

International Journal of Education & the Arts

Editors

Liora Bresler

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

Margaret Macintyre Latta

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S.A.

<http://www.ijea.org>

ISSN 1529-8094

Volume 9 Number 6

June 10, 2008

Understanding, Experiencing, and Appreciating the Arts: Folk Pedagogy in Two Elementary Schools in Taiwan

Yu-Ting Chen

Nanhua University, Taiwan

Daniel J. Walsh

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Citation: Chen, Y-T., & Walsh, D. (2008). Understanding, experiencing, and appreciating the arts: Folk pedagogy in two elementary schools in Taiwan. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 9(6). Retrieved [date] from <http://www.ijea.org/v9n6/>.

Abstract

Drawing on Bruner's notion of folk pedagogy, this research explores how Chinese aesthetic education is perceived and valued at two elementary schools in Taiwan. Using qualitative methods, the research explores how arts teachers guide children to experience arts through the arts curricula in school and the local culture. The study reveals that the two schools share a respect for nature and a concern for local culture. The seven arts teachers' folk pedagogy includes the desire to connect beauty and arts learning, develop children's aesthetic feelings, cultivate children's character, and integrate arts into everyday life. The teachers' shared views provide a broad picture of these folk beliefs in Taiwan as well as a cultural lens for examining aesthetic education in Taiwan and the larger Asian culture.

Introduction

In this article, we explore how Chinese aesthetic education is perceived and valued through arts teaching and learning in two elementary schools in Taiwan—a Tayal aboriginal school in the mountains and a Taiwanese school in suburban northern Taiwan.¹ Operating within the general framework provided by Bruner's ideas about folk pedagogy (1990, 1996), we specifically explore teachers' perspectives and approaches to guiding the children to understand, experience, and appreciate the arts as they interact with school curricula and with local cultures.

Aesthetic education in Chinese tradition is defined as a way to educate people to express aesthetic feelings, to cultivate their temperaments, and to help them achieve happiness, delight, and a high quality of life (Hsuang, 1986). For the purpose of this study, we apply this definition to aesthetic education in arts teaching and learning. To understand the similarities across and differences between aesthetic education in the two elementary schools, we investigate the following research questions:

1. How do the arts teachers at each school understand their teaching and children's learning about the arts?
2. How do the arts teachers provide learning opportunities for the children to understand, experience, and appreciate the arts in their arts classes? To what extent do these learning opportunities connect with the aesthetic understanding² that is promoted in the current curriculum reform?
3. How do the arts teachers' attitudes toward understanding, experiencing, and appreciating the arts reflect cultural values in Taiwan?

We begin with by discussing the theoretical framework and methodology of this study. We then present and discuss the findings. We end with a discussion of implications for arts education.

Theoretical Framework

The specific theoretical framework for this study is drawn from Bruner's ideas about folk pedagogy (1990, 1996). Although focused on folk pedagogy, this research is situated within the larger framework of cultural psychology (Shweder et al., 1998). We also draw

¹ This article is drawn from a larger study of these two schools (Chen, 2006).

² Aesthetics and understanding: Through aesthetic and cultural activities, students can experience and understand different kinds of artistic values, styles, and sequences of cultural contexts. Students can also treasure works of art and participate enthusiastically in multicultural arts activities (Ministry of Education, 2003).

on ethno-aesthetics (Dark, 1967, 1978), along with Chinese theories of beauty, aesthetics, and aesthetic education (Li, 1988; Tsai, 1968).

Cultural Psychology

Cultural psychology is the study of how culture, community, and mind construct each other (Shweder et al., 1998). Cultural psychologists believe that the development of a child is not universal; rather, a child's development is influenced differently within different cultural contexts. Bruner (1990) argues that folk psychology must be at the basis of any cultural psychology: "People have beliefs and desires: we *believe* that the world is organized in certain ways, that we *want* certain things, that some things *matter* more than others, and so on" (p. 39). Folk psychology is thus embedded in the value systems of each culture.

A culture's folk pedagogy is informed by that culture's folk psychology. As folk psychology is preoccupied with how the mind works and how it develops, a culture's folk pedagogy is guided by notions of what children's minds are like and how the culture helps children learn about the world around them (Bruner, 1996). These folk beliefs about how children should learn and how teachers should teach are embedded in everyday cultural life. Bruner (1996) explains the relationship between folk psychology and folk pedagogy as follows.

From this work on folk psychology and folk pedagogy has grown a new, perhaps even a revolutionary insight. It is this: in theorizing about the practice of education in the classroom (or any other setting, for the matter), you had better take into account the folk theories that those engaged in teaching and learning already have (p. 46). . . . For once we recognize that a teacher's conception of a learner shapes the instruction he or she employs, then equipping teachers (or parents) with the best available theory of the child's mind becomes crucial. (pp. 48-49)

Ways of teaching and learning in aesthetic education can vary across cultures. Teachers' pedagogies can reflect cultural beliefs and assumptions about students in their situated cultural contexts.

