to drama's low status in Taiwanese society as mentioned in previous section, when teaching drama, as one teacher notes, "it is rare to get the support, understanding or appreciation from the principal, parents, and even other colleagues in the school…"

Teachers' Willingness to Take Action

What will teachers do after learning about and recognizing the positive effects of DIE?

Through the questionnaires and interviews, three aspects were investigated about teachers' actions: they would learn more about DIE, and to adopt DIE to their teaching.

Teachers' willingness to learn more about drama in education. All the teachers agreed that drama in education was worthwhile to learn and promote. Fourteen teachers said they were willing to attend schools' drama workshops. After all, "we can get a certificate that will add on the points of our teaching evaluation every year", said a teacher. Some also admitted that they liked the free chances to recharge themselves, to learn knowledge, get inspiration, and to be released from their intense work. However, only six said that they would attend theatre groups' workshops; the others hesitated to invest the extra money, time and energy.

Willingness to adopt DIE. Among the 18 respondents, most were willing or eager to do drama; while four of them clearly stated that they did not wish to teach or apply drama to their teaching; and one did not see the need to do drama so far. The reasons for being unwilling to adopt DIE include:

- lack of personal interest;

- lack of suitable personalities for doing drama, for instance, no interest in acting, in expressing through body movement; and

- lack of professional skills and knowledge in D.I.E or drama techniques.

If within this small-scale research there are teachers who are not interested in taking risks to change or try new pedagogy, there must be more teachers of similar backgrounds in Taiwan that respond to DIE in the same way. Interviewees had other reasons for not using drama which seemed both familiar and understandable. A teacher, for example, expressed that:

> *I am a traditional kind of teacher who likes to be well-prepared and organized, so that pupils admire me, and can benefit the most from my teaching. If I lack of knowledge in this field, or enthusiasm, how can I be persuasive?*

This is really a teaching style or belief that many Taiwanese or Chinese teachers hold,

though the list of their reasons may be called a "myth" or "excuses" toward drama teaching (Woolland, 1993). This issue of different teaching styles and cultures will be discussed further in next section.

Teachers' action. Given that many teachers in this study were ready to open their hearts and mind to adopt DIE, only eight teachers had taught drama themselves. Many among the 15 had never actually put their knowledge about drama into practice. Of the eight who had tried drama, only four teachers said they would be happy to "continue" doing drama. The others held back their fervency since they had experienced frustrations or obstacles, saying "perhaps will continue to try", or "not in a short time".

In sum, the results of the investigation show that the trend of adopting educational drama was wide spread, and most teachers were willing to learn or give it a try. However, among this trend, some teachers were not aware or informed about DIE; some even refused to adopt it. The findings also revealed the benefits and difficulties teachers weighed in using drama in the curriculum.

Discussion

Having realized through this study that there are no simple cause-and-effects for this sophisticated real life setting, or absolute facts (Radnor, 2002), I still endeavoured to describe and understand the interactions within the context, simply hoping to identify the key issues and to draw useful implications for drama's future development in Taiwan.

The Reality and Difficulties — Three Key Factors

From the questionnaire and interview data about adopting DIE to Taiwan's primary curriculum, there are three recurrent themes: environment, teachers and pupils. They rise from the reality of Taiwan teachers' teaching, and they may also be the key factors to understand and solve the difficulties teachers confront.

Environment. One of the differences between the Western and Taiwan's educational context is the image of drama. It is only during recent years that drama's educational values were recognized; therefore from the result teachers stated that they seldom gain understanding or enough support from school and parents when teaching drama. They are fighting hard with the whole environment. As Acker (1999) described, teachers are "working hard, doing good, and feeling bad" (p.174). Therefore if the new concepts and pedagogy of drama from Western societies are not widely accepted, it is hard to expect any changes and success.

Joyce and Showers (1995) suggested four components for establishing a sound staff development system — the individual practitioner, the school site, the district initiative, and the governing agencies. Only when the four levels coordinate well, the renewal of the system will be possible. Within each level, proper responsibilities should be taken while training and consultation should be provided. This reflects the problems of the educational system in Taiwan which fails to support teacher's drama practice. Therefore, it is important to consider the aspects of trainings in strengthening teachers' skills, resources that help teachers to carry out what they learn about drama, and a democratic structure that allows autonomy and encourages collaboration. On the other hand, teachers' reflective practice can also help the school culture move toward a change-oriented one.

Teachers. When adopting new concepts and pedagogy from other educational paradigm, teachers play an important role. Some researchers even argue that teachers are the instrument and centre of implementing educational reform (Mullen, 2002). It really depends on teachers' choice to take action to change when they are aware of the need. The results of this study show that some teachers still know little and show little interest about DIE, though drama is now included in the statutory curriculum. As to teachers who have learned about the drama practice, many among them still have not put what they have learned into practice.

Another aspect that influenced teachers' taking action is the traditional view of teachers and teaching style. One of the interviewees who explained why teachers struggle to do drama said that:

> *DIE is difficult for some teachers to accept because when applying it, teachers' role totally changes.......In the learner-centred [drama] teaching, teachers will lose their authority, and lose the control of the whole classroom, which is quite opposite to what Taiwanese or Chinese teachers are used to.*

Teachers in our society are the authority and source of knowledge, and therefore, should receive respect and obedience from pupils (Sham, 1997). As a result, to adopt drama means to change the ways of classroom management and views of teachers' role. Teachers' responses explained that it is a big challenge for them to accept and apply the educational concepts, and the ways of teaching embedded in DIE.

