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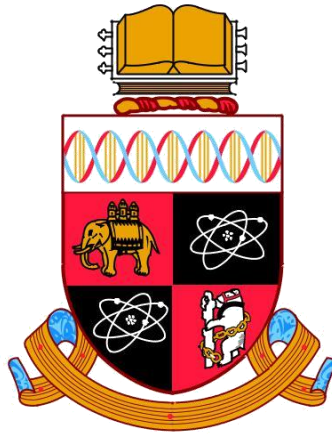
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# **Learning to Teach Moral Education through Drama in a Chinese Primary School**

By

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the possibilities of introducing drama to facilitate primary children's moral learning in the Chinese educational context. As she is an inexperienced teacher, the author also focuses on her own self-improvement in learning to teach through educational drama as well as examining drama's potential to complement the moral education curriculum for primary aged children in China.

The thesis begins with a literature review that explores the authority-oriented nature of the moral education curriculum in mainland China and points out that basic challenges still exist in the current course despite reforms that have been implemented since 1999 on a national scale. It then argues for the potential of story-based drama as an innovative pedagogy that may help students develop their autonomous moral thinking as a way to address some of the shortcomings that exist in the present moral curriculum.

The key methodological approach is that of reflective practitioner case study, using mixed methods to assess the impact of the author's teaching on the children's moral thinking. The fieldwork itself was undertaken in May and June, 2016, with two groups of children in two different primary schools in Beijing, China. There were fifteen sessions taught to 31 children in total, including one preparatory workshop and three story-based schemes of work in each school.

In terms of the main findings, on the one hand, the author offers practical suggestions for other learner teachers who might wish to create a playful, cooperative and ensemble-based drama classroom in the light of her own experience. On the other hand, it also reveals that the incorporation of story-based drama into the existing school curriculum is workable, and this new approach can be seen to some extent to assist pupils in aspects of their citizenship education, imaginative development and dialogic thinking capabilities. The evidence also suggests that educational drama can promote gifted children's moral growth by developing their peer relationships and creative thinking abilities.

The author recommends that a longitudinal study on a larger scale can be conducted by experienced teachers to stimulate more and deeper research on the use of story-based drama in similar contexts, that this may further extend the understanding of Chinese teachers of this resourceful new approach and begin to inform policy makers.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Joe Winston. Though coming from different countries and cultures, we share similar research interests in drama, morality, tales and childhood education. Having the honor and opportunity to be Prof. Winston's student is one of the best and luckiest things in my life. I could not have asked for a better supervisor. Besides being a professional drama practitioner, he is also an excellent moral educator in my eyes, who paid close attention to the educational problems raised in the present study to help those children in my country develop their ethical characters in a better way. Without his supervision, the completion of this thesis would have been impossible, and for that I am deeply indebted to him.

My grateful thanks also go to Prof. Shen Liang in Shanghai Theatre Academy who introduced me to the interesting area of drama education, as well as Prof. Ma Liwen in Beijing Normal University who enthusiastically helped me in conducting the fieldwork.

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Last but not least, I'd like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandmother, Feng Guoying, who went to heaven during my third year of studying abroad; and she used to be a brilliant primary teacher.

## **Declaration**

This thesis has been submitted to the University of Warwick in support for my application for the degree of Doctor of philosophy. This is a confirmation that the work presented in this thesis is original and my own work, which has not been previously submitted for any other degree.

Mengyu Feng

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1. Motivations for the Research

When I was in primary school, the weekly lesson *Ideological Moral Character*<sup>1</sup> was sometimes a scary experience for me. I still remember a whole unit telling the stories of the martyrs, who sacrificed their lives in different ways for the establishment of the People's Republic. Among them, a 14-year-old heroine named Liu Hulan was beheaded by the Kuomintang army in 1947 during the Chinese Civil War, because she showed unshakable loyalty to the Communist Party. Our textbooks also highlighted the famous line 'a great life, a glorious death' written by Mao Zedong, the founder of the People's Republic of China, in memory of her heroism. In that class, the teacher pointed at the red scarves we were wearing around our necks as a symbol of the Young Pioneers<sup>2</sup> and reminded us to: 'Bear in mind, your scarves are dyed red by the fresh blood of these brave people. Without their efforts, we would not be enjoying such a peaceful life nowadays.' Thus, for a long time, that piece of red cloth became rather frightening in my eyes. I even tried my best not to make it dirty, having a suspicion (which I knew to be irrational) that blood might come out of it once I put it in a basin of water. At the end of the unit, the teacher asked us to make a flower using white paper as part of our homework. The next day, being told to behave in a respectful and solemn manner, we were taken to the local Martyrs' Cemetery and took turns to present our hand-made flowers to the unknown sol-

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<sup>1</sup> The course I received was in advance of the reform of the moral curriculum, which commenced on a nationwide basis in 1999. The differences between these two modules and the background of the reform will be discussed in more detail in the literature review.

<sup>2</sup> According to Wikipedia, the Young Pioneers of China is a mass youth organization for children aged six to fourteen, run by the Communist Youth League, an organization of older youths that comes under the Communist Party of China. Most elementary school students are Young Pioneers by the time they graduate from grade school. There were an estimated 130 million Young Pioneers in China, as of 2002.

diers buried in the tomb. Although it was spring, I hardly noticed the liveliness of nature around us. As a shy, timid girl, my only wish was to escape that quiet and rather horrifying place as soon as possible.

There was another lesson in which we were asked to learn from a teenage school boy called Lai Ning, who voluntarily joined in firefighting in a forest near his hometown only to be killed by the flames. This happened in 1988, the same year that I was born. Highly praised by our government, his heroic actions were quickly written into the moral textbooks as a model of duty and courage for children of my age. In addition, a movie based on his life story was released in 1993. As part of our moral education course, the teacher took the whole class to the local cinema to see the film *Lai Ning* together<sup>3</sup>. Afterwards, each child was required to write a movie review to express what we had learnt from his deeds combating the wildfire to protect his town. However, the deepest impression this event left on me was the blazing and raging fire, as illustrated in the following portrait of Lai Ning. In this image, he is swaying on a pine branch to fight against the fire that eventually swallowed him. As a primary aged child, instead of feeling uplifted by his heroism, I felt anxious and vulnerable, fearful that one day I would be expected to sacrifice myself to a burning fire like him.

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<sup>3</sup> The version we saw was a video tape kept by the local cinema. I was about 9 years old when seeing this film.



Being nurtured in such an environment, I gradually learnt to put collective interests over any individual benefit. For example, I would stick to my duty and work hard to tidy the classroom, even when I felt sick; I would also voluntarily bring drinks from home for the sports meetings and happily share with my classmates. However, I was often the one who was left thirsty, with nothing to drink, at the end of the day. My deeds were confirmed and encouraged by the teacher, who regarded me as one of the so-called ‘good’ students. Gradually, the class were divided into two groups, namely the well-behaved and the ill-mannered pupils. In this way, a gulf began to separate us, and a wall was built up between us.

At that time, although I was too young to reflect on the moral course’s shrill and didactic nature, neglecting as it did to attend to individual values and the diversity of children’s characters, I naturally felt sad that there was a distance between me and the other group of children who were labelled naughty or undisciplined. Frankly speaking, sometimes they were dangerous creatures in my eyes, as they might openly challenge our teacher in class and were then criticized or even punished; but I also secretly envied them because they seemed more real and energetic compared with myself, overwhelmed as I was by the strict, ethical rules which I obeyed in order to be a good student in the teacher’s eyes. I was secretly eager to

cross the boundaries and get to know the 'bad students' better. Always acting the part of the good student made me feel tired and bored - but such feelings also made me feel guilty.

In such a state of growing confusion, I moved through my years as a primary and middle school student. Then, when I left my hometown in a small county in the middle of China and entered a senior high school in a city nearby, I first came to experience the charms of drama. Our headmaster, it turned out, had paid a visit to a Japanese school, had been inspired by their drama festival and had decided to have a trial in our school as well. Most programmes were adapted from extracts in the literacy textbooks, with the help of the teacher, such as *The Gift of the Magi* by the American writer O. Henry and the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en. Though my role was merely as an audience sitting in the school hall, that stage still shines in my mind's eye even now. I could find a parallel world there, which I hoped to be a part of, consisting of music, light, story-telling, humor and mutual laughter. Staring at the stage, so distinguishable from the endlessly competitive examinations in my normal school life, and from the disquieting memories of the grave yard and the fire provided by the moral lessons in my previous schools, I had for the first time the idea of becoming a teacher. In doing so, I would wish to offer an alternative: a classroom that could be as bright, playful and free as the stage before my eyes. Besides, there would be no division between so-called 'good' and 'bad' students, who might willingly make friends with each other.

Later, although I followed my parents' advice and chose literature as the major for my Bachelor's and Master's Degrees, I kept my interest in childhood and education and reflected on the shortcomings of the moral curriculum I had once received by studying books such as Plato's *The Republic* and Rousseau's *Emile*, as well as the works of a Chinese educator, Tao Xingzhi, who was highly influenced by John

Dewey, having been one of his students. Furthermore, during my study as a post-graduate student at Fudan University in Shanghai, I joined an organization for promoting the personal growth of migrant children as a voluntary teacher. Here I met with Professor Shen Liang, who taught educational drama in Shanghai Theatre Academy, the only university that has had the subject of drama education in China's higher education since 2005. From him, I obtained a copy of the Chinese version of the books *Drama, Literacy and Moral Education 5-11* (2000a) and *Beginning Drama 4-11* (2009) written by my current supervisor, Professor Joe Winston. Through reading these two books, the dream of becoming a teacher that I had had as a teenage girl was re-awakened and I realized that this was exactly what I wanted to learn. Therefore, I decided to apply for a doctoral course in Drama and Theatre Education at the University of Warwick in 2014, to explore the moral implications of story-based drama for elementary children and to investigate the ways in which it might be applied within the Chinese framework.

I was aware of the challenges of pursuing a PhD Degree in arts education as an inexperienced teacher; however, I did not wish to give up the desire of trying to provide an alternative approach for teaching moral education in the primary years in the current context of China. This is what eventually gave birth to and shaped the thesis that follows.

## **1.2 Research Questions of the Study**

Although I plan to be a drama teacher in my future career, my background is not as a trained teacher but as a specialist in literature. The nature of this challenge shaped the form of my research. Accordingly, one focus of the present study is, as an inexperienced teacher, my progress in learning to teach moral education by using story-based drama. Therefore, I chose the model of reflective practitioner research as a key part of my methodology, in order to help me critically reflect on my

practice throughout the research process and improve my professional competencies in conducting drama teaching.

However, I also needed to concentrate on how a drama approach might be introduced to China as a potential way of complementing the standard moral education curriculum in primary schools. Drama is now being taught in some primary schools in China, especially in big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. However, it is still a new and under-researched field. In particular, there is very little research on actual classroom practice in drama. Thus, this became the aim of my research - I wanted to explore how drama could fit into the current curriculum for moral education in the Chinese context and consider critically its processes and effects. By doing this, I hoped my research could, to some extent, address the problems and challenges existing in the present pedagogy of moral education for pupils in contemporary China.

To better achieve my research objectives as a novice teacher, I chose to conduct my fieldwork in Beijing. In this way, I could be close to a research hub for this new approach which has only recently opened in China: the new center of applied drama and moral education in Beijing Normal University. Professor Ma Liwen, working in its Faculty of Education, introduced me to two primary schools in Beijing where I could carry out my fieldwork. She is one of the pioneers in the field of Drama in Education in China and attended the 8<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association in Paris in 2013 as the only participant from the Mainland, delivering a presentation on the topic: 'A Practical Exploration of Drama-in-Education and Moral Education in a Primary School in China'<sup>4</sup>. With her help, I successfully completed the teaching of four drama workshops in each school, in which I explored a range of moral issues with children

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<sup>4</sup> See online sources: <http://fe.english.bnu.edu.cn/html/003/1/201507/375.shtml>.

aged between nine and ten. The details of these drama sessions will be provided in the data analysis.

To sum up, this research addresses the following key questions:

1. In what ways can I learn, as a novice teacher, to apply the pedagogy of drama-based teaching to promote primary children's moral education in the Chinese context?
2. In what ways might story-based drama fit into the current moral education curriculum in Chinese primary schools?

During the research process, it was reasonable for me as a learner teacher to focus on my own self-improvement first, as that could help me better examine how a drama approach might contribute to children's moral growth. Therefore, the logical way for me to address these questions was to begin with research question one, as illustrated above. However, I am aware that my real focus - and the priority throughout the present study - is research question two; namely, in what ways story-based drama can complement the existing moral curriculum and assist pupils' ethical learning.

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

Below I present a summary of the structure of the thesis and of each of the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2 starts with an analysis of the historical background and different approaches to moral education in primary schools in mainland China from 1949 to the present day. I then attempt to provide an explanation for the authority-oriented nature of these courses by arguing that they are still influenced by the deeply ingrained cultural values of Confucianism. Lastly, I also offer a summary of some critical voices, in which I especially focus on nationwide reforms which commenced in 1999. I then summarize the basic challenges that still exist.

Chapter 3 first introduces the social constructivist perspectives on learning embedded in educational drama that may offer an alternative approach to teaching moral education in ways that contrast with the current Chinese model. I then present an analysis of the work of three influential theorists in my research field, namely Jonathan Neelands, Brian Edmiston and Joe Winston. I argue that all three of them can be seen to inform the present study and help find an innovative approach to address some of the shortcomings that exist in the current moral curriculum.

Chapter 4 focuses on the methodological approaches and the main research methods used in this study. First, I provide an examination of reflective practitioner research as my principle methodology, including a rationale, its key concepts and its potential applications to my research field. I then analyze how case study is also a necessary component of my research and focus on four different case studies emerging from the fieldwork for the data analysis in the following chapter. Finally, I offer a summary of my data gathering process, including a general timeline and the research tools adopted in the present study, followed by a brief discussion on the use of triangulation to help ensure the validity of data.

Chapter 5 presents a selection of the data gathered in my field work that are most relevant to my research concerns. In this lengthy and detailed chapter, I select and analyze different critical incidents that are non-routine and in some ways revelatory from the four case studies. Three of the case studies consist of all the workshops conducted in School B, with a fourth devoted to a gifted child's drama experiences in School A. These case studies broadly provide details of the teaching, the teaching intentions, and the problems I faced, with significant and often problematic outcomes being analyzed through the lens of a series of critical incidents.



Chapter 6 engages in a discussion of my findings, drawing from the analysis of data presented in Chapter 5 and reviewing it through relevant theoretical lenses. In the first part, I provide an analysis of how I learned to become a more capable drama teacher in the light of three key concepts, namely playfulness, cooperation and ensemble-making. In the second part, I examine four different ways in which story-based drama can be seen to have addressed the problems existing in the current moral education curriculum in China and how it might contribute to primary children's ethical growth.

Chapter 7 presents my conclusions, in which I evaluate the strengths and limitations of the present study, explain its implications for future practice and make suggestions for further research.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review Part One

According to Ping et al. (2004), the term 'moral education' can be translated into *Deyu* in Chinese, as 'de' means morality and 'yu' means education. They also point out that, as the soul of the educational system and a powerful ideological tool of the Communist Party of China (CPC), *Deyu* has a much broader meaning which refers not merely to moral education in a Western context, but also to 'political and ideological education, and includes courses in law, health (both physical and mental), work-related studies and many other activities pertaining to a student's general education' (ibid., p. 449). In order to avoid confusion, the term moral education used in the following passage will be equal as the meaning of *Deyu* in a broader sense in the Chinese context.

#### **2.1 Moral Education in Mainland China from 1949 to the present**

It might be difficult to provide a comprehensive discussion and assessment of *Deyu* in the People's Republic of China (PRC) due to the reasons summarized by Meyer (1988), which are: firstly, the large size of the country and its regional diversity; secondly, the huge population; thirdly, the gap between cities and the countryside; lastly, the fact that radical changes have occurred since the PRC was founded. Thus, what I would like to do here is to divide the discussion into three major periods since 1949, when the PRC was founded, and discuss various aspects of moral education in different historical backgrounds, such as its nature and aims, the gradual changes in its value agendas, the possible reasons for such changes and so on, particularly in the context of primary schools.

As the leading scholars in the research field of moral education in China, Meyer (1988) and Maosen (1990) provide a thorough analysis of the changing approach-

es to moral education from the foundation of the PRC in 1949 to the end of the 1980s. Thus, I will refer in large part to their work in this section, particularly in my discussion of the first period (1949-1966) and the second period (1966-1976).

### **2.1.1 The First Period (1949-1966)**

As the beginning of the first period (1949-1966), the PRC was founded on 1 October 1949. According to the Constitution, the People's Republic of China is a socialist country of the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class on the basis of the union of workers and farmers (The Constitution of China, 1982, Article One, cited in Maosen, 1990). The ideological guide of the new government is Marxist theory, composed of Marxist philosophy (including dialectical materialism and historical materialism), Marxist political economy as well as scientific socialism. According to these theories, it is a fixed pattern that human beings develop from primitive societies, through slavery, feudal, capitalist societies, to socialist and ultimately communist societies in which everyone works according to their abilities and acquires what they need. Marxists believe that there are two major antagonists in capitalist societies, which are the capitalist class (a small group who possess the vast majority of means of production for private profits) and the working class (a large group who are forced to sell their labour for less than the value of its output). It is also believed that in the struggle of the two classes the proletariat will achieve the final victory and build up a new society of their own - the socialist society. Thus, under the influence of such ideology, the majority of Chinese people were told to fight against capitalism in order to defend socialism, even to change the world and emancipate all human beings. In addition, from the very beginning of the PRC the highest leader, Mao Zedong, continued the control of people's minds to some extent in the traditional society and put political exhortation in the first place.

In such a social background, the communist moral system consisted of an amal-

gamation of Marxism and Mao's thoughts. According to Marx and Engels (1976), 'Only within the community has each individual the means of his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community' (ibid., p. 8, cited in Maosen, 1990, p. 162). Thus, collectivism was considered as the basic moral code, demanding individuals contribute all they have to the collective to obtain a powerful shelter and personal development. In addition, Marxists believe that a person's ideology and behaviour are determined by the economic basis, and accordingly the individualism of the capitalist class became the enemy of the mass of Chinese people, such as farmers, workers and soldiers. As Meyer (1990) points out, the main moral task during this period was the promotion of the proletariat and elimination of the bourgeoisie, which was not to promote harmony but to provoke struggle. In terms of the highest leader Mao Zedong's impact on people's thoughts, Yuan & Shen (1998) point out that the following tenets made by Mao controlled most people's minds for at least two decades. The first was 'Not having the right political viewpoints means that you have no soul at all', and the other was 'Our educational aim is that we should have our students develop morally, intellectually, and physically, and become cultivated workers with socialist consciousness' (Mao Zedong, 1957/1977, cited in Yuan & Shen, p. 193). A selfless soldier, Lei Feng, was set up as a socialist role model by Chairman Mao and the whole nation were called upon to 'Learn from Comrade Lei Feng' after his death in 1963. He had experienced a painful early life in the bad old days of feudalism, but was reborn in the generosity of the Party and devoted himself to serving others and the Motherland, regardless of reward, as a 'little cog' in the huge socialist machine (Reed, 1995). Speaking of moral education in primary schools, the new government accepted a Common Programme (1949) as the state's Constitution, in which *five loves* were advocated as social morality for citizens of the PRC, including love of the country,

love of the people, love of work, love of science and love of public property, which also became the core of moral education in primary schools (Maosen, 1990).

According to Meyer (1988), there were no specific moral lessons within the primary school curriculum at this time; instead, the PRC sought to diffuse moral education throughout the pupils' learning process, especially in both language and literature classes. Ridley et al. (1971) summarize the basic themes of these lessons based on an analysis of ten language textbooks used in the five years of primary education in both ideological and practical dimensions. In terms of developing certain political ways of thinking in children, the following themes appear most frequently in the textbooks: devotion and allegiance to a new society; the glorification of Mao; military conflicts (against Japan and the Kuomintang); social conflict (against reactionary elements) and so on. At the behavioural level, the most significant themes are: social and personal responsibility (including devotion to duty, obedience, thrift, hygienic behaviour, honesty, neatness and so on); altruistic behaviour (self-sacrifice); collective behaviour (cooperation, solidarity); conquest of the natural environment and so on (ibid., pp. 87ff., cited in Meyer, 1988, pp. 121-122).

In short, three main features of moral education in elementary schools during this period can be summed up based on the themes listed above. Firstly, there was clearly an emphasis on Mao's leadership and Marxist ideology to call the children to be loyal to the new nation, which was dyed with a political colour. Secondly, such education was authoritative to strengthen collectivism against individual values. Lastly, the purpose of moral education was not for the sake of peace but to cause political conflict against ideological enemies of the Party.

### **2.1.2 The Second Period (1966-1976)**

The second period (1966-1976) was ten years of huge social turmoil - the Great Cultural Revolution, which began from the announcement in 1966 till the death of

Mao and arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976. According to Meyer (1988), it was caused by Mao's destructive attempt to educate the whole nation by changing the country into a kind of classroom-theatre in an effort to activate people's revolutionary spirit, especially the young. He also notes that during this period Mao was regarded as a godlike leader, as stated in a second-grade text: 'The words of Chairman Mao have the highest standards, the highest prestige, and the greatest power. His every word is truth. A single word from him is superior to a thousand words by others' (Kwong, 1985, p. 199, cited in Meyer, 1988, p. 123). In such a context, traditional Confucian thoughts were completely abandoned, being regarded as feudal. Intellectuals were suspected of being bourgeois and youngsters were sent to the countryside to accept re-education by peasants and workers.

In terms of school education, Maosen (1990) notes that schools became the main battlegrounds in which the bourgeois intellectuals were to be defeated. Chairman Mao's words and his three articles became teaching materials in elementary schools, including *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*, *In Memory of Dr. Bethune* and *Serve the People*. Therefore, children spent a lot of time at school reciting quotations of Mao, shouting slogans and swearing to defend Chairman Mao with their lives. In addition, Meyer (1988) summarises that the most significant moral purpose of the language textbooks of the early 1970s was 'to preserve the purity of China's Marxian socialism against the threat of an insidious capitalism, elitism and bureaucratic hierarchies' (ibid., p. 123). As illustrated by the examples given by Kwong (1985), children's images portrayed in the textbooks are deadly noble, earnest and always resist blandishments of the evil elements, such as 'austere little heroes catching a rich peasant stealing grain or fighting armed poachers with their bare hands' (ibid., pp. 204-205, cited in Meyer, 1988, p. 124). In conclusion, to some extent the moral education children received during this period was

more ideological than informative, and as such children were expected to be more single-minded in their pursuit of revolutionary ideals.

### **2.1.3 The Third Period (1976 - present)**

The third period (1976 - present) sets up a new goal of China's modernization. According to Meyer (1988), after the fall of the Gang of Four, a statement was made by the CCP in September of 1979, declaring that 'China's principal contradiction was between its people's expectations and China's ability to satisfy them' (*Beijing Review*, no. 45, 10 November 1986, p. 17, cited in Meyer 1988, p. 124). This rewrote the continuous theme that class conflict was the basic contradiction among people of the Mao era. Therefore, the government's goal changed from ideological purity to bringing China up to the standards of other First World countries' by 2049. As a result, education has become the foundation to help society realize these high goals, namely the Four Modernizations programme in agriculture, science/technology, education and industry.

In terms of moral education, a behavioural code for primary and secondary students was reinstated following the adoption of the opening-up policy and the reform, the objectives of which are listed below:

To cultivate in students' ideals, moral quality, culture and discipline; affectivity towards the socialist motherland and the socialist enterprise; dedication to the country's development; thirst for new knowledge; and willingness to think and courage to be creative. (1979, cited in Lee & Ho, 2005, p. 419)

However, as noted by Cheung & Pan (2006), in the 1980s the government had to admit that the moral education received by students did not guarantee that they would gain a strong belief in communist ideology. Especially after the student demonstrations in 1989, Deng Xiaoping, the leader of the CPC, held a definite view that 'educational institutions must always put the persistence in correct political direction as the first task' (Li et al., 1997, cited in Cheung & Pan, 2006, p.39). To echo

Deng's remarks, nationwide schools were called for improvement in moral education, by emphasizing socialist values defined by the CPC to preserve its leadership, as well as equipping students with moral behaviours, legal values and psychological health which was required by the era of economic openness and reform (State Education Committee, 1990). Thus, as Cheung & Pan (2006) point out, since then almost every policy document concerning moral education has an emphasis on the collective interests of society as guiding principles; however, to some extent new individual values are also stressed to serve the socialist market economy.

In terms of indoctrinating students in the Party's ideology, the document *Essentials of reform and development of China's education* was released in 1993 by the CPC Central Committee in conjunction with the State Council, in which the basic task of moral education in schools is described as follows:

The basic task of education in ideological politics and morality, is to educate students in Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong's Thought, and in the Theory of Constructing a Distinctive, Characteristically Chinese, Socialism; to uphold the correct political orientation, and to cultivate a new socialist generation with lofty ideals, moral integrity and a sense of discipline. (cited in Ping et al., 2004, pp. 453-454)

According to Ping et al. (2004), the content emphasized by this statement is in line with the document *An appropriate direction concerning the work of education*, issued by the Party 35 years ago in 1958, stressing '... education should serve proletarian politics...the work of education must be led by the Party in order to implement this guideline' (cited in Ping et al., 2004, p. 454). Such content is consistent with the CPC's ideology, and both statements focus on the cultivation of new generations with the right socialist consciousness.

Furthermore, Lee (2001) analysed the teaching materials of moral education for primary and secondary students and found that political content still accounted for more than half of the entire content: 17.1 per cent sang the praises of the Party and its leaders; 13.8 per cent publicized the CPC's policies; 12.1 per cent stressed the



principles of Marxism-Leninism, communist ideals and the socialist legal system; 11.6 per cent promoted socialism and patriotism (ibid., pp. 225-227, cited in Ping et al., 2004, p. 454). From this, it can be clearly seen that in this period the PRC government has insisted on the indoctrination of socialist ideology to preserve its nature; thus the basic aim of the moral education is still to train students ideologically and serve the political needs.

However, despite this ideological influence, there is also a growing concern for individual values that would fit with a fast-changing society. As stated by the CPC, 'equip students with new values, such as quality, efficiency, competition, open-mindedness, and so on, which are important to serve the socialist market economy' (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 1994, cited in Cheung & Pan, 2006, p.40). Moreover, Lee & Ho (2005) also note that, post 1990, many discussions in the educational field have focused on the personal moral qualities that young citizens require in a modern society, such as self-management and personality development, as well as the meaning of life. As a leading Chinese academic in the field of moral education, Lu (2004) argues that the market economy has shaken the foundation of the traditional rural society and made it possible to transform moral education fundamentally. According to Lu, people in China have started to get involved in the market economy as independent agents while slowly breaking away from dependent relationships formed by kinship, terrain and sub-groups; thus, there is now space for new types of human relationship to flourish, as well as the possibility of developing independent character. Furthermore, as a moral educator, she believes that such space is essential for carrying out contemporary moral education for a new generation with autonomous personalities, as 'it provides the possibility of cultivating self-determined, liberal, democratic, equal and fair individuals' (Lu, 2004, p. 74, cited in Ping et al., 2004, p. 458).

In addition, Cheung & Pan (2006) and Lee & Ho (2005) summarize new elements of moral education which are in accordance with the socialist market economy. Firstly, there is the emphasis on law education. According to Cheung & Pan (2006), elementary students are asked to learn the laws and regulations relevant to their daily lives, such as *Law for the Protection of Minors*, *Law for the Prevention of Minors from Crime*, basic traffic rules and so on. They also point out that this stress on legal education is in line with the concept of the rule of law (yifa zhiguo), which was written into the national constitution in 1999 - by doing this, students are granted the rights to act as they wish within a legal framework in which both the core values of the state and the individual interests of the students can be protected. Secondly, new elements also include the increasing of 'self' identity in moral education, in addition to the 'collective' values that have often been emphasized. For example, in *Morality and Society Curriculum Guidelines* for senior primary children, issued by the Ministry of Education in 2002, the basic topics include *I am Growing*, *Me and My Family*, *Me and My School*, *Me and My Hometown (Community)*, *Me and My Country* and *Facing the World* (cited in Lee & Ho, 2005, p. 424). This indicates that the self-identities of children are being treated more positively, rather than being ignored and suppressed as they were before. Moreover, according to the national guideline for moral education released by the Ministry of Education, elementary children need to learn knowledge of life and some basic social skills, such as how to live healthily and safely, how to do things creatively and how to understand oneself (cited in Cheung & Pan, 2006, p.42) - such teaching content also reflects the increasing focus on individual identity in moral education. Thirdly, a special focus on mental health has also become part of the moral curriculum. In 2002, the document *Outline of Psychological Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools*, issued by the Department of Basic Education, aims 'to improve students'

psychological quality, optimise their potential, cultivate optimistic and ambitious character, improve self-education abilities and strengthen adaptation abilities' (cited in Lee & Ho, 2005, p. 424). According to Cheung & Pan (2006), the appearance of such knowledge results from the government's expectations to attract students' attention to moral education, encouraging them to link their personal development with the nation's competence in the world.

To summarise, before the policy of economic reform and opening up to the world in 1978, Chinese society could be considered to have been authoritarian and conservative. The highly centralized government and strictly planned economic model resulted in the individual's submission in all aspects to society. In accordance with such a social background, the moral courses taught in schools were characterized by manipulation, closed-mindedness and the denial of children's nature, with the aim to cultivate an authority-oriented and obedient populace (Wanxue & Hanwei, 2004; Maosen, 2011; Meyer, 1988). Since 1978, Mainland China has been undergoing rapid economic and social changes and the traditional social system has been shaken; however, a new active society with associated value system is still forming in the process. Fearful of a crisis of values, the Party always tries to renew the system of socialist values with strategies for its own sake, seeking to uphold the socialist nature of the school and society. Cheung & Pan (2006) suggest using the concept of regulated individualism to illustrate the tension between the state's regulation and the individual autonomy reflected in the complexity of PRC's recent moral education policies, differing from the complete obedience of individualism to collectivism in Mao's era. This concept indicates that individuals may enjoy relative freedom for their own development as long as it is beneficial to the modernisation of the state; however, they are not expected to challenge the ideological basis and the bottom line of personal freedom allowed by the government. Such conditional

autonomy to some extent reflects the core dilemma existing in the current moral curriculum in mainland China - that is, the friction between an insistence on authority and the cultivation of 'self-determined, liberal, democratic, equal and fair individuals' as expected by Professor Lu, the chief reformer of the contemporary moral course in China (Lu, 2004, p. 74, cited in Ping et al., 2004, p. 458).

## **2.2 Influences from Confucianism and its Revival in China**

In the first section, I have discussed the basic situation of moral education in mainland China from 1949 to the present, especially in the context of primary schools. It can be clearly seen that the main problem with moral education taught in elementary schools springs from its didactic nature, being shaped by Marxist ideology and socialism, as well as the perceived need to equip pupils with certain ideas appropriate for the progress of the country. Even after the reform and opening up policy in 1978, its nature is still confined to the pursuit of political intention rather than the cultivation of autonomous moral thinking. Therefore, in this section, I would like to dig deeper into Chinese cultural traditions and try to provide an explanation for the authority-oriented nature and ideological function of moral education in China, especially how it has been impacted by the integration of Confucian values with an authoritarian political structure for nearly two thousand years. In addition, I will also discuss the revival of Confucianism, both in Chinese society and schools, since the 1980s after the great cultural revolution, with particular focus on the continuing impact of Confucian thought on contemporary moral teaching in the educational context.

### **2.2.1 The Ingrained Cultural Values of Confucianism**

It is commonly accepted that Chinese culture could be seen as a mixture of various philosophies and religions, such as the Confucian tradition, the Legalist philosophical approach, the Taoist and Buddhist ideas and so on. However, Confucianism is

always regarded as the most influential belief system, as other resources could only succeed in modifying certain aspects of Confucianism but never replace it (Creel, 1954; Fengyan, 2004; Yu, 2008). Lin Yutang, a famous early modern academic of Confucianism, claimed that Confucian thoughts 'maintained its supremacy over the Chinese people for the length of two thousand five hundred years, with the exception of a few periods, and it always came back to its own stronger than ever' (ibid., 1938, p. 1, cited in Yu, 2008, p. 122). This clearly demonstrates the dominant impact of Confucianism in Chinese culture.

Fengyan (2004) links Confucian thinking with moral education, arguing that from a modern perspective moral education constitutes the main part of the ancient Chinese educational system, with Confucianism as the dominant ideology that gradually transformed Chinese society through its values for centuries from the pre-Qin period (6th - 3rd century BC) to the Qing Dynasty (1644 - 1911 AD). As prominent scholars in the field of Confucian thought and contemporary moral education in China, Fengyan (2004), Yu (2008) and Feng & Newton (2012) offer a clear and comprehensive analysis of the influence of Confucianism on Chinese moral education, both in ancient times and in the context of contemporary teaching, which will provide the basis of the following discussion.

As a humanist and one of the greatest educators in Chinese history, the primary concern of Confucius (about 551 BC - 479 BC) was to seek harmony in human relationships as well as the ideal governance of society. According to Lin (1938), Confucius lived in a rapidly transitional period in which the Zhou Dynasty's feudal system was breaking down. Facing great moral and political chaos, he thought it was important to bring back peace and order by restoring a belief system via moral models, education and the arts, in order to restore a kind of international comity and high moral standards in human beings (ibid., p. 6).

Thus, on the one hand, Confucius insisted on *Li* as an essential ethical approach, which could be simply defined as 'the order of things'. According to Lin's (1938) explanation:

On one extreme, it (*Li*) means 'ritual', 'propriety'; in a generalized sense, it simply means 'good manners'; in its highest philosophical sense, it means an ideal social order with everything in its place, and particularly a rationalized feudal order, which was breaking down in Confucius days. (ibid., pp. 10-11, cited in Yu, 2008, p. 122)

As argued by Froese (2008), unlike the division between nature and culture which characterizes Western thought, the Confucian philosophy is based on a 'prominent cosmological assumption... that there is a harmony in nature that emerges spontaneously', and through *ritual* people could 'participate in the meaningful order' (ibid., p. 261, cited in Feng & Newton, 2012, p. 344). The term *ritual* in this context not only refers to religious ceremony but also the appropriate forms of behaviour that each person is expected to conduct both within the family and a wider human community, including the state. In this way, people could cultivate harmonious relationship in line with the cosmic order (ibid).

On the other hand, though Confucian ethics may seem rigid by affirming moral principles and denying ethical autonomy, Huang (2011) argues that 'for Confucius, the goal of moral education is not to issue moral commands but to stimulate a person's moral sentiments' (ibid., p. 147, cited in Feng & Newton, 2012, p. 344), as Confucius believes that 'what non-virtuous persons lack is not an intellectual understanding of virtue but the sentiment or desire to be virtuous' (ibid., p. 153, cited in Feng & Newton, 2012, p. 345). Thus, he encourages people to study classical poetry, since poetry 'can serve to stimulate one's imagination, sharpen one's sensitivity, increase one's sense of solidarity' (*The analects*, 17.9). In terms of ethical autonomy, Feng & Newton (2012) also argue that although in Confucian thought it is proposed that rulers should govern the country with justice and benevolence, with

people respecting and obeying their leaders in return, such 'obedience' is not rooted in submission to direct commands but in the moral character of individuals and their own understanding of what is right and wrong. Moreover, according to Cheng (1997), for Confucius it is essential to achieve individual moral cultivation before good government is achieved, and if people could live in great moral harmony then governance would become unnecessary.

In brief, Confucius's main ideas could be illustrated in the following words using Lin's (1938) summary:

Confucianism stood for a rationalized social order through the ethical approach, based on personal cultivation. It aimed at political order by laying the basis for it in a moral order, and it sought political harmony by trying to achieve the moral harmony on man himself. (p.3, cited in Yu, 2008, p. 123)

However, during the Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 CE), Confucianism was established as the dominant educational and political ideology and its emphasis on moral order was elevated to a supreme level to serve political needs (Cheng, 1997). As most of the following dynasties also adopted Confucianism as their orthodox ideology, such politicisation of Confucian ethical values marked the starting point of a common practice in Chinese society: the government sets out moral commands for people to obey in order to consolidate the social order and ease conflicts between the ruled and the ruler. As noted by Tu (1993), to some extent, though Confucianism has the ability to transform a military or legalist society into a moral community, more commonly Confucian moral values have been politicized to serve an authoritarian government. Therefore, 'the Confucian moralization of politics has become a distinctive feature of Chinese political culture' (ibid., p. 10, cited in Yu, 2008, p. 123).

For example, the top-down establishment of The Three Principle Relationships from the Han Dynasty could be a good illustration in this regard, which constituted

the main part of moral education in ancient China. According to Chen (1994), such relationships mean that 'the monarch guides the subject, the father guides the son and the husband guides the wife' (ibid., p. 373, cited in Fengyan, 2004, p. 433). Fengyan (2004) goes on to explain that 'the monarch guides the subject' means both the mind and body of a subject belonged to the sovereign, and no matter what kind of person the emperor was he held the power that this relationship gave him, while his subjects had no rights but unconditional obedience. Similarly, this applied to relationships between father and son, as well as husband and wife. In this case, as noted by Fengyan (2004), ancient Chinese people were forced to bear double moral restraints, both from society and the family. On the one hand, it was a national moral command that everyone must obey the emperor, otherwise they would receive the most severe punishment; on the other hand, it was also a family ethic which served the national command, as it was believed that a person showing filial obedience in the family would also be loyal to the state. Greatly affected by the Three Principal Relationships, the concept of individualism could hardly be found in ancient China until the end of Qing Dynasty (1644 - 1911). This is commonly agreed to be the most serious problem of Confucian's legacy with regard to moral education (Fengyan, 2004; Ping et al., 2004; Wu, 2009).

From this discussion of the Three Principle Relationships, it can be easily understood how Confucian thoughts were manipulated and provided ancient China with a stable political structure and value system. As summarized by Ping et al. (2004), the integration of Confucianism with politics imbued moral education in ancient China with the following features. Firstly, moral education served to indoctrinate the administrative classes who had access to education. Secondly, such education served the ruling class's political interests, making them immune to critical viewpoints. Thirdly, the content of moral education was always standardized and in con-



formity with universal rules that left little space for political and intellectual innovation. In such a social background, Wu (2009) points out that for ordinary people, Confucianism was not only a chance to gain higher social status but also to cultivate children's filial piety to their parents and maintain the best interests of the family; thus, children were not supposed to make their own judgements, and it would be the parents or teachers' duty to teach them the right answers. Children were required to show filial piety regardless of whether their parents or teachers were right or wrong.

## **2.2.2 The Revival of Confucianism in Contemporary China**

As noted by Ping et al. (2004) and Yu (2008), a consideration of how Confucianism was manipulated throughout China's political history makes it easier to understand why moral education remained in the shadow of political and ideological control in Communist China from 1949, quite consistent with such influences from the tradition. Moreover, this could also provide an explanation as to why Confucianism has become attractive to the Chinese government once again in recent years.

Yao (1999) clarifies the hidden connection between Communist China and the Confucian tradition, stating that elements of Confucian legacy are either hidden in Communist and Nationalist doctrines, ethics, system of a bureaucratic elite, or implicitly underlying the structure of community from the family to the state. He also supports the argument made by Nivison (1956) that 'Communist ethics and Confucianism were not very different in practice', which made it possible for the revival of Confucianism (cited in Yao, 1999, p. 31). In addition, according to Bell (2008), to some extent communism appeared to have failed in China after the great cultural revolution, as people hardly believed that Marxism could provide guidelines for the future of the country; thus, Confucian thought has been reinterpreted to fill the moral or belief vacuum. Yu (2008) goes on to make it clear that in Mao's era the

CPC utilized the ideology of Communism and disregarded the country's own cultural tradition; however, since the reform and opening up policy in 1978, leaders of the Party gradually realized that it might be beneficial to integrate their political ideology into the more profoundly influential Confucian tradition as a common moral system in order to maintain the stability of the civic social order, particularly when being faced with emerging diversity in terms of economic forms, values and lifestyles. Such common morality should be 'reformed' to serve the communist market economy and ideology, and could compete with the foreign values which were being introduced to the country. Therefore, the fact is that the reformed Confucianism taught in schools has been made 'compatible with communism, its collective spirit, its nationalist fever, and its dictatorial tendencies' (ibid., p. 125).

In 1994, the document *Some Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving Moral Education Work in Schools* (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, 1994) was issued, and Confucian values were advocated by the national educational policy in the name of traditional virtues. While emphasizing socialism, collectivism and patriotism as the main goals of moral education, the CPC also required all elementary and secondary schools to 'instigate education in Chinese traditional virtues', which are basically simplified moral principles such as 'loyalty to one's country, commitment to serving one's people, social responsibility, respect for authority, and self-discipline' (cited in Yu, 2008, pp. 124-125). The document also states that '(Schools) must carefully study and pass on the time-honoured excellent moral ideals and behavioural norms developed over our long history, and add to them new content for our time' (ibid). Thus, schools are encouraged to integrate the traditional virtues with new moral models emerging in communist revolution and socialist constructions, as well as moral ideas from other civilizations. The aim of such a 'back to tradition' movement is to try to establish new moral values demon-

strating both Chinese characteristics and the spirit of the present time. In addition, the document gives practical suggestions for schools to begin teaching traditional values, including the compilation of textbooks and readers as well as the use of popular media. As noted by Yu (2008), in the centralized Chinese educational system, no matter how abstract the policy documents might be, these top-down edicts served as guidelines for numerous schools in the country. Thus, schools had to make efforts in one way or another to bring 'Chinese traditional virtues' back into their classrooms.