Ethno-Aesthetics

While aesthetics refers to the philosophy of art, the term "ethno-aesthetics" is employed in a wider sense. According to Dark (1967, 1978), ethno-aesthetics refers to the emic study of any non-Western art form—"it deals with art as perceived by the people who produce it and use it" (Mead, 1979, p. 8).

In order to communicate across cultural boundaries, scholars in this field maintain that it is necessary to apply the ethno-aesthetic perspective to approach other people's art and

aesthetics in their culture. Dark (1967) emphasizes the importance of studying art in its holistic context in order to understand its symbolic structure and integration with other domains in its culture. Price and Price (1980) also argue for the importance of presenting the art and aesthetics of non-Western cultures from the perspectives of the producers themselves. By using an ethno-aesthetic approach, people can understand and appreciate the unique aesthetic traditions and art forms in other people's social and cultural contexts. The ethno-aesthetic perspective can help us explore folk beliefs about aesthetic values and aesthetic education in elementary schools in the Taiwanese cultural context.

Chinese Theories of Beauty, Aesthetics, and Aesthetic Education

The Chinese word *mei*, beauty, has many meanings. According to Hsu,³ the original meaning of *mei* is sweet (Wang, 1998). The word is a compound noun made up of two words—sheep and large size, which together mean “a big sheep is beautiful” or “to serve a big sheep as a feast” (Li, 1988, p. 2). The meaning derives from the emphasis on the need to satisfy one's appetite. Hsu also points out, *mei* has the same meaning as *shan*, which means goodness and virtue. Some scholars interpret the word *mei* as a man who wears a sheep head (Li, 1988). It refers to a chief (or a priest) performing a ceremony, a ceremonial dance, or sorcery. This meaning emphasizes the way that people construct rituals, order, and norms in a society.

Discussions of the essence of beauty date from very early in Chinese history. Within Confucianism are discussions of the beauty of the morality and goodness of human beings, and Taoism focuses on the beauty of the interaction between human beings and nature. Many scholars have discussed beauty and the essence of Chinese literature, calligraphy, ink paintings, and music. However, the study of Chinese aesthetics as a discipline was not developed until the early 1900s (Zhou & Zhou, 2002). With the advent of Westernization in the late 1800s in China, Chinese scholars introduced Western ideas of aesthetics.

In modern Chinese education, Yuan-Pei Tsai (1867-1940) plays an important role in the promotion of aesthetic education. According to Tsai, aesthetic education is an education of the feelings and a cultivation of the spirit (Lee, 1979; Tsai, 1968). Aesthetic education has four functions: to form moral conscience, to cultivate feelings, to educate with a worldview, and to replace religion. Tsai advocates aesthetic education from birth, through public nursing homes for pregnant women, and nursery schools for infants. He calls for promoting aesthetic education in Chinese society by setting up museums and concert halls, beautifying environments, and preserving historical heritages. As for schooling,

³ Shen Hsu (A.D. 58-147) was a Chinese scholar during the Han Dynasty (B.C. 206-A.D. 220). His book, *Shio-Wen-Jei-Tzu*, is regarded as the first Chinese dictionary.

aesthetic education is not confined to schools of the arts or the various arts disciplines. Instead, all school curricula and school life are related to aesthetic education. Although Tsai's theory of aesthetic education was not thought to be successful in the early 1900s, his work marks a milestone in modern aesthetic education in China. His theory also influences contemporary arts education and aesthetic education in Taiwan, such as the goals of cultivating aesthetic feelings in all subjects in schools (Ministry of Education, 1979) and citizens' aesthetic cultivation (Ministry of Education, 1997).

Traditional Chinese education is fundamental to contemporary schooling in Taiwan. Confucian and Taoist aesthetics, along with Tsai's theory of aesthetic education, impact arts education and aesthetic education in Taiwan. These theories of Chinese aesthetic education are necessary for exploring the meanings of aesthetic education in the Taiwanese context. These folk theories reflect people's beliefs about how teachers should teach and how children should learn in everyday school life.

Methodology

In order to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the arts teachers' folk pedagogy of aesthetic education in the two schools in this study, field-based qualitative research methods were employed.

Sites

The criteria for choosing schools for this study included (a) their attention to arts education and aesthetic education, and (b) their incorporation of local culture into school curricula. Through Internet searches and information gathered from several professors in teachers colleges and teacher friends in K-6 schools in Taiwan, we contacted several teachers and principals and finally settled on two elementary schools.

