

**THE WORK OF TEACHING – UNDERSTANDING TEACHER
DEVELOPMENT OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN HONG
KONG**

Thesis for the pursuance of Doctor of Education

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Li Yuen Ling

Abstract

In the child-centered approach, which is an integral part of early childhood education, child development is facilitated through interaction with the social and physical environment. Kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong have been criticized for not incorporating this perspective into their practice. This failure is often justified by the pressure of external constraints such as the demands of the academic curriculum, parents' expectation of success and the emphasis on discipline within the Chinese culture. The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which such constraints were affected by the stage of a teacher's professional development. The classroom practice of nine Hong Kong kindergarten teachers was analyzed and post lesson interviews were carried out. These nine case studies attempted to identify the various coping strategies used by analyzing the curriculum management, pupil-teacher interaction and classroom management procedures operating inside each classroom. The data suggested that the professional development of all nine teachers was limited by their inability to extend their thinking beyond their own personal concerns so that the needs of the children were not the major determinant of their classroom practice. Instead, external constraints dominated the teachers' thinking. All the teachers were competent in time management but appeared to lack awareness of the conditions necessary to teach 'for understanding' rather than for 'knowledge acquisition'. Various ways of bringing about a transformation in teachers' thinking to improve the quality of the children's learning experience are considered. It is argued that to confront and modify the teachers' personal beliefs cognitive dissonance must be induced as a first step in this process of re-orientation. The presence of suitable role models during training is also essential. The relative merits of 'action research' and joint collaborative activity with experts (in the form of 'assisted performance' or 'apprenticeship') are also discussed.

Key Words

Teacher Effectiveness, Teacher Development, Professional Development, Teacher Improvement and Training

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) varies worldwide though there seems to be a common language used. The variation is sometimes justified by culturally appropriate practice, which are practices that accord with the local socio-cultural context. A close examination of the vision of early childhood education reveals that the implied role of the teacher assumes that a stage of development has been reached where classroom decisions are mainly taken in accordance with the needs of the child rather than as a result of self interest or to preserve the institutional norms. In Hong Kong, kindergarten teachers are blamed for not putting early childhood theory into practice, which suggests that their development has been slowed or prevented by the lack of suitable support and training. The research that reported in this thesis sets out to investigate these matters.

This study of the work of teaching inside the kindergarten classroom, through classroom observation, is intended to provide an understanding of the work of teaching (curriculum management, interaction with children, classroom management, coping strategies and thus teaching styles – “a consistent set of teaching tactics” suggested by Galton *et al*, 1980:113) and thus identify the stage of development reached by these teachers. Teachers’ perception of teaching can help inform the researcher about the cognitive state of the teacher and the level of reflection concerning their classroom practice at which they engage. This, in turn, offers clues to explain why they teach in certain ways. By interviewing teachers on aspects of their practice, as well as observing them teaching, it is hoped that this study will provide valuable data for understanding teacher development that can be used to devise teacher education programmes that advance professionalism.

This present brief chapter, Chapter One, provides a general introduction to the research study. Chapter Two and Three provide background information about early childhood

education in general and the Hong Kong context in particular. Chapter Four discusses the research design and methodology. Chapter Five then deals with the interview data while Chapters Six and Seven deal with the classroom observations. Chapter Eight provides an overview by way of a summary while Chapter Nine engages in discussion of the issues that emerge as a result of the analysis and offer some general conclusions and recommendations.

In Chapter Two, variations of worldwide practice and the vision of early childhood education are briefly reviewed. The vision of ECE should have a determining impact on practice. Nevertheless, the ECE philosophy provides an ideal vision for childhood educators but without a universal consensus of the specific pedagogy required implementing it. Teachers' practice varies across countries. In the West, for example, the prevailing impact of child development, requires that in the United Kingdom (UK), education from five to eight is based on a set of criteria of children's attainment presented as specific age related targets. However, in the United States (USA), preschools aim at promoting life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. By contrast, there is more concern for the value on the needs of society in Asia. In Japan, teaching tends to be group-oriented whilst in China the emphasis is on order and children's early academic experience.

Chapter Three describes the local context of kindergarten education in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, kindergarten teachers are required to cope with the influence of the remedies of Chinese culture, the early childhood ideology on learning through play and local parents' demand on an early start of academic work. The Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum (CDI 1996: 1) stipulates the 'triple task': to align with the ideology of child development, to foster routine training and to deliver subject work to maintain standards in the basics. It is interesting to know how far the context influences practice. In Hong Kong, kindergarten teachers do not receive pre-service teacher education course but in-service

teacher education course. About 32% of kindergarten teachers have no teacher-training qualifications (Hong Kong Government 1998, quoted in Rao and Koong 1999: 2). Kindergarten teachers in general are blamed for showing too much concern for academic work and discipline but neglecting other aspects of child development (Education Commission 1999a: 16-17) and not teaching for understanding (Good and Brophy, 1994). Their competence is under challenge as kindergarten teachers now face demands from a variety of sources that their pupils should be educated for “life-long learning”, “self-development” and for “willingness to experiment and explore” (Education Commission 1999b: 5). Therefore, a major issue concerns the ways in which kindergarten teachers advance their professional development to meet the challenge of the “new culture” (Education Commission 1999b: 1). The model of teacher development suggests that the advancement to a higher level of proficiency will depend very much on teachers' cognitive capability.

Chapter Four discusses the methodology of study. An ethnographic approach is used to study the work of teaching and the cognitive state of the teachers. Classroom observation and interviews are used for data collection. It is possible by these means to assess the degree to which an individual, functioning within an early childhood setting, possesses the underlying qualities of an effective teacher (Peters 1984, in Spodek ed. 1984:98). The assumption is that these qualities will be reflected in observable behavior. Classroom observation records teachers' behavior inside the classroom. Moreover, teachers enter the classroom with personal beliefs about teaching. They construct images of ‘the good teacher’ and compare these with images of themselves as teachers. It appears that practitioners are influenced by the pressure of several different interpretations of the role and nature of education in the early years. For example, the social expectation of a good teacher perceived by kindergarten teachers affects teachers' behaviour inside the classroom. Interviews of teachers should help to tap teachers' perception of teaching and the role of teacher and relate these to the various local contexts in which Hong Kong

teachers have to operate.

Chapter Five presents the general views of teachers over teaching and learning. Kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong may find themselves in the midst of a triangle of potentially conflicting expectations and orientations. At the macro level, cultural norms are predominantly Chinese; at the professional level, kindergarten staff with in-service training experience have been influenced by western philosophies of child-centred learning; and at the local level, parent expectations are largely oriented towards academic achievement. The extent to which kindergarten teachers recognise these pressures affects practice. The general views of teachers thus provide data for analysing factors affecting current practice. In Chapter Six, the general pattern of classroom organization of classroom of the nine teachers observed in this study is portrayed. It appears that curriculum arrangement indicate whether the concerns of teachers focus on the task or the child. Classroom rules, for example, are seen to reflect whether teachers are primarily managing behaviour or learning. All these observations provide insights into the role as early childhood educators and their effectiveness as teachers. Chapter Seven concentrates on the pupil-teacher interactions observed inside the classroom. The questioning style of teachers, the relationship with children and children's involvement in learning are the major focus in this chapter. This chapter continues the previous themes, exploring the concerns of teachers and the roles assumed by teachers. The extent to which the vision of ECE (child-centred learning), the ideology of child development (children should be left to discover things for themselves), and western influence of learning (scaffolding, assistant learning) is put into practice will be considered.

Chapter Eight provides a summary of the findings. The extent to which the characteristics of the teachers studied seemed to match the characteristics of teachers in the various stage models of teacher development is considered.

Chapter Nine presents the interwoven factors influencing the practice of the teachers studied. As in other research, teachers in this study tended to explain their performance by the presence of external pressures, such as the perceived demands from the imposed curriculum. The role of teacher education, cognitive development of teachers and collaborative school culture are discussed. It will be suggested that a cognitive dissonance is needed to move practitioners to a higher level of competence. It will be argued that challenge to their prior beliefs on teaching and learning, to bring about internal change, is, the key to their future professional development. Teachers need to realise that maintaining a well disciplined class may not in itself be sufficient to earn recognition as a competent practitioner. Teachers are expected to combine subject knowledge with the appropriate teaching skills, pedagogical-content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Therefore, the conceptions held by teachers of competence, expertise, learning, teaching and assessment will need to be challenged and reconstructed. The culture of teaching and perceptions of how teachers change their practice needs to be reconstructed to allow the professional development of teachers to extend beyond its present stage.

This study may not be able to tap the implicit belief of teachers because general questions were asked during interviews. More interviewing and classroom observation of these teachers are needed if we are to look at the belief influencing teachers' action. This research aimed to find out the initial levels of reflection of teachers and their perception of their roles by gathering the general opinions of teaching and learning of the sample of teachers studied. The characteristics of classroom organization, pupil-teacher interaction and classroom management inside kindergartens have been analysed in an attempt to understand the various stages of development of teachers. In this way it is hoped that the findings can make a contribution to the current debates about teacher effectiveness and teacher expertise.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Preschool education is a worldwide phenomenon; although it manifests itself in a variety of forms (Abbott 1999: 1). It varies in terms of provision, aims, curriculum content both in practice and in teacher education (David 1993: 154-161). Different cultural and economic contexts shape early childhood education in different countries. In Asian countries, economic prosperity creates plentiful opportunities for upward social mobility so that early childhood education provides an early start in schooling and intellectual development, and thus equips the younger generation to be a more competitive force in the economic arena. In Western countries, the Piagetian emphasis on learning through doing which instigated activity-based learning methods in the UK and other countries (Moyle 1997b: 24) has resulted in early childhood educators' focusing on children's active engagement in abstracting meaning from play (Edwards and Knight 1994: 35-36), their environment and their interaction with others.

Besides differences across cultures, controversy can be found within early childhood philosophy and is reflected in the curriculum. A majority of practitioners rated 'knowledge of child development' as the most influential factor in their professional development (Blenkin and Kelly 1997: 23-24). Yet, even this apparent consensus cannot avoid the diversity of ways of conceptualizing aims for the education of under-8s. It appears that practitioners have been influenced by the pressure of several different interpretations of the role and nature of education in the early years. Moreover, there are different ways to interpret these developmental approaches. While some educators have tended towards fostering children's development in social, emotional, physical, linguistic and intellectual terms and have defined their curriculum accordingly, others have been working towards seeing child and practitioners as partners in learning by constructing understanding

together (Edwards and Knight 1994: 32). Others may see children as needing firm control and a thorough grounding in the basics of subjects they will encounter in later secondary school years, or have defined developmentally appropriate provision as giving equal access (through a focus on children's own linguistic and cultural diversity) as the starting-point for their learning (Blenkin and Kelly 1997:48). Therefore, the role of the early years teacher is not universally agreed.

2.2 DIFFERENT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PRACTICES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

2.2.1 Preschool Education in Japan

Currently nine years of education are compulsory in Japan. Children enter school when they are 6 years old, with more than 90% of the children having attended at least 2 years of pre-elementary education (Japanese National Committee, 1998:1).

The latest report (1987) of the National Council on Educational Reform states that the most important objectives of education for the 21 century are: 1. The development of broad-mindedness, a healthy body and creativity in individuals, 2. The rearing of the spirit of freedom, self-reliance and public awareness, and 3. Educating the Japanese individual to live in the global human society (School of Education 1999: 96). The aims of early education, as stated in the National Guidelines (Japanese National Committee, 1998:5), are mastering basic living habits (for 3 year-olds) and developing independence and confidence (for 4 to 6 year-olds). Recent studies of Shigaki 1983, Hendry 1986, and Tobin 1987 indicate that Japanese parents and teachers of preschool children consider learning to function as a member of the group to be the primary goal of preschool education (Kotloff 1996, in Rohlen and LeTendre 1996:100).

According to one commentator, a preschool principal in Japan, “children’s lives have become so narrow. Most of our children live in apartments, with just their parents, who tend to overindulge them and make things too easy for them” (Tobin *et al.*, 1989:59). Some of the reasons for this situation are: the increasing nuclearization of the family brought on by a shrinking birthrate and the rise of the middle-class salaried employee life-style (Japanese National Committee, 1998: 6). These changes have led Japanese parents to believe that preschools offer their children their best chance of learning to function in a large group and of becoming, in Japanese terms, truly human (Tobin *et al.*, 1989: 39). In kindergartens, teachers employ a strategy of nonintervention to promote the development of social control and group solidarity (Tobin *et al.*, 1989: 28 and 32). The teacher allows the children to play freely without adult supervision to give them a chance to learn how to function as members of a group. The class size is big with 25-30 children in one class with one teacher. Tobin has argued that this strategy is used to keep teachers from becoming too mother-like in their interactions with students (Tobin *et al.*, 1989: 62).

2.2.2 Preschool Education in China

The Chinese cultural traditions reflecting Confucian beliefs on the role of effort, the importance of an individual’s striving and working hard, and according to Reynolds and Farrell (1996: 54) the use of the educational system as a planned instrument of nation building inform the role of schooling. Parents have high aspirations for their children, especially in urban areas, where parents have high expectations for their children’s academic success in higher education. Early years education offers a good start academically, and is viewed as a route for children’s upward social mobility.

The time spent in schools varies. Chinese parents who work days send their children to full-day pre-schools. Parents who work at night, or who work far from their homes, either get help from relatives or place their children in boarding programs. Three-quarters of

children (three to six years old) are day students who attend school from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. from Monday through Saturday. One-quarter of preschool children are boarding students, who go home only on Wednesday evenings and weekends (Tobin et al., 1989: 72).

"The prevalent (Chinese) belief is that all children are able to acquire certain core skills in core subjects, and that there is no need for a 'trailing edge' of low performing pupils. This contrasts with the experience in Western societies of the normal distribution, with an elongated tail and 'built in' failure of fifty per cent of the distribution to acquire more than the average level of skill" (Reynolds and Farrell, 1996: 54).

Reynolds and Farrell (ibid: 55) found education in the Pacific Rim concentrated on a small number of attainable goals; mainly of an academic variety or concerned with the relationship to society, rather than a spread of effort across many academic, social or affective goals in the curriculum. Similar ideology prevails in the field of early year education in China. However, there is strong emphasis on music and dance in the Chinese preschool curriculum for a child's ability to sing and dance is seen as an indication of intelligence and potential in other cognitive domains (Tobin et al., 1989: 96-97). Furthermore, preschool teachers tend to value structured time. One preschool educator interviewed by Tobin (1989: 94) said 'A preschool teacher should never waste time. Unstructured time leads to trouble. We do not have much of the kind of 'free time' in our school ... because we believe it is important for teachers to organize their students' time to govern the class so children do not have a chance to become wild or aimless.'

According to Chinese Confucian theories of "child development", children are not born knowing how to behave correctly. Teachers bear the responsibility of teaching students self-restraint and correct behaviour. Disciplining children begins in preschools. The old saying 'three years old determines life till the eighty' is a general belief. The single child

policy has been implemented in China for over twenty years (Croll et al., 1985) so that the upbringing of this single child has become a social issue and concern particularly in the last decade. There is now great concern about spoiling the child. The Chinese look for the triple function of preschool, as giving children a good start academically while socializing them away from being spoiled and encouraging good citizenship. This explains the emphasis placed on order (e.g. structured activities) and regimentation (e.g. not to let children get out of control) in schools.

2.2.3 Preschool Education in Europe

‘There is a good deal of variability in the types of public preschool programs offered in Europe. Programs can differ according to the ages of children served, the length of time programs are in operation, the size of the group, teacher-child ratio, amount of teacher training, the degree of subsidization, and administrative affiliation’ (Lubeck, 1991)

‘Typically children enter at age three, although France and the United Kingdom begin full-time care at age two and Belgium and Sweden, at age two years, six months. In the USSR and in the Netherlands children enter when they are four’ (Anning and Edwards 1999:13, see also Lubeck 1991: 244). In Denmark, there is a long-standing tradition of promoting funding to maintain high-quality services for young children (Anning and Edwards 1999:13). Since female labour force participation rates have generally been high in Europe and most women work full time (Anning and Edwards 1999: 11), extrafamilial care is necessary to accommodate parents’ needs over extended periods. ‘Most programs are therefore in operation full time, running from 10 to 13 hours each day’ (Lubeck 1991). Projects attempting to rethink the role of early childhood have taken place in Europe, with the lead taken in many respects by Scandinavia (Dahlberg et al., 1999: 48).

‘In England, the Department of Health (DH) is responsible for child care of children under

the age of three. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) then takes responsibility for children of 3-8 in maintained education settings. This demarcation was based on the assumption that it was not appropriate for children under the age of three to take part in group settings for educational provision' (Blenkin and Kelly 1997: 30). There has been an increase in the proportion of children of three in nursery schools and classes and this has caused playgroups (preschools) to admit increasing numbers of children as young as two, in order to compensate for the loss of older children. Further, there is the trend whereby children are being removed from nurseries at the age of two in order to begin a formal education program in private schools. Research by Barrett (1986, quoted in Blenkin and Kelly 1997) shows the stressful impact on small children when required to conform to formal ways of learning. It appears that 'not all authorities have a clear view of the desirable structure of the school curriculum, especially the core elements.' (Anning, 1997: 7)

Psychological theory, particularly that of Rousseau, Pestolozzi, Froebel, Dewey and Piaget on the development of the child, linking physical growth and maturation to 'ages and stages' of learning, also provides powerful reasons why childhood should be accorded respect (School of Education 1999: 31). 'After the First World War, there was a determination to enable children to be themselves and to develop as autonomous individuals' (Lofthouse 1997: 177-8). A number of influential reports supported this approach. For example the Hadow Report of 1931 declared, 'The curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored' (Lofthouse 1994:128). From 1931, the term 'child centred' education gradually began to gain currency, an approach achieving its high water mark when endorsed by the Plowden Report (1967) (School of Education 1999: 31).

However, Simon (1989: 381-382) describes 'child-centre approaches in England as a

revolution that never really has happened. In substantiating his point, he tellingly makes the case that there is no pedagogy in England'. Research by Jowett and Sylva (1986), and Osborn and Millbank (1987) showed that there was considerable variation in the provision and outcomes of pre-school education (Sylva and Wiltshire 1993: 24). Though the Plowden Report marked a great upsurge of confidence in the child centred approach to education defined by Hadow in the 1930s (Anning, 1997: 5), the research by Blenkin (Blenkin and Kelly 1997: 15) revealed that there was a low level of use of outdoors facilities. Practitioners did not find learning outdoors was an important factor in the provision of an appropriate curriculum for young children, which may indicate a traditional, 'academic' concept of curriculum concerned mainly with quiet, indoor learning (Blenkin and Kelly 1997: 22).

In recent years, the development of criteria for 'effective' education under five has been based on the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Schooling (SCAA 1996, quoted in Blenkin and Kelly 1997: 35). Nevertheless, the debate around an appropriate curriculum for young children continues. The 'Desirable Outcomes for Young Children's Learning', in England, seen as a preparation for National Curriculum at five, have been recently reviewed following consultation and will now re-appear, with sadly little changed according to Abbott (1999). Early Goals are to be achieved by children at the end of the Reception Year, which for many children will mean when they are only just five.

Furthermore, the introduction of criteria for education between 5 and 8 are based on children's attainment in preset targets. This has generated a form of curriculum, which is very different from previous forms favoured by the practitioners themselves. According to Blenkin and colleagues, 'A child who is confident, independent, socially well integrated, has a good general knowledge and good physical co-ordination is far more important in the

under-8s than a child who can speak French', (Blenkin and Kelly 1997: 57). Thus, performance across predetermined and specific categories has replaced criteria that focus attention on individual development. There appears to be a gap between vision and practice in the field of early education.

2.2.4 Preschool Education in U.S.A.

Early childhood education has emerged as a major area of endeavour as the number of women in the workforce has escalated. There have been increasing efforts to provide public support so that both women and men can reconcile dual work and family responsibilities (Lubeck 1991: 235). American parents send their children to preschool because of the demands of their work and because they want the children to have fun, make friends, and learn (Tobin et al., 1989:154). Early childhood education refers to 'services for children from birth through age eight in part-day and full-day group programs in centers, homes, and institutions; kindergartens and primary schools; and recreational programs' (NAEYC 1982, quoted in Seefeldt and Barbour 1998: 13)

The field continues to grow. In 1915, only 12 percent of children of 5 or younger attended an early childhood program, but by 1993, 71.5 percent of all children in first or second grade attended a child-care center or nursery school program before starting first grade and 95 percent of all five-year-olds are enrolled in kindergarten programs (U.S. Department of Education 1995, quoted in Seefeldt and Barbour 1998).

'Americans hold some truths about preschools to be self-evident, and some rights of preschool children, parents, and teachers to be inalienable. Preschools should promote life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They should teach children to exercise their right of free speech' (Tobin et al., 1989:137). The ideal is to encourage children to use words to express their positive feelings as well as to resolve disputes, and encourage children to

verbalize their wants and needs. 'The aim is to help children become uniquely themselves, fully individuated, and self-actualized, but not to help children feel identified with each other, aware of their basic sameness, equality, and shared destiny. Parents want their children to be high-spirited, independent, curious, and imaginative, but also well mannered, well socialized, and cooperative' (Tobin et al., 1989:147). Adding to this, there are recently serious concerns regarding quality deterioration and equity across family income in the country.

Data indicate that the quality of early care and education in the United States has seriously deteriorated over the past fifteen years ... Children without access to either government or business subsidies and without a high family income are at particular risk of being in low-quality programs. (Kagan et al., 1996:3-4, quotation in Dahlberg et al., 1999).

Despite a general common expectation about early education, government subsidies for programmes and family income tend to decide the quality of programmes offered and received. Programmes and quality of early childhood education may differ in centres, homes and institutions catering for the growing needs of parents. There is variation in early education within the country itself.

2.2.5 Summing up

To sum up, in England, education aims at "Early Years Goals" for children's learning. In U.S.A., preschool is to promote life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (in line with the spirit of the American Constitution). In Japan, teaching tends to be group-oriented, which means peer-group-oriented; the less involved the teacher is perceived to be, the stronger the horizontal ties that form and bind the group together. Chinese teachers emphasize order and the value of children's early academic experience. Preschool education, on one hand, reflects the perception of child development, learning and the role of education in these countries. On the other hand, it reflects the cultural traditions of these countries: a high

value is placed upon learning and education in Asian countries, and a high regard for individuality in Western countries. Preschools are expected to offer institutional solutions to social issues, and are seen as an effective means to address social needs. Moreover, there are variations in the delivery and perception of early childhood practice across and within countries, despite the fact that most educators seem to talk the same language of early childhood, that is, promoting development, ensuring readiness to learn, models and programs, quality and so on, (see Dahlberg et al., 1999), which denotes the vision and philosophy of early childhood education.

2.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

The vision of early childhood education implies a high demand on teacher as the role of a teacher is perceived as a facilitator. However, there is a gap between theory and practice in the curriculum of early childhood education.

2.3.1 The theoretical frame on teaching and learning

In the West, industrialism brought about a reaction that sought to retain the feelings and emotions resulting from close contact with natural surroundings. In *Emile*, Rousseau captured the imagination of Europe with his validation of nature, which espoused the natural goodness of children (James and Prout, 1997: 36). The ‘natural’ child then met influences of Romanticism. ‘Childhood was not seen as a preparation for what was to come, but as the source of ‘innocence’, a quality that has to be kept alive in adulthood in order to provide nourishment for the whole life’ (James and Prout, 1997: 37). The romantic ideal of childhood was portrayed as being fundamentally different from adulthood; different, that is, in the sense of having its own nature and not simply being an immature condition. It gave rise to what became known as the Child Study Movement (James and Prout, 1997:47). There was a growing interest in how children developed. Child study led to what Blyth (1989) termed the ‘developmental tradition’ in primary education, giving

rise to various stage theories of learning, and culminating in child-centred approaches (quoted in Galton 1997: 105).

The Froebelian approach was based fundamentally on the notion that the child's inborn characteristics must be allowed to flower, and that the school's function is, 'to make the inner outer' (Bowen 1903, quoted in Galton et al., 1980: 37). Froebel advocated spontaneous play as the highest level of child development and had an almost mystical belief in the value of spontaneous play (Anning 1997: 10) calling it 'the highest level of child development' (Froebel 1826: para 30, quotation in Anning 1997: 10). Susan Issacs argued that children have the same mechanisms of thought as adults do 'They know less than adults and have less developed minds than adults; but they do not understand the world in fundamentally different ways from adults' (Wooldridge, 1995:121, quotation in Hendrick 1997: 52). Issacs put forward the view that the importance of leaving the child free to choose its own form of expression was usually the best course (Rose 1985:189, quoted in Hendrick 1997:52). Only in this way could the child's ego be free 'for the possibility of real development – in skill and understanding, and stable social relations' (Wooldridge 1995, quoted in Hendrick 1997: 53). The school's role was to provide optimum conditions for such development (Bowen 1903, quoted in Galton et al., 1980). Moreover, the teacher should relate to a child as an individual, and provide materials suitable to the expression of young thinking and feeling (Spodek ed. 1984: 28). Some (Holt 1991, quoted in Moyles 1997b: 14) claimed that real learning was not the result of teaching but the product of working things out for oneself. Further constructivism which lies at the heart of this approach, eschews the socially constructed nature of knowledge, and its rules of reason inscribed in a fixed world of school subjects that children internalize through flexible strategies of problem solving (Popkewitz 1993, quoted in Dahlberg et al., 1999: 55). Successful problem solving requires not only appropriate strategies, but also positive attitudes both towards the problem and towards oneself as a problem solver. This raises the

issue of exactly what kinds of positive attitudes teachers should try to encourage, and what sorts of negative attitudes they should be aware of as potentially damaging.

Most psychologists recognise that the successful learner is an active participant in a learning relationship with others, including teachers. In this view, successful learning partly depends on the negotiated relationship between child and teacher, (and it is definitely not an easy option for the later!). It is crucial that teachers are knowledgeable about what they teach but also sensitive to the children's starting points in setting out to learn (Blenkin and Kelly 1994, quoted in Moyles 1997b: 22). Further, one of the hallmarks of a master teacher is the ability to recognize and repair student misunderstandings and misconceptions which is a difficult undertaking. It is reasonable for a teacher to ask where one is supposed to get the time to have these one-to-one dialogues with thirty plus children (in some Asian countries) or even less than twenty (in some Western countries) children in a class?

Many learning theories such as those of Froebel, Montessori, Issacs, Steiner, Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner, are based upon the notion that children learn to make sense of the world by building up concepts through interaction with the environment (Moyles 1997b: 9). The child is viewed as active and flexible, and from this perspective, the pedagogue (teacher) is expected to start from the child's everyday understanding and construction of the surrounding world (Dahlberg et al., 1999:55). The importance of the teacher understanding concept development and schema is emphasised. Active learning has been acknowledged as crucial to the cognitive and other developmental processes of children (Moyles 1997b: 14). A child learns through making his or her own physical and mental connections with the world, through exploration, social experiences and the actively seeking meanings from experiences.

The purpose of education is to help the child achieve higher levels of development through interactions with his/her physical and social environments.

This is understood to be a learning process not only for the child but also for the pedagogue, if he or she is able to encounter the child's ideas, theories and hypothesis with respect, curiosity and wonder.” (Dahlberg et al., 1999: 55).

Children's developmental levels are assessed and then children are provided with appropriate experiences to create cognitive dissonance, which helps them move on to higher levels of development. In addition, the program may be constructed so that activities that are more appropriate are provided to help children grasp the knowledge required of them. This idea of education has been built on the principle that kindergarten teachers are child development specialists.

2.3.2 The implications of Child Development Theories for the role of a teacher

The philosophy set out in the previous paragraphs has implications for the role of a teacher. According to Anning (1997:12),

‘The role of the teacher was simply to set up the child-centred learning environment and to observe the children's progress ... the teacher is to guide the child without letting him feel her presence too much, so that she may be always ready to supply the desired help, but may never be the obstacle between the child and his experience.’

It is not easy for teachers to achieve the ideals of early childhood education philosophy in practice, particularly in situations where ‘child-centred’ education and individualised learning are either pragmatically or culturally inappropriate or unrealisable. While many educators may see themselves as providing opportunities for children to be actively engaged in their learning, how far this is a reality will depend upon the interpretation and evaluation of these beliefs in practice. (Moyle, 1997b: 17-21). According to the theory,

“play is upheld for the processes of play providing a valuable means of allowing children to learn through their own mistakes; learning without psychological stress. If teachers in schools accept only ‘right’ answers, mistakes are not something to be learned from but are treated as a sign of ‘failure’.

Children will get the feeling that only someone outside of themselves can provide the answer, rather than the answer coming from within the children's own intellect and experiences" (ibid: 17).

Psychological theories over the past few decades have suggested strongly that children's learning occurs more effectively in the context of trial-and-error opportunities (Edwards and Knight, 1994: 35), where fear of failure is replaced with open-ended challenges which are under control and direction of the child (Moyle 1997b: 17). This means that a teacher has to understand exactly what level (stage of development) each child is capable of achieving, with his or her support. The role of the teacher is to be ready to supply the desired help but not to be an obstacle between the child and his/her experience (Anning 1997). Thus, the role of teacher as a facilitator is emphasised.

Children should be empowered to learn, and, play is viewed as a desirable setting of a child-centred learning environment. From the Freudian view, play provides a safe opportunity for children to come to terms with their wishes and anxieties.

"To Bruner, play provides an excellent opportunity to try combinations of behaviour that creates no functional pressure. Montessori's curriculum provided carefully structured opportunities for the mastery of physical skills. The work of Jean Piaget, a developmental psychologist, and B.F. Skinner, a learning psychologist, served as the inspiration for many of the teaching approaches" (Spodek and Saracho, 1991: 11).

High Scope provides a contemporary example of a teaching approach that stresses the need for each child to be directly involved in planning his or her own activities, negotiated with an adult, by a method known as 'Plan-Do-Review'. What all these approaches have in common is that they portray the teacher as a facilitator of children's learning, rather than as the source of the knowledge to be transmitted. In turn, this means that teachers must be willing to reflect on their own practice. What is certainly not implied is a parody of 'child-centred' education, in which children are left to their own devices to learn what they like as

best, as they can. In fact, the teacher's role becomes a complex one involving what Rogoff (1989) calls 'guided participation' (see Hargreaves and Hargreaves 1997:13), combining support and challenge in constructing the learning relationship.

Such beliefs place considerable responsibility upon the teacher.

The challenge is to provide a space where new possibilities can be explored and realized through enlarging the reflexive and critical ways of knowing, through construction rather than reproduction of knowledge, through enabling children to work creatively to realize the possibilities and handle anxiety. (Dahlberg et al., 1999)

The teacher is the decision-maker. It is the teacher who decides what materials to provide, how to arrange the environment, and the direction and focus of lessons, based on knowledge of the children, the community in which they live, the subject matter (Seefeldt and Barbour 1998). The goal is internalization of learning.

2.3.3 Curriculum Hybridisation – The Practical Outcome

There is little consensus on the goals of early education programs (see Abbott 1999) and the early childhood education vision does not stipulate a specific pedagogy. Philosophy and beliefs may be translated into curricular practices in different cultural settings. Learning experiences consist of areas such as early literacy; early mathematics and science; music, art, and movement; social skills and routine training (Edwards and Knight, 1994:46). However, diversity may occur. In western countries, like the U.S.A. (Tobin et al., 1989), early literacy may mean self-expression through language. Early mathematics is numeracy, concepts of space, time, distance and so on. Music, art and movement are to enhance self-expression and promote creativity. In China (Tobin et al., 1989) and Hong Kong (Oppen, 1996), early literacy may mean writing and reciting of rhymes and poems. Early mathematics is addition and subtraction. In China, music and movement may mean correct rhythm of dance. There appears to be problems involved in translating from one

language to another without imposing meanings in the attempt to make one language to fit with the other (Dahlberg et al., 1999).

Globally, there is no uniformity and consensus in thought and practice in ECE. There are accepted ideas such as child centred approaches, problem solving skills/creativity, integrated learning experiences/meaningful learning, learning through play, children working out things for themselves, teacher as facilitator, but no explicit pedagogy to match these aims. When philosophy lacks the back up of pedagogy and is hanging in the air, preschool education is reduced to serving the needs of the society, the economic, social and political development of the broader community and not the child. As Kliebard (1986, quoted by Galton 1997: 106) notes in his study of *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, ideas, as they trickle down into the classroom, rarely retain their pure form. Partly because teachers often ‘bolt’ innovation on to existing practice, and partly because many classroom decisions are driven by pragmatism rather than theory, as a ‘coping’ response to immediate problems, new sets of ideas tend to get mixed up with existing ones. Kliebard (ibid) refers to this mixing process as one of hybridisation, which frequently results in their being a gap between ‘rhetoric’ and ‘reality’. Those teachers claiming to believe in experiential learning as part of a child-centred philosophy, nevertheless often spend considerable amounts of time teaching didactically, although in a classroom environment which emphasises individual learning (Galton 1989). Curriculum hybridisation, therefore, serves to reinforce the common public culture of teaching, since the outwardly shared set of beliefs, often perceived as self-evident truths, creates a barrier which prevents too close an inspection of the disjunction between an individual teacher’s aims and their practice (Galton 1997: 106).

2.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to generally accepted theories of child development, children are required to

construct new learning. Moreover, learning theories inform the process of scaffolding, metacognition and internalization in learning. ‘The zone of proximal development’ (ZPD), is one which strongly emphasises the role of teachers in the learning relationship (Edwards and Knight 1994: 32), and a similar notion is implied in Bruner’s equally well-known notion of ‘scaffolding’ (Bruner and Haste 1987). It makes high cognitive demands on preschool teachers, since scaffolding subject knowledge may be easier than scaffolding generalist knowledge. If teachers tend to practise the perceived views of culturally appropriate roles, especially in countries where the vision of early childhood education is blurred, it may be an obstacle to their effectiveness.

There is the lack of any coherent theory of pedagogy, in the sense used by Gage (1981, quoted in Galton 1989: 97) to describe a science of the art of teaching. In particular, Eisenhart et al. (1991) argues there is no expectation of progression or development within pedagogy, if ‘there are no theories of how teachers learn to teach more effectively’ (also quoted in Galton 1997:111).

“There is a tradition that student teachers model their method on a more experienced classroom teacher’s practice when acquiring basic teaching skills. If they find themselves with problems, they may modify these procedures by taking advice from other teachers, but otherwise, with minor modifications, they stick with the system that works.” (Galton 1997: 111).

Patterns of practice depend heavily on the perceived views of teaching in the professional culture. At present, different countries or cultures appeared to practise culturally appropriate practices (practice in accordance to socio-cultural context). Kindergarten teachers, for example in Hong Kong, may find themselves caught between the currents of child-centred progressivism and utilitarian demands to teach the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

Is culturally appropriate practice a justification or a driving force of current practice? We may need to examine the local context and review the theoretical conception of teacher effectiveness in order to understand practice and teacher development in a country. The next chapter attempts to do this in respect of Hong Kong.

CHAPTER THREE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong are blamed for not putting early childhood education theory into practice, and their competence is challenged. Cultural context and teacher qualifications appear to be the scapegoat for the phenomenon. In Hong Kong, the Chinese make up more than 90% of the population. The existence of conventional Chinese cultural influence, both implicitly and explicitly, cannot be denied. Order and regimentation, 'quan' (Tobin et al., 1989: 93), are upheld unconsciously or consciously by teachers and schools. Both Confucius and Mencius emphasize that character is shaped by experience. Teachers, including early childhood teachers, bear the responsibility of teaching students self-restraint and correct behaviour. Moreover, western influence, the impact of an idealised vision of Early Childhood philosophy, can dominate when kindergarten teachers receive in-service training. Teachers may be fascinated by terms such as creativity, play, free choices and internalization of learning. Locally, giving children a good and early start academically is the prevailing expectation from the growing percentage of middle class parents. On one hand, The Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum (CDI, 1996) emphasizes that provision should be made for reading, writing and arithmetic (the essentials of the traditional objectives-academic start for young children). On the other hand, its advocacy on play and activities reflects the outlook of the "new", child-centred, "progressive" approach to pre-primary education. No matter to what extent western philosophy, Chinese culture and local demand are influencing both theory and practice of kindergartens; it will not be easy for kindergarten teachers to cope with the "triple task". There were no pre-service early childhood education programmes before 1998. Now there is a need to clarify the ideas, theories and concepts that guide the teacher education programmes being offered. The remainder of this chapter examines some of the components that might contribute to the theoretical framework and set the parameters of this present study.

3.2 KINDERGARTENS AND TEACHERS IN HONG KONG

3.2.1 Kindergartens

In Hong Kong, up to 95% of children receive early childhood education (Education Commission 1999b: 1). Children start kindergarten when they are three years old - a very young age by international standards. According to Lubeck (1991), the changes in work and family life have created an increased demand for childcare services. In Hong Kong it is the growth of the educated and wealthy middle class that contributes to an increased awareness of the need for early childhood education. Education brings changes. On one hand, equal opportunities of education results in more women going into the work force. On the other hand, the educated new generation is more concerned about an early academic start and future career success of their offsprings. The economy is another important factor. The median annual income for families in Hong Kong has increased over the past twenty years. Families have more income today compared with the past twenty years because there are many more dual incomes (Education Commission 1999a: 9). Therefore, it becomes more affordable for parents to send children to kindergartens. Increasing numbers of middle class parents send children to kindergartens and the competence of kindergarten teachers now attracts great concern.

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There are two types of regular daily early education and care programmes in existence in Hong Kong: kindergartens and day nurseries. They are covered by separate government ordinances. Kindergartens (approximately seven hundred and fifty) are governed by the Education Department, while day nurseries are under the social welfare department. Each child from the age of three onwards attends a group education and care setting for part of each weekday. For 85% of children, this setting will be a kindergarten where children attend a half-day programme, from Monday to Friday. The remaining 15% attend day nurseries, which usually offer full-day programme (Oppen 1996). The three age groups: 3

years to 4 years, 4 years to 5 years, 5 years to 6 years, are found in three educational levels in kindergartens: nursery (K1), lower kindergarten (K2) and upper kindergarten (K3) classes respectively, and in the corresponding classes for the three age groups in day nurseries. Most kindergartens in Hong Kong are non-government subsidized (Oppen, 1996), privately run, while nurseries are government subsidized. Staff and administrative costs have to be covered by the income generated by school fees, but despite that, 455 non-profit making kindergartens are eligible for rent and rates reimbursement from the government (Rao and Koong 1999: 1 and 6)

3.2.2 Teacher Qualification

There are over nine thousand kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong. In 1981, initial training was introduced to serving kindergarten teachers through in-service education courses, as they had no pre-service training before they began teaching.

- Since 1996, there have been rules governing the entry qualifications (two passes in the Certificate Examination) of new kindergarten teachers. Before 1996, the minimum educational qualification of kindergarten teachers was Form Three.
- Pre-service training for kindergarten teachers was introduced in September 1998. It was a three-year (1998-2001) full-time course.
- In-service training for kindergarten teachers was introduced from 1980 onwards. The initial training consists of a 16-week part-time evening course (Qualified Assistant Kindergarten Teacher Education Course, QAKT). This is the title of the qualification for kindergarten teachers who do not have two passes in the Certificate Examination. A parallel course (Qualified Kindergarten Teacher Education Course, QKT) was conducted for kindergarten teachers with two passes in their Certificate Examination (Form Five Public Examination). In 1995, the Qualified Kindergarten Teacher Education Course - Conversion (QKT Conversion Course) was introduced for QAKT

holders which included a five-week summer block and a one-year part-time evening course. It should be noted that teachers acquiring or even before acquiring the QAKT are regular kindergarten teachers, some of them practically taking charge of kindergarten classes on their own.

- Starting from 1995, a Certificate course (CE) for kindergarten administrators (principals/head teachers) with QKT qualifications was introduced. The majority (estimated at over 90%) of trained kindergarten teachers (60% of the population) are QAKT and QKT holders. In 1999, around ninety more students were enrolled into the CE course and kindergarten teachers are encouraged to study the CE course.
- Kindergarten principals are mostly Qualified Kindergarten Teacher Education (QKT) qualification holders, and it was estimated that in July 1999 around 300 of them was Certificate of Kindergarten Teacher Education (CE, KG) holders. They were kindergarten teachers before they were promoted to the position and are responsible for the administrative work of kindergartens.

New teachers may be absorbed into the culture of schools (Kagan 1992: 144). However, new ideas were and are brought back to schools. After twenty years, the activities approach to teaching and developmentally appropriate practice are widely talked about in the field of early childhood education.

3.2.3 Curriculum and Programme

While undergoing in-service training, head-teachers and a large number of teachers (approximately nine hundred annually) are introduced to the predominantly ‘child-centred’ philosophy and theories of child development. However, understanding of this philosophy appears to be superficial and remains only as philosophy. It does not describe ‘best practice’ in early childhood education. Some kindergartens may claim to adopt the Montessori Curriculum Model, others may claim to introduce a Project Approach. In

practice, the models and approaches may make little difference in some of the kindergartens when they are used as the means of transmitting knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics. The subject focus of the kindergarten curriculum becomes a tension/obstacle for putting theory into practice in Hong Kong. This has resulted in an ‘implementation gap’ identified by Becher (see Ryan and Bush, 1995).

Moreover, there is wide diversity among the curriculum models in the field of Early Childhood Education. As noted in Chapter Two, worldwide there is no agreement about programme methods, goals, or objectives. In addition, programme implementation is inadequate, and there can be great variations in outcomes among the various sites where each programme model is implemented. Despite the pervasiveness of educational innovation (Education Commission 1999a), most forms of education experimentation remain tied to achieving established education objectives. New methods are sometimes viewed as alternative ways of achieving traditionally defined goals.

Since kindergartens in Hong Kong are non-government-subsidized institutions, there is little regulation of their curricula. The Guide to Pre-Primary Curriculum (CDI, 1996) stipulates the ideology of child development and the practice of thematic teaching. Kindergartens claim that they organize contexts for children’s learning across subject boundaries through themes and topics that reflect the cohesiveness that children bring to their learning and meet the demands of the “curriculum”. In other words, kindergarten teachers recognize subject divisions in their planning and recording, but offer children relevant, holistic experiences through thematic work, to help them transfer understandings. In practice, however, it is likely that strong emphasis is placed on work in the subjects to maintain standards in the basics. Carrying out learning activities in an orderly manner is spelled out in the Guide to Pre-Primary Curriculum (CDI, 1996: 51). Discipline may be given high regard in the daily practice.