One remarkable effort in this 'back to tradition' movement was the publication and spread of the *New Three-character Classic* in Guangdong in 1995, a province on the frontline of the reform and opening up movement in China. The *New Three-character Classic* was an adaption of the well-known *Three-character Classic* based on Confucian thought, used as a literacy and moral education teaching material for children about 500 years ago, arising from the Chinese government's effort with support from school teachers and university professors. According to Lee and Ho (2005):

The government officials saw a need to uphold traditional Chinese ethics when the orthodox socialist values were having decreased market value in society. Moreover, the publication of the *New Three Character Classic* reflects government recognition of the failure of orthodox socialist moral education which they frankly described as 'false, grand, and void' and unattractive to students. (ibid., p. 425, cited in Yu, T. L., 2008, p. 126)

Thus, this new adaption had been used as a supplementary reader in moral education lessons on a voluntary basis by schools, which had earned positive feedback from teachers and proved itself a great market success. Since the original publication in 1995, various versions appeared in other places, such as Beijing and Shanghai, and the Guangdong version alone sold 40 million copies throughout the country (Lee and Ho, 2005).

In another primary school in the southern Chinese province, here is a scene ob-

served by Sarah Carr from the *Christian Science Monitor* in 2006, showing that the movement of 'back to tradition' is still going strong in mainland China more than a decade after its launch.

The fourth-graders at Bowen International School were sitting up straight, their arms neatly crossed in front of them, belting out 13th-century Chinese poems on the virtues of being polite, respecting their parents, and working hard in school. (Carr, 2006, cited in Yu, 2008, p. 125)

As Yu (2008) points out, the 'back to tradition' movement tends to target not only children in schools but the entire citizenry across the whole of society, and has become a national cultural phenomenon. For example, universities have started to teach classes and workshops on 'national learning' (*guoxue*), and CCTV runs a prime-time program in which scholars promote classics such as Confucius' *Analects*. He also notes that such 'national learning' fever has in turn stimulated the movement of 'back to tradition' in schools, for which the overwhelmingly conservative agendas of Confucian moral education being promoted in schools can be a good illustration. However, little criticism has been provoked of the governmental involvement in this movement, even among educators and researchers, which can be attributed to the fact that in a centralized country such as China, the government's power often goes unrestricted and unexamined.

To sum up, in this section I have discussed how Confucian values were utilized by politics in ancient China and how they have been advanced to serve the Communist government's educational policies in the current era. As is commonly agreed, education is mainly a socio-cultural process and school reforms are always deeply influenced by politics. Though the 'back to tradition' movement reflects the current and urgent demands for stability and continuity from the government and society, there are still voices calling for more critical and creative thinking in the classroom to prepare youngsters for a more global and modern future, as China is still undergoing the process of modernization. Thus, such critical voices will be discussed in

the following section.

## **2.3 Critical Voices of Moral Education in Primary Schools**

### **2.3.1 Early Critical Voices**

As discussed in the previous two sections, the main problem with moral education in mainland China comes from the didactic nature being shaped by political indoctrination. Li Maosen is an ethicist and philosopher, who published the first paper on moral education in China in the western academia journal JME (Journal of Moral Education) in 1990, shortly after the Tiananmen Square incident. The author thought it was pertinent and timely to offer an overview of moral education in China from 1949 to 1989, and such critical voices are included in the paper:

... moral education in Chinese schools is intended to make obedient citizens. Its aims are always in accordance with current political policies. Education itself is at the service of government instead of the development of the individual and society. So it is not surprising that a political leader's words frequently become the assigned study material and thus the content of moral education. In other words, moral education in China is the weapon of ideological-political indoctrination. (Maosen, 1990, p. 170, cited in Maosen et al., 2004, p. 407)

Meyer (1990) also argues that the most severe problem with moral education in mainland China could be attributed to the inconsistency of moral values, since the educational aims continually change due to constantly changing policies; for example, the traditional model of Confucius was first honored, then totally defamed, and is now honored again. Such contradiction in policies has caused inevitable cynicism among people and students. Meyer (1990) thus holds the opinion that, as an instrument of ideological indoctrination serving certain political institutions, moral education in mainland China could be considered as institution-centered rather than person-centered.

In addition to these earlier criticisms, Wanxue & Hanwei (2004) summarize the opportunities and challenges for moral education reform, brought about by the rapid social changes and developments that have taken place in a short period of merely

30 years since the reform and opening up policy. In terms of opportunities, these modern values are liberated in line with the improvement of people's living quality, such as openness, freedom, dialogue, democracy and pluralism, which are now permeating people's minds and social life. Meanwhile, some examples of challenges are: how the immaturity of the market economy has brought about moral confusion, money worship and, to some extent, a lack of trust; how the Internet, mass media and globalization make some youngsters blindly admire foreign cultures and indulge in the virtual world; how Multiculturalism may lead to moral relativism and nihilism; that People are puzzled by the conflicts between political democratization and the authoritarian tradition; that changes in family structure and lifestyles are making it hard to maintain and develop family ethics. In such a context, Wanxue & Hanwei suggest that Chinese moral education should encourage values such as freedom, self-development and independence, but meanwhile try to restrain the destructive impulses of egoism, materialism and anarchy. They also believe that the politicized and authoritarian moral education of the past is no longer suitable for modern China. However, the fact is that moral education in schools still cannot effectively help students develop the moral qualities needed in the new era, and has functional limitations when facing the various challenges of a transitional society. These challenges may include ethical conflicts between the past and the present, between the conservative and the radical, between local and global cultures, between environmental protection and economic development, as well as increasing regional imbalances. Wanxue & Hanwei go on to point out that it is not beneficial for China to transform successfully into a mature society unless the reform of moral education faces these challenges actively, instead of following social changes in a passive way.

### **2.3.2 The Nationwide Reform of the Moral Education Curriculum**

In terms of educational reform on a nationwide basis, it is accepted among Chinese scholars and educators that the basic education curriculum reform, which commenced in 1999, can be considered as the most influential reform policy for elementary and secondary schools in recent years (Wanxue & Hanwei, 2004). In the background of this reform, the Ministry of Education sponsored experts to conduct a project on the history and current status of the moral education curriculum in Chinese elementary schools from both theoretical and practical levels. Lu Jie and Gao Desheng, as leading contemporary academics of moral education in mainland China, then provided an analysis of the major problems that have existed for over two decades since the 1980s.

Firstly, Lu & Gao (2004) point out that the content of moral education was too distant from children's lives, which used to embody a 'top-down' set of moral requirements and ignore the inner logic of pupils' moral development. As such, the syllabus usually turned out to be rigid and had little connection with children's real lives.

Secondly, the teaching methods tended to be didactic and moral education was usually taught in a traditional way, with teachers offering lectures and students memorizing textbooks. Lu & Gao (2004) also argue that, on the one hand, the course itself had a tendency to moralize information and made it hard for teachers to connect teaching content with children's real lives, and on the other hand, determined by the examination-oriented education system in China, teachers had to teach all the knowledge and moralism in the texts for students to memorize and recite in the Moral Education examination. As they note, this memorizing process was a torture for the students, and had little significance in guiding their moral lives and influencing the development of their personalities.

Thirdly, there was an overlapping and interrelationship between two courses conducted in primary schools: *Ideological Moral Character* and *Society*. To avoid this overlap, teachers from these two courses tended not to mention issues and concerns in the other subject. As a result, the course *Ideological Moral Character* became an 'empty sermon' without being rooted in real life, while the other course - *Society* - became about merely delivering information and lacked core values.

In order to address the problems listed above, in June 2002, the Ministry of Education released guidelines for the new moral education curriculum in primary schools, according to which, *Ideological Moral Character* and *Society* have been combined into one course. Accordingly, *Morality and Life* is offered in Grade 1 and 2 (age 7-8 years) and for each week it is allocated two 40-minute class periods; meanwhile, the course *Morality and Society* is offered from Grade 3 to 6 (age 9-12 years), with two periods of 40 minutes in Grade 3 and 4 as well as three 40-minute periods in Grade 5 and 6 each week. Entrusted by the Ministry of Education, Professor Lu Jie was in charge of the drawing up of the *Morality and Life Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) and *Morality and Society Curriculum Guidelines* (2002), which were announced as experimental versions. 33 regions in China, including most provincial areas and districts, participated in piloting the new guidelines, as well as textbooks designed in accordance with them (Lee & Ho, 2005; Lu & Gao, 2004).

Being considered as 'a completely new, and, in many respects, radical reform of the moral education curriculum' (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 498), some key ideas from the guidelines are listed below:

... compared to the (old) ideo-moral and social studies, the new curriculum is outstanding in its emphasis on (1) the person as the foundation of education. The new curriculum is focused on cultivating civilised behaviours and habits, good moral quality and healthy social development, so that they will love their lives and enjoy making enquiries, and become students with good moral quality and healthy social characters; and (2) students' lives as the foundation of education, closely linking children's life experience and social experience to their learning experience; (3) encouraging



students to actively participate in learning, and under the guidance of teachers to develop moral affection, establish value judgements, and avoid simple lectures; and (4) integrated and activity related learning. (cited in Lee & Ho, 2005, p. 424)

More concisely, according to Lu & Gao (2004), the basic idea held in this reform is that moral education should be lifelong and the development of moral character should return to life, which demands that moral educators help children solve problems in real life, not merely using moral principles. They also state that, based on the theoretical guidance of lifelong moral education, the design strategy has changed from a 'top down' to a 'bottom up' approach, meaning moral education is not established to require children to meet moral demands as before but 'to guide children's lives and help them to develop moral characteristics that are essential for the modernization of China and the development of Chinese society' (ibid., p. 499). Thus, the basic framework of the *Morality and Life Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) for Grade 1 and 2 is based on four dimensions: living a healthy and safe life, living a happy and positive life, living a responsible and caring life, as well as living an intelligent and creative life, determining both the goal and content of the curriculum. The *Morality and Society Curriculum Guidelines* (2002) for Grade 3 to 6 are built on children's social life, including their family, school, community, motherland and the whole world. Such expanding life worlds of the students are used as the framework to guide the aims and content of the course.

Based on these considerations, reformers tended to use educational themes related to the typical problems children may face and real-life events that commonly happen in school, the family and their neighborhood as the main sources for textbooks. As my teaching in the fieldwork mainly focused on Grade 3 (age 9-10), here I will specifically list examples from textbooks for this age group. The main topics in the course *Morality and Society* for Grade 3 include:

### Grade Three: I'm Growing

1. My classmates and I
2. I want to grow up safely
3. My growth and my family
4. My life with the neighbours
5. My growth and the school
6. My growth and others
7. My hometown nurtures me (cited in Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 500)

According to Lu & Gao (2004), as a result of the empirical research being taken in various primary schools, including class observations and interviews, they discovered that the problems faced by children in Grade 3 mainly concerned friendship, personal safety and family life. That is why these concerns are used as the themes for the first three units of the textbook. For each unit, several lessons are set out according to different aspects of children's lives. Taking the unit *My Growth and My Family* for example, the lessons include 'family relationships (Family tree), love in the family (Love from parents), family responsibility (Now what can I do), family tradition (Family memory), and the idea of consumption (What I want and what I can own)' (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 500).

In each lesson, common events in children's real lives are the main sources of the text materials. As explained by Lu & Gao (2004), to some extent, life stories of great figures and heroic models are too far away from children's lives. For example, in one class they observed, in order to demonstrate the leader's spirit of frugality, the teacher told the children that the toothbrush of Premier Zhou Enlai, a big figure among the PRC leaders, was so worn out that it only had a few remaining bristles; this only evoked the children's laughter and few of them knew who he was. Thus, in this reform, the reformers chose to use ordinary and typical events with educational meanings that usually happen around children, then reconstructed and improved these stories. For instance, in the textbook for Grade 3, the event *Forgot to Bring the Textbooks* was chosen for the topic *My Classmates and I* - though minor, according to Lu & Gao (2004), it may influence children's experience of the whole

school day. Moreover, they also believe that such an event has implications for moral education, as the desk mates will be involved in making decisions about whether to share their textbooks. Similar events also include quarrelling with classmates, having misunderstandings with their teachers and so on.

Besides the new standards of selecting teaching materials, new educational ideas are also embodied in the textbooks. According to Lu & Gao (2004), the aim of the new curriculum is not to ask children to obey moral rules, but to help them form basic ideas of how to get along with each other and cultivate their autonomous moral thinking over the long term. Thus, the following ideas are brought into the textbooks, such as *the idea of changing one's identity*, which aims to help children to be considerate and learn to stand in the shoes of others. For example, in the Grade 3 textbook, there is a lesson called *Putting Oneself in Another Person's Position*, based on a life event in which a child from a single-parent family is considered to be 'wild' by the classmates. The textbook asks students what feelings the child would have if they were to take on the role of the child who is being talked about. Through *The idea of human ecology* it is also advocated that people rely on co-operation with each other; for instance, in the Grade 3 textbook, there is a lesson called *How Many People do This for Me*, which encourages children to be aware that they rely upon other people, including workers who do most of the ordinary work, otherwise their lives will not run smoothly. *The idea that 'both sides win the match'* is equally stressed in the new curriculum, which is different from both the idea of class struggle emphasised in the Cultural Revolution and the idea that 'all the other candidates are only the stepping stones for those who have succeeded', brought by the intense competition of the examinations for Chinese students (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 503). For example, in the Grade 3 textbook, there are lessons including topics like *Self-image* and *Why are his academic records so high*, which hold

the basic idea that everyone has their own strengths and is a potentially successful person. In addition, *the ideas of dialogue, sharing, pluralism and diversity* are also included in the course and the textbook. According to Lu & Gao (2004), these new educational ideas involve moral values such as care, justice, equality, honesty, co-operation, responsibility, respect, kindness, forgiveness and so on.

In order to better explore these moral values with children, instead of issuing orders from a commanding position, a conversational pedagogy is encouraged in the new course curriculum. On the one hand, the textbooks are designed to be conversational texts for children, with which children can have conversations and make friends, with whom they may be accompanied on their journey of moral growth. In such conversation, the children in the textbooks keep asking questions of the children in the classroom - together, they face similar problems and confusions. Thus, according to Lu & Gao (2004), in order to engage in moral learning, the students in such a dialogical relationship are not merely listeners but also active participants, who need to reflect on their own life experiences. On the other hand, teachers are also expected to attempt conversational methods in their teaching practice. As pointed out by Lu & Gao (2004), the basic task of the teacher is no longer to provide children with ready-made ideas or correct answers in conformity with some abstract behavioural standards, but to explore together whatever problems they encounter in daily life and to help them acquire their own points of view. To initiate children's thinking, teachers should invite them to share in discussions about possible solutions for collaboration and dialogue, based on the situations and opportunities provided by the textbooks.

However, according to their follow-up research, Lu & Gao (2004) discovered that many teachers could not grasp the essence of the textbook being a conversational text, and accordingly they still adhered to their former ways of teaching. Though

some teachers have tried to change, their teaching process merely changed from delivering lectures to 'the teacher asks and students answer', which cannot reach the level of 'conversation' (ibid., 2004, p. 506). In addition, Wu (2009) also notes that the major difficulty for the advance of the reform is that most moral education teachers are only familiar with teaching information and facts - they lack the skills and experiences in facilitating children's learning through practice and activities, which results in the practical effects being less effective and influential on children than expected.

As pointed out by Lu & Gao (2004), if the basic ideas of the curriculum reform could not be properly implemented in educational practice, the initial intentions of the reform cannot be achieved. Thus, they stress the importance of teacher training, which may help teachers to become more familiar with the new ideas of the reform and be able to display their own initiative in classrooms. In terms of the challenges to the reform of the Moral Education curriculum, Lu & Gao (2004) conclude that besides scholars and curriculum developers, the practical wisdom of teachers is also necessary in delivering the course.

To sum up, in this section I have discussed critical voices of moral education in mainland China both in theory and practice, in which I specifically focus on the background, basic situation and challenge of moral education reform in the context of primary schools. I have mainly drawn from the paper *New directions in the moral education curriculum in Chinese primary schools* written by Lu Jie and Gao Desheng (2004), who have shown leadership in the domestic research field of moral education and are acknowledged by both the government and school practitioners. According to them, moral education in mainland China used to be teacher-, textbook- and class-centred, being based on slogans and role models for students to obey moral commands. Instead, the reform of moral education tries to advocate

student-, situation- and activity-centred approaches, with the aim to generate dialogue and promote children's autonomous moral thinking. However, as criticized by Maosen et al. (2004), in this reform there appears to be no special emphasis on 'promoting critical thinking, reasoning skills leading to moral judgement, or meeting individual needs' (ibid., p. 423). Moreover, as discussed previously, another key challenge relates to the role of moral education teachers, who need to learn to implement an interactive pedagogy to replace the previous didactic approach. Thus, challenges still exist to the reform and ongoing development of moral education in the changing Chinese society.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have firstly discussed the changing approaches of moral education in mainland China in different historical backgrounds from 1949 to the present, especially in the context of primary schools. Secondly, I also try to provide an explanation for the authority-oriented nature of moral education in China and how it is impacted by the integration of Confucian values both in ancient times and the present day. Thirdly, I have provided a summary of critical voices of moral education in mainland China, in which I specially focus on the moral education reform led by Professor Lu Jie in primary schools and summarize the basic challenges that still exist. Keeping those challenges in mind, I will now suggest in my research that drama education might promote children's moral development in certain ways. Winston (1998), has argued 'how, within a dialogical relationship between drama and traditional stories, children can interpret, negotiate and articulate moral meanings' (p. 7). More arguments in illustrating the relationship between moral theories and drama teaching will be addressed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Three

### Literature Review Part Two

#### 3.1 Social Constructivist Perspectives on Learning

As discussed in the previous chapter, although there are certain aspects of improvement in the latest moral education reform led by Professor Lu Jie, there are still issues that could be criticized. For example, in the new curriculum, children are encouraged to focus on common and real-life events, such as whether to share textbooks with their classmates who forgot to bring them. Moreover, according to the reformers, children can learn moral ideas such as sharing or kindness from this, as they are provided a chance to make decisions whether or not to share with their classmates. However, it is obvious that children are merely encouraged to discover or imitate pre-given answers or ethical commands that people should share with each other and help those who are in need. Thus, though the intention of the reform is trying to generate dialogue and promote children's autonomous moral thinking, the fact is that to a large extent it is still very didactic.

Rasmussen (2010) offers a thorough analysis of different philosophies that have underpinned the traditional approach of education and improvised drama practices. Although this article is mainly about teaching aesthetics instead of morality, the points he makes are still applicable to Chinese moral education in my eyes. The contrast he points out between the conventional and drama approach in terms of aesthetic knowledge has similarities with moral education, and what I am interested in is how the constructivist model can be applied to the Chinese moral curriculum using drama. On the one hand, according to Rasmussen (2010), the Chinese approach being based upon instructions could be traced back to the traditional empiricist epistemology and classicist aesthetics, which believe 'it is possible to gain

objective, generalised knowledge that corresponds with the predictable laws of the physical world' (ibid., p. 531). Thus, 'representational truth' and 'hierarchical communication' is present in the associated education, indicating that some kind of knowledge or truth is represented and transferred by an enlightened teacher to other people who are less enlightened (ibid., p. 532). On the other hand, Rasmussen (2010) also argues that drama researchers such as Brian Edmiston, John O'Toole and Joe Winston, tend to see process drama as part of a 'constructivist' epistemology, which is closely related to the constructivist philosophy of John Dewey.

The term 'process drama' used here was first raised by either John O'Toole or Cecily O'Neill in the 1990s. It builds upon the traditional participatory practices established by drama in education in the 1970s and 1980s, principally by practitioners like Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. Process drama has its own theories and practices. In the article *Drama on the Run: A Prelude to Mapping the Practice of Process Drama* (2005) by Pamela Howell and Brian Heap, they describe process drama as 'a form of theatre applied within an educational context in which learners, in collaboration with the teacher, create drama for exploration, expression, and learning.' (ibid., p. 60)

According to Dewey (1934), 'Aesthetic experience is to be defined as a mode of knowledge' (ibid., p. 119, cited in Rasmussen, 2010, p. 533). He rejects the notion of knowledge as a conceptual depiction of given truth, but believes knowing involves meaning construction through aesthetic experiencing and social participation. In more detail, Rasmussen (2010) offers a description of the key ideas of constructivist education, which drama teaching and research are mainly based upon:

The constructivist artist or teacher believes that the self, meaning and knowledge is developed under the influence of all present and 'interacting' language, materials, environment, bodily acts, cognitive and affective representations. This means that the situated experience and generated



cognition does not emerge primarily from 'literature' or 'curriculum' alone, but possibly from all locally invested stimuli and experience. (ibid., p. 533)

Drama education thus conceived challenges the current moral curriculum in China in at least three ways. Firstly, based on constructivist thinking, drama focuses more on inquiries rather than providing pre-given answers, representing Dewey's aesthetic theories that drama experiences may contain plentiful possible meanings as well as various viewpoints which may lead to new and unexpected interpretations; thus, pre-set goals and problems to be solved in education will reduce the richness of the unpredicted outcomes embedded in complex aesthetic experiences (Rasmussen, 2010, p. 536).

Secondly, drama tends to create a playful and imagined world where children may concentrate more on the meaning of objects and events than those in everyday life. As argued by Lev Vygotsky (1967), the Russian social psychologist, in dramatic play children may create an imaginary situation in an illusory world where they improvise the deeds of possible selves and realize their unrealizable desires. And in drama's imagined world, a stick may become a sword as 'in play, thought is separated from objects and action arises from ideas rather than from things' (ibid., 1967, cited in Edmiston, 2010, p. 202). Moreover, his phrase 'imagination in action' indicates that only through imagination can people construct and accept a reality of cultural and social relationships which is more complex than they can experience in their real lives (ibid., 1967, p. 539, cited in Edmiston, 2010, p. 202). Thus, as another philosopher often linked with the concept of 'social constructivism', Lev Vygotsky's theories suggest that drama may offer a better space for children to construct meaning together using their imagination. Oppositely, the reformers of the new moral curriculum in China tend to suggest children should learn from real-life events, which could lead to a possible lack of imaginary space for young children to wish to reflect within.

Thirdly, as one of the early books on improvisatory approaches in classroom written by O'Neill and Lambert (1982), *Drama Structures* indicates that both cognitive and affective knowing are involved in drama education, where thought and feeling are not separated in the learning process of drama. In addition, Misson (1996) also points out that drama operates 'at the nexus of intelligence and emotion. Thought is charged with feeling, while feeling is refined and strengthened by thought' (ibid., p. 11). Thus, unlike the moral teaching in China which will usually rely on simple instructions, process drama engages both cognitive and affective experiences, which makes it possible for learning to occur inwardly in children's minds and produce more interwoven and complex knowledge in the light of constructivism.

To sum up, according to the discussion of the three aspects that drama education may challenge the existing moral teaching in China, it is acceptable that there is a new value agenda and pedagogy in process drama that can offer an alternative and complementary approach to the Chinese educational system. As suggested by Henry (2000) in his paper *Drama's ways of learning*, drama has the potential to be a useful tool for social sciences such as education, for it offers 'a dynamic, integrated and dialogical model to replace more static and predictable paradigms' (ibid., p. 59). Thus, it is the contention of this thesis that drama can provide an approach that is suited to move the rigid and didactic teaching that is evident in moral education in China into a more imaginative, playful and experiential way of learning advocated by the critics of the didactic form I have discussed earlier. Now I will turn to three specific educators and practitioners who offer both theories and models in terms of teaching morality using drama, that have influenced my thinking and practice in one way or another in the present study.

### **3.2 Research on Drama and Moral Education for Children**

It is commonly agreed in the research field of drama education that one of its key educational effects is its ability to get children to think about issues of values and explore ethical dilemmas. Particularly, three drama educators present different approaches to how drama can bring about change in children's values - Jonathan Neelands, Brian Edmiston, and Joe Winston. I will draw upon all three of them in my approach and my own understanding of how drama can work in the Chinese context. Thus, I will now present a summary of the key theories and models of the three drama practitioners.

### **3.2.1 Jonathan Neelands**

As summarized by O'Connor (2010), there are three key words in Jonathan Neelands' work and writing, 'theatre, democracy and education', which reflect his belief in creating democratic citizenship through drama education (ibid., p. xiii). Neelands (2006) suggests using the 'ensemble-based' learning in drama to provide young people with a model of civic life by exploring the idea of how best to live and work together as interdependent human beings, in order to shape and transform their social actions not only in the drama classroom, but also beyond school in the wider community. According to Neelands, such learning enables young people to become 'a self-managing, self-governing, self-regulating social group who co-create socially and artistically' (cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. 156).

It is evident in Neelands' writings that he has a political thrust in promoting democracy and emphasizing the importance of working together by using the language of the left wing, which might have been influenced by Marxism. To make a connection with moral theories, we may trace back to the well-known philosopher of the Enlightenment - Rousseau, who has offered an important view of the nature of moral life and influenced the development of some radical ideologies, such as Marxist or

'left wing' theories in the research areas of education and politics (Carr, 1991, p. 61).

Firstly, the theories of Rousseau are reflected in Neelands' practice, especially Rousseau's idea of advocating the importance of the social contract. As stated by Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, 'There is undoubtedly a universal justice which springs from reason alone...' (Cole, 1973, p. 210, cited in Carr, 1991, p. 69). For Rousseau, virtue is a matter of rational self-determination which results from the submission of the individual will to that of the community, expressing a general justice from people's reasoning; thus, Rousseau sees that the best interests of human beings, both in person and group, exists in the concept of universal justice, which could be discovered by reason, and through rational deliberation people can free themselves to see the true good for human beings (Carr, 1991). The social contract for Rousseau can thus offer a moral framework based on reason, expressing his idea of how people can best live together and achieve general justice.

Similarly, Neelands also believes that in the ensemble-based model of drama, there is social justice representing a utopian future for the young people who can change the world for 'a vision of society we want to live in' (Northrop Frye, 1963, cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. 152). Furthermore, he describes in detail the principles of the ensemble:

The principles of the ensemble require the uncrowning of the power of the director/teacher, a mutual respect amongst the players, a shared commitment to truth, a sense of the intrinsic value of theatre making, a shared absorption in the artistic process of dialogic and social meaning making. (Neelands, 2006, cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. 156)

Neelands repeatedly stresses in his writing the importance of working together in the ensemble. For him, an ensemble can act as a better version of the real world that celebrates the virtues of collaboration. This rational term, which also serves social justice, forms one of the key research areas for Neelands, which can be

traced to Rousseau's major work on political and social philosophy - *The Social Contract*. In my field work, I made up a contract with children in the Preparatory Workshop in each school to make explicit with them how to behave in drama lessons. The initial idea of contracting comes from Rousseau and I mainly refer to Neelands' work to inform the theoretical position and guide the practice in my study; this will be introduced in more details in the data analysis chapter.

Secondly, they both call for a universal democracy by fighting with the power of the privileged, tending to regard education as a possible means for personal as well as social transformations, which give them an understanding of what morality should be. As the famous opening of *The Social Contract* goes, 'Man was born free but he is everywhere in chains' (Cole, 1973, p. 181), showing that Rousseau was acutely aware that 'civilised men' would gain privilege, wealth and power for themselves at the expense of others being exploited (Carr, 1991, p. 66). According to Rousseau, the answer to the problems of social injustice could only depend on the widespread re-education of individuals in true ethical virtues that reflect an impartial concern for all in the light of a consciousness of benevolence and justice (Carr, 1991, p. 70).

Neelands takes a similar stance, stating that :

My 'privileged' upbringing and elite education forged my life-long political commitment to challenging the unfairness of the world and equipping the young with the tools needed to transform it. (Neelands, 2010, cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. xiv)

In terms of drama education, Neelands (2009) supports John McGrath's views on theatre's functions in promoting authentic democracy by giving a voice to the excluded and the marginal, demanding the right to speak in public, criticizing bravely and incessantly questioning the boundaries of freedom:

One of the great services theatre can perform for the people of any country or region or town or village is to be the instrument of authentic democ-

racy, or at the very least to push the community as near to authentic democracy as has yet been achieved. (cited in Neelands, 2009, p. 187)

Thus Neelands (2006) believes that by means of critical thinking, the ensemble approach to drama could be democratic and emancipatory. On the one hand, it can remind teachers how their practices have been shaped by the realities of schooling systems that accept and reproduce inequalities. On the other hand, it may propose practical ways to address the problems of how best to educate for a more equitable and ethical society. Such ideas echo Rousseau's concern for social justice and morality.

To sum up, from this brief analysis we can see the potential connection between Neelands' work and the ideas of the Enlightenment, especially Rousseau's philosophy, that influences Neelands' practice as a drama teacher.

### **3.2.2 Brian Edmiston**

As a drama educator whose teaching interests lie in the ethical dimension, Brian Edmiston mainly adopts the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of dialogism to inform his own practice.

According to Edmiston (1998), instead of promoting abstract moral commands, Bakhtin's views of morality can be described as 'a "prosaic" view of ethics based on dialogue, imagination, and answerability' (ibid., p. 58). In the light of Bakhtin's theories, Edmiston suggests that drama can be used as a useful tool for children to learn to uncover the moral complexities of certain situations and reconsider what they ought to do. Thus, in the following section I will provide a brief analysis of Edmiston's understanding of drama's potential for creating dialogic spaces to generate children's ethical imaginations and be more answerable for their actions.

Firstly, in terms of 'dialogue', Bakhtin (1984) describes the term as follows:

To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (ibid., p. 293)

These statements illustrate Bakhtin's concern with the specific contexts and people's relationships with each other. Hence, Bakhtin views the ethical self as a 'conversation, often a struggle, of discrepant voices with each other' (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 218). Based on his opinions, Edmiston (2008) describes dialogue as not only experienced in external conflicts but also in a person's internal experience of conflict between competing ethical positions, in which different discourses have dialogue with each other, reflecting the complexity of many problems. Thus, being dialogic means people trying to see how the world looks from another's point of view at the same time as they see their own perspectives, which enables them to act in dialogue by keeping this 'double consciousness' in mind (Edmiston, 1998, p. 58).

Edmiston (1994) then suggests that in drama children may discover new voices and opinions for shaping the ethical dimensions of the self, as drama can problematize and enliven the dialogue or conversation among people by contextualising empathetic struggles over how they should act towards each other in particular situations; in this way it can help to create more complex understandings of the voices those children may otherwise only have considered superficially. In an article by Edmiston (1995) based on a *Space Traders Drama*, he stresses the advantages of dialogic thinking in creating a moral perspective in process drama:

If we resist dialogue then we tend to minimize our sense of responsibility and ossify our thinking. Our morality becomes more 'monologic', static, fixed and judgemental rather than dynamic and open to change. (ibid., p. 117)

Secondly, as believed by Edmiston (2008), imagination is also ethically important, as people can evaluate the consequences of their actions by viewing and understanding them from the different standpoints of others, who may or may not be physically present. Moreover, he supports Johnson's (1993) view that learning to be ethical requires using imagination to consider past, present and future events from other people's situations. Edmiston (2000) then proposes that drama can create a space that enables children to learn to use their imagination to consider other people's positions in the ways they need to behave for ethical action, as they may not do so automatically or may have a limited range of positions from which they can imagine the lives of others in everyday life. He also holds the view that ethical imagination in drama can offer a vision of what our lives would be like and how the world can be made better if we act in a different way (*ibid.*). Furthermore, he also makes it clear that both teacher and students should not become immersed in an imagined world, separated from the everyday, but rather try to understand their imagined experiences in order to connect them with their daily lives and thereby develop deeper understandings about them (Edmiston, 2003).

Thirdly, for Bakhtin, a person's actions are ethical when they are 'answerable' to anyone who 'addresses' them about their consequences (*ibid.*, 1990, cited in Edmiston, 2008, p. 17). According to Edmiston's understanding (2008), to be answerable is more than to be responsible, as compared with accepting responsibility for doing something, when people are answerable they allow themselves to be addressed by other people who may be affected by their deeds, which may dialogically alter the framework they use to make meaning; thus, being ethical means understanding that what is right is never completed, but always open to change in further dialogue in new situations. Based on these considerations, Edmiston (1998) then proposes that in drama children adopt different roles as if they have become other



people, providing them the opportunity of being answerable when they view the consequences of their actions from the viewpoints of those they may affect; in this way, children learn to see the world from different perspectives and become more answerable for their own actions.

To sum up, Bakhtin's theories of dialogue, imagination, and answerability provide Edmiston with his own perspective on the moral possibilities of drama education, from which he believes that ethical selves will be forged.

### **3.2.3 Joe Winston**

Joe Winston has been continually concerned with the potential relationship between morality and educational drama since the 1990s. He clearly states his understanding of moral education in the first chapter of his book *Drama, Narrative and Moral Education* (1998, pp.13-24) and the paper *Theorising Drama as Moral Education* (1999). The main ideas of his theoretical stance will be summarized below, followed by some key points on drama's potential for teaching morality that might be relevant to me in my study in China, taken from another book *Drama, Literacy and Moral Education 5-11* (2000a) based on practical drama projects in primary classrooms.

In terms of his theoretical stance, Winston (1998) rejects the cognitive developmental theories of moral education, particularly those developed by Lawrence Kohlberg (1971), which can be traced back to the theories of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1932) who was the first to offer a comprehensive theoretical framework to describe and explain stages of moral development in terms of children's cognitive development. Based on his work, Kohlberg created his model of moral development, including seven stages from the lowest obedient and self-interested orientation to the highest 'universal ethical values and cosmic orientation'. Kohlberg believed justice to be the most important moral principle, and argued that individuals

must use their reasoning to progress through these seven stages one after another to achieve moral growth. However, Kohlberg's emphasis on rationality and his belief in the hierarchy of abstract moral instructions applicable to all people in different times and spaces are not accepted by Winston (1998).

Instead, Winston (1998) stresses the importance of a narrative way to explore the moral self in relationship to others; he also believes that people's ethical understanding is rooted in their social roles. Furthermore, according to Winston (1999), 'stories have traditionally been used to provoke moral reflection, suggest codes of behaviour or challenge accepted moral wisdom' (ibid., p. 461). He then suggests stories play an important role in informing children what an ethical life might be, rather than asking them to follow abstract moral instructions and commands. He builds his argument from academics such as the feminist moral researcher Carol Gilligan (1982) and the theorist Alasdair MacIntyre (1981). According to Winston, their theories share certain features: both doubt universal objectivity but rather emphasize difference and uncertainty, believing that 'morality is located in the social sphere and that particularity, context and cultural specificity are essential when attempting to understand and explain moral life' (Winston, 1999, p. 461). Firstly, he accepts Gilligan's definition of morality as 'an ethic of care' that emphasizes the relationships between people, involving particularity, complexity and emotional connection (Gilligan, 1982, cited in Winston, 1998, p. 16); in addition, he supports Gilligan's argument that narrative story-telling might be the best form to express and teach such moral knowledge. Secondly, Winston also follows Alasdair MacIntyre's theories that one's moral life can be understood through a form of narrative deeply connected with one's social roles in specific social and historical contexts; furthermore, he agrees with MacIntyre that a canon of fairy tales have the potential to introduce children to the domain of moral life. These Winston sees as a basis for

moral exploration in stories commonly told to and enjoyed by children, and the potential of drama to open up the virtues they inscribe for critical examination within story contexts forms the basis of much of his drama practice.

Based on these theoretical considerations, Winston (2000a) uses examples of six projects to illustrate his arguments on story-based drama's potential for promoting children's moral development. Following the description of the schemes applied to children from Grade one to six in primary ages, Winston also discusses in more detail how drama can contribute to the elementary school's moral curriculum. Firstly, he introduces how certain key elements in a drama class can develop children's moral thinking. Secondly, he also explores how rules play an important role in games and drama activities - rules that can teach children about self-discipline and guarantee that the drama class runs smoothly. Thirdly, he discusses how drama can help children become independent moral agents by generating dialogue and creating moral dilemmas to engage their ethical thinking, both rationally and affectively. Lastly, Winston proposes that different roles in drama can introduce children to the domain of public morality by encouraging them to find their own voices in the social sphere of the world inside and outside school; in this way, drama can help to prepare active citizens ready to take part in a pluralistic society.

After a brief analysis of Joe Winston's work both theoretically and practically, I will discuss how his ideas and practice can be illuminating for me in my study in the following section.

### **3.3 How the Three Drama Researchers Inform My Study**

As discussed above, the moral theories of the three drama practitioners I draw upon come from broad philosophical agendas, all of which can be used to inform my own teaching and research. I will now present how they affect my thinking and practice in the present study respectively.

Firstly, Jonathan Neelands helps me to theorise a position while offering practical advice on how to conduct a drama class, specifically when I set up the contract with children in the preparatory session in the fieldwork. Moreover, he also presents an ideological connection with the kinds of discourse used in Marxist theory that I can exploit pragmatically in China. On the one hand, the ethics of justice and democracy he is concerned with are also important values promoted in the 24-word Core Socialist Values<sup>5</sup>. In my research, I try to create an equal and democratic atmosphere in the classroom and remind myself to be less authoritarian as a teacher in order to enhance the children's independent thinking. On the other hand, the language used in Neelands' writings - 'community', 'togetherness', 'social justice' and so on - fits nicely with the discourse of Marxism, which forms the philosophical foundation for the theories of education in China. Thus, on a practical level, Neelands provides me with a vocabulary to use selectively in the context of China in terms of moral and drama education. This will be particularly reflected in the third story-based workshop, when I explored with children the concept of community and tried to promote a sense of togetherness in the drama classroom. I will discuss this in more details in the data analysis chapter.

Secondly, I have learned from Brian Edmiston that drama has the capacity to generate dialogue and help children to see things from others' perspectives or hear their internal conflicting voices, from which they can extend or change their initial ideas by taking different views into consideration; thus, they can learn to be more thoughtful, especially in problematic situations. For example, I asked children to list both the pros and cons for a boy to save others' lives on a stormy night in the third story-based workshop, from which they could hear the boy's struggling inner dia-

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<sup>5</sup> According to Wikipedia, the Core Socialist Values is a set of new official interpretations of Chinese socialism promoted at the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012. The 12 values, written in 24 Chinese characters, are the national values of 'prosperity', 'democracy', 'civility' and 'harmony'; the social values of 'freedom', 'equality', 'justice' and the 'rule of law'; and the individual values of 'patriotism', 'dedication', 'integrity' and 'friendship'.

logue in a moral dilemma and form their own understanding of that situation in a complicated way. Moreover, I also try to engage children's imagination to construct meaning together as Edmiston does in his practice. For instance, I asked the children to make up stories of an old man's past to sympathize with him in the third story-based workshop, which enabled them to gain a more comprehensive view on the character through imaginative qualities.

Thirdly, Joe Winston's belief in seeing moral life as a form of narrative and that stories can be used for conveying such moral knowledge are illuminating principles for me. In my research, I taught three story-based drama workshops in each primary school, all of which were largely influenced by Winston's work. Thus, instead of using everyday, real-life events as teaching materials in the new moral curriculum in China, I based my own fieldwork on stories as Winston has suggested. In addition, Winston also suggests that children learn to reason by engaging their emotions at the same time, and dramatic contexts such as improvised dialogue can offer opportunities for them to discuss both sensibly and emotionally. Therefore, unlike moral teaching's neglect of affect and emotion in China, I would also pay attention to how children learn to feel in drama in my study. Furthermore, as proposed by Winston, drama can introduce children to the domain of social ethics and prepare them to be active citizens in the future. In my study, I invited children to take on the roles of villagers such as salesmen, veterinary hospital doctors and grave keepers in one session, in which they were given the chance to reflect upon how a person should behave in a public place. Such practice is in accordance with the main aim of the new moral curriculum in China, to help children become 'self-determined, liberal, democratic, equal and fair individuals', as the leading reformer Professor Lu has expected (Lu, 2004, p. 74, cited in Ping et al., 2004, p. 458).

To sum up, relying on the research tradition of using educational drama to enhance children's moral development, the key issues for this approach might be that the learning process is playful and enjoyable; children are encouraged to work socially and make their own moral decisions, albeit within fictional contexts; they will necessarily explore various moral ideas as part of this process. I will attempt to fit this approach into the Chinese system and observe how it ties in with the current moral curriculum and critically consider its workings. My aim is to offer an option for addressing the problems and challenges still existing in the moral curriculum reform, as stated previously.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have firstly introduced the social constructivist perspectives on learning embedded in educational drama, which offers an alternative approach to teaching morality compared with the Chinese model. Secondly, I have presented a brief analysis of three drama researchers' work in my research field, who are Jonathan Neelands, Brian Edmiston and Joe Winston. Thirdly, I have discussed how all three of them can inform my thinking and affect my practice in the present study, which helps me to conduct a new drama-based approach in the Chinese context and, to some extent, address the shortcomings existing in the current moral curriculum as stated in the first part of the literature review. In the next chapter, I will introduce the methodologies and main methods adopted in my research.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Methodologies and Research Methods**

#### **4.1 Methodology One - Reflective Practitioner Research**

##### **4.1.1 Rationale for Choosing Reflective Practitioner Research**

There are various scholars who have discussed the key ideas and features of reflective practice. According to Robins et al. (2003), reflective practice can help teachers understand themselves as well as the dynamics of their classrooms more deeply, enabling them to make professional decisions more aptly over their careers. Winston (1998) also argues that in moral education, which constitutes of ethical dilemmas, rather than seeing the teaching as a technical process, it would be more reasonable to link these 'indeterminate zones of practice' to Schön's concept of reflective practitioner research, as they are featured by 'uncertainty, uniqueness and value conflict' (Schön, 1987, cited in Winston, 1998, p. 90).

Keeping this in mind, I have chosen reflective practitioner research as the principle methodology of my study for the reasons listed below. Firstly, one focus of this study is on my progress throughout the teaching process as an inexperienced teacher. As mentioned above, reflective practice can help to improve the professional competencies of a teacher. Secondly, my main research purpose is trying to address problems in the existing moral curriculum of China for primary ages and offer an alternative, complementary programme by introducing story-based drama to assist with moral learning. As discussed previously, reflective practitioner research has become an accepted ideal of practice in education, particularly in the field of drama and moral education. I would like to adopt this methodology in my

study as well, as it chimes with the artistic processes through the nature of the drama practice (O'Toole, 2006, p. 57).