Pupils. The environment and the teachers are often the main concerns of education reforms. Pupils, however, are less considered as a part of the reform, but are mentioned by the teachers in the questionnaires and interviews that pupils can actually make differences in drama activities.

According to the data, the influence of pupils I attribute to is their learning style, which is formed under a very distinct educational context from the West. In the responses concerning the difficulties of doing drama, teachers listed many aspects that are related to pupils' learning style. For instance, they cannot collaborate with others, they prefer being given a correct answer than thinking and exploring, and they are not used to being "active" participants. In Chinese societies, pupils are asked to respect and be obedient to teachers, as a result they are less able to challenge authority and express themselves in front of the authority (Sham, 1997). Active learning, thinking independently and co-operating with others instead of competing are not encouraged (Watkins, 2000). Thus I would suggest before the ways of learning is re-examined, pupils and teachers will find it hard to benefit from DIE.

Implications for the Future

"Reality is something you rise above." **Liza Minnelli (1946 -)**

In the light of the literature and Taiwanese teachers' perceptions of teaching DIE, I propose three suggestions for adopting drama: preparing for "the third space" for DIE in Taiwan, teacher training, and taking time.

Preparing for "the Third Space" for DIE in Taiwan

In the literature review, I referred to the concept of "the third space" where different cultures meet and interact: within this space different values or ways of doing things immerge, substitute or influence each other. When DIE meets Taiwan's cultural context and educational setting, participants may take different positions or reactions in the interactive process: to observe, to evaluate, to change, or to ignore. Cultural conflicts or dilemmas may be found, whereas there is a good opportunity to add vitality and create new possibilities for our own education and society; furthermore, something new may emerge that fits in Taiwan's context well.

To benefit from this "learning from each other" process and anticipate the third space happening, we need to let the voices of both sides be heard and dialogues begin. We need to keep an open mind, while at the same time we deliberately evaluate the spirits that drama encourages, including the interactive teaching/learning style, and a democratic classroom which emphasizes collaboration, communication, autonomy and thinking independently. With deeper understanding, the dialogue and interaction can then have a balanced stand.

Teacher Training

Drama is now included in Taiwan's curriculum; therefore, professional teacher training on both theories and practice of drama is more demanded then ever. For Taiwan's teachers,

learning DIE is not just learning about the drama techniques, but also learning values and culture from a different educational system. It is similar to what Acker (1999) mentioned about UK teachers: "In adjusting to the new requirement (National Curriculum), teachers were not just acquiring technical skills, but making a 'major reconstruction of their self-identity'" (p.174). For Taiwanese teachers, while putting into practice of the new paradigm, they themselves need to adjust and reconstruct their ethos first. Professional training is vital to help them get prepared in these dimensions.

Time is the Best Friend

During Taiwan's presidential election in 2004, turmoil happened and oppositions were created. On reporting these series of events, the *International Herald Tribune* commented that "in the short eight years of full democracy in Taiwan……time is Taiwan's friend" (Power, 2004). Whether implementing democracy or reforming education policy or new educational values, change takes time. Time is needed for absorbing, adapting and amending. Time and patience are required to change the surrounding culture which affects educators and schools (Craft, 1997). This does not mean that the educators and practitioners should use this as an excuse for not to change, but as an element to avoid hasty reforms and to produce sustainable educational development.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted to investigate how teachers of a primary school in Taipei response to and evaluate teaching drama, this paper reports the findings and draws implications from literature as well as the results of the study. The rationale and aims of the research was given in the beginning of the paper, as well as the research context in terms of Taiwan's cultural and the school background where the study conducted. Given the backdrop of the research, literature was then examined covering how drama was viewed in the Western

countries, aspects of teacher's taking actions, and the issues of transferring a new paradigm from a different culture including those raised by Said, Spivak and Bhabha. The research design including the methods of data collection and analysis were explained, and research findings reported regarding the background of the respondents, their evaluations of strengths and difficulties of teaching drama, and their willingness to put drama into practice. Finally discussion on the key factors—environment, teachers, pupils— was made and implications were proposed for drama education in Taiwan in terms of preparing for "the third space" for DIE in Taiwan, teacher training, and taking time.

Einstein the famous scientist once claimed that: "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." From the findings of this research, the unique reality and difficulties are revealed concerning adopting DIE to Taiwan's educational system; yet understanding the real situations from teachers' viewpoints is just a start to come up with feasible implications. Hoping by sharing the research results and my personal insights, this paper can call for further evaluations on applying drama in Taiwan as well as on the whole educational system.

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About the Author

During 2003-04, I studied in the University of Exeter for MEd of Drama & Creative Arts in Education, hoping to contribute what I have learnt to Taiwan's education. Before I went to the UK, I worked in primary schools in Taipei as an English teacher and a classroom teacher. No matter teaching English or other subjects in Mandarin, I always love to use drama or stories, mixed with inventive methods to teach, and invite my pupils to learn with me creatively. After the research for my MA dissertation, I conducted a further study on the same topic which this paper is based on, and I also carried out another research of drama teaching in two primary schools for my PhD project — developing creativity through drama in Taiwan. The proposal of the PhD research was presented at the IDEA congress in July 2007 in Hong Kong, while a short article about the research, the lesson plan and pupils' responses will be published in the Journal of Aesthetic Education, No. 159. For me, doing research is a valuable process of examining theories and my experiences; while the ultimate goals is to share what I learnt with more people, and cultivate the soil where I grew upon!