The success of kindergartens is reflected in their growing popularity in terms of the number of pupils enrolled every year. Thus there is an increasing concern to develop a curriculum that is accountable to parents to whom worthwhile curriculum may mean an effective transition to primary education. Curriculum is important since the construct of quality of instruction complements active learning time by emphasizing the quality of the teaching and learning. These, in turn, are themselves important for bringing about the desired education outcomes. When kindergartens are unable to modify or resist external pressures, teachers are left to decide which methods they should use in the classroom to achieve the imposed targets. Teachers will select curricula innovations that they perceive are relevant and deflect those that they do not support (Lofthouse et al 1995) or feel confident about. This may lead to the delivery of learning in an orderly manner as spelled out in the Guide to Pre-Primary Curriculum (CDI 1996: 51) and this will be preferred by teachers rather than child centred approach.

In some contexts, child-centred philosophies have had a great impact on practice by encouraging learning through activity and experience. However, the existence of parents' demands and the Chinese culture, means that the preoccupation of kindergarten teachers concerns knowledge transmission and discipline. Kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong have been criticized for concentrating too much on the teaching of basics such as mathematics and language, and for their inadequacy in not matching other classroom activities to meeting children's developmental needs. Classroom observation on the work of teaching may help to disclose whether child-centred practice exists as myths or represents the reality of kindergartens in Hong Kong. When the curriculum is so demanding, whether teachers will undermine or enhance young children's desire to learn depends on their defining of professional role.

3.3 ISSUES OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As suggested, there are issues of professional development of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong. Previously, teachers were absorbed into the school culture before they were exposed to a vision of early childhood education through in-service teacher education programmes. The entry qualification of teachers was unsatisfactory, and the competence of teachers was challenged. The subject and professional knowledge of kindergarten teachers is of prime importance since teachers need such knowledge to reflect on their practice. Pressure is placed on teacher education courses to equip teachers for this kind of professional development. A collaborative school culture encouraging teaching for understanding (Good and Brophy, 1994) appears not to have been popular and teachers have been blamed for not putting theories into practice.

3.3.1 Subject and pedagogical knowledge

The entry qualifications of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong inform the public's expectation of a teacher's subject knowledge. However, teachers' knowledge and understanding of subject knowledge and its application in the classroom can help promote more effective teaching and learning (Shulman 1987, McNamara 1991, Reynolds 1992). In Britain and U.S.A., policy-makers promote student teachers' knowledge of subjects and their application of subject knowledge in the classroom as an essential element in the reform of teacher training (McNamara 1991:113).

Furthermore “mere content knowledge is likely to be as useless pedagogically as content-free skills in teaching” (Shulman1986). “Content-nonspecific teaching knowledge, such as general class management routines maximizes the amount of time that students spend on learning” while content-specific teaching knowledge, such as explanations keyed to specific student questions, enables the expert teacher to teach effectively (Sternberg and

Horvath 1995: 11). In the context of kindergarten teaching, a major concern has been the extent to which teachers are focusing on the creation of independent, self-managing learners (Moyles 1997b) or passive learners receiving the delivery of learning outcomes as structured in the teachers' agenda. Reynolds (1992:11) asks how can teachers chunk or differentiate the large amount of varied bits of information they face during interactive teaching? A higher level of teacher development is required to cope with these demands.

3.3.2 Teacher Education

Subject knowledge that seeks to clarify misconceptions that are a barrier or hindrance to teaching is important. Moreover, professional/pedagogical knowledge (curriculum management, class organisation and interaction skills) is important in the professional development of a teacher (Shulman 1987). The present education courses for kindergarten teachers tend to cater for both subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. The subject studies in the QKT and CE courses aim at upgrading students to Form Five and Form Six levels respectively. Professional studies focus on curriculum, teaching and learning theories. In-service teachers are expected to make use of what has been learned in their practice during teaching supervision.

However, expert teachers are characterised by deep learning approaches (Blachford 1996), that define expertise in terms of actions chosen or created as the correct or appropriate ones for the situation or circumstances encountered (Carter et al., 1988; Berliner 1992; Galton 1989). The idea of deep learning is central to the concept of expertise. Researches found that experts were sensitive to the deep structures of the problems and novices were more sensitive to surface structure (Sternberg and Horvath 1995: 11). In-service initial teacher education participants surveyed in Hong Kong were found to adopt surface approaches (Lam et al., 1996 see Blachford 1996), involving rote learning theories or quick fix theories in their practice, which is not the way in which experts work. Kindergarten

teachers must participate in in-service teacher education programmes. The quality of teacher education depends on developing teachers' deep structure learning and teaching (Blachford 1996). The ways in which teacher education programme can meet the different needs of teachers and move teachers to a higher level of competence is a very important issue that needs to be resolved.

3.3.3 School Culture

The conditions that make for successful teaching and learning are multiple. Many different conditions or factors operate to determine whether teachers will do well or do badly. Kindergartens in Hong Kong are blamed for operating standardization of work to ensure a smooth day to day operation of the organization and adopting conventional approaches to teaching, teacher-directed instruction and teaching to transmit knowledge. According to Andy Hargreaves (1992), positive school cultures create conditions where teachers can share their own practical knowledge and have independent access to other knowledge from elsewhere. When the culture of schooling is teaching for understanding rather than for knowledge transmission, the development of a comprehensive model of pedagogy is more likely to occur (Galton 1996). Teachers will base their teaching practices on theories they hold about teaching and learning. They express them through curriculum planning - what is to be taught, teaching methods - how it is to be taught and assessment - what are valued as learning outcomes (Blachford 1996). If systematic inquiry becomes a more integral part of the professional culture of teaching, it should encourage and empower teachers to identify and resolve more of their own school-level problems and create points of engagement and understanding in relation to university-generated educational research (Hargreaves, A. 1992). Teachers' professional development can be enhanced if they are to base their practice on systematic inquiry.

To conclude, the issue is: how can kindergarten teachers advance their professional

development? The present position is one of considerable diversity. There is diversity in what is to count as legitimate forms of knowledge about teaching and education (Hargreaves, A. 1992). The main reason for these divergent approaches to the problem of improving teaching according to Eisenhart (Eisenhart et al 1991) is that there are no adequate theories of how teachers learn to teach. Without such a theoretical base, it is difficult to plan a coherent programme of professional development, which move teachers successively through initial training, then induction until finally they become experienced competent teachers.

3.4 THEORETICAL REVIEW OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

3.4.1 Introduction

Effective teaching is essentially concerned with how best to bring about the desired pupil learning by some educational activity (Kyriacou, 1986: 1). Teacher development or professional growth of teachers is concerned with our ways of thinking about effective teaching. The stages of competence of the teacher, or effective teaching, ranges from novice, through beginner, competent, proficient to expert (Berliner 1989, quoted in Berliner, 1992; Galton, 1989). There are developmental characteristics of novices and experts, which distinguish their practice.

Strahan (1990, quoted in Kagan, 1992:147) was able to infer a standard evolutionary pattern among the novices: They began by seeing confirmation of themselves in their roles as teachers; they then sought affirmation of their teacher status from their pupils. Finally, they sought validation of their success as teachers from pupil achievement (Table 3.1). LaBoskey (Kagan, 1992: 146) proposed a continuum of reflectivity: from commonsense thinker (a novice focuses on himself or herself rather than pupils and relies on personal

experience) to pedagogical thinker (the novice’s attention has shifted from self to pupils, means-end thinking is displayed, and knowledge of children and the moral aspects of teaching is demonstrated) (Table 3.1). Berliner (1992) suggested that novices start to put emphasis on task, outcomes and then move on to emphasise the learning process and children’s needs. Galton (1996) identified it as the process of ‘thinking self then task then child’ (Table 3.1). The final stage of the process occurs when teachers begin to think about the impact of the innovation on pupil’s learning and are prepared to adapt and modify the programs in the best interest of the child rather than themselves. The process of professional development therefore involves changes in the perceptions of teaching and learning.

TABLE 3.1 The process/continuum of professional development

An evolutionary pattern suggested by Strahan	Teachers see confirmation of themselves in their roles as teachers	Teachers seek affirmation of their teacher status from their pupils	Teachers seek validation of their success as teachers from pupil achievement
A continuum of reflectivity suggested by LaBoskey	A teacher focuses on his/herself rather than pupils		A teacher’s attention shifts from self to pupils
A continuum suggested by Berliner	Teachers put emphasis on task and on outcomes		Teachers put emphasis on learning processes and on child
A suggested continuum by Galton	Thinking self	Thinking task	Thinking child

Novice

Expert

How do novices advance to experts in the continuum of professional development? “There is little question that classroom influence is reciprocal in nature and that teachers' perception of pupils' characteristics, expectation, and behaviors influence the nature of teacher development” (Zeichner et al., 1987: 28). Over the years, thinking about effective teaching has been approached in a number of different ways. “On one hand it is felt that the environmental demands posed by current classroom arrangements establish limits on the range of teacher behaviors that can be successfully used in particular settings, and that

'successful' teachers must learn a set of coping strategies appropriate to particular settings. On the other hand, the characteristics and activities of the classroom need to be closely examined in any attempt to understand teacher development” (Calderhead and Gates (eds.) 1992: 43). However, the analysis cannot remain at the level of the classroom alone because teaching is also a product of policy decisions (e.g. curriculum policy) and political or cultural actions at levels beyond the classroom (Zeichner et al., 1987: 29). Attributes of teachers, such as knowledge and perceptions also have a bearing on their effectiveness.

One approach is to cluster the different ways of thinking about effective teaching into a few developmental aspects of a teacher: social sensitivity development, subject knowledge development, pedagogical development and cognitive development. The stages of social development, subject knowledge development, pedagogical development and cognitive development of a teacher will pass through various proficiency levels ranging from novice to expert.

3.4.2 The Social Sensitivity Development of Teachers

According to Doyle (1977:31, quoted by Zeichner et al., 1987: 29), learning to teach involves ‘learning the texture of the classroom and the sets of behaviors congruent with the environmental demands of that setting’. The process involves the change of the perception of teaching and learning.

Kagan (1992: 133) noted that the images of novice appeared to be derived from one or two role models and were inflexible across classroom contexts. There is other evidence that indicates that norms within the teacher peer group exert a powerful influence on teacher. For example, Denscombe’s (1980) study of comprehensive school classrooms and Pollard’s (1980) study of primary school classrooms (see Kyriacou, 1986: 22) both highlight “the ways in which teachers’ thinking about the learning activities they wish to

set up is severely constrained by a number of non-educational factors to do with the realities of school life, particularly how teachers may be judged by their colleagues, and the need to actually survive.” Galton (1989) found that novice teachers learnt the ‘maxims’ (Benner 1984) generally adopted by teachers in the school. Buchmann (1987) clearly argues that most teachers draw on the folkways of teaching to guide their practice (Reynolds 1992). Thus, the professional culture that defines teaching will affect the professional growth of teachers.

To mitigate such problems, teachers need to be conscious of the pupils’ perspective regarding their experience of teaching and learning. This quality of ‘social sensitivity’ (the ability to see things from another’s perspective, Kyriacou 1986: 32) will move a novice to beginner or competent teacher. Thus, competent teachers strive to understand the students in their classes in order to create and sustain a learning community (Reynolds, 1992: 11) while novice teachers stick with the system that works (Galton, 1996). As classroom experience is accumulated, the novice manifests more self-reflection and begins to acknowledge the limitations of their prior beliefs and knowledge (Kagan 1992: 146). The professional growth of a teacher will depend very much on the success of this ‘socialization’ process.

3.4.3 Subject Knowledge Development of Teachers

Teachers' knowledge and understanding of subject knowledge and its application in the classroom can promote the more effective transmission of knowledge during the teaching and learning process (McNamara 1991). According to Sternberg and Horvath (1995: 11-12), an expert in the domain of teaching must know subject-matter content and has accessible knowledge that is organized for use in teaching, and allows adaptation to practical constraints.

Expert teachers tend to emphasis "teaching for understanding"(Good and Brophy, 1994) and focus on eliciting pupils' thinking and building upon it. Berliner and Bennett noted that expert teachers focus on learning process and on child, while novice teachers focus on task and learning outcomes (as structured in the teachers' agenda) (quoted in Moyles 1997a: 50). "Experts bring more knowledge to bear in solving problems within their domain and do so more effectively than do novices" (Sternberg and Horvath, 1995: 10). According to Porter and Brophy (1988) competent teachers use curricular materials that engage students' interests and that are appropriate for students' abilities and needs (Reynolds, 1992). These teachers facing classroom management problems can use curriculum pressure as a way of establishing order while novice teachers design instruction not to control learning but to control misbehaviour (Kagan, 1992: 145). Crucial in this debate, as Galton (1989) argues, is the link between the management of learning and the management of behaviour in the classroom.

Subject knowledge will also determine the quality of questions raised by teachers. A study on questioning was carried out by Borko and Livingstone (1989). A competent mathematics teacher will revert to a novice when teaching history (Glasser and Chi 1988; Borko and Livingston, 1989; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986). S/he can only raise surface questions while conducting a history class. An expert teacher should have the flexibility to judge, to weigh alternatives, to reason about both ends and means, and then to act while reflecting upon one's actions. The teacher cannot deem to be competent as a history teacher for competent/expert teacher is an autonomous professional capable of acting in the best interests of the learning and development of students.

Competent teachers must know the subject matter in a way that allows them to create lessons that help students relate new information to what they already know (transfer learning) and to integrate instruction across content areas (Porter and Brophy, 1988, quoted

by Reynolds, 1992: 9; Sternberg and Horvath 1995:11)

Subject matter knowledge may be considered as a necessary criterion for effective teaching but it is not a sufficient one. As Borko and Livingston (1989) argue it is a mistake to think that the teaching of mathematics and other such disciplines will automatically improve as a result of increased content knowledge. Experts are said to possess pedagogical skills to do with methods of classroom control and the means of motivating pupils, which should have bearings on the ways a class functions irrespective of knowledge of subject content (Galton 1992).

3.4.4 Pedagogy Development of Teachers

Teaching, therefore, is a thoughtful activity that must be underpinned by knowledge and skill. It requires a critical awareness of the pedagogic possibilities and an array of classroom decision-making strategies. Teachers have to consider if the learning experience is organised in the most sound and appropriate way when the characteristics of the pupils (such as ability, prior understanding, and motivation) are taken into account.

“A major task facing a teacher therefore is in deciding which aspects of the context need to be taken into account when considering the appropriate learning activity” (Kyriacou 1986: 11). In her study, Kagan (1992: 143) noted the characteristics of pedagogy development of novices: “At the beginning of the semester, candidates had a high sense of efficacy, spent a great deal of time planning lessons, and designed lessons so that they included more than one activity. Novices found, however, that the reality of the classroom rarely conformed to their expectations or images. By the end, these same novices saw pupils as adversaries, were obsessed with class control, spent less time preparing lessons, and limited lessons to single activities not likely to encourage disruption.” “Teachers introduced firm and clear rules at the beginning of a year until pupils begin to operate these automatically” (Galton

1989). Galton (1989) suggests this was stage one of a two-stage theory of teaching. Stage two occurs once the atmosphere became relaxed, the occasional joke was tolerated and a more friendly relationship with pupils established (Galton 1989).

According to Kagan (1992: 155), “the early stages of classroom practice are spent acquiring procedural knowledge. For this knowledge, novices usually rely on their own experiences in classrooms and their cooperating teachers. The first step in this task is the development of standardized procedures for handling class management and discipline.” Berliner’s model (1992) also suggested the formation of standardized procedural routines. After these are in place, novices turn their attention to instruction and then to pupil learning (Kagan, 1992: 155). In the acquisition of procedural routines, novices move from an initial stage where performance is laboriously self-conscious to more automated unconscious performance (ibid: 155).

Effective teaching is closely linked with the management of time since the amount of time pupils spend on task is associated with greater gains in educational attainment (Kyriacou 1986: 25).

“This is generally true whether it results from teachers allocating more curriculum time to task behaviour (for example, teachers spending more time during lessons on language and number work) or from individual teacher’s maintaining task behaviour during a lesson for longer than their colleagues. ... More recent studies have attempted to move away from a simple ‘amount of time’ notion towards attempting to explore the nature of being ‘actively engaged’” (Kyriacou 1986: 25 and 27, see also Bennett 1988: 27).

Active learning time is the amount of time spent by pupils actively engaged in learning tasks and activities designed to bring about the educational outcomes desired (Kyriacou 1986:25).

“Some teachers may well achieve high levels on task behaviour through the application of control

techniques where the mental engagement of the pupils with the learning activities is actually poor, or through the use of teaching methods which maintain task engagement but where the educational outcomes desired are not effectively achieved. ... For example, the widespread use of project work assumed gains in attainment that did not accrue in the ways expected.” (Kyriacou, 1986: 21).

Thus, the quality of instruction refers to the quality of learning tasks and activities in terms of their appropriateness and suitability for bringing about the desired educational outcomes. Novices may be in control but achieve poor outcomes.

Quickly disillusioned and possessing inadequate procedural knowledge, novice teachers may grow increasingly authoritarian and custodial (Kagan 1992: 143). Their inadequate knowledge of classroom procedures appears to prevent novice teachers from focusing on what pupils are learning from academic tasks (Hollingsworth 1989; Reynolds 1992). Instead, working memory is devoted to monitoring their own behavior as they struggle for workable procedures. To be functional, procedures must become standardized and reflect an integration of management and instruction. In this sense, class control and instruction is the integration of the process variables (see Kyriacou 1986:10) with educational outcomes, which appear to be inextricably interrelated pedagogical tasks. Until such standard procedures are routinized and fairly automated, novices may continue to focus on their own rather than their pupils’ behaviors.

3.4.5 Cognitive Development of Teachers

According to Kitchener (1981) cognitive development is a mature reflective judgment, an eagerness to consider new evidence, search for alternative explanations, view situations from various perspectives, and determine the adequacy of a decision using supportive evidence (Kitchener and King 1981). Theories and beliefs upon which their decisions are based can be a reflection of how teachers function in various settings (Spodek ed. 1984). “Teachers develop coping strategies that represent active and creative responses to the

constraints, opportunities, and dilemmas” posed by the immediate context of the classroom (Zeichner et al. 1987: 28 and 30).

Teachers’ thoughts prior to decision make include factors such as environment and their own state of mind. "The interactive decision making of effective teachers follows the findings of research on expert/novice differences and is postulated to involve rapid judgement, chunking of information, and differentiation of important from unimportant information. Conversely, ineffective and/or novice teachers seem unable to chunk or differentiate the large amount of varied bits of information they face during interactive teaching" (Reynolds, 1992: 11).

Each teacher represents a unique ecological system of pedagogical beliefs and practices that is inextricably connected to the teachers’ personality and prior experiences in life (Zeichner et al. 1987: 21-22; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Stephens (1967) proposes an ‘evolutionary’ theory to account for the socialization of teachers and emphasizes the role of ‘spontaneous pedagogical tendencies’ in explaining why teachers think and act as they do (Zeichner *et al.*, 1987). This raises the point that different individuals, because of their life histories and particular talents, may well have arrived at different stages of competence in respect to different aspects of pedagogy. According to Kagan (1992: 154), as classroom experience is accumulated, teachers find more ways of solving problems, and they grow in their ability to recognise them. Then novices manifest more self-reflection, which is the consideration of what is known of the strengths and weaknesses of a practice. Teachers begin to develop standard procedures appropriate for certain kinds of problems, with strategies increasing in size, complexity, and cohesiveness (Kagan 1992: 154). As time progresses, the novices manifest more self-reflection and begin to acknowledge the limitations of their prior beliefs and knowledge (Kagan, 1992: 146).

However, reflective practice requires a greater level of sophistication. Novice teachers may have too little experience to reflect on. There may be effective beginning teachers but there will be differences between them and effective experienced teachers because of their respective capacities to reflect in this way (Reynolds, 1992).

Novices may engage in technical rationality rather than other levels of reflection (Wodlinger, 1990), because that is where their developmental needs lie: in understanding what works and why it works (Galton 1989). This suggests that instead of expecting novices to reflect on the moral and ethical implications of classroom practices, we should help them to examine their prior experiences in classrooms and to structure ‘research’ projects to acknowledge where their personal images may be inappropriate so as to modify and reconstruct the images. However, caution is needed because when a theory about how people learn turns into a standardized programme, it can become a contradiction in both philosophy and practice.

During training, as the year progresses, teachers begin to be more aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, and evolving beliefs. They begin to generalize problem solving strategies across contexts, simplifying and economizing their efforts. Buchmann (1987) “proposes that only those teachers who utilize less common teaching techniques judge the appropriateness of their teaching actions, test hypotheses about the teaching/learning interaction, and consider the consequences of their teaching actions should be deemed experts” (quoted in Reynolds, 1992:3). Tharp and Gallimore (1988) identified this as responsive teaching.

“To be responsive means that a teacher does not attempt to fully anticipate what students will say, what ideas and experiences will be provoked by the discussion and the text itself. This, in turn, means that the teacher must be intellectually prepared to respond. A full consideration of alternative interpretations of the text is one form of that preparation since teachers’ interpretations of stories, on

the level of plot and theme, have been shown to influence their instructional decisions, both in comprehension questioning and in the choice of topics for concept building.” (Tharp and Gallimore 1988, also see Berliner 1992)

How then can one move toward instructional objectives and at the same time be responsive to students? Getting these two aims in balance is not easy. Tharp and Gallimore’s (1988) study demonstrated the dramatic impact of scaffolding in achieving these aims. Teacher "A" demonstrated competency in the skills of responsiveness and elicitation of student contributions with minimal teacher talk. Teacher 'B' (under training) began to understand that her lectures were too long and discovered her motive behind long teacher talk. She gradually changed her belief that when children had no relevant experience and that the teacher had to provide it. Consequently she minimised the length of teacher talk and engaged with the ideas of responsive teaching. This example illustrates the cognitive development of a teacher: advancing through the ZPD from Stage I (where assistance comes from more capable others) into Stage II (where assistance come from the ones self) (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). The teacher's role is primarily that of facilitator in children’s learning. Teacher B also achieved her growth in professional development, with an advancement in cognitive stages and the focus on ‘teaching for understanding’ (Good and Brophy 1994).

A summary of the model of teacher development (Table 3.2) suggests that novices stick with maxims that work, while experts are more aware of pupils’ needs and adjust their practice accordingly. Novices focus on learning outcomes while experts aim at teaching for understanding in the learning process. Novices focus on on-task learning time and lesson planning while experts focus on active learning time. Novices are unable to chunk information in the complex teaching context while experts recognise problems and use appropriate strategies.

TABLE 3.2: A summary of the model of teacher development

	Novices	Experts	Cognitive change involved to advance from novice to expert
Social sensitivity development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stick with the system/maxims that works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aware of pupils' perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seeing confirmation of themselves in their roles to validation of success from pupil achievement
Subject knowledge development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Surface questions ● Focus on learning outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching for understanding, and transfer of learning ● Focus on learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on task and outcomes to emphasis on learning process and child
Pedagogy knowledge development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spend a great deal of time planning lessons and designed lessons - introduce firm and clear rules ● Management of behaviour ● Focus on rote knowledge classroom strategy ● Focus on on-task learning time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Management of learning activity in the best interests of the learning and development of students ● Focus on comprehensive knowledge of classroom strategy ● Focus on active learning time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focuses on teacher's behaviour then pupil's behaviour
Cognitive development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Too little experience to reflect ● Technical rationality in understanding what works ● Unable to chunk information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Informed by moral and ethical implications of classroom practice ● Test hypothesis ● Responsive teaching ● Recognise problems and use appropriate strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thinking self to thinking child ● Chunking information to search alternative explanations

To sum up, moving to a higher stage of development would mean more effective teaching and quality instruction. Table 3.2 shows a model of teacher development that accounts for the shift in concerns from ones self to one's pupils in terms of the resolution of a novice's image of self as teacher. The model suggests that the novice cannot advance until the initial self-image is adapted and reconstructed. The transformation of mind involves a cognitive process.

3.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to this review of recent theoretical conceptions of effective teaching and teacher development, a novice focuses on himself or herself rather than pupils and relies on personal experience, while an expert teacher will focus on eliciting pupil's thinking and

building upon it. Expert teachers make their own decisions and take responsibility for their classes, while novices are engrossed in identifying, labeling and following the rules (Sternberg and Horvath 1995). Observation of classroom teaching, since it involves considerable student-teacher interaction (Reynolds 1992) can inform the stage of development of a teacher.

Understanding the teaching of the kindergartens is a highly complex activity. It is complex because the kindergarten teaching concerns far more than simply the curriculum to be taught. Teaching involves a range of assumptions concerning teacher ideology about the ways of pupils learn, the teacher-pupil relationship, the teacher's role and a whole set of ideas about what children should be taught and expected to learn. Teachers' cognitive perceptions of learning teaching may thus affect their behaviour inside the classroom. The strategy selected by a teacher is influenced by their conceptions of learning, teacher intentions, conceptions of teaching or theories of teaching (Prosser and Trigwell 1999).

Differences in the use of a teaching strategy also inform the teachers' stages of development (Galton 1989, Calderhead (eds.) 1992, Reynolds 1992, Guild 1997). Scholars may resort to subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge or developmental readiness to explain the cause of these differences. Shulman (1986) and Galton et al. (1980) argue that an expert teacher has critical awareness of the range of pedagogic possibilities and evidence of classroom decision-making strategies. An expert teacher will emphasise whether the pupil is: attending to the learning experience; is motivated or has a willingness to learn; or if the learning experience is appropriate for the desired learning to take place. According to Reynolds (1992), novice teachers lack the developmental readiness to chunk the large amount of information that enables them to perform such tasks effectively. Teachers have to be at a proficient stage before they can practice the vision of child-centred teaching.

Identifying the stage of development of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong should help them shift to a higher level of development. The work of teaching concerns the interactions of children and teachers, whether the teacher teaches the class as a whole, as groups, or as individuals. This provides the setting for interaction between teacher and pupils which is commonly held to lie at the heart of the learning and teaching process, and to a large extent, to determine its pattern and character (Galton et al., 1980). This study seeks therefore to explore the classroom organization, student-teacher interaction and the teacher's sense of reflectivity as a means of understanding practice and teacher development in kindergartens in Hong Kong.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is present worldwide and its application varies considerably across and within countries, despite the fact that most educators seem to talk the same language of early childhood education (Dahlberg et al., 1999). The vision of early childhood education implies a demanding role for early childhood educators. A review of the theoretical conception of effective teaching and teacher development suggests that teachers have to be at a proficient level before they can practise child-centred approaches or take up the role of facilitator in teaching. Kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong are blamed for not putting early childhood education theories into practice, though they are exposed to the vision of early childhood education when they go through teacher education course(s). In the current period of educational reform and with increasing pressures from parents, the competence of kindergarten teachers has become a great public concern. In response to these demands, the purpose of this study was to investigate the classroom practice of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong. The objectives were to:

- identify teachers' perception of teaching and learning;
- describe the work of teaching inside the classrooms;
- identify factors contributing to the pattern of teaching;
- identify the characteristics of teachers and their stage of teacher development.

This study sought to explore the work of teaching, the classroom organization, pupils-teacher interaction and the curriculum of kindergartens. The teachers' ability to reflect upon practice was examined as well. On one hand, the study on the practice and professional development of teachers would, hopefully, offer insights for teacher education programmes. On the other hand, in the light of the evidence presented in the study, it should be possible to examine how far the assumptions about current practice and the criticism appeared either misdirected or true. It was also hoped that it would allow

kindergarten teachers, reading these accounts, to reflect on what is there in this study so that they could apply it to their own situation. This requires seeing the reality of teaching and teachers in as full a context as possible.

An ethnographic approach was used to explore classroom teaching. Classroom observation and interviews were the main instruments of data collection. The analysis of classroom practice informed the characteristics of teachers and their stage of teacher development. The theoretical basis for this study draws on philosophy of early childhood education which emphasizes the active learning process of children and the theoretical conception of effective teaching and teacher development to argue that teachers have to be child focused before they can shift the ownership of learning to children. Finally, it is argued that there are stages of teacher development. The higher the stage the more effective the teaching is. Therefore, identifying the stage of teacher development of kindergarten teachers will shed light on the teacher education programmes in helping teachers to develop professionally.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.2.1 Background

This study sought to examine the practice of kindergarten teachers. A qualitative research methodology was adopted. One of the particular strengths of this approach is its capacity to identify the unexpected and illuminate the odd. Qualitative research can raise important, if uncomfortable, questions about the deepest assumptions and the most taken-for-granted purposes and perceptions in organizations (Kyriacou, 1986:21)

An 'ethnographic approach' was used to explore the classroom teaching. This strand of development is at the forefront of current thinking among researchers (e.g. Bennett, Doyle, and Calderhead, quoted in Kyriacou 1986: 31). Ethnography instead of systematic observation was adopted for two other reasons. One was that there is currently no good

observation system in Hong Kong. The second was that case study approach suits the interest of the study. The study was interested in teacher perceptions, strategies, and their reaction to situations. Essentially, ethnography enables researchers to get an understanding of an action. The observer is part of this action and gains understanding by being involved in it. Classroom teaching is about the interaction between two aspects of classroom processes: characteristics of the learning task and activities, teacher perceptions and behaviour. Case study offers detailed descriptions of how teachers respond to the various learning activities and tasks. Therefore, an ethnographic approach was used.

This study had three main purposes. First, to find out whether kindergarten teachers have a particular view of early years. Second, to explore whether there are disjunction between these ideas and practice. Finally, to identify cultural, structural or internal factors which account for the gaps between rhetoric and reality, if there are any?

The purpose of the study gave rise to a number of research questions:

- (1) What is the context in which children are expected to learn?
- (2) What is the classroom environment, which will enhance children's learning?
- (3) In what ways do teachers contribute to teaching?
- (4) What are the principles that guide kindergarten teachers' teaching?
- (5) How do these principles translate into practice?
- (6) How do these principles influence the context in which children learn?

Supplementary research questions were:

- (1) What is the learning environment?
- (2) What are the coping strategies of teachers?

4.2.2 Methodology

A small-scale study involving nine teachers was chosen for two reasons. First, there being

not much research done on the area of teacher development in the early years field in Hong Kong, references in this area would be difficult to find and it was hoped that maximum attention on a small sample would allow minimum gaps in the accounts of teaching. Second, the purpose of the research was to discover a lot about a few teachers, rather than a little about a lot of teachers. Data from observation, interview, lesson plans and daily schedules of each teacher were under relatively closer analysis in the small sample size. Observation and interviewing rather than questionnaires were used. It was hoped this would avoid the 'perception gap' (Galton 1989:40) that sometimes occurs when one answers a questionnaire, for there is always disjunction between ideas/feelings and practice. The purpose of the observation was to observe teachers' practice. The interview was to question their perception. Observation and interview were supplemented by teaching records written by teachers. The teaching records or daily lesson plans were sources of data collected in such a way as not to arouse notice from subjects. This is intended to be an unobtrusive measure, which is particularly useful for triangulation (Marshall and Rossman 1995). These three different data-gathering methods allowed the researcher the possibility of portraying the reality inside the classroom.

Thus, the study involved the use of a mixture of observation, interviews with the teacher and other methods of data collection (e.g. the daily lesson plans) to develop an account and interpretation of the classroom process. A transcription of one case study was appended (Appendix I).

Classroom Observation

As this study was classroom-based research, "the quality of authenticity in the sense of actually capturing the essence of classroom realities" (Kyriacou 1986: 22) is of prime significance for validity. The only way to resolve this kind of issue is to look and see inside the classroom. Classroom observation instead of questionnaire was adopted for data

collection to avoid the challenge that teachers may not always tell their actions. Moreover, field records collected through participant observation are one of the primary tools of narrative inquiry work. The notes are active reconstruction of the events rather than a passive recording, which would suggest that the events could be recorded without the researcher's interpretation (Connelly and Clandinin 1990). If, according to Seidman (1991), we want to know "How do people behave in this classroom?" then participant observation might be the best method of inquiry. Classroom observation of one whole session (half-day), together with video recording of that session followed by an interview with the teacher was adopted as the main research procedure. The daily plan/time-table, a kind of narrative inquiry sources (Connelly and Clandinin 1990) were collected from the teachers. A detailed study of each teacher over a session (half-day) was selected to obtain a representative sample of classroom activities and to construct an understanding of the mind of each teacher. Observation focused on the structures and routines of each setting, the interactions between the adults and the children, the actions of the teacher, and the feeling-tone of each class.

Special attention was paid to the proportion of time when the teacher's attention was given to the class, to a group or to an individual pupil; the curriculum strategy (content and balance of the curriculum, equal emphasis or a higher priority to formal written work than to reading or oral work, the instructional strategy) and classroom organization. There was a description of the teaching styles that Galton et al. (1980: 113) suggested was a consistent set of teaching tactics. The characteristics of the teachers were discussed, and the relationship between organizational and curricular strategies and the characteristics of teachers was examined. Besides contrasting the styles of the nine teachers, the contrast of the same teacher teaching different curriculum areas was also a focus.

Field notes were kept during the observation. They were written into a narrative account

the same evening and analysed qualitatively by the researcher. Classroom observation of full mornings (three hours) was video-recorded so that the field notes could be verified when needed. According to Simpson and Tuson (1995) if children and teachers are not used to classroom observation, avoiding eye contact with them will minimise distraction. The researcher's attempts to avoid eye contact with children and teacher(s) resulted in little disturbance to the observation process. Descriptive accounts of teachers and pupils, timetables and descriptions of grouping procedures and teacher's organizational strategies were collected and included into the text of the chapters. Care was taken to ensure that the observation in each classroom reflected the general daily pattern in that classroom, if there were tests, examinations, visits or special functions (e.g. religious ceremony), observation was re-scheduled.

The purpose of classroom observation was to document the progression of organization, activity structures and routine tasks in each class. A detailed discussion (post lesson interview) with the teachers then recorded their perceptions of learning and teaching in response to the researcher's enquiry.

Interviews

The interview was conducted after the classroom observation. The goal was to have the participant re-construct her experience within the topic under the study. According to many researchers, if we wish to find out what meaning teachers make out of their teaching experience - in what Schutz (see Seidman, 1991) calls their "subjective understanding" -- then interviewing may be the best avenue of inquiry. A basic assumption of in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. To observe a teacher, therefore, provides access to their behaviour. Interviewing allows the investigator to put behaviour in context and provides access to understanding the participant's action (Seidman, 1991). Conversation does not

only generate important data but is also an important research technique. Talk forms an essential element in social and educational research where investigators collect, analyse and report the conversations they have conducted (Adelman 1981, quoted in Burgess ed. 1985). According to Seidman (1991), humans have the ability to symbolize their experience through language. To understand human behaviour is to understand the use of language. Interviewing, then, is a basic mode of inquiry. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. The data collected also served the purpose of triangulation.

The interview tapped the perception of teaching and learning of the nine kindergarten teachers. Teachers' behaviour inside the classroom will be affected by their beliefs about teaching images of teachers and teaching (Kagan 1992). Kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong are blamed for not putting early childhood education theories into practice, though they are informed about the vision of early childhood education when they go through teacher education courses. Thus, nine teachers of different teacher education qualifications were interviewed with the expectation that there would be differences of views across teachers of different teacher education qualifications and teaching experience.

The discussions lasted for around 60 minutes with the teachers recording their perceptions of learning and teaching in response to inquiry. Teachers were asked to talk about good and bad experiences, their attitudes to children's learning and metaphors that early year teachers use to describe good teaching. Questions for inquiry were:

- Do you think this was a good lesson? Why?
- How do children learn?
- How can children learn better?
- How can a teacher contribute to children's learning?
- What affects teaching?
- What's a good teacher?

The interviews were designed to be open-ended, semi-structured friendly conversations. The conversation was tape-recorded. In this approach, open-ended questions were used. The major task was to build upon and explore their participants' responses to initial questions. The goal was to have the participants reconstruct their experience within the topic under study.

Interviews were conducted to find out as much as possible about the details of the job experience or work as a teacher and to ask the participants how well they found their teaching. The interviewer attempted to maintain a balance between providing enough openness for the participants to tell their stories and enough focus to allow the interview structure to work. Given that the purpose of interviewing is to have the participants reconstruct their experience, and reflect on its meaning, anything shorter than 60 minutes for each interview seemed too short. The length of interviews was between 60 and 90 minutes.

In each case, a warm-up question was asked which was not included in the questions for enquiry. One similar question was asked for the nine teachers. The final question in each schedule was a general question to enable interviewees to add whatever comments they wished on the teacher in use of metaphor. All the interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Recording of interviews allowed transcription of conversation during the analysis stage.

Sampling

This classroom research involved nine kindergarten teachers, taking resources (time and manpower constraint) and willingness of subjects into consideration. In this study, three schools, with three teachers from each were targeted. The culture of research is not popular or valued among those working in the field of early childhood education in Hong Kong.

The Department of Early Childhood Education, Grantham College of Education, was formed in the 80s. In 1995, the Grantham College of Education, with other colleges of education, was incorporated into the Hong Kong Institute of Education, an institute for tertiary education. Scholarly activities and researchers have become relatively active since then. However, video recording of classroom interaction is perceived to be a 'nightmare' for some schools and teachers. Kindergartens were approached one by one randomly. When a kindergarten principal was positive in response, details (e.g. objectives and methodology) of the research were disclosed to the principal. The principal then got the verbal consent from the teaching staff, three teachers of different training/teacher education background (QKT, QAKT, no initial training). There were a few instances where the principals withdrew her consent or could not solicit consent from the teachers. In one case, the kindergarten was fully established and did not have non-trained staff. When three schools had confirmed their participation, no more kindergartens were approached. The aims, purposes and strategies were made known to participants and their agreement obtained before the research was carried out. The names of the schools were kept confidential. The anonymity of the individuals who participated were protected by the use of pseudonyms. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research process.

This type of qualitative study has to face the 'problem of generalization'. The study does not attempt to generalize experiences of teaching. "Similar experiences are unique to different individuals so that generalizability of meaning is difficult, if not impossible" (Anderson and Burns 1989: 77). How then can studying only a few instances be justified? The study was interested in common characteristics but not the differences of some/particular teachers. It did not matter therefore which teacher was studied, since the hypothesis was that there is a common pattern among all kindergarten teachers under the conditions pertaining in Hong Kong. The research aimed to discover a body of information

about a few teachers, rather than a little about many teachers. Instead of aggregating teachers in order to portray the typical teacher, the point here was to celebrate the particular. A close study of a small sample was therefore adopted. This allowed seeing the reality of teaching and teachers in as full a context as possible. This choice was based on a strong belief that it is in the lived situations of actual teachers and children that teaching can best be understood (Weis 1991: 47).

Although random sampling of teachers will always prove to be very difficult within observational studies (Galton et al., 1980), this study tended to provide sample which approximate closely to the general population with classrooms matching the characteristics of local kindergartens. The first kindergarten (School I) was located in an old urban area (Table 4.1). Unlike kindergartens on the ground floor in new residential areas, it is usual that kindergartens in old urban areas that are located on the second floor of a residential building. Pupils are nearby residents. The second kindergarten (School II) was located in a mixed residential and commercial area (Table 4.1). The area is an old urban area but has undergone renovations and reconstruction from time to time. Transportation is convenient and the area is easily accessed. The school is situated across the main road. It is quiet because it is up a slope. There are four floors in the kindergarten. Children come from different surrounding districts. The third kindergarten (School III) was located in the residential area of a New Town (Table 4.1) developed during the last ten years. There are several housing estates in each New Town. The number of kindergartens in a housing estate depends on the size of the housing estate, with at least one kindergarten in every housing estate. Pupils were from the nearby housing estates.

TABLE 4.1 The location of the three schools

School I	School II	School III
Old urban area	Mixed commercial and residential area	New Town area

Nine teachers were involved. They were all female teachers with a range of teaching experience that spanned seven months to eight years. There was the expectation to see whether teaching experience made any difference to perception of teaching and practice. The nine teachers had different teacher education qualifications. Six of them held either QKT or QAKT qualifications (Chapter Two) while three of them had no initial kindergarten education training (Table 4.2). No claim was made that they were representation of the total population. However, it is hoped that kindergarten teachers will recognise certain similarities to their classroom when they read these accounts.

The Nine Teachers

Miss Lee, Miss Cheung, and Miss Wong were in School I.

Miss Lee had four years' teaching experience in the kindergarten. She was a QKT graduate (96-97). Her class had fourteen children, with ages ranging from five to six. She was a class teacher and did not have a teacher aide in her class. She wore tracksuits, the school uniform for teachers.

Miss Cheung had three years' teaching experience in the kindergarten. She was a QAKT graduate, 97-98. Her class had nine, four to five years old children. She was the class teacher and did not have a teacher aide in her class. She wore the teacher uniform.

Miss Wong had nine months' teaching experience. She had not received any initial teacher education training. Her class had eighteen five to six years old children. She was the class teacher and did not have a teacher aide. She wore the teacher uniform.

Miss Lam, Miss Chan, and Miss Yuen were the class teachers in School II. They all had teacher aides in their classes.

Miss Lam had five years' teaching experience in a kindergarten. She obtained the QKT qualification in 1996. Her class consisted of thirty four to five years old children.

Miss Chan had seven months' teaching experience. She had neither pre-service training nor in-service kindergarten teaching training. There were thirty-two children aged three years in her class.

Miss Yuen had seven years' teaching experience in the kindergarten. She was a QAKT graduate, 96-97. Her class had twenty-nine five to six years old children

Miss Tam, Miss Tang, and Miss Ma were the class teachers in School III.

Miss Tam had eight years' teaching experience in a kindergarten. She had obtained QAKT and QKT qualification in 1995 and 1998 respectively. Her class had thirty-two three years old children. She did not have a teacher aide.

Miss Tang had nine months' teaching experience in the kindergarten. She had no teacher education qualification. Her class had twenty-six children aged five to six years. She did not have a teacher aide.

Miss Ma had two and a half years' teaching experience in the kindergarten. She was a QAKT graduate, 97-98. Her class had thirty children, aged three to four years. She also did not have a teacher aide in her class.

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the above descriptions of these nine teachers.

Table 4.2 Characteristics of nine teachers

Teacher	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Qualifications	QKT	QAKT	No training	QKT	No training	QAKT	QKT	No training	QAKT
Teaching experience	4 years	3 years	9 months	5 years	7 months	7 years	8 years	9 months	2.5 years
Level of class teaching	K3	K2	K3	K2	K1	K3	K1	K3	K1

Early in the study, it was expected there would be differences in the nine teachers' perception of teaching and in their practice due to varied teacher education background and teaching experience.

