VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION:
The potential for teacher delight or despair

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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Statement of Sources

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any other form for any degree or diploma to any other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and the list of references given.

Jane Smyth

16 August 2017
If we create a culture where every teacher believes they need to improve, not because they are not good enough but because they can be even better, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

Dylan William
Emeritus Professor of Educational Assessment
Institute of Education
University of London
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Abstract

This study investigates whether the anxiety evidenced in the National Review of Visual Education (NRVE) (Davis, 2008), regarding generalist primary teachers, also impacts on preschool teachers’ delivery of Visual Arts. Taking a mixed-methods approach the study is organised in three interlocking stages, the first two of which seek to explore, at the preschool level, whether the findings of previous studies are replicated in preschools. The third and final stage, however, is designed to take the issue beyond previous studies to consider what might be done to address Arts anxiety at a local level while utilising only existing resources.

Stage One uses both quantitative and qualitative questions to survey a sample of preschool teachers in Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in relation to their teaching, especially in the learning area of Visual Arts. The sample was obtained by the snowball method: 50 requests for participation in a confidential survey were dispatched by the researcher and 26 completed surveys were returned. Results from the survey showed that this, albeit limited, sample of preschool teachers also reported experiencing Art anxiety and a lack of confidence in teaching Visual Arts. The final question of the confidential survey invited respondents to indicate willingness to participate in Stage Two and, if so, to provide contact details. Ten teachers were then selected at random from the 25 who indicated willingness to proceed to Stage Two. This second stage was a 30 minute individual interview with questions designed to allow teachers to expand upon their survey responses and scope concerns and issues. All ten teachers who were interviewed wished to be selected to continue to Stage Three, an individualized professional learning experience (after Rogers (1969)), offered over three months in their place of work.

Selection for Stage Three was based on geographical situation as well as level of teaching experience and preschool type to maximise the diversity of the group. Each preschool teacher worked with the researcher for up to three months on a trajectory of her own choice and, consistent with the Rogerian learning framework, evaluated her own progress towards self-chosen goals. Using journal documentation and audio records of meetings with the researcher a narrative of
each teacher’s learning journey was charted. All preschool teachers reported increased confidence and enhanced direction in their teaching of Visual Arts. The implications of the study for professional learning and further research are explored within the context of this small-scale study within a single location in Canberra, Australia.

The study has implications for individualized professional development in preschools: The collaborative model developed and trialled with preschool teachers has been recognised as having potential for wider and immediate application.
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KEY TERMS

**Atelierista:** An educator with an Arts background who works in, or from, a studio or atelier. (The term is often associated with the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy.)<www.reggiochildren.it/activities/atelier/?lang=en>.

**Early Childhood:** The period from birth to five years.

**Early Childhood Curriculum:** All the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an Early Childhood setting designed to foster children's learning and development. (Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), 2009:47).

**Early Childhood Educators:** Early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in Early Childhood settings (EYLF, 2009:47).

**Early Childhood pedagogy:** Early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching and learning (EYLF, 2009:47).


**Early Childhood settings:** Preschools, kindergartens, long day care, occasional care, family day care, multi-purpose Aboriginal Children's Services, playgroups, crèches, early intervention settings and similar services (EYLF, 2009:47).

**ECEC:** Early Childhood Education and Care.

**EYLF:** Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Belonging, Being and Becoming.

**Intentional teaching:** Teaching which is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful through the specific actions and decisions of individual teachers; the opposite of teaching by rote (EYLF, 2009:47).

**Learning area:** Content related learning characterised by broad, non-specific learning and developmental intentions so that it cannot be described in the Early Childhood sector as a 'curriculum area' (EYLF, 2009:47).
Learning framework: A guide (such as the EYLF) which provides general goals or outcomes for children’s learning and indicates how they might be attained (EYLF, 2009:47).

Literacy: A range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, story-telling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, reading and writing (EYLF, 2009:47).

Numeracy: Understandings about numbers, patterns, measurement, spatial awareness and data as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning and counting (EYLF, 2009:47).

Pedagogista: A specialist in the theory of education. (The term is often used with reference to the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, for an educational leader who works with teachers, families and children.) <www.reggiochildren.it/activities/atelier/?lang=en>.


Pre-service teaching: A period of guided, supervised teaching for student teachers to meet university requirements for the award of a teaching qualification.

PTPA (ACT): Preschool Teachers’ Professional Association (ACT).

TAFE: Technical and Further Education.


Visual Arts (specifically in ACT preschools): Visual Art experiences offered in ACT preschools, including drawing, painting, modelling and print-making.
CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

1.1  The Impetus for the study

The impetus for this research had antecedents in my professional background and was prompted by a frustrating mixture of nostalgia, curiosity and disappointment. As a practicum assessor to pre-service teachers and through my own observations, I sensed, despite centres of excellence, a diminution in the role of Visual Arts in some preschools and observed stultifying practices exemplified by stencilled shapes on paper – the work of adults – given to children to ‘colour in’ with pencil, paint or crayon and apparently considered Art. Further, as a Voluntary Guide to preschool groups at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, I interacted with preschool teachers, some of whom expressed grateful dependence on the visitor experience to provide opportunities for children to view Art works in lieu of, rather than in addition to, a full range of regular ‘hands on’ Visual Arts experiences.

My commitment to and experience in the preschool field is both broad and deep having worked in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for many years as a preschool teacher, adult educator, TAFE teacher, university tutor, workplace assessor, author and consultant with a special interest in innovative teaching and the Visual Arts. I was aware of the findings of the National Review of Visual Education (NRVE, Davis, 2008) in relation to generalist primary teachers. Bresler, 1992 (USA); Genever, 1996 (Australia) and Green, Chedzoy, Harris, Mitchell, Naughton, Rolfe & Stanton, 1998 (UK) confirmed the NRVE findings. More recently (Hudson, 2006 (Australia), Bowell, 2009 (NZ), Danko-McGhee, 2009, (USA) and Bailey & de Rijke, 2014, (UK) have all confirmed the Arts anxiety which had been identified in earlier studies.

As a strong adherent, in my early years of teaching, to the approach of artist and educator, Frances Derham, and having never lost the enjoyment of, and passion for, Art with young children which she inspired, I was curious as to whether the restricted Art practices I was observing in preschools might be a function of a lack of confidence on the part of preschool teachers. However, it was a request for
support from several Early Childhood colleagues, concerned about their current Visual Arts teaching capabilities, and from a School Principal seeking Visual Arts support for three preschool teachers in an ACT Early Childhood School that was the ultimate catalyst for action.

My intention was not only to identify the existence of the phenomenon and verify its impact as characterized in many of the previous studies (see Table 2.3.1) but to respond to a strong desire to draw on personal experience in innovative teaching to instigate some research based practical action which might ameliorate the situation.

1.2 The centrality of the visual

I began by reading the research literature to test my sense of the importance of the visual in the lives of young children. In their earliest interactions infants begin to see human faces and learn something of their surroundings; from these first hazy images, they respond to light, discern shape and form, develop abilities to differentiate colours, recognise hues and see texture and pattern. The degree of this emerging awareness is critically important. Children need not merely to see but discriminate in response to rich details and subtle differences. They need to use their sight to gaze, to see anew, to wonder and be surprised. If children develop visual awareness which allows them to respond to beauty the rich experiences and deep satisfactions of full participation in the Visual Arts through drawing, painting, modelling and print-making will be available to them.

Eisner (1973) observes that ‘To have seen something is to have intellectually constructed a perceptual realisation.’ (Eisner, 1973: 8 -16) Here he refers to the synthesis of eye and brain, which, in the healthy individual, yields skills of thoughtful and expanded looking. It is this synthesis which forms our unique response, influenced by our existing interests and abilities and by cultural and familial considerations. Socialization factors such as family relationships, educational opportunities and the quality of previous experiences all influence learned responses and the degree of attention. Moriarty (2009), gives an example of close, familial contact promoting visual experience:
One morning, a long time ago, I carried my son, who was only a baby then, to a part of my garden where an orchid had just opened its full spectacular flower. He looked at the flower with his yet un-practiced eyes. I watched his face light up with sheer joy. It was as though he had recognised something, yet I think it was the first flower he had ever seen. (Moriarty, 2009:5)

But what happens if the right conditions do not prevail and we do not engage our brain with our senses to maintain and extend our capacity to visualize? Designer Alan Fletcher (1994) gives us an example:

*The African bushman points to a specific point of the horizon and says – “there are zebras”. We look - and see nothing. I find that rather sad. (Fletcher, 1994:14)*

Like the bushman, we need not only to become aware of visual stimuli but, additionally, we must respond proactively. Networked media connect us globally to an inestimable number of images which require visual interpretation; visual discernment is thus vital.

### 1.3 The concept of visuacy: The need for visual education

On ABC TV’s program ‘Q and A’ in 2012 the then Director of Sydney’s Museum of Contemporary Art, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, argued for ‘the need to place increased value on creativity in Australia’ (9 July 2012); she quoted British educator, Sir Ken Robinson as having claimed ‘If we were able to have creativity alongside Numeracy and Literacy in our schools we would have a remarkably different society’. Robinson (2009) laments that ‘our current education system systematically drains the creativity out of our children’ (Robinson, 2009:16).

These views echo key findings of the National Review of Visual Education (NRVE) (Davis, 2008) which declares creativity a resource in need of nurturing in Australian schools. The Review restated broad national and international acceptance that the Arts represent the curriculum area with creativity as core, placing the Arts centrally, not tangentially (Davis, 2008: ix). The Review argued that visual education needs to be reconceptualised as ‘the ability to create, process and critique visual phenomena’ (Davis, 2008: xi) and recommended that
Visuacy, the NRVE argued, has equal importance with Literacy and Numeracy. All children need opportunities to communicate and create visually, to make, to appreciate and to evaluate – all this is of critical importance in the early years. One might remember that it was the child in the fairy-tale who saw – and was the only one to see – that the emperor was wearing no clothes.

Fletcher, (1994) cites the dictum widely attributed to Goethe: ‘The hardest thing to see is what is in front of your eyes’ (Fletcher, 1994:177) and encapsulates this need for visual learning. As a visual scientist, Goethe well understood that our powers of perception must be honed. Seamon and Zajonc (1998) argue that this process requires ‘effort, practice and perseverance.’ (Seamon and Zajonc: 1998:3)

Moreover, in this digital age, with new technology dependent on visual discrimination, an increasing emphasis on visual education should be a national priority. For example, the call for Papers for the 7th International Conference on the Theory and Application of Diagrams (2012) stated this ‘major event in interdisciplinary research provides a united forum for all areas…concerned with the study of diagrams’ encompassing disciplines as disparate as

… architecture, art, artificial intelligence, cartography, cognitive science, computer science, education, graphic design, history of science, human-computer interaction, linguistics, logic, mathematics, philosophy, psychology, and software modelling.’ (DRS Digital Newsletter 2012)

Given this discipline spectrum, Visual Arts education is necessary for potential employment. However, to what extent does the current Australian curriculum reflect this importance?
1.4 The current state of the Arts in Australian education

Currently, the Arts have formal recognition in Australian education and are credited with affording opportunities for children to describe, express, imagine and create. Jeanneret (2011) formalizes this:

*The arts are a central force in human existence and everyone should have sufficient and equal opportunities to experience and continue to participate in the arts throughout their lives.* (Jeanneret, 2011:1)

In the current Australian curriculum which caters for all children from the beginning year of school (Foundation) to Year 10, the five ‘related but distinct art forms’ of Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts are drawn together in a single learning area – ‘The Arts’ – comprising the five Art forms (as strands or subjects), through which students will learn ‘to create, design, represent, communicate and share their imagined and conceptual ideas, emotions, observations and experiences’. The curriculum further states that the Arts have the capacity to engage, inspire and enrich all students, ‘exciting the imagination’ and encouraging them to reach their ‘creative and expressive potential’.


While this curriculum acknowledgement of the core value of the Arts has been welcomed, especially by the teachers and Arts organisations whose sustained efforts ensured inclusion of the Arts, the curriculum will achieve its ambitious goals only if all five strands of the Arts are successfully delivered across all Australian schools.

This is a cause for some scepticism, especially as concerns about Arts teaching have been evidenced in national reviews (which included the perception of the teachers themselves). Elliot (2010) pointed out:

*The identified problem of arts education has long been documented in National Inquiries in Australia. In 1995 there was a Senate Inquiry into Arts Education in schools. In 2005 a National Review of School Music Education was conducted (Dept. of Education, Science and Training 2005) followed in 2008 by a National Review of Visual Education (Dept.*
of Education, Science and Training 2008). Each national inquiry highlights the limited teaching of arts education occurring. (Elliott 2010:1)

There is evidence from these reviews of implementation issues and a lack of official willingness to redress various perceived biases against the Arts in formal education. These point to a malaise affecting Arts education; for example, despite general understanding that successful delivery requires skilled teachers with adequate time and resources, this is perceived to be lacking in many Australian schools (Bamford, 2002).

1.5 Evidence of teacher despair re Visual Arts teaching

The making of effective teachers begins with preparation, yet deficiencies in pre-service course provisions have been recognised for many years and emphatically demonstrated in the NRVE (Davis, 2008). Accounts of this situation have appeared in national and international research over twenty years and reveal poor teacher preparation and limited Arts experiences (Eisner, 1997; Gatt & Kappinen, 2014), limited art training (Ashton, 1998; Andrews, 2015), absence of a personal conviction to teach art (Bamford, 2002), anxiety about teaching the Arts (Genever, 1996), as well as a tendency to avoid teaching art in the classroom (Ashton, 1998, Horne, 2015). Teaching expectations are perceived as unrealistic given existing levels of preparation or in-service support (Marzilli Miraglia, 2008; Alter, Hayes and O’Hara, 2009; Garvis & Pendergast, 2010; Twigg & Garvis, 2010; Goodman-Schanz, 2012; Laird, 2012). Eisner (1999) warns ‘we are expecting teachers to teach what they do not know and often do not love.’ (Eisner, 1999:17)

It would seem his warning, often repeated, has gone unheeded.

While there is no suggestion of complicity, teachers who demonstrate concern, fear and avoidance in teaching the Arts are unlikely to seek increased time and improved resources for an area of teaching they find difficult and/or unrewarding (Eisner, 1997; Ashton, 1998). Anecdotal and observational evidence scopes the nature and extent of the problem:
• A teacher, in discussion with colleagues, deprecates herself, laughingly, as ‘hopeless at Art’ and uses this as defence against her minimal offering of Visual Arts.

• An experienced teacher reveals he only offers Visual Arts opportunities to children ‘last thing Friday’.

• A school classroom displays twenty-four similar examples of formulaic ‘Art’ – adult stencilled and clichéd shapes of a ‘rabbit’ coloured by the children - so that a child, being asked by her parent ‘Which one is yours?’ is unable to identify her own work.

• A school Principal deplores this practice, labelling it ‘bunny bum art’, but considers it entrenched and beyond his influence.

• A preschool teacher reports her good fortune to have a ‘really arty’ colleague who allows her to ‘copy whatever she does’.

• Following the departure of a visiting artist, a preschool teacher comments, ‘He was good; what now?’

• Reflecting on a teaching career which included passionate involvement in Visual Arts, a retired Early Childhood teacher reveals, ‘I’m glad I’m not teaching now, with all the pressures; not in the Arts though because there’s never time for it’. (Teacher B: personal communication July 2012)

1.6 Rationale for and aims of the study: Creating/re-creating delight in Visual Arts teaching

As the NRVE (Davis, 2008) showed, generalist (non-specialist) teachers lack confidence in teaching Visual Arts in primary and secondary schools. Many teachers expressed professional frustration at the degree of challenge they faced in delivering Arts experiences. Not only from inside the education system, but also from outside, from artists and educators, comes despair (McArdle, 2008). Current problems faced by teachers are identified by Ashton (1998), Duncum (1999), Bamford (2002) and Russell-Bowie and Dowson (2005). In their study on Art in Early Childhood education Twigg and Garvis (2010) identify a need for stronger teacher development and suggest structures be made available to Early Childhood teachers to support Art education in schools.
This situation means that many teachers feel a sense of despondency and professional frustration (NRVE, Davis, 2008). Individual talents in the areas of music and drama are, unfortunately, often seen as ‘a gift’ – we cannot all be expected to have been endowed with these - so thinking pervades that there is no shame in lacking skills to teach in these areas. McArdle (2008) suggests that, while teachers may confidently and openly express a lack of skills in teaching the Arts and no apparent desire to address this shortcoming, there is little chance that they would be very likely to offer a similar statement about other curriculum areas:

*I'm no good at mathematics, and I know very little about it. The children in my care this year will not be getting much maths. Mostly we will just do very simple sums that they already know how to do. In fact, most of the children are better at it than me, so I will just let them do their own maths. And we will only have it on Friday afternoons … when it's raining. And if they get bored with numbers, we'll take the numbers away, and use some gimmicks, like glitter or soapflakes.* (McArdle, 2008:368)

It is from generalist teachers in primary school settings such as those identified by McArdle (2008) that most research to date is derived. Supported by national and international research and based on what we know occurs in Australian primary schools with generalist teachers, it was important for me to explore the possibility that Visual Arts education in preschools did mirror the research findings from primary schools.

The exploration was scaffolded around three interlocking research questions:

- To what extent do the confidence levels of preschool teachers mirror those of generalist primary teachers in relation to the Visual Arts?
- If preschool teachers report low levels of confidence in teaching the Visual Arts, what might be the key reasons for this?
- In the case of low confidence levels relating to teaching the Visual Arts – and the context that no action in this regard has followed two national reviews – what strategies might be implemented to enable generalist preschool teachers to increase their confidence in providing quality
Visual Arts education, albeit within their current settings, and using available resources?

Given my location as researcher (R) the study was conducted in Canberra, ACT where the sample was derived from government, as distinct from independent or denominational, preschools. The interdependent research questions led to the design of a multi stage mixed methods study design with the following aims:

1. To ascertain the scope and nature of preschool teachers’ perceived level of confidence and expertise in Visual Arts (Stage One);
2. To probe the working contexts and specific needs of individual preschool teachers (Stage Two);
3. To collaborate with selected preschool teachers to empower them individually in their present settings (Stage Three)

Stage One is exploratory in that it utilizes quantitative and qualitative strategies to determine if the levels of confidence and expertise of preschool teachers of Visual Arts mirror those found in the research literature relating to generalist primary school teachers. Stage Two is also exploratory as it seeks to probe individual pressure points for preschool teachers in their own settings. Stage Three takes a more empirical approach, albeit with only three teachers, as it seeks to work collaboratively with preschool teachers in their place of work to find solutions to issues of concern to them relating to teaching Visual Arts.

1.7 Organization of the thesis

Chapter Two reviews three main areas of literature in relation to the aims of the study. The first contrasts what might be termed the advocacy literature – that which stresses the importance of Visual Arts education for young children – with the professional support for Visual Arts teaching available to teachers in key Early Childhood journals. The second examines national and international research identifying impediments to quality Visual Arts teaching while the third examines potential professional learning pathways in search of principles to guide Stage Three of the study.
Chapter Three scopes the design and methods decision-making with a focus on the mixed methods approach taken in Stages One and Two. It outlines the development of instruments, the ethics approval process and the sampling strategy adopted. The proposed data analysis strategies are outlined. Given the dependence of Stage Three on the outcomes of the previous two stages, the framework for Stage Three is dealt with in Chapter 6.

Chapter Four discusses the results from the Stage One survey, acknowledging the limitations of the sample. It profiles respondents in terms of their educational background and experience, Visual Arts background and level of engagement with the Visual Arts as a background to their perceived levels of ability, confidence and enjoyment of teaching the Visual Arts vis à vis other learning areas. The evidence from the survey justified proceeding to the Stage Two probing of individual teachers and their specific issues.

The fifth chapter takes a thematic approach to the ten preschool teacher interviews encompassing their sense that the Stage One survey was in the nature of a personal ‘wake-up’ call. It scopes their perceptions of their preparation/preparedness to teach Visual Arts, their planning for, and teaching of, Visual Arts as well as their needs, issues, challenges and sense of what might be an ideal Visual Arts program for their preschools.

As indicated, Chapter Six serves as a bridge between Stages One and Two and the empirically focussed Stage Three by examining interviewees’ expectations of Stage Three. It then establishes the methodological framework for Stage Three, including the selection of teachers and proposed documentation. The Rogerian framework (Rogers, 1969) allowed each of the selected teachers to pursue her own purposes and evaluate the efficacy of her learning journey. The final sections of the chapter deal with the transition to Stage Three of each of the selected teachers and their process towards their individual purposes.

Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine document, in turn, each teacher’s idiosyncratic journey towards the realization of her purposes. The final chapter, Chapter 10, synthesizes the key findings of the study with particular emphasis on each
teacher’s evaluation of her journey and its outcome. This leads to the R’s reflections on, and observations about, the study. Implications for teacher education and further research based on the study are discussed. Finally, R. examines directions for practice.
CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Scope of the chapter

This review of literature and research impacting on the aims of the study focuses on three areas. The first section scopes the parameters of quality Visual Arts education particularly pertaining to the preschool years (2.2). The second section surveys research identifying impediments to quality Visual Arts teaching (2.3). The third section (2.4) considers the area of professional learning and the principles which, ideally, should underpin it. The final section synthesizes the themes from the literature and signposts those of key relevance to the current research.

2.2 The importance of Visual Arts education in preschool programs

The view of the need for the Arts from early childhood has long been promulgated. Friedrich Froebel, the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century founder of the ‘kindergarten’ or child’s garden, (the precursor of today’s preschool), drew attention to the young child’s desire to draw and to ‘express ideas by modelling and colouring’. Froebel (1887) argued forcefully that ‘art and appreciation of art constitute a general capacity or talent of man, and should be cared for early – at the latest in boyhood’ (Froebel, 1887:227).

His ‘universal and comprehensive plan of human education’ argued that singing, drawing, painting, and modelling should not be left to ‘an arbitrary, frivolous whimsicalness’ but treated as serious curriculum areas (Froebel, 1887:228). Following Froebel, it is widely accepted that the preschool years offer an optimum time for the promotion of Arts based learning. Gardner (1980), for example, espoused ‘the scribbling and exploring of earliest life as models for the experimentation that is the lifeblood of mature artistry’ (Gardner, 1980:261). Meiners (2012) argues that Early Childhood educators must possess adequate skills and knowledge to ensure that engagement with the Arts can become integral to the lives of children; he emphasises the early years in particular:
While there are now Australia-wide arts curricula for the compulsory school years, the foundations for quality arts work must be laid with young children in the preschool years. (Meiners, 2012:38)

This exhortation reinforces, once more, the importance of the years prior to school and the need to incorporate the Arts into preschool programs. There is, in Australia, a strong tradition of imaginative play, singing, drawing and painting in Early Childhood programs. Most early years environments in Australia now work within a framework which provides Arts experiences (Mai, 2011).

Teacher-philosopher Loris Malaguzzi (1987), whose pedagogical insights have been widely cited since the 1970s, believed that a variety of learning experiences, materials and language must be paramount in the lives of young children in order to build on children’s broad capabilities. The philosophy of Reggio Emilia, named for the schools in Northern Italy with which Malaguzzi is closely associated, includes an approach to Expressive Arts with an atelierista or teacher trained in the Visual Arts in every preschool to work within a team comprising children, families and colleagues. This approach continues to influence Early Childhood educators who, following Malaguzzi’s example, develop professional expertise to understand the myriad ways of children’s seeing and exploring and recognise ‘the aesthetic experience for offering the opportunity to express values, ideas, images and emotions’ (Vecchi, 2010:xxi).

Prior to Malaguzzi, other educators, while not specifically referencing the Arts, understood the value of sensory education (Montessori, 1907) and sensory experiences (Pestalozzi, 1977). Play, by its nature, was known to have value as an essential means of exploration to promote skill development and nurture the imagination. Lowenfeld (1947) and Read (1958) extended this premise by promoting the Arts as fundamental for children in providing an outlet for creative expression. Both recognized Art education as essential for all-round development.

This philosophy is strongly promulgated by contemporary researchers such as Wright (2012) who recognize the Arts as an ‘essential component in the education of young children’ and the early childhood years as the time when the ‘capacity for imagining is at its peak’ (Wright, 2012:2). Wright promotes the Arts for their
ability to nurture children’s ‘meaning-making’ through the ‘imaginative and fictional qualities young children begin to lose as they grow older’ (Wright 2012:2).

Internationally recognised scholar and educator Eisner (1993), emphasising the importance of meaning-making for young children, warned that ‘Expression without meaning or motivation is likely to be empty’ and cautions that the ‘pedagogical environment’ affects what children are able to do and ‘the kind of thinking in which they can engage’ (Eisner, 1983:x-xi).

If the Arts are to provide a strong component of early learning, children will require not only opportunities to engage their senses in a safe environment but adequate time to develop skills in handling a range of objects and materials. For early learning, children require teachers with expertise in the Arts and an understanding of the impetus to make meaning. Importantly, teachers of the Arts in the early years require discipline knowledge and the ability to employ theoretical principles in their teaching. As Bamford (2009) pointed out in her report on Arts and Cultural Education in Iceland,

*Above all, it is the quality, enthusiasm and skill of a good teacher that is at the heart of all successful arts programmes….* Despite this, major concerns were raised [by participants] about the quality of teachers with teacher education being seen as a major challenge. Teacher education was identified as being a major factor leading to lower quality of arts and cultural education …. There was less time and emphasis given to arts and cultural education within initial teacher education [and] … teachers … lacked the basic skills to be able to teach arts education. (Bamford, 2009:104)

The foregoing reflects what might be termed the advocacy end of the literature – writers and theorists who are passionate about the relevance and efficacy of Visual Arts, But how representative are they of the literature and research currently published in the preschool arena? Take the four journals *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* (ECRQ), *Early Childhood Research and Practice* (ECR&P), *Early Childhood Education Journal* (ECEJ) and the *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* (AJEC) as examples. Given that the NRVE (Davis, 2008) presented findings which highlighted teacher anxiety in relation to Visual Arts, it might have been expected that some attempts to provide teachers with
best practice examples might have been beginning to appear in these journals by 2010. However, between 2010 and early 2017, 1393 articles were published across these four journals and, of these, only 1.22 per cent related to Visual Arts. While one of the articles from each of ECRQ, ECR&P and ECEJ had a central focus on Visual Arts (McLennan, ECEJ, 2010), the others, as shown in Table 2.2.1, focus on the Visual Arts as *handmaiden* either to other areas of the curriculum or to specific projects.

Table 2.2.1  Articles focussing on the Visual Arts as ‘handmaiden’ to other curriculum areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR/S Name(s)</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>JOURNAL</th>
<th>TITLE OF ARTICLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phillips, Gorton, Pinciotti &amp; Sachdev</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>ECEJ</td>
<td>Promising Findings on Preschoolers’ Emergent Literacy and School Readiness in Arts-Integrated Early Childhood Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soundy &amp; Drucker</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>ECEJ</td>
<td>Picture Partners: A Co-creative Journey into Visual Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown, Benedett &amp; Armistead</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>ECRQ</td>
<td>Arts Enrichment and School Readiness for Children at Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks &amp; Wangmo</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>ECR&amp;P</td>
<td>Introducing the Project Approach and Use of Visual Representation to Early Childhood Education in Bhutan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>ECEJ</td>
<td>The Role of Drawing in Young Children's Construction of Science Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eckhoff</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>ECEJ</td>
<td>Conversational Pedagogy: Exploring Interactions Between a Teaching Artist and Young Learners During Visual Arts Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>ECEJ</td>
<td>A Reggio-Inspired Music Atelier: Opening the Door Between Visual Arts and Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the period reviewed these three journals offered very little Visual Arts centred scholarship to Early Childhood educators/preschool teachers and, given a significant emphasis on Literacy, Numeracy and Science in the articles published, convey the implicit message that those areas deserve attention while others do not. The AJEC, as is shown in Table 2.2.2, is consistently more research focussed in the articles relating to Visual Arts, possibly reflective of Australian universities’ focus on research points for staff promotion.
Table 2.2.2   Articles focussing on the Visual Arts in AJEC 2010-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR/S</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE OF ARTICLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gur &amp; Temel</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Effects of the Art Education Program on Drawing Skills of Six-year-Old Gifted Children in the High Socio-economic Status in Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terreni</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Adding New Possibilities for Visual Art Education in Early Childhood Settings: The Potential; of Interactive Whiteboards and ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garvis, Twigg &amp; Pendergast</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Breaking the Negative Cycle: The Formation of Self-efficacy Beliefs in the Arts. A Focus on Professional Experience in Pre-service Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garvis</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>These children aren’t creative: Insights from beginning teachers on early childhood arts education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garvis</td>
<td>2012a)</td>
<td>Exploring current arts practice in kindergartens and preparatory classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackenzie &amp; Veresov</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>How drawing can support writing acquisition: Text construction in early writing from a Vygotskian perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight, McArdle, Cumming, Bone, Li, Peterken &amp; Ridgway</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Intergenerational collaborative drawing: A Research method for researching with/about young children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Mackenzie and Veresov (2013) see the Visual Arts in a handmaiden role akin to those in Table 2.2.1, each of these articles contributes more to research knowledge in the area than to the practical knowledge preschool teachers might be expecting/seeking. Furthermore two of these (Garvis, Twigg & Pendergast (2011) and Garvis (2012) report on research which demonstrates teachers’ low levels of self-efficacy in relation to the Arts.

### 2.3 Perceived impediments to quality Visual Arts teaching

The lack of attention to Visual Arts teaching in the mainstream early childhood journals demonstrated above signifies the impediment of omission. However, as alluded to in 1.4, the issue is more complex than this given the fear of, and anxiety about the Visual Arts identified by the NRVE (Davis, 2008) in relation specifically to generalist primary teachers. Table 2.3.1 provides a chronological overview of studies identifying person related impediments to the delivery of quality Visual Arts education. The table is organised chronologically in terms of author, date, country, title of study, aims, nature of sample and key findings in order to trace
the scope and nature of problems identified in the research from the 1990s to the present. While there may be some omissions, the attempt in this table is to show the consistency of person related impediments to Visual Arts delivery across English language reported research. These impediments span almost three decades and diverse countries despite different methodologies, samples and foci. Each entry represents, as far as possible in this tabular summary format, the language used by the author/s cited.
Table 2.3.1  An overview of key studies identifying person related impediments to the delivery of quality Visual Arts teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Aims of Study</th>
<th>Nature of Sample</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bresler  | 1992 | USA     | Visual Art in Primary Grades: A Portrait and Analysis | To describe and interpret Visual Art instruction in Grades K – 3 | Visual Arts lessons in 3 elementary schools | • kindergarten teachers report both vertical (administrators, superintendents, parents, curriculum guides) and horizontal (other teachers) pressures  
• low priority for the Arts – limited resources & money  
• only the few teachers with some artistic professional background had the appropriate paradigms for teaching the Arts and the content knowledge/skills to communicate that knowledge |
| Apple    | 1993 | USA     | Is Art a Frill? Elementary Teachers' Attitudes towards Art | To determine the elementary classroom teachers’ attitudes towards Art & its educational value  
To determine how these attitudes correspond to their use of art in the classroom | Survey responses from 25 out of 31 teachers in one suburban elementary school | • some discrepancy between teachers’ reported positive attitudes toward Art and the amount of classroom time devoted to it;  
• speculation that the apparent discrepancy may be due to lack of time, resources, and/or the necessary background knowledge of Art;  
• attitudes suggest art is not a frill but lack of Art activities suggest that it is treated as a frill. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Aims of Study</th>
<th>Nature of Sample</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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</table>
| Welch                                        | 1995  | Australia | The Self-Efficacy of Primary Teachers in Art Education                | To determine the effect of the pre-service Art education course on perceptions of self-efficacy | Two groups of preservice teachers (N= 31 & 23) & one group of in-service teachers (N= 18) | • No relationship between teaching self-efficacy in general and teaching self-efficacy specific to art education;  
• Perceptions of the value of Art education decreased from Year 1 to Year 3;  
• Students were critical of their Art education – insufficient time & assessment items were stressful and made them feel inadequate |
| Genever                                      | 1996  | Australia | Art Anxiety: Framing Some Responses                                  | To scope the phenomenon of Art anxiety                                           | Pre service Teachers                                                             | • Art anxiety 'interferes with learning', 'decreases the desire to experiment and to take risks', 'may cause students to drop out'  
• for teachers, 'may imperil and stunt their pupils’ appreciation, understanding and practice of art’ |
| Green, Chedzoy, Harris, Mitchell, Naughton, Rolfe & Stanton | 1998  | UK       | A Study of Student Teachers’ Perceptions of Teaching the Arts in Primary School | To sample students’ perceptions of (a) the effectiveness of university-based courses and (b) teachers support in preparing them to teach the Arts | Primary Student Teachers                                                         | • the number of students able to learn how to teach the Arts was ‘significantly low’  
• student comments suggested that existing teacher expertise in the Arts was lacking |
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<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Aims of Study</th>
<th>Nature of Sample</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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</table>
| Green & Mitchell         | 1998 | UK      | The Effectiveness of an Initial Teacher Training Partnership in Preparing Students to Teach Art in the Primary School | To explore students’ experience of learning to teach Art as part of partnership arrangements with primary schools | BA (Ed) students | • students found not to be supported by the professional knowledge and skills of experienced teachers in Art  
• few students benefited from a class teachers’ content or pedagogical knowledge of Art  
• teachers found working with knowledgeable Art students a means of professional development |
| Metcalfe & Smith-Shank   | 2001 | USA     | The Yellow Brick Road of Art Education                              | To probe how student teachers feel about Art                                                          | Elementary Art teaching students | • 47% reported intimidation by Art to the extent of ‘fear’, ‘terror’ or ‘inferiority’  
• previous Art experiences limited to ‘cut and paste’  
• students avoided Art for fear of negative comments, grades or ridicule |


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<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Aims of Study</th>
<th>Nature of Sample</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Gibson   | 2003 | Australia | Learning to be an Art Educator: Student Teachers’ Attitudes to Art and Art Education | To explore Student Teachers’ Attitudes to Art and Art Education | 107 B.Ed. (Primary) students – a compulsory questionnaire delivered at beginning of 2nd year and again at the end of 3rd year | • Perceived confidence decreased as they progressed through teacher education  
  • at the beginning of 2nd year 5.6% referred to themselves as less than confident while, at end of 3rd year, 85.7% suggested that they were in the slight to quite confident category. |
| Hudson   | 2006 | Australia | Exploring First Year pre service teachers’ confidence to teach Art education | To explore and describe the confidence of first year pre service teachers as they engage in a tertiary Art education unit | First year pre service teachers | • more than half of the group had experienced poor quality Art teaching during school years  
  • 65% reported that they were not confident in Art |
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<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
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<th>Aims of Study</th>
<th>Nature of Sample</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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</table>
| Dinham          | 2007 | Australia | Delivering Primary Visual Arts Education: Where Rhetoric meets Reality | To sample Primary student teachers' Visual Arts experience                                     | B Ed & Grad Dip Teacher Education Students | • Most student teachers (56%) had not had any Visual Arts education beyond Year 8  
• Most (73%) had not undertaken any Art education in the five years prior to enrolling in teacher education course  
• Almost 30% reported lack of confidence/interest in Visual Arts |
| Marzilli Miraglia | 2008 | USA     | Attitudes of Pre Service General Education Teachers Toward Art         | To explore histories, perception and attitudes of preservice teachers to assess how these contribute to their anxiety in making and teaching Art | Pre Service Generalist Teachers            | • multiple manifestations of Art anxiety among participants  
• participants exhibited a limited knowledge of Art  
• participants ‘declared that teaching Art was not their job’ |
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<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Aims of Study</th>
<th>Nature of Sample</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Russell-Bowie    | 2008 | Australia  | Perceptions of Confidence and background in the Arts of preservice primary teachers from five countries | To survey generalist primary preservice teacher education students to investigate their background and confidence in the Creative Arts                                                                 | 939 preservice primary generalist teachers from five countries – Australia, USA, Namibia, South Africa & Ireland | • Only 16% perceived themselves to have a good background in Visual Arts;  
• 56% indicated confidence and enjoyment in teaching Visual Arts:  
• females were significantly more confident than males                                                                                                                                                        |
<p>| Wilson, MacDonald, Byrne, Ewing &amp; Sheridan | 2008 | UK         | Dread and Passion: primary and secondary teachers’ views on teaching the Arts | To gain insights into perceptions of and attitudes towards the value of the Arts in the life of schools/young people                                                                                   | Head teachers, senior school managers, teachers from primary, secondary and senior schools focus groups &amp; questionnaire | • Primary teachers saw themselves as lacking in knowledge, skill and confidence                                                                                   |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Aims of Study</th>
<th>Nature of Sample</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Alter & Hays | 2009 | Australia | The Challenges of Implementing Primary Arts Education: What Our Teachers Say | To investigate primary school teachers’ personal Arts experiences and training, as well as their reflections upon their own Arts pedagogy | 19 primary school teachers from 12 different schools across rural and regional NSW representing a variety of ages, backgrounds and experience | • expectation of Creative Arts teaching and learning seen to be unrealistic & demanding of a breadth of knowledge and skills most of the 19 teachers felt they did not possess  
• tertiary Arts experiences limited  
• teacher training perceived as limited |
| Bamford      | 2009 | Iceland | Arts and Cultural Education in Iceland                                | To gather comprehensive data about the extent and quality of Arts and cultural education in Iceland | Survey to all preschools, compulsory schools as well as Art, dance and music schools | • widely reported pattern of falling levels of confidence & lack of skill, experience & expertise  
• high level of inclusion of Visual Arts forms in preschools e.g., woodwork 64%, photography 60%;  
• preschools would welcome partnerships with external people and organizations |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Aims of Study</th>
<th>Nature of Sample</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowell</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Developing Confidence: Visual Art teaching in a Primary School</td>
<td>To investigate how primary school teachers develop confidence in Visual Art teaching</td>
<td>Primary School teachers</td>
<td>• 75% of teachers reported that they ‘had no or only some confidence’ in assessing Visual Art-work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danko-McGhee</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>The Environment as Third Teacher: Pre Service Teacher’s Aesthetic Transformation of an Art Learning Environment for Young Children in a Museum Setting</td>
<td>To create an aesthetic classroom environment</td>
<td>Pre service teachers</td>
<td>• 95% indicated that they had little artistic ability and were not creative</td>
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<td>• The amount of professional development in the area of Visual Art was low</td>
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<td>• Teachers’ confidence levels were related to their experience/lack of in using Visual Art materials</td>
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<td>Garvis &amp; Pendergast</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Supporting Novice Teachers of the Arts</td>
<td>To provide a snapshot of perceptions towards support in schools for the Arts</td>
<td>Beginning generalist teachers</td>
<td>• Beginning teachers perceived a general lack of support for the teaching of Arts in their classroom compared to English and Maths</td>
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<td>Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO)</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Creativity and the Arts in the Primary School</td>
<td>To obtain a current picture of the views and practices of teachers in relation to <em>Arts in the Primary School</em></td>
<td>Questionnaire to 1000 randomly selected primary teachers yielded a 21% response rate</td>
<td>• almost one fifth claimed to be not very confident or not at all confident in Visual Arts;</td>
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<td>Kindler</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Art and art in Early Childhood: What can Young Children Learn from ‘a/Art Activities’?</td>
<td>To scope artistic development</td>
<td>Theoretical analysis</td>
<td>• identifies the issue of teachers' own competencies and zones of comfort in introducing Art techniques and processes</td>
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| Russell-Bowie | 2010 | Australia | Cross national Comparisons of Background and Confidence in Visual Arts and Music Education of Pre-Service Primary teachers | To sample the perceptions of generalist pre-service primary teachers in relation to their own background and confidence in teaching Visual Arts | Non-specialist pre-service primary teachers from five countries | • sampled students across the five countries enter teacher training with little, if any, formal Art background  
  • they are also not very confident in relation to teaching Visual Arts |
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| Twigg & Garvis           | 2010 | Australia     | Exploring Art in Early Childhood                                       | To provide a snapshot of current Art practice in early childhood settings     | Reflective texts deriving from visits to early childhood settings | • early childhood teacher education requires further guidance for teachers to ‘feel capable of teaching the art’  
• need for teachers to become more confident in their dealings with young children and their Art experiences at school |
| Upitis, Atri, Keely & Lewis | 2010 | Canada/USA    | Teachers’ Experiences of Professional Development Programs in the Arts: Generalist Teachers as Arts Advocates | To determine the effectiveness of four well-established North American professional development programs designed for generalist teachers to teach the Arts in their classrooms | Teachers & administrators in four professional development programs | • Professional development opportunities created for generalist classroom teachers need to acknowledge generalist teachers’ lack of experience with specific Art forms in order to be effective  
• Mentoring and collaboration are crucial aspects of teachers’ professional development programs  
• Positive aspects of change reported by teachers included  
  (a) increased confidence and creativity; (b) overall personal development and self-expression & (c) deepened views of the Arts  
• Negative experiences included frustration and feelings of inadequacy |
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<td>Goodman-</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>K-1 Teachers' Visual Arts Beliefs and their Role in the Early Childhood Classroom</td>
<td>To explore how K-1 teachers' lived experiences in the Visual Arts are represented in the early childhood classroom</td>
<td>Four kindergarten and four Grade One teachers from four elementary schools</td>
<td>• Participants perceived their level of essential content knowledge, pedagogic skills, and integrative teaching strategies to be woefully lacking in their understanding of how to foster creative opportunities for young children.</td>
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<td>Schanz</td>
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| Hamama        | 2012 | Egypt   | Case Studies of Art Education in Egypt                               | To explore how private language schools handle Art education in Egypt                                                                       | Teachers and students at two private language schools                                                   | • Other subjects are taught at the expense of Art education  
• Schools not exerting much effort to teach Art in schools  
• Art instructional time limited  
• Teachers hired to teach Art not necessarily Art graduates nor have been educated to teach Art  
• Art knowledge is limited  
• teachers claimed to be teaching to a curriculum but were unable to provide a copy of it  
• professional development not provided to teachers                                                                                                                                                     |
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| Laird         | 2012 | NZ      | Primary School Visual Arts Education: Teachers’ Perspectives         | To discover generalist primary teachers’ perspectives on including Visual Arts in their classroom programme, and the factors which they identified as either supporting or limiting them in this page | 29 returned questionnaires and eight semi-structured interviews                                 | • Teachers (with one exception) had received only a few hours of pre-service preparation in Visual Arts and this appeared to have been in the form of some lessons in making Art objects  
• No guidance had been given on classroom organisation, learning progressions or lesson structures for Visual Arts education  
• Most participants saw the limiting factors as, in order of significance:  
  - Pressure to cover other curriculum areas (in particular literacy and numeracy);  
  - Time  
  - Timetabling  
  - Lack of personal knowledge or confidence in Visual Arts |
| Bailey & de Rijke | 2014 | UK      | Mud Mess and Magic: building student teachers’ confidence for Art and the outdoors in early years | To explore making Art in the outdoors                                                                  | Student Teachers – Early Years Stream                                                                | • identified student phobias about Art  
• students fearful and risk averse                                                                                                                                                                     |
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<td>Gatt &amp; Karppinen</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Finland &amp; Malta</td>
<td>An Enquiry into Primary Student Teachers’ Confidence, Feelings and Attitudes towards Teaching Arts and Crafts in Finland and Malta during Initial Teacher Training</td>
<td>To explore the feelings and attitudes student teachers have towards Arts and Crafts</td>
<td>First year student teachers from the University of Helsinki and the University of Malta</td>
<td>‘the pre-course questionnaire results clearly indicated that, for most students in both universities, prior emotional experiences, particularly negative ones in arts and crafts in primary and secondary school affect students’ attitudes, beliefs and emotions toward Arts and Crafts courses in teacher education’</td>
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<td>Andrews</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Towards the future: Teachers’ vision of professional development in the Arts</td>
<td>To assess the effectiveness of a partnership program for enhancing teachers’ Arts learning and developing their instructional effectiveness</td>
<td>Nine elementary and secondary teachers</td>
<td>Teachers identified three major obstacles in Arts education:</td>
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<td>• lack of sufficient Arts instruction in both teacher education and professional development programs</td>
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<td>• lack of money to ensure quality programs</td>
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| Horne    | 2015 | Iceland | It's all about attitude: How eight educators view and value preschool Visual Art education | To investigate how preschool educators view, experience and value Visual Art in preschools | Eight participants from four preschools | • findings strongly indicate preschool educators’ need for education in Art and creative practices on all levels  
• Educators often feel insecure and rely on adult-orientated, predetermined projects found on the internet or in books |
<p>| Lindsay  | 2015 | Australia | Visual Art Education: The Tangle of Beliefs | To explore preschool teachers’ divergent and often contradictory beliefs about Visual Art | Case study of 12 participants from four regional early childhood education and care services | • Teachers concurrently state how important Visual Art is within early childhood settings while expressing doubts about their own visual art knowledge, confidence and capacity to deliver high quality arts experiences to children |</p>
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<th>Author/s</th>
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| Pavlou   | 2015 | Cyprus  | Understanding Art: Preparing generalist School Teachers to teach Art with Artworks | To provide a nurturing environment for student teachers to learn about Art | BEd Student Teachers | • participants could not remember any encounters with Art works  
• none remembered when they last visited a gallery or museum  
• majority disappointed by Art lessons observed in schools during teaching practice – seen as a consequence of teachers’ limited Art knowledge & attitudes towards Art as a non-important subject |
Table 2.3.1 reveals remarkable consistency in the findings of the research across countries and across the decades suggesting either that the identified problems have not been addressed or not been addressed adequately. Impediments to quality Arts teaching revolve around resources – time, space, and consumables. Comments made by Irish teachers (Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO), 2009) indicate the scope of the perceived problem:

Making the art takes such a long time – where am I to find time to look at art with the children?