Given this, I propose that reflective practitioner research would be an appropriate methodology for my research objectives. To dig deeper into this kind of research, in the following section I will first discuss two key concepts giving momentum to the theories of reflective practice, namely reflection and reflexivity. Then, the main characteristics and critiques will also be discussed. Lastly, I will examine how reflective practitioner research has evolved in the field of drama education.

#### **4.1.2 Concepts of Reflection and Reflexivity**

##### **Reflection**

Reflection is considered as one of the key ideas and features of how people learn from experience by various academics. According to Houston (1988), the historical roots of reflection could be traced back to Plato and other great thinkers such as Aristotle in Greece, the Buddha in India, and Confucius in China, who gained wisdom from the ability to generate new ways of thinking based on their reflection. In the educational research field, the contemporary thought on reflection can be traced back to the works of educator John Dewey (1933) and philosopher Donald Schön (1983).

It seems to be impossible to discuss all the writings on reflection - thus, what I aim to do here is to provide a presentation of some of the key writers and points which are particularly relevant to my own research. In the following passage, I will firstly summarize some of the main points of Dewey and Schön's theories on reflection and how their views might be illuminating to my study. Then the content of reflection, especially for teaching practice, will also be taken into consideration. Gore and



Zeichner's (1991) discussion on the four varieties of teacher reflection is a rich source for me to learn from.

According to Dewey, reflection is a cognitive process, which involves 'the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends' (1933, p. 9). He distinguishes reflective thinking from routine thinking, as routine thinking comes from 'an individual's automatic adherence to rules originating from authority or from tradition' (Sellars, 2014, p.4), while in reflective thinking practitioners have to go through confusion and challenges before finding possible solutions. To solve such problems, he also proposes a five-step model including suggesting solutions, posing questions, hypothesizing, reasoning and testing. In short, Dewey's views on reflection are to some extent influenced by the technical/scientific theory which is the predominant criteria in his time and has had a long-lasting influence on education (Sellars, 2014; Carr & Kemmis, 2003). I am also influenced by Dewey in my study, such as taking his suggestion on posing questions, making hypothesis, using my reasoning and testing ideas when trying to solve problems that emerge from my teaching. But I am aware that I cannot fragment and separate these steps readily into the form he suggests; they are more integrated and complex in actual practice, as suggested in the following theories by Donald Schön.

The theory of reflection promoted by Donald Schön (1983,1987) introduces two kinds of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. According to Schön, reflection-in-action is a concept that highlights the artistry of practice, which involves instantaneous reflection and reflective conversation with oneself to cope with uniquely unexpected situations. Reflection-on-action, on the other hand, takes place after the event and is considered as a more conscious and deliberative

process, involving more critical analysis and evaluations of the actions - a concept based partly on Dewey's (1933) work. To sum up, Schön's key contribution is that he finds out that to gain some form of professional knowledge, practitioners have to learn to 'deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict' (1983, p. 50), and such knowledge can be developed by one of his key concepts, 'reflection-in-action'.

In my research, both Dewey and Schön's theories have proven valuable, for the following reasons. Firstly, as I stated before, trying to address practical problems in the current moral curriculum for primary years is one of my main research concerns. In my search for possible solutions, I will undergo a process of reflective thinking using Dewey's concept. Such persistent and rational thinking is always guided with the following goal in mind: how can I try to offer an alternative by developing my own knowledge and expertise of teaching morality using story-based drama? Thus, Dewey's points on reflection could offer guidance for my research. Secondly, situations of uncertainty and uniqueness are frequently confronted within my teaching experience of drama. Therefore, Schön's concept 'reflection-in-action' is ideal for me to take into consideration.

After discussing Dewey and Schön's theories on reflection, now I would like to discuss the content of reflection, especially for teachers. Gore and Zeichner (1991) have noted four varieties of reflection for teaching practice:

An academic version, which focuses on teachers' skills in disseminating the discipline content and presenting in such a way as to maximise its accessibility for their students; a social efficacy version, which is based on research findings and focuses on evidence-based practice; a developmental version, which primarily considers age and developmentally appropriate teaching strategies that focus on students' interests and thinking; and finally the social reconstructionist version, in which reflection is focused on the political and social issues of schooling and on classroom interactions designed to promote greater student equity and justice. (ibid., p.121)

The reason why I quote this in such length is that it reminds and provides a novice teacher with a relatively thorough version of the necessary elements that a good teacher needs to reflect on and pay attention to. Moreover, a balance between them is also needed to achieve appropriate teacher reflection. Therefore, these four varieties for teacher reflection will always remind me of the major aspects of teaching and help me to gain a more holistic and balanced view on my work.

## **Reflexivity**

When we discuss reflection and reflective practice, it is hard to avoid discussing another term, *reflexivity*, which is sometimes confused conceptually. In the following passage, the meanings of reflexivity will be explored, the possible relationship between reflexivity and reflectivity will also be discussed, and lastly why drama teachers should be aware of reflexive teaching will be examined.

As explained by Sandelowski and Barroso (2002),

Reflexivity is a hallmark of excellent qualitative research and it entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge. Reflexivity implies the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry; and, in between researcher and participant to the social interaction they share. (p. 222)

D' Cruz et al. (2007) also examines how reflexivity may contribute to knowledge production on three levels. On the first level, reflexivity is seen as an individual's response to the situation and choices about the future in terms of self-actualization where knowledge is believed as truth with certainty. The second level of reflexivity includes a critical awareness of self and the ambiguity about the generalizability of knowledge, which is regarded as social construction. The third level acknowledges the role of uncertainty and the interplay between cognition and emotion in knowl-

edge creation. Both the second and third levels define reflexivity 'as an individual's self-critical approach that involves him/her in questioning how knowledge is created...' (ibid., p. 86). Such views on reflexivity, especially the latter two levels, challenge the traditional ways of knowing as an attempt to be objective; instead, social researchers are expected to be aware of the influences of their subjective experience, including both cognition and emotion, in terms of knowledge production.

After a brief analysis of the meanings of reflexivity, it is also necessary to analyse the possible relationship between the terms of reflectivity and reflexivity, which are sometimes thought to be interchangeable. According to Fook (2002), the two notions come from different discourse; reflectivity emerges from professional practitioner and educational fields, such as Donald Schön's theories, while reflexivity has deeper roots in social science discourse, such as anthropology, sociology and psychology. Fook also notes that,

Reflectivity seems in this sense to refer more to a process of reflecting upon practice, whereas reflexivity in the latter sense refers more to a stance of being able to locate oneself in the picture, to appreciate how one's own self influences the research act. (ibid., p. 43)

She tends to believe that these two terms are deeply connected, that a reflexive stance is needed for reflective processes, and together they will form a developed critical practice that enables the practitioner 'to use a variety of methods to confront the ways in which their own backgrounds, embodiment, personalities and perspectives intermingle in holistic context' (ibid., pp. 43-44).

Furthermore, I will mention why being reflexive is important for drama teachers. According to Neelands (2006), based on reflective practice, reflexive teaching ensures students have a more equal status with the teachers in their learning process, so that knowledge is constructed interactively instead of following authori-

ty without question. Through this, a more democratic value can be achieved in the classroom, and teaching is expected to be based on an open dialogue through reflexivity.

To sum up, as Sellars (2014) believes it may be impossible to present a totally objective perspective, as all objectivity is first comprehended as subjective experience; however, if teachers keep critically examining the origins, limitations and validity of their own values and principles, they may become more open to other viewpoints and interpretations. On this basis, a more realistic approach can be developed.

#### **4.1.3 Reflective Practitioner Research**

The phrase 'the reflective practitioner' was first raised by Donald Schön (1983). As he suggests, the reflective practitioner 'allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique' (Schön, 1983, p. 68).

Schön also declares it as a research methodology centred on the personhood of the researchers, making it distinctive from other traditional outsider approaches of educational research. Neelands (2006) offers a simile to illustrate such a difference: external researchers seek to find truthful ways by looking through the window of rooms filled with teachers and learners, while the reflective practitioner chooses the more effective and ethical means by living together with other teachers and learners in the room. Based on this, reflective practice is regarded as 'a way of life' (ibid., p. 17), which involves not only insistent inquiry into one's own professional practice, but also a life-long internal dialogue for a better self, based on examining his/her practice in everyday life (Neelands, 2006; Taylor, 1996). In order to be effective, Neelands goes on to point out, the reflective practitioner 'strives to be

self-knowing as well as other-knowing' (2006, p. 17), so that on the one hand he or she digs deeply into themselves, trying to bring unconscious instincts, habits, values and learnt behaviors which shape their practice back into consciousness, while on the other hand they become aware of the effects of their own interpretations on the lives and experiences of their partners, such as other teachers and students. Such perspectives present teaching as essentially an ethical practice, which chimes with my own interests in moral education in the present study.

The idea of seeing reflective practice as a way of life is also connected with Aristotle's concept *phronesis*, translated as 'practical wisdom' (Carr, 1995, p. 71), being described as '... a fruit which can grow only in the soil of a person's experience and character' (Dunne, 1993, p. 358). According to McLaughlin (1999), the main difficulty in achieving such wisdom might be '... the complicity of *phronesis* with an established way of life' (Dunne, 1993, p. 358). However, it is still worthwhile to bear in mind what Carr (1995, p. 71) describes as *phronesis* especially for a teacher aiming to teach morality, which is a sound moral ability combining practical knowledge of the good with comprehensive judgement and suitable expression of different situations.

Though reflective practice is considered as a key approach in pursuing professional development in contemporary education, it is still helpful to examine critiques of its theory and practice to gain a more balanced view. Christodoulou (2013, pp. 39-43) has provided a rich analysis of the critical evaluations of reflective practice, which may shed light on my understanding of this approach. Thus, I will summarize some of the negative features of reflective practice below.

Firstly, in terms of lack of clarity, there are two main issues. One is that different researchers have discussed theories of reflective practice in various ways, entailing

multiple and even contradictory interpretations. The other is that theories of reflective practice have been applied in different ways and in various contexts, which add to the confusion and ineffectiveness of this approach. According to Christodoulou (2013), reflective practice will only be beneficial when researchers learn to use it purposefully, selectively and systematically within their own contexts.

The second critique of reflective practice is due to its individualistic nature that fails to consider other views or the wider context. Focusing on internal thought is certainly valuable, in that it can help researchers arrive at a reconsideration of existing practices and begin an investigation from one's experience. However, it might be dangerous to overindulge in one's beliefs and actions, as practitioners may have a narrow or false understanding of the actual situation. Furthermore, they may become demotivated due to focusing on the negative side of their solitary practice and mistaking the word 'critical' for 'negative' (Quinn, 1988). Thus, it is essential to conduct conversations with others who can provide alternative perspectives to gain a broader and more positive understanding towards their practice.

The last critique refers to whether practitioners follow reflective theories in a mechanical way without engaging their emotions. According to Bradbury et al. (2010), emotions used to be a neglected area of inquiry in education. However, reflective practice can contribute a lot when used sensibly in an emotionally liberating way.

I will briefly explain the relevance of these three critiques to my own research. Firstly, I am aware that the lack of clarity underpinning reflective practice may to some extent cause confusion and ineffectiveness within the present study; thus, I examine carefully a plentiful supply of theories, then choose purposefully what is meaningful for me as a novice teacher, as stated before. Secondly, I am also concerned with the individualistic nature of reflective practice. As I make clear in the analysis

of reflexivity, self-examination and open dialogue will always be my concern to generate knowledge in a realistic and holistic way. Lastly, in my research, I will pay close attention to the important role emotions play in reflective practice.

#### **4.1.4 Reflective Practitioner Research in Drama Education**

Reflective practitioner research is commonly accepted within drama education as one of the key approaches. As believed by Philip Taylor (1996), 'for arts educators to ignore reflective practitioner design is to remain ignorant to the kind of artistic processes that are the lifeblood of our work' (ibid., p. 27). Besides Philip Taylor, I will also draw upon Jonothan Neelands and Brian Edmison, all of whom are the key scholars and practitioners of this approach in my research field, trying to present a summary to show how this method inspires their teaching and research, and how their theories and practice can shed light on my work.

According to Philip Taylor (1996), the nature of drama education is artistic-aesthetic and process-oriented. When presenting reasons for his preference for reflective practitioner research rather than action research, Taylor takes the stance that, though the latter may be effective in solving problems in a simplistic cause-effect view of human experience, he is more interested in exploring possibilities than promoting a view that conflicts and problems can be easily controlled and resolved (ibid., p.38). As explored earlier, theories on reflective practice, especially the concept reflection-in-action raised by Schön (1983), have recognized how professional competence can be developed in artistic processes and improvisational situations. Taylor states that:

I am keen to explore how reflective practitioners are reading their world, what decisions they make about importance and value, how they struggle with ambiguity and contradiction, and how they begin to ascertain the logical procedures through which they will collect, analyse and present that struggle. (ibid., p. 39)



What Taylor's thoughts remind me of is that, as expressed before, one of my main research concerns is trying to solve problems of inefficiency in the current moral curriculum in China, which is guided by Dewey's concept of being rational in reflection. Though this might be a guiding star for my research, I should still remain open to all the possibilities that might happen in the classroom and not always focus on finding solutions, as Taylor suggests. In this way, I am not only concentrating on the possible results, but the pedagogical process as well.

In the writings of Jonothan Neelands, he presents seven characteristics of a Reflective Practitioner as lived values, which are: cyclical, critical, emancipatory, evidence-based, ethical collaborative and reflexive (2006, pp. 36-37). As each of them is relevant to my research field, I will provide a short summary here to inform my own work. According to Neelands, reflective practice is cyclical and action-orientated, and each cycle involves identifying, planning, acting and reviewing, which creates motivation for the next cycle. Being critical means the practitioner has to critique their own practice and understanding of teaching and learning to gain the right level of knowledge. Reflective practice can also be emancipatory, in that practitioners can intervene in the world for a better society. In my case, I will try to teach in a less authoritarian way to develop the children's independent thinking. This method needs to be evidence-based, including not just the teacher's knowing-in-action, but also a representation of other voices, especially from students, parents and other teachers. Being ethical means that reflective practice is a way of making sense of contradictions, aiming towards a more inclusive and therefore ethical way of schooling. It is also more effective for reflective practitioners to work collaboratively for discussion, shared action and evaluation rather than individual action. Lastly, it is essential for practitioners to be reflexive, for teaching should be based

on open dialogue between learners and teachers. To sum up, although these values seem idealistic, they will always be inspiring for my research, reminding me of the possible standards for reflective practitioners according to a key scholar in the field of drama education.

Brian Edmiston is another educator of process drama who has adopted reflective practitioner research as a methodology. As described by Winston (1998), he is one of the few researchers to have also attempted a comprehensive theory of drama as moral education and has drawn particularly upon Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism to suggest how to structure drama to enable students to forge ethical understandings. Thus, his work is of special significance for me to reflect upon. Winston (1998) has an accurate and justified critique on Edmiston's work, especially when he tries to teach a class of high school students the theme of prejudice using *Space Traders Drama* (Edmiston, 1995). According to Winston (1998), Edmiston relies too much on his belief in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory; thus, to some extent his teaching has a dominant intention to achieve a predetermined change in students' ethical attitudes. However, such a monological approach, suggested by Winston, goes against his dialogical intentions. As a response, Edmiston (2000) re-emphasizes his philosophical framework, grounded in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory, and contrasts it with the neo-Aristotelian approach provided by Joe Winston. Winston (2000b) accordingly points out that in doing so, Edmiston holds the view that the neo-Aristotelian and the followers of Bakhtin are pitched as oppositional in their theories and practices, and such an implied dichotomous binary does not match his theory of dialogism. For drama teachers to gain a more appropriate self-awareness of their own values and practice, Winston (1998) then suggests, 'if we are conscious and aware of our values; are willing to be open about them and justify them; and - most importantly- critically scrutinize them in practice, then we approach our

teaching reflectively, maturely and with intellectual integrity' (ibid., p. 84). Brookfield (1995) also provides four critically reflective lenses for practitioners, which are teachers themselves, the students, colleagues and theoretical literature. Thus, in Edmiston's case, besides himself as the teacher and the established theories, the real voices of the students as well as critiques and suggestions from colleagues also deserve serious consideration. Altogether, they could build up a dialogic construction which is more balanced and morally answerable. To sum up, a brief examination on Edmiston's approach can remind me to be critically aware of my own value agenda as a drama teacher and whether I am presenting a holistic and realistic perspective involving other voices dialogically in my reflective practice.

To conclude, in this chapter I have discussed the rational, key concepts and what I can learn from three key scholars in my field in terms of reflective practitioner research. In the following section, I will examine case study as the other approach adopted in my study.

## **4.2 Methodology Two - Case Study Research**

Being another umbrella term for methodologies, case study research has also gained widespread acceptance in drama education. As O'Toole (2006) explains, drama is by nature a non-reproducible experience where participants generate a unique set of social relationships, and case study research honours such interactions in which 'the researcher is interested in and deeply involved in the structures, processes and outcomes of a project' (ibid., p. 46). Winston (2006) also suggests that the artistic nature of case study chimes with the knowledge generated by drama, for they both 'seek out rather than solve problems, provoke rather than answer questions, deepen our understanding rather than rush to closure' (ibid., p. 45). Given the suitability of case study to the needs of researchers in drama education, the

following section will discuss definitions, types, design processes, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of case study research respectively.

#### **4.2.1 Definitions of Case Studies**

As one of the doyens, Robert Stake has provided a systematic analysis on how case study may contribute to educational research both theoretically and practically. According to Stake, case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what to be studied (1995). This raises the important question for case study researchers - "What is a case?" Stake describes cases as a specific, unique, and bounded system, which can be units of analysis of some particular people, special problem or unique situation, involving rich information that a great deal can be learnt from. Thus, in the words of Stake:

Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.  
(1995, p. xi)

Besides Stake's definition, Walker (1993) describes case study as 'the examination of an instance in action' (p. 165). Yin (2009) sees case study as an empirical inquiry that 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context' (p. 18). After examining different definitions of case study in the fields of education, psychology, sociology and so on, Duff (2007) has listed the widely accepted terms in describing case study research, which include 'boundedness or singularity, in-depth study, multiple perspectives or triangulation, particularity, contextualization, and interpretation' (p. 23).

Though there are various definitions, the same paradox may apply to the heart of each case study, which is how the study of unique cases' particularity could contribute to the knowledge of generalisability. According to Stake (1995), the main

concern of case study is the particularity of the case itself instead of optimizing generalisability; however, by studying the uniqueness, 'valid modification of generalization can occur in case study' (p. 8). MacDonald and Walker (1975) offer a similar view by regarding case study researchers in education as 'a fusion of the artist and scientist' (p. 3), arguing that by portraying a unique case in its own situation the researcher has the chance to communicate common truths about human conditions. Simons (1996) also states that such a tension between the study of the particularity and the need for generalisability allows researchers to stay with ambiguity and challenge certainty, enabling people to see things anew.

As mentioned previously, one of the main concerns of the present study is my progress in teaching moral education through drama as an inexperienced teacher. Besides this, I will also concentrate on how story-based drama could be complementary to the standard Chinese curriculum for moral education. In this way, my teaching process will be the main case to be focused on in this study. For examining this specific case, on the one hand I shall generate knowledge for how a Chinese learner-teacher can learn to use drama for moral teaching and how they can tackle the possible difficulties and problems that can arise in that process. As drama education is still new in the Chinese educational environment and is only recently gaining popularity, such knowledge might be useful for other teachers as guidance if I examine my own case thoroughly and deeply. On the other hand, during the teaching process children and other teachers' voices will also be heard, which may provide richly textured information to address the second focus of my research: how this new kind of teaching can complement existing approaches of moral education in China. To summarise, my own teaching will be the case to be concentrated on in my research as a specific and bounded system (Stake, 1995),

as in this way it may generate knowledge in accordance with my research objectives.

#### **4.2.2 Types of Case Studies**

Various scholars have discussed their own concerns and standards in cataloguing different types of case study. In terms of my own research I will mainly focus on the work of Stake (1995) and Yin (2003, 2009) in the following passage.

Stake (1995) makes the distinction between three kinds of case study, which are *intrinsic case study*, *instrumental case study* and *collective case study*. As he explains, the first kind of study is driven by the intrinsic interest in that particular case itself, the second may help to gain insight or understanding into something else by studying a special case as an instrument, while the third often involves several instrumental case studies that tightly connect with each other in order to generate a collective understanding of a certain issue (ibid., pp. 3-4). My research consists of a collective case study, as my teaching took place in two primary schools and four instrumental case studies were conducted to gain a general understanding of my progress in teaching and how story-based drama might contribute to domestic moral education.

In addition, Stake (1995) makes another distinction between *etic* and *emic* issues in case study research. According to him, *etic* issues are research concerns brought in by the researcher before direct contact with the case, and are therefore external: previous research or the researcher's own concerns, for example. Sometimes these issues may not fit the case and need to be re-addressed according to the real-life situation. In contrast, *emic* issues emerge from the inside, involving people or critical incidents that belong to the case (ibid., p.20). In my study, these two sets of issues will be a necessary complement for each other during the research pro-

cess. For example, a ten-year-old gifted boy emerged in my field work, raising my awareness to focus on how drama can help children like him, which I will discuss in more detail later. Hence, if my concern with moral education and normal children represents an etic issue, then this special boy presents an emic issue that has helped me to develop a more comprehensive view of my overall research questions.

Besides this, Yin (2003) identifies two dimensions in cataloguing different types of case study:

- (1) In terms of the number of cases: single or multiple
- (2) In terms of the purpose of the study: exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory (Yin, cited in Blaxter et al., 2006, p. 75)

Firstly, Yin (2009, Chapter 2) believes that single-case designs are vulnerable, for you have to put 'all your eggs in one basket'. Instead, he suggests that researchers have two (or more) cases. In this way, replication from one case to another would be possible and analytic conclusions coming from two cases will be more convincing than those arising from a single case. In my research, I conducted my fieldwork in two different primary schools - one in an urban city and the other in a village background. As the two schools have different situations, I could not conduct a direct replication. Thus, for each of them, four workshops were conducted with similar themes but slightly different schemes. According to Yin (2009), if the subsequent findings support the hypothesis in contrasting situations, the viability of each case will strengthen the findings compared to those from a single case study (ibid., p. 61).

Secondly, in terms of the purpose of case study, Yin (2003) offers his classifications which are *exploratory*, *descriptive* and *explanatory* (p. 5). According to him, the aim

of an exploratory case study is to define questions and hypotheses of a subsequent study or determine the feasibility of the desired research procedures, while a descriptive case study gives a comprehensive description of the phenomenon within its own context. Lastly, an explanatory case study shows data relying on cause-effect relationships and explains how events happened. As the aim of my case study is neither descriptive nor explanatory, it should be an exploratory case study that tries to discover how my teaching could be improved and how story-based drama may apply to more domestic classrooms.

To sum up, I have discussed Stake and Yin's taxonomies of different types of case study. My own research will comprise of an exploratory, collective and multiple-case study approach, within which both etic and emic issues will be explored.

#### **4.2.3 Designing and Constructing Case Studies**

Taking a pragmatic stance, Yin (2009) provides a thorough and detailed analysis on how to design a more logical and practically sound case study. He offers four different types of case study design applying to different contexts, including single-case (holistic) designs, single-case (embedded) designs, multiple-case (holistic) designs and multiple-case (embedded) designs (ibid., chapter 2).

According to Yin, the present study should be of the last type, I have conducted the teaching in two primary schools and each will 'involve more than one unit of analysis' (ibid., p.50). In this thesis, I will name the two schools School A and School B, in which the former is situated in a city centre while the latter has a rural setting. The smallest unit in my case study is each session taught in the fieldwork; there were fifteen sessions taught in total, including one preparatory workshop and three story-based schemes of work in each school. As relatively better teaching effects were achieved in School B, I will mainly examine the data collected in this



school in the form of three case studies, which are the preparatory workshop as well as the first story-based workshop as the first one, the second story-based workshop as the second one and third story-based workshop as the third. In addition, I will also analyze a separate case study consisting of a gifted child's drama experiences in School A. To sum up, I will focus on four different case studies emerging from the fieldwork and more details will be provided in the Data Analysis chapter.

Besides designing, Patton (1990) offers a comprehensive description of the process of constructing case studies, which can be illustrated in the following table (ibid. p. 388). His illustration will help me have a clear picture in mind and always think about how to gather data and generate a holistic portrayal of my case study step by step, aiming at producing 'robust, rigorous, informative, and significant studies' (Duff, 2007, p. 43).

Step 1	<p>· <i>Assemble the raw case data</i></p> <p>These data consist of all the information collected about the person or program for which a case study is to be written, including all the interview data, the observational data, the documentary data, impressions and statements of others about the case and so on.</p>
Step 2 (optional)	<p>· <i>Conducted a case record</i></p> <p>This is a condensation of the raw case data organizing, classifying, and editing the raw case data into a manageable and accessible package.</p>
Step 3	<p>· <i>Write a case study narrative</i></p> <p>The researcher presents a holistic portrayal of a person or program in a readable and descriptive way, making accessible to the readers all the information necessary to understand that person or program.</p>

#### 4.2.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of Case Studies

As no single approach is perfect, case study research has its strengths and weaknesses. Nisbet and Watt (1984) offer a comprehensive summary of the merits and demerits of case study. According to them, case studies have the advantages of being readable and intelligible, catching unique but easily neglected features of a situation and are always strong on reality. They may provide insights to other similar cases, are flexible and can be undertaken by a single researcher instead of a full research team. They also have the capacity for embracing and building in unexpected events and uncontrolled variables. Besides strengths, they also point out the possible weaknesses of case study, which are listed below (cited in Cohen et al., 2000, p. 184):

1. The results may not be generalized except where other readers/researchers see their application.
2. They are not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective.
- 3 They are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity.

From the table we can see case studies are criticized as being selective. According to Cohen et al. (2000), it is essential for case study researchers to pick up 'the *significant few* from the *insignificant many* instances of behaviour' (ibid., p. 185), and it is the significance of the infrequent but critical incidents that make the researcher insightful into the real dynamics of the case being studied. Besides, this case study also seems to have problems of observer bias. To avoid this, there will be critical self-reflection throughout the research process as examined in the reflective practitioner research section of this thesis.

Most importantly, the common criticism of case study research is the problem similarly described by Nunan (1992) as 'the obvious difficulty of arguing from the single instance to the general' (ibid., p. 81), which could be traced back to the paradox of case study discussed previously. Besides the former discussion, Punch and Oancea (2014) provide a comprehensive analysis and clarification of the possible relationship between generalisability and case study research (ibid., p. 151-155). According to them, for some case studies the main purpose is not to generalise, but rather to understand complexity and entirety by studying a case in its own context. However, such context-dependent knowledge may lead to naturalistic generalization, as Stake suggests: 'even intrinsic case study can be seen as a small step toward... generalisation... especially in a case that runs counter to the rule' (Cited in Punch & Oancea, ibid., p. 151). By helping people deepen their understanding and extend their experience of what they already know, case study makes contributions to the knowledge of generalisation. Besides this, if the purpose of a case study is to seek for generalisation and external validity, as discussed previously, Yin (2009) suggests case study researchers adopt two or more cases for establishing a direct application to generate more convincing analytic conclusions, where researchers focus on conceptualising rather than merely describing and aim at developing new concepts to capture some aspect of the case being studied. As Punch and Oancea (2014) point out, a case can suggest such generalisation, either in terms of insights that 'speak' to people in other cases, by raising concepts to be tested in future study, or challenging previous research by putting forward new propositions.

Furthermore, Punch and Oancea (2014) have also examined how good case studies make contributions to educational research in four aspects. Firstly, the study of a special case can be learned from in its own right. As the case might be unique and not yet understood, it is worthwhile to develop an in-depth understanding of the

case itself. In my research, as mentioned previously, I met with one particular boy during the teaching, whose case I believe to be worthy of being studied. Secondly, case study can offer in-depth understanding of certain important aspects of a new or problematic area, by enabling researchers to discover the significant features, building an understanding of them, and conceptualising them for future study. With regards to my study, the four case studies of teaching in different primary schools were intended to help me generate an understanding of how the teaching could be improved as a learner drama teacher, as well as how story-based drama could be accepted and developed in the Chinese educational context as a newly introduced teaching strategy. Thirdly, the exemplary knowledge produced by case study may connect productively with the experiences of the participants and readers of the research. For example, my own progress in becoming a drama teacher might be useful for some teachers as a guidance domestically, as we may share similar difficulties and confusions. Additionally, the drama workshops conducted can also be examples illustrating how this kind of teaching was accepted in the current educational environment. Lastly, case study research can be a necessary complement for other research approaches. In my research, the four case studies of teaching will provide enough data and information for me to conduct the reflective process as a reflective practitioner.

To sum up, it is worthwhile for researchers to keep in mind the strengths as well as weaknesses of case study methodology and to consider both when presenting claims for knowledge. To produce good case studies, researchers also have to be concerned with the trustworthiness and validity of the gathering and analysing of their data, using the strategy of triangulation, for example, to provide a thick description of the case. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

### **4.3 Research Methods**

According to Blaikie (2007), research methods refer to 'the ways in which evidence is obtained and manipulated, or, more conventionally, to techniques of data collection and analysis' (ibid., p. 232). In this study, different methods of data collection were adopted, as suggested by Punch and Oancea (2014). In this way the research may increase the likelihood of informing research questions from various sources and perspectives, enabling researchers to gain a rounded view towards their issues of concern. Briefly speaking, the main research tools adopted in the present study were observations, interviews, fieldnotes and research journals, drama conventions as well as questionnaires. In the following passage, I will firstly provide a summary of the data gathering process, including a general timeline. Then, each of the above methods will be scrutinized separately and I will explain how they are utilised in my study. This will be followed by a discussion on the use of triangulation to try to ensure the validity of data.

#### **4.3.1 The Process and General Timeline of Gathering Data**

As stated previously, there are two main focuses of my research. One is learning to teach moral education as an inexperienced drama teacher, the other is the possible implications of such a teaching approach in the current Chinese educational context. Throughout this study, I have continued to focus on both issues. In the field work, fifteen sessions were taught in total for 15 children in School A and 16 children in School B from May to June 2016, among which one preparatory workshop and three story-based workshops were conducted in each school. To gain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the two issues mentioned above, different research methods were adopted around the teaching. I will now describe these in more detail, followed by a general timeline of my data collection.

On the one hand, one focus of my research is on the improvement of my teaching abilities as a novice teacher. For most sessions, the schemes for School A were taught on Tuesdays while for School B they were on Thursdays. Therefore, I was afforded some time for evaluation and reflection after conducting my teaching plans in the first school, and could examine how to better deliver the work in the second school. During this process, playfulness, cooperation and ensemble-making were important concepts for me to consider in the creation of a positive environment in my classroom as a novice teacher. The data was gathered around these key ideas as standards for me to reflect on my practice and make progress, with different methods used to achieve this goal. For example, in the planning period of each session interviews were conducted via email or face-to-face with my supervisor to hear critical voices and constructive feedback; then, when implementing the lesson plans, besides the method of participant observation, drama conventions were also used for evaluating the teaching effects that I will explain later; Lastly, a research journal was kept throughout the data collection process as a reflective record of my progress.

On the other hand, in terms of my second research focus - how this kind of teaching might contribute to domestic moral education - interviewing was the main method adopted in this study. For instance, I conducted after-class interviews with children to find out their ideas on this new approach compared with their normal moral lessons; teachers and head teachers from both schools also shared their thoughts with me through face-to-face conversation, such as in what aspects children could benefit from such an approach in terms of their moral growth.

To sum up, the general timeline of the data collection and a summary of the main data collected will be illustrated in the following tables:

<b>Workshop</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>Data Collected (Duration)</b>
Preparatory Workshop in School A	3/5/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 7 boys	Participant Observation	60 minutes
	3/5/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 7 boys	Questionnaire	15 paper Questionnaires
First Story-based Workshop in School A (Lesson 1)	10/5/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 7 boys	Participant Observation	60 minutes
	10/5/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 7 boys	Questionnaire	4 paper Questionnaires
	10/5/2016	Classroom	Boy KTV	Individual Interview	20 minutes
Preparatory Workshop in School B	12/5/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 10 boys	Non-participant Observation	50 minutes
	12/5/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 10 boys	Questionnaire	16 paper Questionnaires
	12/5/2016	Classroom	Miss Hu, 3 teachers from School B	Participant Observation	30 minutes
First Story-based Workshop in School A (Lesson 2)	17/5/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 6 boys	Participant Observation	60 minutes
	17/5/2016	K T V ' s h e a d teacher Mr C h a n g ' s office	Mr Chang	Individual Interview	30 minutes
	17/5/2016	School Yard	KTV's father Mr Wu	Individual Interview	30 minutes
First Story-based Workshop in School B (Lesson 1)	19/5/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 10 boys	Participant Observation	70 minutes
	19/5/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 10 boys	Questionnaire	3 paper Questionnaires

First Story-based Workshop in School A (Lesson 3)	24/5/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 7 boys	Participant Observation	60 minutes
	24/5/2016	Classroom	Boy KTV	Individual Interview	20 minutes
First Story-based Workshop in School B (Lesson 2)	26/5/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 10 boys	Participant Observation	40 minutes
	26/5/2016	Classroom	4 girls and 4 boys	Group Interview	30 minutes
Second Story-based Workshop in School B (Lesson 1)	2/6/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 10 boys	Participant Observation	50 minutes
	2/6/2016	Classroom	3 girls and 3 boys	Group Interview	20 minutes
	2/6/2016	Consulting Room of School B	Ms Qi	Individual Interview	30 minutes
	7/6/2016	Classroom	Boy KTV	Individual Interview	20 minutes
Second Story-based Workshop in School A	12/6/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 7 boys	Participant Observation	40 minutes
Second Story-based Workshop in School B (Lesson 2)	16/6/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 9 boys	Participant Observation	45 minutes
	16/6/2016	Classroom	Headmaster Mr Jiao	Individual interview	30 minutes
Third Story-based Workshop in School A (Lesson 1)	21/6/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 7 boys	Participant Observation	60 minutes



	21/6/2016	Classroom	Boy KTV	Individual Interview	20 minutes
Third Story-based Workshop in School B (Lesson 1)	23/6/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 10 boys	Participant Observation	40 minutes
	23/6/2016	Classroom	3 girls and 5 boys	Group Interview	30 minutes
Third Story-based Workshop in School A (Lesson 2)	28/6/2016	Classroom	8 girls and 7 boys	Participant Observation	60 minutes
	28/6/2016	Classroom	Boy KTV	Individual Interview	20 minutes
Third Story-based Workshop in School B (Lesson 2)	30/6/2016	Classroom	6 girls and 10 boys	Participant Observation	45 minutes
	30/6/2016	Classroom	4 girls and 5 boys	Group Interview	30 minutes

#### 4.3.2 Research Methods in the Study

The main research methods of data collection utilized in this study are listed below, followed by a more detailed discussion of each method respectively.

- Participant observation, of children's behaviours and responses during the teaching of drama workshops.
- Group and individual interviews with the students, teachers, headteachers and parents.
- Fieldnotes and Research journals kept in the fieldwork.

·Questionnaires with the students.

·Drama conventions used as research tools during the teaching, such as still images, writing-in-role and so on.

## **Observation**

As one of the most important data gathering methods, observation has a long tradition in social science studies, especially in educational research (Punch & Oancea, 2014). According to Lofland (1971), when using observation as a research tool, researchers are in 'an on-going social setting for the purpose of making qualitative analysis of that setting' (ibid., p. 93) and can gather 'authentic accounts and verification of ideas' through observations (Mckernan, 1996, p. 63).

Cooper et al. (2006) identify two dimensions in cataloguing different types of observations. According to them, on the one hand in terms of the presence of the observer, observations can be *direct* or *indirect*, the latter needing the support of video recording equipment. On the other hand, in terms of the role of the observer, observations can be either *non-participant* or *participant*. Moreover Flick (1998) offers another dimension considering the degree of structure, as *structured*, *semi-structured* or *unstructured*.

According to the categories of observation listed above, I used both *direct* and *indirect* observation in my fieldwork. For *direct* observation, in the first research phase I observed children's behaviours in the classroom when the teaching plans were being implemented. However, sometimes I was fully immersed in teaching, which made it 'difficult to achieve the distance necessary for systematic observation' (Altrichter et al., 2008, p.105); in this case, video recordings helped me overcome this problem. Video recording equipment was used for getting data for *indirect* observation. By doing so, pupils' verbal and non-verbal behaviours, interaction

patterns, as well as classroom performances could be captured and kept as 'a relatively holistic record of the situation' (Altrichter et al., 2008, p.123). I usually watched the videotapes within one or two weeks, which made it possible for me to revisit any of the children's behaviours that I might have ignored while teaching.

Secondly, my role as a drama teacher made it possible for me to be a *participant* observer. Mason (2002) suggests various aspects of a specific setting in which researchers can immerse themselves and collect data via observation at first hand, such as social actions, relationships, events, locational and temporal dimensions as well as experiential, emotional and bodily dimensions (ibid., p.84). During my teaching sessions, I was 'fully engaged in experiencing the setting' while observing and interacting with the children simultaneously (Denzin 1978, p. 183).

Lastly, the observation conducted in my study was *unstructured*. According to Robson (2002), this type of observation could 'allow the observer considerable freedom in what information is gathered and how it is recorded' (ibid., p. 313). When conducting observation, I was concerned with the participants' responses in the drama sessions, which might contain useful information in terms of the three concepts mentioned previously - playfulness, ensemble-making and cooperation - to remind me whether I was teaching effectively.

While conducting observation for gathering data, I was also aware of the limitations of this method. According to Jones & Somekh (2011), observation may tend to be selective due to the complexity of human behaviours and the impossibility of capturing the whole picture of real life. To decrease the unreliability of data gathered by this technique, observation was used as only part of this multi-method study, complemented by other methods, principally the interviews with children and other

teachers, trying to provide other perspectives and gain a rounded view on the research issues.

## **Interviewing**

Frey & Fontana (1991) describe interviewing as one of the most powerful and common ways in which people try to understand their fellow human beings, while according to Kvale, an interview is 'an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest' that is often conducted through conversations for knowledge production (1996, p. 14, cited in Cohen et al., p. 267). Furthermore, interview is regarded to be the most prominent data collection method in qualitative research by Punch & Oancea (2014), as a good way of 'exploring people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality' (ibid., p. 182). Among various definitions, Rubin & Rubin (2011) sum up three common features shared by qualitative interviews, which are: firstly, they normally have the foundation of a naturalistic and interpretive philosophy; secondly, they are extensions of ordinary conversations; thirdly, the interviewees are partners rather than subjects to be examined or tested in the research process.

In terms of types of interviews, Frey & Fontana (1991) offer a thorough description of various forms of interviewing according to different aims and applied situations. According to them, besides the common type of face-to-face individual verbal communication, interviewing can also take other forms, such as face-to-face group interviews, mailed or self-administered questionnaires, as well as telephone surveys. Considering the degree of structure, they identify that there are *structured*, *semi-structured* and *unstructured* interviews.

In my study, semi-structured interviews were adopted, due to their merits as summarized by Wellington (1996): they are controlled but flexible and not completely pre-determined. Individual interviews and group interviews were also implemented

and used in a semi-structured manner for detecting problems and possible meanings that emerged from my teaching. For most adult interviewees, such as teachers, headteachers and parents, I conducted individual interviews, as, according to Bryman (2008), this form of interviewing may help to build up an atmosphere of trust and rapport for conversations including sensitive issues. For instance, in the case of the ten-year-old boy KTV I mentioned earlier, the interview with his father was conducted individually, without the presence of other people; he could then provide information, for example, about the premature birth of the boy several years earlier. I also interviewed Boy KTV individually in the study, who preferred in-depth communication as a gifted child. In our discussions, his ideas were often impressive and he was good at using metaphors to illustrate his theoretical understanding, which I will try to translate directly in analysing the interviews with him later. During the process of translation, I was aware that I was negotiating between two different languages and cultures. Moreover, as claimed by Benjamin (1999), 'no translation, however good it may be, can have any significance as regards the original' (p.71). To guarantee the equivalence or fidelity of my translation, I invited Weiwei as a critical friend, a Masters student of Professor Ma Liwen from Beijing Normal University, who has special expertise in both language translation and childhood education. With her help, I tried to achieve 'the relevant translation', what Derrida sees as the best translation we can hope for, positioned somewhere between 'absolute relevance, the most appropriate, adequate, univocal transparency, and the most aberrant and opaque irrelevance' (Derrida & Venuti, 2001, p. 179). In addition, his original words in Chinese will be included in the appendix as well. On the other hand, group interviews were conducted in most circumstances for children to 'give voice to their own interpretations and thoughts' (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, p. 181). According to Eder

and Fingerson (2001), children tend to feel more comfortable and less pressured with the company of their peers. Cohen et al. (2000) also makes it clear that group interviews encourage children to challenge each other and use their own style of language. In terms of my interviews with young children, I was always reflexive and aware of the power balance, trying to avoid asking them leading questions. Moreover, as pointed out by Arksey and Knight (1999), there are different methods to generate conversation with children, such as drawing pictures, using games and sentence completion exercises (p.118). Hence, for example, the children were asked to draw pictures that might illustrate specific incidents of moral weight within the drama sessions. Their drawings were used as visual stimulus for the interviews, with which they would be free to share their feelings and reflect on their learning experiences in different settings.

There are both strengths and limitations in conducting interviews. Speaking of the strengths, Oakley (1981) identifies that in interviews the face-to-face communication between researchers and interviewees may enable the silent to be heard. Johnson and Turner (2003) point out that interviews can offer in-depth data that 'allow good interpretive validity' (ibid., p.308). Opie and Sikes (2004) indicate that interviewing is quite a useful tool in seeking children's views when they seem reluctant to express their ideas on paper, either because of boredom of writing or having difficulties in doing so.