The Study at Work

The observer researcher together with a student helper arrived in the kindergarten some half hour before the start of the day to set up the video camera. The researcher had a few brief chats with the teacher and then sat at a corner of the classroom. The whole session was observed and notes were taken down. The right-hand pages of the notebook were left free to be used for immediate reflections on the notes. Each set of interview and observation was spaced from two to three weeks apart to allow time for data transcription and filing. It took six months to complete the data collection. The interview and observation of each teacher was spaced from three to five days' apart. This allowed time for the participant teacher to ponder over the observed sessions but not enough time to lose the connection between the two. In addition, the spacing allowed interviewers to work with the participant teachers over a one-week period. On one hand, interviewers had an opportunity to establish a substantial relationship with participants over time (the researcher had then worked for over one month in each school). On the other hand, this passage of time reduced the impact of possibly idiosyncratic interviews. That is, the participant teacher might be having a terrible day, be sick, or be distracted in such a way as to affect the quality of a particular interview.

It was easy to get lost in the very detailed account of field observation. The theme of the study was kept in the mind of the researcher and some guiding questions were developed for the researcher to return to. The theme of the study in mind was the interaction of theory, practice and belief in teaching -- its implication on teacher development. Some guiding questions for enquiry were:

- What are the situations and patterns of events inside a classroom?
- What are the styles, organizational and curricular strategies (Bennett 1988), used by teachers?
- What are the factors that influence teachers' pattern of practice?

These questions helped 'kick-start' the study and maintained the focus of the research throughout the research project. The questions were always returned to for clarification when there was the possibility of losing direction in the masses of data. The questions were continually refined, throughout analysis of the data. Data were organized according to themes in the form of summaries of words taken directly from the data or conceptualizations of data (Strauss, 1990). There was little interpretation of data at this stage. Finally, similar data were grouped and given conceptual labels. This was followed by attempts to interpret these conceptualisations. The concepts were related by means of statements of relationship.

Early in the study, it was difficult to be certain what pertained and what did not. Narrowing the research focus too much and too soon might have hindered flexibility and distracted observation (Galton et al., 1980). In order not to miss important data, the very first interview and field notes were entirely transcribed and analyzed before going on to the next interviews or field observations. The early coding provided guidance to the next field observations and interviews. As the theory developed, only those tapes, sentences or passages that related to the evolving theory were listened to or transcribed. However, further transcribing occurred when additional or more detailed analysis was needed. If the final analysis indicated that there was a hole in the theoretical formulations that needed closing and that further data collection was needed to close it, those portion of the interviews or field notes that pertained to the theoretical gap were transcribed.

The process of interweaving data selection with data analysis was employed. During the process, the researcher asked questions about the data, made comparisons, constructed hypotheses, and developed small theoretical frameworks about concepts and their relationships. In turn, the researcher used these to look again at the data. When the data were examined closely, meaning to words that seemed previously not to have meaning could be found (Glaser and Strauss 1967, quoted in Anderson and Burns 1989; Strauss, 1990). This helped to increase insight and recognition of the evolving theory. “The process of continual checking, interpreting and revising the conceptual system to fit the evidence virtually assured that the theory would be close to the data. ... Thus, the process of developing theory dictated that data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and that both were ongoing while the researcher was in the field” (Anderson and Burns 1989: 74).

Validity

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), in dealing with this kind of data, what are needed are not formulaic approaches to enhancing either validity or trustworthiness but understanding of and respect for the issues that underlie those terms (quoted in Seidman 1991: 2). They go on to say: we have to do our best to increase our ways of knowing and of avoiding ignorance, realizing that our efforts are quite small in the larger scale of things.

For this study, the interview structure incorporated features that enhance the accomplishment of validity. It placed participants’ views/comments in context. It encouraged interviewing participants over the course of three to five days to account for idiosyncratic days. Furthermore, the goal of the process was to clarify how participants understood and made meaning of their experiences. Seidman (1991) argues that if the interview structure works to allow them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity. When doing the interviews, the

interviewer kept quiet so as not to interrupt the interviewees, not to redirect their thinking while it was developed; so, what was said was their thoughts and not the interviewer's. They were the interviewees' words and reflected their understanding of their experience at the time of the interview

Data Analysis

Qualitative research was used because the study was about behaviour and interactional relationships. Qualitative methods were used in an attempt to uncover and understand what lay behind any phenomenon about which little was yet known. Such methods can be used to gain novel and fresh slants on things about which much is already known. In addition, qualitative methods can provide the intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods (Strauss, 1990).

The everyday reality of the substantive area and diverse nature of the data forced the researcher to break through assumptions and to create new order out of the old. For example, the data suggested that teachers could tell but could not practice the philosophy of early childhood education due to the cognitive constraint of their stage of professional development. This facilitated the researcher to aptly name categories, for example cognitive dissonance as the key for teacher development. It also allowed the making of free associations that were necessary for generating stimulating questions, and for coming up with the comparisons that led to further discovery. The researcher could therefore elicit from the data new insights into phenomenon and novel theoretical formulations. That was the process for the formulation of the warmth, control and structure dimension in Chapter Eight.

Coding was also used. While qualitative study allows for creativity, there is a balance between that which is created by the researcher and the reality of the situation studied.

Coding is a systematic and precise set of procedures that cannot be done haphazardly or at the whim of the research (Strauss, 1990). The data collection and analytic procedures helped the researcher to break through biases that kindergarten teachers were not competent and to formulate theory to argue that teachers stuck to novice skills that was faithful to the reality of the phenomena under the study. According to Anderson (Anderson and Burns 1989), if the theorems agree with the observed facts, the system is probably true, if they disagree, the system is false. Alternating between collecting and analyzing data allowed concepts emerging to the particular research situation and helped verify hypotheses while they were being developed. Its systematic techniques and procedures of analysis enabled the researcher to develop a substantive theory that produced theory-observation compatibility, generalizability, precision and verification.

While doing the data analysis, the researcher attempted to step back and critically analyzed situations, in the attempt to recognize and avoid bias, to try all the time to obtain valid and reliable data, and to think abstractly. It was important to separate judgements, personal reactions and value statements from the ethnographic record of the events (Galton et al., 1980). To do this, a qualitative researcher requires theoretical and social sensitivity; the ability to maintain analytical distance while at the same time drawing upon past experience and theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen (Strauss, 1990).

Qualitative research consists of the different analytic or interpretive procedures that are used to arrive at findings or theories. These procedures include the techniques for conceptualizing data. This process, called 'coding' (identify categories), varies by the training and experience of the researcher. The difficulty is that ideas do not come to everyone about everything but only under certain conditions will those insights arise. While creativity helps to sensitize the researcher to recognize potential categories, the researcher still has to validate any categories and statements of relationships arrived at

creatively through the total research process. The researcher had to know a lot about the area under study. At the same time, she had to be puzzled about some feature of those data or about their interpretations, so that questions and answers were raised and sought. Although knowledgeable about data and theory, the researcher somehow has to escape the very features of her work that may otherwise block the new perspective inherent in the flash of insight, the brilliant idea, or different theoretical formulation.

Thus, a researcher has to periodically step back and ask and maintain an attitude of skepticism (Strauss, 1990). In this study, by doing the first, hypothesis was revised to fit the reality of the data. Skepticism was adopted in the study. It means all theoretical explanations, categories, hypothesis, and questions about the data, whether they come directly or indirectly from the making of comparisons, the literature, or from experience, were regarded as provisional until supported by actual data in the study.

The researcher's task was to gather the data and present it in such a manner that 'the informants speak for themselves'. The aim was to give an honest account with little or no interpretation of those spoken words or of the observations made by the researcher. The researcher's obligation was to hear and report so that the researcher's hypothesis and presence did not intrude upon the data. However, it was not possible to present all the data. The principle here was to present an accurate description of what was being studied, though not necessarily all of the data that had been studied. Reducing and ordering materials of course represented selection and interpretation. The researcher included interpretive comments in and around long descriptive passages and the quotations from interview and field notes. The illustrative material was meant to give sense of what the observed world was really like; while the researcher's interpretations were meant to represent a more detached conceptualization of that reality (Strauss, 1990).

4.3 CONCLUSION

This was a research study which set out to identify and trace the complex classroom culture/interactions and the professional development of nine kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong. It used nonmathematical analytic procedures that results in findings derived from data gathered by classroom observations, transcripts and notes of interviews, videotapes and documents (e.g. time-tables and daily plans, and Guide to Pre Primary Curriculum). Here qualitative research was used to uncover the nature of teachers' practice, the work of teaching. This type of study using qualitative data and with an exploratory intention is a form of ethnography - a classic research approach (Pollard and Filer 1996: 289) to study the perspectives, interaction and cultures of people in context. The belief is that the researcher needs to get out into the field, if he/she wants to understand what is going on. Fieldwork was most appropriate for discovering the relevant variables and building a thorough, rich, detailed description of classroom culture (Marshall and Rossman 1995). The study attempted to identify some hidden aspects of classroom culture that affects teachers' professional development. It was an investigation of the complex interactions of theory, practice and beliefs in teaching. It was hoped that hypotheses based on the conceptual and broad interpretations of the data might guide future studies on kindergarten teachers.

The theme of the study was the interaction of theory, practice, and beliefs in teaching and its implication on teacher development. In this study, the views of teachers on teaching and learning were displayed, through the data collected in interview. The analysis described, using the information gathered during observation, some of the richness and variety of what was on in a kindergarten classroom. It searched for patterns from among these events and the complex interactions of theory, practice and beliefs in order to help explain why certain teachers do one thing while others do something else. No claim is made that any of

these conclusions are, in any way, typical of kindergarten teaching as a whole. However, the findings reflected approaches which some teachers had found appropriate in the circumstances. This should enable kindergarten teachers to reflect on their own practice in a way which up to now has not been possible, since there was little attention given in Hong Kong to the systematic study of teaching of kindergarten teachers through observing teacher behaviour in the classroom. Moreover, the research should hopefully allow those who train student teachers to bridge the gap between theory with practice by offering the means of illuminating theory with precise and detailed information about life and perceptions inside the kindergarten classroom. All these ideas will be described and discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE VIEWS OF NINE TEACHERS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Nine teachers were interviewed after a half-day's classroom observation in the sample schools. Detailed discussions (sixty minutes) with the nine teachers were conducted during which time their perceptions of learning and teaching and responses to enquiry were recorded. The interview was designed to be an open-ended, semi-structured friendly conversation. The teachers were asked to talk about good and bad experiences of teaching, their attitudes to children's learning and particular note was taken of metaphors that early year teachers use to describe good teaching. The conversations were tape-recorded. Open-ended questions were used. The aims were to have the participants re-construct their experience within the topic under study, to elicit their perceptions of the practices observed and allow them to express their views. Questions for enquiry (Chapter four, p.61) in brief concerned: their perception of a good lesson, the accomplishment of learning outcomes, the perception of children's learning, the role of a teacher, attributes of quality teaching and good teacher.

Semi-structured interviews supply in-depth perspectives that illuminate classroom observation data. The personal aspects of practitioners' thinking emerged particularly clearly in the narratives given. It revealed something of the circumstances and concerns within which the respondents ground their thinking and doing, and their responses also identified the needs of practitioners as they sought to develop and improve their practice. The transcripts were analysed by noting commonalties and differences between teachers. A respondent's failure to mention a certain point did not mean disagreement with that view, it was, however, considered to be indicative that this was not a high priority in his/her thinking (Moyle 1997a).

5.2 PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

Teachers in general showed enthusiasm in teaching, as reflected in their responses to the warm up questions. Teachers appeared to focus a lot on learning outcomes, instead of the learning process. Interesting to note, they did not find, relying and strictly following lesson plans, obstacles to their teaching. Instead, they attributed success and achievement to the preparation (of structured learning activities), and lessons on schedule (Table 5.1). Not one teacher worried about whether teachers' questions in discussions were (or were not) responsive to children outcomes and did (or did not) assist children to develop more complete or elaborated ideas. Ideas about developing thinking by reducing dependency on adult-regulation through peer-regulation to self-regulation were not particular in the minds of teachers. Teachers' concerns emphasised the delivery of teaching on schedule and in an orderly mode, in a friendly and patient tone.

5.2.1 Enthusiasm in Teaching

One teacher mentioned that she enjoyed teaching children, teaching children was her career and dream.

Interviewer (I): Do you enjoy teaching?

Miss Ma: 'Sure. I like teaching when I was young.'

Another teacher echoed these sentiments.

I: What is the attraction of being a kindergarten teacher?

Miss Lam: 'Feedback from children's learning is immediate. Achievement in other jobs may take a long time to realize.'

5.2.2. Curriculum Management

Learning outcomes

In their discussions teachers generally placed their emphasis on children getting the work

done and achieving an outcome. It was of interest to note that no teachers spoke about learning outcomes concerning social, moral, aesthetic, physical development and children's enjoyment of the day. These were some expressions of teachers:

'It (teaching) is fine. What has to be delivered is delivered according to the time schedule'.
(Miss Chan)

'Children can write the words correctly.' (Miss Yuen)

'Children can write the Chinese characters according to ruling and steps of writing.' (Miss Tam)

'Children can finish class work (e.g. writing, sentence making, word match etc.) on time.'
(Miss Lam)

'At the beginning of the term (September), children did not even know how to hold a pencil. Now (April), all of them can write. Some migrants from Mainland China did not know any single letters in the English alphabet. Now they can spell out the English words. It gives me satisfaction.' (Miss Cheung)

'Children are attentive and listen well. Children can give correct answers to the questions. ... There is a non-Chinese native speaker in my class. He does not understand Cantonese. He runs around when I am teaching. Now he can sit down and attend to my teaching. He can sit quietly and finish the assignment. At the beginning, he can't read and write Chinese. Now, he can write in Chinese.' (Miss Wong)

Many teachers referred to the writing skills as an aspect of learning. This may be because teaching a skill was easier to identify. No teacher saw children's enjoyment as a learning outcome. One teacher, when talking about Early childhood education, mentioned promoting social well being and basic knowledge of children in the interview.

Interviewer: What should be taught in kindergartens?

Miss Lee: 'I think everything, for example, knowledge, skills, attitude and routines. The scope is wide. I think even trivial things. Life skills are needed as well.'

Learning environment

According to Spodek (1984), the tasks of the teacher were to organize instruction, assess learning needs, or organize classroom resources and activities relative to their educational goals (Spodek ed. 1984). In the interviews, the teachers' role as decision-makers and curriculum designers was not upheld. No teacher discussed the need to tailor teaching content or organization of classroom resources to meet the needs of children (a task often difficult for beginning teachers, Schram, Feiman-Nemser and Ball 1989 quoted in Reynolds 1992), although one teacher put forward the view that the teacher should provide the learning opportunities,

‘Environment is crucial. The teacher provides the learning opportunities.’(Miss Yuen)

Teachers in general referred to the preparation for teaching materials. For example:

‘A teacher has to be well prepared for the lesson. A teacher has to get ready the teaching materials needed for tomorrow.’ (Miss Chan)

However, in general the focus was on fulfilling the objectives of teaching, rather than meeting the learning needs of children.

Teachers tended not to talk about their children's potential and limitations, nor refer to observation and other assessment strategies, in order to provide the proper match between ability and opportunity. Only one teacher (Miss Wong) mentioned such issues when referring to the "improvement" of a non-Cantonese speaking boy in the class (quoted in page 77). Even here, the teacher did not assess learning needs, nor organize classroom resources and activities to help this boy. She did not appear to play the role as diagnostician.

Another teacher did talk about individual differences. To a further question "How can you

cater for individual differences?", she responded

‘Teachers have to be patient. It takes time. A teacher has to observe responses from children. When most of the children fail to understand, a teacher has to find out problems in her teaching. If only a few do not understand, it may be because of individual differences.’ (Miss Cheung)

It seemed that this teacher could verbalize individual differences but could not conceptualize them.

Children’s learning

Current views of effective practice suggest that teachers should, as managers of learning, provide and maintain a learning environment that makes educational experiences accessible to children (Spodek ed.1984). One of the roles of teachers is to assist individual children in acquiring desirable behaviors, in learning to deal with others, and in coping with their own feelings. Teachers instruct, coach, and model to achieve these ends. Children learning through play is recognised a means to these ends (Moyle 1997b)

One teacher mentioned about learning through interaction with the environment.

‘Children can learn easily. When there is a learning environment, every thing can help them learn. They touch or manipulate things and they learn.’ (Miss Yuen)

A few teachers were aware that play had a place in children's learning process.

‘Children can learn better through play and hands on activities.’ (Miss Lee)

‘Children could learn best through play and activities. A teacher has to be friendly with the children. During the class, talk to and play with children to build good relationships with them after teaching.’ (Miss Tam)

However, in this context, play was not given a high priority during the day. The teacher

(Miss Tam) commented:

‘I would like to play more with the children but time did not permit’

Another teacher placed the blame for the absence of play on the tight schedule.

Interviewer: How can children learn better?

Miss Tang: ‘Children can learn best through play and activities. I have got a lot to teach. We have a tight curriculum schedule. Therefore, it is a bit difficult to provide too many activities and play time. I know I am in a bit of hurry but I have to finish the curriculum in time’.

The problem of time was also mentioned by another teacher,

She found that

‘Children could learn when given time and patience. When the teacher was patient, children could learn better.’ (Miss Cheung)

The mode of teaching

Teachers had no comments on their mode of teaching--the teacher at the center of the learning process, lectured, questioned the pupils and "built up new knowledge" in the class (see Chapter Six and Chapter Seven).

5.2.3. Interaction with Children

Not one teacher mentioned about developing or elaborating learning based on children's responses/answers. Teachers did not seem to aware of the possibilities of helping pupils to regulate their own learning process by reducing the extent of adult support and introducing peer group activities in the manner suggested by Brown and Palincsar (1986, quoted in Galton 1997:113). Their responses reflected their focus on the outcomes of children's activities rather than the thinking process involved. This lack of emphasis by teachers on children's independence and ownership of learning was in line with the classroom observations of teachers' frequent attempts to help children physically (holding hands,

rubbing off wrong words) to write down the correct strokes of words. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter seven but two examples illustrate the point.

The teacher (Miss Lee) turned back to the writing group. She held their (children's) hands to assist them to write according to the ruling/steps of writing. She rubbed off the words that had been written wrongly.

Miss Yuen ...supervised a girl's writing ... Miss Yuen rubbed the word off. The girl rewrote it. Miss Yuen then went back to the first boy.

In the interviews, teachers appeared to have little awareness of the lack of quality interaction time and its impact on the quality of children's learning experiences. Teachers, however, were conscious of their managerial role. They appeared to be very concerned about children engaging in work. Some typical responses recorded were:

'Children could do the task.'

'Children were attentive.'

'Children could answer questions.'

'Children behaved well.'

5.2.4 Classroom Management

Teachers appeared to be greatly concerned about an orderly environment. They were disturbed when quietness or order was upset. One teacher commented:

'There was still room for the improvement of classroom management. During group activity time, children talked too loudly at the drawing table. Children were going out and coming in the classroom too frequently while doing their science worksheet.' (Miss Lee)

Another teacher expressed the view that:

'Group activity time is the most difficult time. There are a few learning tasks. Each group is engaging in different activities. It is difficult to take care (monitor of on task work) of each group. class management is most difficult in group activity time.' (Miss Cheung)

Teachers felt a sense of achievement when there was precision in timing (Table 5.1). They

would, if they had to, sacrifice other components for time control (Chapter Six p.106-108).

A teacher (Miss Tang) realised that

‘I am a bit in a hurry.’

However, she understood that it was a fact that she had to finish the curriculum in time.

‘I have to finish (the curriculum) in time.’

Class management was viewed as crucial if the teacher had to deliver teaching smoothly.

To sum up, teachers appeared to be task oriented, rather than children oriented. Their concern was not the learning process, but the learning outcomes. In theory, teaching is to be child-centred. Here, the evidence showed that teaching was task-oriented with the teachers very much in control of the learning process.

5.3 DETAIL ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS’ PERCEPTION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the next section, how teachers respond to the specific questions asked was examined. The first question concerned how teachers found the lesson. The general responses were that the lesson was fine because children could perform tasks and teaching was on schedule. Generally, one thing they were not happy about was the management of the classroom especially during group activity time (Table 5.1). Some typical responses were:

‘Fine. In general, children were attentive and behaved well.’ (MissTam)

‘Good. Group activity time is the most difficult time. There are a few learning tasks. Each group is engaging in different activities. It is difficult to take care of each group. Class management is most difficult in group activity time.’ (Miss Cheung)

‘The lesson is fine. There is disorder during the group activity time. Children talk a lot while they have to wait for the teacher or group changing. (Miss Wong)

In the analysis of answers, the first sentence was often an evaluative statement. Teachers mentioned that the lesson was “good” or “fine”. The second sentence was a suggestion for improvement. Table 5.1 shows the summary of the responses. The first column concerns the general comment on their lesson, followed by some justification of reasons in the second column. The third column was the teachers’ suggestion for improvement.

TABLE 5.1: Teachers’ comments on their lesson

Teachers				
Miss Lee	General comment	Fine		
	Reasons	According to time schedule	Children could answer questions	Children were attentive & listened well
	Areas needed improvement	Group time-children talked too loudly at the drawing table	Children went out and into the classroom too frequently while doing their science worksheet at the corridor.	
Miss Cheung	General comment	Good		
	Reasons	Children were attentive	Children participated in learning activities	
	Areas needed improvement	Group time-difficult to take care of each group engaging in different activities	Class management is most difficult	
Miss Wong	General comment	Fine		
	Reason	All teaching objectives were fulfilled		
	Areas needed improvement	Group time-disorder	Children talked a lot while they had to wait for the teacher or group changing.	
Miss Lam	General Comment	Very good		
	Reasons	Good timing	Children understood	Children were co-operative
	Areas needed improvement	Classroom Management	Some children were not attentive	
Miss Chan	General Comment	Fine		
	Reason	Children learned what had taught		
	Areas needed improvement	Children’s routine needed further training	Children needed to be reminded of behaving themselves	
Miss Yuen	General Comment	Fine		
	Reasons	Children learned what had taught	Children behaved very well	
	Areas needed improvement	Classroom management	Some children were talking	
Miss Tam	General Comment	Fine		
	Reasons	Teaching was delivered as was planned	Children behaved well	
	Areas needed improvement	Classroom management	Sometimes, the classroom was noisy	
Miss Tang	General Comment	Good		
	Reasons	Nothing unexpected happened		
	Areas needed improvement	More attention needed in lesson planning	Children could not answer some of the questions	
Miss Ma	General Comment	Good		
	Reasons	Lesson was smoothly conducted		
	Areas needed improvement	Discipline of children	Children talked too loud during group activity time	

From Table 5.1, the most common statements were 'fine', 'good'. Reasons for saying this were 'teaching on schedule', 'good attention' 'participation of children' and 'good behaviour of children'. The first major reason of five teachers was the smooth delivery of the plan (good timing, fulfillment of teaching objectives etc). The second reason was the participation of children (answering questions, attention, participation, understanding, and cooperation). The third reason mentioned was the behaviour of children. Only two teachers gave a third reason. However, eight teachers found that classroom management was not satisfactorily performed. Some teachers were concerned about the noise level, children talking while waiting, and children moving around at tables during group activity time. One teacher spoke of the difficulty of taking care of each group engaging in different activities while another teacher found the children's routine training insufficient.

The second question concerned how teachers think and know children have learned what has to be taught. One teacher found children demonstrate their learning when

'All of them (children) can finish the assigned tasks.' (Miss Chan)

Another teacher thought children learned when

'Children were attentive and listened well. Children could give correct answers to the questions.

Children could write the Chinese characters according to ruling and steps of writing.' (Miss Wong)

Children's outward response showed the extent of learning was further supported when a teacher expressed the view,

'Children can do the tasks. They ask you further questions. I can observe the response of children.'

(Miss Ma)

When this teacher was asked, "What she was going to observe? Her answer was

'Whether the children can do the tasks.' (Miss Ma)

In an analysis of these answers (Table 5.2), the major emphasis is that children will do the job and answer questions. Only one teacher resorted to children asking questions while another teacher would ‘observe’ whether children could do the task.

TABLE 5.2 How did teachers know children learn what had taught

Teachers	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Children could answer questions	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children could do the task(s)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
By observation		✓							
Children asked further questions		✓							
Children are attentive	✓								

Teachers appeared to be concerned whether children were on task, instead of mentally engaged. Learning outcomes rather than learning process were the focus of teachers’ attention. No teacher seemed to focus on the learning process.

In the third question, teachers were asked for their perception on how children could learn and how children could learn better. One teacher thought children could learn where there was a supportive learning environment.

‘Children were attentive and listened well. Children can learn easily. When there is a learning environment, every thing can help them learn. They touch or manipulate things and they learn. Environment is crucial.’ (Miss Tang)

The role of teacher in children’s learning was talked about by another two teachers.

‘If a teacher tries her best, every child can learn. ... The teacher uses language that children can understand. Encouragement and praises can motivate children to learn. Good class management fosters children's learning.’ (Miss Wong)

‘When they (children) are taught, they can learn what is taught. They (children) listen to the teacher and follow the guidelines of the teacher. The teacher has to make things clear to children.’ (Miss Lee)

The nature of the learning was also seen as significant to children's learning.

'Children learn better if tasks are manageable. They learn when they participate and are attentive.
Children learn better if tasks are manageable.' (Miss Cheung)

While asked on how children could learn better, teachers mentioned a number of possibilities (Table 5.3). Nothing was mentioned about children initiating learning, children's taking responsibility in learning and children's selection and use of relevant resources. To the teachers, children learned what was taught when they could answer questions and finish tasks (Table 5.2). Table 5.3 shows two major things most frequently cited by teachers were good classroom management and preparation of lessons. This is closely followed by friendliness of teacher and interactive teaching (children participation). Finally, teacher encouragement and patience was cited.

TABLE 5.3 Teachers' perception of how children could learn better

Perception\teacher	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Manipulation/hands on experience	✓								
Teachers' encouragement/praises		✓	✓	✓		✓			
Teachers' preparation of lessons	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teachers were patient		✓	✓			✓			
Teachers were friendly		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Tasks were manageable		✓	✓						
Children learn through play	✓								
Children participated /answered questions and were attentive		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Good classroom management		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

External factors such as lesson preparation was regarded as highly relevant to the quality of learning. Emotional climate of the classroom was also highly rated by the teachers in order to promote learning of children. Less frequently mentioned were the task demand, experiential learning and the use of play.

Teachers were also asked about their perception on how a teacher could contribute to children's learning in the fourth question. Teachers referred to lesson preparation, interactive teaching, positive reinforcement and supportive learning environment.

'A teacher has to be well prepared for the lesson. A teacher has to get ready the teaching materials needed for tomorrow. During the contact time, a teacher has to allow children to express. ... (Learning) environment is crucial. The teacher provides the learning opportunities.' (Miss Chan)

'I will keep the time to make sure the objectives of the day can be accomplished.... I prepare lessons two weeks before. One day before the lesson, I will read through the lesson plan and get the teaching aids ready. ... A teacher has to be patient. The non-Chinese speaking boy can learn Chinese because I am patient.' (Miss Wong)

A teacher has to be friendly with the children. During the class, talk to and play with children to build up relations after teaching. ... Let children understand the classroom rules. For example, if they have not finished the assigned tasks, they cannot play with toys. Praises and reinforcement can be very effective.' (Miss Tang)

Two teachers mentioned providing opportunities for children's talk.

'A teacher should talk to children when she is teaching. She should not talk all the way through. Children should be given time to talk and answer questions.' (Miss Wong)

Another teacher held the same opinion:

'During contact time, a teacher has to allow children to express themselves.' (Miss Tam)

From Table 5.4, class management was the most frequently cited while time control and teaching preparation were the second frequent criteria of effective teaching. Though providing opportunities for children talk was mentioned, teachers tended not to mention about deepening children's knowledge and understanding, matching methods to curriculum objectives, matching methods to needs of children, using assessment to inform teaching or allowing children to think about what they had learned (Moyle 1997a).

TABLE 5.4 Teachers' perception of quality/effective teaching

Teacher	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Teaching preparation	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Time for children to express			✓	✓		✓			
Praises and friendliness		✓							
Less teacher talk			✓						
Time control	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Children could accomplish learning outcomes	✓	✓	✓						
Good class management		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

A fifth question concerned teachers' perception on what affected teaching. Teachers found either teaching experience or further teacher education or both helpful to their teaching practice (Table 5.5). Only two of the nine teachers, claimed peer advice could benefit their teaching. Some comments from teachers were as follows:

'In my first year, I do not have much experience with children. I do not know what to provide for children. I stuck to the lesson plan. I taught strictly according to the lesson plan. I taught and the children sat there to learn. After five years, I am better. However, I am not as good as those having ten years experience. I think further study can improve teaching... Classroom observation of other teachers can provide insights... I hope I can further my study in the near future. I like teaching. At present, I can only use simple ways of teaching. If I further my study, I can share the teaching approaches with others.' (Miss Lam)

'Experience will help me. When I accumulate more experience, I'll teach better. Further education in the field of early childhood education will help me understand how children learn... Sometimes, I seek advice from experienced teachers.' (Miss Wong)

'A teacher can improve her teaching by sharing experience with other teachers. Of course, teaching experience of my own is important. Own experience is sometimes better than experience provided by others. A teacher should further her studies or take some courses in the field of early childhood education.' (Miss Chan)

'Before my QKT study, I tried to transmit knowledge to children. Now, I will leave room for children's expression and development.' (Miss Lee)

TABLE 5.5 What affects teaching

Teacher	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Advice from experienced teachers			✓		✓			✓	
Teaching experience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Knowledge of early childhood education/Teacher education training	✓		✓	✓	✓				

When teachers were asked about their perception on what makes a good teacher, the answers were quite varied. Teachers in general referred to the emotional aspect of a teacher

‘A good teacher loves children. She should be active and patient. Children are happy in her class. She should have a good knowledge of early childhood education’ (Miss Tam)

‘A good teacher has to be patient, caring, serious, and devoted. Plenty of time has to be devoted to prepare lesson plans, teaching materials, and worksheets. The attitude has to be genuine, i.e. hoping to do good to children. And we have to love children.’ (Miss Lee)

‘A good teacher should be patient, care and be fair. A (good) teacher should not neglect those who are quiet and not out-spoken. A good teacher can help children learn.’ (Miss Lam)

In an analysis of responses (Table 5.6), prepared/planned lessons and love for children were highly rated by teachers, much more than principles of cognitive learning or instructional effectiveness. Helping children to learn and knowledge of early childhood education were the next frequent answers. Interesting to note was that external judgement such as recognition by peer, principal and parents were also attributes of a good teacher.

TABLE 5.6 Teachers’ perception of good teacher

	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Love children	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Patient	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Fair		✓					✓		
Devoted	✓								
Prepare for lessons	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Helping children to learning		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Knowledge of early childhood education			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Recognised by peer		✓	✓			✓			
Recognised by principal		✓	✓						
Recognised by parents		✓	✓			✓			

When asked to provide a metaphor for teacher, most teachers would say a teacher was like a friend or a parent.

I: If you are to provide a metaphor for teacher, what will you like to say?

Miss Cheung: ' I would say a teacher is like a parent.'

One teacher talked about a teacher as being like a magician.

I: If you are to provide a metaphor for teacher, what will you like to say?

Miss Lee ' I would say a teacher is a friend or a parent. I think it may not be inclusive. A teacher is a magician. A teacher changes her role in different context. The role of a teacher changes a lot.'

5.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Despite the philosophy of Early Childhood Education, firm traditional kind of teaching with emphasis on planning, preparation and external judgement was perceived as important. Teachers on one hand tended to be warm/friendly to children while on the other hand they exercised control on children. There was not much emphasis on children asking questions, learning was conducted in a teacher directed mode. This contrasts sharply with the Early Childhood Education philosophy where learning is not seen to be the result of knowledge transmission but the product of working things out for oneself and the teacher is the facilitator in the learning process (see Chapter Three).

5.4.1 Perception of Learning and Teaching

Interviews clearly revealed how these nine teachers perceived the work of kindergarten teachers. In Chapter three it was argued that how teachers perceive their task/role and respond would influence the nature of their practice. Their perceptions will manifest themselves in the way question and answer sessions are conducted, the form of classroom control exercised, the system of rewards and punishments meted out, and the degree to which pupils are permitted to exercise choice over what they learn (Galton 1996). Things

teachers rated high were: preparation, learning outcomes, timing and order, and the use of praises for class management. Teachers tended to describe their own actions as teachers rather than the actions of pupils. When teachers believed that preparation of lessons was crucial to effective teaching and learning (Table 5.4), there was a shift from children's agenda to teacher's agenda. The strategy might ease teachers having less confidence of curriculum knowledge when things taught could be planned ahead, but it was not sufficient to ensure quality learning.

5.4.2. Belief and Practice

Views expressed by teachers concerning the managerial role of teachers and the learning of children were subsequently confirmed by observations and field notes (see Chapter Six and Seven). Some teachers in the interviews mentioned about providing learning opportunities to children, individual differences, interaction with the environment, learning through play, playing with children, providing opportunities for children's talk or allowing children to express. There was however no variation in their practice. The justification for this was the time constraints, a rational coping behaviour.

Teachers in general found own experience most helpful for effective teaching although three teachers claimed shared experience was also helpful (Table 5.5). Two to three teachers in the study suggested the social recognition as a good teacher by peers, principals and parents was important. It was clear that all classroom teachers, work in a way evidencing the need to 'be like a teacher' in performance terms rather than 'thinking like a teacher' in conceptual terms. Teachers perceived the 'teacher role' in this way, possibly because of a relatively minimal knowledge of the deeper aspects of that role and the emphasis of day-to-day contact with teachers at a 'performance' level (Moyles 1997a).

5.4.3 Ability to Reflect

These conversations also inform the cognitive stage of the teacher. The teachers reflected on what works and why it works or not (technical rationality rather than other levels of reflection e.g. to reflect on the moral and ethical implications of classroom practices; e.g. test hypothesis). For example, a teacher found her teaching fine because:

What had to be delivered was delivered according to the time schedule. Children followed instructions and behave themselves, though children had to be reminded and were a bit noisy during tea time and pack away time. All of them could finish the assigned tasks (Miss Chan).

Teachers in the study appeared to be constantly thinking about their time control and the delivery of teaching. A teacher (Miss Tang) realised that she was a bit in a hurry but she nevertheless accepted that she had to finish the curriculum in time.

Teachers were also conscious of the need for firm and clear rules.

“When children are not attentive and noisy, I will call out those names and ask them to sit down.”
(Miss Wong)

According to the romantic conception of an idealized early childhood philosophy (see Chapter Two), the curriculum of early childhood education/kindergarten is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience. An effective teacher should provide a supportive learning context. First, “the provision of a social context in which there are opportunities to learn and in which children are enabled to exercise some control over their construction of meaning and understanding. Second, high-quality teaching and assistance in learning, including effective communication, assessment and empathy and the provision of appropriate and knowledgeable support and instruction” (Pollard and Filer 1996). The organization of classroom and teacher-pupil interactions will inform the effectiveness of teaching inside the classroom.

The ability to reflect informs the stage of professional development of teachers. According to LaBoskey (1991), a novice focuses on himself or herself rather than pupils. Galton (1996) proposed a continuum of cognitive stages of teacher: from thinking self then task then child. How far were the practice of the teachers studied correlated with their beliefs and resembled one of the stages of teacher development in the continuum set out in Chapter three? The work of teaching inside the classrooms had to be looked into and this is the subject of the next chapters.

CHAPTER SIX: ORGANIZATION OF KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

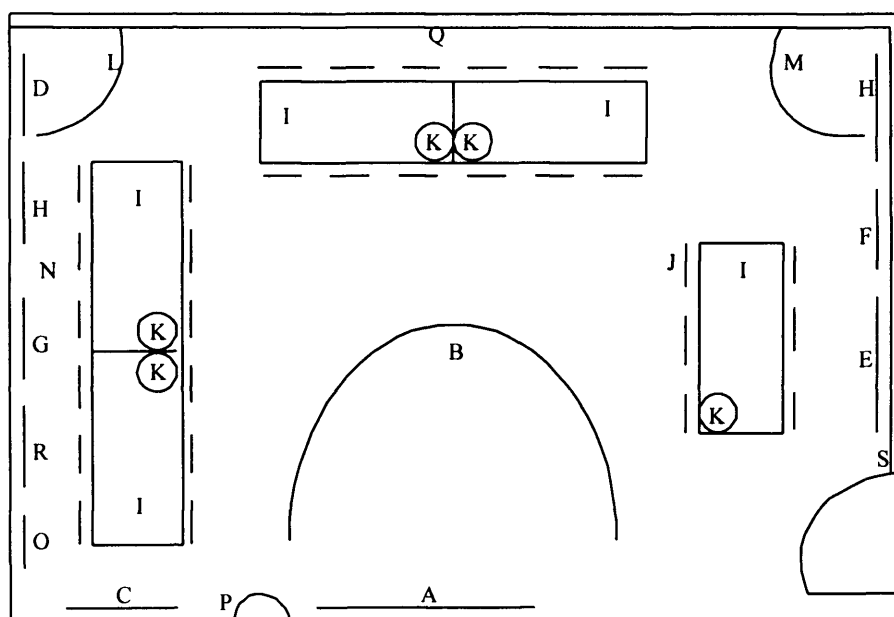
The nine teachers in general rated lesson preparation, learning outcomes, timing and order, classroom management high in their perception of teaching and learning (Chapter Five). It is therefore interesting to look at their practice inside the classroom to see how far the vision of early childhood education was acknowledged. The work of teaching involves curriculum management, classroom management, interactions with children and coping strategies. This chapter will examine the first two components, leaving interactions with children, and coping strategies to Chapter Six. Organizations of the nine classrooms observed were similar. Inside the classrooms, space was fully utilized. Shelves, cabinets and learning corners were placed along the sides of the classroom. Chairs and desks were at the centre of the classrooms. There were a number of sessions on the time-table. Although the order of teaching might vary, the curriculum areas covered were similar. Most learning activities were structured. An orderly environment was observed.

6.1.1 A description of a typical classroom

There was a usual setting of the classroom. Inside the classroom (Figure 6.1), four walls were decorated with posters etc. On the wall at the front of the classroom, there was a time-table/schedule of the day (every day a new schedule), sometimes schedule of birthday celebration (changed once a month), or special occasions such as ceremony/school picnic day). There was also a clock on the wall. There were rhymes and lists of birthday groupings, with the dates of children's birthday, on one side of the wall. On the other side of the room, the wall displayed the vocabulary charts of both English and Chinese words. A theme board was on one of the four walls. There were pictures related to the theme.

When the theme was Spring, there would be pictures of grassland and scenery of forests, rivers, butterflies, honey bees, flowers, cows, frogs, squirrels etc. Colours were bright and eye catching. Alongside, there was children's work on writing, craft-work and drawing posting up and hanging from the ceiling, or along the windows. Cupboards and windows were mounted with cartoons, teachers' "art work". Desks were put together and arranged into two to four groups (Table 6.1). On top of the desk, there was a sticker with the group label, e.g. pictures of fruit, animals or colour. Children, in school uniforms, sat on a chair around the "group table".

Figure 6.1 A typical classroom layout



- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| A. movable white board | K. sticker of group label |
| B. class teaching corner | L. library corner |
| C. time-table/schedule of the day | M. home corner |
| D. vocabulary charts of both English and Chinese words | N. science corner |
| E. birthday list | O. teacher's desk |
| F. rhymes charts | P. a clock |
| G. theme board | Q. low shelf |
| H. children's work | R. display boards |
| I. desks/group tables | S. cupboards |
| J. chairs | |

Table 6.1 Groupings of the nine classes

Teacher Class	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Number of groups	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
Group size (number of children)	4-5	4-5	6	10	10-11	9-10	8	8-9	10
Class size	14	9	18	30	32	29	32	26	30

6.1.2 Class Size

Class size in the nine classrooms varied. Class size ranged from nine to thirty-two children in the study (Table 6.1). A class teacher was allocated to each class. In some schools with better manpower resources, a teacher aide was allocated to help the class teacher (Table 6.2) to take care of half or one third of the children, especially during class work time.

Table 6.2 Class size and teacher aide

Teacher Class	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Number of children in the class	14	9	18	30	32	29	32	26	30
Having a teacher aide	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

6.1.3 Use of Space

The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends a minimum of thirty-five square feet of indoor space per child in the preschool and primary classrooms (NAEYC 1991a, quoted in Seefeldt and Barbour 1998: 227). Less than that is said to result in crowding and limits children's opportunities to explore materials and experiment. In Hong Kong, an optimum indoor space of about 34.8 square feet (1.8 metres) per child is recommended in the preschool classrooms.