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Using singing games in music lessons to enhance

young children's social skills

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Abstract

The ability to develop social relationships with peers has long been regarded as one of the most important development tasks of childhood. The acquisition of social skills is very significant during early childhood; however, these skills are rarely taught in Hong Kong kindergartens. Teachers tend to reinforce quiet and obedient classroom behavior.

To enhance children's social skills, music provides the opportunity for not only aesthetic and creative development, but also social development. Music serves to create social groups because it helps each child feel a part of a group. Music can draw a shy, withdrawn child into a group, encourage all children to come into closer contact with their peers, and support social relationships.

The paper aims to investigate how children's social skills and competence are enhanced by incorporating new songs into a musical game. The subjects were twenty children aged from five to six in an Upper level (K. 3) class in a Hong Kong kindergarten. Thirty-minute music lessons were conducted once a week for eight consecutive weeks in the kindergarten. The first four music lessons were taught using a traditional Chinese teaching approach, whereas the last four music lessons were taught with the added elements of new songs and creative movement games. Data were collected through class observations, video recordings, and a checklist of social

attributes (McClellan & Katz, 1993). The results of the study revealed that the musical games in the music lessons cultivated young children's social development and skills. The children shared in a large group, established close connections, and built their confidence, cooperation, curiosity, and communication through musical games and movement. They were given ways to express themselves that improved their self-confidence and self-esteem, establish positive relationships and maintain positive interactions with peers, take turns fairly, accept and enjoy peers in their group, and interact non-verbally with other children with smiles or nods.

Introduction

The ability to develop social relationships with peers has long been regarded as one of the most important developmental tasks of childhood (Hartup, 1989; Jewett, 1992; McClellan & Katz, 1993; Lau, 2002). Children's behaviors that lead to social acceptance or rejection by peers may be the result of children's early social and emotional experiences that occur in the context of families or schools. Research indicates that children's everyday experiences in relationships with their parents are fundamental to their developing social skills (Cohn, Patterson & Christopoulous, 1991; Parke & Ladd, 1992). Parental responsiveness and nurturance are considered to be key factors in the development of children's social competence (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Although parents and families provide the foundation for children's social skills development, schools and kindergartens are the main places where children learn to get along with their peers. Teachers can be good facilitators and models to enhance children's social skills. They can play the role of facilitators or advisers to promote children's competence with peers in the classroom through various play activities. Research has shown that teachers can guide young children's social development and be active mediators of their social competence (Edwards, 1986; Hazen, Black & Fleming-Johnson, 1984; Kostelnik, Stein, Whiren & Soderman, 1988;

Ladd, 1984, 2005; Mize, Ladd & Price, 1985; Lau, 2007). If experienced and trained teachers working with young children in kindergarten demonstrate a positive acceptance of each child at an early stage, this can help children discover and appreciate their own uniqueness at a later period of schooling (Curriculum Development Council (C.D.C.), 1996, 2006). Children can learn skills from teachers in school if they become good friends by practicing friendship, connecting with other children and adults, and developing social skills that help them "click" with others (Lau, 2005). Burton (1986) stated that children who were able to form close or satisfying relationships with peers had opportunities to learn social skills that would be important throughout their lives.

For teachers, teaching social skills to children is much harder than teaching academic subjects such as mathematics or science. Healthy social skills are the foundation for getting along with others, and come from interactions with both peers and adults. Children who lack social skills can experience problems such as behavioral difficulties in school, inattentiveness, peer rejection, emotional difficulties, bullying, difficulty in making friends, aggressiveness, problems in interpersonal relationships, academic failure, difficulty concentrating, isolation from peers, and depression (Lau, 2005). If children do not have friends or playmates, they can be frustrated, even hurt. As social development begins in the early years, it is appropriate that all early childhood programs include regular assessment of children's progress in the acquisition of social competence (McClellan & Katz, 1993), which is one of the most important aspects of children's development (Wortham, 2002).

In Hong Kong, the Pre-primary Curriculum Guide (C.D.C., 1996) emphasizes that "children should equip themselves with life skills, such as communicative skills and social skills so as to enable them to adapt to society" (p. 1). In November 1996, it

was noted in the consultation document of *Education Commission Report No. 7* that schools need to "impart confidence and social skills to students to help them communicate effectively in community life" (p. 11). More recently, the updated Guide states, "Children should learn to establish good interpersonal relationships through negotiation and co-operation, and to accept basic social values" (C.D.C., 2006, p. 20). Social skills are recognized by the Curriculum Development Council as an important element in the development of young children (2006), and the Council's direction and recommendations are in harmony with the vision and overall aims of education for the twenty-first century outlined in the Education Commission's report, *Education Blueprint for the 21st Century - Review of Academic System: Aims of Education*, published in January 1999 (Hong Kong Education Commission, 1999).

Social skills can be defined as "the ability to implement developmentally appropriate social behaviors that enhance one's interpersonal relationships without causing harm to anyone" (Schneider, 1993, p. 19). The "ability to implement" implies that an individual requires skill to actually be able to display an appropriate behavior. Social skills include daily interaction skills such as sharing, taking turns, and allowing others to talk without interrupting. The category of social skills can also be expanded to include facets of self-control such as appropriate anger management. For many children, social skills are learned by observing how others in their environment handle social situations. Children then imitate desirable responses such as turn taking and apply the skills and so become adept at performing other activities that require them to wait for others (Lau, 2005).