My classroom is too small to do art in

We have no money to buy the materials necessary for the six strands.

It takes forever to display the children’s art. I was here until 4.30 yesterday pinning all thirty pieces of art on the notice boards. (INTO, 2009:123)

Goodman-Schanz’s (2012) American teachers had similar issues:

… to get some of the art activities, that would probably take more time.

simple stuff … coloring or painting every once in a while, but it has to be something that’s not gonna take a lot of time … there’s not enough time.

there is just a little pinch of time for art. (Goodman-Schanz, 2012:86, 91-92)

One interviewee reiterated several times ‘the lack of supplies, resources, and time restraints’ when trying to provide Art experiences into her kindergarten classroom (Goodman-Schanz, 2012:37).

Hudson (2006) records a ‘typical’ interview response in this regards from one of her preservice teachers:

I had very little experience [with art] before attending university. My experience at school was limited and I would say fairly negative. In primary school, I am sure the teachers only taught art when it was raining and we couldn’t go out for sport. In high school, I felt that I couldn’t participate in art because I couldn’t draw. In fact I felt like I
was going to fail this course [Creative and Performing Arts I] because I couldn’t draw. (Hudson, 2006:6)

However, by far the greatest issues across all studies relates to human resources – the teachers themselves. Issues of confidence, ability and preparation are reported as intersecting in ways which seriously militate against quality Art education. To begin with, many teachers bring to their teacher education experience an attitude of negativity towards the Arts born of unfortunate and/or disturbing personal experiences of Arts practice and/or experiences of poor quality arts teaching. Probine’s (2014) tertiary level early childhood students in Auckland, NZ

… recalled moments when they were told they were ‘no good at art, their works were not deemed good enough to be displayed on the wall, or they had been mocked by their peers … (Probine, 2014, np)

The most common reason Gibson’s (2003) Australian teacher education students gave for not continuing with Art was ‘I wasn’t good at it’, accounting for more than half the responses. Other commonly cited reasons included ‘I thought other courses were more important’; ‘I no longer enjoyed it’; ‘My teacher/s/parents advised me not to’ (Gibson, 2003:116). These entrenched and negative attitudes re-surface when challenged by the need to teach Visual Arts to young children in the context of programs where, as Boyd (2000) points out,

There is no recognition of or allowance made for the fact that, thus far, few teacher education students have personal skills in the Arts. (Boyd, 2000:7)

Goodman-Schanz’s (2012) teachers expressed keen awareness of their inadequacies regarding Visual Arts:

… her own lack of skills and knowledge about teaching art and her inability to be creative, which impeded her from fostering the Visual Arts …

… throughout all of her academic training she was not prepared to teach art to kindergarten …children.
'I don’t know how to teach them to be more creative. How to take the next step. I don’t know how to do that'. (Goodman-Schanz, 2012: 38 & 42)

She concludes that

...based on the participants’ perceptions, their level of essential content knowledge, pedagogic skills, and integrative teaching strategies, was woefully lacking in their understanding of how to foster creative opportunities for young children. (Goodman-Schanz, 2012:101)

Horne (2015) reports that her ‘findings strongly indicate preschool educators’ need for education in art and creative practices on all levels.’ (Horne, 2015:53)

It is clear from the literature that teachers perceive their resource problems relating to Visual Arts to become compounded by their own inadequate discipline knowledge, minimal preparation time and poor teaching modelling in the Arts – all of which generates lack of confidence and spiralling feelings of inadequacy, panic and anxiety. Once in the field, beginning teachers perceive a lack of support for teaching the Arts vis à vis that available for other curriculum areas.

2.4 Potential professional learning pathways

The need for a deeper understanding of the discipline and for stronger self-efficacy in teachers who deliver Visual Arts programs has not prompted any obvious or concerted attempts either to alleviate the problem by professional learning opportunities or to circumvent its recurrence by more targeted pre-service teacher education. Horne’s (2015)

... findings suggest that managers find it challenging to find courses that are suitable and benefit all staff, as they have different needs due to their education and experience. [Her] participants found that their municipalities rarely offered courses relating to arts and creativity. (Horne, 2015:67)

Helterbran and Fennimore (2004) state important principles in this regard:

*It does not make sense to spend time and resources on professional educational opportunities unless they are viewed by the recipients as being important and helpful.*
... all professional development opportunities can only be successful if they are perceived as a venue to be crafted for and with teachers, rather than something to be done to them .... Such an effort is particularly important for those who teach very young children. (Helterbran & Fennimore, 2004:267)

He and Ho’s (2013) study of the implementation of professional development policy in Hong Kong also emphasizes the importance of voluntary and committed participation if personal and professional growth is to be maximised.

Knapp (2003), moreover, makes an important distinction between *professional development*, defined as ‘the full range of activities formal and informal, that engage teachers or administrators in new learning about their professional practice’ and *professional learning* which refers to ‘changes in the thinking, knowledge, skills, and approaches to instruction that form practicing teachers’ or administrators’ repertoire’ (Knapp 2003:112). In the context of this research ‘professional learning’ encompasses ‘professional development’ but goes further because it anticipates change as a consequence, as well as skill development. It is thus professional learning which would be most relevant to a context in which teachers seek skill acquisition and perceive impediments – whether actual or imagined – to changes in practice, as Mayer and Lloyd (2011) point out in a generic sense:

... professional learning could involve changes in one’s capacity for practice (i.e. changes in professionally relevant thinking, knowledge, skills, and habits of mind and/or changes in practice itself enacting new knowledge and skills in one’s daily work). (Mayer and Lloyd, 2011:3)

Nevertheless, much of the literature on professional learning focuses on teachers as learning conduits to students and measures its effectiveness for teachers through student achievement, as exemplified by the opening sentence of Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson and Orphanos’s (2009) monograph entitled *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession*:

*Rigorous research suggests that sustained and intensive professional learning for teachers is related to student-achievement gains. An analysis of well-designed experimental studies found that a set of programs which offered substantial contact hours of professional development (ranging from 30 to 100 hours in total) spread over six to*
12 months showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement. (Darling-Hammond et al 2009:9)

This focus on teachers as learning conduits is also embodied in Hawley and Valli’s (1999) nine principles for the design of effective professional learning. (Hawley & Valli, 1999: 137-143) While such an approach is clearly legitimate, it may be more appropriate in the formal school context than in the preschool where ‘children’s developing relationships, expansion of knowledge and understanding of the world’ (EYLF 2009:11) are documented rather than measured quantitatively.

Moreover, the impediments to quality Arts teaching require a comprehensive focus on the teacher in the first instance. Given also that it is widely acknowledged that

... we know very little about what teachers actually learn from professional development (Fishman, Marx, Best and Tal, 2003; Wilson and Berne, 1999) and even less about what students learn as a result of changed practices. (Mayer and Lloyd, 2011:8)

a model which lacks inbuilt feedback from participant teachers re the extent to which their needs have been met is not optimal for the current study.

The literature seems relatively silent regarding preschool teachers’ views about the efficacy of the professional learning activities in which they have participated. Andrews (2015) reported that teachers indicated they had to ‘begin with themselves’ to effectively improve Arts education (Andrews, 2015) and concludes:

... the ideal scenario for teachers’ professional development in the arts is a learning context in which discipline-based and integrative curricular activities are offered, and one which values both the creative process and the creative product. (Andrews, 2015, 34:4, 391-402)

Ingvarson (2005) argues strongly for the GIR (Getting it Right) principle in professional learning. From the foregoing discussion of what teachers perceive as impediments to teaching Visual Arts and researchers’ analyses of inadequacies in teacher education programs doing little to ameliorate these impediments, perhaps even exacerbating them, it is clear that the preschool
teacher of the Arts has idiosyncratic needs to be accommodated in the professional learning arena. In the search for a model which might accommodate a more tailored approach to the diverse needs of this cohort, Table 2.4.1 builds on the ten principles enunciated by Mitchell and Cubey (2003). It draws on analogous principles cited by other writers and encompasses studies which exemplify these principles in action to provide a potential framework for Stage Three of the research.

Table 2.4.1 Professional Learning Principles and exemplar studies (Mitchell and Cubey 2003)

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<td>Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson &amp; Ophanos (2009)</td>
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<td>Recognition of Diversity</td>
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<td>Supportive of Personal Change</td>
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<td>Promotion of Reflective Practice</td>
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These principles, extended from Mitchell and Cubey (2003), allow for individualization and will be used as a framework for planning Stage Three of the research.

### 2.5 Synthesis

This chapter began by scoping the centrality of Visual Arts to pre-school education through historical and contemporary theorists as a prelude to examining the attention devoted to the Visual Arts in four key journals specializing in Early Childhood since 2010. The analysis revealed that only 2.2 per cent of articles across this period had any focus on Visual Arts. Many articles presented the Visual Arts only as a potential conduit to other areas of the curriculum –
signifying, by implication, that the Visual Arts lacked importance in their own right. Other articles took a specific research focus. Only one would have been of potential use to a preschool teacher seeking to enhance her/his discipline or pedagogical knowledge.

This analysis provided a backdrop to a consideration of research on perceived impediments to quality Visual Arts teaching across a range of countries from 1992 to present. While the data for this study were collected in 2013, current research was included to demonstrate that the nature of findings has shown little, if any change over the 25 year period reviewed. Data have been predominantly sought from preservice teachers, and then in-service teachers (generalist primary & preschool) but has also included leaders/administrators, students and secondary teachers. None of the three studies for which preschool teacher data have been collected (Bamford, 2009, Goodman-Schanz, 2012 and Horne, 2015) have been conducted in Australia. The literature reflects firstly the pressures experienced by generalist teachers at preschool and primary school as they experience limited teacher preparation and enter the classroom. The dissonance between that which they know they know and that which they know they do not know in relation to the Visual Arts on the one hand as well as the downward bearing nemesis of the real subjects of Literacy and Numeracy upon important but nevertheless expendable subjects like Visual Arts.

At best most preservice teachers receive a semester of Visual Arts discipline training as part of their preparation and many as little as three weeks. Typically, this has been reported by participants to have exacerbated negative feelings/attitudes engendered at school and ultimately resulted in a kind of pedagogic paralysis where they know not what to do nor are able to apply their own evaluative framework to their practice. Globally a consistent picture emerges of an outcome of unrealistic expectations on teachers to teach in an area for which they are unprepared and unsupported (Eisner, 1999; Bamford, 2009; Garvis and Pendergast, 2011; Laird, 2012). Over the period 1992 to 2017 the problem and its manifestations have been demonstrated from a range of
perspectives yet none has offered a practical, research based strategy to ameliorate the situation.

This study takes a small step, within one Australian jurisdiction, to ascertain the extent to which the phenomenon can be identified among preschool teachers, to scope its manifestations (e.g., lack of confidence), and to investigate the potential of an individualized approach to teachers’ issues, one not dependent on the injection of significant resources.
CHAPTER 3 DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Scope of the chapter

Initially this chapter synthesizes the evidence relating primarily to generalist primary teachers’ anxieties in teaching Visual Arts and posits the question as to whether a similar situation exists for preschool teachers. It scopes the design of the study as it probes the three interlocking aims through a mixed methods approach. The third and fifth sections introduce the data collection/analysis plan and are presented in the future conditional tense. Section Four which describes actions taken in the field is in the past tense. The final section scopes how the data are presented in subsequent chapters.

3.2 Directions from the literature

It is clear from the literature that the average generalist teacher experiences both considerable personal challenge – and even stress – when faced with the responsibility of teaching the Visual Arts. Moreover, while specialist Visual Art teachers and centres of excellence do exist, they are not the norm in most Australian schools. Yet, when the NRVE was submitted in 2008, the then new Federal government ignored its recommendations, including one which addressed, specifically, the education of teachers in relation to the Visual Arts:

*The Review recommends that appropriate pre-service training and ongoing professional learning opportunities in visual education be instituted for (a) visual education specialist secondary teachers and (b) generalist primary teachers.* (NRVE, 2008:213)

Perhaps because the newly elected Labor Party had, as a central plank of its election platform, the establishment of a national school curriculum ‘to ensure Australians are armed with the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the 21st Century’, the report’s recommendations languished in the wake of advocacy for a place in the new curriculum. Winikoff (2008) described the ensuing action:

*…visual arts advocates joined with their peers in the four other arts disciplines (drama, dance, media and music) … formed the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) and through a joint lobbying process, secured the inclusion of the arts in phase 2 of this project.*
The mood was hopeful:

If we are successful in securing the model that we want where each art form (in our case visual education) is taught separately, sequentially and continuously from preschool to at least year 10, by teachers who are well trained and inspirational, the brave arts knights will have found the Holy Grail and (as the fairy tale says), we will all live happily ever after. (Winikoff, 2008: np)

This, however, was not to be. While the Arts are included in the curriculum, all Art forms share a single subject – and the parlous situation identified by the NRVE report (2008) in relation to the preparation and education of teachers persists almost a decade later. As far as primary schools are concerned, there is strong need for post initial input if teachers are to develop confidence and enjoyment in this area of teaching. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Australian preschool teachers experience similarly low levels of confidence and three studies have demonstrated this in other countries (See Table 2.3.1). This study seeks to provide initial Australian evidence in this regard.

The overarching research question is whether there is any evidence of Arts anxiety in preschool teachers in the ACT and, if so, what might be done to ameliorate it given that any expectation of significant increases in resource allocation for Visual Arts education is likely to be optimistic in the current climate. The current research thus takes an exploratory approach (after Silverman, 2006) in relation to the first two aims of the study:

1. To ascertain the scope and nature of preschool teachers’ perceived level of confidence and expertise in the Visual Arts;
2. To scope the working contexts and specific needs of preschool teachers;

The first aim will explore whether the problem identified for generalist primary teachers also exists for preschool teachers. If, indeed, it does, the second aim is concerned to scope the nature of the problem of individual teachers. How does this manifest itself to individual teachers? What might be the commonalities and differences?
Assuming the phenomenon of Arts anxiety is identified in the ACT preschool teacher sample through these exploratory identification and scoping stages of the research, the third aim focuses on Visual Arts specifically and what strategies might serve to stimulate preschool teachers’ interest in the Visual Arts, draw on their existing professional skills and strengths and develop their confidence in teaching Visual Arts within the strategic limitations of existing resources:

3. To collaborate with individual preschool teachers to realize an independent action plan to empower them in their present settings.

The third stage of the research is thus empirical in that it will test the feasibility of a potential solution with individual preschool teachers to posit a potential overarching strategy through which the confidence and teaching expertise of generalist teachers in the Visual Arts might be both augmented and strengthened. It is hoped that the combination of exploratory and empirical research will provide an appropriate methodological framework within which to provide answers to the research question. Within this framework a mixed methods approach will be taken whereby both quantitative and qualitative methods will be utilized (Greene & Curucelli, 1997).

3.3 Locating the study and data collection methods

Given the Australian National University’s location in the Australian Capital Territory whose population was 383,400 in 2014 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/03101.0>), the Capital city, Canberra, offered a convenient and potentially manageable research site. The ACT Government funds fifteen hours per week of preschool education for 40 weeks per year for all ACT children in the year before school entry across 77 government preschool units with varying preschool teacher numbers. The government preschool sector accounts for 91.3 per cent of providers in the ACT (Dowling and O’Malley, 2009)
Anecdotal evidence suggests that, in the ACT organizational changes are impacting on preschool teachers as ACT Primary School Principals now have responsibility for individual preschools, the previous centralised structure for ACT preschools having been devolved. This has also had unintended consequences in terms of preschool teachers losing their former professional networks, being offered the same professional learning choices as their primary teacher colleagues as well as being exposed more directly to pressures arising from the current national emphasis on students’ literacy and numeracy attainment.

A range of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were considered in relation to each of the three stages of the research; these are summarized in Table 3.3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Potential Data Collection Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To ascertain the scope and nature of preschool teachers’ perceived level of confidence and expertise in the Visual Arts</td>
<td>Obtaining information through • On site observations • Mail Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To scope the working contexts and specific needs of preschool teachers</td>
<td>Probing contextual realities through • Focus groups • Individual interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To collaborate with individual preschool teachers to realize an independent action plan to empower them in their present settings</td>
<td>Working with the individual through • Partnering in the classroom • Modelling • Case study • Mentoring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the sections which follow, the implementation possibilities for each stage are discussed and decisions elucidated.

3.3.1 Stage One – Surveying preschool teachers

Given the 77 ACT Government preschools in the ACT, on-site school visits presented practical difficulties for a single researcher as, even with judicious sampling, the time it would take to carry out observations on an appropriate number of schools rendered this impossible. Moreover, classroom observations can be threatening to teachers (Waxman, Tharp and Hilberg, 2004) so that the
chances of ascertaining their actual level of confidence and/or any concerns may be problematic, especially in a face-to-face professional context without adequate time to establish trust.

The option of sampling perceptions via an anonymous survey offered a more practical and flexible pathway as both quantitative and qualitative items can be incorporated and the length (for time poor teachers) controlled. Table 3.2.2 outlines the structure of the survey. Each section’s focus derived from concerns raised in the NRVE report (2008) as the most recent national source of evidence, albeit primary and secondary rather than preschool.

Table 3.3.2  The structure of the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Quantitative Questions</th>
<th>Qualitative Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Professional qualifications and experience, teaching situation and professional development</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Current engagement with the Visual Arts</td>
<td>7 – 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Confidence, enjoyment and ability to teach Visual Arts</td>
<td>9 – 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Availability of time/resources for Visual Arts in respondents’ preschool</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12, 14 &amp;15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Visual Arts in context in respondents’ preschool</td>
<td>16, 17, 19, 20 &amp; 21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Professional self-assessment</td>
<td>22, 24</td>
<td>23, 25 &amp; 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Willingness to proceed to Stage 2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where possible the quantitative questions utilized Likert Scales to save teachers’ time and facilitate analysis. The majority of open-ended questions sought information from participants in relation to their unique situation (e.g., questions 6 & 12) but others (e.g. question 18) were designed to be evocative and stimulate a personal and heartfelt response.
Questions were trialled with two qualified preschool teachers with each taking 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Neither had issues with the clarity of the questions although they recommended the words ‘observer’ and ‘viewer’ be used in question eight as likely to be understood in relation to viewing, as distinct from, making, Visual Art and also raised questions about curriculum nomenclature which necessitated further consultation\(^1\). As a result, ‘Sustainability’ was added as a contemporary learning area, resulting in specific mention of the following learning areas: Literacy, Numeracy, Visual Arts, Music, Drama, Dance, Sustainability/Science/Environmental Education, Physical Health and Well-being. The phrase ‘intentional teaching’ was selected for Question 15, utilizing the accepted term for teaching which is ‘deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful’ (EYLF, 2009:14-18). A copy of the final survey is included as Appendix A. The mode of distribution was paper based rather than electronic in order to protect the anonymity of Stage One respondents.

Denscombe (2008) identifies five main purposes for which researchers employ a mixed methods research paradigm. While none exactly fits the current study, the need for mixed methods here lies midst his final two purposes:

> Mixed methods have been (d) used as a way of developing the analysis and building on initial findings using contrasting kinds of data or methods. And mixed methods approaches have often been (e) used as an aid to sampling with, for example, questionnaires being used to screen potential participants for inclusion in an interview program. (Denscombe, 2008: 272)

The survey yielded both quantitative and qualitative data as a basis for developing interview questions and also enabled potential Stage Two participants to opt in or out as they wished.

---

\(^1\) Jo Krabman, Senior Adviser the Arts, Good Start Early Learning Australia, 2012.
3.3.2 Stage Two – Probing contextual realities
Assuming the evidence gained from the Stage One survey might confirm the anecdotal evidence that preschool teachers also experience lack of confidence in relation to the Visual Arts, Stage Two should probe the perceptions of individual teachers to gain a more idiosyncratic view of their teaching contexts and perceived needs (Aim 2). To do this (See Table 3.3.1), focus groups were considered but ultimately rejected because the public nature of such sessions presented problems in terms of teachers being prepared to discuss insecurities and perceived inadequacies in front of their peers. One-on-one interviews were preferable as this format would offer individuals better protection and potentially yield richer data about the problem and its dimensions. Nevertheless, the Stage Two interview protocol was planned to minimize encroachment on preschool teachers’ very busy schedules and was thus restricted to seven open-ended questions offering participating teachers the chance to be more expansive about their survey responses and idiosyncratic circumstances. The final question related to Stage Three and teachers’ potential participation. A copy of the Stage Two Interview questions is included (Appendix B).

3.3.3 Stage Three – Working with individuals
The Stage Three plan was to select up to three preschool teachers from diverse preschool settings with a view to developing individual programs to meet their particular needs in relation to Visual Arts teaching, albeit with existing resources. Four potential strategies are identified in Table 3.3.1 but no decision was made about which might be appropriate for this stage as it was designed to build on needs identified in Stages One and Two. Hence the detailed discussion of this occurs at the end of Chapter Six i.e., after the discussion of both Stages One and Two results.

3.4 From ethics to the field
Permission to conduct the project as planned was sought from and granted by the two relevant bodies – firstly, the Human Ethics Committee of the Australian National University (Appendix C1) and, secondly, the ACT Government, Education and Training Directorate through Approval of the Research Project
(Appendix C2). Protocol for visitors to ACT Government preschools was advised by Ms Lyndall Read, then Principal, O'Connor Co-operative School, O'Connor, ACT, who gave specific advice that permission to work in any ACT preschool must also be obtained from primary school Principals responsible for individual preschools.

In the subsections which follow, infield strategies and deviations from the plan documented in 3.3 are described.

3.4.1 Stage One - Survey

The practicalities of accessing ACT preschools necessitated a range of strategies:

- The timing of the project coincided with the beginning of the ACT school year and Principals were, mostly, unavailable. Advice that a personal approach was more likely to be efficacious was then followed.
- A networking strategy was recommended by Mr Tim Grace, then Principal of Wanniassa Hills Primary School who facilitated contacts with colleagues, including Principals in other ACT primary schools known to be interested in promoting the Arts in general.
- Following these introductions an invitation was received and accepted to attend a meeting of the ACT Professional Teachers' Professional Association (PTPA) at which Mr Grace was also present. This gave an opportunity to outline the project and invite participation.
- For reasons of efficiency and the hard to reach nature of the target population, the Snowball approach to sampling was adopted after Biernacki and Waldorf (1981).

The PTPA meeting provided an opportunity to describe and promote the research to interested attendees. Those preschool teachers who intended completing the survey were advised to make an individual approach to their Principal for permission to participate in the project. One preschool teacher said she did not feel confident to do this, believing such a request would not be welcomed. Another Principal later sought email clarification regarding approval for the research to be carried out in ACT preschools and was satisfied when advised
that permission from ACT Government, Education and Training, had been obtained.

The inclusion of a carefully written introductory Letter to Principals (Appendix D) and an Information Sheet for Teachers (Appendix F) was designed to reduce a potential high level non-response rate. As explained in 3.3.1 the survey was paper based to ensure anonymity and precautions were taken in this regard. A package containing five documents was sent to each Principal and/or preschool teacher who had expressed interest in the project and/or willingness to participate:

1. Letter to Principals (Appendix D)
2. Survey for Teachers (Appendix A)
3. Consent Form for Teachers (Appendix E)
4. Information Sheet for Teachers (Appendix F)
5. Information Sheet for Parents (Appendix G)

The Information Sheet for Teachers (Appendix F) outlined the purpose of the project and its importance, the planned stages and estimated time commitment. The Consent Form for Teachers (Appendix E) enabled teachers to provide their contact details separately from their surveys to indicate they wished to be considered for Stage Two. Hence respondents were instructed to keep the two separate and return each in the separately addressed, differently coloured and postage paid envelopes provided.

The distribution of the packages coincided with the commencement of a school holiday period and consequently the initial response was slow but gained pace two weeks into the new school term. Knowledge of the project spread by word of mouth with two teachers contacting the researcher to request a survey document and one Principal indicating she would like more than one preschool teacher in her school to have the opportunity to participate.

Consistent with undertakings to the ANU Human Ethics Committee, upon receipt at ANU, confidentiality processes were employed – the completed surveys were
immediately numbered, placed in a box, kept separate from contact details and stored in a locked room at ANU.

3.4.2 Stage Two – Interviews
Since all but one preschool teacher respondent indicated willingness to proceed to Stage Two, 10 agreements to participate were opened at random to select interviewees for Stage Two; these included eight teachers from ACT preschools and two from ACT primary schools with a preschool ‘classroom’. Letters were sent to these teachers inviting them to proceed to individual interview (Appendix H). With the permission of the relevant school Principal, interviews were held in each teacher’s school. Stage Two Interview questions are included (Appendix B). As a preliminary to each interview, all protocols outlined by the Education and Training Directorate of the ACT Government and the further requirements of individual schools/preschools were followed.

Interviews were pre-arranged and confirmed by email 24 hours prior with each teacher; all agreed to the use of an audio recorder (after Denscombe, 2004). Time constraints on individual teachers were significant as each gave some designated planning and administrative time to the interview. Each teacher gave signed permission to proceed according to the terms of the Stage Two agreement Consent Form for Teachers (Appendix I). Availability for, and interest in, proceeding to Stage Three was confirmed at the end of each interview.

All interviews and notes were transcribed verbatim by the researcher; part sentences and other phenomena being included.

3.4.3 Stage Three – Working with individuals
Since all ten teachers expressed willingness to proceed to Stage Three, a selection process was necessary. Given the primary purpose of Stage Three was to test the feasibility of a potential solution for individual teachers, it was decided to maximize the diversity of participants. The objective criteria chosen were educational background, professional experience, preschool context and geographical location. The application of these criteria to select three teachers for Stage Three is described in 6.3. These selected teachers were informed by
Design and Methods

letter (Appendix H). The three relevant Principals were also informed (Appendix J) through letter of thanks sent to all Stage Two participants which included the names of teachers selected for Stage Three (Appendix J).

Given the diverse backgrounds and different issues and needs of the teachers, a broad framework for the conduct of Stage Three was planned to both accommodate diversity and maintain a common structure. Over a three month period this included, for each teacher, a preliminary meeting, a project journal, individual meetings at a time of each teacher's choosing and a post program interview. These are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis strategies differ across the three stages as indicated in the following sections.

3.5.1 Stage One – Survey
Survey responses were checked manually, collated, tabulated and re-checked until all tallied. An acknowledged disadvantage of the self-completion survey method was apparent in a small number of unanswered questions. At conclusion of the analysis, surveys were stored in a locked facility at ANU along with Consent Forms and confidential details.

3.5.2 Stage Two – Interviews
Audio tapes were transcribed to hand-written records, the researcher favouring this method which, while slow, was a useful prompt to recall conversations. Every precaution was taken to record actual language, incomplete sentences and hesitation phenomena accurately. Transcripts were also placed in a locked facility at ANU. Pseudonyms were used to de-identify participants.

3.5.3 Stage Three – Working with individuals
Although each participant followed her own trajectory, as indicated, there was commonality in documentation as each encompassed the following:

- Preliminary meeting
• Project meetings
• Post Program Interview
• Journal entries
• Records of collaborations/discussions
• Emails
• Photographic exemplars of children’s work.

The pseudonyms applied in Stage Two were retained and interviews were transcribed as for Stage Two with all material added to the locked facility. The journals were retained for the duration of the research and then returned to the teachers.

3.6 How the data are presented

The results of the Stage One survey are presented in Chapter Four which profiles the sample in terms of

• Educational background and experience
• Background in, and reported engagement with, the Arts
• Teachers’ enjoyment of, and ability and confidence in, negotiating all learning areas
• Preschool teachers’ scoping of their teaching
• Respondents’ perceptions of delights and challenges in teaching Visual Arts
• Perceived levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment within Visual Arts areas
• The schism between vision and reality

and demonstrates that a similar situation as reported for primary school generalist teachers in the NRVE (Davis, 2008) exists for preschool teachers, at least for this small sample in the ACT.

Given this finding, Chapter Five scaffolds the problems as identified by the teachers in interview and discusses them thematically in terms of
- Teachers’ perceptions of their preparation/preparedness to teach Visual Arts
- Planning for teaching Visual Arts
- Teachers’ needs, issues, challenges and ideal Visual Arts program.

Chapter Six considers teacher’s expectations of what Stage Three might achieve for them, explores a methodological framework in which each selected teacher might be accommodated to find her individual learning pathway, and introduces each teacher's initial frustration or despair and desire for direction. Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine chart the individual journeys of the three selected teachers with the first section of Chapter 10 synthesizing the teachers’ learning pathways and self-evaluation.
CHAPTER 4  STAGE ONE SURVEY RESULTS

4.1  Scope of the chapter

This chapter reports the results of the Stage One survey completed anonymously by 26 ACT preschool teachers with the permission/encouragement of their Principals. This represents a response rate of 52 per cent of the distributed surveys and around 30 per cent of ACT preschools – allowing for one school Principal who encouraged two teachers to complete the survey. According to the Instructional Teaching Resources of the University of Texas (2014), 52 per cent exceeds acceptability limits as a response rate for a mail-administered survey. However, since the snowball sampling approach adopted here for a ‘hard to reach’ population is a non-probability technique, it is possible only to characterize this sample and not to generalize from it (Heckathorn, 2011:355). Hence percentages are used to describe the respondents in this research study in terms of their educational and experiential background as well as their perceptions of their expertise and confidence in teaching, especially Visual Arts. It is not possible to predict from this sample to the broader population of preschool teachers in the ACT or other states/territories of Australia so these results must be regarded as indicative only.

4.2  Profiling the preschool teachers: Educational background and experience

In terms of current teaching positions, 85 per cent of the teachers who responded to the survey identified as preschool teachers, 11.5 per cent as either Early Childhood teachers or Early Childhood Educators (reflecting the current approved nomenclature of the Early Years Learning Framework) and one participant as a ‘classroom teacher’ reflecting her position in an Early Childhood School rather than a preschool.

Table 4.2.1 presents details of respondent teachers’ years of preschool teaching experience.
Table 4.2.1  Respondents’ preschool/Early Childhood teaching experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>&lt;12 months %</th>
<th>1–2 years %</th>
<th>3–5 years %</th>
<th>6–10 years %</th>
<th>11–15 years %</th>
<th>16–20 years %</th>
<th>21–25 years %</th>
<th>30+ years %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 30 per cent have up to two years’ experience, a further 35 per cent have three to fifteen years’ experience while the final 35 per cent have 16+ years’ experience, thus encompassing several eras of pre-service teacher education. However, it would be reasonable to assume from the timing that the majority of respondents received their pre-service training in universities post the Dawkins amalgamations in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s which led to the Unified National System of Tertiary Education. As Davis (2008) has pointed out,

*The Dawkins mergers were controversial at the time, and many lamented the loss of institutions offering distinctive educational experiences. The large post-Dawkins universities may have achieved the hoped-for economies of scale, but at the price of narrowing the range of institutional options open to students, and sacrificing the benefits of specialisation, of a single-minded focus on doing one or small number of things very well …. Once turned into universities, former teaching-focused institutes and colleges had no desire to return to the past. Their staff and students want the research opportunities and status that come with being a university. (Davis, 2008: 36)*

Prior to these amalgamations, preschool teachers were educated in specialist institutions known as Kindergarten Teachers’ Colleges or Institutes of Early Childhood. As teaching only institutions, students spent a high proportion of the day in classes, often practical in nature. One of my contemporaries, artist and Artss educator Ann Robinson, remembers the Arts component of her training at the Sydney Kindergarten Teachers’ College, Waverley, NSW thus:

*We had classes in drawing, painting, modelling, dancing, singing, woodwork, calligraphy, music, craft, puppet-making, graphic art, drama and one of the most profound things we learnt through these Art lessons was to understand that for young children it was the process that was important – not the finished product. No expectations were loaded on the children; it was their own discovery of the materials and their creativity that was the learning process and that’s the way it was taught to us.*
Everything we were taught and the way we were taught was so we would be well equipped to transfer that learning to teaching the children.

As teachers of young children we knew we were facilitating their learning through Art. (E3/6/2017)

Certainly, the literature records the perception of reduction in time devoted to and emphasis on the arts in universities:

For generalist primary classroom teachers, pre-service training in arts education is lamentably inadequate… many universities are not replacing retiring staff and reducing where possible student electives…The universities lament that teaching practical arts involves high cost studio and small group teaching. The arts education subjects are diminishing in tertiary sectors or becoming an ‘amalgam’ of Arts subjects. How much knowledge can a pre-service teacher learn in a 10 week subject that encompasses 3 week blocks of Visual Arts, Drama and Music? (Boyd, 1994:7)

Over the past twenty years, universities have decreased … class time for arts education, despite the repeated recommendations from a variety of reports into Arts education, for teachers to be more adequately trained in the arts …. Preservice primary teachers generally have very little background in the arts when they arrive at university and then have very few lecture hours for input – is it any wonder that many of them start teaching and omit the arts from their programs? (Russell-Bowie, 2008: 4-5)

Concerns have been raised in the UK that teacher training in arts subjects is subject to a diminishing allocation of time, or wide disparities in understanding and commitment, at initial teacher training institutions (Loveless, 2003; Doddington, 2004; Wilson, MacDonald, Byrne, Ewing and Sheridan, 2008:39)

The Arts situation identified above is compounded by a gradual morphing of preschool and primary courses, as argued by Elliott (2006):

… the lack of national or even state requirements for degree level qualifications in early childhood … make it difficult for universities to justify offering degree level courses in a competitive education environment. Gradually, early childhood courses have lost their strong, specialist early childhood focus. At best, early childhood courses are becoming integrated with primary education. (Elliott, 2006: 38)
While frameworks have been strengthened and specified (Dowling and O’Malley (2009), the evidence of the NRVE (2008) does not suggest that the situation in universities has changed from what Elliott (2006) observed.

One strategy to combat a perceived pre-service deficit in learning might be to seek further professional learning opportunities. Table 4.2.2 shows the current engagement by survey participants in any form of further professional learning.

Table 4.2.2  Degree of professional learning engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of engagement in further professional learning</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No current engagement</td>
<td>30.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘On-going’ engagement as offered by Department of Education</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop participant</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study tourist</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool/School-based learning (including National Quality Standards)</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree candidate</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer of colleagues</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Very little’</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure of question</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of participation in any form of further formal education, training and/or professional development is less than four per cent. Over 30 per cent indicated no current engagement while a further 23 per cent indicated uncertainty re the purpose of the question or provided no response. The nature of their responses suggest that many teachers had a somewhat hazy understanding of what
constitutes further education and training or professional development/learning, one respondent even referring to ‘observing colleagues’ in this context. ‘School based learning’ was cited by another, referencing the National Quality Standards which would be more appropriately regarded as mandatory reading for all teachers currently engaged with children in the years before school. The Productivity Commission Report (2005) noted that, in 2004, the ACT reported the lowest level of ‘child care staff having undertaken in-service training in the previous 12 months’ (Productivity Commission Report, 2005: 14.23). For this sample at least, the percentage participating would appear to be even lower.

Perhaps this is akin to Wilson, MacDonald, Byrne, Ewing and Sheridan’s (2008) finding that, in Scotland, their primary head teacher sample

\[\ldots\textit{criticised teachers’ disinclination to attend training in arts subjects. They saw some teachers as unlikely or unwilling to undertake training in subjects they did not like or were not confident in, and there was some perception of a double standard in this respect in comparison with core curriculum subjects:}\]

\[\textit{The teachers will go on courses to teach science and maths and language, because they might feel that they need a bit of help with that, but they can be desperately awful at teaching music, and have no ability and think that they’re awful, but they never go on a course on how to help them to teach music better. (Wilson, MacDonald, Byrne, Ewing and Sheridan, 2008: 43)}\]

The qualifications achieved by participants as preparation for their preschool teaching are detailed in Table 4.2.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) ‘Degree Visual Arts’; Diploma (Secondary Education)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education; Diploma Children’s Services</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education; Diploma Special Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education; Associate Diploma (Primary Teaching)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education; Associate Diploma Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education; Graduate Diploma Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Primary Education Studies/ Bachelor Education (Primary); Graduate Certificate (Early Childhood Education)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Teaching (Early Childhood) ‘with fourth year Primary’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts – ‘Education Early Childhood’; Bachelor Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts; Graduate Diploma Early Childhood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Exercise Science; Graduate Bachelor of Education; Master Educational Leadership.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Science; Graduate Diploma Education (Primary); Graduate Certificate (Early Childhood).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.88</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 4.2.3, preparation for teaching was varied, consistent with Elliott’s (2006) observation that ‘Staff in early childhood centres across Australian [jurisdictions] have a wide range of qualifications and experience’ (Elliott, 2006:34). While all respondents had a qualification in Education, only 30 per cent had specific qualifications in Early Childhood or Children’s Services and, of these, 50 per cent were Graduate Certificates, Diplomas or Graduate Diplomas. This means that, in this respondent group, a major qualification in Early Childhood or Children’s Services was held by only 15 per cent of participants. A further 23 per cent had come to preschool teaching without a specialist Early Childhood qualification of any kind. Even at the point the data were collected for the current study (2013), the situation reflected in these results is analogous to that characterized by Elliott (2006) nationally:

_Somehow, we have arrived at a point where a ‘teacher’ in early childhood can be someone with a degree level early childhood teaching qualification, a child care certificate or diploma from the VET sector, or no qualification at all._ (Elliott, 2006: 36)

### 4.3 Background in and reported engagement with Visual Arts

Table 4.3.1 details the most recent courses/study undertaken by participants in specific Visual Arts areas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Primary school %</th>
<th>Secondary school %</th>
<th>Secondary college %</th>
<th>Tertiary institution %</th>
<th>Adult education/Recreational %</th>
<th>Other %</th>
<th>No answer %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>15.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>15.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>23.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/Modelling</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>23.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/Pottery</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>34.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>53.84</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>30.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3.1 demonstrates that, for the largest group of participants the most recent study in the four core Visual Arts areas (drawing, painting, print-making and modelling) was at tertiary level. Given that participants’ qualifications were largely in Education rather than discipline based, it would appear that the most recent formal instruction in drawing, painting, print-making or modelling was experienced during preparation for teaching. Since tertiary education curricula are typically crowded, it is likely that any discipline Visual Arts input (as distinct from curriculum studies) encompassed no more – and probably less – than a single semester of study.

Anecdotal evidence from Early Childhood and Primary Education students (University of Canberra) reveal that a total of fifteen hours is given to Visual Arts and, of this allocation, three hours is dedicated to an excursion to the National Gallery of Australia. Despite careful preparation and skilled delivery by the Gallery’s experienced Education staff, one must question the efficacy of this minimalist preparation for teaching. For another group of 20 per cent, secondary school was the most recent study, potentially reflecting not only student choice but curriculum requirements. Of the 10 per cent engaged in Adult Education or recreational participation, 38 per cent specified the craft category.

Since respondents, overall, did not demonstrate a clear understanding of what constitutes further education and training or professional development/learning in answer to the question about current studies (Table 4.2.2), it was to be expected that there would be a similar lack of clarity about further plans and this proved to be the case. Responses varied from intention to undertake a Master’s Degree in Early Childhood or Visual Arts to ‘learning’ the National Quality Standards, the latter activity being likely to be essential for teachers in the Early Childhood area. While the question sought details and proposed timing, little detail was offered – perhaps because of ill-defined opportunities, limited planning, confusion or a combination of these.

Teachers’ observation of, and comments on, their preparation for teaching, their teaching experience and how well they were equipped to deliver Visual Arts for children to achieve their creative potential are synthesized in Table 4.3.2
Table 4.3.2  Perceived effectiveness of preparation to teach Visual Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response category</th>
<th>Response %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited attention compared to other curriculum areas</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief attention to teaching techniques and hands on experiences</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Visual Arts discipline training is invaluable</td>
<td>19.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some learning on the job</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No use or very limited use</td>
<td>19.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant/nil response</td>
<td>23.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the fact that almost one quarter of respondents made no response, what is of special interest about these comments is that none are positive – with the exception ‘any visual arts discipline training is invaluable’, highlighting its paucity. It is almost as though they regard Visual Arts experiences as somewhat of a ‘blip’ in the total pre-service teacher education course.

It might be assumed, however, that some preschool teachers engage in recreation through personal, rather than teaching related, activity which might include Visual Arts.

Table 4.3.3 shows the teachers’ current and personal engagement in Visual Arts experiences which are offered at the preschool level.
Table 4.3.3 Participation in the Visual Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Never %</th>
<th>Rarely %</th>
<th>Sometimes %</th>
<th>Often %</th>
<th>Very often %</th>
<th>No response %</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>99.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>99.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>99.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>19.25</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>65.38</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>99.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>99.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>99.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While between 20 and 30 per cent of respondents indicated they participate in Drawing, Photography or Craft ‘Often’ or ‘Very often’, it appears that an unanticipated ambiguity in the question has yielded potentially misleading data because the question did not specifically distinguish between professional (teaching related) and personal (recreational) participation and respondents appear to have conflated the two as, when one examines the percentages for participation, the same three categories together with Painting, dominate ‘Sometimes’, as in preschools. This tentative hypothesis was later verified at the interview stage confirming that participation was limited to what they did with children in preschool groups or classes. Photography and Craft were exceptions for participation with the comparatively high rate of 54 per cent responding ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’. Fifty to 80 per cent of respondents rarely or never participate in drawing, painting, print-making, sculpting, modelling, ceramics/pottery, woodwork or design.

As the name implies, ‘Visual’ Art requires engagement through observation or viewing, not necessarily of the teachers’ own Art work, for appreciation and enjoyment.
Table 4.3.4 provides data on the frequency of the teachers’ participation in the Visual Arts as ‘observer’ or ‘viewer’ of Art work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Never %</th>
<th>Rarely %</th>
<th>Sometimes %</th>
<th>Often %</th>
<th>Very often %</th>
<th>No Answer %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the Visual Arts, drawing and painting were clearly the most often observed or viewed with 80 per cent indicating ‘Sometimes’, ‘Often’ or ‘Very often’. The least observed were print-making, ceramics/pottery and woodwork with more than 25 per cent reporting that they ‘never’ did so.

