

Musical free play: A case for invented musical notation in a Hong Kong kindergarten

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Drawn from a larger mixed methods study, this case study provides an account of aspects of the music education programme that occurred with one teacher and a kindergarten class of children aged three and four years. Contrary to transmission approaches that are often used in Hong Kong, the case depicts how musical creativity was encouraged by the teacher in response to children's participation during the time for musical free play. It shows how the teacher scaffolded the attempts of George, a child aged 3 years and 6 months, to use musical notation. The findings are instructive for kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong and suggest ways in which teachers might begin to incorporate more creative approaches to musical education. They are also applicable to other kindergarten settings where transmission approaches tend to dominate and teachers want to encourage children's musical creativity.

Creativity is one of the most complex, mysterious and fascinating aspects of human behaviour. All great inventions and discoveries, including all forms of artistic expression, depend on creative thinking of the highest order. The Hong Kong *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (Curriculum Development Council, 2006) emphasises the significance of teachers' roles in promoting children's creativity during early childhood education. It encourages teachers to support creative qualities in children through the following specific goals:

to allow children to explore different art media and symbols in an aesthetically rich and diversified environment, to enrich their sensory experiences and encourage them to express their thoughts and feeling, to stimulate their imaginative powers. (p. 20)

These goals are in harmony with other Curriculum Development Council (CDC) documents and the Council's vision and overall aims of education for the 21st century, which place critical thinking skills and creativity in priority positions (CDC, 2000, 2001). Both these documents also highlighted the responsibility of schools to provide learning experiences for the development of the whole person in the domains of aesthetics such as music. The

CDC (2001) emphasised the importance of encouraging kindergarten children to express their creativity confidently and to enjoy participating in creative activities. Despite these goals and vision, encouraging the musical creativity of children attending kindergartens in Hong Kong remains a challenge (Lau, 2007). The reasons for this ongoing challenge are examined in the following section, where approaches to kindergarten education in Hong Kong are considered. In addition, musical creativity, the role of the teacher and children's musical notation are discussed. The methodology follows, where the approach to case study, data collection techniques and processes of analysis are explained. Findings are presented using a vignette of George aged 3 years and 6 months and data from an interview with the teacher. The article concludes with some suggestions for encouraging musical creativity with young children where transmission approaches are common.

Kindergarten education in Hong Kong

More than a decade ago, the *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (CDC, 1996) recommended a child-centred approach. It focused on the all-round development of children and the importance of 'play, learning and care' as the 'three essential elements of daily activities in a pre-primary institution' (p. 63). Like the 1996 version, the more recent *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (CDC, 2006) also endorsed child centredness and learning through play. However, current teaching practices favour transmission models where teachers are the centre of the learning experience; a uniform curriculum, structured activities and prescribed resources are used, and group conformity, competition and rote learning are encouraged (Liang & Pang, 1992; Wong & Lau, 2001a; Lau, 2007). This kind of education centres on transmitting an understanding and appreciation of culture from past generations to succeeding generations (Bruner, 2001). It involves passing down information and performance standards, and carefully moulding individuals to conform to societal values and practices. In particular, the kindergartens are teaching children a curriculum that is too advanced for their age (Education Commission, 1999). For example, children are required to write Chinese characters in a small square as homework, starting at three years of age.

This traditional transmission approach requires young children to sit at desks with paper, pencils, worksheets and similar materials and to adhere to strict academic goals such as undertaking examinations, dictation, spelling and mechanical routine writing (Wong & Lau, 2001a). However, according to the Education Commission (1999), the children have to 'cope with too much homework' (p. 15). They have very little time to engage in musical activities and consequently, the discipline of music is an at-risk area of education in many kindergartens in Hong Kong. When music is included, it is often a routine and highly structured component of the curriculum and involves breathing exercises, pitch practice, and an emphasis on the technique of singing songs. Children repeat songs many times until they can perform them well (Lau, 2008).

