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What is the potential of creativity and drawing for helping and supporting people with special needs?

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for the degree of Master of Art

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Abstract

This research is an investigation of 'what is the potential of creativity and drawing for helping and supporting people with special needs?' This research raises challenges that many teachers have experienced in working with people with special needs.

I have used qualitative methodology in the study. The participants in this study were long distanced and I have used snowballing techniques to recruit the participants. Key issues identified in this study are obtained from the coding frame: obstacles of implementing art education for people with special needs, copying and non-directive approaches in drawing and potential benefit and risk of creativity and drawing.

Finally, this section will end by outlining the whole structure of the dissertation. At the beginning, Chapter 1 will be presented. Chapter 1 will deal with rationale of using narrative, personal narrative and critical reflection of the personal narrative writing will be presented.

After that, I will direct the readers to Chapter 2 which at the beginning, the key questions that will be explored in the literature review. Strategies to locate the literature will also be presented and later two key themes will be reviewed.

Chapter 3 will be devoted for research design and the account. It will present the aim and purpose of the chapter, the research design which include my main research question, choice of methodology, choice of instrument, ethical considerations, recruitment of participant cohort, data collection and processing procedures, data analysis procedures, coding frame, strategies for making the account and finally the account will be presented.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss on matters emerging from Chapter 3. Three key issues will be discussed in relation to the literature.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the implications of helping and supporting people with special needs specifically in relation to obstacles to implementing creative art issues.

Acknowledgements

This is going to be short and quick.

To my supervisor Max Biddulph, I owe the greatest debt. This dissertation would not exist without the help of his ideas, suggestions, encouragement, support, feedback and care.

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Introduction

This very first part of this section presents the aim(s) and purpose(s) that may have influenced my choice of the research topic. This section then presents the research problem in its context. The main question will be stated. This question will direct this research which focuses on issues to be studied. Ethical considerations are very important to any given research. Therefore, this section will also deal with major responsibilities carried by a researcher. Finally, the section ends by outlining the whole structure of the dissertation.

My own personal experiences of working in schools with special needs people may have influenced my choice of the research topic. I recall vividly the days that I worked with special needs children in drawing. Parents and teachers were frequently fascinated by the talent of people with special needs' drawings and question why they drew in such way that they did.

When I write down this research, I questioned myself what I, as a teacher with not much experience in special educations-arts or otherwise-was best eligible to bring to the present debate. The recent years with the growing trend towards inclusive education has identified children with special needs in mainstream schools (Helm & Beneke, 2003). This shows that some national policy's desire is to normalise the lives of people with special needs, as far as this is possible. Therefore, here, I decided my point of departure.

Not all children respond positively to drawing, so it does to children with special needs. My hopes were, at least the teachers would see that creative art techniques particularly drawing can be used as an important tool to meet the needs of people with special needs which could be integrated across the curriculum.

The purpose of this study is to collect data regarding the efficacy of art education with special needs people in schools. Specifically the research question is as follows: What is the potential of creativity and drawing for helping and supporting people with special needs? To address this question, the design of this research will focus on school-teachers. The aim of the present study is to explore the potential of creativity and drawing and to what extent these can be used for helping and supporting people with special needs. Also, it is recognised that the topic is closely linked to the researcher.

The majority of research that looks into the therapeutic potential of art was commonly found in art therapy (Zeallear, 2005). Therefore, this dissertation attempts to draw matching lines between the benefits of art therapy and the potential of creativity and drawing in the classroom for people with special needs will be made.

Therefore, I am motivated to do this research for two reasons: firstly, I want to investigate the potential of creativity and drawing for people with special needs. Secondly, I want to give hopes for the teachers interested in using creative art in teaching and/or working special needs people to develop their abilities and performances particularly in fine and gross motor skills.

School of Education Research Ethics, University of Nottingham has conducted guidelines outlined by the British Educational Research Association's (2004) on the ethical issues involved in the educational research. The BERA currently has a document of statements (Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2004), covering a wide range of issues. As a researcher, I need to follow strict codes of practice devised by BERA when working with participants. These codes cover ethical considerations: rights and protection of participants, confidentiality and privacy. I will ensure that teachers understand the aim and the purposes of this study and they can withdraw from the study anytime at any point. In the data collection, pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity and the data will be stored safely to ensure privacy and confidentiality. These measures will be explained in detail in Chapter 3 later.

At the beginning, Chapter 1 will be presented. Chapter 1 will be dealing with rationale of using narrative, personal narrative and critical reflection of the personal narrative writing will be presented.

After that, readers will be directed to Chapter 2 which at the beginning, the key questions that will be explored in the literature review. Strategies to locate the literature will also be presented and later two key themes will be reviewed.

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analysis procedures, coding frame, strategies for making the account and finally the account will be presented.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss on matters emerging from Chapter 3. Three key issues will be discussed in relation to the literature.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the implications of helping and supporting people with special needs specifically in relation to obstacles to implementing creative art issues.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale for the use of narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry can be used in any form of data given by the story teller. This may include journals, poetry, art or performance both in oral and written narratives which are transformed into a public presentation (Denzin, 2003). The narrative inquiry is the method chosen most frequently in research to elicit the individual's narrative (Josselson, 1996) and will be the primary method used within this chapter.

Since we were little, we were exposed to fictional tales such as fairy tales that always have moral stories behind it and we were asked to relate ourselves with the stories told (Langellier and Peterson, 1996). Hence, I have adopted narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) with its emphasis on 'experience as text' to discover my connection within the story explored. When I ask myself the question, what will be the connection between me and the narrative story? As explained by Crossley (2000) when we ask what the connections means, it refers to how something is related or connected to something or someone else.

Until recently, there has been a great interest among professionals to the application of narrative across the human and social sciences (Abbot, 1990, Crossley, 2000, Elliot, 2005). Therefore, there has been a vast growing literature on definition of 'narrative' (Elliot, 2005). Narrative is defined as a story that is told in

sequence of events that are important for the narrator and his or her audience (Denzin, 1989, Widdershoven and Smits 1996). It has an internal logic to the narrator and relates events in a temporal, causal sequence (Denzin, 1989). Thus, from the definitions of narrative offered, it provides a helpful framework for my writing because it proposes three key features of narratives. First, they are chronological; secondly, they are meaningful; and thirdly, they are 'inherently social' that the reader is determined at the pre-writing stage and are therefore produced for a specific audience (Elliot, 2005:4).

Moreover, narrative as an approach is being used to explore the potential of creativity and drawing to engage readers in understanding what draws people to creativity and drawing, and what creative processes and products involve in drawing. I have chosen narrative inquiry because it is one of the qualitative methods through which I report my own personal and emotional life that is clearly informed by social science and perspectives (Bloor and Wood, 2006). Narrative inquiry is my attempt to gather qualitative information that promised to bring me or my audience closer to the experience of the people studied. I will try to convince others and myself, to take a particular view of my and of others' lives (Ochberg, 1996).

In this narrative inquiry, it is inevitable for me to reflect my own interest and assumptions (Coulson & Stickley, 2007). For the purpose of the research, the inquiry will be based on my participation in the process of sharing my experience in one of my courses to be written about in the next section. My role as a researcher in these circumstances is to invite myself to become a narrator who involves writing

a story with clear beginnings and endings, as separable from the surrounding discourse rather than as situated events (Reissman, 1993). This requires me to know what is 'story worthy' in my social setting (Loseke 2001).

1.2 Using Narrative Inquiry to Explore the Potential of Creativity and Drawing

Lecture was back after a week off and we were looking forward to embarking to another journey of the course. That day, we were invited to set forth to draw and paint. I felt like I was invited into an arena of my non-area of expert and of course it was a challenge as I set forth to art.

We were asked to draw six different drawings which depicted our emotions but in abstract forms. I considered abstract as something that was nothing. Have you ever considered drawing 'nothingness'? The comical thing was I never set out to draw abstract before. I ran into few problems. How was I supposed to do it? What should be drawn? I was not familiar with what shapes I should illustrate. Was it abstract if you just draw a few colored circles? I waited for instructions from the course facilitator.

I sat in a three-in-a-group. I felt withdrawn because I did not know where to begin. Then, I looked at my course mate, Jane. She had started a drawing with different paints available. Jane painted mainly shapes with lovely vibrant backgrounds. I felt intimidated because I was the only one who was not doing it yet. I just drew

pictures that came into my mind. Moreover, it seemed to me that as part of the whole creative processes in paintings, the dominant discourse led many of us to believe that there were no specific approaches or techniques in paintings.