Music is one of the domains of the pre-primary curriculum. It provides children with opportunities for not only aesthetic and creative development, but also social development (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2001; Seefeldt & Wasik, 2006). Leonhard

(1983) asserts, "Music is by its very nature a social art." It creates social groups because it helps each person feel a part of a group. Hence, social skills develop as children feel they are a part of a group. Music can draw a shy, withdrawn child into a group, encourage all children to come into closer contact with their peers, and support social relationships (Spodek & Saracho, 1994), and encourage participation, sharing and cooperation (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2001). Many teachers have found that for a child who is having difficulties making friends or sharing in a large group, music games can help the child develop close connections by building his/her confidence, cooperation, curiosity, and communication. Involving children in music activities gives them a way to express themselves that improves their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Wortham (2002) argues that "play is an important component for children's social development" (p. 273). By promoting children's social skills, play provides an avenue for social development. Arnaud (1971) maintains that "play is a major vehicle for constructive socialization when shared with other children which widens empathy with others, and lessens egocentrism" (p. 5). Young children can "experience the joy of co-operating and sharing with others" (C.D.C., 2006, p. 51) through play experiences such as taking turns and helping each other. However, it is found that teachers use didactic methods to transmit knowledge and social values to children rather than interactive methods, even though children retain knowledge gained from interactive activities much better than they do that from lecturing. Teachers tend to reinforce quiet and obedient classroom behavior (Wong & Chu, 2001; Lau, 2002, 2005). Children are rarely given specific instructions on how to cope with interpersonal activities such as making friends and handling disagreements. Teachers encourage children to sit quietly while working at a desk, and to write and work more

on worksheets (Lau, 2001, 2002) instead of enhancing children's social skills through play activities.

Play and interaction with peers promotes the shift from moral reasoning, which is guided by egocentrism, to autonomous moral reasoning, which is characterized by autonomy, reciprocity, and cooperation (Piaget, 1932, cited in Catron & Allen, 2003, p. 28). By providing children with this opportunity, they learn to take the role of other people, and they are allowed to participate in decisions about rules. They also learn to express themselves verbally, listen to another child's point of view, and decide on a plan of action that will solve the problem. Play helps children learn to be peacemakers through play experiences that help them develop the ability to negotiate, resolve conflicts, communicate and co-operate with peers, and solve problems in a constructive atmosphere (Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1985; C.D.C., 2006; Peachey, 1981). For the young child, play is important work. A child grows, learns, and investigates the world through play. When children interact with one another, they influence each other's development (Fromberg & Bergen, 2006, p. xviii). This happens through simple or complex play activities, or musical activities that invite the child to think, solve problems, and participate in fantasy (Catron & Allen, 2003).

As children learn through play, musical play serves an important role in the development of their social skills (C.D.C., 2006). It encourages participation, sharing, and cooperation. Through a simple musical activity such as group musical singing games, children learn to subordinate their individual wishes to the goals of the group, which is the essence of cooperation (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2001). Catron and Allen (2003) argue that "young children must learn to cooperate with peers and act in a socially responsible manner, and that they develop a cooperative spirit through participating in a variety of small-group activities" (p. 213).

Musical activities such as songs, musical games, and rhythmic movement are fun and enjoyable ways for children to learn social skills (Lau, 2005). Simple sing-along songs, for example, are easy for children to learn. If the songs touch on values and principles, the children begin to incorporate them into their social development. It is known that children tend to absorb social values much better when they do not realize that they are being taught. Musical games allow children to sing aloud, move, and dance around or create certain hand gestures for parts of songs, and also allow them to release social and emotional problems. Children constantly experience new emotions and situations when they are growing up. Each new experience they have contributes to their social development. When children are dealing with these new experiences, they can learn from them. Children concentrate better on activities than on academic textbooks.

Research has documented the effectiveness of music in enhancing children's social skills, especially when interventions and instructions involve the use of participatory activities (Forsyth, 1977; Madsen & Alley, 1979; Sim, 1986; Standley & Hughes, 1996). Music has been recognized as an effective way to foster children's social behavior. Children who are lacking social skills can learn from children who are socially competent (Wortham, 2002). Teachers can give demonstrations, provide and suggest feedback, ask open-ended questions to inquire into children's thought processes, and ask them to share their understandings, imaginings, and feelings (MacNaughton & Williams, 2004). Other instructional approaches and experiences such as "coaching, modeling, reinforcement, and peer pairing are also effective in increasing children's social skills" (Oden, 2000, retrieved from http://ericae.net/edo/ED281610.htm). In addition, teachers can organize special games such as musical games, where less socially competent children are paired with

children who have acquired effective social skills. Through play experiences, the less skilled child can learn to play more effectively. Teachers should be able to construct appropriate social learning environments and design related activities for young children to help instill in them the concept that each person is unique (Lau, 2001, 2002), and help them to acquire self-awareness and learn about the immediate community.