For assemblies, teachers tended to use the hall. Those who did not have a hall would use the lobby while those without a lobby would use the classroom. Thus, there was difference across schools instead of across teachers (Figure 6.2, Figure 6.3), regarding the location of assemblies. For the class teaching (carpet time) and group activities, teaching and learning activities took place inside the classroom (homeroom), corridor space or music room (Figure 6.2). Music activities (only five classes observed had their music sessions on the day of observation) were held in music room (a classroom with a piano and without desks), but one exception in the activity room. The corridor was the most popular space used by teachers. Five teachers out of the seven conducted the physical movement session in the corridors (Figure 6.2). Miss Lee set up a science corner at the corridor while Miss Yuen, Miss Lam, Miss Chan, Miss Tang, and Miss Ma held physical movement and Miss Yuen and Miss Lam held class teaching (carpet time) in the corridors (Figure 6.3). Miss Cheung held physical movement in the Activity Room. Teachers (Miss Tam, Miss Tang, and Miss Ma) in School III held assembly, music and physical movement in the Hall (a multi-purpose room) (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Use of space inside and outside the classroom in different sessions

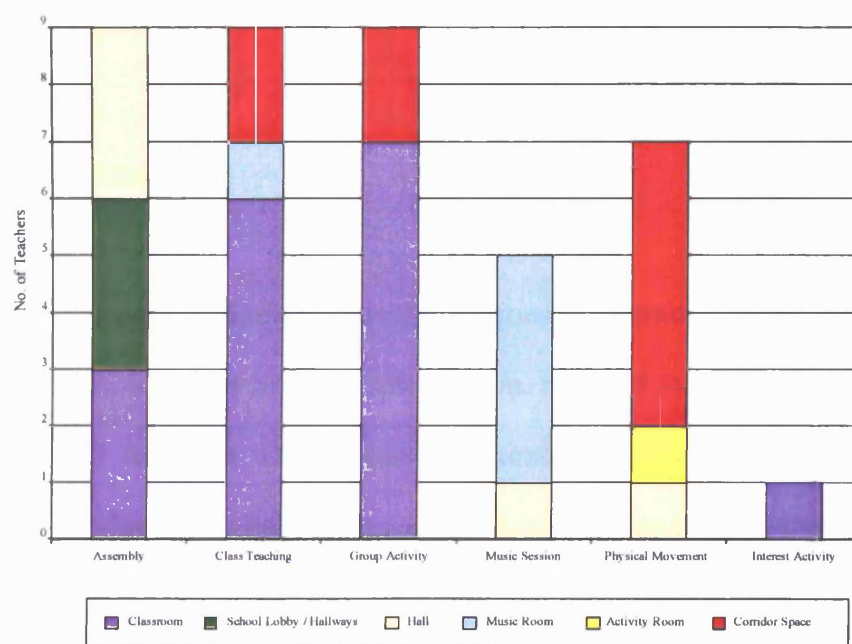
















































Figure 6.3 Use of space inside and outside the classroom of individual teacher

Activity Teacher	Assembly	Class Teaching	Group Activity	Music Session	Physical Movement	Interest Activity
Miss Lee					Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Miss Cheung				Not Applicable		Not Applicable
Miss Wong					Not Applicable	
Miss Lam						Not Applicable
Miss Chan				Not Applicable		Not Applicable
Miss Yuen						Not Applicable
Miss Tam						Not Applicable
Miss Tang				Not Applicable		Not Applicable
Miss Ma				Not Applicable		Not Applicable

 Classroom	 School Lobby/Hallway	 Corridor Space	 Activity Room	 Music Room	 Hall
---	---	---	--	---	--

6.2 A DAY INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

6.2.1 Time Tabling

Besides a school time-table, a detailed lesson plan (Appendix II) was common among the nine teachers. In School II, the three teachers wrote brief plans only for class teaching (carpet time) but not the other activities (Appendix III). The rest of the teachers wrote down details of the lesson into columns consisting of aims, content, activities and teaching aids (Appendix 6.1).

6.2.2 General Pattern

Sessions in a day

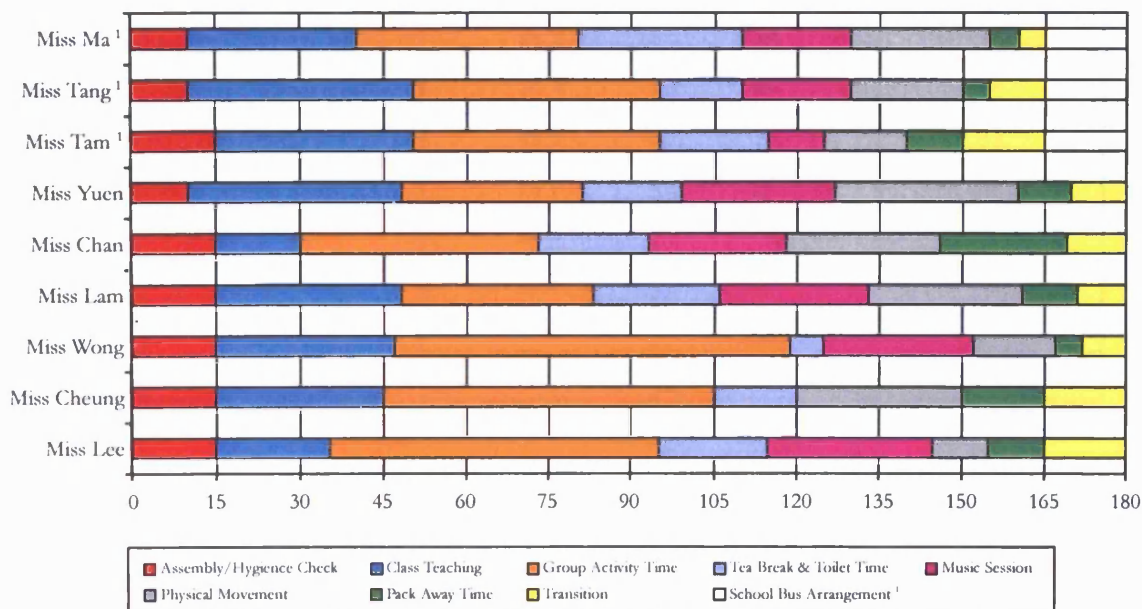
In general, each day consisted of seven major sessions -- assembly, class teaching (carpet time), group activity time, tea break, music session, physical movement and pack away time (Appendix 6.1 and 6.2). During assembly time, the class sang songs inside the classrooms or in the "assembly halls" (Figure 6.2). Some classes also had morning exercise. Children would hear school announcements from loud speakers. Teachers took roll calls, collected homework, checked children's handbook (record of school-home written

communication), finger-nails and tidiness of children. Some teachers would lead children to the washroom. So the assembly time was sometimes known as toilet and hygiene check (health inspection) time (Rao and Koong 1999). The first session was class teaching (carpet time), in five out of the nine cases (Table 6.5). Regarding the others, Miss Lam, Miss Chan and Miss Yuen of School II held physical movement in the first session and Miss Tam of School III had music session in the first session, followed by physical movement. Tea break would be in the middle of the day.

Time allocation

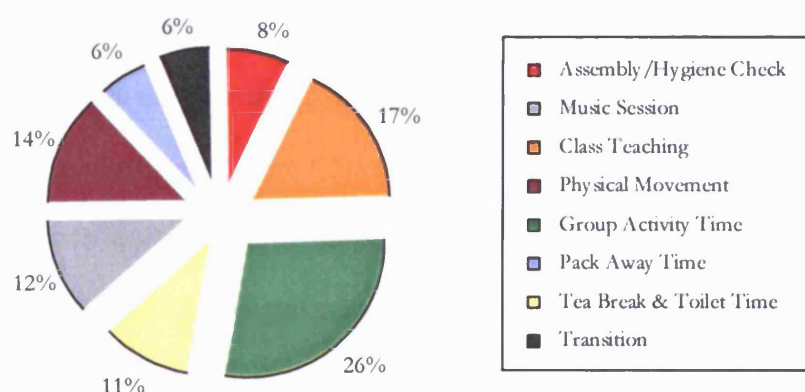
There were some variations in time allocation to different sessions among these teachers (Figure 6.4). However, 70% of time (less assembly, transition, toilet time and pack away time) was occupied on things related to the actual purpose of the lesson/teaching (Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.4 Daily schedule – time allocated to different sessions according to teachers



¹ In the classes of Miss Tam, Miss Tang and Miss Ma, 15 minutes school bus arrangement were scheduled after the pack away time while others either allowed pupils for school bus to miss the show and tell, interest activity and the sharing session or hurry out during pack away time.

Figure 6.5 Overall distribution of time for all activities (on time-table/daily schedule)



Furthermore, a fifteen to forty minutes class teaching (carpet time) and another thirty-three to seventy-two minutes for follow-up activities (class work and assignment) were devoted to academic work (Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6 Amount of time allocated to different activities

Activities \ Duration	Average Time	The Highest	The Lowest
Assembly/Hygiene Check	13.3	15	10
Class Teaching (carpet time)	30.3	40	15
Group Activity Time	48.1	72	33
Tea Break & Toilet Time	18.6	30	6
Music Session	20.8	30	0
Physical Movement	23.8	38	10
Pack Away Time	10.3	23	5
Transition	10.9	15	5

From Figure 6.6, the average time for assemblies was 13.3 minutes. This was less than half the time devoted to class teaching (30.3 Minutes) and just over a quarter of the time given to group activity (48.1 minutes). The toilet time and music session took around twenty minutes (18.6 and 20.8 minutes respectively). Time allocated to physical movement (23.8 minutes) was a few minutes more than the music session. The pack away time and

transitions were allocated the least time (10.3 and 10.9 minutes respectively). Group activity got the highest time allocation, followed by class teaching, physical movement, music movement, tea break and toilet, and assembly. The biggest variation in time allocation was in group activity time. When assembly took place inside the classroom, some teachers appeared to spend more time during assembly than those having assembly at the hall or in the corridors. It could be that teachers saved time in transition from the assembly to the classroom. There were some slight variations (Table 6.6) in lesson content. In practice, there were also some slight variations in the time-table. For example, schools had Putonghua (Mandarin, an official language in China) or English teacher to teach half an hour for every class once or twice a week. This took up the time of a session (It was the whole music session for Miss Chan's class and ten minutes of the physical movement time in Miss Lam's class) in a day.

Teaching content

The content of class teaching was around general studies (Table 6.3) while group activity/class work time was devoted to language, mathematics and craft work (Table 6.4).

Table 6.3 Topics of class/theme/small group teaching

Teacher Class	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Level of Class	K3	K2	K3	K2	K1	K3	K1	K3	K1
Topic	Spring-plants & flowers	Healthy food	Spring-honey & bees	Spring-insects	Festivals In Spring -Easter	Festivals In Spring -Special features	Home Safety	Hygiene	Home Safety

During class work time, half of the class in one or two groups at table(s) would do worksheets or writing while the other half sitting would be involved in craft work or drawing. The former group would have a teacher's close supervision while the later worked on their own. In most of the classes (seven out of nine cases), entitlement to free choice

time or free play depended on children's efficiency on working out the class assignment (Table 6.4). Children could play with toys or go to designated corners when they finished their work.

Table 6.4 Learning tasks during classwork time/group activity time

Teacher Class	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Level of Class	K3	K2	K3	K2	K1	K3	K1	K3	K1
Task 1	Colabo- rative group drawing	Hand- writing practice (2)	Hand- writing practice (3)	Painting	Hand- writing practice (3)	Hand- writing practice (3)	Drawing & Sym- metrical artwork	Learning kits	Work- sheet (4)
Task 2	Work- sheet (1)	Craft work	Sentence making	Hand- writing practice (3)	Craft work	Craft work	Work-sheet (5)	Library time	Learning kits (7)
Task 3	Hand- writing practice & sub- traction	sentence making	Honey experience	Maths Work (4)	Work- sheet (4)	Computer games	Free Choices (Choosing time)	Work- sheet (4)	Free choices (8)
Task 4	Library time	Free Choices (8)	Free Choices (8)	Free Choices (8)	Free Choices (8)	Free Choices (8)	Hand- writing practice (6)	Free Choices (8)	
Task 5	Free Choices (Choosing time)								

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| (1) discriminating genuine flowers | (4) Mathematics work | (7) puzzles |
| (2) Chinese words and Number 1-40 | (5) discriminating electrical appliances | (8) free choices after finishing work |
| (3) Chinese and English Words | (6) one Chinese word | |

Order of Teaching

The order of teaching varied among teachers (Table 6.5). However a tea break of six to thirty minutes, was scheduled in the middle of the half day while children sat at their group tables and had some snacks and drinks. Children either had class teaching before or after tea break. Although different schools might have different practice, teachers in the same school would have similar schedules. Miss Tam however, was an exception in School III. She had music and physical movement while the other two teachers (Miss Tang, and Miss Ma) in the same school started class teaching at the beginning of the day. The time-table of

School III was scheduled in order to maximize the availability of the activity hall. In general, children packed their school bags five to twenty minutes before school ended. Children went home by school bus and would leave the classroom, fifteen or twenty minutes before the bell rang. Children picked up by parents would then have a longer pack-away time. Teachers might use the waiting time for giving homework or school notice reminders, reading rhymes or singing songs. The schedule of the day was therefore very full within a fairly rigid time-table.

Table 6.5 Order of teaching

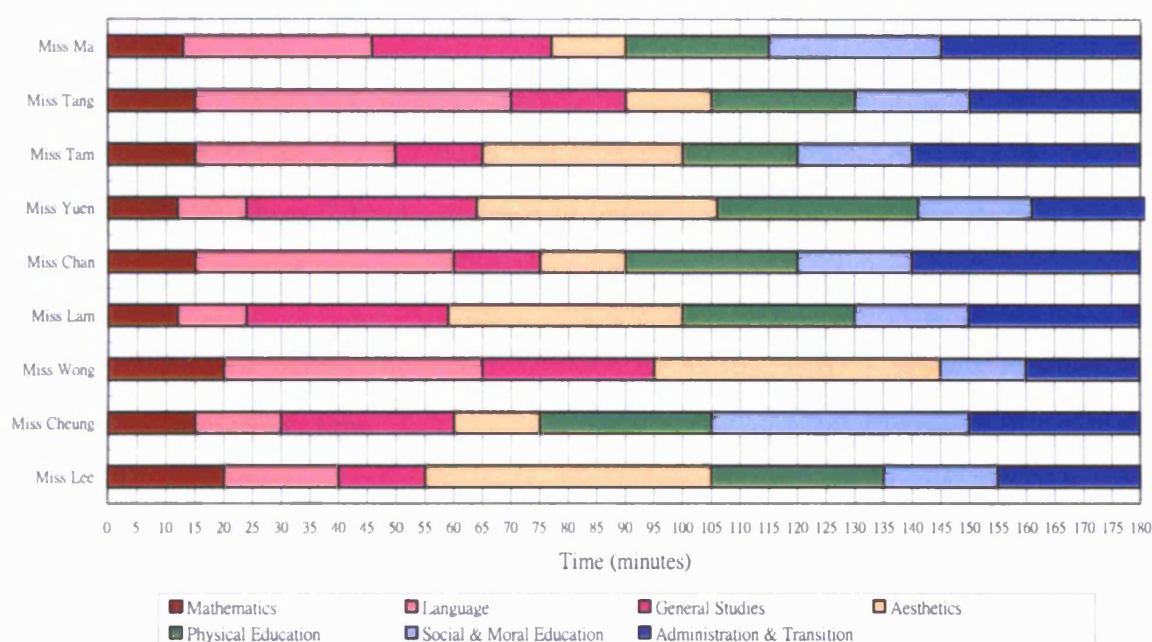
Activities Teachers	Class Teaching	Group Activity time	Tea Break/ Toilet Time	Music Session	Physical Movement
Miss Lee	First Session	Second Session	Third Session	Fourth Session	Fifth Session
Miss Cheung	First Session	Fifth Session	Second Session	(Bible time) Fourth Session	Third Session
Miss Wong	First Session	Second Session	Third Session	Fourth Session	(Interest Activity), Fifth Session
Miss Lam	Third Session	Fifth Session	Second Session	Fourth Session	First Session
Miss Chan	Fourth Session	Fourth Session	Second session	Putonghua Session, Third Session	First session
Miss Yuen	Fourth Session	Fifth Session	Second session	Third session	First Session
Miss Tam	Fourth Session	Fifth Session	Third session	First session	Second session
Miss Tang	First Session	Second Session	Third Session	(Story Session), Fourth Session	Outdoor activities, Fifth Session
Miss Ma	First Session (English class after tea break)	Second Session	Fourth Session	(Revision) Fifth Session	Third Session

Curriculum Areas

Though the order of activities was different, the content of lessons was similar. There were mathematics, language, general studies, aesthetics, physical education, social and moral education in the curriculum. The proportion of time (Figure 6.7) spent on core and

foundation subjects, language writing and mathematics, in the curriculum varied between one third (fifty-five minutes) and half (ninety-five minutes). This included fifteen to forty minutes class teaching and two thirds of class work time doing worksheets and writing.

Figure 6.7 Time allocated to different curriculum areas



Though there were a variety of tasks (singing on the way to toilet, talking to teacher and classmates at tea time, class teaching/show and tell/story telling, doing work sheet, hands on activities, writing, music and physical movement), in general most of the teacher's attention was given to the progress of children made in the areas of mathematics, language and writing/penmanship. During class work time, while pupils worked at tables with assignments, Galton (1989) found that the teacher would first offer considerable help to children until children has gained sufficient confidence, whereupon overt support for the learning was withdrawn. In these classes the pattern was unlike that described by Galton. Continuous supervision was observed. An instance recorded would illustrate that.

While one group of children were doing craft-work at a table, Miss Chan sat with children at the Mathematics table. She reminded children to correct a few mistakes. Children then finished the

counting and matching one after the other. Miss Chan went to the writing table. She sat with the writing group whenever possible, when there were no hands putting up at the Mathematics table. At the writing table, Miss Chan held children's hands to practice writing. From time to time, she checked answers for children at the Mathematics table.

Teachers had to manage two to four tasks at the same time (Table 6.4). Children were assigned to do specific tasks by teachers at the beginning of group activity time. However, at tables with craft work or drawing, children generally worked on their own. Though individualized experiences of self-pacing and peer interaction existed during craft work and drawing time, teachers did not use direct or indirect means for preparing or arranging the learning environment (including materials and activities) to facilitate children's active participation and self-initiated learning. Children's work was assigned by teachers at the beginning of group activity time.

Moreover, there was a clear differentiation between learning and play which were not integrated. Pupils were awarded free time if they finished their work on time. One teacher (Miss Lee) allowed children who had finished their task to play chess in pairs. In another teacher's (Miss Yuen) classroom, a boy released ran quickly to put his exercise book away on the shelf and joined the children at the toy corner. Some children, after finishing all the tasks, asked for permission and were allowed to go to the toy corner. Furthermore, free choices had connotations. One teacher (Miss Lam) provided choices of four songs for children to choose from at music movement session.

Miss Lam played the music (descending note) to clue children to sit down. Miss Lam: "Now choices for you." Miss Lam mentioned four names of songs. Children (picked One): "Brushing Teeth" Miss Lam: "Get ready." (Children then recited the rhyme.)

A conversation between a teacher (Miss Yuen) and children was noted:

Miss Yuen: "We have three groups. One group will do basketball, one group will do stilts, and the other group will have bicycles. You can choose." Miss Yuen (looking at children in one of

the groups): "What do you like to do?" Children: "Cycling" Miss Yuen turned to another group: "I'll give you a challenge. I'll set the basket higher up today." Miss Yuen (to the last group): "What do you want to do?" Children: "Stilt." Miss Yuen: "OK, you can do stilts." During changes, eight minutes later, Miss Yuen stopped the three groups. Miss Yuen: "Stilt group can choose which group to change with." (Stilts group wanted to ride bicycles.) The basketball wanted to choose first. Miss Yuen promised to give them the chance next time. The basketball group then changed to play stilts and the bicycle group played basketball.

It appeared that the use of time in classrooms was clearly divided, that is, into high-status and low-status activities. This encouraged children to believe that academic work, with the teacher sitting around, was more worthwhile than many other skills taught in schools, such as craft and creative activities. Campbell found that children are intelligent enough to understand the hidden curriculum so that those activities that are not using up a teacher's time by being taught will be recognized as a rest activity after engaging in the core and fundamental academic studies (Campbell and Neill 1994).

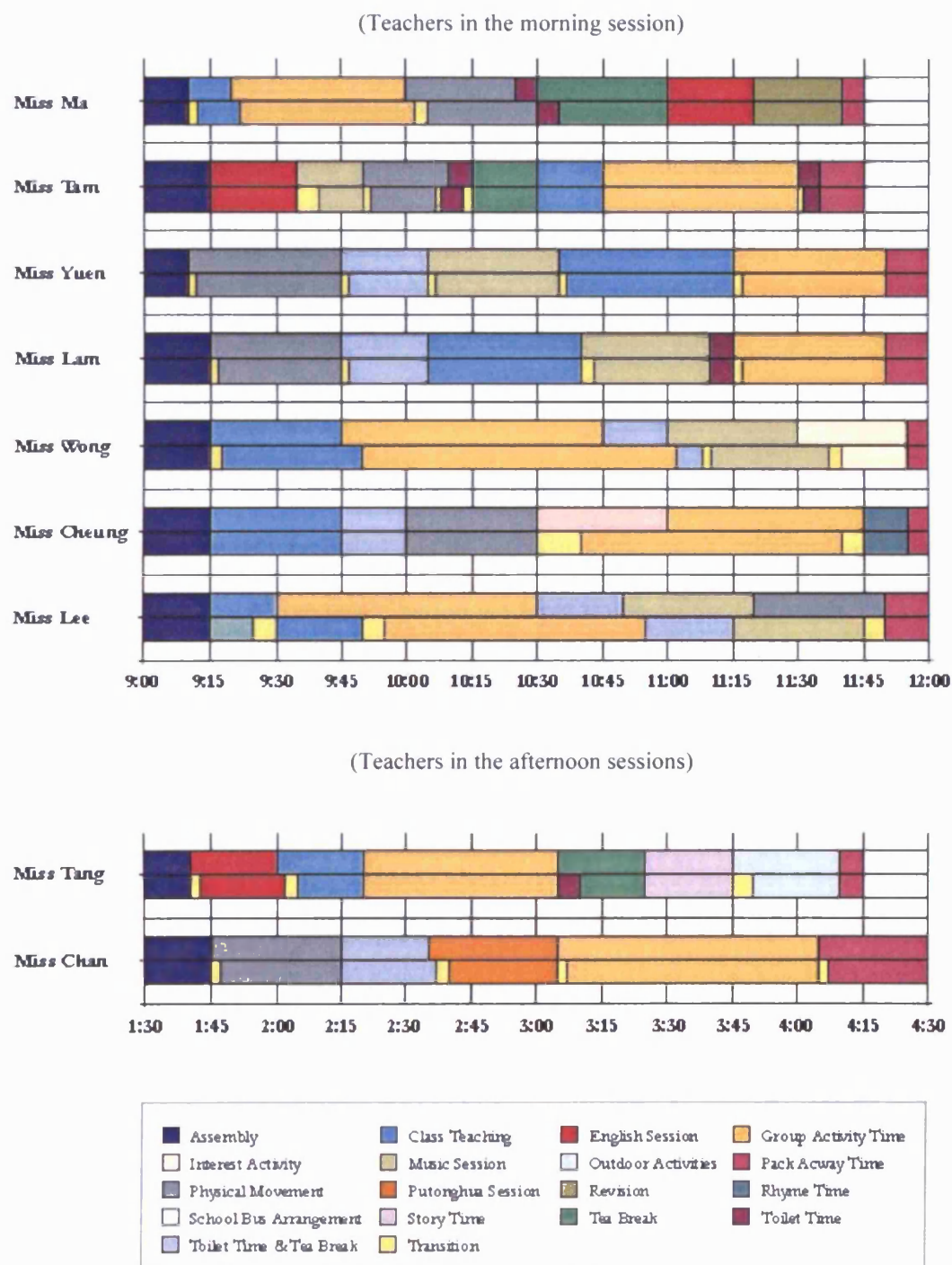
6.3 CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

6.3.1 Differences between written and work schedule

There was little variation in the order of teaching. The order of the day was generally the same. Assembly came first, followed by class teaching, physical movement or music movement. Tea break was in the middle of the day. The time schedule was closely followed and observed by all the teachers. There were only slight variations between what was on the time-table and what occurred in practice during sessions (Appendix IV). Some adjustments in a few sessions (Figure 6.8) and slight variations over practice and time-table were recorded, presumably because transitions were not scheduled on the time-table and teachers might overrun the time allocated for the previous lesson. Teachers tended to make up time at the expense of the next session, such as physical and music movement, tea break. The most unlikely sessions where teachers attempted to make up time were class teaching

and group activity time. All the teachers managed to close activities on time to spare time for transitions.

Figure 6.8 Variations in timing and sessions



In response to the tight schedule, some teachers tended to cancel a session on the timetable. Three instances out of four were recorded in School I. Miss Lee and Miss Cheung

cancelled physical movement and bible session respectively while Miss Wong combined tea time with group activity time (Appendix V). By doing this, the three teachers extended class teaching and group activity time. Miss Tang in School III added a second toilet time (Miss Lam and Miss Tam had the second toilet time on the time-table) other than the scheduled one. Miss Tang had used up five minutes in the tea break for the purpose. Miss Tam had more sessions (ten sessions) on the daily schedule than that of any other teachers in the study. In practice, she skipped a few of them, for example, the revision of old learning and listening skills in music. To conclude, all the teachers in general found ways to make up time by the end of the school day so that parents were not kept waiting to pick children.

Teachers focussed closely on the content stipulated in the schedule. There were only slight variations in the content recorded (Table 6.6). In some cases, cooperative learning, free choices and children's active participation were put down on the time-table but not put into practice. The teacher, Miss Ma, changed from a ball game to slides. This could have been because safety would be difficult to maintain when physical movement was conducted in the corridor.

Teachers appeared to be time conscious. There was in general no obvious problem in timing and closing an activity. However, the pace inside the classroom was quick. A few incidents illustrated the situation well;

It was tea time inside Miss Lam's classroom.

Children (in a loud voice): "A girl is crying."

Miss Lam (walked to the girl): "What's the matter?" "Is it because you can't finish the bread?"

The girl (nearly vomited): "Yes"

Miss Lam (padding her shoulder): "We'll wait for you."

Table 6.6 Variations in Content

	On the lesson plan	In practice
Miss Lee		
Group activity	Cooperative drawing: Children are allowed to decide whether they need to go on with their drawing or not	The class was divided into three groups randomly by the teacher. One group was to do cooperative drawing.
	During the observation of flowers, children are allowed to discuss, express opinions and ask questions. The teacher will assist children's learning.	Children did the observation on their own at the science corner, the corridor outside the classroom.
Miss Cheung		
Class teaching	Teacher will ask "Where does milk come from?" Allow children to give answers first and then tell them milk comes from dairy cattle	Teacher asked the question and answered it herself.
Miss Wong		
Group activity time	Free choices as one learning task	Children could go into play corners after they had finished the three learning tasks
Miss Lam		
Class teaching	Children learn to distinguish insects and animals, through their participation in an activity.	Names of insects were written on paper puppets
Miss Chan		
Class teaching	Children learn why we have Easter Eggs on Easter, through their participation in an activity.	A story was told.
Miss Yuen		
Class teaching	Children learn festivals and things related to the festivals, through their participation in an activity.	Word cards and pictures were prepared and posted on the board by the teacher.
Miss Tam		
Class Teaching	The teacher will use the knowledge children learned yesterday to guide their thinking	Not carried out
	Children will be introduced the concept of half	Not elicited
Music Session	Children will have to sing while playing	Not enforced
	Training of children's listening skill	Skipped
	Children would be allowed to make suggestions on songs at revision, when situations allowed	No revision of old songs
Physical Movement	Cooperative group work	Parallel play instead of cooperative work
Miss Tang		
Class teaching	Children are to describe the picture	Children answered questions on the picture
	Children are to suggest ways of keep clean living environment	Skipped
Miss Ma		
Class teaching	Children are provided with some pictures to stimulate thinking for an ending to the story	Pictures were provided. One child selected a picture for the class to be the ending of the story
Physical movement	Group work Ball game	Children played individually Ball game was replaced by slides

One teacher told children to hurry up themselves at tea time.

Miss Yuen: "Eat quickly. We'll have.....soon."

Another teacher (Miss Wong) announced:

"Hurry up, it's a bit run over time."

Curriculum management was organized and systematic, every bit of the day seemed to be kept to time. However, the rotations of activities appeared to keep both pupil and teacher busy.

6.3.2 Structured activities

Learning activities were structured, teacher directed. At class teaching time, children were called out (group by group) to sit at the front (Figure 6.1) where the teacher would sit while telling the children what they were to learn. According to Seefeldt (Seefeldt and Barbour 1998), if children learned from listening and sitting still, then arranging the physical environment of an early childhood program would not be difficult. But according to researchers (Moyle 1997b), children, like all human beings, do not learn this way. They learn through social and physical interactions with their environment. Because children must be active in order to learn, the nature of their physical environment is critical.

Group activity time seemed to be structured. Teachers in general sat with the group and helped the less able ones. An episode in Miss Cheung's class illustrated this strategy.

'We'll have group activity....' When children were attending to the teacher, the teacher called out children to go group by group to get the materials or exercise books needed for their task. The schedule was posted on the board. Children went to their group table accordingly. Some started writing, some started doing sentence making, and others started the artwork.....The teacher sat at the writing table.At the sentence making table, a child could not provide two kinds of healthy food to make the sentence. She put up her hand. The teacher went to her. The teacher

pointed at the pictures and asked the child the names of the food on each picture.....Eventually, the child could make a few sentences according to the pattern.

In another instance,

Miss Chan noticed that a boy had not done his worksheet. She asked that boy to sit with her and they did the counting and matching on the worksheet together.

At the writing table, children were in general kept still and worked quietly. Child initiated activities generally consisted of asking to be excused (for the washroom). Most children were allowed to visit the washroom, except one teacher who refused permission.

All learning activities appeared to be structured (structured in the sense that it was teacher-directed.). Below are some examples for music and physical movement. During music Session, children sang songs and acted according to the content of the songs and the verbal/non-verbal instructions of teachers. A few instances would illustrate the situation.

Miss Yuen: 'Let's sow the seeds and grow the flowers.' (Following the rhythm of the music, the teacher patted on the ground, pretended to crawl on 'flowers'. Children followed Miss Yuen. They sang the 'Planting Song' while doing the patting and crawling accordingly.)

Miss Yuen: "Who has not taken the turn to come out?"

Children: "'Rabbits' and 'frogs'"

Miss Yuen: "All right. Let's invite 'frogs and 'rabbits' to go into the inner circle." ('Frogs and 'rabbits' hopped into the inner circle to join the rest of the class.)

Miss Yuen: "Animals are hopping but no one sings. 'Flowers', 'plants and 'insects' please welcome them and sing while they are hopping." (Miss Yuen moved her body when there was music from the recorder. Children followed her.)

Miss Wong: "Form a circle, please."

The teacher announced (When the children were in a circle): "sit down, please". (The teacher clapped a few beats and asked the children to repeat after her.)

After a few trials, the teacher announced "let's have a game". (Children were then divided into boys and girls group.)

Miss Wong: "Girls be flowers and the boys be bees. And then the girls take the turn to bees."
"When I play the piano, the bees please fly around the flowers and pretend to collect nectar. When the music is quick, collect nectar quickly. When the music is slow down, collect nectar

slowly. (Children took turns to be flowers and bees and pretended to collect nectar for a few rounds.)The teacher stopped playing the piano and then played a few descending notes. Children sat down on the floor.....And then the teacher played the dismissal song. Children queued up at the door of the music room. Children walked back to the classroom.

During physical movement,

Children assembled Miss Cheung (talked to children): "form into pairs" (Children formed into pairs) One child was singled out and the teacher said, "I'll pair up with you."

Miss Lam: "Pretend to be butterflies and fly to get your bicycles." Children went to get their bicycles with hands weaving.

Miss Lam (to another group): "What do you want to pretend?"

Some children: "Cats"

Miss Lam: "Cats like playing balls. Let's get a ball from the box." Children pretended to be cats and got a ball from the box.

When it was tea time, a general or structured pattern could be observed:

When children were inside the classroom, they sat in a group. Miss Ma: "Please take out your cups" Miss Ma put a pile of plates on each group table. Children then took one and passed the pile to the next child.Miss Ma distributed bread to the childrenMiss Ma led the tea song. Children recited in unison. Then, tea started.

From the observation, child initiated activities seemed to be limited. Toilet going was the most popular child initiated activities (Appendix V). Next was starting a social chat (ibid). In general, children activities involved little learning but rather asking for going to toilet and starting a social chat.

6.3.3 Class organization

Whole class teaching was the most popular, followed by individual seat work and small group teaching (Appendix VI). Regarding class teaching, there was some variations in that four teachers used half class teaching instead of whole class teaching (Table 6.7). In

general, children worked and ate at their group tables at times other than whole class teaching.

Besides class teaching time, music session and physical movement were conducted in the manner of a whole-class activity (Table 6.7). Teachers gave instructions to pupils to sing or move. On one hand, this restricted the proportion of time for children's work on integrated tasks. On the other hand, it was difficult to engage pupils in open-ended extended discussions about their ideas (Galton 1989). Higher-order interaction (Galton 1996) of teachers and pupils was rare. During group activity time/class work time, children sat round a table in a group but worked individually. Collaborative group work rarely took place, except for the cooperative drawing task in Miss Lee's classroom (Table 6.4). At tea break, children sat and ate at their group tables.

Table 6.7 Class organization

Teacher Class	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Class Teaching	Half class	Whole class	Whole class	Half class	Half class	Half class	Whole class	Whole class	Whole class
Group Activity	Sat in a group but worked individually								
Tea Break	Children sat and ate in a group								
Music Session	Whole class teaching								
Physical Movement	Whole class teaching								

6.3.4 Transitions

A certain amount of time, ranging from five to fifteen minutes was spent on transitions (Figure 6.6). Transitions involved moving out of the classroom to the music room, playground, hall or moving back to classroom for group activities (class work), and

queuing up to go to the washroom. Teachers attempted not to waste time: children sang along on the way out and back to classroom or homeroom. While waiting in the queue outside the washroom, children recited rhymes, spelled the English words, counted from one to thirty (Figure 6.9a). By doing all these things, teachers maximised pupils' learning time, minimised waiting and extended transition periods from one curricular activity to another.

Figure 6.9(a) Tasks engaging children at transitions (According to different teachers)

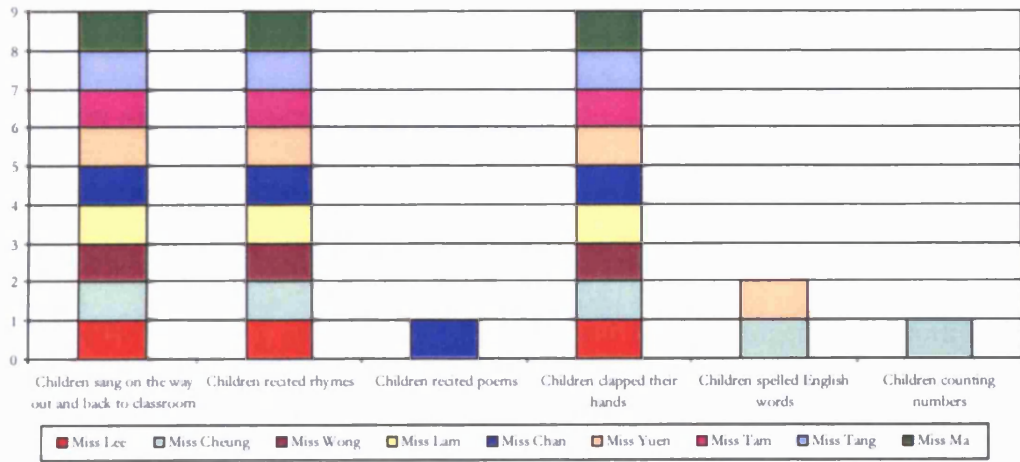
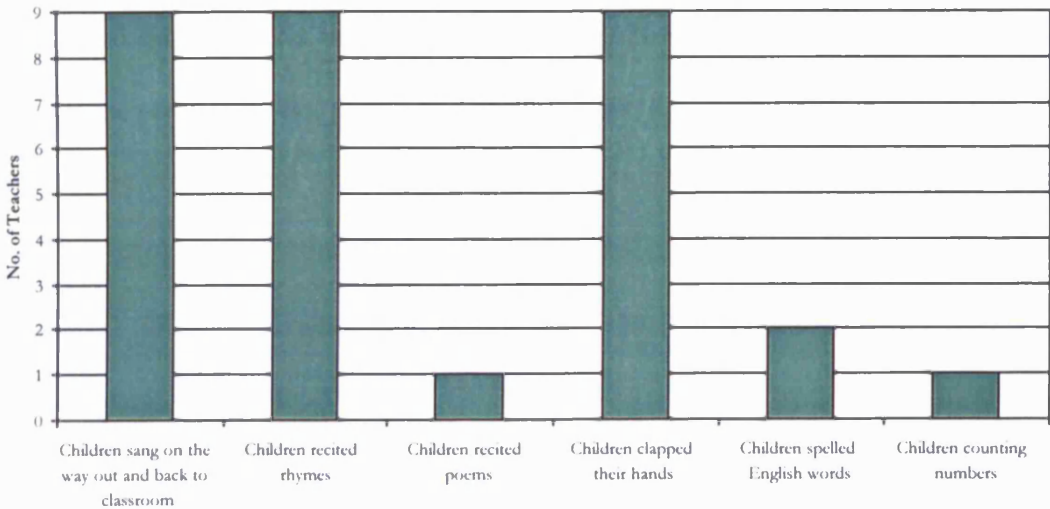


Figure 6.9 (b) Tasks engaging children at transitions (among teachers)



From Figure 6.9 (b), all the nine teachers asked children to sing, clap their hands and recite rhymes. Some teachers asked children to spell English words, recite poems, or count numbers. Children did a number of tasks, a combination of two or three, at transitions. As they sang, they clapped their hands, sang songs.

“There was a well ordered rhythm to the school day, involving sessions, which permitted children frequent breaks to 'let off steam'. This was combined with lesson transitions that did not 'leak' time” (School of Education 1999: 93).

6.4 CLASS MANAGEMENT AND RULES

6.4.1 The General Routine

All nine teachers used fixed small groups of children as the basic units for many daily classroom activities. They ate together in groups and they sat together to work on certain assignments or tasks.

In each class, there were two to four fixed groups of four to eleven children (Table 6.1). Group leaders helped to serve tea to their classmates. When teachers announced that tea break would begin, pupils would move in several directions at once. Some packed away things on the table. Another pupil got a cloth to wipe the table. Children then took out their cups, straws, utensils and sometimes food they brought from home. One pupil from each group then came to the front of the class to get the snack. Meanwhile, a pupil from each group came out to get water or drinks. In less than five minutes, children had the table ready. They sat facing one another in the group and were ready to eat. Teachers either gave a signal (nodding heads or clapping hands) or led children in singing a song or saying a prayer. Tea would then begin. All these preparations were executed with only a few

statements such as "Group leaders, please come out" or "Does everybody have their food and drink" or "Let's have tea".

At group activity time, children went group by group to get the material, stationery or exercise books and worksheets for their task. Then they went to their group table accordingly to whether they were working on writing, sentence making, artwork etc. During class work or group activity time, children were in the same group to start with. As time went on, children would find themselves in a different group. For example, Miss Lee divided the class into three groups. One group of four did drawing. One group practiced writing. One group stayed at the library corner. When anyone finished the work, the teacher gave her/him the worksheet to work in the science corner in the corridor. Children sat in a group but mostly worked individually when working at art, and assignment.

Besides group activity time, children were also called out group by group to sit at the front, to take part in physical movement, as well as queuing up. A few instances illustrate this procedure;

(At class teaching time) Miss Tam called out two groups (at the back of the classroom) one by one to sit at the front of the teacher. The other two groups.....

(At physical movement time) Miss Yuen: "We have three groups. One group will do basketball, one group will do stilts, and the other group will have bicycles, basketball."

(At physical movement time) Miss Chan told the Goodfield Group to go with the teacher assistant to the other side of the corridor to ride bicycles. Miss Chan supervised two groups. The Bunny Group played large blocks at the end of the corridor. The Carfield Group was to do the crawling.

(At the end of a session) Then the teacher (Miss Yuen).said 'queue up' to the children and called the children out by their groups.

(At the time children had to leave the homeroom) Miss Lee said, "Let's see which group does it beautifully!" Children of a group came out one by one and lined up quietly. Each child put his or her chair against the table as they came out."

At the end of the school day, when "pack away" was announced, children would sit their group at their desks.

6.4.2 Preventive Measure

Effective teachers try to prevent problems before they begin (Seefeldt and Barbour 1998: 281). Young children often become frustrated, insecure, and difficult when they do not know what is expected, or what will happen next. Many problems are avoided when teachers plan carefully for routines and smooth transitions (Seefeldt and Barbour 1998). This paradigm was well adopted in the kindergarten classrooms. Several instances were recorded during the observation:

Teachers appeared to have standardized procedures that were routinized and fairly automated. In each class, three children, one from each group, were the group leaders for the day. In some classrooms, group leaders wore a cloth band across the shoulder.

It seemed that there was an 'invisible' teacher's centre, at the front of the classroom. For example,

When the teacher (Miss Tam) stood "at the front", children would turn their eyes to her.

Routines were so automated that when

It came to the end of artwork. Children packed up and put things back on the shelf. Each child put the chair against the table when s/he came out for queuing up.

The teacher (Miss Lam) counted from one to ten. Children assembled as she counted to ten.

First, a range of standardized procedures were observed throughout all sessions.

When queuing up,

The teacher (Miss Yuen): "Let's count from one to ten and queue into three rows." Children counted in unison and queued up in three rows according to their grouping.

Children sang along when queuing up for toilet time. Children coming out of the toilet lined up in a straight line and were very quiet and did not talk to each other.

The teacher (Miss Yuen) went at the front of the queue. Children were talking at the back of the queue. Miss Yuen stopped after the first turning in the corridor. The queue formed a straight line in front of her.

The teacher blew the whistle (during physical movement session), children lined up in front of the teacher.

The teacher stood at the door of the classroom, children went out and lined up in front of her.

During teaching (group activity time),

Children were asked to put up their hands when they asked and answered questions. Children put up their hands and waited to be attended to at the work tables.

When a teacher was writing Chinese characters on the board, pupils read out the strokes and wrote in the air.

Children talked about their group work, a picture they did yesterday. The teacher (Miss Lee) asked children to put up their hands if they had taken part in drawing the picture. Every one put up their hands.

At tea break,

When the teacher signaled tea time, children immediately packed away and sat on the chairs, took out their cups and plates and placed them on the desk. Teacher: "Today, we have sandwiches and water for tea." and led the prayer. Children then said 'thank you' to the teacher and to their classmates and started their snack time.

Children put the packs of bottles of glue, scissors, word cards, pictures of food, exercise books and toys on the shelves. Paper scraps were put into the litter-bin at the door of the classroom. Children took out their cups and towels (handkerchief size) and sat quietly with their hands and heads resting on the table.

When instructing,

Miss Yuen: "Morning exercise"

Children recited the morning exercise rhyme in Putonghua and did the exercise.

When children were queuing up, the teacher (Miss Lam) rolled her forearms to signal group changing. Children then changed to another activity.

The teacher made a gesture of standing up. Children stood up

Miss Lee (spoke softly): "Queue up". Children repeated the words and queued up quietly.

The teacher put her finger on her lips. Children became quiet.

A Teacher said, "See if the boys can go inside without letting us know, let's see whether we can hear any bit of the movement." Boys went inside in absolute silence.