The only thing I remembered from my art lessons in my early school years was that they were very tedious. Although I had only just started, I was already discovering that my art lessons were not at all like I remembered. I had changed my mind when I involved in paintings. People are usually conscious and reluctant to participate fully when presented with a new experience (Nadeau, 1993). However, this was changed by the art activity. I enjoyed drawing 'nothingness' without fearing that my work will be criticised by others.

Knowing that the task was about drawing emotions, I was then translating my memory into drawing. I tried to imagine what abstract sea and the early spring would look like and obtained a vague picture which I drew. I used only few colours with a single dab technique. Regardless of the medium used, I knew that the information on these drawing papers was relating to colour.

Colours were what motivated me the most in painting. There were four (a tetrad) number of colours in the first drawing that consisted of blue, yellow, green and brown. In this painting of abstract drawing, the yellow colour softened the transition between the dark blue and the light brown. The light brown also softened the transition between the yellow and the green. I dabbed the brush in order to enhance my painting, as well as to create certain special effects that were extremely useful in light situations such as spring scenes.

Much of the pleasure from viewing a painting is derived from the colors used in it. The feelings will influence the colours that an individual have chosen. If an individual is feeling depressed, he or she will be more likely to choose darker colors than when he or she is happy. In brief, when an individual draws, he or she does not reproduce one specific characteristic but a 'composite derived from many occasions, impressions, and memories.' (Moschini, 2005:14).

It did not take a lot of talent to draw. I did not have a good foundation in the techniques of drawing and painting. I had drawn shapes in a painting that had highly contrasting colours. I applied the dark purple in abrupt and harsh to the drawing. I worked freely and loosely in an intuitive manner. Primarily, I did not think drawing random shapes could be entertaining. This way, I could go on forever without ever getting it right.

My two course mates had a pretty finishing when the time was announced finished by the facilitator. Then, we were asked to talk about our drawings. When my course mates talked about their paintings, I realised that their art products contained unique expressive images which depicted their emotions. They had chosen soft colours to reveal their happy feelings. Malchiodi (1998b) explains that there is no correct way to express emotions through art.

Each person uniquely expresses emotions in their own way, and has a personal visual language for expressing his or her emotional self. Some people are heavily dependent on shapes and lines, while some people might find colour more motivating. The shape and thickness of the lines in the drawing become another

way of capturing the nature of one's feelings. The subject matter can also be a powerful clue to the concerns of the individual (Gardner, 1980).

When the session ended, I had difficulty leaving the session. I was absorbed by the creative process, and I felt engaged with the activity as escapism from my 'current' world. This has been explained by Malchiodi (1998a) that an individual may not be aware of his or her environment during the creative activity often provides for retreat from reality.

Initially, I could not notice the emphasis on the creative process. The activity was solely based on self-reliant and self-discovery. I reflect this as a less instructive way of activity, however no requirement to being creative. Therefore, less instructive and no restriction made us to be creative in our own ways. When I was involved in the activity, my physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and intuitive sensations arose. I felt that the process of creative painting brought a particular insight into sharper liberation.

I realised that the emphasis was not on the art products. It was the feelings that arose from the activity that were more vital than the product. However, the image drawn in the paper gave us most vital information about our emotions. I learnt through the process, the way I arrived at the end point and made an application. This is best captured by Heib (2005:52) that 'the product-learner identifies a concrete image in that end point and reads its meaning'.

1.3 Critical reflection

In this section, I will be concerned mainly to sketch out how to go about conducting an analysis of my own story. Before I move further, however, it is important to clarify some of the highlights and challenges of adopting a narrative approach. The highlight of this section is to identify the main theme from my personal narrative which will be presented. Besides presenting the theme identified in my writing, my purpose of writing this is to present my research experience using narrative inquiry as an object to review, as part of a process that invites the readers to visit and create their own stories that contribute to the continuing development of 'knowledge in context' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:41).

Drawing on the knowledge I had from my previous narrative writing that I gained during one of my Masters' assignments, I noted how to apply the three features of narratives: chronological, meaningful and produced for specific audience (Elliot, 2005). Therefore, I also recount on my previous writing experiences to highlight what I have learnt about narrative as a research method.

I realised that my story was narrowed, because I felt, in writing about something that had to do with professional culture, it stung me with ethical issues that might challenge my writing. Therefore, I had to be carefully selective in structuring the events and the significant people who are involved in the story. White (1997) explains that a move into the professional culture will likely to result in people describing their lives rather narrowly, often leaving out the significant others and important events.

When conducting narrative approach, the biggest challenge is protecting those involved in the story, so there are ethical issues to consider (Willig, 2000). Anonymity was considered with all people's name. In order to maintain anonymity, pseudonym was used throughout this chapter. In some instances, titles have been used such as the 'course facilitator'. However, anonymity is possible because it is not easy for people to know which course and course facilitator are being referred to. On the other hand, the ethical issues cannot be dealt with unless I know the situation thoroughly and focuses on the meaning of the issue for the people involved (Widdershoven & Smits, 1996). The narrative seemed not to raise any issue for the people involved, thus ethical issue for the people involved was not the case.

As we saw in Chapter 1.2, it shows that narrative inquiry is a method that has become the greatest literacy device for me, in which, mirrors my belief that drawing is more than just an art activity. I have realised that this approach has in fact offered the holistic information (Lieblich et al. 1998) I was personally searching for. The information that I gathered from my writing is comprehensive and has a lot of things to be considered such as impacts upon the individuals on experiencing the creative processes and products which I do not have space to pursue in this chapter. However, I will relate this with the following chapter which is the literature review.

I was aware that one of the challenges that struck me throughout the research process was to be confident with the voice that I made. When I started writing, I was obstinate and had no interest in my position that was attached to the role of a

researcher. After all, I am a teacher and I have a background in art (theories) and education. While Moschini (2005), Malchiodi (1998), Nadeau (1993) and others' books had helped me through the process in terms of art as a therapy, I should not be surprised that as a researcher I draw on others work to justify my position. Therefore, narrative approach has given me the opportunities to say something in my own voice with justification of others' work (Crossley, 2000 & Elliot, 2005).

I also wondered what the focus of this chapter would have been if I had chosen to relate creativity and drawing for people with special needs, instead. I made this commentary before I thought that I might have captured the creative processes of those working with the special needs people rather than my own separate individuated experience itself. I now think that this approach is helpful as it reveals much subjective information about how I perceive the creative art in relation to my experience and individuals with special needs.

As a result, the application of narrative functions to stimulate interests that are projected in the research is hoped to produce knowledge to my profession as a teacher. Therefore, within this study, the theme is constructed in light of personal and a genuine interest in the potential of creative art agenda. This represents the social and political stance where my standpoint is coming from. The main theme identified is the role of creativity and drawing. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

2.1 Introduction

The main research question is 'what is the potential of creativity and drawing for helping and supporting people with special needs?' The main theme identified from the previous chapter is the roles of creativity and drawing. This chapter is intended to review the roles of creativity and drawing. It will also familiarise you with some of the ways used in art therapy; for instance through creative art which can help people with special needs to express themselves, and enhance their health and well-being.

Although at this point you may think that art therapists' styles of response are clearly different with teachers' approaches in art education, it is possible to find the common ground. This is owing to the fact that art practice in education would consider at least some aspects of the therapeutic experience that can be integrated in special education.

Prior to gathering the literature, I produced a list of necessary references and resources to cite from. These resources include library books, internet, journal articles, magazines and electronic books. The first step was a big step because it was not easy to locate the literature. In researching the literature, attention was drawn to the keywords: creativity, art therapy, and people with special needs. This

was to ensure that a more focused keywords would helped me to reduce the selection of references and resources from the vast literature.

The WWW allows 'convenient and flexible access to electronic resources' (Rumsey, 2004:16). Access to the library e-resources using University of Nottingham Library Online Catalog (UNLOC) was also helpful as long as the user was authenticated using the Athens login. Moreover, some documents used in my literature were obtained from search-engines such as Yahoo! and Google. Accessible documents which were in the form of journal articles and magazines used for my literature were available through the internet using the PDF format. Reading the index which is usually located at the end of the books also helped me to trace the information straightforwardly.

2.2 Creativity, Drawing and People with Special Needs

In today's society, creativity is usually the most appreciated quality in wide range of activities. Among the wide range of activities are drama, film, music, mime, pantomime, pottery, painting, literature, photography and so on. The question of 'what is creativity' is formulated within a conventional or individualistic insight on creativity (Sawyer and John-Steiner, 2003).