4.4 Preschool teachers’ enjoyment of, and ability and confidence in, negotiating learning areas

This section profiles preschool teachers’ perceptions of their teaching in all areas of the curriculum and specifically in Visual Arts. Respondents’ perceptions of confidence, ability, and enjoyment across curriculum areas are presented in Tables 4.4.1, 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 while Table 4.4.4 profiles disparities between high/very high levels of confidence, perceived ability and enjoyment across learning areas.

Table 4.4.1 shows participants’ levels of confidence in teaching across preschool learning areas.
### Table 4.4.1 Levels of confidence in preschool teaching across learning areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING AREA</th>
<th>Not at all confident</th>
<th>Somewhat confident</th>
<th>Moderately confident</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Very confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There would appear to be discrepant levels of confidence between teaching Literacy/Numeracy (80 per cent of responses ‘confident’ and ‘very confident’), and the Arts (30 per cent or less ‘confident’ and ‘very confident’). Across all four Arts categories 12 per cent to 25 per cent indicate that they are ‘Not at all confident’ while 30 per cent to 35 per cent are only ‘Somewhat confident’. The only areas in which some respondents were ‘Not at all confident’ were Visual Arts, Music, Drama and Dance. For this sample of ACT preschool teachers, confidence levels in teaching Visual Arts mirror those reported in the NRVE for generalist primary teachers and support other findings in Australia (e.g., Hudson, 2006 and Dinham, 2007), New Zealand (e.g., Bowell, 2009), the UK (e.g., Wilson et al, 2008), Ireland (e.g., INTO, 2010), Canada (e.g., Kindler, 2010) and the USA (e.g., Danko-McGhee, 2009).

Table 4.4.2 shows participants’ perceptions of their ability to teach across learning areas.
Table 4.4.2 Perceived ability levels in preschool learning areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING AREA</th>
<th>Little or no ability</th>
<th>Some ability</th>
<th>Moderate ability</th>
<th>High ability</th>
<th>Very high ability</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>53.84</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>99.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In only one area, Literacy, did more than 20 per cent of respondents perceive their teaching ability to be ‘Very high’. Perceptions of ability were typically low to moderate despite all but one reporting at least two years preschool teaching experience and some as many as 30 years. Responses indicating ‘Little or no ability’, ‘Some ability’ and ‘Moderate ability’ totalled 85 per cent for the teaching of Visual Arts. Only four per cent rated themselves as having ‘Very high ability’ in the teaching Visual Arts category. A comparison with Table 4.4.1 shows higher perceptions of confidence, rather than ability, in teaching the Arts which raises the question as to whether it is possible to be confident in teaching an area about which one knows little. A similar but much larger study in relation to maths in the preschool (Chen, McCray, Adams and Leow, 2014) found that

*Teachers reported greater overall confidence in their ability to teach pre-schoolers math than they did in their knowledge of teaching it.*
(Chen, McCray, Adams and Leow, 2014:371)

They acknowledge that
Survey studies are based on self-report data. They are subjective and reflect each individual’s understanding of the survey questions and willingness to be truthful. (Chen, McCray, Adams and Leow, 2014:371)

As a result they allow for the possibility

... that in-service teachers, surveyed in the workplace, might feel pressure to report more ‘socially acceptable’ beliefs, greater confidence, and more positive math attitudes than they actually possess [and] attempt to reduce this pressure [by informing teachers] of the purpose of the survey; namely, to help administrators plan early math PD that better meets their needs. [They argue that] understanding that survey results were to be used in planning their math PD may have elicited more candid responses, potentially moderating the limitations of self report data. (Chen, McCray, Adams and Leow, 2014:371)

The fact that the current study used a similar strategy in that the first two stages were designed to foreground the programme in Stage Three may have had a similar effect. However, Chen, McCray, Adams and Leow’s (2014) argument in relation to teachers’ confidence in and ability to teach Maths sounds a pertinent warning:

The survey results showed that teachers’ confidence in their ability to teach pre-schoolers math is greater than their confidence in their own math ability. This discrepancy between professional and personal mathematics suggests that preschool teachers may not feel they are good at math, but believe they can teach early math fairly well. Of concern regarding this finding is the possibility that teachers think early math is simple, easy, and requires little mathematical knowledge to teach …. The challenge resides in the misconception that teaching early mathematics is easy since it about the most basic math. Early math is basic but not simple; rather it is abstract, complex, and foundational (McCray and Chen, 2011; NRC, 2009). (Chen, McCray, Adams and Leow, 2014:373 - 4)

A very similar, and equally compelling, argument could be advanced in relation to the teaching of Visual Arts, especially in this age of the ever more visually complex world of technological display and communication.

Table 4.4.3 presents participants’ degree of enjoyment in teaching across learning areas.
Table 4.4.3 Degree of enjoyment in preschool teaching across learning areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING AREA</th>
<th>Little or no enjoyment %</th>
<th>Some enjoyment %</th>
<th>Moderate enjoyment %</th>
<th>High enjoyment %</th>
<th>Very high enjoyment %</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>99.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost 40 per cent of teachers indicated a very high level of enjoyment in teaching Literacy followed by Visual Arts at 31 per cent. In fact, comparatively high levels of enjoyment are reported for Visual Arts teaching with 70 per cent of responses indicating ‘High enjoyment’ or ‘Very high enjoyment’. These levels are higher than the 56 per cent enjoyment reported by Russell-Bowie (2008) but this may be because she was reporting confidence and enjoyment. At the other end of the scale, no respondent indicated ‘Little or no enjoyment’ and only eight per cent indicated ‘Some enjoyment’ suggesting that neither a lack of confidence nor a perception of low or moderate ability militates against teachers’ enjoyment of working with children in the Visual Arts.

Table 4.4.4 shows preschool teachers’ levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment across learning areas.
Table 4.4.4 Preschool teachers’ perceived levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment across learning areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING AREA</th>
<th>Level of confidence</th>
<th>Perceived ability</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confident/Very Confident %</td>
<td>High/Very High %</td>
<td>High/Very High %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>80.76</td>
<td>61.53</td>
<td>80.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>80.76</td>
<td>61.53</td>
<td>69.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
<td>61.53</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>57.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>69.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>49.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>42.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>34.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
<td>53.84</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>61.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a clear mismatch between participants’ perceptions of their ability and their levels of confidence and enjoyment in teaching. Literacy and Numeracy share a confidence level of 80 per cent (Confident/Very confident) and a perceived ability level of 62 per cent (High/Very high ability) with the enjoyment level for Literacy (80%) exceeding that for Numeracy by 10 per cent. Across the Arts, however, enjoyment is higher in all areas than either confidence or perceived ability to teach the relevant discipline. For all the Arts, perceived ability ranges between 11 and 15 per cent, the level of confidence being highest for music, albeit only at 35 per cent, while enjoyment is highest for Visual Arts. Across the Arts enjoyment dominates confidence while ability falls behind both.

4.5 Preschool teachers’ scoping of their teaching

Table 4.5.1 presents teachers’ estimates of time spent planning and preparing for the preschool group taught most often during the week. Columns one to nine relate to teachers’ estimates of time spent in planning and preparation while Column 10 shows the number of teachers who did not estimate preparation/planning time; each row totals 26.
Table 4.5.1  Planning and preparation time for teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING AREA</th>
<th>&lt;10 mins</th>
<th>10–15 mins</th>
<th>20 mins</th>
<th>30 mins</th>
<th>45 mins</th>
<th>1 hour</th>
<th>1.30 hrs</th>
<th>2 hrs</th>
<th>&gt;2 hrs</th>
<th>No estimate of preparation/planning time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustain-ability</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to typographical error a row containing the category ‘Music’ was inadvertently omitted from the survey, and, as a result of the omission, it does not appear in this table.
Overall the Arts receive scant preparation/planning time in comparison with Literacy and Numeracy. While the hours cited by some respondents appear to reflect some overstatement when one considers them in addition to actual teaching hours, this may indicate confusion between a teacher’s thoughtful engagement in planning/ preparation to teach and the physical organisation of materials and equipment in preschools often referred to as ‘preparing the room’ or ‘setting up the activity’. This may be the reason why Visual Arts appears to receive more preparation/planning time than the other Art forms.

The frequency of children being offered Visual Arts is shown in Table 4.5.2 in relation to the group taught most often.

Table 4.5.2  Frequency of Visual Arts offering to the group most taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Not offered %</th>
<th>Offered occasionally %</th>
<th>Offered approx. once a week %</th>
<th>Offered almost every session %</th>
<th>Offered every session %</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>76.92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>57.69</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>99.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/ modelling</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>19.73</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction or collage</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>99.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A clear picture emerged of frequent offerings – ‘every session’ or ‘almost every session’– of Drawing and Painting (more than 90%), but a restricted offering across the Visual Arts. Only one other area, ‘Construction or collage’ was comparable (85%). In contrast, other Visual Arts areas ‘not offered’ or ‘occasionally offered’ elicited a high percentage of responses, suggesting meagre
offerings in modelling, woodwork and design. This contrasts starkly with what Bamford (2009) found in Iceland where there was a high level of inclusion of Visual Art forms in preschools - woodwork 64%, photography 60%, design 69%, textile 72%, and digital art 53%.

Table 4.5.3 shows the human and physical resources available to teachers of Visual Arts in preschools.

**Table 4.5.3  Overview of Visual Arts resources available to teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available resources</th>
<th>HUMAN RESOURCES</th>
<th>PHYSICAL RESOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleagues with some Visual Arts expertise</td>
<td>Self/assistant with no Visual Arts expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Lacking</td>
<td>Limited/very limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>53.85</td>
<td>38.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teachers’ clear lack of confidence in teaching the Visual Arts suggested a sense of desperation as 65 per cent referred to ‘no Visual Arts specialist’ or just ‘myself and assistant’ in terms of the availability of human resources. Of three Arts specialists specifically mentioned, one was not an Early Childhood teacher but a specialist teacher of Art at a senior campus while another was a ‘resident music teacher’ who ‘does not teach Visual Arts’.

Less than 50 per cent gave a response in all categories. Materials were described as ‘basic’, ‘standard’, ‘lots’ and ‘varied’ with one listing craft, rather than Art, materials. One response was ‘Lots but teachers narrow in thinking of how to use
them’. Forty-six per cent gave contradictory indications of adequate and inadequate equipment. One respondent, after two weeks of term, was still unsure what physical resources were available yet another considered herself ‘very fortunate’. Other areas of concern focussed on financial resources (budget) and the scarcity of time for Visual Arts.

Where comments were made, the more positive responses tended to be qualified:

- ‘I work with quite ‘arty’ teachers
- ‘Relief teacher is an artist.’
- ‘Some staff with moderate knowledge to share.’
- ‘A teacher and an assistant who try hard…’
- ‘Occasional visit from Art teacher from senior campus.’

Such comments suggest respondents’ sense of isolation in relation to the teaching of Visual Arts and their desire for some reinforcement and/or inspiration from a person or persons with discipline expertise.

Table 4.5.4 contrasts teachers’ expectations for help and support with Visual Arts in preschools with that received.

**Table 4.5.4  Percentage expecting support, help and encouragement in teaching Visual Arts *vis à vis* those receiving**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts Support</th>
<th>Expecting Receiving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional colleagues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting</td>
<td>19.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving</td>
<td>42.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting</td>
<td>34.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving</td>
<td>42.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting</td>
<td>53.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving</td>
<td>42.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of Children’s Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving</td>
<td>23.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting</td>
<td>46.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The level of support, help and encouragement expected in relation to Visual Arts teaching is mostly considerably less than that received especially in relation to professional development opportunities, professional organizations, parents, families and community members. Evidence of children’s participation is the only area where expectations are close to those realised.

4.6 Preschool teachers’ perceptions of delights and challenges in teaching Visual Arts

Respondents were invited to share their perceptions of delights and/or challenges in teaching Visual Arts. Consistent with their enjoyment in teaching Visual Arts, most comments (54.69%) related to delights rather than challenges. The dominant area of delight for these teachers was the children themselves (45.71%), followed by teaching satisfaction (37.14%) and then personal satisfaction (17.14).

In relation to challenges comments were evenly divided between lack of resources (51.72%) and lack of expertise and/or confidence (48.28%). The former included references to a generic lack of resources as well as specific mentions of time, equipment, money, human resources, storage and teaching space.

These were repeated as perceived impediments to respondents’ teaching of Visual Arts with Table 4.6.1 scoping the teachers’ suggested strategies for reducing/eliminating these perceived impediments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts Support</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some support</th>
<th>Moderate support</th>
<th>Considerable support</th>
<th>Complete support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional organisations (Including publications and online resources)</td>
<td>Expecting Receiving</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>57.69</td>
<td>23.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.6.1  Amelioration of impediments to teaching Visual Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of perceived impediment</th>
<th>Suggestions for amelioration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LACK OF RESOURCES</td>
<td>• Design a dedicated Art studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increase funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEED FOR EXPERTISE</td>
<td>• More professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased time for preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Employ an Arts specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEED TO BUILD CONFIDENCE</td>
<td>• Greater collaboration with colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhance skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers’ suggestions for ‘time’, professional development, human and physical resources were made without reference to budgetary restrictions although collaboration with colleagues and skill enhancement address a range of impediments which might be implemented at lower cost.

4.7  Perceived levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment within Visual Arts areas

Teachers’ perceived levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment in teaching specific areas within the Visual Arts in preschools are shown in Table 4.7.1, Table 4.7.2 and Table 4.7.3. Comparisons are shown in Table 4.7.4.

Table 4.7.1  Levels of confidence in teaching Visual Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Not at all confident %</th>
<th>Slightly Confident %</th>
<th>Moderately confident %</th>
<th>Confident %</th>
<th>Very confident %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/ modelling</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>53.84</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Not at all confident %</th>
<th>Slightly Confident %</th>
<th>Moderately confident %</th>
<th>Confident %</th>
<th>Very confident %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction/</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While confidence levels across Visual Arts areas are not predominantly ‘Confident’ or ‘Very confident’ they exceed 30 per cent, at least, for Drawing, Painting and Construction/Collage. In the ‘Slightly confident or ‘Moderately confident’ categories. In all other areas, confidence levels are slight or non-existent for over 50 per cent of respondents.

Table 4.7.2 Levels of ability in teaching Visual Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Little or no ability %</th>
<th>Some ability %</th>
<th>Moderate ability %</th>
<th>High ability %</th>
<th>Very high ability %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>57.69</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction or collage</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>57.69</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>24.61</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventy per cent perceive themselves to have moderate to high ability in teaching drawing, painting and construction/collage but, mirroring their confidence levels, over 50 per cent see themselves as having some, little or no ability in other Visual Arts areas.
Table 4.7.3 Levels of enjoyment in teaching Visual Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Little or no enjoyment %</th>
<th>Some enjoyment %</th>
<th>Moderate enjoyment %</th>
<th>High enjoyment %</th>
<th>Very high enjoyment %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>53.84</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>38.44</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction or collage</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over 75 per cent have ‘High’/‘Very enjoyment’ of painting and around 60 per cent for drawing and construction/collage. Notwithstanding the low levels of confidence and perceived ability for the other Visual Arts areas, around 70 per cent experience moderate or more than moderate enjoyment in teaching them.

Table 4.7.4 juxtaposes respondents’ ‘High’/‘Very high’ levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment.

Table 4.7.4 Perceived high levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Level of confidence</th>
<th>Perceived ability</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confident/Very confident %</td>
<td>High/Very high %</td>
<td>High/Very high %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>34.60</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>23.06</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
<td>23.06</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction/collage</td>
<td>38.45</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is noteworthy is that, in all areas, enjoyment levels are greater than levels for confidence or ability.

Table 4.7.5 does the reverse by juxtaposing respondents’ low/very low levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment.

Table 4.7.5 Perceived low levels of confidence, ability and enjoyment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Level of confidence</th>
<th>Perceived ability</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all confident/slightly confident</td>
<td>Little or no ability/some ability</td>
<td>Little or no enjoyment/some enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>42.30</td>
<td>38.45</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>57.68</td>
<td>61.53</td>
<td>19.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
<td>61.53</td>
<td>65.38</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>80.76</td>
<td>73.06</td>
<td>23.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction/collage</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>65.38</td>
<td>65.37</td>
<td>30.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>65.37</td>
<td>61.53</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the lower end, as evidenced by Table 4.7.5, levels of confidence and perceived ability tend to be much more in tandem than for higher levels as in Table 4.7.4. Even for woodwork and design which show the lowest levels of confidence and ability, less than half indicate similarly low levels of enjoyment.

4.8 Preschool teachers’ conceptions of partnerships and other opportunities

When asked to describe any partnerships and/or opportunities available to them for Visual Arts education over 50 per cent either made no response or stated that there were no such opportunities. Of those that were engaged in partnerships or saw opportunities, they were largely local – with other teachers/assistant (12.90%), specialist teachers (9.68%), or with parents/grandparents (9.68%). Only 6.45 per cent utilized partnerships/opportunities with cultural institutions.
4.9 The schism between vision and reality

When respondents were invited to make any other observations about the teaching of Visual Arts in preschool 15 of the 26 teachers did so. Categorization of these spontaneous comments was driven by the data itself and yielded four categories as summarized in Table 4.9.1. All comments were encompassed by these categories and there were no outliers. Some respondents made more than one comment.

Table 4.9.1 Visual Arts for children – Comments and observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response category</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Children have confidence, interest and/or capabilities</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The Arts contribute to child development</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Pedagogical doubts relating to current practices</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Professional Development needed</td>
<td>10.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half the comments focused on the generic value of the Arts and children's natural inclination to experiment with painting and drawing. Others related to professional doubts about current Visual Arts practices or professional development needs, suggesting that the teaching of Visual Arts in preschool requires further support:

*I think our involvement in this [research] project would help as a preschool team and the children immensely.*

*Please help!*

*I wish I had more guidance in how to prepare and deliver a high quality program (Arts based) that would broaden their talents and nurture their creativity.*

In the general context of doubt and despair it is not surprising that many respondents perceived a schism between their personal philosophy of teaching and their delivery of Visual Arts as evidenced in Table 4.9.2.
Table 4.9.2  Preschool teachers’ perceptions of the consistency of their Visual Arts delivery with their educational philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISUAL ARTS</th>
<th>Not at all consistent%</th>
<th>Somewhat consistent%</th>
<th>Moderately consistent %</th>
<th>Highly consistent %</th>
<th>Totally consistent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction/collage</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>19.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than 25 per cent of respondents reported total consistency between philosophy and delivery in any area of Visual Arts teaching. Drawing and Painting, areas in which teachers report their highest levels of enjoyment, highlighted the gap between educational philosophy and delivery given that 40 per cent experience consistency between philosophy and delivery as moderate or lower. For the areas such as printmaking, sculpting/modelling, ceramics/pottery, woodwork and design, the percentage of teachers reporting some or no consistency ranges from 35 per cent to over 50 per cent. Such dissonance is likely to be very disturbing for conscientious teachers and exacerbate their sense of stress and inadequacy.

4.10 Synthesis and Discussion

The Stage One survey provided ample evidence that, for this sample at least, Visual Arts teaching prompted considerable despair and yielded, for most respondents, only moderate delight:

- Less than 40 per cent had any tertiary level discipline background in either drawing or painting;
Stage One Survey Results

- Less than 35 per cent had any tertiary level discipline background in either printmaking or sculpting/modelling;
- Less than 15 per cent had any tertiary level discipline background in ceramics/pottery;
- Less than 10 per cent had any tertiary level discipline background in photography;
- None had any tertiary level discipline background in woodworking.

These figures must also be considered in the context that the most common discipline offering of Visual Arts at tertiary level was likely to have been a single unit of 52 hours, as evidenced by the data submitted to the NRVE (Davis, 2008):

*Of the primary courses for which data were available, less than 30 per cent had no compulsory visual education related discipline course requirements; in fewer than half of these, a relevant elective was available. In cases where such a course was compulsory, 71 per cent devote less than 52 hours to visual education. Respondents reported that the amount of time devoted to visual education had reduced, in some cases a function of allowing a choice of discipline from within The Arts KLA, and in some reducing to make room for new developments and/or structures largely unrelated to visual education.*

*They’ve reduced the two arts units we currently have to one which will be impossible. I argued strongly against it but there is no time in the new structure, so we’re diminishing rather than expanding (University Respondent).* (Davis, NRVE, 2008: 176)

In 2002, Bamford had noted that, in her New South Wales institution at that time, …

*…funding constrained the amount of time available for my preservice art classes. The allocation was reduced from twenty weeks of classes for three hours each week, to ten weeks of classes for four hours a week.... [a reduction] in breadth, depth and duration.* (Bamford, 2002:3 & 28)

Yet, as indicated, respondents felt that something was better than nothing.

Confidence levels for teaching Visual Arts were at 30 per cent compared to 80 per cent for Literacy and Numeracy. Respondents perceived their ability to teach Visual Arts to be, at best, moderate (46%) while around 40 per cent saw themselves as having only some or no ability in this area. No respondents
reported that they perceived themselves to have only some or no ability in Literacy and less than four per cent saw themselves as having only some ability in Numeracy.

Respondents felt isolated in their perceived lack of ability in Visual Arts and repeatedly referred to the need for access to expert discipline input to shore up their practice, one even entreating ‘Please help’. All but one respondent indicated a willingness to proceed to Stage Two. While the non-probability nature of the sample precluded any further generalization, the findings from the Stage One survey provided a strong basis to proceed to Stage Two for this group of respondents.
CHAPTER 5 SCAFFOLDING THE PROBLEM: INTERVIEWS WITH 10 PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

5.1 Scope of the chapter

As indicated 96 per cent of survey respondents indicated their willingness to proceed to Stage Two. Following the protocol agreed with ACT Government, ten teachers were then randomly selected for interview. This chapter probes their working contexts and specific needs in relation to Visual Arts through discussing

- perceptions of their preparation/preparedness to teach Visual Arts;
- current planning for and teaching of Visual Arts; and
- expressed issues, needs and ideals

Pseudonyms are used throughout and identifying details, including dates, are not provided. The teachers’ own words are used to contextualize issues thereby allowing their own narratives to speak to the reader. Except where noted, all quotations are from the relevant participant’s Stage Two interview. The context and process of each interview are documented in Appendix L. All interviews were conducted and processed by the researcher. Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 report on themes driven by the data from the interviews while the final section of the chapter (5.5) synthesizes and discusses the implications of these findings for Stage Three of the study.

5.2 A ‘wake-up’ call

The opening question of the interview gave participants a chance to reflect on their experience in completing the Stage One survey. Many responded that the survey had acted as a ‘wake-up’ call prompting them to turn a critical eye on their current Visual Arts practices with some frank appraisals:

[Visual Arts is] just not an area that I was really comfortable [in] so that’s why I sent [the survey] straight back – I was like, ‘That really is not something that I’m focusing on.’ (Hannah)

[The survey] was a big eye-opener. One of the questions was, ‘What was the last time you did any relevant Visual Arts’ … um … ‘Visual Arts practice in PD?’ … and that made me come back and think, ‘OK,
what have I been missing out on? because I haven’t been doing that regular PD, that information was pretty helpful to me. (Sarah)

Well, it certainly made me think about some of the things that I do and some of the things I do I feel OK [about] and other areas I don’t feel as comfortable [about.] (Leah)

It made it really clear to me that while it’s timetabled to a degree, the amount of time it’s been given reflected the [lack of] importance of Visual Arts. (Hannah)

Re a Visual Arts program? I’m ad hoc so I don’t have a clear vision of what I’d like to achieve, so it’s about grabbing anything I can get at the time. (Frances)

I guessed it encouraged me to think about the range of Visual Arts that I encourage children to participate in … So it brought up the broader perspective of what Visual Arts is. (Ciara)

It made me think about how much time I put into preparing. (Rochelle)

I don’t have any particular skills in any of those areas [listed in the survey] but I’m happy to have a go. (Virginia)

I went away feeling like ‘Oh, why aren’t I doing that as much?’ and so it sort of spurred me on … and I thought printing is completely different for the child and I included it in my program this week. Perhaps I could further that in some way. (Stephanie)

We haven’t had clay; we should really look into that. (Eleanor)

I stopped and thought, ‘OK … this is really interesting.’ As much as I love Art I’m still, I guess, focusing on those areas Literacy and Numeracy and it’s made me reflect on that and try to take some more action. (Stephanie)

These initial reflections scoped teachers’ sense of:

- what might, ideally, be encompassed by the Visual Arts compared with their current essentially limited practice;
- personal skill and confidence issues;
- how Visual Arts sits vis-à-vis other learning areas such as Literacy and Numeracy.
5.3 Preschool teachers’ perceptions of their preparation/preparedness to teach Visual Arts

Nine of the ten teachers interviewed lamented their lack of training to teach the Visual Arts and/or their personal inadequacy in this area. Of these Leah, who commenced working in the preschool sector in 2010, lacked any specific tertiary level training in Early Childhood or discipline training for Visual Arts teaching. The other eight teachers experience considerable dissonance between their general confidence in teaching and their angst about teaching the Visual Arts. Hannah’s diagnoses reflected both the problems and the consequences:

- I learnt a lot about the Arts but I didn’t actually learn how to teach it and that’s worried me.
- I still don’t know what’s appropriate for my children to learn.
- You tend to dumb it down a bit or go way over their heads so it’s like [children thinking] ‘WHAT are you talking about?’
- I don’t think I was taught well when I was at uni and it’s something that I did well in, conversely, but I don’t feel I particularly know a lot about teaching Art.
- Really, for me, it’s a lack of knowledge of what is really age appropriate and what I should be teaching them. (Hannah)

Despite her 20 years of teaching, Eleanor admitted to lack of knowledge and uncertainty:

- In my training we did just one Art unit and that’s it so anything else I’ve done with Art is because I enjoy painting and I enjoy other things and probably that’s why it comes into the classroom.

Frustration is demonstrated in mention of attempts to encourage children, possibly reflecting a perceived inability to extend children’s learning in the Arts:

- I really think it’s really up to the individual how much you do. You can try and inspire children but then, because of lack of knowledge sometimes you don’t know where to go. (Eleanor)
Chapter 5

The compressed and/or truncated units of Visual Arts related study undertaken at university, rather than building a foundation, have left many with feelings of deepest inadequacy:

*At uni they taught us snippets of Early Childhood Art in what you can learn but …. It wasn't really deep; it was just too quick … I would rather have had more ‘hands on’, research if you want to learn more, which I did, the recipes they gave us were too short: ‘This is how you work with clay’; ‘This clay may cause asthma’ – really, really fast and then it was gone.* (Pamela)

*Because of the way the course was structured I’ve never actually done a subject called ‘Visual Arts’ … I’ve never done any subject related to Visual Arts. It’s only what I’ve picked up along the way so that sort of limits things.* (Frances)

Frances is even unsure what ‘Visual Arts’ encompasses and maintained that her skills are at a very low level:

*Definition of Visual Arts? Strengths? Very low strengths…* (Frances)

Quite apart from the sense that their own education with regard to the Visual Arts is inadequate, many of the teachers expressed deep seated anxieties about their personal abilities in this area:

*I don’t actually feel I am a very good artist at all. Perhaps that is going back to my childhood where things sort of happened and that made me feel like I wasn’t very good [but] … like you said ‘Art is fun – there’s no right or wrong way. If I perhaps had that as a child, maybe I’d feel a bit more confidence.* (Stephanie)

*I don’t feel I have skills in any of those areas; I feel as though I need an artist by my side.* (Virginia)

*I steer away from print-making; I’m not the most confident painter.* (Rochelle)

*But my own skills of doing it - I can’t draw; I can’t paint. If I was asked to do a painting it would be a totally abstract thing.* (Sarah)

*It’s having not such a great foundation myself so I can’t think ‘I can go that way’….* (Virginia)
I don’t have the depth of knowledge of the Art process that I do of Literacy, Numeracy or social emotional learning and that, to me, [is] my problem. (Hannah)

Say If I go to PD [professional development] or something and they say ‘Draw this’, I just clam up. I just think, ‘Oh, my gosh’, even if I’m doing something as the group and I’m drawing something I think, ‘Oh, my gosh, those poor children’ if I’m trying to get something across. I’m shocking; I don’t have many skills in that area. I’m not an artist at all. (Stephanie)

I’d love to have a go [at clay] but it’s just the whole mess. Clay can be just as much process as well, just playing and playing and enjoying it whereas I’ve got this whole idea in my head about clay being ‘there’s got to be a product at the end’. (Ciara)

While Ciara was the only teacher who made no explicit reference to her preparedness to teach, she clearly differentiated her own process driven approach from the product oriented approach of other teachers:

It’s got to be process orientated, I think. It really frustrates me when I work with other teachers that have, you know, twenty-two art works on the wall that are all the same and I get frustrated when I see that and get frustrated that they don’t know where I’m coming from when I put something on the wall which doesn’t look to them like Art but there’s that whole process that was quite involved in creating that piece and that’s really important.

It’s unusual for people to understand where I’m coming from, you know, [laughs] like I’ve never been a photocopy teacher and I never will be so I feel real understanding [in this school] so that’s unusual. People aren’t brave enough, I don’t think. Perhaps they feel insecure about their own artistic ability. (Ciara)

Reflecting her own high self-confidence, she observed that her assistant also needs to understand her philosophy and accept her modus operandi:

I’ve been lucky in the fact my [previous] assistant understood where I’m coming from. That’s changed – I’ve got a new assistant now and it’s important to me that my new assistant gets that direction and opens her eyes to that as well. (Ciara)

Sarah is confident in expressing a similar product averse teaching philosophy despite her professed lack of Visual Arts skills. Deploring certain current practices
involving a formulaic approach to children’s Art, she is committed to her own approach to teaching:

*I’ve always hated stencils and things like that view of twenty-five things the same because I do things so differently …*

and very critical of the lack of visual discrimination and discernment from which follows high praise for everything a child produces: ‘Fantastic!’ Everything is ‘Fantastic!’ Illustrating these different approaches, she describes a primary school approach to Visual Art which she regards as tokenistic, ignoring children’s potential and creativity:

*[Some teachers] think you just put paint out every day and you’re covering your Art program ‘cause you’re not – there’s so much more to it. A primary school person who moves into a preschool would think they were doing enough by just having access to an easel, access to an area and having different types of paint out but there’s so much more to it that adds to the whole rounded child.* (Sarah)

Ciara and Sarah were the only teachers who advanced principles upon which a Visual Arts programme might be developed yet, in Sarah’s case, her professed lack of skill in Visual Arts militates against delivery adhering to those principles.

All teachers had a strong sense of themselves as teachers (e.g., Sarah’s statement ‘I know who I am as a teacher’) yet, with the exception of Ciara, this was undermined by their personal sense of inadequacy as Arts practitioners and teachers of Visual Arts. Hannah’s anxiety about positioning her teaching on the craft/art continuum suggests some fundamental discipline knowledge gaps and she feels that her teacher training gave her pedagogical ‘content knowledge but it didn’t give me the teaching technique which I think is a step on’. Leah’s heartfelt ‘My thing is how to?’ is pleading.

Regarding preparation/ preparedness to teach Visual Arts, the interviews with these ten teachers provided an elaboration and a range of idiosyncratic exemplars of the angst underlying the Arts anxiety revealed by teachers’ responses to the Stage 1 Survey. While there was commonality in, for example, the teachers’ sense of themselves as ‘hopeless at Art’, the genesis of this feeling
differed for each, suggesting that no single solution could be applied to the problem, thus providing clear direction for Stage Three.

5.4 Preschool teachers planning for and teaching Visual Arts

In accordance with the agreed interview protocol, the ten teachers were given the opportunity to articulate their sources of inspiration, planning strategies in relation to Visual Arts teaching, perceived strengths/weaknesses as well as those areas of the Visual Arts in which they were most/least interested and most/least confident. It was clear from many of the responses that these teachers were unaccustomed to reflecting upon/talking about their pedagogical practices and hence did not always clearly reflect the question. For example, Ciara, the most confident of the teachers interviewed, proffered the following as her source of inspiration:

*If I find something I will put it away and it will sit in a cupboard for a long time and then I’ll think, ‘Ah, that’s what we could do with that and pull it out and re-use it and just looking at things from different perspectives and being a hoarder – collecting bits and pieces – and the children provide so much inspiration like you know you give them something and they’ll do something with a piece of whatever and that can lead to something new.* (Ciara)

There is evidence that teachers seek inspiration from a range of sources:

*Inspiration is from Instagram and Pinterest – a lot of teachers are on there for creative ideas.* (Rochelle)

*Reggio for me has always been something beautiful – beautiful images, beautiful art and kind of unattainable and then when I went and visited the preschool and the infant-toddler centre I thought they are doing, they’re actually doing what the pictures show. You know, I thought, ‘This can’t be true and so I want to be able to put a little bit into practice, just to see if I can do it before…I don’t want to put any pressure on any other preschool teachers’.* (Virginia)

*At CMAG [Canberra Museum and Gallery] you actually go into the artist’s studio where [we had] a good look at some pieces of Art and then it takes it to that next stage.*
The internet – lots and lots of ideas there I’ve recently joined Pinterest – a special part with children’s education – a lot of it is Art, some wonderful things there. (Pamela)

There are books that I’ve found that are really helpful. I used a lot of Ursula Kolbe’s – ‘Rapunzel’s Supermarket’ and ‘It’s Not a Bird Yet’. I’ve loved the real-life examples. (Hannah)

Intellectually very much aware of the value of the Arts, Frances compensates for her perceived lack of skill by accessing quality Arts education programs for young children at Canberra’s major galleries and museums:

Well, I suppose the thing about the ACT is we do have access to some wonderful programs, I mean we’ve just come off the back of CMAG and we go to the [National] Portrait Gallery and the Museum [National Museum of Australia] and I mean there’s lots of access to programs to be involved in so that’s great.

The beauty of [this] preschool is we have a person here who is an artist and she has great ideas so often I can have an idea or a vision and we can collaborate without my feeling [inadequate]. (Frances)

Others acknowledged their teaching was constrained to a significant extent by a pervasive sense of inadequacy in relation to teaching strategy and direction:

It’s being able to grab that moment with the resources and anything you need and running with it. The way I run the program is actually getting it to work in a Visual Arts sense. Also, the constraints of the fact that these things often happen just as you’re going to pack up. I’m like, ‘Why couldn’t this have happened half an hour earlier?’ (Sarah).

I’m interested but I don’t have the skills to do it (Stephanie).

The fact that they see me sitting there [drawing]; we’re having no behaviour issues at these times because everybody is out and everybody is focused on what we are doing. I think we forget sometimes that they need to see me do it because we’re enjoying it. (Hannah)

…but when we say we have high expectations of the children I’m not sure that we do, so that’s been something that I’ve been really working on, you know, when we talk about ‘choice’… (Virginia)

Here I am now and how do I get to there? (Stephanie)
While there is clearly a will to provide Visual Arts programs, the lack of internal resources militates against a clear sense of professional direction.

Some of the teachers appeared to operate on an exposure and/or offering model in relation to the Visual Arts:

*I like to provide variety so that they do have the experience of different mediums, if I can.* (Ciara)

*Probably we always have the drawing table available at preschool and that’s free choice to come and do that. It’s not necessarily structured although sometimes we’ll put something out you’d like the children to have a go at but most of the time it’s more free choice; painting we’d have every week either on a table or at an easel. Painting can be a more directed activity so that there’s an outcome or other times it’s a free expression.* (Leah)

*Certainly, an ‘anything table’ – the children have a lot of fun with that – the boxes, re-cycling goods that they can turn into other things [is] always available but you have those same children going to that table so it’s how to entice the other kids to come there and to make things and explore and experiment but, I mean, they’re getting there.* (Leah)

*… that’s how we plan – try to see what the children are basically interested in. So, it comes from the children and [the teaching assistant]. When they’re creating with the ‘anything table’, the creating table and they’re using different resources we don’t say, ‘Oh, how about you make a body?’ There’s some gold bits of paper at the moment [so] we use that. We just work with what we’ve got, basically.* (Eleanor)

*We have different areas – easel painting and we have open access craft areas; each week there are Visual Arts and sometimes in those areas … we do collaborative Visual Arts outside … the wonderful trees and autumn.* (Frances)

Planning and teaching strategies are also driven by external factors such as parental expectations and the need to provide opportunities for inclusiveness:

*This week we have been trying really hard to make sure we listen to the children’s voices and that’s documented in our program. We have something called our ‘wondering bag’, for example this week a river stone goes home with the children and they and the parents write something down on the stone they have wondered about so one of the children came back and said ‘What are clouds for?’ and ‘How are they*
made?’. So we said ‘OK, what can we do with that?’ and then we made a little play space with cloudy-type things in it for them to investigate – we had some of John Constable’s art works, his cloud images that I printed off and some ‘cotton-woolly’ bits and pieces and we had a table of different types of clouds – cumulus, nimbus - and we had all those different types of clouds we might see and investigating some; so the question about the clouds promoted some drawings.

We drew the clouds first and we put John Constable’s work on the drawing table and we just provided black pens initially and they drew clouds. Then, the next day, we put the framed images with a limited palette of paints – dark blue, light blue and white, and they were finding the paint and painting their cloud pictures and then we made a cloud and raindrops and then we made raindrops out of beads and things like that so it all sort of stems from the children but we try to build on it with different representations – from what they want to know about. (Ciara)

Others use Visual Arts as a vehicle to achieve other pedagogical goals such as language:

… that’s one of the other very good things about Visual Arts – some children don’t realize – some children are reluctant talkers and all of a sudden they start talking to each other which is great communication – that’s what you’re trying to get … six weeks watching them then, all of a sudden, there’s communication – play dough table, even the construction, all that stuff, that’s great sensory stuff so talking – and that’s what you’re trying to get them to do. (Eleanor)

Like literacy books with black and white stories. I show them that you can paint a picture with only using black and white and there are some really nice books – ‘The Cat and the Fish’ series and I get them to realise that, in this book, there might be a river and a boat and a sunny day and how do they know if it’s a sunny day if it’s a black and white. We talk about charcoal working with black and white. White and black; all sorts of things. (Pamela)

Language is valued in the expectation that each child will talk about his/her work to others as Pamela strongly believes this will have mutual benefit for children. In this example, however, the talking takes precedence over the Art experience itself:

I do that once a week: I get everybody to do a drawing but also to talk about it to their friends. It might [give them] experience and that this is more important than their own experimentation and individual experience ... be just a scribble and that child is able to say ‘This is what I...’ Every child has a turn and can see, well, they’re creating
something out of that’s scribble, maybe I can, so I’m doing that more and more. (Pamela)

For Pamela and Sarah, one impetus is physical development:

We do hands on activities to strengthen their muscles so we start off with play dough and play foam which is basic preschool things to use then I get them to work with just the same but different colours. (Pamela)

[The stimulus is] me thinking ‘OK, I’ve got a few children who haven’t been using scissors; as a creative thing it might be a good idea to cut up paper … [with] scissors and [to use] play dough … so we had boxes which gives us that ability to change the model.

It’s where I’m thinking in my head for each individual child ‘OK, you need some practice … I’ll give you more exposure to it. (Sarah)

but also, for Sarah, social skills:

Last term we were really lucky that we really shared big paintings – that brings in lots of social skills – turn-taking – but you’ve also got that understanding that you put that piece of colour there but someone might put something on top of it – all that fantastic social work. (Sarah)

Eleanor’s focus is the body:

We’re a bit thematic at times because there’s … we’re still a bit old fashioned in that respect so we’re doing the body. If they’re really interested it’s not just, let’s say, one thing … There’s lots of different things happening at the same time, some painting, some creative things going on: We’ve got the ‘anything’ table for things they can create in 3D. So it’s what resources we’ve got, what the children bring in, we try and understand different ways … (Eleanor)

and, also, the behavior management of boys:

We’ve just been doing the shaving cream and we put marbles in it and we have different colours and they’re mixing colours – so interesting – and we have trucks for particular boys and they were working outside in the sandpit with trucks who sort of go around the room and create havoc so we bought them little trucks inside in the play dough and they’re at the play dough table, talking and the conversation was really good. (Eleanor)
For Virginia, it provides an opportunity to embrace cultural diversity:

_I can give an example we were talking about because we use the EYLF and this term we’re focusing on ‘Being’. With this group I have here it’s really culturally diverse so woven into a project about families so we’ve been talking about love but a little boy bought in a map and then we linked that to, you know, a discussion in the morning about his map and then we linked that into making some love maps and so the children were given the opportunity to go and draw their love maps and I can see that by doing that we can make that into a bigger Art project where everybody then participated. So it’s very, you know, linking the children with the outcomes that we wanted to achieve that it’s often through Art, the use of artistic materials._ (Virginia)

While Early Childhood pedagogy recognises the importance of the tangible in learning and the young child’s rudimentary understanding of abstract concepts, Pamela’s use of Art equipment is linked more explicitly to the teaching of care and responsibility:

_They also have two sets of Art – painting easels and, another activity, water colours we use a lot; they wash their own brushes … teaches them responsibility and taking care of the things we have for the preschool._ (Pamela)

Discussions of interests, strengths and weaknesses are inevitably entangled with issues of confidence for these teachers and also shape what they perceive to be teaching possibilities for them.

_I don’t do [variety] very well but in the painting and drawing side of it, I do that OK but in sculpting and those modelling types of things probably not as good … certainly not the modelling with clay – that’s something I’m really a bit thrown by. I guess we offer construction quite a lot and play dough’s always there as a modelling opportunity as well._

_The clay: I’m not sure if we just don’t have the resources at the moment or, um, [I] don’t have the time to organise it, um …_

_Maybe the print-making to a degree; I mean I’ve just got the one [wood printing block] and you do that one to death, sort of thing._

_Woodwork’s another one; I mean we do have the woodwork table but that’s not sort of out on a regular basis._ (Leah)
Painting … I, probably, as a teacher you don’t get a lot of opportunity and I’m not a person that’s painted – it’s not something I really do. I really am enjoying drawing and I’m enjoying taking our journals out and it’s something special and the children come up and discuss my work and they are very complimentary or critical …. I love construction – box construction – I love social/emotional learning is my big love and that’s my interest area. I love the conversations that can develop when children work together. I really enjoy it; I’m just not really confident teaching it …. I love working with clay. I haven’t done a lot as in pottery but I love the feel of it. (Hannah)

I try to teach myself dot-painting – how you do dot painting and the other symbols. It’s little bit tricky … I’m least confident with Indigenous Art but I have a go. I just don’t want to do the wrong thing by the Indigenous artists …. When it comes to working with materials – textiles and cloth – we have done a little bit of sewing but we haven’t really created things with clay which I know would be very beautiful. We don’t really do anything with wood. I’ve tried to make things with foil just to make it the more experience they have, the better but when it gets to a certain point of my knowledge, then I’m stuck – not really confident. (Pamela)

Confidence is the thing … I don’t know much about, for instance, you know ceramics, I don’t know anything. Print-making, I don’t [know anything].