However, kindergarten teachers "devote far too much time and lay emphasis to the technique on the singing of songs" (Tripathi, 2004, p. 58). The technique typically used to teach songs is repetition. The majority of kindergarten teachers prefer to use repetition when teaching young children to sing, that is, children are asked to repeat a song several times until they can perform it well. Moreover, the teaching resources and materials available for teachers in the kindergarten field are very limited (Wong & Chu, 2001). Some publishing companies publish teaching packages for kindergartens, but these rarely contain high-quality songs, and are based on themes such as winter, spring, and transportation. In Hong Kong, the number of music experts and educators in the early childhood field is small. A few of them have written lyrics for and/or composed creative and developmentally appropriate high-quality songs for kindergarten children (Wong & Chu, 2001), but there appears to be no songs about enhancing social skills. Kindergarten teachers have difficulty finding quality children's songs (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2001, p. 162).

The traditional "Good Morning" song (Chinese version) is one of the songs commonly used by teachers to enhance children's social skills. When singing this song, the major focus is on acquiring the rules of the song through singing together. Children often labor for a long time to perform even simple songs (Andress, 1980; Wright, 2003). Through the "Good Morning" song, children have become so

organized by teachers in kindergartens that they no longer have time for their own spontaneous games during such kinds of songs.

The "Good Morning" song is in triple meter (¾ time) (i.e., the accent falls on the first of every three beats). However, this song begins with a weaker beat that is followed by three quarter notes (crotchets). Children usually find this form of beat arrangement difficult because they are "still learning to recognize intonation and meter" (C.D.C., 1996, p. 88). The complete triple meter is usually easier.

In the "Hello" song (Appendix A), the quadruple meter (4/4 time) is prominent, and starts with an accent on the first of every four complete quarter notes. Rhythmically, children feel the basic beat through clapping and stepping in time with the beat while participating in singing games. The "Hello" song is syncopated and has a choppy rhythm. This helps develop children's musical understanding. The children are given an inner feeling for differences in pitch and rhythm found in melody. They are able to "express these differences through singing" (Wheeler & Raebeck, 1985, p. 93). Children can participate in a variety of group singing games with simple movements to the "Hello" song.

Purpose of Study

In this study, I wanted to see how musical activities enhance and strengthen children's social learning experiences. These activities included musical games, singing songs, and creative movement. Two songs (appendices A and B) that were composed by the investigator were taught in a Hong Kong kindergarten to enhance children's social skills. The purpose of this study was to see if children's social skills could be enhanced by incorporating new songs into singing games during music lessons in Hong Kong kindergartens. By using a checklist adapted from the Social

Attribute Checklist of McClellan and Katz (1993) during the music lessons, I investigated whether singing games are effective in cultivating young children's social skills, such as establishing positive relationships, maintaining positive interactions with peers, taking turns fairly, accepting and enjoying peers in one's group, and interacting non-verbally with other children with smiles or nods.

Methodology

Twenty children aged from five to six in an Upper class (K. 3) were randomly chosen to join in the study. All of them were in the last year of kindergarten. It was anticipated that in the study, the children would express themselves with confidence, establish positive relationships and maintain positive interactions with peers, interact with other children with smiles and nods, take turns fairly with peers, and accept and enjoy peers of his or her group, and that their social skills would be enhanced through singing and movement lessons. A teacher of the Upper class worked in conjunction with the investigator to implement the study. The teacher led the music activity while the investigator acted as an observer. An assistant teacher was invited to be an inter-rater to observe the music activity and score the children on each item in the checklist to establish inter-rater reliability. In addition, videotaping was used to identify targeted behaviors and social skills to ascertain a satisfactory rate of inter-rater reliability.

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in a privately run, government-subsidized half-day kindergarten that is located on the Hong Kong Island. The data were collected from mid-February to mid-April in the second semester of the 2004-2005 school year. An

Upper class teacher was invited by the investigator to conduct eight music lessons with twenty children from her K. 3 class. A 30-minute music lesson was conducted once a week in the Upper class over eight consecutive teaching weeks. The eight lessons were split into two phases during the data-collection period: the first four lessons constituted phase 1 and the last four constituted phase 2. Twenty randomly selected children aged from 5 to 6 were invited to participate in the study without any special consideration for their musical ability. The children who were invited were required to obtain consent letters from their parents before they were allowed to join in the study.

Data Collection

Three research instruments were used: class observation with anecdotes, videotaping, and a checklist adapted from the Social Attribute Checklist of McClellan and Katz (1993). In addition to the rating conducted by the investigator, a rater who was the assistant of the teacher was invited to score each child on each item on the checklist. This gave reasonable assurance that the investigator and rater were rating the children at the same time on the social behavior. The checklist, observations, and videos were used to triangulate the results. All lessons were videotaped and observed by the investigator and assistant teacher, who were non-participant observers. This helped them watch more objectively and carefully what was happening and become more analytical about the information they recorded (Martin, 2004). The data collected from the observations with anecdotes provided a useful selection of social behavior and skills.

During the eight music lessons, a video recorder was set up on a tripod and placed in an unobtrusive spot to record the children's group interactions. The teacher

provided the children with opportunities to solve problems by thinking about the actions they could do to the "Hello" song (such as shaking hands, clapping hands, nodding heads to respond to each other) and the "Bubble" song, which provided the children with opportunities to express their feelings and ideas, support and cooperate with each other, and respect each other's individual abilities and interests. Each child's playing, moving, interacting, approaching others, respecting and accepting peers, initiating contact with others and taking turns were included in the videotapes for review by the investigator and assistant teacher. Reviewing the videotapes repeatedly helped the observers acquire information on many different attributes of children's social skills in a group context.