According to Sawyer and John-Steiner (2003), the definition of creativity is defined by the society because 'it is the society that constitutes creativity' (p.220). In relation of the statement to people with special needs, it is undoubted that one will

question, what is their quality of creativity? If the society constitutes creativity, how does the society constitute people with special needs' creativity?

Drawing the questions into the school context, it shows that in some schools, limits are placed on children's creativity by educational systems (Zeallear, 2005) that encourage copying and imitation in drawing rather than naturalness and creative imagination (Martin, 2004). My experience working with people with special needs require teachers to give time and attention; it is found that usually teachers, assistants or volunteers are doing direct preparation of children's drawings. For this reason, drawing based on the teachers' skills and knowledge that they readily possess will only lead to a negative investment in children with special needs development (Matlock & Hornstein, 2004).

Drawing creates process, produces a product and can become a practice (Hieb, 2005). My argument is if the special needs people are copying art, will they experience the creative processes? Will the quality of the copying art illustrate creativity? It has been emphasised by (AATA), '[T]he creative process involved in the making of art is healing and life enhancing' (American Art Therapy Association Mission Statement, 1996-1997). Therefore, it is clear that if copying art heals and enhances life for the people with special needs, it shows they are experiencing creative processes because the use of creative art first focuses on the experiences (Moschini, 2005). However, it depends on the individuals' perception to what extent such experiences are meaningful to them. Conversely, Abraham (2005) supports copying because in working with special needs people due to decline in physical, mental or social functioning, therapists will suggest certain projects, or even

provide aid pictures to copy from. Consequently, copying encourages a sense of security and safety in an intellectually, physically, and/or emotionally challenged population.

Moreover, since some teachers feel that people with special needs cannot draw, surely the teachers cannot be expected to 'teach' them art appropriately (Willats, 2005). Teachers and parents themselves may lack the necessary skills to teach children with special needs to do creative drawings, and therefore they are not confident and have no interest in helping them to develop the creativity (Cox, 1992).

It is necessary to look at the art therapy literature particularly drawing to see if there is suggestion how creative art might help to take some of the benefits out of the special education. In researching the creative arts, current literature appears to identify the therapeutic values of drawing in art therapy (Moschini, 2005). However, in studies including people with special needs, the results have shown that its focus are mainly relating to disabilities in addition to the mental well being of children with special needs (Waller and Dalley, 1992). This is due to the creative processes in drawing for special needs people aim to providing solution for the developmental problems.

Drawing can serve as a powerful medium to develop children's cognitive (Zeallear, 2005), and yet some adults view some of special needs people's arts mean nothing. Creativity celebrates the possibilities of the human minds (Bruce, 2004). Therefore, the statement believes that regardless of what that 'possibilities' are, it is clearly

informed that some severe individual's art could possibly excel in drawing than any other field such as academic. As strengthened by Moschini (2005), '[A] picture always speaks the truth. Regardless of age or ability, art never lies. It may reveal only one side, one moment within the here and now, one facet, but that facet is the truth' (p. 2).

Art is utilised because of the advantages that it offers particularly in supporting psychological development and growth. As best captured by Hinz (2006, p. 9):

Art can stimulate psychological growth and support healing in several ways. Inherent in the art itself are properties that can promote growth.
(Hinz, 2006)

Creative drawings become the vehicle for expression that cannot be rejected because if we are rejecting art, we are rejecting the resources of art that is creativity. As explained by Ulanov and Ulanov (1991): '[W]hen an individual refused to receive, to look at and reflect on the images that he or she have come to, he or she will do a great harm to his or her outer social being and perhaps inner psychic being' (p.44).

Unquestionably, there are special needs people who face psychological distress, emotionally disturbed, difficulties with family and relationship issues, personal traumas and other mental health issues (Malchiodi, 1998a & Malchiodi, 1998b). Veltman and Browne (2003) indicated a child could reveal about relationships within the family that was important in determining the child's personality through art information. As the child with special needs linguistic develops more complex

than a normal developing child, the use of metaphors allow for the exploration of complex ideas (Dubowski, 1990).

I would like to take this one step further and suggest that in addition to visual creativity such as drawing, there may be benefits to children with special needs from engaging in drawing. When children are asked to describe their creations verbally, it is less intimidating because the artwork allows them to keep an emotional distance from the reality of life (Malchiodi 1998a). Children who do not have the language skills to communicate verbally find art to be helpful in communicating their emotions (Zeallear, 2005).

Drawing is a mode of communication which is natural that children rarely resist (Malchiodi, 2001). Drawing offers a means to express emotions and thoughts in less threatening way and provide a sense of safety and comfort (Zeallear, 2005).

Researchers recognise the need for developmentally appropriate method such as drawing to help children communicate their experiences. The use of drawing improves communication through direct visual expression (Rollins, 2005). The children's language are simple, however they speak meaningfully through drawings (Ewing, 2008). Some people with special needs with a variety of developmental delays that vary in degree of severity benefit from visual expression (Hull, 1990 & Tipple, 1992). Those who have problems particularly in communicating verbally can make use of creative art such as drawing or painting as a subject to talk about.

For children with learning difficulties, these drawings then are easier to channel communication and learning (Tipple, 1992). Drawing is an art activity and requires

a motor activity and some degree of control, mental concentration, and if it is a sociable activity, cooperation and turn-taking with others will also be engaged (Hull, 1990).

There is no correct way to express emotions through art (Malchiodi, 1998b), however the personal process of making art is equivalently important (Malchiodi, 1998a).

2.3 What can be integrated of art therapy, creative arts with school practice?

Using creative art, people with disability have the opportunity to express their feelings, emotions, and skills in a way all normal people can do (Betts, 2003). Creative drawings make a difference for people with mental health needs, Alzheimer's disease, physical disabilities and developmental disabilities (Malchiodi 1998, Abraham, 2005, Males, 1990). Recent study shows that there has been growth in the use of art therapy in the area of special education, as children with special needs fight with their learning disabilities or emotional challenges (Kalmanowitz & Kasabova, 2004) and with their sense of self-worth that affect their self-confidence functioning in the society (Mowry-Hesler, 2007).

Art is an integral part of human culture and life centred issues (Danto, 2000 & Hooks, 2000). Therefore, if art is taught in more meaningful educational experiences, the art will become a core of the school curriculum (Krug and Cohen-

Evron, 2000). Integration of the visual arts with core subjects appeals to students who have found 'traditional curriculums intimidating, frustrating, or insurmountable' (Zeallear, 2005:5). This is clearly supported by Wadeson (2000) that the use of art therapy in the classroom appears to be the hope for a better society. The schools offer the greatest opportunity to reach individuals particularly with physical, psychological, mental and emotional problems which affect their functions socially. Therefore, for students who do not respond to traditional learning styles, art offers other possibilities of learning as well as promoting social and emotional well-being (Mowry-Hesler, 2007).

In a study by Short (2001), the research indicated students could achieve an in-depth understanding in both visual and verbal expression. Combining visual and verbal language proved to be highly effective in teaching inner child (Zeallear, 2005). Therefore, I think if creative art is well conducted in schools, then art could function as a self-sufficient method or an alternative way to counseling in schools.

The lessons discussed to incorporate creativity for normal people can be continued and used with special needs people, however more and more challenges can be introduced. For example, people with special needs can be encouraged to drawing; though they may not have the motor control to manipulate the drawing materials (Hull, 1990). As I pointed out, there should be no reason why teachers should not introduce to individuals with special needs the drawing materials, under the condition that the teacher's expectations are not too high (Cox, 1992). Therefore, we should be clear that special needs people creativity are not the same as the creativity of more able people and the creativity of adult artists. Then again, it

depends heavily on which group of 'special needs' that the creative products are from. If it is the case of savant skills of individual with autistic, their art products should be judged differently of that the children with severe, profound or multiple disabilities (Sacks, 1985).

Many researchers have uncovered a variety of conclusions regarding the positive effects of drawing ranging from the benefits of the therapeutic role of drawing to psychological treatment (Moschini, 2005, Abraham, 2005 et al). Still, while we wait for updated research in effects of drawings on people with special needs, there are many known facts that should take away our concern feelings associated with it.