On the other hand, interviewing also has challenges worthy of consideration. For example, in-person interviews are considered to be very time-consuming for both researchers and interviewees (O'Toole, 2006, p. 111). In my study, owing to the participants' tight schedules, I usually prepared the key questions beforehand on a piece of paper to guarantee the duration would not exceed half an hour. In addition, according to Wellington (1996), in group interviews children with dominant personalities tend to lead the conversation, thus the quieter ones may lose the opportunity

for contribution. Therefore, I was careful to divide the groups in accordance with the children's genders, personalities and friendships when conducting the fieldwork. I also tried to engage different children in the group interviews to get relatively comprehensive views and voices from each of them. More details were included in the previous table, such as the date, location and participants. The content of these interviews will be discussed in the data analysis chapter.

### **Fieldnotes and Research Journals**

Fieldnotes and research journals were important methods for me because 'they build a picture of classroom participants and interactions and provide a record of the process of problematising and elucidating the teaching and learning issues' (Burns, 1999, p. 85). According to LeCompte et al. (1993), fieldnotes are usually written down shortly after the event has occurred and may consist of symbols, key words or fragments as a reminder of what happened. Journals, by contrast, written with more time available, can keep record of 'the personal side of the fieldwork equation', such as hopes, fears, confusion and enlightenment, enabling researchers to have a dialogue with themselves (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 134). As suggested by Mckernan (1996), research journals make it possible for novice teachers to maintain 'a reflective stance' (p. 87), alerting them to 'developing thought, changes in values, progression and regression for learners' (p. 84).

Hence, in my study I took quick fieldnotes in class or right after class as a reminder of the information worthy of being written down. Besides this, I also kept research journals for self-expression and as the basis for reflective practice. I usually wrote about four or five hundred words in Chinese in these journals at the end of each workshop, in order to keep a record of issues such as the mistakes I made in class, the children's reactions, advice from other teachers and so on.

### **Drama Conventions**

According to O'Toole (2006), drama conventions can be used as research tools for

process drama as well as forming the devising and rehearsal processes involved in playmaking, to provide 'subtle and indirect forms of data collection' (ibid., p. 110). From this research method, researchers can gather evidence for analysing the level of participation of the children, their understanding of the whole context and specific elements, interpretations of the theme or the dilemma, and reactions to challenges (ibid). Moreover, O'Toole (2006) reminds the researcher not to interfere in the normal teaching of the drama sessions and put unfair pressure on the participants when using this research tool.

In my study, I mainly adopted conventions such as *still images* and *in-role writing* to explore how children interpret, negotiate and articulate moral meanings. For example, in the third story-based workshop in School B, the children were invited to compose still images which illustrated key moments of moral significance in the story, from which I could see their level of understanding of the plots and characters. Another example was in the same workshop in School A. I used the technique of *in-role writing* and asked children to write letters to the old man in role as a villager. One girl was reluctant to share her work with her peers. Later, I learned privately that she wrote: 'We never want to see you again because of your bad temper'. From this, I remembered in the previous activity when the children were asked to use still images to explore the possible reasons why the old man chose to isolate himself from others, this girl was chuckling when her group showed that the old man fell ill but nobody took care of him, as she felt it was funny to lie on the floor to perform the role of a 'patient'. I also came to realize that I had not achieved my initial teaching goal of helping the children to feel sympathy for the old man and re-accept him as a member of the group. Through the experience learned here, I changed the drama convention of *still images* when teaching the same activity to the children in School B. Instead, I asked them to create a story together to explore



what might happen to this old man in his early days that led to his isolation, in which the children could use their imagination to dig deeper into the causes of the character's bad temper. The outcomes suggested better teaching effects were achieved through the adoption of this drama strategy, and I will revisit the story made by those children in the data analysis chapter.

### **Questionnaires**

According to Gray (2009), a questionnaire is a research method in which participants are asked to answer the same set of questions in a prearranged order, which helps the researcher to 'explore the prevalence' of their views (Sharp, 2009, p. 62). Although I adopted the questionnaire as a method in my case, I am aware that this is basically a qualitative research with some quantitative elements in the form of questionnaires instead of a mixed-method study. The questionnaires form a small part of the research that I will draw analysis from to complement the qualitative data I collected; however, I will not analyse them in the same way in a full quantitative study, which is a limitation of my use of this method. Instead of claiming statistical significance, they were used as a quick way of gaining information from the children to help me evaluate and reflect upon the effects of the teaching.

In my study, the questionnaires were semi-structured, for they contained both closed and open-ended questions (Sharp, 2009, p. 62). Closed questions are those 'to which all possible answers are provided', involving a greater standardization of measurement (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 11), while open-ended questions give participants the opportunity to express more freely their opinions and can also lead them to identify issues not previously anticipated (Cohen et al., 2000). In my design, the closed questions came first, followed by the open-ended ones. The advantage of using questionnaires was that it could help me get responses from the children quickly and directly. However, the disadvantage was that sometimes the

participants were reluctant to complete them, which I will explain below.

Before conducting the fieldwork, I planned to give the children small questionnaires to fill in at the end of each session in order to quickly get their feedback, which included about 10 closed and one or two open-ended questions. For example, questionnaires were handed to children in both schools after the initial session of the first story-based workshop<sup>6</sup>. This questionnaire contained 10 closed questions, such as whether they liked the story, whether they enjoyed the group work and whether they could fully express their ideas in class, for which the children had three options to choose including *Agree*, *Disagree* and *Not Sure*. In addition, there was also one open-ended question asking them to offer some advice on my teaching. However, I soon realized that they all had a heavy burden of schoolwork and the completion of a questionnaire was not a favourite task for them, as it involved writing that asked for time and effort (Gillham, 2008, p. 13). In particular, they were reluctant to respond to open-ended questions. Thus, I decided to use the form of group interviews to ask the questions originally planned for the questionnaires in the following sessions.

Besides this, at the end of the Preparatory Workshop, I managed to give the children from each school 15 minutes to fill in one questionnaire respectively, which was guaranteed to be short and in line with the tastes of children. Designed in three parts, this questionnaire included 12 closed questions and 3 open-ended ones, as shown below.

### Questionnaire:

#### *Section 1: About Myself*

· I am a: ☐ girl    ☐ boy

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<sup>6</sup> See the original full version of this questionnaire in the appendix.

· My age is \_\_\_ years old.

## *Section 2: Ideas on Moral Education*

*1. Do you think moral education should teach you:*

- ☐ *to obey moral rules and regulations*
- ☐ *to help me develop my own moral thinking*
- ☐ *Not sure*

*2. What kind of virtues do you respect the most?*

- ☐ *Selflessness*
- ☐ *Courage*
- ☐ *Justice*
- ☐ *Excellence*
- ☐ *Loyalty*
- ☐ *Creativity*

\_\_\_\_\_ *(other virtues)*

*3. Which kind of person do you prefer to be?*

- ☐ *A happy person*
- ☐ *A powerful person*
- ☐ *A useful person*
- ☐ *Not sure*

*4. Do you think everyone needs friends and to belong to a community?*

☐ *Yes, I do.*

☐ *No, I don't.*

☐ *Not sure.*

*5. Do you feel quite certain about right and wrong in daily life?*

☐ *Yes, I do.*

☐ *No, I don't.*

☐ *Not sure.*

*6. Who/ What do you think influences you the most in forming your ideas to judge right from wrong? (You can tick no more than two)*

☐ *My parents*

☐ *My teachers*

☐ *My friends*

☐ *TVs, Internet, Newspapers and etc*

☐ *Books*

☐ *Other options \_\_\_\_\_*

*7. Do you have a hero/ heroine in your mind (real and fictional are both fine)? If so, why do you choose him/ her?*

### *Section 3: Ideas on Moral Education Lessons*

*8. Do you like moral education lessons - Morality and Society - taught in your school?*

☐ *Very much*

☐ *Just so so*

☐ *I don't like*

☐ *Not sure*

9. *In moral education lessons you've taught, the common scenes are:*

☐ *Teachers guide students to create situations for free discussion*

☐ *Teachers teach on the platform while students sit still and listen carefully*

☐ *Students are left to learn their textbooks by themselves*

☐ *Being occupied by other major subjects, such as maths or literacy*

10. *Do you think these moral education lessons can help you with your thoughts and deeds?*

☐ *Yes, very helpful*

☐ *Sometimes*

☐ *No help at all*

☐ *Not sure*

11. *Do you think stories may help you think about how people should or shouldn't behave?*

☐ *Yes, I do*

☐ *No, I don't think so*

☐ *Not sure*

12. *Do you have drama experiences before?*

☐ *Yes, a lot*

☐ *Yes, not too much*

☐ *No, never*

*13. What do you feel about the following sessions using drama and stories to teach moral education?*

☐ *Exciting*

☐ *Scaring*

☐ *Curious*

☐ *Other feelings* \_\_\_\_\_

*14. Is there any story you like the most? Any special reasons for that?*

*15. Any suggestions or thoughts about the following sessions? You are more than welcome to write down your ideas.*

In total I recovered 31 questionnaires and gathered useful information about their background, ideas on moral education, preferred ways of learning, thoughts about the conventional moral sessions and so on. In particular, Boy KTV's answers were quite different from the others, which I will discuss more in the data analysis chapter.

#### **4.3.3 Triangulation of the Data**

According to Cohen et al. (2000), triangulation can be defined as 'the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour' (p. 112). Jick (1979) regards triangulation as a powerful way to prove the concurrent validity of data, especially in qualitative research. According to Denzin (1978), the researcher may overcome the inherent bias resulting from single-methods, single-observer and single-theory studies by combining multiple observers, methods, data sources and theories.

Stake (1995, pp. 112-115) provides an analysis of four types of triangulation raised by Denzin (1978), which are *data source triangulation*, *investigator triangulation*, *theory triangulation* as well as *methodological triangulation*. There are different interpretations of Denzin's protocols, among which Stake's (1995) analysis is best suited to my practice. Thus, in the following passage, the specific analysis of each type of triangulation is mainly based on Stake's work, followed by how they were adopted in my study.

Firstly, according to Stake (1995), *data source triangulation* refers to research content being examined at different times, in different places or when people interact differently, to see if the same meaning is carried in various kinds of context. In my study, similar teaching schemes were applied in two schools with different backgrounds, one in an urban city and the other in the countryside. These different settings helped me to explore issues to do with both research questions with children from very different backgrounds.

Secondly, *investigator triangulation* means that 'other researchers take a look at the same scene or phenomenon' (ibid., p. 113). In the fieldwork, my supervisor reviewed my drama schemes prior to each session, taking a critical stance and giving me constructive advice throughout the research process. Additionally, some other teachers also shared with me their observations of children's behaviour as well as criticism and advice on my teaching strategies. All their help contributed to the restriction of my subjectivity in gathering data and the interpretation of findings.

Thirdly, *theory triangulation* means choosing co-investigators with alternative theoretical viewpoints. A domestic drama teacher Miss Hu helped me conduct the Preparatory Workshop in School B in my study, and I later reflected on her deeds in setting up the contract with the children, which will be discussed in more detail in the data analysis chapter.

Lastly, *methodological triangulation* is considered as 'multiple methods focused on the diagnosis of the same construct' to improve confidence in interpretation (ibid., p. 114). In my research, different methods were adopted, including *observation*, *interviews*, *fieldnotes and research journals*, *drama conventions* as well as *questionnaires*. These methods were regarded to be of equal value and they made up for the deficiencies of one another. To sum up, as Flick (2004) believes, the use of triangulation encourages researchers to uncover richer interpretations rather than stay in the confirmation of a monotonous understanding.

#### **4.4 Ethical Considerations**

According to Cohen et al. (2000), when undertaking research, it is important for the researchers to achieve a balance between 'the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of the truth, and their subjects' rights and values potentially threatened by the research' (p. 49). In the educational field, because of the involvement of children, the ethical issues that arise can be particularly subtle and complex. For example, the imbalance of power between the teacher and pupils can impact the validity of data. As pointed out by Burton et al. (2008), children 'may feel that they have to give right answers' when they are asked to fill in a questionnaire or take part in an interview, since 'they do not perceive the researcher in you, but the teacher' (p. 54). Therefore, it is essential for researchers to make sure that children's rights are sufficiently protected and generate a sense of trust and respect towards their dignity and integrity throughout the research process. In the present study, the ethical considerations were mainly implemented in the following ways.

Firstly, as suggested by Mills (2007), in order to guarantee that the participants who joined the research project fully understood its nature and were participating on a voluntary basis, it was necessary to obtain informed consent from those involved in the study. In terms of classroom-based research, the involved parties include the



students, their parents (if the learners are children), the teacher, as well as the school administrators. In my research, permission to get into the school and to approach the students was gained in advance from the headmasters of the two primary schools. In addition, I designed and distributed posters<sup>7</sup> in both schools to help children and their teachers have a general idea of my drama sessions and also to make sure that all 31 children engaged in my research were participating on a voluntary basis. Parental consent was also obtained. Consent letters<sup>8</sup> with a brief explanation of the research project were given out, read and signed by the pupils' parents before the commencement of the teaching project. Copies of signed consent forms were retained.

Secondly, during the research process, I was always attentive to the subtle power play that might exist between adult and children. My students were not compelled to participate at all stages of the data collection procedure. I tried my best to ensure that they entered voluntarily into the research process at all times. They were informed of the research content and were invited to participate, but they always had the right to opt to be part of the class and not part of the research process. For example, they were given a short briefing about the study and were asked about their willingness to answer the questionnaires. They had the right to decline the invitation to be interviewed. During the interview sessions, I also did my best to avoid talking about issues that they might be uncomfortable with.

Thirdly, the participants' personal information was kept as confidential and reported anonymously in the study to ensure their privacy. In my research, all the participants' names have been changed to pseudonyms for this purpose. None of the photos, audio-visual documents or children' drawings have been used for other

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<sup>7</sup> More details about the poster will be introduced in the Data Analysis chapter.

<sup>8</sup> A full version of the consent letter will be provided in the Appendix.

purposes. Furthermore, in accordance with the prescribed principles and criteria set out in the University's code of conduct for research, I also submitted an application for ethical approval to the Institute of Education of the University of Warwick prior to undertaking my research.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have introduced the methodologies and main methods adopted in the present study. Although this research design is incapable of providing a grand view of teaching moral education through drama in a general sense, it can produce some data to testify to the effects of this new approach being applied in two Chinese primary schools as a complement to conventionally didactic moral approaches. This is only a small scale research project, but it is intended to shed some light that future research in the area may be able to make use of.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Data Analysis of the Study**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will present the data gathered in my field work that appears relevant to my research concern. In my study, one preparatory workshop and three story-based workshops were taught in both School A and School B. To present more clearly, I intend to examine the findings in terms of four case studies, which are the preparatory workshop as well as the first story-based workshop as the first case study, the second story-based workshop as the second one, third story-based workshop as the third one and a separate case study of a gifted boy as the last one. As I have already provided a timetable including dates, participants and lesson durations in both schools in the methodology chapter, in presenting the data here I will first offer a basic introduction of the teaching of all workshops, then analyse the critical incidents in each case study. In summarizing the lessons, I will present the details, durations and teaching intentions of the activities. For each story-based workshop, I will additionally provide a summary of the story and the reasons why I chose it. Before moving on to the description of the sessions taught in the field work, I will first give a brief introduction of the schools and participants in my study, followed by a rationale for adopting critical incident theory in analysing the data. More details are shown as follows.

#### **5.2 Schools and Participants**

Both schools were introduced by Professor Ma Liwen, working in the Faculty of Education of Beijing Normal University, who is the domestic pioneer in the field of Drama in Education. To be consistent with the previous chapters, I will

continue to call them School A and School B in the following passage. Both schools are public primary schools situated in Beijing, the capital city of China. School A, located in the city centre, is an affiliated primary School of a well-known university, at which more than half of the children's parents work. Established in 1958, it now has about 1700 pupils studying in 42 classes, with seven classes in each grade. School B, situated on the outskirts of the city and surrounded by a river, has a specialty and tradition in teaching children athletics, calligraphy and traditional instruments in their spare time. Founded in 1936, it now has about 360 pupils studying in 12 classes, with two classes in each grade.

In terms of selecting the participants, Professor Ma recommended Ms. Chen to help me, who taught the module of moral education in School A. Together we designed a poster to explain the content of the teaching with the covers of the picture books attached, as shown below. In the poster, we also put boredom and didacticism in the red circle on the left, meaning hopefully there would be neither of them in the drama class. Instead, we emphasized gaming, performing and storytelling on the right side for children to have a basic idea of the main elements of my sessions. Ms. Chen helped me distribute the posters to the head teachers of Grade Three and Grade Four. In this way, there were 15 children who showed their interests and volunteered to join, including 8 girls and 7 boys. Among them, 12 came from Grade Three while another 3 were from Grade Four; their ages were from around 9 to 10 years old. Similarly, I found another 16 children consisting of 6 girls and 10 boys in School B, who came from the same grades and age group as School A. In a word, all of the children participating in my study were there on a voluntary basis.



As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, although the lesson plans were similar, the teaching conducted in School A was on Tuesdays while that of School B was on Thursdays, giving me some time to reflect on the teaching effects in the first school and examine how to do better in the second. Thus, the results achieved in School B were relatively better than School A. Due to the limitation of length, the summary of the lessons and analysis of critical incidents from the story-based workshops will mostly be based upon the teaching conducted in School B, while the incidents from the preparatory workshop and a separate case study of one 10-year-old boy will come from School A, as revealed in the following passage. In the fieldwork, I taught most sessions myself except for the Preparatory Workshop in School B and the reasons are presented as follows.

### 5.3 Rationale for Using Critical Incident Theory in Analysing the Data

In this chapter, the data collected in my fieldwork will be presented in the form of four case studies. After explaining the lesson plans, I will also describe and analyse a series of *critical incidents* emerging from each case study, that I will use as a strategy for the data analysis. I will now provide the theoretical justification of adopting this and discuss how I believe it illuminates my practice in the fieldwork as a learner teacher.

As defined by Woolsey (1986), as an exploratory, qualitative method of research, the critical incident approach is reliable and valid in generating a detailed and comprehensive description of a specific situation or event. According to him, *incidents* refer to ‘things which actually happened and were directly observed’, while being *critical* means ‘things which significantly affected the outcome’ (Woolsey, 1986, cited in Bruster & Peterson, 2012, p. 174, italics in the original). In terms of its advantages for educational research, Tripp (1993) points out that this instructional tool provides a deeper and more profound level of reflection that enables teachers to effectively and critically assess their practice for self-improvement, as it goes beyond a detailed description of an event in a particular context, focusing on the general meaning of the incident. Furthermore, Griffin (2003) offers a two-step critical Incident format for pre-service teachers to learn to connect the specific learning/teaching events in their daily classroom practice to the broad field of education and professional standards through reflective thinking. First, it includes an in-depth *description* of a non-routine but very revealing event that could be either problematic or pleasing, and such description requires concrete and rich details. Second, and more importantly, it involves an exploration of the possible *meaning*, a detailed reflection and analysis of the incident. In this way, the learner teachers need to find the generalizable aspect of the event and its connection to theory, then make clear their own positions regarding the general meaning before proceeding to describe how future work might be influenced by these new understandings (ibid., p. 210, italics in the original).

In my research, I utilised this technique as a framework for initiating the reflective process of my teaching. In accordance with my research concerns, the critical incidents described in my study can be classified into two types. On

the one hand, there are a range of problematic incidents that emerged in my classroom, difficult to resolve for an inexperienced teacher, that caused me to pause, think back, and try to find solutions in order to improve my practice. On the other hand, there are also incidents that illustrate drama's potential in facilitating children's moral learning compared with conventional approaches. Both sets of incidents will be described and analysed in detail in this chapter, and will be further theorised in the Discussion chapter.

## **5.4 Presenting the Data**

### **5.4.1 Case Study One: Preparatory Workshop followed by Story-based Workshop One**

#### **The Lesson of the Preparatory Workshop**

When preparing the scheme for the preparatory session, my supervisor professor Joe Winston suggested that I follow his book, *Transforming the Teaching of Shakespeare with the Royal Shakespeare Company* (2015), and learn from what he did when children were first introduced to a drama class. In this study, he used activities such as Boal handshakes, name games, crossing the circle, clapping games and ensemble walking (pp. 56-57). Moreover, he also advised me to introduce the players to the need of respecting specific rules for drama practices; as such, I decided to set up a contract together with the students after we had finished the games. In this way I worked out the initial version of the scheme. To guarantee the practical effects, I showed it to Miss Hu, a colleague of Professor Ma Liwen. Having a specialty in playing drama games with young children, Miss Hu was very interested in my scheme and asked if she could conduct the teaching in School B based on my version. I quickly agreed, since I knew she was working on a project with School B and quite familiar with the environment there; also, it would be a good opportunity

for me to learn from an experienced teacher. Thus, for the preparatory session, I will first describe Miss Hu's teaching in School B in the form of a table, and later discuss the critical incidents from School A based on a similar scheme as in School B.

Preparatory Workshop in School B		
Sequence of Activities	Duration (Approximately)	Justification of Activities
1. To start with, Miss Hu told the children to stand in a circle with her facing inwards. She made a brief self-introduction and asked the children to introduce themselves in turn by presenting their names, ages and so on. Then she suggested playing a managing game that once she clapped hands for twice, the children should clap three times and pay attention to her.	5 minutes	According to Miss Hu, introducing a managing game could not only help teachers get children's attention when they need, but also promote the virtue of cooperation.



<p>2. Then she guided the children to come up with new names for drama class step by step. Firstly, she asked each child to speak out a vegetable's name that they could repeat. Secondly, she asked them to raise an animal's name within three characters. Thirdly, she informed the children they would all have an animal name for the drama class so that they had to think out two animal names for himself/herself in three seconds to avoid repetition. Fourthly, she told children to speak out loudly his/her animal name in Turn in the form of 'Hello everyone, I am ...' being accompanied with a gesture for that animal, then other children were asked to repeat the gesture and say together 'Welcome you, ...'</p>	<p>12 minutes</p>	<p>Firstly, this activity encouraged turn-taking when children were asked to speak in order, which was in line with the values such as equality and respect encouraged in the new curriculum of moral education. Secondly, the design in the end could make children feel accepted by a community when others repeated their gestures and said welcome, promoting the moral attitude of being collaborative.</p>
<p>3. She told the children to walk in the space and behave in response to her signals such as walk and stop. After a few rounds, as they were walking in the space, she asked children to make eye contact and say hello to each other; subsequently they were advised to keep quiet and greet others using their bodies such as feet and hips; after that they were asked to imagine they were in their seventies and greet each other in an old voice. Then each child was told to choose a friend and an enemy among their partners in secret and try to keep their friends between themselves and the enemies while walking.</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>	<p>As suggested by Winston &amp; Tandy (2009, p. 4), such a game could encourage children to share the space and be sensitive to others in playful ways. For example, having enemies in this game was designed to arouse playfulness rather than teach them to set others against themselves in class.</p>

<p>4. She asked the children to sit on chairs in a circle facing each other and informed them they were about to play a game 'Fruit Salad'. She took turns to name each child in the sequence of APPLE, ORANGE and PEAR. Then she sat on a chair in the middle and told them when she called APPLE all the children being named APPLE should leave their chairs to find a different one, as should ORANGE and PEAR if they were called. After practising for three rounds, she named herself APPLE and joined them, so that the one failed to find a chair had to sit in the middle and give the next order. After a few rounds, she told children they could also call two fruits together or 'Fruit Salad' which meant all participants had to find a different chair.</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>	<p>Firstly, as stated by Brandes &amp; Ginnis (1996, p. 43), this game could help to break down the barriers among players as everyone was given a chance to play including the teacher, intended to enhance their mutuality and trust as a group. Secondly, children could also learn the importance of obeying rules of the game. According to Winston (2000a, p. 101), an important educational feature of games lies in their potential to help children realize certain approved rules are necessary for positive social interactions.</p>
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<p>5. The children enjoyed the previous game a lot. Miss Hu then suggested that they make up a contract together to guarantee they had more fun in the following sessions. She advised each child to contribute at least one opinion they truly identified, even it might seem similar with others' views. After two or three minutes' thinking, the children started to express their ideas one after another while sitting on chairs in a circle facing inwards. After discussion, these rules were written on a piece of paper, such as DO NOT LAUGH AT OTHERS, LISTEN TO THE TEACHER CAREFULLY and so on, among which each child's animal name was also written down beside the rule he/she raised. Furthermore, they also discussed measures of punishment if someone went against the contract, which were firstly it was better to communicate and listen to the reasons, secondly if someone refused to communicate then he/she should stop joining games for a while and calm down a bit, thirdly if someone refused to reflect on himself/herself then the teacher and the child who raised the specific rule being violated could decide together the next step. After setting up the contract, Miss Hu thanked the children for joining and informed them it was the end of the lesson.</p>	<p>12 minutes</p>	<p>Firstly, as believed by Neelands (2004, p. 54), a contract in drama class could ensure the pupils feel safe to use the space with the teacher and other members, by negotiating some ground rules and behavioural boundaries. Secondly, children were also given a chance to work together in an ensemble. As argued by Neelands (O'Connor, 2010, p. 156), this could help them to become a self-managing, self-governing and self-regulating community. Thirdly, setting up the contract was also expected to be in accordance with the virtues promoted in the 24-word Core Socialist Values, such as democracy, equality and justice.</p>
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## **A Summary of the Story in Story-based Workshop One**

The story written by Antonia Barber, illustrated by Erroll le Cain, and published by Red Fox, tells of a lonely girl with no name and no company, who explores her own identity by trying to find her name and home. It takes place in a palace on the top of a snow mountain, where the girl lives with no one else but her Father, a powerful Enchanter. She never goes out of the palace and they both have no names. The Enchanter could maintain their wealthy and comfortable life using his magic, and also gives the girl enough story books to pass the time so that she will not disturb him when he devotes himself wholeheartedly to his search for the secret of eternal life. From reading, the girl learns that everyone has a name and there are many lands with different people and different lifestyles beyond the palace. Therefore, she enters the room where the Enchanter is immersed in his magic and tells him of her confusion. However, the Enchanter intends to hide the truth and cheats her that she was created by him from a rose when he felt lonely. Hearing this, the girl persuades him to turn her back into a rose for one more day, but the experience tells her that she was never a rose, as do the experiences of being turned into a fish and a fawn. Being convinced that the Enchanter would never tell the truth, she plans her escape and wishes to be transformed into an eagle. But her Father could read her mind and, smiling, tells her she was never an eagle but a 'pretty flying bird'. Being turned into a bird for one day, the girl leaves the palace and starts her painful journey to fly over the snow mountain. In the end she manages to reach a small village at the foot of the mountain, turning back to human form and fainting on the roadside. She is then rescued by a shepherd, who carries her to his house shared with his mother. The girl gradually regains consciousness and she finds out an old woman has been

taking great care of her with tears. The woman explains that she brings back the memory of her little girl who got lost many years ago. There was once a wealthy merchant who had rested at her house, amused by the young daughter, and had wished to take her away in exchange for lots of gold. The mother had refused him, but the girl then disappeared soon after. The Daughter feels that this is her own story and wants to know the girl's name eagerly. The woman tells her it is 'Thi-Phi-Yen', which truly means 'Pretty Flying bird'. The girl feels great joy to find her name and mother, and she decides to settle down with her family where she can finally feel peace and happiness in her heart.

### **Reasons for Choosing the Story**

I first came across this tale when browsing the shelves of the picture book area in Warwick library, and quickly attracted by its beautiful cover and narration. Later, I also found my supervisor professor Joe Winston and Miles Tandy had designed a scheme of work based on this story in their book *Beginning Drama 4 – 11* (2009, pp. 89-91). Since their initial intention was to help children complete a performance in a school hall, I revised it to some extent with my supervisor's help to meet with the teaching goals in my own class. The reasons I decided to use this story for the field work are listed below.

Firstly, according to Winston & Tandy (2009), this story creates a fantastic world of magic which could easily draw children into its fictional world to explore certain issues such as 'identity, parent-child relationships, the nature of power and the inevitability of death' (ibid., p. 89). This fits well with the children's age of around 9 to 10 years old in my study. Secondly, I have a personal preference for this story as a reader with Chinese background. As I studied comparative literature for my master's degree, the characters and

plots in this story easily reminded me of certain archetypes and motifs in Western Literature. For example, the powerful Enchanter may echo with the motif of 'Man sells soul to devil', which is number M211 in Stith Thompson's (1989) *Motif-Index of folk literature* and is best exemplified by the legend of Faust, meaning a person offers his or her soul for favours such as knowledge, wealth and power. Besides this figure, the meaningful way of living the Daughter finally chooses also reminds me of the characters Baucis and Philemon in the fifth act of Goethe's *Faust II*. In Berman's (1983) discussion of the experience of modernity, he revisits Goethe's *Faust* in the opening chapter, namely *The Tragedy of Development*. According to him, this old couple represent the good side of human nature in the modern setting which causes Faust to lose his sight and begin to achieve salvation. Moreover, compared with Goethe's Faust, this story is written by a female writer and the main character is a heroine instead of a hero, which offers me another perspective to learn about and reflect on Western literature and culture. As a teacher, on the one hand I feel that this story could help to provoke discussion with the children about the different choices of living made by the Enchanter and the Daughter. On the other hand, the Daughter's insistence on exploring self-identity and the adherence to her own values could also be helpful for those children who may get used to obeying orders from their teachers and parents. Therefore, in my knowledge, this story may convey rich information worthy of discussion with domestic young children. Thirdly, unlike the real-life events in current textbooks for teaching morality, this story may leave more space for children's imagination and their own construction of meanings. For example, they may wonder what the Enchanter's ending might be, since the author has not mentioned this in the story. For such a curiosity, I could encourage them to devise by them-

selves and generate conversations based on these ideas, which may help to build their own understanding of the character and the story.

## The Lessons of the Story-based Workshop One

Workshop of The Enchanter's Daughter in School B		
Lesson 1		
Sequence of Activities	Duration (Approximately)	Justification of Activities
1. I asked the children to stand in a circle facing each other, introducing myself and my project to them as the start. Then they were told to speak out the animal names in turn to make sure they still remembered them.	3 minutes	To build up the rapport between us and remind children of their new identities in the drama class.
2. I asked them to walk in the space and behave in response to my signals such as walk, stop, clap and jump. I also asked them to move between freezes in the form of a snow mountain and a palace.	3 minutes	The warm-up activity aimed to boost their energy, also introduce them to the setting of the story by building up an imagined world using their bodies. As argued by Lev Vygotsky (1967, cited in Edmiston, 2010, p. 202), dramatic play may help children to create an imaginary situation to construct meaning from objects or events.
3. I asked them to sit in a circle facing inwards and informed them the story happened in a palace on a snow mountain where a lonely girl lived with an Enchanter. The story was about how she tried to find her own name. Then I asked them to introduce their real names one by one and share the stories behind them.	4 minutes	As suggested by Edmiston (2003, p. 222), drama activities should not separate participants from the everyday world but to develop more understanding about it. This activity could help to arouse children's curiosity of the story and build the connection with their real lives.



<p>4. I asked the children to sit in two rows facing the platform. After showing them a silk scarf, I told them I would be the Daughter in the story once I put the scarf on, and I would transform back into the teacher when I took it off. Then I put it on, introducing the children to her difficult situation. She lived with an Enchanter immersed in his magic, and she had no other company and knew nothing about the world outside. From stories she had read, she had found everyone should have a name and mother, but she had neither. So gradually she wished to find out more about her own identity.</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>The strategy of Teacher in Role in this activity fitted well with the conversational pedagogy advocated in the new curriculum. On the one hand, the teacher was to explore a difficult situation together with children instead of issuing pre-given answers from a commanding position. On the other hand, children were also invited to share the confusions of the figure in the story. According to Lu &amp; Gao (2004, p. 505), in such a dialogical relationship, children are expected to be not only passive listeners but also active participants to engage in moral learning.</p>
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<p>5. Out of role, I gave the children one minute to think about the Daughter's situation and informed them they would have a chance to ask her some questions. Then I put on the scarf to be the Daughter again, and the children began to ask me questions, such as her age, where her mother was and why the Enchanter spent little time with her. I tried to answer their inquiries in line with the original story. After several questions I asked them as the Daughter, 'My dear friends, since you already know a lot about me, could you help me by offering some advice?' Then one girl suggested she should go and ask the Enchanter, since no one else lived in the palace except him. The Daughter agreed and thanked her, then told the children she would go the next morning as it was bedtime now.</p>	<p>7 minutes</p>	<p>This activity was also in accordance with the student-, situation- and activity-centred approaches advocated by the reform of the moral course, aiming to generate dialogue and promote children's independent moral thinking, such as why the figure in the story suffered a lot and how they could offer help to her.</p>
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<p>6. Out of role, I told the children the Daughter had a dream that night, in which she entered the Enchanter's room secretly and peered into his book of spells, one of which made her hopeful and the other full of dread. I asked them to think about what these spells might be and informed them they were about to work in groups. The tasks were firstly each group creating a still image to show the result of the spell, secondly inventing the words of the spell and chanting them out when they performed the image. I divided them into three groups, asking the first and third group to show spells of hope while the second group to display that of despair. They prepared and performed these spells out and were viewed in turn. The first group picked one character from each member's animal name to make up the words of the spell which could turn the Daughter into a bird to fly away, the second group's spell called 'Soul, Soul, Out of Body' which would make the Daughter's mind totally controlled by the Enchanter, the third group's spell was 'Open Sesame' which could help to open the door of the palace.</p>	<p>12 minutes</p>	<p>In this activity children could develop their emotional intelligence and empathy when they were asked to feel the contradictory emotions side by side. As believed by Winston (2000a, p. 104), moral learning inherently includes the development of children's emotions.</p>
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<p>7. I asked them to sit in two rows and told them the Daughter woke up from the dream and was about to see the Enchanter the next morning. I then showed them a black hooded cloak and informed them when I put it on I would be the Enchanter. I also asked all the children to be the Daughter and try their best to get answers from the Father. I then took the role of the magician and kept up the tension between us as I always turned down their request for the truth. Then out of role, I asked them what the Daughter might feel after this. Some children said sad, and some said frustrated but still determined.</p>	<p>8 minutes</p>	<p>Firstly, when children were asked to perform the Daughter, they were expected to develop <i>the idea of changing one's identity</i> in the new curriculum, encouraging them to care about others, be considerate and learn to put themselves in another person's position. Secondly, it could also demonstrate the view expressed by Henry (2000, p. 59) that drama could provide a more dynamic way of learning compared with the static pattern; here children are given a chance to think and respond quickly to the teacher.</p>
<p>8. I then showed them a doll and told them I was going to take the role of another figure in this story. In role, I told the children I lived in a small village at the foot of the mountain, and this little doll reminded me of my daughter who was lost many years ago. Out of role, the children all identified this was the Daughter's mother. Then I was hot-seated as the mother and tried to answer their questions according to the original story.</p>	<p>7 minutes</p>	<p>In this activity children could express moral attitudes such as care and kindness to the mother, as advocated by the new curriculum.</p>

<p>9. I asked the children if they would like to design a journey to help the Daughter reunite with her mother. They all said yes. I then divided them into four groups and asked them to name themselves A, B, C, D in their groups. I told the children to create their stories in five minutes by asking all the As to design a journey that the Daughter escaped from the palace, all the Bs add magic to the story, all the Cs invent the Daughter's names and how she got separated from her mother, and all the Ds combine other three partners' ideas and make the whole story reasonable. After each group got their story, I gave them another five minutes to prepare performing it out by asking all the Ds to be the narrator and other three children be the performers. In the end of the lesson, we only saw the performances from the first two groups due to time constraints. I told the other two groups that they would perform their stories at the beginning of next lesson.</p>	<p>20 minutes</p>	<p>Miss Hu suggested me to give each child a specific task in this activity. Although in a rather authoritative manner, it was intended to for the following reasons. Firstly, the group work could help to promote such moral values as equality and cooperation in the new curriculum. Secondly, it could also encourage children to demonstrate virtues such as bravery and courage by solving problems through their own efforts as what the Daughter did in the original story. Thirdly, it could represent a narrative of hope when children were asked to invent a bright future for the Daughter, which was in line with the basic value in the new curriculum of encouraging children to live a happy and positive life.</p>
<p>Lesson Two</p>		

1. To start with, we saw the performances from the other two groups. Then the children discussed their favourite parts of each other's stories, especially the various ways of using magic and the different endings of the Enchanter.	12 minutes	Firstly, this activity was in line with <i>the ideas of sharing, pluralism and diversity</i> encouraged in the new curriculum, in which children were given the chance to appreciate dissimilar stories created by themselves. Secondly, they were also expected to be generous to learn from and give feedback to each other.
2. I told them the original story in a Chinese version translated by myself and showed them the illustrations from the picture book using slides.	13 minutes	They could enjoy listening to the original story. As believed by Winston (1999, p. 461), stories could conventionally cause moral reflection, suggest behavioural codes or challenge putative moral knowledge.
3. As soon as I finished telling the story, a boy asked immediately, 'But what happened to the old Enchanter?' Other children were curious too. I told them the original story did not mention that, but they could have their own ideas and draw them out. Then I gave each of them a piece of blank paper and some coloured pens to share, so that they could draw from their own imaginations. These drawings brought a conclusion to this workshop.	15 minutes	This activity encouraged children to use imagination to make their own moral judgements, in which some of them demonstrated the virtues of tolerance and forgiveness promoted in the new curriculum, as will be discussed below as a critical incidence of their drawings.

## **Critical Incidents in Case Study One**

### *Critical Incident One: Games Going Wrong*

It is commonly believed among educators that games have various advantages in promoting children's progress in morality. For example, Brandes & Ginnis (1996, p. 43) summarize the value of games in 13 aspects for enhancing student-centred learning, such as building trust and cooperation, improving self-esteem, promoting concentration and communication. However, games might be misused in practice and the actual effects do not always match the rhetoric as can be illustrated in the two games played in my preparatory session in School A (not listed in the lesson descriptions above).

The first game, 'Sharks', was picked from the book *Beginning Drama 4-11* (Winston & Tandy, 2009, p. 13). I asked the children to stand in a circle facing inwards and explained the basic rule of the game to them, that they should speak out another child's name to avoid being eaten (i.e. touched) by the shark. After that a boy asked me, 'What happens if you are touched by the shark?' I replied thoughtlessly, 'She or he has to be out.' Then I felt the atmosphere became a bit nervous and competitive. One boy even prepared making a gesture of the shark's mouth before I had started. When I began as the first shark, the child whom I was approaching ran to another one while talking loudly the name. I had to stop the game and told them this was an old shark that could not move very fast. The children then calmed down a bit, but when a girl was slightly slow in giving another's name, some of them started to say, 'Out, Out.' Then I began to realize something had gone wrong because I had told them they could be eliminated from the game. The reason why they tried to speak as fast and loudly as they could was due to their wish to stay in the game. This game was not difficult at all, for they could continue playing as

long as they remembered one of their partners' names, but the atmosphere had been warped by a needlessly competitive edge.

Later, I realized my mistake could be attributed to the didactic nature of education I used to receive in which there were always right and wrong answers, and children who failed in exams would be considered as losers and sent down from the group of so-called good students. The children in School A took this for granted as well, so that they said 'Out' when the girl reacted slowly. The school system had made us get used to this mode of thinking, but it works against the teaching agenda of drama games as well as the idea of *both sides win the match* promoted in the new curriculum, aiming to help children realize the harm of excessive competition and build up a rational view of success that 'everyone has individual strengths and everyone is a potentially successful person' (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 503).

According to Brandes & Ginnis (1986), student-centred education is different from the punishment/reward system of teaching, in that when learners are fully engaged they should feel the intrinsic rewards from the fun of learning instead of seeking for outside approval. However, in my practice, I distracted the children's attention from being fully involved by bringing in the punishment/reward system, which raised competition instead of promoting the positive values of cooperation and trust.

The following game, 'Fruit Salad', being selected from the same book *Beginning Drama 4-11* (Winston & Tandy, 2009, pp. 2-3), was affected by the competitive atmosphere of the 'Sharks' and was thus also not played properly. In the book, all the players are suggested to sit on chairs; however, we only had mats, as the space used to be a dancing classroom. In this way I put a mat in the middle of the space to take place of the chair and asked the children to



form a circle, sitting on mats. After we played for several rounds, I found two children standing around the central mat, and one said to the other, 'last time you already sat on this mat, so it should be my turn this time.' Then the girl who had not given orders before sat in the middle and gave the next order. In the following round, there were four children gathering around the isolated mat who all wished to sit on it. They had to play the hand game Rock-Scissors-Paper to decide it in the end. Then I had to stop the game as its initial intention was to encourage children to focus on getting back to be part of the group instead of fighting for what they evidently saw as a powerful and prestigious position in the middle.

'Fruit Salad' was another example of a game not working properly to demonstrate its educational values. The competitive side was over-emphasized in this game, since the children believed only those sitting on the central mat could be considered the winners. In reflection, I recalled when playing this game in the MA course, my supervisor once reminded us to change the rules slightly and get rid of the chairs for five- to six-year-old children because they would most likely wish to be the centre of attention. Obviously, my group of children in School A were less socially mature than those in School B and had behaved in a similar way to younger children. Therefore, the best way to shift their attention from competing might have been to take out the central mat, which would make the middle of the space less appealing to them. In a word, I came to realize from this incident that rules in drama games are malleable, not fixed, and the teacher needs to change them to fit different groups on different occasions for establishing co-operative rather than competitive atmospheres.

### *Critical Incident Two: Setting up the Contract*

In School B, Miss Hu encouraged each child to contribute at least one opinion to the contract. The following table shows the rules children raised in the contract.

To Do		Not to Do	
Listen carefully to the teacher's instructions and do not act for yourself.	Two girls and three boys	Do not laugh at others.	A girl
Learn to respect each other.	A boy	Do not say dirty words.	A boy
To be in harmony.	A girl	Do not play wildly.	A girl
Be quick and do not stay in the last activity when the teacher introduces the next one.	A boy	No casual talk in class.	Three boys
		Do not do things unconnected with the class.	A girl and a boy

In School B, there were no oppositional voices after each child raised his/her ideas, although Miss Hu reminded them once after a boy suggested they should be quick. She said, 'if you have different opinions, just raise them. You can say I prefer to do things slowly. Otherwise we should stick to this rule after it goes into the contract.' All their ideas were written into the contract, in which some similar opinions were merged together. Each child was also asked to sign his/her names besides the specific rule he/she raised. After this they also discussed the issue of punishment. Some children said they should tell the offending child's parents about their misdeeds, some said he/she should face the wall to reflect during their break time, and others said they should be isolated and have some pressure put on him/her.