Teacher counted one, two and three. Children would do what was expected e.g. quietened down, started to sing, sang louder, packed away, queued up

Second, teachers appeared to have clear and consistent rules. Putting up hands to ask and answer questions or to be attended to was enforced (Figure 6.10 b) usually during group activity time when children had to signal the need for a teacher's attention. For most of the time, it was a general rule that teachers mentioned but was not enforced. When disorder occurred, teachers resorted to the rule to restore order. One such example illustrates the typical approach,

Two children shouted out the answer. Miss Tam: "Remember to put up your hands when you want to answer questions."

During class teaching, the teacher sat at the front and children were asked to come and sit next to her. Teaching was usually started with a question: "What is this?" "What did you learn yesterday?" In all sessions, children had to queue up when they were leaving and entering the classroom. During group activity time, groups of children rotated round different activities and children worked individually on their own task in their own base.

The teacher sat with children at the tables during activities such as tea, writing and sentence making tables. The teacher was in the front of children during class teaching, music and physical movements. Clear and consistent routines helped children know what behaviors would be expected and what behaviors were acceptable in different situations. Routines helped make limits clear. The clear routines of different sessions (Figure 6.10) tended to provide children a clear idea of what they could do.

Figure 6.10 Class routines practised and not practised

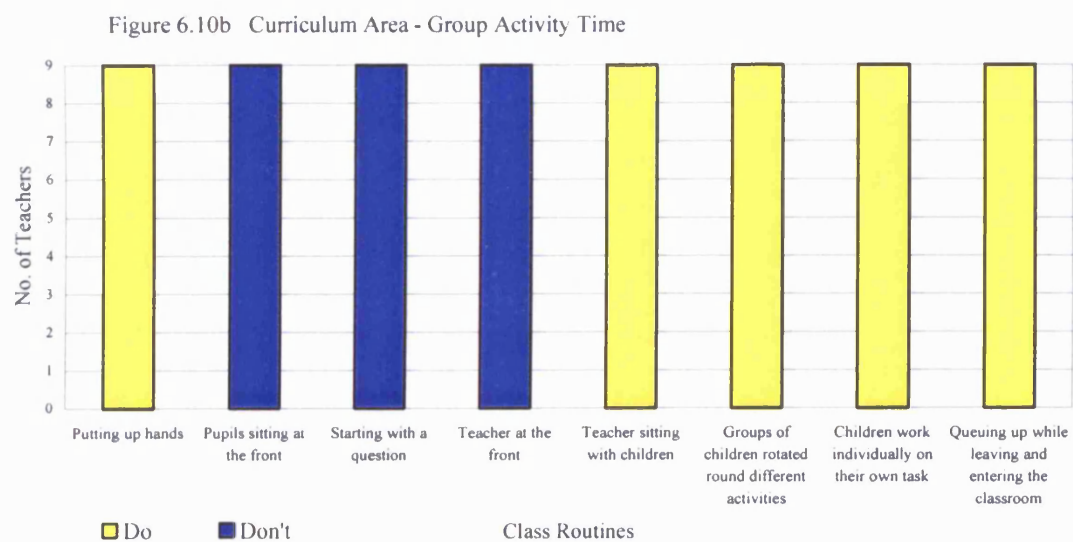
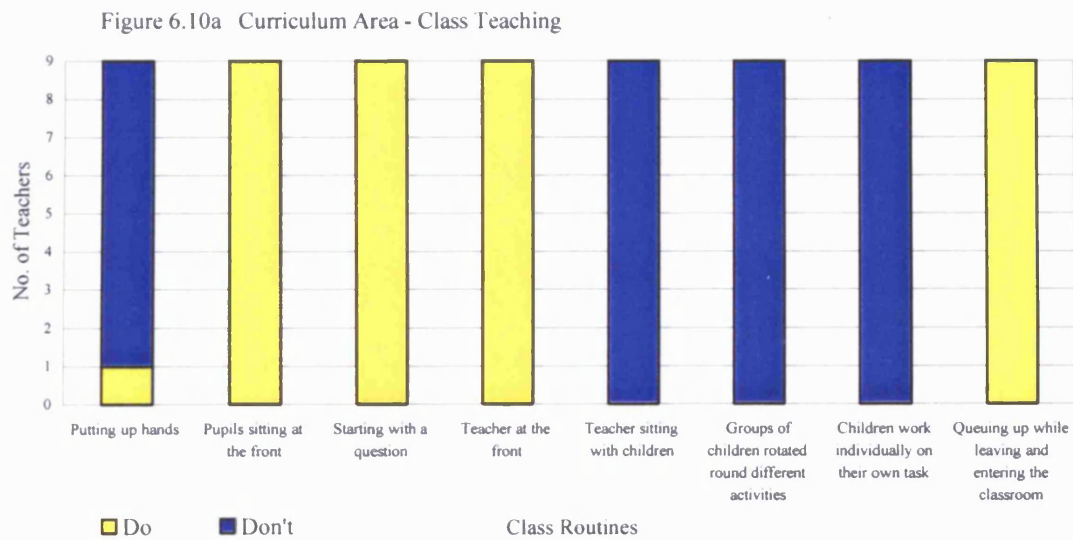


Figure 6.10c Curriculum Area - Tea Break

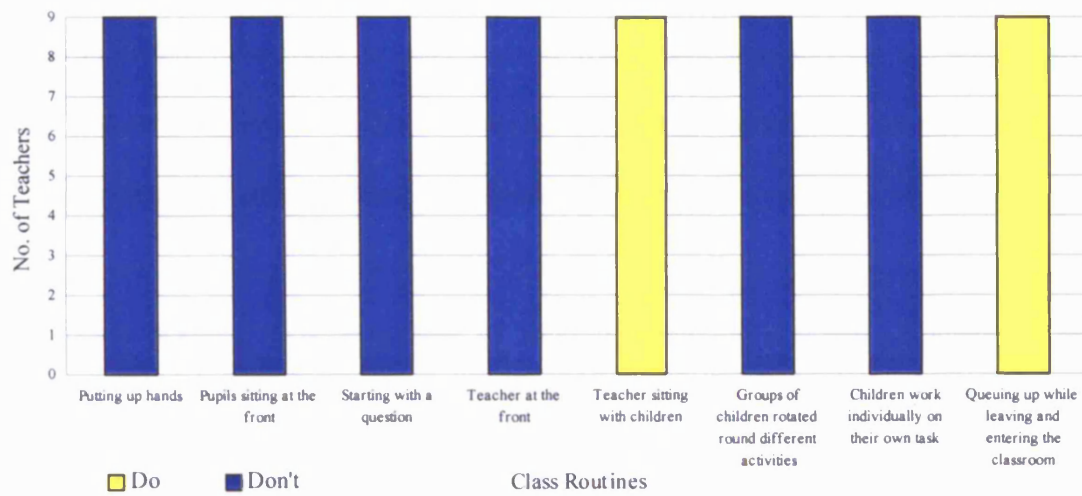


Figure 6.10d Curriculum Area - Physical Movement

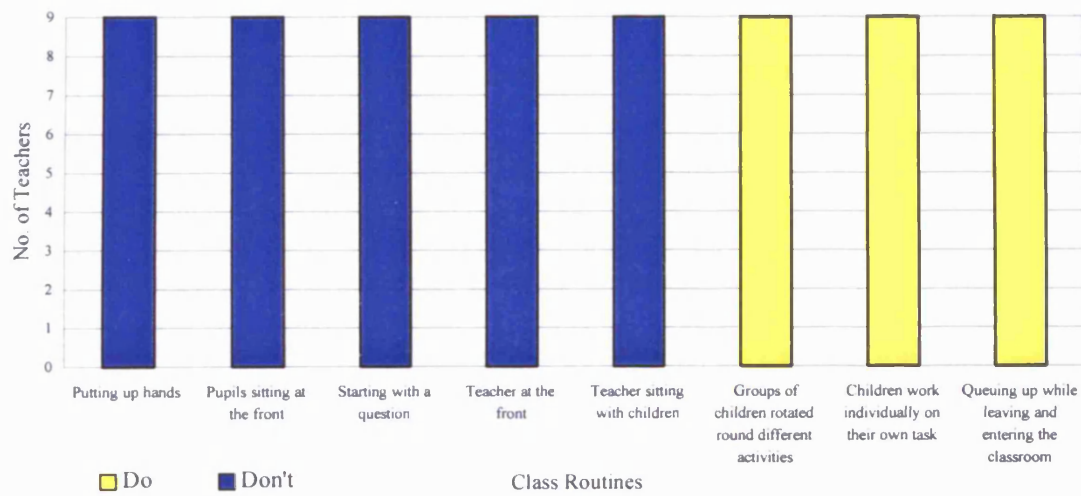
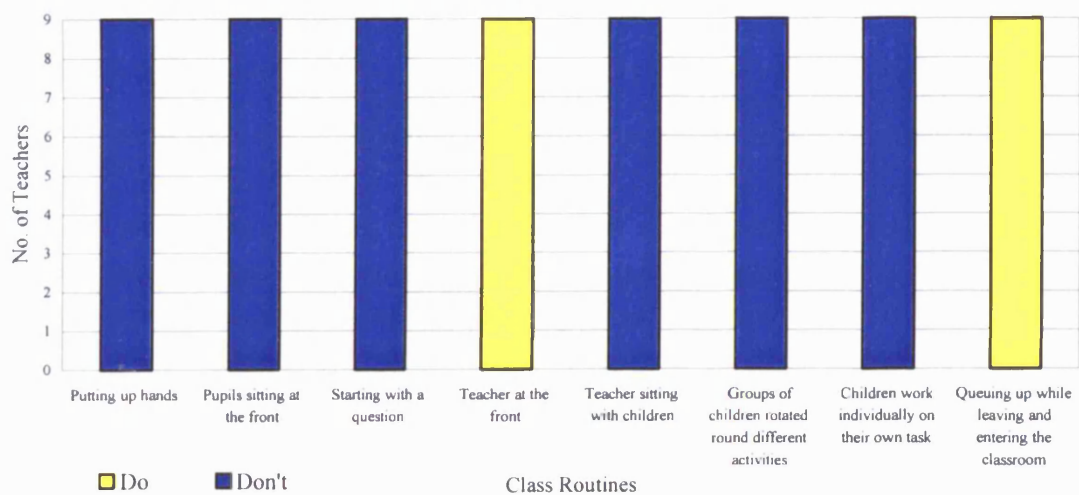


Figure 6.10e Curriculum Area - Music Session



From Figure 6.10, class routines appeared to involve children queuing up, putting up their hands and rotating around different activities, working individually on their own task in their own base, and sitting at the front around the teacher.

Third, there seemed to be a number of ways of engaging children physically. Children were encouraged to clap hands for doing a “good” job. Teachers would engage children in reciting rhymes, counting and singing a song during transitions. Children read out the strokes while the teacher was writing Chinese characters on the board. Children were kept busy: doing a number of things at a time, answering questions, clapping hands; reciting the exercise song in unison while clapping, nodding, putting hands up, twisting their body, jumping to and fro.

Fourth, there appeared to be measures to signal misbehavior.

The tactic of demanding attention (to look at/attend to the teacher) was often used. For example,

Miss Yuen: "Look at me" "Am I beautiful?" "Can you see me?" "You are not watching me."

While waiting for their turn to leave the assembly place, Miss Lam clapped her hands to gain attention from the children.

Moreover, there were signs of overlapping skills. An episode would illustrate it.

Inside the homeroom, children, one by one, went back to their seats. Children did not settle well. Miss Lam called out three children (group leaders) to help deliver breads and drinks. At the same time, she turned to the whole class and said, "sing another song, bees".

Teachers seemed to be alert to danger signals from a heightened noise level, or a very still feeling in the room to the extent that even an inattentive facial expression registered and

provoked a reaction. Teachers usually intervened with a statement, a question or by calling out names of children (Table 6.8) to prevent trouble or misbehavior before it could occur.

Questions such as

"Is she right?"

"Where do you put your hands?"

"Can you see me?"

or making a statement such as,

"Be attentive."

"Look at me."

"See which group sits properly."

"Let me check whether the queue is beautiful or not."

"Chun, tuck in your legs."

"Hing, sit up please."

"Be attentive to the words, You need to recognize the words in a game."

"Children, please listen carefully."

No teacher appeared to be unaware of misbehavior signals or let misbehavior go on too long before intervening. They rarely faced difficult situations that called for drastic measures. An orderly environment was noted. However, no teacher involved children in activities to hold their interests or diagnose their learning needs for the activities.

Table 6.8 Teachers' measures to misbehaviour signals

Measures \ Teacher	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Asking a question	✓			✓	✓				
Calling out the name				✓	✓				
Making a statement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Involving children in physical activity*									
Angry look					✓				

*such as finger or hand actions done to a story or poem or movements to accompany a song

From Table 6.8, making a statement was generally the most common tactic used by teachers to cope with misbehaviour signals. Calling out the name and asking a question was the next frequent use tactics. Putting on an angry face was used by one teacher. The learning environment was highly structured and controlled, the characteristics of direct instruction.

6.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The use of space inside the classroom was maximised and planned (Figure 6.1). Resources were categorized, labeled and shelved or put at corners. Where space was limited, housekeeping practices seemed useful. Keeping everything in its place and keeping the room neat helped maximize the use of small spaces inside the classroom. At interest or learning corners, there were restrictions on the number of children who could be there at any one time. Children had to take off their shoes to coming in and put shoes back on when going out. There were footmarks at the entry for putting shoes. Sometimes, children had to put on cloth bands hung outside the corners. The four classroom walls were fully used. Teachers could see into each space to supervise children as they worked and moved through the room. Teachers made use of out-doors, and the corridor, frequently. In School II, where the class size ranged from twenty-six to thirty-two, the class was subdivided into two halves at class teaching time. An additional staff member (teacher aide) helped to cope with the constraint of space by working with a group of children in the hallway or corridor, during physical movement and group activity time.

Teachers were well prepared (As stated in Chapter Five, it was a highly rated part of the professional culture). Teachers had the agenda both in their minds and at hand. Teachers in School II did not write down a detailed plan, for music and physical movement. However,

they were doing what was in the mind, things agreed at the coordination meetings. A warm-up question in the later interviews with the three teachers illustrated the case.

Interviewer: "You don't have a lesson plan for music and physical movement. Do you plan the activities yourself?"

Miss Yuen: "Three teachers planned the activities together at the coordination meetings. I would carry out what had been agreed."

Activities were planned and structured. In order to accomplish plan, the teacher had to be quick and 'efficient'. Time therefore became a primary concern. Teachers counted up pupils' cooperation. Routine and order would be seen as the best guarantee to ensure pupils' "cooperation". The teacher was thus inclined to 'discipline' children, especially through standardization of routines. With a dependable schedule and consistent routines, transitions usually occurred efficiently and automatically, without disruption when pupils had to wait, teachers kept a variety of activities, songs, counting, rhymes and poems handy to keep children involved while waiting. Only when there was no time-tabled agenda did teachers tend to be more flexible. For example, the following incident at Pack-Away Time was recorded,

Miss Lam: "Let me take out the bell."

(Miss Lam pretended to take out a bell)

A child: "The bell is out of order."

(Children smiled and looked at the teacher.)

Miss Lam: "Ah, out of order." "We can't go back home because there is no bell."

Children: "Repair it" "Maybe no battery."

Miss Lam: "You repair it." "Put battery back."

(The child pretended to repair it.).....

Teachers tended to use a lot of devices, counting, queuing, singing songs, standing at the door to maintain discipline and order.

At here, teachers appeared to have the teacher's agenda and classroom routines seemed to be standardized. The nine teachers seemed to be technical managers inside classrooms, viewed from the perspective of the theoretical framework of effective teaching. The work of teaching involves curriculum management, classroom management as well as the teacher's interaction with children. Teacher's interaction with children, such as questioning and assistance provided for learning, informs the nature of learning provided. According to the vision of early childhood education, effective teaching is judged by whether the pupil is actively attending to the learning experience; and is provided with experiences to move on to higher levels of development. An understanding of the teacher-pupil interactions will provide a fuller picture of the work of teaching and better illuminate the stage of development of the nine teachers.

CHAPTER SEVEN PUPIL-TEACHER INTERACTIONS IN KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As noted in Chapter Six, structured class teaching was most common in the classrooms of the nine kindergartens. Teachers appeared to be busy inside the classroom and they tried to work out schedules on time. It is interesting to note the pupil-teacher interactions in such organizations of classrooms. Observation provided insights into the interactions between the teacher and child and provided instances that reflected relationships and climate inside the classroom. Teachers in general were friendly and this softened the solid and standardized routines. There were instances of intensive teacher talk, some on questioning and some on instructions. The time spent with each child appeared to be short and such interactions were not extensive. Teachers mostly used closed questions. Teachers' talk generally involved assigning activities, monitoring to check the pupils were on task, directing discussion/teaching sessions to see how well pupils were getting the expected answers and providing corrective feedback in response to pupils' errors. Emphasis was generally placed on task and basic skills activities rather than on the child's needs or interests.

7.2 ETHOS INSIDE THE CLASSROOMS

In general, pupils were well informed about and happy to take part in the learning activities, though there were instances of constraint of learning opportunities. Teachers were friendly and smiling for most of the time and were able to solicit pupils' cooperation.

7.2.1 Upon Learning Activities

Pupils were usually given advanced warning of each activity. Teachers would make statements like:

"We are going to jog round the assembly place." (When pupils finished the school song at the central hallway during assembly time.)

"We will have tea break after toilet time." (When pupils were queuing up to the toilet.)

"Please be attentive to the words/Chinese characters. We will have a game later. In the game, you will need to recognise the words." (When pupils settled down and sat around the teacher at class teaching time.)

There were a number of instances where pupils appeared to be relaxed feeling and happy. In one instance, for example, Miss Wong put honey into water and the observer recorded that 'pupils watched with interest.'

When it came to a music session,

Miss Wong: "When I play the piano, the bees please fly around the flowers and pretend to collect nectar."... Pupils did as requested and pretended to be bees and flowers. Miss Wong continued. However, no one could tell which is which because the "flowers" and the "bees" are flying and chasing each other. Pupils smiled and all took part in the movement.

The teacher then divided pupils into teams and the observer's fieldnote recorded that

Pupils were excited and became the cheer team for their team members while waiting for their turns. Pupils were shouting and the teacher watched and smiled.

In another instance, Miss Cheung let pupils try different flavours of milk at class teaching time and allowed children to choose the taste of the milk from plain milk, chocolate milk or strawberry milk at tea break.

Pupils smiled and watched the teacher moving from one child to another to fill cups with different kinds of milk. Pupils talked to each other. They drank the milk with a smile on their face. They told their friends the taste of the milk.

There was another instance recorded in Miss Lee's music session.

After a few minutes' (music) movement, children were asked to sit down. Miss Lee (to the whole class): "Happy or not?" Children (shouted): "Happy." Miss Lee asked children to remain seated and move the body according to the movement mentioned in the song. A lot of children made mistakes (when it came to a song about moving to the left and right). Miss Lee (exclaimed): "You frighten me!" All the children laughed... (After some practice) More children could move to the left and right later.

When it came to the end of the school day,

Children looked at each other with smiling faces while they sang the good bye song.

It was noticeable that these times of relaxation usually took place when learning activities involved no subject knowledge or defined learning outcomes. There were mostly times during music sessions, tea times and pack away times.

However, there were also instances of constraint of learning opportunities. Miss Lam failed to facilitate children's self-expression in art.

At group activity (seat work) time, children went to get the teacher's comment after completion of work. A girl came to Miss Lam and showed her the painting. Miss Lam: "Beautiful" "What's the colour of the butterfly?" "A blue butterfly, isn't it?" A boy followed and showed the teacher his painting. Miss Lam: "It is the sun, right?" (The boy took a second to nod his head.) "You did it wrongly. ... Understand?" (She let the boy go.) Another boy came. Miss Lam (pointing to the painting): "What's that?" (The boy remained silent.) Miss Lam (in a soft voice): "Tell me. What's that?" The boy uttered one or two words. Miss Lam nodded her head and let the boy go.

Another teacher Miss Lee walked around the classroom, during group activity time, to supervise children at tables other than the writing table.

She would say, "The drawing is beautiful" to the child as she passed by. She then stopped at the side of a child and asked, "What is that in your drawing?" The child could not respond promptly and Miss Lee went past. The child remained still for a few seconds and finished his work quickly.

In another instance, Miss Cheung led a brief discussion and reached the key points that babies used milk bottles and big boys/girls used glasses during class teaching. She then

elicited children's performance but did not provide feedback to the children.

The teacher then asked, "Who still uses milk bottles?" Two children put up their hands. The teacher hesitated and went on to ask one of them, "Why do you still use milk bottles? The child said, "Drink milk". The teacher was silent for a second and went on teaching. (A few children looked at the child and the teacher for two or three seconds. The child looked at the teacher, puzzled, and remained quiet during the session.)

The absence of teachers' prompting skills sometimes led to more extreme situations. "Drift" was recorded. That is, children appeared to avoid taking unnecessary risk. There were some instances that children did not answer open-ended questions or seem to hesitate to answer when they were not sure of the answers teachers expected

Miss Tang was telling a story "Three Little Pigs and the Wolf" at class teaching time.

Miss Tang: "Three little pigs have to live on their own and build a house for themselves. (Pupils watched the pictures from the story book while listening.)"

Miss Tang: "Why do the three pigs live on their own, away from parents?" (Children were quiet and could not provide an answer...)

Miss Tang repeated the question and received no answers. She answered the question herself and went on with the story.

In Miss Lee's class, she was showing pupils some cloth flowers and genuine flowers at class teaching time. Miss Lee asked pupils to touch the flower and say whether it was a genuine one or not. The first pupil had a brief touch of the flower and said it was a real one.

The next girl repeated the answer. Though the third boy hesitated a bit, he answered, "yyyes". The teacher took the opportunity and said "some hesitation" word by word in a low voice while looking at the pupils with watchful eyes. Children seemed to recognise the clue. The fourth one pointed out that the flower was a cloth flower.

With the teacher's hint, the fourth pupil was sure of the answer the teacher required and could answer the question according to his finding.

Pupils in general had an emotionally secure learning environment. However, they were not empowered to own the learning process. Pupils seemed to be quite passive in the learning relationship.

7.2.2 Friendly Teachers and Supportive Climate

In Chapter Six, it was found that routines and discipline were demanded from children. In this chapter, so far, it appears that teachers and pupils were friendly and this softened the solid disciplinary demands. In general, the teachers smiled a lot.

At class teaching time, to start with,

Miss Cheung (smiling) took out a milk bottle and a glass.

Another teacher (Miss Wong), smiling, took out a bottle of honey.

Pupils watched with interest and waited for the teaching time to begin. Further,

Miss Ma waved to children to tell them to sit around her at the front to have class teaching time. Not many children noticed that. A few children tended to come out but watched others hesitated. Miss Ma (smiled): "Apple group, Water-melon Group, Orange Group and Grapes Group, come out and sit on the ground." All children gathered around the teacher and sat on the ground, within a minute.

When pupils attempted questions, a friendly smile was used as reinforcement.

Miss Tam: "Do you remember the song we sang last time?"

Children: "Yes"

The teacher (smiling): "Smart" "Can you sing it to me?"

A child had difficulties in doing his worksheet. He came up to Miss Lee. Miss Lee, smiling cheerfully, asked him to study the shape of lily at the science corner before drawing.

There were smiles and laugh from pupils as well.

Miss Tam (to the whole class in a soft voice): “Sit down in a circle (during music session). I’ll turn on the cassette recorder. You will pass this ball (showing children a colorful rubber ball) when the music is on. When music stops, a ball explosion will happen. Please sing according to the music.”

Children smiled and smiled at each other. When the music began, they passed the ball quickly to the classmates... They sang along... Within a minute or two, the music stopped. Children were excited shouted out “Wow!” A loud noise resembling an explosion was heard from the cassette recorder. Children laughed and looked at each other and laughed. ... The game went on ... Children, with a smile on their faces, passed the ball to their classmates. Miss Tam had to say “quiet, quiet” or clapped her hands from time to time (to calm children down) ...

At group activity time, Miss Yuen (at the craft group): “Do it carefully.” “You can tell other teachers that it is a gift (preparing for exchange of gifts in next day’s Easter celebration) made by Tse...made by Chung.” (Children laughed)

Two more examples further illustrate the supportive climate and friendly atmosphere inside the classroom.

Miss Tang: (to a boy at the tea table): “Have you brought some food today?” (The boy nodded his head.)

Miss Tang (kneeled down at his side): “Is it sausage again?”

The boy nodded his head and took out a lunch box from his school bag. There were a few tiny sausages inside. The boy smiled at Miss Tang and invited her to try one of sausages.

Miss Tang (smiled and stood up): “Go on and eat your food.”

It was a bit noisy while children were moving chairs to get ready for class teaching. Miss Tam: “If you are noisy, you cannot hear the teacher. It will hurt my vocal cords if the background is noisy.” (Children were quietened.)

Moreover, pupils clapped their hands for correct answers and good models. For example,

At a class teaching time, pupils were asked to make sentences using the festival related customs in Miss Yuen’s class. A girl made a correct sentence. Children clapped her.

At the chatting time during assembly, a girl mentioned that she had, herself, called in sick (she telephoned the class teacher herself). The teacher (Miss Lee) praised her and children clapped her.

Miss Lee (writing down the vocabulary on the board): “Tell me if I am writing correctly or not.”
When she finished, she asked was it right? When pupils found the words correct, Miss Lee asked pupils to give her a clap.

At 1:45 p.m., children assembled at the playground. Miss Chan told the children that they were going to have a game. The teacher assistant described and demonstrated the skills: sat down on the mat, touched the forearm, crawled with hips down, and used forearms to crawl past an adjustable horizontal bar. The teacher assistant demonstrated once and asked a girl to try to do it. The girl succeeded. Miss Chan: “Good. Let’s clap for her.”

Here, in these examples, we can see that smiles of teachers attract pupils’ attention and involvement. Clapping for encouragement was commonly adopted. In all these episodes, we can see a harmonious and supportive atmosphere inside the classroom.

7.2.3 Cooperation with Pupils

When we look at cooperation, we are focussing on pupil-teacher relationships. In general, children were used to assist in ancillary tasks in classrooms. Pupils appeared ready to offer help to teachers.

There were a few instances where pupils assisted in ancillary tasks in classrooms-- Children helped the teacher to set up equipment, helped with tea break and the like (packing).

At the end of the physical movement session,

Miss Lam called out three names of children to help pack away the three cloth blocks (hurdles for pupils to walk over) on the playground.

When it came to tea time,

Miss Lam called out three children (group leaders) to help distribute bread and drinks.

There were other instances where pupils offered to help the teacher. For example,

Miss Yuen dropped her whistle. A child picked it up for her at once. Miss Yuen thanked the child.

The spirit of cooperation was enhanced when the teacher asked pupils to remind her when she got things wrong and gave her encouragement when she got things right.

Miss Lee introduced the writing task to pupils who would practise writing during group activity time.

Miss Lee (to the class): 'I would like to put down "spring is coming" on the board. Please tell me the strokes while I am writing.' (Children recited the strokes as if to help the teacher to accomplish the task.)

Miss Lee (finished writing): 'Am I correct.'

Pupils: 'Yes.'

Miss Lee: 'Clap for me.' (Pupils smiled and clapped for the teacher.)

Further, Miss Chan painted an egg with pupils at the pack away time. When completed,

Miss Chan: "Let's look at the egg. There are different shapes of circles, triangles and lines. Beautiful or not? We did it together. It is beautiful, isn't it? I'll put it at the science corner tomorrow."

Cooperation of pupils was also elicited in the management dimension. An episode, which illustrates this, took place when

Miss Wong greeted the children who were sitting in three groups. She took the roll call, collected homework, checked children's handbook on their desks, and checked finger nails and tidiness of children. With children's prompt responses, she did all these things in a few minutes.

At the end of class teaching (after introducing the learning activities for seat work), Miss Tang (to the whole class): "Red Group, Blue Group and Green Group, please schedule to finish the three tasks." Children: "Yes". Then Miss Tang stood up. Children turned their seats to face the group table. Some children put back the seat pad on shelves. Children went to the shelves to get their work sheets, or teaching kits. The Blue Group went to the library corner. ...

Pupils in general were ready to offer help and assistance to teachers. Friendly and cooperative relationship between pupils and teachers was observed

7.2.4 Affection and Praise

Besides using smiles and soliciting pupils' cooperation, praises such as "right", "well-done", "smart boy", "good" were used for motivating pupils and for class management.

During class teaching, Miss Yuen was revising the names of festivals with pupils. She showed pupils some word cards and read out the first one with the class.

Miss Yuen (pointed to the next word card): "What's next?"

Children: "Ching Ming Festival" (A festival for ancestor worship.)

Teacher: "Right"

Teacher (pointed to another word card): "What's this. We learned this a month ago."

Children: "Lunar New Year"

Teacher: "Smart"

Then, pupils were asked to make sentences with the names of festivals.

Chung (a boy): "We send flowers to ancestors during Ching Ming Festival."

Teacher: "A good sentence."

Affection between pupils and teacher could sometimes serve as an effective lubricant in classroom relationship. Several episodes illustrate this.

At physical movement time, Miss Yuen went to the basketball group and demonstrated the bean bag throwing. The stilts group was playing themselves. Miss Yuen went to the bicycle group and had a look. She then went to the stilts group. She demonstrated the act of walking on a pair of stilts. Children in the bicycle group called for the teacher and shouted that a boy was taking another's turn. One or two minutes later (after Miss Yuen demonstration at the stilts group), Miss Yuen came to them. Miss Yuen (with a displeased expression on her face): "This is the only group that do not observe the rules." Children in the group quietened down and tended to behave themselves by taking turns (a very straight queue was formed).

At physical movement time, Miss Ma (to the class): "You can choose the song you would like to sing." Children made suggestions one after the other. Miss Ma sang with the children. Children acted out while they were singing. When it was the song of a plane, children pretended to be planes flying in the air. After four songs, Miss Ma stopped playing the piano and asked, "Do you still remember the game we played yesterday?" No one answered. Everybody was talking to each other. Children

were laughing and excited. They talked loudly. Miss Ma: “Wow, too bad. Would you please lower the volume?” Children smiled and quietened a little.

A mutual exchange of dignity, instead of confrontation, between teacher and pupils was cultivated. The teacher asked classmates to clap hands for smart acts. The teacher asked children to clap for her if she wrote the words correctly when she taught writing. Pupils were in a classroom context where risks and costs of failure are not high. During the music session, when most children made mistakes on “left” and “right”, children laughed at the teacher’s comment. The teacher did not name individual mistakes. Class responsibility, rather than individual responsibility, makes no one feel ashamed.

7.3 QUESTIONING

Quizzing pupils was a favorite activity. Questions were generally the closed type and sometimes required straight recall of answers or guesses of expected answers from pupils. Teachers appeared to answer their own questions especially when pupils hesitated in answering.

7.3.1 Number of questions

Teachers frequently used questioning in large groups (whole class) and small groups (half class). There were a lot of questions throughout class teaching time (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Number of questions asked during class teaching

	Class Teaching	Duration of Time	No of Questions per minute
Miss Lee	14 questions	20 minutes	0.7
Miss Cheung	11 questions	30 minutes	0.37
Miss Wong	12 questions	32 minutes	0.38
Miss Lam	14 questions	30 minutes	0.47
Miss Chan	3 questions	15 minutes	0.2
Miss Yuen	15 questions	38 minutes	0.39
Miss Tam	9 questions	15 minutes	0.6
Miss Tang	14 questions	20 minutes	0.7
Miss Ma	6 questions	10 minutes	0.6

The table shows that there were eight teachers (88.9%) asking over 0.37 question in a minute and four teachers (44.4%) asked over 0.6 question in a minute. The average number of questions asked per minute was 0.41.

The following was an example of questions asked by a teacher (Miss Lee) during class teaching time (twenty minutes):

Which season were you drawing yesterday? What were the differences between the two vases of flowers? Do you think you know the names of the flowers? Do you need to eat? Do flowers eat? Do flowers drink? Can you see the red colour of the water? Can you guess the colour of the flowers after a few days? Is the flower beautiful? Name the flowers. Does it have life? Are they real flowers? Understand or not? Do you remember which four Chinese characters you wrote yesterday?

These were mostly closed questions (Table 7.2) with teachers having particular answers in mind.

7.3.2 Closed questions

Closed question could be found throughout observations of all nine teachers.

During class teaching time (in the corridor), Miss Lam showed children a number of word cards of butterfly, honey bee, worm (baby butterfly) and ladybird. The word cards were then put on the board. She then asked children some questions.

Teacher: "What are they?"

Children: "Insects."

Teacher: (Right. I have put a lot of paper insects and paper animals in the garden (next to the corridor). Please pick the "insects" and bring them back.) "What are you going to pick?" "Animals or insects?"

Children: "Insects."

When pupils picked the paper insects went back to their seats. The teacher went on asking

closed questions such as

Miss Lam: "What's the colour of the worm?"

Children: "Green"

All teachers, in general, asked a lot of closed questions. For example,

(At music session) Miss Tam: "Do you remember the song we sang last time?"

Children: "Yes"

Then Miss Tam: "Can you sing it to me?"

Children: "Yes"

(At class teaching time) Miss Wong: "Have you tasted honey before?"

Children: "Yes"

(At class teaching time) Miss Lee: "What were the differences between the two vases of flowers?"

Children were shown to see the two vases.

Children: "colour" "appearance" "shape".

Word cards on "colour, appearance and shape" were prepared and posted on the board. Pupils were to read out them.

Teacher smiled and said, "smart".

A few children exclaimed: "vase" ... "size".

Teacher: "Well, thank you for reminding me."

The two suggestions and opinions other than the prepared were not put on the board.

Some teachers appeared to have the habit of asking closed questions. For example,

Miss Chan (showing the children things inside the basket): "What are these?"

Children: "Easter Eggs."

Miss Chan: (I'll tell you a story. Here are the pictures. Once, three mothers wanted to send gifts to their children in Easter. They painted some eggs and hid them in the park. Then they asked their children to look for the eggs. Children were happy when they found the painted eggs.) "The eggs are gifts for Easter. Therefore, the eggs are called..."

Children: "Easter eggs"

Miss Chan: "Do you want to play the same game (search for painted eggs)?"

Children: "Yes"

At class teaching time, children talked about their group work (a picture they did yesterday).

Miss Lee (to the class): "What did you draw?" One answered "a tree". Miss Lee asked the children "Is it beautiful?" The whole class said "yes". Teacher asked the class to clap for the child. Then she asked another boy, "What did you draw?" The boy answered and the teacher asked "Is it beautiful?" and asked the class to clap for him. ...

At the end of class teaching time, Miss Lee introduced the writing task to pupils.

Miss Lee: "Do you remember which four Chinese characters you wrote yesterday?"

Children: "Yes"

There were also several instances when open-ended questions were changed to closed questions:

Miss Lee: "Can you guess the colour of the flowers after a few days?" "Can you see the red colour of the water?" (Teacher pointed to the glass of water).

In line 2, the question was changed to a closed one because the teacher guided the pupils' attention to the red colour.

Another example was:

Miss Ma (showing children a picture): "What can you see from the picture?" "What's the boy doing?" (The teacher got no prompt response from children.)...

Miss Ma (pointing to a socket): "What do we call this square?"

Again, in line 3, the questioning was changed into a closed one.

Analysing questioning in class teaching time (Table 7.2), we can see that the average percentage of closed questions was 84.1, 9.6 closed questions among the 11.1 questions. There appeared to be an overwhelming high percentage of closed questions asked by teachers.

Table 7.2 Number of open-ended and closed questions during class teaching

	Number of questions asked	Number of open-ended questions	Number of closed questions	Percentage of closed questions
Miss Lee	14	2	12	86%
Miss Cheung	13	1	12	90%
Miss Wong	12	1	11	91%
Miss Lam	14	1	13	93%
Miss Chan	3	1	2	67%
Miss Yuen	15	1	14	93%
Miss Tam	9	3	6	66%
Miss Tang	14	4	10	71%
Miss Ma	6	0	6	100%
Average	11.1	1.6	9.6	84.1%

Furthermore, teachers' questions often required straight recall for the answers.

(At class teaching time) Miss Wong: "How does it (honey) taste?"

Children: "Good taste."

...

Miss Wong: "What do you learn today?"

Children: "Honeybees."

Miss Chan: "What' the name of the poem? (Children of another class were reciting a Tang poem on their way to the toilet)

Children: "Tang poem - Leaving Home"

Teachers quizzed pupils in such a way that pupils responded with few questions of their own (Table 7.3). According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988: 4), the more questions asked by the teacher that are answered by simple recall, the fewer questions children asked. In this study, children asked fewer than two questions within half an hour (10-38 minutes)! Table 7.3 provides details.

Table 7.3 Record of questions asked by pupils at class teaching time (10 - 38 Minutes)

In the class of	Miss Lee	Miss Cheung	Miss Wong	Miss Lam	Miss Chan	Miss Yuen	Miss Tam	Miss Tang	Miss Ma
Number of questions asked by pupils	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0

7.3.3 Pupils answered questions based on teachers' clues.

Pupils tended to provide answers, which suited the teacher's expectations. A few episodes illustrate this point.

Miss Lee: "Which season are you drawing?" Some pupils said autumn. The teacher repeated the question with a stress on the word 'season'. Pupils received the clue and changed the answer to spring.

Miss Wong (holding a jar of honey in front of the children): "What's this?" A child uttered the word "honey". The teacher smiled when she heard "honey". More and more children answered "honey".

Miss Lam (taking a group of children for class teaching): "I will bring you to a special place."
"Where do you think we will go to?"

Children: "A special place."

Miss Lam: "Where?" "Guess"

Children: "Playground"

Miss Lam (accepted the answer but gave no sign of acceptance): "Let's sing the song 'To the market'."

Children (shouted): "Market"

Miss Lam: "We sing the song but not 'going to the market'." "We sing along on the way to the playground." ...

The episodes suggest that children were not reasoning out answers but rather guessing what was the teacher expecting the answer to be. These few small abstracts show "children busy trying to grasp the code of what is expected of them from the teacher in a game of what one could call 'Guess what I am thinking of?' It shows how the question-answer pattern is embodied in the pedagogue (teacher) and the children. It shows how, in this type of exchange, very poor and helpless a child (children) appears, a child (children) seen as an object without his or her own resources and potentials, a child to be filled with knowledge but not challenges (Dahlberg et al., 1999: 54). It was quite a general practice that children tried to work out teachers' expectations/clues. The theme of block building becoming all around ships in a class was another typical example:

At physical movement time, Miss Tam discussed with children before they went to block building corners. Miss Tam (to the class): "What are you going to build from the blocks?"

Children: "Titanic" , "Superman's ship"

The teacher smiled and nodded her head. She clapped her hands three times. Children went to their designated place and built their blocks. ... Children finished the last piece and gathered around Miss Tam.

Teacher (to the Red Group): "What has your group done?"

Children: "A Sailormoon's ship" ("Sailormoon" was a popular cartoon last year but the cartoon did not mention ships.)

.....

Teacher (to the Green Group): "What has your group done?"

Children: "A Superman's ship."

.....

Miss Tam (to the Blue Group): "What has your group done?"

Children: "Titanic"

.....

Miss Tam (to the orange Group): "What has your group done?"

Children: "A hydrofoil to Lantau Island (an outlying island in Hong Kong.)"

The smile and nodding of the teacher at the discussion time was viewed by children as a clue to work out the teacher's expectation.

Sometimes, children were not required to think of an answer because the tasks/questions had the clue embedded, for example:

Miss Lam (instructing pupils to look for paper insects, not paper animals, in the garden next to the class teaching corridor): "If they are insects, there is a Chinese character written on its body."

Miss Wong (showing children a model of honeycomb): "How many sides are there (of a honeycomb)? She started to count "one, two, three ... six." Children echoed and counted from one to six. Miss Wong: "Right, there are six sides. A honeycomb is a six-sided cell."

.....

Miss Wong: "Six legs means how many pairs?" She showed up three fingers. Children answered "three".

Miss Chan: "The eggs are for Easter. Therefore the eggs are called ...?"

Children: "Easter eggs."

7.3.4 Rhetorical questions

Moreover, teachers often tended to answer their own questions. A few questions from a teacher (Miss Lam) would illustrate the situation:

Teacher: "What are the insects?" "Butterfly, honey bee, worm and ladybird"

Teacher: "Where do butterflies get nectar? From flowers."

Teacher: "What's the name of the insect?" "It's Ladybird."

Teacher: "What's a worm (caterpillar)? A baby butterfly is a worm (caterpillar)."

It seemed that a teacher answered her own questions when she assumed that children did not have the knowledge to answer the questions. Another teacher, Miss Cheung tended to answer own questions in this circumstance.

Teacher: "Where does milk come from?" "It comes from dairy cattle."

Furthermore, teachers tended to answer questions especially when children hesitated in answering the questions. For example:

Miss Chan: "Why do we have Easter Eggs at Easter?" (Children did not answer at once.)

Miss Chan: "Let me tell you..."

Miss Tang: "Why do pigs live outside?"

(Children were quiet and could not provide an answer.)

Miss Tang: "They want to have their own style of life."

7.3.5 Consequences of the questioning style

Teachers in general used a lot of questions, of the closed type: questions like "Do you need to drink?" "Does it have life?" "What are you drawing?" "What is the season?" "What is this?"...Answers to the questions were "yes", "a tree", "autumn", "spring", "colour", "appearance", "shape", "green", "ladybird", "honey", "Easter eggs", "playground" etc. Answers were right or wrong and mostly short, thus smothering the pupils' efforts to be an effective and intuitive thinker (Bennett 1986: 47, quoted in Galton 1997:114)

Of particular note, was a teacher who asked a few questions in succession without leaving any gaps in which the children might attempt to respond.

Miss Wong: "Do you know where honey bees live?" "Do you know what a honeycomb looks like?" "What's the shape of a honeycomb?" (Miss Wong turned the textbook to page 8. The teacher pointed at a honeycomb.) Miss Wong: "How many sides are there?"

The consequence was that the children, who had been listening about the task, simply waited for their turn, which the teacher might interpret it as a lack of understanding of the task. The teacher might then supply clues or answers.

Teacher (Miss Wong) started to count "one, two, three ... six." Children echoed and counted from one to six. Teacher: "Right, there are six sides." "A honeycomb is a six-sided cell."...

It appeared that the teacher was at the centre of the learning process; she lectured, questioned the pupils, and "build up new knowledge in class." Teachers in general used rapid questioning and answers. However, questioning seemed not to elicit understanding and there were no challenging questions to foster new learning. Many transcribed instances of teachers who 'over-talk', giving children very little opportunity to use their own oracy/language (Moyles, 1997a). Teachers frequently controlled the language by asking the children to answer the question with a clue which was usually a pre-determined word. Teachers did not leave enough time for children to reply. An emphasis on adult talk was observed.