There is little evidence that drawing is effective for children with severe, profound and multiple disabilities, in the implication of education although those art therapists working with these clients may say the otherwise. The creative processes found in art therapy appear to exert influence to the people with special needs. The most likely explanation for its potential focuses the effects of drawings to communication skills as well as for their mental well being and other developments.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE ACCOUNT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the overall conduct of the study. It will generally give the overview of the research design, methodology, method, selection of research participants, and data collection. The details of data account will be presented in the later part of this chapter. The chapter is also presented with a discussion on reliability, validity and ethical issues. It attempts to provide the readers with vital information that is easily accessible which is direct and concise.

3.2 Research Design

I had outlined a research focus and constructed the main research question aligned with the qualitative methodology. I had chosen semi-structured interviews for my data collection because it suited with the nature of my study. Five participants were recruited for the research. I developed understanding of the issues which emerged in the research from the coding frame after analysing the data collected using the grounded analysis procedures. Finally, I presented the extracts based on the participants' transcripts.

3.2.1 Research Question

The main question guiding this research is restated at the beginning of this chapter to give an idea that methodology and methods are in line with the question investigated. As strengthened by Willig (2001): 'research question, data collection technique and method of data analysis are dependent upon one another' (p.21).

Main research question

What is the potential of creativity and drawing for helping and supporting people with special needs?

3.2.2 Choice of Methodology

The methodology that I selected and employed throughout the research is qualitative. Qualitative research tends to be skeptical on the scientific methods such as statistic analysis for the study of human beings (Bloor and Wood, 2006 & Banda, 2008). The nature of my study seems to suit this approach as it offers me, as a researcher 'documenting the process by which social reality is constructed, managed and sustained' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2008:173).

I chose qualitative because it is fundamentally different from quantitative methods. This qualitative research methodology puts my research in a good position because I want to gain meaning and understanding of teachers' experience stored, improved and implemented for future practices. This methodology is better than quantitative in investigating how this knowledge can be used to enhance the use of art in teaching and the achievement of children with special needs. Moreover, the

traditional methods of quantitative research can be alienating such as questionnaires which limit the participants to narrow answers from selected questions and answers only (Ochberg, 1996).

Validity and Reliability Concerns

Validity and reliability are the most important criteria in order to establish and assess the quality of any particular research (Banda, 2008). A quantitative research usually measures reliability, validity and generalisation compared to qualitative research, whereby there has been less concerned with the 'traditional application of these measures' (Bloor and Wood, 2006:148). The reliability and validity of my research, however, will be achieved from qualitative perspective. Denzin argues that (1989 as cited in Bloor and Wood, 2006:148), 'validity reflects a need to provide an improved understanding of the research subject rather than improved accuracy'. Therefore, the qualitative perspective emphasises on the 'depth of the understanding'.

It is important for me to address, at this point, that there are five participants in relation to my qualitative research study. This is to build the understanding that the qualitative research provides an opportunity for the researcher to study one aspect of the problem in some depth (Bell, 2005 & Darlington and Scott, 2002).

Choice of method

As I collected my data from my participants, I used semi-structured interview in my research. Semi-structured interview is a method of data collection which is compatible with several methods of data analysis for example grounded analysis

(Willig, 2001). These one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted as means of collecting more data and clarifications (Banda, 2008) because the questions are designed for an answer in detailed description (Willig, 2001).

Choice of instrument

The participants were interviewed at a time of their choice, the interviews lasting 35 and 45 minutes, respectively. The interview schedule was based on the topic area of 'creativity and drawing' within working with special needs people. These included questions on teachers' perceptions and experiences of teaching art (see Appendix for a list of questions). These questions were constructed in line with the main research question and the research purposes and aims.

Ethical Considerations

The semi-structured interview requires 'sensitive and ethical negotiation of rapport between the interviewer and the interviewees' (Willig, 2001:23). Therefore, there should be consent from the participants. Written consent to participate in the study was obtained from five participants. In addition, participants were informed that their participations were completely voluntary with no obligation. They were also made aware that they are free to withdraw anytime without risk or prejudice (BERA, 2004, para 13).

Project Information Sheet which included the aims of the study and all the necessary steps were submitted to the participants, on which they responded to appreciatively.

The participants were also made aware that the data collected will be kept securely with no other person than research colleagues, supervisors, or individuals from the University of Nottingham will have access to the data collected (BERA, 2004 para 24).

The participants were provided with further information or sources of contact, if required. Full identity such as my full name, contact details and my departmental supervisor's contact were also revealed, should they had further inquiry about the research. In case the participants wanted to make a complaint on the ethical grounds, I had given them School of Education Research Ethics Co-ordinators' contact details.

The Data Protection Act gives the rights to participants to access stored data that is related to them. Confidentiality such as the participants' names was changed into pen name. This was to ensure that the participants' privacy was protected and remained anonymous (BERA, 2004, para 25-26).

Researchers usually engage in researching controversial and sensitive subjects and consequently, it is expected that ethical issues will likely to emerge from their research. This does not mean that the researchers cannot study sensitive topics but rather the methods used for the research should be ethically justifiable (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

The major ethical dilemmas of interviewing lie in the analysis of the transcription of an interview. The issues become apparent once the researcher decided to publish

the interview transcripts or the analysis (Wilig, 2000). Therefore, the participants were also reminded that they were being recorded on tape.

Recruitment of participant cohort

The potential research participants are not always easy to find particularly those who are willing to commit to reflect their own personal experiences (Darlington and Scott, 2002). The target participants were school teachers. In order to have access to the school teachers in the study, I used snowball sampling technique. Using snowball sampling, the researcher starts with someone who meets the criteria for the study (Banda, 2008). To enable the participants to tell their stories, it is important for the participants to share more characteristics of what the research requires (Darlington and Scott, 2002).

In the research, I looked for teachers who have been working with special needs people. Later, I asked the participants to suggest other teachers who also met the similar criteria. This was very helpful because the participants were long-distanced. Snowball sampling is very useful especially for inaccessible target participants or hard to find (Banda, 2008). All interviews were done using cheap internet calls.

There were six candidates. However, due to time constraints, I decided to interview five participants only because interviews are time consuming and labour intensive particularly in the process of transcribing and returning the transcriptions back to the participants before it can be published (Darlington and Scott, 2002).

A pseudonym for each participant was given to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Teacher A N has been working in Brunei as a SEN (Special Educational Needs) teacher and works closely with selective mute children, ASD, behavioural problems and Significant Learning Disabilities (SLD).

Teacher F J has been working in Taiwan as a special needs teacher for about 7 years. F J works closely with those who have profound, mild and severe mental retardation and ASD in a Junior High School.

Teacher H started her teaching career in 2006 as a regular teacher. At present H is working for a primary school in a remote area in Brunei. H works closely with behaviourally challenging children such as ADHD and ASD.

Teacher N is originally from Brunei and has about two years of experience working as a primary school teacher in Malaysia. N works closely with multiple disabilities children.

Teacher Z has been working in Brunei for three years. Z works as a class teacher in one of the mainstream schools in remote areas of Brunei. Z works closely with ASD children.

Data Collection and Processing Procedures

I had made documentation for my fieldwork that was the project information sheet and the consent form. I made an interview schedules with the participants and later I conducted 5 interviews. A tape recorder was used to record the interviews and all

conversations were transcribed. Then, I sent two copies of the transcriptions to the participants. Then, the participants were given the opportunity to check the transcripts. Afterwards, one amended copy of the transcripts will be returned. Each participant had a final copy of the transcript.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analysis of the data was based on grounded analysis procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Five interviews were analysed on responses to the questions listed above. The processes included were coding and categorising. Firstly, the transcripts were read and analysed by coding each sentence through conceptual labels (Willig, 2001). Very simple coding schemes were used. For example, the questions about creative activities provided in schools, the assigned code is based on the tendency across all the creative activities described by the teachers for the majority of special needs pupils. The most common creative activities for such pupils were drawing, cutting and pasting; often activities related to their needs, abilities and disabilities.

In my research, the data had been produced from semi-structured interviews with open-ended answers. The process that I used in coding was firstly to read the transcripts as many times as I could usually 6 to 9 times. Scrutiny examination of the transcripts allowed me to see certain scripts which share something in common such as themes, statements about the same emotions and similar word or phrase (Denscombe, 1998). Then, the process involved reviewing and 'splitting and dissecting these transcripts into meaningful interpretations, which were reduced to quotations' (Banda, 2008:170).

In this dissertation, the quotations which were classed according to its theme will be categorised. The qualitative researcher has to categorise data collected from the participants in order to analyse and compare various meanings produced in each category (Coolican, 1994).