Historically, early childhood education in Hong Kong has not placed a large emphasis on musical creativity. Most commonly, kindergarten children are taught to copy the teacher in whole groups, rather than engage in individual or free play musical activities in which children are free to explore and manipulate various materials, props and music instruments in the music corner. For example, it is common for all children to sing the same song in

the same way, with little scope for creative invention (Liang & Pang, 1992; Lau, 2008). Such practices are reflected in expecting kindergarten children, beginning at age three, to be involved in rote learning and recitation in unison, where the evaluation of children's music development is based on the number of songs they can sing (Liang & Pang, 1992; Lau, 2008). Musical creativity generally is not valued, nor is music integrated across the curriculum or enhanced during children's free play (Liang & Pang, 1992). Instead, young children's music learning is confined to a rigidly scheduled group session, and all children are expected to attend. As Wong and Lau (2001a) and Lau (2007) noted, such activities tend to encourage conformity and discourage creativity. Despite the emphasis of the CDC documents (1996, 2006) on creativity, imagination and aesthetic appreciation, these strong historical traditions take time to change.

Creativity is linked closely to culture (Ng & Smith, 2004), and children's musically creative acts are linked to the types of musical experiences they encounter in their education, family and community lives. In kindergarten and school, teachers can assist children with the skills of thinking musically, and can 'construct an environment that fosters creativity' (Henniger, 2002, p. 466). The musical environment and the music curriculum can have a significant effect on children's engagement with and exploration of musical creativity.

The influence of international research about children's musical creativity is yet to be experienced in many kindergartens in Hong Kong. The international literature encourages teachers of young children to provide environments that foster musical creativity and 'appropriate guidance from adults' (e.g. Kemple *et al.*, 2004, p. 32). With increasing precision, children can imitate and distinguish among rhythm and tone patterns (Isenberg *et al.*, 2006). These processes usually involve risk-taking and a willingness to go beyond established rules, plus the discipline to complete the task to a level of self-satisfaction (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995). Consequently, how teachers assist children's musical creativity and learning within kindergarten contexts is highly significant. Of importance to the Hong Kong kindergarten context is Wright's (2003) comment that encouraging or limiting creativity depends on whether creativity is valued and 'whether the creative products complement or challenge their own viewpoints' (p. 13). While risk-taking is a quality relevant to creative productivity, if teachers are focused only on their lesson objectives and content delivery, children's creativity can be stifled (Wright, 2003). Children's input and products can be regarded as irrelevant, particularly if they do not reflect the material presented in class.

Kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong have beliefs about children's learning that focus on good academic achievement (Wong & Lau, 2001b) and the transmission of knowledge. Children are required to complete many worksheets in a daily programme (Wong & Lau, 2008), and most of this and other work is directed at cognitive development (Wong & Lau, 2001a). Mechanical drilling, dictation, spelling and routine writing occupies most of the children's time during group activities (Wong & Lau, 2001a, 2008). The expectations of both teachers and parents of Hong Kong children centre on academic rather than aesthetic aspects (Wong & Lau, 2001a). Consequently academic subjects are valued more than creative musical activities (Wong & Lau, 2001a), which creates challenges for kindergarten teachers implementing the Hong Kong *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (CDC, 2006).

Recent research concerning the development of creativity has identified the significance of both teachers and learners in the process (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). Characteristics that are important for learners include using a combination of imagination and experience to enhance their learning; opportunities to contribute to classroom curriculum and pedagogy; collaborating with others on learning tasks, and learners critically evaluating their own learning (Jeffrey, 2001). It is possible to introduce these ideas and practices to young children and encourage their development with young learners. For example, children can be encouraged to be innovative in making decisions about materials and resources, add their own meaning to tasks and develop their own personal plans for tasks (Craft & Jeffrey, 2004). An eclectic approach to teaching means teachers draw on a range of methods and strategies to suit individual circumstances with the overall aim of developing creativity. The relationship between teaching creatively and creative learning is also an important factor in the development of creativity in classrooms (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). In this respect, Jeffrey and Craft suggest the focus should be the 'creative teaching of the teacher and the creative learning of the learner' (p. 86). Attention to the relationship between teachers and learners in the interests of creativity provides a contrast with approaches that focus on the difference between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity (Craft & Jeffrey, 2004).