Sometimes it’s the constraints you’ve got whereas, if you’ve got a bit more time to reflect about it and to really, um, more knowledge. I think for me, more personal knowledge and, also, how to not be always wondering ‘Am I doing this the right way, really is this enough?’ (Eleanor)

The thing for the teacher who is a non-artist to deliver a program is how much you leave to the children to discover and how much you teach so whether it is about the skills – can you use the clay if you don’t know how to join it together? (Virginia)

Drawing can be anything. You can draw on the iPad; boys and girls are learning to do all the things that the teachers don’t know so the Arts are not going to stop because they’ll be teaching us before too long. Scary. (Pamela)

So, you’re seeing I can do this much but where can I take it? (Sarah)

Mess per se is confronting for these teachers for a range of reasons:

I tend to think of … making it more about outdoors as well.
When we went to CMAG gallery the other day; we had paper clay … I’ve never known about that until I had that; I came back and thought ‘This is absolutely fantastic, they can use this and they can colour [it] and for the parents who are saying ‘don’t get my child messy, they’re not getting messy and yet they can have that tactile exploration and they have that fantastic ability to add an activity to it.’ (Sarah)

Parents get very anxious and I just say to them, ‘Please I run a very messy program; let the children come in their old clothes [so] you can wash it; it doesn’t matter. You know that messy stuff brings out conversation. (Eleanor)

If you want to teach creative arts experience about a caterpillar then provide them with lots of resources and materials and let their imagination do it ... You don’t have to tell the child exactly what needs to be done. Some people don’t understand because they like to check the child: ‘Yes, they do it correctly. Yes, they can hold the glue stick right’. They’re maybe worried about that checklist and they don’t see that maybe mess can be made, they’re thinking about the mess they have to clean up afterwards, the reasons they need to use the amount of resources, the preparation that they need to do rather than getting things ready. (Rochelle)

These expressed concerns about mess are consistent with these teachers’ doubts, their lack of a coherent pedagogical philosophy, personal anxieties about their low-level discipline skills, and teaching strategies which tend to achieve legitimacy by association rather than discipline integrity.

5.5 Preschool Teachers’ needs, issues, challenges and ideal Visual Arts program

The interview concluded on a deliberately positive note inviting the teachers to articulate the challenges facing them, their current needs/issues, and the broad shape of their ideal Visual Arts program. The need, issue, challenge areas most frequently identified by the ten teachers included time, resources and ideas but, whether they were perceived as needs, issues or challenges, depended on the individual teacher. There was a pervasive sense that time and resources had become common issues impacting on delivery of the Visual Arts. These issues are scoped below through the lens of the individual teachers, albeit recognizing significant overlap across areas.
5.5.1 Time

While the pressures and/or lack of time were mentioned by most of the teachers in one form or another, the sticking point varied. Ciara perceived lack of time to be an impediment to the reflective teaching to which she aspired:

Time – you know, sit with the children to get the children really engaged. Sometimes someone might be jumping up in the back corner and you need to be there, not, instead, at the clay table. I’d love to be really involved in that and you can’t always be involved at the Visual Arts table – sometimes you’re elsewhere.

Probably because I enjoy it so much I don’t find it really challenging but probably if I look at it in a bigger picture, finding time to reflect on the Visual Arts and reflect on the process of what we did together for the child. It’s alright for me to put it on the wall and to put documentation on the wall myself and say, ‘This is what we did, they did,’ but to spend time talking with a child about what they learned (and what they did) and you know, really drawing the child into that art work that they created, that art form. (Ciara)

For Hannah, time is akin to a pedagogical vise:

You don’t have the time. You’d love to have the time when you’re drawing … This is what my children are interested in, how can I incorporate this into my already incredibly crowded, as it is, timetable in a way that the children are actually going to see the link? (Hannah)

While agreeing with this view ‘that’s the big thing. Time – probably one of the burning issues’, Sarah remains unimpressed by the official solution:

We’ve been told, ‘Drop something; if you pick up anything, drop something’ but no-one wants to drop anything

and points out that

Some of the ideas are impractical in the time constraints I have in the day. (Sarah)

Eleanor was nostalgic for an earlier period when there was a time allocation to attend regular meetings. Stephanie sees the need for time to cater for both small and large groups:
I think there needs to be some balance in between that kind of intentional teaching ... good interest in a time where you could actually spend time with the children talking about something before you go into it. This is where it gets a bit tricky because often it's a large group and we all know that that's ineffective so, I guess, a lot more small group work. Perhaps if they were to walk in and we'd be following up on an interest from the day before, perhaps you'd gather those children and you'd say, ‘Look, how we were talking about birds yesterday … perhaps if we found some feathers we could make a bird, how would we go about doing that?’ I mean this is all ‘pie in the sky’ … having that area set up where the educator could follow through with the children there and perhaps select the materials, sit down and OK, really spend the time and work with them on that. (Stephanie)

Rochelle has concerns about time for preparation:

*Maybe release time – to do clay like the upkeep on that experience as well as … we have so many children [and] adding the parents all the time so it comes down to a lot of time. (Rochelle)*

Stephanie, on the other hand, feels that the time issue really reflects a change in priorities:

*It seems like IT and things like that are really starting to take over [from a play based curriculum] and that seems to be the buzz and we’re getting lost … (Stephanie)*

### 5.5.2 Administrative requirements

The teachers perceived a range of administrative requirements as constraining of both their professional freedom and available time to pursue desirable pedagogical practices. For example, Leah admitted that children were given tasks primarily to meet accountability requirements:

*Prior to [the EYLF] we were under ‘Every Chance to Learn’ which was the ACT curriculum so, yes, that has made it a bit harder because you have to – you’ve always been accountable but [now] you have to be accountable to sort of say ‘Oh, yes, we’ve covered this and within preschools you can’t do it all the time’ – I shouldn’t say this – it’s ‘busy work’ sometimes. (Leah)*

Pamela, on the other hand, regarded current safety requirements as an impediment to her own teaching and hence to the children’s art outcomes:
[At another preschool] I could see all the beautiful works of Art but here we’ve got all these restrictions of … you’ve got to have safety but … it’s a bit over the top.

A lot of different forms of textiles, like me finding charcoal versus chalk, lots of things for us to see which are useable for this age group. I didn’t know that you could use charcoal; tie-dyeing, things like that; lots of different ways. Last year we did sewing: a teacher brought in her sewing machine and we got the little kids to sew and they loved it because it was something different – they could make something! Broken tiles … everyone makes a mural. How can I break a tile and glue it, how safe does it have to be? …You know. (Pamela)

Mandatory documentation of each child’s progress was regarded by many of the teachers as an unwelcome, albeit necessary, demand on their time:

The big onus on all of us is that we’ve got the documentation [to do] for each child. Before it’s been done but all of it was just in your head … I’ve been in the UK where everything was paperwork [so] I’m used to it. (Sarah)

… we’re still trying to work out the best way to do it and streamlining it. (Eleanor)

… of course, having the time to document that – that’s a big thing that I find hard because all these wonderful things happen but, um, having time to document it and the, I guess, that in turn helps not only the children but the parents’ understanding [about] what you’re actually doing as well. (Stephanie)

Little did these teachers know that their concerns are more universally shared as presaged in Every Child’s editor’s introduction to the article Documentation: What is all the fuss about? (Waghorn, 2017):

If you filled a room with educators and asked them what the number one stress is in their work, I guarantee the majority of them would say documentation. (Waghorn, 2017, 23:1)

Virginia’s statement that ‘the burning issue associated with time, currently, is of compliance with standards that are viewed as valuable’ was associated with uncertainty about her pedagogical role:

The thing for the teacher who is a non-artist to deliver a program is how much you leave to the children to discover and how much you
teach so whether it is about the skills – can you use the clay if you don’t know how to join it together? (Virginia)

The fact that, in the ACT, many preschools are now located geographically with primary schools is also, in Virginia’s view, a potential pressure point:

_The thing about preschool, we’re linked to a primary school so there are pressures about that but if you are an ‘off-campus’ preschool there are pressures about working in isolation, there are pressures about [being] just a classroom teacher but more pressures because there are more staff here now – we have a staff of about five now … the thinking through a different way of presenting materials and presenting different materials to the children._ (Virginia)

The administrative link to a primary school is seen as another impediment to action, Sarah commenting in relation to resources:

_I’m sure if I discussed it over at the school I could get more budget towards it but I’d have to discuss it over at the school._ (Sarah)

### 5.5.3 Parents

The tension between parental expectations and the teachers’ confidence and ways of working is a further source of anxiety. With regard to parents, teachers anticipated criticism by them adds barriers to the realization of children’s creativity:

_Parents get very anxious and I just say to them, ‘Please, I run a very messy program; let the children come in their old clothes [so] you can wash [it]; it doesn’t matter._ (Eleanor)

_Even when I bring up play-based learning they’re like, ‘But when are they going to be learning their ABC?’_ (Rochelle)

_… my philosophy clashes with some people [and] when it comes to creative arts some traditional problems arise, I think … it just makes me cringe because I feel like lots of children have these unique imaginations …_ (Virginia)

_When it comes to parents and play-based learning they think [it’s] just ‘free-for-all’ [and that] there’s not much thought going into the planning of it, choosing materials._ (Rochelle)

While Pamela views children’s work aesthetically and values the Arts highly, she falters in communicating this to parents:
It would be really nice if parents could be proud … [they could] come in and really look at children’s art as Art.

Sometimes they don’t quite get it. Sometimes like box construction they create some beautiful things but parents don’t really appreciate it. Maybe we have to … it would be really nice to have a museum of children’s Art all the time. Sometimes [it’s] so beautiful I just want to take it … sometimes when it leaves here I just don’t know what happens to it. (Pamela)

Leah’s low confidence negatively affects her capacity to communicate the learning opportunities provided through play as exemplified the EYLF:

This is what we’re doing; these are the learning opportunities. In puzzle time, for instance, so it really makes [parents think] ‘OK, so they are actually learning.’ So it’s educating the parents [when we] say we’re actually learning through our play and if you see them at the paint table, these are the things that are happening for your child, you know, linking it to our new EYLF as well. So that’s an important element – to see that they know. (Leah)

Even a more Visual Arts confident teacher like Rochelle reported experiencing a tension between her pedagogical philosophy and the literacy/numeracy expectations of many parents:

Even when I bring up play-based learning they’re like, ‘But when are they going to be learning their ABC?’ When it comes to parents and play-based learning, they think [it’s] just ‘free-for-all’, [and that] there’s not much thought going into the planning of it, choosing materials, pasting it on, thinking around that, imagination, there’s lots of things attached and I think getting parents on board … We’re here to help the parents achieve their child’s goals. (Rochelle)

5.5.4 Resources

The teachers’ issues around resources encompassed space, materials, budgets, time allocations and access to appropriate personnel. Leah recognised, for example, that clearly categorised storage facilities would facilitate teaching and save time:

Well, resources available, easily identifiable, storage space … all these sorts of things so it makes it easy just to go and grab what you need and it’s there and you know whether you’re going to be in there, having the time to set that up, even, you know, looking through some
information, having photographs on the storage things, having photographs to say ‘This is what we have available – point to what you need.’ And we can go and get it but we just don’t have the space for that sort of thing, um, and then being able to provide the whole gamut of Visual Arts…Resources are a big thing.

She also reported that budgetary decisions were constrained:

**Budgetary restraints?** Yes. *We have a parent association but they’re not flush with funds so you put it through the PA [Parent Association] what you’re buying – you might have an outdoor focus so we’ve got to spend your money on that then you have to take turns with all the different areas to buy things.* (Leah)

On another resource issue Pamela acknowledged that

**Excursions [are] not as easy – it’s not only cost but parents’ availability and permission – parents not as free with time. Two groups need two buses.**

while Sarah clearly saw time allocation as a resource issue:

**PTPA [Preschool Teachers’ Professional Association] is fantastic but you have to have the time – that’s just to keep up with the NQF [National Quality Framework].** (Sarah)

Other teachers more or less generically embraced the need for additional resources:

**We could do more with some resources.** (Eleanor)

**Lots of resources … in reality, accessible art stores.** (Frances)

**Unlimited materials.** (Ciara)

**Materials. More variety. Different uses.** (Pamela)

**Resources are a big thing.** (Leah)

**Storage space.** (Leah)

... probably just the ... materials. It’d be things like good endless supply of clay to work with so possibly not more space because we’ve got that really well, more space to display and store, probably a kiln –
we could actually fire your clay and, you know, come back and glaze it and do those sorts of things. (Hannah)

Collage outside, easels outside, clay outside, everyone to be able to offer a creative arts area with fully stocked resources. I suppose materials are expensive – I think that would be something … and time … it takes time to set up any kind of experience, money, resources and the amount … (Rochelle)

Some teachers specified human resources because they felt the need for back up:

I guess someone who is really a strong advocate for Arts and because – I feel I say this a lot, too – through newsletters and different means, info nights for parents, means like you can make notes for parents but I feel like the message – they’re so hung up on Literacy and Numeracy, they can’t understand, actually, there’s Literacy and Numeracy in Art as well so, perhaps, I don’t know, there’s some kind of pamphlet. Someone else is backing up what we’re saying from leadership. Perhaps like for the Principal or from an executive in our school. (Stephanie)

Probably parent support would help. A few parents have the mindset that it’s ‘just art’ or that it’s just ‘free for all’ [and that] there’s not much learning. (Rochelle)

5.5.5 Isolation and networking

The ACT’s geographical co-location of some preschools and primary schools was viewed by the teachers variably as either an opportunity or an impediment. Eleanor, for example, lamented the lost opportunity to network regularly with other preschool teachers:

Some teachers go to the primary school meetings so, again, you’ve lost that meeting opportunity with other people of like mind.

Previously we would go to each other’s preschools for meetings and meet with people who have got the same interests, same knowledge and the same focus but now we’re part of the primary school we’re not as many.

She perceives this as isolating:

Friday pm [was] off. A lot of PD was in preschools. Real need – a lot of teachers are isolated and some of the younger people who are
coming in probably haven’t seen some of the older preschools and what’s happening in the older preschools so they have a lot of ‘young’ knowledge, you know, knowledge that’s because of the NQF [National Quality Framework] stuff and there’s other people who have other knowledge and again, sharing and collaborating and all that. Networking is a big issue. (Eleanor)

Virginia, on the other hand, expressed willingness

…to attend staff meetings at the school; I’m very happy to go along [even though it’s] often not particularly relevant.

while at the same time observing that

There’s a huge gap between what happens in preschools and what happens in kindergarten [school entry]. (Virginia)

In Sarah’s case the sense of isolation is patently erosive

I think that a lot of it, again, is the isolation. I’m doing what I think is right but it might not be right.

She craves more ‘ideas’ and relates this need to both professional isolation and the constant time pressures:

Actually, I just want some more ideas, special ideas because we are, I am, very isolated and I know who I am as a teacher and I know that I can go with it but some of the ideas are impractical in the time constraints I have in the day. (Sarah)

5.5.6 Input and ideas

Each of the 10 teachers voiced a strong need for input, mostly seeking this from someone else, a person with the expertise they saw themselves as lacking:

As a preschool teacher we try to meet once a fortnight before we do our planning. I think you need … because I think that … um … you need to sit down and go ‘I just need someone.’ (Hannah)

I guess it’s someone to talk about these things so it’s what worked for them and what hasn’t; where do they get the resources and how do they actually put it together so that it worked well, do you know what I mean? Someone with experience, I guess, or maybe a resource – either a book or an internet site – something like that – where you can
go and have a look at what other people have done and with it in action before you actually delve in to it yourself. (Leah)

Someone to come in and work with me … (Ciara)

Having someone come in who provides inspiration as well as stimulation. We need energy from others … for preschools, for children. (Frances)

Probably my confidence – just having the time to investigate myself. I mean the internet’s really good these days, some really good sites you can go to, to get ideas … then in having the time and the resources. (Leah)

[What’s needed is] a creative arts person – someone dedicated to stay in our space to provide creative arts. (Rochelle)

An ideal Arts program here? I’d start getting specialists [artists] to work with them like O’Connor Co-operative – [The teacher] does Arts from K to 2. I’d pick her brains to give me ideas. It would be lovely to have set up an Arts studio so we didn’t have to put away, clean up, put away. Art space – we started off trying to make a space but … we had an artist but she only taught in the school, not the preschool. Bit sad. (Pamela)

It would require an expert input so my Visual Arts program there would be an artist or several artists involved. My job is to listen to the children and build on their learning and knowledge and, you know, consider it in an authentic way. The Arts provide an amazing opportunity for the children to do that so it should be the ‘pedagogista’, the ‘alterista’, it would not be confined to drawing and painting and clay, it would incorporate music, dance and visual expression. (Virginia)

5.5.7 Perceived possibilities and ideals

Several teachers perceived solutions in elasticity of time:

*Flexibility with time scheduling.* (Hannah)

*Extra hours in the day.* (Sarah)

*Materials and time - ‘Release’ time.* (Rochelle)

*Having time to document – that’s a big thing that I find hard because all these wonderful things happen but … having time to document it…* (Stephanie)
Some of the teachers perceived ideals in terms of physical resources – space and materials:

Space… A really nice space to just go and be not chaotic – lives are really chaotic now. (Hannah)

I would love to have – and I tried to make this in my classroom but I would [still] love to have – an area that is dedicated to that. A studio type area where you’d have, you know, something which is, you know, colours of paint, different formats, brushes, that kind of thing like books … beautiful, good quality things you’d feel happy sharing with the children because I do feel like sometimes I’m scurrying for things and it might have a bit of a spill on it or something and I think, ‘Oh, not really very good but we use it anyway because that’s what we have.’ Something like that where children would naturally focus and go to that area also knowing that ‘Wow!’ you know something can happen here. I know I can grab that and take that and that’s OK. (Stephanie)

…if your purpose in presenting Art and artistic activities to children is to deepen their thinking and promote critical thinking [then] use authentic materials… (Virginia)

I feel like lots of children have these unique imaginations and, yes, we should give them the resources and we can give them an example of what they can do but I don’t think we should put it in their heads of what they should do. I have seen those twenty-four ‘caterpillars’. (Rochelle)

Ciara sees her ideal program as predicated upon certain additional resources: a ‘studio’ [she laughs at this impossibility] … I guess unlimited materials’. Eleanor’s ideal also focuses on plentiful materials arranged for easy access. She would choose ‘Interesting things, more than patty pans; lots of collage, paper’;

You could have this great access to things. Get the children to … You could try other things and see where it takes you. What was the Art work they did? You know, it was the night sky, stars, where was it? Oh, you know I could have, but I didn’t … bought a picture like a print and used that as an inspiration but I didn’t and again you think, ‘Oh, I could have done that. I remember you once talking about – I’m thinking of it – Pro Hart’s ‘Blue Poles’ and on anything I’ve never done but I’ve always wanted to do it is I don’t know if it’s a black piece of background and use different ribbons, cottons and stuff like that, make their own palette and that’s something we can re-do; you don’t have to glue it on. You know, do it and then take a photo of it, but using an Art work as an inspiration. (Eleanor)
A few teachers took a child oriented perspective with Sarah envisaging a play-based curriculum with a program rich in the Arts:

... making sure that those that aren’t accessing Art confidently and making something are still being exposed to it whether it’s through story or through their play; developing it then in their play. (Sarah),

Leah championing

... the availability of [Visual Arts] and the chance for the children to participate in it – that it’s there to be creative ... to express themselves .... Not just concentrating on drawing and painting – the things that I do – but being able to go the whole [Visual Arts] spectrum. (Leah)

and Hannah imagining a program

... that reflected their interests; one that met their needs and extended them - but not to the point they lost confidence - in a really nice space to just go and be – not be chaotic – lives are really chaotic now. (Hannah)

The impression from these teachers is that there may be an ideal program out there but they have incomplete visions of what it might look like and inchoate ways of expressing how it might be implemented:

... you’ve got these children who have shown this interest, you don’t necessarily have to go and get all the messy stuff out ... maybe we could sit down and just do some sketches. (Sarah)

The teachers perceived ideal types of resources coming from other specialists and external agencies:

*It would require [an] expert input so in my Visual Arts program there would be an artist or several artists involved ... it would not be confined to drawing and painting and clay; it would incorporate music, dance and visual expression.* (Virginia)

*Probably parent support would help. A creative arts person – someone dedicated to stay in our space to provide creative arts.* (Rochelle)

*Excursions to galleries. I’d start getting specialists [artists] to work with them ... I’d pick her brains to give me ideas. It would be lovely to have*
set up an Arts studio so we didn’t have to put away, clean up, put away. Art space – we started off trying to make a space but … we had an artist but she only taught in the school, not the preschool. Bit sad. (Pamela)

Someone who is really a strong advocate for Arts because … through newsletters and different means, info nights for parents, means like you can make notes for parents but I feel the message – they’re so hung up on Literacy and Numeracy, they can’t understand, actually, there’s Literacy and Numeracy in Art as well so, perhaps, I don’t know, there’s some kind of pamphlet and someone else is backing up what we’re saying from leadership. (Stephanie)

There needs to be some balance in between that kind of intentional teaching … a time where you could actually spend time with the children talking about something … a lot more small group work … having that area set up where the educator could follow through with the children there and perhaps select the materials, sit down and OK, really spend time and work with them on that. (Stephanie)

Having someone come is who provides inspiration. We need energy from others … for preschools, for children. (Frances)

Just some ideas. (Sarah)

Most felt that another person, an expert, would be required to lead the way, prop them up, provide them with ideas and the certainty that they were pursuing the right direction:

My problem is I can talk to someone about it but you need to be actually putting it in your classroom. Trouble is, I’ve got someone on the staff that’s good at it; like anything, you tend to watch and let them go without giving them input.

It was a little bit like ‘I’ll hand it over to her – she has the expertise’ which was to my detriment because there’s not that follow on for my children. (Hannah)

When asked about her confidence and perception of what would help her now Frances just smiled and shrugged despairingly.
A few comments gestured at, but did not explore, fundamental educational principles:

Not enough to just enjoy Arts just last thing Friday afternoon. (Hannah)

Being able to go the whole gamut of Visual Arts. (Leah)

It would probably be a project as something that would incorporate the whole community but also the unique... something we could do in preschool ... something like our garden and our chooks. (Virginia)

Building a program which includes preschools. (Frances)

Play-based curriculum rich in the Arts. (Sarah)

5.6 Synthesis and discussion

The Stage Two interviews certainly fleshed out the extent and depth of these teachers' concerns about their lack of Visual Arts ability/knowledge and how this feeling of ineptitude impacted negatively on their programming, teaching, and confidence is communicating with parents:

To provide it [an ideal program] and to communicate it with families. (Virginia)

Stephanie cited a distance between her current and ideal practice of Visual Arts teaching and directed a pithy question to the interviewer:

Here I am now and how do I get to there? That's what I want to do! I'm interested but I don't have the skills to do it. (Stephanie)

Virginia’s threshing around in a sea of self-doubt clearly militates against her capacity to deliver an effective Visual Arts program:

My issue is that I'm not Arts trained and I really value the Arts as a method of communication so it's a language for children, so I feel that because I have to do it all that sometimes I don't do it well enough but sometimes I'm unable to continue it deeply enough so that it's worthwhile and I guess the other thing that I have is ... I don't have issues about resources but do have issues ... I just think that my issue is knowing enough and having enough background in the Arts to be able to draw on it and make it really meaningful and worthwhile. (Virginia)
Stage Two corroborated the findings of the Stage One surveys and, for this ACT sample at least, provided further evidence to suggest that the situation re Visual Arts for generalist preschool teachers is consistent with that reported in the NRVE (Davis, 2008) for generalist primary teachers. What might be done to ameliorate this was the focus of Stage Three of the study as will be scoped in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER 6  EXPLORING ANTIDOTES TO DESPAIR:
TRANSITIONING TO STAGE THREE

6.1 Scope of the chapter

This chapter describes the transition from Stage Two to Stage Three of the research. It scopes the ten interviewees’ expectations of the third stage, its focus and the search for an appropriate methodological framework within which to apply Mitchell and Cubey’s (2003) adult learning principles as elucidated in Chapter Two. It explains how the three teachers were selected for Stage Three, the documentation collected as a record of Stage Three and how each teacher was inducted into the program and encouraged to articulate and hone her individual purposes.

6.2 Stage Two interviewees’ expectations of Stage Three

As discussed in the previous chapter, the ten Stage Two in situ interviews provided rich individual data and a clear picture of the multifarious needs and hopes of teachers of Visual Arts across a range of preschools and one Early Childhood school. The final question of the Stage Two interviews asked teachers to articulate their expectations of Stage Three should they be selected. Their responses largely reflected an inchoate, albeit optimistic, sense of what it might entail. Questions such as ‘Would you come in as an artist-in-residence?’ (Stephanie) and ‘I don’t have a clear idea but then, if you think I’d learn’ (Frances) revealed fundamental uncertainties. Table 6.2.1 synthesizes the ten teachers’ perceptions/expectations of the Stage Three programme and what it might mean for each of them. Positive and negative expectations are presented separately.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ciara</td>
<td>What really inspires me about this program is the professional learning …</td>
<td>How much time would be involved?</td>
<td>How much time would be involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... that challenge that sort of pushes you and encourages you to engage in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>that professional learning and to make changes and, too, it makes you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>reflect and encourages you to think about … and that’s something that’s</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>really important.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>I guess if you came [I’d enquire] as to what information you could bring.</td>
<td>Leah plans to take leave and raises the possibility of her unavailability for Stage 3</td>
<td>Leah plans to take leave and raises the possibility of her unavailability for Stage 3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you have access to those different areas, as say, if I’m with clay,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>would you have a resource that you could provide or could you do a lesson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on that to sort of show how it is to be done?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>• Oh, I think it would be hugely useful to me; I think it will fill in</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>the gaps in my knowledge. I consider myself to be a reasonable and</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>intelligent person and I can be taught, um, getting that help – once I</td>
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<td></td>
<td>get that confidence in that area … I think I will and I hope it will.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• I think a mentor would be great. I think a regular sounding board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>before we do our planning [would be great].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I’m very good at ideas or knowing my children so me saying ‘How are my</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>children feeling?’ and explore that in Visual Art in a way that’s</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>meaningful not just a task or tokenistic … and then the terminology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that’s appropriate for the age and the techniques.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>Despite uncertainty regarding program benefits for her, she avers that, if selected, she will ‘give it a go’.</td>
<td>Most concerned about potential time commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sarah   | • I’d like someone to come in and work with us and if the children had that idea to say, ‘Here you are, (interviewer’s name), help them have a go at this …’ being able to say, ‘Yes, we could … we could make this into a drama, into a book’ … set it up as a role play for them.  
• Just those ideas … someone to actually say, ‘Have you considered using this as a resource?’ To have someone different come in and open the children up to other people.  
• I need some more ideas because I could see myself sinking into …  
• I’m hoping I get picked so you give me those ideas so ‘This is where I can take it!’                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Eleanor | • Sounding board? Collaboration with other people would be really good.  
• What am I doing and how can I make it … um … be more constructive with it?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | They used to have a Visual Arts program at the primary school last year but that’s been … they don’t have that [now] with a specialist teacher.                                                                                                                                                     |
<p>| Frances | I don’t have a clear idea of what I’d do in the program but then, if you think I’d learn …                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Stephanie | • How would it be represented in the classroom in the sense of …Would you come in as an artist-in-residence?  
• So that would be for me to look at a model and see how you go about it or would it be for me to sit down and talk about 'OK, this week…'  
• It would be very useful …  
• I’m just really hopeful that if we are chosen that for me, as an educator, I’ll get … I’ll learn a lot because often someone coming in from the outside – what might seem like the impossible to me might actually be quite possible. | I know people are saying, ‘Look, we want to do things differently but because of time or because they’re not sure how to go about it confidently, you know, |
| Virginia | • Having somebody else in with another set of eyes is always useful.  
• It would be fantastic to have more input: ‘Have you thought about…?’ ‘We could try… you know that kind of [collaboration] would be fantastic.’  
• I would love to be involved; I think it would increase my confidence, either in what we are doing currently or with new information or skills. | The thing about professional development is that you source it yourself so you tend to keep going with things that you either like to do or you are confident about doing so you leave aside the things … I should be made to go and do professional development about digital technology. |
| Rochelle | Satisfied to have seen the project documentation; no further clarification sought.                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
All ten interviewed preschool teachers indicated willingness to proceed to Stage Three despite practical concerns such as an anticipated period of leave (Leah) and shared challenges around time commitment. Some saw it unequivocally as professional learning while the potential value of an outsider to refresh their teaching of Visual Arts, provide new knowledge and empower them was mentioned by several. The fact that the program was to be collaborative rather than externally imposed was also appreciated.

Negative expectations ranged from time reservations (Ciara and Pamela) to doubts about the efficacy of professional development (Virginia). Positive expectations included envisaging that participation would provide access to a person/expert as a potential source of ‘ideas’ (Leah, Sarah, Eleanor, Stephanie, Virginia and Hannah). Frances and Pamela had no clear idea of what might be involved but were prepared to ‘give it a go’ while Ciara viewed professional learning as ‘inspirational’. The common theme running through most of the teachers’ comments was their desire and need for a human resource, both as source of ideas and sounding board.

### 6.3 The focus of Stage Three

Chapter One (1.6) scoped three research questions and detailed three aims, one for each successive stage. The aim of Stage Three was to collaborate with selected preschool teachers to empower them, individually, in their current preschool settings while using existing resources only. As indicated in Chapter Two, it was planned to use Mitchell and Cubey’s (2003) Principles in Operation as a framework for Stage Three; the operational interpretation of these is scoped in Table 6.3.1.
### Table 6.3.1 Mitchell and Cubey’s (2003) Principles in Operation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRINCIPLES</th>
<th>OPERATIONAL INTERPRETATION</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participant Centred</td>
<td>• Each teacher’s idiosyncratic pedagogical approach would be respected</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers would be able to cancel or postpone meetings at any time</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Relevant Discipline and Practice Knowledge</td>
<td>• Each selected teacher would identify goals for herself in relation to Visual Arts teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Each teacher’s goals would be within her professional capacity to make changes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal Context Oriented</td>
<td>• Meetings would be scheduled for no longer than an hour and, unless agreed otherwise, be held in the teacher’s workplace at a time of her choosing so as not to conflict with preschool/school timetabling or events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The program would operate with existing preschool/school resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No additional costs would be incurred by individual teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal Analytic Perspectives</td>
<td>• No prescriptive outcomes would be expected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• No assessment of teachers’ performance would be undertaken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Critical Reflection</td>
<td>• Requirements for teachers’ documentation would be minimized</td>
<td>The teachers already perceived documentation to be very time consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Recognition of Diversity</td>
<td>• The reality of each teacher’s teaching context would be accepted.</td>
<td>One teacher, for, example, needed to adapt to accommodate six non-English speaking children who had joined the preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Supportive of Personal Change</td>
<td>• The researcher would follow adult learning principles and position herself not as expert but as collaborator/resource in the learning process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### PRINCIPLES | OPERATIONAL INTERPRETATION | COMMENTS
--- | --- | ---
8. Promotion of Reflective Practice | • Each teacher would be given a journal and encouraged to enter three thoughts, ideas and/or questions three times a week for three months | Journals would be shared with the researcher

9. Sustained and Intensive | • Teachers’ goals would be pursued over three months with the researcher available for regular individual meetings with teachers | 

10. Individualized Mentoring | • The potential for the researcher to become a mentor for one or more of the teachers was acknowledged. | Dutton (2005) points to the ‘... implicit difficulties in developing a delivered mentoring Programme’ (Dutton, 2002: 338)

With these in place, the next section will document the search for a methodological framework within which these might be operationalized in Stage Three.

### 6.4 Scoping a methodological approach to Stage Three

Given these operating principles, however, the choice of theoretical frame for the empowerment strategy proved challenging. Pawlak and Bergquist (2013) identify four models of adult learning:

- The Pedagogic Model where students present as learners with a need to drink at the fountain of knowledge; it is teacher centred.
- The Andragogic Model is learner centred with the teacher’s role more as a guide on the side.
- The Transformative Education Model which, after Mezirow (1997), involves changing the learner’s frame of reference so that new perspectives can be acculturated.
- The Appreciative Education Model which does not operate from a deficit assumption and the need for new learning as do the first three models but rather builds from a position of equality recognizing that both learner and teacher have assets with which to work in the learning context.
The first three of these models were not, in and of themselves, appropriate for Stage Three primarily because the overarching aim for the teachers was not content oriented. The fourth model was not viable because its fundamental principle of equality could not be met as the approach was specifically designed to meet the needs of teachers. Further, R. had a professional reputation in the Early Childhood sector, being known in the ACT for preschool teaching, consultancy and professional development delivery, which may have militated against ‘equality’ with less experienced teachers, one of whom had been previously supervised by R as a preservice teacher.

Damjanovic (2015) points out that

Many of the existing practices in early childhood professional development draw from a deficit model. Professional development models have primarily focused on how to “fix” teacher practices. Many use a one size fits all technical approach, where the “expert” comes in to transmit knowledge, where the teacher can absorb the information, then apply the expert techniques within the classroom. (Damjanovic, 2015: 5)

In searching for a model for her research she considers teacher enquiry (after Meier and Henderson, 2007), teacher research (after Katz, 2006), and professional development in learning communities (NAEYC, 2003) before settling on the Project Approach (Castle, 2012)

... as a viable means for professional development and inquiry within the early childhood context. Children asking questions and engaging in inquiry provide a perfect opportunity for the teachers to engage in inquiry as well. (Damjanovic, 2015:33)

None of these approaches offered a suitable framework for the current study as these teachers were not at a stage, nor in a frame of mind, to conduct inquiry or research. They were not in a teaching context where a professional learning community could be established; nor did they have the mind set required for the Project Approach:

There are three essential components that must be included for project-based learning. First and foremost, there must be a question that drives the learning and activities associated with it (Blumenfield et
Exploring Antidotes to Despair

From the questions posed, children engage in activities that result in a series of artifacts. Finally, there is a culminating product that addresses the initial driving questions. In the framework of the Project Approach the three phases include getting started, fieldwork, and a culminating event. (Helm & Beneke, 2003) (Damjanovic, 2015:34)

Rather than seeking an existing model into which the research might neatly be slotted, it was decided to consider carefully the role which R was to play in working with the teachers. As indicated in 6.2, it was not to be that of expert or setter of the learning agenda as each teacher was to determine her own goals and be involved in the Confucian sense:

\[\text{I hear and I forget}\]
\[\text{I see and I remember}\]
\[\text{I do and I understand}\]

(Attributed to Confucius 450 BCE)

Kolb’s (1984) Learning Style model and Gibbs’s (1988) Reflective Cycle were examined but deemed to be inappropriate for this research. Gibbs’s (1988) six stages of reflection would have made significant demands on the teachers who had already indicated their perception of being extremely time poor and shared some angst in relation to documentation requirements. Kolb’s (1984) four stage cycle also involved reflective observation (stage two) which signalled a similar problem for the teachers and also abstract conceptualization (stage three) which requires hypothesizing about the meaning of the learning experiences could not be accommodated within the three-month Master’s level research program, given the starting point of the teachers.

Kirschenbaum’s (2004) observation that ‘A facilitator can provide the trust, understanding, and realness to free the learner to pursue significant learning.’ (Kirschenbaum, 2004, p.121) led to Carl Rogers (1969) and his seminal work, Freedom to Learn in which he lists what he regards as the five defining elements of experiential learning:
1. The quality of *personal involvement* in which ‘the whole person in both his feeling and cognitive aspects [is] in the learning event’ (Rogers, 1969:5);

2. The fact of *self-initiation* so that even ‘...when the impetus or stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending, comes from within’ (Rogers, 1969:5);

3. Learning that is *pervasive* in terms of making ‘a difference in the behavior, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner’ (Rogers, 1969: 5);

4. Learning that is *evaluated by the learner* who alone knows ‘whether it is meeting his need, whether it leads toward what he wants to know, whether it illuminates the dark area of ignorance he is experiencing’ (Rogers, 1969: 5);

5. Learning that is *meaningful to the learner* - ‘When such learning takes place, the element of meaning to the learner is built into the whole experience’ (Rogers, 1969: 5).

The learner centric essence of Rogers’s (1969) elements of experiential learning mesh with the learner agency operational framework derived from Mitchell and Cubey’s (2003) adult learning principles.

Rogers (1969) also articulated the principles which should be followed by a facilitator. While these are stated generically by Rogers (1969), they are stated here in a form relevant to the Stage Three work with preschool teachers. The facilitator should

1. Set the initial mood/orientation for the learning experience - ‘If his own basic philosophy is one of trust in the group and in the individuals who compose the group, then this point of view will be communicated in many subtle ways’ (Rogers, 1969:164):
2. Help to elicit and clarify the individual’s purposes;

3. Trust in the individual’s desire and motivation to implement these purposes meaningfully;

4. Organize and make accessible relevant resources for learning;

5. Present him/herself as a flexible resource;

6. Accept both the intellectual and emotional context of the learner;

7. Adopt the role of participant learner as and when appropriate;

8. Take the initiative in sharing thoughts and emotions with the learner;

9. Use emotional intelligence in relation to expressions of strong feeling:

   *He endeavors to understand these from the person’s point of view and to communicate his empathic understanding...he helps to bring them into the open for constructive understanding and use by the group (Rogers, 1969:165-166);*

10. Recognize and accept his/her own personal limitations - ‘He realizes that he can only grant freedom to his students to the extent that he is comfortable in giving such freedom’ (Rogers, 1969:166).

Within Rogers’s (1969) principles for both learner and facilitator, Stage Three was conducted.

### 6.5 Selection of Stage Three preschool teachers

Given that all teachers had indicated *prima facie* willingness to proceed and enthusiasm to be selected, the selection criteria of educational background, professional experience, preschool context and geographical location were applied to maximize the diversity of the Stage Three teachers. At the preschool level, there was another requirement – evidence of strong support from the Principal. Table 6.5.1 details the diversity achieved through this process. It should
be noted that, for ethical reasons, the rows cannot be read as characterizing any individual in the sample.

Table 6.5.1 Selection criteria for Stage Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preschool Context</th>
<th>Geographical Location</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Professional Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood School (recently introduced in Canberra) with two preschool groups</td>
<td>North Canberra</td>
<td>TAFE Associate Diploma in Child Studies; Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)</td>
<td>'New Educator' appellation: less than 2 years preschool teaching; ECEC experience prior to teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older well established preschool; 'off campus' of amalgamated primary school</td>
<td>Central Canberra</td>
<td>Teaching Degree qualification obtained overseas</td>
<td>Over 20 years preschool experience including teaching children with diverse needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older, well established preschool 'on site' with amalgamated primary school</td>
<td>South Canberra</td>
<td>TAFE Child Studies Associate Diploma; Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)</td>
<td>Experienced teacher; ECEC experience prior to teaching. Professional Association – active membership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teachers selected continued with the pseudonyms chosen for Stage Two: Hannah, Stephanie and Sarah. All three school Principals gave the researcher access to the relevant school or preschool, permission to communicate regularly with the teachers and to enter staff rooms, classrooms and playrooms for on-site meetings. All teachers not selected for Stage Three were personally informed by a letter which contained an appreciation of their Stage One contribution and the names of the three teachers selected for Stage Three who were selected on the basis of maximising the geographical representation of preschools across the ACT (Appendix K).

6.6 Documentation

Consistent with Mitchell and Cubey’s operational principle five (see Table 6.3.1), required documentation on the part of the teachers themselves was pared back to restricted journal entries. While reflective practice was encouraged (see Table
6.3.1, principle eight) teachers were requested to make only minimal journal entries (which might include comments, ideas and/or questions) three times a week for three months. Consistent with operational principle four (see Table 6.3.1) no prescriptive outcome was expected and there was no assessment of teachers’ performance. This freed the teachers to utilize their journals as an *aide memoire*, to make provisional sketches, diagrams and plans, to record thoughts, questions and ideas and share openly their delights and disappointments as they recorded their progress towards, or setbacks from, the elimination of anxiety and gaining of confidence. As noted in 3.6.3, although participants took different routes in Stage Three, the methods of documenting their journeys were consistent. The teachers appreciated that this rubric was designed to set parameters for them which did not make insurmountable requirements on their time and that the journal’s purpose, within these parameters, was to chart their journey. Table 6.6.1 details how each data source is referenced in subsequent sections of this, and following, chapters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of data</th>
<th>In-text referents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal: Researcher</td>
<td>JR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal: Hannah</td>
<td>JH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal: Sarah</td>
<td>JS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal: Stephanie</td>
<td>JSt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes of meetings</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email communications</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-program interview</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s notes of informal conversations</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation: Hannah</td>
<td>PH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation: Sarah</td>
<td>PS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation: Stephanie</td>
<td>PSt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meetings (M is the in-text referent) and interviews (I is the in-text referent) were either tape-recorded then transcribed or hand-written as notes. In each case the referent is followed by the relevant date (e.g., M8/8/2013). Where a journal entry is undated this is indicated by 'nd' after the referent (e.g., SJ/nd/2013).

In keeping with the adoption of Rogers's experiential learning approach which sees the teacher/learner as central, each teacher's journey through Stage Three, with both its despairing and delighting moments, is presented in her own language in the sections and chapters which follow. This serves both to evaluate each teacher's sense of her own progress and, through that, the Stage Three program.

### 6.7 Setting the mood

By Stage Three it was obvious that each teacher had idiosyncratic needs; hence individual meetings were scheduled with each participant to establish the mood in accordance with Rogers's first principle for the facilitator. The preliminary meetings had a dual purpose. Firstly each individual meeting, by design, included ample time to view Art and gave opportunities for silent responses, comments and discussion and the opportunity to ask questions. Again, consistent with Rogers's (1969) first element of experiential learning, R demonstrated trust in the individual teachers by encouraging and respecting their personal responses to Visual Art.

The second purpose was to restate the purpose of the project and present the methods and conditions for Stage Three. A pro forma checklist (Appendix M) was used to ensure that all relevant issues were canvassed: children’s needs, housekeeping/paperwork, the program, documentation and the roles of participants.

The venue for the first meeting was deliberately chosen to be away from each teacher’s preschool site – and to challenge the teachers visually by accompanying them to two Art exhibitions following Bamford’s (2002) conclusion that her research indicated
...preservice teachers need greater exposure to significant visual encounters ... both in ...[their] direct environment and also within the context of galleries. (Bamford, 2002:336)

to stimulate teachers’ visual awareness.

This was intended to immerse the teachers in the Visual Arts and to share with them R’s personal appreciation of two professionally curated and accessible exhibitions in the hope that individual attention and shared enjoyment might stimulate interest and ‘set the mood/orientation for the learning experience’. (Rogers 1969:166) Hence each preliminary meeting was held at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra (NPG) and included a tour of the Gallery’s exhibition *Paris to Monaro; Pleasures from the Studio of Hilda Rix Nicholas* which included paintings, drawings, artefacts, furniture, garments and ephemera. Immediately following, the neighbouring Gallery of Australian Design (GAD), at that time exhibiting the work of Fred Ward, furniture maker, was used as a complementary venue.

All individual meetings included

- an informal and introductory conversation to establish the collaborative nature of the project;
- an opportunity to clarify understandings of the term *Visual Arts*;
- a description of the further stages of the planned project with time lines and potential meeting dates;
- a discussion, deriving from the Stage Two interviews, around preschool teachers’ perceptions of Visual Arts education in ACT preschools and in their own preschool or school;
- an opportunity to restate personal interests and needs and ask questions;
- a discussion of documentation strategies

From this, individual experiential learning programs were designed for collaboration between R and the participating teacher to empower each teacher in her current preschool setting (Aim 3).
6.8 Taking the preschool teachers around their own ‘brick walls’

The researcher prepared each teacher for the transition to Stage Three in accordance with the process described in 3.5.2 and, then, while each teacher’s trajectory was necessarily idiosyncratic, each developed within the common framework indicated in 3.6.3 beginning with the individual preliminary meeting. All chose to meet during school holidays. As planned (see 3.5.3) each meeting took place in the NPG café and exhibition space.