7.4 NON-VERBAL AND VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Non-verbal interactions and verbal instructions were both common among the teachers studied. Some accounts of assistance in learning and concern for learning outcomes was recorded. Some transcribed instances showed that teachers were not flexible towards pupils' spontaneous responses.

7.4.1 The Use of Body Language

Teachers tended to use gesture, silence and pausing to interact with pupils. There were episodes when a teacher moved to the side of those talking or put her finger on her lips, children stopped talking and concentrated on their work. Teachers appeared to use a number of ways of controlling and monitoring children.

There are instances of teachers controlling by physical presence (standing along side pupil).

For example,

During group activity time, pupils were in three groups. ... A boy at the writing table did not do writing. He looked around, sometimes at the teacher and sometimes at the classmates. He progressed little for a few minutes. Miss Yuen came to him and patted on his shoulder. The boy started to write word by word.

During group activity time, Miss Lam moved to the side of those talking (at the writing tables), children returned to their work.

At 9:35 a.m., Miss Tam asked children to queue up and walked downstairs to the open area (where children had their morning assembly) on the first floor. (Miss Tam was at the side of queue.) Children walked along quietly and orderly.

Other instances illustrate teachers controlling by modeling. For example,

When they (children) assembled, Miss Tam sat on the ground. Children followed her. ... In one or two minutes, children were seated in a circle.

Besides controlling pupils to be on task, modeling was used to assign activities. For example, when doing the morning exercise and music movement, children would perform what the teachers did accordingly.

Miss Lam (at the morning exercise time) put her hands up, moved her legs and knees and children followed.

Miss Chan (asked children to pretend to be a bird and fly to the playground) waved her arms as if pretending she was flying. Children followed her gesture.

Modeling appeared to be a frequent strategy used. Teachers in general asked children to queue up or do penmanship in a desirable way by saying,

“Let’s see who is the most beautiful in lining up to the music room.”

“Let’s see who writes beautifully.”

There are instances that teachers’ controlling is by using gestures. For examples,

At the end of whole class teaching, the teacher stood up while instructing ‘stand up’ and with hand gesture to hint at the action.

Miss Tam asked children to sit in a circle. She stood up and supervised some children to sit in a circle. Some children were talking. Miss Tam put her finger on her lips. The children quietened down.

While checking pupils’ work at group activity time,

Miss Wong walked to the sentence-making table. She nodded her head and children read out the sentence.

When it came to tea time,

A girl asked to play in the home corner after she had finished the last bite of food. Miss Wong nodded her head.

(In another teacher’s physical movement time) A boy (in the Basket group), seeing that Miss Yuen was not watching, shouted to Miss Yuen. Miss Yuen nodded her head and the boy threw the bean bag into the basket.

The last three examples illustrate that teachers nodded their heads to show that permission was granted.

While monitoring children, silence and pausing were used. Silence was used while teachers walked around tables to supervise pupils’ work at group activity time. The following was an example.

At the art table, children tried to put a lot of things on the paper plate while designing the breakfast.

The teacher (Miss Cheung) walked past children and did not disturb any of them.

Teachers sometimes paused until children behaved themselves.

Miss Yuen went to the front of the queue. Children were talking at the back of the queue. The queue was partially formed. Miss Yuen stopped after the first turning in the corridor. The queue became a straight line in front of her.

Body language was in general used to control and monitor pupils to be on task. Teachers appeared to have short interactions with children while using non-verbal interactions.

7.4.2 The use of Verbal Instruction

Direct instruction was commonly used when teachers stipulated rules and instructions to children, monitoring pupils to be on task or directing discussions.

An account of instances showing that children were reminded of observing general rules was recorded.

During physical movement time,

Miss Lam (to the boy in the bicycle group): "You should follow the bicycle route (the plastic tape) on the ground.

To start tea time, another teacher

Miss Lee (to the class): "Pack away and sit at your seats." "Take out your cups and put them on the desk."

At assembly time,

Miss Ma (to the class): "Take out your homework and put it on the table."... "Put your hands on your desk. I'll check your finger nails."

When it came to the class teaching time,

Miss Ma: "Children, listen carefully."

At group activity time, Miss Ma took out the jigsaw puzzles and demonstrated the fitting of the three pieces of an electrical appliance. Children wanted to have a close look at the puzzles. Some stood up and talked between themselves about the puzzles.

Miss Ma: "Sit down. Keep quiet." (Children quieted a bit.)

At tea time,

Miss Ma: "Please take out your cups."... "Sit beautifully" "If not, I will not start tea."...(A boy threw a tissue paper onto another boy.)

At the beginning of class teaching, another teacher Miss Tang (standing at the front) said,

"Red Group, please sit at the front on the floor. The other two groups (Green and Blue), please turn your seats and face the teacher." (Children turned their seats. Some went out and took a seat pad to sit on the ground. Miss Tang (standing at the front): "Sit down and keep quiet." Children then gathered around the teacher at the class teaching corner (Figure 6.1).

While Miss Tang was organizing for tea, nearly every one in the classroom was talking.

Miss Tang: "Please take out your cups." "Red Group come out and get a plate." ... "Do not talk too loudly."

When it came to the end of group activity time,

Miss Tang (raised her voice): "Tidy up your desk when you have finished. You can play toys."... "Group leaders, tidy up your group tables."

For Miss Chan, verbal instructions could be recorded throughout the school day.

At assembly time,

Miss Chan: "Take out your assignment." ... "Zip the school bag." "Put school bags onto shelves, Bunny Group..."

Miss Chan: "Queue up. We will have toilet time before the assembly."... "Eyes watch what? (What should your eyes turn?)" (Children: "The one in front.") "Yes. Eyes watching the one in the front."

At the door of the washroom,

Miss Chan: "We will go in soon. Pull your sleeves over while you wash your hands." (Some children finished and queued in front of the teacher) Miss Chan (to those queuing in front of her): "Where to put your hands?" (Children put their hands at the back.) "Queue up and walk to the playground."

During physical movement time, children were a bit noisy at the block building corner.

Miss Chan: "Play quietly."

Then followed by tea time,

Miss Chan: "Take out plates and cups." "When you have done that, put your hands on your laps."

When it came to group activity time,

A child (at the writing table): "Miss Chan"

Miss Chan (coming from the Math table to the child): "Do not shout."

Then it was the pack-away time,

Miss Chan (holding an egg at hand): "I want quiet ones. I'll come to each desk and let good boys and girls draw a bit on the egg." ... "I'll not let those out of the seats to draw." ... "I'll not let those who are talking to draw on the egg."

Besides Miss Tang and Miss Chan, another teacher Miss Wong also tended to use frequent verbal instructions.

When it was class teaching time,

Miss Wong (to the class): "Sit to front on the floor, class."

At group activity time,

Miss Wong (at the writing table): "Rub off wrong words and rewrite them." "Put up your hands before you rub it off."

Miss Wong (when she found that children overspent time on one task): "Pack away, children at the tea table."

At the transition from group activity time to music session,

Miss Wong: "Pack away, please." ... "Time to pack away." ... "Those who want to go to the music room have to sit down now."

Then it came to toilet time. At the door of the washroom,

Miss Wong: "Hurry up, it's a bit run over time."

A teacher would use more verbal instructions when she had a more complex/specific system of rules. An episode transcribed helps to illustrate an example of 'over-direction':

At toilet time,

Miss Lam (to the queue of children outside the washroom): "Turn a little on the water tap, wash hands, take a handkerchief to wipe your sweat."

Miss Lam stood at the side of the boys' toilet and said,

"Turn a little on the tap" "Queue up".

She then stood at the side of the girls' toilet and told a girl to go to toilet. While some girls did not wish to use the toilet, Miss Lam requested,

"All must go to toilet."

As children finished using the toilet and came out one by one, Miss Lam said,

"Leave a space if there should be a child in front of you." (Children have a lining up plan, like a seating plan inside the classroom).

Moreover, verbal instructions were also used in monitoring pupils to be on task and for directing discussions. The following were some examples:

(At class teaching time) Miss Tang (to the whole class): "Red Group, Blue Group and Green Group, please follow the schedule to finish the three tasks." Children: "Yes"

(At story time) Miss Tang: "I have some drawing paper for you. You can draw something about the story." "There are a few questions on this worksheet. Please take one worksheet and answer the questions."

Miss Ma: "Please pay attention to the number on the jigsaw pieces. Pieces of the same number belong to one set." (There were a few sets of jigsaw puzzles.)

(On the way to the playground) Miss Chan: "Let's pretend to be a bird." ... "Let's sing the 'Clapping Song.'" ... "Let's revise the rhymes and songs."

(At group activity time) Miss Wong (poured honey and then water into cups): "Stir the solution. Taste it." (Children did what was instructed.)

(During physical movement time) Miss Lam (to the bicycle group): "Pretend to be butterflies and fly to get your bicycles." (Children went to get their bicycles with hands weaving.)

(On the way to the washroom) Miss Lam told children the name of a song "Spring". Children started to sing in unison. The teacher told children "A Bird" and children sang the song on the way back to their homeroom. When children finished the song, the teacher said, "A Frog". Children sang the song with the same melody.

"Let's read the names, see who can do it quickly." (Miss Lam pointed to the word cards. Children read it out one by one.)

On their way to the washroom, children were asked to sing a few songs-rhymes. Some children were not singing. Miss Lee: "One, two, three" and the children sang in unison.

(In a brief "discussion") Miss Lam: "Should we catch butterflies?" "No" "We should love them."

In general, teachers made frequent use of verbal instructions. Teachers took a rather managerial role as evidenced in their always monitoring about what's happening or when it's time to stop. The less experienced teachers like Miss Ma, and teachers without teacher education qualification like Miss Wong, Miss Chan and Miss Tang (Chapter Four, Table 4.2) appeared to use verbal instructions more frequently.

7.5 ASSISTANCE IN LEARNING

Assistance with learning, especially on writing and sentence making (Chapter Seven, Table 7.4), was recorded. There seemed to be an emphasis on learning outcomes, not the learning process. Assistance with learning was mostly in form of teachers' corrections of mistakes or hints to answers.

7.5.1 Nature of Assistance

First, considerable focus was placed on writing skills as an important aspect of learning. This may be because teaching a skill is more practical and easier to identify (Moyles 1997a). From the observation, teachers in general assisted the less able children by holding children's hands in writing. There were instances where teachers used a rubber to rub off wrong strokes and badly written words. However, the action was not usually followed by explanation!

Miss Lee held children's hands to assist them to write according to the ruling/steps of writing. She rubbed off the wrong ones.

Miss Cheung was at the writing table (during group activity time), supervising and correcting children's writing.

Miss Wong held his (a non-Chinese boy) hand and taught him how to write.

Miss Yuen rubbed the word off. The girl rewrote it.

It appeared that assistance in writing was provided for the weaker ones, those who could not write correctly. Teachers tended to wish to see all children reach the same level of achievement in writing.

Second, the teachers, in general, showed children how to do a task, but failed to provide assistance as they made initial attempts to perform the task to assure them that they can be

successful (Duffy et al. 1981: 4-5, quoted in Tharp and Gallimore 1988).

One of the teachers, Miss Lam did not assist children to accomplish the task demand but often lowered the task demand instead. During the physical movement session, for example,

Miss Lam (at the physical movement session) demonstrated how she jumped over three plastic hoops and three cloth blocks (about five inches high) and then threw the ball into the basket. While some children failed to jump over the cloth blocks, Miss Lam exclaimed, "Walk across the cloth blocks". "You could walk across if you don't want to jump across". "You can walk if you can't jump." Miss Lam watched two or three children practice the game. She then turned to the bicycle team.

Another teacher, Miss Yuen did not re-assure children that they could do the task without or with adult assistance.

Miss Yuen (at the physical movement session) hopped on the ground (a hop-scotch was on the ground) towards the basket stand. When she was in front of the stand, she threw a bean bag on to the basket. Children then took turns to throw the bean bag. Miss Yuen turned to the stilts group.

In a minute, children called the teacher and told her that the basket was set too high.

This could be explained by the time constraint that teachers had to look after a few group activities during the physical movement session. In order to keep an eye over all the groups of children, teachers tended not to spend too long with any one group.

During the class teaching of Miss Lam,

Miss Lam (after demonstrating the matching of labels and paper insects): "Chun and Kin, would you please match your paper insect with the words on the board." (The two boys did the matching correctly.) Children took turns and tried to do what they were directed by the teacher. Some children could not do the right matching (They could not recognise the names of insects.).

The teacher could have taught the names of the insects and helped children to discriminate the words before assigning the activities. The teacher appeared to be unaware of the prerequisite needed by children for the accomplishment of the task.

Third, there seemed to be an emphasis on task and on outcomes, but not the learning process. Assistance in learning appeared to mainly consist of providing hints for answers.

Children were asked to pick some (paper) insects at the garden. ...

Miss Lam demonstrated how to play the game: pick a paper worm from the garden and come back. She read out the word on its body and matched the insect with the words on the board. Children were then asked to do the same matching...

Children were to match the insect (with words on its body) with the words on the board. (The words were to put in the sky, on the flowers and grass of the picture on the board.) Miss Lam gave clues to the children by telling them "bees are flying, butterflies are on the flowers, and worms are on the grass.

Here, we see that teacher's emphasis was on how the task was to be completed rather than the processes of learning.

Fourth, help with learning in the form of correcting mistakes was recorded. The following was an instance where a teacher corrected a pronunciation mistake for a boy.

A child (at the back shouted out loudly): "carnations" (with a pronunciation mistake on one of the three Chinese characters)

Miss Lee: "Carnations" (with special stress on the correct pronunciation of one of the Chinese character).

Helping with learning was the usual teachers' response to errors. Alternatively, hints for a correct answer would be offered (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4 Types of assistance in learning

Types of Assistance	Holding hands (in writing)	Rubbing off (wrong words)	Correcting pronunciation	Listening to children reading out sentences	Providing hints for answers	Providing explanations to queries
Miss Lee	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Miss Cheung	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Miss Wong	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Miss Lam		✓			✓	
Miss Chan		✓			✓	
Miss Yuen		✓			✓	
Miss Tam		✓			✓	
Miss Tang		✓			✓	
Miss Ma		✓			✓	

From Table 7.4, all the teachers responded to errors in writing and provided hints for answers. Only one teacher provided explanations to pupils' queries and listened to children reading out sentences. Teachers appeared to have little concern for the processes of learning. Instead, a high priority was given to the outcomes of children's activities.

7.5.2 Drawbacks of Interactions in Teaching and Learning

There were instances where teachers appeared not able to support/assess children's achievements in learning terms, but were only concerned with knowledge transmission or recalling of children's knowledge. Low child involvement was generally recorded.

One of the teachers, Miss Tam, did not assist a child to discriminate between electrical and non-electrical appliances, but told the child the hint to complete the worksheet. For example,

(During group activity time) A child did not know how to do the worksheet (Colouring of electrical appliances). The teacher (Miss Tam) stood by his side.

Teacher (to the boy): "Does an apple need electricity?"

The boy: "No"

Teacher (Nodded her head): "Right. Colour the picture. Cut it and paste it on the worksheet. On the non-electrical appliances column."

Here, the teacher tended to provide quick hints to the child. The reason could be that she had to move on to the next child or the next group of children since she was taking care of

a few group activities at a time during group activity time.

The following instance showed that the teacher did not lead the children to describe the shape (of a biscuit).

(During tea time) Miss Yuen (held a biscuit at hand): "Describe the shape of the biscuit."

Children (eating): "Salty"

Children went out to get some more. Teacher tried it herself.

Teacher: "Tasty"

Another instance showed that the teacher lacked sufficient knowledge to help the first boy to make a correct sentence or get variations in sentence making.

(During class teaching) ... Miss Yuen then asked two girls and a boy to make sentences with the words on the word card. Children repeated the sentence in unison when the sentence was confirmed to be correct. Children made sentences like "The Lily is beautiful" "The Easter egg is beautiful" "Peach catches my eyesight (attention)" Miss Yuen made the sentence "The Lily is white in colour." She then heard a sentence in the group. She asked the boy to come out and tell the sentence. The grammar of the sentence was incorrect. Miss Yuen asked a girl to help. The girl changed the sentence a bit and made a correct sentence. Chung (a boy) put up his hand. Miss Yuen got another sentence from him...(Quite similar to the previous ones.) Miss Yuen: "Let's have some variations of the sentences." (Children went on giving similar sentences.)

A further example reflects the inability of the teacher in expanding children's knowledge. Teaching becomes the recall of children's existing knowledge.

(During class teaching time) Miss Tang: "What will happen if we eat a bad apple?"

Children: "Not feeling well" Need to go to toilet."

Miss Tang: "Can we drink tap water?"

Children: "No"

Miss Tang: "What do we need to do with tap water?"

Children: "Boil it."

Miss Tang (showing children a picture of flies flying around a lot of rubbish): "What's on this picture?"

Children: "Rubbish"

Miss Tang: "Is it very dirty?"

Children: "Yes"

Miss Tang: "What will happen?"

Children: "A lot of flies."

Miss Tang: "How can we avoid being like the child in the picture? (The picture is a dirty boy in a dirty environment.)"

Children: "Take a bath" "Cleaning"

Miss Tang: "Where to clean?"

Children: "Everywhere needs cleaning."

Miss Tang: "Any other solutions?"

Children: "Wash your hands after going to the toilet." "Wash your hands before having meals."

Miss Tang: "You are smart." "What should we do every morning?"

Children: "Wash my face and brush my teeth."

The following account showed that Miss Cheung and Miss Lee were unable to illustrate the concepts of ml and osmosis.

(During class teaching time) Miss Cheung: "Can you guess how many cups they (two bottles of milk) could fill..." Children could not answer. Teacher: "Do you notice the word 'ml' on the bottle? The word 'ml' tells you how many bottles you can fill."

(During class teaching time) Miss Lee: "What is the colour of the flower a few days later?" "Can you see the red colour of the water?" "What's the colour of the water?"

Children: "Red"

Miss Lee: "Can you guess the colour of the flowers after a few days?"

Children: "Red"

Miss Lee: "Right"

In the next instance, the teacher attempted to teach the concept of "half". Children could do the craft work, colouring and folding up the drawing paper, but might not know the concept "half". Thus some children painted a whole apple; some painted half an apple before they folded up the drawing.

Miss Tam drew half of an apple and coloured it heavily. She then folded up the drawing paper and press it hard. When the paper was unfolded, children could see an apple with full size. ...Children took their turns to do the art work. Some children painted a whole apple; some painted half an apple before they folded up the drawing paper.

Children understood the message of the teacher but might not have understood the concept of volume, osmosis or half. There were in general no mechanisms to check that children had acquired concepts such as "ml" or "half".

Furthermore, there were a number of instances showing that the teachers seemed mainly concerned with knowledge transmission.

(During class teaching time) Miss Yuen (noticed that pictures of Peaches and Lily were in the wrong place): "What is this? Who picks this one?"

Children (answering the first question): "Lily"

Miss Yuen put back "Peaches" into the slot under the Lunar New Year Festival Heading. A child had mistaken Lily to be Peaches. Miss Yuen asked the child to tell the picture to be Lily. The whole class was asked to read out Lily together.

The teacher could have helped children distinguish between the Lily and Peaches if she had diagnosed the problem.

Moreover, the teachers appeared to have difficulty in teaching conceptual knowledge. They tended to "teach" attitude by lecturing. For examples,

(At the end of class teaching time) Miss Lam: "Do not catch butterflies. Should we catch butterflies?" "No, we should love them."

(During class teaching time) One teacher (Miss Cheung) told children directly that milk was good for our health.

(During class teaching time) Another teacher (Miss Wong) told children that honey bees were very good team workers and human beings should learn from them.

An extreme case shows that the teacher has the tendency of eliciting a counter attitude from children.

(During class teaching time) Miss Ma: "Can you tell whether an iron is hot or cold?" "Can you touch an iron to check that?"

An incident during block building further illustrates the teacher's constraint of knowledge base and her failure of facilitating children's block building activity.

(At the block building area) Miss Tam: "Children, what are you going to built from the blocks?"

Children: "Titanic"... "Superman's ship"

Miss Tam smiled and nodded her head. Children went to their designated place and build their blocks. ... Miss Tam walked around and sometimes stopped at a group and watched for a while.

.....

Miss Tam: "I'll interview some of you."

Miss Tam: "What has your group (Red) done?"

The girl: "A Sailormoon's ship"

Miss Tam: "How does it look?"

The girl: "It's very big and beautiful." (Miss Tam smiled and the girl was released.)

Miss Tam: "What has your group (Green) done?"

The boy: "A superman's ship."

Miss Tam: "How does it look?"

The boy: "It's very big." (Miss Tam nodded her head and allowed the boy to go back to the group.)

Miss Tam: "What has your group (Blue) done?"

The girl: "Titanic"

Miss Tam: "How does it look?"

The girl: "It's very big. ..." (Miss Tam smiled and nodded her head and the girl went back to the group.)

Miss Tam: "What has your group (Orange) done?"

The boy: "A hydrofoil to Lantau Island."

Miss Tam: "How does it look?"

The boy: "It's not big." (Miss Tam patted on his shoulder and the boy went back to the group.)

Teachers in general appeared to have difficulty in scaffolding children's self-expression in art. For example,

Miss Chan: "This is an egg. Let's paint the egg." "Do as the mothers in the story ("Three mothers painted eggs for their children as Easter presents") you have heard."

Miss Chan then asked a girl to come out to draw lines or shapes (triangles and circles) in any colour she liked. Miss Chan asked the girl to tell the colour she had chosen. Then Miss Chan asked a boy to come out. Miss Chan asked the boy to tell the colour he had chosen before he drew. The boy did some drawing.

Miss Chan: "Tell the class what you had drawn."

The boy: "A few lines."

Another boy was called out. He did as the first boy did. Children put up their hands and shouted for their turn so as to be called out while these girls and boys were telling the class (what they had drawn) and drawing at the side of the teacher. They were quietened when Miss Chan said: "I want quiet ones." Children took their turns to draw a few strokes at intervals of a few seconds.

Besides the lack of time, it may have been that teachers lacked sufficient knowledge to know what learning processes were involved (Moyles 1997a) in some aspects of learning. When teachers in general failed to support children's achievements in learning terms and focused on transmission of knowledge, there were instances of low child involvement recorded. For examples,

During class teaching, children were asked to match labels with paper insects. Miss Lam pointed to the word cards to hint to children where to put ladybirds ... Children read out the words and were provided with clues by the teacher to do the matching

Miss Cheung asked children to make a sentence with two kinds of healthy food. She pointed at the pictures. The pool of "healthy food" for selection was posted on the board. Children could choose from milk, fish, pork, vegetables and fruit to fill in the two blanks left in the sentence.

Here, in both instances, we can see that the tasks set for all the children did not involve much challenge and were designed for individual differences. In other instances, the content was sometimes recall of what the learner already knew. Children gave answers to questions that they knew or that were expected by the teacher.

Miss Ma: "What is this?"

Children: "Socket"

Miss Ma: "What will happen if we put our finger into the hollow?"

Children: "Electric shock."

Miss Ma (pointed to another picture): "What is this?"

Children: "An iron." ...

As the children could answer the questions, the teacher assumed that teaching had effected the learning. Teachers ascertained this and "taught" accordingly. Tasks demanded very little mastery beyond what pupils could already do.

Children's involvement was further limited when children were physically guided and their independence in completing the learning task was not encouraged.

(During class teaching) Miss Cheung asked children to sit on the floor. She put her finger on her lips and waited a bit for the children to quiet down. When the children were quiet, she asked group one to count the number of eggs they had. She then used her hands to put two eggs aside every time and counted two, four, six, ... for the group. The whole class counted after her in unison.

Children assembled at the play area at 10:07 a.m. (for music movement). The teacher asked children to form pairs. The teacher paired up with one child. There were totally five pairs. The teacher demonstrated that her partner would be in a higher level when she was lowering her body. While she was rising, she asked the child to lower herself. She told the children that she would like all of them to pretend the movement of playing on a seesaw. She then played some background music from the cassette recorder. The children moved themselves up and down.

(During music movement) ... Miss Lee then pretended to be a bird and asked children to pretend after her. Therefore, the children flew low and high, following the teacher's movement. The teacher sometimes said, "Down there is a lake, let's drink some water", "fly quickly", "you birds are beautiful", " what can you see? I can see trees and flowers". Another teacher playing the piano took the cue from Miss Lee and played the piano in a different tempo.

One typical example of physically guided activity during music session was also quoted in p.112.

From these accounts, child-initiated activities were limited. Requesting to be excused to go to the washroom was in general permitted. Asking to be excused thus became the most common child-initiated activities (Appendix V).

7.6 TEACHER'S FLEXIBILITY TOWARDS CHILDREN'S SPONTANEOUS QUESTIONS/WORK

In general, teachers were not flexible towards children's responses. In most instances, children were requested to conform to adult expectations.

Miss Lam: "What should we pretend?" Let's be a butterfly."

A child: "Be a worm."

Miss Lam: "You be a worm." "We be a butterfly." (Pause) "You be a worm first and then be a butterfly."

The child tended to be a worm for one or two seconds and then be a butterfly.

A boy did not want to do writing. He looked around, sometimes at the teacher and sometimes at the classmates. He progressed little for a few minutes. The teacher (Miss Yuen) came to him and patted his shoulder. The teacher asked him to concentrate on writing. (Children sitting next to him laughed.) The boy stretched his hands to the front and took a deep breath. The teacher read out the words to him. The boy started to write word by word.

In some extreme cases, teachers ignored children's spontaneous responses. For example,

Miss Wong: "Have you tasted honey before?"

A boy: "Yes"

Another boy (to Miss Wong): "My mother buys a bottle of honey."

A girl (to the boy): "My mother doesn't buy honey."

When children were talking about their experience and eating, the teacher looked around the class and attended to some boys at the writing table.

When all the children had found an egg and went back to the group, Miss Chan counted the eggs herself.

A child: "My mother does not buy one for one."

Another child: "Me, too."

Miss Chan did not attend to the chat and announced 'Pack away'.

Further, there were instances when teachers appeared unable to cope with unexpected answers:

Miss Ma (showing children a picture): "What is this?"

Children: "A socket"

....

Miss Ma: "Should children switch on electrical appliances themselves?"

Children: "No."

Miss Ma: "Who should help us to do the job?"

Children: "Parents."

A Child: "My mother sometimes asks for my brother's help to switch on the light."

Miss Ma (after a second's pausing): "Let's look at the next picture."

(The teacher went on teaching and took out another picture.)

Teachers, therefore, seemed to be mainly guided by pre-selected activities and outcomes and less flexible to circumstances. Carter *et al.* (1988) suggests that novices have the

tendency of concentrating on discrete events instead of responding according to context. The management, not the facilitating, role was well perceived. Rarely were there opportunities for give-and-take between a challenging teacher and learning students (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988: 4)

Nevertheless, acceptance of children's ideas was sometimes recorded:

A boy made two hooks in his craft. Others made one hook.

Miss Yuen (laughed): "Ah, yours is different. You put two hooks." "Oh, we can put two hooks as well."

7.7 CONCLUSION

These accounts of nine teachers describe busy classrooms (Chapter Six) with warm and friendly relationships between teachers and pupils. The teacher seemed to be at the center of the learning process; she lectured, questioned the pupils, and built up "new knowledge" in class. Teachers were in general very apt to use questioning and verbal instructions, contributing to intensive teacher talk inside the classrooms. The less experienced teacher or teachers without teacher education qualification tended to resort to stricter rules. Teaching in classrooms appeared to consist mainly of providing tasks and assessing individual performance in terms of pre-determined learning outcomes. Learning outcomes appeared to be the major concern of teachers. In general, teachers were not responsive to pupil mistakes nor diagnostic when teaching.

The predominant method of teaching was recitation (discussion) with the teacher (lecturing) in control, supplementing the lesson with individual work. Only rarely in recitation were teacher questions responsive to pupil productions. Only rarely were they used to assist pupils to develop more complete or elaborated ideas (Hoetker and Ahlbrand, 1969 quoted in Tharp and Gallimore 1988:13). Children tended frequently to rely on clues and hints

from teachers. Teachers operated as technical managers of instructional materials and activities, rather than theory-driven and reflective decision makers (Tharp and Gallimore 1988).

The management role of teachers was most obvious when teachers were emphasising the rules which children had established for behaviour by saying: 'You remember that we decided...' but more often said: 'You must not...' (Moyles, 1997a) or 'You must...' The less experienced teacher (Miss Ma), and the untrained teachers (Miss Wong, Miss Chan, and Miss Tang) appeared to have a greater tendency towards the management role, while Miss Tam (the most experienced teacher with QKT qualification) was less apt to use rules to govern children's behaviour. The creation of independent, self-managing learners is an important element of early years education (Edwards and Knight, 1994). However, its value was sometimes overridden by the value of quiet classrooms during the observation.

Teachers, in general, focused on providing tasks, transmission of knowledge and learning outcomes. Teachers were not diagnostic in teaching. Teaching for diagnosis aims at teaching according to pupils' ability. This approach requires the teacher to discover which types of question and what kinds of activities encourage pupils to think during the learning process. To conclude, the teachers observed were not using relevant strategies to encourage children to regulate their own learning. They tended to put emphasis on the task to be completed rather than on a child's ownership of that task. A lack of emphasis on children's independence is in line with observations of teachers' frequent attempts to help children physically to write and respond to music. On one hand, the teachers attempted to ensure the entire class had grasped the information being provided through whole-class instruction by questioning, during whole class teaching time. On the other hand, there were mechanisms to ensure that the range of achievement was kept small. Bright children answered questions and worked on their own. Children who had fallen behind finished

their work at the side of the teacher; slow learners got more attention from the teacher. However, there was difference recorded in different curriculum areas. Praise was used to motivate children in art and craft work. Children's interest was given more focus than outcomes or products of the artwork. Despite this, there were instances of 'over-praising' children by teachers when the work was not of particularly good quality.

The consistent emphasis on outcomes and providing tasks by teachers resulted in children trying to produce expected answers and work. According to Berliner (1992), expertise in teaching would lead to a focus, away from concentration on the task to concentration on children (Kagan, 1992: 161). Teachers may have had insufficient knowledge to understand the learning processes that were involved (Moyle 1997a) in some aspects of learning. Berliner (1992) suggests that expertise in teaching would lead to an emphasis on teaching for understanding rather than teaching for transmission. In this study, it was rare to see such teaching.

Furthermore, teachers were guided by pre-selected activities and less flexible to circumstances. The management role was well perceived. Berliner (1992) suggests that expertise in teaching would lead to the ability to accept that circumstances alter cases rather than using rules or maxims to solve problems. Teachers in this study always resorted to maxims and stable rules in manipulating control.

The organization of classroom (Chapter Six) was in small group setting, but small group interactions appeared to be rare. In schools of young children, work in small groups encourages processes of change and development and is much desired by children ... Interaction among children is a fundamental experience during the first years of life. Interaction is a need, a desire, and a vital necessity that each child carries within. (Malaguzzi, 1993:11-12, quotation in Dahlberg et al., 1999: 11)

All kindergarten teachers have access to the Guide to the Pre-Primary Curriculum, with a stipulation of early childhood education vision, the role of routines and teaching of basics. Teachers tended to do two tasks out of the three tasks provided. Theories of early childhood education such as child-centred approaches were not practiced by the teachers observed in this study. Though some mentioned that children should be allowed to express themselves and learn through play, all the nine teachers' practice was similar. The role of teacher as facilitator is implied in the vision of early childhood education. The characteristics of a facilitator are close to those of the thinking child stage, a high level of teacher development in the theoretical framework of effective teaching. Teachers in this study appeared to be far from child-centred in approach or unable to put theories into practice. There may be developmental constraint contributing to their practice. An analysis of the stage of development of the nine teachers explained why teachers tended not to put theories into practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY OF STUDY

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to discover more about what teachers think and reflect about their teaching. The work of teaching in the classroom was video-recorded. From the interviews and classroom observations, with little variations across schools and teachers, a general pattern of perception and practice were then displayed. In interviews, teachers appeared very much concerned with classroom management. Children's talking was viewed as a sign of ineffectiveness. In practice, teaching was highly structured and time was well managed. Questions asked were of the close-ended type. Praise was used as a means of reinforcement. Relationships inside the classroom were harmonious. Routines inside the classroom were in general standardized.

8.2 CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

There were generally seven sessions with a highly regular curriculum pattern (Chapter Six, p.144-145). Class organization appeared to be in the form of whole/half class teaching and seat work in a group setting. The allocated 'time on task' (Kyriacou 1986: 20) was around 70% (Chapter Six, Figure 6.5), not including the transitions between learning activities. The pace of teaching delivery seemed to be quick, and surface rather than deep questions were recorded. Learning tasks in general were teacher-structured, with limited child initiated activities. Teachers tended to emphasize learning outcomes, especially those pertaining to writing skills.

8.2.1 Time-tabling

Numbers inside the classroom, ranged from nine to thirty-two children of the same age group. A class teacher was allocated to a specific class. For schools with better manpower resources, a teacher aide was allocated to help the class teacher to take care of half or one

third of the children. In general, there were seven major sessions—assembly, class teaching, group activity, tea break, music session, physical movement and pack away--in every day's timetable. Some variations over the order of teaching were recorded among teachers (Chapter Six, Table 6.5). However, children had their (whole) class teaching time either before or after the tea break. Five to fifteen minutes before school ended; children were to pack their school bags and teachers to give homework or school-notice reminders. Teachers in general stuck to their schedule with little variations (Appendix IV).

The content of class/theme teaching and group learning tasks (Chapter Six:149, Table 6.3 and 6.4), and length of time informed the place of academic studies in the teaching program. Except in the case of one teacher (Chapter Six, Figure 6.4), little time was allocated for tea break (about six to twenty minutes including setting up and packing away). Perhaps because of the tight schedule, children were advised to eat quietly to save the 'chatting' time for the next session. Time allocated to class teaching and group activities/seat work ranged from fifty minutes to one hundred and four minutes in the schedule (Chapter Six, Figure 6.4).

This curriculum pattern recurred with predictable regularity, daily, weekly, and so on. It prescribed that each day opened with class teaching or physical movement or music movement and closed with group activity or music movement or physical movement. The whole period would be filled with an established order of content-related activities. Presumably teachers felt that stability and routine is important for children as an aid to time perspective development, sequential thinking, and general emotional security (Evans, et al 1994). It was no doubt that insufficient regularity could breed anxiety and frustration among children. However, a compulsive regularity, with few breaks from routine can result in boredom and fatigue among some children.

8.2.2 Class organization

The teachers in general had different approaches towards different curriculum areas. In class teaching time, teachers tended to exercise eye contact with every child to ensure attention. Rote knowledge such as: there were six sides in a honeycomb; honey bees, butterflies and ladybirds were insects; what are the names of electrical appliances appeared to be much emphasised by these teachers. During group activity time, children talked to each other at the drawing corner while there was concern on the part of teachers to ensure children obtained 'correct' results at the writing table. Teachers rubbed off words written wrongly and children had to rewrite them. When it was a music or physical movement session, teachers were anxious to keep "good" discipline but children were allowed to engage in a small amount of conversation.

The teaching approach employed was a combination of teaching the class as a whole, and as individuals. Teachers helped less able ones in writing and doing the science worksheet/sentence making/mathematics work. However, the proportion of class teaching (including "carpet/circle time", music and physical movement) was far higher (about 43% of the allocated time, Figure 6.5 in Chapter six). Children were placed in fixed groups as the basic units for many daily classroom activities. They ate together and worked together on certain assignments in group settings but mostly worked individually. Teachers did not employ mixed ability grouping. One possible consequence was that children might then lose the opportunities of intellectual support which they would benefit from the 'scaffolding' of their understanding so that it could be extended across the next step in their development. Social constructivist psychology offers a clear analysis of the importance for learning of the guidance and instruction of more skilled or knowledgeable others, whether support is provided by peers or consultants (Pollard and Filer 1996). Here, grouping was used for management purposes rather than for learning purposes. When a teacher called out children as a group, it saved the teacher's the effort of calling out four to

eleven children individually.

There was no small group teaching. Instead, whole class or half class teaching was popular. Small group activities were not popular, except in the case of cooperative drawing. This resulted in limited time for interaction between children and between children and teacher. Teachers tended to use more whole-class teaching (26 to 32 children) to militate organizational difficulties (There is some evidence that using too many small groups can create management problems, Reynolds 1992; Galton 1989). In some classes, there were up to nine but less than eighteen children. More small group teaching/learning and individualised work should have been possible. Individualised learning formed part of the class organization. Individual coaching during writing, mathematics work and sentence making was offered as the teachers willed while for science worksheets, art and craft-work it took place at the children's request.

8.2.3 Allocated time on task

Total time per day on task varied from two hours and five minutes to two hours thirty-six minutes, excluding the assembly time, toilet time and pack away time. Time allocated to whole class teaching (theme/carpet time, music and physical movement) was around 43% (one hour and seventeen minutes) (Chapter Six, Figure 6.5). Some time was wasted on queuing up and transitions (e.g. moving out of the classroom to the music room, activity room/hall or corridor to have class teaching, music and physical movement; coming back to classroom for group activities, library activities, art work and worksheets.) However, the teacher tended to make use of these 'transition' times: children sang along, and recited rhymes/spellings of words, counting on the way out and back to classroom.

8.2.4 Delivery of teaching

The pace of the delivery of teaching tended to be quick. In order to save time, teachers

assigned pupils to help in tea time instead of asking for volunteers. They stopped children talking during tea time; and stopped a child from finishing their drinks when time was running short. Moreover, there was little time spent waiting for answers to questions. Teachers tended to provide clues not to stimulate thinking but to hint at desired answers. For example, when one teacher expected children to say the colour of the flower was 'red' she provided the clue "what is the colour of the water (in the jar)?" Children got no help when reasoning out the cause of changing colour of the flowers. Children received the message that the flower in the red water would change to red, but did not know why and how. The same was true of other concepts such as "ml" "half" "insects" "healthy food" "team work" and "a different style of life". Pupils were occupied but appeared rarely to be mentally engaged. The tight schedule appeared to be the reason for this questioning style. However, teachers' emphasis on surface questions could also have been a result of their lack of subject content knowledge.

8.2.5 Nature of task: structured activities

The learning tasks mainly consisted of teacher-structured activities. They included: singing on way to the toilet, saying a prayer, asking and answering questions, whole class teaching (teaching content related to the theme), group activities/seat work (work sheet, writing, drawing, reading books, and after work play), structured physical and music movement.

Child initiated activities were limited. Children were assigned to do the first task by the teacher at the beginning of group activity time but they could not negotiate the area of work and learning activity. However, children who had finished their task could play with toys and go to areas such as the library corner, science corner, or vocabulary corner and children who asked to be excused were permitted to go to the washroom. There was only one observed incident in Miss Yuen's class where the teacher rejected the toilet request. Children going to the washroom appeared to be the most popular child initiated activity

(Appendix V). Some requested to go to the toilet more than once, in addition to the two allocated toilet times. Starting a social chat (Appendix V) was also common at the learning corners and tea time.

8.2.6 Educational outcomes

There was a high proportion of teacher activity concerned with supervising the child's work; that is, generally making sure that the children had a clear grasp of the materials and knew how to set about completing the task. It is worth drawing attention to the relatively high proportion concerned with giving feedback to the pupil on work during Group Activity Time. Praising was the main means of reinforcement. The teacher, with her fixed agenda, was also eager to tell the child about what to do (see Chapter Seven). Rote knowledge rather than children's thinking appeared to be the major concern of these teachers.

Some educational outcomes were given more attention than the others. In general, greater concern was given to mathematics, language and writing skills. The lack of concern on other areas of curriculum might have been due to the lack of curriculum knowledge over music, art, physical movement, mathematics and science, where degree of curriculum knowledge was needed to extend children's learning.

8.3 PUPIL-TEACHER INTERACTION

Teachers tended to ask a lot of closed questions, contributing to a high percentage of teacher talk. Classrooms seemed to be of low risk in terms of cost of failure. Children in general participated in answering questions and completed tasks. However, there were many instances of wasted/restricted learning opportunities.

8.3.1 Teacher talk

There was a high percentage of teacher talk. Teacher talked for most of the time in class teaching (theme teaching, music and physical movement) and even during the Group Activity Time. Teacher talk consisted mainly of questioning and instructions (Chapter Seven). Pupils participated by responding to questions and instructions. There were a lot of questions throughout/during class teaching time. The type of questions was mostly closed (Chapter Seven).

8.3.2 Ethos inside the classroom

Children in general were observed smiling and participated in a playful mood especially during the music session. Children appeared to be enthusiastic to "teach" the teacher to write down "spring is coming" on the board. Teachers often solicited help from children. Teachers asked group leaders to distribute books, drawing paper and worksheets for them before Group Activity Time commenced. At tea-time, group leaders were also used as helpers.

A mutual respect between teacher and pupils (O'Neil and Kitson 1996) seemed to be cultivated. For example, the teacher asked children to clap for the teacher if she wrote the words correctly when she taught writing. There were similar examples in all classes. The motivation and self-confidence of children appeared to be high (Ryan et al. 1985). For instance, the teacher asked who had contributed to the drawing. The children all put up their hands. Children appeared less inclined to cover up mistakes (Galton 1989), if there were any. Children exclaimed spontaneously "Understand" when they were asked, "Understand?"

Children were in classrooms where risks and costs of failure appeared to be low. Questions were mostly directed to the class as a whole and answered in chorus. Questions asked were straight-forward/surface types. For example, "I know your names. Do you think you know

the names of the flowers?" The learning challenge appeared low key and children appeared to feel safe and sufficiently secure to 'give it a try'. Children did not tend to keep their heads down. A number of children responded by saying some names of flowers. In another instance, children made mistakes on "left" and "right" when told to turn left or right in a music lesson. Children laughed. This was presumably a problem for the whole class.

8.3.3 Assistance in learning

Despite the above apparent child satisfaction there were also some wasted learning opportunities. Children had only limited empowering opportunities to learn. For instance, a teacher used three clue/word cards (colour, size and shape) on differences between two flowers in two vases (Chapter Seven). Here, clue cards were used, not for scaffolding but rather for restricting children's thinking. The teacher provided the reference frame. Children were to put down some suggestions by using the clue cards provided on the board. However, when others (other than those prepared on clue cards) were suggested, answers were not treated as correct answers and nothing was put on the board. Only three answers, on the clue cards, were allowed. Thus, the clue cards seemed to restrict rather than expand (or scaffold) children's thinking.