The first site is Sun Elementary School (pseudonym), a Tayal⁴ aboriginal elementary school in the mountains of north Taiwan. It is, for Taiwan, a small school⁵ that runs from kindergarten to the sixth grade and houses twenty-two faculty members (including four Tayal teachers) and seven classes with 40 students total (39 are Tayal). It promotes

⁴ The Tayal ethnic group is the second largest of the twelve indigenous groups in Taiwan. Most of the Tayal live in the mountains. They engage mostly in farming, raising animals, and tourism. In keeping with Tayal tradition, they must follow their social rules, *gaga*, to preserve their customs and habits; they believe in *rutux*, a spiritual god beyond nature. They are famous for practicing traditional arts, such as sewing, crafts, ceremonial dance, music, and instruments with originality and utility.

⁵ There are small-sized schools in remote areas (e.g., high mountains, fishing villages) in Taiwan.

ecological education and Tayal aboriginal culture and arts.

The second site, Key Elementary School (pseudonym), a Taiwanese school, is located in suburban northern Taiwan. It is a medium-sized school that runs from kindergarten to the sixth grade and houses 96 faculty members and 56 classes with 1,848 students total. The majority of the students are Taiwanese (15 are aboriginal). The school is noteworthy for its sustainable campus plan in environmental education. It also integrates the local cultures and arts into its school program.

Participants

The participants included the principals, academic administrators, visual arts and music teachers, selected classroom teachers, and selected students in each school. The main participants were the arts teachers all of whom we invited to participate in this research. Two visual arts teachers (Mr. Pei and Ms. Yin) and one Tayal traditional dance/music teacher (Ms. Iban) from Sun, and two visual arts teachers (Ms. Lin and Ms. Fang) and two music teachers (Ms. Cheng and Ms. Tan) from Key agreed to participate⁶.

Data Sources

The fieldwork was supervised by the second author and conducted by the first author over a seven-month period (4 days a week for 3 hours a day, May 2005 through early-July 2005, and again between September 2005 and late-January 2006). Both authors were involved in writing this article. Data sources include (a) semi-structured and open-ended interviews with principals, academic administrators, and arts teachers; (b) participant observations of arts classes and activities; (c) informal conversations with arts teachers, selected classroom teachers, and selected students; (d) artifacts, including curricular documents, students' artwork and portfolios, notes on school or classroom environments, and so on. All interviews were conducted in Chinese and Taiwanese.

The first author is a former teacher at Key Elementary School in Taiwan. It was not difficult for her to build relationships with the staff at Key. She, however, also felt like an outsider because of the changes that had occurred in the five years since she had taught there. Though she was an outsider in terms of Tayal aboriginal culture, the principal and teachers at Sun Elementary School were friendly and eager to share their teaching experiences with her. She brought something of an insider perspective to Sun because of her early teaching experience with the aboriginal students in Hualien, in eastern Taiwan. It seemed that she was situated in between.

⁶ The seven arts teachers' names are pseudonymous.

Data Analysis

Using Bruner's ideas about folk pedagogy as a general orientation, the authors explored how the schools and arts teachers' pedagogies were constrained by the culture. The data were analyzed using standard qualitative methods (Graue & Walsh, 1998). At the heart of such analysis is categorizing and coding. Different methods of data triangulation were used, including data source triangulation and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1984). In the process of data analysis and writing, the authors invited the participants to do member checking, such as checking the Chinese/English interview transcripts and the drafts of each arts teacher's story in the report. We further invited one Taiwanese educator, who is a qualitative researcher and proficient in Chinese and English, to check the English translation of the Chinese interview transcriptions.

These two schools are not intended to represent elementary schools in Taiwan. They can, however, be considered as "identifiable examples" (Walsh, 2002, p. 215) of elementary schools in Taiwan, that is, identifiable to anyone who is familiar with Taiwanese elementary schooling. Our intent was to explore the similarities and differences of aesthetic education in the two elementary schools which are situated in different local cultures in Taiwan.

Findings and Discussion

Cross-case analyses of these two schools and seven arts teachers reveal commonalities between the schools and the arts teachers' shared views and practices of guiding children to experience the arts. They also provide the beginnings of a broader picture of arts teachers' folk pedagogy in aesthetic education in Taiwan.

The Two Schools

In order to preserve the Tayal traditions that are the school's unique characteristic, the School Board at Sun Elementary School promotes Tayal arts and culture. Key Elementary School, a regular Taiwanese school, aims to provide a holistic and environmental education. Sun and Key schools have developed differently, given their different specific cultural contexts; there are, nonetheless, some similarities between them, given their shared larger cultural context. We discuss two commonalities in their educational goals—to educate students to respect nature and care for local culture.