Procedure

In the first four weeks, from mid-February to mid-March (phase one), the teacher conducted four music lessons. Based on the routine music lesson plan, which involved breath exercises and pitch practice, the teacher used the traditional Chinese "Good Morning" greeting song to teach social skills. Children were asked either to sit or stand while singing songs, and were required to be seated when playing games. They were provided with some non-locomotive games such as moving while remaining in their own seats and passing the present box following the background music from a disc player. In the last four lessons from mid-March to mid-April (phase two), the teacher was asked to conduct a fun and interactive 30-minute music lesson that was designed by the investigator. This involved the introduction of two new songs that included actions and games, "Hello, hello and how are you?" (see Appendix A) and the "Bubble" song (see Appendix B). These two songs provided children with chances to reach out to other children and make friends with one

another in groups of two or four. Traditionally, when singing Chinese songs children simply stand and sing the lyrics, but with the new songs, the children could welcome and greet each other in a wonderful way, with warmth and friendliness. They could approach and initiate interactions with other peers positively, respect and accept each other's ideas, take turns, and interact with others with smiles and nods. The musical activities enhanced their social skills in a way that the old songs could not. The data collected from twenty children were used for analysis.

While the children were singing and playing in the musical lessons, a checklist of social attributes (McClellan & Katz, 1993) was used by both the investigator and assistant teacher to record and summarize the children's social skills in three categories: i) social skill attributes, ii) individual attributes, and iii) peer relationship attributes. The investigator and assistant teacher observed and recorded the presence or absence of these social attributes more than one child at a time for further analysis.

Results

The main focus of this paper is to examine the possibility of incorporating two new songs into singing games to enhance children's social skills in kindergarten. The results of the study reveal the achievement of the ultimate goal of the musical activities: that is, the new songs in the music lessons cultivated young children's social development and enhanced their social skills. This study showed that the most important social skills that children learned in the musical activities were establishing positive relationships and maintaining positive interactions with peers, taking turns fairly, showing interest in others, accepting and enjoying peers of the child's own group, interacting verbally and non-verbally with other children with smiles or nods, and showing cooperation, self-control, confidence, independence, and empathy.

Observations of the children

In the first phase of lessons, in general, the children enjoyed the lessons. They seemed to move slightly from egocentricity to social interaction. However, they seemed to do poorly on many of the items on the checklist (Table 1). They had difficulties establishing more satisfying relationships with other children. They were deficient in finding ways to learn from and enjoy the company of one another because there were insufficient opportunities for the children to reach other peers during the activity. The children sometimes exhibited negative social behaviors, such as aggression, when finding friends to play with.

In the second phase of lessons, the musical activities provided opportunities for the children to play and interact with their peers. The children were observed to be able to overcome social difficulties. They had the chance to reach out to other children and make friends with one another and in groups of two. Most of the children laughed and enjoyed themselves very much during the activities. They accepted and enjoyed the peers in their group, and sometimes interacted non-verbally with other children with smiles or nods. Guided both by the investigator and their innate curiosity, the children applied some important problem-solving skills and social skills right in the midst of their playing.

At the start of the music lesson, the "Hello Song" (Appendix A) was initiated to communicate what each child should do sequentially when greeting someone. Children were invited to sing the song and practiced the greetings in a game format. They responded naturally to the rhythm and melody, and sang and moved to the beat of the song. At the very beginning, the children could not sing the words because the tune and lyrics were new, but most of them had a sense of the rhythm and melody, and the teacher's movement captured most of their attention. They loved to participate

by clapping their hands in time with the melody. They felt the thrill of achievement when they knew the words and how to play the greeting game. They expressed greetings by singing "Hello, hello, hello, hello" (waving hands) and negotiating with their partners the way that they wanted to act out the play pattern of "How are you?" (such as shaking hands, clapping hands, nodding heads, turning around, telling partner's names, and so forth). After playing and singing the song a few times, the children were asked to change their partners and discuss the play pattern of the game. All of them turned around and looked for another partner by asking "Would you like to be my partner?"' or "Could you be my partner?" They found new partners and interacted cooperatively in pairs of two in a group musical activity.

Only one child (Ben) was somewhat egocentric and less sensitive compared to other children. Another child (Shirley) was observed to show empathy and react appropriately to her partner by helping the frustrated child to complete a difficult movement task. Shirley used more sophisticated methods of offering comfort by holding her partner's hands and demonstrating the movement. She approached the child positively, showed her concern, and established a positive relationship with her peer.

The "Hello" song allowed the children to explore the things they were learning—sound, language, physical movement, and even social skills. They shook hands, clapped hands, and nodded heads to respond to each other. The greeting activity taught the children how group interactions work. They initiated and developed contact with others. Children's own grouping choices were fostered and respected. The children began to learn that everyone in a group could be a leader, and that compromise was essential. During the musical activity, often one or two children would want to be the leader of the group and make all the decisions about the play

pattern (such as clapping hands, nodding heads, turning around, or shaking hands). The children began to learn to contribute equally in a manner that was most beneficial for the group. They learned to accept each other's ideas and respect each other's interests so as to cooperate and resolve conflicts. They developed social skills such as taking turns and working and sharing their ideas with others. The children found ways to work through problems and express themselves.