As part of this preliminary meeting R reiterated the purpose of Stage Three and encouraged each teacher to consider what might be her project goals for teaching Visual Arts. The intended guidance framework was outlined as was the intention to promote confidence and stimulate enjoyment. Questions were encouraged and, in response to some confused anticipation of the researcher’s role as demonstrator or visiting artist, R explained:

_We’d have to come up with a strategy – I’m not someone who comes in, ‘does Art’ then goes. I don’t expect you to be able to say [R] was here, now she’s gone. We did clay with her but now we don’t. I hope you might be able to say, ‘We identified I needed help to teach children to work with clay and as a result we … did this and this … so now I can do this, this and this on a regular basis and go on to develop my skills in teaching other Visual Arts in the way I have learnt and with, possibly, a new approach._  (R)

At this meeting, as an introductory gift, each teacher received a journal for the project. The small, blank paged journal was to act as an incentive and was to be available to the researcher but remain the property of each teacher. To symbolise the originality of the task, the journals were deliberately not utilitarian in appearance but rather embossed and gift wrapped in paper featuring a diverse range of Arts evocative words – all playfully chosen to begin with the letter ‘D’ for documentation: ‘dream’, ‘dare’, ‘doubt’, ‘desire’, ‘draw’, ‘Degas’, ‘design’, ‘Destiny Deacon’, ‘develop’, ‘difference’, ‘diptych’, ‘determine’, ‘delight’, ‘Dobell’, ‘dabble’, ‘Dada’, ‘dance’ (see Plate 6.8.1).
When Hannah’s gift-wrapped journal was presented, she seemed somewhat bemused and observed, without comment, the ‘D’ words on the wrapping which, R pointed out, related, symbolically, to ‘documentation’. It was, R explained, both response and apology – aware of the amount of documentation already required of teachers, R requested only short entries. Hannah grimaced in mock dismay, ‘So that’s homework?’ (N3/7/2013) noting that she ‘already keeps a diary’. When R justified the discrete task as manageable, she replied briskly ‘Understood!’ (M3/7/2013) and, indeed, from that day recorded ideas, plans and responses briefly but regularly (JH3/7/2013).

Discussion with Hannah in the NPG exhibition was initially exploratory as responses to the Art works were shared. R sensed Hannah’s interests in, and knowledge, of the Visual Arts. R spontaneously spoke about exhibition issues such as the role of curator and aesthetic considerations in exhibition planning. This had serendipitous relevance as Hannah was about to exhibit children’s work in a school Art exhibition – a practice now de rigueur in some schools but threatening to many preschool teachers. Hannah was most interested in wall
texts, immediately seeing value in children adding a title to their work. R drew her attention to relevant decision-making processes such as the mounting and framing of Art work. Hannah chatted incessantly about aspects of her own work, then, as she looked more carefully, surprisingly referenced the wrapping paper: ‘D’ words everywhere!’ (M3/7/2013).

The visit to the neighbouring Gallery of Australian Design (GAD) was Hannah’s first and she commented that her husband, a designer and furniture maker, had expressed jealousy about her opportunity. Questioning whether the Gallery was ‘always for design’, she appeared to take on board the questions ‘What is Art?’ and ‘What is Craft?’ agreeing not to attempt a quick response but to ‘play’ with ideas about Visual Arts, to recall the galleries’ exhibits and, in particular, to consider the furniture, dolls/puppets and other ephemera. More relaxed in the second gallery, Hannah seemed calmed by its mood of quintessential silence (M23/7/2013). Leaving the GAD, Hannah referred to her hopes of seamlessly integrating the Arts into her teaching and her desire to raise her provision of Visual Arts to the standard of her teaching in other curriculum areas. ‘I can do it with Literacy and Numeracy [but] not with Visual Arts’ (M3/7/2013).

Stephanie was unfamiliar with the NPG and had very little experience of viewing Art but R drew on her relevant understandings. Again, the strategy was based on language associated with Visual Art:

_This is an ‘oil’; this is a canvas; this is a pastel drawing; this is another painting with oils. This one is framed with a double mount; this is a replica of her studio copied from a photograph and from sketches in her own journals._ (M5/7/2013)

She adopted suggestions to use with children when viewing Visual Art:

_How simple 3 questions about Art ‘What do you see? How does it make you feel? How did the artist do it?’ Very simple but says so much._ (JSt5/7/2013)

and indicated her intention to apply this immediately: ‘Can’t wait to use it with the children’ (JS5/7/2013).
Sarah was initially quiet and appeared thoughtful. Although she asked pertinent questions and viewed the Hilda Rix Nichols exhibition with interest, she showed no overt enthusiasm either for the visit or the project. She listened intently to R’s comments and nodded in agreement with R’s stated belief that children’s brains must be engaged in making and viewing Art. She accepted the journal gift and agreed to the required project documentation and provisional timetable. Initially viewing her selection for Stage Three with desperation rather than delight, she then seized the chance to access ‘another pair of hands’ but nevertheless worried that her participation would be compromised by her extensive responsibilities to children and families and the existing challenge of working with a new, less experienced assistant. When she realised that the project’s individual focus offered targeted support, she embraced the chance for professional learning in Visual Arts, seeing its complementarity with an area of her program she wished to expand.

Hannah, on the other hand, approached Stage Three with palpable enthusiasm. Excitedly alluding to project inclusion she laughed at herself for having written, clearly, on her anonymous survey, ‘Please choose me’ some months earlier. Teaching colleagues are ‘envious’, she said. Her school Principal argued that Hannah would benefit from the project as she is ‘a sponge’ for information and clarified that Hannah would be supported during the project and that there was expectation that she would share new skills and knowledge with teaching colleagues.

Less confidently embracing the opportunity, Stephanie was initially apologetic about her Visual Arts teaching and deferred to R as an ‘expert’. Only when her dual qualifications in Early Childhood education, ongoing interest in professional learning, years of teaching experience, esteem of colleagues and the collaborative nature of the project had been reiterated did she, apparently relieved, express enthusiasm for skill revival - albeit noting that health issues could impact on the meetings. Expressing frustration in her teaching, Stephanie perceived the project as fortuitous.
6.9 Confronting demons: Clarifying purposes

During the preliminary meeting each teacher was encouraged to reflect on the status quo as a way into articulating what she wished to achieve through participation in the project.

6.9.1 Hannah

Hannah seemed highly desirous of direction, having many Arts initiatives in place yet dissatisfied with her approach. In conversation she expressed intention to bring Visual Arts ‘to the centre’. R expressed the hope that Hannah’s thinking would be challenged so that she could develop a fresh approach to Visual Arts teaching. Hannah responded positively, expressing her need for ‘a sounding board’ (M3/7/2013). Her journal intimated her hopes: ‘I want to teach art confidently and instil confidence and love of Art’ (JH15/7/2013).

6.9.2 Stephanie

For Stephanie, the Stage One survey had been a positive, leading her to question her teaching and admit she had ‘gotten into a rut’, strengthening her conviction her Visual Arts teaching had once been better: ‘It inspired me, took me back to things I used to do all the time.’ (JSt5/7/2013) Despite a genuine interest in Visual Arts, she admitted to a serious lack of confidence and loss of satisfaction: ‘Something else; I’ve lost the urge to purchase – that’s how much I’ve lost my confidence.’ (JSt5/7/2013) She seemed keen to share her current difficulties including the feeling of being watched and citing the tension she experienced between providing a child centred, play based curriculum and the requirement to constantly document children’s learning:

*I’m always being watched: ‘All she does with those children is paint’. It gets back to me [but] that play based learning, it’s, you know … you feel the needs of the children [but] you have to have this piece in your learning journal to say ‘[they’re] learning this’. (JSt5/7/2013)*

Recognising that colleagues shared her frustration Stephanie expressed certainty that a collegiate approach would assist others to meet challenges caused by recent school-preschool amalgamations. R encouraged Stephanie to concentrate on prioritising her own work rather than allowing these concerns to
dominate her thinking. As inducement, R repeated her promise to share results with the Preschool Teachers’ Professional Association (PTPA) and collaborate with her to publicize any beneficial Visual Arts teaching outcomes emanating from the project.

While professing enthusiasm Stephanie also deprecated her teaching and admitted diminished enjoyment:

*I’m worried I’m becoming a teacher I don’t want to be. I feel like I’m losing my way and – I’ll be honest – and not enjoying my job as much. (JSt5/7/2013)*

Nascent anxiety was also implicit in her question ‘Will you be observing me?’ R, who had previously assessed Stephanie’s work as a pre-service teacher, needed to clarify the facilitator’s role:

*Not unless you ask me to. If I’m in the room and you are there I’ll see you but I will not be closely observing you unless you request this and we agree it’s something that fits the plan we devise and that it has purpose for you. (M5/7/2013)*

6.9.3 Sarah

Sarah was keen to appraise R of her current situation: despite her experience and the stand-alone physical situation of the preschool, an Executive Teacher visited regularly, observed her and reported to the Principal. Her recently appointed assistant needed help to understand that ‘children’s work can mean something’ (M9/7/2103) and many parents, while appreciating their children’s work, had ‘underlying concerns’. She felt her own teaching style had a ‘time consuming aspect’ as she attempted to follow and develop the interests of all children (M9/7/2013). Nevertheless her priorities seemed clear: She sought professional learning and ways to involve families.

*I want to refresh [my practice] basically, and [discover] how we can share the importance with families.* (MS 9/7/2013)

Sarah indicated that she was also expected to develop ‘community links’. When R suggested that ‘community links’ might be forged through ‘families’ and offered some potential strategies, Sarah quickly agreed (M9/7/2103). She had embraced
the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and found support for the mandatory documentation in a computer application which assisted her to build child profiles efficiently.

6.10 Implementing purposes: Early intimations

Thus, each teacher articulated her focus. Hannah’s was to give Visual Arts greater priority in her teaching, to develop her ability to teach and to increase her confidence in this area of her program. Stephanie’s wish was to reinvigorate her Visual Arts beliefs and achieve a merger between her teaching philosophy and school requirements, thereby relinquishing frustration in teaching Visual Arts: ‘Work with parents to articulate/explain the value of Arts.’ (JSt5/7/2013) Sarah wanted to clarify her modus operandi for families in the context of her school’s intention to communicate more effectively with the wider community.

Early evidence of the direction in which the teachers began to move, however tentatively, may be found in initial entries in their journals.

Hannah recorded her hopes: ‘I want to teach art confidently and instil confidence and love of Art.’ (JH15/7/2013) Consistent with her espoused regret that the quality of her teaching had diminished, Stephanie’s related journal entry indicated a decision to regain that ground: ‘Small group work – I need to get back to this in my teaching.’ (JSt5/7/2013) Another entry recalled the value of her former philosophically based approach, noting its consistency with R’s comments:

*Reggio Emilia – I have missed you. This is what I need to find again. A lot of what [R] said today resonated with this approach.* (JSt5/7/2013)

Optimism featured throughout her initial journal entries, highlighting her search for inspiration and her sense that the project was timely:

*Thinking that I am getting back some of my old feelings of love about Art and hoping this could be the inspiration I am looking for and feeling is much needed at this point in my teaching career.* (JSt5/7/2013)

A thoughtful start was thus made and, between meetings, Stephanie made careful decisions about Art teaching:
I have spent time thinking about what kind of visual arts experiences I will offer from this point on … thought back to quality experiences I have offered before and considered how with ‘new eyes’ I may introduce these with my current group. (JSt29/7/2013)

Two days later after applying her new ideas, she linked her teaching with renewed enthusiasm for Art: ‘As a teacher I’m getting excited again about art’ (JSt31/7/2013). Despite this strong start, however, uncertainty continued: Notwithstanding her teaching experience and ability to design new approaches she was uncertain about Art language: ‘Hoping to talk more to [R] to get the language right’. (JSt1/8/2013)

Self-reflection was a strong feature of her journal entries, also distinguishing between the personal and the professional:

> Even in my holiday I reflected ‘OK, how am I going to make this manageable and satisfactory for me as teacher’ – not just, you know, ‘manageable’. (JSt1/8/2013)

She disciplined herself to make changes despite time constraints: ‘Starting on Monday morning we’ll have small groups. No excuses now – we need to make the time’ (JS1/8/2013). She explained further, indicating changes already made:

> [Visual Art’s] been pushed aside for many reasons – we all say ‘We don’t have time. We don’t have time’ but I’ve always loved this; I’ve already made changes. (JSt1/8/2013)

In Sarah’s case, her journal entries evinced more enthusiasm than had her meeting responses:

- Met with [R] today – actually feeling positive – this could be the professional learning that has been missing.
- Wonderful to actually walk around a gallery with someone who had some knowledge and provided an insight into the curator’s role.
- Actually feeling inspired!! Really want the children to have the passion art can offer.
- Have asked [R] to support in role of developing a community at preschool – is Art the right way to do this? (JS16/7/2013)
Sarah challenged herself to consider the audience for preschool art displays:

I must really think about displays at school – unable to move the boards – but who are they for – children, parents or both – must start thinking. (JS9/7/2013)

Each of the teachers had thus taken a quantum leap, firstly by voicing their inner doubts and professional insecurities then, secondly, by committing to a course of action of their own choosing.

Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine will chart, in turn, the personal journey of each of these teachers over the three months of the project. The first section of Chapter 10 will synthesize the findings of all three stages with special emphasis on the efficacy of Stage Three from the perspective of the three participants.
CHAPTER 7  PATHWAYS FROM DESPAIR TO DELIGHT: HANNAH

7.1 What I need

Hannah’s diagnosis of her Visual Arts teaching situation was the need for ‘a sounding board.’ (M3/7/2013) She seemed highly desirous of direction because, despite having Arts initiatives in place, she was very dissatisfied with her approach. In conversation, she expressed her intention to bring Visual Arts ‘to the centre’. A journal entry recorded that she was ‘exhausted but … excited by what next term will bring.’ (JH5/7/2013)

Sharing evidence that she had internalized some relevant principles from recent gallery experiences, Hannah noted in her journal that the iconic Warhol images of Campbell’s soup cans at Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG) were ‘instantly recognisable + Art’ (JH5/7/2013). Demonstrating transference of learning she then contemplated the possibility of ‘building on children’s knowledge of world symbols.’ (JH5/7/2013). A subsequent weekend journal entry indicated new ideas about room arrangement to facilitate Visual Arts activities (JH13/7/2013) and a note to herself to draft ‘a spiel’ for parents. Hannah was demonstrating her personal involvement in the program, the first element of Rogers’s (1969) experiential learning.

Her solution to handling children’s Art still in progress - ‘The Unfinished Box’ for Art work which children wished to continue - is evidence of her capacity to ‘self-initiate’, the second of Rogers’s (1969) principles (M8/8/2013). In one busy week, Hannah had further translated observations from gallery visits, reconsidered ‘better ways to display … to show the importance of what they are doing’ and questioned her practice of sending the work home: ‘Why?’ and ‘Why take home?’ (M23/7/13) showing the pervasiveness embodied in Rogers’s (1969) third principle. The fact that she had also found time to check the school’s Art store, to reflect on its arrangement and consider accessibility for staff and children is evidence of her evaluative strategy, Rogers’s (1969) fourth principle (JH18/7/2013; 22/7/2013). His fifth principle ‘meaning’ was embodied in her journal entry ‘Clarity for ME!’ (JH15/7/2013).
7.2 Facilitating purpose/s

Hannah used her journal ‘to draw a plan … to use space better’ (M23/7/2013) and R used this opportunity to affirm the potential of the Visual Arts to drive planning – integrating other learning areas by involving the children in making diagrams and maps thereby linking Numeracy and Visual Arts - as a first step in bringing ‘Arts to the centre’. Consistent with Rogers’s (1969) third and fourth principles of facilitation, R introduced discussion of the Elements of Art (implementing purposes) and the importance of quality materials (access to resources). R suggested Hannah include acquisition of Art language in the mandatory formal documentation of children’s development and that this begin with the introduction of a single colour, preferably a primary one (JH27/7/2013). Appropriate terms might include: ‘colour’, ‘primary colour’, ‘mix’, ‘blend’, ‘light’, ‘dark’, ‘deep’, ‘bright’ ‘hue’, ‘pastel’ and ‘spectrum’ (M23/7/2013).

Even at this early stage in the program multiple potential pathways were emerging. While describing herself as ‘exhausted’, Hannah displayed initiative and energy and, true to her Principal’s prediction, a capacity to ‘run’ with new learning. Her need for a listener was realized through conversations and this clearly facilitated an increase in confidence: ‘Feel direction now – loved the talk with [R] (great sounding board) … I can do this!’ (JH23/7/2013).

7.3 Language and colour

Rogers (1969) observes that, for the individual, learning is most potent when it is perceived to be consonant with that individual’s own purposes. Following R’s suggestions about language, Hannah expanded the children’s Visual Arts vocabulary, promoted an awareness of colour, and encouraged new ways of looking at drawing:

…fountain drawing. I felt myself using the language of Art (light/colour/darkness). S. drew blue that was reflected on the fountain and discussed it with me; from him this was amazing. (JH25/7/2013)
Hannah consolidated this new learning by introducing the children to Dr Seuss’s *My Colourful Days* and commented to R on the success of the integrated approach:

\[\text{[The] children are progressing} - \text{doing exactly what I hoped they would do – building on their own interests and their knowledge.} \text{ (M8/8/2013)}\]

She reported that the provision of a single colour for painting produced an immediate comment from a child: ‘Is this a yellow day then?’ (M8/8/2013) Later, using his new vocabulary, another child asked, ‘What’s the next primary colour?’ to which Hannah immediately replied ‘Red!’ Her further observation ‘We’re getting pieces of work from people who have never been to collage’ (M8/8/2013) pointed to awareness of children’s increasing participation and the sense that Hannah was flying.

Hannah responded to R’s implied question ‘So you could say the restriction in colour appears to have widened children’s thinking?’ (M8/8/2013):

\[\text{I think it’s been inspiring} – \text{I think it was confrontational at first – it took a couple of days to approach the lack of choice but then they got involved … more respectful choice of material.} \text{ (M8/8/2013)}\]

This is consistent with Rogers (1969) principle that learning which is self-initiated and involves the individual’s feeling as well as intellect is likely to be the most lasting and pervasive. Clearly enjoying the children’s burgeoning enthusiasm but needing a slower pace, Hannah used literature to guide the enthusiastic children: ‘I tell them, “You don’t have to do everything in two minutes – Mem Fox took a year to write *Where is the Green Sheep*?” ’ (M8/8/2013)

She shared her sense of the value of the earlier gallery visits with R in the context of her plans for the forthcoming art exhibition:

\[\text{One of the lightbulb moments from our gallery visit was the way work is displayed} – \text{the story that is being told. I find myself thinking about the space in my room that can be utilized to display the children’s work in a way that tells their story.} \text{ (EH19/7/2013)}\]

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Her increased confidence was evident as she approached equality of input (Rogers (1969) facilitation principle seven). Merging suggestions from R with ideas of her own, she now had the confidence to choose direction: ‘My end goal for our research is to create a piece using primary colours for their display piece.’ (M8/8/2013) Her curatorial considerations for the exhibition included displays at child height, adequate space for viewing, gallery protocols and the need to check proposed display screens with the school’s Occupational Health and Safety officer. Further, mindful of her potential audience, she developed plans to locate the screens ‘where parents and families gather.’ (M8/8/2013)

As her thinking and planning developed, Hannah noted that she was comfortable participating in Visual Arts activities with the children:

I find I go over there and start creating and suddenly you'll have this little child beside you. They want you to think they’re really talented. (M8/8/2013)

She reported that the journal was ‘useful’, ‘easy’, ‘not onerous’ (M8/8/13) and ‘very easy to complete’ (EH19/8/13). Her entries were concise as she ‘posed questions’ to herself such as ‘Where to next?’ (JH31/7/2013)

Evidence of R’s success as a facilitator in establishing a climate of trust in which Hannah felt able to learn and apply new approaches to Visual Arts (Rogers’s (1969) first principle of facilitation) was embodied in Hannah’s comment to R: ‘I described you as a one woman cheer squad!’ (EH7/08/2013) With success Hannah developed more direction. In only a few weeks she had travelled from questions of ‘Where do I start?’ to ‘Plans, ideas, dreams’ (M8/8/2013), evidencing her new confidence.

Hannah’s concise journal entries: ‘Language’ and ‘Magic of primary colours’ reflected her approach (JH10/8/2013) while her observations that the children themselves collaborated to name primary colours (JH14/8/2013) and that Child ‘M’ ‘sang whilst painting’ (JH12/8/2013) signify her satisfaction with her results: ‘Been great … REALLY FAB’ (M21/8/2013).
7.4 Taking charge

At this stage in the program Hannah moved on to intensive planning for the forthcoming Art exhibition: ‘Gallery space chosen – kid height + focus’ highlighting her comfort in the teacher-as-curator role (JH16/8/2013). She saw positives in the ‘Display. Really good to share our learning and see what we already know!’ (JH19/8/2013). She explained to R that a child seeking to match a colour to flower petals, decreed a paint mix to be ‘Too orange, not yellow enough’ (M21/8/2013) and that she had found a YouTube link reinforcing the colour interest which ‘cemented it for them’ (M21/8/2013).

In early Spring, Hannah and the children began to enjoy ‘Nature starting to bloom’ (JH25/8/2013). She encouraged the children to take sketch books outdoors, drawing attention to shapes and the need for close visual attention. Over two days they visited local sites to look at sculpture and record their observations through drawing. The words ‘size’, line’ and ‘shape’ were added to their increasing Art vocabulary (M21/8/2013).

7.5 The learner evaluates

Rogers’s (1969) fourth principle is that the learner evaluates because it is only the learner who knows his/her need is being met. Hence R queried:

> Everything you have done in the classroom you have done yourself – with no physical assistance – so how does this differ from what you might have done alone, had you decided to? (MR21/8/2013)

Hannah’s initial response was ‘It’s time; I’ve been given time.’ She then enumerated the time related opportunities she had been afforded by the program, largely through the support of the Principal and Executive Teacher:

- time to meet at another school where the teacher shared her quality Arts program
- ‘Release Time’ for all project meetings
- administrative time
- time to sort equipment and materials
time to develop a system for managing supplies.

Hannah also identified ‘focus’, ‘more support’; ‘confidence’ and ‘bouncing off ideas’ (M21/8/2013), announcing with emphasis:

In the eight weeks we’ve been working I’ve learnt more and become more confident in teaching than in two years at uni. (M23/8/2013)

She acknowledged that

Even when doing the Statement of Intent [for families] Art has become the focus which it hasn’t been before. I start with Art and build other experiences around it. (M23/8/2013)

Confidently, Hannah had also noticed improvements in children’s physical development as a result of increased Visual Arts activity; she observed children’s opportunities for small muscle development afforded by the Visual Arts, broadening her scope to include:

Manipulative tools, scissors, different sized brushes, smocks, bull dog clips, storing, negotiating – that’s physical, fine motor, social, thinking… next year if I’m in a preschool, I’ll focus [on Visual Art] from the beginning of the year. (M23/8/2013)

In just eight weeks she had found direction, gained confidence and reached her goal of bringing Visual Arts to ‘the centre’ of the curriculum. Seeking clarity, R asked, ‘So, it’s an Arts-based curriculum?’ and Hannah replied emphatically, ‘Definitely! It’s everything we do’ (M23/8/2013).

### 7.6 Taking responsibility for quality Visual Arts teaching

Hannah’s determination to take responsibility for Visual Arts in her own classroom was strongly articulated. She referred to the transitory nature of artist-in-residence and visiting artists’ programs, declaring, ‘They come in, they do an amazing job with the children and then they go away.’ (NDec2013) She compared it to an instrumental music program run in her own school by a visiting music educator:
Fabulous [but] as soon as she leaves it doesn't happen. There has to be some sort of onus that they put on us to make it happen … then the onus [is] put on you to take some of the lessons.

She identified the need for mentoring and ongoing support. ‘We need them [the music educators] to be mentors, [to have their] hands over the reins, then check in’ (NDec2013).

Hannah recalled Ciara’s school’s Arts program and, at a dinner at which Ciara was present, asked if this was an ‘artist-in-residence’ program. When Ciara responded ‘We have someone facilitating a community based program.’ Hannah, seeming sceptical, riposted ‘And after that hour it stops?’ (NDec2013) Her comments reflect not only her strong beliefs about a generalist teacher vis à vis a visiting artist but also her burgeoning sense of responsibility for this area of the curriculum:

I don’t hand my Literacy over to others; I don’t hand my Numeracy over to others. I need the support and confidence to do it myself. (NDec2013)

This sense of responsibility and ownership was clearly demonstrated as she prepared for the forthcoming Art exhibition, making decisions about room arrangement, display of work and the writing of labels and wall texts. The ‘hang’ involved children planning the display of their work. The exhibition-in-progress comprised unique pieces – some symbolic, some abstract – all bearing witness to children’s individual and creative participation. They had ‘a clear vision of their work’ (JH3/9/2013) and decided on their own titles with enthusiasm. Hannah reported ‘They’re naming their work – a big red blob is “My brother”’ (Plate 7.6.1) and suggested this referred to the younger sibling of Child A, the Artist (NSep2013).
After deliberating over the choice of materials Child B worked slowly and with care then, without hesitation, titled his collage on paper ‘Australian Flag’ (Plate 7.6.2) and selected the frame in response to its gold border (NAug2013).
Plate 7.6.2  Australian flag

In response to a comment from an adult, Child C described his multi-coloured paint work on paper as 'Giant with a big ear' (Plate 7.6.3) then accepted Hannah’s suggestion these words become the title (NAug2013).
Plate 7.6.3  Giant with a big ear

Hannah encouraged the children to decide on the framing and positioning of their own Art. Child D was adamant that a frame be secured on, rather than around, ‘The King’ (Plate 7.6.4), his collage on paper (M9/4/2013). Hannah complied; the collage was hung according to directions and D expressed satisfaction with the finished Art work (NAug2013).
Plate 7.6.4  The King

Rationales for decisions were variously and delightfully child-like: some wished their work to hang next to that of a friend; others requested the space close to the door so their parents could view it immediately upon entry; one chose a pillar to dominate a space. Hannah happily accommodated these wishes in a spirit of serious collaboration and an attractive and enticing display took shape which demonstrated Hannah’s burgeoning self-assurance. Hannah tasked R with attending the Art exhibition to speak with families about their child’s piece and asked her to ‘look like an artist’ and speak authoritatively about the Art on display. Delight in the children’s output was paramount in Hannah’s thorough briefing to R; she described each selected piece, its possible motivation and the maker’s current involvement in Visual Arts. However, R suggested that in her designated role of ‘outsider’ Art expert she should limit her interpretations for families to the skills required for, and possible learning outcomes from, each piece. Hannah considered then agreed, consistent with Roger’s eighth principle of facilitation - offering feelings or thoughts which the student may take or leave.
Reflecting the seamless expansion of Visual Arts in her teaching practice, Hannah organised the allocation of a ‘special person’ for any child not expecting a family visitor. She encouraged all children to show their own piece, to describe it and also to direct visitors to the work of others. She reported with pleasure that two children ‘M’ and ‘R’ explained, then re-explained, their method to interested visitors. ‘M’ was particularly happy when the Principal, appointed as his ‘visitor’, said she would ‘love his work in her lounge room.’ Child ‘B’ loudly described his work, which included a bright and commercially coloured feather: ‘Look, it’s nature!’ (M10/9/2013). Hannah was thrilled by these responses and saw them as vindication of the value of her Visual Arts program for these children: ‘Our art exhibition was today – feedback was amazing’ and ‘The parents’ faces said it all.’ (JH10/9/2013) Maintaining her concise journal style, she added notes for herself:

* creativity
* expression
* colours (JH10/9/2013)

Journal entries the following day included ‘parents loved the colour mixing work’.

Hannah used the opportunity afforded by the Art Show to disseminate Visual Arts information to parents by distributing copies of the Information Sheet for Parents (Appendix G):

I gave the parents a copy of the [ANU] Research document and they were so excited. This [project] has put Art at the forefront. (NSept2013)

Demonstrating her new confidence she added, ‘I felt empowered to share my knowledge of art to encourage them to really look at their child’s art work.’ (JH11/09/2013) When R congratulated her on the success of the exhibition Hannah replied, ‘I feel a lot more confident now’ (NSept2013), again testifying to the learner’s belief that the program was achieving her goals.
Subsequently Hannah reviewed the parameters of her successful Art exhibition:

> With their Art pieces, what I’ve really loved -- you can see how individual they are -- we had no input into what they were doing; we provided materials and additional materials. (M18/9/2013)

> The majority of the written feedback from parents was the creativity when they see different pieces. (M18/9/2013)

Since the children had collaborated in the preparations, they had also enjoyed shared ‘ownership’ of the dazzling outcome:

> …every day when they come in they show their pictures again, ‘[they say] ‘cause we’re not changing them – that’s our display and that’s our gallery.’ (M18/9/2013)

She saw further social and emotional benefits for children and, for some, their first experience of success:

> For some of my children it’s been their confidence builder. It’s the one thing they’ve been successful in in their eyes and that’s important when you’re four. (M18/9/2013)

> K had his dad’s attention and admiration. Those parents love him – he’s their first – but they have these totally unrealistic expectations. (M18/9/2013)

Her concern had been ‘How do I sell this to families?’ and, in retrospect, she felt that her decision to present framed work and introduce R as a visiting ‘Art expert’ and ANU researcher had alleviated parental anxiety about her new direction:

> I think because we definitely sold you as an Art expert [from] ANU you do take it differently and you were there specifically to talk about the Art work … having you there and the opportunity to talk really focussed on their piece of work … to our parents having something like that where it’s just [done] in such a professional way this is something not just stuffed in children’s school bags – this is named and framed by the children. (M18/9/2013)

> I think the children took that really seriously and because we’d done so much work beforehand about what real artists do and how they display their work – they really saw themselves as real artists. (M18/9/2013)
For one family, explanations from the ‘Art expert’ worked to support Hannah:

One of our families had raised the issue that they were very worried about their child’s development in the area of the Visual Arts because he was doing very simplistic pictures even though I tried to explain that it was perfectly appropriate … he was right on the ball but they were very concerned. Luckily at the art exhibition they were the first parents to arrive and you [R] spent a long time with them and they [gave] beautiful feedback. (M18/9/2013)

Meetings with parents following the Art exhibition gave Hannah the chance to reinforce the importance of Visual Arts exploration. For example, she reported one parent as being

… just very interested to chat to you [R] … the feedback we got from him, the happiness on his face is not something we normally see – he’s just one of those dads but he was really happy after he’d spoken to you [R] and what I was really impressed with, too, was not the Art exhibition but [his comments on] the next ‘Learning Journey’. (M18/9/2013)

Hannah felt that this exemplified parental growth in understanding; she cited the evidence of before and after comments showing one parent’s new appreciation of the novel approach of her child who worked carefully, made only a few marks on the paper and then used the end of his brush to make a deliberate and distinctive line through his work:

One of my mums was a little disappointed with her son’s Art work – you know the one you had identified as how great it was he showed the restraint … [In] written feedback she said, about the restrained use, which, I think … made her look at his Art work in a different way rather than ‘Oh, that looks like a big mess’. (M18/9/2013)

Hannah had also resolved the issue of ‘mess’ in her own mind and had developed strategies to explain the visual and experimental value of colour mixing for young children; she felt impelled to comment:

One of the most damaging things I’ve seen in preschool, and I don’t let it happen, particularly if someone’s monitoring the paint area, is ‘don’t mix up your colours’; ‘don’t put your brush there’; ‘don’t put your fingers in it.’ (M18/9/2013)
We’ve actually had the plastic pots for paint but we’ve collected, at the start of the year, glass jars and [we] just find them so much more satisfying -- you can see the colour change. They’re children’s sizes and if they’re a bit disgusting, [we] throw them. (M18/9/2013)

7.7 Art at the centre

Further evidence that Hannah had succeeded in bringing Arts ‘to the centre’ could be discerned in her linking of natural science with Visual Art through the hatching of chicks in a classroom incubator. As children clustered to watch the hatching and view the day old chicks, they observed closely, talked excitedly and exchanged information. Hannah outlined plans to extend this careful observation into graphic representations. Children were given Art materials and required to express their observations in images. Opportunities for further language development were evident as Hannah planned to speak with each child about his/her work, thereby promoting not only Language but cognitive development through Visual Art.

Another benefit Hannah saw was linking Visual Arts and children’s holistic learning which helped her to promote Visual Arts as a Learning Area:

The more important things we have like your study the more we can say ‘These areas are important; there’s a reason we do Visual Arts – it’s real learning’. (M18/9/2013)

As Hannah’s self-assurance developed, the Principal told R of her increasing enthusiasm for the project and undertook to talk with the school’s Business Manager to seek ways to purchase higher quality materials for Art making (M9/4/2013). Demonstrating her expectations for skill development in handling materials, Hannah shared her plans with R:

I love the idea of you know, washing the brushes and that’s what I’d have set up next year. You know, ‘Here’s a jar, wash your brush out’. (M18/9/2013)

[There will be] an emphasis next year when the present preschoolers move into kindergarten. The teachers won’t have to sell it to the parents. I think it will go further – the parents will demand it! (M18/9/2013)
Significantly Hannah, in only her second year of teaching, was delighting in making and sharing plans for Visual Arts teaching in her following, third year; Hannah, with her new assurance, declared confidently, 'In the third year you nail it!' (M18/9/2013)

7.8 Reflections: Taking stock

At this stage, as the three month period allotted to the program was almost over, R was concerned to explore with Hannah the extent to which she had achieved her goals and would be able continue to move forward, post-project, without the direct support of the program. Hence R suggested that she might enjoy a visit to the National Gallery of Australia (NGA). Hannah immediately embraced the suggestion for a personal, guided NGA tour followed by a meeting.

At the Gallery R, building on earlier learning, focussed on Hannah’s developing visual awareness through the viewing of drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and design. Despite restricted time the visit seemed leisurely as Hannah and R moved through the Gallery. With typical high level interest Hannah quickly adopted R’s suggestion to view a work by first asking, ‘What do I see here?’ followed with ‘How does it make me feel? Quick to appreciate the legitimacy of this approach, Hannah laughed at its simplicity and readily answered, ‘How did the artist do it?’ by examining the materials and methods used in creating the work. When leaving the NGA Hannah expressed her delight at having experienced stimulation through Art: ‘Feel filled up with Art. So much inspiration right at my door. Must make time to visit and be inspired’ (JH18/09/2013).

The Gallery visit was a prelude to a planning session in relation to Hannah’s role in the forthcoming presentation to members of the Preschool Teachers’ Professional Association (PTPA). Hannah expressed initial uncertainty and some self-doubt – consistent with what might be expected from Rogers’s (1969) experience that a learning context which involves a change in the perception of oneself is threatening and tends to be resisted. Nevertheless, she accepted R’s view that there would be value in sharing her experience with teaching colleagues
and agreed to a three to five minute presentation to report on children’s progress, using examples of their work, and mentioning the children’s Art exhibition.

R introduced the presentation and, after sharing findings of the National Review of Visual Education and the current project, emphasised the importance of the place of Visual Arts in preschool learning. In addition, R referred to current pressures and challenges for generalist preschool teachers in delivering Visual Arts education. Outlining the program, R reiterated the rationale for selection of Stage Three participants to counter reported disappointment on the part of some teachers who had not been selected. Hannah, along with the other two project teachers, then shared their reasons for seeking involvement in the project and outlined their work to date, mentioning children’s classroom experiences, gallery excursions, individual and group meetings with R as well as the visit to Ciara’s preschool.

Hannah began with ‘before’ statements about her attitude to Visual Arts:

- ‘An area that I had an interest in but little confidence in teaching.’
- ‘Felt that it was an area possibly neglected in my University studies.’
- ‘Really didn’t want to get bogged down doing craft.’
- ‘Not quite sure where to start!’ (PH15/9/2013)

She gave a step by step account of children’s progress, including her planning processes: ‘We began by stripping it right back – and looking at the three primary colours’ (PH15/9/2013). Hannah described children’s tentative reaction to, then acceptance of her new approach:

- **Week 1 was Yellow. Met with scepticism. But then realised how fabulous they looked on black.**
- **Week 2 was Red. This time approached with gusto – and for some the first time that they really engaged with art experiences of any kind.**
- **Week 3 was Blue. Yay! All knew what was expected and loved it.** (PH15/9/2013)
Hannah demonstrated confidence as she described the children’s exploration of secondary colours, an experience which promoted questioning and extended use of language:

Then we started to look at the secondary colours. We mixed our own colours using two primary colours – lots of discussions about adding more blue, yellow, red. How does the colour change? (PH15/9/2013)

In a convincing display of work from the exhibition, Hannah’s after moment was showing a simple egg carton in which a child had mixed primary colours to make secondary and tertiary colours, thereby discovering new shades and hues. The audience was attentive, almost incredulous as Hannah, displaying the egg carton (an item not known for its intrinsic appeal), described with passion the visual enjoyment and progressive learning manifest in this simple object.

Despite her initial reluctance, Hannah had delivered a powerful explanation of children’s discoveries and the stimulation to their learning provided by Visual Arts. As she dealt with questions, Hannah relaxed. Responding to the group’s evident interest, she spoke with authority and from experience – and later reflected:

PTPA meeting – daunting to speak to such experienced teachers but what a fabulous group. Felt genuine interest in what I was doing. Loved the questions! Of all the work I showed the egg carton got the most interest. Felt incredible pride at what I’ve achieved. (JH19/9/2013)

She had conquered another ‘demon’ and felt justifiably proud of having done so. She had been able to speak confidently, and with authority, to her (mostly senior) peers about an area in which she had previous floundered and experienced a crippling lack of confidence. She had admitted her starting point which made her achievement even more compelling.

Journal entries post PTPA presentation indicated decision making without direct input from R and the intention to try new materials: ‘Where to next? Looking at clay and I love papier mâché.’ (JH23/9/2013) Self-directed, and still considering the challenge of making Art, she formulated her own question: ‘Can I introduce this material and create Art not Craft?’ (JH23/9/2013) As the end of term
approached, Hannah embraced an earlier suggestion to promote visual awareness through observation of the environment:

\textit{Walked and just looked at nature. No drawing/recording – just looking – very liberating for some -- more difficult for others.} (JH25/9/2013)

At the end of term she acknowledged her developing Arts interest:

\textit{Indication of how my focus has changed – 3 art books make up my holiday reading.} (JH26/9/2013)

Hannah’s reading included Ann Pelo’s \textit{The Language of Art}, a book to which she later referred as ‘my Bible’ (JH27/10/2013). Demonstrating her burgeoning interest in the use of language, she noted down the phrases ‘sensual and reflective’, ‘creative and deliberate’ as well as ‘deepens and extends children’s learning’ (JH9/10/2013).

At the beginning of the new term, Hannah’s reflections and consideration of her progress to date led her to naming a section in her journal, ‘What I would do differently?’ (JH9/10/2013) She recorded her successful introduction of clay:

\textit{Day 1 – we began to jump into ‘clay’. 1 block + bare feet. Amazing time from ‘N’ and ‘T’ spent thirty minutes pounding, digging, making impressions and lifting. The language was astounding!} (JH14/10/2013)

\textit{Tentative ‘A’ spent extended time in the clay. Normally avoids sensory experiences – couldn’t get enough of the clay.} (JH17/10/2013)

\textit{Each child approached their own clay mat with focus. Great discussions re effects of water – we love getting our hands dirty.} (JH1/11/2013)

Cognizant of its properties, Hannah confidently created optimal conditions for tactile exploration. Five kilograms of clay were regularly available outdoors and children delighted in bare foot play, first flattening the clay then repeatedly attempting to turn it over, an exercise requiring not only strength but cooperation: ‘Science! Cooperative play! Investigation! Problem-solving!’ (JR 22/11/2013)

Hannah continued to incorporate a range of Art experiences into her program while promoting language, the use of colour and enquiry:
Rain, Rain, Rain. Putting on wet weather gear and headed out children used chalk at the edges – watched & marvelled as the colours blended together. Fabulous conversations re guesses as to what colours would form. (JH5/11/2013)

‘REPORTS!’ was the title of an end of year journal entry as Hannah was determined to include comments on children’s Art: ‘all [will] have a strong arts focus (in theory and examples).’ (JH12/11/2013). Delighted that she would be able to report significant outcomes from Visual Art experiences, Hannah shared her carefully chosen words ‘joyous and fluent speech’ for two boys who exhibited speech development during play with clay – a remarkable result, she believed, and one which also led to a new friendship (JR22/11/2013).

Communicating with parents about Art had positive results:

Discussion with N parent. She was talking to a friend whose child attends another school. [The friend] was so disappointed at the small pieces of clay they use – and the pride she felt when talking about our big blocks of clay. (JH18/11/2013)

Even when entries in the project journal were no longer required, Hannah nevertheless continued:

Visiting teachers – all comments about Art exhibition. All marvelled at their individuality & creative names. The main question – ‘was it a lot of work?! (JH14/11/2013)

Just prior to the program’s completion Hannah accessed a session with R:

Came away from meeting feeling re-invigorated. PL? As a teacher you really need the chance to have professional discussions away from the pressures of work. (JH20/11/2013)

Following the end-of-program dinner with participants, she wrote:

Our dinner – great to bounce ideas off others. Cemented the importance of the program. Without the ongoing support/advice it would have been difficult to sustain an art focus. It would be easy to become lost in everything that has to be done. (JH18/12/2013)
7.9 Evaluation

When the end of the program period approached, R asked Hannah to evaluate any potential broader benefits to her Visual Arts teaching during the project. Hannah referred initially to the children’s increasingly diversified use of language emanating from using the language of Art:

*Success with language is not just with themselves but they’re teaching the parents. A lot of the feedback was with parents … parents wrote, ‘I love them sharing their knowledge of the primary colours’…not ‘I love them sharing their knowledge about red, blue and yellow’ it was ‘primary colours’… using the term. It’s moving to other areas. (M18/9/2013)*

*Using the language of Art, I’ve noticed now that we’ve started to talk about farms so yesterday we talked about the questions that we might have about that – it was hysterical. [One said] ‘Why do pigs like mud?’ and someone said ‘It’s sunscreen!’ We watched a film about harvesting so I said ‘I think we need to write in our dictionaries’. We wrote ‘harvester’ and ‘incubator’… I’m sure all this has come from the Art and using all those big words and me assuming now that they can use these big words and know the meaning. (M18/9/2013)*

*They can see their own progression … It’s very exciting but I’m finding with the Language [it] was really clear when we started the farm work that they had seen themselves as being capable of using this language, these big words that only adults use. (M18/9/2013)*

The post program interview afforded a more ‘in depth’ opportunity for Hannah to reflect on whether the program had both, in Rogers’s (1969) terms, illuminated ‘the dark area of ignorance’ she was experiencing and built ‘meaning … into the whole experience’ for her (Rogers, 1969: 5). Her comment ‘You’ve changed me, you’ve changed the way I’ve approached it’ certainly reflected the program’s success from her perspective as learner. She expressed gratitude for her participation: ‘Hasn’t it been amazing? I’m so grateful for the opportunity’ (I6/12/2013). Identifying several elements which contributed to this outcome, Hannah said:

*I think it was a good time; being my second year I had a little bit more of an idea of what I wanted to do; what did and didn’t work. I had excellent groups [of children]. I had an excellent assistant and a very supportive Principal and I think just having that push off when you said*
'Have you thought about this?’ ... I’ve gone with that and run with it. (I6/12/2013)

She isolated a further important factor: ‘I’m lucky, I’m in an Early Childhood School; they get preschool’ (I6/12/2013), reflecting that teachers in other preschool settings might not be as fortunate.