Respect for Nature

Taiwan is a small isolated island with few natural resources. Recently, the Ministry of Education has begun to promote environmental education and to encourage public schools to implement sustainable campus plans in order to develop a high-quality natural

learning environment (Liu & Chen, 2005). Since 2002, Key School has been involved in sustainable campus planning and is noted for its success in this regard. Sun School began implementing its plan in Spring 2006. Both schools stress respecting nature and providing a strong natural learning environment for children. Principal Hong (pseudonym) from Sun School described the commitment:

You know we have green mountains and water. It's so beautiful, beyond description. . . . You know our school is located in a natural environment. We have natural beauty. We have rich ecology, such as insects, fish, birds, and flowers in the natural environment. . . . One of the features in our curriculum is [the integration of] ecology in nature. I also ask teachers to invite each child to observe one kind of plant or animal each semester. (Interview II, 07/11/2005)

Principal Li (pseudonym) from Key School pointed out the importance of teaching children to respect nature and life so that human beings can live in harmony with it. He stated:

The most important thing is to learn to respect nature. The operation of nature and the seasons is an original kind of beauty. I think, to respect nature is the most important part for children in learning. And I think, life is also an important issue for children to learn from nature and the arts. . . . In addition to being together with human beings, we have to live in harmony with nature. (Interview, 06/30/2005)

Both principals believe that beauty can be found in nature—beautiful examples of which are accessible in their school environment. They encourage the teachers to integrate nature into curricula.

The two schools' advocacy of respect for nature reflects the Chinese aesthetic valuing of the relationship between people, nature, and the cosmos. Ancient tradition leads Chinese people to believe that there should be harmony between people and the world around them (Lee, 1979). In order to live in harmony with nature and the cosmos, people must keep improving themselves and moving along with heaven and nature.

Concern for Local Culture

Since the movement in Taiwan to maintain native culture and to promote multiculturalism in the 1990s, the learning of local culture has been promoted in schools. Both Sun and Key schools stress the importance of teaching students to care about their local cultures. In addition to providing native language lessons, the teachers integrate the local culture into their regular curricula. The integration of local culture, however, is implemented differently in the two schools. The teachers at Key usually implement projects on local culture that have been supported by the government or by the school,

such as the study on Old Street or antique houses in the local area. If there is no special project at hand, the study of local culture is integrated into the curriculum by different teachers to different degrees. For the most part the teachers at Sun carry out the ideal of localization in their teaching, emphasizing Tayal aboriginal culture. Some intend to guide the Tayal children toward embracing and expressing their own cultural identity, and some are motivated by support from the government and charities for aboriginal education. Although the Tayal dance and music performance are promoted, some Tayal teachers dislike performance-oriented activities. For them, studying the meaning of Tayal arts and culture is more important than participating in arts performances. As Mr. Maqaw (pseudonym), a Tayal classroom teacher, pointed out, "It is more important for the kids to know the meaning of Tayal dance and to recognize our Tayal culture than to dance for a performance or a show activity only" (Interview, 01/06/2006).

The Arts Teachers' Shared Views at Each School

The arts teachers hold beliefs about and pedagogies for guiding their students to understand, experience, and appreciate the arts. In this section, we discuss their shared views, which focus on cherishing one's culture through arts learning at Sun, and integrating and appreciating arts in everyday life at Key.

Cherishing One's Culture through Arts Learning

The educational goals at Sun Elementary School argue for the importance of developing children's pride in being Tayal and of Tayal culture and customs. For the most part the regular teachers carry out this ideal of localization in their teaching, as do the three arts teachers.

Both Mr. Pei and Ms. Yin adjust their teaching approaches to account for the fact that they are teaching Tayal children in their home environment. For example, Mr. Pei helped his students observe traditional Tayal dress and make use of Tayal diamond figures in drawing. Ms. Yin talked to her students about Tayal facial tattoos and showed them how to make artwork out of the facial tattoos. Both Mr. Pei and Ms. Yin expect their students to cherish Tayal arts and culture. They are still not confident, however, that they can adequately teach about authentic Tayal arts. They explained that they are not themselves Tayal and have not received enough training in Tayal arts to compensate for their being outsiders. Because Ms. Iban is Tayal, she has an insider's understanding of Tayal arts and culture. She teaches the children to perform Tayal dance vigorously and acquaints them with their culture through dancing and singing. She expects the children to learn about Tayal culture and to develop a cultural identity, as well as to represent their school in their performances. She, however, worries that the transmission of Tayal arts will not continue if the school looks at it mainly from a performance perspective. She expects the school and teachers to help transmit Tayal culture holistically and continuously, for example, by designing a curriculum on Tayal arts and culture for students. As she said,

I am a temporary teacher here. Now I teach these children. Later, I will leave, and these children will graduate. And new students will attend the school. Tayal arts and culture should be passed on to these new students. The cultural heritage should be accumulated and continued over a long period of time, instead of offering it at one particular point in time and in a particular place. Of course, the Principal tries her best to do it. But it also needs the help of the whole school. . . . I wonder if the native language teacher, the native culture teacher, and the adjunct teachers from outside the school can negotiate and cooperate in designing the curriculum. They can teach the same topic, which can be continued in the future. (Interview II, 11/23/2005)

These three arts instructors' teaching reflects a cherishing of Tayal culture. It also reflects people's concerns about aboriginal arts education in Taiwan. Beginning with the movement toward native culture and multiculturalism in the 1990s, the study of folk arts has been promoted in arts education in Taiwan. Some other Tayal teachers at Sun Elementary School, beyond Ms. Iban, argue for the importance of teaching students the meanings of Tayal arts and culture, rather than what they see as going through the motions of dance and music performances. Some scholars similarly argue that aboriginal arts education should be rooted in the learning of aboriginal culture (Wang, 2001). They advocate constructing a graduate school for contemporary aboriginal arts, which focuses on the study of aboriginal cultures and develops an aesthetic education on the basis of aboriginal cultures in Taiwan.