Another song, "Bubble Song" (Appendix B), was introduced after the "Hello Song". It was a singing game with creative movement. The children were asked to imagine that they were blowing bubbles (rhythmic movement accompanying piano music). Next, they were asked to pretend to be the wind that was blowing the bubbles, and then to be the bubbles that were like feathers flying up higher and higher in the sky (with the original tune played an octave higher). The children were asked to respond to fast and slow tempi with whole body movement, and then freeze, pretending the bubbles burst when the music stopped. However, the children bumped into each other while moving. With the teacher's guidance, they were asked to cooperate and pair up in groups of two. They finally cooperated with each other and each pair formed a big bubble by moving close together or forming a big bubble by linking their hands.

The children's movement to music showed that they had a limited creative movement repertoire. They appeared to need instruction in movement to develop a creative movement repertoire. The teacher tried to teach the children to keep time accurately through the blowing-bubble movement. Children's fine motor skills are usually learned through imitation. The motor patterns that the teacher taught were compatible with the children's physical and maturational stages of development. They expressed a controlled muscular response. They also moved expressively. They were

able to imitate accurately rhythmic patterns, and to synchronize their movement with the music, that is, keep the beat. The children's rhythmic movement was creative. They started by learning the movements that the teacher teach them, then rearranged and changed the movements to create their own physical expressions.

During the movement game, the children's confidence was monitored when they attempted the challenging bubble activity. When they were asked to imagine that they were blowing the bubbles, they were independent and autonomous. They had the opportunity to develop self-help skills and independence, and were not excessively dependent on the teacher. Although the children appeared somewhat frustrated by the movement repertoire at the beginning, they still performed in a positive mood and kept the beat with their movement, and moved expressively to the music.

The children listened attentively to the melody. When the tune was played an octave lower and higher, they pretended to be the wind blowing the bubbles and the bubbles flying up high in the sky, respectively. Opportunities were created to encourage the children to express their feelings and ideas. The children appeared to demonstrate socially appropriate ways to express their feelings. The game provided them with the chance to support and cooperate with each other. They respected each other's individual abilities and interests. The game provided opportunities for social interaction, and the children initiated and developed contact with their peers.

The children froze when the song came to an end. They listened attentively and were encouraged to group themselves in twos to discuss and contribute ideas for a freeze statue. They worked cooperatively to express their freeze statue when pretending the bubbles burst. They responded with smiles and nodded at each other when freezing. They were required to imagine and give verbal responses to the places where the bubbles had fallen or were lying. The children made relevant contributions

to the ongoing activities, and expressed their feelings in socially appropriate ways. They had opportunities to release their feelings and express emotion through the musical activity.

Summary of the Checklist

Both the investigator and assistant teacher evaluated the children's social attributes. The assistant teacher found the checklist easy to use. She required very little instruction and training and quickly learned to use it. Few discrepancies arose between the results marked on the checklist by the assistant teacher and those by the investigator. The following tables summarize the social skills that children learned in the three categories (i.e., social attributes, individual attributes, and peer relationship attributes) in the first four musical activities in the first phase (Table 1) and the last four musical activities in the second phase (Table 2).

Table 1
Social attributes children learned in first phase

Singing games and movement	Category of attributes	Social skills children learned in the music lesson	Y	N	S
Singing game: *Hello, hello, and how are you?* (Appendix A)	Social skills attributes	• Approach and show positive interest in other peers			✓
		• Accept and enjoy peers of his/her group			✓
		• Able to make friends			✓
		• Respect and accept others' interests and ideas			✓
		• Compromise on decisions		✓	
		• Take turns fairly		✓	
		• Respect peers' own grouping choice		✓	
	Individual attributes	• Show empathy for and comfort peers			✓
		• Recognize and accept each others differences		✓	
		• Demonstrate positive relationships with peers		✓	
		• Show capacity to care about peers			✓
		• Initiate and develop contact with others			✓
	Peer relationship attributes	• Children are accepted by others			✓
		• Invited by peers to join in the play and keep friendship			✓
		• Respond to each other with a cooperative spirit		✓	
		• Interact with others with smiles and nods			✓
		• Establish positive relationship with peers	✓		
Movement: *Bubble, bubble up in the sky* (Appendix B)	Social skills attributes	• Show socially appropriate ways of expressing feelings		✓	
		• Respect others' needs, and interests			✓
		• Accept and enjoy playing with peers			✓
		• Interact with others		✓	
		• Initiate and develop contact with others		✓	
		• Play without teacher intervention		✓	
	Individual attributes	• Self-esteem and self-concept are fostered and developed: confidence, self-help skills		✓	
		• Experience frustration and see mistakes as opportunities to learn		✓	
		• Become more independent and autonomous			✓
		• Release feelings and express emotion through activity		✓	

	Peer relationship attributes	• Respond to each other with a cooperative spirit	✓	
		• Interact with others with smiles and nods	✓	
		• Establish positive relationships with peers		✓

A checklist adapted from *"Assessing the Social Development of Young Children: A Checklist of Social Attributes"* (McClellan & Katz, 1993).
Y = Yes, N = No, S = Sometimes.