Musical environments for young children that foster creative teaching and creative learning should provide opportunities for children to make their own music, listen to music, and perform their own and other's music (Barrett, 2003, p. 76). Engagement with music as an individual, with small groups of children and with the whole group is also important. Barrett recommends a balance between child- and teacher-directed activities as they occur in individual, small group and whole group situations. For young children, Andress (1998) endorses music play environments that include 'an enticing play area that triggers curiosity and motivates children to become involved in making and responding to music either independently or within a small group' (p. 164). Play is central to early education (Frost *et al.*, 2005; Bredekamp & Copple, 2006) and is a primary vehicle for musical growth (Kenney & Persellin, 2000). It is instrumental in developing children's creativity (Jensen, 2000) and is a significant factor in enhancing children's musical creativity (Russ, 1996). Play can also involve symbolic thinking and the manipulation of symbols (Singer & Singer, 2006), which are central for problem solving and creativity. Many processes such as divergent thinking and openness occur in general as well as in musical play (Russ, 1996), but the quality of divergent thinking, symbolic thinking and symbolic manipulation depends on the teacher. Barrett (2003) identifies five key components of music programmes in early childhood education:

- composing and improvising with instruments and voice;
- notating music experiences;
- singing invented and canonic song;
- playing instruments;
- listening to music (p. 76).

The five areas are interconnected and all should be included in a music programme for young children.

Few studies have investigated children's invented musical notations, particularly those of children under the age of five. Those exploring this area include Upitis (1992) who identified general stages in which children's invented musical notations develop and Davidson and Scripp (1988), who proposed a typology based on children's notions of melodies other than their own (most of their examples are from children aged five and older). Upitis (1992) highlights the importance of surrounding children with musical symbols and sounds, treating children as composers and generating a real need for notation. When Davidson and Scripp considered children's notations of their own compositions they found similarities to the first (precommunicative) and last (correct) of the stages that occur when children are learning to spell. Barrett (2003) proposes that symbolising or 'notating' musical experience can provide 'some indication of children's thinking about music' (p. 77). She noted that children draw on a range of strategies when making symbols to represent musical experiences and that these strategies can include:

- the depiction of the instrument played or the narrative content of a song;
- the 'playing out on paper' of a rhythm pattern or gesture;
- the adoption of abstract symbols (a cross, a circle) to represent musical patterning;
- the adoption of conventions such as variation in size to depict a musical element such as dynamic change (p. 77).

Children's invented notations show elements of their other contextual engagement such as visual arts, mathematical symbols and Western ways of writing music, and often show similarities to invented writing (Barrett, 2003).

Although many Hong Kong kindergartens still adopt traditional transmission approaches to teaching, there are some teachers whose practices are moving towards the promotion of musical creativity in young children (Wong & Lau, 2001a; Lau, 2008). The case reported here is of one Hong Kong kindergarten teacher's beliefs and practices about the development of musical creativity and the creative music education that occurred within her classroom. The research question that guided the larger study was:

- What are the beliefs and practices of Hong Kong kindergarten teachers about music education, and how do they support young children's musical creativity?

Methods

Yin (2003) defines a case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context' (p. 13). Case studies involve the collection of extensive data from multiple sources and provide an in-depth picture of the phenomena being investigated. Prior to classroom data collection, the teacher, Miss Yu (a pseudonym) had completed a survey questionnaire with 50 other kindergarten teachers about the creative and musical experiences provided in their kindergarten classrooms.

Miss Yu had also participated in a focus group interview that was aimed at ascertaining teachers' views, definitions and examples of musically creative processes, people, products and environments. Participants described how they encouraged children to be musically creative, how they assisted children to produce musically creative works (e.g. songs, instrumental play), and their ways of promoting children's musical creativity through free

play experiences. Teachers were invited to be involved in case studies based on their responses to the survey questionnaire and the focus group interview, their willingness to participate and provide access to their classrooms, and the age of the children in their classes (kindergarten level 1, where children are aged 3–4 years). Data for the case studies were collected over 12 weeks, with two half-day visits by the researcher each week to each kindergarten. Data reported here are drawn from video records of the free play period, field notes and the stimulated recall interview with one teacher (Miss Yu).