Integrating Arts and Appreciating Arts in Everyday Life

Key Elementary School aims to provide a holistic education and promotes environmental education in its schooling. Although the regular classroom teachers and administrative teachers design school-based curricula that are related both to environmental education and local culture, the arts instructors teach the children a variety of arts and minimally integrate the school environment and local culture into their arts lessons.

The four arts teachers' shared view at Key is that they are integrating the arts into life and they thus expect their students to appreciate the arts in everyday life. For example, Ms. Lin guided her students to observe trees on campus and draw trees in groups. Ms. Fang invited her students to observe pictures and paintings related to daily life, such as different colors encountered through daily routines. Ms. Cheng taught her students music about an evergreen tree and the winter season, while Ms. Tan guided her students to perceive nature by listening to the sounds and observing the green environment on campus. The arts teachers do not expect their students to become great artists, but to appreciate the arts, to observe paintings or listen to music, and to participate in arts activities in their daily lives. Ms. Fang pointed out,

You know we don't want to develop or train a student to become a great painter. We only expect students to like art or do something that is related to art in life. For example, you invite your classmates to an art exhibition after school. . . . You are not afraid of drawing in daily life. (Interview I, 10/07/2005)

These arts teachers' shared view reflects one of the contemporary concerns about the arts and aesthetic education in Taiwan. The principle behind the Arts and Humanities Learning Area stresses the importance of students' artistic and humanistic cultivation, particularly through putting art into practice in everyday life (Ministry of Education, 2003). Scholars have shown that the goal of enhancing children's artistic cultivation and aesthetic sensibility in life is one of the major issues in current arts education in Taiwan (Chen & Lin, 2004). Although the four arts teachers at Key agree with the ideals of aesthetics and understanding in the Arts and Humanities Learning Area, they find that they do not have enough time to teach so many things in arts classes because the amount of arts classes has been reduced. As a result, despite good intentions, they have only been able to minimally integrate the school environment and local culture into their classes.

The Arts Teachers' Folk Pedagogy

The seven arts teachers' folk pedagogy emerges from the following cultural values: (a) the importance of connecting beauty and arts learning through a deep appreciation of artistic forms, feelings, and cultural meanings; (b) developing children's aesthetic feelings through seeing, hearing, moving, and feeling, and perceiving the elements and expressiveness of the arts; (c) cultivating children's character, especially morality, goodness, and self; and (d) integrating the arts into everyday life.

Connecting Beauty and Arts Learning

The arts teachers have diverse views on beauty and arts learning; however, there are some similarities among them. Their views also reflect their aesthetic values on the arts. Some arts teachers concentrate on judging the beauty of art by its forms or elements. For example, Mr. Pei (at Sun) relates beauty to good arrangement and guides the children to perceive artwork by attending to the good arrangement of its shapes and colors. Some arts teachers connect beauty with personal feeling and emotion. For instance, Ms. Tan (at Key) believes that people experience the beauty of arts when they feel a personal resonance with the arts. She further guides the students to express their feelings during music listening. These beliefs reflect some arts teachers' tendency to guide children to perceive the arts based on forms and feelings.

One of the arts teachers connects beauty with cultural meanings. Ms. Iban (at Sun) regards following the Tayal *gaga*⁷ rule as beauty. She believes that the spirit of *gaga* is transmitted through the learning of dancing and singing and expects the Tayal children to learn from it. The Tayal people transmit social customs through dancing, even though “the Tayal dance is not as charming as the Amis aboriginal dance” (Interview II, 11/23/2005). They also transmit their ideas, culture, and history through singing, even though “Tayal music does not have a very rich scale” (only four tones) and “does not sound cheery” (Interview I, 11/07/2005). The transmission of social norms through the arts is also valued in Chinese aesthetics. As Confucius promoted and transmitted *Li Yue* (rites and music) as the social norms in the old Chinese society, *gaga* is transmitted through oral transmission and arts performances in the Tayal’s tribal society.