In addition, assistance in learning appeared to mainly consist of providing hints for answers and responding to errors. Instances showing that teachers had difficulty in teaching attitude and conceptual knowledge were also recorded

Though there were several good examples of a social constructivist teaching-learning process at work, such as teaching a child to pronounce a word (correctly), answering questions, guiding a child's hand in her writing, there were also some unfortunate incidents. For example, some teachers appeared not to share a child's self-expression in art. In one example, the teacher asked a child what he was drawing ("What's that in your drawing?").

The child, far from seeing this as an approach to help him learn or perhaps explore ideas, remained quiet for one minute until the teacher walked away.

8.3.4 Low child involvement

There was little use of constructivist approaches to support children's intellectual growth. It might have been expected to occur in discussions, observations, questions, and advice. These kinds of constructive interaction with children should clarify, build on, extend or challenge children's ideas. On the other hand, such highly framed or high levels of learning challenge can be perceived by teachers as threatening and stressful to children. However, according to Doyle (1986, quoted in Calderhead (eds.) 1992), it can be argued that tasks without instructional challenge, support and higher expectations can result in lost opportunities and unfulfilled potential. This can lead to superficial achievements as children prioritize 'pleasing teacher' rather than 'understanding'. A sense of lack of control can result in risk avoidance in children and a lack of instructional support can produce routinization and drift. In order to play safe, children tend to adopt defensive strategies to risk-taking in such circumstances.

In questioning, two things appeared to be happening. First, teachers in general were used to answer their own questions. Second, children tended to give answers expected by the teacher. Children appeared to feel safe (willing to answer questions and participate). However, did they learn as much as they could have? Children appeared not to be encouraged to think creatively. Take the example of the task around learning the flowers, children seemed not to be encouraged to provide alternatives other than the "prepared" ones. The teacher was in control. This approach could ease the problem of teachers who lack confidence in their curriculum knowledge since things taught could be planned (and controlled) ahead. However, children's learning in the classroom should also be part of the professional knowledge of teachers young children. This professional knowledge will

provide teachers with a better understanding of children and thus should enhance the teacher's professional development.

8.4 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Teachers in general used modeling, direct instruction and praise to maintain classroom routines. Learning environments appeared orderly and routinized. Teachers tended to keep children still and quiet at writing tables while a little conversation was allowed in other curriculum areas. Time management seemed to serve the justification that prompt responses were needed in order to meet required outcomes. Children were in general well disciplined and teachers appeared to be friendly.

8.4.1 General routine

The teachers, in general, used a lot of verbal and non-verbal instructions (Chapter Seven,). Modeling, direct instructions and praise seemed to be the means of training pupils in various routines (Chapter Seven). In addition, teachers sometimes used a soft voice to instruct queuing up to indicate quietness was demanded. Children echoed and queued up quietly (at the door of the classroom). Moreover, direct instruction was generally used as the main teaching strategy. Children were asked to take out their cups and plates on the desk, pack away and sit on the chairs. There were some instances that children were instructed to put plates outside, eat quietly, stop drinking, and follow teacher's movement in music movement. Children in general took the teacher's advice and instructions (queue up quietly, eat quietly, and follow the teacher's movement etc). Praising was used as a means of reinforcement. 'Very clean' was the comment during finger-nails examination. When a teacher walked around the classroom, she would say, "the drawing is beautiful", "beautiful writing". Children seemed to welcome the praise and behave according to the teachers' expectation.

Procedures were quite standardized. The teacher would tell pupils to queue up and then pupils of the particular group would come out and line up quietly. After the artwork and group work time, children packed up and put things back on the shelf. Children's attention was required as class teaching started. When the teacher was writing a Chinese character, pupils also wrote it in the air. Children clapped hands for correct answers of both classmates and correct writing of teacher. Children sang along and kept the line when queuing up for toilet time. Children coming out of the toilet lined up (in a straight queue) and were every quiet/did not talk to each other. Children lined up in rows or sat in circles in the music lessons according to the signals (e.g. melody from the piano). Responses were thus routinized and fairly automated.

In this way, an orderly learning environment was maintained. Children are likely to learn effectively with an element of both control and support. However, in this case did the teachers manage learning or manage behaviour? It would depend on whether the method employed to establish control was compatible with the teaching. Without instructional challenge, support and higher expectations, such approaches are likely to result in lost opportunities and unfulfilled potential in the orderly learning environment.

8.4.2 Variations towards different curriculum areas

There seemed to be differences in approach to class management with different curriculum areas. Teachers in general kept children still and working quietly when they were doing writing. Praising appeared to be used as a means of reinforcement. The teacher praised the boy, Sing, for his quiet work when some children stopped and watched others. However, children were 'allowed' to talk in corners. At times children had to go out to the corridor to do observation of flowers in the science corner and went inside the classroom to fill in the worksheet. Children could talk and stay in the corridor for a time if they wished. Moreover, a little talking was allowed during the music and physical movement sessions.

8.4. 3 Time Control and Management of Behaviour

It was difficult to decide whether an orderly environment was maintained so that a 'well-planned' teacher's agenda remained on schedule or vice versa. Each teacher appeared to be conscious of time control and delivery of outcomes during class teaching. Pupils were often moving in many directions at once; packing away things on the table, attending to the teacher, putting the chair against the desk, coming out to queue up etc. Teachers tended to pause or stop, for example, one stopped playing the piano, to ensure quietness and order during the classroom activities. Management of behavior rather than learning appeared to be the teachers' concern. The teacher required prompt responses in order to move to the end of the activity. Teaching concerned the transmission of knowledge and achieving the desired product of the teacher's agenda. A lot of questions were asked not only to cue desired answers but also to collect feedback from children. For example, one teacher (Miss Chan) asked children whether they understood or not. When affirmation was received, the teachers moved on. There was a shift from children's agenda to the teacher's agenda.

8.4.4 Affective support

Teachers' particular skills of voice and eye contact enabled them to succeed at getting attention and support from children. In general, teachers were friendly and children behaved themselves. The affective support, smiling and clapping hands for good job, cultivated a relaxed learning climate and softened the solid learning climate

8.5 PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

All the teachers in the study claimed length of teaching experience was a determining factor in their teaching performance (Chapter Five, Table 5.5). However, very little variation was found between teachers of different lengths of teaching experience. Social expectations and taken-for-granted rules influence behaviour and classroom teaching. The same seemed to be true of teachers' perceptions of role of teachers.

Teachers in general expressed great concern over classroom management. Teachers established firm and clear rules in practice. This explained the development of standardized procedures for handling class management and discipline. After these were in place, some teachers (Miss Lam, Miss Yuen, and Miss Tam) turned their attention to instruction. The less experienced teacher (Miss Chan) tended to grow increasingly authoritarian and custodial. Inadequate knowledge of classroom procedures also contributed to the excess of teachers' talk (Chapter Seven) and reduced children's chance to engage in discussion.

Teachers tended to talk about objectives of teaching, rather than matching teaching with children's ability. There was also a shared assumption among the teachers that children could learn what was taught by listening to the teacher. Teaching largely meant verbal instruction. The expectation was that a teacher should teach (talk) for most of the time. If there were a number of aspects for children to "learn", a tight schedule was necessary in order to include all the components. This also explained why play was not given a rightful place.

Teachers viewed teaching (lesson) preparation, class management and time control as most crucial in bringing about effective and quality teaching (Chapter Five, Table 5.4). Good teaching for them was a teacher with a well-planned lesson (Chapter Five, Table 5.6). Thus, in their own minds, they and their colleagues were all good teachers because they taught well-planned lessons on schedule. Here teachers appeared to reflect on what works rather than putting hypothesis to test in classroom practices. However, since the quality of instruction, in essence, primarily involves the extent to which the instruction makes it easy for pupils to achieve intended educational outcomes, and "this involves considering if the learning experience is organised in the most sound and appropriate ways" (Kyriacou 1986: 27), the effectiveness of these teachers must remain an open question.

Thus, despite the philosophy of Early Childhood Education, a firm traditional kind of teaching with emphasis on planning, preparation and external judgement was perceived as important indicators for good teaching. Moreover, teachers tended to focus on and describe their own actions as teachers rather than the actions of pupils in reaching this judgement. During the interviews, there was a noticeable shift from children's agenda to teacher's agenda. The vision of Early Childhood Education was, therefore, not well acknowledged by these kindergarten teachers, although some did mention it briefly in the interviews.

8.6 CONCLUSION

In this study, teachers in general viewed lesson preparation, class management and time control as most crucial to bring about effective and quality teaching. Teachers appeared to be more concerned about their own agenda. There was little contact with the individual child. Teachers' talk, questioning style and whole class teaching led to a very passive learning role of children. There was low child involvement, though children felt safe and teachers were friendly. Children seemed to have a limited range of choices. The delivery of teaching was structured and on time at the expense of pedagogy and children's learning. Teachers' assistance for children learning, in terms of arriving at learning outcomes, was recorded. However, teachers adopted class rules/maxims with little flexibility in classroom management. For example, one of the maxims was maintaining a quiet classroom. There were instances where children were advised to play and eat quietly. Teachers tended to manage behaviour rather than children's learning process. Teachers perceived a managerial role as teachers in kindergartens. A good teacher to them was a teacher with a well-planned lesson (Chapter Five Table 5.6). Teachers in general expressed great concern over lesson planning and delivery of learning outcomes in the interviews. From the observation, there was a high proportion of teacher activity concerned with supervising the child's work to ensure that the children were working on tasks. For example, there was a relatively high proportion concerned with giving feedback to the pupil on his/her writing during Group

Activity Time. The teacher, with her agenda in mind, appeared to be eager to tell the child what to do.

The teachers had different approaches towards different curriculum areas. There were a few tasks scheduled for group activity time. Teachers gave most of their attention to children doing worksheets and writing. Moreover, the purposes of artwork appeared doubtful. At times, it seemed to serve the function of keeping groups of children 'busy' enabling the teacher to get on with the 'real' work of teaching the basics. The entitlement of free choice time or free play mostly depended on children's efficiency on working out the class assignment. The recognition of the function of play appeared to be ambiguous when it did not appear to be incorporated within a curriculum task. In addition to class teaching time, music and physical movement was also conducted in the manner of class teaching. This restricted the proportion of time for children's engagement in open-ended extended discussions about their ideas. Teachers talk appeared to be predominant, leaving little chances for children to initiate questions. This approach brings the question as to whether teachers convey by their actions and policies that they honor the needs of children or emphasize the teachers' own agenda.

The pace of the delivery of teaching was quick. There was no waiting time for questions and answers. Clues were provided not to stimulate thinking but to hint expected answers. Questions requiring simple recall of answers were common. Learning tasks were mainly teacher-structured activities, and of the rote knowledge type. Child initiated activities were limited. Teachers did not appear to be aware of constraining children's opportunities to learn (Pollard and Filer 1996). However, teachers responded to children appropriately and affectionately: there was positive child feeling cultivated within each class.

Routines inside the classroom seemed to be standardized. An orderly environment, with

clear rules, appeared to be given a high regard by these teachers. Queuing up quietly was in general requested by these teachers. Management of behaviour rather than learning appeared to be the teachers' concern.

There was little variation among the nine teachers though there were sometimes evidence of verbal variations in conceptions of teaching and learning. Teachers could talk about but could not apply some learning theories. For example, some teachers could talk about learning through play, hands on experience, and catering for individual difference but did not put them into practice. In their minds, teachers in general wanted to see all objectives of teaching delivered with children completing all their set tasks. There was little focus upon and no discussion of the learning processes of young children. The general belief was that children had learned what was taught when they could do the tasks satisfactorily.

Classroom observation was employed to study the process of teaching and learning. This initial study was kept to a small scale to obtain a fuller account of the teachers. The variations of teacher behaviour due to teacher education qualification and teaching experience could not be deduced though there were instances where the less experienced teacher such as Miss Chan tended to grow increasingly authoritarian and custodial in classroom management. A replication of the study on a larger scale is needed. Interviews were conducted to identify teachers' perception of teaching and learning and these findings were compared with observed practice. It would be valuable to supplement these interviews by questionnaires to provide additional information on the relationships between practice and beliefs, if the study was to be replicated on a larger scale.

Teachers in the study appeared to do things in similar ways to each other. The classroom seemed to be an orderly environment based upon the use of consistent routines with regular breaks from work. Pupils were kept fully occupied. Teachers' questions were mostly closed.

Pupils were given assistance with learning, to ensure achievement of learning outcomes. Children seemed to feel safe but had limited learning opportunities. Teachers tended to be more concerned about lesson planning and pupils on task, teachers' agenda. General characteristics of teachers were recorded (Table 8.1).

TABLE 8.1 Characteristics of the teachers

Curriculum management	Pupil-teacher interactions	Classroom management	Level of reflectivity
-focus on learning outcomes & lesson planning -focus on rote knowledge -focus on-task learning time	-teacher directed learning, with pupils occupied to be on task -questions with expected answers, or in close-ended type, teachers answering own questions, or simple recall of answers	-standardized routines -firm and clear rules/maxims -management of behaviour	Technical level: e.g. emphasis on whether children acquiring basic skills and not the learning opportunities or learning process of pupils

From Table 8.1, it can be seen that teachers mainly focused on lesson planning and learning outcomes in curriculum management. Teacher-directed learning and using closed types of question were the major pupil-teacher interactions. Standardized routines were adopted during classroom management. Teachers reflected on their teaching by referring to aspects of task and self, but not child.

8.7 DISCUSSION

Though there were variations in teacher education training, teaching experience and school, there were many similarities among the nine teachers. Teachers in general were satisfied with the friendly relationship and enjoyed teaching with children. To the teachers, good lessons were lessons where learning tasks were completed and children understood by answering questions (Chapter Five). When teachers were asked to comment on their lesson, they usually expressed satisfaction. The order of reasons (Chapter Five, Table 5.1) why lessons were regarded in this way was first: task completed, second children answered questions and third, satisfactory relationships with children. Teachers expressed unease

over their performance especially when the schedule of the day was tight and there were too many learning tasks. From the interviews and field notes, when a session overran the allocated time or interruptions took place (undesirable children behaviour), teachers usually tended to treat them as their responsibility. There were no instances recorded where pupils were blamed for the loss of time.

It became clear that teachers used a system of organization to control children. Teachers tended to use a pet training model by asking children “watch me”, “can you see me”, “look at me”, “take turns” or teacher supervising on task and standing at the door. Though it was done kindly and warmly, this appeared to be a form of benevolent dictatorship. In Chapter Six, it was reported that teachers varied considerably in their use of preventive measures and misbehaviour signals. However, although the individual strategies varied, all teachers sought a system of control which resulted in uniformity among the class. The main indication of failure in controlling the environment was if the teacher could not finish the task before school ended. When the environment was under control, children were on task, routines were automated and teaching was in schedule. Table 8.1 indicates this in diagrammatic form.

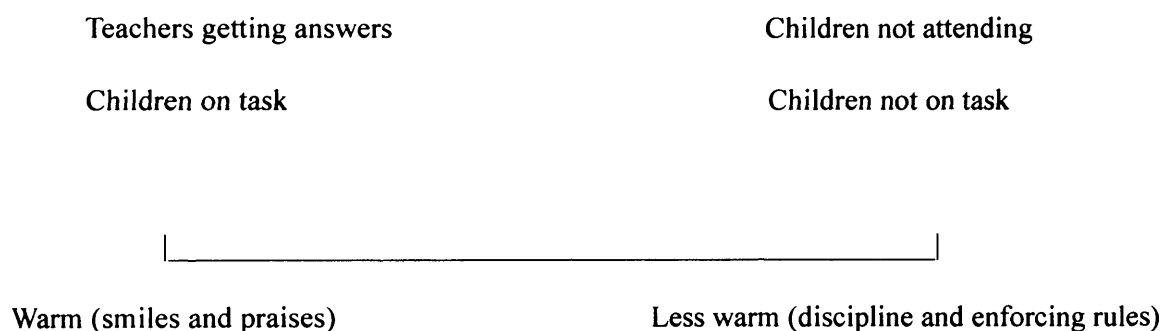
Table 8.1 Control Dimension

Children on task	Children talking and not finishing work
Routines were automated	Verbal and non-verbal instructions used
Teaching in schedule	Overrunning of time
<hr/>	
Situation under Control	Situation out of control

There were constraints on allocation of time. Time on task and engaged time were eroded because of ‘evaporated’ time due to transitions and external factors (e.g. children were slow in eating). When teachers could manage the structured time and allocated time

properly, teachers were warm and smiled. Otherwise, teachers tended to speed up and moved children on a number of tasks. Teachers appeared to make use of praises and cooperation of pupils to keep a safe and happy learning environment for children (Chapter Seven). Teachers smiled, nodded their heads to children while they were getting answers, responses and encouraging children to fulfil tasks, especially during class teaching and group activity time. They became strict and firm when children were not on task or not attending the teacher. Table 8.2 expresses this in diagrammatic form.

Table 8.2 Warmth Dimension

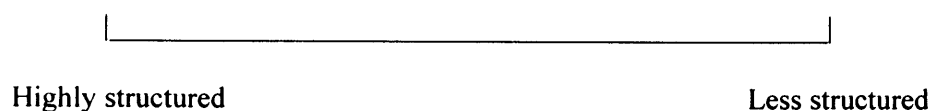


In order to cope with the uniformity of routines and the perceived curriculum, teachers tended to develop a model of consensus. They were acknowledged the value of maintaining a classroom ethos in which children felt warm and loved as well as the value of learning through play and activities (Chapter Five). However, when observed, lessons were highly controlled. Teachers seemed to be outcome conscious and over emphasised the importance of children accomplishing the task (by answering questions or completing worksheets etc). Children were inclined to work according to teachers' expectation when lessons were highly structured. Table 8.3 attempts to present this diagrammatically.

Table 8.3 Task-outcome dimension

Children produced expected answers

Spontaneous children responses



When learning was teacher directed, children did not have much to initiate questions. It was therefore difficult to develop children's creativity, as valued by many early childhood educators.

A question then arises as to what drove the control dimension, warmth dimension and task-outcome dimension of these teachers? Teachers appeared to be working on conflicting maxims. On one hand, they hoped to love and be warm to children. On the other hand, they had to focus on outcomes and manage the ways that enabled children complete their tasks. The limited approaches used to ensure this successful outcome appeared to be a consequence, in part, to their stage of development in their thinking about teaching and its effects.

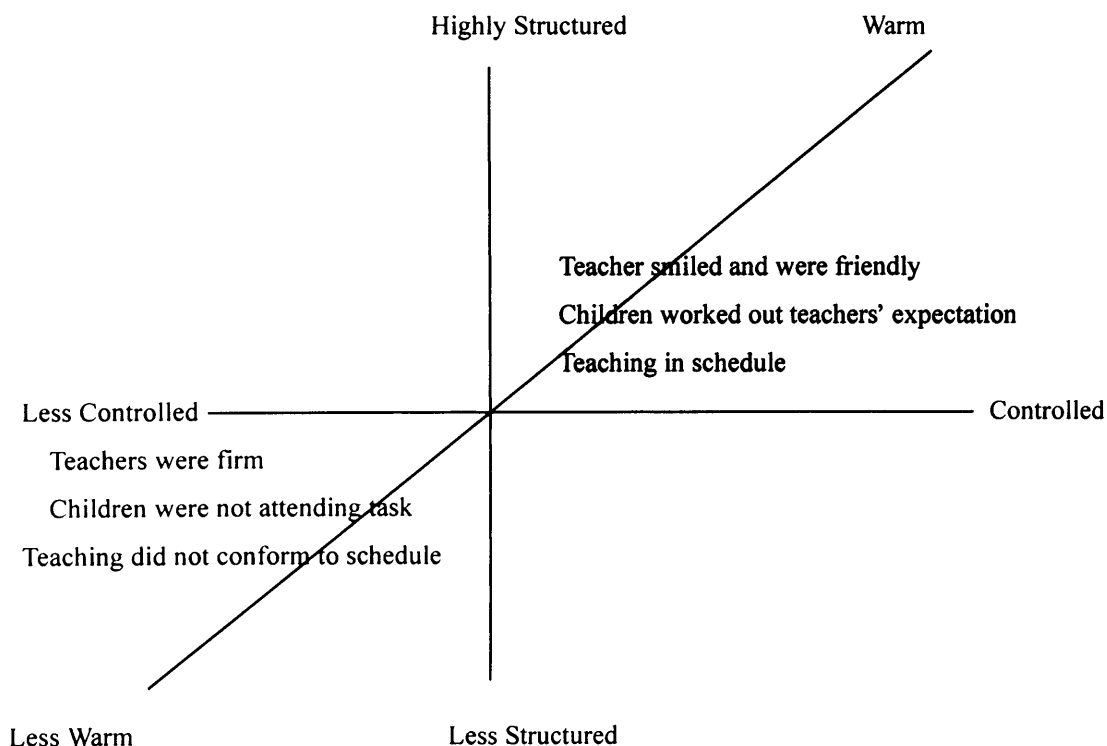
Good teachers, in their mind need to be efficient but warm and friendly, the maxims. When things go wrong there is a conflict and it is warmth which is compromised. And this would be time in most classrooms. Therefore, teachers are no different from others. The two contesting maxims posed a problem for these teachers. They could not improve because of the physical constraints of time (break time, clearing up time) and environment (space). The device for doing it or tackling such problem was a shift from a warm to less warm ethos in accordance to task orientations, in a controlled and structured mode.

These three dimensions appear to be the driving forces of early years teaching in Hong

Kong, which operates within a warm, controlled, and highly structured framework (Table 8.4). There were ‘influencing’ forces at work that drives teachers to another side. These could be task, environment or external constraints. In one case, there was after a pronunciation mistake, the teacher was firm in enforcing the correct pronunciation. In another case, a child could not finish tea and the teacher had to wait for her and lost control of time. In a further case, the teacher had to cut sessions short or cancel a session to make up the break time and to end the school on time.

Table 8.4 attempts to portray these dimensions. In general, teachers were warm, learning environment was controlled and learning activities were highly structured in the nine kindergarten classrooms. In practice (as observed), teachers appeared to be friendly, children were cooperative and worked according to teachers’ expectation and teaching was on schedule.

Table 8.4 CONTROLLED, STRUCTURED AND WARM DIMENSION



Here, it seems that the system is driving the teachers. Teachers seemed to be mainly guided by pre-selected activities, emphasis on outcomes and less flexible to circumstances. According to the theoretical framework of teacher development, proficient teachers would put focus on teaching for understanding rather than teacher-directed transmission of rote knowledge. Proficient teachers accept that circumstances alter cases rather than using rules or maxims (Berliner 1992). They may be capable of becoming more child-centred and automated in teaching, a higher level of teacher development. There appears to be cultural context, external structure and personal cognitive capability as the driving forces influencing the development of teachers. Though it is not clear which force was the stronger, it is clear that we cannot create change by tackling only one of them. The presence of the external and internal pressures contribute to teachers' practice, which raises the question, what can be done to help the future professional development of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong? This will be the focus of the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER NINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN HONG KONG

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Teacher development is a way of thinking about effective teaching, how best to bring about the desired pupil learning by some educational activity (Kyriacou 1986). According to some researchers, teacher development involves general discrete stages novice, beginner, competent teacher and expert (Galton 1989). Differences between stages concern aspects of social development (Zeichner et al., 1987), subject knowledge development (McNamara 1991, Reynolds 1992), pedagogic development (Croll and Hastings 1996) and cognitive development (Kagan 1992). The characteristics of novices and experts have been described by a number of researchers. LaBoskey (see Kagan 1992: 146) was able to infer a continuum of reflectivity: a teacher begins with focusing on himself or herself and goes on to focusing on pupils. Galton (1996) also has identified it as the process of "thinking self then task then child". The final stage of the process is where teachers begin to think about the impact of the innovation on pupil's learning and are prepared to adapt and modify the programmes in the best interest of the child rather than themselves.

TABLE 9.1 Brief characteristics of novice and expert

NOVICE	EXPERT
NOVICE	EXPERT
Thinking self	Thinking child
Emphasis on task and outcomes	Emphasis on learning process

Table 9.1 implies that expert teachers emphasis the learning process. Teaching involves the use of curricular materials to engage students' mentally in learning: children working things out for themselves and reflecting on their understanding. An expert in the domain of teaching must command subject-matter content and pedagogy (Sternberg and Horvath 1995: 11): accessible knowledge that is organized for use in teaching and allows adaptation

to the classroom to promote effective teaching and learning. These imply much more awareness of the pupils' capability and an emphasis on process rather than product.

One aim of this study was to identify the stage of development of the Hong Kong sample of teachers and relate this to aspects of classroom culture or beliefs that have affected teachers' professional development. Early in the study, it was intended to explore variations among teachers of different teaching experience and teacher education qualification. However, very little variation was found among the nine teachers, especially over their perception of teaching and organization inside the classrooms. A further study with a wider sample is needed before we can assess the impact of teaching experience and teacher qualification on teacher development. The common perception of teachers and a general pattern of practice then became the main focus of the study.

9.2 ANALYSING TEACHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE NINE TEACHERS

Teachers in this study developed and exhibited some characteristics of the competent stage (Reynolds 1992). As reported in Chapter Six and Seven, teachers had advanced their development in the way of structuring classroom organization by means of good time management. Teachers used modeling behaviour, such as clapping, and simple training methods using praise. All teachers were able to make adjustments to their lessons and could finish on time, despite the fact that they could not contain some sessions within the allocated time. The main aim of teachers seemed to be to finish on time. In terms of this goal, they appeared to manage time extremely well. Teachers in general had a good relationship with children. However, in some other aspects, they were at the novice/beginners' stage. Teachers in this study appeared to stick to novice skills, highly structured curriculum with emphasis on learning outcomes.

9.2.1 Perceived role of teacher and professional development of the nine teachers

The emphasis a teacher places in the management of learning or behavior depends on his

or her overall perception of teaching and learning. According to Guild (1997), the learner is the most important focus of the educational system. Effective teaching should involve a serious understanding of the learner and the learning process. Within this framework, the teacher's role changes from that of a direct instructor to that of a provider of scaffolding in the construction of knowledge rather than transmission. Teachers in this study viewed their role as direct instructors rather than providers of scaffolding, as no one teacher in this study mentioned developing and elaborating learning based on children's response. A change of perception of teaching and learning is needed to move these teachers to a higher level of development.

9.2.2 Curriculum management and professional development of the nine teachers

According to the romantic conception of an open child-centredness (see Chapter Two), the curriculum of early childhood education/kindergarten is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience. According to Pollard (1996), an effective teacher should provide a supportive learning context: provision of a social context in which there are opportunities to learn and in which children are enabled to exercise some control over their construction of meaning and understanding; and assistance in learning (Pollard and Filer 1996).

In this study teachers gave most attention to class management. Staff in School II tended to stick with the system that worked (less detailed lesson plan, half class teaching, offering pupils only two choices), with no modifications between the three teachers, despite different teaching experience and qualification. The teacher (Miss Chan) with the least teaching experience tended to adopt firmer rules and more controlling methods. Galton (1989) suggests that teachers at the novice-beginner stage rely heavily on maxims (rules) to solve problems. They release a number of standard routines such as being 'firm and fair' until they find an acceptable solution to their difficulties in the classroom. In this case, it also explained why two other less experienced teachers in School I and School III were in

general more authoritarian.

In Reynold's (1992) classification, these teachers were 'competent beginners'. Nevertheless, they could talk about children's learning through activities and experiences (Chapter Five) but could not enact it other than demonstrating superficial understanding (Doyle and Anderson, quoted in Kagan 1992: 144). There appeared to be obstacles which prevented them reaching the stage where they could talk about and apply their ideas across different contexts automatically. On one hand, the less than strong subject knowledge and professional knowledge would also have handicapped the professional development of these teachers. Teacher may have felt vulnerable in the professional culture of early years teaching and tended to 'play safe' by opting for tried and defensive strategies.

Teachers would feel at ease and would be encouraged to try out new strategies or take risks in a more secure environment. The social character of the teaching setting, in other words, has an important influence on opportunities to learn to teach. Furthermore, a cognitive shift to 'thinking child rather than self' (Galton 1996), which marks the move away from the novice stage, will also have an impact on the teacher's style. However, the cognitive state of a teacher will be difficult to change if the role of teacher is not well defined in the professional culture or local context. There is a relationship between the teacher's professional development and use of coping strategies. As the teacher internalizes the vision of a child-centred approach, her professional development evolves and this, in turn, affects his/her use of coping strategies.

9.2.3 Pupil-teacher interactions and professional development of the nine teachers

Expert teachers tend to emphasis "teaching for understanding" and focus on eliciting pupils' thinking and building upon it (Good and Brophy, 1994). Cognitively, teachers in this study seemed not aware of "teaching for understanding". Instead, they tended to tell all

children what to do, thus developing a level of skill associated with novice/beginning teachers.

It can be argued that there are two sets of teaching skills: general teachings skills (such as audibility, and managing pupils and activities) and content specific teaching skills (such as appropriateness of the content, method and structure of the learning activities for the desired educational outcomes) (see Kagan 1992). The two sets of teaching skills are complementary: the former focuses on general presentation and classroom management skills, while the latter focuses on the 'intellectual packaging' of the content and the learning activities (ibid). Teachers emphasising performing the former in their practice cannot be deemed to be experts.

It can also be argued that children being on task, that is, listening to a teacher or doing work as demanded by the teacher, does not take fully into account the ownership of learning. Some pupils appear to be quite capable of doing the task demanded by a teacher without being cognitively engaged. Some recent studies have thus sought to employ a notion of active learning time which focuses on the nature of each pupil's active mental engagement in the learning activities (Bennett et al, 1984; see Kyriacou, 1986). In essence, part of a teacher's development consists of moving away from merely keeping pupils on-task to organising learning activities required for effectively bringing about the educational outcomes desired.

9.2.4 Classroom management and professional development of the nine teachers

According to Kagan (1992: 144), "changes in the novice's knowledge of classrooms could be described in terms of a progression in attention: beginning with classroom management and organization, moving to subject matter and pedagogy, and finally turning to a deeper consideration of what pupils were learning." The progression, suggested by Doyle and

Anderson (Kagan, 1992: 144), includes three stages: “rote knowledge of a classroom strategy (a teacher can talk about an instructional strategy but cannot perform it, performs it poorly, or performs with only a superficial understanding); routine knowledge (the teacher can talk about the rationale underlying the strategy and can apply it but only with much effort and thought and in a specific context) and comprehensive knowledge (the teacher can talk about the strategy and can apply it across varied contexts automatically, thus freeing mental space to focus on pupils).” Hollingsworth (Kagan 1992: 144-145) has argued that “general managerial routines have to be in place before novices could focus on pedagogy and content knowledge.” Kagan (1992: 145) suggested that “novices may also begin to plan instruction designed, not to promote learning, but to discourage misbehaviour” when obsessed with class control. Regardless of the extent of subject matter knowledge, all novices who failed to routinize and integrate management and instruction failed to reach a point of understanding what pupils had learned (Kagan, 1992: 145). On Kagan’s analysis, teachers in the present study tended to manage behaviour but not learning.

9.2.5 Summing Up

The stage model of teacher development helps explain the practice of the teachers studied. The teachers in this study can be located at a particular stage of professional development. They had advanced in time management but stuck to novice skills. This raises the question about “the values embedded within the educational culture of a school and its potential to influence the ways in which teachers think about their work and the roles and responsibilities that they are, in consequence, prepared to accept.” (Day et al., 1993:4) How far are these external and internal forces at work in shaping practice inside classrooms?

9.2.6 External and internal factors influencing practice

While little has been done in an attempt to understand professional development of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong, the tight schedule, structured learning, teacher directed discussions have sometimes been believed to be coping strategies in response to the local context or external pressures. This study suggested that there was an underlying reason, the internal pressure felt by teachers. Teachers appeared to stick to the novice or beginner's skills and their reflective stage was thinking concerned self or task rather than child. Learning by trial and error, without the help of mentor, the experienced can be frustrating, according to Kagan (1992: 151). Perhaps novices feeling ill equipped to cope, are absorbed by the culture of their respective schools. In extreme cases, they adopt pedagogical orientations contrary to those encouraged by the teaching and learning theories put forward in training (Kagan 1992: 144). There are, therefore, both external and internal pressures shaping the Hong Kong practice.

External forces

External pressures included parents' expectation, academic curriculum demand, and the Chinese culture of disciplining children.

In Hong Kong, there has been a rapid growth of a middle class. The one child family has become popular. High expectation on the success of this younger generation prevails. Academic success and career success are often interlinked. It is believed that an early academic start is an essential stepping stone for future academic success. Early years education is mainly perceived by parents, an influential pressure group, as a means of providing an early academic start. In the parents' view, a worthwhile curriculum may mean an effective transition to primary education, so that their children will be given a good start.

The discussion of child-centred philosophy among teachers has been considerable. A minority of parents has expressed concerns over the development of creativity, self-reliance and self-expression of children (Anon 1998). However, the present preoccupation of kindergarten teachers is with achievement.

The curriculum becomes of prime importance if schools focus on the specific curricular indicators of learning outcomes such as those stipulated in the Guide to the Pre-Primary Curriculum (CDI, 1996) even though learning through activities and play or whole child development are also substantially elaborated in the Guide. Teachers might find themselves facing the Chinese traditional culture of teaching tasks based on paper achievement/formal learning outcomes and ‘quan’, disciplining (Tobin et al., 1989). “It is true that no teachers is an island. Teachers are shaped by powerful social and economic forces, forces that coerce and constrain practice” (Lubeck 1991: 249-251). However, it is also true that teachers finally decide what goes on in classroom (ibid). Managing instruction and behaviour rather than seeking to promote pupil understanding appeared to be the teachers' choice.

Internal pressure

The internal pressures included the need to offer well structured lessons, deliver required learning outcomes, provide a safe environment, and ensure effective time management.

According to Andy Hargarves (1992) teaching as ‘emotional work’ drives much of everyday classroom practice. Peoples' feeling drive their actions, though we may not always realize our feeling. Teachers' perception of social expectation influences their performance and behaviour. In the study, teachers tended to explain their tight schedule in an orderly manner an intention to fulfill the demands of the local curriculum and the need for an orderly environment. However, some differences in beliefs were recorded (Chapter

Seven), but little variation in the patterns of teaching were found. This could have been that teachers tended to have introduced structured schedules to overcome content and pedagogic difficulties, but these reasons were not spelled out. Instead, teachers mentioned the social expectation perceived by themselves as the reason for their actions. Here, teachers' behaviour was expressive behaviour instead of rational coping behaviour (Allport, 1966 quoted in Galton 1989: 38).

Furthermore, the explicit belief of these teachers could vary: some would mention learning through play and allowing children's expression. However, the implicit belief of the teachers could be alike: unstructured time leads to trouble. The context in which teaching took place appeared not to be the determining factor, though teachers verbalised it as the justification for their practice. It was more on the perceived social expectation of teaching that would have affected practice.

How teachers perceive their task and respond will inform the nature of their teacher development. In a way, teachers develop coping strategies in response to contexts of the classroom (Calderhead eds. 1992: 42-43). Nevertheless, strategies used should be in accordance to their existing perceptions of teaching. Thus, external pressures became justification for practice. This explains why, despite the pervasiveness of educational innovation (Education Commission, 1999a), most forms of education experimentation remain tied to achieving established education objectives. New methods were usually viewed as alternative ways of achieving traditional goals.

9.3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

How can teachers advance their professional development along in the continuum suggested by the stage model? As said, other higher cognitive skills are required. There are short-term and long-term implications for future teacher training, for schools, and for

policy makers to promote mentorship, collaborative culture and parent education. These will now be discussed.

9.3.1 Cognitive development of teacher as a key to teacher's professional development

The relationship between cognitive development and professional development is close. To develop a profession in teaching requires that we learn how to respond to pupils. Cognitive development of a teacher is an understanding or metacognition of the process of teaching in terms of its effects on pupils academically, socially and emotionally. The practice of teachers informs the zone of proximal development (cognitive capability in coping with everyday classroom tasks) of teachers. According to Kagan (1992: 154), as classroom experience accumulated, “the teachers found more ways of solving problems and grew in their ability to recognise problems”, and strategies (the nature of pupils’ understanding and misunderstanding, alternative learning experiences, classroom settings conducive to high pupil involvement etc). This implies progresses over cognitive development: teachers manifest more self-reflection (the consideration of what is known of the strength and weaknesses of a practice), with strategies increased in size, and complexity. The advancement of cognitive development of teachers is a key to their future professional development. The process involves a developmental progression over the perception of teaching, cognitive strategies and professional knowledge, through assisted performance.

Developmental progression and assisted performance

The developmental progression of a performance/cognition capacity, for people of all ages, can be conceptualized in four stages (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). ‘These developmental progressions have been studied mostly in children, but can also been seen in adults during skill acquisition. In Stage I (assistance provided by more capable others), the teacher is likely to experience confusion, anxiety, and self-doubt. Self-regulatory cognition (metacognition) was predicted by Vygotsky to occur in stress, and disruption. Teachers’

(learners') thinking and action would be regulated by external regulation, the environment and by more capable others. In Stage II (assistance provided by the self), this is a stage intermediate between external regulation and full individual competence (automaticity). Before the automaticity of Stage III emerges, self-assistance is typical. Self-assistance/the ability to reflect can take a variety of forms, including using standards and acquiring feedback, envisioning models of good performance, seeking and constructing cognitive structures to explain events, and arranging contingencies to reward one's own advances. In Stage III (internalization and automaticity), teachers obviously have self-confidence and confidence in their skill'. Their enjoyment of their work is high, and the values and the understandings of their skills and program are solid and readily communicated to others. The individual has emerged from the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) capable of coping with the tasks faced in the everyday classroom. Task execution is smooth and integrated, and its regulation has been internalized and automatized. In Stage IV (de-automatization and recursion), de-automatization and recursion occur regularly where there are slight environmental changes or individual stress. At any point in time, the performances of an individual will reflect a mix of other-regulation, self-regulation, and automatized processes. Enhancement, improvement and maintenance of performance provided a recurrent cycle of self-assistance to other-assistance' (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988).

As teachers pass through these stages, how they change their beliefs becomes a crucial question. Of limited value are workshops whose purpose is to change teacher attitudes and beliefs. There is an emergent contextualist and interactionist view ("neo-Vygotskianism") of human development (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). This view has profound implications for teaching, schooling, and education. A key feature of this emergent view of human development is that higher-order functions (self-regulative learning) develop out of social interaction (ibid). Cognitive and communicative skill appears "twice, or in two planes.

First, it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category (the learner, the teacher, is regulated by more capable others in social transactions), and then within the individual as an intrapsychological category (the learner, the teacher, is regulated by self-directed assistance)” (Tharp and Gallimore 1988). Thus, assisted performance or learning, the social plane, will trigger off the developmental progression.

Progression over perception of teaching

There is substantial evidence that beginning teachers view their more experienced colleagues as highly influential in the process of learning to teach (Zeichner et al., 1987: 29). Cognitive dissonance (other beliefs and professional culture contradictory to ones’ own belief) is needed to confront and modify teachers’ personal beliefs (Kagan 1992: 145). The role models can guide training and practice of the novice through collaboration. Substantial changes in performance were recorded through observation training in the study of Tharp and Gallimore (1988); the teacher (under training) substituted questions for declaratives. She used questioning instead of telling in her teaching. “She aimed at responding to unpredictable utterances of the children in ways that scaffold their understanding and developing pupils’ ideas into a valid link to the lesson. It is an interface of content and pedagogy, an understanding of how topics and skills can be organized and taught to pupils” (ibid). This interface can be regarded as a direct product of novices’ growing knowledge of pupils. In fact, knowledge of content, reconstructed as pedagogical content knowledge, might be viewed as the analogue of the novice’s initial image of self as teacher mitigated by knowledge of pupils and classrooms (Kagan 1992: 158). This suggested that a gauge of professional growth among novices might be multidimensional knowledge of pupils. Such teaching – understood as assisted performance of apprentices in joint activity with experts – becomes the vehicle through which the interactions of society are internalised (Tharp and Gallimore 1988). Following the processes of internalization,

teacher competency moves from the stage of assisted performance into the stages of self-assistance and automaticity. According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), teachers' skill development depends heavily on collaborative support and exchange. Therefore, more important, the major source of new learning for teachers is the school itself.

Schools seemed not to provide this kind of professional development or to create the conditions of cognitive dissonance in teaching practices necessary to facilitate the change. It is clearly demonstrated in studies of teachers of varying lengths of service that most experienced teachers who work in isolation from peers continue to do the same thing they did when they first entered teaching 10, 15, or 20 years ago (Tharp and Gallimore 1988). It will not be possible to change teaching practices, unless at the same time we change the settings in which teachers work, that is, unless we change school cultures and redefine schooling.

Progression over cognitive strategies

What teachers convey by their actions and policies are very important. Do they show that they value children's purposeful discovery or do they choose, instead, to emphasize their own agendas and ignore the process of inner resolution. To be responsive means that a teacher does not attempt to fully anticipate what pupils will say, what ideas and experiences will be stimulated by the discussion and the text itself. This, in turn, means that the teacher must be intellectually prepared to respond. Edwards and Knight (1994) termed it "the tentative practitioner" (Edwards and Knight 1994:5).

This attitude does not come naturally. The learner (teacher) needs to be scaffold (assisted performance to be provided) as s/he progresses through the ZPD (from 'thinking self' and 'task' to 'thinking child'). A transformation of mind is thus necessary. This transformation consists in the development of new, higher-order cognitive processes, new values, and new

motives and is achieved by the same psychosocial processes that have been widely exemplified in the discussion of developmental progression that occurs in children (Tharp and Gallimore 1988).

To assist the less competent learner, the more competent must provide 'scaffolding' or framework by means of which these metacognitive processes can be internalised (the learner has to apply the strategy until the process becomes automatic.) Once this state is achieved, the learner can become an independent thinker. The focus on the ratio of pupil/teacher talk proved a powerful combination/scaffolding for assisting teacher "B" 's advancement through her ZPD in the study by Tharp and Gallimore (1988). The more abstract the problem the more dominant will be the role model (the expert consultant) 's participation.

Progression over professional knowledge

When cognitive capacity is developed, a teacher is able to take on the next task of developing competence, which is the development of pedagogical techniques of questioning, responsiveness, and assisting performance.