Hannah acknowledged that ‘It’s been lovely for myself’ but also that ‘I can see how I started off and it [was] a little bit apologetic.’ (I6/12/2013)

Art wasn’t my strength so I wouldn’t have brought it to the forefront, I just wouldn’t have. It would have been something I would always have had there for children. I would have been happy for someone to show me what to do. (I6/12/2013)

She referred to her previous attitude to Visual Arts as essentially passive: ‘Would you like to paint on the easel?’ then ‘That’s fine, off you go.’ (I6/12/2013) She admitted that

Before, [they] would have gone away thinking Art was quite fun; I don’t think they’d have learnt a great deal; I don’t think they would have seen that I particularly value it. (I6/12/2013)

She evidenced markers of her new approach:

I’ve changed my documentation style – little steps – I was particularly proud of a piece I did on the two boys in the clay and I thought it just summed it up. (I6/12/2013)

I have been sharing a lot of my documentation with [two teachers]; they are both more artistic than I am – than I was. (I6/12/2013)

I’ve come to the children as enthusiastic and confident with it and that’s why they’ve run with it.’ (I6/12/2013)

Now I’m first, front and centre when it comes to Art – I’m in the middle of it and I’m making things and the children are seeing that. (I6/12/2013)

Hannah acknowledged the confidence building effect from the validation her approach received from other staff and families:
When I started to do it I got such positive feedback from families and such positive feedback from staff and some of the families are really difficult and it flipped their view of what we did in preschool and then they thought there is real learning associated with the Visual Arts. (16/12/2013)

*I can see a switch in parents’ attitudes: not one commented on mud on shoes. This is gradual; I once would have been apologising … now it’s ‘this is what we do’!* (16/12/2013)

It was clear that the children’s responses drove and reaffirmed Hannah’s belief in the Visual Arts while also giving her the delight and energy to pursue her goals:

*[I was] really touched by one little boy, very quiet, very shy. He did a painting of his brother – a blob then he had a beautiful discussion with his mum about it and he kept going back to it. Now he makes something and says, ‘Will you take my photo?’ He’s never asked before. The interest that parents have shown in his work, have listened to his story, opened up this whole new realm for him and it was really lovely. ‘Of course, I’ll take your photo’. I took five thousand!* (M21/8/2013)

*My little boys both have incredibly bad speech impediments; one has a stutter; one mispronounces words all the time and there they were with the clay and with each other and we had half an hour of the most fluent conversation I’ve ever heard from these two, trying to negotiate to make the clay as thin as possible.* (16/12/2013)

Marvelling at the results she described as ‘joyous and fluent outcomes’, Hannah delighted as the two boys initiated a ‘play date’, each asking their parents to exchange telephone numbers (16/12/2013).

Reflecting, she said:

*If I have the preschool class again there are things I’d like to do from the very beginning and Art would be my focus from the very beginning because things I have to sell to families and to the Executive I can go through Art because it all happens through Art.* (12/2013)

R suggested that, given Hannah’s significant investment of thought and energy into her Visual Arts teaching throughout the project, she might have made the same progress without its support. Her reply was emphatic:
No, no, I wouldn’t have because, you know how crowded this curriculum is and how much pressure there is on other things.’ (16/12/2013)

I can say all these things now but I wouldn’t have done it if I hadn’t been in the program because it wouldn’t have been in the forefront of my thinking. Open Day and all those things we did, I wouldn’t have done it. You’ve changed me, you’ve changed the way I’ve approached it. (IH16/12/2013)

Hannah’s was convinced this change resulted from participation in the program and this was reinforced by her Principal who wrote thanking R and claiming that the experience had

… created and instilled a new energy, confidence and passion in the teaching of Visual Arts for [Hannah]. In addition, it has equipped her with the theory base necessary for developing and implementing effective programs that explicitly teach children a range of mediums, techniques and age appropriate theory through an integrated approach. (Appendix P)
CHAPTER 8 PATHWAYS FROM DESPAIR TO DELIGHT: STEPHANIE

8.1 Facing facts

Unlike Hannah, who lacked confidence in teaching Visual Arts but was only in her second year of teaching, Stephanie was an experienced preschool teacher. It was confronting for her to realize that she had, earlier in her career, felt competent to teach Visual Arts but that her confidence had been eroded:

*The big importance is no time with our assistants and no time for their preparation. It’s with the union now at present it’s the discretion of the Principals - time issues and responsibilities. I had to get to the point where before my holiday I was just going through the motions.*

(M14/8/2013)

*Small group work – I need to get back to this in my teaching.*

(JSt5/7/2013)

*Finding time for small group work is hard…I hate the gallery space. Cluttered and uninviting in our room.*

(JSt5/8/2013)

Despite her lack of teaching confidence Stephanie assertively affirmed *quality* Visual Art for children and deprecated some so-called ‘Art’ activities irrespective of their widespread appeal:

*There were these visitors and there were these stencils of a tree and the children had [to] just put this brown everywhere and this green. And [the parents] LOVED it.*

(M13/8/2013)

She admitted to R that she had planned to start the year differently but that her resolve had ‘lapsed’. As mentioned earlier, Rogers (1969) argues that significant learning requires personal involvement in which ‘the whole person in both his feeling and cognitive aspects [is] in the learning event’ (Rogers, 1969:5). For Stephanie at this point, cognition might have led change but feeling was clearly not *in sync:*

*I’ve got this tiredness, you know, for the whole idea that literacy and numeracy, literacy and numeracy, literacy and numeracy; it’s almost like I’m brain washed into that – you’re fighting really what a preschool*
child is needing [from] a program. For me, aesthetics is what I'm about [but] it's not seen as important any more. (M3/8/2013)

8.2 Seeking direction

Initially, Stephanie sensed a lack of direction:

Feeling a bit unsure of which direction to head in – thought ‘What is an artist’ but needs to be simpler than this – firstly I need to get children to really ‘Look’ and examine artwork. Will start doing this. (JSt2/8/2013)

She perceived challenges:

Even in my holiday I reflected ‘OK, how am I going to make this manageable and satisfactory for me as teacher’ – not just, you know, ‘manageable’. (JSt1/8/2013)

My hope is if I can display children’s work in a meaningful way to them … many parents may see that as Art. (M13/8/2013)

Notwithstanding, early in the collaboration she drew on successful past experiences to imagine change:

I have spent time thinking about what kind of visual arts experiences I will offer from this point on …thought back to quality experiences I have offered before and considered how with ‘new eyes’ I may introduce these. (JSt29/7/2013)

Nevertheless, she continued to seek approval from R who recommended a step-by-step approach:

It’s a big task; change is always difficult but it can be done, but not all at once, and best done with cooperation from colleagues. (M13/8/2013)

Stephanie invited R to the playroom to assist her in checking layout and supply of Visual Arts materials. Reaching out to R in this way indicated Roger’s (1969) self-initiation while using R as a ‘flexible resource’ demonstrated a further Rogerian element of learning. The room was cluttered with furniture, objects, Art materials and wall displays, many of which were above child viewing height. R suggested Stephanie actively engage with her dissatisfaction:
[R] came to preschool [and] talked more about displaying of children’s art work. We walked around the room and [R] expressed exactly how I felt. Have always felt in the past my room was inviting, aesthetically pleasing to the children and child centred. It is nothing like that now. (M8/8/2013)

In embracing these conversations, Stephanie’s emotions began to engage - ‘Feeling sad about my practise [sic] today’ (JSt8/8/2013), suggesting a realignment of the cognitive and feeling aspects (Rogers, 1969) towards positive personal involvement.

Certainly, it seemed a turning point had been reached; Stephanie alluded to her re-evaluation of previous teaching methods, acknowledging progress:

After last meeting I felt a bit sad – you pointed out ways that I know and am totally at ease with so that [it was as if I] had come in with new eyes. (M14/8/2013)

Further, following her sorrowful admission that the layout of the shared teaching space was not optimal, she responded to R’s entreaty to also consider a child’s eye view when displaying art work. This sharing of thoughts and emotions (Rogers 1969) led to ‘Idea for Art Studio’ (Plate 8.2.1) which appeared in her journal as a double page rough sketch (JSt10/8/2013).
In pursuit of this goal Stephanie met with the preschool staff to plan an Art space incorporating a studio:

*We said ‘How can we make this work?’ so we’re having a little teachers’ meeting ‘specially about Art. What we want it to be [is] something that’s manageable.* (M14/8/2013)

She formulated a goal focusing on parents: ‘Work with parents to articulate/explain the value of Arts’ (JSt5/7/2013) and disciplined herself to make changes despite time constraints: ‘Starting on Monday morning we’ll have small groups. No excuses now – we need to make the time.’ (JS1/8/2013). Stephanie’s heightened personal involvement embodied Rogerian (1969) elements of ‘self-initiation’ as well as ‘personal involvement’ in learning.

### 8.3 Recognising barriers

Despite the ever-present time issues Stephanie documented her progress in her journal:
*Felt confident and was happy with [the Art] experience. Finding time for small group work is hard.* (JSt5/8/2013)

Initially offering only Visual Art experiences suggested by R, she began to initiate her own ideas (Rogers, 1969, second principle):

*Then [I] spontaneously offered dye with these brushes on large paper. Children were totally engrossed. Felt like I hit the mark today.* (JSt7/8/2013)

Stephanie shared information about the program with parents and received positive feedback. She awarded an ‘A plus to the generous and willing parent group’ who were ‘excited about the project and its association with ANU’ (Meeting, 8/8/2013). She continued to document the children’s progress: ‘Colour mixing a success’ and noted ‘an amazing result with pastel work on paper’ (M8/8/2013) during which attempts to expand language were successful: ‘I was trying to talk about line; they had to have symbolic, representative pattern, [for] some of them ‘swirl’ is a word they love’ (M8/8/2013). Stephanie stated confidently that the children’s discussion was self-directed, important and consistent with her philosophy: ‘There was language exchange, and the results were not product driven.’ (M8/8/2013) She expressed hopes for change, especially in relation to increasing parental understanding of children’s Art:

However, her progress was by no means linear. The Principal had approved the project, assisted R to identify potential participants and evidenced interest in Visual Arts himself, having completed a Master’s study on clay use with young children but when R suggested harnessing this expertise, Stephanie’s quick response was: ‘No, we couldn’t.’ (M2/8/2013) She intimated that she wished to introduce clay herself but, when R pursued the potential value of his interest, she remained obdurate: ‘He’s so busy, I’ve been waiting for months to get time with him and yesterday I had fifteen minutes’ (M20/6/2013). After discussion, it transpired that hoped for changes in the school - preschool relationship and focus had been dashed. While agreeing that these were still possible, she acknowledged that, to achieve ongoing success, she would need support from teaching colleagues in the primary school – especially Kindergarten teachers at
school entry level. In the short term, however, and with R’s encouragement, she decided to focus on her own teaching of Visual Arts.

8.4 The turning point

In keeping with this resolution Stephanie demonstrated further ‘self-initiation’, the second stage of Rogers’s (1969) experiential learning. With the involvement of the children and her assistant, Stephanie made changes to her Art space:

_"I am so excited to see how the children will respond to this new space which now contains areas to paint, draw, construct, model etc. The whole room feels better."_ (M14/8/2013)

Stephanie recorded encouraging responses from children:

_"Children are using the studio space well and relishing in the fact they have access to everything in one space."_ (JSt23/8/2013)

As each change was implemented, Stephanie examined results and documented her increasing confidence thereby displaying ‘evaluation by the learner’, Roger’s (1969) fourth principle:

_"Feeling more confident as the days go on that I am being more intentional about my teaching of the visual arts."_ (JSt14/8/2013)

Although she still followed R’s suggestions closely, incorporating the need to encourage children’s independence with Art materials to promote their development, her observations suggest that she had internalized the rationale:

_"Already in the very short time I can see how the children can use this space effectively without crossing the room – we’re trying to set up independence."_ (M14/8/2013)

R asked if the changes she had implemented had allowed her to enjoy teaching more: ‘Loving it! It was like we’re dancing – working beautifully.’ (M14/8/2013)

_"Children are using the studio space well and relishing the fact that they have access to everything in one space. A child made a painting this week called ‘Flower rain’ and asked if we could hang it in the gallery for people to look at."_ (JSt23/8/2013)
Fortuitously the opportunity to apply for a tandem teaching position in ‘an amazing preschool’ where ‘great thought [is] given to Visual Arts and Reggio philosophy’ (M24/8/2013) presented itself. Stephanie applied and reported excitedly:

*Up until a few months ago I would never [have] had the confidence to apply for such a position but since working with [R] I have found some of my old ‘mojo’ and more so am leaping at this opportunity I have been looking for to find new pathways in my career. Very, very, very EXCITED.* (M24/8/2013)

In terms of Rogers’s (1969) fifth element of experiential learning, Stephanie’s own evaluation was that the program was meeting her needs and moving her in directions she perceived to be both satisfying and appropriate.

### 8.5 The ‘impossible’ becomes possible

Following the visit to Ciara’s preschool, Stephanie recorded that the informal discussion there had given her renewed confidence in her belief in the value of individual work:

*Very inspirational. Talked afterwards with [R] and [Hannah]. This was a wonderful conversation that has [raised] my confidence even further in deciding to support children in creating their own individual canvasses for the art fair in October.* (JSt27/8/2013)

With a renewed and positive approach to the upcoming Art exhibition, Stephanie determined to meet her self-imposed standard of presentation in a short time frame: ‘I will also ensure there [sic] art work is labelled and ‘named’. I think I can do it – have 4 weeks’ (JSt28/8/2013). She had observed how the set-up of Ciara’s preschool room complemented Ciara’s philosophy and expressed shared belief in the value of play in children’s learning: ‘The environment there, the way everything was set up – it rang true with [her] philosophy of play based-learning’ (17/11/2013). She used her journal as an aide memoire: ‘tinkering’, ‘exploring’, ‘process not product’, ‘building awareness and relationships with that material’ and ‘acknowledging creativity and stories’ (JSt23/8/2013):
I think [play-based learning] is a catch phrase that everyone just uses because they think if they say ‘We’re PBL’ then that’s it. It’s not, actually. That worries me as a professional because the meaning is getting lost. It’s very interesting when you talk to someone: ‘Oh yes, my centre’s play based but then you actually visit their setting or even … and you think ‘Um, OK, it means different things to different people’. (I17/11/2013)

Stephanie suggested an outdoor venue for one meeting, private discussion being important to her. Indoors, the studio space was ‘all set up and running beautifully’ with children enjoying their new independence with materials (M13/9/2013). Stephanie talked positively about progress and reported children’s new colour discernment: ‘Children mix their own and have their own jars. “That’s not the green I chose – see it’s not the right green” ’ (M13/9/2013).

The new Arts based program had conferred ‘meaning’ on her practice in the Rogerian sense:

I myself have been busy working alongside [R] (ANU Researcher) learning more about programming visual arts experiences that truly allow your children to fully develop their skills and abilities in this incredibly important area of the curriculum. (Stephanie’s Newsletter, 2013)

I have had the opportunity to visit several other early childhood settings and galleries and present to colleagues the changes I am making to benefit the children. (Stephanie’s Newsletter, 2013)

With the clarity and vision of an advocate, she articulated the background and rationale for integrating Visual Arts:

Some of the thinking behind this data shows a complete lack of training in this area at the university level and an educational system that is too heavily geared towards literacy and numeracy and ignoring the crucial stages of development of young children … Due to lack of training, early childhood educators are not understanding the important foundations that the visual arts provide especially when considering the incredible links to learning that can be made with science, literacy and numeracy. (Stephanie’s Newsletter, 2013)

Not merely ‘talking the talk’, however, Stephanie’s journal records her work with children and that she was ‘pleasantly surprised’ at the detail children created in
their Art pieces. ‘One child, “F”, worked on a collage for 50 minutes!!’ (JSt5/9/2013). The ‘brave’ approach she had advocated paid off as she communicated with staff over the vexed issue of ‘Art’ versus ‘Craft’:

[My assistant] has been really supportive. I’ve felt confident and strong in explaining my reasoning behind this approach, noting the difference between ‘Art’ and ‘Craft’. (JSt5/9/2013)

Other educators evinced interest although some questioned introducing canvasses for children’s painting. Stephanie’s journal, however, recorded her confidence in the appropriateness of her approach:

The other educators have been asking me lots of questions about my approach to ‘the canvasses’. They have wished me good luck saying I am brave to take on such a project. My reply was, ‘Once you see children being capable and confident learners the sky is the limit’. (JSt5/9/2013)

She notes that parents, too, had become ‘intrigued’:

Some have commented on the language children are using about Art – they are obviously taking this home which is great!! (JSt5/9/2013)

Over that week Stephanie’s journal detailed her teaching and children’s responses. ‘Pervasive learning’ (Rogers 1969) was now demonstrated with new independence, full involvement and the claim that she was ‘Thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking.’ (JSt12/9/2013)

When R reminded Stephanie she had previously suggested ‘What seems impossible might become possible’, she replied:

Very much so. I was getting too precious, not taking the risks, becoming a ‘parent pleaser’ – dare I say a ‘Principal pleaser’? (M13/9/2013)

Importantly, Stephanie evaluated her progress (Rogers (1969) principle four), suggesting that she had regained both her former direction and standard of teaching. Clearly, the project was ‘meaningful to the learner’ (Rogers (1969) principle five)
These are the programs we used to run; I had just lost my way; this has been a career changing event.’ (M13/9/2013)

As well as this new energy, Stephanie was also sustained by her memory of the visit to Ciara’s preschool room:

*She had that amazing way of following children’s interests but in really meaningful ways – not just themes. Calmness, passion for what she does … it didn’t look like ‘well this is what we all did’… so much more creative than ‘I’ll read a book then you draw a picture.’*(M13/9/2013)

### 8.6 Realization: ‘This is what Art should look like’

Stephanie’s exhibition referenced an actual gallery, every work being titled by the artist and with the artist’s name, as well as media used, displayed on a wall text. Importantly, given her need to ‘sell’ Visual Arts to other staff and families, she composed a catalogue of work which included a statement about her involvement in the ANU Research project:

*This week the children have delighted in the naming of their artwork. This is so precious as they are really thinking about their piece and personalising by giving it a name.* (JSt24/9/2013)

*I am so proud of them and can’t wait to pull it all together in the exhibition.* (JSt23/9/2013)

Delighted by the notion of ‘refreshing one’s eyes’ which emanated from a discussion with R, Stephanie utilised the phrase in naming her display ‘Refreshen [sic] the Eye’:

*It lends itself to the idea of children seeing themselves as capable and as adults for us to respect this and let them own their art. Adults will have the opportunity to ‘Refreshen their eyes’ and see what the children are capable of doing.* (JSt16/9/2013)

No longer overwhelmed, she challenged the rigid expectations of the primary school Art show organisers’ directions while yet working within their parameters. Using the exact number of boards given to her for a self-portrait by each child, she defiantly utilised some to present pithy and relevant Art quotes to place alongside children’s work to attract the attention of viewers. This ‘difference in
behaviour’, possibility even in personality, is consistent with Rogers third defining element:

Researched some more quotes today about the importance of visual arts and young children. I found ‘5’ that I think will be quite symbolic to the display. I ended up printing them off, sticking them to the small canvass then doing a wash over the top. They look great! 😊 (JSt21/10/2013)

Despite this new certainty, Stephanie nevertheless felt tense as the exhibition approached:

Feeling a little nervous about how I am going to display the children’s art work. I don’t want to do something that will detract from their beautiful work … This is getting quite serious now. (JSt24/9/2013)

‘Still working really well at preschool’, she involved children in her plans to set up the exhibition as an Art gallery with a catalogue of work:

I showed the children the catalogue today that displays their art work – they were very excited. (JS22/10/2013)

It being Spring, the magpies were swooping so Stephanie drew on this interest and provided new media to encourage language, expression and drawing. While preparing for the exhibition she integrated Art with Language:

This week there were many conversations about ‘Swooping Magpies’. I bought in a model of a magpie and sat it in a real nest. I then introduced ‘Charcoal’ to the children as a different media. They were keen to explore the charcoal and created some amazing pictures. (JSt22/10/2013)

‘TODAY IS THE DAY!’ (JSt25/10/2013). Her journal contains a full account of the day when the results of her approach to teaching Visual Arts were on public view:

9.00am

Got up early and recruited my daughter and husband to help me with the display. Everything worked really well – the panels stuck to the wall, the artwork stuck to the panels and everything looked amazing. We secured the back wall to the hall so it was a great focal point. Please don’t fall down.
10.30 am

As the other art work was being displayed I got a bit nervous – ours was the only display that had a piece that looked different [for] each child. ‘What if the families hated it?’ So I had to remind myself this was the whole point of the exhibition. Gathered my thoughts and went home to change.

5.00 pm

The children slowly started to drift through with their families. The reaction was priceless. They were so proud, talking to their mums, dads, grandmas, aunts, uncles, siblings about what the name of their piece was and how they had made it. Some came back twice to have another look and bring different people with them. (JSt25/10/2013)

Thoughtful planning and weeks of reflection, documentation and bold decision-making paid off; the final well organised and visually appealing exhibition of highly original work was supported by wall texts designed for adult viewers and a catalogue of children’s work for visitors (Plate 8.6.1).

Plate 8.6.1  The Art show with extended information and catalogues
Stephanie felt a sense of accomplishment which, she argued, emanated from her new style of teaching:

7.00 pm

I was completely buggered but felt really happy that I had done it! Real sense of accomplishment. This was very different to last year’s exhibition that just came and went with little acknowledgement or conversation – I’m definitely a changed teacher. (JSt25/10/2013)

One particular thing sticks in my mind as it caused a flutter of controversy. Another ECE [Early Childhood Educator] fell so in love with our exhibition that she (quite vocally) remarked, ‘This is what art should look like.’ A few others gathered round including [the Principal] to listen to what she had to say. At that point I could have cried as I felt it was so amazing that there was somebody else acknowledging the importance of just letting the children have a go to create their own art work. She took my email and said she would love to get a copy of the documentation displayed with the artwork. (JSt25/10/2013)

Several weeks later, Stephanie recalled the visitor (M), drawing attention to the formal, repetitive work of older, Primary school children in order to contrast the individuality of the pre-schoolers’ Art:

This whole thing unfolded at the exhibition where this conversation between this particular person who was quite vocal saying [of the formal work] ‘It’s basically children doing the same thing in a particular pattern’ and [the Principal] had to be very diplomatic and say ‘Well this is about showing skills da da, da da’ but it was NOT children expressing themselves. (I17/11/2013)

At the exhibition M had identified herself as a Macquarie University graduate in Early Childhood Education who later emailed Stephanie (Appendix Q):

Your piece was simple, factual and yet it ticked all the boxes for exactly what would have scored high marks at uni. I truly think you have a strong grasp of the process. (E1/11/2013)

In this supportive message to Stephanie M recognised ‘a strong sense of the children’s personal decision making and agency’ and understood the value of Stephanie’s work in developing children’s thinking and technique:
There is a very strong message within the whole process of awakening children’s ability and consciousness of art as well as their personal competence in decision making, individuality and creativity … I hope you had lots of community response. (E1/11/2013)

While this was the only formal response from someone outside the school, it clearly vindicated Stephanie’s approach and made her feel ‘like the whole effort was worthwhile’ (EST1/11/2013). This expression of ‘learning which is meaningful to the learner’ and built into Stephanie’s experience is consistent with Roger’s (1969) fifth principle.

8.7 Moving forward: Presenting the project to colleagues

At the PTPA meeting at which the three teachers spoke, Stephanie introduced the project by sharing her pre-program lack of confidence:

\[
I \text{ came into this project feeling quite flat as a teacher. I think I was starting to become influenced/blindsided by other practises [sic] which were ‘not me’ but were all about ‘Primary and parent pleasing’ programs. I had lost my confidence. (PSt19/9/2013)}
\]

\[
As a sector I have been worried about this for a long while. We are just so consumed by other influences that I (and I’m sure others) are starting to move away from our own beliefs about how children learn. It is hard to stay strong when majority rules. I was presenting ‘craft’ oriented programs as opposed to art. (PSt19/9/2013)
\]

She described her watershed moment when, after looking at the playroom with new eyes, she had ‘cried all the way home’ (N19/9/2013). R had been unaware of this reaction and later expressed concern but Stephanie reassured her saying ‘I was just crying with relief’ (N19/9/2013), suggesting the significance of this as a circuit breaker in the involvement of her feelings as well as her cognition (Rogers, 1969).

The audience listened intently as Stephanie described her trajectory:

\[
I \text{ had [a] weekly meeting with [R] to work through the obstacles and [I] found that I was starting to discover my love of teaching the visual arts again. I was becoming more confident and my creative side really started to flow. The programs just evolved with the children. (PSt19/9/2013)}
\]
She described her decision to allow time with children, achieved by eliminating time spent on intensively documenting children’s behaviour into ‘Learning Stories’:

*I gave up learning stories for this term and spent time in conversations with the children, listening to them, nurturing relationships and developing meaningful programs based around their interests but with definite purpose and intent on my part as an educator.* (PSt19/9/2013)

She confirmed that she had now re-established her belief in the philosophy and practices of Reggio Emilia and found value in all aspects of the program:

*I had to go back to my roots which were primarily Reggio driven. [R] helped me do this through mentoring, gallery visits, and providing me with literature and at times, the raw truth…My weekly reflection journal and meeting with other colleagues… were so valuable and played an integral part in this change.* (PSt9/9/2013)

Stephanie elucidated her progress:

*This involved a lot of individual and small group work and the learning that took place was incredible. Children were seeing themselves as artists – capable and confident learners, exploring several different media which at times raised some debates with colleagues e.g. ‘Yes we are offering paints everyday morning and afternoon’ and ‘I’m sorry that the clay is messy but I see it as an integral part of our program’. Finally I felt like I was making progress.* (PSt19/9/2013)

She shared her children’s exhibition work with the group. Her chosen examples were colourful, individual, varied, technically competent and employed a range of media and drew a highly appreciative response from the audience.

In concluding, Stephanie was adamant about the value of the project to her and to the wider preschool sector:

*It has opened up so many questions for me as an educator and also for our Preschool sector as a whole.* (PSt19/9/2013)

*I can’t thank R enough for allowing me to go through this journey with her … Thanks R for helping me get my ‘mojo’ back. I just wish you all had the opportunity to have R in your preschool.* (PSt19/9/2013)
Following the presentation she emailed R:

> I spoke passionately about the project because that is how I feel about it – it has given me a new way forward with my teaching.  
> (ES\textit{t}20/9/2013)

Stephanie thus evaluated her move away from what Rogers describes as a ‘dark area of ignorance’. R responded:

> You are inspirational! That art work is amazing! I know we’re not after ‘product’ but as a form of documentation of children’s engagement with Art materials it cannot fail to draw a positive reaction.  
> (E26/9/2013)

Her renewed determination and confidence did not cease with sympathetic and interested responses from colleagues. Indeed, at an end of year meeting with the Principal, Stephanie presented an Action Research Plan she had conducted around Literacy, focussing on language building as the foundation of her Visual Arts program:

> I had documented language children use along with new words e.g. colours, aqua, magenta etc. Also talked a lot about how a drawing was one of the first forms of literary expression for young children. Of course, he agreed and seemed pleased with my findings.  
> (JSt31/10/2013)

At years’ end Stephanie felt triumphant – she had impressed the Principal and she felt he had listened to her:

> He asked me ‘Where to next?’ and I discussed with him my aims for PT\textit{P}A, the preschool team and the possibility of presenting at the E\textit{C}A [Early Childhood Australia] conference.  
> (JSt31/10/2013)

These plans and aspirations clearly indicate the pervasiveness, in the Rogerian (1969) sense, of her learning over the three months of the program.

### 8.8 ‘On track’ once more

In evaluating the significance and value of the program for her, Stephanie’s sense of ‘meaning’ (Rogers, 1969) was palpable as she spoke for herself and others, acknowledging the value of participation as if it were ongoing:
for me this is social and among colleagues – as you know we gain so much. (I17/11/2013)

We were starting to do parent pleasing programs – you know, make sure if the parents are happy, everyone’s happy but we all know at the end of the day that’s not necessarily what’s best for the children and their learning. (I17/11/2013)

I think it was the conversations with [R] that was a definite starting point. It was bringing things to my attention that I guess were always there but I was almost too scared to acknowledge I was going down a path that was not really me. (I17/11/2013)

She re-iterated earlier comments that the project had reinvigorated her teaching; she anticipated even longer term professional benefit:

I think it’s the way it’s been set up, posing the question, lots of thingss. It’s hard to explain exactly but all I can say is I’m much more interested in this now and much more capable than...I think it’s purposeful and it gives me some direction in my career. (I17/11/2013)

It’s very much about letting go, letting the children be their own artists and it’s not about product... it’s given me the opportunity to, I guess, learn a lot more about children’s Art. (I17/11/2013)

It’s given me the opportunity to explore what I want as an Early Childhood teacher and what I hope the sector, in the future will continue like. In the sense that there has been a sense of loss, I know other colleagues are feeling like we’re implementing programs that are ‘ticking the boxes’ but perhaps not really addressing the needs and interests of the children and our own philosophies. (I17/11/2013)

Stephanie felt that the program had expanded both her personal and professional interest in the Visual Arts:

It’s fair to say I’ve always had an interest in the Visual Arts but this has taken it to a whole new level – I’m looking at things in a whole new light. In particular, the way I offer things to children and what I offer to children and then how I go about getting to the point of ‘Well this is what we’re going to do today’. I found even that, personally, in my own life, I have a better understanding behind why the artist put something or used a particular colour or used particular media to express a thought so from a personal perspective I’m a lot more ‘cultured’. (I17/11/2013)
When I first started the project I was hoping to gain, perhaps, a little bit more knowledge and understanding about working with [the Visual Arts]. Just the language – that’s something I’ve always struggled a bit with – I was hoping [to understand] ‘line’, ‘shape’. What do they mean when they say that? Now I can use that in a confident way so that I’m saying the right thing … so as far as all of that goes I feel a lot more confident in delivering those kind of programs that require you to use that information and I think it becomes a lot more authentic for the children. (I17/11/2013)

… having gone through this process with the children it’s made me realise that it’s the little things, really you need to listen to the children and allow them the opportunity to use the different media, express themselves in a way they want to, not with definite ideas in your head about how you think they’re going to do something so I’ve been giving them a bit more freedom which is something I thought I always did but I realise now I was [formerly] setting things up [to produce results]. (I17/11/2013)

Her new approach to learning and teaching had re-invigorated her confidence and she indicated she had no doubt her learning had been ‘built into the whole experience’ (Rogers, 1969)

I feel really confident and strong and a big part of that is being able to express it to other people. That’s something I had, in the past, found hard. Now I’m almost at the point – I know this sounds a bit arrogant – but ‘Do you know what? I actually know about this now; I know what I’m doing, I don’t need your approval’. I was trying to people please too much … I was losing my own ability so [there is a] ‘need to be brave in this sector’. (I17/11/2013)

The biggest thing though, is giving me my confidence back again to just have a Visual Arts based program that is my starting point now and everything else just branches off that. (I17/11/2013)

In terms of planning Stephanie had high hopes for change which she attributed to the program:

It’s because of you it will be different – quite different. It’s going to, quite obviously, be quite dependent on the group but I think I understand the developmental aspects a little bit more so what I introduce at the beginning of [the] next year compared to the end of this year will be quite different. I think my expectations of the children, also, have changed. (I17/11/2013)
As you know, a huge part of me is the setting and the environment. The environment needs to be set up so children can be independent in getting things and using them. (I17/11/2013)

Another big thing is the parents … They have been very interested in this project and … were constantly asking questions and the exhibition at the end was ‘Wow! I can see what you’ve been doing.’ I’m thinking I will just bring everything together …. you know now that I have a lot more confidence in being able to understand the Visual Arts, that’s going to be of great use next year because I’m going to be able to say ‘Well look, we’ve actually got these brushes and they’re not that great. I was wondering if I could spend some money on this’ and give the reasons why so in that way it will look different. (I17/11/2013)

For Stephanie the program was a self-confessed game changer and testimony to the value of Rogers’s (1969) experiential learning model:

I was looking for something like this to put my energy into, to get me excited about teaching again and I found it. (I17/11/2013)

Stephanie had moved from ‘the impossible’ to ‘the possible’, aided by the program’s Rogerian approach and supported by her strong basic beliefs in the value of Art for young children and its importance in meaning-making for them. Her re-claimed skills brought new confidence to many aspects of her teaching and, true to her belief in ‘working as a sector’, she emerged from the program with new determination to assist colleagues (I17/11/2013).
9.1 Seeking the right pathway

Sarah’s initial direction was that she would like to ‘do something’ with the community. As part of assisting Sarah to clarify her purpose/s as a learner, (Rogers, 1969) R contacted artist and educator David Sequeira, who lived close to the preschool. Sequeira reported a vibrant local Arts community and named artists living in the school catchment area, some of national and international standing, whom he considered could be likely participants in an Arts-based collaboration with the preschool. This might, he said, build on a previous ‘grass roots’ Arts festival held in the local shopping centre and lauded by Robin Archer, then Creative Director, Centenary of Canberra, who planned to emulate it. There would be ideal opportunities, Sequeira believed, to integrate the preschool into a future neighbourhood initiative of this kind.

When R reported this as an exciting prospect and a fortuitous opportunity, Sarah retreated – consistent with Rogers (1969) notion that learners who already feel threatened and inadequate because of a perceived or real deficiency feel doubly so if there is an external threat or pressure:

Met with [R] – reconsidering if community is the right focus.  
(JS22/7/2013)

Sarah then attempted both to justify her position and to articulate what she saw as her teaching needs:

If I was old fashioned I’d have old-fashioned skills.

I need different ideas for starting points and information books and different materials. (M22/7/2013)

Sarah also expressed concern about communication with parents; she wished to facilitate their contribution to Visual Arts. She disparaged their offer to improve the garden as not sufficiently child focussed; R suggested that the offer could be
accepted as a starting point and perhaps linked with Visual Arts but Sarah appeared not to take this possibility on board (M24/7/2013).

R recommended Sarah begin with something as elementary as colour mixing:

*Techniques for V Art; materials. QUALITY materials. Colour mixing, starting with yellow and adding a v small amount of blue, then yellow plus small amount of red etc. AGREED.* (M24/7/2013)

### 9.2 Starting with colour

Sarah’s generic teaching skills were apparent as she applied them in the Art context; in offering shades of one colour, she invited questions and prompted children’s expressive language:

*I found it really hard to only have one colour – so many shades of yellow – initially little interest from the children and then they began to question why? This allowed wonderful language discussion of why they thought and also developed into what the colours made them feel.* (JS29/7/2013)

Her journal records her personal involvement in the learning process (Rogers, 1969) and her capacity to adapt her plans to accommodate the multiple possibilities resulting from the changed Arts focus:

*Due to children’s interest [my] planned one-colour focus was changed – [I] have found it re-inspiring and amazing to take time and reflect on how much the children are gaining from an art focus.*

*They amazingly incorporated the iPads into research on Star Wars and then created life-size replicas using so many elements of their artistic explorations.* (JS5/8/2013)

Her confidence bulwarked by this initial success, Sarah evidenced self-initiated learning (Rogers, 1969):

*Spoke to [R] about actually spending time with the children as they are keen to meet her – I hope the visit is successful – would like her to see how the children inspire and take ideas in different directions.* (JS5/8/2013)
Spoke to the children about [R’s] visit – they have so many ideas and keen to show her their skills. Also noticed a small group who don’t normally use creative resources are choosing to. Continuity with one colour has allowed me to focus on form/line/shape – although I still find it difficult and worry parents may think I’m being lazy! (JS12/8/2013)

Her journal entries focused on Art and revealed Sarah’s developing interest:

Totally spontaneous artistic exploration by the children – talking about beaches (in winter!). The colours they recalled – then began mixing and exploring the shades of the beach – amazing to listen to how much language they used and scientific thinking of the colour exploration. (JS22/7/2013)

Wow [they] certainly put on a show for [R] – initially using one colour with thick and thin brushes – those at the easel spread onto the floor and began making prints…Amazing that they independently said they wished to make art books – again will have to consider how to display and actually make books – allows a great focus on language and link to literacy. (Books coming in different forms.) (JS12/8/2013)

She accepted the challenge that she would ‘need to really think about how to display children’s work and, concomitantly, link it to other aspects of learning.’ (JS5/8/2013) As Sarah came to a new appreciation of Art in her program, she saw anew its potential for social development:

… this is also making me realise art could possibly be central with social [learning] in a quality program. (JS5/8/2013)

9.3 Doubts resurge

Unlike Hannah, whose learning trajectory was fundamentally positive, Sarah’s experiential learning pathway involved numerous see-saws along the way. While she reported she had shared project information with parents with positive results:

Back with the children – shared info on research with families – some positive feedback – from surprising families – (S’s mum eager for him to have exposure as she lacks the knowledge and confidence.) (JS22/7/2013)
her bête noir still loomed:

*How do you sell this to families/school exec? (JS5/8/2013)*

She recognised that the program had rekindled her previous Visual Arts interest:

*Have really realised this experience has allowed me to visit skills/interests from years ago – that have been lost due to other issues. (JS12/8/2013)*

but remained dissatisfied:

*There’s a basic approach that’s not enough. Where can I take it? (M19/8/2013)*

As she prepared for a museum visit with her preschool children she worried that it might not complement her work:

*… lots of reflection is this what I should be offering? We have begun to develop a passion in the children that art is not just painting but many art forms – what if CMAG is stencils and very narrow in focus? (JS19/8/2013)*

although, ultimately, she was reassured:

*Hooray! CMAG covered many aspects of what Visual Art is and it was superb to listen as the children talked so confidently about different aspects and realised that sculptures are also so artistic. (Must remember to value malleable explorations/block models as art.) (JS19/8/2013)*

She was looking forward to visiting Ciara’s preschool:

*Keen to visit [Ciara’s preschool] sounds like it will be inspiring – will be helpful to listen to what Hannah and Stephanie are experiencing. (JS12/8/2013)*

but, in the event, was prevented from doing so by illness.

She recalled earlier teaching practices with nostalgia:

*Really must find some more samples of art to have as part of the learning environment - would be interesting to see if the children notice*
- remember from the UK children [were] really positive – why did I change all this [?] (JS19/8/2013)

However, despite children’s obvious development Sarah experienced difficulty in articulating her approach to, and her faith in, Visual Arts:

… still struggle to be able to really share verbally – need to learn to ‘talk the talk’ with confidence – have witnessed the amazing interest/development in the children – parents positive – but still feel the need to have to justify and explain. (JS19/8/2013)

Her confidence in directing her assistants not to attempt to control children’s Art-making, which had ‘surprised, confused and amused’ them, she judged not to have been successful:

… general discussion is not effective – receiving positive experiences – but their focus reverts to pencil grip and creating something representative. (JS11/9/2013)

However, although her general confidence was building it was not yet robust.

9.4 Taking stock

Struggling to commence Term Three after illness, Sarah continued to make brief and positive journal entries which suggested she was maintaining her Arts momentum. Her journal entries became longer and more descriptive as she charted children’s developing imagination and skills:

Several children asked if they could use sticks in the mud – which developed into a conversation about different mediums to create with.

[I] asked every child to collect some items from the garden and then inside we lay them out – proved to be a focus on how art can be changed and movable and also that looking from different angles offers a different perspective. (JS11/9/2013)

While noting that ‘concrete explorations are more effective in learning’ (JS11/9/2013) she was nonetheless somewhat amazed by children’s discoveries and associated language:
Another surprising element has been the amount of discussion relating to shapes/pattern. On reflection I feel these children have greater understanding of shapes and form than in previous years when we have just talked about shapes and labelled [them]. (JS18/9/2013)

She documented relationships between children fostered through Art opportunities:

Interesting the comparisons the children made within small groups of each other’s creations – great to hear the questioning and positive comments. (JS18/9/2013)

But the next challenge loomed - the mandatory preschool Art show and auction was imminent and Sarah had been pressured to ensure each child produced a self-portrait on one of the small, uniformly sized canvasses provided. Although she did not approve, either this manner of fund-raising or the associated prescriptive requirement, she admitted regret at not having the inner resources to challenge it (JS11/9/2013). However, while acquiescing in the face of the external threat, she did not remove herself from the situation as she had done at the commencement of the program when R suggested community collaboration with local artists. On the contrary, she obeyed the letter of the law – a piece of work from each child – but worked within this framework to pursue her Arts program while building on the interrelatedness of Art and Literacy:

Had a whole group discussion relating to creating a title [for] their creations. This developed into a wonderful literary focus – with discussions about how titles are used – able to revisit some art by famous artists and look at the titles the Van Gogh ‘Starry Night’ proved a favourite. This was then reflected in their own titles – many were descriptions – but others really considered what they had created. (JS11/9/2013)

Her journal focus shifted to the children as she recorded their speech, delighting in their ‘wonderful imagination’ in creating titles for their Art work:

A pattern of stripes and spots

A rainbow in space with aliens

‘Black Hands’ because that’s what I had when I made it – so ‘Black Hands.’ (JS18/9/2013)
As the Visual Arts program expanded, Sarah recorded success in the growth of visual experimentation:

*Have been encouraging sculpture exploration – wonderful way to extend the shape interest into 3D investigation – and to support the children’s ability to visually discriminate.* (JS25/9/2013)

Sarah’s broad understanding of the relationship between Art forms facilitated the extension of children’s creative exploration:

*They have been requesting different music styles – and when not being watched (so they think) moving with expression and clearly listening to the music. (A) and (T) have delighted in this form of creative exploration.* (JS25/9/2013)

Concerned that Sarah’s illness, family demands and a directive from the school to participate in an athletics carnival had impacted negatively on meeting time and hence limited the effectiveness of the program, R invited Sarah to supply a learner’s evaluation (Rogers, 1969). Her response:

*YOU were a sounding board – made me stop and think [and] hone it back to basics to think ‘Oh, it’s OK to do just that’.* (M13/9/2013)

This led R to ask whether she would prefer to proceed independently but she made it very clear that she wished to continue with R as ‘sounding board’ and ‘to give me ideas’ (M13/9/2013).

9.5 Externalizing to colleagues

Sarah’s reflection on the *status quo* of preschool teaching in the ACT:

*The typical ACT preschool set activity [has] lots of transitions – we do this, then this, then this. ACT teachers are in that way of doing things so you have to find time and energy for change.* (M13/9/2013)

This foregrounds both her terror and resolution when it came to the program participants’ presentation to the PTPA. Like Hannah, Sarah needed encouragement to consider its potential but agreed when she realised that ‘many teachers possibly continue to regard visual art as stencils or following a
prescriptive sequence.’ (JS19/9/2013) She read from her paper and explained her decision to participate in the program:

   I felt the research would be very early childhood focused and linked to [my] needs. (JS19/9/2013)

Moreover she had hoped her involvement would offer some Early Childhood focussed professional learning to ‘re-inspire’ her ability to share her passion for Art (JS19/9/2013).

Sarah’s comments on her meetings with R and the subsequent outcomes were, somewhat surprisingly, direct and positive – testimony to R’s successful implementation of Rogers’s (1969) third principle of facilitation – ‘trust in the individual’s desire and motivation to implement [her] purposes meaningfully’ (Rogers, 1969:165).