Developing Children’s Aesthetic Feelings

According to Tsai (1968), aesthetic education has the function of cultivating feelings. These arts teachers try to cultivate children’s aesthetic feelings in multiple ways. They guide young children to experience arts through seeing, hearing, moving, and feeling. They also use concrete words, storytelling, or body movements to help children to experience the arts and have aesthetic perceptions. For example, Ms. Tan (at Key) expects her students to become aware of their feelings in life and to develop their perception in the arts. She explained how she guided them to perceive musical elements and show feelings through listening and drawing.

I think it [the learning of perception] helps them [students] use their senses. Take the activity of music listening and drawing as an example. In the past, he [the student] probably listened to some classical music casually. But under my instruction with some goals, he tried to listen to the lines, the rapid rhythm patterns, or the change of volume in a piece of music. This is a process of transferring. He thought of it in his brain. He could appreciate music by experiencing it. . . . This includes the musical elements and his feelings in his mind. Yes, it is clear that they showed their feelings in drawing. They felt heights in the music. Or they felt that the music sounded beautiful. They showed their feelings through drawing.
(Interview II, 11/10/2005)

Additionally, these teachers tend to guide older children to perceive and experience the arts using more abstract words and artistic terminology. For example, both Ms. Cheng and Ms. Tan (at Key) guide children to listen to music through drawing. While Ms. Cheng guides the young children to develop concrete imagery and stories, Ms. Tan guides older children to distinguish musical elements and draw the elements in abstract

⁷ *Gaga* is the Tayal social norm, which includes ethics, morality, taboos, religious beliefs, and rituals from the Tayal ancestors.

paintings. Their ideas also correspond to the curriculum guidelines that lower grade children should learn to express their aesthetic feelings by experiencing and exploring different arts, whereas upper grade children should learn to distinguish the features of artwork with more specialized vocabulary (Ministry of Education, 2003). Although the curriculum guidelines provide ability indicators for children's achievement at each developmental stage, most arts teachers explained that they only used these indicators as a reference in their curriculum design.

Cultivating Children's Character

To build a sound personal character through arts learning is a goal of the Arts and Humanities Learning Area (Ministry of Education, 2003). This goal is also connected with the traditional Chinese notion of cultivating one's mind and character through aesthetic education. These arts teachers' shared views and practices reveal a belief in the cultivation of children's character through the arts. Some arts teachers expect to cultivate children's morality and goodness through arts learning and appreciation of beauty. For example, Ms. Lin (at Key) believes that it is important for young children to learn to approach their artwork with a sense of goodness and moral character, which she links to earnestness or sincerity. She guides them to evaluate their art based on their own attitudes toward drawing and the improvement of their own paintings. As she mentioned,

I think you can learn to observe things with a sense of goodness. . . . We would look at the children's paintings with the aspect of their moral characters. For example, if a child does not have an earnest attitude to his drawing, his drawing would be ugly. If one is earnest in his drawing, his drawing will look good. Actually, I look at a child subjectively. . . . We have to talk about the features from his work. For example, a boy used to draw a figure with one color, but today he drew a figure with two colors. I would say he makes great progress. "Yes, he is improving. I think he draws well. Everyone gives him applause." My students would say, "Teacher, he drew it seriously. He did a good job in drawing."
(Interview III, 01/17/2006)

The cultural belief is rooted in Confucianism—cultivating one's humanity and morality through the learning specifically of the arts. It also echoes Tsai's advocacy of forming one's moral conscience through aesthetic education (Tsai, 1968).

Most arts teachers' approaches to promoting children's positive aspects reflect their attention to children's selves. They regard building children's self-confidence through the arts as important. As a Tayal, Ms. Iban at Sun expects the children to develop their self-identity through Tayal dance and singing. Ms. Tan at Key expects the children to develop self-understanding through the arts. In addition, Ms. Lin at Key (as shown above) encourages the children to improve themselves through art learning. As East Asians

stress “self-critical, discipline, and improvement” (Lee, 2000-2001), being self-reflective, self-disciplined, collaborative, and interdependent is also emphasized in schooling in Taiwan.

Integrating the Arts into Everyday Life

The arts teachers’ approaches to integrating the arts into life reveal their concerns about the role of the arts in children’s everyday lives. They teach arts that are familiar to children and connected to their prior experiences. Compared with the music and dance teachers, the visual arts teachers have a greater tendency to connect art and aesthetic education with children’s living environment and everyday life. For example, Ms. Yin (at Sun) describes how art is integrated into life. She guides the Tayal children to observe nature and beautiful things in the mountains and use natural materials to make artwork; she further integrates their Tayal culture into art projects, such as making facial tattoos. Ms. Yin explained,

I expect to integrate art appreciation into classroom activities and daily life. It is because . . . art is integrated into the Life Learning Area in the current curriculum. I don’t really regard it [art] as a stand-alone curriculum. For the lower grades, the learning of art is integrated into their daily activities. Yes, and then . . . I also expect them to have interest in art, and their interest in art will last even for their entire lives. (Interview I, 06/28/2005)

For these arts teachers, the arts must be integrated into the students’ lives. As the curriculum guidelines of the Arts and Humanities Learning Area point out: Arts originate in life and blend together in life (Ministry of Education, 2003). Some Taiwanese educators and scholars (Chiang, 2005; Han, 2004) also stress the importance of aesthetics in everyday life—to appreciate beauty and the arts in daily routines. This view corresponds with traditional Chinese attitudes toward aesthetics, which were associated with daily activities such as observing flowers and nature, sharing comments on paintings and literature, watching drama, and so on (Kong, 1998).