Table 2
Social attributes children learned in the second phase

Singing games and movement	Category of social attributes	Social skills children learned in the music lesson	Y	N	S
Singing game: *Hello, hello, and how are you?* (Appendix A)	Social skills attributes	• Approach and show positive interest in peers	✓		
		• Accept and enjoy peers of his/her group	✓		
		• Able to make friends	✓		
		• Respect and accept others' interests and ideas	✓		
		• Compromise on decisions			✓
		• Take turns fairly	✓		
		• Respect peers' own grouping choice	✓		
	Individual attributes	• Show empathy for and comfort peers			✓
		• Recognize and accept each other's differences	✓		
		• Demonstrate positive relationships with peers	✓		
		• Show capacity to care about peers	✓		
		• Initiate and develop contact with others	✓		
	Peer relationship attributes	• Children are accepted by others	✓		
		• Invited by peers to join in the play and be friends	✓		
		• Respond to each other with a cooperative spirit	✓		
		• Interact with others with smiles and nods	✓		
		• Establish positive relationships with peers	✓		
Movement: *Bubble, bubble up in the sky* (Appendix B)	Social skills attributes	• Express feelings in socially appropriate ways	✓		
		• Respect others' needs and interests	✓		
		• Accept and enjoy playing with peers	✓		
		• Interact with others	✓		
		• Initiate and develop contact with others	✓		
		• Play without teacher's intervention			✓

A checklist adapted from *"Assessing the Social Development of Young Children: A Checklist of Social Attributes"* (McClellan & Katz, 1993).
Y = Yes, N = No, S = Sometimes.

Discussion and Conclusion

The investigator discovered that early childhood music, songs, activities, and games are great ways to teach children about social skills in a fun way. Children's social skills are reinforced in music lessons through singing games that they have learned from their peers and teachers. When the music lesson is taught in a fun and interactive way, it is easier for a child to understand the immersed social skills.

It is obvious that play serves as an important vehicle to teach children social skills (Wortham, 2002; C.D.C., 2006). Bodrova and Leong (2007) argue that children's social skills that are necessary for group acceptance are learned through play. Children learn to be socially competent from other children. Peer social groups develop and change as children participate in undirected play. It is shown that peer culture is transmitted through play (Wortham, 2002). Musical play assists as the best modality to arouse young children's learning and to develop their social skills when integrated with developmentally appropriate learning experiences (Lau, 2005).

The most important role that teachers play in children's development is that of teaching the child social skills. When teachers are spontaneous, warm, and responsive, children show more sympathy and understanding toward one another. Moreover, teachers who deliberately try to respond to children's needs serve as models for children. It is known that if "teachers … are fully engaged in children's activities, [children will] model responsive interaction, attentiveness, and respect for others" (Catron & Allen, 2003, p. 211). Teachers can use strategies to intervene in and enhance children's social skills to help children to obtain skills and make progress in their social development. Teachers can:

- *Develop interesting musical games and activities*. Using a wide variety of interesting materials, ideas, and various kinds of play activities and musical

games to engage children's natural curiosity will enhance children's social skills. Evidence indicates that novel or unusual activities and materials that engage children cause them to pay close attention. Music is a powerful way to connect with young children and set the stage for close relationships throughout life. "Through a simple musical activity, children learn to subordinate their individual wishes to the goals of the group—the essence of cooperation" (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2001, p. 166).

- *Provide children with opportunities to play with peers*. Children gain experience in music play from interacting with peers and are able to maintain stable and long-lasting relationships with other children they like over long periods. For instance, they can be paired up for special play experiences that may lead to their musical games together afterward (Hendrick & Weissman, 2007).

- *Play with children in a "peer-like" way*. Children learn crucial social skills through play with other children. Children whose teachers frequently participate and play with them have more advanced social skills and get along better with peers. Lindsey, Mize, and Pettit (in press) confirm that when adults play with children in an effectively positive and peer-like way, children become more socially competent.

- *Intervene and give children direct suggestions for using successful social behavior*. Teachers can give demonstrations, ask open-ended questions and offer suggestions, or give instructions (MacNaughton & Williams, 2004) that lead children to demonstrate successful behavior such as asking for a turn, initiating invitation, having an awareness of others' feelings, showing the capacity to empathize, approaching and interacting with peers in an

appropriate manner, and interacting non-verbally with other children with smiles, waves, or nods.

Successful social development is critical in early childhood years. The plans made for social development in the music program for young children can play a significant role. The foundation established through music experiences in social development will make it possible for the developing children to appreciate other people in their expanding understanding of the world.

As children learn cooperating, sharing, and helping skills, they make progress in socialization, that is, they are able to get along with other people (C.D.C., 2006). If children's socialization conforms to the school environment, they will find their adjustment to school very easy. Successful socialization development in turn depends on other developmental skills, including controlling and expressing feelings appropriately, developing empathy, and developing prosocial skills.

Young children love to learn, move, and vocalize as they act upon their small world. They are born to be immensely active and energetic when engaging in musical activities. A kindergarten music program can provide one of the most important avenues for young children to learn social skills meaningfully and joyfully. By experiencing life through developmentally appropriate activities, young children have ample opportunities to listen, sing, play, and move, which are important components for the development of social skills. This is a new challenge for both education practitioners and kindergarten teachers to face and follows the curriculum focus in the twenty-first century in Hong Kong: "All students should be entitled to the learning experiences that correspond to *social skills* and *aesthetics* for whole-person development featured in learning through play" (C.D.C., 2001, p. 20).

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Appendix A

Hello Hello and How Are You?

Appendix B

Bubble Song

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