   I have been lucky as it has felt like having my own professional guide. One of our early meetings was at the portrait gallery and R offered some insight in why and how the curators display pieces of art, I found this very motivating and informative. (JS19/9/2013)

She also proffered a clear explanation for her change of direction early in the program:

   Initially, I asked if we could focus on using art to help with building a community and possibly the wider community. However, as we began to meet regularly I found it more beneficial to ask for ideas on how to use visual arts to inspire those children who were not really involved. (JS19/9/2013)

and explained that, as a result, she had reconsidered the place of Art in children’s learning in the preschool:

   I am a passionate believer in developing the children’s interest and there are many days where our plans go by the wayside as the children develop their own ideas. Sharing these with [R] has allowed me to see that art can be part of these and that other curriculum areas are still being covered. (JS19/9/2013)

   [R] has helped me realise it is ok and important to value the simple aspects of art and that it does not need to be difficult. After sharing the
children’s interest in colour, R suggested focussing on one of the primary colours at a time and this was amazing as the children initially were not interested but then began to discuss the colours, shades and what they thought about the colours. This has developed into colour mixing and some wonderful printing and even the creation of ‘art books’. (JS19/9/2013)

Post-presentation, Sarah’s journal entry was compelling and positive:

*I think the whole project has been an amazing professional experience – through discussion, simple explorations have been able to be developed and become cross curricula explorations.* (JS19/9/2013)

### 9.6 Harnessing the Art Show

The fact that Sarah’s learning now had ‘meaning’ in the Rogerian (1969) context was demonstrable as she

*Began the process of making the shared canvasses for the auction at the art show.* (JSSep2013)

Preparation was very much on her terms. The curiosity and exploration she had been encouraging in the children now fuelled this highly creative project where Sarah demonstrated new confidence as she adapted the directives for participation. Nowhere was there evidence of regulation ‘portraits’ to be made by children. Instead, one group discussed their wishes then chose their media, their tools and their style while demonstrating social skills:

*They decided they wanted the canvas divided into sections – then they chose to create small groups and pairs and took a section. Many interested in using their hands to make shapes – the result was lots of finger paint colour mixing – then the discovery that they could make dots – at one stage the painting looked very aboriginal.* (JSSep2013)

The resulting shared group canvas demonstrated the children’s new confidence in design and use of colour, line and shape (Plate 9.6.1).
Plate 9.6.1  Shared group canvas for the Art show auction.

The children’s work (Plate 9.6.1) was neither derivative nor formulaic; when children who had been absent returned to preschool their contribution, too, was original:

As several children were away we kept some sections for them – surprising how they added a very different exploration through use of shape and pattern – some interesting spirals and decreasing in size circles. (JSSep2013)

Despite her confidence in the children and readiness to let them create independently, Sarah had to hold firm when other staff questioned her approach:

Have had to really restrain other staff not to ‘fix’ as they struggled with the children’s freedom to explore. Again highlights how to inspire them as I and the children feel inspired. (JSSep2013)

A small group began exploring the texture of the thick paint on the canvas – this led to an amazing finger painting exploration. Once again had to restrain other adults not to interfere and to think about their comments. (JSSep2013)
This inspiration continued with a second preschool group who approached the task differently through group explorations:

All wished to work together – initially lots of colours with representations, no sense of group effort, large but not cohesive. (JSSep2013)

Then as a group they shared ideas on what/how to add – independently decided no more hands but thin brushes, cotton buds and runny paint. (JSSep2013)

Result was an amazing creation (Plate 9.6.2) which clearly represented the group of being fast paced, full of ideas and such enthusiasm to explore and be creative. (JSSep2013)

Plate 9.6.2 Exploration of shape and pattern

The Art show was a triumph which eclipsed Sarah’s expectations and elicited an overwhelmingly positive response. Not only did Sarah organise the Art show and auction, she saw further opportunity for children’s creative expression:

During discussion … I floated the idea that maybe we could perform for the families. [Children] very keen to share their dancing skills and chose a CD they love and felt confident with. [One group] asked if they could do a play (I panicked only 3 sessions before event). We discussed how a play needs an idea that becomes a story – there
needs [to be] characters/role. M. disappeared off and returned with the idea for a story – she happily shared this and accepted some of the additions suggested by others. This was typed onto the iPad and roles were filled. A small group decided they would need scenery and chose part of the story to create (a row of houses) while a small group were organising they accepted offers of help – wonderful idea of cutting out photos of everyone’s faces to have in the windows. Also some amazing co-operation in the creation of props – and wonderful to see who supported whom. (JSSep2013)

Sarah advanced discussion by introducing ‘essential roles – backstage and narrator’ (JS/nd/2013). A stage director was introduced and real items sourced for props.

Sarah was worried as the families with whom she most needed to communicate constituted the potential audience, but she persevered and took the risk because of the children’s enthusiasm:

Rehearsals very stressful for me – but the children so keen, really want to perform for the families. (JSSep2013)

It was a two-fold success in that she not only met the fundraising requirements of the school but also demonstrated to parents the children's increasing abilities:

Despite my last minute fears – the families loved the short play and we were astounded by the confidence with which they performed. (JS/nd/2013)

Art show auction – both canvasses sold for $200 – and all parents in awe of what the children had created. (JSSep2013)

Ironically Sarah had, by a circuitous route, also produced a community event. Continuing her journal entries beyond the end of the program, she depicted a burgeoning Visual Arts program. In a final entry in December Sarah, by then demonstrably more confident in Visual Arts, had displayed to families the children’s all-round development which she had promoted through the Arts:

… the art show was a wonderful community celebration of the children and their creations – also became more than an art show but a ‘visual art show’. (JSDec2013)
9.7 Towards a Visual Arts-centred curriculum

Discussions with Sarah were more circumscribed than those with the other teachers because of her personal circumstances as well as demands from the aligned Primary School but she listened intently, embraced suggestions and considered new approaches. Her journal recorded surprise at children’s complete engagement and concomitant benefits:

Wow, have been absolutely astounded by the fascination with the clay … However adding some sponges and water added an extra dimension – lots of descriptive language and problem solving. Children confidently creating sculptures of familiar objects. Wonderful scientific/social/problem solving and messy creation of a waterfall which became a swimming pool … Solved the problem of water leaking by using more clay to build walls and then catching water in pools. (JS27/11/2013)

As the program progressed, Sarah’s journal entries became more focussed, creating a record of the involvement of individual children:

- The children have been independently exploring many aspects.
- F fascinated with patterning and creating titles.
- J, K and B using collage resources to create props for role/imaginative themes.
- A, J and I collecting and incorporating natural items into creative exploration.
- O, S and M combining resources and using iPads to extend their skills.
- A and a small group creating stories to become plays – using their story knowledge but clearly thinking about the audience.
- J has delighted in exploring techniques of real artists – wonderful Matisse and Van Gogh creations.
- A and C dancing with amazing control and emotion to a range of music styles.
- S and A discussed shades of colour – and how they can change by adding other colours.
- Large group using the play dough for more than playdough – talking about shapes and 3D shapes to form.
- O using sticks in such a positive manner.

So successful were Visual Arts learning outcomes in her preschool that Sarah envisaged a future Arts-based curriculum:
Continue to reflect on how easy it has been to inspire the children and how cross-curricula and resources this whole focus has been. In all honesty it would be wonderful to have a visual art centred curriculum. (JS20/10/2013)

To support her conviction, Sarah listed the learning areas covered:

*Have been mentally able to tick that we are covering:*

- Language/[Literature]
- Maths (shape pattern/size)
- Technology (iPods)
- Creative/imagination
- Science
- Social
- Community
- Children’s interest/voice
- Fine/large motor [skills]
- Cognitive/problem solving (JS20/10/2013)

### 9.8 The learner evaluates

Sarah’s view of the value of the program and its value to her as an experiential learner (Rogers, 1969) was unequivocal:

* I learnt more, was supported more, than any time since teaching in the UK. (JR19/12/2013)*

*You were the starting point for me to stop and think ‘OK, I know I can be brave enough’. (M4/5/2015)*

She confidently declared her future intentions:

*Began this whole project looking to revisit my past interest in art – and have amazingly realised how art is accessible to everyone and it is a wonderful way of building confidence in so many children. Really believe from term 1 in 2014 will attempt a visual art centred curriculum. (JSDec2013)*

At the formal evaluation meeting, the sense of personal dissonance (Festinger, 1957) which had created her sense of professional isolation was re-visited. Festinger’s (1962) theory refers to situations embodying conflicting beliefs, attitudes and/or behaviours. In Sarah’s case, the dissonance arose thus:
My previous [affiliated primary] school was so academic and for me, and from … where I came from, into a Canberra preschool where every child did do stencils, I was way out and different. (M14/05/2015)

After a pause, she added, almost by way of apology:

One of the things so many people default to is the easiest. (M14/05/2015)

and then, almost as an aside, she added a proviso with important implications for Visual Arts programs:

… if you can make the link to the curriculum - schools want the links to the areas of the curriculum - that’s not difficult. (M14/05/2015)

Sarah referred to the Stage One survey having given her the initial stimulus for reflection:

It’s sharing that knowledge which is what you did to me with those questionnaires. It made me realise Visual Art is so much more than when you’re stuck in a school setting in a school that’s got to get its NAPLAN results up; you don’t [then] hear much about Art. (M14/05/2015)

She was now able to speak in school meetings evidencing the pervasiveness of her experiential learning (Rogers’s (1969) third principle):

- I’m semi being you in staff meetings by saying, ‘Well, don’t make it too staged; don’t forget that their creativity comes from different elements and give them opportunities so they can sit and think and brainstorm and share.’

- When these art things were happening I’d recall some of our conversations … at the back of my head I could hear you saying ‘Have you thought of doing things like that?’ or ‘Don’t forget you could do this’. (M14/05/2015)

She reported that her former preschool children, now at school and participating in a lunch time club, still remembered enjoying preschool Visual Art experiences:

From Kinder to Year 6 they have ‘Creative Stations’ and they are able to transfer the skills they learnt last year. They say ‘Let’s do that thing we did in preschool?’ (M14/05/2015)
Clearly delighted with this feedback, Sarah added:

_We know if you give children enough access to the Visual Arts they’re going to go with it._ (M14/05/2015)

She admitted that talking with parents remained a challenge:

_Being creative and artistic takes so many different mediums and explaining that to the parents ..._ (M14/05/2015)

However, when R asked directly, ‘Was there any personal gain? ’she replied:

- **You inspired me again. It was the inspiration to get back into it.**
- **On-going because I get new children and because of children’s interests. It’s become the way I do things. Those conversations we had during the year are the little jolts I still have._ (M14/05/2015)

Having R as a resource gave Sarah the chance to be listened to and she relaxed so that her sense of professional isolation and of being ‘different’ diminished, allowing her to reflect. In terms of R’s role as facilitator of experiential learning, in Rogerian terms, acceptance of both the intellectual content and the emotionally charged attitudes Sarah bought to the program as well as sensitivity to her periodic need for catharsis was a critical contribution to Sarah’s ‘pervasive learning’ and reclamation of confidence in Visual Arts (Rogers’s (1969) third principle). There could be no doubt that not only had Sarah regained confidence in her teaching of Visual Arts but also that confidence had been maintained over time, making a ‘difference in the behaviour, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the leaner’ (Rogers, 1969 - principle three). Still experiencing the benefits of the program after 18 months, she requested a further post program interview to update R on her new situation.
10.1 Synthesis of key findings of the study

The first aim of the study – to ascertain the scope and nature of preschool teachers’ perceived level of confidence and expertise in the Visual Arts – was successfully realised through a confidential survey of ACT preschool teachers, albeit only a small sample, (N = 26 from across 77 ACT government funded preschools). The survey demonstrated that this sample of preschool teachers experienced similar high levels of Arts related anxiety and a lack of confidence to those experienced by teachers of Visual Arts in Australian primary and secondary schools. This is consistent with the literature relating to generalist teachers from a range of countries as summarized in Table 2.3.1 as well as the three studies from other countries pertaining to preschool teachers (Bamford, 2009; Goodman-Schanz, 2012; and Horne, 2015).

The second aim was to scope the working contexts and specific needs of preschool teachers in relation to teaching Visual Arts in the ACT and this was explored through interviews with 10 randomly selected survey respondents. The discrepancies between levels of teaching enjoyment, confidence and perceptions of ability were successfully explored in greater depth in individual interviews. All interviewees confirmed their enjoyment of Visual Arts but expressed concerns and self-doubts as well as uncertainties about teaching in this area.

The fact that the survey had prompted respondents to confront certain ‘demons’ in relation to the Arts, and especially Visual Arts, led inevitably to an idiosyncratic analysis of the root causes. Paramount was a paucity of Visual Art skills and discipline knowledge accompanied by a keen sense of the brevity and critical inadequacy of the teacher education they had received:

*It wasn’t really deep; it was just too quick…I would rather have had more ‘hands on’ research if you want to learn more, which I did. The recipes they gave us were too short: ‘This is how you work with clay’; ‘This clay may cause asthma’ – really, really fast and then it was gone.*

(Pamela)
Frances admitted to never having done ‘any subject related to Visual Arts’ and survived on what she ‘picked up along the way’. Hannah, on the other hand, ‘learnt a lot about the Arts [at university]’ but didn’t think she was taught well which, understandably, worried her. These inadequacies in the discipline and preparation for teaching Visual Arts clearly shaped and restricted the ways in which the teachers constructed and delivered Visual Arts to children. They felt they had no basis on which to plan Visual Arts experiences, some depending, in desperation, on ‘ideas’ from Instagram and Pinterest.

Issues for these preschool teachers centred on a range of matters external to them - parents, time and resources as well as a sense of professional isolation and a perceived curriculum void. Not only did they admit to a lack confidence in teaching Visual Arts but also in explaining to parents the rationale for their Visual Arts teaching in the preschool. Few of the preschool teachers utilized educational partnerships to bulwark their practice. Their sense of professional isolation was both palpable and pervasive and rendered even more debilitating because of the teachers’ tenuousness in relation to their own educational philosophy. Doubts undermined these teachers’ sense of direction in relation to Visual Arts so that the bare parameters of an ideal program, as envisaged by those teachers, appeared both random and, sometimes, desperate.

The fact that all Stage Two participants were willing to be selected for Stage Three was testament to that desperation, especially as many teachers had little clear idea of how it might resolve the problems they faced vis à vis teaching the Visual Arts. The primary aim of the final stage was to collaborate with the selected preschool teachers to realize an individual program to empower each of them in their present setting. The Rogerian framework (Rogers, 1969) chosen to accommodate the individual learning needs of the three selected teachers served to guide the researcher in allowing each teacher to seek and find her own direction. While Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine followed each teacher’s individual journey, the purpose of this synthesis is to identify and explore themes common to these journeys.
The first theme might be termed **Visual Awareness** if it were not for the definitional difficulties which enshroud the term (e.g., Qi Li, 2008). Lamme (2003), points out that visual attention and visual awareness can be clearly distinguished from each other but that, nevertheless, they are 'intricately related' (Lamme, 2003: 13). In a subsequent related article (Lamme, 2004), argues that

... a strong case can be made for a pure non-cognitive form of seeing, independent of attentional selection, called phenomenal awareness [which differs] from the reportable form, depending on attention, called access awareness. (Lamme, 2004: 862)

The first theme is thus termed **Visual Permeability** to give the sense of the teachers’ move from Phenomenal Awareness to Access Awareness which occurred following their 'significant visual encounters' in the company of R in two national art institutions (Bamford, 2002:336). The learning from the gallery experiences, especially the imperative of developing visual flexibility in children, was translated into thinking about and planning for children as recorded in their journals:

*Can’t wait to use it with the children. (JSt5/7/2013)*

*I want to have my children create ‘stories’ and see stories in art work. (JH15/7/2013)*

*I have spent time thinking about what kind of visual arts experiences I will offer from this point on … thought back to quality experiences I have offered before and considered how with ‘new eyes’ I may introduce these with my current group. (JSt29/7/2013)*

*Wonderful to actually walk around a gallery with someone who had some knowledge and provided an insight into the curator’s role – I must really think about displays at school – unable to move the boards – but who are they for – children, parents or both – must start thinking. (JS9/7/2013)*

The invitation to abandon the ubiquitous search for ‘new ideas’ and, instead, ‘play with ideas’ was liberating for them:

*Inspired! My brain is running over with ideas. Looking at the pictures and deeper to the story they told. (JH3/7/2013)*
It inspired me, took me back to the things I used to do all the time. (JSt31/7/2013)

Actually feeling inspired! Really want the children to have the passion art can offer. (JS9/7/2013)

The evidence is that they demonstrated Access Awareness and, moreover, each teacher saw her classroom differently – Visual Permeability.

The second theme was their transition to **Personal Empowerment** as they embraced suggestions for ‘one-step-at-a-time’ beginnings and a focus on one element of Art – colour. As they immersed themselves in the project, their confidence burgeoned; their new priority for Visual Arts was immediately rewarded with children’s intense responses, with some surprised, and others affirmed:

_Totally spontaneous artistic exploration by the children – talking about beaches (in winter)! The colours they recalled – then began mixing and exploring the shades of the beach – amazing to listen to how much language they used and scientific thinking of the colour exploration._ (JS22/7/2013)

_Then [I] spontaneously offered dye with these brushes on large paper. Children were totally engrossed. Felt like I hit the mark today._ (JSt7/8/2013)

All three teachers noted pleasing developments in that, as children delighted in the augmented Visual Art experiences, their Language acquisition also accelerated:

_The words ‘size’, ‘line’ and ‘shape’ were added to their increasing vocabulary._ (M3/8/2013)

_S drew blue that was reflected on the fountain and discussed it with me. From him this was amazing._ (JH25/7/2013)

_Today a child remarked on how they had seen a rainbow … this generated much discussion about colour and I extended the children’s language by using correct words to describe the colours; e.g. indigo, violet etc. … Children were totally engrossed._ (JSt7/8/2013)
The commensurate growth in teacher confidence and trust was almost tangible and this gave impetus to collaborative planning between each teacher and the researcher. After discussion Hannah further refined her aim:

*I want to teach art confidently and instil confidence and love for art.*

(JH15/7/2013)

Stephanie and Sarah embraced the suggestion to play with ideas:

*Feeling a bit unsure of which direction to head in – thought, ‘What is an artist’ but needs to be simpler than this – firstly I need to get children to really ‘Look’ and examine artwork. Will start doing this.*

(JSt2/7/2013)

*Met with [R] - reconsidering if community is the right focus.*

(JS22/7/2013)

At this point, and in idiosyncratic ways, they diverged from the path initially chosen. Hannah relinquished her professed need for a ‘sounding board’; she entertained ‘Plans, ideas, dreams’, then briefly asked herself ‘Where do I start?’ before launching into the ‘magic’ of colours. The children reacted with intense interest:

*Engaged – just all children at work.*

(JH22/8/2013)

She acknowledged that this heightened responsiveness was related to her new confidence: ‘I can do this!’ (JH23/7/2013) From here she felt empowered and worked confidently, using R as a professional colleague, advisor and regular listener with whom to share the joys of the children’s burgeoning creativity.

Stephanie’s path to empowerment, however, was more complex. She developed early trust with R and relished the chance to share professional frustrations:

*I’ve been looking through old preschool newsletters and when the playground was new it’s like ‘everyone come and use it and there’ll be less vandalism’. Now it’s ‘Not before school’, ‘Not after school’. It’s all changed like it’s really sad.*

(MSt2/8/2013)

While intellectually she appreciated the parameters of the collaboration, nevertheless she perceived impediments, sought advice, listened carefully and
chose her own path. Evaluating these shared experiences, Stephanie claimed deep satisfaction as she recognized her return to a previous standard of teaching:

*What you are doing for me is bringing out the things that are there – shifting focus to what [was] before.* (M13/8/2013)

Sarah’s first move towards personal empowerment may be discerned in her swift move to revise her initial aims and take advantage of support in an area of great challenge to her:

*...trying to get the parents more involved. I want them to feel they can come and do things.* (M24/7/2013)

She took the lead in discussion with R, seeking additional comments and ideas about how she might achieve her goal.

Empowered in the intellectual space to create their own goals for Visual Arts and to work in tandem with children, the teachers sought assistance in planning and the collaborative benefits flowed to children as evidenced by the three teachers:

*The children are progressing – doing exactly what I hoped they would do – building on their own interests and knowledge.* (M21/8/2013)

*Art has taken over. What else we’ve found is our source of satisfaction.* (JSt13/9/2013)

*We have begun to develop a passion in the children that Art is not just painting but many art forms.* (JS/nd/2013)

As the Visual Arts became more central to the teachers’ practice, they observed and recorded gains for individual children:

*S amazingly found an egg container and began creating his own shades – for him such a long period and so proud of himself.* (JS29/7/2013)

*I had this beautiful moment: I was telling his mum, ‘Two little boys who would have [formerly] avoided an art experience but they played together for forty minutes’.* (IH18/9/2013)
Hannah, witnessing a child’s new involvement in Art making and hearing him sing, ‘simultaneously and with happiness’ realised she had ‘connected with him through Art’ (MH13/09/2013).

The third identified theme was Pedagogic Leadership which developed from the agreement of the three teachers to share their experiences to that date with their peers at a meeting of the PTPA (19/9/2013) two months into the program. Teachers who had not been selected wished to know more and curiosity emerged from shared information that the three participating teachers were ‘flying’ as a result of their involvement in the program.

Not surprisingly the newly developed confidence of the preschool rooms did not transfer immediately to the challenge of public presentation so R offered support and assistance. Hannah needed to quash her diffidence at being a ‘new’ teacher and envisage professional gain; Sarah began to appreciate her results could ‘speak for themselves’. For Stephanie this was her moment to shine: As an active PTPA member she had put much work into professional standards for preschool teachers and appeared to be bursting with pride as the three teachers presented, to an amazed audience, examples of children’s work in support of their claims for Visual Arts. Stephanie later reported that following the meeting, one teacher asked her, ‘Is this really true?’

Communicating what they had achieved in such a relatively short time frame placed these three teachers in a position of pedagogic leadership. Hannah noted ‘incredible pride at what I’ve achieved’ (JH/nd/2013); Stephanie spoke positively and ‘with passion’ because ‘I’m definitely a changed teacher’ (JSt25/10/2013); and Sarah, with the terror of speaking to professional colleagues behind her, thought the whole project had been ‘an amazing professional experience’ (JS9/9/2013).

However, increased confidence and the sense of pedagogic leadership did not mean that further challenges did not present themselves from within the school contexts. The annual scheduled school art exhibitions required Stephanie and Sarah, on a set date determined by the primary school executive, to place ‘Art'
from each preschool child on formal display for parents, families, colleagues and others. Hannah had mentioned a similar impending task as early as the Preliminary Meeting but she had leeway to organise a more informal exhibition.

Stephanie was hostile that, despite Visual Arts having been being sidelined, she must again contribute to a ‘whole school’ exhibition of children’s stereotypical work under the banner of ‘Art’. Sarah could not countenance the exhibition’s fund-raising purpose but regretted her inability to challenge that notion and the further instruction that each child produce a ‘self-portrait’ on one of the similarly sized canvases provided. She linked her concerns to parents’ expectations:

[I] regret not being brave enough to not use the canvasses but will consider this for future attempt – still need to see how the parents will interpret this. (JS/nd/2013)

Against these constraints, collaborative planning continued: Stephanie and Sarah followed their own modus operandi and were rewarded with quality children’s Art which exceeded even their own expectations:

Result was an amazing creation which clearly represented the group of being fast paced, full of ideas and such enthusiasm to explore and be creative. (JS/nd/2013)

As they displayed the children’s highly individual work, the fourth theme - The Communicative Power of the Product – emerged as the three teachers, now passionate about Visual Arts, were able to offer anxious parents unique and tangible proof of their children’s progress:

They have been very interested in this project and the parents were constantly asking questions and the exhibition at the end was, ‘Wow, I can see what you’ve been doing’. (IS17/11/2013)

The parents can just take a breath and go, ‘Actually, they’re doing what they’re meant to be doing’. (MH18/9/2013)

The teachers’ passion and developing skills – and the power of their children’s Visual Arts products -- had equipped them to interact in conversation about Visual Arts and its place in the curriculum:
... we can say, ‘These areas are important; there’s a reason we do Visual Arts – it’s real learning’. (MH18/9/2013)

The fifth theme derived from each teacher’s recognition of the **Centrality of the Visual Arts** to preschool pedagogy. While collaboration and input from R was regularly available over a wide range of professional issues, Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) interpretation and implementation remained the primary responsibility of teachers who, guided by the EYLF, ensured all children were ‘engaging in a range of experiences across all the Learning Outcomes’. It was thrilling and professionally satisfying when, following the initial burgeoning of children’s language in response to experimentation with colour, teachers observed additional benefits across wider learning areas as they realised they were now teaching *through* the Arts:

*I’m a lot more confident ... knowing that I’m still covering all the required learning areas.* (IS17/11/2013)

The ease of this transition to an expanded Visual Arts program was a surprise:

*Continue to reflect on how easy it has been to inspire children and how cross-curricula and resources this whole focus has been.* (JS20/10/2013)

In this very short time and with relatively minimal, albeit well-timed, input the teachers, revelling in their increased confidence and delighting in the children’s discovery and broader learning, began devising plans to strengthen their Visual Arts focus. All planned to increase Visual Arts offerings in their preschool program and sharpen its cross curricula focus: For Hannah, Art would be central in future ‘because it all happens through Art’; Sarah believed she would ‘attempt a Visual Art-centred curriculum’; Stephanie, always keen to promote quality teaching in the preschool sector, declared herself capable of demonstrating ‘new and innovative ways to include Visual Arts’ and stated that the beginning of the next year would be ‘different – quite different’ (IS17/11/2013).

These key themes of Visual Permeability, Personal Empowerment, Pedagogic Leadership, The Communicative Power of the Product, and the Centrality of the Visual Arts provide an overarching sense of the three teachers’ journeys towards
confidence and independence in teaching Visual Arts to preschool children. Consistent with Rogerian principles (Rogers, 1969), the teachers’ personal evaluations as part of the post program interview are the hallmark of its efficacy in terms of their needs.

Hannah’s spontaneous ‘Hasn’t it been amazing?’ was followed by her recognition that ‘You’ve changed me, you’ve changed the way I approached it’ (IH6/12/2013). Similarly, Stephanie spoke of increased confidence levels: ‘Personally I’m a lot more confident. It really gave me another side, another approach to Visual Arts.’ She observed that initially she had hoped for ‘a little bit more knowledge and understanding’ but professed herself now to be both ‘more interested’ and ‘more capable’ (IST17/11/2013). Sarah acknowledged gains for herself, the children and others:

_Began the whole project looking to revisit my past interest in art – and have amazingly realised how art is accessible to everyone and is a wonderful way of building confidence in so many children._ (IS14/5/2015)

This gain in confidence affecting both teachers and children was a common theme with the teachers reminiscing about their tentative beginnings, contrasting previous negatively oriented emotions with their new certainty:

_It wasn’t that I didn’t value it, it just wasn’t something that I was particularly confident in._ (IH6/12/2013)

For the two more experienced teachers the program had offered professional refreshment. Sarah visited ‘skills/interests from years ago – that have been lost due to other issues’ (IS14/5/2015). Stephanie was greatly relieved that her professional beliefs had been confirmed (IST17/11/2013). Hannah, the newest teacher, recognised that her spontaneous choice of three Art books for holiday reading reflected her emerging Art focus (IH6/12/2013). The third research goal had been met as the three preschool teachers, using existing resources in their current context, had developed strategies which enabled them to promote Visual Arts to children with confidence and delight rather than uncertainty and despair.
10.2 Reflections and observations

For R, nascent expectations of reducing Art anxiety were exceeded with totally unexpected – and very different – results for all three teachers. The Rogerian individualized approach was vindicated as, one by one, participants articulated its power to foster their greatly improved teaching of Visual Arts. It had been highly successful in the view of the three participating teachers.

The diverse needs of the teachers required multifarious roles for R and a strong element of success derived from listening. While teachers, in Stage Two interviews, had revealed common challenges which enabled R to form a collective picture of the preschool situation, it was the Stage Three visits to preschools where teachers’ individual frustrations were idiosyncratically articulated. Here R could immerse herself in the preschool, observe children and staff and begin to appreciate each teacher’s strengths and specific needs. With the Principals’ and the teachers’ permissions R was able to address each issue in the privacy of individual workplaces.

As a supportive ‘outsider’ R discussed issues of health and fatigue with Stephanie and offered gentle encouragement for more attention to personal health. Sarah’s hopes for short-term change in her relationships with parents were perceived by R to be overly ambitious given the many extraneous demands on her. The ‘less is more’ mantra was proffered in order to give Visual Arts its rightful place at the centre of learning:

*Developing a conversation with [R] that scaling back can possibly reinspire artistic explorations. (JS29/7/2013)*

These examples exemplify the multiple ways in which listening was of great consequence. Some frustrations were beyond the remit of the program but needed articulation and recognition so that, collaboratively, teacher and R could attempt to counter factors impinging on confident teaching. In these situations, trust and understanding were essential; regular meetings facilitated their development. As indicated earlier, while it was disturbing to R to learn that Stephanie, after one meeting, had ‘cried all the way home,’ her explanation, ‘I
was crying with relief’ reassured R as well as indicating that Stephanie trusted her with both the intellectual and emotional content of her learning (Rogers, 1969).

Flexibility with project timetabling proved to be crucial if teachers were not to feel compromised by the need to make time for ‘one more thing’. One overwhelmed teacher said, ‘Don’t come next week – I’m not ready.’ When another said, ‘I’ve changed my mind’, R realized the need not to be so invested that she was disappointed or affronted by the teacher’s need to step back or change direction.

As inchoate ideas developed into individual plans and were realised, new ideas unfolded. R was thrilled to learn that Hannah was able to deal with the intense concern of some parents by focusing on skill development through Art and using children’s Art work as ‘proof’. Stephanie, by bravely creating ‘a splash of individuality’ in an exhibition of children’s Art, drew unexpected, positive and well-informed responses (APPENDIX Q), the product thus challenging her hitherto unconvinced colleagues. Sarah bravely risked giving children ‘free rein’ to showcase their talents and skills and, in so doing, demonstrated to parents and the school community the rich benefits of her expanded Arts program. Integral to Stage Three were initiatives which were planned collaboratively but implemented by the teachers themselves. Typically, they attributed their successes to the program: ‘I’d never have done an art exhibition without [it]’ (IS19/12/2013).

For R, expectations for the project had been exceeded and feedback from participants identified unanticipated areas of value:

'It was free; I didn’t have to select the professional learning program, apply to go to it, get approval, attend, take notes, report back to colleagues and then work out how to apply the learning in our own setting. [R] came to us so it all related to our preschool room. (N18/12/2013)

Furthermore, gains in enjoyment and perceptions of increased ability had been documented so that, by the conclusion of the program, both teachers and R reported heightened appreciation of Visual Arts at personal and professional levels. The teachers articulated clear plans for future development in their teaching of Visual Arts, suggesting that their gains were likely to be incremental.
This study, albeit small in scale and limited to the ACT, has demonstrated that the Art anxiety so widely identified in the literature as experienced by generalist teachers, especially at the primary school level, is also experienced by preschool teachers (Smyth and Davis, 2016). However, this study has gone further and demonstrated that it is possible to take positive steps to change that situation at the level of individual preschool teachers. This study’s unique contribution offers a breakthrough in what has been an ongoing litany of despair in the literature.

10.3 Implications for teacher education

In the conclusion to her research Bamford (2002) refers to the significance of

... preservice teachers develop[ing] a sense of belonging to an artistic community and feel[ing] confident in the discourses of this community. This discourse needs to include both written and verbal critique and also the ability to make art. (Bamford, 2002: 336)

She explains that

The focus though is not on developing preservice students into critics or artists, but rather on allowing them to feel part of this discourse and confident in their abilities to participate. Part of developing this confidence is providing the preservice teachers with appropriate models of both art and teaching practices. It is also important that this learning occurs within a positive learning community that is supportive and engaging. At this stage, this may be achieved through the reconfiguring of current approaches, but technological advances may also provide further scope to address these issues of change required in preservice art education. (Bamford, 2002: 336)

The Stage Three program provided a microcosm of the acculturation to which Bamford (2002) alludes. Without intervention and new direction it seems unlikely that preservice teaching programs will find more time within their curricula to devote to Visual Arts education, especially in a context where the Australian National Curriculum has a single subject encompassing both Performing and Visual Arts.

Hence the need for a more imaginative and forward thinking approach to preservice Visual Arts teaching to take account of (a) the realities of discipline ignorance, Art anxiety and lack of confidence in presenting students; (b) the fact
that a ‘keep it simple’ approach may be all that could reasonably be encompassed in the restricted hours allocated; (c) the availability of cultural institutions which may be accessed to develop ‘modes of belonging’ to the discourses of an artistic community; and (d) the availability of strategies to support individual teachers in the workplace.

Support in the field could take a range of forms but, in the light of the evidence produced by this study, would need to recognise preschool teachers’ keenly felt sense of professional isolation and palpable hunger for individual help. This suggests that human rather than technological mediation may be the more efficacious.

Specific to the ACT, the amalgamation of preschools into primary schools has meant many preschool teachers now share generalised professional learning opportunities with primary school colleagues, sometimes to the detriment of a focus on relevant Early Childhood issues. With no overarching Professional Learning (PL) structure specifically for ACT preschool teachers, there is no obvious plan for the preschool sector to ensure ongoing refreshment in all areas of the EYLF. Moreover, administrative hurdles exist so that accessing current PL offerings is often bureaucratic and time consuming, limiting the efforts teachers make to participate in self-selected PL opportunities.

Structural change issues in the ACT have also meant that primary school Principals and Executive Teachers, even when sympathetic to the needs of preschool teachers and keen to promote Visual Arts, may not have either the training or background to understand the strengths, challenges and modus operandi of individual teachers in the preschools for which the Principals have now been given responsibility.

The professional association, PTPA, has demonstrated its ability to provide high quality Visual Arts workshops where specialist teachers of Visual Arts present to generalist preschool teachers in a targeted session in an ACT preschool; these have potential to give teachers on-site, hands-on experience and product information to enable them to extend their Visual Arts offering.
10.4 Implications for further research

Given the teachers’ success in Stage Three, some questions for further research arise directly from the study. For example.

- To what extent would it be possible to replicate the successful outcome with a different, perhaps larger, group of preschool teachers?
- How effective might the three participating preschool teachers be as leading agents for change in Visual Arts teaching within the preschool sector?
- In a longitudinal sense, to what extent is the increased confidence in implementing Visual Arts in the preschool, sufficient to maintain and sustain the developing quality of teaching Visual Arts?
- Might the five identified themes of Visual Permeability, Personal Empowerment, Pedagogic Leadership, The Communicative Power of the Product and the Centrality of the Visual Arts to preschool pedagogy be used as the five pillars of an individualized professional learning model?
- Lack of discipline knowledge is not confined to the Visual Arts as identified by Tambyah (2008) in relation to Social Sciences and Cunningham, Zibulsky and Callahan (2009) in relation to Literacy. To what extent does this lack impact negatively across the disciplines in terms of effective teaching outcomes? For example, are there phenomena which parallel Art anxiety?

- At a broader level, a seven year longitudinal study of a cohort of preservice preschool teachers from different teacher education institutions across Australia would provide useful data about pressure points and useful practices. The seven years would encompass the final two years of preservice training and the first five in the field. This could be combined with variants of the Stage Three approach used in this study so that teachers had some independent support.
10.5 Directions

Dutton’s (2005) research in university residential colleges suggests that much effective mentoring is informal. Mentees seek out potential mentors either instinctively or deliberately and the chosen mentors learn only later – or not at all - that they were perceived as effective in that role. In relation to beginning teachers Carter and Francis’s (2001)

\[\text{… case study findings suggest that the mentoring relationships were more likely to be effective for a longer period of time if the process of establishing the relationship was by choice rather than formal assignment. (Carter and Francis, 2001:257)}\]

Within the Rogerian framework adopted for Stage Three of the study there was the possibility of a mentoring relationship with participants but it was certainly not assumed. Nevertheless, it appears that, at the end of the three months, this was the role in which the three teachers saw R. How crucial the exercise of this role was to the success of the program would need to be determined by further research. A further consideration would be widening the scope to create broader opportunities for experienced practitioners to mentor generalist teachers of Visual Arts in preschools. It would certainly be a positive outcome if a similar program, with the addition of strategic, professional networking by teachers, led to curriculum revival in Visual Arts in the ACT and, maybe, even beyond. A key imperative for the current researcher, however, is to explore this further, albeit recognising that its strong practice orientation may militate against an accompanying academic research focus.


ECRP Early Childhood Research and Practice <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/>.


Goodman-Schanz B. A. (2012) *K–1 teachers’ visual arts beliefs and their role in the early childhood classroom.* Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education: The University of Southern Mississippi.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

Survey for teachers

A program is being developed to promote the Visual Arts of drawing, painting and modelling in ACT preschools with the purpose of increasing the enjoyment and confidence of those who teach as well as those who learn.

This questionnaire is a first step to helping teachers such as yourself. Your answers will contribute to the design of the program.

Please answer each question as fully and honestly as you can.

1. What is your current teaching position? (Please name your position, not your location.)

2. What preschool/early childhood teaching experience have you had?

3. Are you currently engaged in education or training or in any form of professional development? If so, please give details.

4. What academic/professional qualifications have you completed to date?
5. What level was your **most recent** course or study in any of the following Visual Arts? Please tick relevant boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
<th>Primary school</th>
<th>Secondary school</th>
<th>Secondary college</th>
<th>Tertiary institution</th>
<th>Adult education/Recreational</th>
<th>Other (Please specify)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Drawing</td>
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<td>Painting</td>
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<td>Print-making</td>
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<td>Sculpting/Modelling</td>
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<td>Ceramics/Pottery</td>
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<td>Photography</td>
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<td>Woodwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design (<strong>including fashion, graphics, jewellery, interior and landscape design.</strong>)</td>
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<td>Craft (<strong>including quilting, weaving, jewellery making, origami, ikebana, glass-making, scrap booking.</strong>)</td>
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6. Are you **planning** any further education or training or any form of professional development? If so, please give details and proposed timing.

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<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Further education or training or professional development</th>
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<tr>
<td>This year</td>
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<td>Next year</td>
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<td>In the next three years</td>
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</table>

7. How often do you participate yourself in the Visual Arts by making, creating or designing? Please tick relevant boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Drawing</td>
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<td>Print-making</td>
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<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
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<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
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<td>Photography</td>
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<td>Woodwork</td>
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<td>Design (including fashion, graphics, jewellery, interior and landscape design.)</td>
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<td>Craft (including quilting, weaving, jewellery making, origami, ikebana, scrap booking.)</td>
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<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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</table>
8. How often do you participate in the Visual Arts as an observer or viewer? Please tick relevant boxes.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
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<td>Print-making</td>
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<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
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<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
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<td>Craft (quilting, weaving, jewellery making, origami, ikebana, scrap booking.)</td>
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<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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9. How would you rate your level of confidence in teaching the following areas of the curriculum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum area</th>
<th>Not at all confident</th>
<th>Somewhat confident</th>
<th>Moderately confident</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Very confident</th>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
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<td>Numeracy</td>
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<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
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<td>Visual Arts</td>
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<td>Music</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
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<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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</table>
10. How would you rate your ability to teach in each of the following areas of the curriculum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum area</th>
<th>Little or no ability</th>
<th>Some ability</th>
<th>Moderate ability</th>
<th>High ability</th>
<th>Very high ability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
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<td>Numeracy</td>
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<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
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<td>Visual Arts</td>
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<td>Drama</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
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11. To what extent do you enjoy teaching each of the following areas of the curriculum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum area</th>
<th>Little or no enjoyment</th>
<th>Some enjoyment</th>
<th>Moderate enjoyment</th>
<th>High enjoyment</th>
<th>Very high enjoyment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
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<td>Numeracy</td>
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<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
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<td>Visual Arts</td>
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<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
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<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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</table>
12. Please briefly describe the resources available for Visual Arts Education in your preschool?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Space (including storage)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
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</table>

13. How often are the following Visual Arts offered to the group you teach most in your preschool?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
<th>Not offered</th>
<th>Occasionally offered</th>
<th>Offered approximately once a week</th>
<th>Offered almost every session</th>
<th>Offered every session</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
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<td>Painting</td>
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<td>Print-making</td>
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<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction or collage</td>
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<td>Woodwork</td>
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<td>Design</td>
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</table>
14. How much time, on average, do you estimate you spend each week planning and preparing for the group you teach most in the following areas?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum area</th>
<th>Estimated time each week devoted to planning and preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

15. How much time, on average, do you estimate you spend each week in intentional teaching with the group you teach most often in the following areas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum area</th>
<th>Estimated time each week in intentional teaching</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability/Science/Environmental education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical health and well-being</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. How much support, help or encouragement do you currently receive from each of the following to teach Visual Arts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts Support</th>
<th>None at all</th>
<th>Some support</th>
<th>Moderate support</th>
<th>Considerable support</th>
<th>Complete support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents and families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional organisations (including publications and online resources)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

17. How much support, help or encouragement would it be reasonable to expect from each of the following in teaching Visual Arts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts Support</th>
<th>None at all</th>
<th>Some support</th>
<th>Moderate support</th>
<th>Considerable support</th>
<th>Complete support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff members</td>
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<td>Professional colleagues</td>
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<td>Parents and families</td>
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<td>Community members</td>
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<td>Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
18. What are the main delights and challenges for you in teaching Visual Arts?

**Delights and challenges:**

19. How do you rate your level of confidence in teaching the following areas of Visual Arts in your preschool?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
<th>Not at all confident</th>
<th>Slightly confident</th>
<th>Moderately confident</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Very confident</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
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<td>Painting</td>
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<td>Print-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction or collage</td>
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<td>Woodwork</td>
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<td>Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>(Please specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

20. How do you rate your ability to teach the following areas of Visual Arts in your preschool?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
<th>Little or no ability</th>
<th>Some ability</th>
<th>Moderate ability</th>
<th>High ability</th>
<th>Extremely high ability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
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<td>Painting</td>
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<td>Print-making</td>
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<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
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<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
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<td>Construction or collage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>(Please specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
21. How do you rate your enjoyment in teaching the following areas of Visual Arts in your preschool?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
<th>Little or no enjoyment</th>
<th>Some enjoyment</th>
<th>Moderate enjoyment</th>
<th>High enjoyment</th>
<th>Very high enjoyment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Print-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sculpting/ modelling</td>
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<td>Ceramics/pottery</td>
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<td>Construction or collage</td>
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<td>Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Please comment on how well your preparation for teaching and your teaching experience have equipped you to deliver Visual Arts so that children achieve their creative potential?

Comment:
23. To what extent are you able to deliver Visual Arts education in your preschool in a way which is fully consistent with your educational philosophy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
<th>Not able</th>
<th>Sometimes able</th>
<th>Often able</th>
<th>Almost always able</th>
<th>Always able</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
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<td>Print-making</td>
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<td>Sculpting/modelling</td>
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<td>Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. If there are any impediments to your teaching of Visual Art, what are these impediments? How might they be ameliorated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified impediments</th>
<th>Ways to ameliorate impediments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
25. Describe any partnerships and/or opportunities for collaboration which are available to you in your preschool for Visual Arts Education. Please state how and when you use these.

**Partnerships and/or opportunities:**

26. Are there any observations/comments about the teaching of Visual Arts in the preschool which you wish to add?

**Comment/s:**
27. Would you be interested in collaborating with the researcher to design and implement a program of Visual Arts? The researcher would work with you and the children in your preschool or Early Childhood School for up to 5 hours a week for ten weeks. Please answer with a tick in the box for YES or NO to express your interest in continuing in this project.

| YES | NO |

If you answered YES to Question 27 please now complete the attached CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS – STAGE TWO – Program Design and Implementation and return it to the researcher in the WHITE envelope provided.

TO ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY, PLEASE PLACE YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY IN THE YELLOW ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND RETURN TO RESEARCHER.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

If you would like more information please email jane.smyth@anu.edu.au

Your valuable input will contribute to the design of a Visual Arts program for ACT preschools.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW STAGE 2

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

Stage 2 – Pre Program Interview. (Approximate duration 30 minutes)

Thank you for participating today and for completing the questionnaire relating to Visual Arts.

Questions:

1. I know it’s been a while since you completed the questionnaire for me but I wonder did it prompt you to consider /re-consider any particular issues? If so, what were they?

2. What do you regard as the ‘burning issues’ surrounding Visual Arts education in preschools and, especially, in your preschool?