The statements the participants made fell into the following groupings: link to teaching career, quality of teaching, timetable, available resources and etc. Some statements fell into more than one category (Coolican, 1994). Traditionally, the analyst will make some copies of the data, so that it could be cut and pasted into different categories (Denscombe, 1998, Coolican, 1994). It was a time-consuming process. Bowen (2005) explains that, qualitative research methods require demands of different set of skills and offer some special challenges because of its nature and scope.

Strategies for making 'the account'

In this study, the use of coding frame proved very useful as it helped in identifying, supporting and contradicting evidence from the teachers on the provision and implementation of meaningful art education for special needs students. Denscombe (1998) holds that frequency of issues which come up during the interviews is important in knowing what themes will emerge and dominate in any of the discussion in the following chapter.

3.3 The Account

In line with the research question to investigate the potential of creativity and drawing in supporting and helping people with special needs, teachers were asked about their experiences and perceptions about special needs' people creativity. A participant traced that creativity of special needs individuals is limited:

Creativity of special needs people is limited, but we need to develop it. As a teacher, we need to be creative ourselves. Like these children, it is not easy to trace their talent, compared to giving them academic learning which is quite difficult. In craftwork, most of the pupils were guided. Similarly, I also guide them in art drawing. Sometimes I just give them something to copy. I've shown them finger print picture, then I guide them to copy the picture. The other day, we were doing hands and finger printing. I use various kinds of approaches, and I guide them most of the times.

Teacher A

Another participant identified that some people with special needs are talented and some do not possess the talent to be creative:

Before I taught the kind of students [*special needs students*], I thought they don't have creativity. Because I think most of them are mentally retarded and couldn't perform well in the field of creativity. But when I was a teacher, I found that some students with autism can perform very well in drawing or in music. But the music depends on the kind of rhythm. I think, a lot of students with autism have the kind of talent in the field of music or drawing. However, for the less able students, sometimes we don't understand what they are drawing. But we will ask them to explain what they draw. Sometimes they can tell you, 'Oh I draw a bag, I draw a tree, house like that' but sometimes you can't tell the shape, the colour. Most of them are not talented. I think talented students are special cases. They are special cases. For more severe cases, I will ask them to follow what I have prepared for them, maybe drawing a simple thing or colouring.

Teacher F J

Another participant described that talent and interest are not in lined together:

Logically, those who like art, no matter normal or special people, will enjoy art drawing rather than those who do not favourite it. So it goes back to the child's interest, if the child likes drawing or painting then the child will be more likely to show his creativity in drawing. I think talent is what a child is born with but interest could be considered as other thing. It is hard to explain. I just don't think the two things come together. A dyslexic child is talented, more like a gift with art or even creative in animation. Their brains are wired differently and being different from others could be very original. Interest is something that could be built up or enhanced. If the child does not like drawing, maybe the teacher could find any easy task such as scribbling or playing with colours. If then, after the child has shown some interest, role of the teacher now is to encourage it. Activities that suit their interest will be more effective than just those which they don't enjoy. I usually ask them what they are interested in.

Teacher N

Another participant identified that interest and talent are in a similar line and also it is important of knowing the child's talent before teaching them:

Their creativity is something to do with their talent. At the beginning of the year, I usually find out what their likes and interests are and from there on, I will make use of their interests to attract their attention for example to make them to tune in to the lessons and if the teachers already know what their interests are, then their talents could be developed further. It makes my life easier, because I do not have to encourage creative art in teaching children with special needs as they are already into it. These children are more than willing to do creative art.

Teacher H

Given the intention to focus on the potential role of creativity and art in special needs education, teachers were asked about their experiences and perceptions of this aspect of the curriculum. In their responses, participants traced the benefit of art to reduce challenging behaviours and increase attention span:

Art usually affects their [*the special needs pupils*] concentration so they will be more engaged with the activity, hence it will extend their attention span. By drawing and painting, the kids would enjoy learning many new things in life. Plus, it is one of the many ways to reduce tension and pressure. The other thing about autistic student especially the severe one, they couldn't simplify or do difficult work in class. Since drawing is much easier and lighter for them, I think it is fine. Art can actually retain their concentration but it depends on the 'who' and 'when'.

Teacher N

Another participant describes that in implementing of creative art brought considerations of the child's abilities and disabilities:

Sometimes it's very difficult for them to draw because if you ask them to draw something, he would ask you 'what can I draw?', 'how can I draw?', they just ask everything. If I want them to draw an ocean, I can tell them before that I will ask them to watch some cartoons and then maybe about the sea, the fish, the crab and so on. After seeing the TV program, and then I will ask them to recall what kind of things they saw, they watched just now and then they can draw in the paper. Maybe for students with severe mental retardation and because they are not good at drawing, sometimes they can't. I will give them a model and plastic model and I just asked them to paste everything to arrange the location. It depends on students' abilities. For students with just mild mental retardation, I just give them some hint, ask them to watch cartoons and sometimes they can draw something. If I see the picture is not so good, I will tell them, maybe there is something you can draw like fish or something in the sea and then they can draw in the pictures. So it depends on students' abilities.

Teacher F J

Given that the intention to know whether the teachers employ directive or non-directive approaches, the teachers were asked about the children's colour choices and their responses have shown that they preferred suggesting colours to the individuals with severe disabilities:

For severe cases, their [*severe children*] choices of colours cannot be trusted all the time. Sometimes it took them a lot of time to just recognize a colour. So they might pick any colour in random without thinking what colour it is and they might associate it with the things that they see. For example, they could colour maybe a jug with any colour, pink, red, green and so on, but they might not understand why the water is always coloured blue. Or why trees is always coloured with green. They questioned why this why that? Well, these are what they were taught. So repetition is extremely important and clear explanation.

Teacher N

Another participant describes that colour choices brought difficulties to some severe children as some young learners still cannot associate the colours:

Some of them cannot associate the colours. Like one of my pupils, he likes to say 'green' although I have taught him to recognize red. I asked, 'What's this?', he answered, 'Green'. I said, 'No, it's red'. Then I taught him again. 'What's this?' he still said, 'green' and I said 'No, its red.' So far, I guide most of them to do the paintings. I haven't given them total freedom to do it on their own, not just yet. It's because I am working with young learners that's why I haven't asked them to work independently.

Teacher A N

Another participant describes that colour choices are made less restrictive to the children:

Colours can attract their [*special needs children*] attentions. I usually give them instruction first, and then it is up to them whether they want to follow my instruction or not. We cannot force them. It's their choices. There is a pupil of mine who loves green. He will not participate in drawing or painting activities unless the colour green is readily prepared. He also sticks to that particular colour and he will apply that colour to everything that he sees.

Teacher H

Another participant relates the colour choices made by the children with the interpretation of the colour usage:

Several years ago, I had a student with mental retardation and I have to admit that his picture is very special. Sometimes he will use very brilliant colours to draw everything. But the colour is different from what we see in the real world. For example we always see the usual colour of tree but sometimes he will use other colour to draw a tree. Sometimes we would ask him, why you would want to use such colour. He just told me, I like the kind of colour. But exactly the shape and the appearance is undoubtedly very nice. When you see the whole picture you will think the colour is really beautiful. However, the colours are different from what we see in the real world. So, I explored his family, I found that he has no father, no mother and he was educated by his grandfather and grandmother. His family was also poor. So, I think, for me, I thought he envied colourful worlds because his world is not so colourful, so he shows his dream in the drawing.

Teacher F J

Given the intention to focus on the potential of creativity and drawing, teachers were asked about their experience and perceptions of the potential benefits of creativity and drawing. In their responses, participants traced the art teaching as a strategy noting at the motor and co-ordination development of people with special needs:

I think it is easier to do art work [*because*] it is more enjoyable and it is not so difficult for them to do compare to academic work which they find hard to accept. Also, some children can express their feelings through drawings as a mean of communication. They need to improve or stimulate their motor skills and eye-coordination as well. Colours are effective for them too. Mostly, I connect the creative activities with their disabilities. Like their motor-hands co-ordination, I relate most of it with activities such as collage and they use more hands on activities or cutting the papers. That's to develop their hands co-ordination. For severe cases, sometimes it is quite difficult, because I had an experience with an autistic child who is considered as severe, when I give him a work to do, he would throw it away, very hard. Sometimes, the child would spit on me but then again, it depends on its severity.