Implications

Our discussion of implications for arts education focuses on beauty in its context, cultural transmission through arts learning, teachers’ roles in aesthetic dialogue, and aesthetic education in everyday life.

These arts teachers’ folk beliefs about beauty and arts learning provide a useful lens for looking at beauty in its context. For some people, beauty is not identified from its forms. Rather, the meaning of something transmits what is beautiful. For instance, Chinese calligraphy cannot simply be analyzed by Broudy’s (1972) aesthetic scanning, but only in its situated context; the diverse Taiwanese aboriginal arts and aesthetics must be connected to their different culture’s values. Hence, it is necessary for arts teachers to

educate children about arts and beauty in a cultural context. The ethno-aesthetic approach can help educators search for a critical consciousness of aesthetic meanings.

Although Sun Elementary School emphasizes the importance of children cherishing Tayal culture and customs, the school tends to transmit arts skills and neglect the study of the deeper meanings of the Tayal arts in their cultural context. The Tayal teachers pointed out the importance of teaching children their Tayal culture, and they seek support for this from the school. Some researchers in Taiwan found that aboriginal children can sing aboriginal songs and perform aboriginal dance but do not really understand the meanings of their performances (Chen, 1999; Su, 2004). As shown above, it is necessary for teachers to guide children to study their traditional arts in their cultural context. To understand the meaning of culture is as important as learning to give good dance or music performances. To help achieve this goal, teachers can invite local community members to support and participate in a school's cultural and arts activities for cultural transmission.

The arts teachers at Sun Elementary School and Key Elementary School were caring and patient with their students. Their pedagogy mostly reflected two teaching approaches—imitation and didactic instruction (Bruner, 1996). They provided guidance to their students in the process of seeing, hearing, moving, and feeling in response to the arts. Some teachers raised open-ended questions whereas others asked closed-ended questions. While some teachers probed children's answers, some teachers neglected to provide further comments on children's responses. However, in order to mutually interact with children in an aesthetic dialogue, it is crucial for teachers to raise meaningful questions and carefully respond to each child's answer. It is also important to help children engage in meaning-making in the process of making and viewing the arts. Although constrained by their culture, the Taiwanese teachers tended to apply imitation and didactic instruction in teaching. We suggest that they consider helping children to take a more meta-cognitive role in the learning process (Bruner, 1996).

The curriculum guidelines for the Arts and Humanities Learning Area indicate that arts originate in life and blend together in life (Ministry of Education, 2003). Most arts teachers at Sun and Key schools also point out the importance of children experiencing the arts and beauty in daily life. They expect the children to pay attention to the arts and appreciate the arts in their everyday lives. Some teachers also integrate the idea of beauty in everyday life into their teaching. These views reflect Yuan-Pei Tsai's ideas of aesthetic education in schooling (Tsai, 1968). Although Tsai's ideas are not promoted in the current curriculum reform, arts teachers can carry out some of Tsai's ideas in their teaching to integrate beauty into everyday life.

We expect this research will encourage Taiwanese arts educators to explore and value their folk pedagogies. This research will provide educators with different lenses for examining arts and aesthetic education in Asian culture.

References

- Broudy, H. (1972). *Enlightened cherishing: An essay on aesthetic education*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.
- Chen, C., & Lin, S. (2004). [A study on the development of people's aesthetic cultivation and the improvement of arts education]. National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Chen, T. (1999). [A discussion on the possibility of constructing aboriginal community schools]. Paper presented at Conference of Aboriginal Curriculum Development and Teaching Strategies, National Hualien Teachers College, Taiwan.
- Chen, Y. (2006). *Understanding, experiencing, and appreciating the arts: Folk pedagogy in two elementary schools in Taiwan*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois.
- Chiang, S. (2005). [Beauty in heaven: Chiang's talk in aesthetics in everyday life]. Taipei, Taiwan: Yuan-Liou Publishing.
- Dark, P. (1967). The study of ethno-aesthetics: The visual arts. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (pp. 131-148). Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Dark, P. (1978). What is art for anthropologists? In V. Greenhalgh & V. Megaw (Eds.), *Art in society: Studies in style, culture, and aesthetics* (pp. 31-51). London: Gerald Duckworth.
- Denzin, N. (1984). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Graue, M. E., & Walsh, D. J. (1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods, and ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication.
- Han, P. (2004). [Han's talk in beauty]. Taipei, Taiwan: Linkingbooks.
- Hsuang, T. (1986). [Thesaurus]. Taipei, Taiwan: Taiwanese Chuang-Hua Publication.
- Kong, P. (1998). [The development of aesthetics in Taiwan]. Chiayi, Taiwan: Nanhua College.