3. What are your main sources of inspiration for your Visual Arts teaching?

4. How do you go about planning for Visual Arts in your preschool?

5. What do you consider are your main strengths in the area of Visual Arts (including drawing, painting, sculpting/modelling, print-making, ceramics/pottery, photography, woodwork, design, crafts)? What are the areas in which you are most/least interested? What are the areas in which you are most/least confident?

6. What might most help you, right now, to promote Visual Arts in your preschool? (What might be a first step?) What are the main challenges for you?

7. What do you believe would be the ideal Visual Arts program for your preschool? (Please give me snapshot of what your program would look like. What would the children be doing? What would you be doing? What would your Visual Arts area look like?)

8. You have heard about the intended program to support teachers in preschools to deliver Visual Arts education. What questions do you have about the program?

9. How do you feel that participating in the program might be useful to you in your preschool?

Thank you for your time. I very much appreciate your contribution.

Jane Smyth, M Phil Candidate
Research School of Humanities and the Arts, College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University  Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au  0402 917 194
APPENDIX C: APPROVALS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

C.1 Australian National University - Human Ethics Approval

THIS IS A SYSTEM-GENERATED E-MAIL. SEE BELOW FOR E-MAIL CONTACT DETAILS.

Dear Ms Jane Smyth,

Protocol: 2012/637
We Look, We Learn: Strategic promotion of Visual Arts education in the years before school

I am pleased to advise you that your Human Ethics application received approval by the Chair of the Humanities & Social Sciences DERC on 5 February 2013.

For your information:
1. Under the NHMRC/AVCC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research we are required to follow up research that we have approved. Once a year (or sooner for short projects) we shall request a brief report on any ethical issues which may have arisen during your research or whether it proceeded according to the plan outlined in the above protocol.

2. Please notify the committee of any changes to your protocol in the course of your research, and when you complete or cease working on the project.

3. Please notify the Committee immediately if any unforeseen events occur that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the research work.

4. Please advise the HREC if you receive any complaints about the research work.

5. The validity of the current approval is five years' maximum from the date shown approved. For longer projects you are required to seek renewed approval from the Committee.

All the best with your research,

Kim

Ms Kim Tiffen
Human Ethics Manager
Office of Research Integrity,
Research Services,
Ground Floor, Chancelry 10B
Ellery Crescent,
The Australian National University
ACTON ACT 0200
T: +61 6125 3427
F: +61 2 6125 4807
Kim.Tiffen@anu.edu.au or
human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au
C.2 ACT Government – Education and Training

Ms Jane Smyth
9/25 Jerrabomberra Avenue
NARRABUNDAH ACT 2604

Dear Ms Smyth

Approval of research proposal

Thank you for your application to conduct the proposed research titled We Look, We Learn: Visual Arts education in the years before school. I am pleased to inform you that the Education and Training Directorate (the Directorate) has approved your research.

Please note the following conditions regarding your proposed research project:

• research in the school(s) must be concluded by 31 December 2013
• provide a current certificate of public liability insurance on or before 31 October 2013 to continue research in schools beyond 1 November 2013
• any changes in the methodology, scope and timeframe of the project requires approval from the Directorate
• provide to the Directorate, names of schools that participated in the research project at the completion of research/data collection in schools
• within one month of completing your research, you are required to forward to the Directorate electronic and hard copies of your research (paper/report/thesis) electronically to det.research@act.gov.au and by mail to the following address:

Manager
Planning and Reporting
Planning and Performance Branch
Education and Training Directorate
ACT Government
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601

• research reports received as per the preceding condition are placed in an online library accessible internally to all Directorate staff in order to inform policy and program development and evaluation through research in public schools.

The Directorate approves research in all public early childhood and primary schools. You may now directly approach the principals of these schools, with a copy of this approval letter, for permission to carry out your research. It will be at the discretion of the principal as to whether your research can proceed at their site.

GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601 | phone: 132281 | www.act.gov.au
If the principal assesses that the nature of the activity and/or the type of contact may place students at risk, the researcher will be required to undergo screening. The researcher or sponsoring organisation will have responsibility for arranging the screening and any associated costs.

A person entering a school to conduct research is a visitor to the school and must comply with the Directorate’s Visitors in Schools policy available at: http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z

Any information that you obtain as part of research or data collection must be treated in accordance with the requirements of the Privacy Act 1988.

If you require any information about this letter and/or research application process please contact Ji-Hae Yun on (02) 6205 0970 or at ji-Hae.Yun@act.gov.au

Best wishes for your research.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Tracy Stewart
Director
Planning and Performance
8 March 2013
APPENDIX D: LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

ANU LETTERHEAD

Research School of Humanities and the Arts
ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences
Sir Roland Wilson Building 120
Canberra ACT 0200
Date

Name of Principal
Principal
Name of school
Address

Dear

Currently I am undertaking post graduate research at ANU in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts. I am an Early Childhood teacher, lecturer and writer with a long-standing interest in young children and the Arts. My experience includes working with young children and adults in schools, preschools and other early childhood settings as well as in educational contexts in galleries and museums.

My study is designed to develop teaching and learning strategies which will help to expand Visual Arts experiences for young children. Early positive experiences in drawing, painting and modelling have been demonstrated to have benefit for young children’s wider participation in the Arts. Research, however, suggests that some teachers are currently less than confident in their ability to offer the Visual Arts. My intention is to increase the confidence and enjoyment of teachers in providing Visual Arts experience in the years prior to school. I hope to work with teachers to assist with the provision of Visual Arts in their preschools.

The program will be preschool based and will include a visit to a national gallery or museum. It is designed around currently available resources and to work within the current ACARA Australian Curriculum – The Arts in conjunction with the Early Years Learning Framework.

A random group of preschool teachers will be invited to complete a confidential questionnaire which will feed the design of the program. A consent form will be offered to those who indicate willingness to proceed to the next stage.

Pre-program interviews will be conducted with teachers after which two or three teachers will be invited to collaborate with the researcher to develop a Visual Arts program for their own preschool. The program will be implemented in the teachers’
preschools and will be evaluated. Post program interviews with participants will be conducted by the researcher.

Time commitment:

| Stage One       | Questionnaire: 15 - 20 minutes to complete  
|                 | Consent form: 2-3 minutes to complete.       |
| Stage Two       | Pre-program interview: Approximately 30 minutes. |
| Stage 3         | Program development primarily designed by the researcher with optional weekly input into the program by the teacher. |
| Stage 4         | Implementation of Visual Arts program in the preschools  
|                 | • Program in preschools - No additional time commitment for teachers outside preschool hours.  
|                 | • Excursion - planning, preparation, travelling and visiting time and evaluation in preschool hours. |
| Stage 5         | Evaluation:  
|                 | Interview approximately 30 minutes |

I request your permission to invite preschool teachers from your school to participate in the initial questionnaire phase and to continue in the program if selected.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Jane Smyth

If you wish to contact me:
Jane Smyth  
M Phil Candidate  
Research School of Humanities and the Arts  
College of Arts and Social Sciences  
Australian National University  
Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au  
(02) 6161 4646

If you have any questions concerning the research:
Professor Diana Davis  
Visiting Fellow  
ANU Centre for European Studies  
Research School of Humanities and the Arts  
Australian National University  
Email: Diana.Davis@anu.edu.au

If you have any concerns or comments about the conduct of the research:
Ethics Manager  
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee  
The Australian National University  
Telephone: 6125 3427  
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au
APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

STAGE ONE - Survey

Researcher: Jane Smyth, M Phil Candidate, Research School of Humanities and the Arts, ANU Canberra ACT

1. ................................................................. (please print) consent to completing a confidential questionnaire as part of the project ‘We Look, We Learn’.

2. I understand that the information I give will feed into the design of a Visual Arts program to support early childhood teachers.

3. I have read the information sheet for this project and understand its contents. I have had the nature and purpose of the research project, as far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the researcher. My consent is freely given.

4. I understand that this form and any other identifying materials will be stored separately in a locked office at the Australian National University. Data entered onto a computer will be kept on a password protected computer accessible only to the researcher. Data will be kept for 5 years from publication and then destroyed.

5. I understand that although the comments I make will remain confidential I should avoid disclosing information to the researchers which is of a confidential status or which is defamatory of any person.

6. I understand that I may withdraw from the program at any stage, without providing any reason and that this will not have any adverse consequences for me. If I withdraw, the information I provide will not be used in the project.

Signed...............................................................................................
Date...........................................

TO ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY, PLEASE PLACE THIS CONSENT FORM, WHEN COMPLETE, IN WHITE ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND RETURN BY MAIL TO RESEARCHER.

Thank you for your participation.
Researcher to complete:

I……………………………………………………, certify that I have explained the nature and procedures of the research project to…………………………………………………………………………………………. and I consider that she/he understands what is involved.

Signed……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date………………………………………………

Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University
Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au
(02) 6161 4646 (Home)
APPENDIX F: INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

This post-graduate Masters research study is being undertaken in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University, Canberra. I am an Early Childhood teacher, lecturer and writer with a long-standing interest in young children and the Arts. My experience includes working with children and adults in schools, preschools and other early childhood settings as well as in galleries and museums.

What is this research about?

This research is designed to develop teaching and learning strategies which will expand Visual Arts experiences for young children in preschools. The intention is to increase the confidence and enjoyment of teachers in providing Visual Arts experiences. The Visual Arts program will be extended through Visual Arts experiences in a gallery or museum.

The program will make use of currently available resources and is designed to work within the constraints of the current Australian Curriculum and the Early Years Learning Framework.

Why is it important?

Expressive and creative activities are the basis for innovation and creativity. Early positive experiences in drawing, painting and modelling can be expected to have benefits for young children’s wider participation in the Arts. Research, however, suggests that some teachers of young children are less than confident in their ability to offer the Visual Arts so this program will be designed to empower teachers to use their considerable resources and skills in promoting Visual Arts in the preschool. The researcher will work with the teachers to promote drawing, painting and modelling.

What are the stages in the research?

1. In Stage One, consent will be sought from a random group of teachers to complete a questionnaire which will feed into the design of an Early Childhood Visual Arts program for children. Teachers who complete the questionnaire and who indicate willingness to proceed will be offered a Stage Two consent form.

2. In Stage Two, interviews will be conducted with teachers who have agreed to participate in the program.
3. After the interviews two or three teachers will be invited to collaborate with the researcher to develop a Visual Arts program for their own preschools.

4. The program will be implemented in the relevant preschools.

5. The program will be evaluated. Post-program interviews with participating teachers will be conducted by the researcher.

**Time commitment:**

| Stage One | Consent form: 2-3 minutes to complete.  
| Questionnaire: 15-20 minutes to complete |
| Stage Two | Consent form: 2-3 minutes to complete.  
| Interview: Approximately 30 minutes. |
| Stage 3 | Program development primarily designed by the researcher with optional input into the program by the teacher. |
| Stage 4 | Implementation of Visual Arts program in the preschools  
| - Researcher in preschools – up to 5 hours per week for 10 weeks.  
| - No additional time commitment for teachers outside preschool hours.  
| - Excursion - planning, preparation, travelling and visiting time and evaluation in preschool hours. |
| Stage 5 | Evaluation: Post-program interview approximately 30 minutes |

**If you wish to contact me:**
Jane Smyth  
M Phil Candidate  
Research School of Humanities and the Arts  
College of Arts and Social Sciences  
Australian National University  
Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au  
(02) 6161 4646 (Home)

**If you have any questions concerning the research:**
Professor Diana Davis  
Visiting Fellow  
ANU Centre for European Studies  
Research School of Humanities and the Arts  
Australian National University  
Email: Diana.Davis@anu.edu.au

**If you have any concerns or comments about the conduct of the research:**
Ethics Manager  
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee  
The Australian National University  
Telephone: 6125 3427  
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au
APPENDIX G: INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

Visual Arts education in the years before school

A post-graduate research study is being undertaken in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University, Canberra with the assistance of the education staff of Wanniassa Hills Preschool, Wanniassa ACT.

I am the researcher for this project. I am also an Early Childhood teacher, lecturer and writer with a long-standing interest in young children and the Arts. My experience includes working with children and adults in universities, schools, preschools and other early childhood settings in the ACT as well as in national galleries and museums.

What is this research is about?

This research is designed to encourage children’s learning through the Visual Arts in the years before school. The intention is to increase the confidence and enjoyment of teachers in providing a range of Visual Arts experiences. The program may include a visit to a gallery or museum for the preschool group.

Why is it important?

Expressive and creative activities are the basis for innovation and creativity. Early positive experiences in drawing, painting and modelling can be expected to have benefits for young children’s wider participation in the Arts. This program will be designed to empower teachers to use their considerable resources and skills in promoting Visual Arts in the preschool. Teachers are the focus of the research; children are not the focus of this study.

How is this organised?

In collaboration with your child’s preschool teacher, I will plan a Visual Arts program which complies with the Australian Curriculum and the Early Years Learning Framework. The proposal has been assessed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Australian National University and meets all requirements of the ACT Government for research in ACT Public Schools.

What are the stages in the research?

1. A random group of teachers has completed a confidential questionnaire which will now be used to design a program of Visual Arts for the preschool. Your child’s teacher has indicated her willingness to participate in the program.

2. Interviews have been conducted and your child’s teacher has been selected to proceed to the next stage of the program.
3. Your child’s teacher and two other ACT preschool teachers are now further developing a Visual Arts program.

4. The program will be implemented in three ACT preschools.

5. At its conclusion the program will be evaluated by the three teachers with the researcher.

While this study will make no extra demands on parents of children in the preschool, the interest and participation of parents in their child’s preschool experiences during the Visual Arts program will improve outcomes for the children.

Thank you,
Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate

If you wish to contact me:
Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University
Telephone: (02) 6161 4646 (H)
Email: Jane.Smyth@anu.edu.au

If you have any questions concerning the research:
Professor Diana Davis
Visiting Fellow
ANU Centre for European Studies
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
Australian National University
Email: Diana.Davis@anu.edu.au

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Ethics Manager
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee
The Australian National University
Telephone: 6125 3427
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au
APPENDIX H: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM PRINCIPALS

ANU LETTERHEAD

Research School of Humanities and the Arts
ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences
Sir Roland Wilson Building 120
Canberra ACT 0200
Date

Name of Principal
Principal
Name of school
Address

Dear

Currently I am undertaking post graduate research at ANU in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts. I am an Early Childhood teacher, lecturer and writer with a long-standing interest in young children and the Arts. My experience includes working with young children and adults in schools, preschools and other early childhood settings as well as in educational contexts in galleries and museums.

My study is designed to develop teaching and learning strategies which will help to expand Visual Arts experiences for young children. Early positive experiences in drawing, painting and modelling have been demonstrated to have benefit for young children’s wider participation in the Arts. Research, however, suggests that some teachers are currently less than confident in their ability to offer the Visual Arts. My intention is to increase the confidence and enjoyment of teachers in providing Visual Arts experience in the years prior to school. I hope to work with teachers to assist with the provision of Visual Arts in their preschools.

The program will be preschool based and will include a visit to a national gallery or museum. It is designed around currently available resources and to work within the current ACARA Australian Curriculum – The Arts in conjunction with the Early Years Learning Framework.

A random group of preschool teachers will be invited to complete a confidential questionnaire which will feed the design of the program. A consent form will be offered to those who indicate willingness to proceed to the next stage.

Pre-program interviews will be conducted with teachers after which two or three teachers will be invited to collaborate with the researcher to develop a Visual Arts program for their own preschool. The program will be implemented in the teachers’ preschools and will be evaluated. Post program interviews with participants will be conducted by the researcher.
Time commitment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage One</strong></td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>15 - 20 minutes to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consent form</td>
<td>2 - 3 minutes to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Two</strong></td>
<td>Pre-program interview</td>
<td>Approximately 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 3</strong></td>
<td>Program development</td>
<td>Primarily designed by the researcher with optional weekly input into the program by the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 4</strong></td>
<td>Implementation of Visual Arts program in the preschools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program in preschools</td>
<td>No additional time commitment for teachers outside preschool hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excursion</td>
<td>Planning, preparation, travelling and visiting time and evaluation in preschool hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 5</strong></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Interview approximately 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I request your permission to invite preschool teachers from your school to participate in the initial questionnaire phase and to continue in the program if selected.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Jane Smyth

If you wish to contact me:
Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University
Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au
(02) 6161 4646

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If you have any questions concerning the research:
Professor Diana Davis
Visiting Fellow
ANU Centre for European Studies
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
Australian National University
Email: Diana.Davis@anu.edu.au
APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

STAGE 2 – Program design and Implementation

Researcher: Jane Smyth, M Phil Candidate,
Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University, Canberra ACT

1. I……………………………………………………………….. (please print) consent to continue to take part in the project 'We Look, We Learn'. I have read the information sheet for this project and understand its contents. I have had the nature and purpose of the research project, as far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the researcher. My consent is freely given.

2. I understand that if I agree to take part in Stage 2 I will be asked to participate in a pre-program interview and a post program interview. These will each take approximately 30 minutes and will include questions about perceptions of my skills, interests, abilities and levels of confidence in teaching Visual Arts to young children. I will also be required to contribute to and participate in a preschool Visual Arts program in my preschool and accompany children on a possible visit to a gallery or museum.

3. I understand that while information gained during the research project may be published in a thesis and in academic books or journals, my name and position title will not be used in relation to any information I have provided, unless I explicitly indicate that I am willing to be identified when quoted.

4. I understand that personal information such as my name and work contact details will be kept confidential so far as the law allows. This form and any other identifying materials will be stored separately in a locked office at the Australian National University. Data entered onto a computer will be kept on a password protected computer accessible only to the researcher. Data will be kept for up to 5 years from publication and then destroyed.

5. I understand that participation in this program means that art work belonging to children will routinely be photocopied or photographed for research purposes and copies retained in a locked cupboard for a period of 5 years.

6. I understand that although the comments I make will not be attributed to me in any report or publication, it is possible that others may guess the source of information, and I should avoid disclosing information to the researchers which is of a confidential status or which is defamatory of any person.

7. I understand that I may withdraw from the program at any stage, without providing any reason and that this will not have any adverse consequences for me. If I withdraw, the information I provide will not be used in the project.

8. I understand that the researcher will not engage, for purposes of research, with any child in the preschool for whom consent has not been given, nor will the researcher collect, display, comment on or retain any art work from such child.
Audio taping

I consent to written or audio records being made by the researcher during interviews. I also agree to written records being made of collaborative planning, implementation and evaluation. I understand that all tapes and notes will be stored securely at the Australian National University and will be destroyed within 5 years of the conclusion of the study.

Signed......................................................................................................................... Date..............................

Video and Photography

I consent to being photographed by the researcher or her assistant for purpose of illustration in the thesis or professional publication.

Signed......................................................................................................................... Date..............................

TO ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY, PLEASE PLACE THIS CONSENT FORM, WHEN COMPLETE, IN WHITE ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND RETURN BY MAIL TO RESEARCHER.

Researcher to complete:

I.........................................................................................................................., certify that I have explained the nature and procedures of the research project to............................................................................................

and I consider that she/he understands what is involved.

Signed......................................................................................................................... Date..............................

Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University
Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au
(02) 6161 4646
APPENDIX J: LETTERS OF INFORMATION

J.1 LETTER TO TEACHERS STAGE THREE

5 May 2013

Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
Sir Roland Wilson Building 120 – Room 3.46
+61 2 6125 1779
jane.smyth@anu.edu.au

X
X School
X
ACT 2614

Dear X

Thank you for completing a questionnaire and for agreeing to participate in the study 'We Look, We Learn.' You have been chosen, through random geographically based selection, to be offered the chance to proceed to Stage Two of the project.

I now invite you to meet and discuss the project. I am keen to learn how I might assist you with Visual Arts in your preschool. I am offering to work alongside a preschool teacher in three ACT preschools for up to five hours a week for up to ten weeks.

Permission for this research has been granted by the ANU Human Ethics Committee (Protocol: 2012/637) and by the ACT Director, Planning and Performance (File reference : 2013/00082-1)

In order to proceed it is essential that a copy of the attached ‘Approval of research proposal’ be offered to your school Principal for permission to proceed at your preschool site. (Attachment)

I am available to meet you at your preschool on one of two mornings: Tuesday 14 May; Wednesday 15 May or on one of the following afternoons; Thursday 9 May; Friday 10 May; Monday 13 May; Tuesday 14 May or Thursday 16 May. The interview/discussion will take up to 30 minutes.
Should you accept this invitation you would not be obliged to continue with the project. At any time you would be free to withdraw.

An Information Sheet for Teachers is again offered for your perusal. (Attachment)

Please discuss with your school Principal, deliver the copy of ‘Approval of research proposal’ and reply by email at your earliest convenience to jane.smyth@anu.edu.au

Thanking you,

Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate
ANU
J.2 LETTER TO PRINCIPALS – STAGE THREE

Research School of Humanities and the Arts
ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences
Sir Roland Wilson Building 120
Canberra ACT 0200

27 June 2013

X
Principal
X School
X ACT

Dear X

Thank you for your support to X and for encouraging her to participate in the research study into Visual Arts education in the years before school.

This study, as you know, is designed to develop teaching and learning strategies which will help to expand Visual Arts experiences for young children. The National Review of Visual Education (2008) research suggests that some teachers are currently less than confident in their ability to offer the Visual Arts. My intention is to increase the confidence and enjoyment of teachers in providing Visual Arts experience in the years prior to school.

Following a confidential questionnaire (Stage 1), pre-program interviews were conducted with randomly selected teachers (Stage 2) X and two other teachers are now invited to continue to Stage 3 – the development of a Visual Arts program for their own preschool. This will involve visits by the researcher to the teachers in their classrooms. The Program is designed around currently available resources and to work within the current ACARA Australian Curriculum – The Arts in conjunction with the Early Years Learning Framework. Post program interviews with teachers will be conducted by the researcher as part of the evaluation.

**Time commitment for teachers:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Program development primarily designed by the researcher with optional weekly input into the program by the teacher.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Implementation of Visual Arts program in the preschools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program in preschools - No additional time commitment for teachers outside preschool hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5</td>
<td>Evaluation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview approximately 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approval for the research project has been given by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Australian National University (Reference: 2012/637) and by the Education and Training Directorate of the ACT Government (File reference: 2013/00082-1). A copy of the Directorate’s approval is attached.

I now wish to work with X in Stages 3, 4 and 5 of the project. to design a program of Visual Arts for preschool aged children in X School.

I seek your permission to make visits your school during Term 3 to work with Xin this program.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate

If you wish to contact me:
Jane Smyth
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University
Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au
(02) 6161 4646

If you have any questions concerning the research:
Professor Diana Davis
Visiting Fellow
ANU Centre for European Studies
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
Australian National University
Email: Diana.Davis@anu.edu.au

If you have any concerns or comments about the conduct of the research:
Ethics Manager
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee
The Australian National University
Telephone: 6125 3427
Email: Human.Ethics.Offer@anu.edu.au
APPENDIX K: LETTER OF THANKS

Research School of Humanities and the Arts
ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences
Sir Roland Wilson Building 120
Canberra ACT 0200

20 June 2013

Teacher X
ACT

Dear X

Thank you for your participation in Stage 1 of the Visual Arts project ‘We Look, We Learn: Visual Arts education in the years before school’ which provided broad contextual data for subsequent stages. Your contribution to Stage 1 is deeply appreciated.

Twenty-six teachers, of whom you were one, returned completed questionnaires. The data from these questionnaires was highly relevant and valuable as well as substantiating the results of the National Review of Visual Education (2008).

Following the questionnaire stage, ten consenting participants were selected at random for interview and, from these, three were chosen to continue to Stage 3 on the basis of maximizing the geographical spread of preschools across the Canberra region as follows:

Belconnen: X xxx Preschool
Central/Woden: X xxx Preschool
Tuggeranong: X xxx Preschool

The overarching purpose of the program, as explained, is to assist teachers to increase their enjoyment and confidence in teaching Visual Arts. I plan to share the research findings with all participants.

Thank you, X, for your contribution. I really look forward to working with ACT Preschool Teachers to enhance the quality of Visual Arts education in preschools.

Best wishes,

Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Australian National University
Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au
(02) 6161 4646
L.1 Ciara

*The whole process is really important.*

Ciara is a softly spoken, highly articulate teacher with a smiling demeanour and gentle manner. The sole preschool teacher in this primary school, Ciara has had eight years teaching experience and was nominated for a National Excellence in Teaching Award (NETA) in 2005. No children are present; an assistant moves in and out of the room, re-arranging art materials. While the preschool room is not spacious, Ciara has taken full advantage of all existing features and created a room vibrant with colour and interest for the children, including displays focused at children’s eye level and a range of inviting objects to touch. The room is so visually appealing and Ciara’s responses so perceptive (and so free of educational jargon) that the interviewer confidently assumes this to be a place where a thoughtful and creative teacher places a high priority on the Visual Arts and encourages young children to develop artistically. The room displays highly original and individual examples of children’s art which Ciara refers to in illustrating her answers.

Ciara appreciates her current situation as she feels trusted to develop her own way of working giving scope to her obvious creativity. The Principal is supportive and encouraging and sees value in the research project, expressing the hope that Ciara will be selected for Stage 3.

Ciara’s examines her practice confidently with a strong sense of personal enjoyment of the Visual Arts and of working with children. She critiques her own practice and considers the variety of Visual Arts she offers the children in her care:
... it encouraged me to think about the range of Visual Arts that I encourage children to participate in and because I view myself as quite a creative person and I love Visual Arts and I love doing art work with children. But perhaps I like the things I’m confident in and it prompted me to reflect and think ‘So, OK, maybe I don’t do as much sculpture’ and sort of thinking ‘Well, perhaps the play dough is the sculpture’ – thinking along these lines. So it brought up the broader perspectives of what Visual Art is.

L.2 Leah

My thing is how to?

One of two teachers in the preschool, Leah welcomes the interviewer and is obviously well informed about the Research Project. No children are in attendance as Leah is using preparation time for the interview. The playroom is attractively arranged with brightly coloured furnishings and equipment and large doors giving easy access to the outdoor area. Children’s work and abundant information for parents is displayed clearly on suitably placed boards and shelves, reflecting high order attention to quality communications.

Leah displays an immediate and characteristic openness:

Well, [the survey] certainly made me think about some of the things that I do and some of the things I do, I feel OK [about] and other areas I don’t feel as comfortable.

L.3 Hannah

I just don’t think I teach it well enough.

Hannah is a tall and vivacious teacher both enthusiastic and dedicated to her profession. She is a ‘new educator’ in that she has less than two years teaching experience. The Principal of the school, who has an arts background herself, indicated an understanding for the need for
professional learning for Visual Arts teachers and offered a high level of support to the project, even requesting that, if possible, three teachers from the school be considered for interview. Ultimately Hannah’s random selection was announced to the teachers at a full staff meeting and, on meeting the interviewer, Hannah indicated how important it had made her feel to participate in ‘university research’. Not surprisingly, then, the interviewer was warmly welcomed. Hannah laughingly described herself as ‘not a young teacher but a new teacher’; she is a parent, has a Diploma in Children’s Services and many years of experience in the Child Care sector.

Throughout the interview, Hannah talked freely about her current situation addressing issues of concern to her while demonstrating high level enthusiasm for the project as well as ability to communicate her successes and current challenges in teaching Visual Arts. Frequent references to children gave a picture of Hannah’s easy relationship with her pupils and her intense enjoyment in working with them and fellow teachers:

We have come a long way I think. We’ve done a lot – we’ve got the support of the Executive; we’re well resourced. We put together a flyer on why we had changed [the room] and benefits for the children and basically saying ‘We’re the professionals and trust our judgement in this.’

Further, Hannah’s believes her colleagues share her belief in a play-based curriculum and the opportunities it affords for Visual Art.

We’re going to start incorporating our construction into that [program] … we want to make a city and you know that gives children a massive reason to design.

For Hannah, completing the survey also acted as a wake-up call
It’s just not an area that I was really comfortable so that’s why I sent [the survey] straight back – I was like ‘That really is not something that I’m focusing on’

prompting her to admit the lack of priority accorded to the Visual Arts:

I’ve sort of felt [Visual Arts] was a little bit of an ‘add on’ at the end of the week rather than like me really thinking about it.

It made it really clear to me that while it’s timetabled to a degree … the amount of time it’s been given reflected the [perceived] importance of Visual Arts.

I feel I teach some areas really well. This is an area I don’t think I teach badly; I just don’t think I teach it well enough to my own standards and I think I do children a disservice by not having that knowledge.

L.4 Pamela

I teach them things.

Pamela welcomes the interviewer into an office cum staff room crowded with interesting, colourful materials, books and equipment.

Pamela is a resourceful, self-motivated teacher who conducts her own research and has developed an idiosyncratic approach to her Arts program. She enjoys full participation as promoter and director of children’s art activities. She encourages children to learn through an approach which stresses the importance of challenge and the need to persist. Inspiration, however, comes from Pamela rather than the children, whom she refers to as ‘students’ making no reference to Early Childhood pedagogy.

Reflecting on her completed survey, Pamela expresses genuine enjoyment of Art during undergraduate studies.
L.5 Sarah

I know who I am as a teacher.

Small in build, Sarah is a quiet, energetic and quickly spoken teacher who works closely with the children in her care so that, on arrival, the interviewer finds difficulty in locating her. She has now taught for five years in ACT preschools and has developed as a provider of quality preschool programs. More than a year previously, Sarah was invited by the Principal to join the staff, largely because of her broad interest in the Arts and her potential to develop the school’s program in this area. As further testament, the interviewer is aware of appreciative parents who acknowledge Sarah’s experience and the individual attention she gives to all children in an educationally stimulating and happy preschool environment. At the time of interview, up to six children in the category Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) had begun attending the preschool in the previous fortnight – a huge challenge for teacher, parents and children.

Unlike many teachers surveyed, Sarah has a broad personal interest in the Arts and has also expressed confidence in her ability to teach Visual Arts. For her, the survey offered a helpful opportunity for self-assessment and the chance to identify professional needs:

Yes, … it was big eye-opener. One of the questions was ‘what was the last time you did any relevant Visual Arts? … um … Visual Arts practice in PD … and Visual Arts is something I feel pretty confident in but it’s always, still, just as – even more important – than the academic side … expect us to do, so … and that made me come back and think, ‘OK, what have I been missing out on?’ because I haven’t been doing that regular PD, that information that was pretty helpful to me … everything has become so curriculum focussed and [Visual Arts is] not high.
Sometimes, you don’t know where to go.

Arriving at Eleanor’s preschool, the researcher finds not only active children but a melange of stick insects, budgies, caterpillars, tropical fish and a worm farm. A senior ACT preschool teacher, Eleanor shares the nostalgia of conditions in earlier years. Twelve of her 20 years teaching have been here where she works closely with Zoe, an Early Childhood Educator. During the interview Zoe enters, leaves and re-enters, even taking a seat and confidently answering interview questions designed for the nominated interviewee. Eleanor’s clear diction and well-modulated voice contribute to a distinctive style at least as reliant on non-verbal as verbal communication.

Eleanor’s initial reflections are on her practice of showing photographic images of the work of established artists to children to stimulate their interest:

We haven’t really done much about using art works to, you know, sort of get the children enthused about something. I think that’s one we could start and, you know, books. We’ve got some great books with paintings and you can talk about that and I’m lucky… We don’t have that sort of thing here [so] I have to go out and search for them. I love Monet; I like Klimt and things like that so if you could show the children and if they can beware of it ...

She suggests that clay should be introduced in this second term and hints at a reason for not having done so earlier:

Oh, yes, we haven’t had clay; we really should look into that. Sometimes there are low budgets…

When asked whether budgets are a constraint, she is equivocal: ‘We’re very fortunate – we have a lot of consumables.’ Her next comment hints at the more compelling reason for not using clay:
I’d like to but it’s just one of those things … How do you initiate it and all the other things?

L.7 Frances

I don’t have a clear vision of what I’d like to achieve.

At interview Frances is quietly spoken and, possibly, nervous. She indicates pleasure at the opportunity for interview and the chance of continuing to the next stage of the research even though she states, frankly, that she is not clear what value that participation might have for her. Frances came to teaching ‘late in life’ after varied experiences working in local government. Some months after this interview Frances was awarded the ACT Department of Education Early Childhood Teacher of the Year.

Frances’s comments suggest a responsible attitude to teaching Visual Arts but also reflect a certain desperation:

Re a Visual Arts program? I’m ad hoc so I don’t have a clear vision of what I’d like to achieve so it’s about … grabbing anything I can get at the time…so mentorship or collaboration … so the sort of idea so I can articulate what I’m actually trying to achieve through my program because at the moment I seem to just drag bits or use the internet and it tends to be dependent on other people so …

L.8 Stephanie

I’m interested but I don’t have the skills to do it.

Stephanie warmly welcomes the researcher and reminds her that she had once been her student at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). She is now actively engaged in continuous professional learning, and is an energetic member of the ACT Preschool Teachers’ Professional Association (PTPA). She is inclusive in her approach to Early Childhood
teaching, frequently responding in interview not as ‘I’ but as ‘we’, representing preschool teachers.

Stephanie is one of two teachers in a well-established purpose-built preschool in suburban Canberra. The typical small scaled ‘kindergarten’ furniture is supplemented with extra tables and shelves for displays of innumerable containers and objects; walls are covered at varying heights with materials competing for visual attention – children’s work, notices and posters, probably too numerous to be replaced regularly.

Responding to issues raised by the survey, Stephanie declaims the intense focus on Literacy and Numeracy which puts pressure on preschools. She yearns for ‘balance’ between these curriculum areas and the Arts and will now ‘try to take some more action’. Her vision of ‘an integrated approach’ underpins her desire for collaborative action by preschool teachers to promote Visual Arts teaching:

*I guess it felt like there’s been such a focus on Literacy and Numeracy. I’m conscious all the time that, at the preschool level, anyway, um, I think there really needs to be an integrated approach and real balance so I stopped and thought ‘OK, um, this is really interesting’. As much as I love art I’m still, I guess, focussing on those areas, Literacy and Numeracy, and it’s made me reflect on that and try to take some more action.*

The survey has prompted reflection and encouraged self-questioning to which Stephanie has responded enthusiastically:

*I think it did, actually. I love working with clay and modelling and sculpting and things like that and that’s something that I went away feeling like ‘Oh, why aren’t I doing that as much?’ and so it sort of spurred me on. Then also printing – we seem to always offer lots of brushes and always focussed on lots of … and brushes and things so … and I thought printing is completely different for the child and*
I included it in my program this week. Perhaps I could further that in some way.

L.9 Virginia

I feel as though I need an artist by my side.

Virginia is an experienced preschool teacher who is held in high professional regard, being recognised in 2012 with an ACT Public Education Award for Teacher of the Year. A visit to the renowned preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, confirmed for Virginia the importance of the Arts in children's thinking and learning and she now regularly addresses the 'big questions' in her search for improved Visual Arts education for preschool children. A broad understanding of the Arts – including not only Visual Arts but Music and Dance – is apparent in discussion.

The older, inner Canberra preschool where Virginia teaches is well-sited in the corner of an established and well maintained park with many mature trees. To Virginia's delight, the small building was recently extended and refurbished making it more spacious and comfortable. The cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the enrolled children are diverse – something which Virginia sees as a positive: 'That's not a challenge, diversity – that's a strength'.

On the morning of interview, the preschool room is quietly 'buzzing'; children are working contentedly with an Educator and a helper so there are no distractions; Virginia’s answers are measured and thoughtful as she considers not only her background and current teaching practice but philosophical issues related to Early Childhood education and preschool teaching. Throughout the meeting Virginia speaks of ‘we’, positioning herself in a cohort of teachers and considering collegiate needs.
Integral to Virginia’s practice is frequent self-examination of her professional skills and knowledge. For her, the survey was a prompt to supplement this regular reflection; the desire for participation in the Research Project is consistent with her professional practice. Responses to interview questions reveal Virginia’s honesty in evaluating her teaching performance.

The survey’s checklist of Visual Arts disciplines has made her realize she has no particular skills despite using a camera and being a receptive participant in the Arts:

_I mean I’ve taken photos of my kids and as a photographer. I’m the artist in my family and I buy art but I don’t have particular skills in any of those areas [listed in the survey] but I’m happy to have a go._

L.10 Rochelle

_I don’t think we should put it in their heads of what they should do._

Rochelle is one of four preschool teachers in one of Canberra’s new government ‘super schools’ in an area of rapid growth. The school employs specialist teachers for subjects including Music, Dance, Drama and Art. Integrated into the school is the preschool, one of the largest in the ACT catering for a maximum of 154 children who attend part time. The Executive Teacher who leads the preschool team is keen for Rochelle to participate in the interview.

On the bleak mid-winter morning of the interview, thick fog envelops the area and, as the school becomes visible on approach, its large size and building style appear more industrial than educational. Despite this, the interior is warm, the school buzzes with friendliness and activity and any greyness of exterior is offset by bright colours and the high energy of children and teachers. Rochelle is now in her second year of teaching – her first year in this preschool. Aware that Rochelle is in the staff room, small ‘characters’ enter, leave and re-enter to speak excitedly about
their game. Rochelle receives their news kindly then tells them, repeatedly, to return to the playroom. Clearly a busy morning for Rochelle, her quick, brief responses suggest an eagerness to conclude the meeting, uncharacteristic of interviewees.

The survey prompted Rochelle to consider the time required for preparation to teach Visual Arts – ‘It made me think about how much time I put into preparing’ – and to recall her own school experiences.

*I thought about my own creative arts experiences at school – I’m not long out of school and I did take creative arts in Year 11 and 12 [and] about how much time my teachers spent in planning theirs.*
APPENDIX M: PROFORMA CHECKLIST – STAGE 3

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

Teacher:

PRELIMINARY MEETING, GALLERY VISIT and DISCUSSION  National Portrait Gallery 130705

Discussion topic: Seeing and Thinking.

Visual awareness and the engagement of the brain in looking and viewing for understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHECK LIST</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher availability – meetings and visits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Timetable (Draft)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent consent forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Info sheets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outdoor and wet area possibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Needs of children

*Priorities for preschool years*

• To learn about being a person
• To learn about the world
• To learn about interacting in the world
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Skills and techniques for mastery not ‘ideas’</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Painting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Documentation                  |                |
| *Requirements – personal diary keeping by teacher* |                |
| An account of thoughts, questions, ideas, concerns, decisions and directions for discussion with researcher at conclusion of Stage 3: |                |
| • 3 entries                    |                |
| • 3 times per week             |                |
| • 3 months of project         |                |

*Purposes of record keeping*

*Need for honesty and originality.*

| Discussion of topic            |                |
| *Teacher’s role*               |                |
| *Researcher’s role*            |                |
| *Colleagues’ role*             |                |

| Questions                     |                |
**APPENDIX N: PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE**

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

**Teacher:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL MEETING 2</td>
<td>Discussion and planning</td>
<td>JS H</td>
<td>JS visits preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL MEETING/COMMUNICATION 3</td>
<td>Progress evaluation</td>
<td>H (Fri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>August 7</td>
<td>GROUP VISIT 2 – Preschool/School</td>
<td>JS H</td>
<td>PERMISSION Teachers report and co-operatively plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL MEETING/COMMUNICATION 4</td>
<td>H (Fri)</td>
<td>PERMISSION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL MEETING/COMMUNICATION 5</td>
<td>JS H</td>
<td>JS visits preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>GROUP VISIT/MEETING 3:</td>
<td>H (Fri)</td>
<td>JS visits preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>JS H</td>
<td>PERMISSION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL MEETING/COMMUNICATION Post program interview.</td>
<td>H (Fri)</td>
<td>JS visits preschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Presentation planning PTPA</td>
<td>JS H</td>
<td>Rehearsal option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept/Oct</td>
<td></td>
<td>Post program interview</td>
<td>JS H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX O: POST-PROGRAM INTERVIEW

Visual Arts education in the year prior to school

Post Program Interview. (Approximate duration 30 minutes)

Thank you for participating in the program and for attending this second interview.

Questions:

1. Thank you again for giving your time and expertise to develop and implement a Visual Arts program in your preschool. What main ideas and thoughts about Visual Arts have emerged as a result of your participation?

2. At an earlier interview you rated your degree of interest in the Visual Arts. To what extent, if at all, has your interest in Visual Arts changed as a result of the program. Please comment on what, in particular, influenced these changes?

3. You indicated previously your level of confidence in teaching a range of Visual Arts. To what extent, if at all, has your confidence in teaching Visual Arts changed as the result the program?

4. How do you now feel about your ability to teach Visual Arts?

5. What changes, if any, will you implement in Visual Arts in your preschool, as a result of your participation in the program?

6. Please describe any new sources of inspiration you can identify.

7. What now needs to happen in your preschool to foster Visual Arts? (What might be a first step?) What are the main challenges for you?

8. If this program were to be repeated what changes would you make and why?

9. To what extent has this program helped you, personally and as teacher of the Visual Arts?

Thank you for your time. I very much appreciate your contribution.

Jane Smyth
M Phil Candidate
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
College of Arts and Social Sciences Australian National University
Email: jane.smyth@anu.edu.au: 0402 917 194
X is a Preschool teacher at Southern Cross Early Childhood School in her second year of teaching.

X is a most confident and capable teacher but lacked confidence in her ability and knowledge of the teaching of Visual Arts to these very young children. As a teacher and Principal with over 35 years’ experience I have found this to be quite common amongst early childhood educators.

Working with Jane Smyth over the past 12 months has created and instilled a new energy, confidence and passion in the teaching of Visual Arts for X. In addition, it has equipped her with the theory base necessary for developing and implementing effective programs that explicitly teach children a range of mediums, techniques and age appropriate theory through an integrated approach.

X now provides opportunities for her Preschool children to express their own creativity through individualised art works each day. The latter was most evident in the children’s recent Art Show for families. Children’s art work highlighted diversity in mediums, inspiration and presentation.

X’s new found passion and talent for teaching Visual Arts to Preschool children is a direct result of the collaborative and supportive mentoring approach that Jane Smyth has used through her ANU Research Project.

Jennie Bailey
Principal
X School
29 November 2013
APPENDIX Q: EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

Fri, Nov 1, 2013 at 2:19 PM

To: Jane Smyth <jsmyth@workingparent.com.au>

Hi Jane :) 

You are way too kind.

Thought the following email may be of interest/evidence for you and your research. During the exhibition I was approached by this lovely but very vocal lady in regards to my display. She drew many people in supporting how wonderful it was to see the "Butterfly's Work" and that this is what true early childhood art work should look like. She had studied at Macquarie Uni in Sydney but was yet to come across art work that she felt matched what he had be taught. It was funny how it happened because I was standing close by and came to have a discussion with her as well. She asked if I would email her my catalogue and of course I did. Anyway it made me feel like the whole effort was well worth while.

See you soon,

S'.

Hi S:

I did mean to email you Friday night but have had a busy weekend.
I did enjoy the way in which you documented your journey with the children

and I would love to have a copy of the text and some pictures so that I can share with my colleagues at Possum.

I have found that every one has a different way of documenting and that despite all the hoo ha around doing it right we are all a long way from doing well in Australia. I found documenting satisfactorily at uni very frustrating to understand.
Having said that, I did enjoy the way that your piece was simple, factual and yet it ticked all the boxes for exactly what would have scored high marks at uni. I truly think you do have a strong grasp of the process.
Further it was great to see a piece that made so much sense so so simply.

In reading the accompanying 'brochure/ catalogue' there is a strong sense of the children's personal decision making and agency. That piece connected well with the display in that it furthered the process but it clarified how the students were able to make the choices for their items and it gave information to the viewer about the fact that the children had a range of experiences and a portfolio of work for want of a more apt term to refer back to in making their decisions.

There is a very strong message within the whole process of awakening children's ability and consciousness of art as well as their personal competence in decision making, individuality and creativity.
Well done, I hope you had lots of wonderful community responses. I would love to be able to visit your studio and see what you have set up.
you can email me at