Video recording

Children could play in the music corner during free play if they chose and video recording was used to capture teacher–child and child–child interactions during these daily free play sessions. Children’s individual and interactive problem-solving and creativity, and the strategies teachers used to enhance children’s musical creativity and learning were the focus of video data gathering (Silverman, 2000). The video records provided a broad view of the classroom, as well as a closer focus on individual children when engaged in musical creativity during free play. Six free play sessions were video recorded in this classroom and each was about 15–20 minutes in length.

The video records were analysed in terms of the scaffolding in which Miss Yu engaged. The analysis focused on how much time and in what ways Miss Yu was involved in interactions with children during the free play musical experiences. The themes included responsiveness, involvement and attitudes toward the children, and the strategies and methods used to guide children’s musical creativity.

Individual interview: stimulated recall

Stimulated recall with the teachers occurred one month after data collection was completed. With the aid of selected video segments, teachers were encouraged to talk freely about their philosophies and practices and how they teach to promote musical creativity. These conversation-style interviews lasted about one hour and were audio-recorded. The visual evidence served to remind teachers ‘of a situation and to stimulate ideas’ (Gray, 2004, p. 385) associated with the strategies used to scaffold children’s musical creativity at the time. Miss Yu was asked to reflect on the children’s musical processes as well as the approaches and strategies she used. She was also encouraged to reflect on, and describe, why and how the scaffolding processes may have enhanced children’s musical creativity. Such visual documentation brought the teacher a means of remembering and studying in detail for reflective purposes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Miss Yu was also encouraged to comment about her philosophies and practice of fostering children’s musical creativity, and to talk freely during the interview.

Miss Yu taught a nursery class with 18 children aged three who attended for five half-day sessions per week. The kindergarten was located on Hong Kong Island. Miss Yu had 16 years of teaching experience in the kindergarten field. After she graduated from secondary school, Miss Yu completed a two-year basic teacher-training course specialising in the early years (Certificate of Education Course). Through the Certificate in Kindergarten Education Programme, she gained formal training in the use of music in education.

Miss Yu worked with an assistant teacher and the classroom was relatively small, but the environment was warm and included children's pictures and other decorations on the walls. The music area provided a rich context for children to interact with their peers, teachers and resources through a variety of learning experiences. A table in the music area displayed different materials, props, recording equipment, musical instruments and various kinds of paper to enhance role play, prop building and other forms of symbolic representation. Children were able to explore the music resources and musical instruments. The environment incorporated many of the components described by Andress (1998) as necessary for young children's musical play.

Children engaged in musical free play three times per week, which usually lasted for 30 minutes. Besides the musical free play, Ms Yu had planned music lessons. The 15-minute lesson plan covered a sequence of activities, namely a movement warm-up, a greeting song, a breathing exercise, a pitch training game, a revision of old songs, the teaching of a new song, rhythmic movement games and a cool-down activity. The planned lesson was followed by the creative musical free play sessions in the music centre. Of the five key components of music programmes in early childhood settings identified by Barrett (2003), the data show that in Miss Yu's class, composing and improvising with instruments and voice occurred during free play time, as did notating musical experiences, playing instruments and listening to music.

Data analysis

Video records were transcribed from Cantonese to English and these records, along with the field notes were grouped systematically, resulting in categories that included teachers' scaffolding strategies, beliefs and practices, musical elements (e.g. movement, rhythm), the kinds of play in which children were involved (e.g. pretend, imaginative, dramatic, fantasy), musical expressions and problem solving. Field notes and video records were used to form vignettes which provided rich descriptions and captured key aspects of the musical encounters observed. Interviews were transcribed after being translated into English. They were analysed for word usage (Yin, 2003) and grouped according to teachers' understandings about musical creativity, process, product, and person; and teachers' beliefs about enhancing musical creativity.

Results and discussion

From the video records and field notes of Miss Yu's classroom, the following excerpt about notation was selected as an example of how Miss Yu encouraged children's musical creativity. Recall that in Hong Kong kindergartens transmission approaches are common and that even though curriculum documents have emphasised aesthetics such as music for some time, the academic curriculum remains a strong feature.