In School A, I gave each child a sticky note to write down their thoughts, which they were then asked to stick to a big blank sheet of paper. One boy called

KTV (a nickname made by himself for the drama class) refused to take the note and asked me whether he could be allowed not to propose any rules. I was surprised but agreed. I found him sitting on the edge of the group, keeping a certain distance from the rest. After other children finished writing up their opinions, we discussed them one by one and combined some similar ones. In this way, there were five rules written into the contract, as illustrated in the following table.

1. Do not quarrel and try to solve conflicts privately. Do not waste the time of the whole class.
2. Learn to listen attentively and respect each other's right to speak.
3. Learn to use polite language and get along peacefully with each other.
4. Be quiet and in order. Do not push each other and do not play wildly.
5. In group discussion, raise hands before you speak.

In contrast to School B, KTV always had objections so that the whole class needed to discuss in a relatively more democratic way. For example, when discussing the second rule, all the other children agreed but KTV objected. The process of the discussion is shown below.

*KTV: If someone is telling you something that's incorrect, shall we still listen to him/her?*

*A girl: You can forgive him/her.*

*A boy: You can raise up your hands in that occasion.*

*KTV: Then that's a waste of time and goes against the first rule.*

*Others: Vote, vote.*

*KTV: Why the truth should be in the hands of the majority?*

*Me: What KTV said deserves our thinking. But according to me, it would be hard to judge if someone is talking things wrong unless we wait politely until*

*he/she fully expresses his/her ideas. Then you can raise up your hands and express your opinion.*

*Others: Agree.*

*KTV: I object to voting. It is worth less than a penny.*

*Another girl: He speaks dirty words.*

*Others: You should use polite language. You go against the regulations for primary children.*

*KTV: If something really makes you angry then you can say.*

*Another boy: You can tell the teacher.*

*KTV: Why should I tell everything to the teacher?*

*Me: The truth may not be in the hands of the majority, but after discussion, I think these two rules sound more reasonable and maybe we should put them into the contract.*

That was how the second and third rules came into the contract. Then we moved on to the next note, on which a child wrote, 'we should be quiet and orderly.' Most children believed it should be included in the contract. I was also happy with this rule and thought it would be beneficial for classroom management. As a new drama teacher, I was unconsciously worried that the children would go out of control, as they were given more freedom than in the conventional classroom in such a space. Hence, I wrote 'Be quiet and orderly' on the big sheet of paper as part of the contract. However, KTV then raised opposing views.

*KTV: I agree to be quiet but not in orderly.*

*Me: Any reason?*

*KTV: I once read a book, saying you can hardly do anything in the collective.*

*If you always obey the order, sometimes you are ruining your intelligence.*

*(He said very fast and most children could not hear clearly)*

*Others: Let us move to the next one. He is wasting our time.*

*Me: We accept this one?*

*Others: Yes.*

*KTV: I am in a minority of one, so I am forced to accept.*

I was quite impressed by this boy and felt most of his ideas were reasonable. However, as an inexperienced teacher, I did not know how to respond to such an intelligent critique at that time and still used my authority to keep 'Be orderly' in the contract. In reflection, I came to realize the reason for having this rule was because it could provide me an excuse to regulate children's behaviours as they were usually taught in other classes. However, what KTV was concerned about was that his individual self-expression should not be oppressed by such a regulation in the interest of the collective. My deeds apparently went against one basic value dimension in the new curriculum, which encouraged children to develop their own characters, *living an intelligent and creative life* (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 499). From the preparatory session, this ten-year-old boy KTV began to impress me with his honesty and independent thinking. I will write more on him as an individual case study later. These thoughts also went into my research journal and part of it is quoted below<sup>9</sup>.

*3/5/2016 Tuesday*

*Today I conducted the first session in my field work, that I'm not satisfied with. I started to feel nervous from the beginning. Maybe that was one reason leading to the wrong effects of the two games. Even worse, although I felt hesitant, I still put 'Be in order' in the contract. I knew KTV was right in some sense. 'Be in order' means to follow the teacher's instructions as they usually*

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<sup>9</sup> The quotation here is translated by me from the original version written in Chinese.

*do in their normal school life. He just wanted more freedom in drama classes. I think I wrote this rule into the contract largely due to the reason I unconsciously believed it would be beneficial for class management. As a new drama teacher, I was afraid children would go out of control if they were given more freedom in such a space. But I felt contradicted, because I knew such control went against the rhetoric of drama to place the children in the centre and help them to flourish.*

KTV's ideas led me to reconsider the teacher's role in making up the contract. According to Neelands (2004, p. 54), the rules negotiated in a contract should play the same role as those of a game, which offer an approved sanctions system for teachers to guarantee a safe and fair learning environment for the participants. However, in my case, I was wondering how far the children were raising rules for the teacher's sake and how much influence the teacher could impose on shaping the contract. These ideas also led me to consider closely the subtle manipulations when Miss Hu set up the contract with children in School B. Firstly, I thought sometimes she was leading the children in raising the rules. For example, a girl said, 'when the teacher asks us to perform or do other things, we should do as she tells us.' Then Miss Hu praised her, 'Yes, indeed. Her idea is quite nice and respectful. I think someone else has raised similar ideas before, shall we put them together? Well done indeed.' In this way there were five children who contributed similar opinions together. In this rule, Miss Hu also emphasized children had better not act for themselves but to follow the teacher's instructions, which was obviously not in line with the aim to promote children's independent thinking in the new curriculum of moral course. Secondly, it was Miss Hu who suggested to add punishment to the contract. She told the children after they got all the rules, 'These are our rules,

anyone has different opinions? No, good. Then I think we should discuss what to do if someone violates the rules. Imagine someone keeps breaking our rules, then we have nothing to do with him/her? Do not forget it takes efforts to make the contract and our names are all written on it. I hope everyone considers it carefully.' That was why children came up with punishment for those who might break the contract. For Miss Hu, it was obvious the rules were unquestionable and inviolable, which was different from Neelands' (2004, p. 54) ideas that the contract in drama is more than an agreed sanctions system, but embodies an ongoing dialogue to guarantee the quality of learning and interpersonal relations in a drama class; that there should be open discussion of the breaches of the agreements and all participants shall take responsibility for the maintenance of the contract.

However, Miss Hu's method of setting up the contract was highly praised by the headmaster and the other three teachers of School B who came to observe her teaching. When sharing the experience after class, Miss Hu told those teachers that drama class may represent some features of the imperceptible education being promoted in recent years, to permeate teaching intentions to the children in a natural way but still under the charge of the teacher, which could be illustrated in the process of making up the contract. The Children in School B also showed positive attitudes towards the contract in a group interview. They thought it useful in guiding their behaviours in class. They also preferred Miss Hu's lesson to the one telling them to obey various rules in school and society in their moral course. They felt the rules made by themselves sounded more reasonable and were more willing to obey.

Although Miss Hu's class was well received, KTV's intelligent critic kept reminding me there was a deeper tension between the rhetoric of the contract

and the reality of cohesion. According to Foucault (1977), discipline and punishment in educational institutions could make students docile and normalise them to meet with the standards of the school and society. In my study, the contract seemed to be democratic, but to a large extent, Miss Hu was guiding the children to set up the rules and punishment in a subtle way, which she hoped them to internalize as self-discipline.

In the light of my experience in the following story-based workshops, only some of the rules in the contract occurred to me during teaching. For example, in School A, the fifth rule of raising hands was used quite often in group discussions, so that children could express their ideas one after another to guarantee listening effects. The contract took effect on another occasion when two girls formed a little gang and refused to play with other children when dividing into groups. Others thought they were wasting time and left them alone for several minutes. The two then joined in the game again. This incident also made me think that I should inform the children beforehand that in drama class sometimes they could work with their friends but sometimes they had to work with unfamiliar children and make new friends. This could promote the moral attitude of being co-operative and develop their mutuality as a group. We could discuss it as a rule and included it as part of the contract to help them be familiar with some of the conventions of drama class, such as dividing into groups, which was uncommon in their normal classes. As suggested by Winston & Tandy (2009, p. 16), it takes time for children to get used to working with different children in drama lessons - explaining this in the contract may help them to adapt more quickly to this new teaching approach.

In School B, one rule 'Do not laugh at others' was raised by a shy girl. It was obvious she was trying to protect herself and feel safe, as children may have



more chance to connect with each other in the group work of a drama class. However, all the children were encouraged to play charades in the last activity of the second story-based workshop, but she was not ready. She tried her best, but the boy she was partnered with could not understand the message she tried to convey. Some children laughed, and she felt embarrassed. In an interview, the girl told me this was her most unhappy experience in the drama sessions, which led me to reflect upon my practice. As a teacher, I should know better how to protect children. When some children laughed, I forgot to mention the rule 'Do not laugh at others' to them, which rendered the contract ineffective. From this incident I came to realize that, besides the children, the teacher needed to be attentive to the contract as well and manage the class sensitively; the drawing up of a contract itself cannot solve all problems. Another incident that took place in School B was a boy who kept talking with his friend in the last session of the third story-based workshop. I warned him twice, but found him chatting for a third time. I did not punish him according to the contract, instead, I asked him to take the role of the main character in an important activity, which was to represent a little boy crossing the river to save others lives. He then became highly concentrated on the teaching and actively took part in the rest of the activities as part of the community. This incident taught me that playful activities may work better than punishment in bringing back children's attention and encouraging all students to be involved in the drama class.

To sum up, in both school A and School B, the teacher's influence was imposed on the making of the contract, which was largely considered as an instrument for regulating the children's behaviours. However, some incidents in my field work led me to reflect upon how the contract could truly work, help-

ping to build a safe and fair environment for the children in which they would regulate their own behaviours and negotiate the climate for learning, as Nee-lands (2004) expects. Such an outcome requires the efforts of both the students and the teacher.

#### *Critical Incident Three: Drawings of the Enchanter's Ending*

At the end of the first story-based workshop in School B, I asked the children to imagine the Enchanter's ending and express their ideas in the form of a drawing. As some of them were on duty and had to leave early to clean their classrooms on that day, there were ten children participating in this activity. To my surprise, more than half of them thought the Enchanter would be forgiven and live happily with the Daughter together, consistent with the moral attitudes promoted in the new curriculum such as forgiveness and tolerance, which was worthy to be discussed as a critical incident here. To avoid confusion, I will name the children using their animal names taken from our drama lessons in the following passage.

In their drawings and the following group interview, all the children showed their belief that the Enchanter would not uncover the secret of eternal life. Four of them thought he deserved punishment and died alone in the palace. For example, Boy Brown Bear believed the Enchanter remained bloody-minded and eager for immortality after the Daughter left. He kept studying more and more magic books until he passed away before his desk, illustrated in his drawing below.



The other six children designed a brighter ending for the Enchanter, in which the Daughter forgave him. They also explained the reasons for forgiveness in the interview, and some conversations are quoted below.

*Me: Don't you think the Daughter should hate him for locking her in the palace?*

*Boy Pig: Not really. In my experience, my mom sometimes locks me in our house as well when she is busy with her work.*

*Boy Monkey: Me too, my grandfather locks me occasionally.*

*Me: Why do you think he treated the Daughter in that way?*

*Boy Pig: You told us when you took the role of the Enchanter, that the world outside was too dangerous for her.*

*Girl Seagull: Moreover, he was lonely and wanted some company.*

*Girl Horse: I know why he spent little time in accompanying the Daughter. It's like my dad who had to earn money to support the family. Sometimes your parents could not play with you because they have more important things to do.*

*Me: It seems you quite understand him. Do you think he would change to a more kind and gentle man?*

*Boy Bear: Yes, I don't want him to die alone. I like the way he devoted himself to something and he looked cool.*

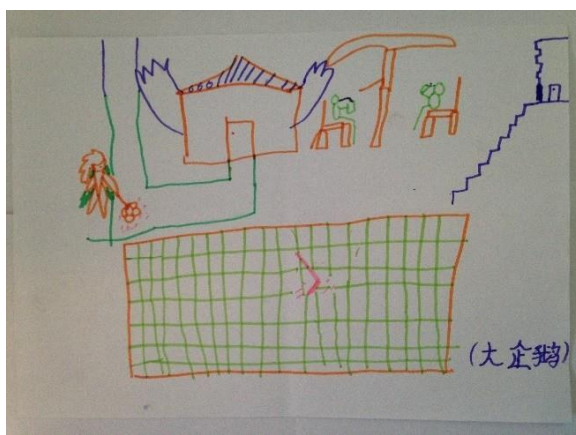
*Boy Big Penguin: I think he would change himself after the Daughter's leaving, because he felt regret.*

Though sharing a similar ending, the six children held different ideas in creating their stories. On the one hand, some of them thought the magician decided to go through a number of ordeals after reflecting upon his actions, so that he could redeem himself. For example, according to Girl Seagull, the Daughter's leaving made the Enchanter realise his wrong deeds. One day he suddenly understood the reason why he could not find the elixir of life was because of his selfishness, and he might not earn immortal life unless he did something special that could move others. He decided to go to a temple and become a monk, then he travelled around the world and helped people using his magic power. After several years, he passed a village and met with the Daughter and her mother by chance. He apologized to them and received forgiveness, as illustrated in her picture.



On the other hand, others were willing to believe that the Enchanter changed himself because he was touched by the Daughter's contentment with her mother when he found her, and wished to join in their family/ village as a member of the community. Moreover, they were also concerned that the En-

chanter should serve other people before he received acceptance. For instance, in Boy Big Penguin's eyes, the Enchanter decided to be a better father because he wished to share the happiness of the Daughter. He used his magic to help his family live an easier life. As shown in his drawing, the magician added wings to their house, so that the Daughter could easily travel to other places to see the world. He also made a magical sickle to help harvest the wheat on the farm. In a word, they lived a happy life together.



According to Benjamin (1969), the communicable experience and wisdom contained in stories can be most easily achieved by receivers when they are free to interpret in their own ways without pressure. Those drawings listed above illustrate how children's imaginations can go in different directions, as they did when given the chance to reflect in greater depth on the role of the Enchanter and enter into a dialogue with the story in an open-ended way. Moreover, the discussion in the following interview also showed how they related the designing of this character's ending to their own experiences and moral beliefs, such as a wrong deed can be forgiven after redemption and a good family member should be understanding.

In addition, Boy Big Penguin's drawing also raised an interesting topic that we continued to consider in our discussion, developing into a moral question: supposing people had magic powers (such as technology), would they rely on

these powers or would they still need to work? In particular, would they still do manual work? Part of this conversation is transcribed below.

*Me: Do you think the Daughter still had to work if the Enchanter could always use spells to make their life comfortable?*

*Boy Cat: No, she could play computer games to pass the time.*

*Boy Big Penguin: I have different ideas. For me, they can't always rely on the magic. They also had to do some work such as chopping the wood. Otherwise the Enchanter would become proud again as in the palace.*

*Girl Swan: I agree. Moreover, the Daughter will be lazy and feckless in that case.*

*Boy Eagle: I support Boy Cat. Life is hard. Work will make you tired and sick.*

*Since the magician has the special power, why not make use of it? All the villagers in my hometown use machines to harvest crops nowadays. I think that's smart.*

*Boy Pig: But I feel you still had to do some work as a human being. My mom always tells me if you don't work, your body would regress to a gorilla.*

*Girl Seagull: My mom usually says you cannot reap without sowing.*

*Boy Cat: But in that way your life will be bitter. Why not enjoy a comfortable life compared with suffering hardships?*

*Boy Pig: If you don't work, you will become very fat. Too many computer games will make you feel boring.*

Although no agreement was reached in the argument, this moral issue drawn from the picture aroused children's interests and provoked their thinking, as revealed in the above discussion. As argued by Benjamin (1969), as the tutor of children, the fairy tale offers good counsel and such counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story

which is just unfolding. To sum up, it appeared the children could weave the story into their real lives in the activity of devising the Enchanter's ending, which helped to develop their autonomous moral thinking without providing standard answers in a relaxed atmosphere.

#### **5.4.2 Case Study Two: Story-based Workshop Two**

##### **A Summary of the Story**

This story by Beatrice Alemagna, both the author and illustrator, was first published in French by Tate Publishing in 2006, and the English edition came in 2014 by Rae Walter. I used the Chinese version for my teaching, which was translated by Xu Jun in 2010. This story tells of a lion who, bored of his rural life on the grasslands, goes to the big city of Paris to try his luck. At first, he is curious if people would be terrified by him. Then he gets rather disappointed and sad when he finds out nobody pays attention to him, even when he roars. He feels homesick and keeps wandering the city. He passes by a big factory, a river, and a beautiful lady in a painting called Mona Lisa. He continues his long walk to a white castle, where he is quite happy to be accompanied by an old lady. Then he climbs to the top of an iron tower, feeling the city welcomes him by opening all the windows. In the end, he stops at a beautiful platform centred on a big crossroad, then climbs onto it and roars joyfully. In response to his roaring, car horns and cheers ring out across the streets. He feels content to find the right place just for him in this big city.

##### **Reasons for Choosing the Story**

I came to know this picture book from a classmate on the MA course in 2014, and was impressed by the narration of how a stranger explores his identity in a big city. For a pilot study, I tried to design drama activities based on this story, which were then largely revised by my supervisor. With his help, I was able

to teach a 2-hour drama lesson using a scheme based on this tale in my hometown in July 2015, to explore the theme of acceptance of a stranger by the local community. When preparing for my fieldwork in 2016, I decided to use this story again, for two main reasons.

Firstly, as a learner teacher, the pilot study in 2015 was an important experience for me in teaching drama. This practice and experience could give me more confidence when compared with other stories I had not taught before. Secondly, to my thinking, this story could have a special meaning for current China. As is generally accepted, China has been experiencing rapid urbanization since 1978, and the flow of rural-urban migration is considered one of the largest in world history. In the process of social transformation, the traditional value system based on family bond has been challenged, and more and more young people had to explore their own identities and learn to get along with strangers instead of familiar relatives, which is similar with the lion's experience in this story. In this way, it might be beneficial for the children as future citizens to explore this fictional tale beforehand in the form of a drama class. For example, some activities were designed for them to help a stranger from a different culture, in which they needed to overcome language barriers in a playful way, such as playing the game charades. More details will be illustrated in the description of the lesson plans in the following passage.



## The Lessons of the Story-based Workshop Two

Workshop of A Lion in Paris in School B		
Sequence of Activities	Duration (Approximately)	Justification of Activities
Lesson 1		
1. To start with, I informed the children the new story would be about a lion's adventures as a stranger in a big city. Then I did a warm-up activity, asking them to walk in the classroom and play the hug game. After several rounds, I asked them to hug in four to form four groups and mark themselves A, B, C and D in their groups to make three still images about the lion. Firstly, I asked them to imagine and make an image of 'a lion in the street' with all the As performing the lion. Secondly, I asked them to show another image about 'a friendly lion in the street' with all the Bs performing the lion. Thirdly, I asked all the Cs and Ds to be the lion, presenting 'a friendly lion in the street that everyone ignores'.	10 minutes	In this activity, children were encouraged to use their imagination and body language to explore the possible relationships between the lion and the city in a playful way. They were expected to develop the moral quality of equality promoted in the Core Socialist Values, as they were asked to take turns to perform the main character of the story.

<p>2. I kept the two lions in the last group and asked children to imagine what they were thinking in that situation. Then I invited volunteers to touch the shoulder of the lion, trying to speak out his feelings or ideas at that time. After that I set free the lions and asked children if they ever felt in that way and in what circumstances.</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>Firstly, Children showed their sympathy towards the lion, which was in line with the basic value dimension of <i>living a responsible and caring life</i>, promoted in the new curriculum (Lu &amp; Gao, 2004. P. 499). Secondly, they were also encouraged to share similar experiences, which was in accordance with one idea held by Edmiston (2003, p. 222) that children's imagined experiences in the drama space should connect with their everyday world for developing a deeper understanding of it.</p>
<p>3. I then showed them the picture book <i>A Lion in Paris</i>, reading the story and displaying the illustrations using slides.</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>According to Winston (2000a, p. ix), a good story could suggest how life might be lived by showing the lives of others, which inspires ethical thinking instead of issuing moral commands.</p>
<p>4. I took the role of the lion by showing a lion puppet to the children and asked them to imagine if the lion could speak, what kind of information they hoped to know from him. I then answered their various questions ask the lion.</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>Children were given an opportunity to respond quickly to the teacher, which was consistent with the basic value dimension of <i>living an intelligent and creative life</i> in the new curriculum (Lu &amp; Gao, 2004, p. 499).</p>

5. Putting down the puppet, I asked the children what the lion's best moment might be in the picture book and why. I then asked them about his worst moment and listed some of their answers on the blackboard, such as when the lion was afraid of terrifying other people, when he was ignored on the subway, and when he could not order food for language barriers.	6 minutes	Children were encouraged to come up with their own ideas instead of receiving ready-made answers, which could initiate their thinking and was in line with the conversational pedagogy encouraged in the new curriculum (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 505).
6. I divided the children into four groups and asked each group to form a still image, showing one different moment from the options on the blackboard. They were viewed in turn and children from the next group would comment on the previous one and tell why it was a bad moment for the lion.	10 minutes	This activity was in accordance with the new curriculum in three aspects. Firstly, children were expected to practice the moral attitude of being co-operative in the teamwork. Secondly, it could help them to develop sympathy towards the lion when showing his bad moments. Thirdly, they were also encouraged to be generous when making comments on each other's work.
7. I asked them to walk in the space and play another round of the hug game, in which three children were left out by intention. When they were invited to express their feelings, one girl used the word 'blue' and the other two used 'unhappy'. I then asked other children if they could offer help and they all said yes. I turned my back to them and counted from one to ten. They finally managed to hide these girls in their groups.	6 minutes	Firstly, it could promote <i>the idea of changing one's identity</i> in the new curriculum (Lu & Gao, 2004, pp. 502-503), as some children were experiencing the lion's feelings as an outsider. Secondly, it was my hope that the children would demonstrate the moral attitude of being kind to others when they were asked to help the left-out girls, as suggested in the new moral course (ibid., p. 504).

8. I asked them to imagine a child of their age was visiting Beijing, who was a complete outsider just like the lion. I then informed them this child's story would be explored further in the next lesson and maybe they could offer help, as they had in the last activity.	2 Minutes	The imagined child raised here left a space for the children's imagination. According to Johnson (1993, p. 9, cited in Edmiston, 2004, p. 159), learning to be ethical requires such imagination to consider events from others' situations.
Lesson 2		
1. I asked the children to stand in a circle and take turns to share their most impressive activities from the last class.	4 Minutes	It could not only help them to review the previous session, but also promote <i>the idea of sharing</i> in the new curriculum (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 504).
2. I asked them to raise some options of Beijing's monuments that the child might pay visit to and wrote the answers down on the blackboard, such as Tiananmen Square, the Happy Valley, the Fragrant Hills Park and the Beijing Zoo. I then divided them into groups of four and advised each group to choose a different monument and make a still image of it. They were viewed in turn and the next group was asked to make comments on the previous one.	13 Minutes	Children were expected to demonstrate moral values such as collaboration, sharing and generosity, as encouraged in the new curriculum.

<p>3. Staying in their groups, I asked them to think about the problems the child might face in these places regarding language barriers and listed five answers from them. Then each group was asked to choose from the options and they needed to show images of such problems as the child could not order food/ buy tickets/ ask the way/ find a place to pass the night, and the passers-by were not being helpful in those circumstances. They were viewed in turn and made comments on each other.</p>	<p>13 minutes</p>	<p>Firstly, Children could develop the virtue of cooperation in their group work. Secondly, children were expected to be considerate and compassionate when they were asked to explore the difficult situations of the imagined child, which was in line with <i>the idea of changing one's identity</i> in the new curriculum (Lu &amp; Gao, 2004, p. 502).</p>
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<p>4. I asked the children to sit in two rows and played the game of charades by letting them guess what I was doing using only body language, such as brushing my teeth and waiting impatiently for a bus. I then asked them to find a partner and name each other A and B. Each A was given a piece of folded paper, with a problem a stranger might encounter such as being hungry/ thirsty/ sick and so on. All the As were asked to send the messages to the Bs only by facial expression and body language, and the Bs had to offer help once they understood. After several minutes' play, they were asked to take turns to show in public. As they performed, all the other groups were happy to guess what the problems and solutions might be. After they finished performing, I asked the children to give themselves a big applause and informed them that was the end of the workshop.</p>	<p>15 minutes</p>	<p>In this activity, children were encouraged to enjoy the process of offering help to others, which was in line with the ideas of care and kindness promoted in the new curriculum (Lu &amp; Gao, 2004, p. 504). Moreover, it could suggest different behaviours to the children compared with the last activity. As suggested by Edmiston (2000), drama could provide a vision of how the world would be different if people acted in a different way.</p>
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## Critical Incidents in Case Study Two

### *Critical Incident One: Dividing Groups*

The participating children from School B came from different classes of Grade Three and Grade four, and most were unfamiliar with each other. In the first session of this workshop, I planned to let them choose partners using hug games. However, reality showed that the majority would not form mixed

gender groups. Later in the second session, I tried to use lottery instead of hug games to get the children into groups more randomly, which appeared to achieve a positive classroom environment. The details will be described as follows.

In the first class, before creating still images of the bad moments for the lion in Paris, I asked the children to walk in the space and play hug games. I then saw two girls walk hand in hand, and I had to tell them to walk alone, trying to find some new friends in their groups. However, when I called out 'Hug in Four', they still ran to each other and another two girls quickly joined them. The result appeared to be four girls hugged in the first group, four boys stayed together for the second group, three boys and a girl were left to form the last group. I told them this time did not count and they had to play the hug game once again. I soon noticed that three boys winked at each other and the outcome seemed to be similar with last time. Due to time constraints, I allowed them to form still images based on their groups. However, I interviewed a group of six children after class to find out more about their reluctance of working with new friends. Part of the conversation has been transcribed below.

*Me: Do you have to work in groups in other classes?*

*Girl Seagull: Sometimes when the teacher asks you to make handwritten newspapers, you do it with your desk-mate.*

*Boy Pig: That's similar with doing experiments in chemistry classes, which is fixed and only with your desk-mate. But here you have the chance to work with different people.*

*Me: But just now I felt you didn't like to have unfamiliar partners.*

*Boy Pig: Um, it felt strange to hug between boys and girls.*

*Me: Then the strategy is boys hug boys and girls hug girls. Right?*

*(They laughed and agreed)*

*Boy Bear: To be frank, I don't like that Boy Giraffe always chases me in the hug game. Wherever I go, he runs towards me and hugs me tightly.*

*Me: That means you want to leave the chance to work with someone else, right?*

*Boy Bear: Yes, it might be more interesting.*

*Boy Pig: Me too. That's challenging.*

*Me: How about the girls?*

*Two Girls: Maybe we can have a try.*

From the interview, I realized the children did not have enough experience in teamwork, especially to choose partners by themselves. Moreover, it seemed they came to a consensus that girls and boys had better keep certain distance in the hug games. However, some of them still wanted to try a new form of grouping, which they thought might be more stimulating and inspiring.

Besides the interview with the children, I also talked with Ms. Qi about this issue, who took charge of the consulting room in School B to take care of the mental health of the children. According to her experience, there might be two reasons for this phenomenon. On the one hand, boys and girls tended to become sensitive about gender issues in the age group of around 10 years old, such that they might feel shy about words such as 'Hug' and 'Kiss'. On the other hand, girls were more likely to take the role of merit student or model student of academic records in class, as they were often more eager to meet with the expectations of teachers and parents; this, to some extent, may also create a certain distance between boys and girls. Ms. Qi then suggested that I create more chances to enhance the communication across genders in my



group, which may help them to develop a more harmonious relationship and be beneficial for their integrated growth.

Therefore, I decided to try using a lottery instead of hug games to help them overcome gender barriers in the second session. I prepared some folded-papers with written numbers from one to four beforehand. When the children were about to show the tableau form of their favourite public places, I asked them to take turns to pick up a folded piece of paper and go to the designated place to meet other members who held the same number. In this way, I divided fifteen children into four groups randomly, with boys and girls mingled in each group. After class, I interviewed another five children to find out their ideas of this new method:

*Me: How do you feel about the lottery?*

*Girl Fish: I was the first to pick up the folded paper. I felt exciting and was eager to know who would become my partners.*

*Boy Monkey: I felt quite calm. Whoever you work with, the important thing is to do the best of yourself.*

*Boy Giraffe: For me, I could not choose my partners as before.*

*Girl Swan: Because it's random.*

*Boy Giraffe: Yes. This time I had to show the Fragrant Hill Park with three girls. I didn't know how to perform the maple tree. They taught me, however, children from other groups thought I was the Goddess of Mercy in Buddhism.*  
*(Children laughed)*

*Girl Little Penguin: I like your performance. I argued with Boy Monkey in preparing to show the Tiananmen Square, but at last it seemed everyone liked it.*

*Me: Yes, indeed.*

As suggested by Robinson (1980, p. 166), instead of generating communication from static groups and strengthening the current social identities, drama teachers need to create more chances for new encounters and innovative thoughts within the group, making their relationships fluid rather than fixed. The above interview shows that, after adopting the lottery as the new method of grouping, the children began to build up partnerships with each other across genders, which will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of the following incident.

*Critical Incident Two: Making Friends through Group Work*

As boys and girls were divided more randomly in the second session, they had to develop a sense of teamwork together, especially when conflicting opinions appeared. Here I would like to mention two still images that were created when the children were asked to show the places of interest the imagined boy might go, to illustrate how they negotiated with one another and gained friendship in the process.

In the first tableau form, three boys and a girl planned to show the amusement park as a public place. Through discussion, they decided to display their favourite enjoyment, the roller coaster, to represent the park. As the tallest among them, Boy Pig came out with the idea to lie on his stomach to perform the tracks. He then invited Girl Horse to sit on his back to be a tourist. Here were their conversations.

*Boy Pig: Come on, Girl Horse, sit on my back.*

*Girl Horse: Are you sure?*

*Boy Pig: Yes. Because I'm the tracks and you are the visitor.*

*Girl Horse: But will you be tired?*

*Boy Pig: No, of course not.*

At first, Girl Horse covered her eyes with her hands, pretending to be terrified. She told Boy Pig that was what she usually did in real life. However, Boy Pig suggested that she open the arms and mouth with an excited facial expression, which according to him would be better for the overall effect. Girl Horse took his advice, and the other two boys adopted their ideas, building the roller coaster even longer. Finally, they showed their performance to the rest of the class as shown in the photo, which impressed everyone and won a loud applause.

*'Ah, a super roller roaster!'*

*'How thrilling!'*

*'Good for them!'*



In the second example, Boy Monkey and Girl Little Penguin held different views in choosing the scenic area in Beijing: the boy wished to show Tiananmen Square, while the girl wanted to present the Palace Museum. As the other two children held an attitude of neutrality, the girl suggested to play the hand game of Rock-Scissors-Paper to decide. The boy then won the game and the girl accepted the result. After discussion, this group planned to show

the photograph of Chairman Mao as a symbol of the square. Being encouraged by other members, Boy Monkey convinced himself to take the role of Chairman Mao's photo. The rest of the group would perform the line of flags on both sides, as well as the Tiananmen rostrum behind the photo. Boy Monkey and Girl Little Penguin argued once again about the position of the photo, as shown in the following conversation.

*Boy Monkey: In my mind, Chairman Mao should be positioned the highest. When you perform the flags, it's better to put the knees down.*

*Girl Little Penguin: No, I don't think so. Both the flags and the Tiananmen rostrum are higher than the photo.*

*Boy Monkey: However, Little Penguin, it feels strange if I'm the lowest one in our still image as the chairman.*

*Girl Little Penguin: But it's a common sense. We could ask the teacher.*

After listening, I agreed with the girl and showed the boy a picture of the Tiananmen Square using my phone. Boy Monkey finally accepted the girl's idea and their performance also won cheers from the other groups.

In the after-class interview, Girl Horse told me that initially she felt shy to sit on Boy Pig's back, but gradually she trusted him and felt happy for such an experience, which she considered as the most unforgettable activity from all of our sessions. Boy Monkey said he made a new friend with Girl Little Penguin through cooperation. Using his own words: 'It might be strange, but I feel she became my friend by keeping calling her name in our discussion.'

The incidents listed above suggest that the group work in drama class brought fresh dynamics to the relationship between boys and girls in the light of new experiences and the negotiations between each other. As a drama educator, there is a view held by Robinson (1980) that children explore a set of symbolic

roles and their existing social roles at the same time in the group, and ‘the symbolic roles may often be used to get some business done at the real social level or to change the real situation’ (ibid., p. 165). Furthermore, he also believes that children could reconstruct understanding of both their personal and the public world through new experiences and communication with others, which helps to test their current thinking mode and even modify it when necessary (ibid., p. 162). In my class, although children might experience unfamiliarity with a new group in the beginning, the evidence still showed that some of them learnt new ideas from each other by taking roles in the imaginative scenes. For example, Girl Horse gained a new way from Boy Pig to express her feeling when riding a roller coaster. In addition, Boy Monkey’s belief of the authority of the highest leader might be challenged by Girl Little Penguin’s respect for reality. Such a process also enhanced the mutuality of the group and their ability to cooperate, in line with the virtues promoted in the new curriculum such as being cooperative, considerate and friendly (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 503).

#### *Critical Incident Three: Playfulness in the Group Work*

The headmaster Mr Jiao of School B came to observe my second session of this workshop. According to him, the most impressive thing was that he did not expect that the children could be so happy and playful in the classroom. He took some photographs when the children were asked to present their favourite public places, including the image of the roller coaster mentioned above as well as another two. It is these that I will focus on in analysing the children’s playfulness in our drama class.

The following photo shows a group of three children trying to present the zoo and pretending to be different animals. Girl Swan chose to be an elephant,

which children from the other groups could easily recognize. Boy Bear pretended to be a chimpanzee and Boy Leopard took the role of a cobra. However, the two boys' appearance caused confusion but also provoked laughter, as revealed by their conversations.



*Girl Seagull: I think Boy Bear is performing a bear, trying to get some honey from the tree.*

*Boy Bear: No, I am a chimpanzee from Africa!*

*Boy Giraffe: A chimpanzee is much bigger than you!*

*Boy Monkey: Ha, look at his long arms. He must be a young gibbon from China, the one in Li Bai's poem<sup>10</sup>!*

*(Children laughed, including Boy Bear)*

*Girl Horse: Boy Leopard should be a harp seal pup, fluffy and adorable.*

*Boy Leopard: No, I am a cobra!*

*Girl Fish: Cobras are usually poisonous, but you look so cute.*

*Boy Pig: A special cobra.*

*Boy Leopard: Yes, special and smiling.*

*(They laughed again)*

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<sup>10</sup> Li Bai is one of the greatest Chinese poets, living in the Tang Dynasty. In his famous poem *Setting off Early from Baidi City*, he described the howling of the gibbons when sailing through the Gorges of Yangtze. This poem has been included in the literacy textbooks for primary children.

The second photo described the still image of the Tiananmen Square, in which Girl Little Penguin and Boy Monkey argued about their position, as mentioned in the previous incident. The children also obtained a great deal of enjoyment from their performance.



*Boy Bear: Ha, it's so vivid. I can't stop laughing!*

*Boy Pig: See, they three are all higher than Chairman Mao!*

*Boy Cat: It seems Boy Polar Bear is lying on Chairman Mao's Back.*

*Others: Ha! Ha!*

*Girl Swan: But Chairman Mao is smiling.*

*Boy Giraffe: A funny smile! I will never forget!*

The Children's playful ideas and behaviours left a deep impression upon Mr Jiao. In the after-class interview, he told me that, in his experience, they were rarely so delightful and creative in other classes. Specifically, he compared this drama class with another moral lesson he had observed, in which the children were taught to line up in public places, after which they all nodded their heads and the result appeared to have been successful. However, when the class was over, they piled up again at the exit as usual. According to him, the difference was that the children usually had to sit still to receive moral instructions passively; in contrast, the active participation and dynamic interaction of our lesson formed a playful atmosphere in the drama classroom, where

they could express themselves more open-heartedly in a delightful way. He listed examples from my class, such as the children's funny interpretations of the animals and the way in which they displayed the core of China's political centre using their bodies in a rather humorous way, which he thought achieved better effects than the other moral class. A similar view is held by Winston (2005), that the playful and light-hearted experience of drama could balance the teaching of moral commands by breaking existing ethical boundaries and refreshing certain ideas children have inherited, enabling them to 'internalize a complex web of emotional and ethical detail' (ibid., p. 317).

Moreover, Mr Jiao told me that he tried his best to guarantee that the children had a more joyful time through music and sport as the headmaster, and he hoped to bring in more drama activities in the future. From my conversation with him, I came to realize that the children's enjoyment of my class might not have been possible without his influence and effort. As stated by Robinson (1980), the social reality that a drama class is based upon will, to a large extent, dictate its vitality and quality. Therefore, the playfulness that existed in the drama classroom should also be attributed to the healthy ethos of School B in a broader context.

#### *Critical Incident Four: Feedback in Group Work*

According to Robinson (1980), a key function of drama education is to help children make progress through social interaction and communication in an open learning environment. In the light of my experience in the field work, it is clear that children receive feedback frequently from both the teacher and their peers in a drama classroom. Here I would like to analyse two incidents from the workshop to illustrate how feedback can better enable children to learn from each other.



In the second session, a group of four children showed a still image of the imagined boy who was lost in Tiananmen Square but was not properly helped. In their work, Boy Giraffe performed the boy and pretended to hold a map, while Boy Eagle took the role of a passenger, looking at Boy Giraffe with an open mouth. When the following group were asked to make comments, they pointed out that the tableau was not clear enough with some rather frank feedback, as revealed in their conversations.

*Boy Cat: For me, the passenger is helping him out.*

*Boy Bear: Their performance reminds me when you go to see a dentist. Because it seems Boy Giraffe is holding a mirror and Boy Eagle is opening his mouth as the patient.*

*(He then imitated Boy Eagle and made a funny face. Other children laughed.)*

*Boy Eagle: No, I'm saying 'I've no idea' to him!*

*Girl Fish: You'd better pretend to ignore him. Don't open your mouth.*

*Boy Leopard: Yes, being uninterested.*

The two boys then asked me to give them another chance to perform the scene. This time, when Boy Giraffe tried to get attention, Boy Eagle turned his back on him. The feedback group could plainly tell the rest of the class how the imagined boy was overlooked, receiving no reaction, and they applauded the performing group.

As stated by Robinson (1980), one important role for children in drama education is to be an 'interpretative and appreciative' audience (ibid., p. 172). Furthermore, he also stresses the creative engagement of children when offering feedback to each other; they are expected to contribute their own interpretation and judgement instead of being passive appreciators (ibid., p. 175). Accordingly, the feedback group in my class honestly expressed their opinions,

resulting in amendments to another group's work. I allowed this because, at the time, the atmosphere in the classroom was cheerful and positive and the two boys did not get at all annoyed when the feedback on their work was critical. The social health of both the class and the group were good enough for such changes to happen. However, I adopted a different approach as the teacher when dealing with feedback in another incident.

In the first session, a group of four girls made a tableau that showed the lion being terrified by others when he had just arrived in Paris. In their scene, three girls were passengers, walking towards the audience in the shape of a triangle, and Girl Seagull took the role of the lion with her back to the others. When the next group made comments, they suggested Girl Seagull should have some eye contact with the other performers, as well as the rest of the class. However, in this instance I supported her original choice and their group received applause.

*Boy Monkey: I feel the lion is much closer to the wall instead of us.*

*Girl Swan: I once participated in a short play for the New Year, and the teacher taught us actors usually should not turn the back to the audience.*

*Boy Pig: I think maybe the lion can keep the body in the same way but turn around the head to peep at the passengers.*

*Boy Polar Bear: Secretly and fearfully.*

*Girl Swan: In this way we could know better about the lion's feelings as a foreigner.*

*Me: Nice advice. But in my eyes, Girl Seagull offers us another way to understand the lion. Like the blanks left in our traditional paintings, her hidden face could also leave space for our imagination to guess the facial expression of a newcomer in the condition of being afraid.*

The reason for this decision on my part was because I remembered a field-note I had written about this girl: 'Girl Seagull, a sensitive girl, sometimes will keep some distance from others.' This was after an earlier session, in which the children were encouraged to share their feelings with the ignored lion - Girl Seagull told us about her experience as a transfer student and her struggle to make new friends for a long period. From my observations in class, I had also noticed that she was a shy girl, for whom turning her back on others might represent the perfect way to express the fearful feelings of the lion. According to Robinson (1980, p. 167), the potential for changing through interaction in drama does not appear naturally, but connects with the teacher's ability of monitoring, always needing to pay close attention to the social reality of the group. In this incident, Girl Seagull might have taken the suggestion as public criticism as a shy child. Therefore, I chose to appreciate instead of critiquing her.

From these two incidents, I will reflect on how feedback could operate more successfully in a drama class. On the one hand, if the children are confident and the atmosphere in the classroom is good enough, as it was in the first incident, it might be better to welcome constructive advice on the basis of appreciation and trust. On the other hand, in other circumstances, such as in the second incident, the teacher should have the awareness and skill to control the situation and make sure that each child feels safe in the learning environment by offering positive feedback. For example, for sensitive children such as Girl Seagull, it would be better for the teacher to give instructions privately rather than in public, before any performance takes place.