Teacher A N

Another participant describes that drawing is beneficial for people with special needs, however it also has drawback on children's development of language:

Some people with special needs have difficulties in motor skills and controlling art materials. By drawing they can enhance their motor skills because in my case, the children like drawings more than learning other subjects such as maths, Malay language and reading in English. It depends on their learning disability though, because the children that I am dealing with are those with mild disabilities. Art drawing can benefit the children with special needs because they can express their feelings by drawing what they want to the teachers. However, it is not effective at all times because my children when they are too inclined to use drawing to express what they want, they tend to lack other aspect such as speaking.

Their development of speaking is much slower and their pronunciation is still weak and not clear and they tend to speak more English language than our native language, Malay.

Teacher Z

Given the intention to focus on the school roles in people with special needs' creativity and drawing, teachers were asked about their views on school as a great opportunity for children to be creative particularly with special needs children. Another teacher describes the benefit of creative art and drawing and noted on school for social development of children with special needs:

School is a great opportunity for children to be creative as school surrounding is different from their home where they can mingle with their friends in class so that their communication skills will improve and they can share and at the same time learn new skills which are provided in the creative art such as collage, building house together using the card boxes or playing with the play dough and so on.

Teacher Z

Another participant describes that school gives less opportunities for people with special needs to be creative:

In a regular school, there is less opportunity for people with special needs to be creative, because there is limited exposure to creative activities for people with special needs. This is because of the small number of special needs children coming to our school and we have to accept them. And because of the small number of children, there is not so much exposure to art, not much creative approaches are available for them. For example, in one class there would be only two children with special needs, and to compete with the majority number of normal children, sometimes we feel it's a waste of time to concentrate on the minority.

Teacher H

Another participant raises concerns over limited availability of art programs in school:

In my junior high school sometimes we teach them how to draw, how to sing, or maybe about music. We seldom do another activity. Because I think, if you want to teach students with special needs to do drawing, you must have some knowledge about that. Because here most teachers are special education teachers, sometimes we are not good at the kind of art or creativity. So most of us teach them only drawing, or singing or like that. For me, I'm not good at drawing art. I hate drawing. So, I don't like to teach them to draw, maybe in comparison with drawing, I prefer teaching them music because that's my talent. That's my advantage. So I can teach them. If I have to teach them to draw I think I will not be confident about it so I can't.

Teacher F J

In the following chapter, the details of data account will be analysed, interpreted and discussed. There are three key issues that emerged from these findings. The first key issue will deal with the obstacles that the teachers face in implementing the creative art. The second issue is related to copying and non-directive approaches and finally, the third issue will deal with the positive and negative aspects of creativity and drawing as to answer the main research question.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF MATTERS ARISING FROM CHAPTER 3

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the presentation of the issues arise in Chapter 3 that were collected through semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, I picked up on the issues that were frequently raised in Chapter 3. This is aimed to explore the extent to which the perceived creativity and drawing bring potential to people with special needs as to answer the main research question.

In doing research, the main concern is to make meaning out of the texts that a researcher is studying (Dunne, Pryor and Yates 2005). This study used the method of grounded analysis as the basis of its data analysis. As Denscombe (1998) holds: grounded theory puts emphasis on as much detail as possible about particular situations and then 'let the data speak for themselves' (p.90).

Gradually, from the interviews, I began to develop understanding as regards to the research question. I noted some of the issues that were frequently discussed by the teachers. The creative art procedures in the special education context has shown that issues related to art teaching, creative processes and products, seemed to be frequent.

Also, I found that the data shed light not on the special needs people directly, which seems to be non-existent at this time, but rather on individuated talent and

interest in creative activities that was found in some special needs people. These responses seemed to provide imperfect, but still useful indicators of the potential of creativity and drawing for most special needs people.

4.2 Key Theme 1: Obstacles of implementing art education for special needs people

While the literature review gave a general picture on the roles of creativity and drawing and art therapy that could be integrated as a common ground with art teaching, the findings in this research have revealed that the majority of participants felt that it may be hard to achieve creative goals in working with special needs people especially the severe cases.

Research findings have revealed the challenging questions of how teachers can generate and maintain the creative process through the many demands. The demands include the kind of disabilities that need to be met by the teachers, school as a great supporter and teachers' commitment. Many reasons were cited by the majority of participants in the previous chapter (Chapter 3) and some also be discussed in this chapter.

The majority number of participants argued that there are a number of reasons why some individuals with special needs may not receive proper art education. First of all, majority of participants agreed that schools have diverse school-population. A view expressed by a participant shows that it is inevitable for school to accept various kinds of people with abilities and disabilities. Furthermore, there were also

some concerns raised by some participants that accommodating each individual needs could be very demanding.

A participant argued that art programs have been lightly selected for schools. The participant also revealed that schools only stress on music but not drama depending on the teachers' abilities and availabilities to perform such art before they can actually teach others. The findings from this section have suggested that lightly selected art program gives fewer options for different individual needs.

My argument is that opportunities to participate in creative art activities do not occur for some children especially the disadvantaged minority, for example students with different kind of disabilities from others. We could argue here, that there is ignorance on the part of many participants' views about teachers' creative approaches which an individual could obtain from school. This also makes the teachers look down upon severe individuals' abilities altogether. This implies that the teachers consider individuals with severe disabilities to have limited opportunities and it is difficult for the teachers to accommodate art activities that could map with different individual needs.

Secondly, it is very common among the participants to think that creative individuals are born with art talents. The findings from the interviews seem to suggest the misinterpretations of the term 'talent' and 'interest' could be the starting point of problems in the delivery of meaningful creative art education for special needs people. The view expressed by a participant about talent and interest stand in a dissimilar line (in Chapter 3) supports the notion that meaningful art education is more than just going through the art activities. In support of these

findings, a study by Sawyer shows most people have common misconceptions that the ability to draw is more to a talent (Sawyer and John-Steiner 2003) than a basic necessity to enhance development for the individuals with special needs (Mowry-Hesler, 2007).

This can be seen in the findings where majority of teachers think that only some people with special needs who have talents can surely excel in drawing. The extracts seem to support that failure to distinguish between these terms has affected the implementation of art education for people with special needs that it reduces participations particularly those with severe disabilities. This also implies that they consider special needs people's creativity to be limited.

My argument is that a failure to measure the quality of special needs' art could be because the indicators of what is creativity and what is defined as special needs people's creativity are considered to be universal and they vary from time to time and from one society to society. There are no indicators made by the participants regarding the quality of creative art in special needs people which are clearly mentioned in the responses of the first question 'what do you think about special needs' creativity?' The views in the participants' extracts show that special needs' creativity without talent may also be unsuccessful as illustrated in the opening extracts of chapter three.

Link to this are the findings which have shown that there is lack of building art knowledge in schools. This seems to suggest that the lack of building art knowledge means that there is proof of the art curriculum not addressing the individual with

special needs. A participant in this study showed that she had assigned for a hospital internship to relate it with the creative activities given to special needs people. This seems to suggest that building knowledge with part of the community (hospital staff, art therapists etc) could form a significant attitude to special individuals.

However, most of the participants perceived that art knowledge could be obtained from 'trial and errors' or peer's experiences. The findings have created a scenario where teachers go out to school and continue teaching even for some years without adequate ideas to teach creative art to special needs people. All they know is that they teach art without really appreciating the creative processes behind it or even not considering the potentials of what creative art can bring to the life of people with special needs.

One conclusion that we can draw from these findings is that there are debatable issues on the discourses of quality of art education, creativity and that they vary with parents, teachers, educational administrators and people with special needs. To the majority participants in this study (teachers), the quality of art creativity is measured by the special needs' talents and abilities at completion of any given art activity. However, the findings have shown that talents of special needs people do give good art products compared to those who do not have.

4.3 Key Theme 2: Copying and non-directive approaches in drawing

The findings also reported that some participants would give instructions to the individual with special needs to follow a model of picture. I would argue here that the participants' notions about limited abilities and talent of people with special needs tend to expose them to more skills of copying. In relation to the literature reviewed, these findings could be argued. However, the findings seem to imply that teachers would encourage copying skills in most schools because some teachers would deal with more severe children.

These findings suggest that teachers preferred directive approach to non-directive approach in working with special needs people. I would also like to argue that teachers' directive approaches show importance for some children because 'non-directive approaches of drawing could be threatening and seen as intrusive or counterproductive as establishing trust, safe and comfortable environment for creative expression' (Malchiodi and Bruce, 2008:29). However, such contradiction exists in a situation where the teachers may find solutions in non-directive approaches that are useful for the individual development and to give 'legroom' for special needs people to be creative independently.