A set of six transparent glasses, filled with coloured water that included red, yellow, violet, blue, orange, green at different heights was prepared by Miss Yu for the children to explore in the music centre. The six colours represented six notes of the musical scale (do, re, me, so, la, do). George (3 years and 6 months), one of the more active



Fig. 1 George hit the glasses of the three colours, and invented musical notations

boys in the class, spotted the new materials, was curious and eager, and asked Miss Yu if he could play with them. Miss Yu explained that the glasses could be easily broken, and then let George try. He struck the glasses softly using a stick and played one pitch again and again, which appeared to lead him to a great deal of personal satisfaction. He seemed to have an understanding of his action in relation to sound. George enjoyed creating a melody, and began to incorporate form-making elements – such as a singable melody – into his piece.

After George had finished his improvisation with the water glasses, Miss Yu said, ‘There are some crayons and white paper next to you. Do you think there is anything you can do with them?’ Miss Yu paused for a short time. George looked and listened. She then picked up a red crayon, matched it with the red water glasses, and showed how marks on the paper could represent sounds. George watched intently. She suggested that George try using three crayons – red, green and yellow – and George created his own marks to represent the music using the three colours. After creating music marks on paper, Miss Yu asked ‘What do you want to do with the music marks?’ Then using his left second finger, George pointed to the created marks while using his right hand to play a tune, matching it with the music mark. He hit the glasses of the three colours, and none of which sounded like a familiar melody. He was engrossed in the playing process, and excitedly raised his hand when he had finished his creation. (19 March 2001) Source: VHS K1–006.

Miss Yu demonstrated her support and encouragement of George’s individual expression by providing an atmosphere in which George felt free to explore the sound-making resource, even though it was fragile glass (see Fig. 1). After explaining about the

fragility of glass, Miss Yu stood back and let George explore the features of the sounds. Miss Yu's actions are consistent with the ideas of Craft and Jeffrey (2004) in encouraging George to experiment with the glasses of water, creating his own melodies and songs. Barrett (2003) too, indicated the importance of children making their own music. When George had finished improvising with the water glasses, Miss Yu engaged his attention by asking if there was anything he could do with the crayons. George made no response but continued to watch carefully. Through making a mark on the paper with a red crayon each time the glass with red water was struck, Miss Yu made George aware of how he could notate music, that is, how to record on paper the sounds he had been making with the glasses. One of the strategic points in encouraging children's musical creativity is knowing when teacher intervention is necessary. Woodward (2005) acknowledges that teachers must know when to intervene and when to allow children to continue to investigate individually or with small groups.

George responded to Miss Yu's questions and modelling (scaffolding) by recording the sounds on paper that he had played in process of making music. By pointing to the created marks and playing a tune which matched the marks, George made a connection between sound and symbol. He created song after song but made marks for the first song only, and improvised for the other songs. George used symbols to represent the different notes and this act of symbolising or 'notating' musical experience provided some indication of his thinking about music (Barrett, 1999, 2003). His invented notations drew on the demonstration provided by the teacher, and gave a picture of the narrative content of his songs. Through this process, he 'played out on paper' the rhythm patterns and pitches associated with his gestures. He adopted abstract symbols (straight lines with three colours) to represent the musical pattern. In notating his work, George explored the processes and practices of the act of 'notating' as an introduction to the formal symbol system of music (Barrett, 2003). According to Barrett (2003), invented notation is 'a powerful starting-point for discussion with a child and provides an opportunity to interrogate the nature and extent of a child's musical thinking' (p. 78). When children notate, teachers can take note of the strategies they employ, their associations between the sound events and the symbols, and their comments on the aural and visual features.

The statement and question from Miss Yu about the crayons ('There are some crayons and white paper next to you, do you think there is anything you can do with them?') directed George's attention to the resources and suggested a connection between the crayons and his music making. The modelling helped George structure and organise his thoughts and assisted him to make a musical product (a song). Miss Yu's scaffolding showed George how to represent the songs he had created using abstract symbols (that is, invented notations) to represent the musical patterning. It also came at the right time for George, as another child may not have been able to respond in the way George did, or may already have known how to represent musical sounds on paper. If Miss Yu were to extend her scaffolding to ask George to play the music he had notated, and to listen for similarities and differences between the various repetitions, he might learn 'to 'retrieve' his musical meaning from notations developed in the past', and ultimately learn 'to interpret the notations developed by others' (Barrett, 2003, p. 78).