Teachers have to develop professional-level skills if they are to move beyond their current stage. The beliefs and theories that teachers develop about children, knowledge, and practice are a legitimate source of professional behavior. They learn when a teacher should intervene directly in children's learning processes and when to hold back. Ineffective and/or novice teachers seem unable to chunk or differentiate the large amount of varied bits of information they face during interactive teaching (Reynolds 1992: 11). Teachers make immediate decisions, which are based upon judgements about children's learning, the characteristics of the children they teach, and the particular circumstance in which they function. When teachers tend to regulate pupils' behaviour, pupils are not required to "do

as you think” but “do as the teacher says” (Galton 1989). Pupils often find it difficult to interpret the teacher’s dual role of learning facilitator and behaviour manager and play safe by adopting dependency strategies which in extreme cases take the form of “learned helplessness” (ibid). Experts are less prone to create this kind of classroom environment since they avoid the use of maxims such as “ don’t smile until Christmas,” preferring instead to deal with each problem as it arises on the principle that “circumstances alter cases” (Galton, 1996). Peer coaching and expert consultation are important elements in the process.

Summing up

Professional development of a teacher involves cognitive development, a change of the practitioner’s perception of teaching and learning, a change of coping strategies and in the professional knowledge of the teacher. To facilitate the change, the key is cognitive structuring/advancement through ZPD takes place mainly by the process of assisted performance. Peer coaching and expert consultation are important elements in the process of cognitive development. Thus, a new vision of schooling in which mutual assistance is commonplace is needed.

9.3.2 Suggested clauses for action

How to advance the teaching skills of experienced teachers from novice to competent stage?

There are three basic ways which are generally used to promote change through learning the coaching model, mentorship and action research. The stage model of teacher development implies that novice teachers will think self and adopt worked maxims. Cognitive development, developmental progression, towards a higher level of thinking child and automacity is needed to advance teachers in the continuum of competence. However, limitations of coaching exist. According to researchers such as Berliner (1992) McIntyre (1992), teachers in this study have not developed sufficiently to reflect on their

own practice is with action research but can reflect on others' practice. For example, in the case of the use of clue cards, some demonstrated lessons would inspire the practice of the teachers. Models of teaching which are geared to extend children's thinking could be used in the coaching process. Models which do not control children's responses by the prepared clue cards but instead write down all children's responses on the board, or allow children to sort out suggestions and headings on the board in a brain storming session could be demonstrated. Teachers might not be changed internally by these model coaching. They might argue that it takes time to allow more children's spontaneous responses when they are at the stage of thinking self and task. This explains why despite the exposure to early education pedagogy in the in-service programmes most kindergarten teachers continue to adhere to their existing ways of teaching. Further, mentors working in the same context and who allow flexibility in teaching and cope well with the time constraints within the context will bring about cognitive dissonance and changes in belief of the mentees. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) suggests it as Stage III of the Cognitive Progression, one's constructing of cognitive structures to explain events after envisioning models of good performance. As teachers are beyond the initial stage, action research will facilitate reflection on practice. Thus, in the short term, provision of coaching and mentoring can advance teachers' stage of development, while in the long term, action research should be encouraged as the teachers progress along the continuum of development. The aim of teacher education programmes is to incorporate coaching, mentorship and action research in alignment with teachers' developmental stage.

The role of teacher education

When novices undertake teacher education training, the intention is that they should learn to reflect on their practice and to develop a personal theory of teaching, thus becoming an autonomous teacher. This paradigm of the 'reflective practitioner' is commonly used as the basis for numerous teacher education programmes. Currently, there is an apparent lack of

connection between the content of teacher education programme and the exigencies of classroom teaching. All the research studies reviewed by Kagan (1992: 148-150) felt that courses had focused too much on theory and too little on practical strategies. Therefore, teachers may either seek quick-fix solutions in name of theories or fall back on own beliefs (Guild, 1997). Moreover, despite the nature and objectives of the teacher education program, Gore and Zeichner (see Kagan, 1992: 142) “found little evidence of reflection; what little they did find consisted of technical rationality, the lowest level. The failure of teacher education programmes to promote reflection may have been attributable to the traditional nature of the supervision that accompanied student teaching or to the absence of suitable role models (experienced teachers/mentors) themselves engaging in self-reflection.”

The model of teacher development accounts for the shift in teachers’ concerns away from self to a focus on pupil needs in terms of the resolution of a novice’s image of ‘self as a teacher’. According to the model, a novice’s primary task is to acquire knowledge of pupils and, by inference, knowledge of oneself as a teacher. This ability to regulate our thinking processes, (in this case in relation to teaching), is the ability to ‘control the domain of cognition’ (Meadows, 1993: 78). According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), learning occurs only when assisted performance is provided to the learner in the ZPD. To achieve this, a transformation of mind is required of the learner. This involves a cognitive process, the development of new values, and new motives, which is achieved by the same psychosocial processes that have been examined in the previous discussion of developmental progression that occurs in learning. This is an ability in an execution of cognitive capability. Here, the more competent help the less competent move to a position where they can become ‘self-regulating’ in their thinking (Galton 1997). The availability of role models, seasoned teachers who question and reflect on novices’ pedagogical beliefs, should facilitate the process (Kagan 1992:142).

Teachers enter the profession with personal beliefs about teaching. They bring with them “images of good teachers, images of self as a teacher, and memories of themselves as pupils in classrooms. These personal beliefs and images generally remain unchanged and follow them into classroom” (Kagan, 1992: 142). Novices may tend to focus on their own actions as teachers. “They appear unable to adapt their images of teachers and lessons to different situations and pupil needs. For professional growth to occur, prior beliefs and images must be modified and reconstructed. ... It is a novice’s growing knowledge of pupils that must be used to challenge, mitigate, and reconstruct prior beliefs and images. ... To acquire useful knowledge of pupils, direct experience appears to be crucial” (Kagan 1992:142). Research suggests that novices placed with cooperating teachers who facilitated the integration of new knowledge with novices’ preexisting beliefs appeared to experience the greatest professional growth (Hollingsworth, in press, see Kagan, 1992: 144).

A mentor or cooperating teacher may therefore be beneficial to initial stages of teacher development. Problems may arise if novices are still inclined to believe that there exists somewhere a set of guidelines, or even tips, which will enable them to survive as teachers no matter what the context of their teaching (Benner 1984: 21). During training, teachers will be offered working theories or advice to guide them in their choice of suitable strategies. A shortcoming is that these theories often fail to provide a basis for understanding, informing and interpreting his or her own thinking about his or her teaching. For example, teachers are expected to create and maintain a purposeful and orderly environment for the pupils. The question of whether the method employed to establish control is compatible with the teaching objectives is rarely explored. Bereiter (1995) concluded that mentors were often unwilling to connect situated (practice) to non-situated knowledge (principles of teaching and learning) for the latter was regarded as ‘the responsibility of the college’ (see Edwards, 1997).

It seems that advice offered by experienced practitioners may do little to foster a teacher's development of increased professional competence beyond the initial beginning teacher stage. Although it should be acknowledged that sound advice during those early stages certainly alerts student teachers to many pitfalls and to issues of major practical significance.

There should be closer links between practice and coursework. Unless such links develop, novices will not appreciate the abstract and theoretical content of most education courses at this stage in their professional development. Attempts should also be made to enable teachers to adopt a research orientation towards reflection about their own teaching. "Classroom action-research" aimed at increasing effective teaching should thus be promoted. This approach refers to a research-oriented attempt by teachers to understand and solve practical problems faced in the classroom. For example, when teachers plan to adopt inquiry/discovery teaching, an approach which places emphasis on pupils "self-directed learning", "classroom action-research" can help to identify the problems faced by teachers using these methods. Furthermore, it will help them to explore strategies which may resolve these problems in particular classrooms, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the teaching.

Teachers involved in this kind of research will develop an intimate and personal understanding of the knowledge-creation processes. However, there are some excellent teachers who are not involved each year in research projects (Reynolds, 1992). The essential requirement is a personal and critical understanding of the knowledge-creation process such as conference presentations, publications and awards. Research is a necessary but not sufficient condition for excellent teaching.

Reflection as advocated by action researches, requires teachers to derive their own theories

from action (Schon, 1987) so that they learn to become teacher-researchers. It is doubtful however, given the characteristics of novice teachers portrayed by the research, whether such teachers have sufficient experience or knowledge of routines to operate in this reflective way (Berliner 1992; Reynolds 1992). We should therefore perhaps not offer a uniform programme to all practitioners, irrespective of the developmental stage they have reached. A developmental model of teacher's professional growth is needed. The teacher education programme with a clear articulation of a developmental model based on stages would create an expectation of further progress (Galton, 1996). The availability of a theory of professional growth or teacher development enables teacher educators to determine at what point a particular competence should be introduced and at what level dealt with. Teacher education should be based upon the most suitable strategies that teachers can accommodate at a particular stage of their development, an idea similar to that of readiness in child development.

The Value of Action Research

Most of the changes for improving educational quality are imposed from above. This top-down approach may not be the most effective way of reforming educational provision. A number of writers have noted the evidence that a centrally dictated system, with little scope for individuality and flexibility, achieves minimal success (Holt 1987; Kelly 1989). These writers argue that, 'for effective learning to take place teachers need to feel in control of change rather than to feel controlled by change' (Blenkin, Edwards and Kelly 1992: 55, quoted in Blenkin and Kelly 1997:94). Graham (1993, quoted in Blenkin and Kelly 1997:94) writes that 'the best and most effective change comes from within', and action research enables practitioners to transform their practice in a safe, supportive and self-directed environment. Since changes are self-initiated, the impact is likely to have a more genuine effect. Action research gives practitioners control of developments so that they become meaningfully convinced of the changes which need to take place to improve their

practice.

Action research not only focuses attention on the practitioner's actual practice but it also stimulates active evaluation of the practitioners' quality of their practice. This critical, self-evaluative inquiry enables practitioners to consider the context of their practice. While conducting action research, practitioners are motivated to question particular aspects of their teaching, to articulate the underlying values and assumptions which inform and influence that practice, and to consider the effectiveness of their professional actions and judgements, especially in the light of the impact these have on the children with whom they work (McIntyre 1992: 46).

A useful way of beginning this process is to consider their existing views of the area under focus and then to spend some time reviewing what is actually happening, usually by observation (see Edwards 1997). For example, practitioners may chose to look at the teacher's role in developing reading. For such a study, it would be necessary for the action researchers to clarify what they believed that role should be before gathering evidence about it from their own practice. In looking more closely at their chosen focus, they might collect evidence in a variety of ways. They could ask colleagues to observe them reading with a child or tape-record a reading sessions. Alternatively, they might simply observe children reading. Practitioners can select a variety of means by which to find out more about their practice. The next step is perhaps the most crucial part of the action research process and requires the practitioners to reflect critically upon the data gathered. By asking probing questions on any new findings, practitioners can then take active steps to adjust their practice according to the insights gained from their observations. Once these changes have been introduced, the practitioners may continue to observe and reflect in a continuous cycle of professional development and improvement.

Action research then embraces a practitioner's professional judgement, and, in so doing, it becomes a means by which practitioners may regain their professional identity. A context is being created in which professional judgement is given priority over simplistic skills and where deliberation replaces rule following (Grundy 1989, quoted in Blenkin and Kelly 1997:93).

The deeply questioning process of action research demands that practitioners query every aspect of their practice. The vigorous questioning of personal assumptions helps to guard against poor teacher judgement. As Elliott (1991: 52) puts it, action research 'improves practice by developing the practitioner's capacity for discrimination and judgement in particular, complex, human situations ... informing professional judgement' (quoted in Blenkin and Kelly 1997:93). Through action research, practitioners develop their 'practical wisdom' (ibid.). the development of such 'practical wisdom' can help practitioners to make more appropriate judgements.

The value of action research, then, is that it gives faith and confidence to practitioners' professional judgement and encourages them to take control of their practice. This in turn can help to empower practitioners to confront the challenge of improving their practice and becoming initiators of change.

Action research is adaptable, and it accommodates itself to the particular needs and circumstances of each practitioner. Not only does it acknowledge the complexity of educational practice, it is also itself an endless process. It is a strategy which precludes the imposition of any formal or rigid structure or programme, and recognizes that the 'context of practice is always changing the required continuous innovation' (Elliott, 1985, p.504 quoted in Blenkin and Kelly 1997: 95). It enables practitioners to respond appropriately to the challenges of educational practice. Nevertheless, action research is best used by experts

rather than teachers in other stages since it requires them to step outside the ordinary and the routine.

School culture of collaboration

Efforts that focus exclusively on individuals may hamper development of teachers and teaching “because teachers’ skill development depends heavily on collaborative support and exchange” (Rosenholtz, 1986; see Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). Such collaboration can create a point of professional craft knowledge (Cooper and McIntyre 1996) that informs everyday classroom teaching, and provide ways teachers attempt to offer advice to each other (especially) new entrants to the profession (Kyriacou 1986: 29). The best teachers draw from various sources, including the pooled or studied experiences of other teachers.

Thus, it is important that schools create a variety of activity settings in which teachers may engage in joint productive activity with others (Tharp and Gallimore 1988). We will not change teaching practices, unless at the same time we change the settings in which teachers work. This requires that we change school cultures and redefine schooling. According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), mutual assistance is the highest instantiation of the theory of teaching (ibid). It provides the purest form of intersubjectivity, arising from cooperative work. “It produces a coordinated set of intrapsychological planes – jointly acquired and coordinated cognitive structures within project-team-related activities: each member of the team has different skills, and each contributes assistance to the others, as well as receiving it. Assistance can be provided through ZPDs (learning readiness of learners, learners are in their ZPDs when learning occurs) mutually” (Tharp and Gallimore 1988). One need not be outstanding in order to assist. A school that provides and encourages mutual assistance becomes a learning environment for all.

According to Andy Hargraves (1992), the culture of teaching has important influences on

the work that teachers do. In general, these various cultures provide a form and context in which particular strategies of teaching are developed, sustained and perfected over time. Cultures of teaching comprise beliefs, habits and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers. Culture carries the community's collectively shared solutions to its new membership. If we want to understand what the teacher does and why the teacher does it, we must therefore also understand the teaching community, the work culture of which that teacher is a part. Physically, teachers are often alone in their own classrooms; psychologically, they never are (Andy Hargaves 1992: 217). Their strategies are influenced by the classroom styles of the colleagues with whom they worked in present and past. In this respect, teacher cultures, the relationships between teachers and their colleagues, are significant aspects of teachers' lives and work. They provide a vital context for teacher development and for the ways that teachers teach.

Whilst action research is by definition largely self-directed, it also enables practitioners to extend their professional practice through collaboration, helping to counteract the isolationist tendencies which have sometimes characterized the education profession (Andy Hargaves 1992). For, although the focus is on self-reflection, this can be done within a collaborative context, embracing both the individualism and the collectivism which Fullan (1993) maintains are crucial for effective change. Since action research must operate in a context of mutual trust and co-operation, a team approach can enable practitioners to feel less hesitant of disclosing personal fears and uncertainties. Further, the supportive structure of action research can encourage practitioners to take risks and to develop a 'collaborative culture' (Lieberman and Miller 1999).

This focus for professional collaboration helps to stimulate mutual debates about what is happening in practice. Such co-operative practice enhances the provision for the children and helps to ensure consistent and quality education for all.

9.4 CONCLUSION

This study is that it is one of the first to look in detail of early years teaching in Hong Kong. The expectation placed on kindergarten teachers has been very demanding. The impact of an idealized vision of early childhood education has been all prevailing. In Hong Kong, the influence of Chinese culture and the local demand on an early academic start has been no less. The study suggests maintaining a well discipline class may not be enough to demonstrate a teacher's competence. To improve practice; the conception held by teachers of competence, expertise, learning, teaching and assessment must also be challenged and reconstructed. To make real improvement in teaching, teachers must seek to produce understanding in the students, requiring an advance in their stage of professional development.

Teachers enter the profession with personal beliefs about teaching. Theories such as child-centred learning and responsive teaching are difficult to integrate into practice while teachers perceive teaching mainly as transmission of knowledge. Considerable in-service development is therefore needed. According to one model of teacher development, for professional growth to occur, prior beliefs and images must be modified and reconstructed. Kagan (1992: 143) has suggested that an indicator of professional growth among novices may be a willingness to see oneself (as teacher) intimately connected to pupils' problems. A mentor or cooperating teacher may also be beneficial to initial stages of teacher development. Attempts should be made to enable teachers, beyond the initial stages, to adopt a research orientation towards reflection about their own teaching. "Classroom action-research" aimed at increasing effective teaching should be promoted. It refers to a research-oriented attempt by teachers to understand and solve practical problems faced in the classroom.

There is no technology of curriculum development nor of teaching which is adequate for

the complete development of a teacher. Professional craft knowledge (Cooper and McIntyre 1996) can inform everyday classroom teaching. In effect, teachers select or create practice for specific situations and learn further refinements from critical reflection on their own practice. Teachers are far from technicians. Teacher education programme therefore is adjusted to cope with teacher's individual differences, and different cognitive stages. We should not offer a uniform programme to all practitioners, irrespective of the developmental stage they have reached. Teacher education should provide the most suitable form that a teacher can take at a particular stage of his/her development. The real value of teacher education, therefore, is not a fixed set of behaviours and programmes but a teacher, an autonomous professional capable of acting in the best interests of the learning and development of students. Teacher training guarantees predictable behaviours but teacher education guarantees freedom, the flexibility to judge, to weight alternatives, to reason about both ends and means, and then to act while reflecting upon one's actions (Lofthouse 1997). It is far from sufficient to focus on knowledge about goals in education, the nature of learning and teaching, the role of teachers and students and demonstrated technical or trained competencies in the classroom. A developmental model of teacher's professional growth is needed. The teacher education programme with a clear articulation of a developmental model should then be possible.

This study is one of the first research study exposing the reality of the kindergarten classroom situation in Hong Kong. More research on the context of early childhood education and context of new changes such as interfacing global knowledge in educational content and teacher education, democratization and changes in China is needed if we want to understand teacher development in the local context. A new culture of early childhood education has been promoted in Hong Kong. The tide of educational reforms is high. However, 'policy changes at the outer, macro-level, of systems can seem oppressive to those struggling to implement them at the micro-level of their workplaces' (Anning et al.

1999). An understanding of the context, the work of teaching and stage characteristics of kindergarten teachers might allow rational judgement over assumptions. Teachers need a framework of policy but automaticity in practice. Furthermore, the social perception of early childhood education has to be changed. It is obvious that we need to bridge the gaps between the vision of practitioners and parents. There is a need to pay more attention to parent education.

There have been a number of research studies on teacher development in the neighbouring countries around Hong Kong. For example, collaborative teaching, paired teaching and collaborative learning based on research findings has been developed in Singapore. Hong Kong may be left behind if schools fail to acknowledge the current of change. Hopefully, this kind of study on teacher development will encourage further interest and curiosity to explore the complexity of kindergarten teaching in Hong Kong and turn kindergarten into 'a comprehensive, integrated and coherent early childhood service, flexible and multi-functional...a rich and enhancing experience for everyone involved in it' (Moss and Penn 1996, quoted in Anning et al 1999). If the findings of this study at least act as a catalyst in stimulating a debate on such issues, it will have served a useful purpose.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I Extracts from transcripts

A DAY INSIDE MISS LEE'S CLASSROOM

TOILET TIME AND HYGIENE CHECK

At 9:00 a.m., the bell rings. Miss Lee greeted the children who were sitting in three groups. From 9:00-9:15, she took the roll call, collected homework, checked children's handbook (record of school-home written communication) on their desks, and checked finger nails and tidiness of children. She praised the tidiness of the children. With children's prompt responses, she did all these in a few minutes. Then the teacher said queuing up to the children and called the children by their grouping. Miss Lee said, "Let's see which group does it beautifully!" Children of the group came out one by one and lined up quietly. Each child put the chair against the table when came out. A child came up to the teacher and requested to send Mrs. Chu (a classmate's mother) a small bag of things. The teacher took it and promised to send it to Mrs. Chu after school. Children queued up and assembled at the door of the washroom. The girls used the washroom after the boys. On their way, children were asked to sing a few songs/rhymes. Some children were not singing. The teacher said "One, two, three" and the children sang in unison. The teacher clapped her hands and the children followed. It was the assembly time, as stated on the timetable (Appendix I).

CLASS TEACHING: SHOW AND TELL

p.101x, 114,

Children went back to the classroom. The teacher welcomed a child back from sick leave. The child told her sickness and the teacher echoed her by telling the class the reason of her absence. The child told the teacher that she telephoned and informed the school office by herself. Miss Lee asked the classmates to clap for the child. The teacher said the prayer to thank for the health and the children said after the teacher sentence by sentence, "thanks for giving health to children so that they can come to school, please let the sick recover and come to school tomorrow..."

The teacher showed the children a drawing. She asked some children to help to post it up. A lot of children put up their hands and offered help to the teacher. It was a drawing which the children did yesterday. The teacher asked who had contributed to the drawing. The children all put up their hands.

Miss Lee (attending to a girl putting up her hand): "What do you draw?"

The child (pointing to her picture): "A tree"

Miss Lee (to the rest of the class): "Is it beautiful?"

The whole class: "yes".

Miss Lee: "Then shall we give her a clap?"

The classmates clap for the girl. A few children were asked on their contribution and got claps from classmates. Then the teacher asked children to queue up.

CLASS TEACHING: CARPET TIME

Children queued up in a straight line and assembled at the music room. They sang and clapped their hands on their way. The children had their class teaching time inside the music room, a bigger classroom. Children sat on the carpeted floor. The teacher sat on a low chair at the front. It lasted for thirty minutes. During the time, the teacher started by asking a question.

Miss Lee: "Which season were you drawing yesterday?"

Some children: "Autumn"

Miss Lee (exclaimed): "I beg your pardon!"

Some children: "Spring"

Miss Lee smiled and told the class to count from one to ten and she would show them some magic. The whole class counted but nothing came up. The teacher encouraged the children to count loudly. The class then counted in unison. The teacher asked children to guess what was behind the white board. The white board was moved away and there were two vases of flowers on a small table.

Miss Lee: "What were the differences between the two vases of flowers?"

Class: "colour", "appearance", "shape"

The teacher (smiling): "smart"

A few children exclaimed: "vase", "size"

Miss Lee: "Well, thank you for reminding me."

Every time when a child got the desired answer as prepared by the teacher in her word card, a child was called upon to put the card on the board. On the board, there were words "colour", "size" and "shape".

Miss Lee: "Once again." (Children were asked to tell the "differences" again by reading out the words on the board.)

Then,

Miss Lee (with a smile on her face): "I know your names. Do you think you know the names of the flowers?"

A number of children: "chrysanthemum", "lily"

Miss Lee: "There were no chrysanthemum and lily in these vases." "You could find those flowers at the science corner later."

A child (at the back shouted out loudly): "carnations" (with a pronunciation mistake on one of the three Chinese characters)

Miss Lee: "carnations" (with special stress on the correct pronunciation of one of the Chinese character)

The teacher talked to the flowers, "Flowers, flowers, do you need to eat?" and then asked the children a few questions.

Miss Lee (to the class): "Do you need to eat?"

Children: "yes"

Miss Lee: "Do flowers eat?"

Children: "yes"

Miss Lee: "Do flowers drink?"

Children: "Yes"

Miss Lee (pointing to the glass of water): “What’s the colour of the flower a few days later?” “Can you see the red colour of the water?” “Can you guess the colour of the flowers after a few days?” Children: “red”

The teacher asked a girl to come out and whispered a few words to her. The girl went out and brought one flower back.

Miss Lee: “Is the flower beautiful?”

The whole class: “yes”

A girl was asked to come up, touch the flower, and check whether the flower was a real one. One after the other, though the third boy hesitated a bit, answered, “yes”. The teacher took the chance and said “some hesitation” word by word in a low voice with watchful eyes. Children seemed to get the clue. The fourth one pointed out that the flower was a cloth flower.

Miss Lee: “Name the flower”

Children: “Rose”

Miss Lee (to the class): “Does it have life?” “Are they real flowers?”

Some children: “Yes”

Some children: “No”

The teacher called those (three of them) who were uncertain to come out and explained a little more to them. Then the teacher asked the whole class to choose their favourite flower at the science corner. If the choice is a real flower, the children had to draw a sun against the picture of flower on the worksheet. After giving the instruction,

Miss Lee (to the whole class): “Understand or not?”

The class: “Understand”

Miss Lee: “Do you remember which four Chinese characters you wrote yesterday?” The whole class: “Spring is coming (in Chinese)”.

The teacher started writing the Chinese character on the board, and pupils followed and wrote in the air. Teacher wrote the four characters (spring is coming) on the board. Children spotted a little difference between the characters written yesterday and the characters writing by the teacher. The teacher explained both were correct. The stroke she wrote yesterday was a classic style while the one she was writing would make the word look artistic.

Then the teacher speak softly “queue up, please, apple group”. Children came out quietly to queue. Group by group, they queued up orderly and quietly.

CLASS TEACHING: GROUP ACTIVITY TIME

At 10:00 a.m., the teacher and children went back to their homeroom/classroom. The teacher invited three children to help returning class workbooks, and delivering worksheets. The teacher told children that there were some new books on plants and flowers at the library corner. The class was divided into three groups randomly by the teacher. There were four activities. Three of them, cooperative drawing, writing and reading were to be done inside the classroom. The children, after finishing work inside the classroom, could go out to the science corner at the corridor to fill in a worksheet Children sat in groups. Some did drawing; some did writing; some did reading at the library corner. It was put down “small

group activities” on the timetable.

The teacher walked around the classroom. She would say, “the drawing is beautiful” to the child she passed by. Once, she asked a child, “ what is that in your drawing?” She did not stop at the side of that child but went passed. The child remained still for a few seconds and finished his work in a minute. The teacher came to another child and then held the child’s hand to lead him to the science corner. The children of the drawing team talked loudly. At the writing table, some were watching others drawing or reading and stopped doing their work. The teacher walked up to the table and said, “ look! Sing (a boy) is doing a good job.” Children at the table smiled. A girl came up to show the teacher her work. The teacher said “beautiful!” Another child also would like the teacher to have a look on his work. The teacher reminded him that two words were left out (kneeling down on the ground and talked to the child) on the work sheet. The child could tell one missing word. The teacher asked for one more. The child gave the answer and the teacher without a smile said “right”. The teacher turned back to the writing group. The teacher held their (children’s) hands to assist them to write according to the ruling/steps of writing. She rubbed off the wrong ones.

When the children finished drawing, they put back the colour pencils and the like on the shelf. Some children asked to be excused and were permitted. More and more children finished their work inside the classroom and went out to the corridor to do their worksheet. As children coming in and going out, the learning climate became relaxed and loose. When children finished the assignment, they could play chess in pairs or stayed at the toys’ corner.

A child had difficulties in doing their worksheet. He came up to the teacher and asked whether he could draw a lily or not. The teacher with a cheerful smile asked him to study the shape of lily at the science corner before drawing. The child asked whether he could erase the one on the paper and then went outside.

When the teacher noticed that all children had finished the four tasks, she asked the children to stand up and sing along for a few minutes (less than ten minutes). The songs were a revision of the songs learned. Children acted according to the content of the songs. Their actions were alike/standardised, and orderly.

TEA TIME

At 10:45, it was time for tea break/snack.

Miss Lee: “Pack away and sit at your seats” (to the class)

“Take out your cups and put them on the desk” (in the air)

Children were busy with their work and not attending the teacher.

Miss Lee: “stand up” (in a loud voice and her hands were in the gesture showing the same action) “apple group...”

The teacher called the names of groups one after one in a soft voice to ask children to queue up. When the teacher spoke in a soft voice, children became quiet and came out to line up orderly. Children assembled at the door of the wash room. The teacher asked the boys to go and use the wash room first.

Miss Lee: ‘Boys go first, I want no noise, you are so quiet that I don’t aware of your going in and out’.

Children went in and out orderly. They went back to the homeroom.

Miss Lee: “ who would like to help the distribution of plates and sandwiches and pouring the drink/water?”

Miss Lee: “Chi Wai, Mei Yee, Yin Ting” (before children responded, teacher called some names)

Three children came out to help the three tasks. .

Child (responsible for the drink): “Who wants water?” (He calls around. Those who wanted their cups to be filled put up their hands.)

Within four minutes, children got things ready on the table and sat facing one another in a group, ready to eat.

Miss Lee: “Does every body get food and drink?”

The teacher thanked the helper and waited for one of them to put the bottle of drinks back on the tea table.

Miss Lee: “ Today, we have sandwiches and water for tea.”

Then she led the prayer. Children then said “Thank you, teacher” and “Thank you, classmates” and started their snack time.

Miss Lee: “Eat quietly” (to the class)

“Lai Ming, time to take your medicine” (to a girl)

One child seemed not eating. The teacher walked to him.

Miss Lee: “ Not eating? Have you finished?”

The child: “Finished”

Miss Lee: “Put it (a plate) outside” (talks to a girl in a low voice)

“When you have finished, where to put it?”

The girl then put the plate back on the tea table at the front. At 11:12, children were asked to go to the music room. A child was still drinking.

Miss Lee: “ no more drinking, we are going to the music room now.”

Children packed away things on the table and queued up.

MUSIC SESSION

At 11:05, children from two classes were in the music room. When children heard the melody of the piano, they sang the morning greeting song-*Good morning, teacher. Good morning, children.*

Then children were asked to listen to the tape recorder and guessed the sound. Some children said it was the sound of a frog. The teacher asked children to pretend. After hearing and pretending the sound of a few animals, children were asked to choose and pretend any one of them. Children were then asked to pretend the walking and sound of an animal and move about in the music room. The teacher then pretended to be a bird and asked children to pretend after her. Therefore, the children flew low and high, following the teacher's movement.

Miss Lee: “ down there is a lake, let's drink some water”, “fly quickly”, “you birds are beautiful”, “ what can you see? I can see trees and flowers” (the teacher gives clues from time to time).

The teacher playing the piano took the clue from Miss Lee and played the piano in a different tempo. Children were smiling and participated in a playful mood. Then the teacher asked the children to sit down and sing “d, r, m, f, s” and “s, f, m, r, d” for a few times. The teacher suggested having a game. The children heard the music and the boys and girls then lined up in two rows. When they heard another set of tones from

the piano, they formed into a big circle and sat down. The teacher asked children to tell the names of flowers they learned in the morning, by singing. The teacher sang “what’s the name of the flower” in the rising tone of “d r m f s” and sang “it is a rose” in the falling tone of “s f m r d”. Children took turns to ask their friends and answered. Then there was the melody of the song “spring is coming” from the piano.

Miss Lee: “well, it is time for us to move about” “what’s the name of the song?” Children sang the song and move about (act according to the content of the song). Miss Lee asked children to provide the names of a few songs that would allow a lot of movement. Children gave a few names of the songs. They sang and moved accordingly. One child (not belonging to Miss Lee’s class) did not sing and move. He stood for most of the time. He was not a Cantonese native speaker. Miss Lee did not notice that. After a few minutes moving, children were asked to sit down.

Miss Lee (to the whole class): “Happy or not?”

Children (shouted): “Happy”

Miss Lee asked children to remain seated and move the body according to the music (a song). When the song was about moving to the left and right, a lot of children made mistakes.

Miss Lee (exclaimed): “ You frighten me!”

All the children laughed. More children could move to the left and right in the later part. The teacher praised the children and allowed children to have one more game. Children remained seated in a circle. One of them hid a handkerchief at the back of a child and went back to his seat. The child having the handkerchief had to catch the child before he went back to his seat. If he could not, he had to sing a song. A girl complained that the first two boys did not hide handkerchief behind girls.

Miss Lee: “ The first two do not but the following ones will”.

Then the third one hid the handkerchief behind a girl. After the girl had the turn, the teacher at the piano played the farewell song. The whole class queued up and went back to the homeroom.

PACK AWAY TIME

At was 11:45 when children went back to their homeroom. They had to pack away. From the loud speaker, a few pupils taking school bus were called to assembled at the door of the classroom. A clerical assistant came and gathered the children to queue up at the corridor. Children would be accompanied by the clerical assistant to go down the stairs to the street and to get on the bus. Those in the classroom would have more time to pack away. Some of them took off the sweater and put it inside the school bag. Some of them asked to be excused. Some talked to the teacher. Five minutes before the school bell rings, the children sang the good bye song. The children then sat quietly at the seat and waited for their caretakers to pick them home.

THE INTERVIEW

Interviewer (I): How long have you been teaching kindergartens?

Miss Lee (L): It has been four years. I started to teach when I left secondary schooling.

I: Do you enjoy teaching?

L: Sure. I like teaching. I like teaching children. Children are lovely. They can learn easily. When they

are taught, they can learn what is taught. Children can understand what is taught. They listen to the teacher and follow the guidelines of the teacher. The teacher has to make things clear to children to provide the learning opportunities.

I: How can a teacher provide the learning opportunities?

L: A teacher has to be well prepared for the lesson. A teacher has to allow children to tell their opinions.

I: How do you find the lesson?

L: Fine. Things are on schedule. Children could finish class work on time. Children can give correct answers to the questions. There is still room for the improvement of classroom management. During group activity time, children talk too loudly at the drawing table. Children are going out and coming in the classroom too frequently while doing their science worksheet. In general, children were attentive and listened well.

I: How do you know children have learned what has to be taught?

L: Children are attentive. Children can answer questions and complete tasks, for example, children can write the Chinese characters according to ruling and steps of writing.

I: How can children learn better?

L: The lesson is well prepared. The teacher has to control time so that there is no overrun of time. Children can learn better through play and hands on activities.

I: What should be taught in kindergartens?

L: I think everything, for example, knowledge, skills, attitude and routines. The scope is wide. I think even trivial things. Life skills are needed as well.

I: What affects teaching?

L: Experience and study. Knowledge of early childhood education helps teaching. Before my QKT study, I tried to transmit knowledge to children. Now, I will leave room for children's expression and development. Besides, my experience of teaching children improves my teaching.

I: What's good teacher?

L: A good teacher has to be patient, caring, serious, and devoted. Plenty of time has to be devoted to prepare lesson plans, teaching materials, and worksheets. The attitude has to be genuine, i.e. hoping to do good to children. In addition, we have to love children.

I: If you are to provide a metaphor for teacher, what will you like to say?

L: I would say a teacher is a friend or a parent. I think it may not be inclusive. A teacher is a magician. A teacher changes her role in different context. The role of a teacher changes a lot.

Appendix II A Detailed Lesson Plan

THE LESSON PLAN

[illegible]

11:00			
11:00-11:30		<p>Music session</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. children will be led to the music room 2. they clap their hands on the way they walk inside the music room 3. music movement: spring is coming while children are singing the song "spring is coming", they will pretend some animals awaking in spring and moving around (e.g. the flying of birds) 4. tone practicing children use different names of flowers to fit the tone of sofa names "d, r, m, f, s" (e.g. what's the name of the flower? in the rising tone and it is a rose in the falling tone) 5. song revision: spring is coming 	
11:30-11:55		<p>Physical movement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. hands and arms children will be asked to clap their hands up and down, left and right once, and then twice or more 2. feet and legs children will be instructed to hold a ball against their fore body and move the ball to their backs and vice versa. Children can move the ball to other parts of the body when they are familiar with the exercise 3. slide and a handkerchief game 	<p>Plastic balls</p> <p>A handkerchief</p>
11:55-11:58		Packing of school bags	
11:58-12:00		Ready to go home	

Appendix III A Brief Lesson Plan

TIME-TABLE

Assembly 9:00-9:15 a.m.

Physical Movement 9:15-9:45 a.m.

Toilet Time and Tea Break 9:45-10:05 a.m.

Class Teaching 10:05-10:40 a.m.

Music Movement 10:40-11:10 a.m.

Toilet Time 11:10-11:15 a.m.

Group Activity Time 11:15-11:50 a.m.

Pack Away Time: 11:50 a.m.-12:00 noon

LESSON PLAN

Time	Aims and Objectives	Content and Methodology	Teaching Aids
10:05-10:40	Appreciation and love of plants	Children are introduced of the flowers in the garden on their way to the class teaching area	Paper insects and animals
	Appreciation and love of insects	Children are told to catch insects	
	Awareness of environmental protection	Children sing the song "Save Our Earth"	
	Discrimination between insects and animals	Chinese characters of insect names are written on the body of paper insects Children will pick the paper insects in a game (Teacher hides up the paper insects and animals, children are to look for them)	
	Matching names and insects Telling names of insects	Children put paper insects next to their names accordingly and read out the names	
			Word cards with insect names

Appendix IV Variations in Timing and Sessions

Miss Lee	Assembly & hygiene check		Class teaching	Group activities time	Toilet time & Tea break	Music session	Physical movement	Pack away time
On timetable	9:00-9:15		9:15-9:30	9:30-10:30	10:30-10:50	10:50-11:20	11:20-11:50	11:50-12:00
In practice	9:00-9:15	Show and tell 9:15-9:25	9:30-9:50	9:55-10:55	10:55-11:15	11:15-11:45	Not carried out	11:50-12:00

Miss Cheung	Toilet time & Assembly	Class teaching	Toilet time & tea break	Physical movement	Bible time	Group activity time	Rhyme time	Pack away time
On timetable	9:00-9:15	9:15-9:45	9:45-10:00	10:00-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-11:45	11:45-11:55	11:55-12:00
In practice	9:00-9:15	9:15-9:45	9:45-10:00	10:00-10:30	Not carried out	10:40-11:40	11:45-11:55	11:55-12:00

Miss Wong	Toilet time & hygiene check	Class teaching	Group activity time	Toilet time & tea break	Music session	Interest activity	Pack away time
On timetable	9:00-9:15	9:15-9:45	9:45-10:45	10:45-11:00	11:00-11:30	11:30-11:55	11:55-12:00
In practice	9:00-9:15	9:18-9:50	Group activity time & Tea 9:50-11:02	Toilet time 11:02-11:08	11:10-11:37	11:40-11:55	11:55-12:00

Miss Lam	Assembly	Physical movement	Toilet time & tea break	Class teaching	Music movement	Toilet time	Group activity time	Pack away time
On timetable	9:00-9:15	9:15-9:45	9:45-10:05	10:05-10:40	10:40-11:10	11:10-11:15	11:15-11:50	11:50-12:00
In practice	9:00-9:15	9:17-9:45	9:47-10:05	10:05-10:40	10:43-11:10	11:10-11:15	11:17-11:50	11:50-12:00

Miss Chan	Assembly	Physical movement	Toilet time & tea break	Putonghua session	Group activity time	Sharing & Pack away time
On timetable	1:30-1:45	1:45-2:15	2:15-2:35	2:35-3:05	3:05-4:05	4:05-4:30
In practice	1:30-1:45	1:47-2:15	2:15-2:37	2:40-3:05	3:07-4:05	4:07-4:30

Miss Yuen	Assembly	Physical movement	Toilet time & tea break	Music session	Class teaching	Group activity time	Pack Away Time
On timetable	9:00-9:10	9:10-9:45	9:45-10:05	10:05-10:35	10:35-11:15	11:15-11:50	11:50-12:00
In practice	9:00-9:10	9:12-9:45	9:47-10:05	10:07-10:35	10:37-11:15	11:17-11:50	11:50-12:00

Miss Tam	Assembly	English class	Music session	Physical movement	Toilet time	Tea break	Class teaching	Group activity time	Toilet time	Pack away time
On timetable	9:00-9:15	9:15-9:35	9:35-9:50	9:50-10:05	10:10-10:15	10:15-10:30	10:30-10:45	10:45-11:30	11:30-11:35	11:35-11:45
In practice	9:00-9:15	9:15-9:35	9:40-9:50	9:52-10:07	10:08-10:13	10:15-10:30	10:30-10:45	10:45-11:30	11:31-11:35	11:35-11:45

Miss Tang	Assembly	English class	Class teaching	Group activity time	Toilet time	Tea break	Story time	Outdoors activities	Pack away time
On timetable	1:30-1:40	1:40-2:00	2:00-2:20	2:20-3:05	Not in schedule	3:05-3:25	3:25-3:45	3:45-4:10	4:10-4:15
In practice	1:30-1:40	1:42-2:02	2:05-2:20	2:20-3:05	3:05-3:10	3:10-3:25	3:25-3:45	3:50-4:10	4:10-4:15

Miss Ma	Assembly	Class teaching	Group activity	Physical movement	Toilet time	Tea break	English class	Revision	Pack away
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			time						
On timetable	9:00-9:10	9:10-9:20	9:20-10:00	10:00-10:25	10:25- 10:30	10:30- 11:00	11:00- 11:20	10:20-11:40	11:40- 11:45
In practice	9:00-9:10	9:12-9:22	9:22-10:02	10:05-10:30	10:30- 10:35	10:35- 11:00	11:00- 11:20	10:20-11:40	11:40- 11:45

Appendix V Child initiated activities

Teacher/child-initiated activity	Asking to be excused (going to toilet)	Expressing a request	Starting a social chat	Standing up to have a clear look of things at the front
Miss Lee	✓	✓	✓	
Miss Cheung	✓		✓	
Miss Wong	✓		✓	
Miss Lam	✓		✓	
Miss Chan	✓		✓	
Miss Yuen	✓		✓	
Miss Tam	✓		✓ (one with the teacher at tea break)	
Miss Tang	✓		✓	✓
Miss Ma	✓		✓	

Appendix VI Class Organization

Teacher	Curriculum areas	Class organization
Miss Lee	Class teaching	Small group (half class) teaching
	Group activity	Children sat in a group but work individually
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Whole class teaching
Miss Cheung	Class teaching	Whole class teaching
	Group activity	Small group learning Individualized work
	Artwork Writing, making sentences	
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Whole class teaching
Miss Wong	Class teaching	Whole class teaching
	Group activity	Children sat in a group but work individually
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Whole class teaching
Miss Lam	Class teaching	Small group (half class) teaching
	Group activity	Children sat in a group but work individually
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Small group (two-third class) teaching
Miss Chan	Class teaching	Small group (half class) teaching
	Group activity	Children sat in a group but work individually
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Small group (two-third class) teaching
Miss Yuen	Class teaching	Small group (half class) teaching
	Group activity	Children sat in a group but work individually
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Small group (two third class) teaching
Miss Tam	Class teaching	Whole class teaching
	Group activity	Children sat in a group but work individually
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Whole class teaching
Miss Tang	Class teaching	Whole class teaching
	Group activity	Children sat in a group but work individually
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Whole class teaching
Miss Ma	Class teaching	Whole class teaching
	Group activity	Children sat in a group but work individually
	Tea break	Children sat and ate in a group
	Music session	Whole class teaching
	Physical movement	Whole class teaching