

Applying body aesthetic concepts on kindergarten education: Exploring the partnership between teachers and researchers

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This project dialogue reflects on ongoing research practices and issues associated with engaging aesthetic concepts in education. The project was funded by the Ministry of Education, Taiwan, and centered on exploring aesthetic concepts in relation to curriculum design and teaching practice. However, after visiting two primary schools and conducting classroom observations and focus group interviews with teachers, the research focus shifted to investigating teachers' perspectives on aesthetic education and applying aesthetic concepts in teaching. Three themes emerged from the initial data analysis: 1) teacher appearance in the classroom, 2) teaching practice, and 3) teaching content. In addition, concepts used in Laban Movement Analysis — body, flow, sound, and space — were used to analyze the teacher's movement behavior profile in the classroom (e.g., the teacher's spatial relationships with students in the classroom).

The project was collaborative, involving four research personnel, four teachers in the primary curriculum, and two kindergarten teachers. Nine advisory faculty in education from two universities provided feedback on the research design, data collection techniques, and classroom observations. The research design engaged qualitative methodologies centered on classroom observations augmented by pre- and post-observation discussions with teachers.

Data analysis indicated that pre- and post-observation discussions resulted in shifts in the interactions of researchers and teachers, changes in teaching practices, and their impact on students. Teachers in the study actively adapted to leadership roles during the study period. In

the early stages, researchers provided suggestions for teaching strategies and topics teachers might address in their participant discussions. It was not long before teachers began actively proposing their own ideas and suggestions for applying aesthetic concepts in teaching. As a result of the pre- and post-discussion regimen, teachers assumed proactive leadership roles in addressing pedagogical ideas and reflections, and encouraged the research team to provide supporting workshops for their further professional development.

Changes to teaching practice were an outcome of this project. Data indicated that changes to pedagogies influenced the in-class performance of students. Along with notable changes in the teachers' body/space comfort levels and the range of emotional expressions of kindergarten children during the research period, data also demonstrated that increases in student learning motivations stimulated teachers to confront and meet the challenges of modifying their teaching practices. Findings suggest a need for further inquiry. Applying aesthetic concepts in teaching and bringing concepts of body/space into discussion on effective teaching practices stimulated teachers' attitudes toward change in practice, and enhanced students' motivations in learning.

Keywords: aesthetic concept, kindergarten teacher, partnership, researcher

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Chu-Yun Wang studied dance at the Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan, after which she completed an MA course in dance studies at Laban, in London. In 2014, she earned a PhD in education from the University of Exeter Graduate School of Education, UK. Her main research interest has developed out of her early dance training in which she focuses on the dance teacher's identity, the teacher's professional development, and dance education in schools.