The significant point emerging from these findings is that the copying products should not be overlooked because it is intensely important just like the art processes. As Golomb (2004) argues that '[F]ollowing a readily presented model does not mean that their work 'lacks individual character, personal meaning or creative invention' (p.160). This should be clearly understood that drawing exercise

for people with special needs might not be produced in an automated thoughtless state (Cox, 1992) because for some people it may take longer time to be creative (McFarlene, 2008). Individuals with special needs may prefer copying skills to non-directive approaches because it gives them more sense of direction and copying could suit best for people with more severe disabilities.

One conclusion that could be drawn from these findings is that there are flexibilities in the teaching strategies. This is not to say that the teacher may prefer one approach to another. However, to the majority participants, these findings suggest that guidance and directive approaches are important for individuals with more severe disabilities. While the findings also identify that more freedom will be given to the individuals who are more able. This suggests that the creativity of individual with severe disabilities should not be looked down because their creativity is defined in their own standard. It would be very damaging to compare their creativity with artists' talents or individuals with special needs who have milder disabilities.

4.4 Key Theme 3: Potential benefit and risk of creativity and drawing

The findings presented in chapter 3 are trying to answer the main research question of this research, 'What is the potential of creativity and drawing in helping and supporting people with special needs?' Majority of the participants know that creativity and drawing are beneficial for all-round development of individuals with special needs. Thus, this is an important factor that many participants mentioned and corresponded with the roles of creativity and drawing in the literature review.

A finding from a participant supports that drawing reveal about a student's relationship with his inner-state world through art interpretation. This suggests that drawing can become a mode of 'inner' communication. My argument is to what extent the teacher's interpretation of the art product was true? The subject matter can be a powerful clue to the concerns of the individual (Gardner, 1980). To support my argument, it was argued by Malchiodi (1998a) that art expression can change overtime, hence affect art interpretation too. This is because the painter or the client will stimulate different viewers to contribute different thoughts and images to the products and become individual participants themselves in the products. This tends to create confusion to the interpreters because Moschini (2005) explains that when an individual draws, he or she does not reproduce one specific characteristic but a 'composite derived from many occasions, impressions, and memories.' (p.14).

One possibility emerged, the teacher could have asked the painter or the drawer about the drawing, so that the teacher may be able to get the real meaning of the art products. However, it is argued that talking about the art products with more

challenged population could be difficult because 'more talking seemed only partly useful' (Malchiodi, 1998a:152).

Although the findings have revealed that the teachers have frequently talked about the potential of creativity and drawing for individual with special needs, there are contradictions in the procedures linked to creative processes and products. However, such contradictions exist in a situation where the creative art procedures and teaching strategies are dependent on each other (See Coding Frame).

This could raise uncertainties as to whether the participants would relate the pull factors to teaching art with creative processes and products of people with special needs. This implies that participants may not be aware of the contradictions. This creates a scenario where the teachers were unaware that an individual who wants to apply the colour on his or her own choice may be experiencing creative processes and products.

A participant identified that too much drawing can cause delay of speech development. However, the participant's quotation seems to portray an isolated case. The findings support that drawing has its own drawback for individuals who have not developed their speech yet. My argument is that the role of drawing have mixed messages that it is important to stress on creativity and drawing as a way to understand the complexity of the special needs' world.

On the other hand, not all drawings representation could be interpreted and understood by the teachers. Although it may be argued that drawing represent symbolical representation, but not all language can be visualised through the

nature of drawings. However, Hall (2007) argues that drawing is a form of visual language and could be respected in the same way as other conventional language, spoken or written. This is exemplified in the literature review noting that drawings can be used to communicate the inner states and cognitive, social, motor and gross skills that the special needs people can develop through experience with art.

An important point emerged here; the findings could suggest that the conclusions on too much drawing can lead to speech problem seem not to be related to all individuals' cases. This suggests that the development of speech could vary from each individual and there should be no problem with speech coming. It is the matter of the postponement and how the teachers set the balance between drawings and speech development.

This finding could also raise doubts as whether the teachers are having mutual interaction with the special needs' people about their drawings or creative products. There are benefits for the special needs people to engage in drawings. As traced in the literature, this suggests that a teacher could ask them to describe their creations verbally as to increase their language skills to communicate verbally (Zeallear, 2005). If this is addressed by the teachers, then the teachers would acknowledge that drawing has an important effect to speech development of individuals with special needs.

One conclusion that can be drawn from these findings that there are some positive aspects that the teachers perceived positively or negatively in regards to the potential of creativity and drawing of people with special needs. However, the contradictions revealed in these findings suggest that there are uncertainties

whether the teachers really relate their teaching with their perception and views about the potential of creativity and drawing. This is to argue that the teachers do not practice what they recognise to be useful for majority of individual with special needs. This suggests that there should be a call for pedagogical implications from the research.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

5.1 Introduction

In this research, I have reviewed and analysed some of the potential aspects of creative and drawing processes. I also found that creative art is a subject which requires design, planning and performance factors of teachers for people with special needs. I would now reflect on whether there are any implications of the analyses reviewed here for working with special needs people.

In the findings, the data shed light on individuated talent and interest; however some useful indicators for most people with special needs were identified. Creativity such as drawing is important for people with special needs. Many of the available suggestions in the following section are appropriate for pupils or students with disabilities and applicable for most people with special needs.

5.2 Discussion of implications of helping and supporting people with special needs

We are aware that some of the points that have been discussed so far are relevant to the all-round development of people with special needs. However, to accommodate the necessities of the people with special needs particularly those with learning disabilities; we need to recognise that many difficult questions arise here for the teachers.

It has been analysed from the literature review and the findings that a meaningful art education for people with special needs is an established form of knowledge with identifiable organised structures of the design procedures, creative strategies, the content and approaches. These structures can be used to bring change on the people with special needs and the art curriculum if integrated with it.

Of all the great challenges that teachers have to face is to acquire skills in meeting special needs as how the teachers can help without the teachers necessarily having much knowledge about the creative drawings. So this is probably the reason why teachers, assistants or volunteers easily give up and do the art work for them instead of giving useful opportunities to explore the drawing experiences themselves. However, in the present day it is important to assume that the majority of teachers know little about the creative drawings than is generally known as 'art-blindness' (Hull, 1990).

Special needs people cannot exercise their drawing skills or to explore the materials when they are 'spoon-fed' and this will greatly affect their learning of new creative skills. But this is not a big surprise in many classrooms; individuals with special needs usually are more likely to risk trying something new or to stay with the difficult task when they feel safe or accepted. It is the matter of they are motivated to participate and work to the best of their abilities (Helm & Beneke, 2003).

Professionals can respond to people with special needs' development by encouraging their creative expression and stimulate their curiosity by creating opportunities to stimulate or challenge their thinking. Therefore, attentions should

be given to the environment, materials and experiences planned for the people with special needs and the ways in which teachers can interact with special needs people to develop their interests and creativity (McFarlane, 2008).

Considerations need to be taken into account when working with special needs people who have severe developmental delays because they find drawing a very simple geometric form is actually very challenging, even for most typically developing child. It requires people with special needs to have gained sufficient motor or physical control over the pencil or any drawing materials such as colour pencil, crayons and so forth in order to produce various kinds of marks (Cox, 1992).

Hinz (2006) states: 'Art heals because of the way people react to the artistic process and to the images produced' (p. 9). However, I argue that product is less important for people with special needs because the creative processes are important to enhance the development of people with special needs. Teachers' role is to encourage the process of art-making not to focus on the final output of the drawing activity. There should be no right or wrong answers to what are best things to draw. Choices should be given about what to draw because being creative usually takes time. Teacher can support creativity by providing time, space and encouragement or by taking part in the drawing activity.

DiLeo (1973) as an apprentice to most of Malchiodi's work (1998a) and Cox's work (1993) emphasises on adult roles to provide materials and opportunity, encouragement and judicious praise. The materials should be large blank papers

and crayons, pencils and paints being deferred until a greater control of motor have been achieved. He perceived that asking questions are interference because it will stifle the 'God-like' spark that is present in Everyman. He also discourages the use of colouring book because it will block creativity.

There are some possible impacts of creativity and drawing to people with special needs. Strategies that have been effectively used in art therapy are the best strategies to implement, with considerations that pupils' or students' abilities are vary. In what follows, I will suggest some of the strategies used for people with autism, people with cognitive limitations, students with learning disabilities, students with visual, hearing and physical impairments and Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (EBD).