### **5.4.3 Case Study Three: Story-based Workshop Three**

#### **A Summary of the Story**

This story by Helen Ward, illustrated by Ian Andrew and published by Templar Publishing, tells of an old man who lives alone on a hill, looking after a collection of abandoned animals. For him, the people who live on the opposite hill are noisy, greedy and merciless, and so he prefers to stay with the animals rather than with human beings. Most of the villagers dislike him as well, because he is bad-tempered and strange in their eyes. All except a young boy, who often observes the old man from a distance and could feel his tenderness when he took care of the animals. Then one day it started to rain ceaselessly, until the land between the two hills was flooded and the old man's house became surrounded by rising water. From the other hill, the boy could hear the howling of fear from the animals and see their master becoming terrified. He was desperately worried about them, but there seemed to be nothing that he could do, until a boat magically appeared before him and drifted ashore. The boy quickly boarded it and rowed towards the old man's house. However, when he arrived he received no welcome, as the old man refused his help. The boy still managed to send the nearest animals back to the village using the boat. Meanwhile, other villagers noticed what the boy was doing and gathered on the shore to meet him, trying their best to help the animals by providing shelter and bringing them blankets. The old man watched this in silence. When the boy returned and filled the boat with more animals, he did not call out. The boy rowed back to the village to find that the villagers had made a makeshift raft of tin baths and barrels to rescue more animals. He set out for a third time, with the raft following behind. This time the old man trusted him and together they helped the rest of animals to leave the island before it sank.

When they safely reached the village, the old man and the other villagers stared nervously at each other. At last he thanked them sincerely, with a smile on his face and tears melting in the rain. The villagers all came forward to welcome and greet him. At that time the rain began to stop, and a rainbow appeared in the sky.

### **Reasons for Choosing the Story**

I came to know this picture book, *The Boat*, through my supervisor professor Joe Winston, who designed a drama scheme based upon this tale to enhance personal growth for primary children between the ages of 8 - 12 years. He also selected some extracts from these activities to illustrate how participatory drama could be used for children's language learning and moral development in an article for professor Ma Liwen in Beijing Normal University. The lesson plans in my study mainly rely upon his work and the reasons for choosing this story are listed as follows.

Firstly, as pointed out by Winston in the unpublished article mentioned above, this story is mythic, with no names in its narrative. It is evocative of the tale of *Noah's Ark* from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and the little boy embodies a symbol of hope for a better future, bringing the hostile adults together. One view expressed by Neelands (2009) is that ensemble-based learning in drama education represents a pedagogy of hope, where the participants have the possibility to imagine and act for a better world. Therefore, I would like to explore the theme of hope with children by means of both this story and the process of the drama class.

Secondly, this tale involves the discussion of the concept of community, which is also a typical issue in domestic moral education. As mentioned previously in

the literature review chapter, as a communist country, the mainstream of school values in China emphasizes the collective interest, rather than that of the individual, and children are habitually nurtured in the spirit of collectivism. For example, there is one topic in the textbook of the new moral course for elementary children in Grade Two named 'Happy Young Pioneers', listing examples of the martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for the establishment of the country and regarding the students as the successors of such communist spirit. Another topic for those in Grade Three is called 'My family, school and community', teaching children to be well behaved and obey regulations in public spaces, such as respecting their parents and not littering or spitting in public. In contrast, this story portrays an isolated man who regains acceptance and feels the warmth of the community, dealing with the relationship between individuals and the group in a more complex way. Thus, I would like to discover what children think about this tale in the form of a drama class in my field work.

## The Lessons of the Story-based Workshop Three

Workshop of The Boat in School B		
Sequence of Activities	Duration (Approximately)	Justification of Activities
Lesson 1		
1. To start with, I asked the children to sit in two rows and face the blackboard, showing them the first sentence of the story, 'On a hill among hills lived one old man.' I then gave them one minute to think what kind of old man he might be and what questions they would like to ask him. After that, I took the role of the old man holding a stick and replied to children's queries according to the story, such as why he lived alone on the hill, how long he had been there and what his daily routine was.	5 Minutes	This activity had a dramatic and pedagogical function, encouraging children to think and engage before they were told the story. It was also in accordance with <i>the idea of dialogue</i> promoted in the new curriculum, in which the players had the chance to respond to the teacher quickly (Lu & Gao, 2004, pp. 503-504).
2. I turned down the light to prepare to show children the illustrations from the picture book using slides. I then read the story translated by myself to music, the track <i>Dolphin</i> from the album <i>Bones</i> by Gabrielle Roth and the Mirrors.	7 Minutes	The slides and music made the process more like a performance, which could encourage the children to engage more compared with merely reading to them.

<p>3. I asked the children to form a circle, sitting on the floor. Using a story wand, I took the role of the narrator and encouraged them to act the story out using their bodies spontaneously and collectively, in which children formed the characters such as the boy, the old man, the villagers, the animals, the boat and the raft.</p>	<p>8 Minutes</p>	<p>In this activity the children were enlisted into spontaneous physicalization by interpreting with each other instinctively, which not only brought the body into play as central for the learning in drama, but also connected with the issues of building trust, which I will talk about more in the discussion chapter.</p>
<p>4. The children were divided into four groups to reflect on the story by discussing its most impressive and thought-provoking moments. After that, each group were encouraged to create a still image to reveal the special moments such as those of despair, surprise, friendship and reconciliation. They were viewed in turn, in which we also discussed the moral significance of those moments together.</p>	<p>10 Minutes</p>	<p>In this activity, the children were encouraged to create still images of moral meaning. According to Winston (2000a, p. 96), such stillness could help them to reveal morality in a simple way, while also providing their classmates opportunities to examine and feed back ethical responses.</p>



<p>5. I asked the children to stand in a circle and invited them to briefly describe the old man in their eyes. They gave me answers such as being kind to animals, strange, independent and ill-tempered. I then told them to imagine what experience this old man might have in the past, leading him to be isolated. I began with the sentence that 'He was once a nice little boy, until something happened...' Then with my instructions, the children made up a story together, in which they thought he came from a poor family and was betrayed by his friends, making him keep a certain distance from the human world. I then informed them that we would explore more about the old man in the next session.</p>	<p>8 Minutes</p>	<p>In this activity, the children were expected to be considerate by taking a different perspective of the main character and getting into the old man's shoes. According to Lu (cited in Lu &amp; Gao, 2004, p. 502), as one of the reformers of moral education curriculum, the basis of teaching morality is to cultivate children's empathy for others.</p>
<p>Lesson 2</p>		

<p>1. We reviewed the last session together. After that, I told them the old man sometimes needed to go to the village. What might he do there? The children gave me ideas such as shopping at a market, taking animals to see the vet, collecting abandoned animals in the circus and paying a visit to his parents' grave in the cemetery park. They were then divided into four groups, each of which were asked to choose one different place from the options listed above. In their groups, the children were also told to mark themselves A, B, C and D, with all the As taking the role of the investigators from the local police station to collect information from his/her partners, and others performing the salespeople, vet doctors, managers of the circus and grave keepers respectively, who would describe their experiences with the old man to the investigators. After that, I played the leader of the police station and asked the investigators to take turns to report their findings to me as well as other children.</p>	<p>10 Minutes</p>	<p>This activity helped the children to recognize that there were reasons on both sides for the conflict, which shifted the empathy for the old man to that of the villagers.</p>
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<p>2. I then asked the children to imagine what the old man might look like in the young boy's eyes. I listed different animals on the blackboard and asked them how the old man would spend his time with the animals. Their answers were feeding the chickens, taking care of a sick turtle, petting a dog tenderly, teaching a parrot to speak language and so on. They then listed his qualities, such as being kind, warm, attentive, patient and friendly.</p>	<p>7 Minutes</p>	<p>This activity was intended to refocus the children on the old man by using the perspective of the boy to see him practicing the ethic of care for the animals, enabling them to be aware of others' situations more critically and sensitively.</p>
<p>3. I then informed them of the stormy night when a boat appeared before the boy. I asked them to think about the reasons for him to go and not to go. Among their answers, I listed five reasons for him to go on the blackboard, such as to save lives, to make friends with the old man, to tell the old man he could trust someone in the world. Moreover, I also listed some reverse reasons.</p>	<p>8 Minutes</p>	<p>As suggested by Edmiston (1998, p. 58), drama has the potential to offer conflicting voices for shaping children's ethical selves in a more complex way, as it could problematize and enliven the moral struggles within a person's inner experience in certain situations.</p>

<p>4. I asked the children to represent the conflicting ideas of the boy in the form of conscience alley. Two volunteers were invited to hold a blue cloth to signify the river. A boy was chosen to play the role of the young boy in the story, holding a paper boat and wearing an eye mask. Others were divided into two groups evenly, one of which would chant out the reasons for him to go while the other would tell him the opposite. As I held the boy's hand to walk through the alley, differing voices echoed around him. After that, he was interviewed about his feelings and decisions, to share with other classmates.</p>	<p>5 Minutes</p>	<p>According to Winston (2000a, pp. 106-107), a conscience alley in drama could help to display the tensions of different voices, in which the children could experience the difficulty and complexity of a moral dilemma, recognising the difficulty of making a choice when competing reasons appear.</p>
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<p>5. I gave each child a piece of blank paper to write a short letter to the old man, convincing him to be part of the community in the name of the villagers and using their words to form a piece of the raft. The children were then asked to stand in a circle, take turns to read out their letters and put them in the centre of the circle. After this, I encouraged them to think about what qualities of human beings could connect each other, which would be the ropes to tie different pieces of the raft together. They gave me replies such as kindness, devotion, care, responsibility, forgiveness, trust, bravery and so on. I wrote them on pink paper stickers to tie up all the sixteen letters to form the raft, which was named the 'Raft of Love' by the children.</p>	<p>10 Minutes</p>	<p>Firstly, the process of making the raft together could enhance the group's mutuality and cooperation, in line with the virtues promoted in the new curriculum. Secondly, the children could also develop moral language and broaden their ethical vocabulary in this activity, which would contribute to their personal autonomy in morality, as suggested by Winston (2000a, p.93).</p>
<p>6. I brought out the paper boat again and asked the children to name it, which they finally decided to call the 'Boat of Hope'.</p>	<p>2 Minutes</p>	<p>As believed by Neelands (2009, cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. 138), drama represents a pedagogy of hope, in which young people can take actions for a better future.</p>

### **Critical Incidents in Case Study Three**

#### *Critical Incident One: Imagination Helps Children Develop Empathy*

According to Neelands (1992), drama enables children to experience and explore the lives of other people in various situations in a safe place using imagination, which helps them 'to develop empathy and respect for others who are

culturally, historically or socially different from themselves' (ibid., p. 6). In my fieldwork, it appeared that the children could understand the characters from the story better when given the opportunity to imagine together, seeing through their eyes, especially in the activities to discover the old man's previous life and the impressions he might leave on others.

At the end of the first session, I asked the pupils to explore the old man's past collectively, trying to find out what kind of experience would make him isolate himself from the human world. Under my instructions, they made up a story that explained why this character chose to live on a mountain with abandoned animals. In their mind, the old man came from a poor family and was hurt by others at a young age. More plots from the discussion are presented as follows.

*Me: Once there was a little boy, nice and friendly. Until something happened and changed him...*

*Boy Pig: He might be betrayed by friends when he was young.*

*Girl Swan: Because of money.*

*Me: Money? What kind of family might he come from?*

*Boy Cat: A poor family. His father could be a ragpicker and he had no mother.*

*Me: Then how did the betrayal happen?*

*Boy Leopard: Usually no one wanted to play with him. But one day when he walked alone in the street, he met with a gang who invited him to join in and promised to pay him well. Then they asked him to steal money and finally betrayed him.*

*Me: Didn't he know it was not right to do that?*

*Girl Horse: He might know but he really hoped to be wealthy, so that no one would laugh at him again.*

*Girl Swan: And he could support his family.*

*Boy Pig: He could even go abroad for better education.*

*Me: But the reality broke his dreams, right?*

*Boy Bear: Yes, then he was so frustrated that he moved to the mountain.*

*Me: Why did he live with animals?*

*Boy Giraffe: He once rescued an injured bird from the poachers, and he felt happy to look after it. In this way, he made friends with more and more animals.*

*Me: That explained why he felt closer to animals instead of humans, right?*

*Children: Yes.*

Besides this exploration of the background of the old man, I also asked the children to imagine what he might look like from both the villagers' and the boy's perspectives in the second session. On the one hand, they were told to portray local people such as the market salesmen, the veterinary doctors, the circus manager and the grave keeper. One child in each group then took the role of the police investigator, collecting any possible stories that could have happened between the old man and the residents in accordance with the original story.

According to the investigator's report, there was a little monkey sitting on his shoulders whenever the old man appeared in the market, looking offensive and screeching noisily. Once they arrived, most people would escape imme-

diately. There was one occasion on which the old man used a counterfeit bill that the shop assistant refused to accept; however, he was bitten by the monkey on the hand, and then its master left without paying. Moreover, the veterinary doctors found that the old man would sometimes spit on the floor of the hospital. They warned him to obey the rules of a public place, otherwise they would not welcome him, but the old man replied impolitely that he was used to this and didn't have to change for anyone. In the circus managers' eyes, the old man always got angry when collecting injured animals, as he thought people were cruel to these creatures. When they tried to stop him, he said he was free to lose his temper and he cared about the animals, not humans. The grave keepers described the old man as a rather quiet person, usually wearing black clothes, who came to visit his parents' graves every two weeks. They thought he was a dutiful son and tried to greet him, but he never replied to any of them.

On the other hand, the children were also invited to construct the old man's everyday life with the animals from the viewpoint of the boy in the following activity. Through collective imagination they built up their life, walking the dog on sunny days and feeding the chicks every morning. Some of the children also created little stories. For example, Girl Swan thought that sometimes the old man might feel lonely, so he gave a parrot the name of Polly and began to teach it to speak. After several days' practice, Polly could say 'Hello', which made him quite happy. In Boy Pig's imagination, the old man's favourite animal, a big turtle, fell ill on a rainy night. It was very heavy, but the old man still managed to take it to the hospital and looked after it patiently until the turtle recovered. I then asked them to list what qualities they could find from those behaviours. Their answers included kindness, tenderness, patience and so



on. After this, Girl Panda shared her thought that there was softness in the old man's heart, although it was only left for the animals.

In the after-class interview, most of the children told me that they changed their attitudes towards the old man as the drama activities went on. For example, Boy Leopard said he found the image of the old man gradually became more complex and vivid in his mind. As revealed in this lengthy quote using his own words, 'In the beginning of our class, I disliked him because he easily got angry when we asked him questions. In the second session when we made up the story about his past, I began to feel sorry for him as he suffered a lot in the young age and it was not all his fault to be grumpy. Then I felt it also reasonable for the villagers to keep away from such a person when hearing how he treated them in an unfriendly way. Finally, I wished more people could see his kindness as the little boy, because the old man could be moved and become a better person.' Moreover, Girl Swan thought it was stimulating to make up stories around a figure with her peers in a story-based drama class. She told me, 'It feels exciting that we have created more details of the old man's life by ourselves. I can see different facets of his life through those stories and obtain a better understanding of him.'

As shown above, children's imagination enables them to discover a fictional role through multiple standpoints. This is in line with the view of Edmiston (1998), that young learners can imagine equally the bright and dark side of humanity safely and playfully in a drama classroom, which helps them to explore the ethical dimensions of certain situations, including both kind and bad-mannered behaviours (*ibid.*, p. 57). Furthermore, he also believes such a learning process could develop children's moral attitude of being empathetic when they try to connect with and interpret others' experiences in different

times and spaces (ibid., p. 5), which is consistent with the virtues encouraged in the new curriculum such as respect and understanding (Lu & Gao, 2004, pp. 503-504).

### *Critical Incident Two: Shaping Ethical Selves Through Dialogic Thinking*

As stated by Edmiston (1998), drama can be dialogic when children's initial thoughts are challenged, broadened or revised by exploring conflicting points of view and reflecting upon the meaning of possible behavioral consequences in problematic situations, complicating their understanding of issues of moral significance (ibid., p. 60). This view is in line with the practice in my classroom when the children were brought into the ethical struggle of the boy on the stormy night, which will be presented in more details in the following passage.

At the beginning of the activity, I asked the children to sit in a circle and use their bodies to represent the severe conditions of the weather, such as the whirling wind and heavy rain. Additionally, I played a piece of music to add to the tension of the atmosphere. After this, I encouraged them to think about the pros and cons of the boy jumping on the boat and sailing to the old man's house. I then asked them to raise one reason for him to go and wrote this on the blackboard, followed by another reason on the opposite side. Their answers are as shown below.

To Go	Not to Go
He could save lots of lives.	He might lose his life as well.
The boat could bring him safely to the old man's home.	He might get lost or the boat could turn over halfway.
He could make friends with the old man.	The old man may turn down his help.

The animals could be moved to a safer place and they would not howl in fear any more.	He might get hurt by some ferocious animals.
It could be a chance to bring the old man back to the other villagers as a community.	The villagers may not welcome the old man and his animals at all.

After listing their opinions, I told each of them to memorize one reason that they found most acceptable and then stand in two queues. After this, I asked Boy Giraffe to take the role of the boy and walk through the conscience alley to experience the conflicting voices within his inner experience, while the others chanted various reasons as he passed. Later, Boy Giraffe shared his feelings with the rest of the class and the children discussed the hardship of decision making in a moral dilemma, as illustrated in the following conversation.

*Boy Giraffe: Frankly speaking, I became confused after hearing the voices from you. At first, I thought I would surely go to rescue them like how the Monkey King helped those in need in the recent movie 'Hero is Back'. Since it was a heroic deed in my mind, I supposed other villagers would praise me, even worship me. However, someone kept saying 'The villagers will not welcome them'. Then I thought in that way my efforts would be in vain. I wish I could flip a coin to decide it.*

*Girl Swan: I understand. Initially, I believed it was the will from heaven to save the old man and his animals that a boat appeared before the boy. Nevertheless, someone then raised an idea that the boat would turn over halfway. I then felt scared and hesitated. It would be bad if the boy could neither help the old man nor protect himself.*

*Boy Pig: For me, I like animals and wish to help them. But meanwhile, I also need to consider my own safety if I were the boy, as some violent animals may hurt me.*

*Girl Horse: If I were the boy, I may feel excited at first as it could be a chance to get closer to the old man's house after watching from a distance for a long time. I would also worry about the bad weather and his bad temper, because it could be hard to accept if I risked my life to get there and he remained cold as usual. But I might never forgive myself if I ignored him in that situation. Thus, I think I would make the same decision as the boy.*

*Boy Eagle: In my eyes, the boy was not rational enough when he decided to go.*

*Girl Little Penguin: He was brave to make that decision.*

*Boy Eagle: I could also say he was reckless in terms of his own life.*

*Girl Horse: I remembered he was accompanied by a dog when seeing the illustrations, so that it could help him when necessary. In addition, he took the old man as his friend, he did this out of affection rather than rationality. Otherwise he might always blame himself.*

Their discussion has shown how children generated dialogue between each other and how others' viewpoints might influence their previous ideas. In this process, some children destabilized their initial thoughts and admitted to confusion in their mind. As stated by Maxine Greene, 'Naming, articulating, affirming the dissonances and contradictions in our consciousnesses, we may be able to choose ourselves as ethical in unexpected ways' (cited in Edmiston, 1998, p. 82). In addition, according to Bakhtin, the self is 'not a particular voice within, but a particular way of combing many voices within' (ibid., p. 83).

As far as I can see, this drama activity enabled some of the participants to critically evaluate their earlier choices and take alternative points of view into consideration, which may inspire them to develop their ethical selves in a more multifaceted and complex way. Furthermore, instead of providing children with standard answers superficially, the dialogic space created by drama could also foster their autonomous moral thinking in a dilemma, which is in accordance with *the idea of dialogue* promoted in the new curriculum (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 503)

#### *Critical Incident Three: Setting Moral Codes in Specific Contexts*

As discussed in the literature review chapter, Brian Edmiston adopted Bakhtin's 'prosaic' view of ethics in his practice as a drama educator. According to Edmiston's explanation, compared with applying abstract principles in disregard of the specialty of the relationship, time and place, morality relies more on the considerations of a specific context in everyday life (Edmiston, 1998, p.59). Furthermore, he believed educational drama could be inspiring 'when participants contemplate specific urgent action rather than talk about generalities and abstractions' (ibid., p. 61). In school B, I found some activities in this story-based drama workshop enabled the children to explore generalized ethical codes through discussion based on detailed settings either provided by the story or related to their daily experiences, helping them form more interwoven and complicated understandings of those situations. I will illustrate this by analyzing two activities: one in which the children discussed the old man's surprise at seeing the boy help him and another in which they examined the concept of community when making the raft together as villagers.

In the first activity, the children were asked to select special moments of moral significance from the story and create still images based on them. One group chose to show the old man's astonishment when observing the boy still rescuing his animals after being refused by him. In their work, Boy Leopard lay on his stomach as the boat, on which Girl Panda pretended to load animals as the boy. As the old man, Boy Big Penguin stood behind them, looking confused and surprised. After the other groups had clearly observed what they presented, we discussed this moment together.

*Boy Monkey: I think the boy is doing the right thing, but the old man should be more warm and grateful.*

*Girl Swan: I think it is reasonable for him to remain silent. Because he may have never experienced anyone that could bear his bad temper and still try to help him, so that he was in surprise and silence.*

*Girl Horse: Yes, I agree. He was observing, and it should take some time for him to trust the boy as a stranger.*

*Me: Why did he choose to trust the boy rather than prevent him from taking his beloved animals away?*

*Boy Leopard: Because it should be common sense that no one would risk his life on a stormy night to steal his animals.*

*Boy Big Penguin: He felt he was a kind boy that tried to move the animals to a safer place.*

*Girl Little Penguin: I think his attitude was changing a lot. From being angry to surprised, then moved. At that moment, he still did not trust him from the heart. But later, he said 'Thank you' to the boy and other villagers.*

This conversation suggests that Boy Monkey might be judging the old man's behaviours according to the moral principle 'People should appreciate others' kind offer'. However, as pointed out by his peers, the old man was still not ready to express his gratitude at that moment. The story has offered the background and specific context for children to contemplate the moral meaning embedded in the figure's feelings and actions. As suggested by Winston in his unpublished article, this activity enables children to trace the emotional journey of the characters within its narrative.

In another activity, children were asked to write letters to the old man as villagers, in which Girl Panda wrote, 'Hi old man, we won't treat you as before, please sail safely back to us.' Beside the words, she also drew some illustrations on the paper, as shown as below, which I later used as a stimulus to explore the children's ideas of the moral notion of community after making the raft.



*Me: Now the raft is ready to bring the old man back to the community. It's time for us to look at Girl Panda's drawing. There is a little bee, flowers, a lighting candle, a smiling face and a boat in a beautiful scenery. Let's invite her to tell us about them.*

*Girl Panda: On the right, I drew a boat in a peaceful background because I wished the old man could have a safe journey back to the village. In the middle, I thought he might feel warm when seeing the candle and the smile in the rainstorm. The left part showed my understanding of the collective. A good community should be like a big garden with flowers, that everyone works hard as the bees and takes care of it attentively.*

*Me: Many nice ideas. Anyone else would like to share your opinion on community?*

*Boy Eagle: I think Girl panda's idea is nice but a bit ideal. Like the lyrics in the song we were taught from kindergarten, that our motherland is a garden in which everyone wears a happy smile on their face. However, the reality is not always this.*

*Boy Monkey: Yes, sometimes people just ignore you and treat you badly. Although teachers usually tell us to be friendly and active in the group, but if someone in the community hurts me, I would surely keep away from them, just like the old man.*

*Girl Seagull: I identify with the old man too. Because it would be better to stay alone rather than being cheated. I once tried hard to make friends, but gradually I found they played with me only when I could gain high scores in exams, which made me rather sad. And I don't think everyone could be lucky enough to be saved by the boy and accepted again by the villagers.*

*Girl Little Penguin: But the thing we can make sure is trying to do something nice and work hard like the bees making honey. Even in the old man's case, if he does not care about the deserted animals, the boy would not be impressed*



*and decide to help him. I also had similar experiences to help others as the boy, although he is much braver than me.*

*Girl Swan: Yes, I agree. We can do things within our abilities, such as contributing a piece of wood to make the raft.*

*Girl Horse: Yes, so that the community could develop better. I believe no one could live on an isolated island. Even the old man needs to go to the village to buy food or see the doctor. In that way we had better build up a nice community.*

*Me: What do you think a nice community should be?*

*Boy Monkey: People take care of each other.*

*Boy Pig: There should be forgiveness. No one is perfect, and it will be hard to make friends without tolerance.*

*Girl Swan: The spirit of dedication. If everyone cares about the collective, it will become a beautiful garden as Girl Panda has painted.*

*Me: Good. Let's thank Girl Panda again for her nice drawing.*

In these conversations, the children shared their understanding of how a good community should function, in which they connected with their own experiences and the narrative of the story. As mentioned previously, I also planned to compare the children's ideas of such a concept in this story-based workshop with their normal moral sessions. In the after-class interview, Girl Fish told me she had learnt about the notion of community in one of her moral classes, which mainly taught her to protect public facilities and respect those who have contributed to the collective. Compared with this, she thought that in my class she could better understand the complexity of the relationship be-

tween individuals and the group, as illustrated in an example using her own words: 'Our moral textbooks merely taught us not to spit in public and we should try to stop others in that situation for the sake of our environment. However, I came to realize there might be some reasons for certain wrong deeds from our workshop. That was when we thought the old man might spit in the vet hospital to express his anger and distrust towards other people. Obviously, he knew clearly it was not right, but he couldn't help himself. Therefore, it would be useless to persuade him or punish him. Only when people tried to understand him and help him sincerely, like the little boy, could they bring back his willingness to care about others.' Moreover, she enjoyed listening to her peers' ideas and experiences on this subject, which made her feel more real and connected with herself.

According to Chinese reformers (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 508), the main aim of the new curriculum of moral education is to shift its focus from requiring children to obey abstract ethical rules and regulations, which appeared to be didactic and inefficient. Instead, it is hoped that the course will concentrate more on children's lives, in accordance with the stage of development of their minds and bodies. In light of my experience, story-based drama could provide specific contexts to promote children's autonomous moral thinking, either through the narrative of the story or by engaging children to reflect on their own life experiences. As suggested by Henry (2000), drama had the capacity to offer 'a dynamic, integrated and dialogical model to replace more static and predictable paradigms' (p. 59).

#### **5.4.4 Case Study Four: A Separate Case Study of Boy KTV**

As mentioned in the analysis of the Preparatory Workshop, a 10-year-old boy named KTV in School A aroused my attention by his intelligence and spe-

cialty. I continued observing his behaviours in the following workshops and found out more about his views on those sessions in one-to-one interviews after class. Moreover, I also interviewed his teacher and parent to better understand his background. It is worthwhile to write about this boy as a separate case study here, in which I will mainly focus on how story-based classes could reflect certain traits of his character through an imaginary figure, and how teaching through drama could positively affect him in terms of moral education. As I have analysed the Preparatory Workshop previously and the second Story-based Workshop in School A was taught in the form of a public class of merely 40 minutes, the critical incidents regarding Boy KTV will mostly be taken from the first and third story-based workshops.

### **Story-based Workshop One: A Sense of Identity with the Powerful Enchanter**

When making up the contract in the Preparatory Workshop, KTV showed an awareness of individual values and the spirit of critical thinking when a tension appeared between personal interest and that of the collective. In addition, he also displayed his distinctiveness when filling in the questionnaire<sup>11</sup> after the preparatory session. Although it was anonymous, his answers were quite different from the others and so his work was easily recognizable. For example, KTV was the only child who preferred to be a powerful person, while the other fourteen children chose to be happy or useful. He also respected ethical virtues such as excellence and creativity, while the others mostly admired justice and loyalty. In the following workshop, he maintained his individuality and clearly identified with one of the characters in the story.

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<sup>11</sup> A full version of the questionnaire was introduced in the methodology chapter.

At the beginning of the workshop, when the children were asked to take the role of the Daughter to uncover the Father's secrets, performed by me, KTV showed rather different interests compared with the others. Most of the group felt sympathy for the girl and were eager to discover the Daughter's name, where her mother was, why the Enchanter cared more about eternal life than her and so on. However, KTV stood on the magician's side and tried to help him to invent the elixir. The conversations are quoted as follows.

*KTV: Father, I long for immortality as well. Shall we invite some other enchanters outside the palace to help you?*

*Me: I won't trust their intelligence. No one has any clue of it before and I should be the first one. I will study it out some day undoubtedly.*

*KTV: Could you please give me some books on magic instead of story? Why not we do the research together?*

*Me: You are still too young. Story books are more suitable for you. Now go back to your room and I have prepared more books for you.*

In another activity when the pupils were told to devise the ending of the story and perform it out, KTV took the role of the narrator in their group. In their story, the Daughter learnt a magic spell secretly from one of her Father's books and fled from the palace, then she met with a wolfman in the forest who pitied her and taught her how to fly with a special cloak, which helped her to find her mother. The story won applause from everyone; however, one boy's comments from the following group made KTV slightly unhappy, as shown below.

*Boy A: I like their story. I think KTV has made great progress.*

*KTV: I am always good and have no need to make any progress. Thank you.*

*Me: Yes exactly, always good. Especially this time.*

In the after-class interview, KTV told me that other children usually judged him and thought he was wrong when he behaved differently, but they could not understand him properly, so that he did not like it even when they praised him. He also compared his situation with the enchanter, saying that 'I can understand why the Father studied magic all day to be more powerful, because in this way he could ignore all others' comments and be the best of himself.'

At the end of the workshop, I asked the children to draw the possible endings of the Enchanter's story in their imagination. Among the twelve pictures, a typical idea from most of the children was that the magician died alone, regretting his actions and deciding to give up his magic power, as shown in one of their drawings.



In contrast, as illustrated below, KTV was the only one who thought the magician invented out the elixir of life, riding on his magic broom with a guiding star, holding the precious potion in hand, flying to heaven merrily and remaining young forever.



In the after-class interview, I asked him why the magician deserved such a happy ending in his eyes. He answered that a confident, industrious and powerful enchanter should reach his goal instead of dying alone, otherwise it would be a waste of genius. He also believed a person's morality was not as important as his/her ability, as revealed in the following conversations<sup>12</sup>.

*KTV: I don't believe that good citizens are always rewarded and the wicked punished. As no one is perfect in the world, a powerful wizard should get what he wanted even if he had some moral defects. But if he got the elixir by chance such as picking it up on the road, other magicians might kill him and snatch it away. In short, the magician should be professional and capable enough in his field.*

*Me: Supposing the magician has actual strength, wouldn't it be better if he helps others with the magic?*

*KTV: Yes. In this way he will have both the ability and morality. This should be the most idealistic person. The second level are those who have ability in a special field, the third level are individuals who are good and obedient while*

<sup>12</sup> The original words of the first interview with KTV in Chinese will be included in the Appendix.

*the lowest level has neither. I think I belong to the second class, just like the enchanter.*

*Me: Why not the first level?*

*KTV: Those people serve for the nation and other people. As a pupil, that's too much for me. I just want to realize my own potential and do not want to care too much about others.*

*Me: How about in the future?*

*KTV: Maybe. If I have extra strength, I may consider that.*

Besides KTV's belief in a person's capacity, we also discussed another topic: could strength bring the enchanter real happiness?

*Me: Why does the enchanter still need the Daughter's company even if he is such a powerful wizard?*

*KTV: He might be lonely. I think I can understand his feeling. When you become too knowledgeable, sometimes you could not sleep tight at night. Taking me for example, I lost sleep occasionally since I began to read books on psychology about two years ago. Desire for knowledge is like the royal crown, that you will desperately want before you could get. However, once you put it on your head, you will feel it is too heavy to get rid of. It's not seemingly interesting to be an emperor. Idiots are even happier than them.*

*Me: A happy idiot or a lonely emperor, which do you prefer?*

*KTV: I'd rather be an idiot.*

*Me: But now you look more like an emperor.*

*KTV: Yes, I think so. Now I stop reading too many books and spend more time playing computer games and watching TV. But you will still feel bored if you play too much.*

After the talk with KTV, I was quite impressed by his deep understanding of the character from the story, thus I also interviewed his teacher and father to seek more information about him. According to his teacher, Mr Chang, both his parents were professors at Beijing Normal University, creating a relaxed environment for him that provoked his talents from an early age. He had broad interests, including literature, history, psychology, physics and so on. Different from his peers, who usually liked comics and picture books, he preferred more difficult books such as *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* by Gustave Le Bon. He also performed well in his studies as one of the cleverest and best students in his class. However, sometimes his views were so special that they would not be well received by his classmates; even his teachers were worried by some of his opinions. For example, last semester Mr Chang asked his class to write a poem named 'My country', which aimed to be positive; nevertheless, KTV was the only student who attacked the dark side of society, criticizing corrupt officials and even claiming that *Xinwen Lianbo*<sup>13</sup> was made of fake news. The teacher had to ask his parents to help him write another poem. He also mentioned that to some extent KTV was lacking in collective sentiments and values, tending to be proud of his individuality and high intelligence. However, sometimes he also became quite sensitive about how others might judge him and showed a willingness to be part of the community. For example, their whole class once had an opportunity to prepare a program for celebrating the New Year. Unfortunately, he was sick at home and he cried a lot for missing the chance. Moreover, in terms of my teaching at their school, Mr Chang mentioned that after he put up the

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<sup>13</sup> According to Wikipedia, *Xinwen Lianbo* is a daily news programme produced by China Central Television (CCTV).



poster in their classroom, KTV showed a clear interest and was the first student to apply.

When interviewing his father, he informed me that KTV learnt to read from quite an early age and started to read novels such as *Romance of Three Kingdoms*<sup>14</sup> at about four years old. He had a good self-study ability and his parents usually bought him whatever books he showed an interest in. However, his father refused him in requesting a Japanese novel *No Longer Human* by Ningen Shikkaku about one year ago, as he thought it would be too sophisticated and negative for a child. Generally speaking, his parents usually respected him and the atmosphere at home was rather democratic. However, the mainstream in school still respected collective values over individuality, and so it was sometimes necessary to help KTV find a balance between his home and school environment. His father also said that after joining in my drama classes KTV appeared to be more social, as he planned to sign up for another interest class to perform English theatre, which he had never done before.

From my observations in class and the following interviews, I realized that KTV had a quite different moral universe due to his special background and talents, which could not fit into the school's overarching ethical standards emphasizing collectivism over individuality. However, the teaching of story-based drama provided an open space, allowing him to reveal his moral world and have a dialogue with the story. I also found that although he seemed to be rebellious and superior due to his intelligence, he still needed emotionally to be part of the community. As he was able to communicate with others in drama

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<sup>14</sup> According to Wikipedia, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is a 14<sup>th</sup> century historical novel attributed to Luo Guanzhong, which is acclaimed as one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature.

class, I planned to give him more chances to get involved in the following workshops.

### **Story-based Workshop Three: Getting Involved with Others in Drama Classes**

In the beginning of the workshop, after telling the children the story, I asked them to hold each other's hands and form a big circle, preparing to act out the tale using a story wand. The girls tended to stand together, as did the boys. KTV tried to hold Boy A's hand, as they came from the same class; however, Boy A refused him and chose Boy B next to KTV. KTV turned to Boy B, but Boy B laughingly fled away. He then stood quietly with his hands behind his back. Seeing this, I told the children, 'I'm waiting here to hold KTV's hand, anyone else would like to join us?' After several seconds' quietness, Girl A, who worked together with KTV when performing the ending of *The Enchanter's Daughter*, ran to KTV and said, 'I'd like to hold KTV's hand.' Then Girl B from the same group said, 'Me too, we are a group.' KTV then said something so fast that no one could hear clearly. In this way, they formed a circle. As this was a new activity for the children, I asked if some of them could demonstrate the first sentence of the story, that 'On a hill, there lived an old man with a group of animals, such as a cat and a tiger.' Boy C performed the mountain, Boy A bent earthwards to portray the old man while Girl A was happy to be the cat. Everyone laughed when she was stroked by the old man and purred like a cat. At this point, although I was not sure if KTV would refuse, I asked, 'KTV, would you like to perform the tiger for us?' To my delight, he hesitated but then agreed. He walked towards the center of the circle, with his hands curled to be the tiger's claws. Girl A said to him, 'KTV, you should be lower, like me on the floor.' KTV then knelt next to Girl A with his hands on

the floor and the mouth open. Boy A, as the old man, stroked his head and others said, 'Yes, he looks like a real tiger in this way.' Everyone applauded and thanked them for their performance. Later in the activity, KTV appeared to be more active and began to raise his hands with the other students. I asked him to act as the little boy when he sailed to the old man for the last time. He enjoyed taking the main role of the story and invited Girl C as the old man onto the boat politely, speaking his line loudly: 'Come on, there is nothing to be afraid of.' I then let more children perform the animals, such as the elephant, giraffe and turtle, whom were helped by KTV and Girl C to load onto the boat. When sailing to the village, KTV pulled hard as the boy. After I finished the last sentence of the story, saying 'The rain began to end, and a rainbow appeared in the sky', I asked all of them to perform the rainbow together. KTV immediately held the hands of Girl A and Girl B without hesitation, they then raised their hands above their heads. At that time, Girl D cried out, 'We need someone taller in the middle!' Girl A encouraged KTV, 'Go ahead KTV, you are a tall boy.' Hearing this, KTV ran to Girl C and held the hand of Boy D to form the top part of the rainbow, as shown in the photograph below (KTV was the boy who stood in the middle of the photo). Although their rainbow was in the shape of a semi-circle instead of a two-dimensional arch in real life, KTV later told me in the after-class interview that this was one of his best moments among all the sessions. I asked him the reason why he enjoyed this activity, and his answers are transcribed below<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> The original words of the second interview with KTV in Chinese will be included in the Appendix.



*KTV: I like the feeling in this game, that I don't have to be otherworldly.*

*Me: What do you mean by otherworldly?*

*KTV: It's hard to explain. When I read the book *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, I began to know that leaders who have higher status usually manipulate the masses while the masses gradually rely on them until they could not live without them. My position is strange in that I am a smart one among the common people, the majority of whom are always unreasonable. I feel uninterested in controlling others and more importantly, I don't want to be manipulated by the authority. That's why I usually choose an indifferent attitude and feel otherworldly.*

*Me: Do you feel there is authority in drama class?*

*KTV: In my experience, I feel the atmosphere is quite equal. I even forget about those higher or lower status. Taking this activity for example, we change the roles a lot that I could perform the main character, the animal, and everyone has the chance to be part of the rainbow.*

*Me: Do you like to play these roles with other children?*

*KTV: Yes, it makes me feel I'm connected with others. When playing the role of the boy, I couldn't finish the whole scene by myself without the old man, the boat and the animals.*

*Me: Do you often have such feeling in daily life?*

*KTV: No, I usually think a lot and these ideas make me prefer to be alone. For example, I frequently tell myself not to follow the masses blindly. Supposing the leaders tell them carrying along smoked meat may bring bad luck. Then most people will stop doing that except me. I will do it secretly and try to prove taking bacon could bring you happiness. Once I confirm that, I will continually keep it a secret. On the one hand, other people usually won't believe you. On the other hand, if everyone knows that, there will be less meat for me.*

*Me: But as you mentioned just now, there are some happy things need to be completed by more people, right? Like when you made the rainbow with all other players.*

*KTV: Yes, if the biscuit of good luck is as big as a house, obviously we cannot finish it alone and we need to share. I think we can share the lucky biscuit equally in this class. It doesn't matter if anyone has a bit more.*

*Me: For me, the lucky biscuit of our class doesn't exist by itself. It is created by every one of us.*

*KTV: Yes, I agree. We all have the chance to create the biscuit when enter this class, then we share it together. When I first saw the poster of the drama class, I thought it would suit me and wanted to have a try. Gradually I feel the group here is special and nice, and this drama class is not bad, not bad at all.*

In another activity from the following session, the children were asked to choose and perform moments of moral significance from the story. KTV's group chose to show the boy's courage when he decided to sail the boat towards the old man's house in the storm. The following words are transcribed from the video tape that shows the process of their discussion and the photograph reveals the result.

*KTV: I could play the old man's house (putting his hands in the shape of triangle above his head).*

*Boy A: I think your hands could represent the house, then your body could perform the sinking island. How about this?*

*KTV: Ok. In this way, maybe I should tilt my hands to one side as the house is falling in the flood.*

*Boy B: Good idea. As the boat, I can keep my hands straight up to show the boy's courage and determination.*



Their group received applause. Here are some comments on KTV's performance.

*Girl A: I think KTV is performing the mountain.*

*Boy C: No, it should be the old man's house as it is tumbling.*

*Girl B: This could explain why the boy sailed to him even in such bad weather. Because people only show their courage when facing severe conditions.*

*Girl C: I agree. Their group are good at details.*

In the after-class interview, I praised him in taking other's advice, which he compared with his deeds in daily life and explained why. Our conversations are quoted below<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> The original words of the third interview with KTV in Chinese will be included in the Appendix.

*KTV: I usually won't do that in everyday life. Instead, I defend myself. When conflicting opinions appear, my slogan is it is the world's fault instead of me. At least, the world makes more mistakes than me.*

*Me: Why?*

*KTV: Normal school life is like the Pythagorean theorem in maths that you had to obey without doubt. But the problem is the regulations you are asked to follow are not always right. For example, if a professor tells a primary teacher that one plus one equals three. Then the teacher will believe this is the standard answer for pupils in the exams. As a child, you have no right to object. In this way, I get used to attributing to others when I feel angry at something and cannot change. I also empower myself higher status in heart because I'm often more knowledgeable than others.*

*Me: Any difference in drama class? Do you think I represent the authority as well?*

*KTV: No. In drama class, it's not like a professor teaching small children. Instead, it's like a research seminar among professors. The atmosphere is playful and comfortable, and there are no standard answers waiting for us. For example, the hands could represent a mountain, a house, part of a boat or whatever. Since there are no right and wrong answers, I don't have to prove that I'm right. If another's opinion sounds good, I'd like to take it and make it even better.*

These conversations, as well as KTV's performance in our drama activities, reveal that although he maintained a suspicious attitude towards the school regulations, which usually confirmed authority and standard answers, drama enabled him to make social connections and cooperate with others in a rela-

tively equal and free atmosphere, where he tended to be more creative instead of rebellious.