George was engrossed in the playing process and seemed contented with his symbolic creation. Playing with the glasses and the scaffolding provided by Miss Yu enabled George

to engage in symbolic thinking and to manipulate symbols (Singer & Singer, 2006), both of which are central to problem solving and the development of creativity. As Uptis (1992) states, children should be treated as composers. Once children understand the concept of notation, Uptis suggests generating a real need for it in the musical learning context. George's new skill may help him develop the confidence to apply this knowledge in new but different situations, and may even inspire him to show other children during free play. George's musical growth was nurtured by opportunities to explore the sound qualities of the glasses, to compose melodies and to notate them. His understanding might be further extended by positive comments about his music-making, by describing what he has done and conserving his music making through audio or visual recordings. This might motivate George to devise other simple notations to capture his music, and encourage him to find alternative ways of notating a variety of musical works.

Interview

During the interview, Miss Yu expressed her philosophy of teaching. When asked to discuss the benefits that children gained from free play in the music centre, she explained: 'I believe that children learn from play. They can be assisted and scaffolded to have musical creativity through play, especially from drama, fantasy and imaginative play'. Miss Yu's explanations of the value of play are similar to those of Kenney and Persellin (2000) who consider play is a primary vehicle for musical growth. The children in Miss Yu's class enjoyed exploring new aspects of themselves and of being challenged to be creative in their musical endeavours. Miss Yu indicated that dramatic, imaginative and fantasy play provide challenges because play can be 'spiritually', emotionally and physically fulfilling for children, and all three aspects are integrated as children come to know themselves. In Miss Yu's view, because children are filled with expectations and enjoy imaginative play, a type of 'free-expression' is produced, which liberates the children creatively and musically. Russ (1996) also identified the importance of play in enhancing children's musical creativity.

Miss Yu also stated that there are benefits for children as they gain confidence in their own ability during play. The children learn that acceptance of others is very important, and through an ethos of trust, are not afraid to try new things, because they realise that they are not going to be judged by every little thing they do. She also indicated that through imaginative play, children have the opportunity to recognize that they have different abilities in many areas, such as language, art or music, and to recognize that there is a variety of ways to achieve great things. Through confidence in themselves, they come to know and trust their own abilities. Miss Yu was strong in her belief that if children are given opportunities to develop imagination and self expression, they can be more creative. Here Miss Yu's views coincide with ideas about creative learning of learners (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004) in that she encourages the children to make decisions about materials and resources, and to add their own meaning to the tasks in which they are involved. In addition, Miss Yu is actively involved in scaffolding children's attempts (as with George) to enhance their learning (see Bruner, 1986).

Miss Yu described her approach to scaffolding and the facilitation of children's play as occurring through active participation and engagement with them during their play. She stated that she guided children's musical play with strategies such as modelling,

demonstrating, asking children questions to extend their ideas and understanding about musical creativity, and provided feedback to support children who did not know how to start a task. She facilitated learning by becoming a co-participant in children's construction of knowledge. Such scaffolding included helping children explore self-generated graphic notation (as in George's case), engage in instrumental improvisation of specific phrases for a familiar song and create new lyrics for a familiar song (see Lau, 2007).

During the interview, Miss Yu indicated that the focus of her scaffolding was children's movement, singing, imaginative and instrumental play. It was apparent that Miss Yu felt comfortable and confident when dealing with children's instrumental play. She encouraged children's spontaneous music experiences, and found many opportunities to scaffold children's creative learning. Miss Yu stated that children can be more expressive in musical free play than when participating in a conventional music programme. Yet it was evident that her musical background assisted her in finding opportunities to help children in the application of more complex and abstract aspects of musicianship during the musical play (see Lau, 2007).