Some people with autism will bring challenges to teachers especially the non-verbal people because the teacher could not know how much knowledge that an autistic can absorb from the creative art activities. It is important for teachers to pay attention to the cues they may provide regarding their feelings when they engaged to the creative art. Teachers should be aware that in dealing with autistic people, he or she should be consistent in routine. For example, if the autistic pupil likes green colour, the teacher should provide green colour every time they have art.

People with cognitive limitations may respond to art based on more observations. Thus, verbal explanations seem to be less important compared to the observations they make. Therefore, when teaching them how to apply colours, teachers need to be concise. Since most of them like visual, it would be very helpful to use pictures

in explaining the art lesson. For some teachers, explaining using pictures could be tiresome, therefore I suggest that using computer software would be better in terms of visual projection. However, computer software lacks concrete compare to visual materials. If the child has difficulty in following the lesson, the teacher may offer both concrete and visual explanation.

Golomb (2004) suggests 'narrative drawing', a strategy that the teacher utilises pictorial narratives and the special needs people follow a readily available model. In working with people with special needs, following a model might help them to draw because 'following a model does not imply that their work lack individual character, personal meaning or creative inventions' (p.160).

Many students with learning disabilities (LD) are able to process language and apply abstract concepts without much problem, whereas others have specific deficits in social skills. In particular, teachers need to choose their words carefully in explaining the art lesson or when communicating with them.

Asking questions such as 'What is it?' or 'What are you making?' may put students with learning disabilities (LD) under pressure to responding, when they may be simply making experiments with the medium without any particular product of art in mind (McFarlane 2008). Therefore, teachers should be very careful in making observations and the type of questions that the teachers should ask because it is feared that it would lead to limitation of thinking and creativity.

Additionally, teachers need to be aware some people who have developmental problems may also possess visual, hearing or physical impairments. Safety and

mobility is the major concerns for visually impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired people. In working these people, the way the teacher invites them are important and are absolutely critical to the teachers' success in helping them to engage in the creative processes. Before the drawing activity is taking place, it is necessary for the teachers to organize the materials and the teachers themselves need to recognise the art materials themselves (Rubin, 2005).

For visually impaired people, I would suggest them to use chubby crayons or fine pencils. According to Cox (1992), many teachers are in favour of using crayons because they come in various colours and thick. One of the advantages of thick crayon is, it gives a better degree of control rather than drawing aimlessly. In addition, Cox claims this as a possibility to rule out the usage of pencils, because pencils too, have its equal advantages over crayons. One of the most important advantages is an individual can draw in finer point of pencil and are more likely to be more advanced developmentally than using a thick chubby crayon. For a visually impaired individual, the latter seems to be insignificant, however for developmental purposes such as to develop better motor skills; the latter seems to be applicable.

I would not suggest people with special needs to use brushes because applying paints using brushes require greater control rather than applying the paint aimlessly. Golomb (2004) explains that thick brushes and drippy paints usually will give hard creation of distinct shapes. Therefore, it can constrain what the special needs people do, particularly those with motor skills problems to use the brushes and paints.

For students with Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (EBD), the teachers need to be aware that these students are sensitive and depressed and are prone to negative feelings. Teachers also can encourage individual with special needs to talk about their drawing as to stimulate creative thinking and problem solving. As suggested by McFarlane (2008), professionals are encouraged to ask open ended questions for example 'Can you tell me about..', 'What do you notice about..' and so on. These questions are those that model curiosity and promote the pleasure of sharing experience of the creative processes (Matlock & Hornstein, 2004). Some special needs populations require the teachers to lock away their work safely (Nadeau, 1993). For these people, some of their art expression might be sensitive; therefore it is teachers' responsibilities to keep the students' art work protected or isolated.

Colour plays a dominant role in drawing. According to Abraham (2005), colours do not only affect the mood or mind states but also affects the body on the whole. The author's experience has taught her to be more aware of and use her intuition regarding the powerful effects of specific colours on each of her patient while painting. Therefore, in working with EBD students, it is important to invite each individual to choose a colour out of a box. Teachers should provide a range of medium or colours so that each individual has the freedom to choose (Rubin, 2005). This is also applicable for all people with special needs.

Majority of the participants said that they would display the drawings made by the pupils or students with special needs. I would suggest that the teacher should be very careful with displaying their artwork because some drawings might be

individually expressed and personal for them. Nadeau (1993) suggested that destruction or misuse of their work by another person will destroy their efforts and this will lead to 'months of effort to re-establish the same quality of freedom in their artistic expression' (p. 42).

People with special needs need constant help or encouragement and teachers have to constantly remind themselves that the beauty of their arts can be creative in the way they utilise creative rules (Willats, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion begins with a summary of the main research findings. Some contradictions revealed in this research may require further research. This chapter ends with the researcher personal reflections.

The main research question was 'what is the potential of creativity and drawing for helping and supporting people with special needs?' The research was an investigation of whether there are potential aspects of creativity and drawing to enhance all-round development of people with special needs. The summary of the main finding are as follows:

The research has identified the obstacles in implementing art education for people with special needs due to the demands that have to be met by the teachers (see chapter 3). The demands include the kind of students' disabilities, teacher's commitment and school as an overall conduct. The findings also revealed that creativity with talent gives successful product, when it was argued that most people have common misconceptions that the ability to draw is more to a talent. It is hoped in the future that there would be clear discourses of art education and creativity of people with special needs.

The research has also revealed that art program should be diversified in order to give more participation from the disadvantaged minority. This is a call for teachers to be more multi-skills to accommodate the individual needs. This is perhaps one of the demands that need to be met for people with special needs.

The research has also identified that creativity can be perceived in copying skills and directive approaches in drawing rather than non-directive approaches. The findings suggested that teachers should not overlook copying products because it is equivalently important like the processes. This finding revealed contradiction because some teachers may find solutions to non-directive approach in order to give freedom to people with special needs to explore the creative art or materials on their own. However, at this point it should be understood that teacher's flexibility is important in regard to decide which approach is better to meet an individual needs.

The research has also answered the main research question. The findings had corresponded with the literature review. However, there were contradictions in the procedures linked to creative processes and products. There should be further research on this issue as to see to which extent that the teachers put their knowledge into practice.

There are strengths and limitations identified in this study. The limitations are linked to a number of contradictions which the study has identified and which are also presented as areas that may require further research. As discussed in chapter 4, the issues were presented. When I analysed the findings, I realised there was a slight change of focus in regard to answer the main research question. I tend to collect data regarding the efficacy of art education with special needs people in schools. However, the issues presented in chapter 4 may be useful indicators for areas to be developed and amended for my future implementations.

Reflecting back the process of my research, it was hard for me to find the participants for my interviews. At that time, my fallback position was to change my model of dissertation to extended literature review based. Noting on the advantages of qualitative research, I was determined to find the suitable participants for my research. Thus, I decided to choose long-distance participants whose two of them had active contact with me. Later, they suggested their colleagues who met the criteria that I wanted for my research: teacher who taught special needs people. This snowball sampling technique was very useful especially when the participants for my research were hard to find.

The interviews were done using internet calls because all participants were long-distanced. I used Skype for cheap internet calls and it was a requirement to buy as sufficient Skype credit as possible to ensure that the connection would not be cut off in the middle of the conversations. It was hard to use internet calls because it relies heavily on the internet connection. Despite depending heavily on the internet connection, the quality of the calls was very good.

I used digital tape recorder and it was really helpful compared to using tape recorder which requires you at some point to change the tape from side A to side B. I would suggest researchers to interview using internet calls only if they have digital tape recorder. It is for the sound quality purpose, so there will be no problem in transcribing and painless of rewinding back and fro to listen back carefully and changing side A to side B.

Since all participants were long distanced, the consent forms and project information sheets were sent via their e-mails. The return of transcripts was also done via e-mail. There was no problem in using e-mail since all participants had easy access to internet.

The use of qualitative method proved to be the strength in my study because the methodology and method enables me to have detailed descriptions of teachers' views and perceptions, feelings over teaching art and creativity for people with special needs. The other strength was, the findings are already benefiting my position as a school-teacher for my teaching career as the topic is closely linked to the researcher.

It is hoped that my research will help those who are working with special needs to use creative art as a strategy to encourage participation, encourage communication, develop motor and gross motor skills and develop speech as well as language skills which derived from mutual interactions between teachers and people with special needs. I believe the potential aspects of creativity and drawing revealed in this research could support and help people with special needs.

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