To conclude, from the analysis of this section, this case study shows Boy KTV's specialty and individuality, with an intelligence and thinking capacity well beyond his age, whose moral world to some extent could be related to Nietzsche's (1898) idea of 'the overman' (Übermensch) as one of the most significant notions in his thinking. Moreover, KTV's experience in my class illustrates how drama can help and engage gifted children like him, which will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have presented the data gathered in my fieldwork in the form of four case studies, including three case studies consisting of the schemes of work conducted in School B as well as a separate case study of a gifted child's learning experiences in School A. In each of the first three case studies, I have first provided the lesson plans, a summary of the story being used and my reasons for choosing it. I have then analysed the critical incidents emerging from my teaching process. In the last case study, I have examined a 10-year-old gifted child's performance in my classroom, whose experience can illustrate drama's potential in helping singularly intelligent young children's moral learning. The critical incidents described and analysed in this chapter will be further examined and theorised more thoroughly in the following Discussion chapter.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Discussion**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

As mentioned previously, there are two main focuses to the present study: learning to teach morality as a learner drama teacher, and the ways that such a teaching approach can be applied within the Chinese educational context. Accordingly, this chapter will be divided into two parts; on the one hand, I will reflect on my practice and discuss how I have learned to become more capable in conducting drama teaching; on the other hand, I will also examine how this new drama-based approach can contribute to the current moral curriculum in China. Therefore, in the following passage, I will first focus on my progress as a novice teacher, then respectively analyse how story-based drama can promote students' citizenship education, their imaginative qualities and dialogic thinking. I will also analyze how it enables gifted children to develop their peer relationships and creative characters in the context of community.

#### **6.2 Part One: Learning to Teach Morality as a Learner Drama Teacher**

In the first part of this chapter, I will mainly focus upon how I have tried to create a positive learning environment as a novice teacher by considering three important concepts throughout my teaching process: playfulness, cooperation and ensemble-making. Thus, in the following passage, I will respectively examine the ways in which I have learned to become a more qualified moral teacher by advocating playful, cooperative and ensemble-based learning for the group of children in my drama classroom.

##### **6.2.1 Loosening Ethical Constraints through Drama's Playful Elements**

As discussed in the literature review, since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the highest leader of the Communist Party Mao Zedong aimed to control the majority of people's minds by emphasizing the absolute obedience of individualism to collectivism. This was especially true during the period of the Great Cultural Revolution. According to Meyer (1988), Mao was regarded as a godlike leader in this period, as illustrated in the content of the textbooks, 'The words of Chairman Mao have the highest standards, the highest prestige, and the greatest power. His every word is truth' (Kwong, 1985, p. 199, cited in Meyer, 1988, p. 123). Even in the document Essentials of reform and development of China's education, released by the CPC Central Committee in 1993, the basic task of moral education in schools still stresses the teaching of 'Mao Zedong's Thought', which is indispensable and unviolated in indoctrinating the students to uphold the correct political orientation (Ping et al., 2004, pp. 453-454).

However, in contrast to the glorified and authoritative image of Mao portrayed in the textbooks of the moral course, a group of children in my second story-based workshop showed Chairman Mao's photograph in Tiananmen Square as the core of China's political centre in a rather playful and humorous way. In their work, a boy performed the iconic image of Mao by sitting on the floor with a grin on his face, whose acting brought a great deal of enjoyment and laughter to his peers. As pointed out by Winston (2005), the transgressive playfulness in drama enables children to play with the established boundaries of everyday rules, that can help them to achieve 'temporary freedom from institutionalised values' (p. 322). To some extent, in my study, the children's lighthearted experience of presenting the image of Chairman Mao as the founder of the nation helped them loosen the constraints of the prescribed ethical

codes of normal life, destabilizing their initial interpretation of the serious and solemn facets of authority without being profane and undermining the Chinese political system.

Moreover, Robinson (1980) notes that the social reality a drama classroom is based in can largely decide whether it is possible to achieve such a playful and dynamic atmosphere or not. In my fieldwork, the playful activities could not have taken place without the headteacher's supportive understanding and the healthy ethos of his school. Therefore, as a learner teacher, I came to realize not only the potential of drama's playful elements in releasing children's moral restrictions from the political framework, but also the necessary conditions for it to happen in the Chinese context.

### **6.2.2 Balancing the Cooperative and Competitive Aspects of Drama Games**

As discussed in the data analysis, two drama games were misused in my preparatory workshop by over-emphasizing their competitive side. In the first game, 'Sharks', some of the children shouted 'Out, out' when one player was slightly slow and regarded her as the loser of the game. This was because I misguided them in explaining the rule that students could be eliminated from the game if they were too slow to react and were touched by the shark. Upon reflection, I realized my deeds went against the values of cooperation and collaboration promoted by the chief reformers of the moral course in China, who reject the severe competition children experience in their normal school life that classifies them as winners and losers, especially in examinations (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 503). In addition, in terms of practical concerns, this may also cause class management problems if some children are excluded and removed from the game. Similarly, in the second game 'Fruit Salad', the atmo-

sphere of the classroom was also intense and nervous, with children competing to sit on the central mat as an appealing and prestigious position.

However, according to Winston (2015), participants should be encouraged to be co-operative in a relaxed environment when playing drama games, and the atmosphere is usually 'cheerful, boisterous and physically active'; this is more about binding people together rather than highlighting individual identities (ibid., p. 57). Furthermore, Caillois (1961) notes that only regulated competition leads to creative rather than destructive play, although he regards competition as one of the four basic elements of games. A similar view is held by Cook (2000) in analysing the competitive and cooperative aspects of language play, in that it requires ingenuity to avoid being overly aggressive and stay on the borderline to locate a sense of humour that can generate solidarity.

In light of these theories, I remind myself to enhance the positive values of cooperation and mutuality when playing games with children as a novice teacher. Nevertheless, I am also aware that competition is an indispensable aspect of games in a drama classroom. As pointed out by Winston (2000a), the competitive aspect of drama games can offer opportunities for children to cope with the challenges and tensions of the drama process, which helps to provoke a delayed pleasure instead of instant satisfaction (p. 103). In this way, it is necessary to learn to maintain a balance between the cooperative and competitive aspects of games in the drama classroom.

### **6.2.3 Being Aware of Power Relations in Promoting Ensemble-based Learning**

As discussed in the literature review, Neelands (2009) stresses the importance of advocating 'ensemble-based' learning in drama to help young people

explore how best to live together as interdependent human beings. As he argues, an ensemble can act as a better version of the actual world that celebrates the virtues of justice and collaboration. In addition, he also describes the principles of the ensemble-based model of drama, in which he puts 'the uncrowning of the power of the director/teacher' as a primary goal (cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. 156).

However, to some extent, Miss Hu used her authority as the teacher and asked leading questions when the children were asked to set up the contract in the preparatory workshop of my study. For example, when a girl raised her opinion that the students should listen carefully to the teacher's guidance, Miss Hu praised her and emphasized that children had better not act for themselves but follow the teacher's instructions. In this way, there were five children in total who contributed similar opinions to the contract. In view of Neelands' theories, Miss Hu's deeds obviously went against the basic values of ensemble-based learning in a drama classroom.

Moreover, Foucault (1977) critically analyses how authority uses power to regulate and control individuals in institutions such as schools, hospitals and prisons. According to him, people with disciplinary power decide what is truth and what is proper behaviour from a commanding position, and those who do not obey are likely to be punished and excluded. In terms of the educational field, Foucault points out that 'a relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching', which is integrated into and increases the efficiency of the whole system of the mechanism of society (ibid, p. 176). Such a view is accepted by Edmiston (2008), who pays particular attention to the unavoidable power relations between children and adults in his drama practice. To encourage students' ethical explorations with both their

peers and their teacher, he proposes that it is necessary for the educator to 'share power with children as much as possible in order to create trusting collaborative relationships and spaces' (ibid., p. x).

Although I have learnt that the drama teacher needs to be aware of the potential danger in authoritatively guiding children from Miss Hu's deeds, I am also aware that the educator should properly take his/her responsibility, rather than leave the students unconduted, because a well-managed drama class relies on the pedagogical and artistic skills of the facilitator. Morgan & Saxton (1987) have offered a comprehensive analysis of how drama teachers can develop their teaching skills of questioning and answering (pp. 67-105). To provoke the children's autonomous thinking, they also support Ferguson's (1980) view that 'Respecting the learner's autonomy, the teacher spends more time helping to articulate the urgent questions than demanding right answers' (cited in Morgan & Saxton, 1987, p.92).

To sum up, in terms of promoting ensemble-based learning, I have come to realize that the educator needs to avoid asking leading questions and always be aware of the power relations between adults and children as a learner teacher.

## **6.3 Part Two: The Ways Drama May Contribute to the Moral Education in China**

### **6.3.1 Drama and Citizenship Education**

As introduced in the first part of the literature review, Professor Li Maosen, a leading Chinese academic in the research field of moral education, offers an overview of the moral teaching conducted in Chinese schools from 1949 to 1989. Here, he points out that such education to a large extent is the instrument of 'ideological-political indoctrination' for the government to 'make obed-

ient citizens' rather than promote the students' independent ethical thinking (Maosen, 1990, p. 170, cited in Maosen et al., 2004, p. 407).

After this period, the 1990s saw the commencement of a program of nationwide reform of the moral education curriculum, due to the rapid social changes taking place in China since the reform and opening up policy. According to the chief reformer and moral educator Lu Jie (2004), the market economy has shaken the basis of the traditional rural society, which was based on affiliated relationships by kinship, terrain and sub-group. This new dynamic saw the people of China involve themselves in society as more independent agents; thus, social transformation has offered opportunities for the building of new kinds of impersonal relationships and the development of these personalities for future citizens, such as 'self-determined, liberal, democratic, equal and fair' (Lu, 2004, p. 74, cited in Ping et al., 2004, p. 458).

Although its educational aims are good, some problems still exist in the new moral curriculum. For example, there is a lesson titled *Putting oneself in another person's position* in the Grade Three textbook, which starts with a real-life example of a child from a single-parent family; this child is regarded to be wild and pitiful by their classmates. The textbook then asks the students to discuss with each other what feelings the child might be experiencing if they were to stand in his/ her shoes. According to Professor Lu Jie, such a lesson can develop children's ethical qualities, such as care and consideration (Lu & Gao, 2004, pp. 502-503). Nevertheless, I am unsure as to whether it is suitable for children to discuss such a sensitive topic publicly and in a rather direct way, particularly if any of them happen to share a similar situation. Thus, though the teaching purpose of this lesson is to enhance the moral idea of care, the pedagogy appears to be inconsiderate and not protective enough.

In light of my experience in the fieldwork, I argue that drama can offer a relatively playful and safe environment that enables children to explore and practice certain civic virtues. My lesson plans are designed to distance students from the sensitive issues that moral education can, at times, unearth. The use of story, myth and fictional contexts are intended to enable such distancing. Moreover, I am also aware that it is a complex process to establish trustworthy relationships and build up a caring environment in the drama classroom, which relies on the efforts of both the teacher and students. In the following passage, I will discuss in more detail how the civic values of trust and care were explored in my practice respectively.

### **Civic Virtue of Trust in the Drama Classroom**

At the beginning of my field work, it was clear from the questionnaire and interviews that most of the children engaged in the present study had little or limited drama experience. The main attitudes they held towards my sessions were either curiosity or excitement, as they noticed the differences between their normal lessons and the drama workshops, in which they were given more free space in a classroom devoid of chairs and desks.

According to Halstead & Pike (2006), it is a distinctive feature of drama lessons that participants work collaboratively in physical nearness to each other in a free space, which requires self-discipline. A lack of such discipline may result in disruptive behaviours, which presents a potential challenge existing in drama for young children (p. 79). Nicholson (2002) is also aware that it might be more difficult to establish trustworthy relationships in the drama classroom compared with other, traditional courses. According to her, in the learning process of drama, participants need to engage all their bodies, emotions and intellects; thus, they not only have to generate feelings of trust within



a group of players, but also to pay attention to each other's physical, emotional and intellectual well-being when working together (p. 83).

To create a safe and reliable learning environment in the drama classroom, I encouraged the children to set up a contract together, as introduced previously. Some of their ideas reflected their awareness and willingness to build up a trustworthy community by negotiating the behavioural boundaries and some grounded rules. For example, the children in School B raised views such as *do not laugh at others*, *do not say dirty words*, *do not play wildly*, *learn to respect each other* and *be in harmony*. The children in School A reminded themselves to *listen attentively and respect each other's right to speak* as well as to *use polite language and get along peacefully with each other* in the contract.

However, as pointed out by Nicholson (2002), although a contract may have practical benefits in building up trust, offering a way of making certain agreed moral codes explicit to the participants, nevertheless, as a set of fixed rules for the general manner of classroom behaviours, it has its limitations when coping with 'the unpredictability of artistic creativity' within specific drama situations (p. 88). Therefore, as a collaborative art form, Nicholson (2002) identifies trust in educational drama as being inherently connected to artistic creativity and spontaneity, involving continuous negotiation and re-negotiation according to specific contexts and social settings; though risky for the participants, this encourages active involvement and creative experimentation in their learning process.

In my study, I paid attention to unexpected circumstances emerging from the drama practice throughout the teaching process to enhance the level of trust felt amongst the group. For example, when playing the hug games at the start

of the second story-based workshop in School B, it occurred to me that the boys and girls appeared to keep a certain distance between each other, as noted in the data analysis chapter. From the post session interviews, I came to realize that the reason why they were so reluctant to hug each other in the group game was because they had no similar experiences from previous lessons; they were not used to the physical closeness of the game, and thus felt uncomfortable due to shyness. Moreover, in my interviews the children expressed a willingness to work with unfamiliar partners, as they had more interesting and stimulating experiences in mixed gender groups. As pointed out by Nicholson (2002), participants can achieve feelings of trust in drama classes only when they are actively willing to face new challenges after weighing the potential risks and rewards in a specific situation or relationship; accordingly, the teacher should pay close attention to the social context in which the drama takes place, and have a good understanding of the children's preceding experiences and knowledge that may influence their actual practice. Thus, he/ she can help the children identify and measure the advantages and disadvantages, offering appropriate support or intervention and enabling the students to feel safe enough to experiment in the new learning experiences. In my class, after making sure the children were ready to accept new challenges for a more harmonious relationship across genders, I dropped the hug game and instead used a lottery system to split the class into mixed gender groups.

Under my guidance, the boys and girls in School B started to build a sense of cooperation and mutuality in their group work. For example, when showing the roller coaster using their bodies in a still image, Boy Pig performed the tracks by lying on his stomach while inviting Girl Horse to sit on his back to be

a tourist. The girl initially felt nervous, but gradually she chose to trust him, and eventually their performance won a big applause.

In this incident, Girl Horse and Boy Pig established trust between each other in the process of playing the roles of the visitor and the tracks. As argued by Winston (2004), children naturally have the capacity to engage in participatory and imaginary play with their partners, which forms the basis for them to interpret and communicate meanings together in the drama classroom (p. viii). Moreover, Sennett (1986) points out, as a voluntary and disinterested activity that happens in special time periods and spaces, play teaches children about self-distance from their daily lives, allowing them to create new expressions instead of following the conventions of their familiar environment (p. 317). In my study, the imaginary roles Girl Horse and Boy Pig performed in a dramatic activity made it easier for them to shed their initial shyness, which they carry in their everyday life, enabling them to trust and touch each other in order to present the playfulness of a visitor riding a roller coaster. According to Winnicott (1971), the trust embedded in such playing is essential for children's personality development, making them feel safe and confident enough to interweave with each other in a space 'that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals'; thus, playing leads children to creative experience in such a space, where they can learn to separate the actual world from their subjective reality and begin to establish autonomous selves, that constitute the foundation of the cultural life of human beings (p. 64).

In the after-class interview, Girl Horse told me she felt happy to have had this experience, which she considered as the most memorable activity among all the sessions. Besides this, Boy Pig also enjoyed playing the role of the tracks,

and this was reflected in the story wand activity in the third story-based workshop; here, he was eager to take the role of the boat by lying on his stomach again as the tallest and strongest boy in the class. All the other children participated in performing different roles in the story such as the boy, the old man and the animals, and either sat on his back or followed behind him. They laughingly connected with each other in close physical proximity, which also illustrated that this group of children managed to develop a more trustworthy and intimate association through the playful elements rooted in the drama practice.

Although both Girl Horse and Boy Pig showed positive attitudes towards their trusting relationship, Girl Seagull's exploration of such feelings had different results. I had asked the children to play a game of charades, as mentioned previously - initially, I planned to invite voluntary pairs to share their work, instead of the whole class. However, all of the children raised their hands high above their heads, including Girl Seagull, so they were asked to take turns to perform before their classmates. The problem was that Girl Seagull was not ready; she could not clearly convey a message to her partner using only her body language, which made her feel embarrassed. In the after-class interview, Girl Seagull told me, 'Because everyone raised their hands including my partner, I didn't want him to lose the chance and thought maybe we could work out the message in public, but I got even more nervous then.'

According to Nicholson (2002), the trusting relationships established in educational drama are usually complex, because the participants tend to trust others in dissimilar aspects of the drama practice due to their differing backgrounds. Such trusting contacts are also not static, as their experiences will expand or alter in drama so that they may change their ways to trust or be

trusted in their learning processes; therefore, uncertainty exists in such relationships, which can be rewarding and satisfying but also painful and difficult, depending on 'to what or whom it is morally appropriate to trust, in which context and for what reasons'. Thus, the practice of the civic virtue of trust in a drama classroom requires the participants to exercise vigilance, showing trust in specific contexts instead of expressing a general feeling of sincerity (p. 88). Following Nicholson's suggestions, Girl Seagull should learn to protect herself in the risk-taking environment of drama, showing her trust and sincerity more cautiously instead of following others thoughtlessly and exposing herself in a situation beyond her control. Moreover, I also reflected on my responsibility as the teacher. Due to the playful atmosphere in the classroom, when some children started to laugh at seeing her performance, I forgot to mention the rule *Do not laugh at others*, which had in fact been raised by Girl Seagull in the contract. This made the learning environment less protective for this sensitive girl. Although I apologised to her in the interview, the process of that activity still seemed to be lacking the ethic of care. I will discuss this civic value in more detail in the following section, using another incident involving Girl Seagull.

### **Civic Virtue of Care in the Drama Classroom**

The ethic of care was first raised in the American psychologist and ethicist Carol Gilligan's work *In a Different Voice* (1982) from a feminist perspective. In this book, she argues that women's moral selves are usually embedded in the attachment with others in specific contexts, focusing on interpersonal relationships and individuals and seeing compassion and responsibility as a virtue. This Gilligan defines as an ethic of care; such a moral ideology is different from the male model of an ethic of rights, emphasizing autonomy, ratio-

nalinity and generalized standards, reflected in her mentor Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of the stages of moral development. As discussed in the literature review chapter, the approach adopted in the present study is largely influenced by the educator Joe Winston (1998), who accepts Gilligan's point on seeing morality more as an ethic of care and suggests that story-based drama can teach children to value such a virtue by concentrating on their emotional connections with each other and respecting individual differences in the drama community. I will then examine how the civic value of care was explored and practiced in my classroom.

As mentioned in the data analysis chapter, when Girl Seagull tried to show the fearful emotions of the ignored lion in our story by turning her back on the others, some children suggested that she should have more eye contact and use facial expression. Nevertheless, I still appreciated the performance and protected her from being over-criticized in public, as I realized this might be the exact way to present the lion's unpleasant experience according to this sensitive girl. I also noticed that the learning environment was not caring enough when other children tried to correct her in a public space, instead of confirming her own understanding of the role.

As pointed out by Sennett (1986), there is a distance between people's behavioural code in the public domain and that of their private lives when with family and close friends, where we can act more simply and naturally; furthermore, he suggests that the conventions of the public realm should protect and respect the individuals' rights to their natural expressions, otherwise they will become reluctant to act socially, making the impersonal world less diverse and intimate and lose 'warmth, trust and open expression of feeling' (p. 5). Similarly, based on an analysis of Hannah Arendt's theories of citizenship,

Winston (2004) argues that the values in a public domain should help to generate dialogue and form collective civic action for people from different backgrounds to understand and appreciate each other while maintaining their diverse personalities.

In Girl Seagull's case, the children who tried to correct her performance ideas should learn to gain the awareness of respecting her personal thoughts to create a more caring environment, so that Girl Seagull as an individual can feel accepted and appreciated in the public learning space of drama, which is the only way to maintain the dynamics of their group in the long term.

In the following workshop, the children were given more chances to learn to value and practice the moral virtue of care. For example, they were asked to imagine how the old man practiced the ethic of care for his animals from the boy's perspective, which showed a virtuous aspect of this character, changing most of the children's initial impressions of him as a grumpy man. They were also encouraged to model the sensitivity of care for others by performing and swapping the roles of the old man and the animal, so that they could positively learn about showing care and being cared for in a drama activity. Moreover, they were able to discuss the ways in which the virtue of care can promote the impersonal relationships in a community at the end of the workshop, in which they showed a belief that people should take care of each other and care about the collective; in this way, the community will become as beautiful as a garden.

In her recent article, *Beckoning hope and care* (2015), Cathleen Gallagher, proposes that the drama classroom can operate as a forum to cultivate hopeful and caring young citizens in the social context, facing challenges from the environmental, economic and political crises. In addition, she also introduces

her international research project *Youth, Theatre, Radical Hope and the Ethical Imaginary: an intercultural investigation of drama pedagogy, performance and civic engagement* (2014-2018), in which she pays attention to how caring relations can be understood and encouraged in the altruistic activities of drama, and how they can impact on young people's out-of-school actions to enhance their civic engagement in a bigger picture. In light of Gallagher's work, I also tried to develop the civic virtue of care among young children in the present study, which can be reflected in my way of encouraging them to treat each other in a friendly and kindly manner in the classroom.

### **Summary**

In this section, I have examined how the civic virtues of trust and care were explored in my research. Although both the teacher and the children may encounter difficulties in the exploration of such values and the process seems more complicated compared with other courses, as acknowledged by Nicholson (2002), to build up a trustworthy and caring environment in a drama classroom does not mean there is always agreement among the group members; instead, it is 'a robust environment in which debate, dissent, generosity and artistic experimentation might be encouraged and valued' (p. 90).

#### **6.3.2 Drama and Imagination**

According to Robinson (2011), imagination refers to 'the ability to bring to mind events and ideas that are not present to our senses' (p. 220). Furthermore, he points out that such capacities enable human beings to see beyond the contemporary moment and the realistic environment, facilitating our ability to view things from others' perspectives; thus, imagination offers people liberating horizons in actual circumstances and continuous possibilities to creatively transform the reality (ibid., pp. 141-142). However, to a large extent, the de-



velopment of such imaginative qualities for children is neglected in the moral course of China.

As introduced previously, in order to shift the focus from moral commands issuing from an adult standpoint, the chief reformer of the new curriculum, Professor Lu, proposes that the main sources for the moral curriculum's textbooks should stem from real-life events centred around the children themselves, which need to be childlike and delivered from their perspectives (Lu & Gao, 2004). For instance, there is one lesson that aims to teach children to protect common property, in which the textbook introduces a personified chair stating his sorrow to the students that he tries best to serve people, but no one takes good care of him; the pupils are then encouraged to model the way the chair talks and express their imagined concerns for other items of property in a similar situation (ibid., p. 505). In this case, children are only given limited space to develop their imagination towards such properties, but the lesson is still didactic in its conveyance of the moral message that they must not abuse or misuse public possessions.

To address such a problem, I based my teaching of morality on fictional stories rather than real-life events, which are more concerned with possibilities than realities. On the one hand, as noted by the Canadian literary theorist Northrop Frye (1963), 'The art of listening to stories is a basic training for the imagination' (p. 49, cited in Egan, 1992, p. 63). I told three picture book stories to the children in the field work - *The Enchanter's Daughter*, *A Lion in Paris* and *The Boat* - using slides to show the illustrations and accompanying my narration with music. These story-tellings were considered by all of the children to be their favourite parts of the drama workshops. On the other hand, some activities were also designed to help the children explore different hu-

man conditions and construct meaning by themselves in an imagined world created by story-based drama, such as designing the Enchanter's ending and developing empathy for the old man's past life. Besides, I am also aware of how far children's imagination can go in a drama classroom in the present social and political background of China. As mentioned previously, the recent moral education policies from the Party indicate that the chief aim of the course is for the development and modernisation of the country; however, it should not challenge the ideological basis and the bottom line of individual freedom permitted by the government.

Therefore, in the following passage, I will discuss respectively how story-based drama offers an imaginative space for children to understand moral life in a narrative way, instead of following moral models and ethical codes passively, how imagination can help them develop virtues such as empathy and tolerance, and in what ways imagination can be engaged in a drama classroom in the Chinese context.

### **Imagination Stimulated by Story-based Drama Enables Children to Learn Morality in a Narrative Way**

In this study, a major reason behind my choice to use the story of *The Enchanter's Daughter* was because the author does not bring closure to the magician's story arc, leaving an imaginary space for children to fill with their curiosity and their own interpretations. Thus, I advised them to devise the subsequent story for this character individually, at the end of the first story-based workshop, in the form of a drawing. Such an approach is different from the way they are usually taught on the normal course, by indoctrinating abstract moral principles. For example, there is one lesson in their textbook named *Learn to be a brave little eagle*, in which Eagle A is described as industrious,

practicing flying skills even in a big rainstorm, while Eagle B is lazy and enjoys sleeping at home. Here, all the pupils are encouraged to learn the virtues of bravery and diligence from Eagle A<sup>17</sup>. Instead, in my fieldwork, I tried to use more interesting stories and related activities to stimulate the children's imagination and help them explore the ethical values embedded in the dramatic narratives of these tales to form their own moral thinking.

An early educator, Margaret McMillan, examines how stories can promote young peoples' imagination in her book *Education Through the Imagination* (1904). According to her, the reason why a tale is beneficial for a child is not because it can provide him with instructions or a sequence of incidents, but due to the fact that it can offer fresh impressions of human behaviour and character in possible situations, adding variety and colour to his mental images, so that 'it offers new moulds into which he can project himself' (ibid., p. 184). In addition, Egan (1992) points out, as fictional stories can offer a hospitable environment that allows children to see things as they possibly are, such an exercise can help them to develop the narrative capacities of the mind, such as the ability to use metaphor, the integration of reason and emotion, the making of meaning, as well as the indispensable imagination which plays an important role 'in the composition of narratives and their construction of possibilities' (ibid., p. 63); these abilities are of educational significance in Egan's eyes, as they contribute to children's overall capacity of making sense of their experiences and the world they are living in (ibid., p. 64).

As mentioned above, to promote children's imagination, I invited them to enter the imaginary world of the enchanter, generate dialogue with him in an open-ended way, then design this character's possible ending in a free atmosphere.

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<sup>17</sup> This example is picked from the textbook *Morality and Life* for primary children in Grade Two, published by the People's Education Press in 2011.

Their paintings showed how the narrative of the original story left them with dissimilar impressions, and how they engaged personal experiences and moral beliefs to project themselves in different ways into the framework offered by the tale, as suggested by McMillan (1904). For example, Boy KTV thought that the enchanter deserved a happy ending in which he finally invented the elixir of life and realized his dreams, as this fictional figure was powerful, intelligent and hard-working in his eyes; according to Girl Seagull, the magician's evil deeds could only be forgiven after his sincere redemption, being purified by religion to serve the community and help other people as a monk; Boy Big Penguin believed that the enchanter felt regret after the daughter's departure and decided to be a more responsible father in order to enjoy the happiness of family life. In their imaginations, this figure became a complex individual who could hardly be defined as simply good or bad; he can be criticized for being cold-hearted to the daughter, but according to Boy KTV, this was because he felt lonely, the crown of knowledge weighing too heavy for him to easily rid<sup>18</sup>. He can make mistakes and have moral defects, but he can also change to become a better person through redemption and reflection in Girl Seagull and Boy Big Penguin's eyes. Thus, as the children interweave the story into their own moral world, the character of the enchanter appears multifaceted in their narrative; such a figure portrayed by their imagination is different from the simple and fixed characters who represent either right or wrong in their normal moral courses, as described above.

Moreover, it appears that such an imaginary process can also help children to develop the narrative mode of mind, as proposed by Egan (1992). For example, Boy KTV involved his affection for the enchanter in his narrative, making it

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<sup>18</sup> See the conversations in the after-class interview with KTV in final section of the data analysis chapter.

reasonable for this figure to reach his goal since, in his interpretation, he was dedicated and proficient; Girl Seagull and Boy Big Penguin showed their belief that the enchanter's life could be more meaningful when using his magic powers to serve the community/family instead of pursuing eternal life for himself.

Besides this story, it appears that another tale, *The Boat*, also provoked the children's imaginative qualities and informed them what an ethical life might be. In this scheme of work, I tried to promote their autonomous moral thinking based on the original narrative of the tale, rather than imposing certain regulations upon them. In an activity in the third story-based workshop, the children were encouraged to perform the imagined roles of the villagers, such as the veterinary doctors, to explore how the ill-tempered old man would interact with other people in a common space. In this instance, they suggested that such a figure might sometimes spit on the floor and it was useless to warn him to obey the rules of the hospital. In the after-class interview, Girl Fish told me that although she was taught in her normal moral classes that spitting in public is impolite, she felt the imagined experiences of the old man in the drama workshop enabled her to realize that there might be some reasons for such bad mannered behavior - the old man did this to express his anger and distrust towards other people. She also believed that only through others trying to understand and help the old man sincerely, such as the little boy in the story, could his willingness to care about others be restored, rather than through persuading or punishing him in accordance with the code of behavior.

As argued by MacIntyre (1981), each person is 'essentially a story-telling animal', whose life represents a narrative structure in which he/she experiences adventures, including progress and danger, success and failure, from birth to

death; thus, his/her understanding of morality is internally linked with personal life in various historical contexts and social situations. MacIntyre proposes that the dramatic narratives of stories can inform and inspire children as to what the moral life might be, rather than asking them to follow a set of general principles (ibid., p. 216). Furthermore, according to Neelands (1992), compared with 'a symbolic level of concepts and generalisations' delivered in the conventional curriculum, the imagined experience generated by stories and play in a drama classroom can better help children to comprehend abstract thought, as they offer specific contexts and concrete examples connected with human experience (cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. 48). In my classroom, Girl Fish gained a more complex understanding of the behavior of spiting based on the original narrative of the story and her imagination of the old man's possible situation, compared with the abstract moral code taught previously that spiting in public is bad and should be prohibited. In her eyes, although the old man knew clearly that such a deed was not right, he still offended the convention because he was disappointed and uninterested in the human world; only the little boy's care and help could bring him back into the community.

To sum up, I have discussed how imagination, stimulated by stories and activities in a drama classroom, can help children develop the narrative mode of mind and learn morality in a narrative way by engaging their own experiences and ideas, instead of following moral models or abstract principles passively. Such an approach is in accordance with the chief aim of the new moral curriculum in China, which is to shift the concern from didactic regulations from an adults' standpoint to children's own lives and promote their autonomous moral thinking (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 508). In the following section, I will further

examine how imagination generated by story-based drama can promote moral values such as empathy and tolerance.

### **Imagination Helps to Promote Virtues such as Empathy and Tolerance**

As believed by McMillan (1904), the moral attitude of empathy requires a person's imaginative insight to view the world from others' perspectives; 'where the power of representation (or imaginative power) fails, sympathy fails' (p. 186). In my study, there were activities designed to promote the children's empathy through different imaginary figures in all three workshops, including the enchanter's daughter who was locked in the palace, the lion who was terrified and ignored in a big city and the old man who isolated himself from the human world.

According to Egan (1992), rather than being proud and cruel, the ability to imagine is an essential prerequisite to develop social virtues such as respect and understanding in children, by recognizing and treating other people as 'unique, distinct, and autonomous' whose lives are as real and important as their own (ibid., p. 54). In addition, Edmiston (2008) points out that educational drama offers imagined spaces for children to safely and playfully explore the social relationships and situations of other people in a fantasy world to enrich their normal social lives, in which they may 'encounter and dialogue with viewpoints that would never be faced in everyday life' (ibid., p. 171); in this way, children have the chance to develop their ethical imagination by trying to connect with other people across time and space, taking their standpoints into consideration. This helps to cultivate the ethical value of empathy and a more generous attitude towards the standards of right and wrong (ibid).

In my study, the children were invited to use their imagination to explore the old man's past life in the third story-based workshop and find out the possible

reasons leading to his isolation, such as coming from a poor family and being betrayed by his friends at an early age. Additionally, they were given the chance to imagine how the old man may leave different impressions on the villagers and the little boy, in which he displayed grumpiness towards other people but attentiveness to the deserted animals. The evidence showed that these drama activities helped the children to get into others' shoes and modify their value systems of right-and-wrong to some extent. For example, in the after-class interview, Girl Swan told me she could see different facets of the old man's life, obtaining a more well-rounded view of him through the imagined stories created with her peers. Moreover, Boy Leopard thought he had more compassion for the old man after realizing it was the hardship of life that had made him ill-tempered, even though he still showed his kindness by caring for animals that shared a similar situation with him; in addition, he also changed his initial impression of the villagers, who might be cold-hearted as described by the old man, because the imagined experience of how the old man treated others in an unfriendly way made him feel sympathetic towards the villagers as well.

Besides the virtue of sympathy, the children also explored the value of tolerance through the imagined world in my drama classroom. According to Northrop Frye:

One of the most obvious uses [of imagination] is its encouragement of tolerance. In the imagination our own beliefs are also only possibilities, but we can also see the possibilities in the beliefs of others... what produces the tolerance is the power of detachment in the imagination, where things are removed just out of reach of belief and action. (Frye, 1963, p. 32, cited in Egan, 1992, p. 56)

At the end of the first story-based workshop, more than half of the children in School B chose to forgive the Enchanter's selfishness and wished him to change to become a better person, displaying the ethical attitudes of toler-



ance and forgiveness. Furthermore, the story *The Boat* also provoked their thoughts on the value of tolerance, as illustrated in the discussion of how a good community should behave in their eyes. Boy Pig stressed the importance of such a virtue, stating: 'No one is perfect, and it will be hard to make friends without tolerance.'

As pointed out by Egan (1992), instead of conveying solid information or presenting certain actualities, the teaching of a rich source of fictional stories can stimulate children's imagination and contribute to the flexibility and complexity of their mind to see things as they possibly are; such an approach itself demonstrates the moral attitudes of tolerance and open-mindedness, and can cultivate the students' awareness that their sense of the actual world is 'not Truth or Reality, but one of a number of ways of making sense of the world and experience' (ibid., p. 57). In my study, the imagined stories helped to broaden the children's minds and generate a tolerant attitude towards other possible situations of human experience, such as when they tried to understand and accept the fictional roles of both the enchanter and the old man.

To sum up, I have discussed how the imagined space created by story-based drama can promote children's social virtues such as sympathy and tolerance, both of which are encouraged in the new moral curriculum in China (Lu & Gao, 2004, pp. 502-504). In the following section, I will examine the boundaries of imagination in a drama classroom allowed in the current background of China.

### **How Far can Imagination Go in a Chinese Drama Classroom**

As introduced in the literature review chapter, the main aim of the new moral curriculum in China has shifted its focus from the requirement of children to follow moral demands to the guidance of their ability to solve problems in real

life, so that they can 'develop moral characteristics that are essential for the modernization of China and the development of Chinese society' (Lu & Gao, 2004, p. 499). Thus, the chief reformers raise four basic ethical dimensions in designing the framework of the *Guidelines for Moral Character and Life in full-time compulsory education in China*, one of which is to help children live an *intelligent and creative life* (ibid).

Robinson (2011) examines the connection between creativity and imagination: according to him, 'creativity is applied imagination', meaning being creative relies on a person's imaginative qualities and involves putting his/her imagination into actual work (ibid., p. 142); in addition, he believes that the cultivation of imagination is essential for realizing one's creative capacities, which require 'openly playing with ideas, riffing, doodling, improvising and exploring new possibilities' (ibid., p. 228). In this sense, the emphasis on developing children's imaginative abilities in my study is in accordance with one of the general principles of promoting children's intelligence and creativity in the new moral curriculum.

Nevertheless, I am also aware of the potential tensions between the level of freedom embedded in the development of imagination in a drama classroom and the ideological constraints imposed by the government in the current Chinese context. According to Northrop Frye (1963), 'the fundamental job of the imagination in ordinary life, then, is to produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in' (cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. 152). Such a view is accepted by Neelands, who believes that educational drama enables young people to use their imagination freely to express and create 'credible and coherent, alternative worlds and experiences', which provides these young citizens with the horizon and capacity of reimagining

and transforming existing social and political structures for a brighter future (cited in O'Connor, 2010, p. 39).

However, as pointed out by Cheung & Pan (2006), although the Chinese government allows more free space for students to develop their independent thinking abilities in the new moral course, for the sake of the modernisation of the country, they are not expected to offend the socialist nature of education and exceed the current political and legal framework defined by the Party; accordingly, the teachers of the moral course have been granted more autonomy in the teaching processes, such as adopting their own teaching methods and generating improvised teacher-student interactions, but these approaches should clearly aim to serve the nation's needs; besides, the schools they are working in are always under the evaluation and scrutiny of the administrative authorities. The government's attitude can also be illustrated in the document *Implementing Guidelines of the Construction of Civil Moralities*:

[the state] respects personal legal rights... encouraging civics to gain personal benefit through legal means, while expecting civics to build up the value of putting national and collective benefits first. (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 2001, cited in Cheung & Pan, 2006, pp. 45-46)

A similar view is held by Chang & Ren (2018) in their recent article, stating that there is a red line that can never be crossed or challenged in realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation as the leading discourse of the Xi era; this is 'the absolute leadership of China by the Communist Party', made possible by idolizing the supreme leader Xi Jinping (ibid., p. 13). They also point out that the Party makes efforts to establish its authority and win the support of the young generation, who are more concerned with individual values, material comforts and spiritual fulfilment in the age of the globalized market

economy, in order to maintain their administration over the country in the long term (ibid).

To sum up, the current political context determines the boundaries and limitations of the development of the students' imagination in a Chinese drama classroom, which is not permitted to go beyond the realistic framework for social transformation as expected by Jonathan Neelands. Although story-based drama can be used to stimulate young peoples' imagination to a certain extent, to inform them what the moral life is in a narrative way and promote the virtues such as sympathy and tolerance as discussed previously, the drama teacher should also consider the bottom line of individual freedom allowed by the government in the context of China when conducting approaches to enhance children's imaginative capacities.

### **Summary**

In this section, I have discussed how the imagined space created by story-based drama can help children to learn morality in a narrative way and enhance ethical attitudes of sympathy and tolerance. In addition, I have also examined the possible limitations of promoting children's imagination in the context of China, which is required to serve the development of the country without challenging the existing political and social framework.

### **6.3.3 Drama and Dialogic Thinking**

As mentioned in the literature review chapter, the educational *idea of dialogue* is encouraged in the reform of moral education, to be consistent with the modern values liberated after China's reform and opening up policy, such as openness, sharing and diversity (Wanxue & Hanwei, 2004). Accordingly, Lu & Gao (2004) point out that the textbooks in the new moral course should offer opportunities to generate discussion among children, and teachers need to

adopt a conversational pedagogy by inviting children to share their ideas in communication instead of providing ready-made answers or behavioral standards from a commanding position. For example, in a lesson titled *Come to my hometown*, children are invited to design a one-day trip around their hometown by drawing a map of the journey's route and introducing local specialties using words or pictures. They are then asked to discuss their work with their classmates; in this way, children are expected to be 'not only listeners but also active participants in the dialogue', as they are given the chance to share their thoughts with each other on the given subject in the learning process (ibid., p. 505).

However, as far as I can see, the dialogic approach promoted in the new moral curriculum is largely concerned with encouraging children to exchange facts and information, rather than helping them to shape more complicated ethical selves through alternative perspectives and interrelated discourses. According to the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, compared with the transmission of messages, the dialogue between people is more about the dynamic and continuous process of interaction, involving the combination of the speakers' unique world views. Such an idea can be illustrated in his own words,

'[A communication] is not transmitted from [author] to [reader], but is constructed between them as a kind of ideological bridge, is built in the process of their interaction' (Bakhtin & Medvedev, 1978, cited in Nystrand et al., 1993, p. 295).

In the following passage, I will refer to Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and examine how story-based drama can promote children's dialogic thinking in the light of my field work. I will first discuss the ways in which educational drama can initiate children's moral thinking in a dialogic way, then analyse how the

dialogue generated in a drama classroom helps to shape the students' ethical selves in a more complex and multifaceted way.

### **The Ways Story-based Drama Helps to Promote Children's Dialogic**

#### **Thinking**

According to Bakhtin (1984), every individual has their own distinct view stemming from different times and spaces, making the human world multi-voiced. Accordingly, people can form new ethical understandings when they take other viewpoints into consideration to complement their own perspectives through dialogical and reciprocal interaction (ibid). This is accepted by Edmiston (1998), who further points out that educational drama enables children to experience and communicate simultaneously on two levels, including actual social interactions with their peers and teacher and symbolic interactions between the imagined roles which are represented in a fictional framework. Therefore, compared with their daily lives, they have more chances to reflect on their current value systems and achieve a 'double consciousness' by handling the two sets of roles at the same time and considering others' ideas through the two levels of interaction present in a drama classroom (ibid., p. 6). In the second story-based workshop of my study, Boy Monkey and Girl Little Penguin had a discussion on how to portray the photograph of Chairman Mao as a symbol of Tiananmen square. Boy Monkey thought his group members ought to kneel while he - performing Mao's photo - should be the highest among them, as befits such a figure representing authority. However, Girl Little Penguin managed to persuade him that the leader's picture should be lower than both the rostrum and the flags played by the other members of the group. In this way, the chairman presented by Boy Monkey sat on the floor with a grin on his face, being positioned the lowest in their still image. In the

after-class interview, he told me, 'At first, I felt nervous to take the role of Chairman Mao as he was authoritative in my impression. I planned to sit there seriously with my classmates kneeling on the ground, but the result was they all stood there. Nevertheless, I am glad that my acting of Chairman Mao has brought laughter to the audience.' Girl Little Penguin explained that the reasons why she tried to change Boy Monkey's mind were because she felt it strange to drop to her knees; in addition, she believed their group would be better following the actual positions of Mao's photograph and the other objects, as they existed in reality. In this incident, Boy Monkey's initial understanding of the authority and sacredness of the fictional role was challenged by Girl Little Penguin's respect for reality; affected by the dynamic interactions in the playful atmosphere of the drama class, the result was his humorous way of displaying the representation of China's political centre. Although he kept his idea of sitting in their performance, he also agreed to take the lowest position, as his partner suggested. Such a learning experience could to some extent lead to his re-interpretation of the solemnity of leadership.