Conclusion

Research has shown an important factor in the development of creativity is the relationship between teachers and learners, specifically between teaching creatively and providing opportunities for creative learning (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). A well-planned and well-arranged creative environment affects how children interact with peers and teachers, with the materials and with the learning experiences in musical free play. Miss Yu understood the significance of the environment, and she carefully prepared specific spaces and provided resources for children to experience musical free play and to encourage creativity. There were many opportunities for children to explore, express and interact, and for children's musical creativity to flourish. The teaching resources, open-ended materials and props offered children a rich context in which to interact and provided choices that sustained children's interest and imagination, all of which are significant factors in enabling children's musical creativity to flourish. Musical creativity is also enhanced by the 'involvement of the teachers who take account of children's learning process[es] and scaffold them during their musical free play' (Wong & Lau, 2008, p. 102). Three suggestions are relevant for kindergarten teachers who are interested in enhancing their approach to creative musicality and children's engagement in musical play: make room for play; provide time and environments rich in resources; and scaffold children's musical play (see Lau, 2007). These suggestions are pertinent for those who work in contexts where transmission approaches dominate and who are interested in encouraging the development of musical creativity.

The academic nature of many kindergarten programmes in Hong Kong does not allow for musical free play. In the case presented here, the teacher taught planned music lessons three times per week for 15 minutes each time. These sessions were highly structured and activities followed a particular sequence. Opportunities for musical free play followed the planned lessons and occurred three times per week for 30 minutes each session. It is significant that twice the amount of time was provided for musical free play as was

allowed for planned music lessons. Adequate time is therefore required in the kindergarten curriculum not only for planned music lessons, but also for musical free play.

Adequate time for musical free play also requires the provision of appropriate teaching resources, facilities and equipment, and professional support from experts in kindergarten music and movement. Children's musical creativity is fostered in a low-risk, spacious, comfortable and stimulating environment that provides opportunities for children's exploration and imagination. Provision of an environment that is high in physical safety and where teachers accept and appreciate children's ideas and creative expression is very important. The environment should allow children to make sound without being concerned that they may be disturbing others involved in quieter activities. It should encourage creative spirit and free musical play, which are quite different from the planned music lessons that occurred before the free play sessions in Miss Yu's class.

Children use different materials to express their growing knowledge of the physical and social world, as well as to express their creative ideas. Spontaneous 'games' and other interactive activities emerge from children's free musical play and while these were not detailed here, they did occur in Miss Yu's classroom (see Lau, 2007). Open-ended materials such as scarves, puppets, empty boxes, hats, paper, ribbon sticks and musical instruments were available to support children's musically creative play. Teachers also can provide other invented sound-making devices. Streamers, elastic bracelets or anklet bells are also enticing, and rag dolls or stuffed animals can serve as dance partners for children. Age-appropriate and culturally appropriate props and materials should support and sustain children's creative play, spontaneously, and enable them to represent their understandings through music activities.

The significance of the teacher's role in guiding and facilitating the enhancement of children's musical creativity was apparent in the approach used by Miss Yu. As illustrated in the vignette, George's musical creativity was encouraged and developed through scaffolded interaction and opportunities to work in close proximity with the teacher. For kindergarten teachers interested in providing time and space for musical free play, there are two key points. First, provide resources, time and space for the promotion of musical creativity with young children (e.g. musical free play). Second, take an active role in scaffolding young children's musical creativity by providing effective assistance or guidance through modelling and asking questions (see the vignette about George). It is also important to support children to be innovative in making decisions about materials and resources, to encourage children to add their own meaning to tasks, and to develop their own personal plans for tasks (Craft & Jeffrey, 2004). Children's innate interest, motivation and curiosity in music is aroused if teachers respond to creative behaviour, believe in children's abilities and show care by giving children special work, challenges and choices (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

As was the case with Miss Yu, teachers do not need to be exceptional musicians or performers to promote musical creativity in young children (Petersen, 2001). They can show the children that they themselves enjoy trying new things – making silly songs, dancing spontaneously, creating new body movements along with the music, inventing body shapes or patterns when the music stops or engaging in a variety of other joyful experiences with the children (see Lau, 2007). Teachers can directly influence the development of creativity in children's early years by becoming actively involved in their musical free play and

serving as guides, initiators, mediators and facilitators. In addition, they can unlock their own creative potential during music activities with children.

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