- Lee, H. H. (1979). [A study on Yuan-Pei Tsai's theory on aesthetic education]. Unpublished master's thesis, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Lee, K. (2000-2001). The self and arts education: Folk psychology and early schooling. *Arts and Learning Research Journal*, 17(1), 155-175.
- Li, Z. (1988). [*Hua Hsia Mei Hsueh* (Hua Hsia Aesthetics)]. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing.
- Liu, T., & Chen, L. (2005). [Education Year Book of the Republic of China]. Taipei, Taiwan: Ministry of Education.
- Mead, S. M. (1979). Introduction. In S. M. Mead (Ed.), *Exploring the visual art of Oceania: Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia* (pp. 1-12). Honolulu, HA: University Press of Hawaii.
- Ministry of Education. (1979). [Legislation of compulsory education]. Taipei, Taiwan: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (1997). [Legislation of arts education]. Taipei, Taiwan: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2003). [Grade 1-9 curriculum guidelines]. Taipei, Taiwan: Ministry of Education.
- Price, S., & Price, R. (1980). *Afro-American arts of the Suriname Rain Forest*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
- Shweder, R., Goodnow, J., Giyoo, H., LeVine, R., Markus, H., & Miller, P. (1998). The cultural psychology of development: One mind, many mentalities. In W. Damon (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology of development: Volume 1. Theoretical models of human development* (5th ed., pp. 865-937). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Su, M. (2004). [A Study of Bunun Parents' Attitudes towards the Cultural Activities at a Bunun Elementary School in Hualien]. Unpublished master's thesis. National Hualien Teachers College, Hualien, Taiwan.
- Tsai, Y. P. (1968). [Autobiography and album of Mr. Yuan-Pei Tsai]. T. W. Sun (Ed.). Taipei, Taiwan: Taiwan Press.
- Walsh, D. J. (2002). Development of self in Japanese preschools. In L. Bresler & A. Ardichvili (Eds.), *Research in international education: Experience, theory, and practice* (pp. 213-245). New York: P. Lang.

- Wang, G. J. (1998). [A study on aesthetics teaching of elementary school teachers in Taiwan]. Unpublished master's thesis. National Hsien-Ju Teachers' College, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Wang, S. (2001). [Aboriginal arts in the contemporary Taiwan]. Taipei, Taiwan: National Taiwan Arts Education Center.
- Zhou, L., & Zhou, J. (2002). [Mei xue gai lun]. Taipei, Taiwan: Wen jin.

About the Authors

Yu-Ting Chen is an assistant professor at the Department of Early Childhood Education in Nanhua University in Taiwan. She received her Ph. D in curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and her Masters degree in music education from Michigan State University. Her research interests include aesthetic education, music education, and arts in early childhood education.

Daniel J. Walsh was a preschool and kindergarten teacher for 13 years. He has been at universities since 1984. He received his Masters from San Francisco State University and his Doctorate from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. His teaching and research seeks to shift Early Childhood Education, both daily practice and the education of teachers, away from an acultural, highly structural, and romantic developmentalism to a culturally informed, systemic developmentalism attuned to “contemporary realities.” He has two kids, Scooter, 21, a junior at Bowdoin College in Maine, where she plays ice hockey, and Buck, 15, a freshman at University High School in Urbana, Illinois, where he runs track and cross-country. Daniel describes himself as an obsessed avid bicyclist, a quite minor musician, and a fading ice hockey player. He spends as much time as he can biking, singing, and skating with Scooter and Buck.

International Journal of Education & the Arts

Editors

Liora Bresler

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

Margaret Macintyre Latta

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S.A.

Managing Editor

Alex Ruthmann

University of Massachusetts Lowell, U.S.A.

Associate Editors

David G. Hebert

Sibelius Academy, Finland

Pauline Sameshima

Washington State University, U.S.A.

Editorial Board

Peter F. Abbs	University of Sussex, U.K.
Eunice Boardman	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
Norman Denzin	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
Kieran Egan	Simon Fraser University, Canada
Elliot Eisner	Stanford University, U.S.A.
Magne Espeland	Stord/Haugesund University College, Norway
Rita Irwin	University of British Columbia, Canada
Gary McPherson	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
Julian Sefton-Green	University of South Australia, Australia
Robert E. Stake	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.
Susan Stinson	University of North Carolina—Greensboro , U.S.A.
Graeme Sullivan	Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S.A.
Christine Thompson	Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.
Elizabeth (Beau) Valence	Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.A.
Peter Webster	Northwestern University, U.S.A.