Besides drama's potential to offer two levels of interaction in the actual classroom and the imagined dimension, Edmiston (1998) also notes that drama becomes dialogic when the teacher organizes sequenced activities that can engage children to destabilize and review their own ideas and positions in the learning process, forming an ongoing dialogue with themselves; in this way, drama enables them to develop more complicated understandings, rather than reinforcing their initial ethical assumptions of certain issues and situations (ibid., p. 60).

In my first story-based workshop, Boy Bear initially thought the enchanter was an irresponsible father when the daughter explained that he spent little time

accompanying her. However, he gradually changed his attitudes, especially in the activity of teacher in role in which I portrayed the magician, which he regarded as his favourite part in the whole workshop. In this activity, I wore a long black hooded cape to hide my glasses and sandals, lowering my voice to make myself appear more like an enchanter, which left a deep impression on Boy Bear. Using his words, 'It felt like either the character jumped out of the story or I transformed to his palace. I forgot about other things and really enjoyed the communication with him.' In this conversation, I patiently explained to the group that the magician locked his daughter away because he cared for her, believing the outside world to be dangerous; he could not play with her, as he was pressed for time since he had to uncover the secret of eternal life before death arrived. Boy Bear later told me this figure appeared powerful and mysterious in his determination to work out this puzzle, and for this reason he chose to design a brighter future for him at the end of the workshop.

According to Winston (2000a), the strategy of teacher in role can provoke children's ambivalent ethical reactions when trying to show the complex nature and contradictory behavior of a character, enabling them to reconsider their positions and arrive at more complex, open-minded understandings. In my classroom, such an approach helped Boy Bear to see different aspects of the enchanter and achieve a more rounded view of him through the dialogic sequencing embedded in the drama activities.

To sum up, I have discussed two ways that story-based drama can support the development of children's dialogic thinking. On the one hand, they can concurrently participate in a continuous process of interaction and negotiation on both actual and fictional levels in a drama classroom. On the other hand, the drama teacher can use teaching strategies such as teacher in role to plan



and structure sequenced activities for children to generate inner dialogue with themselves and reconsider their existing values and ideas. I will then analyze how dialogic drama may contribute to shape the complexity of their ethical selves in the next section.

### **Dialogic Drama Enables Children to Shape Their Ethical Selves in a More Complex Way**

As discussed in the literature review chapter, Bakhtin adopts a 'prosaic' view of morality, emphasizing the social connections between individuals in a specific time and space. Therefore, in his eyes, an ethical person is never self-sufficient but constructed through conflicting discourses with others: 'voices (and words) speaking from different positions and invested with different degrees and kinds of authority' (cited in Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 218). Based on his theories, Edmiston (2008) further points out that such dialogue can be experienced as external conflicts between people, but it also refers to one's internal struggles between opposing ethical voices, revealing the complexities of certain moral dilemmas. He then proposes that drama can not only generate dialogues among children to consider others' perspectives in public discussions, but also has the potential to contextualise the inner competing voices of a person in specific contexts, enabling students to form more thoughtful attitudes towards problematic situations (Edmiston, 1998).

In the third story-based workshop of my fieldwork, there was one activity in which the children were asked to experience the tensions of the little boy's contradictory ideas in the form of a conscience alley; namely, should he sail to the old man's house to save other lives on a stormy night? After this, the students were given the chance to share their thoughts about the issue in a group discussion, which enabled them to take alternative views into consider-

ation, critically evaluate their initial opinions and be aware of the difficulty of decision-making in this ethical dilemma. For example, Boy Giraffe at first thought it was a heroic deed to rescue others, from which the boy might receive worship and admiration from the villagers; however, someone else reminded him that those people might not welcome him and the old man at all. In Boy Eagle's eyes, the boy was irrational when he decided to go, because he was risking his own life; nevertheless, Girl Horse contributed her opinion that the boy did this out of affection rather than rationality, as he took the old man as his friend.

In such a learning process, the children were not only invited to experience the moral struggles of the little boy's inner voices enlivened by the story-based drama, but also encouraged to interact with each other to achieve multiple perspectives in a problematic situation, which helped to develop their ethical selves in a more multifaceted and complex way. As argued by Bakhtin (1984), a person's idea is not fixed in one's head but changeably created by impersonal interactions. Such a belief can be revealed in his own words:

The idea is inter-individual and inter-subjective – the realm of its existence is not individual consciousness but dialogic communion between consciousnesses. The idea is a live event, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses. (ibid., p. 88)

As discussed above, drama has the potential to enhance children's dialogic thinking and develop their ethical selves in a more complex way. However, I am also aware that the creation of such a dialogic space requires the teacher's awareness, respecting the children's voices by reflecting on Miss Hu's dogmatic approach to making up the contract. In the preparatory workshop, Miss Hu guided the children to set up unquestionable rules and corresponding punishment to regulate their behaviors, going against

Neelands' (2004) idea of seeing the contract as an ongoing dialogue to guarantee the learning quality in a drama class that always relies on open discussion (p. 54).

Dahlberg & Moss (2005) also make it clear that, to build up a dialogic classroom, the students' voices should not be 'excluded, marginalised, ignored or just be seen as something cute or funny' (p. 101); instead, the teacher needs to relinquish their position of authority and participate with the children to establish a more respectful, active and open learning relationship (ibid). In this way, the children's perspectives will be respected, based on which they can construct meaning together through dynamic interactions and negotiations with their peers, as well as with their teacher, in a drama classroom.

### **Summary**

In this section, I have first discussed two different ways in which story-based drama can enhance children's dialogic thinking, then analysed how the dialogue generated in a drama classroom can help children shape more complex ethical selves. In addition, I am also aware that to initiate children's dialogic thinking the drama teachers should always remind themselves to discard their imposing manner, instead generating open discussions with the children on the basis of equality and respect in the teaching processes.

#### **6.3.4 Drama and Gifted Child**

As explored in the analysis, a ten-year-old boy KTV emerged in the present study and impressed me with his intelligence and individuality, raising my awareness to focus on how story-based drama can help gifted children such as him to complement my general concern for the moral education conducted in a standard classroom. Hence, in the following passage, I will discuss this boy's surprising moral worldview by linking it to Nietzsche's (1898) theories,

then analyse the ways in which drama can support able students such as KTV to develop their potential, offering a learning environment in which their emotional and intellectual differences can be better accepted and understood; one that enables them to engage with their peers more readily and express themselves more freely compared with other classes.

### **An Analysis of a Gifted Child's Unique Moral Worldview**

As defined by the National Association for gifted children (NAGC) in the United States, the term gifted individuals refers to 'those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in the top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains' (NAGC, 2010, cited in Vidergor & Harris, 2015, p. 10). Additionally, Marland (1972) has summarized the main categories for children's giftedness, such as their general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual or performing arts skills and so on (cited in Webb et al., 1994, p. 3). In the present study, as a 10-year-old boy, KTV showed high intelligence and theoretical understandings of my drama sessions, and demonstrated a thinking capacity that was well beyond what is usual for his age. For example, when other children agreed to write 'Be orderly' into their contract in the preparatory workshop, he raised an opposing idea that there would be a danger if people got used to obeying orders and following the collective blindly, as this might stunt their intelligence. It was his smart criticism that reminded me as an inexperienced teacher not to suppress children's self-expression by using such regulations for the sake of class management.

In terms of the features of gifted young learners, Freeman (1999) points out that they are more likely to receive support from well-educated parents who

are more professionally driven, but they may also have weaker personal relationships compared with their peers (p. 186). Furthermore, Webb et al. (1994) have explored why gifted children tend to have problematic peer relationships in schools, often being labelled as 'anti-social', 'conceited' or 'show-offs who always know the answers' (p. 18). According to them, most gifted students develop language abilities surprisingly early, with broad and sophisticated vocabularies that may quickly surpass their peers and cause communicative problems; in addition, their intellectual maturity and emotional development seldom progress at the same pace, which may lead to a lack of social skills and a gradual separation from other children of similar age; this can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety and insecurity that may affect or limit the performance of their high potential in the long term, as all human beings need emotional connections, including gifted children (ibid).

In KTV's case, he has supportive parents who are both professors in a well-known domestic university. With their help, KTV showed an interest in literature and started to read long novels from quite an early age. In his teacher's eyes, although KTV performed well in his studies as one of the cleverest students, his views were so unique that they could not usually be easily interpreted by his classmates. He also mentioned that, to some extent, KTV was proud of his knowledge and high intelligence but lacked collective sentiments and values, sometimes becoming emotionally childish and overly sensitive at how his peers might judge him. In my first-story based workshop, KTV got slightly annoyed when one boy praised him for his progress in one activity. He explained to me later that, from his experience, other children could not usually understand him properly, so he frequently felt alienated and alone; this

meant it was difficult for him to accept the judgement of his classmates, even when they tried to praise him.

Besides their concern about the difficulties for gifted children to develop sound peer relationships, Webb et al. (1994) also note that this group of children are likely to question and break traditions and rules from an early age, often finding it hard to tolerate conventional and ordinary aspects of the world. However, such questioning can bring discomfort and feel threatening to people around them, such as their teachers and parents, by challenging their existing framework of beliefs and ideas; thus, gifted children might gradually turn rebellious in one way or another as they feel frustrated and out-of-step with society (p. 22).

In my study, KTV's head teacher told me that sometimes he worried about this boy because he would sharply attack the dark side of society, criticising the misdeeds of government officers. In addition, KTV also showed intolerant attitudes towards the school's ethical regulations in our conversations, which were irrational and arbitrary in his eyes, but felt he was forced to follow them uncritically. When having to cope with conflicting voices that mostly emphasised the collective values in everyday life, he tried to maintain his individuality and kept this as his slogan: *It is the world's fault instead of mine*.

As discussed above, KTV's giftedness made it difficult for him to establish peer relationships and fit into the school's mainstream ethical framework that stressed collectivism over one's own personal views; accordingly, he demonstrated his original character and individual moral values in my fieldwork. First, he made it clear in the questionnaire from the preparatory workshop that he wanted to become a powerful person, while also regarding excellence and creativity as his most preferable virtues. Such an attitude was also in accor-

dance with his identification with the powerful enchanter in the first story-based workshop, in which he believed the magician was capable enough to achieve his goal despite his moral defects. Furthermore, in the after-class interview, he told me that from reading the book *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895)<sup>19</sup> by Gustave Le Bon, he realized the masses are usually irrational and manipulated by the authorities; however, as a smart one among the common herd, he was vigilant against the danger of being controlled and wanted to realize his own full potential.

As mentioned earlier, to some extent, KTV's moral universe can be related to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of *Übermensch*, introduced in the prologue of his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1898). This is usually translated into English as 'superman' or 'overman'. According to Deleuze (2006), *Übermensch* refers to Nietzsche's ideal of a complete and superior human being with abilities above and beyond those of ordinary people, who represents a new humanity by ridding themselves of the burden of old Christian values and challenging established way of thinking. The overman is also described in Nietzsche's own words as those 'who are new, unique, and incomparable, who give themselves laws and create themselves' (cited in Ansell-Pearson, 1992, p. 315); moreover, Nietzsche also uses the metaphor of 'the lightening from the dark cloud' to illustrate the relationship between the overman and the common people, in which the superman signifies light and beauty while the masses are inferior, living in shadow and ugliness (ibid). However, Bishop (2016) offers an analysis of Nietzsche's understanding of the overman and the shadow by drawing upon the theories of Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung, who points out that it is the inferior man as

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<sup>19</sup> This book is considered one of the seminal works of crowd psychology. The Chinese version KTV read was translated by Feng Keli and published in 2011.

the shadow who represents the collective unconscious; and that such darkness is an inseparable part of humanity, as human beings are never perfect creatures. Thus, it is essential for the superman to learn to accept his own limits and the ordinary aspects of the culture he is rooted in (p. 23). Similarly, Webb et al. (1994) also suggests that it is necessary to help the gifted child develop empathy and social skills in order to value and relate to the normal things and people that surround them.

In my study, although KTV told me he usually saw himself as of a higher status due to his intelligence, adopting an indifferent attitude towards others in his everyday life, he still showed that he had emotional needs and a willingness to be part of the classroom community. For example, his teacher told me he once cried a lot after missing the chance to perform in a program with his classmates to celebrate the New Year. Moreover, he was also the first in his class to show a clear interest in my drama workshops, which he clearly knew would involve interaction and cooperation with other children.

To sum up, I have first analysed KTV's giftedness, as well as the possible problems he might face as a gifted young boy in developing peer relationships and through his questioning of established rules. I have linked his moral values with Nietzsche's theories, proposing that it is necessary to help such a child to develop a more balanced view of his own specialness and others' normality in order to form a more integrated personality that might contribute to his creativity and self-realization in the long term. In the following section, I will respectively discuss how story-based drama demonstrated the potential to offer a free and cooperative space, which could enable a gifted child such as KTV to not only build up emotional connections with his peers but also to maintain his own individuality and creative thinking.



## **How Drama can Help Gifted Children Develop Peer Relationships and Exercise Creative Thinking in the Context of a Community**

As suggested by Webb et al. (1994), there are two useful means to support gifted children willingly and playfully to participate in activities with their peers, namely '*anticipation through fantasy and role-playing*' (p. 153, italics in the original). According to them, these approaches are both enjoyable and enlightening for most gifted children, as the imagined situations and roles can arouse their curiosity without providing ready-made and fixed answers. They also offer opportunities for such children to learn to understand and value others' ideas. Moreover, the experience of sharing an activity can also help them to build up emotional connections, such as cultivating a sense of respect and mutuality with other children of the same age (ibid).

In my study, KTV engaged in and performed different fictional roles - such as the tiger, the little boy and the rainbow - in the activity in which he and his classmates were invited to act out the story *The Boat* together. In the after-class interview, he told me he enjoyed such an experience because he could play with others in a relaxed atmosphere without thinking too much and felt a connection with them, aspects which were rare in his normal life. In addition, he also used a metaphor to describe his happy moments in the drama classroom, stating that all the players had the chance 'to create a big lucky biscuit together' when entering the class, which they then shared.

In terms of gifted children's tendency to question rituals and traditions, Webb et al. (1994) also raise the point that it is important to create a space that allows such children to exercise their creative thinking, instead of forcing them to follow useless, even harmful customs, as 'blind belief, unquestioning obedience or passive acceptance of traditions conflicts with the nature of the gifted child' (p. 180). Additionally, they point out that when given the freedom to

act in non-traditional ways and express their independent opinions, it is also necessary to help gifted children to learn to communicate with other people who share their culture but come from differing backgrounds. This can provide them with security, a sense of belonging to a community and a feeling of being integrated into the world (p. 178).

In my conversations with KTV, he used another simile to describe his normal school life, saying it was like the Pythagorean theorem in maths: everyone had to obey it without doubt. However, in his eyes, the school regulations emphasizing collective values that he was asked to follow were not always right. As an alternative, he found more equality and freedom in my drama workshops, in which the teacher did not represent such a monolithic authority and no standard answers were expected from the students. Using his own words, 'In drama class, it's not like a professor teaching small children. Instead, it's like a research seminar among professors.' He also used one activity from The Boat drama as an example to illustrate his point, in which he and another two boys presented a still image to show the little boy's courage when deciding to row to the old man's house on a stormy night. In their work, KTV initially tried to represent the old man's house by putting his hands in the shape of triangle above his head, however, his partner suggested that his hands could present the house while his body could be the sinking island. Based on his advice, KTV finally decided to tilt his hands to one side to highlight the severe crisis, as the house was about to tumble down into the flood. Then the third boy, performing the boat, adopted KTV's idea of using his hands in this way by keeping them straight up in order to display the boy's determination in such terrible weather. Thus, KTV told me, in a drama classroom, he could explore the possible results of their group work through discussion and experimenta-

tion with his peers, as there were no right or wrong answers. Just as hands could represent either a house or part of a boat, so he felt he could express his opinions more freely and take another's advice more readily compared with normal classes. KTV's experience showed that, to some extent, drama can offer gifted children a relatively unrestricted space that not only permits them to express themselves creatively but also provides them with a sense of security, as they have the opportunity to work with their peers and to offer and receive advice and support at one and the same time.

As discussed above, although drama has the potential to promote gifted children's peer relationships and creative thinking, I also reflect on the teacher's role in facilitating this group of learners by reconsidering my deeds when KTV personally opposed the rule 'Be orderly' as part of the contract in the preparatory workshop. At that time, I was too inexperienced to respond to his intelligent criticism and kept the regulation for the interest of the collective, as most children suggested, although I seldom used it in the following sessions. As pointed out by Torrance (1963), without creative and adventurous-spirited teachers, children with creative talent will 'go unorganized, undeveloped, and unrewarded', because they are likely to be estranged from unsympathetic and commanding teachers when they try to question authority and use their own thinking ability (ibid, p. 10). In the light of Torrance's view, the regulation 'Be orderly' in my class arguably over emphasised orderliness, thus going against the free spirit required by a drama teacher, who needs to build up a creative classroom that will help children's self-expression and independent characters to flourish, something especially beneficial for gifted children.

## **Summary**

In this section, I have first discussed KTV's giftedness, his problematic peer relationship and his questioning of traditional aspects of school and society. I have also analysed his untypical moral values by drawing upon Nietzsche's theories and have stressed the importance of helping him to come to terms with his own - as well as others' - limitations, as all human beings are always imperfect. Lastly, I have examined the ways in which story-based drama can support gifted children such as KTV to develop peer relationships and creative thinking through group-work, the success of which nonetheless depends upon the creative spirit and generous attitude of the drama teacher.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have first analysed how I reflect upon my practice in the fieldwork and have learned to become a more competent drama teacher in the light of three key concepts, namely playfulness, cooperation and ensemble-making. Then, I have discussed four aspects in which story-based drama can help to address the shortcomings existing in the current moral course in China and offer an alternative to enhance domestic primary children's ethical development, including the promotion of their civic values such as trust and care, their capabilities of imagination and dialogic thinking, as well as gifted children's peer relationships and their creative thinking abilities. In the following passage, I will further examine the strengths and limitations of the present study as the final chapter.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Conclusion**

This thesis has described a study in which I tried to address the shortcomings existing in the current programmes of moral education taught in Chinese elementary schools by investigating, as a learner teacher, the possibility of using educational drama as a complement to facilitate primary children's moral learning. In my study, fifteen sessions were taught in total in two schools in Beijing for 31 children aged between 9 and 10 years old, in May and June, 2016. These included one preparatory workshop and three story-based workshops that were conducted in each school, with School A in an urban city and School B in a village just outside the capital. Throughout my research, I have been continuing to focus on two issues. One is my own progress in learning to teach moral education as a novice drama teacher, the other being the possible implications of such a new approach in the Chinese framework. In the light of my research concerns, I have highlighted and theorized some key issues in my discussion chapter. In this concluding chapter, I would like to present the main findings of the study, its limitations and my suggestions for future research that might be useful for those who share similar interests. Finally, I will conclude by describing my own future aspirations as a drama researcher.

#### **7.1 Presentation of the Main Findings**

From my own experience in recent years, it is clear that in China's major urban cities more children's theatres are appearing, many schools are including drama classes as part of the curriculum and drama summer schools are be-

coming popular. Accordingly, there is a growing number of Chinese teachers starting to become interested in educational drama, most of whom have little or very limited drama experience, like myself. Therefore, the findings of this research might be most pertinent to them, particularly for those who are interested in enhancing children's moral growth through the use of drama in the ways that I have suggested here.

This study might be helpful to teachers sharing similar interests in the following ways. First, I have paid close attention to the details of my drama practice as a learner teacher, as illustrated in the Data Analysis chapter. Second, I have offered theoretical understandings of some key issues concerning moral education and drama education, such as how games and stories play an important role in children's moral learning, and how drama can inform students about what an ethical life might be instead of compelling them to follow abstract, moral rules. Third, I have also reflected and analysed the mistakes I made in the fieldwork as an inexperienced teacher, so that anyone who reads my thesis closely can, to some extent, avoid making similar errors.

To be consistent with my research concerns, I will now present the chief findings of the present study in two aspects, as follows.

### **7.1.1 Teacher's Role in Facilitating Children's Moral Learning through Drama in China**

First, it might be challenging for teachers to try to apply drama approaches in the Chinese educational system, especially in the initial stages. The reason for this can be attributed to the didactic nature of the education he/she has been used to, that over-emphasises a solemn form of political indoctrination, competition in exams and the authoritative role of the educator. These do not

match the playful, cooperative and ensemble-based learning advocated in the rhetoric of educational drama. For example, I misused drama games in ways that led to severe competition in the classroom, unintentionally going against my initial desire to enhance the positive values of cooperation and mutuality. Though difficult, it was possible to learn to become a more competent drama teacher by critically reflecting on such mistakes and actively seeking for advice or information from other teachers or from children's parents, both of whom showed enthusiasm and support for this new approach, considering my lack of experience.

Second, there is evidence here that a drama teacher can play an important role in facilitating children's moral learning. In my study, in terms of establishing a safe environment for children (especially some sensitive children) to develop the civic virtues of trust and care, the teacher should pay attention to the social context in which the drama is taking place, with an awareness of the children's previous experiences and knowledge that might influence their participation in the drama classroom. In this way, he/she can offer appropriate support or intervention to enable the students to build up trustworthy and friendly relationships. Moreover, the promotion of children's imaginative qualities also calls for attitudes of modesty and open-mindedness on the part of the teacher, that to some extent enable him/her to avoid turning the process of moral learning into their students being required to passively accept a set of unquestioned, ethical rules and models. Furthermore, to initiate children into dialogic thinking, the drama teacher has to discard an imposing manner in order to generate open discussions with their pupils, equally and respectfully, during the teaching process. Lastly, a creative spirit and generous attitude is required from the drama teacher when trying to help gifted children develop

relationships with their peers, whilst permitting them to retain their own independent characteristics.

Third, the teacher needs to have a clear understanding of the social reality of a drama class, as well as the potential limitations of such an approach in the Chinese context. On the one hand, to a large extent, the actual social context decided the quality and vitality of the dramatic, fictional work. In my research, playfulness was productive in the school that had the headteacher's support and enjoyed a healthy ethos. On the other hand, when using drama's transgressive elements to release children's moral restrictions, or when using stories to stimulate their imaginative and creative qualities, it is necessary for the drama teacher to consider the baseline of individual freedoms permitted in a political system that does not allow for any criticism.

### **7.1.2 The Ways Drama Can Contribute to Current Moral Education Courses in China**

First, in terms of citizenship education, drama could offer a relatively playful and safe environment by using stories and games to enable children to explore and practise civic virtues such as trust and care. This is in accordance with the new moral programme's chief reformer, Professor Lu's expectation of cultivating 'self-determined, liberal, democratic, equal and fair' individuals as future citizens in China; and with the moral values of honesty, as well as kindness, promoted in the new curriculum (Lu, 2004, p. 74, cited in Ping et al., 2004, p. 458).

Second, to complement the existing moral course's problem of neglecting children's imaginative qualities, drama could stimulate young learners' imaginations and enhance their moral learning in at least two ways. On the one



hand, imagination inspired by stories and activities in a drama classroom could develop children's narrative mode of mind and inform them what the ethical life might be by engaging their own experiences and ideas, instead of requiring them to follow moral models or abstract codes passively. On the other hand, I have shown that the imaginary spaces created by story-based drama can promote children's social virtues, such as sympathy and tolerance, both of which are encouraged in the new moral curriculum in China.

Third, in accordance with the dialogic approach promoted in the new moral education programme, with its emphasis on exchanging facts and information, educational drama could initiate children's moral thinking in a dialogic way and help them to shape more complex, ethical selves through experiencing alternative perspectives and interrelated discourses.

Fourth, the special case of gifted children in moral learning is rarely paid any attention in the current curriculum in China. As an alternative, the drama approach could, to some extent, support this group of learners' moral growth by developing their peer relationships and creative thinking abilities in the context of a trusting community, where their emotional and intellectual differences could be better understood and accepted, compared with their normal classes.

## **7.2 Limitations of the Study**

First, this research project was conducted by a learner teacher, in which I made mistakes due to a lack of teaching experience, especially in the initial stages. For example, I failed in responding to a gifted child's intelligent criticism when drawing up the contract in School A. I also neglected to protect a sensitive girl in the second story-based workshop in School B. However, these

experiences also helped me learn to become a more capable teacher by critically reflecting upon my failures.

Second, although similar lesson plans were conducted in two primary schools, I mainly drew upon the data from School B, where relatively better teaching effects were achieved. One reason for this was because the drama classroom in School A had dozens of mats in it which distracted the children. For example, they used the mats as props to build houses in the scene of the reunion of the Daughter and her mother in the first story-based workshop, concentrating on how to build better houses instead of exploring the relationships between the characters. Therefore, I had to spend extra time on class management and move all the mats into the next-door classroom before the following workshop started. In the light of my experience, I would propose that drama teachers attend well to the suitability of the spaces in which they are teaching and spend time carefully preparing them in advance of the children arriving.

Third, the fieldwork was conducted in a short period of two months. Given such time constraints, I could not expect or examine any long-term or sustainable results regarding the contribution of drama to the moral growth of the children engaged in my research. Though children's responses and feedback to some extent revealed a positive influence of drama on their moral learning at that moment, it cannot be guaranteed that these effects would endure. For example, the gifted child KTV was reluctant to leave the classroom on the last day of my teaching in School A, feeling that the enjoyment of playing with his peers in such a space during the drama sessions had ended too soon in his eyes. The case might have been different if I had had the chance to work with them for a longer period and on a regular basis.

Fourth, the two classes in my fieldwork were small, consisting of thirty-one children in total, who attended on a voluntary basis. From my own experience, it is common that drama is included in Chinese primary schools as an extra-curricular activity in the form of a drama club or society, in which students participate as volunteers. Thus, the present study can be seen as most pertinent to those teachers who already work with small groups in a voluntary class of this kind. However, I am also aware that different issues and problems will emerge for any class teacher who might wish to incorporate drama as part of their ordinary curriculum, where classes are larger and in which children do not attend on a voluntary basis.

### **7.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

I hope this piece of research might be of value to anyone interested in using a drama approach to facilitate primary children's moral learning in the Chinese context, especially for novice teachers who have just started in this field. My suggestions for future research are listed below.

First, the three stories adopted in my fieldwork all come from a foreign culture. Though they were well accepted and understood by my students, these children also expressed in their after-class interviews a willingness to experience dramatic activities with some Chinese stories which they were more familiar with. Their favourite stories included *The Magic Paintbrush*, *The Legend of Nezha*, *The Adventures of Mulan* and so on. Therefore, it might be interesting in a future study to explore how such local stories can be explored and reinterpreted by children through drama.

Second, conducted by an inexperienced teacher, this research project is basically a small-scale, qualitative piece of research instead of a mixed methods study. Though it has some quantitative elements in the form of questionnaires,

these were mainly used as a quick way of gathering information from the children to complement the qualitative data and do not carry any claim of statistical significance. Therefore, what is further required might be a longitudinal study on a larger scale with more experienced teacher researchers and children participating in drama workshops for a more extensive period of time, in which both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used properly. As a trial in this new and under-researched area in China, I hope my study might stimulate more and deeper research to further our understanding of this resourceful new approach.

#### **7.4 Concluding Remarks**

This thesis has made me believe that my dream of being a better teacher has partly come true. As my doctoral journey is about to come to an end, I plan to apply for a teaching post in China to become a real educator, perhaps in the new centre of applied drama and moral education in Beijing Normal University. In this way, I can further explore this topic as a drama researcher, introducing this new approach to other teachers and, importantly, having more opportunities to invite children to capture the beauty of drama that I experienced when I was a teenage girl.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1.1**

#### **Consent Forms for Parents (Chinese)**

##### **致家长的一封信**

亲爱的家长，

您好！

现正式寻求您的意见，是否同意您的孩子参与本人计划进行的一项教学活动。本次活动旨在探索教育戏剧将在何种程度上促进小学生的德育发展。您孩子所在的小学及班级教师已同意参加。您孩子所参与的教学活动将会被录影存档；在教学期间，您的孩子还将被邀请参加与教学相关的调研问卷及访谈活动。在参与之前，本人将征求他们的同意，他们随时有权利不参与或者中途退出。

为了保护您孩子的权益，本人做出如下保证：

- 您的孩子每天将照常开展学习活动，本研究不会干扰他（她）的日常学习和生活；
- 活动中不会提到个体学生的名字；
- 您的孩子不会被评估与测试；
- 您随时可以终止您孩子的参与，一旦您决定终止参与，与您孩子有关的影音资料将不会被使用；
- 所有收集的影音资料只供教育与研究所用；

上述内容均遵守并符合英国华威大学相关伦理道德规定（详细规定见<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/statement/>）

如果您希望对本研究做进一步了解，欢迎通过以下方式与我取得联系，或在本人到访学校时与我沟通。如果您愿意让您的孩子参与本次活动，请填写好下面的同意书附表。衷心地感谢您的支持与帮助！

指导老师：冯梦雨

英国华威大学教育系博士研究生

联系电话：13162528157

电子邮箱：[haidebao22@163.com](mailto:haidebao22@163.com)

### 家长同意书

我已阅读并理解上述通知书中的内容，我愿意 ☐ 不愿意 ☐（请在您选中的选项上打钩）我的孩子参与由博士生冯梦雨开展的活动。

我理解我孩子的身份和个人信息将被严格保密；我随时可以终止他（她）的参与。

个人签名：\_\_\_\_\_

日 期： \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 1.2**

### **Consent Forms for Parents (English)**

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing this letter to ask permission for your child to participate in my field study taking place in his/her elementary school. As a PhD student from the University of Warwick, I am investigating educational drama's potential in facilitating primary children's moral learning. Both the headmaster and the teachers have been informed of the nature of my research and the teaching plans, and have already allowed me into the school to approach the students. I have also designed and distributed posters to help the pupils gain a general idea of my drama sessions, and your son/daughter has shown his/her interests and wishes to join in on a voluntary basis.

The teaching will be conducted from May to June, in which one preparatory workshop and three story-based workshops will be taught. During the process, the classroom activities will be filmed; your son/daughter will also be invited to take part in my research such as filling in the questionnaires or being interviewed. But I will guarantee that they enter voluntarily into the research process and will always have the right to opt to be part of the class and not part of the research process.

To protect your child's rights, I promise that:

- This study will not affect his/her regular school life;
- His/her name will be changed to a pseudonym to protect their anonymity;
- Your child will not be assessed or tested;
- You have the right to terminate your child's participation at any time;
- None of the photos and audio-visual documents will be used for other purposes;

All the rules listed above are in accordance with the prescribed principles and criteria set out in my application for ethical approval to the Centre for Education Studies at the University of Warwick prior to undertaking my research (<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/services/ethics/statement/>).

Please feel free to contact with me using the following information. If you permit your child's participation, please sign your signature on the form attached below. Thank you very much for your support!

Mengyu Feng  
Institute of Education  
University of Warwick  
Coventry  
CV4 7AL

Tele (mobile): 13162528157  
Email: [haidebao22@163.com](mailto:haidebao22@163.com)

### Parent's Consent Form

I have read and understood the content of this letter, I Agree ☐ Disagree ☐  
(please tick your option) for my child to take part in the research project conducted by Miss Mengyu Feng.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix 2**  
**Questionnaire from the Preparatory Workshop (Chinese)**  
**调查问卷**

**Part 1：关于我自己**

·我是一个：☐ 女孩    ☐ 男孩

·我今年 \_ 岁了.

**Part 2：关于“道德教育”**

1. ( 单选 ) 你认为“道德教育”应该教会你：

- ☐ 懂得遵守道德规则和道德教训
- ☐ 帮助你形成自己的道德思考和价值判断
- ☐ 不确定

2. ( 双选 ) 以下哪些品质你认为最值得尊敬？

- ☐ 无私 ☐ 勇气 ☐ 公正 ☐ 卓越 ☐ 忠诚 ☐ 创造性
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ (其它品质)

3. ( 单选 ) 你更倾向于成为怎样的人？

- ☐ 一个快乐的人
- ☐ 一个有权力的人
- ☐ 一个有用的人
- ☐ 不确定

4. ( 单选 ) 你认为每个人都需要朋友，并在某个集体中找到归属感吗？

- ☐ 是的，我认为是这样
- ☐ 不，我不认为是这样
- ☐ 不确定

5. ( 单选 ) 在日常生活中，你通常能够自如地做出“对”或“错”的道德判断吗？

- ☐ 是的，我可以

☐ 不，我不能

☐ 不确定

6. ( 双选 ) 以下哪些选项更多地影响着你日常生活中所做出的价值判断？

☐ 我的父母

☐ 我的老师

☐ 我的朋友

☐ 电视、网络、报纸等媒体

☐ 书籍

☐ 其它 \_\_\_\_\_

7. 你心中有一个理想的英雄/女英雄（现实或虚构的均可）的形象吗？能说说为什么选择他/她吗？

### **Part 3: 关于“道德教育”的课堂**

8. ( 单选 ) 你喜欢学校开设的道德教育课程——“品德与社会”课吗？

☐ 非常喜欢

☐ 一般

☐ 不喜欢

☐ 不确定

9. ( 单选 ) 在你所接受的“品德与社会”课上，常见的现象是：

☐ 教师能够启发学生创造情境，自由讨论

☐ 教师在讲台上授课，学生端坐听讲

☐ 学生通过看教材自学

☐ 被其它主科占据，如数学、语文等

10. ( 单选 ) 你认为学校开设的道德教育课程对你日常的所思所为有帮助吗？

☐ 是的，帮助很大

☐ 帮助一般

☐ 没什么帮助

☐ 不确定

11. ( 单选 ) 你认为故事能够帮助你思考人们应该怎么做和不应该怎么做吗？

☐ 是的，我认为能

☐ 不，我认为不能

☐ 不确定

12. ( 单选 ) 你之前有过戏剧经验吗？

☐ 是的，有很多

☐ 是的，有一些

☐ 不，从来没有

13. ( 单选 ) 面对即将到来的运用戏剧和故事来教授道德教育的一系列课程，你  
是怎样的心情呢？

☐ 激动

☐ 害怕

☐ 好奇

☐ 其它 \_\_\_\_\_

14. 你最喜欢的故事是哪一个呢？有什么特殊原因吗？

15. 对接下来的戏剧课程有什么建议吗？欢迎告诉老师！

## Appendix 3.1

### Questionnaire from Story-based Workshop One (Chinese)

#### “巫师的女儿”小问卷

·我是一个: ☐ 女孩 ☐ 男孩

·我今年 \_ 岁了.

问题	同意 ☺	不同意 ☹	不确定 ☹
1.我喜欢《巫师的女儿》这个故事。			
2.我觉得这个工作坊是有趣的。			
3.我能够跟得上老师在课堂上的节奏。			
4.我能清楚地知道什么时候老师在扮演角色，什么时候没有在扮演。			
5.我喜欢和小组的同学一起设计故事的结尾。			
6.对故事人物的采访环节能够增进我对该人物的认识。			
7.课堂上的活动能够帮助我加深对这个故事的理解和认识。			
8.在大家面前表演的话，我会觉得有点害怕。			
9.课堂上我能够有机会充分表达出自己的观点。			
10.在讨论中倾听他人的观点，有助于我更加深入地思考问题。			

11.你认为这个工作坊哪些地方还可以进一步提高呢？说说看。

## Appendix 3.2

### Questionnaire from Story-based Workshop One (English)

·I am a: ☐ girl ☐ boy

·My age is \_\_ years old.

Questions	Agree😊	Disagree😞	Not Sure😊
1. I like this story.			
2. This workshop is enjoyable.			
3. I can keep pace with the teacher.			
4. I know clearly when the teacher is in role or not.			
5. I liked designing the ending of the story with my group members.			
6. The activities of interviewing the characters in the story help me understand them better.			
7. The drama activities help deepen my understanding of this story.			
8. I feel a bit scared when asked to perform before my classmates.			
9. I can fully express my opinions in the drama classroom.			
10. Other children's opinions can help me think more deeply and thoroughly.			

11. In what ways do you think the workshop can be improved? Any suggestions?  
You are more than welcome!

## Appendix 4

### Extracts of Three Interviews with Boy KTV (Chinese)

#### 采访片段

##### (一)

KTV:我不认为好人一定有好报，坏人一定有恶报。大家都有缺点，一个法力高强的巫师就算有点道德瑕疵也不该影响他得道升天。但如果他道行不够，只是碰巧在路边捡到了长生不老药，那很可能会被其他巫师抢走，还会招来杀身之祸。所以，他一定要法力高强才能得到他想要的。

我：假如这个巫师真的很强大，那他用自己的魔法去帮助其他人，不是更好吗？

KTV: 嗯，那这样他就是最厉害的人了，德才兼备。第二等就只有才，第三等只有德，最末等就是两样都没有。我觉得我属于第二等，跟巫师一样。

我：为什么不是第一等呢？

KTV:最上等的人是国之栋梁、利国利民的。我就是个小学生，做好自己就不错了，没想管其他那么多。

我：那将来等你长大以后呢？

KTV: 可能吧。如果我行有余力，可能会考虑考虑。

我：假如巫师真的那么强大，他为什么还需要女儿的陪伴呢？

KTV:因为孤独吧。我能理解他的感受。当一个人拥有太多知识时，有时夜里甚至睡不好觉。我就是这样。大概从两年前开始研读心理学的书开始，就经常失眠。对知识的渴望就像是那个王冠，没得到时做梦都想得到。但是，一旦有一天把它戴在头上了，就会发现它重得摘都摘不掉。国王没那么好当的，连白痴都比他们活得开心。

我：那你更想做个快乐的白痴，还是宝座上的国王呢？

KTV:我宁可当白痴，也不想当皇帝。

我：但你现在看起来更像是皇帝。

KTV:没错。我现在没在看那么多书了，花更多时间看电视打游戏。但有时候也会觉得无聊。

## (二)

KTV:我喜欢这个活动，在其中不会有超然物外的感觉。

我：超然物外？

KTV:这个怎么说呢，嗯，我曾经看过一本书，叫《乌合之众》。里面讲，那些高位的、有权力的人通常会操纵群众，慢慢地，这些群众就会丧失自我、变得依赖他们。我呢，是不一样的群众，是聪明的群众。不像他们那么不明事理。我既没兴趣操纵别人，更不愿意被领导操纵。所以，我就只好选择超然物外了。

我：那你觉得我们的戏剧课上，也有权威和领导吗？

KTV:我觉得整个氛围还是很平等的。我几乎都忘了那什么高位者、低位者。就像这个活动里，我们经常变换角色的。我既能演主角，也能演动物，每个人也都能成为彩虹的一部分。

我：那你喜欢跟其他小朋友一起演这些角色吗？

KTV:还挺喜欢的。让我觉得跟他们融合在一起了。如果没有其他同学演的老人、动物和船，我一个人也没法完成小男孩那一幕。

我：那你在平时会有这样的感觉吗？

KTV:很少有。我总是想很多，这些想法让我觉得还是一个人呆着好。比如说，我总经常告诫自己不要盲从大多数。因为如果领导告诉他们谁带熏肉谁倒霉，那他们肯定都不带了，除了我。我会暗地里带着，并且努力证明带着熏肉能带来好运气。当我证实了之后，我也不会告诉其他人。一来他们通常不会相信你，二来如果大家知道了，那留给我的熏肉就少了。

我：但像你刚才说的，有些欢乐的事情需要大家一起才能完成，对吧？就像你需要和大家一起配合才能建造出彩虹那样。

KTV:是的，我同意。如果幸运饼干像房子一样大，我们当然没办法一个人吃完，还是得大家一起分享。我觉得在这个教室里，我们能平均分配这个幸运饼干。谁的多一点、少一点也没有关系。

我：这块幸运饼干不是本来就存在的吧？我觉得是靠我们大家一起创造的。

KTV:我同意。每个人走进这个教室都有机会创造这个饼干，然后大家一起分享。我第一次看到这个活动的海报时，觉得不错，想要尝试一下。慢慢地，觉得这里的集体很不一样，很不错。这个戏剧课堂挺好的，真的很不错。

### (三)

KTV:平时我一般不这么做。反而，我会捍卫我自己。一旦有那些不同的观点出现，我的口号是，错的不是我而是这个世界。起码，这个世界错得比我多。

我：为什么？

KTV:怎么说呢，平时的学校生活就像是勾股弦定理，你只有遵守没有质疑的份儿。但问题是，你要遵守的内容并不都是对的。比如说，如果一个大学教授告诉一个小学老师一加一等于三，那这个老师就会认为这就是正确答案，还会出这样的题考试你。作为小学生，你又没有反对的权利。所以，如果我遇到不顺眼不顺心又没办法改变的事，我就怪到别人头上。我也在心里把自己列为高位者，因为我通常懂得比别人多。

我：那我们的戏剧课有什么不同吗？你觉得在课上我代表权威吗？

KTV:我觉得没有。戏剧课不像是一个教授在教一群小学生，而像是教授们的学术研讨会。这儿的气氛很好玩，很舒服，也没有什么标准答案等着我们回答。比如这次的活动，手既可以代表山，也可以代表房子、船，或者别的东西。既然没有标准答案，我就没必要证明自己才是对的那个。如果别人的观点听起来还不错，我也愿意接纳，并且在他的基础上变得更好一点。



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